

CRITICAL SURVEY OF
**Mystery &
Detective Fiction**



**CRITICAL SURVEY OF
MYSTERY
AND
DETECTIVE FICTION**

CRITICAL SURVEY OF MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

Revised Edition

Volume 1

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Continuing the Salem Press tradition of the Critical Survey series, *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction, Revised Edition* provides detailed analyses of the lives and writings of major contributors to the fascinating literary subgenre of mystery and detective fiction. This greatly expanded five-volume set is the first full revision of a work that originally appeared in 1988. Published in four smaller, unillustrated volumes, the original *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* contained 275 articles about individual authors of mystery and detective fiction and a glossary of terms. This new edition updates or replaces all the original articles and adds entirely new articles on 118 more authors, raising the total to 393 articles, an increase of 43 percent. The original glossary has been expanded and divided into two parts. Moreover, this new edition adds 37 entirely new overview essays and 5 new appendixes, raising to 7 the total number of items in the Resources section of volume 5.

To such well-known mystery writers as Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Erle Stanley Gardner, Dashiell Hammett, Edgar Allan Poe, and Dorothy L. Sayers, this revised edition adds such venerable writers' names as Louisa May Alcott, Edward Stratemeyer, and Margaret Truman. Most of the new author articles, however, are on popular contemporary writers, such as Mary Higgins Clark, Patricia Cornwell, John Dunning, John Grisham, Thomas Harris, Carolyn Hart, Rolando Hinojosa, Scott Turow, and Stuart Woods. A particularly noteworthy addition is J. K. Rowling, the author of the sensationaly popular Harry Potter series, whose seventh and final volume was published in 2007.

Mystery and detective fiction is essentially a British and American creation that has long been dominated by British, American, and European writers. One of the most exciting developments in the field, therefore, has been the growing number of new writers of various ethnicities and nationalities. In selecting authors to add to *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, a particular effort was made to achieve greater ethnic and international diversity. Among the

added authors are the African American writers Eleanor Taylor Bland, Walter Mosley, and Barbara Neely and the Chicano writer Rolando Hinojosa. Authors added from other Western Hemispheric countries include the Mexican writer Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Brazilian Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, and three Canadians: William Deverell, David Morrell, and Peter Robinson. New Asian authors include China's Qiu Xiaolong and five writers from Japan: Natsuo Kirino, Seichō Matsumoto, Shizuko Natsuki, Akimitsu Takagi, and Miyuki Miyabe. Africa is represented by the South African author Gillian Slovo; Zimbabwe-born Alexander McCall Smith, who writes about a woman detective in Botswana; and Elspeth Huxley, who set several traditional murder mysteries in fictional East African countries.

Geographically, the largest number of writers are from North America, with 204 from the United States, 10 from Canada, and 1 from Mexico. The next largest group of writers are associated with the British Isles: 149 from England, 12 from Scotland, 8 from Ireland, 5 from Wales, and 1 from Northern Ireland. The rest of Europe is represented by 12 writers from France, 3 from Switzerland, 3 from the Netherlands, 3 from Russia, 2 from Spain, 2 from Sweden, 2 from Germany, and 1 each from Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Georgia. One writer is from Israel. Africa is represented by 4 writers from South Africa, 1 from Zimbabwe, and 1 from Zambia. Asian writers include 5 from Japan, 1 from China, and 1 from India. South America is represented by 2 writers from Argentina and 1 from Brazil. Three Australians are joined by 1 New Zealander.

With the addition of more than three dozen overview essays and new appendixes, *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* now joins Salem's family of fully revised and expanded Critical Surveys of poetry, drama, short fiction, and long fiction. Some authors covered here are also covered in one or more of the other sets, but it should be understood that articles in each set are unique. For example, the article on Mark Twain in *Critical Survey of Long Fiction* focuses

on his novels, that in *Critical Survey of Short Fiction* focuses on his short stories and sketches, and the one in the present set focuses on his mystery and detective writings—which are considerably more extensive than many people may realize. Readers will find little overlap in the text of these three articles.

The need for a new edition of *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* is evident in the growing recognition of the genre's importance in modern literature and in the increased attention the genre is receiving in classrooms. The gap between what is perceived as mainstream fiction and mystery genre fiction has narrowed, and mystery fiction is now seen as something far more than mere entertainment, as it often offers special insights into human nature and institutions. Indeed, the syllabus of one college course states that mystery fiction "explores how human consciousness makes sense out of what might otherwise be viewed as random experience and meaningless violence." This, incidentally, is a theme that is discussed at length in many of the overview essays in volume 5.

Another aspect of mystery fiction's receiving increased recognition is what it reveals about different social classes, societies, cultures, and, indeed, entire nations. Mystery fiction probes deeply into the inner workings of every level of society and exposes the strengths and weaknesses of economic, political, and legal institutions. During the days of South Africa's racially oppressive apartheid system, it was often said that one of the best ways to understand the complex problems of that country was to read the mysteries of James McClure, a South African mystery writer whose novels probed deeply into both black and white communities and vividly revealed human dimensions of the day-to-day effects of racial segregation. Similar observations might be made about the mystery and detective fiction of other countries, such as Japan, which is richly represented in *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*.

There was a time when mystery and detective fiction seemed virtually synonymous with the classic "whodunits," in which murders are committed, and then both detectives and readers settle down to sort out clues until the guilty parties are identified and order is restored. The fictional investigators may range from

hard-boiled police detectives and private investigators, such as Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, to brilliantly intuitive amateurs, such as Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple. Such stories are still written, but the modern mystery genre encompasses a vast variety of subgenres that are known by such terms as comic capers, courtroom dramas, cozies, historical mysteries, inverted mysteries (which reveal the culprits immediately), police procedurals, psychological mysteries, and thrillers of various stripes. These subgenres and others are all well represented here, and *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* casts its net even wider to take in authors of espionage and horror stories.

Judging by the distribution of names in volume 5's Categorized Index of Authors, the most popular subgenre among writers in this set is that of the amateur sleuth, represented by 139 writers. That category is closely followed by the rapidly expanding subgenre of police procedurals, with 135 writers, and by thrillers, with 120 writers. The other subgenres in order of representation are private investigator, 92; psychological, 86; hard-boiled, 67; cozies, 65; espionage, 54; inverted, 53; historical, 51; master sleuth, 19; comedy caper, 17; horror, 14; courtroom dramas, 9; and meta-physical and metafictional parodies, 7.

OVERVIEWS

In addition to this edition's large expansion of articles on individual authors, the other major change in this revised edition is the inclusion of 37 completely original overview essays, most of which are as long as 6,000 words. These essays explore the history and nature of the mystery and detective genre and examine the fiction of ethnic writers and writers from other parts of the world. The overviews begin with "Past and Present Mystery and Detective Fiction," a section containing essays on the roots of the genre, the so-called Golden Age of mystery fiction, innovations in the field, literary aspects of mystery fiction, connections between so-called mainstream fiction and the mystery genre, and pulp magazine fiction.

Another group of essays, "Mystery Fiction Around the World," explores mystery fiction in Africa, Asia, Britain, France, Latin America, and the United States

as well as mysteries set in exotic locations. The section labeled “Mystery Fiction Subgenres” explores 14 different varieties of mystery fiction, including academic mysteries, cozies, ethnic American mysteries, feminist and lesbian mysteries, forensic mysteries, historical mysteries, horror stories, juvenile and young-adult mysteries, parodies, police procedurals, science fiction and mystery blends, spy novels, thrillers, and true-crime stories. “The Detectives” section contains essays on amateur sleuths, armchair detectives, hard-boiled detectives, and women detectives as well as Sherlock Holmes pastiches. A final group of essays, in “Other Media,” examine nonliterary adaptations and other writing genres, such as films, drama, radio dramas, television series, and graphic mystery novels.

RESOURCES AND INDEXES

Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction, Revised Edition adds 5 new appendixes and greatly expands and divides the original edition's glossary into “Genre Terms and Techniques” and “Crime Fiction Jargon.” Added appendixes in the “Resources” section include an annotated bibliography of general works, a guide to Web and electronic resources, lists of major writing awards, a detailed time line of highlights in the history of crime and detective fiction, and a chronological listing of authors. Indexes in this set are geographical and categorized indexes of writers covered in author articles, an index of the principal series characters, and a general subject index.

ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT

As with Salem's other *Critical Survey* sets, *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* is designed to meet the needs of secondary school and college undergraduate students. Articles on authors are arranged alphabetically, by the names or pen names under which the authors publish their mystery fiction. In some cases, these names differ from those by which the authors are best known. An example is “Edgar Box,” the pen name that Gore Vidal used to write several mystery novels.

Each author article is formatted identically, opening with ready-reference data on the author's name, pseudonyms, birth and death dates and places, and

types of plots. Because of the large numbers of books that many mystery writers publish, *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* differs slightly from other *Critical Survey* sets in listing each author's principal works at the *end* of the article, instead of at the beginning. Articles on authors of series fiction—such as Christie's Hercule Poirot stories and John Ball's Virgil Tibbs series—complete the top matter by listing the authors' principal series and offering brief descriptions of the principal series characters.

The main text of all author articles begins with a paragraph or two headed “Contribution” that sums up the author's place in the mystery and detective fiction genre and discusses what sets the author apart from others in the field. This section is followed by one headed “Biography,” which provides a brief summary of the author's life, paying particular attention to events relating to the author's mystery and detective fiction.

The heart of every author article is the long “Analysis” section. It begins with an overview of the author's writing that discusses themes, motifs, and writing style. This section is further broken down into subheaded sections on individual works—usually novels—or groups of works. With an average of three subsections per article, *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* contains focused discussions on more than 1,300 individual works.

Immediately following the byline of each article's contributor are lists of the author's principal works, arranged by genres, beginning with principal works of mystery and detective fiction. Individual titles are arranged chronologically and subdivided by series, as appropriate. Finally, each article ends with an annotated bibliography listing works on the author and on the subgenres in which the author writes.

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Salem Press would like to thank the many academicians and area experts who contributed to both the original editions and this revised edition. The names and affiliations of all contributors are listed in the first volume of this set. This edition also owes much to its editor, Carl Rollyson, Baruch College, City University of New York.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960's, mystery and detective fiction has become an integral part of the school curriculum and is no longer regarded as mere entertainment or as an inferior branch of literature. Now, a writer such as Raymond Chandler, who wrote scripts for Hollywood and stories for pulp magazines of the 1930's and 1940's, has become required reading in high school and college courses. In a University of New Hampshire graduate course, "Form and Theory of Fiction," Chandler is included alongside celebrated mainstream authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Cormac McCarthy. The New Hampshire course explores Chandler's use of dialogue, structure, characterization, metaphor, and narrative and is implicitly suggesting that his methods stand up to the most rigorous analysis. Other mystery and detective writers, such as James M. Cain, Horace McCoy, and Cornell Woolrich, whose novels were originally published in cheap paperback editions and were adapted for Hollywood films, have now been canonized in such prestigious publications as Library of America editions.

What accounts for this upgrading of a genre that once was considered merely formulaic, too predictable and stereotypical to rise to the heights of great literature? Major critics in the 1930's and 1940's, such as Edmund Wilson, scorned the "whodunit," the cozy mystery, the thriller, the police procedural—in short, all the variations of a *modus operandi* that always led to the solving of crimes and melodramatic conflicts between good and evil. Such genre fiction was simplistic and did not deserve the critic's measured attention, Wilson argued.

In part, even the best mystery and detective fiction was devalued precisely because it was popular, and critics associated the greatest literature with a smaller elite or coterie of sophisticated readers. The modernist credo of critics demanded literature that was difficult and required skill in decoding. Works such as James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922) were the epitome of what serious readers should expect from great literature. Even a writer such as the nineteenth century English novelist Charles Dickens, now considered one of

the great writers in the Western canon, was not considered worthy of what influential critic F. R. Leavis deemed "The Great Tradition."

Despite all this, college and high school courses today include mystery and detective fiction in their units on "critical thinking." The Yale-New Haven Teacher's Institute, for example, offers a course titled "Detective Fiction: Focus on Critical Thinking" that aims to sharpen students' ability to interpret evidence and even to come to terms with the phenomena of their daily lives. At its heart, detective fiction is about problem solving, the course syllabus notes. Consequently, the genre can be used across the curriculum in the humanities and sciences—indeed in any course in which word problems must be solved. A detailed lesson plan on the institute's Web site, which also includes a bibliography and references to journal articles about the value of teaching detective fiction, demonstrates just how significant a role the genre has come to play in pedagogy.

Similarly, libraries have disseminated on the Web reading lists and articles about collection management, sorting through the immense variety and quality of mystery and detective fiction. A library literature program at a high school in Pasadena, California, includes a monthly genre discussion group that focuses on mystery and suspense. Home schooling Web sites recommend mystery and detective fiction as an accessible way of teaching reading skills. Rutgers University, in its reading recommendations for senior year high school electives, includes mystery and detective fiction as part of a well-balanced curriculum.

The fact that inclusion of mystery and detective fiction in school curricula was a rarity before the 1960's is due to a different attitude toward the role and subject matter of education. At that time, the classics were taught. Before the twentieth century, the classics meant Greek and Roman literature. English and American literature, let alone the literature of other cultures, did not become a widespread part of the American college curriculum before the early twentieth century. The New England poet Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow was considered a daring innovator when he introduced the study of comparative literature (literature in translation) into the Harvard curriculum during the mid-nineteenth century.

The rediscovery of the writings of the nineteenth century writer Herman Melville during the 1920's spurred academics to begin to study contemporary writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner—all of whom grew up reading Melville as a recent discovery, incorporating elements of his style into their work. Critics such as Edmund Wilson and Lionel Trilling who wrote for mass circulation magazines as well as literary journals began to integrate contemporary literature into their notions of what it meant for an educated person to be well read. However, Wilson and other influential critics still drew a line between what they considered merely popular contemporary literature and contemporary writers who might deserve to be regarded as competing, so to speak, with the classical writers of European literature.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the academic consensus was that mystery or genre fiction writers were not worthy of inclusion in college and high school courses. Challenging that consensus, Leslie Fiedler, Ray Browne, and other academics began to suggest that literature—even great literature—was more diverse and with deeper roots in popular culture than educators had previously acknowledged. Rather than continuing to replicate ever more abstruse articles about works such as Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), Browne and others argued that scholars and teachers should expose their students to why popular writers—some of whom were fine stylists—should be studied as closely as the already canonized writers. Browne's creation of the Popular Culture Association suddenly opened up new fields of study for academics, whose articles and books launched systematic studies of writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Eric Ambler, the role of film noir in literature, and elements of mystery and detective fiction that were the underpinnings of many classical works of literature.

To some extent, the distinctions between genre and mainstream fiction that Edmund Wilson, Dwight Macdonald, F. R. Leavis, and other critics found were

never as deep as they thought. Faulkner, for example, devoted considerable time to reading Rex Stout and Georges Simenon. Indeed, a published inventory of his library included many of their paperback novels. Moreover, Faulkner's own novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) is structured rather like the gothic thriller/detective novels that he enjoyed reading. The correspondence of other mainstream writers—Rebecca West, for example—reveals a high degree of respect for the so-called pulp writers such as James M. Cain. That Faulkner attempted to write his own series of detective stories, collected in *Knight's Gambit* (1949), with decidedly poor results suggests that the rather sneering attitude certain critics adopted toward genre fiction was unmerited. Faulkner's detective, lawyer Gavin Stevens, is a poor substitute for Hercule Poirot and the cozy mysteries Agatha Christie published with such aplomb. The capacity to write great crime fiction, in other words, requires a certain sort of genius that not all writers—even great mainstream ones—can demonstrate.

As the University of New Hampshire course in the theory and form of fiction suggests, the handling of dialogue and narrative, for instance, can be as impressive in mystery and detective fiction as in any other kind of literature. With the appearance of literary criticism such as John Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), rigid distinctions between high and low, or popular and elite literature, became less meaningful. The range of literary works that academics saw fit to analyze expanded, and opportunities for the inclusion of mystery and detective fiction into school curricula grew.

At the same time, however, mystery and detective fiction has sometimes deserved the critical pastings it has received. Too often, its genre heroes—even in such classics as the Sherlock Holmes series—never change or develop as characters. A character such as Holmes has his eccentricities, to be sure, and his creator, Arthur Conan Doyle, was adept at introducing new aspects of his character. However, the point of the series was that Holmes could never really change and could *always* be relied upon to solve the crime. Considering that the Holmes stories were formula fiction

at its best, think of all the imitators that inevitably exhibit less skill than their progenitor.

Perhaps the main reason school curricula now include units on mystery and detective fiction is that the genre itself has matured, as critic and crime novelist Patrick Anderson argues in *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Crooks, Cops, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction* (2007). The present, fully revised, and expanded edition of *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* not only acknowledges the new and accomplished writers of this genre, it also explores how the genre itself has changed and grown, especially in terms of characterization and complex narratives.

A series character such as Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch, for example, not only develops and changes from one novel to the next, he suffers the toll that years of involvement in brutal crimes exact on his psyche. Similarly, John Lescroart's defense attorney/detective Dismas Hardy suffers breakdowns and relies on a more experienced attorney to help him win some of his cases. These fallible and vulnerable characters are a far cry from an earlier generation of superhero sleuths who somehow managed repeatedly to tangle with the criminal world without ever becoming corrupted themselves. Compare Scott Turow's legal thrillers with those of Erle Stanley Gardner and the growing sophistication of genre fiction is apparent. Turow's books are studies of the legal system itself, not merely pretexts for writing another whodunit, despite the fact that Gardner's narrative skill remains a touchstone for serious writers such as Turow who are committed to help readers make sense of legal procedures.

Perhaps even more significantly, this new edition of *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction* takes into account the ways in which world literature has contributed to the genre of mystery and detective fiction with essays on writers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. At the same time, American writers such as Charles McCarry and Barry Eisler have explored settings on several continents. Eisler's series character, John Rain, is part Japanese and part Anglo-American. Many other authors covered in these volumes write about African American, Native Ameri-

can, Hispanic, and woman detectives in a wide variety of cultural settings that have transformed mystery and detective fiction into a far less provincial and "cozy" genre.

The overview essays—a major new addition to *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*—acknowledge the explosive developments occurring in world literature that are now being incorporated into school curricula. These overviews cover subjects such as African mystery fiction, Asian mystery fiction, ethnic American mystery fiction, forensic mystery fiction, feminist and lesbian mystery fiction, innovations in the genre, Latin American mystery fiction, pastiches of Sherlock Holmes, and parodies. Topics such as these demonstrate just how much has changed in the mystery and detective field since the first edition of *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*.

The other change in school curricula that this new edition addresses is the role of other media in shaping mystery and detective fiction. With the advent of video tapes and DVDs, the classroom has been extended to include a much broader sense of what literature itself means. Included in the overview sections are essays on topics such as film, graphic mystery novels, radio drama, stage plays, and television series.

As a research tool, this new edition provides students with a great array of sources for further study—not only up-to-date bibliographies for individual authors but also for the overview essays, which are complemented by a separate section of appendixes that contains a general bibliography, a guide to Web resources, a time line of crime and detective fiction, two glossaries, and a chronological list of writers. Finally, a complex set of indexes encourage students to cross-reference writers and types of mystery and detective fiction, so that they will be able to identify writers from specific regions and others who focus on the same subjects.

With the expansion of *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, a new generation of crime writers comes to the fore, including figures such as Nevada Barr, Lee Child, Michael Connelly, Patricia Cornwell, Colin Dexter, Barry Eisler, Antonia Fraser, Alan Furst, Sue Grafton, Thomas Harris, John Lescroart, David Morell, George Pelecanos, Ian Rankin,

J. K. Rowling, Scott Turow, and Ann Waldron. The range of their work and worldwide audience and their presence in school curricula make these volumes an especially useful guide to developments in contemporary literature.

Despite the significant changes in mystery and detective fiction, the genre itself endures because of certain underlying continuities. Ann Waldron is an example of an author who reinvigorates the genre's old conventions in new settings. She grew up reading the cozy mysteries of Agatha Christie, obviously enjoying the adventures of an amateur sleuth such as Miss Jane Marple and the comfortable English village settings that are disturbed by the sudden eruption of a murder. That world is gone, even though readers can indulge their nostalgia by continuing to enjoy Christie's splendid narratives. Waldron updates Christie by choosing as her primary setting a college town, Princeton, New Jersey, which is still sufficiently small and inbred to provide a cast of eccentric characters who know and suspect one another. By renewing Christie's well-worn formula, Waldron creates witty mysteries featuring an amateur woman sleuth, McLeod Dulany. However, Dulany—unlike Marple—is a modern woman, a journalist and teacher of writing at Princeton University. Dulany is also a southerner whose sharp perceptions of northerners adds another dimension to the culture described in Waldron's Princeton murder series. Moreover, Princeton University as a institutional structure becomes an integral part of the mysteries, so that Waldron is also treading on the familiar ground of the academic mystery subgenre but refreshing it by making her detective an outsider (Dulany is on a leave of absence from her Tallahassee newspaper) who is keen to observe the infighting that occurs in an Ivy League hothouse. Another Waldron mystery, set in a Princeton seminary, fosters a sense of claustrophobia, of seething resentments and conflicts, that are essential to well-wrought mystery.

At the heart of much mystery and detective fiction—no matter the period in which it is written or set—is corruption, a canker spreading through individuals, families, and institutions. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler perfected this aspect of the genre, and filmmakers such as Howard Hawks, in *The*

Big Sleep (1946), and Roman Polanski, in *Chinatown* (1974), have brought the same sensibility to the screen, exposing the incestuous conflicts that are at the core of many family disturbances and the greedy manipulation of public resources. In Barry Eisler's thrillers, John Rain is hired by governments to make assassinations look like natural deaths. While Rain makes no excuses for his horrible line of work—indeed his honesty and torment fully engage the reader's empathy (a rather shocking fact in itself)—Eisler's novels are clearly targeted at the national security states that employ extralegal means of accomplishing policy goals while pretending that are conducting wars against terror. Thus it is not surprising to learn that Eisler, a former Central Intelligence Agency operative, is opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and that his view of world politics pervades the plots of his novels.

Contemporary mystery and detective fiction is also distinguished by a cross-fertilization of elements that earlier novelists tended to separate into different series. For example, John Lescroart's Dismas Hardy/Abe Glitsky series combines the police procedural with the legal thriller. At its best, this series features the clash between Hardy's view that police methods must never subvert the legal process and Glitsky's conviction that lawyers often obfuscate the nature of crime, not only making his job harder but also leaving society unprotected and justice denied. A similar tension occurs in several television dramas—most notably in *Law and Order*, in which the structure of a typical episode splits its attention between the detectives who investigate crimes and apprehend criminals and the district attorneys and defense lawyers who cut deals and dilute the punishment of crimes. This series, nevertheless, makes a strong case for the legal justice system, admitting its flaws but also showing why issues of crime and punishment are not, and probably can never be, as simple as catching, convicting, and sentencing perpetrators. Crime and punishment becomes not merely a moral imperative but a political process full of plea-bargaining and other compromises.

Like modern prose fiction, television has become much more sophisticated and complex in its treatment of crime and punishment. Whereas an earlier genera-

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tion of television shows featured straight-shooting, honest cops such as Jack Webb's Joe Friday in *Dragnet*, or tough-guy cops such as Telly Savalas's Theo Kojak, and Raymond Burr as the shrewd Perry Mason whose defense work exposes police incompetence, the focus has now shifted to legal processes—as in *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* and the various *CSI* series. Rather than concentrating on super cops and detectives, the scenarios of broadcast networks and cable programs now focus on teams of specialists and forensic scientists. These televised dramas also share screen time with nonfiction documentaries on HBO, A&E, and other cable networks that dramatize subjects such as autopsies and DNA analyses. Figures such as medical examiners have become both television stars and series characters in novels. The probity and steadiness of author Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta is a throwback to the old-fashioned heroine/detective. In contrast, Helen Mirren's Chief Inspector Jane Tennison in the *Prime Suspect* television series is

battling not only the sexism and corruption of her own department but also her own demons.

In this complex history of continuity and change, what never flags—what never can be removed from the genre—is the *pursuit* of crime, whether it is Patricia Highsmith's Mr. Ripley, who gets away with murder, or Sherlock Holmes, who always gets his man. If mystery and detective fiction is incorporated into school curricula it is because of the realization that what was once considered simply entertainment or leisure reading speaks to a deep core of curiosity about human motivations, about the rights and wrongs of human behavior, and about those characters who simply cannot content themselves with the status quo and must intervene in history—sometimes for better but often for worse. How to come to terms with such a world is the overriding theme of mystery and detective fiction in all of its permutations.

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AUTHORS

A

ANTHONY ABBOT

Charles Fulton Oursler

Born: Baltimore, Maryland; January 22, 1893

Died: New York, New York; May 24, 1952

Also wrote as Fulton Oursler

Types of plot: Master sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Thatcher Colt, 1930-1943

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THATCHER COLT is a New York City police commissioner (in one book, however, he has retired into private crime-prevention work). Tall, dapper, and poised, Colt is a genius at orchestration of police resources and technology and at the exposure of fraud. He is married to the beautiful Florence Dunbar.

ANTHONY "TONY" ABBOT, a former newspaperman, is secretary to Thatcher Colt during and after his term as commissioner. As the man who most frequently shares Colt's confidences, he takes notes on Colt's cases and narrates the memoirs to promote public belief in the police. He is married to the lively Betty.

MERLE K. DOUGHERTY, New York's district attorney, is often at odds with Colt yet must grudgingly acknowledge his indispensable contributions to the work of the police department.

CONTRIBUTION

Anthony Abbot's contribution to the mystery and detective genre is found in his eight novels chronicling the feats of Thatcher Colt, the reserved but unswerving commissioner of the New York City Police Department. Abbot, as he himself noted, was "one of the first apologists for the police in detective fiction"; as such, he anticipated the development of the police procedural. At a time when most fictional police officers were portrayed as incompetent, dishonest, or, at

best, solid but unimaginative, Abbot created a police officer-hero of formidable intelligence. For the most part, however, Abbot was a derivative writer. Popular in their day, the Thatcher Colt novels are now chiefly of historical interest. They are a virtual compendium of the motifs that dominated the American mystery novel in the 1920's and 1930's.

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Abbot was a pen name of Charles Fulton Oursler, who published many books, both fictional and nonfictional, under the name Fulton Oursler. He was born on January 22, 1893, in Baltimore. Abbot's two sisters died in early childhood. His father worked seven days a week, having supervisory responsibility on a streetcar line; when Abbot was in his teens, however, his father was fired from two jobs, so that the family's economic position became unstable. As a small child, Abbot was taken by his mother to first-class stage plays in Baltimore; these outings were made possible by the theaters' donation of tickets to Abbot's father, whose streetcar schedules accommodated their patrons. During his youth, Abbot read widely and learned to perform magic tricks. His family considered college unaffordable, so he quit school at fifteen and found work as office boy in a law office; he also began to give magic shows at night. While still in his teens, Abbot became a reporter for the *Baltimore American*, thus taking the first step toward fulfilling the vow he had made three years before, near the grave of Edgar Allan Poe, that he would be a writer.

In 1910, Abbot married Rose Keller Karger; eventually, a son and a daughter were born to them. As a journalist, Abbot met local and national politicians and celebrities such as Sarah Bernhardt. He had been told, however, that the only place to pursue his career

was New York City, so in 1918 he obtained work there with *Music Trades*, a weekly. This was also the year he sold his first short story, “The Sign of the Seven Shots.”

A turning point in Abbot’s life was the inception of his work for Bernarr Macfadden, creator and publisher of *Physical Culture*, *True Story*, *True Detective*, and other magazines. Abbot was soon put in charge of Macfadden’s editorial enterprises. (Later, he served as an editor for *Reader’s Digest*.) During this time, Abbot wrote fiction, went to Hollywood to do script-writing, and met many of the famous people who circulated through New York. In 1924, he had met and fallen in love with writer Grace Perkins, which led him to be one of the first Americans to resort to a Mexican divorce as well as a Mexican marriage. When Rose finally granted the divorce, stipulating an alimony settlement, Abbot and Perkins were able to be married in the United States. Abbot had a daughter and a son from this marriage.

Abbot’s first novel written using his pseudonym was *About the Murder of Geraldine Foster* (1930; also known as *The Murder of Geraldine Foster*), featuring Thatcher Colt. Encouraged by its success—the novel appeared on the best-seller list, a rarity for a mystery at the time—he produced a series of Colt novels in rapid succession while continuing to publish widely as Fulton Oursler. His best-known work, written as Oursler, was the enormously successful inspirational book *The Greatest Story Ever Told: A Tale of the Greatest Life Ever Lived* (1949), based on his radio series of the same title. (Though skeptical of spiritualism and actively involved in unmasking spiritualist frauds, Abbot had a lifelong interest in religion and in unexplained psychic phenomena; ultimately, he converted to Roman Catholicism.) He died of a heart attack on May 24, 1952.

ANALYSIS

In discussions of popular fiction, critics often use the term “formulaic.” Rarely, however, could that term be so literally applied to a body of fiction as it could to the mystery novel of the 1920’s and 1930’s. During this period, countless writers, attracted by the growing popularity of the genre, approached the task of mys-

tery writing rather as if they were baking a cake: Simply follow the recipe and success will be guaranteed.

THATCHER COLT SERIES

It was in this fashion that Anthony Abbot’s Thatcher Colt series was conceived. As a hero, Thatcher Colt has much in common with Sherlock Holmes and other prototypical fictional detectives. Colt’s lean, aristocratic features and unflappable manner set him apart from the ordinary run of men. Like Holmes, he is an expert in the science of criminology, while his passion for scientific gadgetry places him in the tradition of a popular American detective of the era, Craig Kennedy. Like Holmes, he frequently keeps his deductions to himself, leaving his subordinates (and the reader) to wait for his explanation of what he has seen that they missed. Colt’s Watson, the recorder of his exploits, is his secretary, Anthony “Tony” Abbot. Thus, “Anthony Abbot” is at once the narrator of the Thatcher Colt books and their (ostensible) author—just as “Ellery Queen” (who debuted in 1929, a year before Colt) is at once narrator, protagonist, and author of the Ellery Queen books. The same device had long been used in the Nick Carter series.

Why bother with this transparent stratagem? In Abbot’s case, the answer lies in the didactic intent of the Thatcher Colt series—a peculiarly American earnestness. For all of his resemblance to Holmes, Colt is not an amateur sleuth: He is a police officer. While providing the entertainment that was the primary goal of the series, Abbot wanted to send his readers a message regarding the importance of respect for law and order and for professional guardians of the peace. Instead of portraying the police as bumbling oafs or corrupt timeservers, as many mystery writers of the period did, Abbot depicted them (especially as exemplified by Colt) as dedicated and efficient public servants, masters of the new science of crime fighting. The device of Abbot as author/narrator was intended to give the books a pseudodocumentary flavor, reinforcing the authority of their message.

Indeed, Abbot prided himself on the authenticity of the series. In his autobiography, *Behold This Dreamer!* (written as Oursler; 1924), Abbot emphasized this point:

To get my facts right, I dawdled around the old Headquarters Building in Center Street and got my facts straight from the source; and for a fee, the secretary of the police commissioner read the scripts and checked every detail. The books were meticulously accurate.

A reader in the 1980's, faced with the patently melodramatic quality of the Thatcher Colt books, might well receive Abbot's claim with incredulity. These books, meticulously accurate? Certainly it is a long distance from the romanticized adventures of Thatcher Colt (who, despite his professional status, is very much the master sleuth) to the gritty realism of the modern police procedural (where teamwork takes precedence over individual heroics). Nevertheless, with his attention to the actual details of police work, Abbot was preparing the way for that popular subgenre.

Anna R. Holloway

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THATCHER COLT SERIES: *About the Murder of Geraldine Foster*, 1930 (also known as *The Murder of Geraldine Foster*); *About the Murder of the Clergyman's Mistress*, 1931 (also known as *The Crime of the Century* and *Murder of the Clergyman's Mistress*); *About the Murder of the Night Club Lady*, 1931 (also known as *The Murder of the Night Club Lady* and *The Night Club Lady*); *About the Murder of the Circus Queen*, 1932 (also known as *The Murder of the Circus Queen*); *About the Murder of a Startled Lady*, 1935 (also known as *The Murder of a Startled Lady*); *Dark Masquerade*, 1936; *About the Murder of a Man Afraid of Women*, 1937 (also known as *The Murder of a Man Afraid of Women*); *The Creeps*, 1939 (also known as *Murder at Buzzards Bay*); *The Shudders*, 1943 (also known as *Deadly Secret*)

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The President's Mystery Story*, 1935 (as Fulton Oursler; with others)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Wager, and The House at Fernwood*, 1946 (as Fulton Oursler); *These Are Strange Tales*, 1948

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS FULTON OURSLER): *Behold This Dreamer!*, 1924; *Sandalwood*, 1925; *Stepchild of the*

Moon, 1926; *Poor Little Fool*, 1928; *The World's Delight*, 1929; *The Great Jasper*, 1930; *Joshua Todd*, 1935; *A String of Blue Beads*, 1956

PLAYS (AS FULTON OURSLER): *Sandalwood*, pr. 1926 (with Owen Davis); *Behold This Dreamer*, pr. 1927 (with Aubrey Kennedy); *The Spider*, pr. 1927 (revised 1928; with Lowell Brentano); *All the King's Men*, pr. 1929; *The Walking Gentlemen*, pr. 1942 (with Grace Perkins Oursler); *The Bridge*, pr. 1946

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS FULTON OURSLER): *A Child's Life of Jesus*, 1951

NONFICTION (AS FULTON OURSLER): *The Happy Grotto: A Journalist's Account of Lourdes*, 1913; *The True Story of Bernarr Macfadden*, 1929; *The Flower of the Gods*, 1936 (with Achmed Abdullah); *A Skeptic in the Holy Land*, 1936; *The Shadow of the Master*, 1940 (with 'Abd Allah Ahmad); *Three Things We Can Believe In*, 1942; *The Precious Secret*, 1947; *Father Flanagan of Boys Town*, 1949 (with Will Oursler); *The Greatest Story Ever Told: A Tale of the Greatest Life Ever Lived*, 1949; *Modern Parables*, 1950; *Why I Know There Is a God*, 1950; *The Greatest Book Ever Written: Old Testament Story*, 1951; *The Reader's Digest Murder Case: A Tragedy in Parole*, 1952; *The Greatest Faith Ever Known*, 1953 (with April Oursler Armstrong); *Lights Along the Shore*, 1954; *Behold This Dreamer!*, 1964

TRANSLATION (AS FULTON OURSLER): *Illustrated Magic*, 1931 (by Ottokar F)

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ence work on detective fiction includes several references to Abbot in relevant entries. Bibliographic references and index.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on police procedurals that helps place Abbot among his fellow writers.

Steinbrunner, Chris, and Otto Penzler, eds. *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Still the classic source on mystery and detective fiction. A good work for contextualizing Abbot's work thematically, but it lacks bibliographic resources.

CLEVE F. ADAMS

Born: Chicago, Illinois; 1895

Died: Glendale, California; December 28, 1949

Also wrote as Franklin Charles; John Spain

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rex McBride, 1940-1955

William Rye, 1942-1950

John J. Shannon, 1942-1950

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

REX MCBRIDE, a freewheeling, wisecracking private investigator and specialist in insurance cases, is tough, with a widely publicized reputation for shady behavior. About thirty-two years old and unmarried, he lives by a simple guiding principle: to fight as dirty as the other guy does.

WILLIAM RYE, a troubleshooter who prefers to be called a confidential agent, is employed by a Los Angeles oil magnate and political boss. In his thirties, Rye is a tough, ruthlessly efficient, no-nonsense individual.

JOHN J. SHANNON, a private investigator and formerly a detective lieutenant on the Los Angeles police force, is tough, temperamental, but at times compassionate. He is unmarried, young, and handsome. He also has a penchant for obscenities.

CONTRIBUTION

Cleve F. Adams was one of few pulp writers to make the successful transition to hardcover publication. Although he is an underrated author, eclipsed by his contemporary, Raymond Chandler, Adams

brought a new dimension to the genre. Chandler's image of the private investigator as knight-errant is inverted by Adams into the image of private investigator as antihero. Working in the hard-boiled tradition of Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, Adams has been acclaimed as "one of the best of the tough detective story writers of the middle and late thirties." His private-investigator novels have been described as unique, having captured "the gray and gritty feel of the time as powerfully as Chandler" and having created an enduring image of the private detective. Adams regarded motive and characterization as the essential elements of mystery and detective fiction. His fast-paced novels present convincing, credible characters and capture the political violence and corruption of the 1930's.

BIOGRAPHY

Cleve Franklin Adams was born in 1895 in Chicago, where he spent his childhood and his youth. In 1919, at the age of twenty-four, Adams moved to California and worked at a variety of jobs, including soda jerk, window trimmer, interior decorator, copper miner, screenwriter, life insurance executive, and detective.

Adams began producing hard-boiled mystery fiction around 1934, writing almost exclusively for pulp magazines such as *Detective Fiction Weekly*, *Double Detective Tales*, *Argosy*, and *Black Mask*. Between 1936 and 1942, he published fifty short mystery stories.

In 1940, Adams published his first detective thriller, *Sabotage*, followed by a second novel, *And Sudden Death*, that same year. In the next eight years, he published thirteen more novels, one of which, *No Wings on a Cop* (1950), was expanded by Robert Les-

lie Bellem, and another, *Shady Lady* (1955), was completed after his death by Harry Whittington. He also worked as a film director and screenwriter; cofounded, along with W. T. Ballard, the Fictioneers, a group of local Los Angeles writers (including Raymond Chandler); and worked with the Authors League of America. On December 28, 1949, he died of a heart attack at his home in Glendale, California.

ANALYSIS

Cleve Franklin Adams contributed hard-boiled mystery fiction to pulp magazines in the mid-1930's, eventually publishing his first story, "Vision of Violet," in the February, 1936, issue of *Clues: A Journal of Detection*. In the summer of 1940, he was employed by Ken White, editor of *Black Mask*, to "inject new life and vigor into the magazine and to reestablish the magazine's tougher, hard-edged image." This period of apprenticeship allowed him to create several hard-boiled detective heroes, gradually bringing into existence the private eye who would be given the name Rex McBride.

AND SUDDEN DEATH AND SABOTAGE

Adams's first two novels, *Sabotage* and *And Sudden Death*, were published in 1940. With these novels featuring private investigator Rex McBride, Adams created a new, intriguing variation on the detective hero. Instead of a Philip Marlowe or a Sam Spade with whom the reader can empathize, the reader is presented with the antithesis of these characters—Rex McBride, the private investigator as antihero or chauvinist pig: Crude, coarse, and cynical, yet sentimental, he is deficient in morals and enigmatic in nature. McBride "has a capacity for long, brooding silences, sudden ribald laughter, mad fury, and aloof arrogance." No one—clients, police, criminals, or female friends—understands him. McBride, however, get results. Adams, who sees motivation as the crucial element in the mystery and detective genre, notes the impulse that drives him: "his singleness of purpose . . . He has been hired to do a job and he is going to do it. Come hell or high water he's going to do it."

As Adams acknowledges, this conception of the detective hero is an inversion of the hero legend. Unlike Chandler's Marlowe, McBride is not a knightly

hero and does not attempt to redeem the corrupt. He is an ordinary man. Although cast in the hard-boiled mold, McBride is a complex individual. His personal involvement with a case may be prompted by the need for justice or simply the need for money. He is emotional and impulsive. By turns he is arrogant, caring, coldhearted, generous, moody, sentimental, and ruthless. Yet it is his changeable nature that makes him human and believable.

Other characters in the novels are also realistically drawn, from clients to villains. As one critic says, Adams "showed a genius for juggling diverse groups of shady characters, each with his or her own greedy objective."

Careful plotting is not a primary characteristic of Adams's fiction. He prefers instead to let situations accumulate until the hero finds himself in a jam. As he views it, the detective who is logically motivated will create suspense; his desire to win will make him a menace to opposing forces. Thus, the other central elements of mystery fiction, suspense and plot, naturally derive from motivation:

As I see it, suspense is built on MENACE. This urgency both for and against, does not only apply to a detective-mystery story. What matter if it be only a golf tournament. Our hero wants to win, doesn't he? And our villain, or villainess, simply isn't going to stand for his winning . . . He wants to win, too. He wants to win, even if he has to resort to unsportsmanlike shenanigans, by golly. So is he a menace? You bet your sweet life he is. And does the *struggle* between the two opposing forces create SUSPENSE? Well, if the writer has done his job, it should.

Adams's handling of plot and his mode of pacing are typically hard-boiled. His stories are complicated, involving the standard cast of gangsters, treacherous women, unsympathetic police officers, corrupt politicians, and professional criminals. Violent action is generously provided, and crimes are so extravagant and so inextricably tangled together that Adams's protagonist is often faced with almost impossible tasks. McBride's success in getting results stems from his knowledge of the streets and his ability to move freely among its elements.

UP JUMPED THE DEVIL

The enigmatic nature of McBride and the fast-paced action of his violent world are best exemplified in *Up Jumped the Devil* (1943). The first two paragraphs reveal Adams's view of realistic characters and logical airtight motives:

McBride paused just inside his door and regarded the dead man with some astonishment, for while this was not the first dead man he had ever seen it was certainly the first time he had found one sitting in his own room. Presently it occurred to him that it was not his own room, and he turned, opening the door a trifle wider, and compared the number on the door panel with that on the key he still had in his hand. No, he decided, the mistake was the dead man's, not his.

Further, McBride discovers that his suitcase, a well-traveled but expensive Gladstone that is his pride and joy, has been defaced. The novel thus begins superbly with a dramatic encounter that gets the story moving. Instantly, McBride has a personal stake in the situation. The language is simple, with highly active verbs that create excitement. In addition, the sharpness of McBride's wit and his changing emotions are understandable and logical, revealing Adams's theory that plausibility stems directly from the writer's urge to have characters act like people.

From this point in the novel, Adams creates a breathless pace; suspense mounts from page to page. McBride is faced not only with the major problem of discovering who murdered the man and put him in his room but also with a series of complicated situations and murders. Hired to follow the Chandlers and recover the jewels paid for by his insurance company after they were lost, he must solve each minor situation before he can find the solution to the first murder. He encounters treacherous women, is threatened and deceived by clients and criminals, and is beaten and kicked unconscious.

This piling of incident on incident reveals Adams's weakness with plot. Yet, McBride's character is heightened and motivation is sustained throughout the novel. Although there are several plot threads that must be resolved, the diverse ingredients are blended together well. In the end, McBride is faced with the

painful revelation that a woman in whom he is interested has masterminded the jewel theft and has been conspiring with the president of the company in the various sabotage efforts.

Adams's best novels, *Sabotage*, *Decoy*, *Up Jumped the Devil*, and *Shady Lady*, are similar in their cynical view of American politics, the variety of their skillfully drawn characters, and the sharp wit of their protagonist, McBride. The diverse elements of Southern California society are excellently drawn. They are novels that should be given serious attention for their contribution to the private-eye genre.

Jacquelyn Jackson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

REX MCBRIDE SERIES: *Sabotage*, 1940 (also known as *Death Before Breakfast* and *Death at the Dam*); *And Sudden Death*, 1940; *Decoy*, 1941; *Up Jumped the Devil*, 1943 (also known as *Murder All Over*); *The Crooking Finger*, 1944; *Shady Lady*, 1955 (with Harry Whittington)

WILLIAM RYE SERIES: *Dig Me a Grave*, 1942 (as Spain); *Death Is Like That*, 1943 (as Spain); *The Evil Star*, 1944 (as Spain)

JOHN J. SHANNON SERIES: *The Private Eye*, 1942; *No Wings on a Cop*, 1950 (with Robert Leslie Bellem)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Black Door*, 1941; *The Vice Czar Murders*, 1941 (as Charles; with Robert Leslie Bellem); *What Price Murder*, 1942; *Contra-band*, 1950 (also known as *Borderline Cases*)

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Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. A study of the hard-boiled subgenre from Raymond Chandler to Sue Grafton; provides a framework for understanding Adams.

Nevins, Francis M., Jr. "The World of Cleve F. Adams." *The Armchair Detective* 8 (1974/1975): 195-201. Discusses the rules and conventions unique

to Adams's fiction and the character types that inhabit it.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains an essay on hard-boiled fiction as well as a section on the Golden Age of mystery; provides a background against which to place Adams.

BORIS AKUNIN

Grigory Shalvovich Chkhartishvili

Born: Tbilisi, Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, Soviet Union (now in Georgia); May 20, 1956

Also wrote as Grigory Shalvovich Chkhartishvili

Types of plot: Historical; police procedural; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Erast Fandorin, 1997-
Nicholas Fandorin, 2000-
Sister Pelagia, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ERAST PETROVICH FANDORIN is a slender, dark-haired member of the Moscow police force in nineteenth century Russia. His piercing blue eyes and a pencil mustache make him quite good-looking. He is also adept in the martial arts, learned from his Japanese manservant, Masa, a samurai whose life he once saved. Through innate luck and a keen intellect, he is able to solve the most challenging mysteries, yet he shows no sign of arrogance. The death of his young wife gave Fandorin an air of sadness that women find attractive.

NICHOLAS FANDORIN, the grandson of Erast Fandorin, lives in Russia during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. By profession, Nicholas is a historian, but unlike his grandfather, he is more literary and historical sleuth than detective. His story alternates with chapters about Russian historical figures. Nicholas is an unusually tall person, suggesting that he looks down on other people, both literally and figuratively.

SISTER PELAGIA is a novice nun and an undercover detective. Youthful, freckled, and deceptively innocent-looking, she is in fact far too lively, inquisitive, and outspoken to be a nun. Ostensibly a teacher in a diocesan girls' school, she is the power behind Bishop Metrofani, renowned for his solutions to the most baffling mysteries. Pelagia, a lover of masquerade, sometimes poses as her charming, stylish, and fictitious sister, Polina Andreevna Lisitsina, though she worries about the sin of exposing herself to worldly temptation in this disguise.

CONTRIBUTION

Boris Akunin, whose books have sold more than 15 million copies, is unique among Russian-language mystery authors because of his appeal to a mass readership, both in Russia, where he has lived since 1958, and overseas. Observers have attributed this success to the emergence of a large Russian middle class, eager for good books, following the demise of the communist regime. Akunin guessed, correctly, that the transition would create a demand for a genre that had not existed in the Soviet Union—a middle ground between high literature and whodunit fiction. His chief series character, Erast Petrovich Fandorin, is athletic and elegant like James Bond and cerebral like Sherlock Holmes, with additional overtones of Leo Tolstoy's Stepan Arkadyich Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877; English translation, 1886). The nineteenth century Fandorin arouses nostalgia for the late czarist era, doomed though that period was.

Keenly sensitive to the concerns of the reading public, Akunin has declared his goal to be to entertain and enlighten the middle-class professionals emerging in twenty-first century Russia. The stylistic clarity and multilayered organization of Akunin's novels have raised the tone of popular Russian literature. His new literature serves as a model for what he perceives to be the new Russian character. As he sees it, the emerging Russian middle class has an abundance of energy and goodwill but needs guideposts of all sorts—literary and aesthetic, moral and ethical—as well as the quality entertainment that was denied its members in the Soviet era. These are the contributions Akunin has sought to make—thus far with enormous success—through his writing.

BIOGRAPHY

Boris Akunin was born Grigory Shalvovich Chkhartishvili on May 20, 1956, in Tbilisi, in the Soviet republic of Georgia. His father served in an all-Georgian army artillery unit; his mother taught Russian literature and language. Around Akunin's second birthday, his family moved to Moscow, where he has continued to make his home. Growing up, he immersed himself in the literary works that were to influence him most as an adult. These included the works of Russians Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevski, and Anton Chekhov as well as those of Alexandre Dumas, *père*, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain. He was also captivated by Kabuki theater and became interested in all aspects of Japanese culture.

In the 1970's, after high school, Akunin enrolled in Moscow State University, majoring in Asian and African studies; he also studied for a time in Germany and Japan. After earning a degree, he worked for several Moscow publishing houses, where he translated scientific literature and later Japanese- and English-language fiction. He realized that emulating the styles of works he translated—including those of Yukio Mishima, Malcolm Bradbury, Kobo Abe, and Peter Ustinov—was excellent preparation for his own writing. Until 2000, he also worked as deputy editor-in-chief of *Inostrannaia literatura*, a foreign literature journal.

In the late 1990's, Akunin felt challenged to write "literary" thrillers when his wife, Erika—a closet fan

of pulp fiction—complained of the trashy fiction that then prevailed. He observed that she covered mystery novels in brown wrapping paper when riding the subway, and he resolved to create fiction that she and others would not feel embarrassed to be seen reading. Initially, however, Akunin was not sure that he wanted to write a whodunit himself, so he attempted to sell his plot ideas to other writers. However, there were no takers, so he took on the task of creating a new middle-ground genre.

Akunin decided to take a pen name—partly because his surname, Chkhartishvili, was difficult even for Russians to pronounce, but also because the playfulness of a nom de plume appealed to him. Some critics speculate that the pseudonym Boris Akunin, or B. Akunin, was meant to suggest the last name of the nineteenth century Russian radical Mikhail Bakunin. Bakunin is generally considered a bourgeois revolutionary, and Akunin has said he is writing for middle-class professionals, who are to be considered Russia's twenty-first century revolutionaries. However, his knowledge of Japanese might have caused him to select the name Akunin, which in Japanese roughly means "evildoer," and Akunin has pointed out that the villain is a highly important figure in detective stories.

Akunin created a series of very successful novels featuring Erast Fandorin, beginning with *Azazel'* (1998, 2000; *The Winter Queen*, 2003). Several of these novels have been translated into English. He also wrote a series on Erast Fandorin's grandson, Nicholas, and one on Sister Pelagia, an amateur sleuth. He also published a nonfictional work on the philosophical implications of suicide, *Pisatel' i samoubiistvo* (1999, the writer and suicide). It includes biographical information on 350 writers who committed suicide, from all countries and all eras.

ANALYSIS

The setting for Boris Akunin's Erast Fandorin novels is a transitional world, that of Russia in the late nineteenth century, some two decades before the Russian Revolution. Akunin's readers also are in transition, moving away from the Soviet era. For years, the Soviet government discouraged people from reading detective fiction, a genre it considered decadent. Even

after the end of the communist regime, many citizens, including Akunin's wife, were still influenced by the Soviet assessment. Akunin set for himself the goal of introducing middle-class readers to a new type of story midway between the great literature of Tolstoy and Dostoevski and the pulp fiction that many Russians read in secret. Russians can now read to be entertained rather than fed the party line, and perhaps more important, Akunin's readers can find a link to the national past that the Soviets maligned.

Akunin wanted the Fandorin series to portray a wide range of character types and historical settings. The cast of characters includes actual historical figures as well as fictional creations closely modeled on real-life people. Fandorin's physical description is reportedly based on a portrait of a relative of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky's patroness that Akunin purchased cheaply in a Moscow flea market. The settings for the novels include the Russo-Turkish War, the coronation of Czar Nicholas II, and Paris in the 1870's. However, these stories cannot claim total historical accuracy, for Akunin makes his readers feel at home by filling gaps in historical knowledge with his imagination. Above all, inspired by the great authors of the nineteenth century, these stories capture the ambiance of those magnificent and strange times.

Akunin seeks to orient his readers in a culture dating before the Soviet era; however, the settings are also a commentary on twenty-first century Russia. For example, in *Smert' Akhileisa* (2000; *The Death of Achilles*, 2006), he describes the graft and bribery that surround the building of the cathedral of Christ the Savior in the nineteenth century. According to Akunin, the same type of graft and bribery are occurring as that cathedral is being restored in the twenty-first century. Perhaps Akunin intends to erect one of his moral guideposts here, to indicate the possibility of something better than these practices.

Akunin envisioned the Fandorin series as covering all varieties of mystery fiction; each novel was to exemplify a particular subgenre. Each novel has a subtitle indicating which subgenre it represents, such as conspiracy, espionage, or hired killer. Despite Akunin's serious purpose, his narratives display a kind of amusing self-consciousness, as did those of his

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

nineteenth century models. For example, his chapters bear subtitles such as "In Which an Account Is Rendered of a Certain Cynical Escapade," and he refers to Fandorin as "our hero." Although he places high value on a coherent plot, he maintains that on some level he writes only for himself, using symbolism and humor that no one else can understand but that please him enormously.

THE WINTER QUEEN

The Winter Queen, the first of the Erast Fandorin series, subtitled "Conspiracy Novel," opens in 1876. Erast Fandorin, twenty years old, has just lost both parents. He joins the Moscow police force, where his first assignment is to look into a student's very public suicide. A second student is murdered, and Fandorin himself narrowly escapes death. The murder investigation leads him to an association governing orphaned boys' schools, to which both students have left gen-

erous bequests. This association, led by an English noblewoman, is conspiring to rule the entire world. When Fandorin confronts the Englishwoman, she appears to commit suicide by exploding a bomb. Fandorin has all her conspirators arrested. Later, another bomb kills the young woman Fandorin has just married, and the story ends with Fandorin walking the streets in shock.

THE TURKISH GAMBIT

Turetski gambit (1998; *The Turkish Gambit*, 2004), set in 1877 during the Russo-Turkish war, is subtitled “Espionage Detective.” The secret orders in a telegram from the Russian high command are inexplicably changed, causing the Russian army to waste its effort and the Turks to gain unexpected advantage. A Russian officer is wrongly accused of the crime of tampering with the orders, but Fandorin’s remarkable sleuthing unmasks the real culprit, a Turkish secret agent posing as a French journalist. This novel is notable for the number of historical characters and actual events portrayed.

MURDER ON THE LEVIATHAN

Leviafan (1998; *Murder on the Leviathan*, 2004), subtitled “Hermetic Detective” and the third in the Fandorin series, emulates the style of Agatha Christie, with a glamorous setting; extraordinary, secretive characters; and a bizarre murder at the outset. In Paris of 1878, ten people—Lord Littleby, his children, and his servants—are murdered. French detective Gustave Gauche misguidedly follows a clue to the *Leviathan*, a passenger ship on which Fandorin happens to be traveling, headed for a diplomatic assignment in Japan. The aptly named Gauche points the finger at a succession of eccentric but harmless passengers, until Fandorin explodes the Frenchman’s theory of the case and solves it himself.

THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

The fourth novel in the Fandorin series, *The Death of Achilles*, is subtitled “Detective of the Hired Killer.” Akunin tells this story through the point of view of two characters: Fandorin and his opponent, Achimas. When the two narratives arrive at the same point in time, they merge to reveal the solution.

Fandorin has returned home from a diplomatic assignment in Japan, bringing his Japanese manservant, Masa, whose life he has saved. In Moscow, General

Sobolev (called the “Russian Achilles”) is found dead of an apparent heart attack; however, Fandorin suspects his longtime friend may have been murdered. He learns that Sobolev was indeed the victim of an ingenious hired killer: Achimas, the same man who killed Fandorin’s wife in *The Winter Queen*. Fandorin kills Achimas in a final confrontation.

Despite the enormous destruction and pain he has caused, Achimas is no stereotyped villain. As portrayed by Akunin, Achimas was orphaned as a child in an environment that constantly threatened his survival. In adulthood, he decides that the only way to ensure his survival is to become a paid assassin. Through this portrayal, Akunin was able not only to create a compelling character for his readers but also, as an author, to explore the inner world of a compassionless hired killer.

Thomas Rankin

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ERAST FANDORIN SERIES: *Azazel’*, 1998, 2000 (*The Winter Queen*, 2003); *Turetski gambit*, 1998 (*The Turkish Gambit*, 2004); *Leviafan*, 1998 (*Murder on the Leviathan*, 2004); *Osobyie porucheniya*, 1999 (*Special Assignments: The Further Adventures of Erast Fandorin*, 2007); *Statski sovetnik*, 1999; *Koronatsiia; Ili, Poslednii iz romanov*, 2000; *Smert’ Akhillesa*, 2000 (*The Death of Achilles*, 2006); *Liubovnitsa smerti*, 2001; *Liubovnik smert*, 2001; *Almaznaia kollesnitsa*, 2003; *Nefritovie chetki*, 2007

NICHOLAS FANDORIN SERIES: *Altyn-tolobas*, 2000; *Vneklassnoe chtenie*, 2002; *F.M.*, 2006

SISTER PELAGIA SERIES: *Pelagiia i belyi bul’dog*, 2000 (*Pelagia and the White Bulldog*, 2006); *Pelagiia i chernyi monakh*, 2001 (*Pelagia and the Black Monk*, 2007); *Pelagiia i krasni petukh*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Detskaia kniga*, 2005

SHORT FICTION: *Skazki dlia idiotov*, 2000

NONFICTION (AS CHKHARTISHVILI): *Pisatel’ i samoubiistvo*, 1999

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which Akunin discusses his reasons for using his novels to create “a kind of encyclopedia of different subgenres of the crime novel” and the love of the grand nineteenth century literary style that led him to set his Erast Fandorin tales in that period.

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Baraban, Elena V. “A Country Resembling Russia: The Use of History in Boris Akunin’s Detective Novels.” *Slavic and East European Journal* 48, no. 3 (Fall, 2004): 396-420. Describes Akunin’s historical mysteries as a phenomenon of the search for a Russian national identity.

Finn, Peter. “A Case of Crime and Reward: Mystery Writer a Star in Russia.” *Washington Post*, April 23, 2006, p. A15. Explains Akunin’s success as a balance between authorial professionalism and a lighthearted approach to his subject.

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terly 18 (Fall, 2006). Analyzes Akunin’s work in the light of worldwide literary nostalgia, on which cultural studies have become increasingly focused. Considers the Nicholas Fandorin character’s postmodernist perspective as a foil to that of historical Russian figures.

Klioutchkine, Konstantine. “Boris Akunin.” In *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Russian Writers Since 1980*. Boulder, Colo.: Gale Group, 2004. Provides biographical information and a critical survey of Akunin’s work to 2004. Describes how Akunin’s establishment of a middle ground between high-brow literature and pulp fiction led to his own success and to new opportunities for other Russian-language authors.

Parthé, Kathleen. *Russia’s Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. This book by a professor of Russian analyzes the historical influence of Russian literature in shaping national identity and explores post-Soviet changes in Russian literary tradition including the discouragement of “junk reading.”

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

Born: Germantown, Pennsylvania; November 29, 1832

Died: Boston, Massachusetts; March 6, 1888

Also wrote as A. M. Barnard

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Although Louisa May Alcott is best known for her classic and most financially successful novel, *Little Women* (1868), as well as other juvenile literature, she found her greatest enjoyment in writing thrillers that allowed her to push the narrow boundaries that were set for her as a Victorian woman. In works such as *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (written 1866; published 1995) and *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), she

showed the darker side of human nature, depicting female heroines who either succumbed to the pressures of propriety, conforming to the angelic ideal of womanhood, or triumphed over adversity, using society’s expectations of them to outwit their adversaries and escape confinement.

Alcott’s work also included nonfictional pieces, such as the popular *Hospital Sketches* (1863), based on her stint as a nurse during the American Civil War, and “How I Went Out to Service,” based on her work experiences outside writing. Alcott’s novel *Work: A Study of Experience* (1873) was also based on her experiences in low-paying, less-than-satisfying jobs before she was able to not only earn a living but also support her immediate family with the money she



Louisa May Alcott.

made from writing. Like the heroines of her novels, Alcott was torn between what was considered a respectable lifestyle and her desire to rebel against it. Although *Little Women*, *Little Men* (1871), and other popular, morally oriented works allowed her to achieve economic independence and some pleasure in providing for her family, it was the thrillers that she wrote before her commercial success that allowed her to at least vicariously experience the freedom her heroines did.

BIOGRAPHY

Louisa May Alcott was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 29, 1832, to Amos Bronson Alcott and Abigail May Alcott, but she spent most of her life in Massachusetts, mainly Concord and Boston. Considered spirited and willful, she did not fit the image of the ideal, docile child of which her Transcendentalist father approved, but she did not allow her

spirit to be broken. Like the beloved character Jo in *Little Women*, Alcott actively participated in drama and literature, writing plays and a newspaper based on the childhood capers of her and her three sisters. Although her family was often on the brink of poverty, partly because of her father's novel teaching methods and frequent moves, the family's friendship with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, prominent Transcendentalists and Concord residents, contributed to the creative and intellectual richness of the young woman's life. The Alcotts were also active in the abolitionist and suffrage movements. They even made their home a stop on the Underground Railroad and harbored fugitive slaves. Later in life Louisa May Alcott would be the first woman in Concord who registered to vote.

The stress of destitution and the devastating effect it had on the Alcotts after a failed attempt at communal living on a farm her father called Fruitlands made Louisa all the more determined to be successful and support her family, preferably achieving wealth and fame. Her initial plan was to become a great actress. As a teenager she wrote, costumed, directed, and starred in plays. Playwriting led to poetry and then her first novel, *The Inheritance*, written circa 1850 but undiscovered and unpublished until 1997. By her late teens, Alcott had worked a number of low-wage jobs, including governess, teacher, seamstress, laundress, and live-in household servant. More pragmatic than her idealistic father, Alcott was determined to turn her stories into money and learned to be a savvy marketer of her work to various publications.

When her book *Flower Fables* (1854) received reviews approving it as worthwhile literature for young people, Alcott was encouraged to continue writing and published *Hospital Sketches*. When she contracted typhoid fever and pneumonia during her service as a nurse, she was sent home with not only her memories of the soldiers for whom she had cared but also a case of mercury poisoning, a result of the treatment she had received, which would compromise her health for the rest of her life.

These publications were followed by the thrillers that Alcott truly enjoyed writing but were published anonymously or under the pseudonym A. M. Barnard

and were not considered as respectable or as economically feasible as her literature written for juveniles. She described her juvenile literature as “moral pap for the young” and grew to resent the intrusions on her privacy that her literary fame engendered. However, she knew that it was the best way to provide economic security for her family, and her fame did allow her to meet such literary luminaries as Charles Dickens and Walt Whitman. Alcott provided not only economic security but also emotional stability for her family. When her sister Anna’s husband died, leaving her two children fatherless, Louisa provided for them, and when her sister May died in childbirth, Louisa adopted her niece Lulu. Alcott was also the primary means of support for her mother, who suffered from depression and dementia in her later years, and her father, who grew increasingly dependent on her as he aged. Being single, without children, and financially secure throughout her adult life allowed Alcott to travel widely and live well, but the dependence of others on her and her determination to provide for them significantly curtailed her freedom and caused her a great deal of stress.

By the time of her death from spinal meningitis on March 6, 1888, just a few days after her father died, Alcott’s book sales had reached the one million mark, and she had earned approximately two hundred thousand dollars, considered a fortune at the time, for her fiction. She had indeed achieved wealth and fame as a writer.

ANALYSIS

Louisa May Alcott wrote most of her thrillers, or what she called her “blood and thunder” stories and novels, from 1863 to 1868, starting with her story “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment,” which won a prize. Published anonymously or under a pseudonym, these tales often focused on heroines who defied traditional ideals of Victorian womanhood. Attaching her name to them might have tarnished Alcott’s reputation, tainting the image readers later had of the morally impeccable author of *Little Women*.

Similar to Alcott’s thrillers, her realistic novel *Moods* (1864) portrayed a lack of opportunities for women to develop their full potential, a recurrent

theme throughout her work. Rather than writing serials, however, Alcott presented readers with a new cast of characters for each piece she wrote. Two of her most striking characters, Rosamond Vivian in *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, rejected for publication in 1866 as “too sensational” but rediscovered and published in 1995, and Jean Muir in the novella “Behind a Mask: Or, A Woman’s Power,” elude the attempts of others to pigeonhole them into certain roles (devoted wife for Rosamond and guileless governess for Jean). It is their successful escapes that thrill the reader. These methods of escape are both geographical and psychological, as the heroines leave the homes with which they are familiar to enter new territory and create new lives for themselves, eluding capture or discovery of identity as they travel and renegotiate their roles.

In another major thriller, *A Modern Mephistopheles*, Alcott departed from her defiant heroines to portray the ideal Victorian woman in Gladys Canaris, the young and naïve devoted wife of a man who is doomed by the total devotion he has pledged to his diabolically manipulative employer in return for attaching his own name to his employer’s writing to achieve literary fame. Gladys is a foil to Alcott’s other heroines who are determined to be independent despite the attempts of others to control them.

Alcott’s sensational stories and novels are characterized by confinement and the attempt to break free from it. Male characters such as Philip Tempest in *A Long Fatal Love Chase* and Jasper Helwyze in *A Modern Mephistopheles* attempt to control the heroines through seduction and threats. Jean Muir emerges victorious, securing wealth and position through marriage, as she has sought to do, but Rosamond is defeated and conquered after a long journey and a case of mistaken identity. Whether they emerge triumphant or defeated, Alcott’s heroines reflect the challenges women faced and the obstacles they encountered.

“BEHIND A MASK”

“Behind a Mask” is considered one of Alcott’s most shocking thrillers for its portrayal of Jean Muir, a divorced former actress who becomes a governess to accomplish her goal of achieving financial security through marriage to an aristocrat. “Behind a Mask” is the kind of “blood and thunder” tale that Alcott truly

enjoyed writing. Because of its sensational nature, it was published under the pseudonym of A. M. Barnard. Just as Jean conceals her true identity to deceive her employers, the Coventrys, Alcott concealed her identity to avoid readers' possible prejudice and judgment of her other works based on this subversive novella.

As the story begins, the wealthy Coventrys are discussing the impending arrival of the new governess, Jean Muir. Their conversation shows the preconceived notions they have of poor but educated unmarried women, who have few job options outside being a governess. When Jean arrives, she is shown playing the role of governess, meekly speaking to the Coventrys with her eyes downcast. Later, when she is alone in her bedroom, the reader sees her with her hair down (literally), and she is described as having features that belong to a woman older than she has presented herself, more cynical and tired than the strict but spirited governess that the Coventrys expected.

As the story progresses, Jean is shown endearing the family to her with her down-to-earth but clever and witty ways. Although the women in the family are suspicious of her motives, the men are won over; two of them even fall in love with her. Rejecting the younger, more impetuous Coventry for the older, titled one, Jean skillfully manipulates Sir John, who is already in love with her, to marry her before the other Coventrys, who have discovered that she is a divorced former actress, can protest, thus securing her position as a member of the landed aristocracy.

In its depiction of a woman who knows what she wants and how to get it, and who will stop at nothing to accomplish her goal, regardless of proprieties, "Behind a Mask" was shocking for its time and surprises readers even now with its unapologetically manipulative heroine and what appears to be Alcott's refusal to judge her as she emerges triumphant.

A LONG FATAL LOVE CHASE

Confinement versus freedom is a recurrent theme in Alcott's thrillers, and in *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, that theme is personified in the character of Rosamond Vivian. Living on a remote island under the custody of her grandfather, a recluse who barely tolerates her out of a sense of obligation, Rosamond longs for adventure. When the aptly named Philip Tempest, an ac-

quaintance of her grandfather, arrives on the scene, she is captured by his charm, good looks, and stories about his adventures. When he challenges her to go away with him on his boat and travel to distant lands without the security net of marriage, she balks, but when he tricks her into boarding his boat and sails away with her, she adjusts to the idea and becomes less concerned about the lack of propriety.

When Rosamond discovers that Philip is already married and that his assistant on the boat is actually his son, she flees and encounters a series of characters who aid and abet her as she eludes the vengeful Philip, who shows up when he is least expected, startling readers and Rosamond, who must continually think of ways to conceal her identity and escape to the next refuge. She must also resist believing his promises that he will divorce his wife so that they can live as happily as they did before his deception was discovered.

The tragedy of the story lies in the mistaken identity that leads to Rosamond's death. When she finally reaches her grandfather's home, having come full circle in this adventure, she and her companion, a monk who has helped her and come to love her, are on separate boats, and Philip mistakes Rosamond's boat for that of her companion, crashing into it and causing Rosamond to drown. Like other Alcott heroines, Rosamond does get what she wants, namely peace and refuge from Philip, but at the cost of her life. In this manner Alcott showed the lengths to which women had to go to escape the confinements of society, only to have their lives end in tragedy.

Holly L. Norton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *A Modern Mephistopheles*, 1877; *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, 1995 (written 1866)

SHORT FICTION: *A Double Life: Newly Discovered Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott*, 1988; *Freaks of Genius: Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott*, 1991; *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Moods*, 1864; *Little Women, Part 2*, 1869 (also known as *Good Wives*, 1953); *Work: A Study of Experience*, 1873; *Diana and Persis*, 1879;

Jack and Jill, 1880; *Jo's Boys, and How They Turned Out*, 1886; *The Inheritance*, 1997 (written c. 1850)

SHORT FICTION: *On Picket Duty, and Other Tales*, 1864; *Morning Glories, and Other Stories*, 1867; *Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag*, 1872-1882 (6 volumes); *Silver Pichers: And Independence, a Centennial Love Story*, 1876; *Spinning-Wheel Stories*, 1884; *A Garland for Girls*, 1887; *Lulu's Library*, 1895; *Alternative Alcott*, 1988; *Louisa May Alcott: Selected Fiction*, 1990; *From Jo March's Attic: Stories of Intrigue and Suspense*, 1993; *The Early Stories of Louisa May Alcott, 1852-1860*, 2000

PLAYS: *Comic Tragedies Written by "Jo" and "Meg" and Acted by the "Little Women,"* 1893

POETRY: *The Poems of Louisa May Alcott*, 2000

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Flower Fables*, 1854; *Little Women*, 1868; *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, 1870; *Little Men*, 1871; *Eight Cousins*, 1875; *Rose in Bloom*, 1876; *Under the Lilacs*, 1878

NONFICTION: *Hospital Sketches*, 1863; *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1889 (edited by Ednah D. Cheney); *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*, 1989; *The Sketches of Louisa May Alcott*, 2001

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_____. *Louisa May Alcott: From Blood and Thunder to Hearth and Home*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998. Collection of essays tracing Alcott's development and her versatility in moving between domestic and sensational fiction to make a career for herself as a writer. Indexed.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Born: Portsmouth, New Hampshire; November 11, 1836

Died: Boston, Massachusetts; March 19, 1907

Type of plot: Police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, popular poet and essayist and editor for nine years of *The Atlantic Monthly* (1881-1890), contributed three prose volumes of major interest to readers of detective and mystery fiction: *Out of His Head: A Romance* (1862), *Marjorie Daw and Other People* (1873), and *The Stillwater Tragedy* (1880). An astute literary critic and a diligent student of Edgar Allan Poe, Aldrich was attracted to a detective fiction cloaked most often in moods of the fantastic or the supernatural. A prolific poet in the Romantic style, Aldrich inclined in his fiction to the melodramatic and fanciful, and although he sometimes endeavored to portray local-color backgrounds and to sketch realistic social conditions, his Brahmin aloofness and reserved, patrician attitudes often rendered such efforts artificial and unconvincing. Comparable to the creative strategies of Poe, Aldrich's forays into areas of mystery were generally more successful than his occasional excursions into realism, although in *The Stillwater Tragedy* he employed the conventions of the detective novel to mix the gothic with the realistic. Tone and atmosphere were Aldrich's prime concerns, and his stories and novels with themes of detection and mystery, though few in number, hold a significant place in the evolution of the genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, whose ancestry went back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, spent his childhood in Portsmouth, New York City, and New Orleans. Many of his experiences of that time were later described in his autobiographical novel, *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869), a classic tale of an American youth. His education included informal study under the watchful eye of his maternal grandfather Thomas Darling Bailey, whose motley collection of romance nov-

els afforded the bookish youngster an escape into enchanted realms. His formal study was with the revered disciplinarian Samuel De Merritt, a rigid grammarian who helped young Aldrich develop his skill in composition. Aldrich was briefly employed in his uncle's successful counting house, but at the age of nineteen the aspiring author published a volume of poems and accepted a job as a junior literary editor, thus embarking on a lifelong career in letters. Before he was thirty, Aldrich had moved to Boston to edit *Every Saturday*, a post he held until 1874.

Quickly recognized as a poet whose work embodied the genteel tradition, Aldrich became associated with Edmund Clarence Stedman, Richard Henry Stoddard, and Bayard Taylor, writers who were also identified with this popular style that dominated American poetry of the post-Civil War era. His reputation as a leading figure on the literary scene was established emphatically by the early 1870's, when, in addition to his acclaimed verse, his celebration of boyhood touched the hearts of readers of all ages and his tale "Marjorie Daw" captured international audiences. Aldrich married Lilian Woodman in 1865, and in 1868 she gave birth to twin sons.

From 1881 to 1890, Aldrich served as editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, where he proved himself to be a sharp critic of poetry and a fastidious purist in legislating language principles for his prose authors. He retired to devote his time to writing and traveling. By the advent of the twentieth century, however, Aldrich began to recognize that his philosophy of composition was rapidly going out of fashion; the realism that was anathema to him for its "commonplace, polemic, scientific air" had taken root. He maintained scant interest in those who would "strip illusion of her veil" and "vivisection the nightingale." When the National Academy of Arts and Letters was founded in 1904, however, Aldrich was among the first named to membership. After a brief illness, he died in March, 1907, calmly whispering, "I am going to sleep; put out the lights."

ANALYSIS

Thomas Bailey Aldrich was a true product of the Romantic movement in American letters of the nineteenth century, attracted to the fanciful, the sophisticated, and the exotic. Although life around him was increasingly oriented toward the practical and the materialistic, his major focus, even in tales of mystery, was on the imaginatively created world of shadows and suggestion. His most famous story, “Marjorie Daw,” concerns a nonexistent main character who lives entirely in the sensibility of the key correspondent. Heralded abroad and widely anthologized, the story reveals Aldrich’s keen sense of popular taste, an awareness that he assiduously cultivated in his job as a magazine editor.

OUT OF HIS HEAD

The gothic world of mystery and detective fiction was thus tailor-made for Aldrich’s literary proclivities. *Out of His Head* mirrors the arabesque and the bizarre, the chilling and the gruesome. A series of sketches and reveries, the work purports to be edited by Aldrich from the papers of Paul Lynde, a highly articulate but unfortunate gentleman whose “hereditary peculiarity” necessitates his placement in an asylum. There he composes reminiscences of an adventurous life filled with lost love, misery, illness, disease, and death. Lynde resembles many of Poe’s morbid heroes, and his Moon Apparatus, an infernal machine with which he tinkers from time to time, reveals the profundity of his imagination. Most interesting in this work are chapters 10 through 14, which form a complete detective story. The narrative focuses on the discovery of a dead body in a sealed chamber. Depositions reveal the impossibility of suicide, and the authorities are naturally puzzled. Lynde, with his acutely penetrating powers of observation, discerns the murderer but reveals his discovery only to the murderer himself, who, Lynde hopes, will be forever driven by his dark conscience. Lynde himself confesses to the crime simply to experience a new and different ecstasy—that of an innocent man hanged.

Although this ultimate experience is denied him, Lynde’s literary ruminations—composed by a person “out of his head” and ranging from witchcraft to a fatal, masked incident at the New Orleans Mardi Gras—establish the editor Aldrich as a master of mood and of what Poe called ratiocination.



Thomas Bailey Aldrich. (Library of Congress)

MARJORIE DAW AND OTHER PEOPLE

The literary specter of Poe hangs heavily over two particular tales in Aldrich’s *Marjorie Daw and Other People*, especially in the psychological portraits of the protagonists and the nightmarish scenarios involved. “A Struggle for Life” employs a device frequently used by Poe, that of live burial. The narrator is locked in a tomb with the dead body of his beloved; his terror, plan to escape, and strategy to remain alive are memorably evoked. The atmosphere of the macabre also works well in “The Chevalier de Resseguier,” a tale whose tonality resembles that of Poe’s famous poem “The Raven.” Aldrich describes a dialogue between a bibliophile and a skull he had purchased in a bookstore specializing in works devoted to mesmerism, spiritualism, and other psychic and occult phenomena. In detailing the strange impressions of *déjà vu* and the melancholy fantasy, Aldrich reveals an adroit mastery of the gothic literary aesthetic, while in sustaining the intensity of the disturbed narrator’s emotional state throughout the story, Aldrich demonstrates an understanding of Poe’s dictum of the “totality of effect.”

THE STILLWATER TRAGEDY

The Stillwater Tragedy was both Aldrich's final novel and his only full-length mystery and detective work. It was carefully planned to examine the dark side of life, for Aldrich had come to believe that readers were paying more attention to somber tones in literature than to graceful, pleasant ones. Aiming at a large readership, this proponent of the genteel tradition now steered his literary strategy toward what for him was the unfamiliar environment of realism by combining a murder tale—then popular in the dime novels of the era—with a contemporary tale of the collision of capital and labor in a small New England industrial town.

Aldrich, disturbed at what he perceived to be foreign ideologies infiltrating and corrupting the American sociopolitical system, spoke strongly against unrestricted immigration. In a poem called "Unguarded Gates," in which he asked, "O Liberty," is it "well to leave the gates unguarded?" he warns, be careful "lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn/ And trampled in the dust." Stillwater, the locale of the murder in *The Stillwater Tragedy*, is a community whose American laboring class has been exposed to socialistic doctrines by an influx of European immigrants. Another foreign element has come to the village as well—murder.

The murder victim, whose death is scarcely mourned, is Lemuel Shakford, a litigious miser, a capitalist with many enemies from all classes of society. Shakford's murder is set against the background of a destructive general strike. The volatile mixture of people and events is then compounded by the arrival in Stillwater of Edward Taggett, a big-city sleuth with a considerable reputation.

The appearance of the detective enables Aldrich to expand on the range of Dickensian characters in his cast, for Taggett pops up at various places in the community—socializing at the local tavern, working for a time in disguise as a laborer, and even living in the home of the murder victim. The town's scandal-mongers, crime theorists, and general gossips are portrayed by Aldrich as a Greek chorus commenting on the action and suggesting further areas to explore in arriving at a solution. The solemn trance in which Stillwater seems to be suspended—the eerily gabled

murder house and the dreary phantasm of the strange detective at work by lamplight in the silent village—is brilliantly realized. With the settlement of the general strike comes the clever unraveling of the solution, but Taggett needs the help and ingenuity of the dead man's cousin to put things in order and return peace of mind to the troubled people of Stillwater.

Historically important for his work in the mystery and detective genre, Aldrich, in depicting methodical, unorthodox detectives at work, brought to the pages of American literature early prototypes of a character type that was to become a staple of subsequent writers. Aldrich's pronounced ability to create a landscape of mystery and sustain a mood of pervasive suspicion is similarly noteworthy. Finally, in *The Stillwater Tragedy* he fused the style of the genteel romantic purveying the incense "of Arabia and the farther east" with that of the sharp-eyed recorder of a small-town crisis.

Abe C. Ravitz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *The Stillwater Tragedy*, 1880

SHORT FICTION: *Out of His Head: A Romance*, 1862; *Marjorie Daw and Other People*, 1873

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Story of a Bad Boy*, 1869 (illustrated by Harold M. Brett); *Prudence Palfrey*, 1874; *The Queen of Sheba*, 1877; *The Second Son*, 1888 (with Margaret Oliphant)

SHORT FICTION: *Two Bites at a Cherry, with Other Tales*, 1893; *A Sea Turn and Other Matters*, 1902

POETRY: *The Bells: A Collection of Chimes*, 1855; *The Ballad of Babie Bell, and Other Poems*, 1859; *Cloth of Gold, and Other Poems*, 1874; *Flower and Thorn: Later Poems*, 1877; *Mercedes and Later Lyrics*, 1884; *Wyndham Towers*, 1890; *Judith and Holofernes*, 1896; *Unguarded Gates, and Other Poems*, 1895; *The Poems of Thomas Bailey Aldrich: The Revised and Complete Household Edition*, 1897

NONFICTION: *From Ponkapog to Pesth*, 1883; *An Old Town by the Sea*, 1893; *Ponkapog Papers*, 1903

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- O'Brien, Edward J. *The Advance of the American Short Story*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931. The originator of *The Best American Short Stories* series discusses Aldrich's responsibility for the vogue of the surprise-ending story in the early twentieth century. Says that although "Marjorie Daw" is flawless, many of Aldrich's stories are "pure sleight of hand."
- Pattee, Fred Lewis. *The Development of the American Short Story: An Historical Survey*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923. In this important early history of the American short story, Pattee summarizes Aldrich's career and discusses the importance of "Marjorie Daw" in establishing an influential short-story type. Says that the story stood for art that is artless, that it has a Daudet-like grace and brilliance with the air of careless improvisation.
- Samuels, Charles E. *Thomas Bailey Aldrich*. New York: Twayne, 1965. A general introduction to Aldrich's life and art; includes a chapter on his short stories and sketches; describes "Marjorie Daw" as a masterpiece of compression that won an instant international reputation for Aldrich. Discusses Aldrich's stories of the fanciful gothic and his taste for the macabre.

GRANT ALLEN

Charles Grant Blairfindie Allen

Born: Kingston, Ontario, Canada; February 24, 1848

Died: Hindhead, Surrey, England; October 28, 1899

Also wrote as Cecil Power; Oliver Pratt Rayner;

Martin Leach Warborough; J. Arbuthnot Wilson

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Grant Allen wrote what he himself acknowledged to be potboilers. Most of his works appeared in serial form in popular magazines such as the *Cornhill* and the *Strand*; they were later republished in collections that revolved around a central character. Of these collections, the most famous is *An African Millionaire* (1897). Its central character, Colonel Clay, has been called “the first great thief of short mystery fiction.” Besides being the first English writer of “crook fiction,” a type of inverted crime story, Allen may have been the first writer to make use of female sleuths: Miss Cayley, in *Miss Cayley’s Adventures* (1899), and Hilda Wade, in the novel named for her (1900).

BIOGRAPHY

Grant Allen was born Charles Grant Blairfindie Allen on February 24, 1848, in Kingston, Canada. He was the second and only surviving son of Joseph Antisell Allen, a minister of the Irish church, and Charlotte Ann Grant, daughter of the fifth baron de Longuiel, a French title recognized in Canada. He was first educated by his father, then by a Yale tutor when the family moved to Connecticut. Later, he was sent to private school in Dieppe, France, at the Collège Impériale. From there, he went on to the King Edwards School, Birmingham, and then to Oxford University, where he received a first-class degree in classical moderations in 1871. While at Oxford, Allen married, but his wife became ill soon after their marriage and died within two years.

In 1873, Allen was appointed professor of mental and moral philosophy at the first university for blacks established in Jamaica. Just before leaving for this

post, he married Ellen Jerrad, who accompanied him there. As a teaching position, this appointment was a failure. Most of the students were not literate; they were hardly prepared for a study of “mental and moral philosophy.” Allen used his extra time there, however, to formulate his evolutionary system of philosophy.

In 1876, the school collapsed, following the death of its founder, and Allen returned to England. On his return, he supported himself and his family by writing. At first he wrote only scientific essays, but later he began adapting his scientific ideas to a fiction format. His first novel, *Philistia*, was published in 1884. He would go on to write more than thirty works of fiction, including detective novels: *An African Millionaire*, published in 1897; *Miss Cayley’s Adventures*, published in 1899; and *Hilda Wade*, published in 1900.

In 1892, Allen had acquired a famous neighbor, Arthur Conan Doyle. Although he and Doyle held diametrically opposed political, social, and religious views, they became good friends. In 1899, Allen, realizing that he was dying, asked Doyle to complete the last two chapters of *Hilda Wade*. Doyle followed through on his promise to do so, though he admitted that he was never happy with the result. Allen died on October 28, 1899, of liver disease. He was survived by his wife and a son.

ANALYSIS

Grant Allen would be surprised, at the very least, to find that he is best remembered as a writer of popular fiction. Allen considered himself a naturalist and a philosopher, a disciple of Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, and Charles Darwin. He began writing short stories as a way to illustrate scientific points. His first published work of fiction, “Our Scientific Observations on a Ghost,” for example, was not a ghost story but a tale that showed how people could be led to believe in ghosts. Allen described the further circumstances that led to his becoming a writer of fiction in the preface to *Twelve Tales, with a Headpiece, a Tailpiece, and an Intermezzo, Being Select Stories* (1899).

James Payn, on assuming the editorship of the *Cornhill* magazine, returned one of Allen's scientific articles and at the same time wrote to "J. Arbuthnot Wilson" (one of Allen's pseudonyms) to request more short stories. After this, Allen said he was well "on the downward path which leads to fiction."

One can still see in Allen's fiction the influence of his scientific interests, his evolutionary philosophy, and his antiauthoritarian politics. In fact, he turned some of his later fiction into a forum for his views on society. He was most infamous in his lifetime for the novel *The Woman Who Did* (1895), which presents the radical view that marriage is an unnecessary institution.

Allen's political leanings are evident in his assignment of guilt and innocence. He criticizes the police for seeing only the crime and not the context that may have caused it; in one episode of *Hilda Wade*, for example, a murderer is presented as morally innocent because his wife's personality drove him to murder. On the whole, Allen does not hold the police force or professional detectives in high regard. In fact, in one short story, "The Great Ruby Robbery," as well as one episode of *An African Millionaire*, it is the detective who is the criminal. The worst offenders, for Allen, are members of the upper class, regardless of whether they have broken the law. This view is very clearly expressed in *An African Millionaire*, in which crimes committed by a confidence man against a businessman are presented as morally justifiable.

Allen thought of himself as a supporter of women's rights, though his view that a husband should be excused of the murder of a nagging wife hardly strikes one as liberated. He did believe, however, that women should hold positions in the workforce equal to those of men, and that the English system of chaperoning women was merely another form of imprisonment. These views on women come across most forcefully in his portrayal of strong female characters, especially Miss Cayley of *Miss Cayley's Adventures* and the title character of *Hilda Wade*. Both these heroines could be said to be competing with Sherlock Holmes, as they are probably among the first female detectives to appear in print.

MISS CAYLEY'S ADVENTURES

Of the two works, *Miss Cayley's Adventures* is much more enjoyable and much more consistent in tone. Miss Cayley sets off at the beginning of the novel with twopence to her name, determined to travel around the world and have adventures. She is not disappointed. Among her many exploits are rescuing an Englishwoman from an Arabian harem, shooting tigers in India, and saving her lover from a mountain cliff in Switzerland. The stories never pretend to be grounded in reality, but rather have the spirit of rip-roaring yarns. Miss Cayley is a bold, spontaneous, never-say-die heroine. About to leave England in search of her first adventure, she describes her *modus operandi* to her more conservative friend Elsie:

I shall stroll out this morning . . . and embrace the first stray enterprise that offers. Our Bagdad teems with enchanted carpets. Let one but float my way, and hi! presto! I seize it. I go where glory or a modest competence waits me. I snatch at the first offer, the first hint of an opening.



Artist Gordon Browne's depiction of Lois Cayley for an 1898 story in *The Strand Magazine*.

Very soon into her adventures, Miss Cayley meets an extremely wealthy young man, Harold Tillington. Miss Cayley refuses to marry Harold, though, because he is so much richer than she; she vows to marry him only when he is penniless and forlorn. The detective plot serves mostly to bring those circumstances about. Toward the end of the novel, Harold is wrongfully accused of fraud by his cousin, a reprehensible member of the aristocracy. Just before he is led away to prison, Miss Cayley marries him and then proceeds to prove his innocence.

HILDA WADE

Hilda Wade is more centrally concerned with crime and detection. Hilda Wade is on a quest to clear her father of the accusation of murder by proving that the real criminal is a renowned doctor, Sebastian. Hilda Wade is presented as a female version of Sherlock Holmes. She has astonishing powers of intuition that match his powers of deduction. She also has a chronicler and admirer, Dr. Cumberledge, to match Holmes's Watson. When they first meet, she astonishes Cumberledge by seeming to know everything about him.

The occasion for my astonishment was the fact that when I handed her my card, "Dr. Hubert Ford Cumberledge, St. Nathaniel's Hospital," she had glanced at it for a second and exclaimed, without sensible pause or break, "Oh, then, of course, you're half Welsh, as I am. . . ." "Well, m'yes; I am half Welsh," I replied. . . . "But why *then* and *of course*? I fail to perceive your train of reasoning. . . ." "Fancy asking a woman to give you 'the train of reasoning' for her intuitions! . . . Shall I explain my trick, like the conjurers?"

The reference to "conjurers" is reminiscent of Watson exclaiming over Holmes's deductive powers. Doyle had an even more direct influence on the collection, as he wrote the last two episodes following Allen's death.

Hilda Wade is marred, however, by Allen's heavy reliance on the belief that personality was evidenced by physical traits and genetically determined. The novel is also inconsistent in tone. The opening chapters take a somewhat grim and realistic approach, which seems fitting for an account of Hilda's dogged pursuit of her father's betrayer. Toward the middle of the novel, though, the reader is thrust into a fantastic

series of episodes that take Hilda Wade and Dr. Sebastian from South Africa through Tibet. In the final chapters, Sebastian confesses, after having been twice saved by Hilda: first from a dangerous fever in Tibet and then by being pulled from the wreckage of the ship that had been taking them back to England. The novel has none of the light humor that makes both *Miss Cayley's Adventures* and *An African Millionaire* so enjoyable.

AN AFRICAN MILLIONAIRE

An African Millionaire is the book for which Allen is probably best remembered, at least among followers of detective fiction. It has been called the first of the field of "crook fiction," in which the hero is not the detective but his nemesis. Readers are probably more familiar with E. W. Hornung's *Raffles*, but Allen's Colonel Clay preceded *Raffles* by three years.

An African Millionaire first appeared in twelve successive issues of the *Strand* magazine, starting in June, 1896. The most notable feature of this series is that each story chronicles robberies committed by the same thief, Colonel Clay, against the same victim, the African millionaire of the title, Sir Charles Vandrift. In each case, Colonel Clay plays on a greedy, self-serving instinct in Sir Charles to line his own pockets. In one episode, for example, the colonel, disguised as a timid parson, agrees to sell Sir Charles some paste-diamond jewelry for two thousand pounds. (The parson will not part with them for less because they belonged to his dear mother.) Sir Charles, however, has realized that they are not paste, but real diamonds and worth much more than two thousand pounds. He complacently believes that he has made a great profit off the parson—until he discovers that he has bought his own stolen diamonds.

Allen portrays Colonel Clay as a sort of modern-day Robin Hood: a confidence man who robs the unethical businessman. Allen's own view of businessmen and landowners is more explicitly stated in his science fiction novel *The British Barbarians: A Hill-Top Novel* (1895). In that novel, a traveler from a utopian future asserts that private ownership is a barbaric institution. In *An African Millionaire*, Colonel Clay echoes this view when he explains his motivation for preying on Sir Charles:

Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em, / And these again have lesser fleas, and so *ad infinitum!*

Well that's just how I view myself. *You* are a capitalist and a millionaire. In *your* large way you prey upon society. . . . In *my* smaller way, again, *I* relieve you in turn of a portion of the plunder.

In general, Allen's critique of the businessman and the Victorian aristocracy is expressed less clumsily in this series of adventures than in the more didactic *The British Barbarians*. In fact, the African Millionaire stories are much more interesting and enjoyable as satires on the British upper class than as whodunits (or perhaps in this case, "how-to-do-its"). In one story, for example, Sir Charles is gulled into buying a castle because he and his wife want to acquire aristocratic roots:

Nice antique hall; suits of ancestral armour, trophies of Tyrolese hunters, coats of arms of ancient counts—the very thing to take Amelia's aristocratic and romantic fancy. The whole to be sold exactly as it stood; ancestors to be included at a valuation.

The note of sarcasm here belongs to the narrator, Sir Charles's brother-in-law, Seymour Wentworth. Seymour is also on Sir Charles's payroll as his secretary, and is therefore on Sir Charles's side rather than Colonel Clay's. Nevertheless, Allen uses him quite successfully as a source of sarcastic asides. By putting the sarcastic voice within the ranks of the wealthy, Allen gives his criticisms more validity.

Aside from the satiric tone, the stories are notable for their various twists on the straightforward confidence-man plot that is established in the first two stories. One such twist occurs in "The Episode of the Arrest of the Colonel," in which Sir Charles hires a private detective from an agency to protect him from Colonel Clay. The private detective, however, proves to be Colonel Clay himself, who thus once again triumphs over the hapless Sir Charles. The superhuman skills that Colonel Clay seems to possess and the sheer audacity required to continue to hunt the same victim make him a highly entertaining figure. To say that Colonel Clay is a master of disguise is an understatement. As Seymour proclaims, he is "polymorphic, like the element carbon." (This is also another jab at Sir Charles, who deals



Grant Allen's *Colonel Clay in the June, 1896*, issue of *The Strand Magazine*.

in polymorphic carbon—that is, diamonds.) Besides Clay's appearances as the timid parson and the street-wise private detective, he becomes a Byronic Mexican mind reader, an old German scientist, a Scottish diamond merchant, and a Tyrolese count. The reader, like the much-put-upon Sir Charles, begins to suspect anyone in the stories of being Colonel Clay: "Perhaps we were beginning to suspect him everywhere."

Although for the most part very playful and even nonsensical in mood, the stories also impart a sense of paranoia, of beginning to suspect everyone, everywhere, of being the enemy. Indeed, Colonel Clay begins to resemble a fairly harmless version of Professor Moriarty. These stories seem to point, in a small way, toward a growing feeling at the end of the nineteenth century that the world was a large and unsafe place—a feeling that would reach its fullest expression in the American hard-boiled detective story. When everyone you meet is a stranger, who can you trust?

On the whole, though, Allen's stories have not been greatly influential because they are not widely read. Because they are potboilers, they have all but

disappeared from library shelves. In the case of *Hilda Wade*, this disappearance can perhaps be left unmourned, for it has all the worst aspects of the pot-boiler in being melodramatic, sentimental, and inconsistent in tone. *Miss Cayley's Adventures* and *An African Millionaire*, however, are well worth reviving. In both of these works Allen showed himself to be a good storyteller, a writer of rousing and humorous tales of adventure.

Jasmine Hall

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Kalee's Shrine*, 1886 (with May Cotes; also known as *The Indian Mystery: Or, Kalee's Shrine*); *For Maimie's Sake: A Tale of Love and Dynamite*, 1886; *A Terrible Inheritance*, 1887; *This Mortal Coil*, 1888; *The Devil's Die*, 1888; *The Jaws of Death*, 1889; *Recalled to Life*, 1891; *What's Bred in the Bone*, 1891; *The Scallywag*, 1893; *Under Sealed Orders*, 1894; *A Splendid Sin*, 1896; *Hilda Wade*, 1900 (with Arthur Conan Doyle)

SHORT FICTION: *Strange Stories*, 1884; *The Beckoning Hand, and Other Stories*, 1887; *Ivan Greet's Masterpiece*, 1893; *A Bride from the Desert*, 1896; *An African Millionaire*, 1897; *Twelve Tales, with a Headpiece, a Tailpiece, and an Intermezzo, Being Select Stories*, 1899; *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, 1899; *Sir Theodore's Guest, and Other Stories*, 1902

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Philistia*, 1884; *Babylon*, 1885; *In All Shades*, 1886; *The Sole Trustee*, 1886; *The White Man's Foot*, 1888; *A Living Apparatus*, 1889; *Dr. Paliser's Patient*, 1889; *The Tents of Shem*, 1889; *The Great Taboo*, 1890; *Dumaresq's Daughter*, 1891; *The Duchess of Powysland*, 1891; *Blood Royal*, 1892; *An Army Doctor's Romance*, 1893; *At Market Value*, 1894; *The British Barbarians: A Hill-Top Novel*, 1895; *The Woman Who Did*, 1895; *The Type-Writer Girl*, 1897; *Linnet*, 1898; *The Incidental Bishop*, 1898; *Rosalba: The Story of Her Development*, 1899

SHORT FICTION: *The General's Will, and Other Stories*, 1892; *Desire of the Eyes, and Other Stories*, 1895; *Moorland Idylls*, 1896

POETRY: *The Lower Slopes: Reminiscences of Excursions Round the Base of the Hellicon*, 1894

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Tom, Unlimited: A Story for Children*, 1897

NONFICTION: 1877-1890 • *Physiological Aesthetics*, 1877; *The Colour-Sense: Its Origin and Development—An Essay in Comparative Psychology*, 1879; *Anglo-Saxon Britain*, 1881; *The Evolutionist at Large*, 1881 (revised 1884); *Vignettes from Nature*, 1881; *The Colours of Flowers, as Illustrated in the British Flora*, 1882; *Colin Clout's Calendar: The Record of a Summer, April-October*, 1883; *Flowers and Their Pedigrees*, 1883; *Nature Studies*, 1883 (with others); *Biographies of Working Men*, 1884; *Charles Darwin*, 1885; *Common Sense Science*, 1887; *A Half-Century of Science*, 1888 (with T. H. Huxley); *Force and Energy: A Theory of Dynamics*, 1888; *Falling in Love, with Other Essays on More Exact Branches of Science*, 1889; *Individualism and Socialism*, 1889

1891-1900 • *Science in Arcady*, 1892; *The Tidal Thames*, 1892; *Post-Prandial Philosophy*, 1894; *In Memoriam George Paul Macdonell*, 1895; *The Story of the Plants*, 1895 (also known as *The Plants*); *Cities of Belgium*, 1897 (also known as *Belgium: Its Cities*); *Florence*, 1897 (revised 1906); *Paris*, 1897 (revised 1906); *The Evolution of the Idea of God: An Inquiry into the Origins of Religions*, 1897; *Flashlights on Nature*, 1898; *Venice*, 1898; *The European Tour: A Handbook for Americans and Colonists*, 1899; *Plain Words on the Woman Question*, 1900; *The New Hedonism*, 1900

1901-1909 • *County and Town in England, Together with Some Annals of Churnside*, 1901; *In Nature's Workshop*, 1901; *Evolution in Italian Art*, 1908; *The Hand of God, and Other Posthumous Essays*, 1909

EDITED TEXTS: *The Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works of H. T. Buckle*, 1885; *The Natural History of Selborne*, 1900 (by Gilbert White)

TRANSLATION: *The Attis of Caius Valerius Catullus*, 1892

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Greenslade, William, and Terence Rodgers, eds. *Grant Allen: Literature and Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005. Collection of scholarly essays detailing Allen's relationship to fin-de-siècle British culture.

Morton, Peter. *The Busiest Man in England: Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. The first critical biography of Allen in a century, this book attempts to solve the mystery of why Allen, a member of a wealthy family, was dependent on his writing to support himself. Discusses not only Allen's life but also freelance authorship and journalism in Victorian England. Bibliographic references and index.

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Schantz, Tom, and Enid Schantz. "Editors' Note." In *The Reluctant Hangman, and Other Stories of Crime*. Boulder, Colo.: Aspen Press, 1973. Useful commentary on the three stories contained in this special, limited edition that includes the original illustrations from the *Strand* magazine.

MARGERY ALLINGHAM

Born: London, England; May 20, 1904

Died: Colchester, Essex, England; June 30, 1966

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage; police procedural; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Albert Campion, 1929-1969

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALBERT CAMPION, an aristocrat, Cambridge University graduate, and amateur sleuth, begins the series as a flippant young man, but as the series progresses, he matures, marries Lady Amanda Fitton, and becomes a father. Thin, pale, well bred, and well tailored, he is the kind of man whom no one clearly remembers. Campion's seeming vacuity masks his brilliant powers of observation and deduction. A considerate and honorable person, he is often referred to as like an uncle in whom everyone confides. Although his full name is never disclosed, Allingham indicates that Campion is the younger son of a duke.

AMANDA FITTON, later Lady Amanda Fitton, eventually becomes Campion's wife. Amanda is first introduced in *Sweet Danger* (1933) as a teenage girl with mechanical aptitude. When she reappears several years later, Campion and the cheerful, daring young woman first pretend to be engaged. As their relationship develops, they proceed to a legitimate engagement and finally to marriage. When Albert returns from the war at the end of *Coroner's Pidgin* (1945), Amanda introduces him to her wartime achievement, their three-year-old son Rupert, who continues to appear in later books and at the end of the series is a graduate student at Harvard University. Amanda becomes an aircraft designer, and even after marriage she continues to rise in her firm, finally becoming a company director.

MAGERSFONTEIN LUGG, Campion's valet, is a former convicted cat burglar whose skills and contacts are now used for legal purposes. A bona fide snob, Lugg tries unsuccessfully to keep Campion out of criminal investigations and up to the level of his ducal forebears.

CONTRIBUTION

Along with Ngaio Marsh, Nicholas Blake, and Michael Innes, Margery Allingham was one of those writers of the 1930's who created detectives who were fallible human beings, not omniscient logicians in the Sherlock Holmes tradition. Her mild-mannered, seemingly foolish aristocrat, Albert Campion, can miss clues or become emotionally entangled with unavailable or unsuitable women. Yet, though his judgment may err, his instincts demonstrate the best qualities of his class. Although Allingham is noted for her careful craftsmanship, for her light-hearted comedy, for her psychological validity, and for such innovations as the gang leader with an inherited position and the inclusion of male homosexuals among her characters, she is most often remembered for her realistic, often-satirical depiction of English society and for the haunting vision of evil that dominates her later novels.

BIOGRAPHY

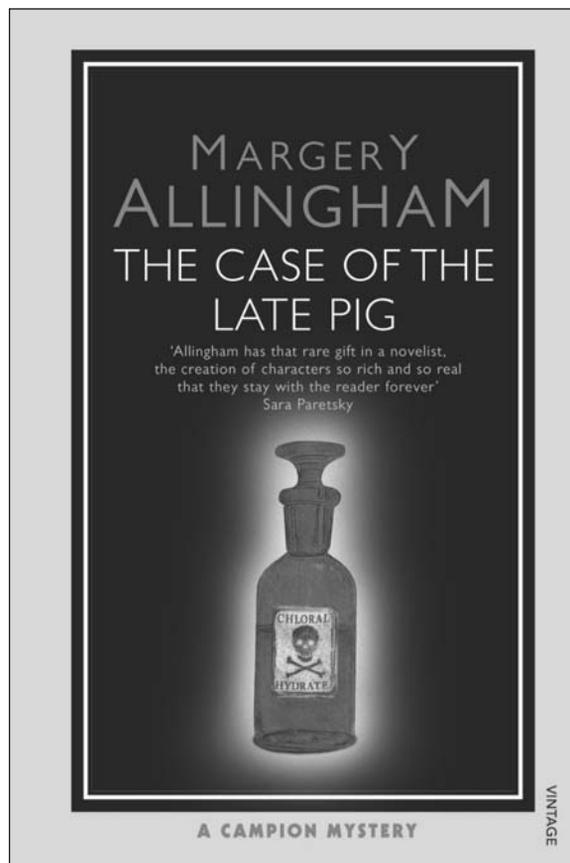
Margery Louise Allingham was born on May 20, 1904, the daughter of Herbert John Allingham, an editor and journalist, and Emily Jane Hughes, her father's first cousin, who also became a journalist. By the time of her birth, the family lived in Essex, where every weekend they entertained a number of other journalists. Although the young Allingham had two siblings, she spent many of her childhood hours alone, often writing. At seven, Allingham published a story in the *Christian Globe*, a publication of which her grandfather was editor. That year she went away to the first of two boarding schools; she left the second, the Perse School for Girls in Cambridge, when she was fifteen.

Finally, Allingham enrolled in the Regent Street Polytechnic in London as a drama student, but her first novel, *Blackkerchief Dick: A Tale of Mersea Island* (1923), an adventure story set in Essex, had already been accepted for publication, and when her friend Philip "Pip" Youngman Carter convinced her that her talents were more suited to writing than to acting, she left school to work on another novel. In 1927 she married Youngman Carter, who had become a successful commercial artist.

With the publication of her first mystery novel, *The White Cottage Mystery*, in 1928, Allingham settled into

her career. In *The Crime at Black Dudley* (1929), she introduced Albert Campion, the amateur detective who was to appear in all the mystery novels that followed.

In 1929, Allingham and her husband moved to Essex; in 1934, they purchased their own home, D'Arcy House, expecting to live and work quietly in the little village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy. World War II soon broke out, however, and with Essex an obvious invasion target, Allingham became active in civil defense, while her husband joined the army. Her autobiographical book *The Oaken Heart* (1941) describes the fear and the resolution of Britons such as herself during the first months of the war. In 1944, Allingham returned to her mysteries. She and her husband made periodic visits to their flat in London but lived in D'Arcy House for the rest of their lives. Between 1929, when she wrote the



In Margery Allingham's tenth Albert Campion novel, her amateur sleuth investigates the murder of an old school bully named "Pig" Peters. (Courtesy, Random House)

first *Campion* mystery, and her early death of cancer on June 30, 1966, Allingham worked steadily, averaging almost a volume a year, primarily novels but also novellas and collections of short stories. Before her husband's death in 1970, he completed *Cargo of Eagles* (1968) and wrote two additional *Campion* novels.

ANALYSIS

After her pedestrian story of police investigation, *The White Cottage Mystery*, which she later removed from her list of works, Margery Allingham hit on a character who would dominate her novels and the imaginations of her readers for half a century. He was Albert *Campion*, the pale, scholarly, seemingly ineffectual aristocrat whom she introduced in *The Crime at Black Dudley*. As Allingham herself commented, the changes in *Campion's* character that were evident over the years reflected changes in the author herself, as she matured and as she was molded by the dramatic events of the times through which she lived.

When Allingham began to write her novels in the 1920's, like many of her generation she had become disillusioned. Unable to perceive meaning in life, she decided to produce a kind of novel that did not demand underlying commitment from the writer or deep thought from the reader, a mystery story dedicated to amusement, written about a witty, bright group of upper-class people who passed their time with wordplay and pranks—and occasionally with murder. In Allingham's first novels, Albert *Campion* is somewhat like P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, pursuing one girl or another while he attempts to outwit an opponent. The fact that *Campion's* opponent is a murderer is not particularly significant; he is an intellectual antagonist, not a representative of evil. Furthermore, most of the action itself is comic.

LOOK TO THE LADY

In *Look to the Lady* (1931), for example, a formidable country matron abandons her tweeds and pearls for the garb of a mystical priestess, presiding over the rites of the Gyrrh Chalice. In her costume, she is hilarious, a target of satire; when she is found dead in the woods, she is of far less interest, and the solution of her murder is primarily an exercise of wit, rather than the pursuit of justice.

DEATH OF A GHOST

With *Death of a Ghost*, in 1934, Allingham's books become less lighthearted but more interesting. Her prose is less mannered and more elegant, her plots less dependent on action and more dependent on complex characterization, her situations and her settings chosen less for their comic potentiality and more for their satiric possibilities. *Death of a Ghost* is the first book in which Allingham examines her society, the first of several in which the world of her characters is an integral part of the plot. Before the murder takes place in *Death of a Ghost*, Allingham must create the world of art, complete with poseurs and hangers-on, just as later she will write of the world of publishing in *Flowers for the Judge* (1936), that of the theater in *Dancers in Mourning* (1937), and finally that of high fashion in *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938).

Just as Allingham becomes more serious, so does Albert *Campion*, who abandons even the pretext of idiocy, becoming simply a self-effacing person whose modesty attracts confidences and whose kindness produces trust. In *Sweet Danger* he meets the seventeen-year-old mechanical genius Amanda Fitton. After she reappears in *The Fashion in Shrouds*, *Campion's* destiny is more and more linked to that of Amanda. If she is good, anyone who threatens her must be evil. Thus, through love *Campion* becomes committed, and through the change in *Campion* his creator reflects the change in her own attitude.

TRAITOR'S PURSE

With the rise of Adolf Hitler, it had become obvious that laughter alone was not a sufficient purpose for life. Even the more thoughtful social satire of Allingham's last several books before *Death of a Ghost* was inadequate in the face of brutality and barbarism. Only courage and resolution would defeat such unmistakable evil, and those were the qualities that Allingham dramatized in her nonfictional book about her own coastal Essex village in the early days of the war; those were also the qualities that Albert *Campion* exhibited in the wartime espionage story *Traitor's Purse* (1941). In that thriller, the forces of evil are dark, not laughable, and the traitorous megalomaniac who is willing to destroy Great Britain to seize power over it is too vicious, too threatening, to evoke satire. Like his coun-

try, Albert Campion must stand alone against the odds; with symbolic appropriateness, he has just awakened into bewilderment, aware only that civilization is doomed unless he can defeat its enemies before time runs out.

With *Traitor's Purse*, Allingham abandoned the mystery form until the war was nearly won and she could bring Campion home in *Coroner's Pidgin*. Although for the time being evil had been outwitted and outgunned, Allingham comments that she could never again ignore its existence. The theme of her later novels is the conflict between good and evil. Such works as *The Tiger in the Smoke* (1952) and *Hide My Eyes* (1958) are not based on the usual whodunit formula; early in those books, the criminal is identified, and the problem is not who he is but how he can be caught and punished.

From his first appearance, Campion has worn a mask. In the early, lighthearted comic works, his mask of mindlessness concealed his powers of deduction; in the satirical novels, his mask of detachment enabled him to observe without being observed; in the later works, as a trusted agent of his government, Campion must carefully conceal what he knows behind whatever mask is necessary in the conflict with evil. Clearly the change in Campion was more than mere maturation. As Allingham's own vision of life changed, her view of the mystery story changed, and her detective Campion became a champion in the struggle against evil.

THE CHINA GOVERNESS

The qualities of Allingham's later works are best illustrated in *The China Governess* (1962). The first words of the novel are uttered by a police officer: "It was called the wickedest street in London." Thus, the conflict of good and evil, which is to constitute the action of the book, is introduced. Although the Turk Street Mile has been replaced by a huge housing project, the history of that street will threaten the happiness and the life of Timothy Kinnit. Kinnit, who has recently become engaged, wishes to know his real origins. He was a child of the war, a man who had appeared as a baby among a group of evacuees from Turk Street and was casually adopted by the kindly Eustace Kinnit.

As the novel progresses, past history becomes part

of the present. It is in the new apartment house on the site of old Turk Street that a brutal act takes place, the killing of a decent old woman. Yet evil is not confined to Turk Street. During the war, it had followed the evacuees to the Kinnit house in Suffolk, where an East End girl callously abandoned the baby she had picked up so that she might be evacuated from London, a baby whose papers she later used to obtain money under false pretenses. The highly respectable Kinnit family has also not been immune from evil.

In the nineteenth century, a governess in the Kinnit family supposedly committed a famous murder and later killed herself. For one hundred years, the family has kept the secret that is exposed in *The China Governess*: that the murder was actually committed by a young Kinnit girl. At the end of the book, another murderess is unmasked, ironically another governess who is masquerading as a wealthy Kinnit relative and who is finally discovered when she attempts to murder Basil Toberman, a socially acceptable young man who has spitefully plotted to destroy Timothy Kinnit. Thus a typical Allingham plot emphasizes the pervasiveness of evil, which reaches from the past into the present and which is not limited to the criminal classes or to the slums of London but instead reaches into town houses and country estates, pervading every level of society.

The China Governess also illustrates Allingham's effective descriptions. For example, when the malicious Basil Toberman appears, he is "a blue-chinned man in the thirties with wet eyes and a very full, dark-red mouth which suggested somehow that he was on the verge of tears." Thus Allingham suggests the quality of bitter and unjustifiable self-pity that drives Toberman to evil. Later, an intruder who emerges from the slums is described in terms that suggest his similarly evil nature: "He was tall and phenomentally slender but bent now like a foetus . . . He appeared deeply and evenly dirty, his entire surface covered with that dull iridescence which old black cloth lying about in city gutters alone appears to achieve."

Allingham's mastery of style is also evident in her descriptions of setting. For example, on the first page of *The China Governess*, she writes with her usual originality of "The great fleece which is London, clot-

ted and matted and black with time and smoke." Thus metaphor and rhythm sustain the atmosphere of the novel. Similarly, when the heroine is approaching Timothy's supposedly safe country home, the coming danger is suggested by Allingham's description of "a pair of neglected iron gates leading into a park so thickly wooded with enormous elms as to be completely dark although their leaves were scarcely a green mist amid the massive branches."

If evil were limited to the London slums, perhaps it could have been controlled by the police, admirably represented by the massive, intelligent Superintendent Charles Luke. When it draws in the mysterious past and penetrates the upper levels of society, however, Luke welcomes the aid of Albert Campion, who can move easily among people like the Kinnits. In the scene in which Campion is introduced, Allingham establishes his usefulness. Quietly, casually, Campion draws Toberman into an unintentional revelation of character. Because the heroine, who is eavesdropping, has already heard of Campion's sensitivity and reliability, she is ready to turn to him for the help that he gives her, and although he is not omniscient, he sustains her, calms her excitable fiancé, and brilliantly exposes the forces of evil.

Because Allingham builds her scenes carefully, realistically describing each setting and gradually probing every major character, the novels of her maturity proceed at a leisurely pace, which may annoy readers who prefer the action of other mysteries. Allingham is not a superficial writer. Instead, because of her descriptive skill, her satiric gifts, her psychological insight, and her profound dominant theme, she is a memorable one.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ALBERT CAMPION SERIES: *The Crime at Black Dudley*, 1929 (also known as *The Black Dudley Murder*); *Mystery Mile*, 1930 (revised 1968); *Look to the Lady*, 1931 (also known as *The Gyrth Chalice Mystery*); *Police at the Funeral*, 1931; *Sweet Danger*, 1933 (also known as *Kingdom of Death* and *The Fear Sign*); *Death of a Ghost*, 1934; *Flowers for the Judge*, 1936

(also known as *Legacy in Blood*); *Dancers in Mourning*, 1937 (also known as *Who Killed Chloe?*); *Mr. Campion, Criminologist*, 1937; *The Case of the Late Pig*, 1937; *The Fashion in Shrouds*, 1938 (revised 1965); *Mr. Campion and Others*, 1939 (revised 1950); *Traitor's Purse*, 1941 (also known as *The Sabotage Murder Mystery*); *Coroner's Pidgin*, 1945 (also known as *Pearls Before Swine*); *The Case Book of Mr. Campion*, 1947; *More Work for the Undertaker*, 1949 (revised 1964); *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 1952; *The Beckoning Lady*, 1955 (also known as *The Estate of the Beckoning Lady*); *Hide My Eyes*, 1958 (also known as *Tether's End* and *Ten Were Missing*); *Three Cases for Mr. Campion*, 1961; *The China Governess*, 1962; *The Mind Readers*, 1965; *Cargo of Eagles*, 1968 (with Youngman Carter); *The Allingham Case-Book*, 1969

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The White Cottage Mystery*, 1928 (revised 1975); *Six Against the Yard*, 1936 (with others); *Black Plumes*, 1940; *Take Two at Bedtime*, 1950 (also known as *Deadly Duo*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Wanted: Someone Innocent*, 1946; *No Love Lost*, 1954

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Blackkerchief Dick: A Tale of Mersea Island*, 1923; *Dance of the Years*, 1943 (also known as *The Gallantrys*)

PLAYS: *Dido and Aneas*, pr. 1922; *Water in a Sieve*, pb. 1925

NONFICTION: *The Oaken Heart*, 1941

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- Pike, B. A. *Campion's Career: A Study of the Novels of Margery Allingham*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987. Focuses on the representation of Albert Campion and his relationship to other fictional sleuths.
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- Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Allingham is the third of the three major figures discussed in this study, as her novels are compared with those of Christie and Rendell. Bibliographic references and index.
- Thorogood, Julia. *Margery Allingham: A Biography*. London: Heinemann, 1991. Discusses the lives of both Allingham and her fictional creation, Campion. Bibliographic references and index.

ERIC AMBLER

Born: London, England; June 28, 1909

Died: London, England; October 22, 1998

Type of plot: Espionage

CONTRIBUTION

Eric Ambler has been called the virtual inventor of the modern espionage novel, and though this is an oversimplification, it suggests his importance in the development of the genre. When he began to write spy novels, the genre was largely disreputable. Most of its practitioners were defenders of the British social and political establishment and right wing in political philosophy. Their heroes were usually supermen graced with incredible physical powers and a passionate devotion to the British Empire, and their villains were often satanic in their conspiracies to achieve world mastery. None of the protagonists in Ambler's eighteen novels is a spy by profession; the protagonists are recognizably ordinary, and Ambler's realistic plots were based on what was actually occurring in the world of international politics. In addition, because he

was a craftsman, writing slowly and revising frequently, he succeeded in making the espionage genre a legitimate artistic medium.

Many of Ambler's works have been honored. For example, *Passage of Arms* (1959) earned the Crime Writers' Association's Crossed Red Herring Award; *The Levanter* (1972) also won the Gold Dagger; and *The Light of Day* (1962) was awarded the 1964 Edgar for best novel by the Mystery Writers of America. In 1975 Ambler was named a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America and in 1986 he was awarded the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. In 1987, his autobiography *Here Lies: An Autobiography* (1985) received an Edgar Award for best critical/biographical work.

BIOGRAPHY

Eric Clifford Ambler was born in London on June 28, 1909, the son of Alfred Percy Ambler and Amy Madeline Ambler, part-time vaudevillians. He attended Colfe's Grammar School and in 1926 was

awarded an engineering scholarship to London University, though he spent much of his time during the two years he was there reading in the British Museum, attending law-court sessions, and seeing films and plays. In 1928 he abandoned his education to become a technical trainee with the Edison Swan Electric Company, and in 1931 he entered the firm's publicity department as an advertising copywriter. A year later, he set himself up as a theatrical press agent, but in 1934 he returned to advertising, working with a large London firm.

Throughout this period, Ambler was attempting to find himself as a writer. In 1930 he teamed up with a comedian, with whom he wrote songs and performed in suburban London theaters. In 1931 he attempted to write a novel about his father. Later, he wrote unsuccessful one-act plays. In the early 1930's he traveled considerably in the Mediterranean, where he encountered Italian fascism, and in the Balkans and the Middle East, where the approach of war seemed obvious to him.

In 1936 Ambler published his first novel of intrigue, *The Dark Frontier*, quit his job, and went to Paris, where he could live cheaply and devote all of his time to writing. He became a script consultant for Hungarian film director/producer Alexander Korda in 1938 and published six novels before World War II.

Ambler joined the Royal Artillery as a private in 1940 but was assigned in 1942 to the British army's combat photography unit. He served in Italy and was appointed assistant director of army cinematography in the British War Office. By the end of the war, he was a lieutenant colonel and had been awarded an American Bronze Star. His wartime experience led to a highly successful career as a screenwriter. He would spend eleven years in Hollywood before moving to Switzerland in 1968. Meanwhile, he resumed novel writing with *Judgment on Deltchev* (1951), the first of his postwar novels. In 1981 he was named an officer of the order of the British Empire. He died in London in 1998.

ANALYSIS

At the beginning of his career, Eric Ambler knew that his strengths were not in the construction of the

ingenious plots required in detective fiction. As he was seeking to establish himself as a writer of popular fiction, his only course was the espionage thriller; its popularity in Great Britain was the result of public interest in the secret events of World War I and apprehension about Bolshevism. These concerns were enhanced by the most popular authors in the field—John Buchan, whose Richard Hannay was definitely an establishment figure, and Sapper (the pen name of H. Cyril McNeile), whose Bulldog Drummond stories were reactionary, if not downright fascist, in tone.

Ambler found neither these writers' heroes nor their villains believable, and he viewed their plots, based on conspiracies against civilization, as merely absurd. Having seen fascism in his travels in Italy, he was radically if vaguely socialist in his own political attitudes, and his study of psychology had made it impossible for him to believe that realistically portrayed characters could be either purely good or purely evil.

Ambler decided, therefore, to attempt to write novels that would be realistic in their characters and depictions of modern social and political realities; he also would substitute his own socialist bias for the conservatism—or worse—of the genre's previous practitioners.

THE DARK FRONTIER

His first novel, *The Dark Frontier*, was intended, at least in part, as a parody of the novels of Sapper and Buchan. As such, it may be considered Ambler's declaration of literary independence, and its premises are appropriately absurd. A mild-mannered physicist who has been reading a thriller suffers a concussion in an automobile accident and regains consciousness believing that he is the superhero about whom he has been reading. Nevertheless, the novel also reveals startling prescience in its depiction of his hero's antagonists—a team of scientists in a fictitious Balkan country who develop an atomic bomb with which they intend to blackmail the world. Ambler's technical training had made him realize that such a weapon was inevitable, and though he made the process simpler than it later proved to be, his subject was clearly more significant than his readers could realize.

Though Ambler sought consciously in his first works to turn the espionage genre upside down, he

was quite willing to employ many of the elements used by his popular predecessors. Like Buchan's Richard Hannay, his early protagonists were often men trapped by circumstances but willing to enter into the "game" of spying with enthusiasm and determination. In his next three novels, *Background to Danger* (1937), *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938), and *Cause for Alarm* (1938), he set his plots in motion by the device Buchan employed in *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915). His naïve hero blunders into an international conspiracy, finds himself wanted by the police, and is able to clear himself only by helping to unmask the villains.

What makes these novels different, however, is Ambler's left-wing bias. The villains are fascist agents, working on behalf of international capitalism, and in *Background to Danger* and *Cause for Alarm* the hero is aided by two very attractive Soviet agents. In fact, these two novels must be considered Ambler's contribution to the cause of the popular front; indeed, one of the Soviet agents defends the purge trials of

1936 and makes a plea for an Anglo-Soviet alliance against fascism.

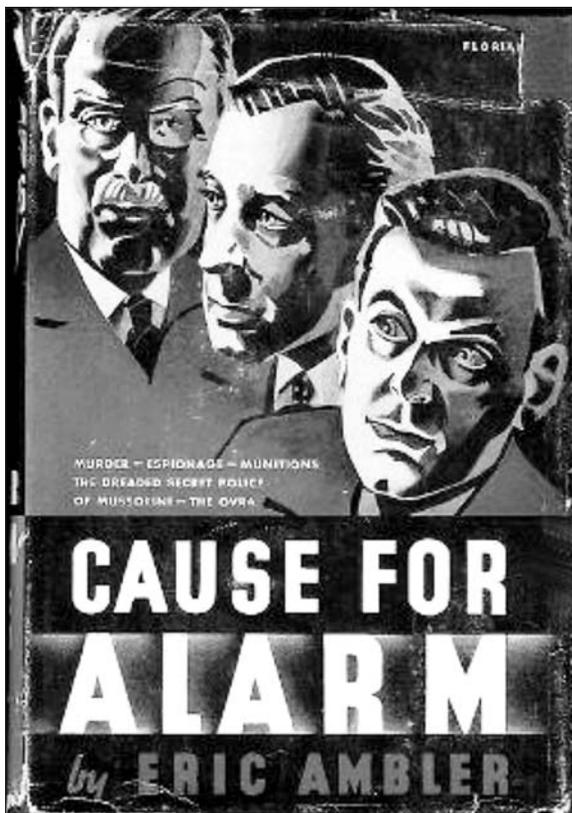
JOURNEY INTO FEAR

Ambler's most significant prewar novels, however, are *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939) and *Journey into Fear* (1940). The latter is very much a product of the "phony war" of the winter of 1939-1940, when a certain measure of civilized behavior still prevailed and the struggle against fascism could still be understood in personal terms. The ship on which the innocent hero sails from Istanbul to Genoa is a microcosm of a Europe whose commitment to total war is as yet only tentative. Ambler perfectly captures this ambiguous moment, and Graham, his English hero, is, in a sense, an almost allegorical representation of Great Britain itself, seeking to discover allies in an increasingly hostile world.

A COFFIN FOR DIMITRIOS

A Coffin for Dimitrios is Ambler's most important prewar work, a novel that overturns the conventions of the espionage thriller while simultaneously adopting and satirizing the conventions of the detective story. His protagonist, Charles Latimer, is an English writer of conventional detective stories. In Istanbul, he meets one of his fans, a colonel of the Turkish police, who gives him a foolish plot ("The butler did it") and tells him about Dimitrios Mackropoulos, whose body has washed ashore on the Bosphorus.

A murderer, thief, drug trafficker, and white slaver, Dimitrios fascinates Latimer, who sets out on an "experiment in detection" to discover what forces created him. Latimer discovers, as he follows the track of Dimitrios's criminal past through Europe, that Dimitrios is still alive, a highly placed international financier who is still capable of promoting his fortunes by murder. As Latimer comes to realize, Dimitrios is an inevitable product of Europe between the wars; good and evil mean nothing more than good business and bad business. Nevertheless, when Dimitrios has finally been killed, Latimer returns to England to write yet another detective story set in an English country house, even though the premises of his story—that crime does not pay and that justice always triumphs—have been disproved by Dimitrios.



SCREENWRITING AND A HIATUS

Ambler's career as a novelist was interrupted by World War II and by a highly successful career as a screenwriter. Among the many screenplays he wrote are *The Cruel Sea* (1953), which won him an Oscar nomination; *A Night to Remember* (1958), adapted from Walter Lord's 1956 book about the sinking of the *Titanic*; and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962). Several of his own novels were adapted into films, as well. *Journey into Fear* was filmed in 1942, directed by and starring Orson Welles, and was re-adapted in 1974. *Epitaph for a Spy* 1938 was adapted to film in 1943 as *Hotel Reserve*, starring James Mason, and *Background to Danger* (1943) starred George Raft, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre. *The Mask of Dimitrios*, starring Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre, was filmed in 1944, and *The Light of Day* was adapted as *Topkapi* in 1964.

When Ambler resumed writing novels after an eleven-year hiatus, the world had changed radically. In a sense, the world of the 1930's, though confusing to Ambler's protagonists, was morally simple: Fascism was an easily discerned enemy. By the early 1950's, however, the atomic spies, the revelations of Igor Gouzenko, the Philby conspiracy, and the ambiguities and confusions of the Cold War made the espionage novel, in Ambler's view, a much different phenomenon. For the most part, therefore, his later novels have nothing to do with the conflict between East and West and are usually set on the periphery of the Cold War—in the Balkans, the Middle East, the East Indies, Africa, or Central America. Furthermore, the narrative methods in the later works are more complex, frequently with no single narrative voice, and the tone is sometimes cynical.

JUDGMENT ON DELTCHEV

In 1950 Ambler began collaborating with Charles Rodda (under the pseudonym Eliot Reed) on five novels, but his own novels earned more attention. *Judgment on Deltchev*, his first solo postwar novel, was inspired by the trial of Nickola Petkov, who had been charged with a conspiracy to overthrow the Bulgarian government. Ambler set the novel in an unidentified Balkan country; the novel has little to do with the larger concerns of the Cold War, although its political

background is clearly presented as a conflict between "progressives" and reactionaries and Deltchev is accused of attempting to betray his country to "the Anglo-Americans."

The book was the result of Ambler's effort to find a new medium for the espionage novel, and it went further than any of his prewar novels in developing the premises of *Journey into Fear*. There his protagonist's problem was how to discover among a ship's passengers someone he could trust; in *Judgment on Deltchev*, the plot to assassinate the prime minister is peeled away, layer by layer, as Ambler's narrator, an English journalist, attempts to find out what really happened, again and again discovering the "truth," only to see it dissolve as yet another "truth" replaces it.

THE SCHIRMER INHERITANCE AND STATE OF SIEGE

Ambler's next two novels, which continued to exploit his interest in plots that are not what they seem, are of considerable interest, despite flawed endings. *The Schirmer Inheritance* (1953), about an American lawyer's search for a German soldier who is hiding in Greece, where he fought for the Greek communists after the war, is flawed by an unexplained change of heart by the young woman who accompanies the lawyer as his interpreter; she is manhandled by the German and yet suddenly and without explanation falls in love with him. In *State of Siege* (1956), set in a fictitious country in the East Indies, Ambler develops an apparently real love between his narrator, an English engineer, and a Eurasian girl and then permits him to abandon her when he finally is able to escape from the country.

After this shaky interlude, however, Ambler produced a series of novels that thoroughly explored the possibilities of the novel of intrigue and provided a variety of models for future practitioners.

THE LIGHT OF DAY AND DIRTY STORY

Ambler's usual hero is an average, reasonable person, but in *The Light of Day* and *Dirty Story* (1967), he makes a radical turn. Arthur Abdel Simpson, his Anglo-Egyptian narrator, is an opportunist with few real opportunities. In *The Light of Day*, Simpson, who works as a guide in Athens to pursue his career as a minor thief and pimp, is caught rifling a client's luggage

and is blackmailed into cooperating with him. Later, when arms are found behind a door panel of the car he agrees to drive across the Turkish border, the Turkish police force him to cooperate with them. Simpson's neutral position, in between two forces that in his view are equally exploitative and threatening, would seem to be Ambler's comment on the modern dilemma.

In this novel and in *Dirty Story*, in which Simpson is entangled first in the production of pornographic films and then in the politics of Central Africa but survives to become a trader in phony passports, the narrator may be odious, but he is also better than those who manipulate him. The narrator's strategy—to tell people what they want to hear, to play opponents against one another, to survive as best he can—is, Ambler seems to suggest, the same, in a sense, as everyone has been using since 1945.

THE INTERCOM CONSPIRACY

This vision informs *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969), probably Ambler's most distinguished postwar novel. It is based on an idea that appears frequently in Cold War espionage fiction—that the innocent bystander will find little to choose between the intelligence services of the two sides—while avoiding the mere paranoia that usually characterizes developments of this theme. It deals with the elderly, disillusioned heads of the intelligence services of two smaller North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries; they purchase a weekly newsletter, then feed its editor classified information that is so menacing in nature that the major intelligence agencies must pay for its silence. With this work, Ambler seemed to make the ultimate statement on espionage—as an activity that finally feeds on itself.

THE SIEGE OF THE VILLA LIPP

Ambler's other postwar works continued to exploit the themes he had already developed, but one of them, *The Siege of the Villa Lipp* (1977), is a remarkable experiment, the story of an international banker who launders illegally acquired funds for a variety of criminals. Here Ambler translates the tactics of modern intelligence agencies into the terms of modern business practices, in a sense returning to the premises from which he worked in his earliest fiction. His descriptions of the way banking laws and methods can be manipulated are so complex, however, that the novel too

often reads like an abstract exercise in economics.

All Ambler's novels develop what he has called his primary theme: "Loss of innocence. It's the only theme I've ever written." This seems to suggest his view of the plight of humanity in its confusing predicament during the period that has seen the rise and fall of fascism, the unresolved conflicts of the Cold War, and the increasing difficulty of the individual to retain integrity before the constant growth of the state. The methods that he has employed in the development of this vision, his great narrative skill, his lean and lucid prose, and his determination to anchor the espionage genre firmly within the conventions of modern literary realism, make his achievement the first truly significant body of work in the field of espionage fiction.

Robert L. Berner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Dark Frontier*, 1936 (revised 1990); *Background to Danger*, 1937 (also known as *Uncommon Danger*); *Cause for Alarm*, 1938; *Epitaph for a Spy*, 1938; *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, 1939 (also known as *The Mask of Dimitrios*); *Journey into Fear*, 1940; *Judgment on Deltchev*, 1951; *The Schirmer Inheritance*, 1953; *State of Siege*, 1956 (also known as *The Night-Comers*); *Passage of Arms*, 1959; *The Light of Day*, 1962; *A Kind of Anger*, 1964; *Dirty Story*, 1967; *The Intercom Conspiracy*, 1969; *The Levanter*, 1972; *Doctor Frigo*, 1974; *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*, 1977 (also known as *Send Me No More Roses*); *The Care of Time*, 1981

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Waiting for Orders*, 1991 (expanded as *The Story So Far: Memories and Other Fictions*, 1993)

SCREENPLAYS: *The Way Ahead*, 1944 (with Peter Ustinov); *United States*, 1945; *The October Man*, 1947; *The Passionate Friends: One Woman's Story*, 1949; *Highly Dangerous*, 1950; *Gigolo and Gigolette*, 1951; *The Magic Box*, 1951; *The Card*, 1952; *Rough Shoot*, 1953; *The Cruel Sea*, 1953; *Lease of Life*, 1954; *The Purple Plain*, 1954; *Yangtse Incident*, 1957; *A Night to Remember*, 1958; *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*, 1960; *Mutiny on the Bounty*, 1962; *Love Hate Love*, 1970

NONFICTION: *The Ability to Kill, and Other Pieces*, 1963 (essays); *Here Lies: An Autobiography*, 1985

EDITED TEXT: *To Catch a Spy: An Anthology of Favourite Spy Stories*, 1964

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CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG

Born: Vulcan, Michigan; May 2, 1905

Died: Glendale, California; July 18, 1969

Also wrote as Jo Valentine

Types of plot: Thriller; psychological; amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

MacDougal Duff, 1942-1945

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MACDOUGAL DUFF is a retired history teacher who has become an amateur detective. He is Scottish, unmarried, and middle-aged, with the reputation of "being able to see through a stone wall," although his main instrument for finding solutions is common sense.

CONTRIBUTION

The majority of Charlotte Armstrong's suspense works detail the perilous voyage of an innocent person

who, often by chance, is drawn into an underground world of intrigue and terror. Her stories revolve around whether something will be found or found out before a time limit is reached. Interest is centered on whether something will be done in time rather than on how a problem will be solved. In an innovative manner, she generally traces the progress of both the heroes and the villains as they work to obtain the same goal. Thematically, her fiction brings up a debate between a hard-boiled postwar cynicism and a sentimental idealism; it chronicles the mental distress of a major character who has to forge his own philosophy based on a synthesis of these two attitudes. Her prose also represents a synthesis of these strands, and though generally terse and tense, it is relieved with touches of humor.

Armstrong blends elements from Cornell Woolrich, in the way she reveals a violent underside to the everyday world, and Shirley Jackson, in the way she carefully constructs a dark atmosphere and in her ex-

pert character portraiture. Her strong female characters prefigure the independent female characters who were to emerge more fully later in the century, and her frequent use of occult themes anticipated the penchant for the supernatural in popular fiction that was to emerge in the 1970's.

BIOGRAPHY

Charlotte Armstrong was born on May 2, 1905, in Vulcan, Michigan, to Frank Hall Armstrong and Clara Pascoe Armstrong. Her mother was Cornish. Her father was of Yankee stock, an engineer at an iron mine. In her autobiographical novel *The Trouble in Thor* (1953), the character based on her father, the engineer Henry Duncane, is a kind of amateur detective. In exploring a problem in the mine, Duncane

never seemed to fumble. If he did not at once perceive the source of trouble and its remedy, he at once began to look for it. And Duncane's groping was so full of purpose; he hunted for cause with such order and clarity, that he was totally reassuring.

Armstrong attended high school in her hometown and went on to the University of Wisconsin, completing her bachelor of arts degree at Barnard College in 1925. She became a career woman in New York City. Her first job was selling classified advertisements over the telephone at *The New York Times*. She also worked as a fashion reporter and a secretary in an accounting firm. On January 21, 1928, she married Jack Lewi, an advertising man.

Armstrong retired to private life and eventually to the rearing of three children, managing to write in her spare moments. She began with poems and then moved to plays. Her tragedy, *The Happiest Days* (pr. 1939), and her comedy, *Ring Around Elizabeth* (pr. 1941), were both produced on Broadway. Neither did well at the box office, but while the second was in rehearsal, she sold her first mystery, *Lay on, Mac Duff!* (1942).

This and her next two novels were of the amateur investigator type and were moderately well received, but she seemed to find her métier with *The Unsuspected* (1946), which was a work of suspense. This work was filmed in 1947, and she relocated to Holly-

wood with her family from New Rochelle, New York, to supervise the screenplay.

The family remained in California, living in Glendale, and Armstrong continued writing. Her novel *Mischief* (1950) was adapted for film as *Don't Bother to Knock* (1952). In 1957, she received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for her novel *A Dram of Poison* (1956). Armstrong died after an illness on July 18, 1969, at Memorial Hospital in Glendale, California.

ANALYSIS

Marilyn Monroe brutally strikes her uncle from behind with an ashtray. A dead look is in her eyes. This is one nightmarish scene from the film *Don't Bother to Knock*. Charlotte Armstrong's works were particularly suitable for film treatment because of her tight plotting, her skill at cutting back and forth between the actions of different characters as the work builds toward a climax, and her use of visually striking images. Furthermore, her themes were those that were found in film noir of the 1940's and 1950's. She often described how an innocent character was drawn into a web of intrigue and murder, or she described the machinations of a manipulative, controlling, and murdering father figure.

To illustrate how easily an average person could be led astray, Armstrong often opened with some trivial event that became the first in a series of events that led inexorably into a troubling underworld. Even in her early, amateur detective works—*Lay on, Mac Duff!*, *The Case of the Weird Sisters* (1943), and *The Innocent Flower* (1945)—she had the sleuth, MacDougal Duff, become accidentally involved in the crime he would have to solve. Yet these novels, which make up the MacDougal Duff series, were not characteristic of her mature work, in which she focused on how an average person had to call up his own resources to escape or solve a crime.

THE WITCH'S HOUSE

Typical of these works in which the opening emphasized the way an average citizen can be caught in an undertow is *The Witch's House* (1963). Professor O'Shea is leaving his office and notices a colleague slipping something into his pocket. It looks like a sto-

len microscope part. Unable to question or even stop the observed professor in a mob of passing students, O'Shea ends up chasing him in his automobile. The chase leads him into a plot involving blackmail, incest, and murder.

A DRAM OF POISON

Another, even more original strategy Armstrong used to ground a suspense plot might be called the nonopening. *A Dram of Poison* uses this technique. The novel describes the bachelor life of Professor Gibson, chronicles his courtship and marriage to Rosemary James, and finally tells of his disillusionment with his wife. More than half of the novel has passed before the suspense plot proper—in which a disguised bottle of poison is mislaid—begins. All the materials and human predispositions that will lead to a harrowing tale of suspense are rooted in a simple, undramatic tale of a May-December romance.

Armstrong noted that she was not interested in puzzling her readers with a mystery, but in creating suspense. She distinguished between the genres by bringing up the hackneyed scene of a heroine tied to the railroad tracks. According to Armstrong, "If we were to come upon the scene *after* the train has been by, we will be involved in a whodunit." If the work is suspense, the girl has not yet been run over: "It has not happened yet. We, as readers, don't want to see it happen. We fear that it may."

In *The Witch's House*, for example, O'Shea is badly hurt and taken in and concealed by a senile old woman. All the necessary clues are plain to the reader, but the question remains: Will he be located by the people who are searching for him before he dies of his wounds? It is the pressure of time, then, that turns the screws of suspense. Armstrong pointed out that an "ordeal is converted to suspense with the addition of a time limit."

THE DREAM WALKER

Not only did Armstrong give her heroes a small and rapidly dwindling amount of time to achieve their object, but she gave equal time to the villains as well. In keeping with her ideas about the transparency of suspense, Armstrong did not hide the villains' attempts to carry out their plots; she made them an integral part of the story line. In *The Dream Walker* (1955), for example, much of the suspense and fasci-

nation of the tale arise from watching how the mastermind of a plot to discredit an elder statesman works to cover his own tracks and tries to outguess both those battling him and his own henchmen. It is not only the observation of the heroes' reactions, but also the back-and-forth reactions of each side in a deadly game that create an engrossing text.

In Armstrong's novels, tremendous stress is placed on the Everyman who is put in a desperate situation. Not only is the protagonist faced with a crime, but also he or she is often forced to look at the world in a new way. The result is a synthesis of realism and idealism, with those starting too far in either direction learning to be either more caring or less sentimentally dependent.

MISCHIEF

Jed Towers in *Mischief* begins as a cynic. He is introduced while in the act of breaking up with his girlfriend because she wanted to show charity to a panhandler. By the end of the novel, he has grown enough to return to the hotel room where he had left an innocent child with an unbalanced babysitter, telling himself, "Mind your own business. Take care of yourself, because you can be damn sure nobody else will." Knowing his involvement may hurt his career, he nevertheless discards his unconcerned worldview and acts like a man.

THE UNSUSPECTED

In *The Unsuspected*, Mathilda Frazier must make a change in the opposite direction. Her overly trusting, blind dependence on her guardian has to be abandoned, and she must face the evil in the world. In an ending in which Armstrong matches psychological change to symbolic image, Mathilda rejects her mentor by diving into a pit of garbage to rescue someone whom the mentor has trapped there. (This ending is in opposition to that of *Mischief*, where Jed must run upstairs to save the menaced child.)

CHARACTERIZATION

Armstrong's concern with characters who grow is clear. She has said, "The most fascinating characters are those who change under the pressure of happenings." Her fiction centers on such characters and involves finely shaded character drawings. Her picture of Professor Gibson in *A Dram of Poison* is a masterly

example. With consummate delicacy, she details Gibson's gradual disillusionment with his wife and himself, spurred by the acerbic comments of his sister.

Armstrong is equally adept at portraying women. She often developed heroines who were strong, outspoken, and forthright. Anabel O'Shea, who appears in *The Witch's House*, is a model of this type. When her husband disappears, she assesses the lackadaisical, or at least bored, attitude of the police, who view the missing person as a straying husband, and determines that she must find him on her own. She proves herself wily, resourceful, and persevering in the search; dogged in following leads; and undaunted by the interfering do-gooders or villains who appear in her path. Anabel O'Shea is an example of the independent female character whom Armstrong was already developing in the 1940's (in *The Unsuspected's* Aunt Jane, for example). She created a pattern for the type of self-assured woman that would play a large part in popular literature of the 1960's and 1970's.

It might be added that one of Anabel O'Shea's most charming characteristics is her ability to see some humor in her situation, and it is one of Armstrong's trademarks to inject comedy into even her most unsettling works. In *The Witch's House*, comic relief is provided by the characters of Parsons and Vee Adams. Both humorously romanticize and misinterpret the disappearances. Parsons, the university gossip, ascribes the whole situation to a Russian plot, while Vee, the daughter of one of the missing men, depicts herself as a tragic heroine, dreaming of graveyards and headstones. These characters' comic misapprehensions introduce a strain of comedy into the generally distressing story.

This novel also brings up another major Armstrong theme, that of the fallen or partially fallen father figure. Vee Adams's father, in this novel, though a respected academic, has been secretly corrupted and betrayed by his young wife. More characteristically, Armstrong's plots involve a paternal character who has fallen one degree and may fall further.

THE GIFT SHOP

In *The Gift Shop* (1967), the father's earlier peccadillo may bring down his son, a state governor. The father, Paul Fairchild, had a brief liaison that produced a

daughter who is now to be kidnapped to force the father's eldest son, the governor, to pardon the murderer, Kurtz. Further extending the thematic richness of this story, Armstrong has Kurtz's daughter be the one trying to kidnap Fairchild's little girl, so that the plot breaks down into a battle between a daughter and a son—Fairchild's youngest son tries to find and protect the missing girl—to preserve their fathers' tarnished reputations.

It might be said that many of Armstrong's concerns and stylistic decisions emerge from the chastened worldview that arose in the United States during and after World War II. The involvement of the United States in this war ended a period of isolation and, more important, involved the common people in the armed forces and on the home front in a common struggle. It was a war that called on everyone. These historical conditions must have played a part in Armstrong's deep interest in how an ordinary person reacts when plunged into unusual and trying situations. Furthermore, the returning veterans brought back with them a serious, realistic, un-sentimental attitude toward the world and world politics. Such an attitude is visible in Armstrong's disdain for corny emotionalism and her unflinchingly honest appraisal of authority figures. Her works lack the squeamishness associated with many earlier female writers and employ sparing but open, dispassionate descriptions of physical violence and torture.

Paradoxically, it is also these attitudes that shape Armstrong's outlook on the occult. Armstrong constantly uses supernatural components in her writings, thus becoming one of the first to use in suspense works an element that would become prominent in American popular writing in the 1970's; still, as may be guessed, she brings in this element only to debunk it. *The Dream Walker*, for example, concerns the small-time actress Cora Steffani, who begins to achieve notoriety by her supernatural excursions. She falls asleep for a few minutes and awakens to recall vividly a meeting with a famous person in another part of the country. It is learned that at exactly the same time in that other part of the country Cora, or a woman closely resembling her, has met the famous person under the same circumstances of which Cora has dreamed. Clearly, there are actually two women, and they are involved in an ingenious, subterra-

nean subterfuge, but all the trappings of a supernatural story are present.

REALISM

Finally, it should be pointed out that Armstrong's style embodies the same stance of detached but caring realism that her best characters are led to adopt. Chiefly concerned with human psychology, she spends little space on the description of setting or milieu but concentrates on conversation, action, and character portrayal. She is always precise and concise, writing simple, unadorned sentences that prove perfect at conveying her no-nonsense point of view. Take this thumbnail sketch from *The Dream Walker*, which describes how a rich, idle young man has been led into bad company:

So there he was. Shut out. With the income, to be sure, but understanding nothing about its sources. Raymond's education, I can guess, was the most superficial gloss. He seemed to have nothing to do but spend money he never made.

He got to spending his money in a strange place.

In this passage Armstrong conveys a complex mixture of psychological and social circumstances in the humblest language and caps and condenses the whole downward progress of Raymond with her final, evocative, but still simple sentence. Each word is chosen with thoughtfulness and with the construction of the entire text in mind.

LEMON IN THE BASKET

Although she seldom departed from this reserved style, at climactic points in her story she could use simple but effective strategies to convey the excitement of the moment. In *Lemon in the Basket* (1967), the heroine is running up the stairs to save the little Arabian prince just as the assassin is about to enter his room. Armstrong builds to the moment of truth with a series of disconnected clauses:

As Inga went into the boy's bathroom to fetch him a glass of water . . .

As the door to that east guest room, that had been standing on a slant, began to swing inward, opening . . .

As the boy sat absolutely still, staring into the eyes of the sudden man . . .

By the lightning-like juxtaposition of several simultaneous scenes, she is able to create a harrowing moment without departing from her use of simple, undramatic description.

After all, it is a world of suspense and terror, the one of which Charlotte Armstrong wrote and in which she lived during the long aftermath of World War II. Not only was she brilliant at creating stories that registered some of the angst of this situation but also, in the philosophies her major characters developed, she offered a coherent way of facing this unfriendly world.

James Feast

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MACDOUGAL DUFF SERIES: *Lay on, Mac Duff!*, 1942; *The Case of the Weird Sisters*, 1943; *The Innocent Flower*, 1945 (also known as *Death Filled the Glass*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1946-1960 • *The Unsuspected*, 1946; *The Chocolate Cobweb*, 1948; *Mischief*, 1950; *The Black-Eyed Stranger*, 1951; *Catch-as-Catch-Can*, 1952 (also known as *Walk Out on Death*); *The Trouble in Thor*, 1953 (also known as *And Sometimes Death*); *The Better to Eat You*, 1954 (also known as *Murder's Nest*); *The Dream Walker*, 1955 (also known as *Alibi for Murder*); *A Dram of Poison*, 1956; *The Seventeen Widows of Sans Souci*, 1959

1961-1970 • *Something Blue*, 1962; *Then Came Two Women*, 1962; *A Little Less than Kind*, 1963; *The Mark of the Hand*, 1963; *The One-Faced Girl*, 1963; *The Witch's House*, 1963; *Who's Been Sitting in My Chair?*, 1963; *The Turret Room*, 1965; *Dream of Fair Woman*, 1966; *Lemon in the Basket*, 1967; *The Gift Shop*, 1967; *The Balloon Man*, 1968; *Seven Seats to the Moon*, 1969; *The Protégé*, 1970

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Albatross*, 1957; *Duo*, 1959; *I See You*, 1966

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *The Happiest Days*, pr. 1939; *Ring Around Elizabeth*, pr. 1941

SCREENPLAYS: *The Unsuspected*, 1946; *Don't Bother to Knock*, 1952

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- Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.:

Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay on Armstrong detailing her life and works.

- Knight, Stephen Thomas. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Broad overview of the important trends and developments in two centuries of detective fiction. Places Armstrong in her greater historical context.
- The New Yorker*. Review of *The Case of the Weird Sisters*. 18 (January 30, 1943): 64. Brief but useful review of one of Armstrong's most famous works, the second in her MacDougal Duff series.

MICHAEL AVALLONE

Born: New York, New York; October 27, 1924

Died: Los Angeles, California; February 26, 1999

Also wrote as Michele Alden; James Blaine; Nick Carter; Troy Conway; Priscilla Dalton; Mark Dane; Jean-Anne de Pre; Fred Frazer; Dora Highland; Amanda Jean Jarrett; Stuart Jason; Steve Michaels; Memo Morgan; Dorothea Nile; Edwina Noone; Vance Stanton; Sidney Stuart; Max Walker; Lee Davis Willoughby

Types of plot: Private investigator; historical; thriller; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ed Noon, 1953-1993

Nick Carter, 1964

April Dancer, 1966

Coxeman, 1968-1971

Craghold, 1971-1975

Satan Sleuth, 1974-1975

Butcher, 1979-1982

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

ED NOON is a private investigator portrayed in more than thirty novels. He is a swashbuckling detective-for-hire who risks life and limb in the course of solving crimes. Fluent in street talk, he seasons his conversation with quotes and quips of baseball and

motion-picture immortals, and he is not averse to using wisecracks to fluster cops or suspected criminals.

CONTRIBUTION

Michael Avallone produced more than 150 novels and a host of short stories within the first three decades of his writing career. Many of his works were published as drugstore-rack flashy-cover paperbacks with provocative titles such as *Never Love a Call Girl* (1962), *Sex Kitten* (1962), and *And Sex Walked In* (1963). His best work, however, is crime fiction. Although he wrote many volumes under pseudonyms and many of them are gothics, it was his famous Ed Noon series of crime novels that captured fans of mystery fiction. He brought stories of crime detection down to the level of high school dropouts, with fast-moving plots, lusty women, and fistfights. Where Agatha Christie might carefully plant clues to the murder of a single country gentleman or woman, Avallone spiced up his chapters with murders, suicides, and gun battles that left a slew of corpses to be accounted for. Smarter than the cops he often works with, Ed Noon solves his jigsaw puzzle at the end of each novel in a flurry of heart-stopping action.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Angelo Avallone, Jr., was born in New York on October 27, 1924. He attended Theodore

Roosevelt High School in the Bronx. Like millions of his generation, he went into military service in World War II; he served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946 and was discharged with the rank of sergeant. On his return from military service, he became a stationery salesperson, a position he held for nine years (1946-1955). He was married to Lucille Asero in 1949 and they had one son. In 1960, he was married to Fran Weinstein and they had one daughter and one son.

An avid motion-picture fan in his youth, Avallone toyed with writing his own scripts. He entered the literary world in 1953 with the publication by Holt, Rinehart of his first detective novel, *The Tall Delores*. During the next five years, while writing his first ten Ed Noon books, he served as an editor for Republic Features in New York (1956-1958) and for Cape Magazines, New York (1958-1960).

During the 1960's, when the United States was torn asunder by the rise of the Civil Rights movement, the war on poverty, the hippie counterculture, and the anti-Vietnam War crusade, Avallone churned out nearly fifty books under the pseudonyms Nick Carter, Sidney Stuart, Priscilla Dalton, Edwina Noone, Dorothea Nile, and Troy Conway. In the early 1970's, he wrote under the names Jean-Anne de Pre and Vance Stanton. Under his own name he produced another twenty-seven books by 1978. Many were novelizations of popular screenplays; others were gothics. His works, many of them marketed as slick-cover drugstore paperbacks, sold well enough to provide Avallone with a comfortable income. He eventually moved to East Brunswick, New Jersey.

Often the subject of controversy among authors and critics of crime fiction, Avallone enjoyed the role his books provided him. He shared the secrets of his success in writing and publishing crime novels in "How I Sold a Series of Paperback Mystery Novels" (published in 1971 in *Writer's Digest*), which focuses on his Ed Noon series. He served as chairman of the television committee (1958-1960) and the film committee (1965-1970) of the Mystery Writers of America. Frequently he appeared before school audiences in New York and New Jersey schools. He fired off a series of pointed articles critical of other scholars and

young critics in the mystery-fiction field. By 1980, he was to enjoy a series of sympathetic articles by his peers about his contributions to the field of crime fiction. He died in Los Angeles in 1999.

ANALYSIS

Often grouped with contemporaries such as Mickey Spillane, Davis Dresser, and Henry Kane, Michael Avallone found himself writing in a similar vein and for a very similar audience. Challenging situations, introduced in Avallone's first series of private-eye novels, are resolved by a rough-and-tumble six-foot character named Ed Noon, who dominated a slew of books issued between 1953 and 1993.

THE TALL DELORES

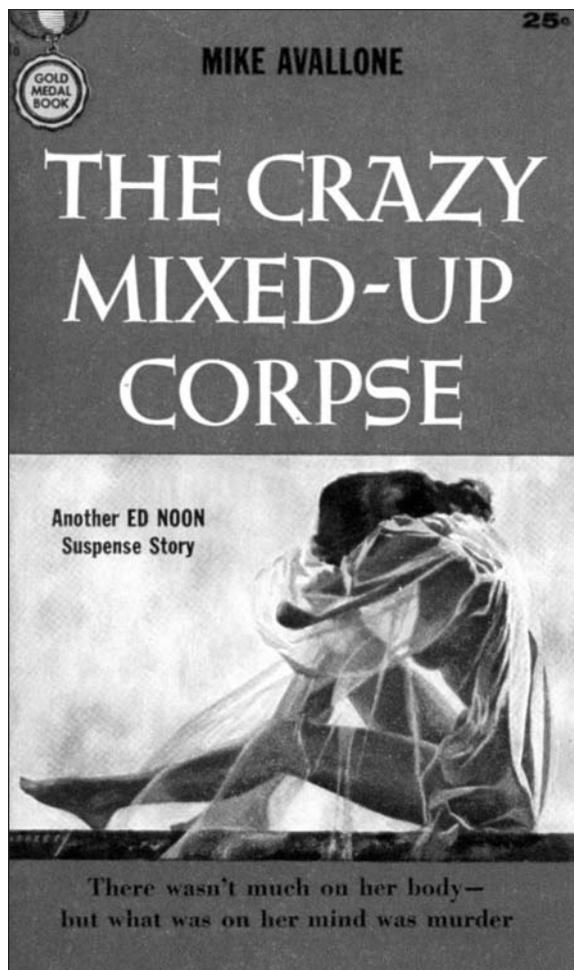
Private investigator Noon is a city slicker whose street talk is filled with wisecracks that defuse or create explosive situations while shielding a mind clever enough to unravel tangled affairs. In Avallone's first novel, *The Tall Delores*, Noon introduces himself and his style:

Great business, this private-peeper racket. You get paid to look through keyholes, mess up fresh playboys for old guys who wanted to scare them off their child brides, find missing persons who usually preferred to stay lost, and get your own face pushed in once in awhile. For a fee, of course.

I'm buck-hungry like the rest of my fellow Americans. And not crazy about taxes either. So money dominated all the time I had. My time was anybody's who could pay for it.

And now the Tall Delores wanted me to find Harry (also Tall) Hunter for her for the fifth part of a grand. Well, it was worth it. I'd done things for a part of a grand before that weren't so grand.

For some forty years this American detective hero was to roam the streets, exuding his love for films, baseball, and beautiful women, while trying to keep the world straight for middle-class America. "With this recipe Avallone has inadvertently created a private Nooniverse," writes critic Francis M. Nevins, Jr. Other critics were appalled by Avallone's atrocious misuse of language, plots that lacked substance, and freakish scenes. Yet Noon carved a place for himself in mystery fiction, and if literary giants and academics



scorned his technique, it did not bother his fans (or Avallone's publishers).

Apparently, some confusion exists over which book was actually Avallone's first Ed Noon book. Many lists cite *The Spitting Image* (1953) as the first; in *The Spitting Image*, however, Noon is hired because he had solved the case of *The Tall Delores*. The Library of Congress card catalog numbers confirm that *The Tall Delores* preceded *The Spitting Image*.

AVALLONE'S NOONIVERSE

Avallone matched the prolific production and copied a bit of the creative style of England's famous Edgar Wallace in the three decades of his mystery and fiction writing. As the postwar world unfolded, Avallone's works reflected the American cultural trends toward realism and away from modesty and the growing concern

about crime and juvenile delinquency. His graphic descriptions of nudity preceded the appearance of *Playboy's* playmates in the raw; his hard-knuckled physical violence came before *West Side Story* (1957) carried that mode to the stage and screen. Avallone's Nooniverse and Mickey Spillane's characters opened the way for James Bond and his more sophisticated European settings. College students quoted lines from Avallone and Spillane as they toiled over William Shakespeare and John Milton. The age of the paperback began just as Avallone began publication; ironically, his first three Noon books had first editions in hardcover (his third was titled *Dead Game*, 1954).

Avallone joined other Eisenhower-era writers in indulging in a new frankness about sex. This openness is reflected in Ed Noon titles issued in the 1950's and 1960's: *The Case of the Bouncing Betty* (1957), *The Case of the Violent Virgin* (1957), *Lust Is No Lady* (1964), and *The February Doll Murders* (1966).

Perhaps the most mind-boggling of Ed Noon's escapades occurs in *Shoot It Again, Sam* (1972), in which the private eye, accompanying a corpse sitting up in a casket being sent back East, is captured by foreign agents and brainwashed into believing that he is the real Sam Spade. In his spy novels written under the pseudonym Nick Carter—*The China Doll*, *Run, Spy, Run*, and *Saigon* (all published in 1964)—the plots take even stranger twists.

OTHER SERIES

The scope of Avallone's crime novels was ever-widening as he interspersed his writing of the Noon series with numerous other series produced under pen names such as Nick Carter, Sidney Stuart, Priscilla Dalton, Edwina Noone, Dorothea Nile, Troy Conway, Jean-Anne de Pre, Vance Stanton, and Stuart Jason. The books written under women's names are gothics. Four volumes of short stories were collected and published: *Tales of the Frightened* (1963), *Edwina Noone's Gothic Sampler* (1966), *Where Monsters Walk* (1978), and *Five Minute Mysteries* (1978). In addition, after 1960 he published more than fifty other novels, many of which were novelizations of screenplays (as were many of his crime novels).

In Avallone's good-guy, bad-guy world, specific cultural icons are repeatedly celebrated. His novels are

liberally sprinkled, for example, with references to baseball teams and outstanding players of his generation. One of the most fascinating aspects of Avallone's crime novels is the way in which they reflect his love for motion pictures. A fan of films produced in the 1930's and 1940's, he filled his plots and dialogues with allusions to Hollywood masterpieces. Whereas Edgar Wallace moved from crime fiction to theater and film writing in his career, Avallone adapted screenplays to crime novels; both writers profited by such shifts.

In sum, it can be said that Avallone's novels reflect the passions and prejudices of middle America in the mid-twentieth century. Of his favorite protagonist Avallone said, "I might as well be keeping a diary when I write the Ed Noon books." Thoughtful readers experience these books as uncensored, often garbled, yet strangely compelling flights of heroic fantasy.

Paul F. Erwin

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ED NOON SERIES: 1953-1960 • *The Tall Delores*, 1953; *The Spitting Image*, 1953; *Dead Game*, 1954; *Violence in Velvet*, 1956; *The Case of the Bouncing Betty*, 1957; *The Case of the Violent Virgin*, 1957; *The Crazy Mixed-Up Corpse*, 1957; *The Voodoo Murders*, 1957; *Meanwhile Back at the Morgue*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Alarming Clock*, 1961; *The Bedroom Bolero*, 1963 (also known as *The Bolero Murders*); *The Living Bomb*, 1963; *There Is Something About a Dame*, 1963; *Lust Is No Lady*, 1964 (also known as *The Brutal Kook*); *The Fat Death*, 1966; *The February Doll Murders*, 1966; *Assassins Don't Die in Bed*, 1968; *The Horrible Man*, 1968; *The Doomsday Bag*, 1969 (also known as *Killer's Highway*); *The Flower-Covered Corpse*, 1969

1971-1978 • *Death Dives Deep*, 1971; *Little Miss Murder*, 1971 (also known as *The Ultimate Client*); *London, Bloody London*, 1972 (also known as *Ed Noon in London*); *Shoot It Again, Sam*, 1972 (also known as *The Moving Graveyard*); *The Girl in the Cockpit*, 1972; *Kill Her—You'll Like It!*, 1973; *Killer on the Keys*, 1973; *The Hot Body*, 1973; *The X-Rated Corpse*, 1973; *The Big Stiffs*, 1977; *Dark on Monday*, 1978

NICK CARTER SERIES (AS CARTER): *Run, Spy*,

Run, 1964 (with Valerie Moolman); *Saigon*, 1964 (with Valerie Moolman); *The China Doll*, 1964 (with Valerie Moolman)

APRIL DANCER SERIES: *The Birds of a Feather Affair*, 1966; *The Blazing Affair*, 1966

COXEMAN SERIES (AS CONWAY): *Come One, Come All*, 1968; *The Man-Eater*, 1968; *A Good Peace*, 1969; *Had Any Lately?*, 1969; *I'd Rather Fight than Swish*, 1969; *The Big Broad Jump*, 1969; *The Blow-Your-Mind Job*, 1970; *The Cunning Linguist*, 1970; *A Stiff Proposition*, 1971; *All Screwed Up*, 1971; *The Penetrator*, 1971

CRAGHOLD SERIES (AS NOONE): *The Craghold Legacy*, 1971; *The Craghold Creatures*, 1972; *The Craghold Curse*, 1972; *The Craghold Crypt*, 1973

SATAN SLEUTH SERIES: *Fallen Angel*, 1974; *The Werewolf Walks Tonight*, 1974; *Devil, Devil*, 1975

BUTCHER SERIES (AS JASON): *Slaughter in September*, 1979; *The Judas Judge*, 1979; *Coffin Corner, U.S.A.*, 1980; *Death in Yellow*, 1980; *Kill Them Silently*, 1980; *Go Die in Afghanistan*, 1981; *The Hoodoo Horror*, 1981; *Gotham Gore*, 1982; *The Man from White Hat*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1963-1970 • *Shock Corridor*, 1963; *The Doctor's Wife*, 1963; *The Main Attraction*, 1963 (as Michael); *Felicia*, 1964 (as Dane); *The Night Walker*, 1964 (as Stuart); *90 Gramercy Park*, 1965 (as Dalton); *Corridor of Whispers*, 1965 (as Noone); *Dark Cypress*, 1965 (as Noone); *Heirloom of Tragedy*, 1965 (as Noone); *The Darkening Willows*, 1965 (as Dalton); *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.: The Thousand Coffins Affair*, 1965; *The Silent, Silken Shadows*, 1965 (as Dalton); *Young Dillinger*, 1965 (as Stuart); *Daughter of Darkness*, 1966 (as Noone); *Kaleidoscope*, 1966; *Madame X*, 1966; *Mistress of Farrondale*, 1966 (as Nile); *Terror at Deepcliff*, 1966 (as Nile); *The Evil Men Do*, 1966 (as Nile); *The Second Secret*, 1966 (as Dalton); *The Victorian Crown*, 1966 (as Noone); *The Felony Squad*, 1967; *The Man from AVON*, 1967; *Hawaii Five-O*, 1968; *Mannix*, 1968; *My Secret Life with Older Women*, 1968 (as Blaine); *Seacliffe*, 1968 (as Noone); *The Coffin Things*, 1968; *The Incident*, 1968; *The Vampire Cameo*, 1968 (as Nile); *Hawaii Five-O: Terror in the Sun*, 1969; *Missing!*, 1969; *The Killing Star*, 1969;

A Bullet for Pretty Boy, 1970; *One More Time*, 1970; *The Cloisonné Vase*, 1970 (as Noone)

1971-1982 • *A Sound of Dying Roses*, 1971 (as de Pre); *Keith Partridge, Master Spy*, 1971; *The Night Before Chaos*, 1971; *The Third Woman*, 1971 (as de Pre); *When Were You Born?*, 1971; *Aquarius, My Evil*, 1972 (as de Pre); *Die, Jessica, Die*, 1972 (as de Pre); *The Fat and Skinny Murder Mystery*, 1972; *The Walking Fingers*, 1972; *Who's That Laughing in the Grave?*, 1972; *153 Oakland Street*, 1973 (as Highland); *The Beast with Red Hands*, 1973 (as Stuart); *The Third Shadow*, 1973 (as Nile); *Warlock's Woman*, 1973 (as de Pre); *Death Is a Dark Man*, 1974 (as Highland); *Only One More Miracle*, 1975; *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen*, 1981; *The Cannonball Run*, 1981; *Friday the Thirteenth Part Three*, 1982; *The Scarborough Warning*, n.d.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Tales of the Frightened*, 1963; *Edwina Noone's Gothic Sampler*, 1966 (as Noone); *Five Minute Mysteries*, 1978; *Where Monsters Walk*, 1978

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1960-1970 • *All the Way*, 1960; *Stag Stripper*, 1961; *The Little Black Book*, 1961; *Women in Prison*, 1961; *Flight Hostess Rogers*, 1962; *Never Love a Call Girl*, 1962; *Sex Kitten*, 1962; *Sinners in White*, 1962; *The Platinum Trap*, 1962; *And Sex Walked In*, 1963; *Lust at Leisure*, 1963; *Station Six—Sahara*, 1964; *Krakatoa, East of Java*, 1969; *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, 1970; *Hornets' Nest*, 1970; *Keith, the Hero*, 1970; *The Doctors*, 1970; *The Haunted Hall*, 1970; *The Last Escape*, 1970; *The Partridge Family*, 1970

1971-1983 • *Love Comes to Keith Partridge*, 1973; *The Girls in Television*, 1974; *Carquake*, 1977; *CB Logbook of the White Knight*, 1977; *Name That Movie*, 1978; *Son of Name That Movie*, 1978; *The*

Gunfighters, 1981 (as Willoughby); *A Woman Called Golda*, 1982; *Red Roses Forever*, 1983 (as Jarrett)

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B

MARIAN BABSON

Ruth Stenstream

Born: Salem, Massachusetts; December 15, 1929

Types of plot: Cozy; amateur sleuth; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Douglas Perkins and Gerry Tate, 1971-

Trixie and Evangeline, 1986-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DOUGLAS PERKINS and GERRY TATE are partners of the London public relations firm Perkins and Tate. They get involved in solving murders through their publicity work. Not a cat lover, Perkins ends up doing publicity for a cat show and becomes a cat owner himself.

TRIXIE DOLAN and EVANGELINE SINCLAIR are two former stars of the silver screen who find their acting talents are no longer in demand. They stumble into murders that must be investigated.

CONTRIBUTION

Marian Babson displays in her crime novels a debt to Agatha Christie and other writers from the period known as the Golden Age of mysteries. However, the world envisioned by Babson is an irrational one, far from the orderly, hierarchical world of the English tea cozies. Her characters, children among them, tend to be lonely, alienated individuals striving for order in a chaotic world. Animals, particularly cats, contribute to the dynamics of Babson's mysteries, often revealing submerged personality traits of their owners. Skilled in character analysis, Babson delves into the minds of outwardly normal people, questioning the very meaning of normality. She has more interest in exploring the psychological effects of suspicion on characters than in focusing on murder itself or subsequent justice.

Seldom do detectives—professional or amateur—unravel the mystery; rather, the culprits continue their lives of violence, ultimately bringing about discovery through their own actions. Babson experiments with a variety of narrative techniques and professional settings. Her first-person narrators, who hold few illusions about life, usually appear more concerned with the terror of the suspected threat than with the crime itself.

Although reviewers in the United States and in Babson's adopted England have generally paid little attention to her work, she has managed to carve out a niche for herself. Her quirky characters, experiments in narrative style, and humorous, if sometimes implausible, plots have earned Babson a dedicated following on both sides of the Atlantic. Her ten years as head of the Crime Writers' Association (1976-1986) also endeared her to her colleagues. In 2004, *Malice Domestic* gave Babson its Agatha Award for lifetime achievement for her contributions to mystery and detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in New England on December 15, 1929, Marian Babson moved to London in 1960 and continues to make her home there, with periodic visits to the United States. Details of her private life remain scant. She worked briefly on the campaign of a Boston politician, where she learned the basics of public relations. Her experiences lent to the creation of her first series hero, Douglas Perkins, a publicist-turned-detective. Later, she worked as a secretary on temporary stints for a variety of employers, including a pop singer, a psychiatrist, a safe maker, and a solicitor. In 1976, she became secretary of the Crime Writers' Association, a post she held until 1986.

Babson has said that her writing mysteries evolved from her fondness for reading them. Between 1971 and 1987, she wrote more than twenty mysteries. In one interview, she named straight suspense and crime mixed with comedy as her two favorite genres, yet she does not limit her work to them, saying, "I don't think writers ought to be too predictable." Her versatility is evidenced by her work for various magazines, including *Woman's Realm* and *Woman's Own*.

ANALYSIS

In Marian Babson's work, murder usually does not initiate the mystery. Instead, the characters, including the children, attempt to regain some order as they suffer from unexpected and unprovoked disruptions to their lives. In *A Trail of Ashes* (1984; also known as *Whiskers and Smoke*), Rosemary empathizes with the young as they learn that "life was not the way it was presented on the television screen. When people were cruelly wounded, they did not leap up with a merry laugh after the commercial—they lay there and bled." Characters in Babson's mysteries do bleed, if only metaphorically, and they continue to struggle with loneliness.

A TRAIL OF ASHES

Babson frequently provides pets as companions for her disaffected characters. Errol, a Maine coon cat featured in *A Trail of Ashes*, offers little consolation for the Blakes when they first arrive. He typifies an aggressive, undisciplined society that prides itself on independence. Rosemary explains, "The brute was twice the size of our lovely Esmond; a burly, thick-necked, square-headed animal, given an unexpectedly rakish look by the fact that the tip of one ear had evidently been chewed off in some private dispute of long ago." Ultimately, assertive Errol and the Blakes establish a rapport, a tribute to newfound friendships.

PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN

Babson's sensitive portrayal of children in crime novels was displayed early in her career. Typically, these children struggle with unsettling disruption in their lives: parental abuse, neglect, or death. In *Unfair Exchange* (1974), nine-year-old Fanny displays an obnoxious attitude that proves to be a reaction to the neglect by her vivacious yet thoughtless mother, Caro-

line. Babson captures the dichotomy of Fanny's character by showing the child seeking comfort by clutching a huge stuffed giraffe she has named for a sports car, Alfa-Romeo. Twinkle, the child star in *Murder, Murder, Little Star* (1977), appears as arrogant and rude as Fanny. Twinkle's ineffectual mother accompanies her on the set but offers no real support. Narrator Frances Armitage, hired as Twinkle's chaperone, recognizes the loneliness of the child and her career concerns. Thought to be ten but really a teenager, Twinkle fears the loss of good parts. Once her life is no longer in jeopardy, Twinkle seems destined for a role suggested by Frances: Lady Jane Grey, the child bride and queen.

The inhabitants of Babson's world are invariably victims of loneliness and emotional deprivation. Though her stories are not unleavened by wit, the worlds she creates leave her readers with the sense that events are random after all, and that little is worthy of trust.

PERKINS AND TATE SERIES

Cover-Up Story (1971), Babson's first crime novel, relays the exploits of series character Douglas Perkins of the public relations firm Perkins and Tate. Perkins finds himself embroiled in a mystery while representing an American country music troupe led by the tyrannical Black Bart. When one of the performers is injured under suspicious circumstances, Perkins and his partner Gerry Tate must find the murderer while trying to maintain peace among the rest of the troupe's unusual members. In *Murder on Show* (1972; also known as *Murder at the Cat Show*), death calls on Perkins again—this time at a cat show he and partner Tate have been hired to publicize. When a gold cat statue goes missing and the show organizer turns up dead, Perkins must unravel the mystery, while trying to maintain his studied ambivalence toward an endearing kitten clamoring for his attention. In *Tourists Are for Trapping* (1989), Perkins and Tate investigate the death of an elderly member of an American tourist group, and in *In the Teeth of Adversity* (1990), they help a dentist to the stars deal with the bad press surrounding the death of a top model in his office.

Although the Perkins series novels have been praised for their plotting and characterization, some

critics describe them as apprentice novels, in which Babson was able to hone her narrative and comedic style in addition to developing several of her recurrent themes and plot devices such as the centrality of feline characters, quirky plot scenarios, and the way her protagonists stumble unintentionally on mysterious and deadly events.

THE LORD MAYOR OF DEATH

The Lord Mayor of Death (1977) involves Kitty, a five-year-old who is easier to like than Babson's other child characters, Fanny and Twinkle, but no less lonely. Irishman Michael Carney lures Kitty into accompanying him to ceremonial festivities. The red lunch box he gives her contains a bomb with which he plans to kill the lord mayor of London and nearby celebrants.

A victim of child abuse, Michael loathes children, a fact that emerges as his thoughts are presented. Nevertheless, he must cater to Kitty's whims to accomplish his plan. Increasingly aware of children's unpredictability, Carney has to placate the fretful Kitty. Fearfully, he remembers, "When kids had tantrums, they threw things." By presenting the lunch box to Clover the Clown to boost his spirits, Kitty unknowingly thwarts Carney's plans. The tension in the novel arises from the juxtaposition of innocent children with a murderous villain.

THE TWELVE DEATHS OF CHRISTMAS

The Twelve Deaths of Christmas (1979), set in a London rooming house, demonstrates Babson's narrative skill in presenting multiple murders. An omniscient narrator alternates with the crazed, unknown murderer in giving accounts of the seemingly random murders and the subsequent fear they instill. Adroit placing of red herrings enables the murderer's identity to remain a secret until the end. The reader, however, traces a tortuous descent through layers of madness as the murderer wrestles with a sense of alienation, painful headaches, and incomprehension of events.

The murderer, finally diagnosed as suffering from a brain tumor, uses free association in selecting unconventional instruments of death. For example, when walking in Queen Mary's Rose Garden on the sixth day of Christmas, the murderer notices a metal pull ring torn from a can and recalls a metal loop with a blade, a device used in a post office for opening pack-

ages. This thought is followed by feelings of irritation toward a youthful mugger, lying in a drunken stupor while his blaring transistor radio shatters the peace of the garden. "I remember something else, too," the murderer muses. "Blood makes an excellent fertilizer for roses." Increasingly, he becomes paranoid but remains superficially normal, smiling and waving to neighbors but thinking, "I hate them all." Vivid description reinforces the disquieting atmosphere in the rooming house. The table set for the Christmas feast holds, among other things, "skeletal stalks of celery" and a carving knife "nearly as long and sharp as a sword."

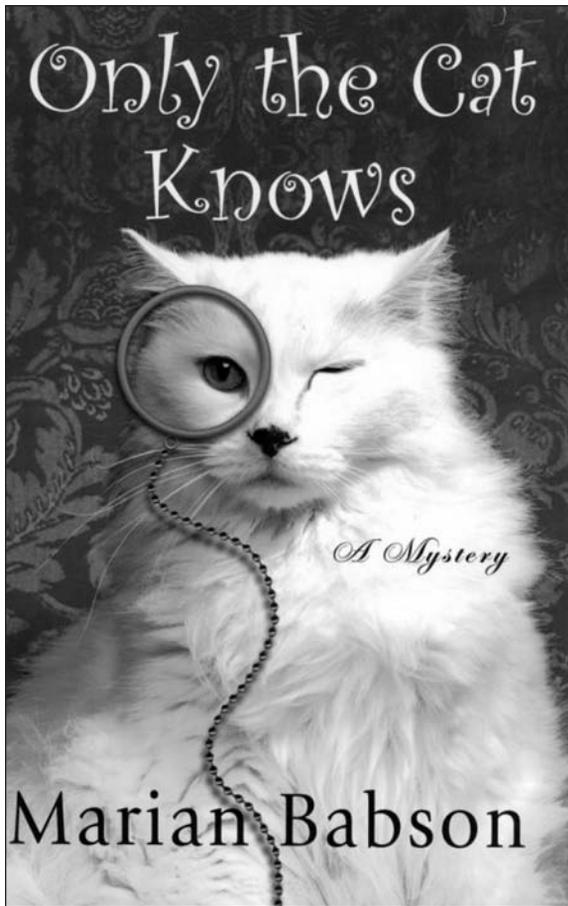
DANGEROUS TO KNOW

Babson's *Dangerous to Know* (1980) is notable for some of her most effective imagery. Certainly, Tom Paige, the newsman narrator, could be expected to manipulate words skillfully. Working the graveyard shift, when wire services around the world shut down for the night, Tom expresses his disillusionment with the modern world. Describing teleprinters, he remarks, "They're the mechanical Recording Angels of the twentieth century. Everything spread out before your eyes and everything given the same value."

Later, he decries the superficiality of newspapers and their reading audience: "Life in a newspaper office is full of loose ends." He despairs of the possibility of writing for an educated reading public, eager to resolve substantive issues. His already jaundiced attitude toward humankind becomes even more cynical when he learns that his trusted coworkers share the guilt for recent crimes, including murder. The conclusion of the mystery offers little consolation to the reader who anticipates the reestablishment of order.

THE CRUISE OF A DEATHTIME

With *The Cruise of a Deathtime* (1983), Babson returns to multiple murders and an Agatha Christie-like resolution. This work won the first Poisoned Chalice Award, which recognizes works for the large number of bizarre murders they incorporate. The murders and the suspects are confined to the *Empress Josephine*, a cruise ship headed for Nhumbala, ten days' trip from Miami. Among the victims are five film viewers "skewered to their seats—rights through the back of their chairs!" An extortion note threatens additional



murders each day of the cruise. The resolution of the mystery is reminiscent of Christie's *Ten Little Niggers* (1939; also known as *And Then There Were None*).

As Babson isolates her characters on the cruise ship, she explores people's insensitivity to one another. The novel begins with an introduction to Mortie Ordway and Hallie Ordway, television quiz show contestants who "had triumphed, winning not only the Loot of a Lifetime, but climaxing it by winning the Cruise of a Lifetime, as well." Their making fools of themselves on the show had entertained innumerable viewers, who never considered the emotional cost to the Ordways, called "Oddways" by the offensive quizmaster. Their villainy is shown to be in part a response to their having become objects of derision. Before shooting her pearl-handled revolver, passenger Mrs. Anson-Pryce recognizes the complicity of society in criminal activities: "Truly, we manufacture our own monsters."

WEEKEND FOR MURDER

Weekend for Murder (1985; also known as *Murder on a Mystery Tour*) also evokes memories of Golden Age predecessors, set as it is in secluded Chortlesby Manor. Woven throughout the novel are allusions to famous authors and their works; for example, the manor's cat is named Roger Ackroyd and two of the characters are Sir Cedric Strangeways and Lieutenant Algernon Moriarty. The culprit, a disaffected literary critic, draws on pre-1940 mysteries as he plots his crime. A playful tone pervades the book.

THE CAT WHO WASN'T A DOG

In *The Cat Who Wasn't a Dog* (2003; also known as *Not Quite a Geisha*), the sixth installment in the Trixie Dolan and Evangeline Sinclair series, Babson's grand dames of the stage find themselves embroiled in a new mystery when fellow actress Dame Cecile Savoy and another actress friend discover Savoy's beloved Pekinese dead. Mystery soon engulfs the aging actresses when they become implicated in the death of a taxidermist with whom Savoy has consulted for the preservation of her precious Pekinese and in the disappearance of a housekeeper.

As in most of her works, Babson's plot involves a savvy and exotic cat—this time, a Japanese bobtail named Cho Cho San, who knows more than she is telling about the murders. Babson makes no secret of the murderer's identity, but the sniping between the four actresses and their desperate efforts to disentangle themselves from suspicion of murder provides ample entertainment.

ONLY THE CAT

Only the Cat (2007; also known as *Only the Cat Knows*) breaks little new ground, but Babson delivers another quirky mystery that requires subtle feline skills to unravel. Everett Oversall, a wealthy and reclusive tycoon, employs a stable of beautiful women at his remote castle. When one of them, Vanessa, goes into a coma after a fall, her twin brother Vance decides to unravel the mystery.

Experienced as a female impersonator, Vance goes undercover as his sister to unravel the mystery behind her accident. In typical fashion, Vanessa's cat Gloriana is the only trustworthy figure involved in the mystery and ultimately proves invaluable to his investigation.

Babson's characters lack the depth of previous books, but she depicts Vance's increasingly desperate attempts to maintain his female persona to excellent comedic effect.

Beatrice Christiana Birchak
Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PERKINS AND TATE SERIES: *Cover-Up Story*, 1971; *Murder on Show*, 1972 (also known as *Murder at the Cat Show*); *Tourists Are for Trapping*, 1989; *In the Teeth of Adversity*, 1990

TRIXIE AND EVANGELINE SERIES: *Reel Murder*, 1986; *Encore Murder*, 1989; *Shadows in Their Blood*, 1991; *Even Yuppies Die*, 1993; *Break a Leg, Darlings*, 1995; *The Cat Who Wasn't a Dog*, 2003 (also known as *Not Quite a Geisha*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1973-1980 • *Pretty Lady*, 1973; *The Stalking Lamb*, 1974; *Unfair Exchange*, 1974; *Murder Sails at Midnight*, 1975; *There Must Be Some Mistake*, 1975; *Untimely Guest*, 1976; *Murder, Murder, Little Star*, 1977; *The Lord Mayor of Death*, 1977; *Tightrope for Three*, 1978; *So Soon Done For*, 1979; *The Twelve Deaths of Christmas*, 1979; *Dangerous to Know*, 1980; *Queue Here for Murder*, 1980 (also known as *Line Up for Murder*)

1981-1990 • *Bejewelled Death*, 1981; *Death Beside the Seaside*, 1982 (also known as *Death Beside the Sea*); *Death Warmed Up*, 1982; *A Fool for Murder*, 1983; *The Cruise of a Deathtime*, 1983; *A Trail of Ashes*, 1984 (also known as *Whiskers and Smoke*); *Death Swap*, 1984 (also known as *Paws for Alarm*); *Weekend for Murder*, 1985 (also known as *Murder on a Mystery Tour*); *Death in Fashion*, 1985; *Fatal Fortune*, 1987; *Guilty Party*, 1988

1991-2007 • *The Diamond Cat*, 1994; *Canapés for the Kitties*, 1997 (also known as *Miss Petunia's Last Case*); *The Company of Cats*, 1999 (also known as *The Multiple Cat*); *To Catch a Cat*, 2000 (also known

as *A Tealeaf in the Mouse*); *The Cat Next Door*, 2001 (also known as *Deadly Deceit*); *Please Do Feed the Cat*, 2004 (also known as *Retreat from Murder*); *Only the Cat*, 2007 (also known as *Only the Cat Knows*)

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Cooper, Ilene. Review of *The Cat Next Door*, by Marian Babson. *Booklist* 98, no. 15 (April 1, 2002): 1308. In this work, Tikki the cat helps solve a murder of a family member in the garden. Reviewer notes that there are too many characters but that many will still enjoy the novel.

_____. Review of *The Cat Who Wasn't a Dog*, by Marian Babson. *Booklist* 100, no. 1 (September 1, 2003): 67. Reviewer finds the novel centering on Trixie and Evangeline to be entertaining. Notes the presence of a cat and recipes, two features of Babson's works.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Only the Cat*, by Marian Babson. 75, no. 7 (April 1, 2007): 308. The reviewer finds this novel about a female impersonator investigating his twin's death to be improbable but enjoyable and suspenseful.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains a biocritical essay on Babson looking at her works and life.

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Contains chapters on postwar British crime fiction, women detectives, and the Golden Age, which provide background from which to evaluate Babson's style.

Zaleski, Jeff. Review of *To Catch a Cat*, by Marian Babson. *Publishers Weekly* 247, no. 47 (November 20, 2000): 50. In this suspenseful psychological thriller, an eleven-year-old boy witnesses a murder while stealing a cat. Reviewer praises Babson's mastery of suspense.

DESMOND BAGLEY

Born: Kendal, Cumbria, England; October 29, 1923

Died: Southampton, England; April 12, 1983

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage

CONTRIBUTION

Desmond Bagley wrote fourteen novels. His work has often been recommended to the young adult reader as well as to the adult fan of suspense and adventure fiction. His typical main character is an intelligent man who thinks of himself as an ordinary workingman. The protagonist is able to use his wits as well as his special hobbyist or professional expertise to solve mysteries or, more likely, to escape danger. The settings include countries or environments—South Africa, the Yucatán, Greenland, Iran—that are foreign to most English readers' experience. Suspense, special knowledge, and setting all contribute to the reader's sense of discovery and enjoyment. Bagley puts himself in the camp of John le Carré, considering espionage more evil than necessary, rather than in the camp of Ian Fleming, whose hero cannot lose or be representative of anything less than the right. Bagley did not become as famous as did le Carré or Robert Ludlum in espionage or as Dick Francis has become in tales of the amateur sleuth. It may be that Bagley's novels lack the signature touches, the disenchanting George Smiley, the ultracomplex plots, the horse-racing connection, which have made the reputations of these authors. Nevertheless, Bagley's novels are worth discovering. His main characters have integrity, and they are driven to solve their various problems in ways that engage the reader.

BIOGRAPHY

Desmond Bagley was born Simon Bagley in Kendal, in the county of Westmorland, 260 miles north of London. His parents ran a theatrical boardinghouse, where, as a small child, he met Basil Rathbone, who was playing Shakespearean roles with Sir Frank Benson's touring company at the time. Bagley attended schools in Bolton and Blackpool, but he did not follow in the public school tradition. The spirit of Bagley's

characters is discernible in his own act of quitting school at the age of fourteen to take on his first job, as a printer's devil. He subsequently worked in a factory making plastic electrical fittings and, when World War II broke out, in an aircraft factory, making parts for planes.

In 1947, Bagley traveled to South Africa. He is said to have departed from Blackpool during a blizzard, to have gone three thousand miles across the Sahara Desert guided by star and compass, and to have traveled across Nigeria, then west to Kampala, Uganda, where he contracted malaria. Next he traveled down the African continent, working in asbestos and gold mines, until he reached Natal Province, South Africa. There, he wrote feature stories for the press and pieces for radio, worked as a nightclub photographer, and began to indulge his hobbies of sailing and motorboating. Bagley became a freelance journalist in 1957, and he later became a script writer for a South African subsidiary of Twentieth Century Fox. He married Joan Margaret Brown in 1960.

Bagley lived his later years on the English Channel island of Guernsey. In 1983, he suddenly became ill and was taken to the Southampton General Hospital, where he died on April 12.

ANALYSIS

Desmond Bagley's early novels offer the kind of suspense that is created when a workingman fights against the odds. The first two published, *The Golden Keel* (1963) and *High Citadel* (1965), offer pure adventure, and most of the villains are purely bad.

The thoughts of Bagley's characters are portrayed through a first-person narrative or are implied through a third-person point of view. Despite the ordinariness of their voices, Bagley's characters can be found exploring existential questions in the mode of John le Carré's writing. Bagley's protagonists search for their identities, having lost wives, brothers, memories, names, jobs, or faces (by plastic surgery).

Bagley customarily began writing with the first chapter and "a group of people in an interesting situa-

tion and environment.” He knew “roughly” how he wanted the book to end. Then, “the characters and environment interact (I regard the place as another character in the book) and the plot grows organically like a tree.” The result is that Bagley’s main characters, such as Jaggard in *The Enemy*, undergo an experience that parallels life and adds to the reader’s store of experience accordingly.

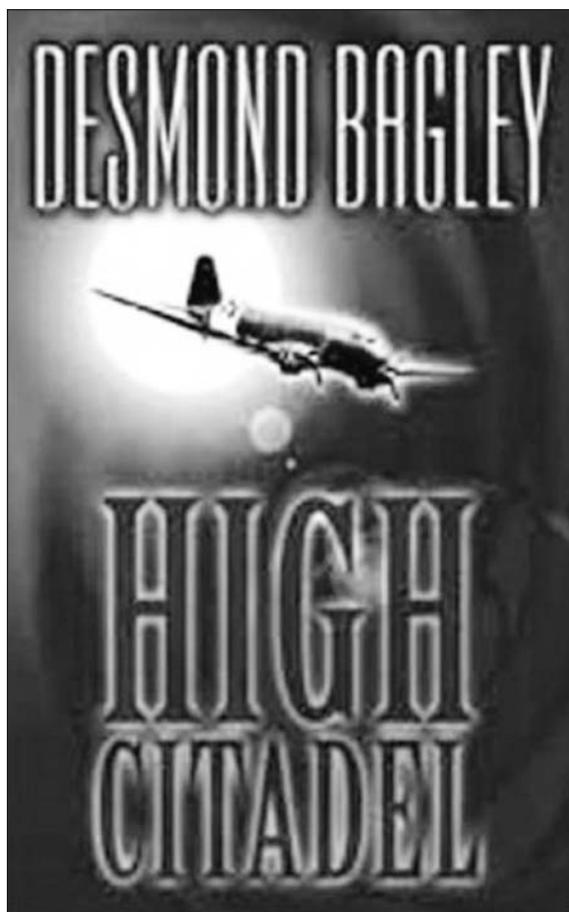
THE GOLDEN KEEL

The Golden Keel takes place in an environment with which the author is familiar (South Africa), and it has a main character, Peter Halloran, who bears a resemblance to the author, having worked in an aircraft factory during World War II, emigrated to South Africa with no ready job or capital, and spent time with boats. Bagley’s characters are in some ways rough, and they are ready to risk an adventure. Halloran, for example, has just lost his wife. He has strong survival instincts, but he now has less to lose. The language of this book is sometimes awkwardly plain—at the beginning, for example, and during romantic scenes. Bagley is a good storyteller, however, and the fun and excitement of the book prevail. It is a story of man against the sea as well as of man against man.

HIGH CITADEL

The setting of *High Citadel* includes snow-covered mountains complete with avalanches and blizzards. The major character, O’Hara, an alcoholic pilot about to lose his last job, has a reason for his character flaws: He was tortured as a Korean War prisoner. His ordeal in the story is brought on by the actions of South American communist terrorists, and it allows him to purge himself of the effects of his war experience. This book, while concentrating on O’Hara, is narrated in the third person so that Bagley can enter the minds of other characters fighting the terrorists. The narrator moves back and forth across a mountain pass, between characters, so that the readers may view the battle lines of the high citadel. Discovering whether the stranded victims of the plane crash will survive an attack makes an exciting reading experience.

These and the other amateur-sleuth adventure books also contain fascinating specialized information about such things as geology, archaeology, rain forests, and mountain climbing. Bagley said that he researched ex-



tensively throughout his career as a novelist. He acquired information about avalanches for *The Snow Tiger* (1974), for example, during a period of twelve years, in remote places such as the Antarctic and the South Pole and by talking to snow and ice scientists. He said that he took photographs but no notes, that he had a retentive memory, “a mind like flypaper.”

THE SPOILERS

Even in the early books, however, Bagley goes beyond interesting facts and mere suspense to touch on concerns with political intrigue. In *The Spoilers* (1969), the characters are amateur agents rather than amateur sleuths. The assembled team is made up of the protagonist, who is a doctor, and one idealist, one con man, two mercenaries, one torpedo specialist, and one fast-talking journalist. Their mission is to make an assault on the drug trade in the Middle East and includes a strange and secret underground bombing in Iran.

In his later novels, Bagley continued to deliver intense stories of one person's mind, creating sophisticated plots using a storehouse of tricks and motifs, such as handlers and operatives, special techniques for following a subject, and ghastly, customized ammunition—all available to the authentic spy. Bagley did not, apparently, consider himself a writer in a certain genre of fiction. He claimed to be mystified by his reputation as a writer of crime and suspense: "My books are not specifically about crime although some people think they are." He admitted to fitting under the umbrella of suspense. "Yet," he went on to say, "all novels must have suspense or they are nothing."

LANDSLIDE AND THE FREEDOM TRAP

Bagley should also be remembered for his interest in the question of identity. This can be seen as early as *Landslide* (1967). The book is a good adventure story: A geologist is hunted by and exposes murderers, and he alerts the area to a geological fault that will jeopardize lives. Yet paralleling the physical threats involved in the adventure story are the psychological dangers for the protagonist, Robert Boyd. This man was burned so severely in an accident that he could not be identified with certainty. He might have been one of two different people, one antisocial, one not, before he suffered amnesia and had plastic surgery, which gave him a completely new face. He fears that he may have an evil side that will return if his memory comes back. Boyd earns love and respect without solving the mystery of his identity.

In *The Vivero Letter* (1968), the protagonist reacts against the overheard words of a thoughtless girl. She calls him a gray little man, and in reaction he is emboldened to launch an expedition into the steamy jungles of the Yucatán. In *The Tightrope Men* (1973), an innocent civilian has been given plastic surgery while he is unconscious, and he wakes up looking like a certain Finnish scientist sought by the Russians. In *The Freedom Trap* (1971; revised as *The Mackintosh Man*, 1973), appearance fools the reader. The protagonist appears to be an incarcerated criminal and speaks as such in his own voice, but he proves to be a government agent whom no one left alive in the government knows to be an agent.

THE ENEMY

In *The Enemy* (1977), Bagley brings together a down-to-earth male protagonist, high suspense, specialized information, political issues, and espionage. This novel serves as a good example of Bagley's mature voice and of his having achieved control of the ingredients of his art. Unlike his early female characters, Penelope Ashton in *The Enemy* is drawn with enough subtlety to avoid false notes, sufficiently engaged in the action to engage the reader's sympathy, and as technically proficient and resourceful as Malcom Jaggard, the protagonist. The maturity and authority of Jaggard are evident in his voice, and as the book is told in first person, Jaggard's voice is the dominant element of Bagley's style.

Jaggard characterizes himself early in the book as someone who tries to make no false claims. (By the end of the book, it will have become clear how difficult, though important, it is to do so.) When he talks about his growing acquaintance with Penelope Ashton, modesty, self-mockery, and an intentional restraint characterize his voice and style: "And, as they say, one thing led to another and soon I was squiring her around regularly. . . . We could have been a couple of Americans doing the tourist bit." "Squiring her around" and "the tourist bit" are ordinary clichés that show the character's intentional avoidance of elitism.

Bagley leads his readers to the experiences of secondary characters through the narrator's viewpoint. Jaggard is conscientiously tentative about describing what may be in someone else's mind. Sometimes he retreats to being sure only about his own thoughts: "After six weeks of this I think we both thought that things were becoming pretty serious. I, at least, took it seriously enough to go to Cambridge to see my father."

Bagley's style also includes humor. A situation in a Swedish town in *The Enemy* is described as

becoming positively ridiculous; two of Cutler's men were idling away their time in antique shops ready for the emergence of Ashton [Penny's father] and Benson and unaware that they were being watched by a couple of Russians who, in their turn, were not aware of being under the surveillance of the department. It could have been a Peter Sellers comedy.

Later, Jaggard says, "I followed behind, passing Ashton who was already carrying a tail like a comet."

The fun is only a backdrop, however, to the serious themes of the novel. Jaggard's authority is demonstrated when Jaggard says, "You won't get me back in the department. I'm tired of lies and evasions; I'm tired of self-interest masquerading as patriotism. It came to me when Cregar [a dishonest, power-hungry member of the House of Lords] called me an honest man. . . . How could an honest man do what I did to Ashton?" (Jaggard refrained from telling Ashton the truth because of the agency's orders. Ignorance of the truth led to Ashton's death.)

Bagley is a writer who follows rules of decency, and thus he is often recommended to young adult readers. Jaggard does what most young adults would like to do, telling his employers repeatedly to "stuff it." In *The Enemy*, Bagley continues to offer both young and old readers the catharsis of suspense. There are searches for a man who assaulted Penny's sister with battery acid and exciting searches for Penny's father and his valet (which entail a look into the past, from which it is determined that Penny's father, Ashton, was a brilliant physicist and Russian defector). There are searches for Ashton's cleverly hidden research and a desperate search for Penny herself when she disappears from sight.

A catharsis of a new kind is provided, however—a purging that depends on admitting that the good man is not always rescued alive, that the good elements in government do not necessarily emerge victorious, that even the hero does not always get to live happily ever after. As Jaggard says at the beginning of the last chapter, "this is not a fairy tale." In this chapter, it is learned that he is terminally ill.

As in the previous novels, *The Enemy* shows evidence of research having been done in specialized areas—this time computer programs, model railroads, and genetic engineering. The railroad-schedule microprocessors are discovered to be a disguised computer, fascinatingly described, for storage of Ashton's theoretical genetic research. There is much information about *Escherichia coli*, a species of intestinal bacteria, about mutations of it caused by the splicing of DNA strings, and about dangers to the human race if this

sort of engineering is not controlled.

Espionage and intrigue in *The Enemy* are not gratuitous. Competing power-hungry departments within the British government exemplify the human faults of pride, covetousness, and consequent deceit. The one supervisor Jaggard has believed to be true finally equivocates and is prepared to make deals in the end, while Jaggard himself has betrayed Ashton.

At the time Bagley wrote *High Citadel*, he seemed to have thought that political decisions could be made sharply and with clarity. The North Koreans were evil, there were evil effects from their torturing of O'Hara, and the enemy in the South American setting of that novel is also evil. The main character, O'Hara, must learn to conquer his psychological problems, and this action constitutes a vague subplot. There is nothing vague about who the villains are, however, and only the female characters in the novel and a college professor have any qualms about using a range of weapons, ending with bombing, to hurt and kill the communists. By 1977, Bagley was less definite. In his books of that time, the main character's fellow spy is more likely than not to be a double agent, and the people supposedly on the same side at home may not be helping. *The Enemy* begins with these quotations: "We have met the enemy, and he is ours," from Oliver Hazard Perry, heroic American commodore; "We have met the enemy, and he is us," from Walt Kelly, subversive sociological cartoonist.

Anna R. Holloway

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Golden Keel*, 1963; *High Citadel*, 1965; *Wyatt's Hurricane*, 1966; *Landslide*, 1967; *The Vivero Letter*, 1968; *The Spoilers*, 1969; *Running Blind*, 1970; *The Freedom Trap*, 1971 (revised as *The Mackintosh Man*, 1973); *The Tightrope Men*, 1973; *The Snow Tiger*, 1974; *The Enemy*, 1977; *Flyaway*, 1978; *Bahama Crisis*, 1980; *The Legacy*, 1982; *Windfall*, 1982; *Night of Error*, 1984; *Juggernaut*, 1985

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H. C. BAILEY

Born: London, England; February 1, 1878

Died: Llanfairfechen, North Wales; March 24, 1961

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Reggie Fortune, 1920-1948

Joshua Clunk, 1930-1950

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

REGGIE FORTUNE studied medicine to become a family practitioner but instead becomes fully employed by Scotland Yard as a medical expert in cases of murder. Married to Joan Amber early in the series, the cherubic Fortune prefers a quiet country life in the company of flowers, his Persian cat, and good food. An unsolved crime, however, awakens limitless zeal and a surprising ruthlessness.

JOSHUA CLUNK, the surviving partner of Clunk and Clunk, is the solicitor of choice among London's lower-class criminals. Chanting bits of hymns and gushing piety, old Josh is suspected by all of hypocrisy and double-dealing. He deploys a staff of talented and attractive in-

vestigators, usually to expose large-scale and dangerous criminals.

CONTRIBUTION

Short stories about Reggie Fortune, first collected as *Call Mr. Fortune* in 1920, won an immediate following both in Great Britain and in the United States. Ingenious in plot, full of arresting characterization, and equally satisfying as detective puzzles or as moral fables, these stories established H. C. Bailey as a master of his art and Fortune as one of the world's great fictional detectives. In 1930 the series of novels featuring Joshua Clunk began. These works had elaborate plots; to Bailey's great skill in narration were added extended development of character, a variety of narrative voices and points of view, and a special concern for youths, especially the poor and the victimized. In 1934, Fortune also began appearing in novels; he appeared solely in novels after 1940.

Involved in police procedures, and normally on excellent terms with the Criminal Investigation Department, Fortune must nevertheless be considered a

private investigator because of his independent judgments and actions, especially when he finds the police futile or mistaken. Drawling, purring Reggie and crooning, gushing Joshua are exactly alike in the intelligence with which they perceive and the energy with which they attack the wicked. Both will deceive the police and execute their own justice if by doing so they can protect the innocent or prevent a clever criminal from escaping.

BIOGRAPHY

H. C. Bailey was born Henry Christopher Bailey in London on February 1, 1878, and he lived most of his life there. After preparing at the City of London School, he studied at Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, and was graduated with honors in classics in 1901. From 1901 to 1946, he worked for London's *Daily Telegraph*, advancing from drama critic to war correspondent and finally to editorial writer.

Bailey wrote his first novel while still an undergraduate. With only slight variation, he managed to publish a substantial historical novel each year, 1901 through 1928; by that time, he had also, with a coauthor, written a play based on one of his novels, written a history of the Franco-Prussian War, and written what became the first four collections of Reggie Fortune stories. The thirtieth and last historical novel, *Mr. Cardonnel*, appeared in 1931. Unlike his detective stories, Bailey's historical novels vary enormously in scene and characters. *The Roman Eagles* (1928), a history for children, is set in ancient Britain at the time of Julius Caesar's invasion. *Mr. Cardonnel* begins in 1658, the last year of Oliver Cromwell's reign. *The God of Clay* (1908) is about the young Napoleon Bonaparte. Other tales have medieval settings, take place during the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain, or carry the reader to nineteenth century Italy. Apart from being good yarns, these works represent much knowledge and sympathy, and all were completed while Bailey worked at the *Daily Telegraph*.

In 1908 Bailey married Lydia Haden Janet Guest. They had two daughters and lived in a London suburb. Bailey wrote as if he enjoyed writing; his books were largely created between dinner and bedtime. His other hobbies were walking and gardening, both of which

receive attention in his novels. Bailey was a founding member of the Detection Club, founded around 1930. E. C. Bentley, author of *Trent's Last Case* (1913), was another member, as well as being Bailey's colleague at the *Daily Telegraph*. G. K. Chesterton, whose Father Brown has much in common with Fortune and Clunk, was "Ruler" of the club until his death in 1936. Hugh Walpole, Agatha Christie, and Dorothy L. Sayers were among the other members.

Bailey was short and lean, with ample black hair, a black mustache, and thick eyeglasses. He concentrated his imaginative and creative life in his work, and was a retiring and respectable citizen. In many of his novels he created settings where mountains meet the sea: He and his wife retired to such a place, in North Wales. He died in 1961.

ANALYSIS

The critics who argue that H. C. Bailey's detective fiction is dated, dull, and full of class prejudice are mistaken. Though only nineteen years younger than Arthur Conan Doyle, Bailey was distinctly a man of the twentieth century. His plots exhibit a perceptive candor about sexual motives and human aberrations. There is none of the snobbery that holds that ancestry, education, or profession guarantee superiority. There is also no "land of hope and glory" patriotism. If liberal churchmen and civil servants are often narrow-minded and self-important in Bailey's work, so too are retired army officers and landed gentlemen. Fortune avoids the pomp and ceremony of upper-class institutions whenever he can; he is kind to his brother-in-law the bishop, but he is not impressed by him. Fortune favors his eating clubs, not on the basis of their membership but for the quality of their muffins. Mr. Clunk is of humble origins and chiefly serves the poor; Bailey intends that the reader think Clunk a humbug for his pious cant, his Gospel Hall work, and his profitable investments, but case after case finds him lavish in good works. Clunk is the nemesis of pretentious charitable institutions that exploit the poor and helpless.

HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

Bailey has a rare gift for portraying sympathetically the poor and neglected of society. "The Brown Paper" (in *Mr. Fortune Here*, 1940) explores the friendship of

two working-class Londoners: Ann Stubbs, an orphan in her early teens, and Jim Hay, a robust deliveryman a few years older. *Honour Among Thieves* (1947) shows, among many other things, the growth of trust and affection between Alf Buck, who has fled his criminal past to work a truck farm, and Louisa Connell, who has escaped from reform school. There is the further fine touch of showing this relationship develop through the eyes of Alf's younger brother, who resents Lou as a ruinous intrusion and fails to understand his brother's growing interest in her. Clunk, without their knowledge, protects all of them both from Alf and Lou's past criminal associates and from the police.

THE VERON MYSTERY

Yet Bailey does not represent moral character as depending on social class; if spoiled and selfish types are often found among the prosperous and secure, he is merely holding a mirror to reality. Some of his middle- and upper-class characters are honest, reliable, and generous in spirit; some of his working-class types are villains to the core. He will sometimes show diabolical cooperation between servants and masters; in *The Veron Mystery* (1939), a shrewd old serving woman first tries to protect her dying master, then speeds him to his grave in an effort to protect his estranged but worthy son.

Bailey's stories and novels offer a rich variety of women. They come from all classes and backgrounds and range from stammering infants to wise ancients. There are dedicated, efficient professionals—such as Dr. Isabel Cope in *The Life Sentence* (1946)—candid college students, spunky teenagers, philosophical single women, and devoted wives and mothers. A single short story from 1939 presents the Honorable Victoria Pumphrey, a charming and masterful detective whom the reader unfortunately sees only in her first case. This Bailey rarity, "A Matter of Speculation," may be found in *Ellery Queen's Anthology*, issue 15, 1968. Yet without wickedness and murder there would be no detective stories, and Bailey's women, though usually interesting, are sometimes murderous. Indeed, his female criminals are alarming in their resourcefulness and numbing in their malice and villainy. If demonstrating that the female is deadlier than the male is misogynistic, Bailey stands convicted.

THE BISHOP'S CRIME

Children figure in many of the stories and novels, tiresomely so according to detractors. Imperiled children often contribute to the suspense and anxiety induced by Bailey's plots; the author's ability to represent the minds of small children is extraordinary. They are far from alike; in *The Bishop's Crime* (1940), the reader first meets Bishop Rankin's daughter Peggy Rankin, ten years old, outside after dark to steal plums. When Fortune finally wins the trust of this high-spirited girl, she contributes to the solution of the mystery.

Apart from the series heroes themselves, Bailey has one large group of characters who, taken altogether, may be too good to be true. Many of his stories have love stories as subordinate plots; in these, there are a number of young men whose devotion to their ladies is chivalric, unconditional, and selfless.

REGGIE FORTUNE

The character of Reggie Fortune changes hardly at all through a very long series of stories and novels, though in the latter tales Fortune does remark about his advancing years and reflect on cases of earlier days. Plump, baby-faced, and blond, Fortune prefers lying down to sitting, and sitting to walking. A gourmet with a large appetite, he avoids distilled liquor altogether, but enjoys table wines. He prefers the quiet country life to the bustle of the city. Whenever possible he will sleep late and start his day with a long soak in the tub. He enjoys his pipe and cigars in moderation. He protests when called to cases but, once engaged, proves capable of rapid sprints, long hikes, and furious—everyone except Fortune would say recklessly dangerous—driving. Fortune was dropping his final *g's* before Lord Peter Wimsey came on the scene, and he was dropping many parts of speech as well. His manner of speaking is usually brief, like old-fashioned telegrams, interspersed with quaint expressions such as "Oh my hat!" and "My only Aunt!"

Joan Amber, Fortune's wife, rarely plays a large role in his adventures, but she appears often enough to have a distinct style and character. Joan is far happier in society than Fortune, but, lovely as she is, she goes out to enjoy people rather than to be admired. She sometimes prods her husband to get him started on a case, but she never interferes once he has started. Un-



Medical expert Reggie Fortune assists Scotland Yard in this illustration from H. C. Bailey's 1923 short story "The President of San Jacinto."

doubtedly devoted, Joan nevertheless sustains a line of teasing banter that might well irritate a man less pleased with himself than Fortune. Elise, the cook of the household, is always offstage; the reader knows her by the exotic feasts she prepares for the Fortunes. Sam, the chauffeur, on the other hand, is considerably more than a servant; when the police are unable or unwilling to help, Fortune often calls on Sam to do some discreet investigating. Sam has sharp eyes and a clever mind. He is also tough and reliable in the tight spots.

All discussions of Fortune must take up the debate over whether he is an intuitive detective, operating with a sort of sixth sense for crime, or an innocent. Reggie Fortune describes himself as a simple, natural man: His talent for finding clues and drawing far-reaching inferences from them may indeed illustrate how an unfet-

tered human intelligence can work unaffected by prejudice and preconceived theory. He does not, in fact, recognize killers as such on first meeting them, but he can usually tell if pain or torment are present; on the other hand, he invariably recognizes goodness when he meets it. All readers would agree that he is a fine judge of character; devoted fans might add that that is a function of his good heart as well as his learning and experience. A typical case for Reggie Fortune is one in which the police are either baffled or have accepted a simple explanation that fails to take everything into account. The detective's zeal comes both from a need to right wrongs and from a vast array of exact knowledge that permits him to see what conscientious police officers often miss. Along the way he displays a commanding knowledge of physiology, the effects of various wounds and poisons, and the healing arts. Yet some of his cases are solved by his command of ancient languages and literatures and an understanding of history. Bailey's achievement in his portrayal of Fortune is of the same order as Rex Stout's with Nero Wolfe: Both writers have created credible geniuses.

Though he is based in London, most of Fortune's cases take him to provincial towns and villages, where the police are often honest and sometimes intelligent but rarely both. If the detective inspectors on the scene are rarely crooked, they are quite often obstructive, so that Fortune must overcome their obstacles as well as those created by criminals. The turning point in many of his cases comes when he has finally persuaded the Honorable Sidney Lomas to send in Superintendent Bell and Inspector Underwood of the Central Intelligence Division.

JOSHUA CLUNK

Joshua Clunk, whose cases often take him to the provinces as well, must labor even harder to engage the attention of the police or to prevent them from charging the innocent while the guilty go free. Well along in years, sallow of complexion, preening his gray whiskers, with prominent eyes and false teeth, Clunk rivals Erle Stanley Gardner's Bertha Cool as the most immediately unattractive crime fighter in detective fiction. His comfortable suburban home resembles Fortune's in having a large garden and an atmosphere of serenity, but the overall tone could hardly be

more different. One sees even less of Mrs. Clunk than of Mrs. Fortune. She is, nevertheless, the perfect mate for the old puritan, sharing his pleasure and activity in the Gospel Hall he founded and in which he preaches. The couple call each other "Dearie," and Mrs. Clunk never questions her husband concerning his curious activities. Sunday at the Clunks is given to attending divine services (three of them) with large meals and cozy naps. Clunk will not work or even drive his automobile on a Sunday, unless, as he puts it, the Lord's work demands an exception: Then he hails a taxi and pursues his case with typical energy.

Gushing exaggerated praise and compliments on staff and police alike, squeaking when alarmed, patterning in and out of rooms on his short legs, interlarding his animated talk with verses of hymns, and chewing or sucking candy, the energetic Clunk somehow stirs and guides staff and police to discover criminals and liberate the innocent. One can sometimes get through an entire adventure without Clunk's appearing in court, but the reader finds him in this setting often enough to know that he is quick-witted, knowledgeable, and persuasive. Indeed, some of the best scenes in the series take place in courtrooms. For sheer genius in seeing the significance of things and reasoning inferentially, Clunk is at least the equal of Fortune and may be (partly as a result of Bailey's own ironic camouflage) the most underrated of the great fictional detectives.

It is a device of this series that Clunk should be out of the action much more than he is in it. Most often the reader sees the plots unfolding with no detective present—Bailey always uses third-person, omniscient narrative—or, once the initially unrelated episodes begin to form a pattern, one or another of Clunk's assistants is followed through his laborious investigations. His assistants often question Clunk's directions—and even his motives. The assistants—usually Victor Hopley, Jock Scott, or Miss John—are notable for their sensible decency and good taste, yet the reader is never in doubt that the cases are Clunk's, and however much his assistants grumble or question, they continue working for the old hypocrite.

Clearly Fortune and Clunk have much in common—and so do the elaborate stories in which they operate.

Scenery plays a considerable role in the tales; indeed, Fortune himself maintains that the rivalry between the fertile lowlands and the chalky hills was at the basis of the crimes in the adventure consequently called *Black Land, White Land* (1937). Certainly the landscape plays a large role in *The Veron Mystery*. One of the leading characteristics of a Fortune or Clunk plot is that the detectives can solve the crime at hand only by solving a much older one, left unsolved by the authorities of its day, or worse, mistakenly solved by convicting and punishing someone who was really innocent. That is another leading characteristic of both series: Bailey's villains are not content to murder out of malice or greed; they delight in finding innocent victims and framing them. Fortune and Clunk are therefore frequently engaged in reevaluating a case that well-meaning police have accepted from the hands of clever criminals.

Most controversial among the traits these detectives share is their willingness to arrange and even execute justice on their own account: A favorite device is to so apply pressure on partners in crime that they turn on one another, usually with lethal violence. Yet saving the cost of a trial is by no means the main goal: Bailey's heroes are usually acting to protect the injured innocent or the honestly redeemed. Their means are often disturbing—one winces when Clunk or Fortune quietly suppresses evidence or rearranges it; their ends, on the other hand—the restoration of wholesome, useful life—are admirable.

It has already been suggested that the quality of the Fortune stories, followed by the Clunk and Fortune novels, remained consistently high. Over the course of Fortune's and Clunk's literary lives, however, some social change is evident. The earliest Fortune stories sometimes reflect the exuberance that affected the arts in the 1920's. Nevertheless, the tone reached by the mid-1920's remained fairly uniform until World War II, when Reggie Fortune gave up much of the luxury that had attended his life at home. This austerity lasted to the end of the series; plush living had hardly returned to Great Britain by 1948. During the war against Adolf Hitler, Fortune and Clunk sometimes challenged German spies; international intrigue had not been a feature of the series before that point. With

their restrained and serious atmosphere, the wartime novels are, perhaps, the most consistently good; at least they feature new levels of complexity in plot and new depths of villainy among the wicked. Bailey's last four novels have all his trademark characteristics but an even leaner style. He was always terse, but here there is more reliance on dialogue, both to advance the stories and to define character, and a minimum of description.

As a storyteller, Bailey displays wisdom, learning, and skill in entertaining combination. His stories and novels occur in particular times and places, but they illustrate values of valor, innocence, and truth, in conflict with hate, greed, and cruelty. Arranged in challenging puzzles full of colorful characters artfully drawn, his novels are classics.

Robert McColley

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

REGGIE FORTUNE SERIES: *Call Mr. Fortune*, 1920; *Mr. Fortune's Practice*, 1923; *Mr. Fortune's Trials*, 1925; *Mr. Fortune, Please*, 1927; *Mr. Fortune Speaking*, 1929; *Mr. Fortune Explains*, 1930; *Case for Mr. Fortune*, 1932; *Mr. Fortune Wonders*, 1933; *Shadow on the Wall*, 1934; *Mr. Fortune Objects*, 1935; *A Clue for Mr. Fortune*, 1936; *Black Land, White Land*, 1937; *This Is Mr. Fortune*, 1938; *The Great Game*, 1939; *Mr. Fortune Here*, 1940; *The Bishop's Crime*, 1940; *Meet Mr. Fortune*, 1942; *No Murder*, 1942 (also known as *The Apprehensive Dog*); *Mr. Fortune Finds a Pig*, 1943; *The Cat's Whisker*, 1944 (also known as *Dead Man's Effects*); *The Life Sentence*, 1946; *Saving a Rope*, 1948

JOSHUA CLUNK SERIES: *Garstons*, 1930 (also known as *The Garston Murder Case*); *The Red Castle*, 1932; *The Sullen Sky Mystery*, 1935; *Clunk's Claimant*, 1937 (also known as *The Twittering Bird Mystery*); *The Veron Mystery*, 1939 (also known as *Mr. Clunk's Text*); *The Little Captain*, 1941 (also known as *Orphan Ann*); *Dead Man's Shoes*, 1942 (also known as *Nobody's Vineyard*); *Slippery Ann*, 1944 (also known as *The Queen of Spades*); *The Wrong Man*, 1945; *Honour Among Thieves*, 1947; *Shrouded Death*, 1950

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The Man in the Cape*, 1933

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1901-1910 • *My Lady of Orange*, 1901; *Karl of Erbach*, 1902; *The Master of Gray*, 1903; *Rimingtons*, 1904; *Beaujeu*, 1905; *Under Castle Walls*, 1906 (also known as *Springtime*); *Raoul, Gentleman of Fortune*, 1907 (also known as *A Gentleman of Fortune*); *Colonel Stow*, 1908 (also known as *Colonel Greatheart*); *The God of Clay*, 1908; *Storm and Treasure*, 1910

1911-1920 • *The Lonely Queen*, 1911; *The Suburban*, 1912; *The Sea Captain*, 1913; *The Gentleman Adventurer*, 1914; *The Highwayman*, 1915; *The Gamesters*, 1916; *The Young Lovers*, 1917; *The Pillar of Fire*, 1918; *Barry Leroy*, 1919; *His Serene Highness*, 1920

1921-1940 • *The Fool*, 1921; *The Plot*, 1922; *The Rebel*, 1923; *Knight at Arms*, 1924; *The Golden Fleece*, 1925; *The Merchant Prince*, 1926; *Bonaventure*, 1927; *Judy Bovenden*, 1928; *Mr. Cardonnel*, 1931; *The Bottle Party*, 1940

PLAY: *The White Hawk*, pr., pb. 1909 (with David Kimball; dramatization of Bailey's novel *Beaujeu*)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Roman Eagles*, 1928

NONFICTION: *Forty Years After: The Story of the Franco-German War, 1870, 1914*

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Rzepka, Charles J. *Detective Fiction*. Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2005. Overview of detective fiction written in English focuses on the relationship between literary representations of private detectives and the cultures that produce those representations. Provides context for understanding Bailey's work.

Sarjeant, William A. S. "'The Devil Is with Power': Joshua Clunk and the Fight for Right." *The Armchair Detective* 17, no. 3 (1984): 270-279. Looks at one of Bailey's famous characters and examines his function.

_____. "In Defense of Mr. Fortune." *The Armchair Detective* 14, no. 4 (1981): 302-312. Focuses on one of Bailey's most famous characters and delves into his function both within the writer's works and within the larger world of detective fiction.

JOHN BALL

Born: Schenectady, New York; July 8, 1911

Died: Encino, California; October 15, 1988

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Virgil Tibbs, 1965-1986

Chief Jack Tallon, 1977-1984

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

VIRGIL TIBBS is a black detective officer on the Pasadena, California, police force. Unmarried, he is described as about thirty years old in the first novel and remains in his thirties throughout the series. Cool, competent, self-possessed, and systematic, Tibbs has risen above his deprived boyhood in the segregated South of the 1940's, yet in his job he must repeatedly confront the effects of discrimination and hatred.

JACK TALLON, a thirty-four-year-old sergeant on the Pasadena police force, leaves the stress and strain of urban violence and major crime to become chief of police in the small town of Whitewater, Washington. There he discovers a need for police professionalism equal to that of the big city: Even in small towns, fighting crime calls for a particular kind of character, teamwork, and integrity.

CONTRIBUTION

John Ball's mystery novels document his status as a pioneering master of the police procedural genre. These finely crafted, intricately plotted works focus directly on the minutiae of criminal investigation, emphasizing both the efficiency of plodding routine and the necessity of dovetailing teamwork in solving and preventing crime. He concentrated on different aspects

of these tasks in his two series. Virgil Tibbs works primarily on his own, meticulously piecing details together until the entire complicated picture emerges. Jack Tallon, on the other hand, is—as chief of police—the consummate organizer and team player; his solutions to problems arise from organized group efforts. Taken together, the two series (along with Ball's nonseries mysteries) develop what might be called a systems approach to crime and detection. This focus on teamwork and on following established procedures was Ball's trademark.

BIOGRAPHY

John Dudley Ball, Jr., was born in Schenectady, New York, on July 8, 1911, to John Dudley, Sr., a research scientist, and Alena L. Wiles Ball. He attended Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, earning his bachelor's degree in 1934. After becoming a commercial pilot for Pan American World Airways, he joined the United States Army Air Transport Command at the outbreak of World War II, serving as a flight instructor and a member of a flight crew until 1946. Following his service, Ball pursued a career as a music critic and annotator, first as a writer of liner notes for Columbia Masterworks Records (1946-1949) and music editor for the *Brooklyn Eagle* (1946-1950) and then as a columnist for the *New York World-Telegram*. Ball also worked as a music commentator for WOL, a radio station in Washington, D.C. During this time he published his first books, on the record industry and early recordings of classical music. Later, Ball worked in advertising and for various public relations enterprises.

In 1958, he joined the Institute of the Aerospace Sciences (IAS) as public relations director, a post he

held until 1961, when IAS was absorbed by the larger American Rocket Society. At that point Ball joined DMS News Service, a publishing company in Beverly Hills, where he was employed as editor in chief until 1963. He served as writer, chairman, and editor in chief for the University of California Mystery Library Program. During the mid-1970's Ball also became a sworn deputy sheriff in Los Angeles County and a volunteer associate of the City of Pasadena Police Department.

The year 1958 marked Ball's return to book publication. Since then he wrote or edited more than thirty books, including fourteen mystery novels, winning the Edgar Allan Poe Award (1966) and the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award (1966), both for *In the Heat of the Night* (1965). In addition, Ball wrote some four hundred articles on aviation, music, astronomy, and travel. He died October 15, 1988, in Encino, California.

ANALYSIS

John Ball's first mystery in the Virgil Tibbs series, *In the Heat of the Night*, both catapulted him to popular and critical acclaim and established the central themes of his work. Virgil Tibbs was an instant hit. Appearing as he did at the height of the agitation for civil rights of the mid-1960's, he incarnated many of the qualities that the public wished to attribute to members of the recently insurgent African Americans. Tibbs is simultaneously proud and circumspect, sensitive to the outrages of prejudice yet aware that public attitudes cannot be forced, only quietly persuaded. Tibbs is a vector in the campaign for universal human tolerance; he forces a recognition of his humanity through his superior achievements.

IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

In the Heat of the Night remains Ball's most popular and most widely acclaimed book, though it certainly is not his best. It captured and holds the popular imagination more for its setting and its central character than for its style or the quality of the plot. The novel opens in the middle of a heat wave in Wells, a small town in the still-segregated North Carolina of the early 1960's. The town stagnates in poverty. To improve economic conditions, a local civic organization is sponsoring a musical

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

festival, headed by the great conductor Mantoli. In the small hours of one sweltering morning, Mantoli is found murdered. The local good-old-boy police chief, hired more for availability than skill, lurches into action. Sent to the train station to check for suspects, a deputy spots a likely one: a thirty-year-old black, alone and flashing a suspicious amount of money. The case is apparently already solved.

When the chief interrogates him, however, the man—Virgil Tibbs—states that he has earned that money working as a police officer in Pasadena, California; that unlike anyone on the Wells police force he has experience in homicide work; and that the chief has already made mistakes that could make solving the crime impossible. The chief is dumbfounded. Bad enough to lose a prime suspect, but far worse to have that suspect—a black man—humiliate him in the process. To save face, he resolves to get rid of this rival, but the case has such heavy political and economic implications that he finds himself forced to ask Tibbs to

stay on as an officially requisitioned consultant. Meanwhile, tensions rise as the heat continues to bake the town. Economic survival depends on solving the crime and salvaging the festival, tarnished by the murder and shorn of a big-name conductor and impresario. Further, Tibbs threatens the social and racial equilibrium of the segregated town: His position gives him authority over white people accustomed to unanimous consent about keeping blacks in their place.

Throughout this potentially explosive situation, Tibbs keeps his composure, complacently tolerating even the casual insults that segregation imposes on him. He too, however, suffers in the heat: After all, to escape this kind of situation, he had gone to California, where a man could expect to be judged by the quality of his work rather than the color of his skin. Still, he remains professional, methodically proceeding with his investigation and providing lessons in tolerance along the way. Tibbs's professionalism shows most in his method and attention to detail; in instance after instance, he sees what others overlook, and he is constantly aware of the figure in the pattern he is attempting to reveal. In the process he is able to keep the chief from jeopardizing his own career by arresting the wrong man. Significantly, the climax of the novel occurs when Tibbs deliberately breaches the decorum of segregation by demanding service at a whites-only diner; thus, he is able to demonstrate that bigotry is the real culprit in the case. The novel ends with the chief's acknowledging that Tibbs is a man; the chief leaves him to await his train on a whites-only bench, though he refrains from shaking hands with Tibbs.

The book is cinematic, as novels of setting and character often are, and its screen adaptation was a phenomenal success. Released in 1967, the film won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor (Sidney Poitier). Still, although this acclaim had much to do with the book's popularity, the film fails to capture the essence of the novel. The book's distinction is founded on its depiction of police procedure, its patient analysis of routinely acquired details of fact, and its theme of transracial tolerance—that is, the acknowledgment of our common humanity as the only means of achieving harmonious social order. Before this novel appeared, few American crime

writers had centered on painstaking, depersonalized methodology as a basis for their fiction; in other traditions, only Margery Allingham, E. C. Bentley, Michael Innes, and Ngaio Marsh had treated it extensively, and they either emphasize the eccentricity of their police detectives or place them in quite exceptional situations. As a precedent, the enormously successful television series *Dragnet* (1951-1959, 1967-1970) must be acknowledged, though even there, attention to eccentricity predominates. Virgil Tibbs reverses this. His ethnicity creates expectations of eccentricity, but Tibbs is the essence of impersonal normality, of basic humanity. His behavior is that of the superior culture: He “outwhites” the whites. His is the dispassionate soul, the cool intellect struggling to understand, and in the process transcending, prejudged boundaries. His is the colorless, raceless future of humanity, achieved through exercise of compassion and reason. In this respect he is a remote descendant of the character of Jim in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

THE EYES OF BUDDHA

Some of the later Virgil Tibbs books realize these themes more successfully. All of them, to be sure, lack the steaminess of setting, the readily identifiable tension, the overt racial confrontation of *In the Heat of the Night*. Further, because they advance the same themes, they remain less innovative. Even so, the best of them, *The Eyes of Buddha* (1976) and *Then Came Violence* (1980), raise Virgil Tibbs to greater definition. Racial confrontation is absent from these novels; in fact, in both novels Tibbs is isolated, shown as an exceptional individual working on his own. In *The Eyes of Buddha*, Tibbs is given temporary leave from his official duties to pursue a private case of an heiress who had vanished from a beauty pageant. His investigation winds a tangled path to eventual success in Katmandu, where he is given the opportunity to confront an alien culture and where his discoveries also lead to solution of an apparently unrelated case back in Pasadena.

THEN CAME VIOLENCE

In *Then Came Violence*, Tibbs is forced to lead a dual life: While ostensibly continuing to carry out his normal police work, he is also detailed to the State Department of the United States to provide cover for the

exiled family of a progressive democratic African chief of state under attack by insurrectionist forces. The wife of the president proves to be a female African counterpart of Tibbs himself. Poised, articulate, the product of a composite culture, she is willing—like her husband—to put her life on the line to realize her vision of a better society. Clearly, this vision corresponds to the object of Tibbs's vocation as a police officer. His goal is not merely to solve crimes, still less to capture or punish criminals, but also to create an atmosphere in which peace and justice can flourish. The dual role imposed on Tibbs here nearly undoes him. Not only is he on duty all the time, denied the repose and relaxation necessary to function efficiently, but also he finds himself falling in love with the woman he has sworn to protect and keep inviolate. In the end, Tibbs does solve a tricky armed robbery case and a convoluted vigilante operation, but he loses the woman and family he has come to love—they escape to a more secure refuge in Switzerland when it is found that the husband-father may still be alive. Tibbs, though personally devastated, accepts this situation philosophically, as does she: It is part of the price the gifted must pay to secure some semblance of order in society.

This pattern of the exceptional idealistic loner required by circumstance to subordinate himself to higher purposes would be overbearing if attention were not continually directed toward established methodology and teamwork. What emerges is an interlocking set of paradoxes in the novelistic world of Ball. For example, Tibbs is the only man in Southern California qualified to serve as consort to the wife of a deposed African leader, but at every opportunity, Ball shows him to be dependent on the joint efforts of the police force, every member of which possesses unique qualifications. More than once Tibbs's Japanese American partner, Bob Nakamura, is referred to as a genius in his own right, and every police team is a composite of professional specialists. Similarly, Tibbs often arrives at his solutions by the most startling leaps of intuition, yet these revelations hinge on disparate details assembled by plodding routine. Again, everyone seems well disposed and perfectly attuned to the other members of his team.

In such a world it is sometimes difficult to imagine where any impetus to crime could originate. On occasion this lends an air of unreality to the proceedings, and the characters begin to look like mannequins going through mechanical motions. Ball has sometimes been faulted for the stiffness of his dialogue, but when his world works, as it does in the best of this series, these objections become irrelevant, blotted out by the consistency of vision. In Ball's world, the world of Virgil Tibbs, evil exists, but it can be countered by the goodwill of talented men working together with singleness of purpose.

POLICE CHIEF

These themes carry over into the Chief Jack Tallon series. On its face the fictional premise for this series seems completely different. In *Police Chief* (1977), Jack Tallon begins as a police sergeant in Pasadena. After putting in overtime on an emergency hostage situation in which one police officer is killed and a bus accident in which six die, he looks up from the bodies to see his terror-stricken wife in the crowd of onlookers; at that moment he remembers that this evening was to have been their wedding anniversary celebration.

Recognizing that the constant mayhem and crises of major urban police work are taking their toll on his private life, he applies for the position of chief of police in Whitewater, eastern Washington, population ten thousand. On arrival, he discovers a calmer environment but a small staff of largely unqualified personnel. He accepts the challenge of developing a professional team out of this collection of people and soon learns that violence and personal strain are not confined to the big city. A series of brutal rapes occurs, accompanied by a malicious underground campaign that holds the new chief himself, the intruder into this cozy world, responsible.

Dismayed by this lack of trust, Tallon nevertheless devotes himself completely to this problem, recruiting help from the community to augment his limited force. He initiates a training program for the staff, emphasizing the necessity of detail work and routine. Soon his efforts begin to show results. By piecing together isolated clues, he is able to break a drug ring at the local college. Tallon's force gains confidence and pride with

increasing competence, and the community's goodwill mounts. Aware of the enhanced character of his people, Tallon resists pressure to call in the heavy guns of the local sheriff. Finally he is able to put into action a plan to trap the rapist—one that is, ironically, almost ruined by the interference of a well-meaning citizen newly motivated by pride in his community. The rapist is revealed to be a native of the town, the assistant to the editor of the local newspaper. Peace returns to the community, but only at the expense of the revelation that the seeds of violence are everywhere, that no place is safe, and that everyone is responsible for combating the evil that constantly reappears.

These themes weave through the Tallon series as well as the Tibbs series, as do certain insistent motifs. One is the image of a young woman who has chosen to escape from a situation of luxury or celebrity by retreating into a religious community, sometimes turning her back on her family. Another is the necessity of tolerance, of recognizing a common humanity, especially with apparently unorthodox groups. Often this appears in inverted form, as when Ball connects violence or crime with the mindless malice implicit in prejudice, whether racial, social, sexual, or religious. Connected with this theme is a sympathetic treatment of Asian religions and cultures and of syncretistic religious movements.

Yet dominating these motifs, and to a certain extent absorbing them, are the dual touchstones of personal pride and integrity. Ball's central characters believe in themselves but nevertheless strive to improve. Although confident in their own abilities, they know that unaided they can do little; so they give themselves to others unreservedly, becoming consummate team players and tireless workers and in the process instilling pride and competence in other members of the team. This approach to character seems somehow Asian; Ball's characters possess the discipline, the selflessness, and the concentration of the Asian warrior. Aware of the smallness of their share in the divine plan, they remain equally aware of the uniqueness and the necessity of their contribution to the welfare of the whole.

James L. Livingston

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

VIRGIL TIBBS SERIES: *In the Heat of the Night*, 1965; *The Cool Cottontail*, 1966; *Johnny Get Your Gun*, 1969 (revised as *Death for a Playmate*, 1972); *Five Pieces of Jade*, 1972; *The Eyes of Buddha*, 1976; *Then Came Violence*, 1980; *Singapore*, 1986

CHIEF JACK TALLON SERIES: *Police Chief*, 1977; *Trouble for Tallon*, 1981; *Chief Tallon and the S.O.R.*, 1984

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The First Team*, 1971; *Mark One: The Dummy*, 1974; *The Killing in the Market*, 1978 (with Bevan Smith); *The Murder Children*, 1979

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Upright Corpse*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Rescue Mission*, 1966; *Miss 1000 Spring Blossoms*, 1968; *Last Plane Out*, 1970; *The Fourteenth Point*, 1973; *The Winds of Mitamura*, 1975; *Phase Three Alert*, 1977

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Operation Springboard*, 1958; *Spacemaster I*, 1960; *Judo Boy*, 1964; *Arctic Showdown*, 1966

NONFICTION: *Records for Pleasure*, 1947; *The Phonograph Record Industry*, 1947; *Edwards: U.S. Air Force Flight Test Center*, 1962; *Dragon Hotel*, 1968; *Ananda: Where Yoga Lives*, 1982; *We Live in New Zealand*, 1984

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Honoré Balzac

Born: Tours, France; May 20, 1799

Died: Paris, France; August 18, 1850

Types of plot: Espionage; police procedural; psychological; thriller; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Honoré de Balzac wrote his fictional works as the self-appointed secretary of French society. It was natural, therefore, that he should consider the police (both political and judicial), this newest and most efficient branch of modern, autocratic governments. He was in fact one of the earliest writers of French fiction to recognize the police as society's best defender against subversives and criminals.

Like members of other powerful and arbitrary organizations, Balzac's police officers were shown to be relentless in their missions and cruel in their vengeance. Thus, he was less interested in police work as such than in the psychological study of police officers of genius—not only for their Machiavellian cynicism and superior understanding of people but also for their quest to dominate and rule the world. Such theories of vast conspiratorial associations and of intellectual power influenced later novelists, including Fyodor Dostoevski, Maurice Leblanc, Pierre Souvestre, Marcel Allain, and Ian Fleming, among others.

BIOGRAPHY

The eldest of four children, Honoré de Balzac was born as Honoré Balzac on May 20, 1799, in Tours, France, where his father was a high government official. His mother inculcated in young Honoré a taste for the occult and for Swedenborgian metaphysics. After his early studies, distinguished only by the breadth of his reading, Balzac attended law school while auditing classes at the Sorbonne.

Although Balzac was graduated in 1819, he rejected a legal career and decided instead to write plays. His first work, a verse tragedy about Oliver Cromwell, was judged a failure by friends and family. Undaunted by their verdict, however, Balzac began writing penny dreadfuls and gothic thrillers under various pseudonyms. Furthermore, he expected to become rich by establishing a publishing company, a printing office, and a type foundry; all three, in turn, went bankrupt and saddled him with insurmountable debts.

Not until 1829 did Balzac—using his real name—enjoy a modest success, with the publication of *Les Chouans* (1829; *The Chouans*, 1890). Driven as much by a need for money as by his desire to re-create the world, between 1829 and 1848 this new Prometheus wrote some one hundred titles that make up his monumental *La Comédie humaine* (*The Comedy of Human Life*, 1885-1893, 1896; best known as *The Human*



Honoré de Balzac. (Library of Congress)

Comedy, 1895-1896, 1911). He also published several literary magazines, short on subscribers but long on brilliant analysis, as shown by his study of Stendhal in the September 25, 1840, issue of *Revue parisienne*. In addition, Balzac's plays were usually well received by both critics and the public, as were the essays, newspaper pieces, and *Les Contes drolatiques* (1832-1837; *Droll Stories*, 1874, 1891).

In November of 1832, Balzac received a fan letter from the Ukraine signed "L'Étrangère." Thus began his life's greatest love affair, with the cultivated Countess Éveline Hanska. Besides pursuing a voluminous correspondence, the lovers met as often as opportunity and money allowed. Nevertheless, after her husband died in 1841, she continued to evade the marriage proposals of a financially strapped and increasingly ill Balzac (he suffered from cardiac hypertrophy), until March 14, 1850, when she finally married him. After the couple returned to Paris on May 21, Balzac's condition quickly worsened. He died soon after, on August 18, 1850.

ANALYSIS

Honoré de Balzac first practiced his craft by imitating, often slavishly, the sensational romances of Ann Radcliffe, Charles Robert Maturin, and Matthew Gregory Lewis, with their fantasies of the grotesque and the horrible. Balzac also learned that fiendish wickedness and sadistic sensuality can heighten the pleasure of a thrill-seeking public. Although he never officially acknowledged his early efforts, he incorporated many of their lessons in his later works, especially in the tales of the supernatural and criminal.

THE HUMAN COMEDY

Balzac's magnum opus, *The Human Comedy*, is a vast and detailed panorama of French society of the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, Oscar Wilde has remarked, "The nineteenth century, as we know it, is largely an invention of Balzac." In nearly one hundred novels and stories evolve some two thousand fictional characters, who appear in various milieus, types, and professions, from Paris to the provinces, from old maids to poor relations, from lawyers to police officers and gangsters.

THE CHOUANS

Corentin is rightly the most famous of Balzac's police officers. He enters the scene in *The Chouans*, the first book to which Balzac signed his name, adding the self-ennobling particle *de*. Set in Brittany in 1799, the novel is a mixture of sentimental love story and political police intrigue. The obvious villain of the piece is Corentin, the spiritual, if not natural, son of Joseph Fouché, Napoleon Bonaparte's minister of police. In spite of his youth (he was born around 1777), Corentin already possesses all the qualities required of a great secret agent, because he has learned from his mentor and chief how to tack and bend with the wind. Everything about him is wily, feline, mysterious: His green eyes announce "malice and deceit," he has an "insinuating dexterity of address," he seeks to obtain respect, and he seems to say, "Let us divide the spoil!"

Always willing to suspect evil motives in human behavior and too clever to hold to only one position, Corentin already embodies Balzac's concept of the superior being, although in elementary form. To succeed, Corentin rejects no methods; he knows well how to use circumstances to his own ends. Furthermore,

morality always changes and may not even exist, according to this modern Machiavellian, who is unconcerned with praise or blame: “As to betraying France, we who are superior to any scruples on that score can leave them to fools. . . . My patron Fouché is deep . . . enough, [and] he has always played a double game.” To this conception of life can be added a natural bent for everything that touches police work. The idea, so dear to Balzac, that “there are vocations one must obey” is a kind of professional determinism that forces one to turn to what is already possible within him and to act and think accordingly.

Although not a series character in the accepted sense, Corentin does reappear in several other novels, particularly in *Une Ténébreuse Affaire* (1841; *The Gondreville Mystery*, 1891), in which he again acts in several covert operations, this time to protect various cabinet members unwisely involved in an attempted coup against Napoleon Bonaparte, and in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838-1847, 1869; *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, 1895). In *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, he plays the role of a private detective and works more to keep in practice than out of financial need.

THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

The Gondreville Mystery offers an excellent example of a ruthless police force, temporarily foiled perhaps but mercilessly victorious in the end. The novel also reveals that the political police are so unprincipled that they doctor the evidence and manipulate the facts to frame the innocent and thereby hide their own crimes. If, in the process, their victims are executed or imprisoned, it only serves to reinforce the notion of a powerful police, made all the more so when self-interest or wounded pride is at stake:

In this horrible affair passion, too, was involved, the passion of the principal agent [Corentin], a man still living, one of those first-rate underlings who can never be replaced, and [who] has made a certain reputation for himself by his remarkable exploits.

HISTORY OF THE THIRTEEN

Balzac’s own worldview is made evident in the laying out of the ministerial plot and its subsequent cover-up. Indeed, the author of *Histoire des treize* (1834-

1835; *History of the Thirteen*, 1885-1886) loves to invent secret societies, either benevolent or nefarious, as a means of increasing the individual’s power or, more likely, that of the government, which he calls “a permanent conspiracy.” Because the political police are given a virtual carte blanche in the defense of the government and the ruling class, they are quick to take advantage of their status; they act arbitrarily and with impunity, often outside the law, thereby becoming so powerful that Balzac thought of them as a state within the state.

THE SPLENDORS AND MISERIES OF COURTESANS

Corentin is ably assisted by Contenson, a virtuoso of disguise, and by Peyrade, a crafty former nobleman with a perfect knowledge of aristocratic manners and language. Twenty years after their success in *The Gondreville Mystery*, all three are reunited in *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*. Following a series of fantastic adventures replete with poisoned cherries, hidden passageways, rapes, and kidnappings—in short, all the melodramatic devices of Balzac’s apprenticeship—they are ultimately instrumental in thwarting the villain’s machinations.

Quite different from the political police are the judicial police, for their primary function is to prevent crimes and arrest criminals. Both because of the niceties required by law and because of their official and overt role, they are depicted in Balzac’s novels as less sinister and frightening. Thus, their reputation is reduced, especially because even the well-known Sûreté seldom seems to succeed in apprehending thieves and murderers.

It is not that these police officers have more scruples, but that they lack the immense powers of action at Corentin’s disposal. Unlike their political counterparts, they rely mostly on *agents provocateurs* and on denunciations from citizens who, attracted by financial rewards or driven by passion, often aid in the capture of criminals. For example, it is thanks to Mlle Michonneau that Bibi-Lupin can arrest Vautrin, a convict escaped from the hulks of Toulon and hiding at Mme Vauquer’s boardinghouse.

In addition to differences in their functions and methods, the judicial police attract a very particular type of individual: Many officers are either ne’er-do-

wells or come from the ranks of supposedly reformed criminals. Whereas political agents show intelligence, perspicacity, and perverse cunning, those of the official forces are generally mediocre and easily duped, this despite the popular saw that it takes a thief to catch a thief. Among these latter, though clearly superior, is Bibi-Lupin. An interesting character, being himself a former convict, Bibi-Lupin organized and has headed the Brigade de Sûreté since 1820.

DADDY GORIOT

Bibi-Lupin first appears in *Le Père Goriot* (1834-1835; *Daddy Goriot*, 1860; also known as *Père Goriot*). In it, on the arrest of his former chainmate, he hopes that Vautrin will attempt to escape, which would furnish him with the legal pretext to kill his arch-enemy. This clever trick might well have worked if only Vautrin were not Vautrin and had not suddenly sensed the trap. In *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, the Sûreté chief will again be ordered to fight against Vautrin, who this time is disguised as Abbé Carlos Herrera as his part in an elaborate but foiled swindle. (This is the same case on which Corentin and his associates are working.)

Bibi-Lupin does in fact recognize Vautrin's voice and a scar on his left arm, yet he cannot prove beyond a doubt that Herrera and Vautrin are indeed one and the same. Yet because of his experience with prisons, their special slang and mores, acquired during his own stays at Nantes and Toulon, Bibi-Lupin counts on the possibility that several inmates may unwittingly betray their leader. His strategy does not lack shrewdness, although it fails because the accused has immediately resumed his ascendance over his fellow gang-members. In a last attempt to unmask the false abbot, the police chief tries to make him betray himself by putting him in a cell with one of his former protégés.

Once more, Vautrin sees through Bibi-Lupin's ruse; he speaks only in Italian with his friend—to the indescribable rage of the spy who watches them, does not understand a word, and does not know what to do. Balzac creates a universe that is forbidden to the uninitiated, one in which the superior man frustrates his enemies' schemes and achieves his ends thanks to a secret language, a code, a magic formula, a system that remains impenetrable to all outsiders.

This duel between two mortal rivals can only end in the defeat of Bibi-Lupin, who is obviously outclassed by Vautrin. Tricks that would have succeeded with lesser people do not work with such a formidable adversary. Furthermore, accused by his superiors not only of having stolen from arrested suspects but also, and especially, "of moving and acting as if you alone were law and police in one," Bibi-Lupin realizes only too late his danger. Later, he can but watch as his former prison companion becomes his deputy and then replaces him six months later. That Vautrin, like any good and honest bourgeois, should retire after some fifteen years of police service filled with daring exploits—during which time he acted as Providence incarnate toward those his unorthodox methods had saved from ruin or scandal—is ironic, considering his view of the world.

Vautrin is the master criminal of *The Human Comedy*. Like all fictional criminals of genius, he wants much more than the vain satisfactions that money brings. He seeks above all to dominate, not to reform, a society that he despises and whose hypocritical middle-class morality he scorns. "Principles don't exist, only events. Laws don't exist, only circumstances," he explains to an all-too-attentive Eugène de Rastignac in *Père Goriot*. Such lucidity and cynicism, combined with an inflexible will, have led this satanic "poem from hell" to consider crime the supreme revolt against an intrinsically unjust world—a revolt further intensified by his homosexuality.

In the end, however, Vautrin goes over to the other side and becomes head of the Sûreté, just as his model, François-Eugène Vidocq, had done. Vidocq, whose memoirs had been published in 1828-1829, was a good friend of Balzac and often told him of his police adventures or his prison escapes, as numerous as they were extraordinary. Besides Vidocq, Vautrin is said to resemble other historical figures such as Yemelyan Pugachev and Louis-Pierre Louvel, a result of Balzac's technique of using historical originals, which he reinterprets, re-creates, and ultimately transforms.

Vautrin does not believe that there are insurmountable barriers between the police and the underworld, and it does not disturb him to "supply the hulks with lodgers instead of lodging there," as long as he can

command: "Instead of being the boss of the hulks, I shall be the Figaro of the law. . . . The profession a man follows in the eyes of the world is a mere sham; the reality is in the idea!"

In Balzac's opinion, police work does not consist of tracking down clues, questioning suspects, and solving crimes, but rather of arresting subversives, real or imagined, solely out of political necessity. Although he admires the nobility and courage of those who resist and finds his political operatives and their methods odious, Balzac recognizes that, regardless of the number of innocent men and women crushed in their path, they must all play their essential part in the eternal struggle between Order and Chaos.

Pierre L. Horn

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS (ALL PART OF THE HUMAN COMEDY):

Les Chouans, 1829 (*The Chouans*); *Histoire des treize*, 1834-1835 (*History of the Thirteen*, 1885-1886; also known as *The Thirteen*; includes *Ferragus, chef des dévorants*, 1834 [*Ferragus, Chief of the Devorants*; also known as *The Mystery of the Rue Solymane*]; *La Duchesse de Langeais*, 1834 [*The Duchesse de Langeais*]; and *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, 1834-1835 [*The Girl with the Golden Eyes*]); *Le Père Goriot*, 1834-1835 (*Daddy Goriot*, 1860; also known as *Père Goriot*); *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, 1838-1847, 1869 (*The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, 1895; includes *Comment aiment les filles*, 1838, 1844 [*The Way That Girls Love*]; *À combien l'amour revient aux vieillards*, 1844 [*How Much Love Costs Old Men*]; *Où mènent les mauvais chemins*, 1846 [*The End of Bad Roads*]; and *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin*, 1847 [*The Last Incarnation of Vautrin*]); *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*, 1842 (*The Gondreville Mystery*, 1891)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *La Comédie humaine*, 1829-1848 (17 volumes; *The Comedy of Human Life*, 1885-1893, 1896 [40 volumes]; also known as *The Human Comedy*, 1895-1896, 1911 [53 volumes]; includes all titles listed in this section); *Physiologie du mariage*, 1829 (*The Physiology of Marriage*); *Gobseck*, 1830 (En-

glish translation); *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, 1830, 1869 (*At the Sign of the Cat and Racket*); *La Peau de chagrin*, 1831 (*The Wild Ass's Skin*; also known as *The Fatal Skin*); *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, 1831 (*The Unknown Masterpiece*); *Sarrasine*, 1831 (English translation); *La Femme de trente ans*, 1832-1842 (includes *Premières fautes*, 1832, 1842; *Souffrances inconnues*, 1834-1835; *À trente ans*, 1832, 1842; *Le Doigt de Dieu*, 1832, 1834-1835, 1842; *Les Deux Rencontres*, 1832, 1834-1835, 1842; and *La Vieillesse d'une mère coupable*, 1832, 1842); *Le Curé de Tours*, 1832 (*The Vicar of Tours*); *Louis Lambert*, 1832 (English translation); *Maître Cornélius*, 1832 (English translation); *Eugénie Grandet*, 1833 (English translation, 1859); *La Recherche de l'absolu*, 1834 (*Balthazar: Or, Science and Love*, 1859; also known as *The Quest of the Absolute*); *Melmoth réconcilié*, 1835 (*Melmoth Converted*); *Le Lys dans la vallée*, 1836 (*The Lily in the Valley*); *Histoire de la grandeur et de la décadence de César Birotteau*, 1837 (*History of the Grandeur and Downfall of César Birotteau*, 1860; also known as *The Rise and Fall of César Birotteau*); *Illusions perdues*, 1837-1843 (*Lost Illusions*); *Pierrette*, 1840 (English translation); *Le Curé de village*, 1841 (*The Country Parson*); *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées*, 1842 (*The Two Young Brides*); *Ursule Mirouët*, 1842 (English translation); *La Cousine Bette*, 1846 (*Cousin Bette*); *Le Cousin Pons*, 1847 (*Cousin Pons*, 1880)

SHORT FICTION: *Les Contes drolatiques*, 1832-1837 (*Droll Stories*, 1874, 1891)

PLAYS: *Cromwell*, wr. 1819-1820, pb. 1925; *Vautrin*, pr., pb. 1840 (English translation, 1901); *La Marâtre*, pr., pb. 1848 (*The Stepmother*, 1901, 1958); *Le Faiseur*, pr. 1849 (also known as *Mercadet*; English translation, 1901); *The Dramatic Works*, pb. 1901 (2 volumes; includes *Vautrin*, *The Stepmother*, *Mercadet*, *Quinola's Resources*, and *Pamela Giraud*)

NONFICTION: *Correspondance*, 1819-1850, 1876 (*The Correspondence*, 1878); *Lettres à l'étrangère*, 1899-1950; *Letters to Madame Hanska*, 1900 (translation of volume 1 of *Lettres à l'étrangère*)

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2004. Examines the representation of time and its relationship to narrative—always a key issue in mystery fiction and in literature involving revelation or suspense. Compares Balzac to Stendhal, Alexander Dumas, *père*, and Émile Zola. Bibliographic references and index.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Honoré de Balzac*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003. Collection of critical essays on Balzac by leading scholars. Includes discussions of the structure of the author's realism and his representation of a fictional universe. Bibliographic references and index.

Festa-McCormick, Diana. *Honoré de Balzac*. Boston: Twayne, 1979. An excellent introduction to the works of Balzac. Festa-McCormick describes with much subtlety Balzac's evolution as a novelist, and she makes insightful comments on his representation of women. This book contains a very well annotated bibliography.

Kanes, Martin, ed. *Critical Essays on Honoré de Balzac*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. Divided into sections on literary vignettes and essays (1837-1949)

and critical essays (subsections covering periods from 1850 to 1990). Includes a detailed introduction, a bibliography, and an index.

Robb, Graham. *Balzac: A Life*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1994. A detailed biographical account of the life and work of Balzac. Focuses on his philosophical perspectives as well as his fiction; speculates on the psychological motivation underlying his work.

Thomas, Gwen. "The Case of the Missing Detective: Balzac's *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*." *French Studies* 48 (July, 1994): 285-298. Discusses how Balzac anticipates a number of detective story conventions. Argues that Balzac retains gaps and indeterminacies in his work and that his final revelation is a literary device rather than a logical conclusion.

Zweig, Stefan. *Balzac*. Edited by Richard Friedenthal. Translated by William Rose and Dorothy Rose. New York: Viking Press, 1946. Although slightly dated, this fascinating book reads almost like a novel about his life.

ROBERT BARNARD

Born: Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex, England;
November 23, 1936

Also wrote as Bernard Bastable

Types of plot: Cozy; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Superintendent Perry Trethowan, 1981-
Chief Inspector Charlie Peace, 1989-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SUPERINTENDENT PERCIVAL "PERRY" TRETHOWAN, a Scotland Yard detective, is ostracized by his aristocratic family of zany eccentrics. Originally assigned to the vice squad, he first appears on an assignment to investigate the spectacular death of his own father. All the Trethowan mysteries are written in the

first person; readers are informed that he is a large man, but rather than being self-revealing, Perry is the consummate observer.

CHIEF INSPECTOR CHARLIE PEACE first appears in a Trethowan mystery, *Bodies* (1986), as a black gym employee. He returns as a series character, a newly hired police officer in *Death and the Chaste Apprentice* (1989). Subsequently transferred to Yorkshire, he quietly fields and ignores racial slurs. Ever laconic and sardonic, he efficiently solves mysteries with humor, sometimes teaming with the older, widowed detective Mike Oddie.

CONTRIBUTION

A literary critic and academic scholar, Robert Barnard is recognized as one of the leading practitioners

of the pure detective story. As a mystery writer, he works within the classic tradition and is often said to have inherited Agatha Christie's mantle, for like her, he writes of murder among everyday people and often uses conventional plotting devices. His works, however, unlike Christie's, are often humorous and filled with social satire. Barnard's novels follow the customary plot progression from buildup, to crime, to investigation by police, to solution; however, Barnard experiments, sometimes using a first-person narrator or offering several narrators' points of view. His settings are not the street corner, the gang, the brothel, or even the police station. Rather, he centers his novels at opera houses, local pubs, writers' conventions, English villages, universities, parishes, and theaters.

Barnard has been well received in Great Britain, although he acknowledges that it was his American audience that enabled him to leave his professorship in Norway in 1983 to return to England and become a full-time writer. Barnard suggests that fellow mystery writers remember their purpose, noting, "I write only to entertain." Also, he advises them to cherish the conventions, and, in general, to seek not to spoil the recipe of this popular genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Barnard was born on November 23, 1936, in Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex, England. His father was a farm laborer turned writer who wrote what Barnard calls "very sub-Barbara Cartland" romance stories for weekly magazines. At Balliol College, Oxford, Barnard initially read history but soon changed to English. He received his bachelor's degree with honors in 1959, worked in the Fabian Society bookstore, and then took a post as lecturer at the University of New England in New South Wales, Australia, in 1961.

During Barnard's five years in Australia, he met and married Mary Louise Tabor, and read deeply in the Victorian period, specializing in Charles Dickens, the Brontës, and Elizabeth Gaskell. He began to write for academic journals, then attempted a comic novel, but the plot never developed. He next wrote a crime novel concerning Nazi looting, using standard detective-fiction structure. It was rejected by publishers, but a Collins editor encouraged him to send another

manuscript. Collins then published his first mystery, *Death of an Old Goat* (1974). This first mystery, set in Australia, reflects his distaste for teaching there and especially for the snobbish British visiting professors with its numerous satirical portraits. In the novel, bumbling police Inspector Royale investigates the murder of visiting professor Bellville-Smith.

Barnard's wife wished to move to Europe, so in 1966, he accepted a position at the University of Bergen, Norway. He lectured while he studied for his doctorate, graduating in 1971 after writing his dissertation on imagery and theme in the novels of Dickens. In 1976, he accepted a position at the University of Tromsø in Tromsø, Norway, the northernmost university in the world, three degrees north of the Arctic Circle. He came to love Norway, its beauty, its friendliness, and its peace. He set two of his mysteries there, *Death in a Cold Climate* (1980) and *Death in Purple Prose* (1987).

In 1983, Barnard resigned his teaching position in Norway and returned to England to settle in Leeds, having been abroad for twenty-two years. His sense of objectivity as a "returning exile" enabled him to see England through clear and freshly critical eyes. He enjoyed teaching and felt he had done a good job but now intended to take advantage of his growing market to support himself by his writing. Shortly after settling in Leeds, he noted that the very generous reviews in the United States helped to sell his works there and enabled him to live off his earnings.

In addition to his mystery novels and his short stories for mystery magazines, Barnard wrote the first book-length critical study of Agatha Christie, *A Talent to Deceive: An Appreciation of Agatha Christie* (1980), which contains a bibliography and short-story index compiled by Louise Barnard. He has also written extensively on Charlotte Brontë and serves as chair of the Brontë Society.

In 2003, Barnard received the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement in crime writing. He has been nominated numerous times for the Edgar Award and has won the Nero Wolfe Award for *A Scandal in Belgravia* (1991). In 1988, he won the Anthony Award for best short story for "Breakfast Television" in 1988, the

Agatha Award for best short story for “More Final than Divorce” in 1988, and the Macavity Award for best short story for “The Woman in the Wardrobe.”

ANALYSIS

Robert Barnard, like Agatha Christie, locates his mysteries, for the most part, in cozy, comfortable settings. They do not occur in alleys, in exotic dens, or crime-ridden slums but rather in respectable locations: gossiping English villages, clerical convocations, academic halls, conventions of specialists, arts festivals, and theaters. His first mystery is set in Australia and two later ones take place in Norway, reflecting the author’s travels. However, his main focus, even when living elsewhere, is England with its prep schools, Anglican parishes, by-elections, and its minor royalty. For Barnard’s readers, this is part of his appeal: tea cozies, lawn fêtes, rectors, and constables.

Barnard’s plots are conventionally crafted. They usually involve a closed circle of suspects, among whom various relationships and secrets are exposed, all following the commission of the murder. He admires Christie’s careful approach to plotting, citing her as a genius in the “double-bluff” method and its skillful use of red herrings. However, perhaps, like those of Charles Dickens whom he also admires, his plots are not his major strength. They are sometimes contrived and improbable, or they rely too heavily on withholding vital clues or on providing unforeseen twists at the end. Barnard told an interviewer that his stories are not totally preplanned. He begins with a good idea of the murder, victim, motive, and murderer. Then, however, he often generates the story as he writes, for he thinks with his pen in hand—unlike Christie, who had every detail worked out in advance.

Plots in Barnard’s works are often, as in Dickens, secondary; however, both authors pour compensatory energy into the creation of characters, many of whom are originals and quite memorable. Barnard asserts he is “always pinching things” from Dickens, and they are both certainly masters at vividly depicting lower-class characters. For example, Jack Phelan in *A City of Strangers* (1990) is described as “wearing a vest that displayed brawny and tattooed arms gone nastily to flesh, and a prominent beer gut. His trousers were

filthy, and he sat on a crate in a garden littered with the dismembered remains of cars.” Barnard also provides an amusing variety of clerical types, a wicked caricature of an American scholar, gay models and body builders, an aging actress, and even an obscure member of the royal household.

The names of Barnard’s characters are inventive and also reminiscent of those of Dickens: Marius Fleetwood is a ladies’ man, though readers are told he began as a grocer improbably named Bert Winterbottom. Barnard says he has to guard against becoming too Dickensian and resorting too easily to caricature, for his strength is to write more realistically and display an acute eye for sharply drawn social and domestic detail, as in *Mother’s Boys* (1981). His characters are powerfully delineated and easily recognizable; for example, with Declan O’Hearn, in *The Corpse at the Haworth Tandoori* (1998), Barnard creates a new human being, so unusual and recognizable that readers would know him if he walked into a room. In *Out of the Blackout* (1984), he experiments with a new realism and an unusual piece of detection in which the central character, taken as a five-year-old child from London during the Blitz, is searching for his real identity.

Realism is evident in Barnard’s depiction of the sometimes self-referential world of writing and publishing. He explores authors of all kinds: writers of mysteries, romances, biographies, and memoirs. He deftly provides a sharply drawn social milieu of the subculture of male models; he gives memorable depictions of the realities of divorce and is especially good at depicting the dysfunctional family.

Barnard experimented under the pseudonym Bernard Barnstable with four realistic historical novels. *To Die Like a Gentleman* (1993) is set in Victorian England, with the period style well achieved through letters and diary accounts, allowing for multiple viewpoints. Two other historical novels feature Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as a narrator-detective and allow Barnard to display his knowledge of music and to make satirical comments on eighteenth century English society. *A Mansion and Its Murder* (1998) concerns a late nineteenth century banker and captures the fin de siècle culture in England.

Barnard is capable of creating memorable short works as well. Most of the sixteen short stories collected in *Death of a Salesperson* (1989) are ironic crime narratives in the style of the *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1962) television show. His topics in this collection, as in his longer detective fiction, include satires on the art world, academia's foibles, and the stately home tradition. Like Roald Dahl's stories, those of Barnard are based on a winning combination of humor and shock.

In commenting on his series characters, Barnard notes that he does not overuse them, for they tend to dictate the tone of the book, and he prefers to vary the tone. Also, he insists that the crime novel is not deep nor psychological in focus, but formulaic, populist, and designed to entertain. To interest his audience, he updates the well-worn English scene with academics who leave their wives for graduate students, with the nastier sides of divorce, and with some ambiguous twists on sexual orientation. Overall, in his plotting, Barnard is never obsessed by evil; rather, he is much more interested in meanness and in human failings, especially in the lack of self-knowledge.

Although Barnard's plots are pleasingly realized and his characters are memorable, his style is often his most powerful feature. Unlike Christie, he writes with humor, both gentle and light and also biting and satirical. He has an ear for dialogue—always observing and listening and recording, determined that his dialogue be as lively as possible. In general, his ability to write in ways that shock, entertain, delight, and surprise gives testimony to the variety and power of his style.

DEATH IN A COLD CLIMATE

Death in a Cold Climate is set in Tromsø, Norway, where Barnard taught for several years. It conveys a strong sense of how somber and depressing a Scandinavian winter can be and provides an understanding of a foreign culture that is essential to the plot. The murder victim is an outsider, a young Englishman. Symbolically, the story opens at the darkest time of the year, and the competent Norwegian police inspector Fagermo takes until the spring return of the sun to solve the murder. Barnard provides humorous remarks on Norwegian foods and Scandinavian pretense as well as a moving picture of the Korvold family.

SHEER TORTURE

Sheer Torture (1981) introduces Barnard's Detective Perry Trethowan, his first recurring detective figure, and one who narrates his own story. For fourteen years, Perry has been happily disowned by his loony, aristocratic family and is married to Jan, who is working on a degree in Arabic. Perry's superior orders him to investigate the bizarre death of his father, who, wearing spangled tights, has been murdered in a medieval torture machine called a strappado. Perry is more embarrassed than grieved by the event but manages to solve the kinky murder. Some critics call this novel a cross between the novels of the British writers Roald Dahl and Ngaio Marsh.

POLITICAL SUICIDE

In *Political Suicide* (1986), Barnard displays his withering views of the British electoral process and gives himself wide scope to satirize the political machinations of the Tories, the Social Democrats, and the Labour Party. There are also fringe parties galore: the John Lennon Lives Party, the Bring Back Hanging Party, and the Richard III Was Innocent Party. Some critics have compared his election passages to those of Dickens in *Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837). A Tory member of Parliament has been found drowned in the Thames. The three candidates vying to fill his vacant position in Bootham, Yorkshire, provide Barnard with many opportunities for scathing satire, for they are all among the suspects interviewed by Superintendent Sutcliffe, who takes until the final pages to reveal the motive, means, and opportunity of the murderer.

DEATH IN PURPLE PROSE

Death in Purple Prose, a Perry Trethowan series novel that depicts literary groups, finds the detective again involved with his loony, aristocratic family. Perry accompanies his sister Cristobel to a convention of the World Association of Romantic Novelists (WARN), held in Bergen, Norway. Here Barnard draws lightly on his own father's profession as a romance writer as well as on his years spent in Norway. He satirizes the romance-novel industry, and when a famous writer is murdered, secrets are revealed. Malevolent rivals for the title of conference queen range from the sensibly attired Mary Sweeny with her hard, glinting eye to the coy and sugary Amanda Fairchild.

THE MISTRESS OF ALDERLEY

In *The Mistress of Alderley* (2002), a Detective Sergeant Charlie Peace mystery, the murdered man is an aging lothario, Marius Fleetwood, who, although he still lives with his wife, claims multiple past and current mistresses. His current official mistress, the retired actress Caroline Fawley, thinks he is hers, exclusively. However, when Fleetwood is murdered, Peace finds, among other things, that the dead man had also been trysting with Caroline's daughter, an oversexed opera star. Satire is aimed at the local clergy, at techno-kids, and at a fussy dower-house gentleman and his rough sister. The whole nasty mess is cleared up when the murderer is discovered at the very end to be the daughter's jealous lover. English slang abounds ("swish," "breakfast fry-up," "Guy Fawkes") as well as allusions to famous people in the news such as Hillary Clinton and Guy Ritchie.

Marie J. K. Brenner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION**SUPERINTENDENT PERRY TRETOWAN SERIES:**

Sheer Torture, 1981 (also known as *Death by Sheer Torture*); *Death and the Princess*, 1982; *The Missing Brontë*, 1983 (also known as *The Case of the Missing Brontë*); *Bodies*, 1986; *Death in Purple Prose*, 1987 (also known as *The Cherry Blossom Corpse*)

INSPECTOR CHARLIE PEACE SERIES: *Death and the Chaste Apprentice*, 1989; *A Fatal Attachment*, 1992; *A Hovering of Vultures*, 1993; *The Bad Samaritan*, 1995; *No Place of Safety*, 1997; *The Corpse at the Haworth Tandoori*, 1998; *Unholy Dying*, 2001; *The Bones in the Attic*, 2001; *The Mistress of Alderley*, 2002; *The Graveyard Position*, 2004; *A Fall from Grace*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death of an Old Goat*, 1974; *A Little Local Murder*, 1976; *Death on the High C's*, 1977; *Blood Brotherhood*, 1977; *Unruly Son*, 1978 (also known as *Death of a Mystery Writer*); *Posthumous Papers*, 1979 (also known as *Death of a Literary Widow*); *Death in a Cold Climate*, 1980; *Mother's Boys*, 1981 (also known as *Death of a Perfect Mother*); *Little Victims*, 1983 (also known as *School for Murder*); *Corpse in a Gilded Cage*, 1984; *Out of the Blackout*, 1984; *The Disposal of the Living*, 1985

(also known as *Fête Fatale*); *Political Suicide*, 1986; *The Skeleton in the Grass*, 1987; *At Death's Door*, 1988; *A City of Strangers*, 1990; *A Scandal in Belgravia*, 1991; *The Masters of the House*, 1994; *Touched by the Dead*, 1999 (also known as *A Murder in Mayfair*); *A Cry from the Dark*, 2003; *Dying Flames*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS BASTABLE): *To Die Like a Gentleman*, 1993; *Dead, Mr. Mozart*, 1995; *Too Many Notes, Mr. Mozart*, 1995; *A Mansion and Its Murder*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Death of a Salesperson*, 1989; *The Habit of Widowhood and Other Murderous Proclivities*, 1996

NONFICTION: *Imagery and Themes in the Novels of Dickens*, 1974; *A Talent to Deceive: An Appreciation of Agatha Christie*, 1980; *A Short History of English Literature*, 1984 (also known as *A History of English Literature*, 1994); *Emily Brontë*, 2000; *Brontë Encyclopedia*, 2007

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Barnard, Robert. "Growing Up to Crime." In *Colloquium on Crime*, edited by Robin W. Winks. New York: Scribner, 1986. Barnard discusses his creative process, focusing on improvisation and on the use of caricature, humor, and, suspense; also discusses mystery novels as a genre.

_____. *A Talent to Deceive: An Appreciation of Agatha Christie*. Rev. ed. New York: Mysterious Press, 1987. Barnard's work on the author whom he most admired sheds light on his understanding of the classical detective novel and how he interpreted it in his own works.

_____. "Why oh Why? Motivation in the Crime Novel." *Writer* 108, no. 8 (August, 1995): 3. Barnard talks about writing mysteries, particularly cozies, and creating plausible motives for crimes.

Breen, Jon L. "Robert Barnard." In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks. New York: Scribner, 1998. Provides biographical details, an analysis of Barnard's critical writings, and

a look at the historical novels and short stories.

Ford, Susan Allen. "Stately Homes of England: Robert Barnard's Country House Mysteries." *Clues* 23, no. 4 (Summer, 2005): 3-14. Ford analyzes Barnard's use of the traditional detective novel form used in the Golden Age of mysteries. Compares his work to that of Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh.

Herbert, Rosemary. "Robert Barnard." In *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: Hall, 1994. Updates a 1985 interview, covering Barnard's use of personal experience in his fiction, his favorite writers, and his attitudes toward literary allusion and the populist entertainment aspects of the mystery genre.

NEVADA BARR

Born: Yerington, Nevada; March 1, 1952

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Anna Pigeon, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

ANNA PIGEON works for the National Park Service as a law enforcement agent in numerous parks. Small and middle-aged, Anna often finds herself fighting discrimination against women and championing ecological concerns even as she deciphers the clues to a variety of murders in a range of scenic locations.

CONTRIBUTION

Nevada Barr provides a unique perspective within the canon of mystery and detective fiction written by women. By making her detective park ranger Anna Pigeon, Barr can traverse diverse terrain rather successfully. As a woman in a mostly male world, Anna can explore and indict the National Park Service's often patriarchal rules and policies. In addition, because of the nature of National Park Service appointments, Anna can describe and delight in natural habitats across the United States without this movement from place to place becoming arbitrary or forced. Thus, Barr's novels offer readers impressions of some of the most interesting natural habitats in the United States. Though Anna's approach to crime seems a bit amateurish because the National Park Service does not expect its employees to have to deal with crimes, her or-

ganized and analytic nature makes her a natural investigator. Barr's detective novels not only contain crime and detection but also comment on ecological concerns in a variety of picturesque natural habitats and inequality in the workplace, even as her works maintain a humanistic interest in the narrator and her concerns.

BIOGRAPHY

Nevada Barr was born in Yerington, Nevada, on March 1, 1952, to Dave Barr and Mary Barr, both pilots; her sister Molly also became a pilot. Though born in her namesake state, Nevada spent her early years in Susanville, California, at a small mountain airport where her parents worked. She received a bachelor's degree in speech and drama from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo in 1974 and a master of fine arts in acting from the University of California, Irvine. After graduate school, Barr gravitated toward New York City, where she spent five years serving as a member of the Classic Stage Company and performing in several off-Broadway productions. Later, she moved to Minneapolis and spent several years in the theater there. She also worked in advertising in a variety of capacities, appearing in commercials and industrial films. Her career in writing began in 1978, though her first published novel, *Bittersweet*, a historical Western novel about two women, was published in 1984.

Because of her first husband's interest in conservation and wildlife, Barr began working as a seasonal employee for the National Park Service in 1989. These seasonal jobs allowed her to work in the parks during

the summer months while pursuing her acting and writing during the rest of the year. Her first appointment was at Isle Royale National Park in Michigan in 1989, her second at Guadalupe National Park in Texas in 1990, and her third, for two seasons in 1991-1992, at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. To gain full-time status within the National Park Service, Nevada transferred to Natchez Trace National Park in 1993, where she worked for two years before leaving the park service to work full-time on her writing.

In 1993 Barr published her first mystery novel, *Track of the Cat*, set in Guadalupe National Park, where she had previously worked. This novel won the 1994 Agatha Award for best first novel and the 1994 Anthony Award for best novel. Subsequent novels also have garnered a number of nominations and awards. *Firestorm* (1996) was nominated for the Anthony Award for best novel and was awarded France's Prix du Roman d'Aventure. *Blind Descent* (1998) was nominated for both an Anthony Award and a Macavity Award. *Deep South* (2000) also received an Anthony Award nomination. Barr and her second husband, former National Park Service ranger Richard Jones, live in New Orleans, Louisiana.

ANALYSIS

Nevada Barr's mystery series featuring National Park Service ranger Anna Pigeon is unusual among series featuring a female sleuth in that the novels do not fit neatly into any one genre of mystery and detective fiction. On one hand, Anna is certainly a kind of private investigator, hard-boiled in her self-imposed isolation from others as well as independent, for the most part, from family and romantic liaisons that limit her ability to move from park to park without consequence. Though she maintains connections with her psychologist sister Molly, her sister lives in New York City while Anna traipses from park to park across the United States. Indeed, the nature of the park service, as outlined in Barr's *Track of the Cat*, suggests that most park workers do not stay in one park indefinitely so as not to become too invested in one area. Though Anna goes to New York when Molly becomes gravely ill in the seventh novel in the series, *Liberty Falling* (1999), neither Molly's illness in this novel nor Anna's

marriage to local sheriff and minister Paul Davidson in *Hard Truth* (2005) limit Anna's involvement in solving crimes nor the necessary traveling. Even when Anna falls in love—twice during the series, first with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent Frederick Stanton, who will eventually pair with her sister Molly, and second with Davidson—she resists putting herself in any emotionally needy situation. Furthermore, with Anna's general cynicism, she can maintain a level of objectivity that serves her well when investigating crimes. Like her hard-boiled predecessors, Anna regularly gets shot, beat up, pushed down mountains, and kidnapped without deterring her from resuming the investigation the next day.

Although she has the personality and many other qualities of a hard-boiled private investigator, Anna's job actually involves her in quasi-police work. Though she often has to concede to local police authorities or FBI operatives while investigating a case, her position in the park allows her to carry weapons and enforce the laws of the parks. In this regard, Barr's novels suggest the police procedural. Anna must follow the protocol of her job regarding the gathering of evidence and the interrogation of suspects. Though her authority is sometimes undermined by those higher in command in the park service, Anna, unlike private investigators, is a central character at a crime scene.

Despite her tough demeanor and her savvy police skills, Anna Pigeon often approaches crime as would an amateur sleuth. Although no one pays her to discover the truth behind a crime, Anna goes beyond her park ranger responsibilities to solve mysteries. These explorations manage to put her into extraordinarily dangerous situations without much forethought or management on her part. For example, she might be taking a walk late at night when she discovers a clue that might lead to a killer. Instead of calling for backup or pursuing the lead in the morning, Anna might walk into a trap. Furthermore, she often seems ill-equipped to handle these emergencies even though she inevitably triumphs by the end of the novel.

Barr's use of national parks as settings for her works allows a level of integrity often missing from series that involve an amateur detective. Though private investigators and police officers might have a

never-ending caseload that could be the basis for multiple novels, park rangers typically do not see crime on such a scale. The very nature of the itinerant park ranger, however, allows Barr to transport Anna Pigeon to a variety of new settings with new possibilities for crimes. Because the crimes occur at different parks, Anna's repeated investigation of so much murderous activity does not strain credulity.

The national park settings also add a further dimension to Barr's tightly woven, often psychological mysteries. Anna Pigeon revels in the unique surroundings of each park at which she works. Whether she is exploring the lush, humid swamps of lower Mississippi or the deep, icy waters of Lake Superior in Michigan, Anna describes, experiences, and appreciates the places where she works. Barr's descriptions of park ranger work—both its tedium and its surprises—connect with these natural surroundings to create an engulfing perception of place and an admiration for each park. Place is so critical to the plot of the novels that Barr typically provides a map of the park area in question in each book. Within each park, Anna must learn new skills such as fire suppression, caving techniques, and even waitressing in order to survive. Thus, Barr's novels become windows into multiple environments but from a distinctive, insider perspective.

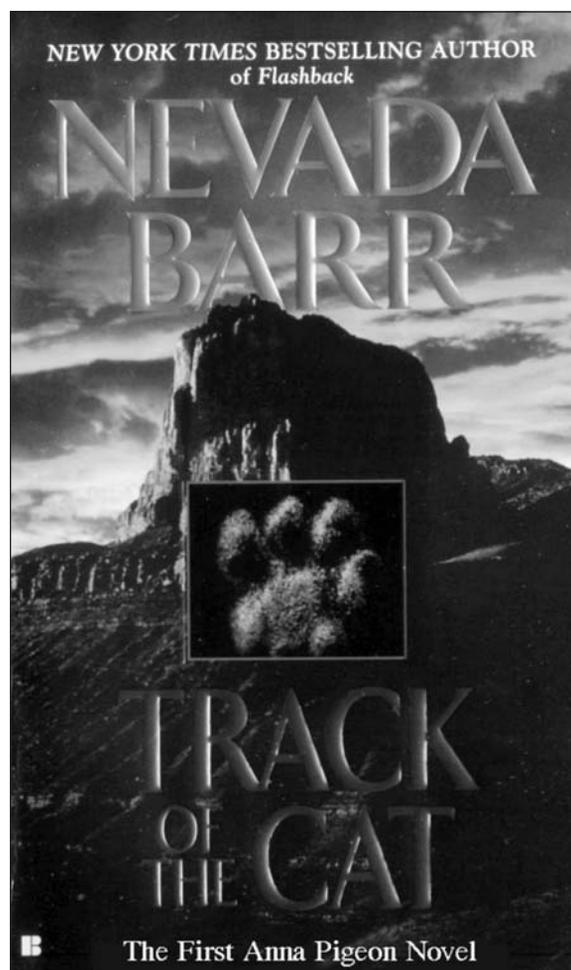
Thematically, Barr's mysteries often revolve around ecological concerns. Frequently, murders occur because people get greedy and infringe on park land to make money or curry favor. For example, in *Blind Descent*, a caver dies because she realizes an oil company has drilled into a federally owned cave, and in *Deep South*, a young girl is murdered because she stumbles on a Civil War reenactor's nefarious scheme to make money. Though the crimes in these novels sometimes seem unrelated to the environment of the park, inevitably the plot will unfold to show how the murder or murders often directly involve an infringement on park lands.

In addition to expressing environmental concerns, Barr's novels also often have a decidedly feminist agenda. Anna Pigeon must dodge male insults and insinuations as she moves her way up the National Park Service's bureaucratic ladder. Especially after she achieves leadership roles, Anna undergoes intense scru-

tiny by the men who must serve beneath her. Barr's presentation of Anna as a strong-willed but politic member of a labyrinthine political network showcases the inherent biases of the organization even as it shows Anna's ability to play by the rules. Despite efforts from others to keep her from her job, Anna believes in the sanctity of the park, the importance of due process, and the integrity of personal experience. Barr's novels enhance female-centered justice, even as they extol the virtues of natural habitats and a kind of vigilante honesty. Anna might take matters into her own hands, but she does not shirk from the consequences of those actions.

TRACK OF THE CAT

Track of the Cat, which introduces Anna Pigeon, incorporates many of the themes of subsequent novels



in the series. Anna, an emotionally isolated woman in a mostly male environment, must deal with patronizing bureaucrats with gender biases and capitalistic agendas. Furthermore, the alluring descriptions of landscape and the flora and fauna of Guadalupe National Park give the text an open quality that invites readers to share in the exploration of the terrain as well as the exploration of the murder. Other elements of the novel make it unusual for the genre. *Track of the Cat* showcases Barr's interest in gender roles and the environment. During the course of the novel, Anna questions her sexuality when she becomes enchanted by a lesbian worker at the park. She also fights her first battle against a mostly male and capitalist enemy in favor of an environmental concern, in this case, the preservation of the innocent mountain lion who is falsely accused of committing the murder that precipitates the initial investigation. Anna's vigilance in protecting a park's habitat becomes a reoccurring theme in later novels.

BLIND DESCENT

Blind Descent, like Barr's earlier *Firestorm*, accentuates her interest in the locked-room mystery. The setting for this novel is the uninhabited, largely fictionalized Lechuguilla Cave, located adjacent to Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico, an extreme area that only a few people ever explore. The who, how, and why of this mystery are all intertwined and enigmatic. Barr augments the narrowly defined plot with two related elements. First, the author enhances this mystery with the particulars of rock climbing, rappelling, spelunking, and cave investigation. The crime situation requires the investigator to understand the mechanics of these activities, as well as the ecological issues at stake when investigating pristine wilderness, whether it be above or, as in this case, below ground. Second, Barr focuses on Anna's near paralyzing claustrophobia when faced with the challenge and necessity of underground exploration, further defining Anna's character even as this fear also assists in provoking a similar fear in the reader. Barr uses the restrictions of the cave to highlight the internal restrictions of the characters, thus creating a cleaner narrative structure on which to resolve the complexities of the mystery.

DEEP SOUTH

Set against the backdrop of the Natchez Trace Parkway National Park in Mississippi, *Deep South* marks a transformation in Barr's depiction of Anna Pigeon. Though Anna had been depicted as a nomadic and independent character in the first seven novels of the series, Barr shows Anna taking on more traditional roles, particularly in her relationships with characters, and more important, with place. Though in all of the Pigeon books Barr depicts place with keen detail, as she moves into the South, the detail becomes less objectively observed and more intimately involved. When the reader learns that Anna has taken a permanent position at the Natchez Trace Parkway National Park, the concept of "permanent" sets the tone for the rest of the novel. The relationships Anna forms seem more important because of their potential engagement in her future, though Anna maintains a level of wariness about the idea of settling down. A second novel about Natchez Trace Parkway, *Hunting Season* (2002), allowed her to investigate this territory again as it deepened characterization and the sense of place.

Rebecca Hendrick Flannagan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ANNA PIGEON SERIES: *Track of the Cat*, 1993; *A Superior Death*, 1994; *Ill Wind*, 1995 (also known as *Mountain of Bones*); *Firestorm*, 1996; *Endangered Species*, 1997; *Blind Descent*, 1998; *Liberty Falling*, 1999; *Deep South*, 2000; *Blood Lure*, 2001; *Hunting Season*, 2002; *Flashback*, 2003; *High Country*, 2004; *Hard Truth*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Bittersweet*, 1984; *Naked Came the Phoenix*, 2001 (with others)

NONFICTION: *Seeking Enlightenment Hat by Hat: A Skeptic Path to Religion*, 2003

EDITED TEXTS: *Nevada Barr Presents Malice Domestic Ten: An Anthology of Original Traditional Mystery Stories*, 2001; *Deadly Housewives*, 2006

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Barr, Nevada. Web Site of Nevada Barr. <http://www.nevadabarr.com>. This Web site is maintained by

Nevada's sister Molly Barr and contains up-to-date information on Barr's books. The site also hosts a gallery of the two sisters' art, as well as photos of Nevada when she worked for the National Park Service. Though not necessarily a scholarly source, the personal elements of this site make it worthwhile when studying Nevada Barr.

Cava, Francis. *Sleuths in Skirts: A Bibliography and Analysis of Serialized Female Sleuths*. New York: Routledge, 2002. This book contains a compendium of information about female sleuths, including brief descriptions of heroines. The extended bibliography of detectives and works includes Nevada Barr's Anna Pigeon. Index.

Line, Less. "Guadalupe Gumshoe." *Audubon* 105 (September, 2003): 22-23. Line's profile accentuates Barr's interest in natural habitats and provides an overview of her work as a mystery novelist whose protagonist operates as a National Park Service ranger. This article also provides interesting statistics about national park violence and staffing as it relates to events within Barr's novels.

Nolan, Tom. "For a Clue, Look Up." *The Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2003, p. W19. This profile of Barr focuses primarily on her writing style and her success with mysteries. Also includes information

relative to her nonfictional work, *Seeking Enlightenment Hat by Hat*.

Rancourt, Linda. "Murder She Writes." *National Parks Magazine* 69 (September/October, 1995): 30-35. This article in a National Park Service journal appeared early in Barr's career, highlighting the importance of her National Park Service work in her writing. Drawing on workers' comments from the various parks mentioned in Barr's first three novels, as well as Barr's comments on her own work, Rancourt shows how Barr combines her job of National Park ranger with that of mystery novelist.

Reynolds, Moira Davison, ed. *Women Authors of Detective Series: Twenty-One American and British Authors, 1900-2000*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001. Describes Barr's work as well as that of twenty other female authors of detective fiction in the twentieth century.

Shindler, Dorman T. "Taking on History's Mysteries." Review of *Flashback*, by Nevada Barr. *Publishers Weekly* 250, no. 4 (January 27, 2003): 230. Ostensibly a review of Barr's *Flashback*, this interview also addresses her use of history in both her mysteries and her historical Western, *Bittersweet*.

ROBERT BARR

Born: Glasgow, Scotland; September 16, 1850

Died: Woldingham, Surrey, England; October 21, 1912

Also wrote as Luke Sharp

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Eugène Valmont, 1904-1906

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

EUGÈNE VALMONT is a private investigator in London, formerly chief detective to the French govern-

ment, of indeterminate age, perhaps in his mid-forties, and unmarried. He is arrogant, self-celebrating, and procedurally impeccable; his admirably incisive deductions frequently mistake appearance for fact in Barr's knowing parody of the genre.

CONTRIBUTION

In the character of Eugène Valmont, Robert Barr capitalized on the popularity of detective fiction and gentlemanly sleuths, whose antecedents were Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. His perspective, however,

was distinctly ironic: Valmont's investigations, when not completely trivial, are often failures. Barr satirized the school of literary masterminds through a firm control of the devices of the form. He was a master of burlesque narrative, in which a final reversal of the situation in point turns the suspicious events into innocent practices. Banal solutions put the supposed complications into a nonsinister perspective, offering comic resolutions within the normal complexities and deceptions of "serious" detective fiction. Barr's consulting detective, who is anything but self-effacing, has been suggested as a model for Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, first envisioned in 1916, and there are appreciable likenesses of character. Valmont's continuing appearances in anthologies testify to the success of Barr's inspired and offbeat creation.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Barr was born in Glasgow, Scotland, on September 16, 1850, the eldest of eight children of Robert Barr, a carpenter, and his wife, Jane Barr. The family moved to Wallacetown, Ontario, in 1854, and thereafter to Windsor. After teaching provisionally at rural posts in Kent County, Barr entered the Toronto Normal School in 1873 (a period satirized in his novel *The Measure of the Rule*, 1907), earning a third-class teaching certificate. He taught in Wallacetown and Walkerville and became principal of the Windsor Central School.

By this time, Barr was an intermittent contributor of comic pieces to the Bothwell *Advance* and the Toronto satirical magazine *Grip*. The Detroit Free Press accepted his mock-heroic account of an 1875 voyage around Lake Erie's south shore; in 1876, he joined the paper's staff, working first as a reporter, later as a columnist, and finally as its exchange editor.

In 1881, Barr established the British edition of the newspaper in London; he contributed interviews, obituaries, character sketches, anecdotes, facetious travel notes, and columns. By the 1890's, journalism had become a lucrative career for him. In 1892, he and humorist Jerome K. Jerome founded *The Idler*, a glossy, lavishly illustrated monthly magazine that enjoyed immediate success and that featured an impressive list of contributors. Barr coedited *The Idler* through 1895

and again from 1902 until it ceased publication in 1911. His first collection of stories appeared in 1883, his first novel in 1894. Fluent in profanity, he was a sociable raconteur, a constant smoker, and a vigorous clubman.

Barr built his own home, Hillhead, in Woldingham, Surrey, where he was an invaluable and solicitous friend to his neighbor Stephen Crane, and also associated with other literary figures of the day. His hobbies included cycling, golf, photography, and travel—to Algeria, Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, Italy, the United States, and Canada. In 1900, he was awarded an honorary master of arts by the University of Michigan. Barr died at Woldingham on October 21, 1912, survived by a son, a daughter, and a grandchild.

ANALYSIS

Robert Barr's principal talent lay in the cleverness and ingenuity of his plots, particularly in his ability to devise ironic twists to otherwise straightforward situations. He had no particular command of naturalistic detail; his locations remain almost completely functional. His narrative language is formally correct and elegantly characterless. None of his characters is realized with any physical or psychological depth; they remain lightly sketched and one-dimensional, excelling only in badinage and facetious dialogue. He wrote with a facility that came from his journalistic background, addressing the voracious popular market for superficial fiction. Until he created Eugène Valmont, his inventiveness and wit existed almost completely at the level of romantic froth.

"THE GREAT PEGRAM MYSTERY"

A number of detective and mystery stories and novels preceded Barr's success with *The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont* (1906). "The Great Pegram Mystery" (originally published in *The Idler* of 1892 as "Detective Stories Gone Wrong—The Adventures of Sherlaw Kombs") was a distinct departure from his usual short-story practice. Not unlike the Holmesian prototype, Sherlaw Kombs plays the violin, scorns Scotland Yard, anticipates a visitor before his arrival and skillfully deduces his occupation and mission, uses a magnifying glass at the scene of the apparent crime, makes calculations to the inch, and meticulously unravels the

sequence of events *ex post facto*. Kombs insists on dealing only with facts, and, within the boundaries of circumstantial evidence, his reconstruction is faultless. His aide, Watson, the narrator, is an exclamatory naïve admirer and straight man, of no assistance whatever.

One would hope that Barr's friend Doyle greeted this inspired silliness with magnanimity, for Kombs mistakes for suicide a case of robbery and murder that occurred, as a devastating touch, nowhere near the location of the body in a train compartment. The pastiche is of a high order. It is augmented by Kombs's precise and completely self-assured investigation, and by his wonderfully tongue-in-cheek justification of his conclusions (the "motive"):

Nothing is more calculated to prepare the mind for self-destruction than the prospect of a night ride on the Scotch Express, and the view from the windows of the train as it passes through the northern part of London is particularly conducive to thoughts of annihilation.

This story was included in Ellery Queen's anthology *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1944).

FROM WHOSE BOURNE?

The novella *From Whose Bourne?* (1893) further anticipated Barr's attention to detective fiction. In it, a ghost assists in clearing his wife, who is wrongfully suspected of having poisoned him at a dinner party. The French spirit-detective Lecocq, a precursor of Eugène Valmont, possesses all the formality, pride, and obtuseness of Sherlock Kombs: He seems adept only at collating the obvious facts in their logical order, an exercise that he considers child's play. Though the story is protracted and unfocused in development—the ostensible impulse behind the two prime suspects is purely romantic—it does demonstrate Barr's fondness for the unusual solution (here, an inadvertently switched drug) beyond the obligatory complications at the level of the apparently guilty parties.

REVENGE!

The mystery stories collected in *Revenge!* (1896) are considerably more satisfactory. Ranging over a variety of international locales, the majority of the tales conclude with the discomfiture or death of the antagonists by such devices as dynamite, naphtha, billiards,

revolvers, an avalanche, and the stock exchange. "An Alpine Divorce," for example, develops the situation of a couple who hate each other. The wife commits suicide by flinging herself off a cliff in Switzerland, having first framed her husband in public for her prospective murder. In "Which Was the Murderer?" a woman must smother her wounded and possibly dying husband with a pillow to ensure that his assailant does not escape the charge of murder.

These stories are confined by rapid development, minimal attention to physical environment, a more or less genteel level of society, virtually interchangeable characters at best distinguished by their sex or position, and a formal, literate, but featureless style. Nevertheless, they often prove Barr's considerable powers of invention and show how masterfully he could work within the limits of the popular short-story format.

THE TRIUMPHS OF EUGÈNE VALMONT

The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont was for Barr a triumph of complementary character and style: Valmont's singular nature is, effectively, often the principal content of his cases. He is the only individual with any real depth in these stories. The collection, in which Barr rose well above his journalistic competence, represents his single sustained foray into the genre of detective fiction.

Though he is consistently opinionated, autocratic, and self-satisfied during his investigations, Eugène Valmont possesses an undeniable charm; his quirks and fixations make him entirely distinctive. His appeal is only augmented by his preening. Sublimely convinced of his own superiority and thoroughness, he prides himself on his urbanity of manner, though he is galled by having been mocked in the French press. His deductions are incisive and eminently plausible, even when radically misdirected. At times, however, he relies on intuition, rather than on proof or evidence. He has monumental vanity, Gallic vivacity, and an unshakable dedication. He is also much interested in the financial rewards accruing from private practice.

It is Valmont's character that sustains these stories: His sometimes intelligent obtuseness, his blindness to the obvious, and his unceasing identification of criminal activity are delightful. He is prone to discover suspicious circumstances and complications where none

exist. He has a "fixed rule never to believe that I am at the bottom of any case until I have come on something suspicious," and his conclusions often supplant normal human insight or consideration of alternative truths. Valmont can coolly explain or rationalize any discrepancy between his projections and the reality of a sequence of events.

Though Valmont prides himself on his calmness and imperturbability, the nature of the English disturbs him. He is infinitely condescending toward British police methods, against which he rails constantly, bemusedly, and patronizingly. He believes that the concept of innocence until guilt is proved is ridiculous, as he explains what to him are his justifiable violations of due process in the face of English conservative thought. Throughout his questionable triumphs, the inexplicability of the nation's mentality is a repeated target in crafty asides: "It is little wonder the English possess no drama, for they show scant appreciation of the sensational moments in life; they are not quickly alive to the lights and shadows of events."

For Valmont, the English personality is epitomized in the stolid Spenser Hale of Scotland Yard, who is often the butt of his barbs. It is Hale who Valmont blames for his own inflation of elementary cases: "Sometimes the utter simplicity of the puzzles which trouble him leads me into an intricate involution entirely unnecessary in the circumstances." Conversely, even though he harps repeatedly on his dismissal by the French government, managing to glorify himself in the process, Valmont celebrates the people and culture of France at every opportunity:

It is my determination yet to write a book on the comparative characteristics of the two people. I hold a theory that the English people are utterly incomprehensible to the rest of humanity, and this will be duly set out in my forthcoming volume.

Valmont's diction is almost completely formal and grammatically elegant, though he lapses occasionally into supposedly French inversions and amusing turns of English idiom. While Valmont is deflecting anarchist activities in Paris, he is complimented on his verbal facility:

Monsieur Valmont, you have stated the case with that clear comprehensiveness pertaining to a nation which understands the meaning of words, and the correct adjustment of them; that felicity of language which has given France the first place in the literature of nations.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE FIVE HUNDRED DIAMONDS"

In "The Mystery of the Five Hundred Diamonds," the first sequence of connected stories in *The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont*, Valmont must guarantee the safe transport out of France to the purchaser of an ill-starred necklace consigned to public auction. He assumes that fraud is inevitable and that the successful bidder is a hitherto unknown prince of criminals, and thus he gives chase. The detailed and protracted pursuit on foot, by coach, and by boat, complicated by such red herrings as miscues, disguises, transfer of the goods, and an American detective, is excitingly and effectively rendered. Here the point is the elaboration of Valmont's method and resources rather than his initial error of identification and creation of a task that did not require his talent for complication.

"THE ABSENT-MINDED COTERIE"

The essence of Valmont is evident in "The Absent-Minded Coterie," a sequence of four chapters that has enjoyed an enduring anthology life. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* of March, 1950, celebrated the adventure in "A Poll of Twelve on the Best Dozen Detective Stories," along with works of such writers as G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy L. Sayers, Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Aldous Huxley. In the story, Scotland Yard's presumption of an illegal coining establishment and recruitment of Valmont leads to an apparent confidence scheme run by a curiosity-shop owner who, in an amusing irrelevancy, also writes Christian Science pamphlets under a pseudonym. Absentminded buyers of goods are thought to lose track of their debts over the course of the collection of weekly installments. Valmont bristles with suspicion, but he has no hard evidence of wrongdoing. With an uncharacteristic sneering heavy-handedness, he accuses one of the merchant's canvassers of merely playing the innocent. Throughout, the modest operative metaphor of a London fog is appropriate to the sup-

posed victims of the alleged scheme and even more to Valmont himself, who is undeniably clever but wrong, misled by his earnest determination to uncover deceit. He is left unrepentant but nonplussed by the canvasser's explanation of his and his employer's quite legitimate and well-intentioned enterprise. Here, as elsewhere, Barr does not dwell on Valmont's reaction to the facts; the story ends with the revelation, not with discomfiture, self-recrimination, or rationalization.

Valmont's "triumphs," whether real, petty, or non-existent, are more a vindication of his personality than practical and satisfactory demonstrations of his self-proclaimed genius as a detective. With this satiric version of the master sleuth, Barr made a distinctive contribution to the growing pantheon of literary investigators, before wit and insight were joined to physical derring-do in the later, more forceful forms of the genre.

Louis K. MacKendrick

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

EUGÈNE VALMONT SERIES: *The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont*, 1906

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Face and the Mask*, 1894; *A Woman Intervenes: Or, The Mistress of the Mine*, 1896; *The Mutable Many*, 1896; *Jennie Baxter, Journalist*, 1899; *A Prince of Good Fellows*, 1902; *Over the Border*, 1903; *A Chicago Princess*, 1904; *A Rock in the Baltic*, 1906; *The Watermead Affair*, 1906; *The Girl in the Case*, 1910; *Lady Eleanor, Lawbreaker*, 1911

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *From Whose Bourne?*, 1893; *Revenge!*, 1896; *The Strong Arm*, 1899; *The Woman Wins*, 1904; *Tales of Two Continents*, 1920; *The Adventures of Sherlaw Kombs*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *In the Midst of Alarms*, 1894; *One Day's Courtship, and The Heralds of Fame*, 1896; *Tekla*, 1898 (also known as *The Countess Tekla*); *The Victors*, 1901; *The O'Ruddy*, 1903 (with Stephen Crane); *The Lady Electra*, 1904; *The Speculations of John Steele*, 1905; *The Tempestuous Petticoat*, 1905; *The Measure of the Rule*, 1907; *Young Lord Stranleigh*,

1908; *Cardillac*, 1909; *Stranleigh's Million*, 1909; *The Sword Maker*, 1910; *Lord Stranleigh, Philanthropist*, 1911; *The Palace of Logs*, 1912; *A Woman in a Thousand*, 1913; *Lord Stranleigh Abroad*, 1913; *My Enemy Jones: An Extravaganza*, 1913 (also known as *Unsentimental Journey*)

SHORT FICTION: *Strange Happenings*, 1883; *In a Steamer Chair, and Other Shipboard Stories*, 1892; *The Helping Hand, and Other Stories*, 1920

PLAYS: *An Evening's Romance*, pr. 1901 (with Cosmo Hamilton); *The Conspiracy*, pr. 1907; *Lady Eleanor, Lawbreaker*, pr. 1912; *The Hanging Outlook*, pr. 1912 (with J. S. Judd)

NONFICTION: *The Unchanging East*, 1900; *I Travel the Road*, 1945

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Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. Discusses Barr's literary production within the context of the detective fiction being written in England in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century.

Klinck, Carl F., ed. *Literary History of Canada*. Vol 1. 2d ed. Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1976. Detailed four-volume history of Canadian literature and literary culture is a good source for understanding Barr's background. Bibliographies and indexes.

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Parr, John. "The Measure of Robert Barr." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 3, no. 2 (1974): 21-31. Evaluates Barr as a Canadian author and a contributor to a properly Canadian literary culture.

FRANCIS BEEDING

John Leslie Palmer and Hilary Aidan St. George Saunders

JOHN LESLIE PALMER

Born: Oxford, England; September 4, 1885

Died: Hampstead, England; August 5, 1944

Also wrote as Christopher Haddon; David Pilgrim
(with Hilary Aidan St. George Saunders)

HILARY AIDAN ST. GEORGE SAUNDERS

Born: Clifton, England; January 14, 1898

Died: Naussau, the Bahamas; December 16, 1951

Also wrote as Barum Browne (with Geoffrey
Dennis); Cornelius Cofyn (with John de Vere
Loder); David Pilgrim (with John Leslie Palmer)
Types of plot: Espionage; police procedural; psycho-
logical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Colonel Alastair Granby, 1928-1946

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

COLONEL ALASTAIR GRANBY (later a general), D.S.O., of the British Intelligence Service. In *Take It Crooked* (1932), he marries Julia Hazelrig. A man of short stature with twinkling eyes, he quotes William Shakespeare and enjoys good food and drink. He eventually becomes head of the British Secret Service.

CONTRIBUTION

The pseudonymous collaboration as Francis Beeding of John Leslie Palmer and Hilary Aidan St. George Saunders began in the 1920's, when both served in the League of Nations Permanent Secretariat. Living and working in Geneva, both were no doubt keenly aware of the European nations' fears and frustrations, which persisted after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. There was a degree of paranoia, demonstrated in part by the dread that Germany, bitter and burdened by war reparations, was secretly rearming. It is not surprising that, set against a background of rumors, one in which espionage was sure to be a part of any covert rearmament effort, espionage stories would become increasingly evident in the popular literature.

The partnership of Palmer and Saunders produced a series of entertaining espionage novels that, because of their quality, appealed to the sophisticated reader of the day. No less appealing was the other fiction produced by the two. Writing is supposed to be a lonely business, and successful literary collaborations are few, but that of Palmer and Saunders lasted for more than twenty years, during which, as Francis Beeding, they produced more than thirty popular novels.

BIOGRAPHY

John Leslie Palmer was born on September 4, 1885. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, where he was the Brackenbury scholar. Palmer married Mildred Hodson Woodfield in 1911, and the union produced a son and a daughter. Palmer was drama critic and assistant editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature* in London from 1910 until 1915, after which he was drama critic of London's *Evening Standard* until 1919. During the same period, he served in the British War Trade Intelligence Department. Palmer was a member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and from 1920 to 1939, he was on the staff of the League of Nations Permanent Secretariat in Geneva. He produced several novels, one play, and numerous nonfictional works, most concerning the theater, including a study of the life and works of Molière, and a two-volume work titled *Political [Comic] Characters of Shakespeare* (1945-1946). Palmer died on August 5, 1944.

Hilary Aidan St. George Saunders, born January 14, 1898, was, like his collaborator, a graduate of Oxford's Balliol College. After the death of his first wife, Helen Foley, in 1917, he married Joan Bedford. During World War I, Saunders served in the Welch Guards and was awarded the Military Cross. He worked on the staff of the League of Nations Permanent Secretariat from 1920 to 1937 and was with the British Air Ministry during World War II. He was librarian of the British House of Commons from 1946 to 1950. Both anonymously and under his own name, Saunders pro-

duced a number of works concerned with military operations. Saunders died December 16, 1951.

ANALYSIS

For their literary quality alone, the espionage novels of Francis Beeding are notable for their period. Where others might have written for those who sought fast-paced thrills and chilling descriptions of death and torture, Beeding's style appealed to the reader requiring softer, more cultured entertainment. His style would satisfy those who enjoyed characterizations of ordinary people of wit and charm with tastes for good food and wine, fashion, travel, and the arts. Stories by Beeding also show an understanding of the reader who requires a semblance of plausibility in character and plot but who is able to recognize absurdity and accept it willingly when it makes for an entertaining read.

THE THREE FISHERS

In Beeding's espionage novels, characters sometimes display a type of humor not unlike that of Ian Fleming's James Bond, whose spying for the British came later. In *The Three Fishers* (1931), the young Ronald Briercliffe, on a secret mission to Paris on behalf of British intelligence, is taken prisoner by Francis Wyndham, whose intention is to make a fortune for himself by creating an international panic during which military conflict would resume between France and Germany. For the term of his imprisonment, Briercliffe is confined to a small, narrow room in the attic of Wyndham's Paris home. Shortly, and by clever means, Briercliffe manages to escape, but within a very few hours, he is recaptured and returned to Wyndham, having in the meantime narrowly escaped both being buried alive and being disfigured with acid. Exhausted, he is delivered to the same small room, where he flings himself on the bed and whispers, "Home again."

Traveled readers might be gratified by the sense of authenticity Beeding gives by furnishing detailed descriptions of movement within the cities where activity in his espionage novels takes place. The following passage is from *The Three Fishers*, the setting for which is Paris:

"Gare de Lyon," said Wyndham, "and drive as fast as you can."

The driver let in his clutch and they ran swiftly down the Quai Henri Quatre. They made the Gare de Lyon in less than three minutes. Wyndham paid off his man, entered the departure side of the great station, crossed to the arrival side and chartered another taxi.

"The Port de Vincennes," he said, "and go slowly. I want to buy a hat."

Wyndham bought his hat in the Boulevard Diderot and then in front of a café in the Place de la Nation he paid the man off, saying that he had changed his mind and would go no farther.

THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

For the armchair traveler, Thomas Preston, the principal figure in *The Hidden Kingdom* (1927), generously gives to the reader a sense of place and a heightened anticipation of the action to come in his description of a scene in Barcelona:

We were standing in the Plaza del Rey, on the site of the old Roman forum. It was approached on three sides by narrow streets, but on the north side it was unbroken. The sun was behind me, shining full upon a mediæval tower that rose above a line of small houses. Under the tower was a glint of splendour, where the rays of the sun caught the brass and lit the brilliant uniforms of the band. . . . But it was the houses themselves, their windows full of people in a hundred attitudes of attention, which gave to the scene its peculiar atmosphere. They were the houses of small folk who had come and gone about their business in the town for centuries, and who still in this little square . . . crowded out the past and filled one with a sense of the happy continuity of life.

The above are but two among dozens of examples in each of the novels which furnish something special in the way of scene development. The action in Beeding's novels takes place in Austria, England, Germany, Italy, Morocco, and Switzerland, as well as France and Spain, and architecture and customs are richly described—bonuses not found in all espionage novels of the period.

PRETTY SINISTER

Among other treats offered Beeding's readers are the passages describing his characters' brief moments of dining, not one of which fails to mention the selection of wine or wines, as may be seen in *Pretty Sinister* (1929):

“Yes, old boy, not at all bad, but I think they have rather overdone the mushrooms.”

Granby surveyed his sole with appreciation.

“I like this place,” said Merrill.

“I’m glad you’re glad,” returned Granby, looking with a twinkle at his companion, who was a little flushed.

Beside them a Romanée Conti, lying in its wicker basket, gleamed through the dust and cobwebs of twenty years.

“A thought old for Burgundy, if you follow the modern fashion, but 1908 was a wonderful year,” murmured his host. “I suggest that a little later on we just wet the nose in Perrier Jouet ’17. That will go down rather well with the *pêches flambées*.”

Beeding’s are among the best examples of popular espionage fiction written between the two world wars. The purposes and objectives of the League of Nations for a time provided underlying ideas for Beeding’s novels, and for the student of history, that is perhaps what sets Beeding apart. Not only would such themes have given the modern reader a sense of involvement in current events, but they give later readers a special perspective on the period as well.

Several characters in the novels are employed by the league, and Geneva is often the setting. The league’s covenant against the private manufacture of arms and its promise to prevent such manufacture is used in *The Seven Sleepers* (1925) and in *The Four Armourers* (1930). *The Six Proud Walkers* (1928), *The Five Flamboys* (1929), *The Three Fishers*, and *The One Sane Man* (1934) each have a villainous character whose goal is to gain wealth or position via the destruction of the peace pledged and supported by the League of Nations.

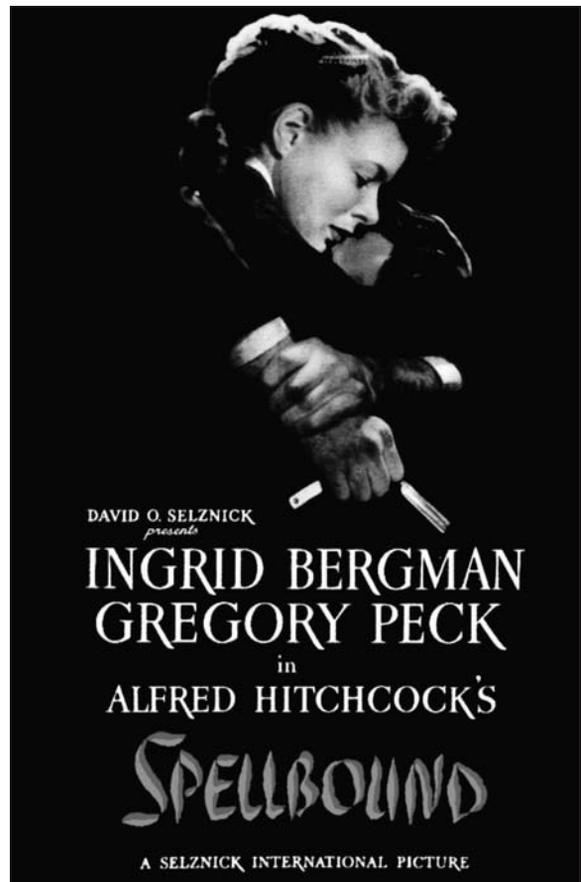
THE NINE WAXED FACES

Eventually, Beeding began using world events as background for his espionage novels. *The Nine Waxed Faces* (1936) is set against the Nazi takeover of Austria, and the characters Hagen and Cafarelli are names used to represent Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. The Spanish Civil War is the subject of *Hell Let Loose* (1937), and the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia is covered in *The Ten Holy Terrors* (1939). Although Beeding’s heroes exhibit some of the typical prejudices of

the period and they are not above a show of nationalism, awareness and concern is reflected, on the part of the author, for the grave political events of two decades.

THE HOUSE OF DR. EDWARDES

Beeding succeeds in providing color, adventure, and amusement in his espionage novels. For the remainder of his work, however, Beeding seems to have had a different plan. *Death Walks in Eastrepps* (1931) is a departure for him, as he delves into psychology for a look at a killer who is motivated by the injustice done to his dead mother. *The House of Dr. Edwardes* (1927; also known as *Spellbound*) is an earlier attempt at a psychological study. The villain is a madman who mentally enslaves the inmates of an exclusive Swiss mental hospital, requiring them to perform satanic rituals. It was this novel that provided material for a film



Director Alfred Hitchcock adapted Beeding’s novel *The House of Dr. Edwardes* to the screen as the classic suspense film *Spellbound*.

made by Alfred Hitchcock, taking its title from the American edition of the novel: *Spellbound*.

Paula Lannert

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

COLONEL ALASTAIR GRANBY SERIES: *The Six Proud Walkers*, 1928; *Pretty Sinister*, 1929; *The Five Flamboys*, 1929; *The Four Armourers*, 1930; *The League of Discontent*, 1930; *Take It Crooked*, 1932; *The Two Undertakers*, 1933; *The One Sane Man*, 1934; *The Eight Crooked Trenches*, 1936 (also known as *Coffin for One*); *The Nine Waxed Faces*, 1936; *Hell Let Loose*, 1937; *The Black Arrows*, 1938; *The Ten Holy Terrors*, 1939; *Eleven Were Brave*, 1940; *Not a Bad Show*, 1940 (also known as *The Secret Weapon*); *The Twelve Disguises*, 1942; *There Are Thirteen*, 1946

PROFESSOR KREUTZEMARK SERIES: *The Seven Sleepers*, 1925; *The Hidden Kingdom*, 1927

INSPECTOR GEORGE MARTIN SERIES: *The Norwich Victims*, 1935; *No Fury*, 1936 (also known as *Murdered: One by One*); *He Could Not Have Slipped*, 1939

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Little White Hag*, 1926; *The House of Dr. Edwardes*, 1927 (also known as *Spellbound*); *The Devil and X.Y.Z.*, 1931 (by Saunders as Barum Browne); *Death Walks in East-repps*, 1931; *The Three Fishers*, 1931; *Murder Intended*, 1932; *The Emerald Clasp*, 1933; *Mr. Bobadil*, 1934 (also known as *The Street of the Serpents*); *Death in Four Letters*, 1935; *The Death-Riders*, 1935 (by Saunders as Cornelius Cofyn); *The Erring Under-Secretary*, 1937; *The Big Fish*, 1938 (also known as *Heads Off at Midnight*); *Under the Long Barrow*, 1939 (by Palmer as Christopher Haddon; also known as *The Man in the Purple Gown*); *Mandragora*, 1940 (by Palmer as Christopher Haddon; also known as *The Man with Two Names*); *The Sleeping Bacchus*, 1951 (by Saunders)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *So Great a Man*, 1937 (as Pilgrim); *No Common Glory*, 1941 (as Pilgrim); *The Great Design*, 1944 (as Pilgrim); *The Emperor's Servant*, 1946 (as Pilgrim)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS (BY PALMER)

NOVELS: *Peter Paragon: A Tale of Youth*, 1915; *The King's Men*, 1916; *The Happy Fool*, 1922; *Looking After Joan*, 1923; *Jennifer*, 1926; *Timothy*, 1931

PLAY: *Over the Hills*, pr. 1912, pb. 1914

NONFICTION: *The Censor and the Theatres*, 1912; *The Comedy of Manners*, 1913; *The Future of the Theatre*, 1913; *Comedy*, 1914; *Bernard Shaw: An Epitaph*, 1915 (also known as *George Bernard Shaw, Harlequin or Patriot?*); *Rudyard Kipling*, 1915; *Studies in the Contemporary Theatre*, 1927; *Molière: His Life and Works*, 1930; *Ben Jonson*, 1934; *The Hesperides: A Looking-Glass Fugue*, 1936; *Political [Comic] Characters of Shakespeare*, 1945-1946 (2 volumes)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS (BY SAUNDERS)

NONFICTION: *Bomber Command: The Air Ministry's Account of Bomber Command's Offensive Against the Axis*, 1941; *The Battle of Britain, August-October, 1940: An Air Ministry Record*, 1941; *Combined Operations, 1940-1942*, 1943 (by Saunders; also known as *Combined Operations: The Official Story of the Commandos*); *Return at Dawn: The Official Story of the New Zealand Bomber Squadron of the R.A.F.*, 1943; *Per Ardua: The Rise of British Air Power, 1911-1939*, 1944; *Pioneers! O Pioneers!*, 1944; *Ford at War*, 1946; *The Left Hand Shakes: The Boy Scout Movement During the War*, 1948; *Valiant Voyaging: A Short History of the British India Steam Navigation Company in the Second World War*, 1948; *The Green Beret: The Story of the Commandos, 1940-1945*, 1949; *The Middlesex Hospital, 1745-1948*, 1949; *The Red Cross and the White: A Short History of the Joint War Organization of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem*, 1949; *The Red Beret: The Story of the Parachute Regiment at War*, 1951; *Westminster Hall*, 1951; *Royal Air Force, 1939-1945*, 1954 (with Denis Richards; 3 volumes)

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ting in *Death Walks in Eastrepps*. Bibliographic references and index.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005. Includes a chapter on trauma in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, an adaptation of Beeding's *The House of Dr. Edwardes*.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *An Introduction to the Detective Story*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1987. This work tracing the history of the detective story contains a chapter on the Golden Age mystery and mentions Beeding.

_____. *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981. Scholarly study of British espionage thrillers geared toward the nonscholar and written by a major critic in the academic study of mystery and detective fiction. Provides perspective on Beeding's work.

Turnbull, Malcolm J. *Victims or Villains: Jewish Images in Classical English Detective Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1998. Contains a discussion of Beeding's *The Five Flamboys* in the chapter on the Golden Age portrayal of Jews in English mysteries.

JOSEPHINE BELL

Doris Bell Collier

Born: Manchester, Lancashire, England; December 8, 1897

Died: Place unknown; April 24, 1987

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; psychological; police procedural; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

David Wintringham and Steven Mitchell, 1937-1958

Claude Warrington-Reeve and Steven Mitchell, 1959-1963

Henry Frost, 1964-1966

Amy Tupper, 1979-1980

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. DAVID WINTRINGHAM is a gifted amateur sleuth whose professional training provides him with skills that enable him to solve crimes. A family man, he possesses keen powers of observation, intense curiosity, dogged determination, courage, and strong moral principles.

INSPECTOR STEVEN MITCHELL of Scotland Yard, who advances to chief superintendent, is a model of the hardworking but uninspired police officer. Ordinary in every sense, he is pleasant but nondescript in

appearance and is endowed with average intelligence and homely virtues. His kindness and patience during interviews build trust and often elicit valuable information. His painstaking attention to routine police investigation also contributes to his success.

CLAUDE WARRINGTON-REEVE, a kind but arrogant London barrister who works with Chief Superintendent Mitchell on three cases, is an altogether more flamboyant figure and is cast in the mold of the eccentric master sleuth of Golden Age detective fiction. He drives a fast black Jaguar and in one book dramatically fells a culprit on the golf course with a long drive.

DR. HENRY FROST, a retired general practitioner who appears in two novels, exhibits many of the same character traits as David Wintringham: strength of will, keen observation, a talent for logical deduction, tenacity, and a fundamental moral sense. He is skilled at finding and interpreting physical evidence at the scene of the crime and then building a chain of evidence to reach a solution to the problem.

MISS AMY TUPPER, featured in two novels, is an energetic, inquisitive, indomitable elderly single woman who spurs police investigation into crimes by asking questions that they cannot ignore. She is motivated by sympathy for crime victims and by a desire for justice.

CONTRIBUTION

Since the 1920's, respectable, middle-class Englishwomen have been committing murder on paper to the delight of millions of readers. They constitute a recognized group, if not a formal school, of skilled practitioners of the genre. Although Josephine Bell did not begin publishing detective stories until late in the Golden Age of crime fiction between the two world wars, she was definitely of the same historical and literary generation as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, and Margery Allingham. She was "among the most reliable of those intelligent, unsensational women writers who have created a peculiarly English corner in this kind of fiction," and she deserves to be remembered along with those other great writers of the period for the excellence of her craftsmanship. Her novels are notable for the imaginative patterning of their puzzles, realistic portrayal of people from various walks of life, skillful rendering of place, deft evocation of atmosphere, interesting subject matter, and gentle, ironic humor.

Bell's career as a crime writer reflected the historical and literary development of the genre over a period of nearly fifty years. She demonstrated considerable talent in a variety of crime fiction. During the heyday of the classic detective novel, she mastered its conventions and wrote whodunits. After World War II, as the genre evolved to include more types of crime novels, Bell exhibited both flexibility and versatility by extending her canon to include the gothic novel, the police procedural, and the thriller.

BIOGRAPHY

Josephine Bell was born Doris Bell Collier, the second of three children of Maud Tessimond Windsor and Joseph Edward Collier, a surgeon in Manchester. Doris was very fond of her father, who died of cancer when she was seven years old. Her mother was married a second time to Jean Estradier, a French teacher, and had one child by him, a girl named Alice. Young Doris did not get on well with her stepfather, so she was happy to leave for boarding school when she was twelve. She attended the Godolphin School, Salisbury, where she met Dorothy L. Sayers. In Doris's first year, Sayers was already a senior.

On leaving school in 1916, Doris applied to study medicine at Newnham College, Cambridge University. At college, she took a keen interest in rowing and stroked in the very first Newnham eight. When she went to University College Hospital to do her clinical training, no accommodation for female medical students existed, so she had to sleep in a side ward. At University College Hospital she met Norman Dyer Ball, a fellow student, and was married to him in 1923; four children were eventually born to them.

Doris and her husband went into general practice together in Greenwich in 1927. In 1936, Norman was killed in an automobile accident. After her husband's death, Doris moved her small family to Guildford in Surrey, where she started a general practice of her own. At the same time, to supplement her income, she decided to become a professional writer. *Murder in Hospital*, already complete when her husband died, was published in 1937; she produced one or two novels a year for the next half century. She was a founding member of the Crime Writers' Association. After retiring from medical practice in 1954, she devoted herself to writing, sailing, theatergoing, and community involvement. She died in 1987.

ANALYSIS

Josephine Bell was not a literary innovator, nor was she an abject conformist. She did not introduce new devices or make significant changes in existing conventions of the genre. Instead, she was scrupulous in observing the traditions of the classic detective story—except for the treatment of her detective hero: She rejected the idea of the eccentric master sleuth in favor of more realistic characterization. In fact, she surpassed many of the Golden Age writers in realistic presentation of both principal and secondary characters. Furthermore, unlike many of her contemporaries, who did not change with the times, after World War II Bell introduced greater range and depth of psychological development in her characters and even portrayed individuals with personality disorders. She strove continually to create lifelike characters and often drew on her wide experience of human nature in representing humankind's foibles, follies, and vices.

Bell's career as a professional crime writer spanned

fifty years. For the first twenty years, she wrote a series of books featuring a detective team composed of a gifted amateur, Dr. David Wintringham, and a Scotland Yard professional, Inspector Steven Mitchell. They worked together on eight cases—approximately half of the tales—and Wintringham appeared alone in seven other mysteries. Mitchell functioned on his own in only one story; Bell subsequently paired him with a more flamboyant amateur partner, Claude Warrington-Reeve, in three other whodunits. Bell followed the Golden Age tradition in favoring the gifted amateur over the more pedestrian police officer but departed from it by failing to endow her medical amateur with an eccentric personality. Wintringham's character is consistently realistic and undramatic. Although Mitchell is more than simply a Watson-type foil, he is always secondary to the more compelling figures of Wintringham and Warrington-Reeve.

DR. DAVID WINTRINGHAM

Although Dr. David Wintringham is the main character, no information concerning his physical appearance or social background is given. His personality is revealed through his thoughts, conversation, and behavior. Some critics have suggested that Bell's reputation suffered because she failed to create a great detective, that Wintringham's personality was not vivid enough to draw a large following. There may be some truth in this charge. Post-World War II writers who created ordinary, unsensational sleuths developed the personalities and personal lives of their characters more fully. Without peculiar mannerisms, idiosyncratic habits, and extravagant gestures to rivet attention, a character must be developed more fully to compensate for the loss of drama.

Wintringham's professional training provides him with skills that enable him to be a good detective. He possesses keen powers of observation, intense curiosity, dogged determination, and a strong commitment to truth and justice. Bell frequently draws parallels between doctoring and detecting—that is, between scientific investigation and police investigation.

“That's right.” The Inspector smiled approvingly. “You're getting more thorough. Not so much of the I've-had-an-inspiration about you this time, is there?”

“You forget that I am doing research of a kind,” answered David. “It is a very sobering experience.”

“Really? I always understood it was packed full of thrills.”

“Not a bit of it. You ought to know better. Your own work is research; it is also popularly regarded as exciting. Is it packed full of thrills?”

“I should say not.”

“There you are.”

For a few minutes the two men reflected on their drab existence.

INSPECTOR STEVEN MITCHELL

More is revealed about Mitchell through direct description. In *Murder in Hospital*, he is presented as looking homely in the typical mackintosh and bowler hat of the Central Intelligence Division detective. He is further characterized in *Death on the Borough Council* (1937) as “a medium-sized man with an ordinary pleasant-featured face.” His family background is described in the first novel, which also includes an account of his motives for joining the police force.

Inspector Mitchell came of a respectable middle-class family who had always lived in one or other of the South London suburbs, moving about for no apparent reason from one small and genteel villa to another. His father's work in a city office tethered them within reasonable distance of it, but like so many suburban families they seemed unable to settle anywhere permanently. This fact and his varied schooling produced in young Mitchell a restlessness that was not really fundamental to his character, but made him refuse the chance of a job in the office where his father worked to seek the excitement he supposed inseparable from life in the police force.

That he had been wrong in this supposition he never really noticed. The routine work and discipline were entirely to his liking. He settled down well and worked hard. He had good average brains and infinite patience, while his kind manner towards witnesses had often elicited facts that would have been withheld from more brilliant officers.

Neither character changes much, although Bell makes an effort to represent realistically the passing of time. Over the course of the first five novels, Wintringham's personal life progresses at a normal rate. In the first

novel, he is engaged to be married to Jill; in the second, they have been married and are expecting their first child; in the third, their son, Nicky, is a toddler; and in the fifth, the family has grown by the addition of a daughter, Susan. In addition, Mitchell's success is charted as he advances through the ranks of the police hierarchy from inspector to chief superintendent.

The pattern of the relationship between Wintringham and Mitchell as well as of the deductive method is set in the first few books. A crime occurs within Wintringham's domain or purview; Mitchell is assigned to the case as the investigating officer from Scotland Yard; Wintringham offers to help unofficially because of inside knowledge or connections; Mitchell rejects Wintringham's help at first, but then welcomes it when Wintringham turns up valuable information. "It's against all the rules," grumbled Mitchell. "But I'd rather, by a long chalk, have you working where I can see you, than behind my back." Wintringham frequently provides some vital medical evidence that leads to the solution of the crime, while Mitchell works quietly in the background, interviewing suspects and collecting facts by routine police methods. Eventually, they pool the results of their labors and find the solution by means of logical deduction. Confrontation and apprehension of the culprit follow.

THE UPFOLD WITCH AND DEATH ON THE RESERVE

In the early 1960's, Bell introduced a second amateur medical sleuth in the character of Henry Frost, a retired general practitioner who appears in two novels, *The Upfold Witch* (1964) and *Death on the Reserve* (1966). Frost exhibits many of the same personality traits as Wintringham: a strong will, an eye for detail, a developed logical sense, and moral fiber. In some ways he might be seen as a more mature version of Wintringham.

AMY TUPPER

The only other character in Bell's later fiction to stage a comeback was Miss Amy Tupper, who made her debut in *Wolf! Wolf!* (1979) and played a part in *A Question of Inheritance* (1980). She is an inquisitive elderly single woman who spurs official investigation of crimes by asking questions that had not occurred to the police. Her private inquiries turn up important in-

formation that helps solve the mystery.

Bell follows the formula of classic detective fiction introduced by Edgar Allan Poe in the mid-nineteenth century. This formula is natural for her and for her sleuth, because the deductive method follows the steps of the empirical scientific method: observation, interviewing, research, formulating a hypothesis, testing the hypothesis, and presentation of results. These steps are repeated until all relevant facts are accounted for and all questions are answered.

PUZZLE NOVELS

In the manner of the works of Freeman Wills Crofts and R. Austin Freeman, Bell's detective novels often focus more on the problem or puzzle than on the personality of the sleuth. She was attracted to detective fiction for the same reasons she enjoyed medicine—because she liked to solve problems. Bell sets the puzzle and then teases out the solution. Emphasis is placed on the steps leading to identification of the villain. Through skillful manipulation of the omniscient narrative viewpoint, she introduces seemingly unrelated characters, events, and facts; then she painstakingly reveals how the discrete pieces of the puzzle come together to form a fascinating pattern. That is, the detective uncovers facts that he eventually assembles into an intricate but coherent pattern, much as the doctor does in medical research.

In novels of this sort—for example, *The Port of London Murders* (1938)—as in those with an inverted structure, Bell was less concerned to disguise the identity of the criminal than to disclose the complexity of the crime and the ingenuity of its solution. Still, despite her focus on how the investigators solve the puzzle rather than on who committed the crime, she cleverly masks the identity of the culprit, who often is the least likely suspect. Good examples of this technique occur in *Death on the Borough Council*, *Death at Half-Term* (1939), *Easy Prey* (1959), *The Upfold Witch*, and *Death of a Con Man* (1968).

MURDER IN HOSPITAL

Bell's plotting can sometimes be faulted for too much reliance on coincidence, both in gathering evidence and in solving the puzzle. For example, in *Murder in Hospital* Wintringham just happens to pass through a certain hospital ward when the doctor in

charge is about to inoculate a child with antidiphtheria serum without asking if she had received a previous injection. Patients sensitized by prior injections require smaller doses and could be killed by the amount administered initially. In a blinding flash of insight, Wintringham realizes how several unexplained deaths have been caused and by whom. Similar coincidences occur often enough in other novels to strain credibility.

VILLAINS AND VICTIMS

Different types of villains march through the pages of Bell's novels. Some are people dominated by greed, such as Gordon Longford in *The Port of London Murders*, Cyril Dewhurst in *Death at Half-Term*, Stephen Coke in *Easy Prey*, and Roy Waters in *Death of a Con Man*. A few, such as Edgar Trouncey in *Death on the Reserve* and John Wainwright in *The Upfold Witch*, are motivated by a combination of sexual desire and greed. Some are neurotic individuals who are driven by fanatic obsessions—for example, the mad scientist in *Murder in Hospital*, the rabbit keeper in *Death on the Borough Council*, and the religious megalomaniac in *The Innocent* (1982). Others are criminally insane—for example, the paranoid schizophrenic Simon Fawcett in *The Hunter and the Trapped* (1963). Whoever they are and whatever their crimes, however, they are provided with a quick exit at the end of the story, often in the form of a suicidal attempt to avoid being taken into custody.

In her early novels, Bell also follows the Golden Age protocol regarding victims. They are either unattractive persons for whom the reader could never grieve or too underdeveloped as characters to be missed. Victims are usually hapless individuals who are destroyed by chance, those who threaten the security of the villain, or people whose deaths would lead to profit for the killer.

Bell has employed a variety of closed communities as settings; she sometimes limits the setting in terms of place or in terms of social group. Murders occur in areas such as a hospital, a library, a public school, a nature reserve, an archaeological dig, and the ever-popular country village. In two novels, Bell also limits suspects within the community of a religious sect. Whatever the scene of the crime, she provides excellent local color, evoking in the reader a sense of each place's mood and atmosphere.

LATER WORKS

Beginning in the 1950's, Bell began to try her hand at a variety of other types of crime fiction. She drew on the gothic tradition in *To Let, Furnished* (1952) and again in *New People at the Hollies* (1961). She went to great lengths to acquire knowledge of forensics and police procedures so that she could get the details right. Of all her books, *Bones in the Barrow* (1953) is most often cited for careful attention to police routine. During the 1970's and 1980's, she wrote several romantic thrillers, including *Death of a Poison-Tongue* (1972) and *A Pigeon Among the Cats* (1974). In these novels, a young heroine finds herself in a dangerous situation involving murder and is finally rescued through a combination of her own efforts and outside assistance. In the latter works, Bell uses the genre to discuss and expose important social problems such as the danger of superstition, the inadequacy of social services, unethical recruitment practices of coercive religious sects, and drug addiction. A retrospective view of Bell's career discloses both an ability to adjust to changing styles in the genre and an ability to write in a variety of mystery modes. Her work very much reflects the development of the genre over fifty years, the evolution of the detective story to the crime novel, the whodunit to the "whydunit."

B. J. Rahn

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVID WINTRINGHAM AND STEVEN MITCHELL

SERIES: *Murder in Hospital*, 1937; *Death on the Borough Council*, 1937; *Fall over Cliff*, 1938; *The Port of London Murders*, 1938; *Death at Half-Term*, 1939 (also known as *Curtain Call for a Corpse*); *From Natural Causes*, 1939; *All Is Vanity*, 1940; *Trouble at Wrekin Farm*, 1942; *Death at the Medical Board*, 1944; *Death in Clairvoyance*, 1949; *The Summer School Mystery*, 1950; *Bones in the Barrow*, 1953; *Fires at Fairlawn*, 1954; *Death in Retirement*, 1956; *The China Roundabout*, 1956 (also known as *Murder on the Merry-Go-Round*); *The Seeing Eye*, 1958

CLAUDE WARRINGTON-REEVE AND STEVEN MITCHELL

SERIES: *Easy Prey*, 1959; *A Well-Known Face*, 1960; *A Flat Tyre in Fulham*, 1963 (also known as *Fiasco in Fulham* and *Room for a Body*)

HENRY FROST SERIES: *The Upfold Witch*, 1964; *Death on the Reserve*, 1966

AMY TUPPER SERIES: *Wolf! Wolf!*, 1979; *A Question of Inheritance*, 1980

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Backing Winds*, 1951; *To Let, Furnished*, 1952 (also known as *Stranger on a Cliff*); *Double Doom*, 1957; *The House Above the River*, 1959; *New People at the Hollies*, 1961; *Adventure with Crime*, 1962; *The Hunter and the Trapped*, 1963; *The Alien*, 1964; *No Escape*, 1965; *The Catalyst*, 1966; *Death of a Con Man*, 1968; *The Fennister Affair*, 1969; *The Wilberforce Legacy*, 1969; *A Hydra with Six Heads*, 1970; *A Hole in the Ground*, 1971; *Death of a Poison-Tongue*, 1972; *A Pigeon Among the Cats*, 1974; *Victim*, 1975; *The Trouble in Hunter Ward*, 1976; *Such a Nice Client*, 1977 (also known as *A Stroke of Death*); *A Swan-Song Betrayed*, 1978 (also known as *Treachery in Type*); *A Deadly Place to Live*, 1982; *The Innocent*, 1982

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Bottom of the Well*, 1940; *Martin Croft*, 1941; *Alvina Foster*, 1943; *Compassionate Adventure*, 1946; *Total War at Haverington*, 1947; *Wonderful Mrs. Marriot*, 1948; *The Whirlpool*, 1949; *Cage-Birds*, 1953; *Two Ways to Love*, 1954; *Hell's Pavement*, 1955; *The Convalescent*, 1960; *Safety First*, 1962; *The Alien*, 1964; *Tudor Pilgrimage*, 1967; *Jacobean Adventure*, 1969; *Over the Seas*, 1970; *The Dark and the Light*, 1971; *To Serve a*

Queen, 1972; *In the King's Absence*, 1973; *A Question of Loyalties*, 1974

NONFICTION: *Crime in Our Time*, 1962

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Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. The focus of this study is on Bell's contemporaries rather than on her, but it mentions her in passing and provides an important study of the milieu in which she wrote.

Hanson, Gillian Mary. *City and Shore: The Function of Setting in the British Mystery*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004. Analyzes Bell's use of setting in *The Port of London Murders*. Bibliographic references and index.

White, Terry, ed. *Justice Denoted: The Legal Thriller in American, British, and Continental Courtroom Literature*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003. This bibliography covers legal thrillers from early to later writers. Contains a brief biography of Bell.

ARNOLD BENNETT

Born: Shelton, near Hanley, England; May 27, 1867

Died: London, England; March 27, 1931

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Five Towns, 1902-1916

CONTRIBUTION

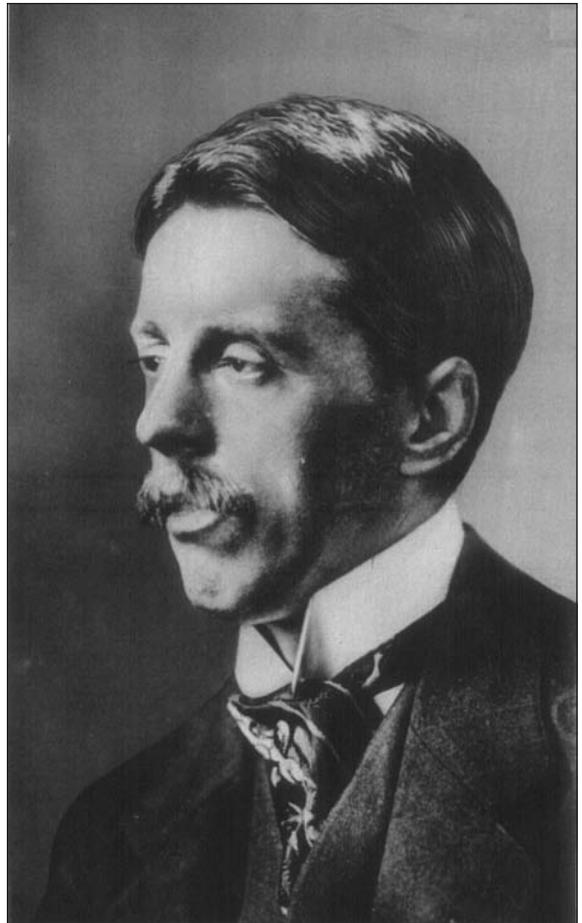
Arnold Bennett was, above all, a professional writer. He wrote numerous novels, plays, short stories, and books of commentary; he also wrote one of the most influential columns on the book world during his lifetime. This column, entitled "Books and Persons," appeared in *The New Age* from 1908 to 1911 under the pseudonym Jacob Tonson and under his own name in *The London Standard* from 1926 to 1931. His criticism and analysis of the detective novel at the end of the 1920's was significant in shaping the genre. His use of detailed description and his depictions of middle- and lower-class life provide his readers with insight into how others live and think.

BIOGRAPHY

Arnold Bennett was born Enoch Arnold Bennett in the Potteries, a section of England that was to provide many of the scenes for his writing. He worked at a variety of jobs and eventually became editor in the 1890's of *Woman*, a magazine produced for middle-class English women. He began to write reviews and short stories both for this journal and other, similar publications. Eventually, his success led to a novel and a full-time writing career. He formed a close relationship with James B. Pinker, one of the most significant early literary agents. From 1900 until his death, Bennett was one of the leading figures in the English literary world and, along with H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy, can be considered to be a founder of the Edwardian school of realistic fiction. His novels of the Five Towns area in England—including *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns* (1907), *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), *Clayhanger* (1910), *Hilda Lessways* (1911), and *These Twain* (1915)—are especially

noteworthy. Many of his other novels, in particular *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902) and *Riceyman Steps* (1923), are still widely read. During World War I, Bennett wrote on wartime life and worked as a publicist for the English government.

Bennett was married to a French poet, Marguerite Soulié. Later, the couple separated, and Bennett was married to Dorothy Cheston. This union resulted in one daughter, Virginia. Bennett traveled widely throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, often using his yacht for lengthy excursions. In addition, he lived for long periods of time in Paris. Wherever he went, he observed carefully, noting his observations in his jour-



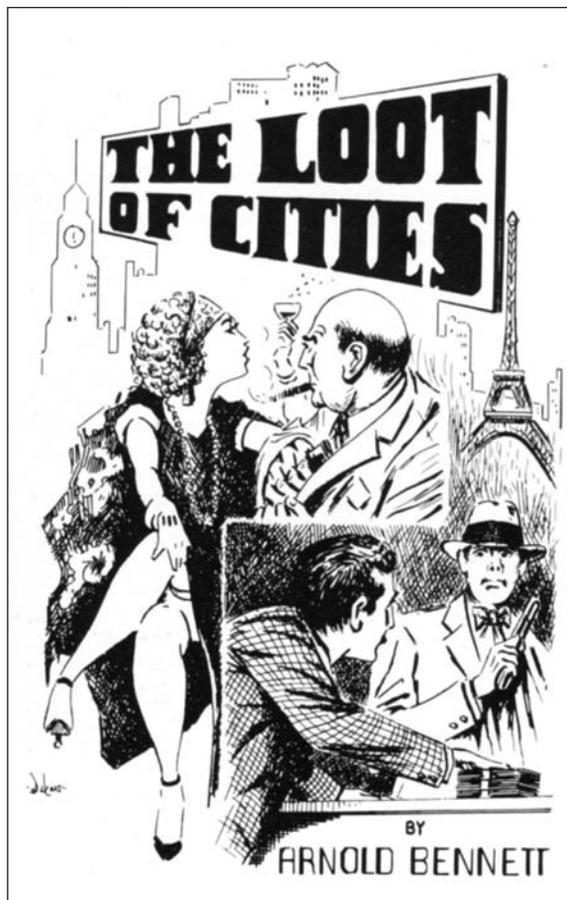
Arnold Bennett.

nal. He used this material, especially the more mundane aspects, in his work. Bennett suffered from a severe stammer, and many believe that this disability aided his writing—only through writing could he communicate in a straightforward, efficient manner.

Bennett was a successful playwright, and his work appeared on London West End stages for more than twenty years. His friendships with other writers such as Eden Phillpotts, H. G. Wells, and John Galsworthy were instrumental in helping him write fiction; this group fought very strongly against censorship and insisted on describing life as it really happened. Bennett was the epitome of the professional writer, working each day to schedule, meeting his deadlines with ease, offering his help and commentary to other writers, and even providing funds for those whom he thought needed his assistance. (Among the latter were D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce.) Bennett's use of detective story conventions was simply an example of his professionalism, as he believed that good, careful, competent writers should make use of whatever methods and techniques moved their stories along. Bennett continued to write until the end of his life. He died of typhoid fever early in 1931.

ANALYSIS

Arnold Bennett began his career working as an editor, a position that allowed him to read many raw manuscripts. Among these were several detective stories. As he began to prepare for his life as a professional author, he read widely in the mystery and detective genre and was especially influenced by the work of Émile Gaboriau. As Bennett began his own work, he employed aspects of detection in his novels, as in *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, which features corpses, and the detection mysteries posed by corpses, within a general description of life in a luxurious resort hotel. Bennett was also interested enough in detection to work for several months with his close friend H. G. Wells on the writing of a play called "The Crime." The play was never produced because it was to open with a corpse on the stage, something thought by producers to bring bad luck. The text of the play is no longer extant.



THE LOOT OF CITIES

In 1903, Bennett began a series of short-fiction pieces for *The Windsor Magazine*. The six interconnected stories were published in 1904 as the novel *The Loot of Cities*, and the book was republished in the United States in 1972 as a volume designed for collectors of little-known detective fiction. In the book, a detective, Cecil Thorold, also a millionaire, is out for a good time. He eventually falls in love with one of the other characters after traveling to Brussels, Switzerland, and the Mediterranean. The book, although not one of Bennett's best, illustrates his style and his method of description.

HUGO

Bennett's next venture into these themes was the novel *Hugo* (1906), which is little known. The work is modeled to some degree on the style of Gaboriau and uses coincidence, as well as Bennett's sense of mood

and life in foreign areas, to drive the plot. Bennett tends to contrast life in cities and towns in his writing, and, although it is traditional for the city to be denigrated in these comparisons, Bennett is more interested in comparing life in the city and the country objectively. Decisions that his characters make are often ironic ones, molded by the nature of their environments and their early lives.

THE CITY OF PLEASURE

Bennett's novel *The City of Pleasure* (1907) is an effort to contrast two persons who operate a giant amusement park in London. The story actually centers on crime, suspense, danger, burglary, and missing funds, concluding with a love-story ending. Although the book is not an example of typical detective fiction, it depends on the conventions of that genre. Police seldom appear in Bennett's work; the detection and punishment of crimes occur primarily through coincidence.

LATER WORKS AND SHORT STORIES

Bennett continued to use the elements of detective fiction in some of his later novels, especially *The Price of Love* (1914) and *The Strange Vanguard* (1928). The first of these features the mystery of a missing sum of money and the impact of the missing funds on the lives and loves of his characters, especially as suspicion falls on one or another of them. The second is a light piece of fiction, but a kidnapping and considerable intrigue put it into the category of detective fiction.

Bennett wrote with a facile pen and could produce materials for publication in very short order, without much need for correction. He had a great sense of style, and although his short stories are not well known, they read quickly, have an air of truth about them (even after many years), and hold the modern reader's interest. Several of them that appeared in magazines are straight detective fiction, with the best of these being "Murder," which appeared in *Liberty* on October 1, 1927, and was collected in *The Night Visitor* (1931). The short story is worth remembering, as it pokes fun at methods of detection, particularly those of the police and fictional characters similar to Sherlock Holmes. It was Bennett's way of making light of the lesser aspects of detective-fiction writing.

On the basis of this work one might misjudge Bennett as a dabbler in detective fiction. Yet Bennett's

comments on writing and writers were extremely important in his own time and have been collected in *Arnold Bennett: The Evening Standard Years, "Books and Persons," 1926-1931* (1974). Several of the pieces included in this volume, essays on style, were important in developing the methodology of John Dickson Carr and other mystery writers of the late 1920's and 1930's. The young detective story writer can still profit by reading Bennett's remarks on style, character, plot, and, above all, the need to rid one's work of clichés. Bennett believed that the detective story could be as respectable as a classic novel, and he encouraged novice detective-fiction writers whenever he could. His essays on the genre constitute a veritable self-help guide.

Bennett may not be remembered for his own detective fiction, although his work in that area is admirable. His real contribution was his willingness to treat detective fiction seriously, criticize it within the bounds of general fiction, and offer his advice to those essaying work in the genre—and for this Bennett should be recognized.

David C. Smith

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FIVE TOWNS SERIES: *Anna of the Five Towns*, 1902; *Leonora*, 1903; *Tales of the Five Towns*, 1905; *Whom God Hath Joined*, 1906; *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns*, 1907; *The Old Wives' Tale*, 1908; *Clayhanger*, 1910; *Helen with the High Hand*, 1910; *The Card*, 1911 (also known as *Denry the Audacious*); *Hilda Lessways*, 1911; *The Matador of the Five Towns*, 1912; *The Regent*, 1913 (also known as *The Old Adam*); *The Price of Love*, 1914; *These Twain*, 1915; *The Lion's Share*, 1916

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, 1902 (also known as *T. Racksole and Daughter*); *Hugo*, 1906; *The City of Pleasure*, 1907; *The Strange Vanguard*, 1928 (also known as *The Vanguard*, 1927)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Loot of Cities*, 1905; *The Night Visitor*, 1931

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Man from the North*, 1898; *The Gates of Wrath*, 1903; *A Great Man*, 1904; *Teresa of Watling Street*, 1904; *Sacred and Profane Love*, 1905

(also known as *The Book of Carlotta*); *The Sinews of War*, 1906 (with Eden Phillpotts; also known as *Dou-bloons*); *The Ghost*, 1907; *Buried Alive*, 1908; *The Statue*, 1908 (with Phillpotts); *The Glimpse*, 1909; *The Pretty Lady*, 1918; *The Roll-Call*, 1918; *Lilian*, 1922; *Mr. Prohack*, 1922; *Riceyman Steps*, 1923; *Elsie and the Child*, 1924; *Lord Raingo*, 1926; *Accident*, 1928; *Piccadilly*, 1929; *Imperial Palace*, 1930; *Venus Rising from the Sea*, 1931

SHORT FICTION: *The Woman Who Stole Everything*, 1927

PLAYS: *Polite Farces for the Drawing-Room*, pb. 1899; *Cupid and Commonsense*, pr. 1908; *What the Public Wants*, pr., pb. 1909; *The Honeymoon: A Comedy in Three Acts*, pr., pb. 1911; *Milestones: A Play in Three Acts*, pr., pb. 1912 (with Edward Knoblock); *The Great Adventure: A Play of Fancy in Four Acts*, pr. 1912; *The Title*, pr., pb. 1918; *Judith*, pr., pb. 1919; *Sacred and Profane Love*, pr., pb. 1919; *Body and Soul*, pr., pb. 1922; *The Love Match*, pr., pb. 1922; *Don Juan de Marana*, pb. 1923; *London Life*, pr., pb. 1924 (with Knoblock); *Flora*, pr. 1927; *Mr. Prohack*, pr., pb. 1927 (with Knoblock); *The Return Journey*, pr. 1928

NONFICTION: *Journalism for Women*, 1898; *Fame and Fiction*, 1901; *How to Become an Author*, 1903; *The Truth About an Author*, 1903; *Things That Interested Me*, 1906; *Things Which Have Interested Me*, 1907, 1908; *Literary Taste*, 1909; *Those United States*, 1912 (also known as *Your United States*); *Paris Nights*, 1913; *From the Log of the Velsa*, 1914; *The Author's Craft*, 1914; *Over There*, 1915; *Books and Persons: Being Comments on a Past Epoch, 1908-1911*, 1917; *Things That Have Interested Me*, 1921, 1923, 1926; *Selected Essays*, 1926; *Mediterranean Scenes*, 1928; *The Savour of Life*, 1928; *The Journals of Arnold Bennett*, 1929, 1930, 1932-1933; *Arnold Bennett: The Evening Standard Years, "Books and Persons," 1926-1931*, 1974

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Anderson, Linda R. *Bennett, Wells, and Conrad: Narrative in Transition*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. A focused introduction to Bennett's fiction as well as that of H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad.

Broomfield, Olga R. R. *Arnold Bennett*. Boston: Twayne, 1984. Criticism and interpretation from Twayne's English Authors series. Includes a bibliography and an index.

Drabble, Margaret. *Arnold Bennett*. Reprint. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986. Drawing from Bennett's *Journals* and letters, this biography focuses on Bennett's background, childhood, and environment, which it ties to his literary works. Profusely illustrated, containing an excellent index and a bibliography of Bennett's work.

Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. Study of the brief but distinctive Edwardian period in detective fiction. Discusses Bennett's detective fiction and relates it to the author's fiction in general, as well as to the detective stories of his fellow Edwardians.

Roby, Kinley. *A Writer at War: Arnold Bennett, 1914-1918*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972. Although primarily biographical, this book also offers valuable insights into Bennett's work during and after World War I. Contains works cited and an excellent index.

Squillace, Robert. "Arnold Bennett's Other Selves." In *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves, and Self-Fashioning, 1880-1930*, edited by Marysa Demoor. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Discusses the different personae assumed by Bennett to market his various works. Useful for understanding the relationship between Bennett's detective fiction and his other work.

_____. *Modernism, Modernity, and Arnold Bennett*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1997. Squillace argues that Bennett saw more clearly than his contemporary novelists the emergence of the modern era, which transformed a male-dominated society to one open to all people regardless of class or gender. Very detailed notes and a bibliography acknowledge the work of the best scholars.

Wright, Walter F. *Arnold Bennett: Romantic Realist*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971. Sees Bennett as vacillating between the two extremes of Romanticism and realism and describes his novels as mildly experimental.

E. C. BENTLEY

Born: London, England; July 10, 1875

Died: London, England; March 30, 1956

Also wrote as E. Clerihew

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Philip Trent, 1913-1938

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PHILIP TRENT, in his thirties, became famous for publicly solving crimes in the columns of *The Record*. A successful painter, he is by no means arty, and despite a love of poetry, he has the enviable knack of getting along with all sorts of people. He is the ideal young Englishman of his day.

CONTRIBUTION

In crime fiction, vivid, enduring character, not to be confused with caricature, is rare, as it is often cramped by the machinery of the plot. Also, to the practiced reader, mystery often becomes anything but insoluble. In Philip Trent, however, E. C. Bentley created a memorable companion, and in *Trent's Last Case* (1913, revised 1929), the first book in which Trent appeared, he devised a plot of successive thrilling denouements and an ending quite impossible to foresee. The book was written to divert the course of English detective fiction, and in this, as well as in sales and reviews, it was an outstanding success.

Sherlock Holmes, an important figure of Bentley's youth, so dominated the field that his inventor, Arthur Conan Doyle, was called on to solve real crimes. Bentley challenged Doyle's icy, introverted, infallible hero with a good-humored, susceptible extrovert who caught the public mood and became as much a model for less original writers as Sherlock Holmes had been. The shift in the heroic notion from the disdainful self-sufficiency of Holmes to the sociable misapprehensions of Trent prefigures the change in sensibility accelerated by World War I, in which old certainties as well as young men died.

BIOGRAPHY

It would be hard to invent a background more representative than Edmund Clerihew Bentley's of the English Edwardian governing class. His father was an official in the Lord Chancellor's department, the equivalent of a ministry of justice. He was educated at a private London boys' school, St. Paul's, and at nineteen, he won a history scholarship to Merton College, in Oxford. He made friends at school with G. K. Chesterton, who remained his closest friend for life, and at Oxford University with John Buchan and Hilaire Belloc. All would become famous writers.

At Oxford, Bentley became president of the Oxford Union, a skeleton key to success in many careers, and experienced the "shame and disappointment" of a second-class degree. Down from Oxford and studying law in London, he published light verse and reviews in magazines. In 1901, he married Violet Alice Mary Boileau, the daughter of General Neil Edmonstone Boileau of the Bengal Staff Corps. Bentley was called to the bar the following year but did not remain in the legal profession, having, in the words of a friend, all the qualifications of a barrister except the legal mind. He went instead into journalism, a profession he loved and in which he found considerable success.

For ten years, Bentley worked for the *Daily News*, becoming deputy editor. In 1912, he joined the *Daily Telegraph* as an editorialist. In 1913, he published *Trent's Last Case*. It was an immediate, and, for its author, an unexpected success. Strangely, nothing was heard of its hero, Philip Trent, for another twenty-three years.

Although *Trent's Last Case* was repeatedly reprinted, translated, and filmed, Bentley went on writing editorials for the *Daily Telegraph*, and it was not until two years after his retirement from journalism in 1934 that there appeared *Trent's Own Case*, written with H. Warner Allen. A book of short stories, *Trent Intervenes*, followed in 1938, and *Those Days: An Autobiography* appeared in 1940. *Elephant's Work*, a mystery without Trent, which John Buchan had advised him to write as early as 1916, appeared in 1950.

In 1939, with younger journalists being called to arms, Bentley returned to the *Daily Telegraph* as chief literary critic; he stayed until 1947. After the death of his wife in 1949, he gave up their home in London and lived out the rest of his life in a London hotel. Of their two sons, one became an engineer, and the other, Nicolas, became a distinguished illustrator and the author of several thrillers.

ANALYSIS

Trent's Last Case stands in the flagstoned hall of English crime fiction like a tall clock ticking in the silence, always chiming perfect time. From the well-bred simplicity of that famous, often-adapted title to the startling last sequence, everything is unexpected, delightful, and fresh. The ingenious plot twists through the book like a clear stream, never flooding, never drying up, but always glinting somewhere in the sunlight and leading on into mysterious depths.

In this landscape, the characters move clearly and memorably, casting real, rippling shadows and at times, as in real life, disappearing for a moment from view. It is a consciously moral vision, as the opening sentence proclaims: "Between what matters and what seems to matter, how should the world we know judge wisely?" The morality, although not quite orthodox, is the morality of a decent man to whom life presents no alternative to decency. It is a morality that the hero and his creator share.

Trent's Last Case is the work of a man who thought, as many have thought, that he could write a better detective story than those he had read. Having satisfied himself and others on this point, he did not write another crime novel until after he had retired from what he always regarded as his real work, newspaper journalism.

A better background for an English detective-fiction writer than E. C. Bentley's is difficult to imagine. His father was involved with crime and its punishment through his work as an official in the Lord Chancellor's department; Bentley's own classical education, followed by three years studying history at Oxford, insisted on the importance of clear, grammatical speech and orderly ideas; in his period in chambers when qualifying as a barrister, he came into contact with the

ponderous engines of judgment and witnessed the difficulties to be encountered encompassing the subtle complexities of truth; and finally, he had acquired the habit of summoning words to order in his capacity as a daily journalist.

To the happy accident of birth among the English governing class in its most glorious years, nature added a playfulness with words—a talent that brought a new noun into the English language. Bentley was sixteen and attending a science class at St. Paul's when four lines drifted into his head:

Sir Humphrey Davy
Abominated gravy.
He lived in the odium
Of having discovered Sodium.

The form amused him and his friends, and he carried on writing in it, eventually for *Punch*, and published a collection in 1905. This collection, entitled *Biography for Beginners*, was Bentley's first book; it was brought out under the name of E. Clerihew. For a time, clerihews rivaled limericks in popularity, and something of their spirit and cadence survives in the light verse of Ogden Nash and Don Marquis. Some of this playfulness shows through in Trent's conversation; although Bentley hopes in vain that the reader will believe that Trent's "eyes narrowed" as he spotted a clue and that "both men sat with wrinkled brows," the style is generally nimble and urbane and does not impede the action.

The language runs aground only when confronted by American speech. These are the words in which the closest lieutenant of one of the most powerful men on earth addresses an English gentleman and a high-ranking Scotland Yard detective: "I go right by that joint. Say, cap, are you coming my way too?" Bentley edited and wrote introductions to several volumes of short stories by Damon Runyon, whose work he enjoyed all of his life, and it is likely that his American idiom derives from this source.

TRENT'S LAST CASE

Bentley, in 1911, left the deputy editorship of the *Daily News*, which he had joined because it was "bit-terly opposed to the South African war. I believed earnestly in liberty and equality. I still do." He became an

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Philip Trent in a 1938 issue of The Strand Magazine.

editorial writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, which gave him more time for himself. *Trent's Last Case* came out two years later. It redefined the standards by which this kind of fiction is judged.

In *Trent's Last Case*, an American of vast wealth living in England is murdered. He has acquired his fortune by the unscrupulous but not unusual strategy of manipulating markets and intimidating those who bar his way. Yet it cannot be the wealth that Bentley condemns but the corruption of those who spend their lives in the pursuit of it, since hereditary landowners in Great Britain possessed wealth of a far more enduring and substantial sort. Bentley saw the new breed of American tycoon as insatiable, callous, and criminal—the murder was thought at first to be the work of underworld connections. Where F. Scott Fitzgerald saw Jay Gatsby, his rich bootlegger, as a figure of romance, even a kind of apotheosis of the American Dream, Bentley saw Sigsbee Manderson as the quintessence of evil.

The implicit belief that a gentlemanly and conviv-

ial existence is a mirror of the moral life, if not indeed the moral life itself, and that evildoing leads to madness, or is indeed madness itself, gives the book a moral certitude that crime writers in more fragmented times have found hard to match. Yet certitude can still be found in British life, at least that part of it sustained by an expensive education and inherited wealth. The rich conventionally bring with them an agreeable social style; the nouveau riche do not. A society based on acquired wealth, such as American society, could make a hero out of Gatsby; a society based on inherited wealth made a villain out of Manderson.

Trent epitomizes the difference between English and American fictional detectives. The English detective, coming from the high table of society (Trent, Lord Peter Wimsey), is far more clever than the mainly working-class police. The reader is unlikely to quibble. In the United States, the best crime fiction has been written around the type of private eye who seldom knows where the next client is coming from (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald) or around hard-pressed cops doing their all-too-fallible best (Ed McBain). In a republic, the best fictional detectives come from the people; in a kingdom, they come from privilege. Trent's tangible presence derives from his background and his circumstances being so close to those of his creator.

Sigsbee Manderson's passing is regretted only by those who stood to lose money by it. One of those who did not was his wife. Nevertheless, Mabel Manderson is the antithesis of all the double-crossing dames brought to a peak of perfection if not credibility by Hammett and Chandler and subsequently parodied in the espionage stories of the Cold War.

Goodness, as John Milton and others have found, is harder to embody than evil. Mabel Manderson in less talented hands would have become a stock character, but in Bentley's, she is the ideal woman, fair and caring and moral. In turning her back on a vast fortune for love, she follows her heart as blithely as Trent, by his chivalrous behavior toward her, follows the public-school ethic of his day, an ethic that a year later would accompany the doomed young officer conscripts into the trenches and later still the young fighter pilots into the Battle of Britain.

The popular appeal of crime writing relies on the author's ability to make the reader care about what happens next. Bentley achieves this by careful plotting and by making people and events interesting in themselves. Bentley's engineering was always too solid to need passages of violent action or Chandler's remedy for an ailing plot—having somebody come through the door with a gun. Bentley in any case did not believe in gore: "My outlook was established by the great Victorians, who passed on to me the ideas of the Greeks about essential values, namely, physical health, freedom of mind, care for the truth, justice, and beauty."

Bentley was nevertheless a product of his background in attitude to servants. A manservant must instantly recognize a gentleman and address him with a subtly different deference from that with which he would address a detective. Manderson's manservant passes this test, calling Trent "Sir" and the detective merely "Mr. Murch." It at once becomes clear that this is not to be a case in which the butler did it.

Yet Mr. Manderson's maid, French in the fashion of the time and consequently lacking in reserve, is severely rebuked: "A star upon your birthday burned, whose fierce, severe, red, pulseless planet never yearned in heaven, Celestine. Mademoiselle, I am busy. Bonjour." This reprimand strangely mixes misogyny, class contempt, and xenophobia. To an Englishwoman of equal social standing, however, Trent behaves with unexceptionable gallantry. With Mrs. Manderson, he is the unworthy knight, she the princess in the tower. Indeed, Mrs. Manderson emerges as the central, and finest, character in the book. Whereas in the Hammett-Chandler school women are conventionally untrustworthy to the degree that they are desirable, Mabel Manderson is as idealized as any fine lady in troubadour verse. That she symbolizes the importance of family life becomes even more clear later in *Trent's Own Case*.

An attempt, as Bentley put it, at "a new kind of detective story," *Trent's Last Case* was an immediate success and its reputation and sales in many languages continue to grow. The *Dictionary of National Biography* called it "the best detective novel of the century." *The New York Times* described the novel as "one of the few classics of crime fiction." John Carter, one of the

founding editors of *Time* magazine, said it was "the father of the contemporary detective novel" and marked "the beginning of the naturalistic era." The critic Frank Swinnerton viewed it as "the finest long detective story ever written." Finally, continuous praise has been heaped on it by other writers of crime: "An acknowledged masterpiece," Dorothy L. Sayers; "One of the three best detective stories ever written," Agatha Christie; "The finest detective story of modern times," G. K. Chesterton; "The best detective story we have ever read," G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole; "A masterpiece," Edgar Wallace.

Nothing else Bentley wrote had such success, including his autobiography. Detective stories are a reaffirmation of the medieval morality plays, in which evil is always vanquished and good always triumphant. To these reassuring fables, Bentley brought a new complexity, a humbling of the overweening intellect, and a glorification of the modesty of the heart. The occasional shortcomings in sympathy derive from his milieu, which exerted such an influence over his vision; the completely original mixture of ingenuity and good humor has never been matched and is all Bentley's own.

Malcolm Winton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PHILIP TRENT SERIES: *Trent's Last Case*, 1913 (revised 1929; also known as *The Woman in Black*); *Trent's Own Case*, 1936 (with H. Warner Allen); *Trent Intervenes*, 1938

NONSERIES NOVEL: *Elephant's Work*, 1950 (also known as *The Chill*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

POETRY: *Biography for Beginners*, 1905 (as Clerihew); *More Biography*, 1929; *Baseless Biography*, 1939; *Clerihews Complete*, 1951 (also known as *The Complete Clerihews*); *The First Clerihews*, 1982 (with G. K. Chesterton and others)

NONFICTION: *Peace Year in the City, 1918-1919: An Account of the Outstanding Events in the City of London During the Peace Year*, 1920; *Those Days: An Autobiography*, 1940; *Far Horizon: A Biography of Hester Dowden, Medium and Psychic Investigator*, 1951

EDITED TEXTS: *More than Somewhat*, 1937 (by Damon Runyon); *Damon Runyon Presents Furthermore*, 1938; *The Best of Runyon*, 1938; *The Second Century of Detective Stories*, 1938

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Haycraft, Howard. *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story*. 1941. Reprint. New York: Carroll and Graf, 1984. Organizes the history of detective fiction into a "biography" and situates Bentley's works in relation to others in the narrative.

Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. Discusses the brief but distinctive Edwardian period in detective fiction. Compares Bentley to such other Edwardians as Chesterton and John Buchan.

Panek, LeRoy. "E. C. Bentley." In *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain, 1914-1940*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979. Compares Bentley to his contemporaries and details his contribution to and reception by British culture.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Sheds light on Bentley's work.

ANTHONY BERKELEY

Anthony Berkeley Cox

Born: Watford, Hertfordshire, England; July 5, 1893

Died: London, England; March 9, 1971

Also wrote as A. B. Cox; Francis Iles;

A. Monmouth Platts

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Roger Sheringham, 1925-1945

Ambrose Chitterwick, 1929-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ROGER SHERINGHAM, an amateur sleuth and mystery aficionado, was created initially to parody an unpleasant acquaintance of the author. Anthony Berkeley's readers, however, warmed to him, and he reappeared in other novels, with his offensiveness—an all-knowing insouciance—much subdued and ren-

dered more genial, but retaining his urbanity and sophistication.

AMBROSE CHITTERWICK, an unlikely, mild-mannered detective, negates all popular images of the sleuth but nevertheless solves baffling crimes.

CONTRIBUTION

Anthony Berkeley achieved fame during one of the periods in which mystery writing was ascendant. In the 1920's, he was frequently linked with Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and S. S. Van Dine as one of the four giants in the field. Indeed, John Dickson Carr, himself a giant, called Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929) one of the best detective stories ever written. Nevertheless, Berkeley parted company with them, particularly with Christie—even though she did prove to be, if not the most durable, certainly the most enduring of the quartet—as he

moved from the mystery as intellectual conundrum toward an exploration of the limits within which the genre could sustain psychology and suspense. One can almost imagine Berkeley wondering: "What if the reader knew from the first paragraph who the murderer was? How would one generate suspense?" Thereon, he pioneered the inverted mystery, told from the criminal's point of view or, in a further twist, from the perspective of the victim.

Berkeley was more than equal to the challenges that he drew from the genre, and his work has been justly celebrated for its perspicuity. His characters are rich and deeply realized as he pursues the implications of the murderous motive on their psyches. Although his plots are sometimes contrived (plot machinations are not his principal focus), his stories are shot through with elegance, intelligence, and grace.

One last contribution that Berkeley tendered was to the performing arts. One of his Francis Iles novels—*Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime* (1931)—was adapted for television in Great Britain in 1979, while another one, *Before the Fact* (1932), was adapted by Alfred Hitchcock into his 1941 classic film *Suspicion* with Cary Grant and Joan Fontaine, and *Trial and Error* (1937) was directed by Vincent Sherman and scripted by Barry Trivers as *Flight from Destiny* (1941). Hitchcock, at least via his screenwriter, betrayed the novelist's conception of a fit resolution to the thriller; Hitchcock evidently believed that he knew the marketplace better than did the original artist.

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Berkeley was born Anthony Berkeley Cox in Watford, Herfordshire, England, and his given names would later become indelibly linked with those of the top British mystery authors of the Golden Age. As a child, he attended a day school in Watford and at Sherborne College, Wessex. He later studied at University College, Oxford, where he earned a degree in classics. After World War I started in 1914, he enlisted in the British Army and eventually attained the rank of lieutenant. However, he became a victim of gas warfare on a French battlefield and left the army with permanently damaged health.

In 1917 Berkeley married Margaret Fearnley Farrar. That marriage ended in 1931 and was followed a year later by Berkeley's marriage to a woman variously identified as Helen Macgregor or Helen Peters. This marriage lasted little more than a decade. Meanwhile, Berkeley worked at several occupations, including real estate. He was a director of a company called Publicity Services and one of two officers of another firm called A. B. Cox, Ltd.

Berkeley's writing and journalistic career as Anthony Berkeley and Francis Iles lasted several decades. He began by contributing witty sketches to *Punch*, the English humor magazine, but soon discovered that writing detective fiction was more remunerative. The year 1925 was a boom time for Berkeley. That year he published the classic short story "The Avenging Chance" and (as A. B. Cox) the comic opera *Brenda Entertains*, the novel *The Family Witch: An Essay in Absurdity*, and the collection *Jugged Journalism*. He carefully guarded his privacy from within the precincts of the fashionable London area known as St. John's Wood.

As Anthony Berkeley, he founded the Detection Club in 1928. A London organization, the club brought together top British crime writers dedicated to the care and preservation of the classic detective story. The very existence of the organization attested to the popularity of mystery and detective writing in the 1920's. In 1929 Berkeley published his masterpiece, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, in which members of the club appeared as thinly disguised fictional characters.

Berkeley had a considerable effect on the way that the Detection Club was chartered; while the oath that candidates for membership had to swear reflects Berkeley's own wit—it parodies the Oath of Confirmation of the Church of England—it also works to confirm on the practitioners of mystery writing the status and standards of a serious and well-regarded profession, if not an art. Berkeley collaborated with other club members on several round-robin tales and anthologies: *Behind the Screen* (serialized in *The Listener*, 1930), *The Scoop* (serialized in *The Listener*, 1931; reprinted as *The Scoop, and, Behind the Screen*, 1983), *The Floating Admiral* (1931; reprinted in 1980); *Ask a Policeman* (1933, reprinted 1987), *Six Against the Yard: In Which Margery Allingham, An-*

thony Berkeley, *Freeman Wills Crofts*, *Father Ronald Knox*, *Dorothy L. Sayers*, *Russell Thorndike* *Commit the Crime of Murder Which Ex-Superintendent Cornish, C.I.D., Is Called upon to Solve* (1936; also known as *Six Against Scotland Yard*), *The Anatomy of Murder* (1936), and *More Anatomy of Murder* (1936).

Although Berkeley published his last novel in 1939, he continued reviewing mysteries for the rest of his life. As Francis Iles, he wrote for the *London Daily Telegraph* in the 1930's, for *John O'London's Weekly* in 1938, for the *London Sunday Times* after World War II, and for the *Manchester Guardian* from the mid-1950's to 1970. He also wrote articles dedicated to his fascination with crime, such as his 1937 essay "Was Crippen a Murderer?"

Interestingly, although Berkeley sought to prevent the public from intruding on his personal affairs, he was not insensitive to professional obligations. Like Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle before him, he recognized public demands, affably molding his detective, in this case Roger Sheringham, into a more likable and engaging creature when it became apparent that that was what the public desired. This is one of many parallels between serial publication as practiced by Dickens and the series of novels that many detective writers published. Anthony Cox died in 1971, his privacy inviolate and the immortality of Anthony Berkeley assured.

ANALYSIS

The classic English murder mystery enjoyed a golden age in the 1920's. Whether the mystery's triumph resulted from the confidence that followed the postwar boom or from a prescient awareness that this era of prosperity would soon come to an end, the public imagination was captured by erudite, self-sufficient, all-knowing, and in some instances debonair detectives—the likes of Lord Peter Wimsey, Hercule Poirot, and Philo Vance. The reading public was entranced by someone who had all the answers, someone for whom the grimmest, grimiest, and most gruesome aspects of life—murder most foul—could be tidied up, dusted off, and safely divested of their most dire threats so that life could continue peaceful, placid, and prosperous.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Roger Sheringham gets into a jam in "The Avenging Chance."

"THE AVENGING CHANCE"

Anthony Berkeley entered the increasingly fertile field of mysteries, becoming a major figure with the 1925 publication of the often-reprinted short story "The Avenging Chance," which featured detective Roger Sheringham, on whom his author bestowed the worst of all possible characteristics of insufferable amateur sleuths. A British World War I veteran who has become successful at writing crime novels, Sheringham is vain, sneering, and in all ways offensive. The story was, in fact, conceived as a parody, as the following passage illustrates:

Roger Sheringham was inclined to think afterwards that the Poisoned Chocolates Case, as the papers called it, was perhaps the most perfectly planned murder he had ever encountered. The motive was so obvious, when you knew where to look for it—but you didn't know; the method was so significant when you had

grasped its real essentials—but you didn't grasp them; the traces were so thinly covered, when you had realised what was covering them—but you didn't realise. But for a piece of the merest bad luck, which the murderer could not possibly have foreseen, the crime must have been added to the classical list of great mysteries.

However, the story proved sufficiently popular to inspire its as yet unnamed author to expand it into a novel, which is now considered to be one of Berkeley's four classics, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*. His other important novels are *Malice Aforethought*, *Before the Fact*, and *Trial and Error*. He actually wrote many others, now considered forgettable, having in fact been forgotten and fallen out of print.

THE POISONED CHOCOLATES CASE

The Poisoned Chocolates Case is clever and interesting: Its premise is based on the detective club Berkeley founded. A private, nonprofessional organization of crime fanciers reviews a case that has, in true English mystery fashion, stumped Scotland Yard. Six members will successively present their solutions to the mysterious death of a wealthy young woman, who, it seems, has eaten poisoned chocolates evidently intended for someone else. The reader is presented with a series of possible scenarios (some members suggest more than one), each one more compelling than the last. Thus Berkeley exhausts all the possible suspects, not excepting the present company of putative investigators. Berkeley even goes so far as to present a table of likely motives, real-life parallel cases, and alleged killers, reminiscent of the techniques of Edgar Allan Poe, who based the fictional artifice of "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" on a genuine, unsolved mystery. (Berkeley does this as well in his 1926 *The Wychford Poisoning Case*.)

Like that of Poe, Berkeley's method is logical, or ratiocinative, as the chroniclers of C. Auguste Dupin or Sherlock Holmes might aver. Thus, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* is remarkable less for its action and adventure—there are no mean streets or brawls here—than for its calm, clear rationale. This is murder most civilized, gleaming only momentarily in the twilight of the British Empire. It is, moreover, murder, in this pretelevision era, by talking heads. Thus, the author

must find a way other than plot convolutions to generate interest, to say nothing of suspense, since he is, in effect, retelling his story five times.

Yet Berkeley creates a crescendo of climaxes and revelations of solutions, with Roger Sheringham, the detective presumptive, assigned by the luck of the draw the fourth presentation. He is twice trumped by superior solutions, for the last, and most perfect answer, belongs to the slightest and most insignificant of the club's communicants, Ambrose Chitterwick. Roger is rendered beside himself by this untoward and alien chain of events, and the conventions of the genre are no less disturbed. This final solution cannot be proved, however, so that at the end the reader is left baffled by the ironies and multiplicities of the mystery's solution, not unlike the messy and disheveled patterns of life itself.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Also published under the name Anthony Berkeley was *Trial and Error*, which posits a mild-mannered, unprepossessing protagonist, Mr. Todhunter. Already under a death sentence imposed by an incurable illness, Mr. Todhunter, like the last and best ratiocinator in *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, is most improbable in his role: He has decided that the way to achieve meaning in life is to kill someone evil. Thus, the reader is presented with a would-be murderer in search of a crime. The murder, then, within the structure of the text, is a pivotal climax rather than the more usual starting point for the principal plot developments. *Trial and Error* is one of Berkeley's first exercises with the inverted mystery; it enabled him to experiment with the form, expand and extend it, at the same time indulging his instincts for parody of the methods, and particularly the characters, of mysteries.

Berkeley's method is to sacrifice convention and routine for the sake of characterization. How will these people react when the terms of their worlds, the conditions under which they have become accustomed to acting, are suddenly shifted? What will Mr. Todhunter be like as a murderer, for example? These are the concerns of the author. Berkeley believes that the unexpected is not a device that results from the complexities and permutations of plot, but is the effect of

upending the story from the very beginning. He is not finished with poor Mr. Todhunter's inversion, for *Trial and Error* proceeds to tax its antihero with the challenge of seeing someone else wrongly convicted for Todhunter's crime. With Berkeley's knowledge of the law securely grounding the story, Mr. Todhunter must therefore, honorably if not entirely happily, undertake to secure a legal death sentence for himself. There is yet another, final turn to the screw of this most ironic plot before Berkeley releases it.

**MALICE AFORETHOUGHT AND
BEFORE THE FACT**

Under the nom de plume Francis Iles, Berkeley wrote *Malice Aforethought*, *Before the Fact*, and *As for the Woman* (1939)—the last a little-known, generally unavailable, and not highly regarded endeavor. The first two, however, are gems. Here is even more experimentation and novelty within the scope of the novel. *Malice Aforethought* centers on the revenge of a henpecked husband, another of Berkeley's Milquetoasts, who, when finally and unmercifully provoked, is shown to be the equal of any murderer. Yet he, like Berkeley's earlier protagonists, must suffer unforeseen consequences for his presumption: his arrest and trial for a murder of which he is innocent, following his successful evasion of the charge of which he is guilty, uxoricide.

Malice Aforethought famously announces at the outset that the murder of a wife will be its object: "It was not until several weeks after he had decided to murder his wife that Dr. Bickleigh took any active steps in the matter. Murder is a serious business." The story then proceeds to scrutinize the effect on this downtrodden character of such a motive and such a circumstance. Thus, character is again the chief interest. Similarly, in *Before the Fact*, it is fairly clear that the plain, drab heiress will be killed in some fashion by her impecunious, improvident, and irresponsible husband. As with *Trial and Error*, greater attention is devoted to the anticipation of the murder than to its outcome. In *Before the Fact*, the author clearly knows the extent to which the heroine's love for her beleaguering spouse will allow her to forgive and excuse his errancy. Played against this knowledge is the extent to which the husband is capable of evil. One might hazard the observation that the book becomes a prophetic

textbook on abuse—in this example, mental and psychological—to which a wife can be subjected, with little hope of recourse.

The imbalances and tensions within the married estate obviously intrigue Berkeley. Both of the major Iles novels follow the trajectory of domestic tragedies. In contrast, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* remains speculative, remote, apart from the actual—virtually everything in it is related at second or third hand. Similarly, Mr. Todhunter is an uninformed and incurious old bachelor, also abstracted from life, until his self-propelled change. Berkeley's range is wide.

Uniting these four books, besides their intriguing switches and switchbacks, are Berkeley's grace and ironic wit. His section of the Detection Club round-robin *Ask a Policeman* (1933) delightfully spoofs Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey. "The Policeman Only Taps Once" (1936), likewise, parodies James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. His novels are urbane, well-paced, well-crafted specimens of the interlude between a passing postwar age and an advancing prewar time. They depict the upper-middle and lower-upper classes attempting to deal with a slice of life's particular but unexpected savagery and ironic, unyielding justice. In each case, characters willingly open Pandora's box, whereupon they discover that they have invited doom by venturing beyond their stations. What they find is in fact a kind of looking-glass world, one similar to what they know, which is now forever elusive, but horrifyingly inverted and contradictory.

Within the civilized and graceful casing that his language and structure create—which duplicates the lives these characters have been leading up to the point at which the novels open—Berkeley's characters encounter a heart of darkness, a void at the center of their lives. It was probably there all along, but only now have they had to confront it. Berkeley exposes through ironic detective fiction the same world that T. S. Eliot was revealing in poetry in the 1920's: a world of hollow, sere, and meaningless lives, where existence is a shadow and the only reality is death. What more fitting insight might a student of murder suggest?

Laura Dabundo

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROGER SHERINGHAM SERIES: *The Layton Court Mystery*, 1925; *The Wychford Poisoning Case*, 1926; *Roger Sheringham and the Vane Mystery*, 1927 (also known as *The Mystery at Lover's Cave*); *The Silk Stocking Murders*, 1928; *The Second Shot*, 1930; *Top Storey Murder*, 1931 (also known as *Top Story Murder*); *Murder in the Basement*, 1932; *Jumping Jenny*, 1933 (also known as *Dead Mrs. Stratton*); *Panic Party*, 1934 (also known as *Mr. Pidgeon's Island*); *The Roger Sheringham Stories*, 1994; *The Avenging Chance, and Other Mysteries from Roger Sheringham's Casebook*, 2004

AMBROSE CHITTERWICK SERIES: *The Piccadilly Murder*, 1929; *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, 1929; *Trial and Error*, 1937

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Family Witch*, 1925 (as Cox); *The Professor on Paws*, 1926 (as Cox); *The Wintringham Mystery*, 1926 (as Cox; revised as *Cicely Disappears*, 1927); *Cicely Disappears*, 1927 (as Platts); *Mr. Priestley's Problem*, 1927 (as Cox; also known as *The Amateur Crime*, 1928); *Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime*, 1931 (as Iles); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Before the Fact*, 1932 (as Iles); *Ask a Policeman*, 1933 (with Milward Kennedy and others); *Not to Be Taken*, 1938 (also known as *A Puzzle in Poison*); *As for the Woman*, 1939 (as Iles); *Death in the House*, 1939

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Brenda Entertains*, 1925 (as A. B. Cox); *Jugged Journalism*, 1925 (as Cox)

PLAYS: *Mr. Priestley's Adventure*, pr. 1928 (adaptation of his novel; also known as *Mr. Priestley's Night Out* and *Mr. Priestley's Problem*)

NONFICTION: *O England!*, 1934 (as Cox); *The Anatomy of Murder*, 1936 (with Helen Simpson and others)

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Turnbull, Malcolm J. *Elusion Aforethought: The Life and Writing of Anthony Berkeley Cox*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. Combined biography and critical study, situating Berkeley's works alongside relevant episodes in his life.

AMBROSE BIERCE

Born: Horse Cave Creek, Ohio; June 24, 1842

Died: Mexico(?); January, 1914(?)

Types of plot: Horror; psychological; metaphysical and metafictional parody

CONTRIBUTION

Ambrose Bierce has been labeled a misanthrope or pessimist, and his short stories dealing with murder have been misunderstood as the work of a man who, obsessed with the idea of death, showed himself incapable of compassion. A less moralistic and biographical reevaluation of the work of Bierce, however, discovers his intellectual fascination with the effect of the supernatural on the human imagination. Further, his morally outrageous murder stories, collected by the author under the title of "The Parenticide Club" in *The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce* (1909-1912), are tall tales, which are certainly not to be taken at face value. Their black humor, combined with the cool understatement of the voice of their criminal or psychopathic narrators, serves to reflect a society gone to seed and to poke fun at the murderous state of American life in the West during the Gilded Age.

BIOGRAPHY

The tenth of seventeen children, Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce was born on June 24, 1842, on a small farm in Horse Cave Creek in southeastern Ohio. To escape life on the frontier (his family soon pushed farther west to Indiana), the boy began to devour every scrap of literature he could obtain on the homestead of his parents. After an uneventful youth, Bierce saw a chance for adventure at the outbreak of the Civil War. He enlisted with the Ninth Indiana Infantry shortly before his twentieth birthday, on April 19, 1861. Serving the Union until the end of the war, Bierce earned a reputation for courage on some of the major battlefields of the Western theater and participated in General William Tecumseh Sherman's devastating drive through the Carolinas.

After the war, Bierce settled in San Francisco, taught himself writing, and began work as an editor

with a regular gossip column in the city's *News Letter*. On Christmas Day, 1871, he married well-to-do Mollie Day. Bierce's in-laws made it possible for the young couple to leave for England, where Bierce wrote for magazines and saw the publication of his first three books, all under the pen name of Dod Grile. Mollie's return to the United States and the birth of their third child there forced Bierce to return in 1875. The next years saw the death of his parents and an abortive attempt to become the manager of a mining company in the Dakota Territory. Back in San Francisco, Bierce began writing a regular column for William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* in 1887. Bierce separated from Mollie in 1888, and in 1891 his son Day was killed in a duel. During this period Bierce composed some of his best-known short stories, gruesome tales of war alternating with macabre mysteries and ghost stories. These were published in the *San Francisco Examiner's* famously lurid Sunday supplement, to which Guy de Maupassant and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle also contributed. Bierce published *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891) and *Can Such Things Be?* (1893). These two collections of short stories brought him literary acclaim and lasting recognition; it is in these volumes that his murder and horror fiction is to be found.

Bierce continued to work as a journalist of some standing for Hearst's papers, but his later fiction fell in both quality and popularity. His pithy humor column, *The Devil's Dictionary*, was collected and published in 1906 as *The Cynic's Word Book* (an unfortunate retitling that was probably at least partly responsible for the book's lackluster reception). Bierce devoted most of his last years, from 1909 to 1912, to the collation and editing of his collected works, a mammoth task that to critics smacked of unwarranted pride and that failed to sell.

Depressed and in poor health, Bierce informed his family and friends that he would travel to wartorn Mexico to report on the revolution. His last letter dates from December 26, 1913, reportedly sent from Chihuahua, though this letter does not survive except as a



Ambrose Bierce. (Library of Congress)

copy transcribed by its receiver. Of his death nothing is known. None of the many American diplomats or journalists in Mexico at that time recorded seeing Bierce, though queries about his whereabouts were made. His mysterious disappearance made him the enduring literary and popular icon that his last attempts at publication had not. Rumors of Bierce's presence at Pancho Villa's camp or his death at this or that battle gave rise to a romantic figure that Carlos Fuentes appropriated for his novel *Gringo Viejo* (1985; *The Old Gringo*, 1985). Bierce is also reimagined as an investigative journalist/amateur detective by Oakley Hall in a series that began in 1998 with *Ambrose Bierce and the Queen of Spades*.

ANALYSIS

Ambrose Bierce was not a writer of detective fiction by intent, and he did not write mysteries in the

modern sense of the word. The common denominator of his short stories is that they all deal with death—death caused by war, humans, or the supernatural. The presentation of death, however, often follows the methods one would expect in detective fiction, a genre nascent in the days of Bierce. There is the attempt to discover the cause of death through rational cogitation, and perhaps the most important figure in the aftermath of the death is that of the coroner. Although a minor character, Bierce's coroner succeeds in reinstating order and reining in the chaos that has crept into the narrative through what has often been a true tour de force of the imagination. Certainty is reestablished but at a price: Somebody is irrefutably dead.

“THE HAUNTED VALLEY”

Bierce's first short story, “The Haunted Valley” (it first appeared in *Overland Monthly*, 1871, and was revised for *Can Such Things Be?*), anticipated the themes and devices of much of his later work. As in most of his stories, the setting is Bierce's contemporary American West, a land and a people he knew exceptionally well and to which he brought his own particular brand of the gothic. In exchange, he received initiation to the tall tale, a form that thrived at the campfires of the pioneers, and a subgenre that Bierce would cultivate to perfection. At the core of “The Haunted Valley” is the mystery surrounding the death of the “Chinaman” and the role of his white employer-tormentor, a roguish innkeeper. The narrator, a nameless traveler, discovers the enigma surrounding the fate of the two. Yet, typical for Bierce, this knowledge cannot serve to bring forth temporal punishment of the villain. An all-white jury has acquitted the innkeeper in a fashion typical of the corruptness of the courts of Bierce's fiction and his contemporary surroundings.

Retribution is meted out in a careful and deliberate manner, however, and the denouement of his earliest story proves exemplary of the way in which, in Bierce's work, victims entangle themselves in webs of their own making. Here, the innkeeper insists on the almost abnormal power with which looks are charged. Sensing his master's special susceptibility to the supernatural, his hired hand tricks him into believing that he sees the Asian's eye. The villain is so shocked that he dies, and a certain black sense of retribution

prevails, made absolute by the fact that the trickster goes mad as a result of his action.

“A WATCHER BY THE DEAD”

The use of the supernatural is a hallmark of Bierce’s fiction; unfortunately, he has been mistaken for a writer who relies on sheer horror to enhance otherwise undistinguished writing. Therefore it is important to see that often the horror of Bierce’s stories, which inevitably end in one or more violent deaths, comes from within the human mind rather than from any outside source. As such, Bierce’s mystery stories explore the realm and the abyss of the human imagination and its susceptibility to primal beliefs. Any rejection of this aspect of the human condition will lead to the destruction of doubters, whose pride or simple insistence on their powers of reason will be shattered after they have met one of Bierce’s fiendish tempters.

“A Watcher by the Dead” (in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*) is a great illumination of that. Here, a doctor declares categorically:

The superstitious awe with which the living regard the dead . . . is hereditary and incurable. One needs no more be ashamed of it than of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie.

Thus, decades before Carl Jung and Northrop Frye, the question of humanity’s collective memory is raised. Bierce’s stay in Great Britain may have acquainted him with the ideas of English agnostics who tried to replace the Christian demand to do good with the discovery of a tribal memory, that part of people that may guide them to learn from the past and be morally better than the ape of Darwinian theory. Nevertheless, the doctor’s provocative and condescending words are challenged by a cocksure stranger, Jarette. The two agree on an experiment in which Jarette will stay alone in a barred room for a night with what he thinks is a corpse. Soon, Jarette feels terror, and the friend who has been playing dead cannot help but “come alive,” killing the other as he does so. Unfortunately, the doors remain locked, and the accomplice, now indeed alone with a corpse, goes mad; the disaster is complete with the ruin of the doctor’s career.

“THE DEATH OF HALPIN FRAYSER”

The idea of human susceptibility to the supernatural, although always with a new turn of the plot, is indeed the basis of many of Bierce’s mysteries. He plotted his fiction around the exploration of all imaginable variants on this theme; intellectually, Bierce’s short stories have something of the mathematical precision of Johann Sebastian Bach’s fugues. Far from making his writing repetitive or formulaic, however, Bierce’s central idea is always developed one step further, reexamined or turned on its head to reveal a new insight. In “The Death of Halpin Frayser” (in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*), the joke is partially on the reader, who is set up by a quote from an “ancient” text that warns about the evil that comes from the soulless bodies of former loved ones. Next, there is Halpin, falling in a strange forest and dreaming that his mother strangles him. His corpse is found by a detective and a deputy. In the story’s final twist, it turns out that Halpin has not been killed by himself in a panicked frenzy but by the murderer of his mother while he was dreaming of his death.

“STANLEY FLEMING’S HALLUCINATION”

Most of Bierce’s later stories incorporate the supernatural. “Stanley Fleming’s Hallucination” (in *Can Such Things Be?*) is carefully constructed to mirror the previous stories. Here, the protagonist hallucinates being attacked by a large dog in his bedroom; a consulting physician reads a book on wraiths and lemurs downstairs while his patient dies. Incredibly, Bierce’s story insists:

When the man was dead an examination disclosed the unmistakable marks of an animal’s fangs deeply sunken into the jugular vein.

But there was no animal.

The thinner the borderline between self-induced terror of the supernatural and the “real” appearance of the unreal, the more haunting Bierce’s work becomes. Stories such as “The Thing at Nolan” and “The Difficulty of Crossing a Field” (in *Can Such Things Be?*) have become classics of the uncanny; the unnatural appearances and disappearances that they recount strike one because of their seemingly mundane setting. It takes a developed craft to transform the vanish-

ing of a farmer while crossing “a closed-cropped pasture of some ten acres, level and without a tree, rock, or any natural or artificial object on its surface” into a chilling story.

“THE PARENTICIDE CLUB”

There is another, more roguish side to Bierce, a side that has for decades disturbed righteous critics who have failed truly to read his tall tales, casting them aside as morally indigestible morsels from the table of a great cynic, major misanthrope, and minor writer. “An Imperfect Conflagration,” one of the four short stories that form “The Parenticide Club” centers on the diligently plotted and violent demise of the parents of a prodigal narrator, who relates his story with grand understatement, keeping his ironic detachment to the point of sardonic indifference while relating the equally grand account of his and his parents’ misdoings. The opening of “An Imperfect Conflagration” shows how effectively the voice of the narrator lures the reader into an obviously amusing but seemingly amoral story:

Early one June morning in 1872 I murdered my father—an act which made a deep impression on me at the time. This was before my marriage.

Reading about his later marriage, one is immediately confronted with the double denial of a “correct” response to the patricide—everlasting shock on the part of the murderer is replaced by a “deep” but clearly temporary “impression,” and the sense of appropriate temporal punishment by society is thwarted by the knowledge that the groom-to-be has obviously been spared the rope, firing squad, or at least lengthy incarceration.

In another fiendish turn, the narrative often prevents the reader from feeling any sympathy for the victims and instead induces clandestine siding with the perpetrator of the crime. Father and son are professional burglars, and the dishonesty of the father while dividing the spoils of their nighttime exploits causes the son to “remov[e] the old man from his vale of tears.”

In “Oil of Dog,” Bierce’s darkest tale among the four stories, the reader is matter-of-factly introduced to a family straight out of hell: “. . . my father being a

manufacturer of dog-oil and my mother having a small studio in the shadow of the village church, where she disposed of unwelcome babes.” Thus, the context is set for a narrative that concludes with father and mother killing each other in a fierce fight over who is to melt down the other for sale as “canine” oil. Critics who recoil from such unadulterated and unmitigated horror have regularly failed to see the real thrust of Bierce’s narratives.

In his “Negligible Tales” (in *Can Such Things Be?*), Bierce excels at poking fun at the evil realities of his world. By enlarging them to truly absurd proportions, he avoids the sour tone of the disgruntled moralist and assumes the role of the old fiend to bring home his point.

It is important to see that the parenticides in these tall tales are essentially motivated by commercial reasons: The burglar son does not want to be cheated out of his spoils by his father, whom he kills (prudently taking out a life insurance policy on him before disclosing the body). “Oil of Dog” has at its center a thriving commercial enterprise that, by selling its quack cure to an eager community, prospers from the bodies of unwanted ones until greed takes over the proprietors and they begin to melt down less easily missed people. Shut down, the business runs its logical course toward self-consumption—a powerful comment by Bierce on the true nature of the age of the robber barons, mining magnates, and real-estate czars of the American West of his times.

Bierce’s dark mysteries and cynically embellished tall tales continue to provide enjoyable reading not only because they say so much about his era, when a deep interest in the supernatural accompanied progress in the hard sciences and when the ideal of the self-reliant, hardworking yeoman farmer was shown to be the fool’s choice by the ever-increasing success of people devoted to the ruthless amassing of money, but also because his work can be savored on a purely artistic level. His short stories are diamonds of the genre: Their style is direct, precise, crafty, and to the point, and their plots twist and turn in ever-unpredictable directions toward the certain end—death.

R. C. Lutz

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Cobwebs: Being the Fables of Zambri the Parse*, 1884; *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, 1891 (also known as *In the Midst of Life*, 1898); *Can Such Things Be?*, 1893; *Fantastic Fables*, 1899; *My Favourite Murder*, 1916; *Ghost and Horror Stories of Ambrose Bierce*, 1964; *The Collected Fables of Ambrose Bierce*, 2000 (S. T. Joshi, editor)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

POETRY: *Vision of Doom*, 1890; *Black Beetles in Amber*, 1892; *How Blind Is He?*, 1896; *Shapes of Clay*, 1903; *Poems of Ambrose Bierce*, 1995

NONFICTION: *Nuggets and Dust Panned in California*, 1873; *The Fiend's Delight*, 1873; *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*, 1874; *The Dance of Death*, 1877; *The Dance of Life: An Answer to the Dance of Death*, 1877 (with Mrs. J. Milton Bowers); *The Cynic's Word Book*, 1906 (better known as *The Devil's Dictionary*); *The Shadow on the Dial, and Other Essays*, 1909; *Write It Right: A Little Blacklist of Literary Faults*, 1909; *The Letters of Ambrose Bierce*, 1922; *Twenty-one Letters of Ambrose Bierce*, 1922; *Selections from Prattle*, 1936; *Ambrose Bierce on Richard Realf by Wm. McDevitt*, 1948; *A Sole Survivor: Bits of Autobiography*, 1998 (S. T. Joshi and David E. Schultz, editors); *The Fall of the Republic, and Other Political Satires*, 2000 (Joshi and Schultz, editors)

TRANSLATION: *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter*, 1892 (with Gustav Adolph Danziger; of Richard Voss's novel)

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce*, 1909-1912; *Shadows of Blue and Gray: The Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce*, 2002 (Brian M. Thomsen, editor)

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correspondence calculated to nourish a more sympathetic portrait than is usually presented of Bierce.

_____. *Phantoms of a Blood-Stained Period: The Complete Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce*. Edited by Russell Duncan and David J. Klooster. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2002. This volume collects all of Bierce's Civil War writings and places each piece in the historical context of the war. The lengthy introduction describes Bierces's battlefield experiences and discusses their effect on the psyche and literary expression of the writer.

Butterfield, Herbie. "'Our Bedfellow Death': The Short Stories of Ambrose Bierce." In *The Nineteenth Century American Short Story*, edited by A. Robert Lee. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1985. A brief, general introduction to the themes and techniques of some of Bierce's most representative short stories.

Conlogue, William. "A Haunting Memory: Ambrose Bierce and the Ravine of the Dead." *Studies in Short Fiction* 28 (Winter, 1991): 21-29. Discusses Bierce's symbolic use of the topographical feature of the ravine as a major symbol of death in five stories, including "Killed at Resaca," "Coulter's Notch," and "The Coup de Grace." Shows how the ravine symbolizes the grave, the underworld, and lost love for Bierce, all derived from his Civil War memories and the death of his first love.

Davidson, Cathy N. *The Experimental Fictions of Ambrose Bierce: Structuring the Ineffable*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. Discusses how Bierce intentionally blurs distinctions between such categories as knowledge, emotion, language, and behavior. Examines how Bierce blurs distinctions between external reality and imaginative reality in many of his most important short stories.

Hoppenstand, Gary. "Ambrose Bierce and the Transformation of the Gothic Tale in the Nineteenth-Century American Periodical." In *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, edited by Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995. Examines Bierce's relationship to the San Francisco

periodicals, focusing on the influence he had in bringing the gothic tale into the twentieth century; discusses themes and conventions in “The Damned Thing” and “Moxon’s Master.”

Morris, Roy, Jr. *Ambrose Bierce: Alone in Bad Company*. New York: Crown, 1996. A compelling biography that reviews Bierce’s literary career alongside the writer’s life. Morris argues that Bierce’s

cynicism was both real and deeply rooted, a lasting depression left over from Bierce’s Civil War experiences and built on by personal tragedy and disappointment. Bierce’s mysterious disappearance, according to Morris, was a cleverly made ruse to cover his own suicide—an attempt to make the end of his already peculiar life an enduring work of gothic fiction.

EARL DERR BIGGERS

Born: Warren, Ohio; August 26, 1884

Died: Pasadena, California; April 5, 1933

Types of plot: Police procedural; master sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Charlie Chan, 1925-1932

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHARLIE CHAN is a middle-aged Chinese detective on the police force in Honolulu, Hawaii. Short and stout, but agile, he advances from sergeant to inspector in the course of the series. He solves his cases through patience, attention to detail, and character analysis.

CONTRIBUTION

In Charlie Chan, Earl Derr Biggers created one of the most famous fictional detectives of all time. The amusing Chinese detective with the flowery, aphoristic language became widely known not only through the six novels in which he is featured but also through the many films in which he appeared. There were in fact more than thirty Charlie Chan films made from 1926 to 1952, not to mention some forty television episodes in 1957, a television feature in 1971, and a television cartoon series in 1972. In addition, in the 1930’s and 1940’s, there were radio plays and comic strips based on Biggers’s character. A paperback novel, *Charlie Chan Returns*, by Dennis Lynds, appeared in 1974. Chan has become an American literary folk hero to rank with Tom Sawyer and Tarzan of the Apes, and

he has inspired the creation of numerous other “cross-cultural” detectives.

BIOGRAPHY

Earl Derr Biggers was born in Warren, Ohio, on August 26, 1884, to Robert J. Biggers and Emma Derr Biggers. He attended Harvard University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in 1907. He worked as a columnist and drama critic for the Boston *Traveler* from 1908 to 1912, when he was discharged for writing overly critical reviews. His first play, *If You’re Only Human*, was produced in 1912 but was not well received. That same year, he married Eleanor Ladd, with whom he remained married until he died. The couple had one child, Robert Ladd Biggers, born in 1915. His first novel, *Seven Keys to Baldpate* (1913), a kind of farcical mystery-melodrama, was exceedingly popular, and in the same year a play by George M. Cohan based on the novel enjoyed even greater success; over the years, it inspired five different film versions.

In the next eleven years, Biggers was quite prolific. Aside from a number of short stories for such magazines as *The Saturday Evening Post*, he wrote two short novels, *Love Insurance* (1914) and *The Agony Column* (1916), frothy romantic mysteries, and several plays, which enjoyed only moderate success. None of his plays was published.

In 1925 Biggers came into his own with the publication of the first Charlie Chan novel, *The House*

Without a Key, first serialized, like all the other Chan novels, in *The Saturday Evening Post*. With the exception of one short novel, *Fifty Candles* (1926), after 1925 Biggers devoted himself exclusively to Chan, producing five more novels about him. Biggers died of a heart attack in Pasadena, California, on April 5, 1933. A volume of his short stories, *Earl Derr Biggers Tells Ten Stories* (1933), appeared posthumously.

ANALYSIS

When Earl Derr Biggers wrote his first Charlie Chan novel, he had already been practicing his craft for a number of years. He had developed a smooth and readable colloquial style in the four novels and numerous short stories he had already published. In the several plays he had written or collaborated on, he had developed a knack for writing dialogue. Thus, he was at the peak of his literary powers in 1925, when Chan first burst into print in the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post*. All of his preceding novels had some characteristics of the mystery in them, but they would best be described as romantic melodramas rather than crime novels.

The Chan novels, particularly the earlier ones, are invested with the spirit of high romance and appeal to the natural human desire to escape the humdrum of everyday existence. Thus Biggers chooses exotic and picturesque settings for them: a Honolulu of narrow streets and dark alleys, of small cottages clinging to the slopes of Punchbowl Hill, and a Waikiki that in the 1920's was still dominated by Diamond Head, not by high-rise hotels. He makes abundant use of moonlight on the surf, of palm trees swaying in the breeze, and of aromatic blooms scenting the subtropical evening. The streets are peopled with "quaint" Asians and the occasional native Hawaiian; the hotel lobbies house the white flotsam and jetsam of the South Seas in tired linens.

The reader is introduced to the speech of the Hawaiian residents, peppered with Hawaiian words such as *aloha*, *pau*, and *malihini*. Then, a part of this romantic picture, and at the same time contrasting with it, there is the rotund and humdrum figure of the small Chinese detective. In three of the novels Chan is on the mainland, seen against the fog swirling around a pent-

house in San Francisco, in the infinite expanse of the California desert, and on the snow-clad banks of Lake Tahoe.

There is also a strong element of nostalgia in Biggers's works. One is reminded, for example, of the good old days of the Hawaiian monarchy, when Kalakaua reigned from the throne room of Iolani Palace. Also, in San Francisco the loss of certain infamous saloons of the old Tenderloin is deplored, and in the desert the reader encounters the last vestiges of the once-prosperous mining boom in a down-at-heel cow town and an abandoned mine. Biggers delights in contrasting the wonders of nature with those of modern civilization, such as the radio and the long-distance telephone.

Parallel to the mystery plot, each novel features a love story between two of the central characters. The young man involved often feels the spirit of adventure in conflict with his prosaic way of life. This conflict is embodied in the person of John Quincy Winterslip of *The House Without a Key*, a blue-blooded Boston businessman who succumbs to the spell of the tropics and to the charms of an impoverished girl who resides in Waikiki. It is also present in Bob Eden of *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), the wastrel son of a rich jeweler who finds that there are attractions to be found in the desert and in connubial bliss that are not present in the bistros of San Francisco.

The heroines of these romances are usually proud and independent liberated women, concerned about their careers: Paula Wendell, of *The Chinese Parrot*, searches the desert for sites for motion pictures, while June Morrow, of *Behind That Curtain* (1928), is an assistant district attorney in San Francisco. They are torn between their careers and marriage and deplore the traditional feminine weaknesses. "I don't belong to a fainting generation," says Pamela Potter in *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1930), "I'm no weakling." Leslie Beaton of *Keeper of the Keys* (1932) had "cared for a spineless, artistic brother; she had learned, meanwhile, to take care of herself." Chan makes no secret of his belief that a woman's place is in the home. In fact, although he seems to admire all these liberated women, at one point he remarks, "Women were not invented for heavy thinking." Still, as the reader learns in *Char-*

lie Chan *Carries On*, he sends his daughter Rose to college on the mainland.

THE HOUSE WITHOUT A KEY

The first two novels are narrated mainly from the perspective of the other characters, rather than from that of Charlie Chan. That enables the author to present him as a quaint and unusual person. When he first comes on the scene in *The House Without a Key*, Biggers provides a full description: "He was very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting." When Minerva Winterslip, a Bostonian single woman, first sets eyes on him, she gasps because he is a detective. In popular American literature of the 1920's, Chinese were depicted in the main

either as cooks and laundrymen or sinister characters lurking in opium dens. Biggers consciously chose a Chinese detective for the novelty of it, perhaps inspired by his reading about a real-life Chinese detective in Honolulu, Chang Apana (Chang Ah Ping).

There is more than a little fun poked at Chan in the early novels. His girth is frequently mentioned. He is self-deprecatory and polite to others almost to the point of obsequiousness. He speaks in a bizarre mixture of flowery and broken English, leaving out articles and confusing singulars and plurals. The very first words he speaks in the series are odd: "No knife are present in neighborhood of crime." Chan confuses prefixes, as in "unprobable," "unconvenience," "insanitary," and "undubitably," one of his favorite words, and is guilty of other linguistic transgressions. He

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Swedish actor Warner Oland (right) played Earl Derr Biggers's Chinese American sleuth Charlie Chan in sixteen films during the 1930's. (Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive)

spouts what are intended to be ancient Chinese maxims and aphorisms at every turn, sometimes quoting Confucius: “Death is the black camel that kneels unbid at every gate,” “It is always darkest underneath the lamp,” and “In time the grass becomes milk.” He is often underestimated, even scorned, by the whites with whom he comes into contact—Captain Flannery of the San Francisco police in *Behind That Curtain* is particularly unkind.

In spite of the amusement with which Biggers writes of him, Chan emerges as an admirable, sympathetic figure. He is kind, loyal, persistent, and tenacious. His Asian inscrutability is misleading, as his “bright black eyes” miss nothing. In spite of his rotundity, he is light on his feet and can sometimes act with remarkable agility. He is a keen student of human behavior—he has little use for scientific methods of detection, believing that the most effective way of determining guilt is through the observation of the suspects. “Chinese are psychic people,” Chan is fond of saying, and he frequently has hunches that stand him in good stead. He possesses great patience, a virtue with which he believes his race is more richly endowed than other races.

Chan was born in China, “in thatched hut by side of muddy river,” and at the beginning of the series has lived in Hawaii for twenty-five years. He resides on Punchbowl Hill with his wife, whom he met on Waikiki Beach, and children. Chan has nine children at the beginning of the series (eleven by the end). In his early years in Hawaii, Chan worked as a houseboy for a rich family. In *The Chinese Parrot*, when he masquerades as a cook, he has a chance to practice his cooking, although he believes that kitchen work is now beneath his dignity. He also masters an outrageous pidgin English, although it hurts his pride when he must affect it.

In the course of the series, Chan increases in dignity. He advances from sergeant to inspector, and his exploits become widely known. His English retains its quaint vocabulary but loses much of its earlier pidgin quality, except for the occasional omission of an article. Although the earlier works are told mainly from the perspective of the other characters, in the later ones the story is often told from the perspective of Chan

himself. One reads what he sees and what passes through his mind. If this diminishes somewhat the quality of the superhuman, it makes him more human, so that instead of viewing him with a combination of awe and amusement, one can more readily identify with him.

It is instructive to compare two scenes that take place in Chan’s bungalow on Punchbowl Hill. In *The House Without a Key* he greets a visitor dressed in

a long loose robe of dark purple silk, which fitted closely at the neck and had wide sleeves. Beneath it showed wide trousers of the same material, and on his feet were shoes of silk, with thick felt soles. He was all Oriental now, suave and ingratiating but remote, and for the first time John Quincy was really conscious of the great gulf across which he and Chan shook hands.

THE BLACK CAMEL

In an amusing chapter in *The Black Camel* (1929), the reader encounters Chan at breakfast. Here one finds that Henry Chan, his eldest son, is a man of the world, or at least is making his way in the field of business, and speaks in a slangy manner that causes Chan to wince. His two older daughters are more interested in the illusions of Hollywood than in anything else. They constitute a typical American family, in spite of their Asian origins. The reader also finds that Chan’s wife speaks the kind of pidgin that Chan so much decries in others and that he felt humiliated to have to affect when he was playing the part of the cook Ah Kim in *The Chinese Parrot*.

THE CHINESE PARROT AND BEHIND THAT CURTAIN

There is some continuity in the novels apart from the character of Chan himself and a certain logic to justify Chan’s forays to the mainland, where Biggers probably thought he would have more scope for his talents than in the sleepy town of Honolulu in the 1920’s. In *The Chinese Parrot*, he travels to San Francisco to deliver an expensive necklace for an old friend who had employed him in his youth. He also travels to the desert as part of this same commission. In *Behind That Curtain*, Chan becomes embroiled in another mystery while waiting for the ship to take him home

from the one he has just solved. At this time he meets Inspector Duff of Scotland Yard, whom he later meets in Honolulu, where Duff has gone to ferret out the perpetrator of a murder that has been committed in London. When Duff is wounded, Chan goes to San Francisco to catch the culprit. While in San Francisco he is hired by someone who has read in the papers of his exploits to go to Lake Tahoe to unravel a mystery for him.

Biggers's mysteries tend to have the same romantic nature as his settings. They tend to involve relationships from the past, long-festered enmities or complicated plans for revenge or extortion. While they are never so fantastic as to be completely unbelievable, they are not realistic either. Biggers employs coincidence and such melodramatic devices as false identities, impersonations, and chance encounters.

In the spirit of the classical mystery of the 1920's, Biggers more or less plays fair with his readers, allowing them to see clues that Chan alone has the perspicacity to interpret correctly. In the classical tradition, Chan reveals the killer in the final pages of the work. Biggers is good at building suspense, often by placing the life of one of the sympathetic characters in jeopardy. The mysteries are generally such that the reader has a strong idea as to the identity of the murderer long before the denouement, even if he cannot put his finger on the pertinent clue, and much of the suspense comes from waiting for the narrator to confirm a suspicion.

In a sense, the mysteries are secondary. They serve as a kind of backdrop for the romantic setting, the love affair that unfolds as the mystery is solved, and, above all, for the personality of Chan. It must be admitted that Chan's status as a folk hero depends more on the cinema image projected by Warner Oland and Sidney Toler, and such catchphrases as "number one son" and "Correction, please," than on the character portrayed in Biggers's books. Still, the series has a lasting charm derived from the peculiar combination of mystery, romance, and gentle humor that Biggers achieved—and of the nostalgia they evoke for the Waikiki Beach and the Honolulu of the 1920's.

Henry Kratz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHARLIE CHAN SERIES: *The House Without a Key*, 1925; *The Chinese Parrot*, 1926; *Behind That Curtain*, 1928; *The Black Camel*, 1929; *Charlie Chan Carries On*, 1930; *Keeper of the Keys*, 1932

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, 1913; *Love Insurance*, 1914; *Inside the Lines*, 1915 (with Robert Welles Ritchie; novelization of Biggers's play); *The Agony Column*, 1916 (also known as *Second Floor Mystery*); *Fifty Candles*, 1926

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Earl Derr Biggers Tells Ten Stories*, 1933

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *If You're Only Human*, pr. 1912; *Inside the Lines*, pr. 1915; *A Cure for Incurables*, pr. 1918 (with Lawrence Whitman); *See-Saw*, pr. 1919; *Three's a Crowd*, pr. 1919 (with Christopher Morley); *The Ruling Passion*, pb. 1924

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Penzler, Otto. *Earl Derr Biggers' Charlie Chan*. New York: Mysterious Bookshop, 1999. Detailed study of Biggers's most famous creation.

_____. *The Private Lives of Private Eyes, Spies, Crime Fighters, and Other Good Guys*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1977. Examines the representation of the domestic space and experience of crime-fiction protagonists, comparing their private lives to the lives of those whose privacy they routinely violate in their investigations.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Helps place Biggers within the context of the genre.

Schrader, Richard J., ed. *The Hoosier House: Bobbs-Merrill and Its Predecessors, 1850-1985—A Documentary Volume*. Detroit: Gale, 2004. History of Biggers's publisher; details Biggers's career with Bobbs-Merrill, as well as the careers of such other authors as Ayn Rand, C. S. Forester, and L. Frank Baum. Bibliographic references and index.

NICHOLAS BLAKE

C. Day Lewis

Born: Ballintubbert, Ireland; April 27, 1904

Died: Hadley Wood, Hertfordshire, England; May 22, 1972

Also wrote as C. Day Lewis

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; psychological; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nigel Strangeways, 1935-1966

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

NIGEL STRANGEWAYS, an amateur sleuth, is sometimes found writing scholarly treatises on esoteric topics before he is interrupted by a case. A tall, lean man with blue eyes and unkempt blond hair, he woos and marries a world-famous explorer, Georgia Cavendish. After her heroic death in World War II, he takes up with Clare Massinger, a sculptor, even though she refuses to marry him. Strangeways enjoys unraveling a mystery, although he sometimes finds himself respecting, even admiring, some of the murderers he uncovers.

CONTRIBUTION

The word often and accurately used in descriptions of Nicholas Blake's twenty mystery novels is "literate." He started writing mysteries in the period known as the Golden Age of the form in Great Britain, a period with such thoughtful and articulate practitioners as Michael Innes, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, and Margery Allingham. Blake excelled in his dual role as poet and mystery writer, producing, in the esti-

mation of some critics, better mysteries than poems. His poetic talents undoubtedly influenced his novels, whether detective stories, thrillers, or crime novels. In the quantity and quality of literary allusion, in the diversity of characterization and physical description, and in the overt use of his own personal experience, Blake was of the class of writers who raised the standards of mystery fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Nicholas Blake was born Cecil Day-Lewis in Ballintubbert, Ireland, on April 27, 1904, the only son of the Reverend F. C. Day-Lewis and Kathleen Blake Squires. After the death of his mother in 1908, his aunt helped to rear him, following his father, an Irish Protestant clergyman, as he moved from one London parish to another. Blake attended Sherborne School and Wadham College, Oxford University, where he received a master's degree.

He taught at various schools from 1927 until 1935, running into trouble with school administrators because of his leftist political views. He married Constance Mary King, the daughter of one of his former teachers, in 1928, and the couple had two sons. Desperately in need of more money, Blake, who had read many mysteries himself, wrote and published his first one, *A Question of Proof*, in 1935. He was a member of the Communist Party in Great Britain from 1935 to 1938, and though he never resigned from it, his political views changed, particularly after the Spanish Civil War. He worked for the Ministry of Information dur-

ing World War II and was made a commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1950.

Blake divorced his first wife in 1951 and the same year married Jill Balcon, with whom he had a son and a daughter. His professional reputation remained high: He held the position of professor of poetry at Oxford University (1951-1956) and director of the publishing firm Chatto and Windus (1954-1972). He was the Charles Eliot Norton professor of poetry at Harvard University (1964-1965), and finally, poet laureate of England, from 1968 until his death in 1972.

ANALYSIS

Summarizing his views on why authors write mystery fiction, Nicholas Blake said frankly—in the essay “The Detective Story: Why?”—that money was certainly a major motive for most. His first mystery novel, *A Question of Proof*, Earl F. Bargainnier reports, was written because Blake could think of no other honest way to come up with one hundred pounds to pay for a leaking roof.

Like the many academics of his day and those who have followed him, however, Blake’s own pleasure as a reader of mysteries contributed to his pleasure in writing them. In the same essay, he also noted that every drug addict wants to introduce other people to the habit, a habit that allows a tamed, civilized, “a-moral” society to revel in the pleasures of imaginary murder. It is a pleasure possibly of great significance to anthropologists of the future, Blake predicted; in the twenty-first century, the detective novel would be studied as the folk myth of the twentieth century, the rise of crime fiction coinciding with the decline of religion. Without the outlet for the sense of guilt provided by religion, Blake proposed, individuals turn to the detective novel, with its highly formalized ritual, as a means of purging their guilt. That is why the criminal, the high priest of the ritual, and the detective, the higher power who destroys the criminal, appeal equally to readers; they represent the light and dark sides of human nature. Blake draws the parallel between the denouement of a detective novel and the Christian concept of the Day of Judgment, when the problem is triumphantly resolved and the innocent suspects are separated from the guilty.

NIGEL STRANGEWAYS

The solemnity of such views underlying the addictive attraction of mystery fiction is counterbalanced in Blake’s novels by what Julian Symons called their “bubbling high spirits” and the author’s evident pleasure in “playing with detection.” That quality of glee comes through in the range of the twenty novels Blake wrote, which sometimes delightfully echo other great amateur detectives and novels, reassuring readers that they are in the company of a fellow addict. There is, for example, a hint of Sayers’s Lord Peter Wimsey in Blake’s Nigel Strangeways. A tall, lean man with sandy-colored hair that habitually falls over his forehead, guileless pale-blue eyes, and an abstracted look, Strangeways, like Wimsey, has that deceptive innocence and gently comic air that often lead suspects to confide in him. Similarly, though Strangeways is paid for his work, his preoccupation between cases appears to be that of the gifted dilettante. Strangeways meets his first wife on a case; a world-famous explorer, Georgia Cavendish, is, like Sayers’s Harriet Vane, an independent woman with a well-established career before marriage to the great amateur detective.

Other striking variations on the standard mystery include the first-person criminal in *The Beast Must Die* (1938), recalling Agatha Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), and the academic murder mystery construct of *The Morning After Death* (1966). Blake’s *A Penknife in My Heart* (1958) seems, on the surface, so similar to Patricia Highsmith’s *Strangers on a Train* (1950) that Blake inserted a note to say that it was only after his book had gone to press that he discovered the amazing coincidence, as he had not read her book or seen the film.

Such similarities merely highlight the elements shared by the body of mystery fiction produced during what is referred to as the Golden Age of the genre in the 1920’s, 1930’s, and 1940’s in Great Britain. As readers became more sophisticated and demanding, and as more writers entered the field, the quality of writing was raised. Blake was one of a handful of dons who took up the challenge of satisfying the exacting standards of this popular form, which required adherence to a formula as well as something fresh and challenging.

Blake's analysis of this demand was that it required the juxtaposition of fantasy with reality that defines detective fiction and that there were two ways to achieve this juxtaposition: to put unreal characters into realistic situations or to put real characters into unreal or at least improbable situations. The second was the more prevalent, certainly in Blake's fiction. It became a standard feature, according to LeRoy Lad Panek, for the great detective to be depicted as a sophisticated and cultured human being who might occasionally flounder and make a mistake.

To accommodate as well the period's passion for puzzles, Panek reports, the Golden Age novel often contains maps, time tables, cautionary and informative footnotes, and other devices designed to engage the reader's intellect in the story; these details make the great detective more realistic, ostensibly a person whose thinking process the reader can follow. Blake's *Strangeways* often makes lists of motives and suspects or of questions about a case, thus neatly playing fair with readers by providing them with a full range of possibilities while simultaneously confusing them so thoroughly that the narrative interest is maintained because they still need *Strangeways* to pick among the plausible alternatives.

Though Blake's *Strangeways* follows the tradition of the great detective—the intelligent, perceptive, and immensely likable amateur sleuth—the author's complex other life brought a distinctive note to this Golden Age tradition. Not only an active and highly respected poet, Blake was also a leftist; he considered himself a revolutionary. Bargainnier suggests that in the battle between the poetic and political impulses within Blake, the poet won. Indeed, though he never formally gave up his membership in the Communist Party, Blake ceased to be involved actively. Yet the conflict between the contemplative and active life appears, as Bargainnier points out, in the recurring theme of schizophrenia in the mystery novels; in more than one novel, a character will wonder if he unknowingly committed a crime because there is another, hidden side to his nature.

Blake's leftist leanings also appear in his attitude toward the detective novel. In the essay referred to above, Blake writes that there is a class bias in crime fiction; the detective novel, with the hero almost al-

ways on the side of law and order, appeals almost exclusively to the upper and professional classes, who have a stake in maintaining a stable society. The lower-middle and working classes read thrillers, where the criminal of the thriller is often its hero and nearly always a romantic figure, a descendant of the Robin Hood myth.

One way in which Blake bridged this gap he perceived between the classes in their choice of reading matter was probably also a result of his mind-set as a poet, a mind-set that more than any other genre calls for John Keats's "negative capability," that ability to subdue one's own personality and give oneself up to another's. Consequently, Blake's novels evince an unusual sympathy, even admiration, for the criminal. Enumerating the fates of the murderers in Blake's novels, Bargainnier notes that more than half of the criminals commit suicide or are killed by others—that is, removed from the scene before they can face the established judicial system.

Following the conventions of the detective novel, the plot in a Blake novel unfolds over a relatively short period of time and the cast of characters is confined. What characterizes Blake, however, is his long view of the genesis of a crime. In novel after novel, *Strangeways* will learn information about characters, buried for twenty or thirty years, that serves as clues to the present situation. Thus, in *Thou Shell of Death* (1936), *Strangeways* finds the key to the death of a national air hero by investigating a mysterious incident in his past when he was an obscure handyman in Ireland; in *End of Chapter* (1957), he tracks down the cause of an intensely intimate rivalry between his co-workers to their roles in a tragic case of doomed romance; in *The Corpse in the Snowman* (1941), he picks up hints of the tragedy that changed a high-spirited young girl into a reckless drug addict.

The emphasis on the past is apparent in another feature of Blake's works. Bargainnier points out that an unusually large number of children and teenagers appear in the novels. Sometimes the youths are directly involved in the crime, such as the little boy whose death in a hit-and-run incident in *The Beast Must Die* precipitates the story or the children whose lives become the battleground for control in *The*

Corpse in the Snowman; the fate of a beloved child long dead motivates the run of malice and murder in *End of Chapter*. In *The Widow's Cruise* (1959), *The Morning After Death*, and *Head of a Traveler* (1949), the conditioning of childhood experiences and tendencies becomes, similarly, important to analyzing the behavior of the adults in the present.

Golden Age fiction was characterized by its highly literate quality. Panek notes that the detective novelists, appealing to their well-educated readers, had characters who cited “[Charles] Dickens by the cartload and [William] Shakespeare by the ton.” A certain amount of banter about writers and writing and a self-referential quality was common. Here again, the well-read poet C. Day Lewis permeates the writing of Blake the mystery novelist. Julian Symons remarks that Blake

brought to the Golden Age detective story a distinctly literary tone, and also in his early books a Left Wing political attitude. Both of these things were unusual at the time. I can remember still the shock I felt when on the first page of Blake's first book, *A Question of Proof*, T. S. Eliot's name was mentioned. (I should be prepared to offer odds that there are less than a dozen crime stories written during the decades between the wars in which the name of any modern poet appears.)

It is not only that literary allusions abound in Blake's writing but also, more important, that an intimate knowledge of literature assumes a major role in the solution of some of the mysteries. Toward the end of *Thou Shell of Death*, for example, Strangeways berates himself for not immediately recognizing the significance of the victim's quoting a line from a Jacobean play. The poet's propensity for metaphor, to yoke unlike things together, leads Strangeways, in *The Widow's Cruise*, to link the nervous behavior of swans, which he had observed months before, to the strange behavior of two sisters he encounters on a cruise.

HEAD OF A TRAVELER

Though *The Private Wound* (1968), his last novel, is the most autobiographical of Blake's works, it is in *Head of a Traveler* (the title itself is a line from A. E. Housman's parody of a Greek tragedy) that the influence of the poet on the novelist becomes central. The novel begins with Strangeways's journal, as he jots

down his impressions of a visit to the estate of a distinguished English poet, Robert Seaton. Strangeways notices the “cataleptic trance of white and yellow roses” and is himself entranced by the house:

It was like getting out into a dream. Walking past the front of the house, glancing in at the drawing-room windows, one might have expected to see a group of brocaded figures arrested in courtiers' attitudes around a Sleeping Beauty, the stems of roses twining through their ceremonious fingers.

In this novel, as in so many of Blake's novels, Strangeways's early perceptions are prescient. The dreamlike, fairy-tale atmosphere of a Sleeping Beauty he picks up from the house does indeed prove to account for much inexplicable behavior on the part of both the poet, who has been pretending to be busy with a long poem, and of his wife, whose two main loves in life are the house, which once belonged to her family, and her husband's work, which she and the rest of the family protect with an awe that makes it impossible for Seaton to write. For Strangeways, the house is animated:

The fairy-tale house, so unreal when first he had seen it, was still less real to-day; then it had been the fabulous exuberance of its roses, the trance of high summer; now it was as if Plash Meadow, having drunk too deep of horrors, suffered from a blighting hangover.

He realizes that the poet's work is at the “very roots of the case.” A crucially suggestive clue for him is the sense that only since the murder of his brother has Seaton finally written a great poetic sequence. By not only piecing together his observations but also, more important, trusting his instinctive understanding of a poet's life and personality, Strangeways does, finally, deconstruct the false suicide note to clear the poet of murder and find the truth. The image of catalepsy from the first page is repeated:

Robert jumped at the opportunity to leave Plash Meadow, to break the cataleptic trance it had thrown upon his Muse, to return to the conditions under which—however grim they had been—he had in the past produced poetry. To kill Oswald would be to destroy his last chance of freeing the creator in himself.

This novel, which ends with Strangeways unable to decide whether he should report the true murderer, displays all the distinctive qualities of Blake's detective fiction: It is sophisticated, lyrical, psychologically acute, and, withal, high-spirited. His novels were the result of the needs of the poet fulfilled by the talents of the mystery writer.

Shakuntala Jayaswal

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NIGEL STRANGWAYS SERIES: *A Question of Proof*, 1935; *Thou Shell of Death*, 1936 (also known as *Shell of Death*); *There's Trouble Brewing*, 1937; *The Beast Must Die*, 1938; *The Smiler with the Knife*, 1939; *Malice in Wonderland*, 1940 (also known as *The Summer Camp Mystery* and *Malice with Murder*); *The Corpse in the Snowman*, 1941 (also known as *The Case of the Abominable Snowman*); *Minute for Murder*, 1947; *Head of a Traveler*, 1949; *The Dreadful Hollow*, 1953; *The Whisper in the Gloom*, 1954 (also known as *Catch and Kill*); *End of Chapter*, 1957; *The Widow's Cruise*, 1959; *The Worm of Death*, 1961; *The Sad Variety*, 1964; *The Morning After Death*, 1966

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Tangled Web*, 1956 (also known as *Death and Daisy Bland*); *A Penknife in My Heart*, 1958; *The Deadly Joker*, 1963; *The Private Wound*, 1968

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Friendly Tree*, 1936; *Starting Point*, 1937; *Child of Misfortune*, 1939

PLAY: *Noah and the Waters*, pb. 1936

POETRY: 1925-1940 • *Beechen Vigil, and Other Poems*, 1925; *Country Comets*, 1928; *Transitional Poem*, 1929; *From Feathers to Iron*, 1931; *The Magnetic Mountain*, 1933; *A Time to Dance, and Other Poems*, 1935; *Collected Poems, 1929-1933*, 1935; *Overtures to Death, and Other Poems*, 1938; *Poems in Wartime*, 1940; *Selected Poems*, 1940

1941-1960 • *Word over All*, 1943; *Short Is the Time: Poems, 1936-1943*, 1945; *Collected Poems, 1929-1936*, 1948; *Poems, 1943-1947*, 1948; *Selected Poems*, 1951 (revised 1957, 1969, 1974); *An Italian Visit*, 1953; *Collected Poems*, 1954; *Pegasus, and*

Other Poems, 1957; *The Newborn: D.M.B., 29th April 1957*, 1957

1961-1992 • *The Gate, and Other Poems*, 1962; *Requiem for the Living*, 1964; *A Marriage Song for Albert and Barbara*, 1965; *The Room, and Other Poems*, 1965; *Selected Poems*, 1967; *The Abbey That Refused to Die: A Poem*, 1967; *The Whispering Roots*, 1970; *The Poems, 1925-1972*, 1977 (Ian Parsons, editor); *The Complete Poems of C. Day Lewis*, 1992

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Otterbury Incident*, 1948

NONFICTION: *A Hope for Poetry*, 1934; *Revolution in Writing*, 1935; *The Colloquial Element in English Poetry*, 1947; *The Poetic Image*, 1947; *The Poet's Task*, 1951; *The Poet's Way of Knowledge*, 1957; *The Buried Day*, 1960; *The Lyric Impulse*, 1965; *A Need for Poetry?*, 1968

EDITED TEXT: *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 1963

TRANSLATIONS: *The Georgics of Virgil*, 1940; *The Graveyard by the Sea*, 1946 (Paul Valéry); *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 1952; *The Eclogues of Virgil*, 1963

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Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Discusses Blake's *Head of a Traveler* and *A Penknife in My Heart*. Bibliographic references and index.

"Nicholas Blake." In *Modern Mystery Writers*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1995. Critical, scholarly examination of Blake's work and its place in the mystery-fiction canon. Bibliographic references.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of

Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Helps place Blake within the context of the genre.

Smith, Elton Edward. *The Angry Young Men of the Thirties*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975. In his first chapter, "C. Day-Lewis: The Iron Lyricist," Smith outlines the dilemma of British poets in the 1930's, a decade of worldwide economic collapse. This study of poetry is thus useful for contextualizing the poet's detective fiction as well.

ELEANOR TAYLOR BLAND

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; December 31, 1944

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Detective Marti MacAlister, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MARTI MACALISTER is an African American homicide detective in her forties with ten years' experience with the Chicago Police Department. After the mysterious suicide of her husband, an undercover narcotics detective, she joins the police force in Lincoln Prairie, a suburb sixty miles north, as a way to help her and her two children handle their grief. Meticulous, organized, patient, Detective MacAlister is a model of tenacity, investigative perseverance, and compassionate police work.

MATTHEW "VIK" JESSENOVIK, MacAlister's partner and the son of a police officer, is a gruff veteran of the Lincoln Prairie detective force. Despite his deep-seated reservations about women detectives, which derive from his Old World Catholic assumptions as a second-generation Pole, he ultimately complements his partner and ably assists in the demands of investigatory police work.

CONTRIBUTION

Eleanor Taylor Bland's highly successful Marti MacAlister series reflects the standard elements of the police procedural: the faith in tireless investigation and the momentum toward resolution via insight, rather than intuition, and the reaching of an inevitable conclusion based on common sense and legwork. However, Bland's character, Marti MacAlister, broke new ground as an African American woman. Because the series has a modern time frame, MacAlister faces only subtle discrimination and the occasional off-putting remark, and her commitment to police work ensures her the respect of her colleagues. Given the two partners' diverse backgrounds, the series affirms the viability of multiculturalism in the workplace. A strong feminist role model, MacAlister has come to terms with the death of a husband, the responsibilities of two children, and ultimately the complex emotional experience of a remarriage and stepchildren.

What further distinguishes the MacAlister series is its commitment to pressing social issues and its unflagging sympathy for those who are voiceless victims of social and economic distress—abused women and children, the homeless, the mentally ill, alcoholics, drug addicts, the unemployed, and the elderly.

BIOGRAPHY

Eleanor Taylor Bland was nearly fifty before she published her first novel. Born Eleanor Taylor in Boston on New Year's Eve, 1944, into lower-middle-class circumstances, Bland learned from her cab-driver father and her stay-at-home mother the virtue of stoic patience, the importance of love, a lifelong respect for family, and the importance of a Christian-centered morality. Bland married a sailor when she was only fourteen. When his tour of duty ended, they were stationed in Illinois along Lake Michigan, and they decided to stay. During the mid-1970's, Bland was diagnosed with cancer. Doctors initially gave her little chance of survival, and she endured a rigorous regimen to combat the disease, an experience that encouraged her to return to school. Although she loved reading and considered English, Bland completed a bachelor's degree in accounting at Southern Illinois University in 1981 and, after relocating to Waukegan, enjoyed a successful career (1981-1999) as a cost accountant for Abbott Laboratories, the pharmaceutical and health care giant.

In the early 1990's, Bland, divorced and helping to raise an infant grandson while working full-time, began to read mysteries in her spare time. She was intrigued by police procedurals, finding in their meticulous investigative protocols a parallel to the accounting field. It occurred to her to try writing a procedural centered on the kind of character she knew best: a single African American working mom living in the suburbs north of Chicago, who loves her family and sympathizes with the underdog. Because her background was not in police work, she thoroughly researched the manuscript, learning the methodologies of detective work to give her manuscript a gritty verisimilitude.

Dead Time, Bland's first Marti MacAlister mystery, was published in 1992 and found a wide and generous response among both genre fans and critics. Bland captured both the unglamorous detail work of police investigation—the low-octane thrill of assembling evidence, weighing testimony, and ultimately piecing together a reliable reading of a crime—while stage managing suspense with satisfying twists. In the following years, Bland published MacAlister titles with admirable regularity, despite a recurrence of health problems in 1999.

Although Bland completed a handful of short stories and edited a groundbreaking anthology of mystery stories written by African Americans, her commitment remained to the series and to the evolution of the Marti MacAlister character both professionally and personally. MacAlister continued her stellar success as a homicide detective, turning down offers for advancement to lieutenant to stay on the street, and her children matured into responsible young adults. MacAlister herself came to terms first with her husband's death and then with the challenge of remarriage with a paramedic named Ben Walker. In the later titles in the series, Bland began to explore age and illness (both Jessenovik's wife and Ben have faced medical crises). Bland relished her rapport with her readers and became noted for frequenting conventions, book signings, and online discussion groups.

ANALYSIS

Eleanor Taylor Bland's Marti MacAlister lacks the eccentric idiosyncrasies that often distinguish procedural protagonists. She never swears or makes wisecracks, and she respects authority (except a particularly ambitious female lieutenant who has emerged in the later titles in the series as something of a nemesis). She attends to paperwork diligently and seldom resorts to violent engagement, strong-armed interrogations, High Noon dramatics, shootouts, or police work that bends the rules to effect a high-stakes arrest. She never drinks (save her addiction to coffee), and she lacks cinematic sexiness (she is, by her own admission, overweight, an imposing five feet, ten inches, and one hundred sixty pounds). Her off-duty life is far from exciting; she is happiest on those rare evenings when she can enjoy a Whoopi Goldberg video marathon with her children and then make love with her husband. The MacAlister series lacks the full-throttle feel of other modern procedurals: Its protagonist simply builds a case, does the job, and when there is a preponderance of evidence, brings in the perpetrator, police work that seldom dazzles but always succeeds.

The series centers on the psychology of investigation: the piecing together of forensic evidence and witness testimonies, the grueling eighteen-hour days, and the ultimate moment of insight (often presaged by one

of MacAlister's high-stress headaches and her inevitable turn to acetaminophen). As procedurals, each volume focuses on a single investigation, although other cases, frequently cold cases, become entangled. Given Bland's omniscient narration and the shifts from MacAlister to the victims and at times to the killers, readers often know the killer's identity and can therefore follow the twists of police investigations.

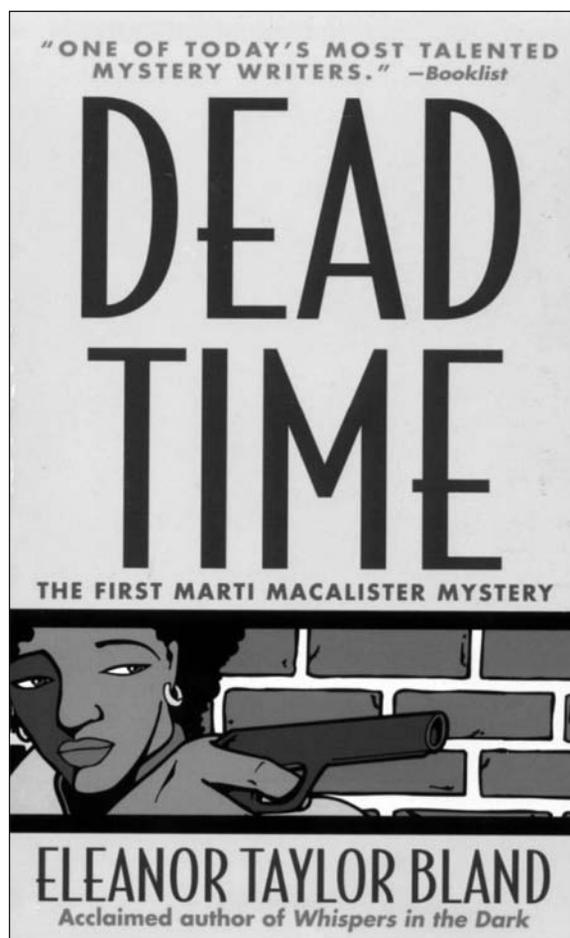
While maintaining the genre's intricate methodologies, the MacAlister series has created a central character who generates reader sympathy, unusual in the genre (conventionally, readers either admire the central character's acumen or envy his or her cool). Bland counterpoints the mayhem of MacAlister's investigations with the ordinary life she maintains as a working mother. She shows MacAlister encouraging her kids to stay committed to school, while she adjusts to being a young widow and enters into a romance with Ben Walker. Bland anatomizes with candor and delicacy the dynamics of grief (Ben's wife had been killed by a drunk driver) even as it gives way to new love. MacAlister enjoys a close relationship with her mother and her daughter, each generation offering moral insight to the next. Although her relationship with her son is more problematic (she is painfully aware of his need for a male role model), she maintains a generous communication with him. In addition, MacAlister maintains friendships with a variety of recurring characters, which underscores her sympathetic heart and the value she invests in friendship.

Although as procedurals, the novels in the series regularly center on murders among the privileged or those motivated by greed, career ambitions, and a desire to better their social position, each volume constructs a case that also involves Bland's sympathy for the victims. Her victims exist on the margins of urban society and are the collateral damage of overworked government agencies: street people, dropouts, prostitutes, AIDS patients, battered wives, the mentally handicapped, addicts, and most of all, children. (Bland herself became a recognized community activist in the Waukegan area.) That MacAlister frequently relies on the help and testimony of those who are often ignored by other investigators gives those typically rendered voiceless a compelling narrative presence and gives

the series its compassionate awareness that the forgotten deserve attention, respect, and assistance. Without abandoning the intricate twists of the procedural to indulge in obvious polemics, Bland fashions such misfits into vivid characters who come across with verisimilitude and poignancy.

DEAD TIME

The initial murder victim in the first Marti MacAlister procedural, *Dead Time*, is one of society's throw-aways, a Jane Doe schizophrenic choked to death in a flophouse. MacAlister, new to the Lincoln Prairie force, listens to the junkies and winos, whose testimony the first-response officers simply ignore. Still haunted by the shooting death of her husband a year and half earlier, MacAlister quickly becomes enmeshed in a gruesome series of stranglings, the explanation of which leads her and her partner back fifteen



years to the death of a singer apparently accidentally electrocuted on a naval base while preparing to entertain troops headed to Vietnam.

With meticulous care, MacAlister and Jessenovik unearth a jewelry smuggling and fencing operation under the direction of a ruthless special operations officer, who used the chaotic final years of the Vietnam War as a cover for his wrongdoing. Although Bland deftly handles the intricate details of the investigation, what distinguishes this novel is the group of five homeless kids whom MacAlister befriends. The children are squatting illegally in the flophouse the night of the murder and their testimony is crucial, which puts them in danger from the special operations officer. MacAlister goes beyond merely keeping them safe so that they can help piece together the case, making them her special project, which gives the narrative a compassionate feel, appropriate to a mystery set at Christmas time.

DONE WRONG

In *Done Wrong* (1995), the fourth installment in the series, Marti MacAlister emerges into her strength not merely by dint of her unraveling a most intricate case involving police cover-ups and drug trafficking but also because she is compelled to confront her dark suspicions surrounding the apparent suicide of her husband, Johnny, found shot through the head by his own gun during a drug bust in a Chicago cemetery three years earlier. When an undercover narcotics officer, Johnny's former partner, apparently commits suicide by jumping from the second floor of a Chicago parking garage, MacAlister cannot accept the medical examiner's ruling. On her own time, she returns to Chicago with Jessenovik and begins the difficult work of focusing her acumen on her husband's undercover world.

MacAlister upends an entrenched departmental administration intent on burying the circumstances of Johnny's death: Johnny knew that a careless police officer had killed a child in an earlier drug bust in which a considerable sum of money had disappeared, and MacAlister begins to glimpse the depth of cooperation between corrupt city detectives and the street kings of the drug empire. However, she comes ultimately to the peace that she has sought—the knowledge that her husband had not committed suicide but rather had

most likely died as part of a departmental vendetta. *Done Wrong* is compelling for its shadowy uncertainties, typical of procedurals that involve undercover work with its inevitable moral ambiguities as police officers become part of the criminal world. What sustains this novel, however, is MacAlister's emotional growth as she makes her peace with the past: She revisits the neighborhood where she grew up, now a drug war zone, and reestablishes ties with Johnny's friends. She also confronts her present (she and her daughter have a frank discussion about birth control) and plans at last for a future that can include Ben Walker.

WINDY CITY DYING

The tenth novel in the series, *Windy City Dying* (2002), is distinguished by Bland's decision to hand over part of the narrative center to the psychology of a deranged serial killer—a university-educated African American who has been released after serving fifteen years for killing a coworker at a prestigious financial firm when evidence of his bookkeeping irregularities surfaced. The released felon begins to exact vengeance on those he sees as responsible for his ruin, not by killing them but rather killing their loved ones to make them suffer more keenly. Because MacAlister's first husband was the arresting officer, MacAlister herself is on the killer's list but has been saved for last as her death would provide the most obvious link to the killer's case. Given the numerous (and brutal) killings and the shifting point of view and the shattering of linear narration, the novel reveals a new confidence in Bland as writer. Bland manipulates suspense by counterpointing MacAlister's gradual realization of the ties between the multiplying murders with her own peril as the killer stalks her and Ben, whom MacAlister has just married.

Investigating the emerging pattern brings MacAlister once again to confront the ghost of her first husband; his coded notebooks help her break the case. What further distinguishes this novel is the eventual showdown in a hospital stairwell when MacAlister confronts the killer, dressed as a woman. She draws her weapon and kills the psychopath, a singular moment in the MacAlister series. The novel is of interest to series aficionados because, as part of the investiga-

tion, MacAlister revisits the five street children who appeared in the first volume (one of the children is initially accused in the first killing). She is saddened to find that since that Christmas five years earlier, the foster care system and street life have driven the children toward alcohol and violence and have robbed them of their self-esteem and any sense of a future. In contrast, MacAlister's own daughter faces a difficult decision of whether to devote herself after high school to the longshot possibility of Olympic success in volleyball. The young woman forsakes the opportunity for athletic stardom to make her commitment to her family, part of the series' larger theme of the powerful counterforce of love in a dangerous and chaotic world.

Joseph Dewey

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MARTI MACALISTER SERIES: *Dead Time*, 1992; *Slow Burn*, 1993; *Gone Quiet*, 1994; *Done Wrong*, 1995; *Keep Still*, 1996; *See No Evil*, 1998; *Tell No Tales*, 1999; *Scream in Silence*, 2000; *Whispers in the Dark*, 2001; *Windy City Dying*, 2002; *Fatal Remains*, 2003; *A Dark and Deadly Deception*, 2005; *Suddenly a Stranger*, 2007; *A Cold and Silent Dying*, 2004, *A Dark and Deadly Deception*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

EDITED TEXT: *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*, 2004

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the African American procedurals writer whose influence Bland acknowledges. Provides cultural context for understanding the African American approach to procedurals, specifically how black detectives helped counter stereotypes.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Diversity and Detective Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999. Although geared for narrative theorists and targeted to teachers interested in using procedurals, the collection provides a context to appreciate Marti MacAlister as a landmark contribution to a genre that, because of its urban roots, readily lent itself to diversity.

_____. *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995. Surveys more than sixty female detectives and private eyes with specific interest in a feminist reading that sees these groundbreaking fictional characters as social and cultural templates.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The American Police Novel*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003. A sweeping survey that traces the genre in post-World War II America and catalogs the genre's plot devices, character types, symbols, and themes. Challenges the perception of the genre as male dominated by tracing its inclusion of gender, race, sexual orientation, and age diversity.

Vicarel, Jo Ann. *A Reader's Guide to the Police Procedural*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1999. Indispensable reference, a thorough explication of the genre that includes themes and narrative elements as well as major writers and their works. Helpful in distinguishing the genre from the more familiar (and flashier) private investigator genre.

ROBERT BLOCH

Born: Chicago, Illinois; April 5, 1917

Died: Los Angeles, California; September 23, 1994

Also wrote as Tarleton Fiske; Will Folke; Nathan Hindin; E. K. Jarvis; Wilson Kane; John Sheldon; Collier Young

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Robert Bloch wrote many crime novels as well as science-fiction novels, screenplays, radio and television plays, and hundreds of short stories. Working in the tradition of H. P. Lovecraft, Bloch portrayed characters who are plagued by their psychological imbalances. In addition, he gave new life to the surprise ending. Often readers are shocked or even appalled at the ending with which they are confronted. Unlike many writers in the genre, Bloch did not always let those who are right succeed or even live. In fact, many times those who are good are the ones who die.

The characters Bloch employed are quite ordinary. They are hotel owners, nuns, psychiatrists, and secretaries. The use of seemingly normal people as inhabitants of a less than normal world is part of what made Bloch one of the masters of the psychological novel. His novels do not have vampires jumping out of coffins; instead, they have hotel owners coming out of offices and asking if there is anything you need.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Albert Bloch was born on April 5, 1917, in Chicago. He attended public schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. During his early years in school, Bloch was pushed ahead from the second grade to the fifth grade. By the time he was in sixth grade, the other children were at least two years older than he. Although Bloch was more interested in history, literature, and art than were most children his age, he was not an outsider and was, in fact, the leader in many of the games in the neighborhood.

At the age of nine, Bloch attended a first-release screening of the 1925 silent classic *Phantom of the Opera*, starring Lon Chaney. He was at once converted to

the genres of horror and suspense. In the 1930's, he began reading the horror stories of H. P. Lovecraft. When he was fifteen, he wrote to Lovecraft asking for a list of the latter's published works. After an exchange of letters, Lovecraft encouraged Bloch to try writing fiction. By the time he was seventeen, Bloch had sold his first story to *Weird Tales* magazine. As a tribute to his mentor, Bloch wished to include Lovecraft in a short story titled "The Shambler from the Stars." Lovecraft authorized Bloch to "portray, murder, annihilate, disintegrate, transfigure, metamorphose or otherwise manhandle the undersigned." Lovecraft later reciprocated by featuring a writer named Robert Blake in his short story "The Haunter of the Dark."

Bloch worked as a copywriter for the Gustav Marx advertising agency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from 1942 to 1953. Copywriting did not get in the way of creative writing, however. Besides a short stint as a stand-up comic—Bloch was often in much demand as a toastmaster at conventions because of his wit—he wrote scripts for thirty-nine episodes of the 1944 radio horror show *Stay Tuned for Terror*, based on his own stories. After leaving advertising, he turned to freelance writing full-time. Bloch was married twice, first to Marion Holcombe, with whom he had a daughter, Sally Francy. In 1964 he married Eleanor Alexander.

In 1959 Bloch received the Hugo Award at the World Science Fiction Convention for his short story "The Hellbound Train." The following year he received the Screen Guild Award and the Ann Radcliffe Award for literature. He served as the president of Mystery Writers of America (1970-1971). *The Skull* received the Trieste Film Festival Award in 1965. He received the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society Award in 1974 and the Comicon Inkpot Award in 1975. The World Fantasy Convention presented him with its Life Achievement Award in 1975. He also received the Cannes Fantasy Film Festival First Prize for *Asylum*.

Bloch earned several Bram Stoker Awards, granted by the Horror Writers Association, for his autobiography, *Once Around the Bloch: An Unauthorized Autobiography* (1993) in 1994, for his fiction collection

The Early Fears (1994) in 1995, for his novelette “The Scent of Vinegar” in 1995, and for lifetime achievement in 1990. At the 1991 World Horror Convention he was proclaimed a Grand Master of the field. Likewise, the World Science Fiction Association presented Bloch with a Hugo Special Award for “50 Years as an SF Professional” in 1984. Bloch died of esophageal cancer in 1994.

ANALYSIS

Robert Bloch began his writing career at the age of seventeen when he sold his first short story to *Weird Tales* magazine. His early crime novels *The Scarf* (1947) and *The Kidnapper* (1954) reflect his fascination with psychology and psychopathic behavior. Bloch was quite prolific and published *Spiderweb* and *The Will to Kill*, in addition to *The Kidnapper*, in 1954. He later revised *The Scarf* to tighten the ending and eliminate any sympathy the reader might have felt for the main character, a psychopathic killer. Although Bloch’s efforts at the early stages of his professional career cannot be called uninteresting, they are flawed by a certain amount of overwriting that serves to dilute the full impact of the situation at hand.

PSYCHO

In 1959, Bloch published *Psycho*, the compelling tale of Norman Bates, the owner of the Bates Motel. In his novel, Bloch brings together all the terrifying elements that have been present in his earlier works. Bates, like many of Bloch’s past and future characters, is an apparently normal human being. The citizens of Fairvale think he is a little odd, but they attribute this to the fact that he found the bodies of his mother and “Uncle” Joe after they died from strychnine poisoning.

Psycho has become the model for psychological fiction. The character of Norman has also become a model because he appears to be so normal. In fact, until near the end of the novel, the reader does not know that Mrs. Bates is not, in fact, alive. The part of Norman’s personality that is still a small boy holds conversations with Mrs. Bates that are so realistic that the reader is completely unaware of the split in Norman’s personality. The horror the reader feels when the truth is discovered causes the reader to rethink all previous events in the novel.

One of the most successful scenes in *Psycho* occurs when the detective Milton Arbogast goes to the house to speak with Mrs. Bates. Norman attempts to persuade his “mother” not to see the detective. Bloch writes:

“Mother, please, *listen* to me!”

But she didn’t listen, she was in the bathroom, she was getting dressed, she was putting on make-up, she was getting ready. *Getting ready.*

And all at once she came gliding out, wearing the nice dress with the ruffles. Her face was freshly powdered and rouged, she was pretty as a picture, and she smiled as she started down the stairs.

Before she was halfway down, the knocking came.

It was happening, Mr. Arbogast was here; he wanted to call out and warn him, but something was stuck in his throat. He could only listen as Mother cried gaily, “I’m coming! I’m coming! Just a moment, now!”

And it *was* just a moment.

Mother opened the door and Mr. Arbogast walked in. He looked at her and then he opened his mouth to say something. As he did so he raised his head, and that was all Mother had been waiting for. Her arm went out and something bright and glittering flashed back and forth, back and forth—

It hurt Norman’s eyes and he didn’t want to look. He didn’t have to look, either, because he already knew.

Mother had found his razor . . .

The reader can clearly see from the above passage how convinced Norman is that his mother is indeed alive. It is also evident how skilled Bloch is at convincing his reader that a particular character is at least reasonably sane.

PSYCHO II

A similar situation occurs in *Psycho II* (1982), in which Norman Bates escapes from the state mental hospital. Dr. Adam Claiborne, certain that Norman is alive, even after the van in which he escaped has been found burned, goes to California to attempt to find Norman. By all accounts, Norman is still alive and leaving evidence to support this theory. In fact, Claiborne claims to see Norman in a grocery store. The reader is, however, shocked to learn at the end of the novel that Norman did indeed die in the van fire and that the killer is Dr. Claiborne himself. Again, the

reader must rethink the events preceding the startling disclosure.

In none of his novels does Bloch rely on physical descriptions of characters to convey his messages. For example, the reader knows relatively little about Norman Bates. He wears glasses, is overweight, and has a mother fixation, among other psychological problems. By the end of the novel, the reader is well aware of Norman's mental state. Before that, the reader, like the citizens of Fairvale, sees him as a little odd, even more so after the murder of Mary Crane, but the reader has no clue as to the extent of his problems until the end of the novel. This is what

makes Norman, as well as the rest of the mentally unstable inhabitants of Bloch's world, so frightening. Bloch gives the reader a vague physical picture of many of his characters so that the reader is left to fill in the details that make these characters turn into the reader's next-door neighbors. Bloch's antagonists could be anyone. They appear normal or near normal on the outside; it is what is inside them that makes them so dangerous.

In spite of Bloch's talent, his novels are predictable. After one has read several, one can almost always guess the ending. Although the reader is not always correct, he or she is normally quite close to discovering who the criminal is. The problem with predictability in works such as Bloch's is that the impact of the surprise ending, to which he gave new life, is diminished when the reader had been reading several of his books in quick succession.

Since the publication of *Psycho*, Bloch wrote a number of novels and short stories, as well as scripts for such series as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Thriller*. He also wrote science-fiction novels and short stories. Although Bloch became better-known after the release of the film *Psycho* by Alfred Hitchcock, it cannot be said that this novel is the "only"

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Tony Perkins (left) played Norman Bates in the 1960 film adaptation of Robert Bloch's novel Psycho. Janet Leigh (right) played the woman who makes the mistake of stopping for the night at the Bates Motel. (Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive)

good novel Bloch wrote. His style tightened following his first publications, and *Psycho* marked his development from a merely good novelist to one who achieved a lasting place in the genre.

NIGHT-WORLD

Although Bloch wrote in the style of H. P. Lovecraft, his novels cannot be said to imitate those of Lovecraft. Lovecraft is known for gruesome tales guaranteed to keep the reader awake until the wee hours of the morning if the reader is silly enough to read them in an empty house. Bloch's novels tend more toward the suspenseful aspects of Lovecraft without many of the gory details. Lovecraft gives the reader detailed accounts of the horrible ends of his characters. In *Night-World* (1972), Bloch simply tells the reader that a character has been decapitated and that his head has rolled halfway down an airport runway. The nonchalant way in which Bloch makes this pronouncement has more impact on the reader than any number of bloody descriptions.

Bloch terrified the audience by writing about criminals who seem to be normal people. These are the people one sees every day. The crimes that these supposedly normal people commit and the gruesome ends to which they come have also become quite normal.

Bloch's reaction to the atrocities of society was to make them seem normal, thereby shocking the reader into seeing that the acts and ends are not normal, but rather abnormal and more shocking and devastating than people realize.

Victoria E. McLure

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Scarf*, 1947 (also known as *The Scarf of Passion*); *Spiderweb*, 1954; *The Kidnapper*, 1954; *The Will to Kill*, 1954; *Shooting Star*, 1958; *Psycho*, 1959; *The Dead Beat*, 1960; *Firebug*, 1961; *Terror*, 1962; *The Couch*, 1962; *The Star Stalker*, 1968; *The Todd Dossier*, 1969; *Night-World*, 1972; *American Gothic*, 1974; *There Is a Serpent in Eden*, 1979 (also known as *The Cunning Serpent*); *Psycho II*, 1982; *Night of the Ripper*, 1984; *Robert Bloch's Unholy Trinity*, 1986; *The Kidnapper*, 1988; *Lori*, 1989; *Screams: Three Novels of Suspense*, 1989; *Psycho House*, 1990; *The Jekyll Legacy*, 1991 (with Andre Norton)

SHORT FICTION: 1945-1970 • *The Opener of the Way*, 1945; *Terror in the Night, and Other Stories*, 1958; *Pleasant Dreams—Nightmares*, 1960 (also known as *Nightmares*); *Blood Runs Cold*, 1961; *Atoms and Evil*, 1962; *More Nightmares*, 1962; *Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper: Tales of Horror*, 1962 (also known as *The House of the Hatchet, and Other Tales of Horror*); *Bogey Men*, 1963; *Horror-7*, 1963; *Tales in a Jugular Vein*, 1965; *The Skull of the Marquis de Sade, and Other Stories*, 1965; *Chamber of Horrors*, 1966; *The Living Demons*, 1967; *This Crowded Earth, and Ladies' Day*, 1968

1971-1990 • *Fear Today—Gone Tomorrow*, 1971; *Cold Chills*, 1977; *The King of Terrors*, 1977; *Out of the Mouths of Graves*, 1979; *Such Stuff as Screams Are Made Of*, 1979; *Unholy Trinity*, 1986; *Final reckonings: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 1*, 1987 (also known as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Bitter Ends: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 2*, 1987 (also known as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Last Rites: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 3*, 1987 (also known as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Lost in Time and Space with Lefty Feep*, 1987 (with John Stanley);

Midnight Pleasures, 1987; *Fear and Trembling*, 1989
1991-2000 • *The Early Fears*, 1994; *Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master*, 1995 (with Richard Matheson and Ricia Mainhardt); *The Vampire Stories of Robert Bloch*, 1996; *Flowers from the Moon and Other Lunacies*, 1998; *The Devil with You! The Lost Bloch, Volume I*, 1999 (with David J. Schow); *Hell on Earth: The Lost Bloch, Volume II*, 2000 (with Schow)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *It's All in Your Mind*, 1971; *Sneak Preview*, 1971; *Reunion with Tomorrow*, 1978; *Strange Eons*, 1979

SHORT FICTION: *Sea-Kissed*, 1945; *Bloch and Bradbury*, 1969 (with Ray Bradbury; also known as *Fever Dream, and Other Fantasies*); *Dragons and Nightmares*, 1969; *The Best of Robert Bloch*, 1977; *Mysteries of the Worm*, 1979; *The Fear Planet and Other Unusual Destinations*, 2005 (Stefan R. Dziemi-anowicz, editor)

RADIO PLAYS: *Stay Tuned for Terror*, 1944-1945 (series)

SCREENPLAYS: *The Cabinet of Caligari*, 1962; *The Couch*, 1962 (with Owen Crump and Blake Edwards); *Strait-Jacket*, 1964; *The Night Walker*, 1964; *The Psychopath*, 1966; *The Deadly Bees*, 1967 (with Anthony Marriott); *Torture Garden*, 1967; *The House That Dripped Blood*, 1970; *Asylum*, 1972; *The Amazing Captain Nemo*, 1979

TELEPLAYS: *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* television series, 1955-1961 ("The Cuckoo Clock," "The Greatest Monster of Them All," "A Change of Heart," "The Landlady," "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," "The Gloating Place," "Bad Actor," and "The Big Kick"); *Thriller* series, 1960-1961 ("The Cheaters," "The Devil's Ticket," "A Good Imagination," "The Grim Reaper," "The Weird Tailor," "Waxworks," "Till Death Do Us Part," and "Man of Mystery"); *Star Trek* series, 1966-1967 ("Wolf in the Fold," "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" and "Catspaw")

NONFICTION: *The Eighth Stage of Fandom: Selections from Twenty-five Years of Fan Writing*, 1962 (Earl Kemp, editor); *The Laughter of the Ghoul: What Every Young Ghoul Should Know*, 1977; *Out of My Head*, 1986; *H. P. Lovecraft: Letters to Robert*

Bloch, 1993 (David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi, editors); *Once Around the Bloch: An Unauthorized Autobiography*, 1993

EDITED TEXTS: *The Best of Fredric Brown*, 1977; *Psycho-paths*, 1991; *Monsters in Our Midst*, 1993; *Lovecraft's Legacy*, 1996 (with Robert Weinberg and Martin H. Greenberg); *Robert Bloch's Psychos*, 1997

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_____. *Once Around the Bloch: An Unauthorized Autobiography*. New York: Tor, 1995. Originally written the year before he died, this autobiography of Bloch was republished posthumously.

_____. *The Robert Bloch Companion: Collected Interviews, 1969-1986*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Borgo Press, 1990. Collection of several key interviews given by Bloch about his life and work over a seventeen-year period.

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from Poe to King and Beyond. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Includes an essay by Bloch about horror writers, as well as meditations on the genre by many other famous authors. Bibliographic references.

Haining, Peter. *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000. Looks at Bloch's contribution to the pulps and the relationship of pulp fiction to its more respectable literary cousins.

Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. A scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre, including Bloch's contribution to that genre. Bibliographic references and index.

Lovecraft, H. P. *Selected Letters V, 1934-1937*. Edited by August Derleth and James Turner. Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House, 1976. Includes letters exchanged between the teenaged Bloch and the great American master of horror.

Matheson, Richard, and Ricia Mainhardt, eds. *Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master*. New York: Tor, 1995. Includes fiction by Bloch, as well as tributes to him by other authors who have been influenced by him.

LAWRENCE BLOCK

Born: Buffalo, New York; June 24, 1938

Also wrote as William Ard; Jill Emerson; Chip Harrison; Paul Kavanagh; Sheldon Lord; Andrew Shaw

Types of plot: Inverted; private investigator; comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Evan Tanner, 1966-
Chip Harrison, 1970-
Matthew Scudder, 1976-
Bernie Rhodenbarr, 1977-
Martin Ehrengraf, 1983-
J. P. Keller, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

EVAN TANNER is an agent working for an unnamed, secret government agency, who cannot sleep because of a shrapnel wound to the brain. When not working, he spends his spare time joining various odd-ball political movements.

CHIP HARRISON is a private investigator and assistant to Leo Haig, an overweight private detective who raises tropical fish and patterns his life after Nero Wolfe. Acting as Haig's Archie Goodwin in his two mystery adventures, he is full of humorous references to various mystery writers and their characters as well as to his own sexual exploits.

MATTHEW SCUDDER is a private investigator and an alcoholic former police officer who works without

a license. Guilt-ridden because he accidentally killed a young girl in a shootout, he drowns his despair with alcohol and occasionally accepts a case to pay the rent.

BERNIE RHODENBARR is a burglar and amateur sleuth who steals for a price. In his amusing capers, Bernie, who derives an emotional thrill from thievery, usually winds up in trouble when dead bodies appear in places he illegally enters. He then must play detective to clear himself.

MARTIN EHRENGRAF is a dapper little criminal-defense attorney who believes that all his clients are innocent. To prove it, he is willing to use every trick in the lawyer's black bag and will even kill to win his cases.

J. P. KELLER is an appealing, conscientious hired assassin who is a thorough professional, cool but always on the lookout for a girlfriend. For a killer, he is an occasionally whimsical man prone to loneliness and self-doubt, the sort who worries about what kind of present to give the woman who walks his dog.

CONTRIBUTION

Lawrence Block is a storyteller who experiments with several genres, including espionage, detective, and comedy caper fiction. Regardless of the genre, he delivers a protagonist with whom his readers can empathize, identify, and even secretly wish to accompany on the different adventures. Block's tone ranges from the serious and downbeat in the Matt Scudder novels to the lighthearted and comical found in the works featuring Bernie Rhodenbarr and Chip Harrison. His characters are outsiders to conventional society, and Block captures their true essence through their first-person vernaculars. Furthermore, his vivid and realistic descriptions of the deadbeats, the bag ladies, the pimps, the police officers—both good and bad—and those hoping for something better portray New York City as a place devoid of glitter and elegance. Writer Stephen King has called Block the only “writer of mystery and detective fiction who comes close to replacing the irreplaceable John D. MacDonald.”

Several of Block's novels were (rather poorly) adapted to film. These include *Nightmare Honeymoon* (1973), the 1983 Shamus Award-winning *Eight Million Ways to Die* (1986), and *The Burglar in the Closet* (as *Burglar*, 1987, starring Whoopi Goldberg).

BIOGRAPHY

Lawrence Block was born on June 24, 1938, in Buffalo, New York. He attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, from 1955 to 1959. In 1957, he became an editor for the Scott Meredith literary agency but left one year later to pursue a professional writing career. In 1960 he married Loretta Ann Kallett, with whom he had three daughters. In 1973 he and his wife were divorced. Ten years later he married Lynne Wood. Fond of travel, they visited eighty-seven countries by the end of the twentieth century.

Block's first books were soft-core sex novels (for which he used the pseudonyms Andrew Shaw, Jill Emerson, and—as did Donald E. Westlake—Sheldon Lord), which were released in paperback. In fact, for many years his novels were published as paperback originals. He is a multiple winner of nearly every major mystery award for his writing. He won Edgar Awards for his short stories “Keller on the Spot,” “Keller's Therapy,” and “By Dawn's Early Light,” and his novel *A Dance at the Slaughterhouse* (1991). He received a Nero Wolfe Award for *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling* (1979), a Shamus Award for *Eight Million Ways to Die* (1982), a Maltese Falcon Award for *When the Sacred Ginmill Closes* (1986), and an Anthony Award for *Master's Choice, Volume II*. He has served as a member of the board of directors of the Mystery Writers of America, which honored him with the title of Grand Master in 1994, and as president of the Private Eye Writers of America. In 1964 he became associate editor of the *Whitman Numismatic Journal*, a position that reflects his interest in and knowledge of coins. For many years he was a contributing editor for *Writer's Digest*, for which he wrote a monthly column on fiction writing. His seminar for writers, “Write for Your Life,” saw great success.

ANALYSIS

Lawrence Block is one of the most versatile talents in the mystery field. His desire to entertain his readers is evident in the many categories of mystery fiction that he has mastered. With each subgenre, Block utilizes a fresh approach to the protagonists, the plots, and the tone and avoids relying on established formulas.

With Evan Tanner, introduced in *The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep* (1966), Block created an agent who, faced with the prospect of rotting away in a foreign jail, reluctantly accepts his new career. While most private detectives are former police officers, thus having the proper knowledge and experience for their new professions, Chip Harrison's previous employment in a bordello offered no formal training for working for Leo Haig. Bernie Rhodenbarr, the polished and sophisticated amateur sleuth, is actually a burglar for hire. With the character of Matthew Scudder, Block destroys the cliché of the hard-drinking private detective by making Scudder an alcoholic who wrestles with the demons of his past.

Block is a master at creating the right tone for each series of mysteries. The Tanner novels are laced with wisecracks and screwball characters. The Rhodenbarr novels not only are full of lighthearted comedy but also contain fascinating burglar lore such as how to deal with locks, alarms, and watchdogs. With his two Chip Harrison mysteries, *Make Out with Murder* (1974) and *The Topless Tulip Caper* (1975), Block's sense of humor is fully developed. (Two earlier Chip Harrison novels are actually erotica rather than mysteries.) The nineteen-year-old private eye's adventures with Haig are full of mystery in-jokes and puns. In the short story "Death of the Mallory Queen," Chip and Haig encounter a suspect named Lotte Benzler, which is clearly a play on the name Otto Penzler, the well-known mystery bookstore owner, authority, and critic.

Chip's tales parody the tough, hard-boiled detective stories, but they are also Block's tribute to Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe-Archie Goodwin legacy. In sharp contrast, though, are the novels featuring Matt Scudder. The stark, unsentimental prose lends these books a serious, somber tone, as glib dialogue and flowery metaphors would only ruin the effect for which Block strives: to allow his readers to enter the mind of a man who is haunted by his guilt.

What Block's characters have most in common is that they are outsiders to the world in which they live. Walking the thin line between law and lawlessness, these men disregard the conforming demands of a complacent society. Bernie Rhodenbarr, for example, as a thief and an amateur sleuth, is a descendant of the

outlaw of the Wild West or the gangster of the Roaring Twenties, both elevated to the status of folk heroes by the early dime novels and pulps. Bernie is able to beat the system and get away with it. When someone needs something stolen, Bernie is more than happy to oblige—for a price. His profession satisfies a secret desire that must be common to many readers, that of wanting something more exciting than the usual nine-to-five routine. Bernie is not, however, a completely amoral character. There are times when he does feel some guilt for his stealing, but as he says, "I'm a thief and I have to steal. I just plain love it."

THE BURGLAR IN THE CLOSET

Bernie's illegal excursions into other people's homes, however, often lead him into trouble. In *The Burglar in the Closet* (1978), before he can finish robbing the apartment that belongs to his dentist's former wife, the woman comes home with a new lover. Trapped in her bedroom closet, Bernie must wait during their lovemaking and hope they fall asleep so that he can safely escape. The woman is later murdered, and Bernie must discover who killed her to keep himself from being accused of the crime. As amateur sleuth, Bernie holds the advantage of not belonging to an official police force and is therefore not hampered by rules and procedures. With Bernie, Block adds a new twist on the role of the detective. Instead of being on a quest for justice or trying to make sense of the crimes of others, Bernie is motivated by more self-centered feelings. Like Philip Marlowe, Lew Archer, and a host of other detectives, Bernie is an outsider to the world through which he must travel on his investigation, but he is motivated by his need to save his own neck.

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

Perhaps the most complex and believable of Block's series characters is Matthew Scudder, the alcoholic private detective who is introduced in *The Sins of the Fathers* (1976). Scudder is a former police officer who abandoned his roles as law enforcement officer, husband, and father after an incident that shattered his world. While in a bar one night after work, he witnessed two punks rob and kill the bartender. Scudder followed the two and shot them both, killing one and wounding the other. One of Scudder's bullets, how-

ever, ricocheted and hit a seven-year-old girl named Estrellita Rivera, killing her instantly. Although Scudder was cleared of any blame in the tragic shooting and was even honored by the police department for his actions in apprehending the bartender's killers, he could not clear his own conscience. After resigning from the force and leaving his wife and two sons, Scudder moved into a hotel on Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan to face his guilt in lonely isolation.

A STAB IN THE DARK

Scudder's alcoholism is a central theme throughout each novel, and if the books are read in sequence, the alcoholism increasingly dominates Scudder's life. He suffers blackouts more frequently, and twice he is told to stop his drinking if he wants to live. As the alcoholism becomes worse, so does Scudder's isolation from those for whom he cares. In *A Stab in the Dark* (1981), a female friend, a sculptress and fellow alcoholic, tries to make Scudder confront his drinking, but he denies having a problem and says that a group such as Alcoholics Anonymous would not work for him. By the end of the book, the woman refuses to see Scudder any longer, as she herself has decided to seek help.

EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE

Eight Million Ways to Die, published in 1982, is the turning point in the Scudder series. It is a superior novel for its social relevance and psychological insights into the mind of an alcoholic. In this book, Scudder has made the first steps toward confronting his alcoholism by attending regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. He is hired by a prostitute, Kim Dakkinen, who wants to leave her pimp to start a new life. Afraid that the pimp, Chance, will talk her out of her plans or hurt her, Kim wants Scudder to act as a go-between with Chance. When Kim is murdered a few days later, Scudder suspects Chance, who had earlier agreed to Kim's freedom. Chance, however, asserts his innocence and hires Scudder to find Kim's murderer. Thus, Scudder's quest to solve the murder holds the chance for him to quit drinking. "Searching for Kim's killer was something I could do instead of drinking. For a while."

In this novel, Scudder's isolation is more complete. Because of his worsening alcoholism, he has been barred from buying any alcohol at Armstrong's and

becomes an outcast among the drinkers who have been a major part of his life for many years. Each day without a drink is a minor victory, but his mind is obsessed with the need for a drink. Scudder has also begun going to daily meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Usually he sits off to the side or in the back, listening with cynical disdain to the statements of the many problem drinkers. To him, their saccharine-sweet tales of hope sound absurd in contrast to the brutal fate suffered by Kim. Not only is Scudder an outsider to his fellow drinkers, but also he is an outsider to those hoping for a life free of alcohol. He can admit to himself that he has a problem but is unable to do so in public. He needs the help the support group can give, but he wants to tackle the problem alone. This conflict between appearance and reality recurs throughout the novel. Scudder appears to be handling his period of drying out, but in reality he is afraid to leave the bottle behind and fearful of the future.

With Chance, Block has created a man who longs for power and who must lead a double life to maintain it. He lives in a quiet neighborhood, pretending to be the faithful manservant of a nonexistent, wealthy retired doctor, so as not to arouse suspicion from his neighbors. He appears to care for his prostitutes, support them financially, and encourage them to follow their dreams. In reality, though, Chance demands complete loyalty from his girls. He uses them for his own financial gain and need for power. Coming from a middle-class background, he studied art history in college. When his father died, however, he left school, enlisted in the military, and was sent to Vietnam. When he returned, he became a pimp and created a new identity, that of Chance. In the end, however, he is left with nothing. Because of Kim's murder and another girl's suicide, the rest of his prostitutes leave him.

The world that Block depicts in *Eight Million Ways to Die* is precariously balanced on the edge between appearance and reality, hope and despair, life and death. Although Chance's prostitutes appreciate his care and protection, they want something better for their lives. One dreams of being an actress, another, of being a poet. There is hope that they will leave their present professions and pursue these dreams, but underneath there is the impression that they will never do so.

Another perspective is furnished by the stories of hope told by the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Each alcoholic who publicly admits his problem tells of a past life full of despair. These stories are contrasted with the tales of modern urban horror that Scudder reads in the newspapers. In one case, Scudder hears about an elderly woman who was killed when her friend found an abandoned television and brought it to her house; when he turned on the television, it exploded. A bomb had been rigged inside, probably as part of a mob execution attempt that failed when the target grew suspicious and discarded the television.

These tragically absurd tales of people who die sudden, violent deaths serve as proof of life's fragile nature. The ways that people die are just as numerous as the body counts. As a police officer tells Scudder, "You know what you got in this city? . . . You got eight million ways to die." The prospect of death scares Scudder. In the end, he realizes the seriousness of his alcohol addiction and his desperate need for help, even if it comes only one day at a time. As the novel closes, he is finally able to say, "My name is Matt, . . . and I'm an alcoholic." With the Scudder novels, Block has achieved a "kind of poetry of despair." Scudder is a man who loses a part of himself but takes the first steps in building a new life.

J. P. KELLER SERIES

Stories about a wistful hit man named J. P. Keller began appearing in *Playboy* magazine in the 1990's. Often anthologized, many of these stories were arranged into episodic novels. Keller got a dog in his second story, "Keller's Therapy," and soon had a dog walker to care for the dog while he was on assignment. The charm of the Keller stories is the lonely, bachelor existence of an ordinary, likable man who kills people for a living.

SMALL TOWN

Block, a native New Yorker, responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, with the novel *Small Town* (2003). Told from the points of view of several characters, this novel explores the catalytic effects of the attack, including serial murder on a small scale. Many critics consider *Small Town*, which finely balances suspense, psychological insight, and comic

timing, while hearkening back to Block's early soft-porn days, to be his finest novel.

Dale Davis

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

EVAN TANNER SERIES: *The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep*, 1966; *The Cancelled Czech*, 1966; *Tanner's Twelve Swingers*, 1967; *Two for Tanner*, 1967 (also known as *The Scoreless Thai*); *Here Comes a Hero*, 1968; *Tanner's Tiger*, 1968; *Me Tanner, You Jane*, 1970; *Tanner on Ice*, 1998

CHIP HARRISON SERIES (AS HARRISON): *No Score*, 1970; *Chip Harrison Scores Again*, 1971; *Make Out with Murder*, 1974 (also known as *The Five Little Rich Girls*); *The Topless Tulip Caper*, 1975; *Introducing Chip Harrison*, 1984 (includes *No Score* and *Chip Harrison Scores Again*); *A/K/A Chip Harrison*, 1984 (includes *Make Out with Murder* and *The Topless Tulip Caper*)

MATTHEW SCUDDER SERIES: *The Sins of the Fathers*, 1976; *In the Midst of Death*, 1976; *Time to Murder and Create*, 1977; *A Stab in the Dark*, 1981; *Eight Million Ways to Die*, 1982; *When the Sacred Ginnmill Closes*, 1986; *Out on the Cutting Edge*, 1989; *A Ticket to the Boneyard*, 1990; *A Dance at the Slaughterhouse*, 1991; *Down on the Killing Floor*, 1991; *A Walk Among the Tombstones*, 1992; *The Devil Knows You're Dead*, 1993; *A Long Line of Dead Men*, 1994; *Even the Wicked*, 1996; *Everybody Dies*, 1998; *Hope to Die*, 2001; *All the Flowers Are Dying*, 2005

BERNIE RHODENBARR SERIES: *Burglars Can't Be Choosers*, 1977; *The Burglar in the Closet*, 1978; *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*, 1979; *The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza*, 1980; *The Burglar Who Painted Like Mondrian*, 1983; *The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams*, 1994; *The Burglar Who Thought He Was Bogart*, 1995; *The Burglar in the Library*, 1997; *The Burglar in the Rye*, 1999; *The Burglar on the Prowl*, 2004

MARTIN EHRENGRAF SERIES: *Ehrengraf for the Defense*, 1994

J. P. KELLER SERIES: *Hit Man*, 1998; *Keller's Greatest Hits: Adventures in the Murder Trade*, 1998; *Hit List*, 2000; *Keller's Adjustment* (a novella;

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NONSERIES NOVELS: *Babe in the Woods*, 1960 (as Ard); *Markham: The Case of the Pornographic Photos*, 1961 (also known as *You Could Call It Murder*); *Death Pulls a Double Cross*, 1961 (also known as *Coward's Kiss*); *Mona*, 1961 (also known as *Sweet Slow Death* and *Grifter's Game*); *Cinderella Sims*, 1961 (also known as *Twenty-Dollar Lust*; as Shaw); *Lucky at Cards*, 1964 (as Lord); *The Girl with the Long Green Heart*, 1965; *Deadly Honeymoon*, 1967; *After the First Death*, 1969; *The Specialists*, 1969; *Such Men Are Dangerous: A Novel of Violence*, 1969 (as Kavanagh); *The Triumph of Evil*, 1971 (as Kavanagh); *Not Comin' Home to You*, 1974 (as Kavanagh); *Ariel*, 1980; *Code of Arms*, 1981 (with Harold King); *Into the Night*, 1987 (a manuscript by Cornell Woolrich, completed by Block); *Random Walk: A Novel for a New Age*, 1988; *Small Town*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *Sometimes They Bite*, 1983; *Like a Lamb to the Slaughter*, 1984; *Some Days You Get the Bear*, 1993; *One Night Stands*, 1998; *The Collected Mystery Stories*, 1999; *The Lost Cases of Ed London*, 2001 (includes *The Naked and the Deadly*, *Twin Call Girls*, and *Stag Party Girl*); *Enough Rope: Collected Stories*, 2002

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NOVEL: *Ronald Rabbit Is a Dirty Old Man*, 1971

NONFICTION: *Writing the Novel: From Plot to Print*, 1979; *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*, 1981; *Write for Your Life: The Book About the Seminar*, 1986; *Spider, Spin Me a Web: Lawrence Block on Writing*, 1988; *Lawrence Block: Bibliography 1958-1993*, 1993 (with others); *After Hours: Conversations with Lawrence Block*, 1995 (with Ernie Bulow)

SCREENPLAY: *The Funhouse*, 1981

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Block, Lawrence, and Tom Callahan. "Lawrence Block, Master of Mystery." *Writer* 116, no. 7 (July, 2003): 22. This lengthy and interesting interview with Block coincided with the release of *Small Town*. Block discusses his writing methods and, in particular, beginning a half-finished novel set in Manhattan from scratch after the destruction of the World Trade Center.

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PIERRE BOILEAU and THOMAS NARCEJAC

PIERRE BOILEAU

Born: Paris, France; April 28, 1906

Died: Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France; January 16, 1989

THOMAS NARCEJAC

Born: Roche-sur-Mer, France; July 3, 1908

Died: Nice, France; June 9, 1998

Types of plot: Psychological; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

It is no exaggeration to state that through the efforts of crime writer Pierre Boileau and his collaborator, Thomas Narcejac, a new type of thriller was created. Together, under the pseudonym Boileau-Narcejac, they wrote studies in abnormal psychology rooted in the philosophical outlook of existentialism current in the Paris of the immediate pre- and post-World War II period. Film directors such as Alfred Hitchcock brought Boileau's and Narcejac's treatments of human duplicity and gullibility to a wider audience than that previously enjoyed by most thrillers.

Their tales are puzzles of intricate design that require the reader's close attention. Each novel contains at least one startling development; some contain several. Many of the stories deal with people worn out by their mundane existence and who grasp at perceived opportunities to find some meaning in their lives. Their gullibility is matched by the amorality and artfulness of more vital characters, who trick them into doing things they had never considered doing.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on April 28, 1906, in the Monmartre section of Paris to a shipping-firm manager and a housewife, Pierre Boileau was an accounting student for a time, studying at a Parisian school of commerce, although he became increasingly unhappy with his father's choice of careers for him. Before he became a writer, he first learned a considerable amount about other people from his work as an architect, a writer of advertising copy, a textile worker, and a restaurant waiter. Writing when he could find time, Boileau eventually

wrote several early novels, the third of which, *Le Repos de Bacchus*, won the 1938 Prix du Roman d'Aventures.

Because he was thought to be an opponent of Nazism, Boileau was made a political prisoner in 1939, just after the German invasion of France. Fortunately for him and for literature, Boileau was not executed or jailed but rather was forced to serve in the French Welfare Department, visiting various penal institutions to talk to inmates. In these institutions, he learned much about crime and the criminal's way of looking at life; this information would aid him immensely in his creation of crime fiction. After 1942, the year he was freed from his internment, Boileau began to turn to active mystery writing, publishing several well-regarded works.

Thomas Narcejac was born as Pierre Ayraud in 1908 to "a family with a well-established sea-going tradition." He attended school in Poitiers and later received a degree in philosophy from the Faculté des Lettres in Paris. As a result of a childhood accident that had half-blinded him, he could not follow his family's seafaring tradition; instead, he decided to teach. Becoming interested in the techniques of detective fiction, he began to write, often throwing the results, he states, "into the waste-paper basket as fast as I produced them." Some survived, however, and in 1948 he too received the Prix du Roman d'Aventures. All of his literary ventures were written under the pen name Thomas Narcejac because he wished to keep his professional life distinct from his literary one.

The two writers' destinies joined when Boileau noticed in a bookstore window a work written by Narcejac, a book that offered both a striking critique of modern detective novels and solutions to their problems. Thus inspired, Boileau wrote frequently to Narcejac about transforming the mystery genre; this correspondence led eventually to their forming a partnership in June of 1948. They pledged to put their theories to work in a collaborative novel. Written in 1952, *Celle qui n'était plus* (*The Woman Who Was No More*, 1954) was published by the house of Demoël,

then had the good fortune to be adapted by director Henri-Georges Clouzot into *Les Diaboliques* (1955; *Diabolique*, 1955). Another collaboration resulted in *D'entre les morts* (1954; *The Living and the Dead*, 1956), which, when filmed by Hitchcock, became the widely acclaimed thriller *Vertigo* (1958). Boileau died in 1989 and Narcejac in 1998.

ANALYSIS

The novels of Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac deal with the subject of appearances. Their main characters discover the validity of the old saying, "Things are not as they appear." Frequently, their tales of suspense and intrigue proceed in a murky, unreal atmosphere characterized by heavy fog or creeping darkness at twilight. Characters deceived in one way or another by people whom they have trusted stumble alone through the half-lit scene symbolizing moral ambiguity and their lack of vision. Here, in this foggy place, people listen only to inner, selfish directives, abandoning both reason and decency in the process.

Generally these characters are weak individuals who lead aimless, unhappy lives, starved of meaning and romantic fulfillment. Their lives bear a notable resemblance to the empty, absurd lives led in the existentialist novels of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Puppets of fate, these characters lack inner direction, and lacking direction, they frantically grasp at straws, looking for some form of secular salvation. Love often is the most appealing form of salvation they seek: they believe that it will carry them to a place far from their boring lives.

Boileau and Narcejac offer painful portraits of normal individuals who become studies in abnormal psychology. Obsessed with an idea or a particular person, these characters gradually create a realm all their own. These private worlds would not be destructive, were it not that they lead to danger and difficulties as well as, on occasion, death.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS NO MORE

Their fantasies become the stuff of murder mysteries because their obsessions are not self-generated but rather have been created for them by others who can profit from them. In *The Woman Who Was No More*, for example, a character named Fernand Ravinel is

monstrously tricked by his mistress, Lucienne, and his wife, Mireille, into killing himself and leaving Mireille a large amount of insurance money. Typically, the tale begins in a literal fog, this one having drifted into a French city from the sea. Accompanied by the ominous sound of a ship's foghorn, Ravinel begins the most fateful day of his miserable life. The ship carries Mireille, whom he has promised to help murder.

The fog without is emblematic both of confusion within Ravinel's mind and of the creeping evil enveloping his soul. Given a sampler of his thoughts, the reader immediately realizes that Ravinel is a weak, selfish egotist with no redeeming qualities. Only an ordinary traveling salesman, he somehow manages to see himself as a man wronged by a wife who cannot comprehend his greatness.

Tension builds as Ravinel talks to Lucienne about the coming murder; they will commit it together to receive money from the insurance policy Mireille recently took out when Ravinel bought his policy. Lucienne, being the stronger and more intelligent of the two, takes the lead and forces Ravinel to stick with his assigned role. Nevertheless, he cannot stop thinking about the woman whom he is about to kill and about some of the things she has done for him.

The two killers administer a sedative to the unsuspecting Mireille and then drown her in a bathtub. Initially, Ravinel denies to himself that he has done anything wrong; he numbly helps Lucienne get rid of the corpse, but he cannot stop his memories of his wife.

Brilliantly, Boileau and Narcejac allow scenes from Ravinel's past life to rise ghostlike from deep inside Ravinel's unconscious mind; her image begins to haunt him, giving him no peace. Almost as quickly as Ravinel finds a way to justify the crime, another vision of Mireille floods his imagination, driving him toward a nervous breakdown. The existentialist Ravinel is not troubled by fears of having offended God; rather, he has to admit to himself that life seems unrewarding and unpleasant. Nevertheless, he cannot place the blame on himself, where it really belongs. There is no self-recognition in his disordered mind, only self-pity and fear. The more he thinks, the more frightened he becomes of being discovered and seen as a common murderer.

He creates elaborate rationalizations. He blames Mireille and Lucienne, not himself, for any lack of ardor in their relations. The murder, he postulates, happened only because of his wife's inability to appreciate her husband. The boredom that weighs heavily on him is the fault of the dull people around him and of the dull place where he lives. In short, there is no chance of his accepting any measure of responsibility for his actions. Little by little, the reader comes to realize the unlikeliness of a bright woman such as Mireille ever being attracted to Ravinel.

Later, a complication arises: Ravinel cannot locate the body, which he had dumped in a millpond. His concern turns to panic when Mireille fails to float to the surface. It is as if she has come back to life, he speculates, although he quickly dismisses the thought. Yet, despite Ravinel's best efforts, the notion that his wife is alive keeps resurfacing. Finally, it becomes not only possible but also likely that she lives. What is left of his composure is destroyed by an actual sighting of the supposedly dead Mireille. Though he could not see her clearly, he knows that it was her.

The reader wonders about what is happening: Is Ravinel hallucinating, is the fog creating a specter out of nothing, or is Mireille risen from the dead and walking the earth? At this point, the novel seems to be nothing more than a routine "haunting" with a ghost taking vengeance on the living. Yet Boileau and Narcejac have created something far more complex.

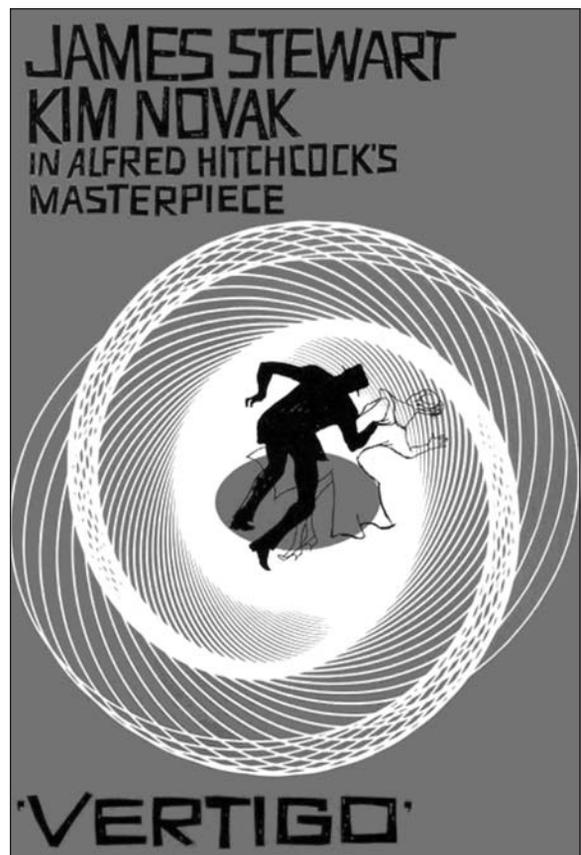
When a mentally retarded girl, Henrietta, informs Ravinel that she just saw someone who looks like Mireille, his mental anguish becomes acute. The last turn of the screw happens when he receives a letter having Mireille's signature at the bottom that states, in her characteristically breezy way, that she loves him.

In a spectacular finale, Ravinel, delirious from terror and guilt, receives another note from his "dead" wife indicating that she will see him that night at their home. At this point, neither Ravinel nor the reader knows what will happen. As the light fades with the dusk, so does Ravinel's courage. Waiting breathlessly inside the house, Ravinel at last hears footsteps approaching his room—the familiar footsteps of his wife. Mad with horror and in need of release from his crippling guilt, Ravinel does the only thing possible: He kills himself.

Boileau and Narcejac do not end the book there, though it would be a conventionally satisfying way to end a horror or mystery novel. The last scene is reserved for the arisen Mireille, who only pretended to be murdered, and Lucienne, her friend and (it is implied) lover. Mireille congratulates Lucienne on a job well done. They believe that they have performed a service to society, ridding it of a boring, unpleasant man.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

The startling turnabout displayed in *The Woman Who Was No More* is also used to good effect elsewhere in the Boileau-Narcejac canon. Fog, depravity, duplicity, and amoral drift are once again present in their masterpiece, *The Living and the Dead*. The main character is an ordinary man, Flavières, who is recruited by his supposed friend Gévigne to follow Gévigne's wife to see why she acts so strangely. By



Set primarily in San Francisco, Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo* was adapted from *The Living and the Dead*.

agreeing to shadow the beautiful Madeleine, Flavières unwittingly becomes a victim of a terrible plot to murder the real Madeleine. Flattered by the attentions of his old friend, he decides to follow her throughout Paris if necessary to determine the cause of the alleged madness.

On the surface, Madeleine appears to be exactly what Gévigne says she has been: an erratic, unpredictable woman of strange moods. Flavières becomes fully convinced of her mental instability when he sees her jump into the Seine River in an apparent suicide attempt. She is saved by him from drowning and yet is not happy about being rescued.

As in their other novels, Boileau and Narcejac demonstrate the deceptiveness of appearances, especially when they are orchestrated by cynical and amoral people. As in *The Woman Who Was No More*, Madeleine reappears, after falling from a church tower onto a stone pavement. Flavières, witness to the final act of Madeleine's madness, tries to forget her and get on with his life. Yet he is constantly reminded of her, and finds that he cannot forget her. Years after her fatal plunge, Flavières sees her again in a crowded theater, then in other places, until he becomes certain that it is she. Madeleine—or rather the woman who once pretended to be her—has forgotten all about him; she fails to recognize him at first when he introduces himself. Caught and unhappy about being recognized, Madeleine first tries to lie her way out of her predicament, claiming that he is imagining things. When the lies fail to work, she confesses that she is Madeleine but will tell him nothing else.

Finally, she blurts out that she is not really Madeleine but instead is Renée Sourange. She had been recruited by Gévigne to impersonate his wife, a woman without mental problems of any kind, to convince a third party that Madeleine had committed suicide. Actually, she had been pushed from the belfry by her husband. Flavières's report of the "suicide" added authenticity to the story given to the police by Gévigne.

In a second twist, when Renée tells the enraged and disappointed Flavières the rest of the story, he strangles her. His rage is kindled not only by the fact that he was taken for a fool but also by the fact that the truth has destroyed his vision of a woman too good for this world.

In a third twist at the end of the novel, Flavières, being escorted in handcuffs, asks the officers if he can kiss Renée's dead body. With tears in his eyes, he does so, leaving an ambiguous message: Did he love Renée just as he had loved Madeleine, or did he still see her as Madeleine? Perhaps that gesture of farewell was also a gesture of forgiveness.

Two of the best collaborators in the mystery and detective genre, Boileau and Narcejac, with their highly ambiguous endings, twists and turns of plot, and extraordinary insights into the psyches of both victim and villain, established themselves as craftsmen of the highest order.

John D. Raymer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1930-1950 • *André Brunel, policier*, 1934 (by Boileau); *La Pierre qui tremble*, 1934 (by Boileau); *La Promenade de minuit*, 1934 (by Boileau); *Le Repos de Bacchus*, 1938 (by Boileau); *La Police est dans l'escalier*, 1947 (by Narcejac); *La Mort est du voyage*, 1948 (by Narcejac); *Le Mauvais Cheval*, 1950 (by Narcejac)

1951-1960 • *Celle qui n'était plus*, 1952 (*The Woman Who Was No More*, 1954); *Les Visages de l'ombre*, 1953 (*Faces in the Dark*, 1954); *D'entre les morts*, 1954 (*The Living and the Dead*, 1956); *Les Louves*, 1955 (*The Prisoner*, 1957); *Au bois dormant*, 1956 (*Sleeping Beauty*, 1959); *Le Mauvais Œil*, 1956 (*The Evil Eye*, 1959); *Les Magiciennes*, 1957; *À cœur perdu*, 1959 (*Heart to Heart*, 1959); *L'Ingénieur qui aimait trop les chiffres*, 1959 (*The Tube*, 1960)

1961-1970 • *Maléfices*, 1961 (*Spells of Evil*, 1961); *Les Victims*, 1964 (*Who Was Clare Jallu?*, 1965); *Et mon tout est un homme*, 1965 (*Choice Cuts*, 1966); *La Mort a dit, peut-être*, 1967; *Delirium*, 1969; *Les Veufs*, 1970; *Maldonne*, 1970

1971-1981 • *La Vie en miettes*, 1972; *Opération primevère*, 1973; *Frère Judas*, 1974; *La Tenaille*, 1975; *Le Second Visage d'Arsène Lupin*, 1975; *La Lèpre*, 1976; *L'Âge bête*, 1978; *Carte vermeille*, 1979; *Le Serment d'Arsène Lupin*, 1979; *Terminus*, 1980; *Box Office*, 1981

SHORT FICTION: *Usurpation d'identité*, 1959 (by Narcejac)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Esthétique du roman policier*, 1947 (by Narcejac); *La Fin d'un bluff: Essai sur le roman policier noir américain*, 1949 (by Narcejac); *Le Cas "Simenon,"* 1950 (*The Art of Simenon*, 1952; by Narcejac); *Le Roman policier*, 1964; *Tandem: Ou, Trente-cinq ans de suspense*, 1986

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JORGE LUIS BORGES

Born: Buenos Aires, Argentina; August 24, 1899

Died: Geneva, Switzerland; June 14, 1986

Also wrote as H. Bustos Domecq; B. Suárez Lynch

Type of plot: Metaphysical and metafictional parody

CONTRIBUTION

Jorge Luis Borges's primary contribution to the detective genre is his recognition and exploitation of the fact that the genre is the quintessential model for pattern and plot in fiction. An admirer of the stories of Edgar Allan Poe since childhood, Borges saw that Poe's development of the detective story was closely related to his theories of the highly patterned short-story genre in general; he also knew very early in his career that G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown detective stories were built on the paradoxical union of a highly rational plot with a mystic undercurrent.

Although few of Borges's short fictions are detective stories in the conventional sense, many of them make specific reference to the genre and use detective-story conventions to focus on the nature of reality as a highly patterned fictional construct. Borges was influ-

ential in showing that detective fiction is more fundamental, more complex, and thus more worthy of serious notice than critics in the past had thought it to be.

BIOGRAPHY

Jorge Luis Borges was born on August 24, 1899, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the son of Jorge Guillermo Borges, a lawyer and psychology teacher, and Leonor Acevedo de Borges, a descendant of old Argentine and Uruguayan stock. A precocious child who spent much of his childhood indoors, Borges later said that his discovery of his father's library was the chief event in his life; he began writing at the age of six, imitating classical Spanish authors such as Miguel de Cervantes.

Attending school in Switzerland during World War I, Borges read, and was strongly influenced by, the French Symbolist poets and such English prose writers as Robert Louis Stevenson, G. K. Chesterton, and Thomas Carlyle. After the war, Borges spent two years in Spain, where he became the disciple of Rafael Casinos Assens, leader of the Ultraist movement in poetry, and where he began writing poetry himself.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Jorge Luis Borges. (© Washington Post; reprinted by permission of the District of Columbia Public Library)

In 1935, Borges's first book of stories, *Historia universal de la infamia* (*A Universal History of Infamy*, 1972), appeared. He wrote his most important stories, published in 1941 under the title *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (the garden of forking paths), while recovering from blood poisoning four years later. Another collection of stories, *Ficciones, 1935-1944* (English translation, 1962) was published in 1944 and promptly awarded a prize by the Argentine Society of Writers. After he criticized the regime of dictator Juan Perón, however, Borges was "promoted" from his librarian's job to that of inspector of poultry and rabbits, a position from which he promptly resigned. When the military government took over from Perón, Borges was appointed head of the National Library; in 1956, he was awarded the National Prize in Literature. Because of increasing blindness he was forced to stop reading and writing in the late 1950's; his mother became his secretary, however, and he continued to work by dictation.

In 1961, Borges was awarded a major European prize with Samuel Beckett, an event that launched his international reputation and that led to his being invited to lecture in the United States. The following year, translations of his books began to appear and he received several honorary doctorates and literary prizes from universities and professional societies. He died in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 14, 1986, after a long and distinguished career.

ANALYSIS

Jorge Luis Borges was undoubtedly the most "literary" of all practitioners of the detective story; in fact, he stated that he found within himself no other passion and almost no other exercise than literature. His interest in detective fiction stemmed from early encounters with the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, whom he called the originator of the detective story, and G. K. Chesterton, whose combination of mysticism and ratiocination he admired most.

Borges repeatedly acknowledged his debt to the detective-story genre. What he admired most about the form is that whereas much modern literature is full of incoherence and opinion, the detective story represents order and what he called "the obligation to invent." Indeed, the intrinsic relationship between the detective story and Borges's fiction centers on the related issues of order, pattern, and plot, qualities that to him are most pronounced in short fiction. Borges rejected both the naïve realism and the discursive psychologizing of the novel, preferring instead the aesthetic tightness and consequent fantastic irrationalism of the short story.

In one of his most famous statements on detective fiction, "Chesterton and the Labyrinths of the Detective Story," Borges notes that whereas the detective novel borders on the character or psychological study, the detective story is an exercise in formal patterning and should abide by the following rules: The number of characters should be minimal; the resolution should tie up all loose ends; the emphasis should be on the "how" rather than the "who"; and the mystery should be so constructed that it is fit for only one solution, a solution at which the reader should marvel.

“THE APPROACH TO ALMOTÁSIM”

Borges’s fascination with the possibilities of the detective story as a model for his fiction actually began with an experiment, with the 1936 essay “El acercamiento a Almotásim” (“The Approach to Almotásim”). The work is presented as a Borges review of a detective novel titled “The Approach to Almotásim,” written by a Bombay lawyer named Mir Bahadur Ali. Although Bahadur is fictitious and the novel is nonexistent, Borges summarizes its plot—his own fiction within this fictional review—and characterizes the novel as a union of rational detective fiction and Persian mysticism—a combination similar to that which Borges perceived in the works of Chesterton.

The plot of the fictional novel involves a nameless Bombay law student who kills, or thinks he kills, a Hindu in a street battle between Hindus and Muslims and who proceeds to flee the police—a flight that later turns into a pursuit of a man pure of soul. The novel ends just as the student finds this man, whose name is Almotásim. What most interests Borges the reviewer in the story is Almotásim as an image of the incarnation of the spiritual within the physical—a concept central to the stories of Chesterton. The story also introduces Borges’s concern with fiction as a metaphor for reality, rather than reality as a basis for fiction.

SIX PROBLEMS FOR DON ISIDRO PARODI

Borges has called one of the chief events of his life his friendship with Adolfo Bioy Casares, with whom he began editing classic detective novels and writing collaboratively in the 1940’s. Together they invented a third writer, Honorio Bustos Domecq, the pseudonym for the creator of a fictional detective named Isidro Parodi who is featured in their first collaborative book, *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* (1942; *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi*, 1981). Don Parodi, as his name suggests, is a parody of the rational detective; he is the reasoner and practitioner of absolute inaction, an armchair detective who cannot become involved in the events of the solution of a mystery because he is in a prison cell.

“AN EXAMINATION OF THE WORK OF HERBERT QUAIN”

Most of Borges’s fictions emphasize, in one way or another, the highly formalized literariness and the

mystical undercurrent of the detective story. In “Un examen de la obra de Herbert Quain” (“An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain”), Borges comments on a detective novel by a fictional author, summarizing the plot in the most conventional fashion. The twist of the story is that the solution proves to be erroneous and leads the reader back to discover another solution, which makes the reader more discerning than the detective.

“IBN HAKKAN AL-BOKHARI, DEAD IN HIS LABYRINTH”

In “Abenjacán the Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto” (“Ibn Hakkan al-Bokhari, Dead in His Labyrinth”), Borges presents a dichotomy, similar to the one Poe developed in “The Purloined Letter,” between the poet and the mathematician. Dunraven, a poet, tells the story of al-Bokhari, who killed his cousin Zaid, stole his money, and smashed in his face with a rock. Later, al-Bokhari dreams about the murder; in the dream, Zaid says that he will get his revenge by killing al-Bokhari the same way. Al-Bokhari builds himself a labyrinth in England in which to hide, but he is later found dead, with his face obliterated. Unwin, a mathematician, is unconvinced by the story and unravels the mystery by arguing that it was Zaid who was the culprit—who stole al-Bokhari’s money and then fled to England, where he built a maze to lure al-Bokhari there. Such metamorphoses of the identities of the maker of the maze and the one trapped in it are classic rules of the game, says Dunraven, accepted conventions that the reader agrees to follow. Indeed, the poet as the maker of the story and the mathematician as the one who solves its twisted plot represent conventions of united bipolar dualities that Borges uses in other stories.

“THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS”

“The Garden of Forking Paths,” published in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in 1948, is patterned after that variant of the mystery-story genre known as the espionage thriller. The central figure is a Chinese English professor spying for the Germans. In a first-person statement, presumably made after his capture, Dr. Yu Tsun tells of his plan to communicate the secret location of a British artillery site to his German chief before Captain Richard Madden captures him.

The story revolves around two of Borges’s favorite

themes—the idea of time and the concept of the labyrinth—which are unified with Yu Tsun’s plan when he goes to the home of Stephen Albert, an expert on Chinese culture who happens to have in his possession the dual undertaking of one of Yu Tsun’s ancestors, a book and a maze. This undertaking Yu Tsun now discovers to be a single task, for the book itself is a maze, an infinite labyrinth of time. The hero of this labyrinthine work, instead of choosing one alternative from many and thus eliminating the others, as is common in fiction, chooses all of them simultaneously and thus creates forking paths. Borges’s story concludes when Yu Tsun kills Stephen Albert just as Richard Madden arrives, knowing that when his chief sees the story in the newspaper he will understand that the secret location of the British artillery is a city named Albert. Having no way to say the secret word, he thus reveals it the way fiction always does: indirectly, through an event.

“DEATH AND THE COMPASS”

Borges’s most explicit treatment of the detective story is “La muerte y la brújula” (“Death and the Compass”), in which he inverts several of the conventions Poe invented. First, there is the famous sleuth Lönnrot, created in the mold of Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin, who sees himself as a pure thinker. Second, there is the police commissioner Treviranus, who is skeptical of the sleuth’s methods. Third, there is the archvillain, Red Scharlach, counterpoised against the detective as his nemesis but also as his alter ego. Finally, there is the mystery itself, a mystery of no common nature.

The story is actually a parody of the detective story as originated by Poe, for its plot, although dependent on the detective’s use of pure reason to solve the mystery, actually parodies this use of reason. The events begin with a mysterious murder that the police commissioner considers a simple case of robbery and chance, an explanation that Lönnrot rejects as too simple. Because the case involves a dead rabbi, he prefers a religious explanation, an explanation based on the clue provided by a piece of paper with the words “The first letter of the Name has been spoken” typed on it.

Soon after, two more crimes occur, at the scene of which are references to the second and the final letter of the Name. Lönnrot is so convinced that all three crimes are related that he carefully examines Jewish

lore and discovers that the crimes are symmetrical in both time and space, creating at first a triangle but suggesting to him that the mysterious Name is the name of God—JHVH—and that a fourth crime will take place on a certain date at a specific place.

When the detective arrives at the suspected time and place, the usual detective-story conventions are reversed. What Lönnrot finds there is his enemy, Red Scharlach. The explanation for the mystery, usually mouthed by the detective, but here revealed by the criminal, affirms that Treviranus was right about the first crime—it was simple robbery. Once Red Scharlach found out that Lönnrot was on the case, however, he wove a labyrinth to catch him—by committing the second crime himself and by staging the third, knowing that the detective would use the rabbinical explanation of the Tetragrammaton, the name of God, and thus fall in his trap by hypothesizing a fourth crime. The story thus ends not with the capture of the criminal but with the fourth crime—the murder of the detective.

“Death and the Compass” makes use of many of the conventions of the detective story, not the least of which is that the detective is caught by the detective story’s most powerful convention—the search for an explanation for a mystery through purely patterned reason. If Lönnrot is caught by being too much Dupin, he is also caught because he has forgotten one of the crucial elements of the Father Brown stories—that, whereas the detective is only the critic who seeks to solve the mystery of the plot, it is the criminal who is the artist, the one who creates a plot. In “Death and the Compass,” Lönnrot is caught by purely literary means—ensnared by the criminal artist’s plot and his own sophisticated reasoning.

Borges is the capstone figure of detective fiction in the twentieth century. Anticipating the concerns of postmodern fiction, Borges realized that reality is not the composite of the simple empirical data that humans experience every day; it is much more subjective, metaphysical, and thus mysterious than that. The detective story reminds the reader, says Borges, that reality is a highly patterned human construct, like fiction itself.

Charles E. May

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi*, 1942 (as Domecq with Adolfo Bioy Casares; *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi*, 1981)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Un modelo para la muerte*, 1946 (as Lynch; with Bioy Casares)

SHORT FICTION: *Historia universal de la infamia*, 1935 (*A Universal History of Infamy*, 1972); *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, 1941; *Ficciones*, 1935-1944, 1944 (English translation, 1962); *Dos fantasías memorables*, 1946 (as Domecq; with Bioy Casares); *El Aleph*, 1949, 1952 (translated in *The Aleph, and Other Stories, 1933-1969*, 1970); *La muerte y la brújula*, 1951; *La hermana de Eloísa*, 1955 (with Luisa Mercedes Levinson); *Cuentos*, 1958; *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq*, 1967 (as Domecq; with Bioy Casares; *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*, 1976); *El informe de Brodie*, 1970 (*Doctor Brodie's Report*, 1972); *El matrero*, 1970; *El congreso*, 1971 (*The Congress*, 1974); *El libro de arena*, 1975 (*The Book of Sand*, 1977); *Narraciones*, 1980

SCREENPLAYS: "Los orilleros" y "El paraíso de los creyentes," 1955 (with Bioy Casares); *Les Autres*, 1974 (with Bioy Casares and Hugo Santiago)

POETRY: *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, 1923, 1969; *Luna de enfrente*, 1925; *Cuaderno San Martín*, 1929; *Poemas, 1923-1943*, 1943; *Poemas, 1923-1953*, 1954; *Obra poética, 1923-1958*, 1958; *Obra poética, 1923-1964*, 1964; *Seis poemas escandinavos*, 1966; *Siete poemas*, 1967; *El otro, el mismo*, 1969; *Elogio de la sombra*, 1969 (*In Praise of Darkness*, 1974); *El oro de los tigres*, 1972 (translated in *The Gold of Tigers: Selected Later Poems*, 1977); *La rosa profunda*, 1975 (translated in *The Gold of Tigers*); *La moneda de hierro*, 1976; *Historia de la noche*, 1977; *La cifra*, 1981; *Los conjurados*, 1985; *Selected Poems*, 1999

NONFICTION: 1925-1930 • *Inquisiciones*, 1925; *El tamaño de mi esperanza*, 1926; *El idioma de los argentinos*, 1928; *Evaristo Carriego*, 1930 (English translation, 1984); *Figari*, 1930

1931-1950 • *Discusión*, 1932; *Las Kennigar*, 1933; *Historia de la eternidad*, 1936; *Nueva refutación del tiempo*, 1947; *Aspectos de la literatura gauchesca*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Antiguas literaturas germánicas*, 1951 (with Delia Ingenieros; revised as *Literaturas germánicas medievales*, 1966, with Maria Esther Vásquez); *Otras Inquisiciones*, 1952 (*Other Inquisitions*, 1964); *El "Martín Fierro,"* 1953 (with Margarita Guerrero); *Leopoldo Lugones*, 1955 (with Betina Edelberg); *Manual de zoología fantástica*, 1957 (with Guerrero); *The Imaginary Zoo*, 1969; revised as *El libro de los seres imaginarios*, 1967, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, 1969); *La poesía gauchesca*, 1960

1961-2001 • *Introducción a la literatura norteamericana*, 1967 (with Esther Zemborain de Torres; *An Introduction to American Literature*, 1971); *Prólogos*, 1975; *Cosmogonías*, 1976; *Libro de sueños*, 1976; *Qué es el budismo?*, 1976 (with Alicia Jurado); *Siete noches*, 1980 (*Seven Nights*, 1984); *Nueve ensayos dantescos*, 1982; *The Total Library: Non-fiction, 1922-1986*, 2001 (Eliot Weinberger, editor)

EDITED TEXTS: *Antología clásica de la literatura argentina*, 1937; *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, 1940 (with Bioy Casares and Silvia Ocampo); *Antología poética argentina*, 1941 (with Bioy Casares and Ocampo); *El compadrito: Su destino, sus barrios, su música*, 1945, 1968 (with Silvina Bullrich); *Poesía gauchesca*, 1955 (with Bioy Casares; 2 volumes); *Libro del cielo y del infierno*, 1960, 1975 (with Bioy Casares); *Versos*, 1972 (by Evaristo Carriego); *Antología poética*, 1982 (by Leopoldo Lugones); *Antología poética*, 1982 (by Francisco de Quevedo); *El amigo de la muerte*, 1984 (by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón)

TRANSLATIONS: *Orlando*, 1937 (of Virginia Woolf's novel); *La metamorfosis*, 1938 (of Franz Kafka's novel *Die Verwandlung*); *Un bárbaro en Asia*, 1941 (of Henri Michaux's travel notes); *Bartleby, el escribiente*, 1943 (of Herman Melville's novella *Bartleby the Scrivener*); *Los mejores cuentos policiales*, 1943 (with Bioy Casares; of detective stories by various authors); *Los mejores cuentos policiales, segunda serie*, 1951 (with Bioy Casares; of detective stories by various authors); *Cuentos breves y extraordinarios*, 1955, 1973 (with Bioy Casares; of short stories by various authors); *Extraordinary Tales*, 1973); *Las palmeras salvajes*, 1956 (of William

Faulkner's novel *The Wild Palms*); *Hojas de hierba*, 1969 (of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Obras completas*, 1953-1967 (10 volumes); *Antología personal*, 1961 (*A Personal Anthology*, 1967); *Labyrinths: Selected Stories, and Other Writings*, 1962, 1964; *Nueva antología personal*, 1968; *Selected Poems, 1923-1967*, 1972 (also includes prose); *Adroque*, 1977; *Obras completas en colaboración*, 1979 (with others); *Borges: A Reader*, 1981; *Atlas*, 1984 (with María Kodama; English translation, 1985)

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- Bell-Villada, Gene H. *Borges and His Fiction: A Guide to His Mind and Art*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. An excellent introduction to Borges and his works for North American readers. Provides detailed commentary concerning Borges's background, his many stories, and his career, all the while downplaying the Argentine writer's role as a philosopher and intellectual and emphasizing his role as a storyteller. A superb study.
- Frisch, Mark F. *You Might Be Able to Get There from Here: Reconsidering Borges and the Postmodern*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004. Careful study of the meaning of the term "postmodernism" in relation to Borges and his fiction, offering a variety of perspectives on the intersections of postmodernism with Borges and with other cultural elements. Bibliographic references and index.
- Irwin, John T. *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Reads Borges as an intentional imitator and reinventor of Edgar Allan Poe's style of detective fiction, detailing the transformations through which Borges put the form.
- Kefala, Eleni. *Peripheral (Post) Modernity: The Syncretist Aesthetics of Borges, Piglia, Kalokyris and Kyriakidis*. New York: P. Lang, 2007. Argues that Borges engages in postmodern syncretism, that is, that he mixes aesthetic elements that are normally mutually exclusive in order to question the conventions of the genres—such as detective fiction—within which he chooses to work. Bibliographic references and index.
- Nunez-Faraco, Humberto. "In Search of *The Aleph*: Memory, Truth, and Falsehood in Borges's Poetics." *The Modern Language Review* 92 (July, 1997): 613-629. Discusses autobiographical allusions, literary references to Dante, and cultural reality in the story "El Aleph." Argues that Borges's story uses cunning and deception to bring about its psychological and intellectual effect.
- Sabajanes, Beatriz Sarlo. *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*. New York: Verso, 1993. A good introduction to Borges. Includes bibliographical references and an index.
- Stabb, Martin S. *Borges Revisited*. Boston: Twayne, 1991. A follow-up to Stabb's *Jorge Luis Borges*, published in 1970. Emphasis is on Borges's post-1970 writings, how the "canonical" (to use Stabb's term) Borges compares to the later Borges, and "a fresh assessment of the Argentine master's position as a major Western literary presence." An excellent study, particularly used in tandem with Stabb's earlier book on Borges.
- _____. *Jorge Luis Borges*. New York: Twayne, 1970. An excellent study of Borges intended by its author "to introduce the work of this fascinating and complex writer to North American readers." Includes an opening chapter on Borges's life and career, followed by chapters on the Argentine writer's work in the genres of poetry, essay, and fiction, as well as a concluding chapter entitled "Borges and the Critics."
- Williamson, Edwin. *Borges: A Life*. New York: Viking, 2004. Drawing on interviews and extensive research, the most comprehensive and well-reviewed Borges biography.

ANTHONY BOUCHER**William Anthony Parker White****Born:** Oakland, California; August 21, 1911**Died:** Berkeley, California; April 29, 1968**Also wrote as** Theo Durrant; H. H. Holmes;
Herman Muddgett**Types of plot:** Amateur sleuth; private investigator;
police procedural**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Fergus O'Brien, 1939-1942

Sister Ursula, 1940-1942

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

FERGUS O'BREEN is a private investigator, around thirty, with red hair and a fondness for yellow sweaters. He has a sharp, analytical mind and is attracted to young, not-too-bright women. He is a heavy smoker and a recreational drinker.

LIEUTENANT A. JACKSON is with the homicide division of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). He is around thirty, tall, handsome, single, and intelligent, but he always has the help of an amateur sleuth in solving his murder cases.

LIEUTENANT TERENCE MARSHALL is also with the homicide division of the LAPD. Tall, handsome, and happily married, he is a closet intellectual. He can be seen as a married version of Lieutenant Jackson in the Fergus O'Brien series.

SISTER URSULA is of the order of the Sisters of Martha of Bethany. Of indeterminate age, she is compassionate, devout, an amateur sleuth par excellence, and instrumental in the solution of Marshall's cases.

CONTRIBUTION

Anthony Boucher entered the field of mystery and detective fiction in 1937, just as the Golden Age of that genre was drawing to a close. The five novels he published under the Boucher pseudonym and two others under the name H. H. Holmes were typical of one branch of the field at the time: intellectually frothy entertainments offering several hours of pleasant diversion. Boucher's plots were clever murder puzzles that

could be solved by a moderately intelligent reader from the abundant clues scattered generously throughout the narrative. The murders were antiseptic affairs usually solved in the end by an engaging deductionist. The characters (or suspects) were often intriguing but always only superficially developed. The settings were potentially interesting but somehow unconvincing. Boucher was, however, one of the first writers to bring a high degree of erudition and literary craftsmanship to the field of popular mystery and detective fiction.

Boucher was much more important to the field as a critic and as an editor than as a writer. As a mystery and detective critic with columns in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, Boucher showed that he could recognize talented writers and important trends in the field. As an editor, he had a penchant for extracting the best from the contributors to the journals and anthologies that he oversaw.

Boucher's greatest contributions to the mystery and detective field, however, did not come through his novels or short stories. After a successful but exhausting stint as a plot developer for radio scripts for shows featuring Sherlock Holmes and Gregory Hood, Boucher began editing and writing book reviews in the fields of both science fiction and mystery and detective fiction. As an editor, he excelled, creating *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and turning it into one of the first literate journals in that field. He brought the same skills to *True Crime Detective*, which he edited from 1952 to 1953. He encouraged many young talents in both the genres of science fiction and mystery and detective fiction, including Richard Matheson, Gore Vidal, and Philip José Farmer.

The Mystery Writers of America recognized Boucher three times as the top critic of mystery and detective crime fiction. As a critic and an editor, he was gentle, humorous, and always compassionate, and he was usually able to provoke the best efforts of those

whose work he assessed. In no small way, he contributed through his criticism and editing to the emergence in the 1950's of a real literature of mystery and detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Boucher was born William Anthony Parker White on August 21, 1911, in Oakland, California. He was the only child of James Taylor White and Mary Ellen (née Parker) White, both physicians and both descended from pioneers of the California/Oregon region. His maternal grandfather was a lawyer and a superior court judge, and his paternal grandfather was a captain in the United States Navy. Despite being an invalid during most of his teenage years, Boucher was graduated from Pasadena High School in 1928 and from Pasadena Junior College in 1930. From 1930 to 1932, he attended the University of Southern California (USC), majoring in German. He spent most of his time outside classes at USC in acting, writing, and directing for little theater. Boucher was graduated from USC in 1932 with a bachelor of arts and an undergraduate record sufficient for election to Phi Beta Kappa and the offer of a graduate scholarship from the University of California at Berkeley. He received his master of arts degree from that institution in 1934 on acceptance of his thesis, "The Duality of Impressionism in Recent German Drama."

The academic life apparently having lost its appeal for Boucher after he received the master of arts degree (he had planned to be a teacher of languages), he embarked on an unsuccessful career as a playwright. When his plays failed to sell, he tried his hand at mystery writing and sold his first novel to Simon and Schuster in 1936 (it was published the following year). He adopted the pseudonym "Boucher" (rhymes with "voucher") to keep his crime-fiction career separate from his still-hoped-for career as a playwright. During the next six years, Simon and Schuster published four more of Boucher's murder mysteries. During the same period, Duell, Sloan and Pearce published two of his novels under the pen name of H. H. Holmes.

During this phase of his career, Boucher married Phyllis Mary Price, a librarian, in 1928. They had two children, Lawrence Taylor White and James Marsden

White. By 1942, Boucher's interests had shifted from the writing of mystery fiction to editing and science fiction. During the remainder of his career, Boucher edited several periodicals in both the mystery and science-fiction fields, including *True Crime Detective* (1952-1953) and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1949-1958). He also edited many anthologies in both fields, wrote radio scripts for mystery shows, and had several book review columns. His reviews of mystery and detective books won for him the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for best mystery criticism in 1946, 1950, and 1953. Boucher died in his home in Berkeley, California, on April 29, 1968.

ANALYSIS

Anthony Boucher began writing mystery and detective fiction as a way to support himself while he pursued a never-realized career as a playwright. All five novels published under the Boucher pseudonym and those published as H. H. Holmes between 1937 and 1942 are well-constructed murder-detection puzzles featuring a deductionist hero or heroine and often a locked-room theme. The characters in his novels are not well developed, are almost exclusively Caucasian with bourgeois attitudes and goals, and are always secondary to the puzzle and its solution. Only rarely do the novels mention the social and political issues of the period during which they were written, and they offer no particular insights into the several potentially interesting subcultures in which they are set. In short, the Boucher-Holmes novels are examples of much of the Golden Age mystery and detective literature, in which the crime and its solution through logical deduction are paramount.

Taken collectively, the Boucher-Holmes novels are the epitome of one branch of Golden Age mystery and detective fiction. They are amusing escapist works of no particular literary merit. Boucher, an only child from a comfortable middle-class background, did not have the worldly experience of a Dashiell Hammett. Thus, his characters were portrayed in a narrow world in which ugliness, if it existed at all, derived from character flaws, not from social realities. He did not possess the poetic insight into the human condition of

a Ross Macdonald or a Raymond Chandler, so his characters lack depth, and the situations that he created for them are generally unconvincing.

Boucher was much more successful in his short stories, in which characterization is less important than in novels. Nick Noble, an alcoholic ex-cop who was featured in "Black Murder," "Crime Must Have a Stop," and "The Girl Who Married a Monster," is a much more engaging character than any of those appearing in Boucher's longer works. Fergus O'Brien and Sister Ursula are also more believable when they appear in short stories. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *Playboy*, and *Esquire* are only a few of the many journals that published Boucher's short stories.

THE CASE OF THE SEVEN OF CALVARY

In many ways Boucher's first novel set the pattern for those that followed. Set on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, *The Case of the Seven of Calvary* (1937) introduces several promising characters whose personalities prove to be disappointingly bland. The novel demonstrates Boucher's acquaintance with literature in four languages, with ancient heresies combated by the Roman Catholic Church, and his intimate knowledge of several forms of tobacco usage. Virtually nothing comes through, however, concerning academic life at Berkeley in the 1930's or the mechanics of the little-theater movement, in which most of the characters in the novel are involved and with which the author had considerable experience. Still, the novel is well plotted, the deductionist (a professor of Sanskrit) sufficiently Sherlockian, and the clues abundant enough to make the puzzle enjoyable.

THE CASE OF THE BAKER STREET

IRREGULARS

Boucher was heavily influenced by Arthur Conan Doyle and fascinated by Sherlock Holmes, as demonstrated in all of his novels, but particularly in the third, *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars* (1940). Again, Boucher introduces a cast of initially fascinating but ultimately flaccid characters, most of them members of an informal Holmes fan club (a real organization of which Boucher was a member). Again the plot is clever, this time revolving around various Doyle accounts of the adventures of the sage of Baker Street.

The hoped-for insights into the subculture in which the novel is set—in this case, the film industry in Hollywood—are again absent. Boucher does have his characters make several innocuous political observations, vaguely New Dealish and more or less antifascist, but one of the primary characters, a Nazi spy, comes off as a misguided idealist and a basically nice fellow. The deductionist in the novel is an Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) homicide lieutenant who appears in several of Boucher's novels, A. Jackson (his first name is never given).

THE CASE OF THE SOLID KEY

In his other appearances in Boucher's novels (*The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, 1939; *The Case of the Solid Key*, 1941; and *The Case of the Seven Sneezes*, 1942), Jackson has considerable help in solving his cases from Fergus O'Brien, a redheaded, yellow-sweater-wearing private detective. Despite the sweater and the hair, O'Brien is surely one of the most colorless private eyes in all of mystery fiction, his blandness exceeded only by that of A. Jackson. In *The Case of the Solid Key*, considered by his fans to be Boucher's best, O'Brien and Jackson deduce the perpetrator of an ingenious locked-room murder from among some potentially exciting but typically undeveloped characters, including a Charles Lindbergh-like idealist and a voluptuous film star (Rita La Marr, no less) who remains incognito during most of the novel. Once again, Boucher sets the action of the novel against a backdrop of the little-theater movement, the actual workings of which are largely unexplored in the novel. *The Case of the Solid Key* also includes some unconvincing dialogue concerning politics and social issues, with Boucher's own New Deal convictions emerging victorious over the selfish, big-business attitudes of a spoiled rich girl who always gets her comeuppance (a stereotype that appears in several of Boucher's stories).

ROCKET TO THE MORGUE

Boucher created a potentially more engaging but characteristically incomplete deductionist, Sister Ursula, in two novels published under the pseudonym H. H. Holmes. Sister Ursula, a nun of the order of the Sisters of Martha of Bethany, helps Lieutenant Terence Marshall of the LAPD homicide division solve murders

in *Nine Times Nine* (1940) and *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942). The characters in the latter novel are drawn in part from the science-fiction writers' community in the Los Angeles of the early 1940's and are thinly disguised fictionalizations of such science-fiction luminaries as John W. Campbell, Robert Heinlein, and L. Ron Hubbard. The plot revolves around another locked room and is amusingly complicated and pleasantly diverting. The novel contains the obligatory spoiled rich girl, several conversations mildly critical of the socio-economic status quo, and several comments mildly lamenting the imminent outbreak of war.

Paul Madden

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FERGUS O'BREEN SERIES: *The Case of the Seven of Calvary*, 1937; *The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, 1939; *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars*, 1940 (also known as *Blood on Baker Street*); *The Case of the Solid Key*, 1941; *The Case of the Seven Sneezes*, 1942

SISTER URSULA SERIES (AS HOLMES): *Nine Times Nine*, 1940; *Rocket to the Morgue*, 1942

NONSERIES NOVEL (AS DURRANT, WITH OTHERS): *The Marble Forest*, 1951 (also known as *The Big Fear*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Exeunt Murderers: The Best Mystery Stories of Anthony Boucher*, 1983

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Far and Away: Eleven Fantasy and Science-Fiction Stories*, 1955; *The Compleat Werewolf, and Other Tales of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 1969; *The Compleat Boucher: The Complete Short Science Fiction and Fantasy of Anthony Boucher*, 1999

NONFICTION: *Ellery Queen: A Double Profile*, 1951; *Multiplying Villainies: Selected Mystery Criticism, 1942-1968*, 1973; *Sincerely, Tony/Faithfully, Vincent: The Correspondence of Anthony Boucher and Vincent Starrett*, 1975 (with Vincent Starrett)

EDITED TEXTS: *The Pocket Book of True Crime Stories*, 1943; *Great American Detective Stories*, 1945; *Four and Twenty Bloodhounds: Short Stories*

Plus Biographies of Fictional Detectives—Amateur and Professional, Public and Private—Created by Members of Mystery Writers of America, 1950; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 1952-1959; *A Treasury of Great Science Fiction*, 1959; *Best Detective Stories of the Year: Sixteenth Annual Collection*, 1961; *The Quality of Murder: Three Hundred Years of True Crime*, 1962 (compiled by members of the Mystery Writers of America); *The Quintessence of Queen: Best Prize Stories from Twelve Years of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, 1962 (also known as *A Magnum of Mysteries*); *Best Detective Stories of the Year*, 1963-1965

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Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Provides perspective to Boucher's work.

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Spencer, David G. "The Case of the Man Who Could Do Everything." *Rhodomagnetic Digest* 2 (September, 1950): 7-10. An examination of the works of Boucher that focuses on his Fergus O'Brien series.

White, Phyllis, and Lawrence White. *Boucher: A Family Portrait*. Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Historical Society, 1985. Biographical study of Boucher and his family, revealing the influences of his upbringing on his work.

EDGAR BOX

Gore Vidal

Born: West Point, New York; October 3, 1925

Also wrote as Gore Vidal

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Peter Cutler Sargeant II, 1952-1954

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PETER CUTLER SARGEANT II, a public relations agent and amateur sleuth. A young Harvard graduate with a background in journalism, he is a tough, unsentimental professional who gets involved in solving murder cases only when his curiosity is piqued and his own safety is at stake.

CONTRIBUTION

Gore Vidal is a historical and social novelist. His three detective novels, *Death in the Fifth Position* (1952), *Death Before Bedtime* (1953), and *Death Likes It Hot* (1954), published under the pseudonym Edgar Box, were written early in his career and are not considered to be among his best work. Nevertheless, all three detective novels demonstrate his skill at social criticism and solid command of the murder mystery genre. Although not exactly a classic example of the hard-boiled detective, Peter Cutler Sargeant II is an objective, shrewd observer of humanity. Like other rationalistic detectives, he pays close attention not only to material evidence but also to human motivations. He likes to proceed by a process of elimination, examining the most obvious suspects before realizing that the case is far more complex than he had initially imagined. As is so often true in murder mysteries, Sargeant has a mind that is much more supple than that of the police officers and other fatuous characters who try to outwit him in his cases.

BIOGRAPHY

Gore Vidal (Edgar Box) was born Eugene Luther Vidal to Eugene Vidal and Nina Gore Vidal on October 3, 1925, at the United States Military Academy in West

Point, New York. Shortly thereafter, his family moved to Washington, D.C.—the setting of much of Vidal's fiction—and lived with his maternal grandfather, Senator Thomas Pryor Gore of Oklahoma. Vidal's parents were divorced when he was ten. His mother married Hugh D. Auchincloss, and Vidal lived at the Auchincloss estate in Virginia while attending St. Alban's School in Washington.

By the time Vidal was graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1940, he had toured England and the United States and renamed himself Gore Vidal. He joined the army in 1943, studied engineering at the Virginia Military Institute for one term, and was appointed to the rank of maritime warrant officer on October 24, 1944. *Williwaw*, his novel about his war experiences, was published in 1946.

After the war, Vidal traveled widely in Europe,



Gore Vidal in 1948. (Library of Congress/Carl Van Vechten Collection)

Central America, and the United States, making his living writing and lecturing. After completing his modestly successful detective series in 1954 as Edgar Box, he abandoned that name and became a highly successful television writer for two years, authoring such scripts as *Barn Burning* (televised August 17, 1954) and *The Turn of the Screw* (televised February 13, 1955). By 1956, he was also writing film scripts for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. His stage play, *Visit to a Small Planet: A Comedy Akin to a Vaudeville*, published in 1956, ran for 338 performances on Broadway in 1957. Even more successful was his play *The Best Man: A Play About Politics*, which ran for 520 performances in 1960.

A political commentator, drama critic for *The Reporter*, candidate for Congress (in 1960) and for the Senate (in 1982), Vidal has been a prolific writer and a provocative public personality. His best-known and most highly acclaimed novels are *Julian* (1964), *Myra Breckinridge* (1968), *Burr* (1973), and *Lincoln* (1984). He has achieved even greater reputation as an essayist. His principal collection of nonfictional prose is *Homage to Daniel Shays: Collected Essays, 1952-1972* (1972).

ANALYSIS

Gore Vidal has admitted that he did not set out to write mystery novels to make a new contribution to the genre. He was a professional writer in need of an income. Just as he later turned to television and film writing for money, so detective novels represented an opportunity for him to support himself. Because he is an accomplished writer, however, Vidal's three mystery novels as Edgar Box are not negligible achievements. They are distinguished by a strong sense of plot and a complicated array of interesting suspects. When he knows the milieu of his characters particularly well—as in the Long Island setting of *Death Likes It Hot*—he achieves a fascinating blend of social criticism and detection.

There are certain aspects of Vidal's detective, Peter Cutler Sargeant II, that must be tolerated if his investigations are to be appreciated. Sargeant is a well-built male with a considerable appetite for young women. Although his romances figure significantly in all three

novels, they are treated in a somewhat perfunctory fashion—as though Vidal feels obligated to give Sargeant a love interest but cannot summon much enthusiasm for the task. By modern standards, Sargeant would be considered something of a sexist—although his male chauvinism is not much different from the superior attitude he takes toward most human beings, who seem to him fatuous, manipulative, and sometimes downright silly. To a certain extent, he simply shares the characteristics of many fictional detectives, whose line of work encourages suspicion of motivations and professions of sincerity.

In none of the three novels is Sargeant hired as a detective. On the contrary, he is engaged by the head of a ballet company, a politician running for president, and an ambitious society matron to handle their public relations. It is only after a murder is committed that his curiosity is aroused. Usually, his employer enlists his aid in getting out of a jam occasioned by a murder and all the bad publicity such a crime entails. Even then, Sargeant reluctantly seeks out the murderer only after his own life is endangered. This would seem to be an effective novelistic stratagem because it enables Sargeant to remain objective (he has not been looking for work as a detective) but involved (he may be the next victim). The problem is that Vidal uses the same stratagem in each novel, so that as a series, his novels fail to sustain themselves; they seem too gimmicky. It is too much to suppose that a public relations man would become involved in so many murder cases.

Like many fictional detectives, Sargeant often discovers the identity of the murderer before he has evidence to present to the police. It is the chain of circumstances that he analyzes, the relationships he has had with the suspects, the stories they have told him, and some word or occurrence that suddenly provides the spark for his intuitive solution to a case. This reading of human nature, of clues that do not really exist except in the mind of the intellectually superior detective, distinguishes Sargeant from the plodding, unimaginative police detectives who are his adversaries.

Vidal is successful in creating empathy for Sargeant by having his detective freely admit his ignorance. Sargeant makes many mistakes. Often he takes leaps in the dark, asserting that he has information

when he has none at all. A considerable amount of bluff goes into Sargeant's interrogation of suspects. What finally makes him successful, however, is his willingness to wrestle with his own lack of evidence.

DEATH IN THE FIFTH POSITION

A typical example of Sargeant's self-questioning can be found in *Death in the Fifth Position*. A ballerina has fallen to her death during a performance. Someone has cut the cord that suspended her high above the stage. At first, her drug addict husband is suspected. Then he dies in his apartment—perhaps as a suicide but possibly as a victim of the real murderer. Sargeant has to recalculate a list of suspects. He sits worriedly at his employer's desk for "several minutes." Then "idly, with a pencil stub," he writes the names of everyone in the company who could have committed the crime. He puts the name of his girlfriend, Jane, a dancer in the company who has received better roles since the death of the ballerina, at the bottom of the list and draws a box around it, as if to protect her. On the next page he writes "Why?" and "How?" Then he answers a series of questions about motive with what he knows about each of the suspects. He is able to cross his girlfriend off the list because she was not next in line to succeed the dead ballerina. The only lingering doubt about her is whether she might have had some other private motive—there has been talk that the dead ballerina was in love with Jane.

Thus, Sargeant moves slowly, almost excluding suspects but never entirely ruling anyone out, so that the mystery deepens. Eventually, the possible murderers are eliminated and Sargeant fastens onto the most probable guilty party. He ultimately solves his case by creating a situation in which he knows enough to trap the criminal into a confession or into behavior that reveals his or her guilt. In *Death in the Fifth Position*, his working out of the solution on paper is like the blocking out of a play; that is, Sargeant is a superb director of his actors, but he cannot completely envision the perpetrator of the murder until he gets the characters to move in certain directions.

Death in the Fifth Position is actually the weakest of the three novels, for Vidal's command of the milieu of a dance company seems weak. It is not unusual to stock a detective novel with stereotypical characters,

but *Death in the Fifth Position* seems particularly unimaginative in this respect. The Russian ballerina, Eglanova, for example, speaks in exactly the kind of bad Russian accent found in Hollywood B films, and Louis, the aggressively gay dancer who pursues Sargeant, is such a caricature that his behavior is not so much humorous as it is tiresome.

DEATH BEFORE BEDTIME

Vidal is on sounder ground with *Death Before Bedtime*, which is set in the political atmosphere of Washington, D.C. This is familiar territory for a novelist who creates interesting, devious characters: a political wife who might be hardened and cynical enough to have murdered her unfaithful husband, a senator aspiring to the presidency; the senator's promiscuous daughter, whose careless love life is somehow connected to his death; the senator's devious assistant, who is intimately tied to shady business dealings that may have led him to murder his boss; and a prominent businessman from the senator's home state who is rumored to have faced ruin when he failed to get the politician's support for an important government contract. The intricate cast of suspects and colorful personalities makes *Death Before Bedtime* a stimulating novel of mystery, intrigue, romance, and politics.

DEATH LIKES IT HOT

Even better and by far the most amusing novel in the series is *Death Likes It Hot*, set during a summer on Long Island at the mansion of an ambitious society matron, Mrs. Veering, who has hired Sargeant to manage publicity for a huge party she has planned for the fall. Here Sargeant's personality and his feel for society are wonderfully congruent. Although he is in the business of inflating people's reputations, Sargeant loves to poke holes in their pretensions, as in his description of the Ladyrock Yacht Club on Easthampton:

Members of the Club are well-to-do (but not wealthy), socially accepted (but not quite "prominent"), of good middle-class American stock (proud of their ancient lineage that goes back usually to some eighteenth century farmer).

It is almost possible to imagine Sargeant making these parenthetical remarks out of the side of his mouth. Vidal's economical style—putting in a few sentences

what this society thinks of itself, the words it uses for itself, and how little there is to justify its claims—is at its best in this novel.

One of the finest characters in the Sargeant series is Brexton, a well-known but enigmatic artist suspected of arranging his wealthy wife's drowning. His behavior is not at all predictable, and his character is not summarized in the clichés that mar Vidal's other mysteries. Perhaps this is the reason that Sargeant finds him such a sympathetic character. Brexton is shrewd and knows even better than Sargeant that people should not be taken at their word. A sample of the dialogue between these two characters—at a point when Mrs. Veering (also a suspect) has had what purports to be a heart attack—reveals the shrewd, understated interplay between detective and suspect. Notice how Brexton answers Sargeant's questions by saying as little as possible:

“Has Mrs. Veering had heart attacks before? Like this?”

“Yes. This is the third one I know of. She just turns blue and they give her some medicine; then she's perfectly all right in a matter of minutes.”

“Minutes? But she seemed really knocked out. The doctor said she'll have to stay in bed a day or two.”

Brexton smiled. “Greaves *said* the doctor said she'd have to stay in bed.”

This sank in, bit by bit. “Then she . . . well, she's all right now?”

“I shouldn't be surprised.”

The reason dialogue like this is especially effective is that it shows Sargeant learning his job, taking his cues from a very sophisticated but guarded informant. Brexton will not make Sargeant's job easy for him, but he is perfectly willing to prevent him from being misled.

Death Likes It Hot was about as far as Vidal could take his Sargeant series. With this last novel, he was able to rectify some of the series' faults by putting his detective in an environment that could be much more carefully described and was more functional in terms of a mystery story plot. In other words, as Sargeant becomes knowledgeable about this particular society, he is better able to detect the murderer. This is not really

the case in the other two novels. Almost nothing significant is learned about the ballet world in *Death in the Fifth Position*, and the world of politics figures importantly only in the first part of *Death Before Bedtime*, which really turns on the demented personality of one of the characters. It is difficult to see how Vidal could have continued the series without making it ridiculous. How could Sargeant have continued to become involved in murder cases without becoming a professional detective? If Vidal had turned him into a professional detective, Sargeant's distinctive qualities—his aloofness from matters of crime until his personal safety is at stake, his reluctance to solve a murder case until circumstances force him to act—would have been destroyed. *Death Likes It Hot* fulfills the modest strengths of the Sargeant series; Vidal was wise not to continue writing in the mystery genre after this triumph.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PETER CUTLER SARGEANT II SERIES: *Death in the Fifth Position*, 1952; *Death Before Bedtime*, 1953; *Death Likes It Hot*, 1954

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS VIDAL): 1946-1950 • *Williwaw*, 1946; *In a Yellow Wood*, 1947; *The City and the Pillar*, 1948 (revised 1965); *The Season of Comfort*, 1949; *A Search for the King: A Twelfth Century Legend*, 1950; *Dark Green, Bright Red*, 1950

1951-1970 • *The Judgment of Paris*, 1952 (revised 1965); *Messiah*, 1954 (revised 1965); *Julian*, 1964; *Washington, D.C.*, 1967; *Myra Breckinridge*, 1968; *Two Sisters: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel*, 1970

1971-2000 • *Burr*, 1973; *Myron*, 1974; *1876*, 1976; *Kalki*, 1978; *Creation*, 1981; *Duluth*, 1983; *Lincoln*, 1984; *Empire*, 1987; *Hollywood: A Novel of America in the 1920's*, 1990; *Live from Golgotha*, 1992; *The Smithsonian Institution*, 1998; *The Golden Age*, 2000

SHORT FICTION (AS VIDAL): *A Thirsty Evil: Seven Short Stories*, 1956; *Clouds and Eclipses: The Collected Short Stories*, 2006

PLAYS (AS VIDAL): *Visit to a Small Planet: A*

Comedy Akin to a Vaudeville, pb., 1956; pr. 1957; *The Best Man: A Play About Politics*, pr., pb. 1960; *Romulus: A New Comedy*, pr., pb. 1962; *An Evening with Richard Nixon*, pr. 1972

SCREENPLAYS (AS VIDAL): *The Catered Affair*, 1956; *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 1959 (with Tennessee Williams); *The Best Man*, 1964 (adaptation of his play); *Last of the Mobile Hot-Shots*, 1969; *Caligula*, 1977

TELEPLAYS (AS VIDAL): *Visit to a Small Planet, and Other Television Plays*, 1956; *Dress Gray*, 1986

NONFICTION (AS VIDAL): *Rocking the Boat*, 1962; *Reflections upon a Sinking Ship*, 1969; *Homage to Daniel Shays: Collected Essays, 1952-1972*, 1972; *Matters of Fact and of Fiction: Essays, 1973-1976*, 1977; *The Second American Revolution, and Other Essays, 1976-1982*, 1982; *At Home: Essays, 1982-1988*, 1988; *Screening History*, 1992; *The Decline and Fall of the American Empire*, 1992; *United States: Essays, 1952-1992*, 1993; *Palimpsest: A Memoir*, 1995; *Virgin Islands, A Dependency of United States: Essays, 1992-1997*, 1997; *Gore Vidal, Sexually Speaking: Collected Sex Writings*, 1999; *The Last Empire: Essays, 1992-2000*, 2000; *Dreaming War: Blood for Oil and the Cheney-Bush Junta*, 2002; *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated*, 2002; *Imperial America*, 2004; *Point to Point Navigation: A Memoir, 1964-2006*, 2006

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Kiernan, Robert F. *Gore Vidal*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. This study of Vidal's major writings tries to assess his place in American literature and gives astute descriptions of the Vidalian style and manner. The book, which uses Vidal's manuscript collection, contains a brief note and bibliography section.

Parini, Jay, ed. *Gore Vidal: Writer Against the Grain*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Vidal's distaste for much of the academic study of modern fiction has been mirrored in a lack of academic study of his work. Jay Parini sought to redress the balance by compiling this work, which deals with both Vidal's fiction and nonfiction.

Stanton, Robert J., and Gore Vidal, eds. *Views from a Window: Conversations with Gore Vidal*. Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, 1980. A compilation of interviews excerpted and arranged along themes. Vidal comments on his and other authors' works, on sexuality, and on politics. Vidal edited the manuscript and made corrections, with changes noted in the text.

Vidal, Gore. *Point to Point Navigation: A Memoir*. New York: Doubleday, 2006. Covers the years 1964 to 2006, detailing Vidal's experiences and his reflections on writing (his own and others'), as well as culture generally.

M. E. BRADDON**Mary Elizabeth Braddon Maxwell****Born:** London, England; October 4, 1835**Died:** Richmond, England; February 4, 1915**Also wrote as** Aunt Belinda; Lady Caroline Lascelles; Babington White**Types of plot:** Psychological; thriller**CONTRIBUTION**

In the 1860's, crime literature was scorned by critics as the entertainment of subliterates. Only a few writers—primarily, Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton—had developed the crime novel into a literary form for the middle and upper classes. To their efforts, M. E. Braddon added profoundly realistic psychological development of characters, especially female characters. She was among the first, also, to use the crime novel as a vehicle for radical social commentary, particularly concerning the condition of women and the moral corruption of the middle classes. In addition, Braddon polished the technique, made famous by Wilkie Collins in *The Woman in White* (1860), of allowing a step-by-step revelation of a case, so that the reader learns of evidence along with the detective. Her wit, too, was unusual in her age. Braddon's novels are also noteworthy for the camera-like accuracy with which she depicted an astonishing variety of settings; to the horror of her contemporary critics, she could describe the drinking and gambling places of men as vividly as the claustrophobic atmosphere of a rural village or the glittering decorations of a wealthy woman's private rooms.

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Elizabeth Braddon was the daughter of Henry Braddon, a solicitor, and his Irish wife, Fanny White Braddon. Henry Braddon was financially irresponsible and an unfaithful husband. He was separated from his wife while Mary Elizabeth Braddon was still a child. A sister, Margaret, eleven years older than Mary, married an Italian and settled in Naples. A brother, Edward, six years older, moved to India and

then to Tasmania, eventually becoming prime minister there.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon was educated by her mother, who encouraged her reading and writing, except when finances allowed a governess or a school. At the age of nineteen, Braddon determined to support them both by going on the stage, in defiance of all that was then considered proper. Despite protests from relatives, she acted for several years under the name Mary Seyton.

In 1860, Braddon met the Irish publisher John Maxwell. They lived together. Marriage was impossible because Maxwell was already married; his wife was in a Dublin mental asylum. Maxwell and Braddon were to have six children, five of whom survived childhood, before they could marry in 1874, on the death of his wife. The scandal was considerable. Despite this, Braddon made a home for Maxwell's five children, their own children, and her mother. The warmth of that home is described by a son, William B. Maxwell, in *Time Gathered* (1938).

Braddon's prolific career began in earnest as an attempt to support Maxwell's publishing ventures. *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) brought her immediate fame, and she became permanently typed as a sensation novelist (although she tended to turn away from crime in many of her later works). By the late 1860's, Maxwell and Braddon were financially established. They eventually owned much property and traveled on the Continent; they moved in a circle that included distinguished figures from the worlds of theater, art, literature, politics, and even society, despite their scandals. Braddon continued writing until her death, her last novel, *Mary*, being posthumously published in 1916.

ANALYSIS

Sensation novels were a scandal of the 1860's. The term, poorly defined then, as now, was used to condemn fiction by such writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Reade, as well as that by M. E. Braddon and many lesser fig-

ures. Condemnation focused on the novelists' preoccupation with crimes, mostly murder, arson, and bigamy. Much of the criticism was thinly concealed class snobbery: Sensation novels spread the values of the working class, not of the governing classes. They were not genteel. In these novels, crime was not confined to the poor. In the stately homes of England, the novels suggested, there was considerable crime, but these criminals, unlike the poor, were often protected by their wealth and power. Then, too, sensation novelists often presented psychologically motivated, even sympathetic, people as criminals; their criminals were not stereotypical representatives of evil that had been found in the earlier gothic, romantic, and Newgate fiction from which these novels sprang. Also, critics perceptively observed, and objected to, female characters who successfully defied Victorian proprieties and challenged masculine authority.

By these criteria, Braddon was the most sensational of them all, and her reputation, too, was tainted by the scandals of her personal life. *Lady Audley's Secret* was notorious. It was also widely read. It appeared in October, 1862; by the end of that year, eight editions had been printed. Braddon knew exactly what she was doing. In *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), she created the figure of sensation novelist Sigismund Smith, who satirizes himself and his author with his methodical analysis of the number of corpses needed to satisfy public taste. Yet there is more than cold calculation in Braddon's work.

In his definitive and excellent *Sensational Victorian: The Life and Times of Mary Elizabeth Braddon* (1979), Robert Lee Wolff notes the social satire underlying Braddon's work. He observes her critiques of Victorian class structure, and he proves her to be politically radical, although not revolutionary, showing that, in her later works, she revealed her radicalism quite openly. Yet this radicalism would have been obvious from the first to sophisticated female readers of her day. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, for example, the dramatic tension does not evolve from the war of good against evil. To satisfy Victorian prudery, Braddon told that story, making sure that the forces of goodness are finally triumphant, but she fashioned the narrative in such a way that the sophisticated reader is virtually

forced to identify with the forces of evil, as personified by Lady Audley. Lady Audley loses, but dramatic tension arises because the reader hopes that she will not. Similarly, in *Aurora Floyd* (1863), the reader is made to sympathize with a bigamist who foreshadows that in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891): Both authors insist that their criminal heroines are actually pure women. In *The Captain of the Vulture* (1862), there are two heroines, both bigamists. *Birds of Prey* (1867) and *Charlotte's Inheritance* (1868) function a bit differently; both are direct attacks on the morality of the middle class. In these novels, too, with one exception, the strongest characters are the women.

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the opponents are Lady Audley, the former Lucy Maldon, and her detective stepnephew, Robert Audley, who remorselessly secures the evidence that will ruin her. Robert Audley is motivated by his belief that his is the hand of God and by his somewhat erratic loyalty to one of Lady Audley's husbands, George Talboys. Much more space, however, is given to the justification of Lady Audley. Born into poverty, she is the daughter of an insane mother and an alcoholic father; her childhood is punctuated by nightmares in which her mother attempts to kill her. She knows that her beauty is her only asset, and she resolves to make a successful marriage. She believes that she has done so when she marries George Talboys, but his father disapproves, and the young couple is allowed to wallow in squalor. The girl complains; thereafter, the conventional reader is free to believe that she, as a nagging wife, deserves whatever happens to her. The worldly reader, however, will react differently when Talboys abandons his wife and infant son, leaving only a note to say that he will return when he has made his fortune. He does not communicate again in the years that follow. Lucy must support herself, her son, and her father. She does so, changing her name and taking employment as a governess. When she is courted by the wealthy Sir Michael Audley, she convinces herself that, long abandoned, she is free to marry. As Audley's wife, she is an idealized lady of the manor, joyously improving conditions on his estate and alleviating the poverty that she herself has found so painful. She makes her husband's life a paradise.

All that is ruined when Talboys reappears and doggedly locates Lucy. She pushes him down a well. Although the conventional reader will see this as a coldblooded murder, the worldlier woman will view it as somewhat justified, if a bit excessive. Robert Audley determines to catch her. She tries to kill him also but merely murders a lout who has blackmailed her. She is forced into a confession, after which she is institutionalized in a bleak Belgian madhouse in which she dies. Robert Audley now has the satisfaction of knowing that he has ruined her life and broken his uncle's heart. Pleased with his work, he ends the story in an aura of prudish self-righteousness. Conventional virtue has won, but Braddon's attitude toward that virtue is clearly one of disdain.

AURORA FLOYD

Aurora Floyd is similarly subversive. At the time, Victorian critics were outraged when Aurora strikes a servant for beating her dog, but Braddon was clearly on the side of Aurora; the servant who attacks the dog also proves capable of murder. Worse than this unmannerly behavior, however, is the fact that Aurora is a bigamist. The victim of great wealth, she has run away from school to marry her father's handsome, but worthless, groom. Believing that husband dead, she accepts a proposal from proud, aristocratic Talbot Bulstrode, but he breaks the engagement when she will not explain the mystery of her past. According to the mores of the day, Bulstrode is right; according to the author, he is quite wrong. Braddon has Bulstrode admit this when he sees Aurora prove herself an excellent wife to his friend, John Mellish.

Through repeated references, Braddon makes it clear that *Aurora Floyd* was her retelling of William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604). Othello, she implied, was not a true hero: Mellish is. Generous and in no way authoritarian, he supports his wife regardless of her past, remarries her when her first husband has reappeared and been murdered, and stands by her, with only one lapse of faith, when Aurora is suspected of that murder; he is, in short, capable not only of trusting his wife's innocence but also of sympathetically comprehending her guilt. Consequently, Aurora and Mellish live happily at the end of the novel, as Othello and his more innocent Desdemona did not.

BIRDS OF PREY AND CHARLOTTE'S INHERITANCE

Ostensibly, *Birds of Prey* and *Charlotte's Inheritance* retell the story of William Palmer, who was tried for murder in 1856. Like Palmer, Braddon's villainous Philip Sheldon is a surgeon who murders a friend to conceal financial difficulties and who then attempts to murder female relatives (Palmer successfully, Sheldon not) for their insurance money.

Yet there are hints throughout that Braddon was also telling Dickens how he should have written "Hunted Down" and Bulwer-Lytton, whom she admired, how he should have written *Lucretia* (1846), both fictional retellings of the similarly motivated true crimes of Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. Both the Dickens and Bulwer-Lytton works are weakened by their melodramatic villains, mere stick figures exemplifying evil. In contrast, Braddon directly and uncompromisingly confronted the immorality of middle-class greed. Sheldon represents that class, and he is, in fact, associated with other such professionals—an attorney and a physician—who condone his original murder rather than risk financial ruin by reporting it. On the other hand, the four men who act as detectives in the two novels are, with one exception (a French gentleman), the underdog outcasts of this society. One is a French mountebank suggestive of the later Hercule Poirot. Another is an unsuccessful confidence man. The third is the equally unsuccessful apprentice of the confidence man, turned successful journalist. It is significant, however, that all these men are helpless to rescue Sheldon's stepdaughter, whom he is slowly poisoning. Only when the women of the novels band together, mistress and servant alike, can the girl be saved.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE VULTURE

Braddon also wrote historical crime novels, as, for example, *The Captain of the Vulture*, set in the eighteenth century. In this novel, she presents two sympathetic female bigamists. The stronger of the two is Sally Pecker, mistress of the village inn. Sally has been educated by life. Her first husband abandoned her after mistreating her, and he maliciously carried off her much-loved infant son. She has found rest in the village of the story and married the kindly inn-

keeper. Sally befriends Millicent Duke, the novel's young heroine, who is the victim of her wealth, her isolation in a rural village, her reading of the romantic novels favored by Victorian moralists, and her decadent father and brother. The latter marry her off to George Duke, apparently a sea captain but actually associated with pirates and slavers. He disappears, and after many years, Millicent marries the love of her girlhood. Her first husband reappears and is murdered; Millicent is arrested and tried for the crime. With Sally's help, Millicent has transcended her earlier weakness, and, in a courtroom scene that anticipates the later courtroom dramas of Erle Stanley Gardner, she denounces the true culprit. There are detectives in the story, but they are well intentioned bunglers, who succeed only in arresting Millicent. The other males are weak or they are criminal, although extenuating circumstances surround one such character. Sally Pecker's son reappears, and not surprisingly, in view of his environment, he is a criminal. Yet he is allowed a tranquil death in his mother's arms, for he is clearly one of society's victims.

These novels exemplify the techniques of Braddon's crime fiction and explain why her novels were notorious in their age. Still, while she upset the conventional, she attracted an admiring audience, which included Alfred, Lord Tennyson, William Ewart Gladstone, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Reade, Robert Louis Stevenson, George Moore, Sir James Barrie, and Henry James, among others. Their admiration was well directed. Braddon wrote prolifically and unevenly, but, at her best, she rivals any crime novelist of her age and ranks among the best of mainstream novelists.

Unfortunately, modern critics and scholars have tended to accept the verdict of scandalized Victorian moralists. From her death in 1915 to the mid-twentieth century, she was almost completely ignored. The result is that, until publication of Wolff's *Sensational Victorian*, even the facts of Braddon's life, such as her date of birth, were incorrectly stated in standard reference sources when they were given at all.

Betty Richardson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

VALENTINE HAWKEHURST SERIES: *Birds of Prey*, 1867; *Charlotte's Inheritance*, 1868

DETECTIVE FAUNCE SERIES: *Rough Justice*, 1889; *His Darling Sin*, 1899

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1860-1870 • *Three Times Dead: Or, The Secret of the Heath*, 1860 (revised as *The Trail of the Serpent*, 1861); *The Black Band: Or, The Mysteries of Midnight*, 1861-1862 (also known as *What Is This Mystery?*); *Lady Audley's Secret*, 1862; *The Captain of the Vulture*, 1862 (also known as *Darrell Markham: Or, The Captain of the Vulture*); *The Lady Lisle*, 1862; *Aurora Floyd*, 1863; *Eleanor's Victory*, 1863; *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 1863; *The Outcast: Or, The Brand of Society*, 1863-1864 (also known as *Henry Dunbar: The Story of an Outcast*); *The Doctor's Wife*, 1864; *The Lawyer's Secret*, 1864; *Only a Clod*, 1865; *Sir Jasper's Tenant*, 1865; *Diavola: Or, The Woman's Battle*, 1866-1867 (also known as *Run to Earth* and *Nobody's Daughter: Or, The Ballad-Singer of Wapping*); *Rupert Godwin*, 1867; *The White Phantom*, 1868; *Oscar Bertrand: Or, The Idiot of the Mountain*, 1869; *The Factory Girl: Or, All Is Not Gold That Glitters*, 1869; *The Outcroon: Or, The Lily of Louisiana*, 1869

1871-1880 • *Robert Ainsleigh*, 1872 (also known as *Bound to John Company: Or, The Adventures of Misadventures of Robert Ainsleigh*); *To the Bitter End*, 1872; *Lucius Davoren: Or, Publicans and Sinners*, 1873 (also known as *Publicans and Sinners*); *Lost for Love*, 1874; *Taken at the Flood*, 1874; *A Strange World*, 1875; *Hostages to Fortune*, 1875; *Dead Men's Shoes*, 1876; *An Open Verdict*, 1878; *Leighton Grange: Or, Who Killed Edith Woodville*, 1878? (also known as *The Mystery of Leighton Grange*); *Just As I Am*, 1880; *The Story of Barbara, Her Splendid Misery and Her Gilded Cage*, 1880 (also known as *Her Splendid Misery*)

1881-1890 • *Le Pasteur de Marston*, 1881; *The Fatal Marriage: Or, The Shadow in the Corner*, 1885; *Wyllard's Weird*, 1885; *One Thing Needful, and Cut By the County*, 1886 (also known as *Penalty of Fate: Or, The One Thing Needful*); *Like and Unlike*, 1887; *The Fatal Three*, 1888; *The Day Will Come*, 1889

1891-1910 • *The Venetians*, 1892; *Thou Art the*

Man, 1894; *Sons of Fire*, 1895; *London Pride: Or, When the World Was Younger*, 1896 (also known as *When the World Was Younger*); *Her Convict*, 1907; *During Her Majesty's Pleasure*, 1908; *Beyond These Voices*, 1910

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1866-1880 • *The Lady's Mile*, 1866; *Circe: Or, Three Acts in the Life of an Artist*, 1867; *Dead Sea Fruit*, 1868; *The Blue Band: Or, The Story of a Woman's Vengeance*, 1869?; *Fenton's Quest*, 1871; *The Lovels of Arden*, 1871; *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 1873; *Joshua Haggard's Daughter*, 1876; *George Caulfield's Journey*, 1879; *The Cloven Foot*, 1879; *Vixen*, 1879

1881-1890 • *Asphodel*, 1881; *His Secret*, 1881; *Wages of Sin*, 1881; *Flower and Weed*, 1882; *Mount Royal*, 1882; *Married in Haste*, 1883; *Phantom Fortune*, 1883; *The Golden Calf*, 1883; *Under the Red Flag*, 1883; *Ishmael*, 1884 (also known as *The Ishmaelite*); *Only a Woman*, 1885; *Mohawks*, 1886; *The Little Woman in Black*, 1886; *Whose Was the Hand?*, 1889; *One Life, One Love*, 1890

1891-1900 • *Gerard: Or, The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*, 1891 (also known as *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*); *All Along the River*, 1893; *Under Love's Rule*, 1897; *In High Places*, 1898; *The Infidel*, 1900

1901-1916 • *The Conflict*, 1903; *A Lost Eden*, 1904; *The Rose of Life*, 1905; *The White House*, 1906; *Dead Love Has Chains*, 1907; *Our Adversary*, 1909; *The Green Curtain*, 1911; *Miranda*, 1913; *Mary*, 1916

SHORT FICTION: *Ralph the Bailiff, and Other Tales*, 1862 (also known as *Dudley Carleon*); *The Summer Tourist: A Book for Long and Short Journeys*, 1871; *Milly Darrell, and Other Tales*, 1873 (also known as *Meeting Her Fate*); *My Sister's Confession, and Other Stories*, 1876; *In Great Waters*, 1877; *Weavers and Weft, and Other Tales*, 1877; *Shadow in the Corner*, 1879 (also known as *Figure in the Corner, and Other Stories*); *Great Journey, and Other Stories*, 1882

PLAY: *The Missing Witness*, pb. 1880

POETRY: *Garibaldi, and Other Poems*, 1861

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Aladdin: Or, The*

Wonderful Lamp, 1880; *The Good Hermione*, 1886 (as *Aunt Belinda*); *The Christmas Hirelings*, 1894

MISCELLANEOUS: *Flower and Weed, and Other Tales*, 1884; *Under the Red Flag, and Other Tales*, 1886; *All Along the River*, 1894

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ERNEST BRAMAH

Ernest Bramah Smith

Born: Manchester, Lancashire, England; March 20, 1868

Died: Somerset, England; June 27, 1942

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Max Carrados, 1914-1934

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MAX CARRADOS, a wealthy bachelor and amateur detective, around thirty-five, is totally blind. His blindness has led him to develop other senses, and he is able to read newspaper headlines by running his sensitive fingers over them, to monitor scents and sounds undetectable by others, and even to sense subtle changes in temperature.

LOUIS CARLYLE, a private-inquiry agent and disbarred solicitor, who calls for Carrados's aid when he is stumped or when he has a client who cannot afford to pay. Very intelligent and capable, he requires assistance only on truly baffling cases.

PARKINSON is servant and eyes to Carrados. Extraordinarily observant, he is able to remember every detail of his surroundings, even to the size of a glove lying on a table four weeks before. He is the ideal detective's assistant, asking no questions, following orders to the letter, revealing nothing.

CONTRIBUTION

In Max Carrados, Ernest Bramah created the first blind fictional detective, ushering in a host of blind, paralyzed, overweight, and otherwise disabled sleuths. Unlike many of those who followed him, however, Carrados is not truly disabled by his physical limitations. Because he has developed his other senses so acutely, his lack of sight is no real hindrance to him, and he gently mocks his sighted colleagues who are so often misled by what they see. Carrados's blindness opens up new avenues to the writer. Because Carrados cannot see, Bramah is forced to come up with different ways by which evidence is gathered and examined,

giving a fresh angle to conventional material.

Nevertheless, Bramah's detective is not defined solely in terms of his blindness. A very kind man, he has a remarkable wit, demonstrated most memorably in his exchanges with Louis Carlyle, and a rigorous sense of justice, which at one point compels him to urge a murderer to commit suicide. Modern readers of Bramah may not find much that is new in terms of plot, but they will find much to appreciate in the strong characterizations and humor of the stories.

BIOGRAPHY

Very little is known about Ernest Bramah's life, and it was his lifelong wish that it be so. Throughout his professional life, he demonstrated a remarkable skill at avoiding personal interviews, preferring to keep his private life private. His publisher was compelled in a 1923 introduction to assert that, in fact, Ernest Bramah was a real person and not a pseudonym for another author.

He was born Ernest Bramah Smith in Manchester, England, and most sources give the date as either 1868 or 1869. From his autobiographical first book, *English Farming and Why I Turned It Up* (1894), it can be learned that he dropped out of high school to try his hand at farming. It was not a success. Bramah subsequently turned to journalism and became a correspondent for a small newspaper. Later, in London, he became secretary to the publisher Jerome K. Jerome and eventually joined the editorial staff of Jerome's periodical, *To-day*. Bramah left *To-day* to become editor of a new trade magazine for clergymen, *The Minister*, and stayed there until the magazine folded.

It was at this point that he became a full-time writer for magazines, creating the Max Carrados and Kai Lung stories that were later published in book-length collections. Bramah's first book of detective fiction, *Max Carrados*, was published in 1914, when he was in his mid-forties; his only Max Carrados novel, *The Bravo of London* (1934), appeared when he was in his mid-sixties.

In addition to his writing, Bramah had a great interest in numismatics (an interest shared with Max Carrados), and he is the author of a nonfictional book on British coins, *A Guide to the Varieties and Rarity of English Regal Copper Coins: Charles II-Victoria, 1671-1860* (1929).

Bramah's Kai Lung stories, and some of his popular articles, deal so convincingly with Asian geography and culture that it has often been speculated that he lived for a time in Asia. That may in fact be true, but there is no evidence to support it. A small and thin man, Bramah lived as a recluse in his later life. He died in Somerset on June 27, 1942.

ANALYSIS

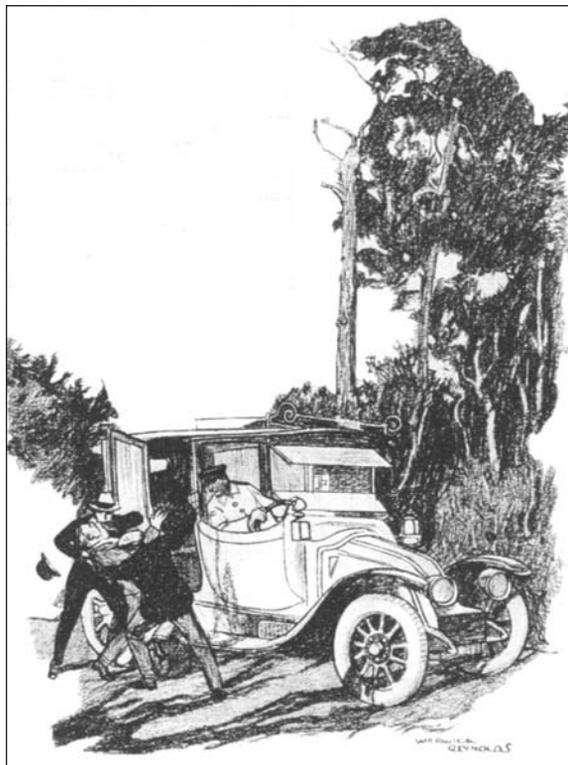
In Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados stories, the reader finds the best of two worlds: The stories contain many of the conventional crimes and criminals that are greeted as old friends by those who have read widely in mystery and detective fiction, yet they center on a detective who is utterly new and who insistently provides a fresh view of the conventional material.

MAX CARRADOS

Max Carrados was blinded as an adult, when a twig hit his eyes during a riding accident. The injury left him sightless, but the appearance of his eyes is unchanged. In his introduction to *The Eyes of Max Carrados* (1923), Bramah explains that

so far from that crippling his interests in life or his energies, it has merely impelled him to develop those senses which in most of us lie half dormant and practically unused. Thus you will understand that while he may be at a disadvantage when you are at an advantage, he is at an advantage when you are at a disadvantage.

Carrados, understandably, prefers to work when he is at an advantage; thus he conducts many of his investigations at night, and he manages to hold a roomful of villains at bay simply by extinguishing the lights. Even in a well-lit room, however, Carrados is able to perform remarkable feats: He is able to read newspaper headlines, playing cards, and photographic negatives by running his extremely sensitive fingers over them; by knowing what to look for and guessing where to search, he can locate a single petal on the



The kidnapping of Max Carrados in a 1926 issue of Pearson's Magazine.

ground or a few strands of hair caught in a bramble; he can recognize the voice or pattern of footsteps of a person he has not encountered in several years; and he is able, by identifying the odor of the adhesive, to determine that a man is wearing a false mustache.

Though Carrados's achievements may seem to readers incredible and superhuman, Bramah went to some pains in his introduction to *The Eyes of Max Carrados* to establish that, historically, blind people have indeed accomplished much, and Carrados is only one example of the tremendous capabilities of the blind. "Although for convenience the qualities of more than one blind prototype may have been collected within a single frame," each of the things that Carrados can do is certainly possible. "Carrados's opening exploit, that of accurately deciding an antique coin to be a forgery, by the sense of touch, is far from being unprecedented."

Carrados is not above feigning helplessness when it will help him obtain information. When it suits him, he can be remarkably clumsy, knocking over a framed

picture (and stealing the piece of glass with the fingerprint on it), accidentally opening the door to a dark-room (to confront the suspect within), or bumping into furniture (so he can whisper to the accomplice who reaches out to help him). These accidents are typically followed by Carrados's humble apology—"‘sorry’, he shrugs, ‘but I am blind.’"

With one exception, the rather unsuccessful novel *The Bravo of London*, Max Carrados solves his mysteries within the span of the short story. Yet even within this genre Bramah manages to establish characters that live and breathe and intrigue the reader. Bramah's recurring characters—Carrados, Louis Carlyle, Parkinson, Inspector Beedle—are so engaging in part because they are revealed to be flawed. Witty, kindly, and generous as Carrados is, he also has a cold streak and is not immune to vanity. Previous to his reunion with Carrados, Carlyle has been disbarred because of an indiscretion (although not a crime), and he does not take cases from clients who cannot pay. In only a few sentences, Bramah presents a succinct and rather appealing suggestion of Inspector Beedle's character:

the inspector nodded and contributed a weighty monosyllable of sympathetic agreement. The most prosaic of men in the pursuit of his ordinary duties, it nevertheless subtly appealed to some half-dormant streak of vanity to have his profession taken romantically when there was no serious work on hand.

Bramah's crime fighters are believable, likable characters, not overly virtuous supermen.

This passage also shows something of Bramah's own style. The sentences are economical and carry a constant faint touch of irony. "This is how people are," Bramah seems to say, "and is it not amusing?" The teasing is always gentle, always affectionate—Bramah enjoys his characters, finds pleasure in the silliness of social climbing and the vagaries of human relationships, and laughs at human weakness rather than denying it.

As in this passage, with its reference to the inspector's "weighty monosyllable," most of the action in the stories is revealed through dialogue. Although the narrator is a third-person omniscient one, little is revealed

that is not spoken aloud by one character to another. The reader may know that Carrados intends to conduct a search but will not learn what is found until Carrados tells someone else. Carrados likes to work alone, and not even the reader is allowed into his confidence until he is ready to reveal all. Even when the detective expresses dissatisfaction with himself, he does so by muttering to himself; the reader is permitted to overhear the muttering but not to enter into Carrados's mind. Does he ever feel fear in a dangerous spot or have fits of self-pity about his blindness? The reader never knows any more than the other characters in the stories know.

Certainly one of Carrados's most attractive characteristics is his ironic wit. Exchanges between Carrados and Carlyle are filled with sarcasm and affectionate teasing, but the blind man is at his best when sparring with criminals:

"If you happen to come through this alive and are interested you might ask Zinghi to show you a target of mine that he keeps. Seven shots at twenty yards, the target indicated by four watches, none of them so loud as the one [your friend is] wearing. . . ."

"I wear no watch," muttered Dompierre, expressing his thought aloud.

"No, Monsieur Dompierre, but you wear a heart, and that not on your sleeve," said Carrados. "Just now it is quite as loud as Mr. Montmorency's watch. It is more central too—I shall not have to allow any margin. . . ."

"Monsieur," declared Dompierre earnestly. . . . "Take care: killing is a dangerous game."

"For you—not for me," was the bland rejoinder. "If you kill me you will be hanged for it. If I kill you I shall be honourably acquitted. You can imagine the scene—the sympathetic court—the recital of your villainies—the story of my indignities. Then with stumbling feet and groping hands the helpless blind man is led forward to give evidence. Sensation!"

BRAMAH'S CRIMINALS

If Max Carrados and his friends are made to resemble flesh-and-blood men, the same cannot be said for Bramah's criminals. Even in Bramah's time, his evil-doers would have been familiar to anyone widely read in mystery fiction: They are mysterious strangers from

India, Christian Scientists, philandering husbands, mad scientists, and Jews, and they are usually painted rather flatly. As a group, they are unusually crafty and intelligent, but they are not—with a few exceptions—complex characters whom one could perhaps forgive or grudgingly admire. One exception to this rule is the professional thief, often with an international reputation, who has lived by his wits for years and is a proper intellectual match for Carrados. Still, even these characters begin to be recognizable as a type, the “internationally renowned criminal,” and are indistinguishable one from another.

Another exception to the flatly evil villain sometimes turns out not to be a villain at all, but a misunderstood hero. Once Carrados, in the midst of obtaining definitive evidence against the “villain,” comes to understand the man’s true nature (and in Bramah’s stories, criminal masterminds are always male), he uses his wits to ensure that the crime-that-is-not-a-crime is carried through successfully, even while the police (whom he had called when he had arrest in mind) are on their way. It is in these stories that readers encounter another fascinating aspect of Carrados’s personality, and one of Bramah’s own fascinations with the business of solving crimes.

CRIME IS NOT A GAME

The truth is, Bramah appears to believe, that solving a crime is not always as rewarding as one would suppose. Often, Carrados finds himself on the trail of someone whom he would rather not catch; he finds it distasteful at times to ruin careers or marriages or to waste the taxpayers’ money on preserving justice for evil men. At these times, he wishes that he had not become involved in the case. In fact, in many ways he is never truly involved, at least not emotionally. He is interested in solving the puzzle, not in bringing criminals to trial, and he prefers to let the police take over as soon as he can present the evidence to them. In the scenes in which Carrados agonizes over the consequences of his decision to take on a case, Bramah develops one of his recurring themes—the idea that crime is not simply a puzzle or a game, but something that really occurs, and with genuine human consequences. The theme is presented gently and in no way detracts from one’s pleasure in reading the stories;

Bramah is writing mystery fiction, not tracts. Nevertheless, he wants his readers to leave his stories with a better understanding of the capabilities of the blind and the realities of a crime-ridden world.

If Bramah’s plots have one shortcoming, it is one that modern readers will find more annoying than did his contemporaries. In some tales, the mystery is solved more through divine intervention than through the ingenuity of the detective. In one case, for example, a pair of enormously clever thieves who have made a reputation on two continents escape with a large fortune. As they are almost away, with virtually no chance of being caught, they are suddenly confronted with the notion of God’s goodness and their own sinfulness. They repent and bring the money back. Though writers as great as William Shakespeare have found it necessary to include coincidence in their plots because coincidence is, in fact, a part of life, mystery stories that are resolved in this way tend to be rather unsatisfying.

The most satisfying resolutions are Carrados’s alone, and the special twist that clicks everything into place usually occurs offstage, in Carrados’s mind or in the course of one of his secret investigations. These are not mysteries that readers could solve if only they were clever enough—unless they happened to be experts on Greek tetradrachms (like Bramah and Carrados) or on local British history. The fun is in watching how Carrados does it, not in trying to beat him to the solution.

At his best, though, Bramah is a master of the short story in which everything fits, nothing is wasted, evil men get their due, and damsels in distress are rescued—all in a highly entertaining fashion.

Cynthia A. Bily

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MAX CARRADOS SERIES: *Max Carrados*, 1914; *The Eyes of Max Carrados*, 1923; *The Specimen Case*, 1924; *Max Carrados Mysteries*, 1927; *The Bravo of London*, 1934

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Mirror of Kung Ho*, 1905; *What Might Have Been*, 1907 (also known as *The Secret of*

the League); *A Little Flutter*, 1930; *The Moon of Much Gladness*, 1932 (also known as *The Return of Kai Lung*)

SHORT FICTION: *The Wallet of Kai Lung*, 1900; *Kai Lung's Golden Hours*, 1922; *Kai Lung Unrolls His Mat*, 1928; *Kai Lung Beneath the Mulberry-Tree*, 1940; *Kai Lung: Six Uncollected Stories from "Punch,"* 1974

NONFICTION: *English Farming and Why I Turned It Up*, 1894; *A Guide to the Varieties and Rarity of English Regal Copper Coins: Charles II-Victoria, 1671-1860*, 1929

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CHRISTIANNA BRAND

Mary Christianna Milne

Born: Malaya; December 17, 1907

Died: Place unknown; March 11, 1988

Also wrote as Mary Ann Ashe; Annabel Jones;

Mary Roland; China Thompson

Types of plot: Master sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Cockrill, 1942-1955

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

INSPECTOR COCKRILL is in the Sherlock Holmes tradition of detectives who have almost supernatural powers but who disclose little about their methods of reasoning until the case is over. The elderly Cockrill's outward manner is crusty, but he is kind and has a paternal affection for young women. A perceptive judge of character, he sympathizes with human weakness, though he is indefatigable in his search for truth.

CONTRIBUTION

Christianna Brand may be considered a pioneer of the medical thriller, as her highly honored 1944 novel *Green for Danger* preceded by decades the popular works of Patricia Cornwell and Robin Cook. Indeed, H. R. F. Keating called it the finest novel of the Golden Age of mystery fiction. Her detective fiction illustrates the dictum of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel that a change in quantity may become transformed into a change in quality. The standard British mystery emphasized complex plotting in which the reader was challenged to decipher the clues to the perpetrator of the crime.

Brand's works took the emphasis on surprise to new heights: Sometimes the key to the story emerged only with the novel's last line. Few readers proved able to match wits with her Inspector Cockrill, and if he was not present, she had other ways to fool the audi-

ence. On one occasion, she “gave away” the story by a subtle clue in the first paragraph. Also, many of her books show an irrepressible humor that she carried to much further lengths than most of her contemporaries.

BIOGRAPHY

Christianna Brand was born Mary Christianna Milne in Malaya in December, 1907, and grew up there and in India. She was sent to England to attend a Franciscan convent school in Somerset, an area of England known for its beauty. Her happiness at school received a rude upset when her father lost all of his money; she had to begin earning her own living at the age of seventeen.

Brand went through a rapid succession of ill-paid jobs, mostly in sales, but also in modeling, professional ballroom dancing, receptionist and secretarial work, shop assistant work, interior design, and governess work. At one point, she opened a club for working girls in a slum section of London. Her financial prospects took a turn for the better when she met and fell in love with a young surgeon, Roland Lewis. She married him in 1939 and became Mary Christianna Lewis in her personal life.

Before her marriage, Brand had already begun to write. Her decision to try detective stories had behind it no previous experience in fiction writing. (It is said that she wrote her first book, *Death in High Heels*, 1941, while working as a salesgirl, as a way to fantasize about killing a coworker.) She nevertheless was soon a success, and her second novel won a prize of one thousand dollars offered by Dodd, Mead and Company for its prestigious Red Badge series. Her early success proved to be no fluke; by the time of the publication of *Green for Danger* (1944), she had come to be generally regarded as one of the most important mystery writers of her time.

Brand once more did the unexpected by ceasing to write mystery novels according to her hitherto successful recipe. Instead, she turned to short stories. After the appearance of *Starrbelow* (1958), she did not write another mystery novel for ten years. Her writing career, however, was by no means over. She had in the meantime tried her hand at several other varieties of fiction, including historical romances and screenplays.

Although she never achieved the renown for these that her mysteries had brought her, her Nurse Matilda series of novels for children gained wide popularity. She returned to the ranks of mystery novelists in the late 1960's. She died in on March 11, 1988, in the arms of her husband of fifty years, Roland Lewis.

ANALYSIS

An author who, like Christianna Brand, has achieved a reputation for the ability to surprise her readers faces a difficult task. Her readers, once forewarned, will be expecting deception and hence will be on their guard. Nevertheless, Brand managed to pull off one surprise after another in each of her most famous mysteries. In her stress on bafflement, she was hardly original, but the seemingly impossible culprits she produced made her achievement in this area virtually unequaled.

There is much more to Brand than surprise. There is almost always in her work a romance, an idealistic love affair whose sexual elements are minimal. In her work, heroines at once fall in love with the man whom they will eventually marry, although only after overcoming numerous obstacles. Remarkably, in Brand's novels this approach to romance is carried to such lengths that it does not seem at all cloying or stereotypical. Rather, it is yet another manifestation of her unusually pronounced sense of humor.

Brand, whatever one may think of her, is certainly no unalloyed optimist. Often, her characters must realize a bitter truth about close friends. In *Green for Danger*, for example, the overriding ambition of many of the nurses makes them petty and nasty. In Brand's view of things, even “ordinary” people may harbor serious failings. Her murderers are not obvious villains but characters undistinguishable from anyone else in the novel, until their bitter secret is exposed.

Here, the element of romance often reappears, although this time more somberly. The murderer's secret usually involves either a disgruntled lover or someone whose ambition consumes all ordinary restraint. The motives of ambition and unrequited love, like the heroine's experience of falling in love, operate in an absolute fashion. Idealism and an awareness of evil thus work to balance each other, making Brand's

stories less unrealistic than a first encounter with one of her romantic heroines would lead one to suspect. All of this, further, is overlaid with a veneer of humor, making up in high spirits for what it lacks in sophistication.

GREEN FOR DANGER

As just presented, the characteristics of Brand's novels hardly seem a program for success. She managed, however, to put all the diverse pieces together in an effective way, as a closer look at *Green for Danger* illustrates. In this work, sometimes regarded as her best, a patient in a military hospital for bombing victims dies on the operating table. At first, his death hardly attracts notice, being regarded as an accident (by some mischance, the man's anesthetic had been contaminated). It soon develops, however, that more than accident is involved. Testimony of several student nurses who were present at the scene shows indisputably that foul play has occurred. The murderer can only have been one of the seven people present in the operating room theater, but not even the ingenious probing of Inspector Cockrill suffices to reveal the culprit. Still, the inspector is far from giving up.

Cockrill devises a characteristically subtle plan to trap the murderer into attempting another killing during surgery. His plan almost backfires, as the culprit possesses an ingenuity that, however twisted by malign ambition, almost matches that of Cockrill himself.

When the method of the murderer at last is revealed, even the experienced mystery reader will be forced to gasp in astonishment. Although dominant in *Green for Danger*, this element of surprise does not stand alone. A young nurse who has aroused suspicion is the person responsible for bringing Cockrill into the case. She is in love with a young doctor; although her romantic feelings do not receive detailed attention, they are unmistakably present. Although the reader will hardly take this nurse seriously as a suspect, since otherwise the romance would face utter ruin, this fact provides little or no aid in stealing a march on Cockrill.

Romance and murder are a familiar combination; to join humor with them is not so common. Brand does so by means of amusing descriptions of the petty rivalries and disputes among the nurses and other

members of the hospital staff. The points that induce them to quarrel generally are quite minor: For example, someone has taken over another's locker space, or wishes to listen to a radio program that another dislikes. These irritations soon flare up into severe disputes, which, however humorously depicted, serve to remind the reader of Brand's belief that murderous rage lies close at hand to more everyday feelings.

Brand's contention was based on personal experience. Before her marriage, she felt an enormous dislike for one of her fellow workers. This animosity, she conjectured, was of the sort that might easily lead to murder. It was this experience that colored her development of the motivation of her murderers and added a starkly realistic touch to her romantic and humorous tendencies.

LONDON PARTICULAR

For a lesser author, the old combination of traits Brand's novel presented might seem difficult to repeat—but not for Brand. In *London Particular* (1952; also known as *Fog of Doubt*), she again startles the reader. This time she does so by withholding until the last line of the book the method of the murderer in gaining access to a house he seemingly had no opportunity to reach. After one has read this last line, one realizes that Brand had in fact given away the essential clue to the case in the book's first paragraph. So subtly presented is the vital fact, however, that almost every reader will pass it by without a second glance.

In this book, Brand's strong interest in romance comes to the fore. The characters' various romantic attachments receive detailed attention; the many rivalries and jealousies present among the main characters serve to distract the reader from solving the case. Again characteristically for Brand, true love eventually triumphs, and the culprit is the victim of an uncontrollable and unrequited passion for another of the principal characters.

TOUR DE FORCE

Green for Danger stresses surprise, *London Particular*, romance. A third novel, *Tour de Force* (1955), emphasizes the final element in Brand's tripartite formula: humor. The story is set on an imaginary island in the Mediterranean, near a resort where a number of English tourists have gone for vacation. Among them

is the now-retired Cockrill, as well as his sister, Henrietta. A murder quickly arouses the local gendarmerie to feverish but ineffective activity. Their burlesque of genuine detection, consisting of an attempt to pin the blame on one tourist after another until each possibility is disproved, does not even exempt Cockrill. His efforts to solve the case are foiled at every turn by police bumbling.

Firmly behind the police is the local despot, who threatens the tourists with dire penalties unless he at once receives a confession. The dungeon on the island is evidently of medieval vintage, and the petty satrap whose word is law on the island regards this prison as a major attraction of his regime.

Here, for once, surprise, though certainly present, does not have its customary spectacular character. Instead, the reader receives a series of lesser shocks, as one person after another seems without a doubt to be guilty, only to be replaced by yet another certain criminal. Cockrill eventually discloses the truth with his usual panache.

BUFFET FOR UNWELCOME GUESTS

Brand's short stories further developed some of the techniques of her novels. In several stories in the collection *Buffet for Unwelcome Guests: The Best Short Mysteries of Christianna Brand* (1983), Inspector Cockrill figures in inverted plots. Here the reader knows the identity of the criminal, and the interest lies in following the efforts of the detective to discover him. This technique poses a severe test to a writer such as Brand who values suspense. Can there be surprises in a story in which the identity of the criminal is given to the reader at the outset? Brand believed that there could, and one can see from the popularity of her stories that many readers agreed with her. One of these, "The Hornets' Nest," won first prize in a contest sponsored by *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

Brand's style does not have the innovative qualities of her plots. It is, however, a serviceable instrument, both clear and vigorous. She tends to emphasize, more than most detective story authors, long descriptive passages of scenery. In her depiction of the imaginary island in *Tour de Force*, she captures with great skill the atmosphere of several Mediterranean islands favored by British tourists. A reason for the popularity

of *Green for Danger* lies in its stylistically apt portrayal of the loneliness of women whose husbands and boyfriends had gone to fight in World War II. Here she once more relied on personal experience, for her own husband was away on military service for much of the war.

Another feature of Brand's style was characteristic of the writers of her generation, though not of younger authors. In writing of love, she had no interest in depicting sexual encounters in detail, or even in acknowledging their existence. Sex, along with obscene language, is absent from her books; these could only interfere with the unreal but captivating atmosphere she endeavored to portray.

THE HONEY HARLOT

To this generalization there is, however, a significant exception. *The Honey Harlot* (1978) is a novel of sexual obsession; here, the approach to love differs quite sharply from that of her more famous mysteries. Her characteristic work does not lie in this direction, and this novel was not followed by one of similar type.

To sum up, Brand carried some of the elements of the classic British detective story—in particular surprise, romance, and humor—to extremes. In doing so, she established a secure place for herself as an important contributor to the mystery field.

David Gordon

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR COCKRILL SERIES: *Heads You Lose*, 1941; *Green for Danger*, 1944; *The Crooked Wreath*, 1946 (also known as *Suddenly at His Residence*); *Death of Jezebel*, 1948; *London Particular*, 1952 (also known as *Fog of Doubt*); *Tour de Force*, 1955; *The Three-Cornered Halo*, 1957; *The Spotted Cat, and Other Mysteries: The Casebook of Inspector Cockrill*, 2001

INSPECTOR CHARLESWORTH SERIES: *Death in High Heels*, 1941; *The Rose in Darkness*, 1979

INSPECTOR CHUCKY SERIES: *Cat and Mouse*, 1950; *A Ring of Roses*, 1977

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Starrbelow*, 1958 (as Thompson); *Court of Foxes*, 1969; *Alas, for Her That Met Me!*, 1976 (as Ashe); *The Honey Harlot*, 1978; *The Brides of*

Aberdar, 1982; *Crime on the Coast, and No Flowers by Request*, 1984 (with others)

SHORT FICTION: *What Dread Hands?*, 1968; *Brand X*, 1974; *Buffet for Unwelcome Guests: The Best Short Mysteries of Christianna Brand*, 1983 (Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and Martin H. Greenberg, editors)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Single Pilgrim*, 1946 (as Roland); *The Radiant Dove*, 1974 (as Jones)

SCREENPLAYS: *Death in High Heels*, 1947; *The Mark of Cain*, 1948 (with W. P. Lipscomb and Francis Cowdry); *Secret People*, 1952 (with others)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Danger Unlimited*, 1948 (also known as *Welcome to Danger*); *Nurse Matilda*, 1964; *Nurse Matilda Goes to Town*, 1967; *Nurse Matilda Goes to Hospital*, 1974

NONFICTION: *Heaven Knows Who*, 1960

EDITED TEXTS: *Naughty Children: An Anthology*, 1962

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Barnard, Robert. "The Slightly Mad, Mad World of Christianna Brand." *The Armchair Detective* 19, no. 3 (Summer, 1986): 238-243. Discusses the off-kilter nature of Brand's stories and characters and their importance to her overall work.

Brand, Christianna. "Inspector Cockrill." In *The Great Detectives*, edited by Otto Penzler. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Brand's own description of her most famous and successful character.

Briney, Robert E. "The World of Christianna Brand." In *Buffet for Unwelcome Guests: The Best Short Mysteries of Christianna Brand*, edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and Martin H. Greenberg. Carbon-

dale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983. An examination of the internal logic and character of the world generated by Brand's fiction, as well as the relationship between that world and the mysteries, detectives, and murderers that inhabit it.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay that examines the life and writings of Brand.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Discusses Brand's *London Particular*. Bibliographic references and index.

Penzler, Otto. "In Memoriam, 1907-1988." *The Armchair Detective* 21, no. 3 (Summer, 1998): 228-230. An obituary and appreciation of Brand, detailing her place in the history of British detective fiction.

_____. "The Works of Christianna Brand." In *Green for Danger*. Topanga, Calif.: Boulevard, 1978. An overview of the author's work, provided as a foreword to an edition of her most famous and most popular detective novel.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Discusses several of Brand's colleagues. A good source on the conventions of the genre and the context of Brand's contributions to it. Bibliographic references and index.

Symons, Julian, ed. *The Hundred Best Crime Stories*. London: The Sunday Times, 1959. Places Brand as the author of one of the hundred best crime stories of all time.

LILIAN JACKSON BRAUN

Born: Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts; June 20, 1913

Also wrote as Ward Jackson

Types of plot: Cozy; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Cat Who, 1966-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JAMES MACKINTOSH QWILLERAN is a charismatic mustached journalist. A Chicago native, he has worked as a police reporter and foreign correspondent and published a book about crime. After a divorce and alcoholism disrupt his career, he accepts a position as an arts reporter with a midwestern newspaper, initiating his unexpected partnership with a cat in the solution of a murder. After adopting that cat and another, the cosmopolitan Qwilleran pursues journalism while investigating mysterious events in various settings, particularly Moose County, where he moves after he inherits a fortune and becomes a philanthropist. He is affectionate toward his cats and recognizes their special attributes.

KOKO is a male Siamese cat formally named Kao K'o Kung. He befriends Qwilleran, who lives in the building owned by the art critic who is Koko's original master. After the art critic is murdered, Koko becomes Qwilleran's pet and exhibits behavior that helps Qwilleran discover clues that solve mysteries. Koko has sixty whiskers, which Qwilleran believes causes Koko to be more sensitive and intuitive. During Koko's early detecting career, the police chief issued him a press card to honor his contributions.

YUM YUM is a female Siamese cat younger and smaller than Koko. Her original owner, Signe Tait, called her Freya, while Signe's husband George Tait referred to her as Yu, meaning jade, which he collected. After Yum Yum helps Koko and Qwilleran resolve a murder case involving the Taites, Qwilleran provides her a home and new name. Yum Yum often assumes a more passive role than Koko.

CONTRIBUTION

Lilian Jackson Braun popularized animal mysteries in the late twentieth century, effectively creating a sub-genre of cat mysteries that inspired other authors to invent their own versions of feline sleuths. Beginning with short stories published during the 1960's in mystery collections, Braun incorporated her artistic and professional experiences and interests in her cat mysteries to create a fictional world that attracted a diverse readership.

Scholars mostly dismissed Braun's mysteries as being unsubstantial and lacking literary merit. Critics gave her writing mixed reviews. While some reviewers demeaned her cat mysteries as cute and contrived, others praised her unique presentation of mystery characterizations and situations. Editor Anthony Boucher included Braun's work in the eighteenth annual edition of his *Best Detective Stories of the Year* (1963).

Despite Braun's early success, publishing three novels in the cat mystery series from 1966 to 1968, she found that publishers preferred hard-boiled novels and did not create any additional books in the series until nearly two decades later in 1986. This time, Braun quickly secured a loyal following that consistently purchased her books, assuring her commercial success. Her books became a literary phenomenon, selling millions of copies in the United States and in foreign editions and appearing on best-seller lists.

The Cat Who Saw Red (1986) was nominated for an Edgar Award by the Mystery Writers of America, and *The Cat Who Played Brahms* (1987) received an Anthony Award nomination. The Winter, 1990, issue of *Mystery Readers Journal*, discussing animal mysteries, recognized Braun's pioneering role in that mystery subgenre.

BIOGRAPHY

Lilian Jackson Braun was born Lilian Jackson on June 20, 1913, at Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, to Charles Jackson and Clara Ward Jackson. Braun's parents had emigrated from northern England to the United States, where her father made tools for factory

machines. During Braun's childhood, several of her father's coworkers boarded in her parents' Springfield, Massachusetts, home. Braun was an only child until she was nine, when her brother, Lloyd, was born, followed by the birth of her sister, Florence.

During the 1920's, the Jackson family moved from Massachusetts to Detroit, Michigan, where Charles Jackson secured employment as a toolmaker with a motor company. Braun later credited her father's inventiveness and her mother's imagination for shaping her storytelling skills. At dinner, Braun and her siblings were expected to provide detailed accounts describing their experiences at school.

As a girl, Braun read Sherlock Holmes mysteries and camped with her Girl Scout troop. A Detroit Tigers fan, she composed funny verses about baseball. When she was fifteen, Braun sold baseball poems, which she referred to as spoems, to the *Detroit News*. Using the pseudonym Ward Jackson, she contributed articles to *The Sporting News* and *Baseball Magazine*. Braun also wrote for her high school's newspaper and literary magazine.

When Braun was sixteen years old, she graduated from high school. Although she wanted to earn a college degree to teach school, she instead sought employment to assist her family during the Depression. During baseball season, Braun wrote poems for the *Detroit News*. In 1929, Braun began writing advertising copy as a freelance employee for the Crowley Knower Company's store. In 1930 the Ernst Kern Company hired her to work full-time creating advertisements, then had her direct public relations. She worked for that company for the next eighteen years.

Around 1943, Lilian Jackson married Paul Braun, an accountant. In 1948 she accepted an editorial position at the *Detroit Free Press*. Braun's husband gave her a Siamese kitten for her fortieth birthday. A fan of the W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan opera *The Mikado* (1885), she named the kitten Koko. Koko's death after a neighbor shoved him out a tenth-floor window was the catalyst for the Cat Who series. Dealing with her grief, Braun wrote the short story, "The Sin of Madame Phloi." *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* published the story in 1962 and requested additional cat mysteries. It was this story that Anthony Boucher se-

lected for inclusion in the eighteenth annual *Best Detective Stories of the Year*.

Braun continued to write, and her short story "Magnificent Shed" was published in the October, 1965, issue of *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. She won American Institute of Architects writing awards. Then, an E. P. Dutton editor contracted Braun to write cat mystery novels. Braun completed four manuscripts, three of which were published during the mid-1960's before her publisher stated that no market existed for further cat mysteries. Braun's husband died in 1967.

Braun continued writing for the *Detroit Free Press* until her 1978 retirement. The next year, she married actor Earl Bettinger. They resided in Bad Axe, Michigan, and owned a log cabin by Lake Huron. Braun renewed her literary career in the 1980's when a Berkley editor offered her a multibook contract. She added to the Cat Who series at the rate of about a book per year. Braun also wrote a column for the *Lilian Jackson Braun Newsletter* and forewords for Gina Spadafori's and Dr. Paul D. Pion's *Cats for Dummies* (1997) and books discussing the Cat Who novels. She and her husband bought a home in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Tryon, North Carolina, where they became active in the community, supporting the Flat Rock Playhouse and Polk County library. The Tryon Movie Theatre hosted a tribute to Braun in April, 2005.

ANALYSIS

Lilian Jackson Braun creates mysteries that contain elements of classic whodunits accented with modern twists to explore themes of justice, duty, and community. Her depiction of cats who contributed to the discovery of clues and were aware of sinister elements in humans was a unique technique when she began writing cat mysteries in the 1960's. Braun's feline depictions were authentic, never demonstrating unrealistic behaviors or responses. Her feline characters do not talk or exhibit any supernatural means of communicating with humans.

Braun's storytelling relies on an omniscient narrator describing Qwilleran's experiences and revealing details about his cats through the journalist's perspective. Qwilleran interacts with the cats, interpreting their natural curiosity and destructiveness as signals

that serve to point out clues he should investigate. His unexpected role as a wealthy man and philanthropist represents the theme of redemption as he generously shares his money with others to improve their lives.

Braun's sense of place contributes to the realism of her books. Appropriating scenes with which she is familiar, she capably creates urban and rural settings for her fictional Down Below and Moose County. She enriches her stories with her knowledge of regional history and traditions that connect generations. Expanding her cast and settings, Braun incorporates sufficient variety to create unique, compelling stories.

By the early twenty-first century, however, many of Braun's novels seemed to consist mostly of a series of scenes lacking a cohesive story. Her writing style was often stiff and did not have the continuity and flow found in her previous stories. Plots often relied on coincidences, and characters were not well developed. Many characters were unlikable and self-indulgent. Although the theme of altruism remained, it lacked the sincerity evidenced in earlier novels. Crimes did not demand the same attention and pursuit of justice as they had in Braun's early mysteries. Sometimes Qwilleran never elaborated how he came to a solution, and murderers often were dealt with by an accidental death or by the suspect leaving Moose County. Characters did not respond realistically to major losses. Braun's excessive use of exclamation points seemed contradictory to her characters' limited enthusiasm.

THE CAT WHO COULD READ BACKWARDS

In the first book of her series, *The Cat Who Could Read Backwards* (1966), Braun introduces her protagonists, James Qwilleran and Koko. Qwilleran's past is referred to as he humbly accepts a position as an arts reporter for the *Daily Fluxion* and reunites with his childhood friend Arch Riker, who becomes an integral character in the series. Although he lacks artistic experience, Qwilleran eagerly approaches his assignments, intending to prove he is a capable reporter despite his previous failures as a husband and an alcoholic. As he interacts with colleagues and artists, he learns that the newspaper's art critic, George Bonifield Mountclemens III, is a reclusive individual who writes acerbic reviews.

After accepting an invitation to dine with Mount-

clemens, Qwilleran leases an apartment in the critic's building and soon begins to perform errands for Mountclemens, including tending his Siamese cat. Qwilleran interviews artists and attends art events, becoming familiar with the local artistic community. He becomes involved in the aftermath of several murders, including that of Mountclemens. Qwilleran and Mountclemens's cat, which Qwilleran renames Koko, establish a bond. Qwilleran becomes aware of suspicious places and objects because of Koko's inquisitiveness, and that awareness helps him identify the murderer and motive.

Qwilleran's determination to start his life anew and his self-discipline embody the themes of possibility and opportunity that Braun creates in her early *Cat Who* books.

THE CAT WHO SAW RED

Braun retained her distinctive style when she resumed her series with *The Cat Who Saw Red* in 1986, nearly two decades after she first published a *Cat Who* novel. Her protagonist Qwilleran still works for the *Daily Fluxion*, but he is now a food critic and no longer covers art. He and the cats live at the Maus Haus surrounded by an eclectic group of neighbors. His devotion to Koko and Yum Yum has intensified and he is more perceptive of their helpful behavior.

Koko types significant combinations of letters and numbers on Qwilleran's typewriter, scratches a victim's notebook, and paws at pictures with Yum Yum. A red book agitates Koko, and he and Yum Yum create a yarn trap that snares a killer. Braun's sophisticated style and complex plotting enable the cats' unusual behavior to seem plausible to readers and perhaps intentional, done in the aim of helping Qwilleran secure justice for their friend's murder.

THE CAT WHO PLAYED POST OFFICE

After receiving an inheritance from Fanny Klingenschoen in *The Cat Who Played Brahms*, Qwilleran contemplates whether he should accept the stipulations that are part of receiving that fortune. To receive the fortune, Qwilleran must live in the Klingenschoen mansion in Pickax for five years. In *The Cat Who Played Post Office* (1987), he decides to move to Pickax. Braun eases Qwilleran's transition to unfamiliar territory by transferring to Pickax the character of Iris Cobb, who had been his landlady when he lived in

Junktown in *The Cat Who Turned On and Off* (1968).

Qwilleran wins new friends because of his pleasing personality and generosity, creating the Klingenschoen Foundation to improve his adopted community. He involves himself in local activities and investigates why a maid vanished from the mansion. Koko plays notes on the piano, locates a diary, and knocks out an intruder with a vase. Qwilleran learns how Pickax's past influences its present, reinforcing his resolve to stay. He eventually establishes a home in an apple barn in *The Cat Who Knew a Cardinal* (1991) and secures the Klingenschoen estate in *The Cat Who Moved a Mountain* (1992). Qwilleran accelerates his altruism and observes his cats to aid investigations of mysterious events, which are commonplace in Moose County.

THE CAT WHO HAD SIXTY WHISKERS

Although *The Cat Who Had Sixty Whiskers* (2007) begins with Qwilleran boasting that Koko has sixty whiskers, enhancing his intuitiveness, both cats, mostly interested in food, seem more passive regarding mysteries. When librarian Polly Duncan, Qwilleran's romantic interest, travels to Paris, Qwilleran becomes lonely. He pursues several column ideas for his Qwill Pen column in *The Moose County Something*, but none of the subjects sustains his interest, and he relies on readers' contributions to fill his space. Qwilleran's moodiness becomes tedious.

Qwilleran meets an eccentric piano tuner whose fiancée dies after having an allergic reaction to a bee sting. When Qwilleran realizes who purposefully hid the dead woman's bee kit, he does not seek that person's arrest. He socializes with neighbors at his condominium, meeting an attorney named Barbara Honiger, who has moved into Polly's vacated apartment.

Qwilleran uncharacteristically mentions his dislike for visitors who want to view the apple barn. When he hears that the apple barn has been destroyed, he displays a moodiness and cavalier attitude that are frustrating to readers as is his sudden courtship of Barbara. Much of this novel, like several others preceding it, including *The Cat Who Dropped a Bombshell* (2006), seem inconsistent with the themes of friendship, commitment, and acceptance that are the essence of the Cat Who series.

Elizabeth D. Schafer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE CAT WHO SERIES: 1966-1990 • *The Cat Who Could Read Backwards*, 1966; *The Cat Who Ate Danish Modern*, 1967; *The Cat Who Turned On and Off*, 1968; *The Cat Who Saw Red*, 1986; *The Cat Who Played Brahms*, 1987; *The Cat Who Played Post Office*, 1987; *The Cat Who Knew Shakespeare*, 1988; *The Cat Who Sniffed Glue*, 1988; *The Cat Who Went Underground*, 1989; *The Cat Who Talked to Ghosts*, 1990; *The Cat Who Lived High*, 1990

1991-2007 • *The Cat Who Knew a Cardinal*, 1991; *The Cat Who Moved a Mountain*, 1992; *The Cat Who Wasn't There*, 1992; *The Cat Who Went into the Closet*, 1993; *The Cat Who Came to Breakfast*, 1994; *The Cat Who Blew the Whistle*, 1995; *The Cat Who Said Cheese*, 1996; *The Cat Who Tailed a Thief*, 1997; *The Cat Who Sang for the Birds*, 1998; *The Cat Who Saw Stars*, 1998; *The Cat Who Robbed a Bank*, 1999; *The Cat Who Smelled a Rat*, 2001; *The Cat Who Went Up the Creek*, 2002; *The Cat Who Brought Down the House*, 2003; *The Cat Who Talked Turkey*, 2004; *The Cat Who Went Bananas*, 2004; *The Cat Who Dropped a Bombshell*, 2006; *The Cat Who Had Sixty Whiskers*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Cat Who Had Fourteen Tales*, 1988; *Short and Tall Tales: Moose County Legends Collected by James Mackintosh Qwilleran*, 2002; *The Private Life of the Cat Who . . . Tales of Koko and Yum Yum from the Journal of James Mackintosh Qwilleran*, 2003

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Braun provides details about cats she has owned and her writing process.

Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Contains an essay on Braun that describes how the death of her cat Koko motivated her to write and how her books's popularity goes beyond cat lovers.

Feaster, Sharon A. *The Cat Who . . . Companion*. New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1998. Comprehensive guide includes synopses, lists of characters and places, and trivia for Cat Who books. Also contains maps and an interview with Braun.

Headrick, Robert J., Jr. *The Cat Who Quiz Book*. New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2003. Braun wrote the foreword for this compendium of questions and answers about characters, places, plots, clues, and quotations in the Cat Who series. Lists foreign edition titles.

Johnson, Maria C. "Imaginary Felines Keep Their Paws on Lilian Jackson Braun." *Greensboro (N.C.) News and Record*, May 26, 1991, p. F1. Detailed

feature article written by a reporter near Braun's North Carolina home includes personal information not in other sources.

Kaufman, Joanne. "The Cat Woman Who Writes Mysteries." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 2006, p. D16. Examines criticism of Braun's writing and its reception within the mystery genre.

Nelson, Catherine A. "The Lady Who . . ." *The Armchair Detective* 24, no. 4 (Fall, 1991): 388-394, 396-398. An interview with Braun, who discusses her writing successes and aspects of her life before the Cat Who series. Includes photographs of Braun, her cats, and office.

JON L. BREEN

Born: Montgomery, Alabama; November 8, 1943

Types of plot: Comedy caper; master sleuth; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ed Gorgon, 1971-
 Jerry Brogan, 1983-
 Rachel Hennings, 1984-
 Sherlock Holmes, 1987-
 Sebastian Grady, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ED GORGON is a baseball umpire with a flair for solving major league puzzlers.

JERRY BROGAN is a hefty racetrack announcer who uses imaginative methods to both squeeze into his announcer's booth and to unravel criminal schemes.

RACHEL HENNINGS is the owner of a haunted bookstore in California who moves among the dead, the undead, and the not-dead-at-all.

SHERLOCK HOLMES is the iconic supersleuth created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

SEBASTIAN GRADY is a Hollywood detective whose sidekick is a cat.

CONTRIBUTION

Jon L. Breen's contribution to mystery and detective fiction has been twofold. He is first a scholar who has performed invaluable service to those interested in the genre, compiling carefully annotated bibliographies. He is also a recognized reviewer and critic, having written reviews for a number of periodicals, including *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *The Armchair Detective*, and *The American Standard*. Acknowledged as a critic, he has received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1982, 1985, and 1991. He was also the winner of the Agatha Award for critics in 2000. With his wife, Rita A. Breen, he coedited an anthology of eleven novelettes selected from the *American Magazine*.

Breen has also contributed to mystery literature by producing many short stories and novels. In these he has explored parody and pastiche, combined his interest in sports with his love of books, and demonstrated his knowledge of the classic mystery story. His novels have been well received and favorably reviewed in the United States and in Great Britain.

BIOGRAPHY

Jon Linn Breen was born on November 8, 1943, to Frank William Breen and Margaret Wolfe Breen. His parents' professions may have influenced his own choice of profession and his love of scholarship: His father was a librarian and his mother a teacher. Breen's college years were spent in California, where he received a bachelor's degree from Pepperdine College (now University) in 1965. He then attended the University of Southern California, where in 1966 he completed a master's degree in library science, a profession he would never completely abandon. During these years he was also a sports broadcaster for a radio station in Los Angeles. An interest in sports continues to be one of Breen's major avocations and has influenced his writing.

After serving in the military from 1967 to 1969, including a year in Vietnam, Breen returned to library work. He served at several educational institutions in California before becoming the head reference librarian at California State College (now University), Dominguez Hills, a position he held until 1975. He then took a position as the reference and collections development librarian at Rio Hondo Community College at Whittier, California. In 1970, he married Rita Gunson, a teacher, of Yorkshire, England. She has coedited with her husband a volume of novelettes.

Breen's first short story appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1966, when he was twenty-three years old. That first effort was followed by more short stories, reviews, reference works, critical biographies, essays, and three respected novels. By his own admission, Breen followed the ambitious goal of becoming what he calls an "all-rounder," in the tradition of writers Anthony Boucher, Julian Symons, and H. R. F. Keating. The goal has motivated him to achieve success in diverse areas of research and literature within the mystery and detective genre.

ANALYSIS

In the course of an interview, Jon L. Breen once evaluated the major strengths of his novels as their humor and their appealing characters. Breen's humor owes much to his forays into parody and pastiche. In *Hair of the Sleuthhound: Parodies of Mystery Fiction*

(1982), Breen, in his preface to the volume, tries to distinguish between the two; either because of his careful scholarship, characteristic of his work, or the honesty of his approach to writing, an equally important characteristic, he does not manage to provide a clear distinction; the two forms are intertwined and difficult to separate. Furthermore, the most successful parodies, Breen maintains, are those done in affection and with respect, without hostility. That attitude is obvious in Breen's work. The authors whom he parodies have accepted his work as flattering and have noted its humor. While Breen's parody may be the sincerest form of flattery, it can also be an important form of criticism—and therein, perhaps, lies its key distinction from pastiche.

Breen's humor is close to that defined as the ready perceiving of the comic or the ludicrous, effectively expressed. It is marked also by warmth, tolerance, and a sympathetic understanding of the human condition. Gentle as this humor may be, Breen is capable of creating hilarious scenes. *Listen for the Click* (1983) can be regarded as a spoof of the classic amateur-sleuth plot. The final scene is a parody of the typical gathering of suspects during which the culprit is unmasked. A situation that in less practiced hands might be both tiresome and trite, under Breen's control leads to a satisfactory resolution of the mystery and a genuinely comic scene.

THE GATHERING PLACE

Breen is also capable of handling subtler humor adroitly. In scenes with less action and more dialogue, his touch is equally deft. Neither labored nor forced, his lines are witty, suited to his characters, and well paced. When Rachel Hennings, protagonist of *The Gathering Place* (1984), inherits her uncle's second-hand bookstore in Los Angeles, she interrupts her college career in Arizona to manage the shop, which is a literary landmark. In the past a favorite haunt of literary figures and their friends, it has a charming ambience and appeals to her tastes and interests. While at college, she has been pursued by an amorous if tense young faculty member. Resigned to her leaving Arizona, the young professor calls his brother in Los Angeles, who is the book editor for a local newspaper, asking that he assist Rachel in getting settled. Rachel and the editor are attracted to each other, but he con-

siders her his brother's girl. Their conversation in which Rachel tries to express her feelings is characterized by Breen's control of scene and dialogue. The tone is light; there is no weighty introspection or serious self-analysis. In this author's work, only the less sympathetic characters take themselves very seriously.

Rachel is an independent young woman, determined to succeed in her bookshop. Confronted by a motley lot of representatives of the world of the best seller, as well as the friendly ghosts she senses in her uncle's shop, she proves equal to the challenges presented to her. As in the case of other Breen characters, she is attractive and has a winning personality.

TRIPLE CROWN AND LISTEN FOR THE CLICK

As Breen suggests, his characters are one of his strengths. They are varied and attractive. Jerry Brogan, the protagonist of both *Triple Crown* (1985) and *Listen for the Click*, is an overweight racetrack announcer. He is bright and decent, a former public relations man who has found satisfaction and pleasure in his small and narrow announcer's booth, although his weight calls for imaginative methods of entering that cramped space. Devoted to his aunt and dedicated to doing a good job calling the races but somewhat uncertain about his relationship with his girlfriend, Brogan is eminently likable. He is not cast in the traditional hero mold, nor is he an antihero, but rather a figure with whom it is very easy to identify.

Brogan's aunt, Olivia Barchester, a charming eccentric given to avid reading of mystery and detective fiction and owning a certain talent for investigation and deduction, is not only a friendly parody of famous sleuths who have gone before her but also a carefully drawn and attractive figure in her own right.

The ability to depict memorable characters and the penchant for humor in his novels may be exemplified best by Breen's minor characters, Stan Digby and Gaston Miles in *Listen for the Click*. Respectively a would-be mystery writer and a seedy con artist, combining their talents to take the apparently artless Olivia Barchester for her fortune, the two contribute much to the success of the novel.

KILL THE UMPIRE

One of Breen's best known characters, Ed Gorgon, gives the author opportunity to set his classical-style

mysteries in the unlikely world of major league baseball. Gorgon is an umpire. In 2003, Breen collected sixteen Gorgon stories in *Kill the Umpire*. Always the critic, Breen accompanied his stories with commentary dealing with the development and growing sophistication of his storytelling and Gorgon's aging over thirty years of making calls between murders.

EYE OF GOD

In 2006, *Eye of God* was released to mixed reviews. Breen foresaw controversy but was intrigued by the idea of homicidal criminality existing at the heart of American televangelism. The religious conversion of one of the main characters at the outset of the novel and the uncritical exploration of the inner sanctum of the Religious Right made many readers uncomfortable. Some fans, however, found the novel interesting and original.

PLOT AND STYLE

In a discussion of his work, Breen has said that he finds the plot to be the most difficult part of the undertaking. Breen is on record as an admirer of some of the most complex plots of mystery and detective fiction, and it is not surprising that craftsmanship in this area is of major importance to him. His story lines are strong and his powers of construction formidable. Reviewers are not critical of his plots, with the exception of *The Gathering Place*, in which, according to one critic, Breen pushes the reader's credulity too far. Rachel becomes involved in a psychic experience in her shop when she becomes a "medium" for long-dead writers who use her to expose a ghostwriting scandal. She also discovers that she can sign authentic signatures of these same beneficent spirits in an automatic writing session when the pen moves unbidden by her hand, creating a cache of signed editions coveted by collectors. Even an act of final retribution implies that these ghosts are determined to punish the guilty and protect the innocent. It is not surprising that some critics insist that Breen has strained the fabric of his story, or that the premise on which the tale hangs is too bizarre to be acceptable. A critic for *The New York Times*, however, believes that the author never intended his readers to take the premise seriously, and as in his other novels, it is the entertainment that Breen affords that is important.

Breen's attention to detail, which enhances the au-

thenticity of his scenes and adds to the completeness of his descriptions, is also noteworthy, especially in a genre where attention to detail is an important factor. His timing and placement of clues and his avoidance of the loose ends that can distract and frustrate the reader account for much of the popularity of his novels. The foregoing comments should not, however, suggest that realism in the literary sense is the first goal of the author. His is not the tough or hard-boiled approach to crime and mystery fiction. There is no gratuitous violence or lurid description of corpses, though murders are committed and acts of violence do occur. Sex is neither exploited nor ignored; it plays a part in the lives of Breen's characters and in his plots but never dominates the action. Nor is Breen's treatment of women exploitative. Women are presented quite naturally as equally intelligent and capable as their male counterparts. On the other hand, the author does not pander to the female audience by exaggeration. Balance is another of the author's unheralded achievements.

Breen's style, which has been described as "breezy" by more than one critic, is extremely readable. No doubt the author, who is also an able craftsman, would be dismayed that a novel could be devoured so quickly, given the time it must take to achieve the flow of plot and words. His prose is economical and clear. His dialogue, especially in the more humorous scenes, is well conceived. The pages are not burdened with complex sentences or banalities.

SCHOLARSHIP

Breen's lengthy love affair with mystery and detective fiction—he began reading and collecting at the age of twelve—seems to give him a unique place among authors of this genre. Few can claim his knowledge of the history of the movement or exhibit such intimate understanding of the contributions of individual authors of the past. As a result, he is as important for his scholarly work as he is for his fiction. For example, *Novel Verdicts: A Guide to Courtroom Fiction* (1985), a critical bibliography of courtroom fiction, while not claiming to be comprehensive, is a very complete and detailed guide. A set of guidelines influencing the choice of entries is clearly stated. Each book included has a lengthy courtroom scene or focuses on a trial.

Entries are restricted to cases in American or British courts or cases in parts of the world that use English in their legal systems. All entries carry annotations outlining plot and action, and a critique of the accuracy of legal knowledge.

Breen's thorough knowledge of the mystery genre, as critic and scholar, parodist and practitioner, makes him a unique figure among mystery writers, particularly interesting to the mystery buff for his mastery of the difficult parody form as well as for his similarity to other masters of the genre. Above all, Breen's novels are sheer fun, promising to delight readers with their well-crafted plots, judiciously drawn characters, wealth of realistic detail, and fine timing.

Anne R. Vizzier

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ED GORGON SERIES: *Kill the Umpire*, 2003

JERRY BROGAN SERIES: *Listen for the Click*, 1983 (also known as *Vicar's Roses*); *Triple Crown*, 1985; *Loose Lips*, 1990; *Hot Air*, 1991

RACHEL HENNINGS SERIES: *The Gathering Place*, 1984; *Touch of the Past*, 1988

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Eye of God*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Hair of the Sleuthhound: Parodies of Mystery Fiction*, 1982; *The Drowning Icecube, and Other Stories*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *A Little Fleshed Up Around the Crook of the Elbow: A Selected Bibliography of Some Literary Parodies*, 1970; *The Girl in the Pictorial Wrapper*, 1972; *What About Murder? A Guide to Books About Mystery and Detective Fiction*, 1981; *Novel Verdicts: A Guide to Courtroom Fiction*, 1985

EDITED TEXTS: *American Murders*, 1986 (with Rita A. Breen); *Sleuths of the Century*, 2000 (with Edward Gorman); *Synod of Sleuths: Essays on Judeo-Christian Detective Fiction*, 1990 (with Martin H. Greenberg)

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Breen. *The Weekly Standard* 9, no. 30 (April 12-April 19, 2004): 47. This favorable review notes that the Ed Gorgon sports-themed stories in this collection span more than thirty years and that Breen writes reviews for the publication.

Breen, Jon L. Interview in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. June, 1979, pp. 57-58. Breen's critical reviews appeared in *Ellery Queen* for years. This is an interesting turn-of-the-tables.

_____. *Novel Verdicts: A Guide to Courtroom Fiction*. 2d ed. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1999. A revised bibliography that contains more than eight hundred entries of books dealing with courtroom dramas published by 1997.

_____. *What About Murder? A Guide to Books About Mystery and Detective Fiction*. 2d ed.

Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1993. A bibliography of more than two hundred murder novels published through 1981 with annotations by Breen. Provides insights into Breen's view of mysteries.

Callendar, Newgate. Review of *The Gathering*, by Jon L. Breen. *The New York Times*, May 20, 1984, p. A39. Reviewer notes that the premise of the book is not believable but states that Breen did not intend to make his readers believers but to entertain them.

Watt, Peter Ridgway, and Joseph Green. *The Alternative Sherlock Holmes: Pastiche, Parodies, and Copies*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003. A book that must have been written with Breen in mind. This large volume explores the fiction directly inspired by Holmes and Watson.

SIMON BRETT

Born: Worcester Park, Surrey, England, October 28, 1945

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Charles Paris, 1975-

Mrs. Pargeter, 1986-

Fethering, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHARLES PARIS is a broken-down, alcoholic actor with a libertine nature. Forty-seven years old, he has been divorced for fifteen years in the first novel. He gets along well with his former wife, who runs a school for girls. He sometimes takes temporary jobs such as painting houses or helps out his friends. Trying to liven up his routine life, he pursues meaningless sexual encounters and amateur detective work.

MRS. MELITA PARGETER is the attractive widow of a master criminal, who had serious links to the underworld but never got her involved in any nefarious ac-

tivities. When he died, he left her wealthy and also left her his address book. Her husband's associates have all gone straight, but they provide a wealth of resources that enable the widow to make copies of jewelry and find vehicles. Mrs. Pargeter lives in an upscale subdivision. The novels' action tends to happen during the daytime, while the neighborhood husbands are off to work, so it is their wives who experience the uncertainties of living near a sleuth.

CAROLE SEDDON is a prim and proper resident of Fethering, a self-contained retirement community on the southern coast of England. Divorced shortly after retiring from her career in government service, she is trying to live a quiet life when she is forced to investigate a death on the beach.

JUDE is the bohemian neighbor of Carole Seddon, in Fethering, who becomes involved in her neighbor's investigation. She uses only one name, has a colorful past, and earns her living from aromatherapy and alternative medicine. Jude is the liberal, emotional side of this pair.

CONTRIBUTION

Simon Brett is a versatile writer, equally at home with mystery, children's literature, radio, television, and theatrical drama. For his first mystery series character, Brett looked to the middle-aged actors with whom he worked. They fascinated him, in part because he found them to be so obsessed with themselves. "Somebody defined an actor as someone whose eyes glaze over when the conversation moves away from him," he said. He created Charles Paris as an amalgam of many of the actors he has known. Brett described Charles to an interviewer: "If anyone starts attacking the theater, he will leap to the defense, but he does have this kind of detachment so that he can sit on the sidelines and . . . see the share of idiocy and greed and all the worst human values."

Brett is a past chairman of the Crime Writers' Association (1986-1987). In 2000, he became president of the prestigious Detection Club. He received nominations for Edgar Awards in 1984 for his "Big Boy, Little Boy," *A Shock to the System* (1984) in 1986, and "Ways to Kill a Cat" in 1998.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in a southern suburb of London shortly after the end of World War II, Simon Anthony Lee Brett is the son of John Brett, a surveyor, and Margaret Lee, a schoolteacher. His secondary education was at Dulwich College, where he won a scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, to study history. He graduated with first class honors, but only after serving as president of the University Dramatic Society and as director of the Oxford Late-Night Revue on the Fringe at the Edinburgh Festival. He married Lucy Victoria McLaren in 1971, and they subsequently raised two sons and a daughter.

In 1968, Brett became a radio producer for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He also began writing plays. His first production, *Mrs. Gladys Moxon*, debuted in London in 1970. His next play, *Did You Sleep Well?* was staged the following year and another, *Third Person*, in 1972. His interest in plays gave way to radio and television scripts, earning him the 1973 Writers Guild of Great Britain Award for the best radio feature script, and then he decided to branch out

into novels. While with the BBC, he produced the first episode of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978), a radio series.

The BBC assigned Brett to produce a series of adaptations of Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries. Brett says he worked closely with the writer who was adapting the books into scripts and his experience "sort of demystified the genre." This association with the Wimsey project showed him that a good mystery is series of dialogues, with the sleuth interviewing various characters: "If you can actually make the dialogue interesting, there is usually one fact that has to emerge from these encounters; . . . the top wasn't on the bottle of whiskey . . . and you can make an interesting scene around that." Although he was not sure of his ability to create the puzzle plots typical of mysteries, he knew that he could write dialogue and decided to write a mystery.

Brett published his first mystery, *Cast, in Order of Disappearance*, the start of the Charles Paris series, in 1975. In 1986, after eleven years of producing a Charles Paris novel annually, Brett created a new series featuring Mrs. Pargeter. In 2000, he started a third, featuring two women in the coastal town of Fethering.

ANALYSIS

Simon Brett likes to weave irony and humor into his stories, commenting obliquely on the aspects of British society in which each of his series is set. In the Charles Paris novels, he looks at the egomaniacs of the theater, the young performers who are clawing their way up and the older performers who are easing their way down. With Mrs. Pargeter, the aging but sexually attractive widow gives readers a look at a variety of underworld characters, whom she calls on to help her with certain investigative tasks, both savory and unsavory. In the Fethering series, he puts together a middle-aged, conservative and quiet divorced woman who has been forced into retiring from the Home Office and a jarring neighbor with a wild and loose, outgoing personality; here, there is less commentary on a facet of society than more of a contrast between two opposites.

In stories outside these series, Brett features weaker characters who react to life's problems by turning to

crime. The most popular of these was *A Shock to the System*, in which oil-company executive Graham Marshall's career is threatened, and he resorts to murder. This 1984 novel was made into a 1990 film starting Michael Caine.

Brett's mysteries have been categorized as "British cozies," which leaves the author "amazed and amused," although he acknowledges that he and other British writers have not produced much fiction in the hard-boiled genre, although British readers do enjoy this genre. Brett has said that he writes about amateur sleuths rather than police detectives because the novels about the latter are essentially just puzzles, where all that matters is identifying the murderer. He thinks that the detectives in these works have become interchangeable characters and that nearly no good puzzles are left. With an amateur sleuth, he finds more leeway to describe some part of the world in the background, such as the milieu of theater productions, horse racing, or the wine trade.

DEAD GIVEAWAY

In the eleventh Charles Paris novel, *Dead Giveaway* (1985), Charles is invited to be a contestant on the pilot of a television game show similar to *What's My Line?* (1950-1967), where panelists guess who he is and what he does. The faded actor is resigned to the realization that this is a challenge because few people would recognize him. As the big wheel is spun at the climax of the show, the sleazy, skirt-chasing host falls dead, poisoned by cyanide in his gin. The host had upset many people, providing many suspects for his murder. One of them, who had worked on a show about poisons and had handled the host's glass, enlists Charles's aid. Charles knows something about the timing of the poisoning, because he himself was secretly sipping the gin earlier. As usual, the novel features a healthy dollop of irony and wit.

A NICE CLASS OF CORPSE

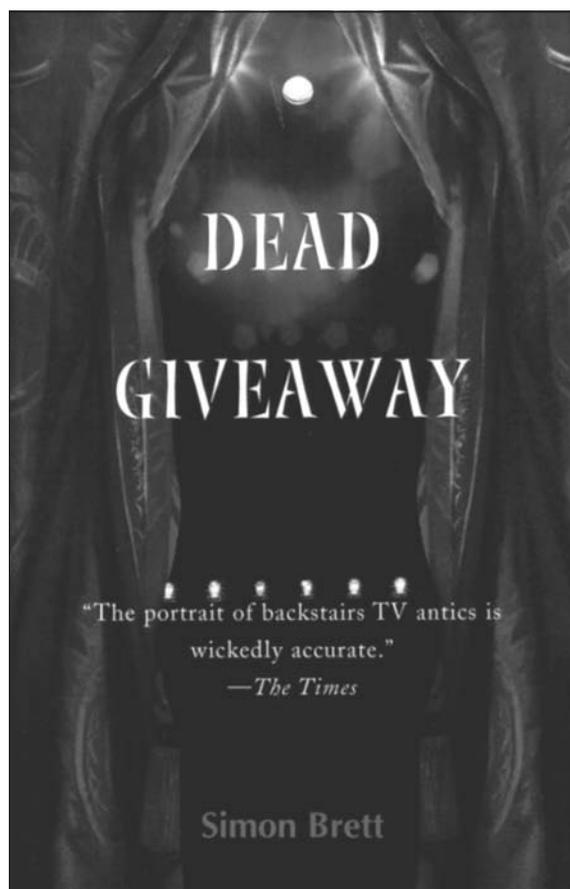
Mrs. Pargeter has been compared to Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, but Brett described her as "not quite so accepting as Miss Marple. She has her own standards and she does not like pretension. She's very happy to put people down." Her elegance is tempered with flashiness.

In *A Nice Class of Corpse* (1986), the first work in

the series, Brett mixes Mrs. Pargeter's systematic method of detection with entries in a criminal's diary. Several deaths have been attributed to accidents that happen only to the elderly, but Mrs. Pargeter suspects murder, and the diary confirms her belief for the reader. She finds fake jewels in a safe, catches a thieving employee of the Devereux seaside hotel, and uncovers the diary's writer.

THE BODY ON THE BEACH

The Fethering series begins in *The Body on the Beach* (2000) with the growing friendship of two opposites, forcibly retired civil servant Carole Seddon and flamboyant flower child Jude. Carole finds a body on the beach, his throat slashed, but when she returns with the police, the body is gone and they write her off as hysterical. It does not help that she has washed her dog and her kitchen floor before calling them. The next day, a dead teenager washes up on the beach, and



the grieving mother wants it kept quiet. Jude and Carole question local residents and discover tensions among regular patrons of the local pub.

Here again, Brett's strength is the depth of his characterizations, although it seems a bit over the top for him to withhold any details of Jude's prior life or even her last name. The matching of opposite personalities works well, however, and both make a good contrast to Mrs. Pargeter.

J. Edmund Rush

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHARLES PARIS SERIES: *Cast, in Order of Disappearance*, 1975; *So Much Blood*, 1976; *Star Trap*, 1977; *An Amateur Corpse*, 1978; *A Comedian Dies*, 1979; *The Dead Side of the Mike*, 1980; *Situation Tragedy*, 1981; *Murder Unprompted*, 1982; *Murder in the Title*, 1983; *Not Dead, Only Resting*, 1984; *Dead Giveaway*, 1985; *What Bloody Man Is That?*, 1987; *A Series of Murders*, 1989; *Corporate Bodies*, 1991; *A Reconstructed Corpse*, 1993; *Sicken and So Die*, 1995; *Dead Room Farce*, 1997

MRS. PARGETER SERIES: *A Nice Class of Corpse*, 1986; *Mrs. Presumed Dead*, 1988; *Mrs. Pargeter's Package*, 1990; *Mrs. Pargeter's Pound of Flesh*, 1992; *Mrs. Pargeter's Plot*, 1996; *Mrs. Pargeter's Point of Honour*, 1998

FETHERING SERIES: *The Body on the Beach*, 2000; *Death on the Downs*, 2001; *The Torso in the Town*, 2002; *Murder in the Museum*, 2003; *The Hanging in the Hotel*, 2004; *The Witness at the Wedding*, 2005; *The Stabbing in the Stables*, 2006; *Death Under the Dryer*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Shock to the System*, 1984; *Dead Romantic*, 1985; *The Christmas Crimes at Puzzel Manor*, 1991; *Singled Out*, 1995

SHORT FICTION: *Tickled to Death, and Other Stories of Crime and Suspense*, 1985 (also known as *A Box of Tricks: Short Stories*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *After Henry*, 1988; *The Booker Book*, 1989; *The Penultimate Chance Saloon*, 2006

PLAYS: *Mrs. Gladys Moxon*, pr. 1970; *Did You Sleep Well?*, pr. 1971; *Third Person*, pr. 1972; *Drake's*

Dream, pr. 1977 (with Lynne Riley and Richard Riley); *Murder in Play*, pb. 1994; *Mr. Quigley's Revenge*, pb. 1995; *Silhouette*, pr. 1998; *The Tale of Little Red Riding Hood*, pb. 1998; *Sleeping Beauty*, pb. 1999; *Putting the Kettle on*, pb. 2002; *A Bad Dream*, pb. 2005

RADIO PLAYS: *Semi-circles*, 1982; *Gothic Romances*, 1982; *A Matter of Life and Death*, 1982; *Cast, in Order of Disappearance*, 1984

TELEPLAYS: *A Promising Death*, 1983; *The Crime of the Dancing Duchess*, 1983

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Molesworth Rites Again*, 1983; *The Three Detectives and the Missing Superstar*, 1986; *How to Stay Topp*, 1987; *The Three Detectives and the Knight in Armor*, 1987; *How to Be a Little Sod*, 1989; *Look Who's Walking: Further Diaries of a Little Sod*, 1994; *Not Another Little Sod*, 1997

NONFICTION: *Frank Muir Goes Into* —, 1978 (with Frank Muir); *The Second Frank Muir Goes Into* —, 1979 (with Muir); *The Third Frank Muir Goes Into* —, 1980 (with Muir); *Frank Muir on Children*, 1980; *The Fourth Frank Muir Goes Into* —, 1981 (with Muir); *The Child Owner's Handbook*, 1983; *Bad Form: Or, How Not to Get Invited Back*, 1984; *People-Spotting: The Human Species Laid Bare*, 1985; *The Wastepaper Basket Archive*, 1986; *Hypochondriac's Dictionary of Ill Health*, 1994 (with Sarah Brewer); *Crime Writers and Other Animals*, 1998; *Baby Tips for Grandparents*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *The Faber Book of Useful Verse*, 1981; *Frank Muir Presents the Book of Comedy Sketches*, 1982 (with Muir); *Take a Spare Truss: Tips for Nineteenth Century Travellers*, 1983; *The Faber Book of Parodies*, 1984; *The Faber Book of Diaries*, 1987; *The Detection Collection*, 2006

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Fletcher, Connie. Review of *Murder in the Museum*, by Simon Brett. *Booklist* 99, no. 17 (May 1, 2003):

1536. Review of this installment in the Fethering series praises the combination of social satire and traditional cozy.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Chapters on the Golden Age of detective fiction and postwar British crime fiction provide background on Brett's works.

Swaim, Don. Simon Brett Interview with Don Swaim.

<http://wiredforbooks.org/simonbrett/> 1986 and 1989. Raw interviews for Don Swaim's two-minute CBS radio series, *Book Beat*. The 1986 interview is more than thirty-nine minutes long and discusses *Dead Giveaway* and Charles Paris, plus differences between British and American mystery writing, radio and television. The 1989 interview is more than fifteen minutes long and discusses both Paris and Mrs. Pargeter.

FREDRIC BROWN

Born: Cincinnati, Ohio; October 29, 1906

Died: Tucson, Arizona; March 11, 1972

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ed and Am Hunter, 1947-1963

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ED and AMBROSE "AM" HUNTER are nephew and uncle, private detectives based in Chicago. Ed is the young nephew, very idealistic; Am is a retired circus performer, a more mature, seasoned individual. Thus, the two men combine naïveté and idealism with experience and sobriety, making a balanced team when dealing with sordid street life.

CONTRIBUTION

Fredric Brown's contribution to the detective novel lies in his inventive plots and his realistic portrayals of life at the bottom. In *The Screaming Mimi* (1949), he draws a grim picture, at the novel's beginning, of an alcoholic reporter on a binge—a veritable slice of life. A specialist in the trick ending and the clever title, Brown was not much of a stylist and showed in many ways his early training in the pulp-magazine field. He liked the hard-boiled style but preferred to avoid strict adherence to its conventions. In the mid-1950's and later, when he tailored his fiction to the new men's

magazines such as *Playboy* and *Dude*, Brown's style became more polished and sophisticated.

Brown's detective and mystery fiction was professional and clever. His characters borrowed much from the *Black Mask* school of writing (he contributed one story to the magazine). Unfortunately, few of his characters are memorable; most are one-dimensional. His main contribution to the field lies in his original plots and ingenious endings.

BIOGRAPHY

Fredric Brown (all of his life he fought against being called "Frederick") was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on October 29, 1906. As a teenager, he lost his parents in consecutive years, 1920 and 1921, and was forced to work at odd jobs to support himself. During the 1920's, he attended Hanover College in Hanover, Indiana, as well as Cincinnati University. He married in 1929 and moved to Milwaukee, where he worked as a proofreader for several publishers until he finally settled down at the *Milwaukee Journal*. There he remained until 1947, when he moved to New York, having been offered a position as an editor for a chain of pulp magazines.

It was in 1938 that Brown sold his first story, "The Moon for a Nickel," which appeared in *Street and Smith's Detective Story Magazine*. From that time on, Brown sold regularly to the pulps, writing in a variety

of genres, from *Dime Mystery* to *Planet Stories* to *Weird Tales*. He built a considerable following among pulp readers.

Brown's first popular success came with the publication of his first novel, *The Fabulous Clipjoint* (1947), which introduced the nephew-and-uncle team of Ed and Am Hunter. The novel won the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America in 1948. Brown's literary fortunes improved, and he moved to New York to take up a major editorial position; moreover, he divorced his first wife, Helen.

A succession of popular crime novels followed, beginning with *The Dead Ringer* in 1948 and *The Screaming Mimi* in 1949. In that latter year Brown met Elizabeth Charlier, married her, and moved to Taos, New Mexico. The chain of pulps had folded, but Brown, fortuitously, had found a new career as a popular crime novelist. As television became a greater power in the entertainment field, Brown also found many of his stories being purchased for adaptation to television.

Brown's health had never been good, and it was not helped by his sporadic heavy drinking. Respiratory problems also developed, and in 1954 Brown and his wife, Elizabeth, moved to Tucson, Arizona, for his health. Although he had been writing for such high-paying magazines as *Playboy* and *Dude*, Brown was no longer able to keep up the pace. His last novel, *Mrs. Murphy's Underpants*, published in 1963, was not up to his usual mark. A few more stories appeared under his name, but his full-time writing days were past. He died of emphysema in Tucson on March 11, 1972, at the age of sixty-five.

ANALYSIS

Fredric Brown's early writing for the pulps was formative for his style, which was never very polished. Accustomed to tailoring his stories to the standard pulp stereotypes, he was able to distinguish himself mainly by devising unusual plot twists or endings. His story titles also show an inventive air: "A Little White Lye," "Murder While You Wait," "The Dancing Sandwiches." Once, in need of a clever title, he bought one from a fellow writer for ten dollars: "I Love You Cruelly." Although his prose was never outstanding,

Brown did attract a large following who appreciated the tough-guy type of story and the realism of Brown's settings (often in Chicago).

THE FABULOUS CLIPJOINT

Many of his early stories are forgettable, but with *The Fabulous Clipjoint* Brown managed to create a fascinatingly complex plot, amid the background of a sleazy carnival. His detective team, Ed and Am Hunter, is different and appealing. Oddly enough, though, the best of Brown's crime novels do not belong to this series: *The Screaming Mimi* and *The Far Cry* (1951). Both novels have unusual characters and focus on a rather seamy milieu. The milieu is well drawn, but modern readers who are not accustomed to the clichés of pulp style may find the one-dimensional nature of many of the characters unappealing. The tough talk is there, but the soul is missing.

Brown himself did not engage in discussions of the theoretical basis of his work or of the detective novel in general; he was a professional author and considered writing a job one did for money. Nevertheless, he did follow the standard pulp guidelines: a catchy opener, unusual characters, a new twist in the plot, and above all, a smash finish. This conventionality probably crippled his development as a stylist—but it did make him attractive to editors. Brown's ingenious twists of plot were just what editors sought to enliven the routine nature of much pulp fiction.

THE SCREAMING MIMI

In *The Screaming Mimi*, one of Brown's best-known crime novels, all of his assets and his debits are visible. It was the only Brown novel to be made into a film (with the same title, in 1958, starring Anita Ekberg and Philip Carey). The setting of the novel is Chicago of the 1940's. The hero is a newspaper reporter who is inclined to go on occasional binges, and the novel opens as the reporter, Sweeney, is just coming out of his latest bender. "Sweeney sat on a park bench, that summer night, next to God. Sweeney rather liked God, although not many people did." Here is a characteristic Brown touch—the clever play with words. "God" happens to be another bum, named Godfrey.

Brown lavishes much care on his descriptions of the Chicago night scene: Bughouse Square, Clark

Street, and North State Street. His accurate portrayal of down-and-outers is a credit to his thorough knowledge of the settings of his novels and his interest in low-life characters.

The mystery centers on a mysterious “Ripper” who has been attacking young women of unsound reputation. Sweeney stumbles onto the scene of an attack; the victim is a nightclub dancer, Yolanda Lang. She manages to survive the assault. Sweeney, stunned by her beauty, decides to swear off drinking for the time being to get to know her and find the Ripper.

There are elements of the novel that remind one of the standard 1940’s Hollywood crime film of the order now known as film noir. However, there also are original touches. The hero, Sweeney, is an unsavory character who has just crawled out of the gutter. Another interesting character is Doc Greene, the owner of a nightclub named El Madhouse, where Yolanda does her dancing. Greene pretends to be literary, but makes mistakes when dropping the names of authors and books. In describing Greene’s eyes, Brown writes: “Somehow, too, they managed to look both vacant and deadly. They looked like reptile’s eyes, magnified a hundredfold, and you expected a nictitating membrane to close upon them.” Brown’s is a style that mingles old clichés with a turn of the verbal screw.

More sophisticated readers may find this kind of description shopworn. The following could have come from *Dime Detective*:

Stopped in mid-sentence, she stared at him. She asked, “You aren’t another shamus, are you? This place was lousy with ’em. . . .”

Sweeney stuck out a paw and the detective took it, but not enthusiastically.

It wasn’t quite believable somehow.

The core of this novel, as with so many novels of the hard-boiled variety, is the wanderings of the hero, the low-life characters, the strange settings, the brushes with the law. In this regard, Brown followed the standard formula, but in choosing as his protagonist an alcoholic newspaper reporter, he applied the twist that makes the story different.

At the end of the story, the murderer proves to be the very Yolanda with whom the hero is in love and

who inspired him to come out of his binge and try to solve the mystery of the Ripper. In the last few paragraphs of the novel, Sweeney, having solved the murder and lost his love, is seen back on the street, sharing a fifth of booze (or two) with Godfrey. “Sweeney shuddered. He pulled two flat pint bottles out of the side pockets of his coat and handed one of them to God. . . .”

This, one might say, is the clever twist. There is no happy ending. Brown was a writer who hated happy endings, even though he was forced on many occasions to write them. In his novels, Brown had enough control over his material that he was able to write the endings he wanted.

There are many admirers of Brown who claim that he wrote his best prose not in the crime-fiction field but in the area of science fiction. He did have a steadfast following in this genre, and many of his science-fiction stories avoid the clichés of pulp fiction. Nevertheless, there are many Brown mystery fans who believe, with critic Bill Pronzini, that “the largest number [of his mystery stories] are tales of merit and high craftsmanship.”

Independent judgment, however, must find that Fredric Brown did not blaze many trails as a crime writer, although he certainly provided much entertainment for readers. His talents did not approach the level of a Georges Simenon, a Nicolas Freeling, or a P. D. James. Brown was a competent professional in the realm of pulp fiction, but he is clearly not a candidate for university seminar discussions on the detective novel.

Philip M. Brantingham

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ED AND AM HUNTER SERIES: *The Fabulous Clip-joint*, 1947; *The Dead Ringer*, 1948; *The Bloody Moonlight*, 1949 (also known as *Murder by Moonlight*); *Compliments of a Fiend*, 1950; *Death Has Many Doors*, 1951; *The Late Lamented*, 1959; *Mrs. Murphy’s Underpants*, 1963

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Murder Can Be Fun*, 1948 (also known as *A Plot for Murder*); *The Screaming Mimi*, 1949; *Here Comes a Candle*, 1950; *Night of the Jabberwock*, 1950; *The Case of the Dancing*

Sandwiches, 1951; *The Far Cry*, 1951; *The Deep End*, 1952; *We All Killed Grandma*, 1952; *Madball*, 1953; *His Name Was Death*, 1954; *The Wench Is Dead*, 1955; *The Lenient Beast*, 1956; *One for the Road*, 1958; *The Office*, 1958; *Knock Three-One-Two*, 1959; *The Mind Thing*, 1961; *The Murderers*, 1961; *The Five-Day Nightmare*, 1962

SHORT FICTION: *Mostly Murder*, 1953; *Nightmares and Geezenstacks*, 1961; *The Shaggy Dog and Other Murders*, 1963

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *What Mad Universe*, 1949; *The Lights in the Sky Are Stars*, 1953 (also known as *Project Jupiter*); *Martians, Go Home*, 1955; *Rogue in Space*, 1957

SHORT FICTION: *Space on My Hands*, 1951; *Science-Fiction Carnival*, 1953 (with Mack Reynolds); *Angels and Spaceships*, 1954 (also known as *Star Shine*); *Honeymoon in Hell*, 1958; *Daymares*, 1968; *Paradox Lost and Twelve Other Great Science Fiction Stories*, 1973; *The Best of Fredric Brown*, 1977

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Mitkey Astromouse*, 1971 (illustrated by Heinz Edelmann)

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Haining, Peter. *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000. Discusses Brown's work in the pulps and the role of pulp fiction in American culture.

Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre. Examines Brown's *The Fabulous Clipjoint*, *The Screaming Mimi*, and *The Lenient Beast*.

Seabrook, Jack. *Martians and Misplaced Clues: The Life and Work of Fredric Brown*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993. Detailed critical biography discussing the relationship between Brown's personal experiences and his fiction.

SANDRA BROWN

Born: Waco, Texas; June 12, 1948

Also wrote as Laura Jordan; Rachel Ryan; Erin St. Claire

Types of plot: Thriller; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

After Sandra Brown's suspense thriller *Mirror Image* (1991) made *The New York Times* best-seller list, she became one of America's most prolific and popular authors, with a large and dedicated fan base. She has published more than sixty-five novels, many of them *New York Times* best sellers. Her works have been translated into more than thirty languages, and millions of copies of her novels have been sold in

audio formats. Brown began her writing career as a romance novelist, but in the early 1990's, her novels became increasingly more complex and suspense filled as she steadily moved into the mystery, crime, and thriller genres. It was her ability to combine two popular genres—romance and suspense—that not only placed her novels in the popular subgenre known as romantic suspense but also positioned her as one of America's top mystery writers. Brown is highly regarded by fans for her engaging, suspenseful plots, which feature false leads, sinister motives, positioned and highly detailed characters, and unpredictable endings. *The Crush* (2002) became Brown's fiftieth *New York Times* best seller. Her 1992 novel *French Silk* was

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Sandra Brown. (AP/Wide World Photos)

made into an American Broadcasting Company (ABC) television film starring Susan Lucci in 1994.

Brown's awards include the American Business Women's Association's Distinguished Circle of Success, the B'nai B'rith's Distinguished Literary Achievement Award, the A. C. Greene Award, and the Romance Writers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award.

BIOGRAPHY

Sandra Brown was born on June 12, 1948, in Waco, Texas, to journalist Jimmie Brown and to counselor Martha Cox. She grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, and attended Texas Christian University before leaving to attend Oklahoma State University and the University of Texas at Arlington, where she majored in English. In 1968, when she was working a summer job

as a dancer at Six Flags Over America, she married Michael Brown.

Before Brown started to write for a living, she worked as the manager of a Merle Norman Cosmetics Studio in Tyler, Texas (1971-1973), as a weather reporter for WFAA-TV in Dallas (1976-1979), as a model for the Dallas Apparel Mart (1976-1987), and as a reporter for the nationally syndicated television show *PM Magazine*, which aired from the 1970's to 1980's. All her life, she had been an avid reader of detective novels, and after losing her job as a weather reporter in 1979, she decided to take a risk and write professionally. She describes that decision as a kind of epiphany and claims that from this point she could clearly see that she was meant to spend the rest of her life as a writer. After reading and studying a variety of romance novels and books on how to write, the burgeoning author placed her typewriter on a card table and began her writing career.

After attending a romance writers' conference, Brown wrote her first romance novel, and her work was first published in 1981. Harlequin Romances failed to purchase her first novel, but Dell Books took a chance on the new writer. Two of her romance novels, *Love's Encore* (1981) and *Love Beyond Reason* (1981), were accepted for publication within thirteen days of each other. During the following ten years, the prolific Brown wrote an average of six romance novels per year using the pseudonyms Erin St. Claire, Laura Jordan, and Rachel Ryan (her children's names). In 1991, when her *Mirror Image* hit *The New York Times* best-seller list, Brown became one of America's best-selling authors. She began to drop the pseudonyms and to use her own name. In addition to writing novels, Brown serves as the chief executive officer of her own multimillion-dollar publishing empire, and in terms of financial earnings, she is ranked with such best-selling authors as Tom Clancy, Stephen King, J. K. Rowling, and Danielle Steel.

Brown and her husband, Michael, a former news anchor and the owner of a video production company, produced an award-winning documentary film, *Dust to Dust* (2002), about asbestos contamination in Libby, Montana.

ANALYSIS

Critics say that more than any other factor, it is Sandra Brown's strong storytelling ability and her ability to combine romance, terror, and suspense that set her apart from other writers. In addition, Brown appeals to both male and female readers, who find themselves constantly changing their minds about the identities of her villains. She manages to keep readers in suspense with her greatly detailed, richly plotted novels. Critics also praise Brown for her ability to weave false leads and highly unpredictable, sinister motives into her intricate plotlines. Although all of Brown's thrillers have been called "vulgar" and "bloodthirsty" by reviewers, who note the "raunchy" sex scenes, Brown's books continue to sell well.

Highly regarded for her novels of romantic suspense, Brown thinks of her books primarily as suspense crime novels that incorporate a spicy love story. Her plots generally follow a predictable outline, with each featuring a fiercely independent female protagonist who encounters an extremely violent situation, usually involving murder, and finds herself in dire need of masculine help. However, differentiating the good guys from the bad guys is never easy in the Brown novel. Brown's plots invariably play out against a backdrop of complex family secrets that are revealed one by one and discovered when least expected.

Brown invariably makes her protagonist a high-powered, successful, career-minded woman, who although highly self-sufficient, finds herself in danger and in need of help. For example, the protagonist of Brown's *Charade* (1994), is a soap-opera star in danger of dying unless she receives a heart transplant. Many of Brown's novels are set in the Deep South, and this setting, complete with swamps, plantations, and creepy Spanish oaks, lends itself well to the menacing atmosphere that surrounds her characters. Brown's *Mirror Image*, *Breath of Scandal* (1991), and *French Silk* are all set in the hot and sultry city of New Orleans, an atmosphere that has appeal for readers desiring to escape their own prosaic lives and enter into a dangerous fantasy world of sex and high intrigue. In addition, Brown's suspense novels incorporate a large number of highly complex characters, who are one by

one drawn against their wishes into a dark unfolding plot. The characters, and Brown's readers, remain completely unaware of the hidden family secrets that act as the underpinnings of Brown's plots, and it is the revelation of these secrets that draws the characters into the never-ceasing action. In addition, Brown differs from other writers in that she breaks away from predictable, formulaic happy endings and oftentimes opts for dark endings.

CHARADE

In *Charade*, if soap-opera star Cat Delany does not receive a heart transplant, she will die. After the operation, Cat, who is simply happy to be alive, is stalked by a killer who seeks revenge on her because she is the recipient of his former lover's heart. Suddenly, Cat's world closes in on her, and she finds she can trust no one, not even the new love in her life, the crime writer Alex Pierce, who might be her stalker. This is another fast-paced Brown book that maintains suspense by hiding the identity of the killer. It also contains Brown's formulaic independent female heroine who finds herself in a vulnerable situation at the hands of a handsome predator.

FRENCH SILK

French Silk, a romantic suspense novel, is set in one of Brown's Deep South locales, New Orleans. After evangelist Jackson Wilde is murdered, District Attorney Robert Cassidy finds himself with a long list of suspects. Wilde's young wife, Ariel, who has been having an affair with her husband's son, tops the list. However, the search for the killer soon zooms in on Claire Laurent, who owns the French Silk mail-order lingerie company, a target of Wilde's antipornography campaign. As the weather in the city heats up, more problems develop for District Attorney Cassidy, who finds himself falling in love with the suspect, who has been lying to him in an effort to protect her mentally deficient mother at whose hands she suffered as a child. Although Laurent is attracted to Cassidy, her abusive childhood causes her to remain terrified of commitment, so she keeps him at a distance. Once again, *French Silk* contains Brown's trademark independent female protagonist in need of male protection in addition to her penchant for dark family secrets.

CHILL FACTOR

Chill Factor (2005), unlike many of Brown's thrillers, is set in winter in a small North Carolina town where yet another independent woman finds herself in dire need of rescuing after she is trapped in a mountain cabin with a man who might possibly be a killer. After the loss of their three-year-old daughter, Lilly and Dutch Burton decide divorce might be the solution to their ongoing problems. When Lilly's car skids off a mountain road shortly after she leaves the Burtons' cabin barely ahead of a storm, she hits a handsome hiker named Tierney, and she and the injured man wait out the blizzard in the cabin. Lilly calls her husband, Dutch, but he cannot reach her because of the snow. Later, Dutch finds out that Tierney is a serial killer who has recently killed five women. Here, as in her other novels, Brown casts the killer as a writer.

RICOCHET

Set in the Deep South, *Ricochet* (2006) is filled with Brown's nonstop suspense, steamy settings, and sex scenes. From the minute Georgia detective Duncan Hatcher sees the shy, refined, and lovely Elise Laird at a police awards banquet, he cannot help but fall in love with her. However, she is off limits because she is married to a local judge, who constantly ruins Hatcher's chances of bringing the region's drug lord to justice. After Elise, a former topless dancer, shoots a burglar in self-defense, Hatcher is called to her fabulous home, where she confides in him that her husband, with the aid of the drug lord, set her up to be the victim of the intruder. Hatcher attempts to downplay his increasing feelings for her, and Elise soon vanishes, but not before another body turns up.

BREATH OF SCANDAL

The Deep South, in this case South Carolina, is the setting for Brown's popular *Breath of Scandal* (1991). Jade Sperry, another of Brown's strong female protagonists in need of male help, is bent on avenging the pain and suffering inflicted on her by three classmates who raped her while she was in high school. The rape caused her boyfriend to commit suicide, and she found herself pregnant as a result of the attack. Another of Brown's highly intelligent protagonists, Jade worked her way through college as a single mother and became successful despite the scandal and the trauma.

However, she is unable to achieve a lasting, fulfilling relationship with a man until Dillon Burke, the handsome contractor she puts in charge of a construction project, comes into her life.

EXCLUSIVE

Like many of Brown's other books, political thriller *Exclusive* (1996) is full of family secrets that create nonstop suspense. Reporter Barrie Travis is granted an exclusive interview with the First Lady of the United States after the death of her baby, seemingly from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). However, Barrie discovers that the baby might have been the victim of murder and that a former presidential adviser—who is possibly the First Lady's lover—might be involved in the death. All this, however, is just the beginning of the unveiling of the First Family's dark secrets.

M. Casey Diana

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Mirror Image*, 1991; *French Silk*, 1992; *Where There's Smoke*, 1993; *Charade*, 1994; *The Witness*, 1995; *Exclusive*, 1996; *Fat Tuesday*, 1997; *Un-speakable*, 1998; *The Alibi*, 1999; *Standoff*, 2000; *The Switch*, 2000; *Envy*, 2001; *The Crush*, 2002; *Hello, Darkness*, 2003; *White Hot*, 2004; *Chill Factor*, 2005; *Ricochet*, 2006; *Play Dirty*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1981–1985 • *Love Beyond Reason*, 1981 (as Ryan); *Love's Encore*, 1981 (as Ryan); *Hidden Fires*, 1982 (as Jordan); *The Silken Web*, 1982 (as Jordan); *Not Even for Love*, 1982 (as St. Claire); *Eloquent Silence*, 1982 (as Ryan); *A Treasure Worth Seeking*, 1982 (as Ryan); *Breakfast in Bed*, 1983; *Relentless Desire*, 1983; *Tempest in Eden*, 1983; *Temptation's Kiss*, 1983; *Tomorrow's Promise*, 1983; *Prime Time*, 1983 (as Ryan); *A Kiss Remembered*, 1983 (as St. Claire); *A Secret Splendor*, 1983 (as St. Claire); *Seduction by Design*, 1983 (as St. Claire); *Bittersweet Rain*, 1984 (as St. Claire); *Words of Silk*, 1984 (as St. Claire); *In a Class by Itself*, 1984; *Send No Flowers*, 1984; *Sunset Embrace*, 1984; *Riley in the Morning*, 1985; *Thursday's Child*, 1985; *Another Dawn*, 1985; *Led Astray*, 1985 (as St. Claire); *A Sweet Anger*, 1985 (as St. Claire); *Tiger Prince*, 1985 (as St. Claire)

1986-1990 • *Above and Beyond*, 1986 (as St. Claire); *Honor Bound*, 1986 (as St. Claire); *Twenty-Two Indigo Place*, 1986; *The Rana Look*, 1986; *Demon Rumm*, 1987; *Fanta C.*, 1987; *Sunny Chandler's Return*, 1987; *The Devil's Own*, 1987 (as St. Claire); *Two Alone*, 1987 (as St. Claire); *Adam's Fall*, 1988; *Hawk O'Toole's Hostage*, 1988; *Slow Heat in Heaven*, 1988; *Tidings of Great Joy*, 1988; *Thrill of Victory*, 1989 (as St. Claire); *Long Time Coming*, 1989; *Temperatures Rising*, 1989; *Best Kept Secrets*, 1989; *A Whole New Light*, 1989; *Texas! Lucky*, 1990; *Texas! Chase*, 1990

1991-2002 • *Breath of Scandal*, 1991; *Another Dawn*, 1991; *Texas! Sage*, 1992; *The Rana Look*, 2002

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Brown, Sandra. "The Risk of Seduction and the Seduction of Risk." In *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women*, edited by Jayne Ann Krentz. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992. Best-selling author Brown discusses the psychology behind the romantic inclinations of her strong, independent female characters and their attraction to good-looking but ultimately dangerous men.

Machan, Dyan. "Romancing the Buck." *Forbes* 159, no. 11 (June, 1997): 44-45. This article examines Sandra Brown's decision to switch from the romance genre to the more substantial and far more profitable mystery, suspense, and thriller genres and the risk involved in this decision.

Rapp, Adrian, Lynda Dodgen, and Anne K. Kaler. "A Romance Writer Gets Away with Murder." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 21 (Spring/Summer, 2000): 17-21. Scholarly article that details how Brown integrated her talent for writing successful romances into the thriller, suspense, and mystery genres, a move that catapulted her into mainstream fiction as a best-selling author.

Raskin, Barbara. "Moguls in Pumps." *The New York Times Book Review*, May 31, 1992, p. 739. Compares Brown's best-selling *French Silk* with Ivana Trump's *For Love Alone* (1992) and Judith Krantz's *Scruples Two* (1992) to illustrate the rags-to-riches or poor-girl-makes-good theme employed in each novel.

Rice, Melinda. "How to Become a Best-Seller." *D Magazine—Dallas/Fort Worth* 27, no. 6 (June 1, 2000): 80. A profile of the author that concentrates on how she went from being a romance writer to a writer of suspense and mystery and how she manages the business end of her work.

LEO BRUCE

Rupert Croft-Cooke

Born: Edenbridge, Kent, England; June 20, 1903

Died: Bournemouth, England; June 10, 1979

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sergeant William Beef, 1936-1952

Carolus Deene, 1955-1974

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SERGEANT WILLIAM BEEF, a village police officer turned private investigator, is married to a quiet countrywoman who thinks the world of her husband. Large, red-faced, plodding, and enamored of pubs (he loves beer, whiskey, and dart games), Beef is a remarkably astute detective whose methods, while slow, are amazingly thorough. Beef is somewhat peeved that he is not as famous as Hercule Poirot or Albert Cam-

pion, despite the almost constant presence of his biographer, Lionel Townsend; on more than one occasion, Beef complains that Townsend's books imply that luck rather than skill is the secret to Beef's successes.

LIONEL TOWNSEND is a freelance writer and Sergeant Beef's biographer and companion in detection. Constantly irritated by Beef's methodical nature and endless dart playing, the university-educated Townsend makes it clear that he would much prefer to chronicle the exploits of a more glamorous detective, someone such as Lord Peter Wimsey, for example. When faced with another of Beef's pub stops, Townsend sourly compares his own experiences with those of Dr. Watson. A bachelor, Townsend keeps a flat in the genteel vicinity of the Marble Arch and thinks disparaging thoughts about Beef's "drab little house . . . as near Baker Street as he had been able to manage."

CAROLUS DEENE, a senior history master at the Queen's School, Newminster, is an amateur sleuth during school holidays and weekends. Forty years old and widowed, he is an "uncomfortably rich man," who lives for his two consuming interests, teaching history and investigating crime. Working almost exclusively from interviews with those involved, Deene formulates "the kind of wild hypothetical imaginary stuff which might easily turn out to hold the seeds of truth." In fact, he is as famous for his wild theorizing as for his ability to solve the puzzles of crime. He makes it clear that he is motivated both by an intellectual curiosity and by a desire to find out the truth.

HUGH GORRINGER, the headmaster of the Queen's School, is possessed of a huge pair of hairy ears. Torn between an obsession with protecting the school from adverse publicity and an overwhelming curiosity about Deene's adventures, Gorringer initially disapproves of Deene's involvement in detection but almost always manages to find an excuse to be present at the events providing a solution to the crime.

RUPERT PRIGGLEY is a precocious Queen's School student who frequently invites himself to accompany Deene. In the Deene series, Priggley provides most of the commentary on and criticism of the detective genre.

MRS. STICK, Deene's highly respectable housekeeper, disapproves of his hobby of investigating crime

and threatens to give notice if he does not stop. Insistent on calling things by their proper names, Mrs. Stick can be counted on to mispronounce the French names of the dishes she serves to Deene.

CONTRIBUTION

Leo Bruce's Sergeant William Beef and Carolus Deene novels have been praised as "superb examples of classic British mystery," his plots have been described as "brilliantly ingenious," and Bruce himself has been called "a master of the genre." Yet, if his fame rests on his skill with the classic form, his chief importance to the history of the genre lies in his perfection of the immensely entertaining and parodic self-conscious detective novel, a subgenre that questions and revises, edits and inverts, occasionally criticizes and lampoons—all with a wry ironic tone—the conventions of the traditional whodunit. In the Sergeant Beef novels, certainly, and to a slightly lesser extent in the Carolus Deene series, the principal characters seem not only aware of their fictional existence but also inclined to use that recognition to remark on their counterparts in other detective stories, on the plots devised by other crime writers, and on the genre as a whole. For the well-read connoisseur of detective fiction, this artifice, which would be a disaster from the pen of a less gifted writer, invests Bruce's fiction with a double significance: The novels are intricate puzzles that tantalize and fascinate and most of all entertain, and they are also theoretical works in that they provide analytical commentary on the literary form they represent. Thus, Bruce manages, in this most popular of fiction genres, to obey that age-old dictum that literature must both delight and instruct.

BIOGRAPHY

Leo Bruce was born Rupert Croft-Cooke on June 20, 1903, in Edenbridge, Kent, England, the son of Hubert Bruce Cooke and Lucy Taylor Cooke. Little information—beyond the standard sketchy biographical data—is available on Bruce's life. He was educated at Tonbridge School, Kent, and Wellington College (now Wrekin College); from 1923 to 1926, he attended the University of Buenos Aires, where he founded and edited a weekly magazine, *La Estrella*.

Bruce's career seems primarily to have involved either writing or the military, both in England and abroad. The exceptions were two years (1929-1931) spent as an antiquarian bookseller, and one year's experience as a lecturer at the English Institute Montana in Zugerberg, Switzerland. Beginning with a stint in the British Army Intelligence Corps in 1940, Bruce went on to serve in the 1942 Madagascar offensive (for which he was awarded the British Empire Medal) and as commander of the Third Gurkha Rifles in 1943. Continuing his service on the Indian subcontinent from 1944 to 1946, Bruce was a field security officer in the Poona and Delhi districts and an intelligence school instructor in Karachi, West Pakistan. He returned to England to work as the book critic for *The Sketch* before deciding to concentrate on his freelance writing career.

Earlier, during the 1930's, Bruce had spent several years as a writer; during that decade, he wrote plays, some twenty books, one collection of short fiction, and translations of Spanish works. After his years in the military, he produced several autobiographical volumes, biographies of a wide variety of figures (including a controversial life of Lord Alfred Douglas), at least three books on cookery, some poetry, and even one foray into literary criticism—a commentary on several Victorian writers. All along, Bruce was writing the detective novels that would earn for him acclaim as “a major British detective story writer of salient merit.”

Bruce's first detective novel, *Case for Three Detectives* (1936), was also the first book for which he employed the pseudonym Leo Bruce, under which all of his detective novels would be published. In this book, Bruce introduced the plebeian Sergeant Beef, whose exploits he recounted until 1952, when Bruce inexplicably abandoned Beef after eight novels. The wealthy, university-educated Carolus Deene first appeared in *At Death's Door* in 1955. Bruce wrote only a few more books after he abandoned the detective novel in 1974. He died on June 10, 1979.

ANALYSIS

On the surface, the Sergeant Beef novels and the Carolus Deene novels appear to be quite dissimilar.

The Beef chronicles have an engaging middle-class ponderousness that is wholly in keeping with Sergeant Beef's person and behavior, while the Deene stories sparkle with wit and iridescent one-liners. Aside from his shadow, Lionel Townsend, Sergeant Beef has only a small cast of supporting players—his nearly invisible wife and Chief Inspector Stute of the Special Branch—onstage with him; Carolus Deene must constantly deal with a crowd of regulars—Hugh Gorringer and his wife, Mrs. Stick and her laconic husband, the sometimes annoying but always bright Rupert Priggley, and Deene's friend John Moore of the Criminal Investigation Department—who are so brilliantly realized as characters that they add life and entertainment to the novels without detracting from the suspenseful narratives. Beef is decidedly, unabashedly bourgeois with a strong element of the working class; Deene describes himself as “repulsively rich” and lives in a Queen Anne house presided over by an eminently respectable housekeeper who serves him gourmet meals with vintage wine. William Beef investigates crimes because detection is his profession; Deene detects out of a love for puzzles (he is constantly in competition with another schoolmaster for the morning newspaper's crossword) and an obsession with finding the truth. Beef's detractors call him lucky rather than competent; Deene has a reputation for improbable theories that turn out to be accurate.

Superficial differences aside, however, Leo Bruce's two detective series have important characteristics in common. Bruce's novels are conventional stories of the type known variously as traditional British, Golden Age detective story, whodunit, or even puzzle mystery. As examples of a classic form familiar to aficionados of crime and mystery fiction, the Sergeant Beef and Carolus Deene books display Bruce's adept handling of genre conventions: the basically comic universe, the presence of a great detective, locked rooms and perfect alibis, the closed circle of suspects from which the murderer (the crime in question is always murder) is eventually identified, clues—obvious and otherwise—and misdirections, a believable solution that somehow restores order to a society turned topsy-turvy, and the great detective's summing up of the facts of the case. Even Bruce's settings are famil-

iar: little English villages with quaint hyphenated names located on or near bodies of water or distinct geological formations, proper seaside resorts, picturesque cottages and stately country homes, and respectable London suburbs. Although the murders are violent, Bruce rarely if ever provides explicit details of either method or aftermath; his treatment of crime has the delicacy and understatement of the traditional detective novels rather than the gritty realism of the newer, American crime novel. Bruce's characters belong to the world of the Golden Age: His detectives carry no weapons and rely solely on the interview and the reenactment for results; minor characters are succinctly sketched character types—respectable citizens, eccentrics, obsequious tradespeople, loyal or disgruntled domestics, dotty parsons.

CASE FOR THREE DETECTIVES

Another similarity between the two series is the self-mocking tone present in many of the individual books. Bruce excelled at constructing self-parodying detective novels in which some characters display a tendency to remark—often critically—on the conventions of the genre and the expectations of readers long familiar with those conventions. Bruce's first detective novel sets the tone for the rest. In *Case for Three Detectives*, Sergeant Beef solves a murder that completely baffles three eminent sleuths—Lord Simon Plimsoll, Monsieur Amer Picot, and Monsignor Smith—clearly intended as parodies of Wimsey, Poirot, and Father Brown. The Sergeant Beef novels are particularly self-conscious; they are narrated by a writer of detective fiction, more specifically, by the novelist who records and then fictionalizes the adventures of Sergeant Beef. Lionel Townsend, the writer, has very specific—and rather elitist—ideas about the nature of detective fiction, ideas with which Sergeant Beef does not agree, and their frequent arguments turn on such matters as plot development, the detective's personality, the role of a Watson, and the criteria by which readers judge the success or failure of a detective series. Bruce also calls attention to his fiction by alluding to characters who exist only in crime novels or by naming other authors. In one instance, Lionel Townsend's more intelligent brother suggests to Beef that he have Aldous Huxley or E. M. Forster write up his cases.

COMMENTS ON THE GENRE

Bruce continued his oblique commentary on detective fiction in the Carolus Deene series, chiefly in the conversations between Deene and his junior Watson, Rupert Priggley. Armed with the affected cynicism of the adolescent, Priggley frequently makes reference to the clichés of badly written detective fiction. Listening to Deene interview a suspect whose answers are predictable, Priggley blurts, "Oh, God, . . . we'll have an Indian poison unknown to science in a minute." He mocks Deene about asking "some fabulously unexpected question," and complains, "You've no idea how dated you are. All this looking for clues and questioning suspects and being mysterious about your theory till the last minute—it went out ages ago." He then goes on to point out the traits of modern fiction; clearly, none applies to the Deene stories. Rupert Priggley even manages a comparison of the English and American genres:

If you suppose that at your time of life you can turn yourself into one of these hardboiled, steel-gutted, lynx-eyed American sleuths who carry guns and risk their lives every few pages, you're wildly mistaken. You're English, sir, as English as Sherlock Holmes and Hercule (*Ma foi!*) Poirot.

Bruce clearly has wide knowledge of the conventions of the genre in which he writes, and he has entertainingly taken advantage of his position as a practitioner to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of his chosen form.

DEATH IN ALBERT PARK AND CRACK OF DOOM

Bruce displays a fondness for misdirection caused by the red-herring murder, that is, the murder of an unrelated person—even a stranger—to conceal the circumstances of the planned killing. Mr. Crabbett in *Death in Albert Park* (1964) stabs two other women in addition to his wife so that the killings will look like serial murder in the Jack the Ripper tradition. A retired colonel kills a woman to throw suspicion on her husband for both that murder and the colonel's murder of his own brother in *Crack of Doom* (1963). The plots of *Jack on the Gallows Tree* (1960) and *Die All, Die Merriely* (1961), among others, involve murder committed

for the purpose of concealing the identity of a killer. In each case, the choice of an unrelated victim proves a major mistake for the killer; the cover-up murder provides Beef or Deene with the clues essential to the solution of the puzzle.

HUMOR AND MURDER

Murder may be a grim business, but the world of the traditional British detective novel is a comic one, informed largely by human folly and imperfection. In Bruce's fictional world, much of the humor derives from the pretenses of people who try, often unsuccessfully, to adhere to an artificial code of conduct. Bruce's comedy is dark at times, but it provides opportunity for laughter even as it probes the social restrictions and demands that lead the weak to frustration and finally to murder, or into the fantastic delusions of the totally egotistical man who plans a murder simply to know for himself that he has taken a life and gotten away with it. In one case, a ridiculous feud between two devout churchwomen—one a High Church devotee, the other rabidly Low Church—results in death. More often, however, the motive is money—money with which to buy recognition, to ensure social success, to continue in a luxurious lifestyle, to further ambition, or to gain freedom from imagined restrictions. A husband who married his wife for money soon resents his dependence and kills her for his freedom. A man does away with the other heirs to a fortune he wishes to enjoy alone. Another, believing himself to be his aunt's heir, kills her only to discover that she has written him out of her will. What all these killers believe is that somehow money will earn for them the respect of their associates and peers, that money will help make up for their social deficiencies and will confer on them the cachet they so desperately want. The murderers are sometimes pathetically ridiculous in their machinations.

A master at manipulating the English language, Bruce neatly lampoons his characters with his capsule descriptions that home in on their affectations, on their foibles. Mr. Gorringer is introduced as "a large and important-looking man with a pair of huge crimson ears whose hairy cavities were marvellously attuned to passing rumour." A secretary is declared to be as neat as the proverbial new pin: "She looked rather like a

new pin, her long, narrow person rising to an inverted flowerpot hat." The faithful Mrs. Stick mangles beyond recognition the French names she insists on using for her culinary efforts; she serves up these delicacies with a bottle of "Shah Toe Ma Gokes." The very proper Miss Tissot arrogantly disapproves of everything about Carolus Deene—and says so quite bluntly—but when he offers to buy an aperitif for her, she orders one before the invitation is completed.

Bruce also clearly enjoys inventing names or juxtaposing names in incongruous contexts, often as a means of gently ridiculing the various public pretenses with which his detectives come in contact. In one novel the available newspapers are listed as *The Daily Horror*, *The Daily Wail*, *The Daily Explosion*, and *The Daily Smirch*. A prominent local is reverently referred to as "Colonel Lyle de Lisle De lisle L'Isle," while a pretentious London club seems to accept only those whose names are hyphenated—thus the manager blithely refers to Cyril Nutt-Campion and Cecil Waveney-Long and Adrian Stokes-Gray, even Ronnie Bright-Wilson, all in the same brief conversation. The names of victims and culprits alike are grin producing, often because they reflect character or profession so well: Hilton Gupp is a fishy sort of man-about-town; Lady Drumbone is a member of Parliament who lectures loud and long on sundry crackpot causes; Cosmo Ducrow is a fabulous rich recluse; Grazia Vaillant lives for her crusade to introduce incense and ornate vestments to her village church, which is decidedly Protestant. Ambitious young police officers have improbable names such as Spender-Hennessy or Galsworthy; lesser characters sport the names Fagg, Chickie, Flipps, or Pinhole. Even pets do not escape Bruce's name game; one dog breeder's menagerie is named after various Marxist heroes.

Although Bruce did not formulate a theoretical statement about the nature and characteristics of the detective novel, as so many of his colleagues have done, his own work exemplifies a coherent and well-articulated approach to the genre as he saw and practiced it. Clearly Bruce was a traditionalist, a creator of classically restrained and very English detective novels. Yet he was also an innovator in that he used the genre to ridicule its own excesses. Bruce's contribu-

tion to detective fiction is a fairly substantial body of work that both entertains and edifies, that engages and provokes.

E. D. Huntley

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SERGEANT BEEF SERIES: *Case for Three Detectives*, 1936; *Case Without a Corpse*, 1937; *Case with Four Clowns*, 1939; *Case with No Conclusion*, 1939; *Case with Ropes and Rings*, 1940; *Case for Sergeant Beef*, 1947; *Neck and Neck*, 1951; *Cold Blood*, 1952

CAROLUS DEENE SERIES: *At Death's Door*, 1955; *Death for a Ducat*, 1956; *A Louse for the Hangman*, 1958; *Dead Man's Shoes*, 1958; *Our Jubilee Is Death*, 1959; *Furious Old Women*, 1960; *Jack on the Gallows Tree*, 1960; *A Bone and a Hank of Hair*, 1961; *Die All, Die Merrily*, 1961; *Nothing Like Blood*, 1962; *Crack of Doom*, 1963 (also known as *Such Is Death*); *Death in Albert Park*, 1964; *Death at Hallows End*, 1965; *Death on the Black Sands*, 1966; *Death at St. Asprey's School*, 1967; *Death of a Commuter*, 1967; *Death on Romney Marsh*, 1968; *Death with Blue Ribbon*, 1969; *Death on Allhallowe'en*, 1970; *Death by the Lake*, 1971; *Death in the Middle Watch*, 1974; *Death of a Bover Boy*, 1974

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS CROFT-COOKE): *Seven Thunders*, 1955; *Thief*, 1960; *Clash by Night*, 1962; *Paper Albatross*, 1965; *Three in a Cell*, 1968; *Nasty Piece of Work*, 1973

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Pharaoh with His Wagons, and Other Stories*, 1937

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS CROFT-COOKE): 1930-1940 • *Give Him the Earth*, 1930; *Troubadour*, 1930; *Cosmopolis*, 1932; *Night Out*, 1932; *Her Mexican Lover*, 1934; *Picaro*, 1934; *Shoulder the Sky*, 1934; *Blind Gunner*, 1935; *Crusade*, 1936; *Kingdom Come*, 1936; *Rule, Britannia*, 1938; *Same Way Home*, 1939; *Glorious*, 1940

1941-1960 • *Ladies Gay*, 1946; *Octopus*, 1946 (also known as *Miss Allick*); *Wilkie*, 1948 (also known as *Another Sun, Another Home*); *The White Mountain*, 1949; *Brass Farthing*, 1950; *Three Names for Nicholas*, 1951; *Nine Days with Edward*, 1952; *Harvest Moon*, 1953; *Fall of Man*, 1955; *Barbary Night*, 1958

1961-1975 • *Wolf from the Door*, 1969; *Exiles*, 1970; *Under the Rose Garden*, 1971; *While the Iron's Hot*, 1971; *Conduct Unbecoming*, 1975

SHORT FICTION (AS CROFT-COOKE): *A Football for the Brigadier, and Other Stories*, 1950

PLAYS (AS CROFT-COOKE): *Banquo's Chair*, pb. 1930; *Deliberate Accident*, pr. 1934; *Tap Three Times*, pb. 1934; *Gala Night at "The Willows,"* pb. 1950

RADIO PLAYS (AS CROFT-COOKE): *You Bet Your Life*, 1938 (with Beverley Nichols); *Peter the Painter*, 1946; *Theft*, 1963

POETRY (AS CROFT-COOKE): *Songs of a Sussex Tramp*, 1922; *Tonbridge School*, 1923; *Songs South of the Line*, 1925; *The Viking*, 1926; *Some Poems*, 1929; *Tales of a Wicked Uncle*, 1963

NONFICTION (AS CROFT-COOKE): 1927-1950 • *How Psychology Can Help*, 1927; *Darts*, 1936; *God in Ruins: A Passing Commentary*, 1936; *The World Is Young*, 1937 (also known as *Escape to the Andes*); *How to Get More out of Life*, 1938; *The Man in Europe Street*, 1938; *The Circus Has No Home*, 1941 (revised 1950); *How to Enjoy Travel Abroad*, 1948; *Rudyard Kipling*, 1948; *The Moon Is My Pocket: Life with the Romanies*, 1948

1951-1960 • *Cities*, 1951 (with Noël Barber); *The Sawdust Ring*, 1951 (with W. S. Meadmore); *Buffalo Bill: The Legend, the Man of Action, the Showman*, 1952 (with W. S. Meadmore); *The Life for Me*, 1952; *The Blood-Red Island*, 1953; *A Few Gypsies*, 1955; *Sherry*, 1955; *The Verdict of You All*, 1955; *The Tangerine House*, 1956; *Port*, 1957; *The Gardens of Camelot*, 1958; *Smiling Damned Villain: The True Story of Paul Axel Lund*, 1959; *The Quest for Quixote*, 1959 (also known as *Through Spain with Don Quixote*); *English Cooking: A New Approach*, 1960; *The Altar in the Loft*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Madeira*, 1961; *The Drums of Morning*, 1961; *The Glittering Pastures*, 1962; *Wine and Other Drinks*, 1962; *Bosie: The Story of Lord Alfred Douglas, His Friends, and His Enemies*, 1963; *Cooking for Pleasure*, 1963; *The Numbers Came*, 1963; *The Last of Spring*, 1964; *The Wintry Sea*, 1964; *The Gorgeous East: One Man's India*, 1965; *The Purple Streak*, 1966; *The Wild Hills*, 1966; *Feasting with Tigers: A New Consideration of Some Late Victorian*

Writers, 1967; *The Happy Highways*, 1967; *The Ghost of June: A Return to England and the West*, 1968; *Exotic Food: Three Hundred of the Most Unusual Dishes in Western Cookery*, 1969

1971-1977 • *The Licentious Soldiery*, 1971; *The Unrecorded Life of Oscar Wilde*, 1972; *The Dogs of Peace*, 1973; *The Caves of Hercules*, 1974; *The Long Way Home*, 1974; *Circus: A World History*, 1976 (with Peter Cotes); *The Green, Green Grass*, 1977

EDITED TEXTS (AS CROFT-COOKE): *Major Road Ahead: A Young Man's Ultimatum*, 1939; *The Circus Book*, 1948

TRANSLATIONS (AS CROFT-COOKE): *Twenty Poems from the Spanish of Becquer*, 1927 (by G. A. Dominguez Becquer); *The Last Days of Madrid: The End of the Second Spanish Republic*, 1939 (by Segismundo Casado)

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tive 18 (Spring, 1985): 154-159. A brief study of the self-referential and metafictional aspects of Bruce's work.

Barzun, Jacques, and Wendell Hertig Taylor. Introduction to *Furious Old Women*, by Leo Bruce. Overview of Bruce's career that places *Furious Old Women* in the context of his other work, and of the larger genre of which it is a part.

Gohrbandt, Detlev, and Bruno von Lutz, eds. *Seeing and Saying: Self-Referentiality in British and American Literature*. New York: P. Lang, 1998. Study of the sort of self-referential narrative strategies employed by Bruce in his Sergeant Beef series.

Van Dover, J. K. *We Must Have Certainty: Four Essays on the Detective Story*. Selinsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 2005. Traces the evolution, conventions, and ideological investments of detective fiction. Invaluable for understanding the aspects of that fiction on which Bruce's work comments.

KEN BRUEN

Born: Galway, Ireland; 1951

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; police procedural; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Detective Sergeant (later Inspector) Brant, 1998-Jack Taylor, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SERGEANT BRANT is introduced in *A White Arrest* (1998) as a corrupt, brutishly violent London detective who is feared and respected by his peers. An antihero, Brant is a rage-filled, pugnacious bully who maintains a complicated but curiously loyal relationship with the few detectives and police officers whom he respects. He occasionally betrays an interest in Irish culture and

is an avid reader of Ed McBain, the American author of police procedurals. He respects strength and sees violence as a necessary tool of law enforcement. He places little trust in the legal system, preferring to mete out justice in an ad hoc fashion.

JACK TAYLOR is a Galway-based former member of the Garda Síochána, the police force of Ireland. Expelled for drinking and substance abuse, he now occupies a gray area between the law and the criminal world and is viewed with distrust by both sides. He works as a private investigator—or a "finder," as he calls himself in *The Guards* (2001), the novel in which he is introduced—in a country where, he says, there are no private investigators because they are viewed as informers or traitors. His circle is a relatively narrow one. He maintains an antagonistic and guilt-ridden rela-

tionship with his mother and her priest, as well as a few delicate relationships that could barely be called friendships, apparently based on circumstance and necessity, with his bartender, his landlady, and a former colleague from the Guards.

CONTRIBUTION

With the publication of the first Jack Taylor mystery, *The Guards*, in 2001, Ken Bruen found broad popular and critical acclaim within the mystery and detective genre. The popularity of this novel in Europe and later in the United States prompted the reissue of several of Bruen's earlier works; the first three Sergeant Brant novels—*A White Arrest* (1998), *Taming the Alien* (1999), and *The McDead* (2000)—were collected and reissued in the United States as *The White Trilogy* (2003).

Bruen's novels are significant for their treatment of two popular detective subgenres. As their protagonist's penchant for Ed McBain's novels of the 87th Precinct suggests, the Brant novels are contemporary police procedurals of a particularly dark and gritty nature. The novelty lies in the juxtaposition of the setting (London) and the narrative style, which is heavily influenced by American noir. The Jack Taylor novels are private investigator novels that are also unusual in terms of their setting (Galway), because as the narrator maintains, there are no private investigators in Ireland.

Bruen's stature as a writer of mystery and detective fiction is reflected in the number of awards and recognitions his works have received. *The Guards* was an Edgar Award finalist and Shamus Award winner, and several of his other novels have appeared on annual lists of best novels.

BIOGRAPHY

Ken Bruen was born in 1951 in Galway, Ireland, to a middle-class family. During Bruen's childhood, Galway, on the western coast of Ireland, was a small town in which everybody knew everybody else. It has since become one of Ireland's largest cities, with its share of big-city problems. Raised in a bookless household, Bruen described himself as a quiet boy who stood out in a society in which high value is placed on the art of conversation. His father, an insurance salesman, did

not encourage his reading or his quest for education. Bruen once stated that much of his life was spent trying to earn his father's respect, even though his father was not impressed by the English degrees that he earned. Although his father did not outwardly approve of his writing career, Bruen once found a cache of clippings about his novels among his father's effects, which he interpreted as a posthumous expression of paternal approval for his literary vocation.

After college and graduate school, Bruen spent many years traveling the world and holding a variety of jobs, including teaching positions in Kuwait and Vietnam, a position as a security guard in the World Trade Center, and acting jobs in low-budget films.

In 1978 Bruen accepted a teaching position in Brazil that led to a horrific experience that changed the course of his life. Arrested with four other foreigners in a Rio de Janeiro bar after a brawl, he was held without being charged for the next four months in a Brazilian cell where he experienced physical, psychological, and sexual abuse at the hands of his guards and fellow inmates. He retreated from these horrors into what he has described as a catatonia from which he spent a long time recovering.

On his release, Bruen moved to South London, where he would spend the next several years and where his career as a serious writer began to take shape. He also resumed teaching and met his wife, Philomena. After fifteen years in London, Bruen returned to Galway, where his daughter was born.

Several echoes from significant events in Bruen's life can be found in his novels. The settings of South London and Galway, for example, are the most familiar towns in Bruen's life. Additionally, his daughter was born with Down syndrome, like the character Serena-May, the child of Jack Taylor's friends Jeff and Cathy. His brother and several members of his wife's family struggled with or succumbed to alcoholism, and Bruen once said that a brother-in-law was the model for the character Tommy in *American Skin* (2006).

ANALYSIS

After some early attempts at literary fiction and several well-received London-based crime thrillers including *Rilke on Black* (1996), *The Hackman Blues*

(1997), and *Her Last Call to Louis MacNeice* (1997), Ken Bruen achieved critical and commercial success with the publication of *The Guards*, a Jack Taylor novel, in 2001. Although his career as a novelist did not begin with the Sergeant Brant and Jack Taylor series, they are his most popular novels and among his most effective. In both series, Bruen brings a markedly American style to unusual settings like London and Galway. The literary influences Bruen claims are, with the exception of Samuel Beckett, more American than Irish: Raymond Chandler, David Goodis, James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammett, Elmore Leonard, James Ellroy, Joseph Koenig, George V. Higgins, and James Crumley. Bruen's economy of language makes for a staccato read that effectively mirrors the thought processes of the characters. The plots of the novels advance at a breakneck speed.

THE WHITE TRILOGY

Although Bruen's South London police procedurals have come to be known as the Brant novels, Detective Sergeant Brant shares the stage with several other significant characters, particularly in the first three novels in the series, reissued as *The White Trilogy*, where he has no more than equal billing with his boss, Chief Inspector Roberts. The police procedural often describes the actions of an ensemble rather than an individual. In the first Brant novel, *A White Arrest*, Roberts and Brant are referred to as R&B, rhythm and blues, in what seems like an echo of the team Fire and Ice in *The Black Dahlia* (1987) by James Ellroy, whom Bruen cites as an influence. Also introduced early in the novel is WPC (Woman Police Constable) Falls, who as a black woman is Brant's unlikely protégé. In *A White Arrest*, a serial killer called the Umpire is targeting the English cricket team, and a vigilante group is murdering drug dealers. As is common in the genre of police procedurals, the narrative is presented in the third person by a narrator who, although omniscient, does not divulge much about the inner lives or feelings of the characters—little more, at least, than the characters divulge to one another. Marital infidelity and the death of a dog are handled with dark humor amid allusions to British and American pop culture.

In *Taming the Alien*, the second novel in the trilogy, Brant travels to Ireland and the United States in pursuit

of a fugitive with whom he finds a strange affinity, while WPC Falls struggles with an arsonist and the loss of a baby and Chief Inspector Roberts learns that he has skin cancer. *The McDead*, the third novel in the trilogy, pits Brant and Roberts against an Irish gangster over the death of Roberts's estranged brother. As elsewhere in the world of Bruen's London novels, revenge is presented as the best resolution available to the characters. The characterization is accomplished almost entirely through dialogue, with only limited commentary from the narrator, most of it darkly humorous.

LATER BRANT NOVELS

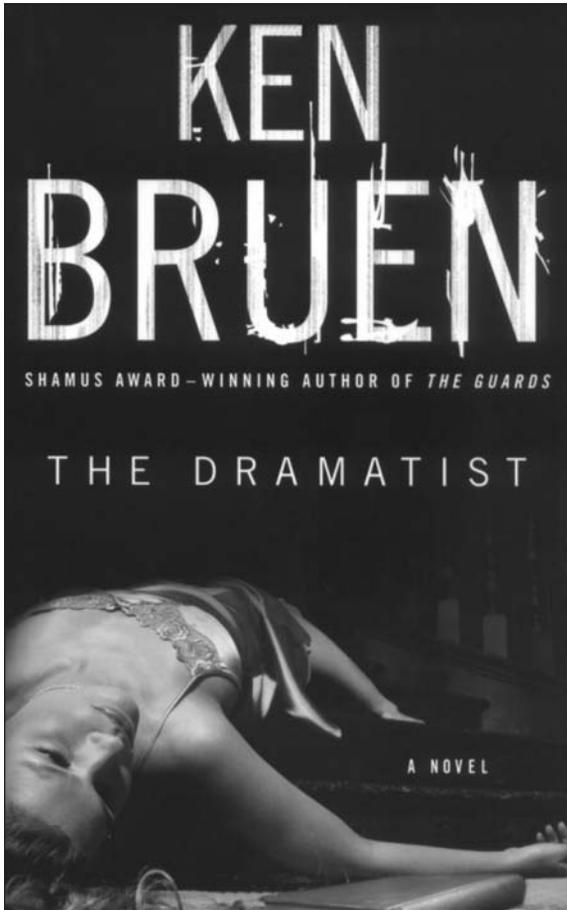
The line that separates the police from the criminals in the Brant novels is hard to identify; it has more to do with point of view than with the intrinsic qualities of any of the police officers who are recurrent characters. *Blitz* (2002) opens with Brant assaulting and destroying the reputation of the police psychiatrist who is supposed to be evaluating him, framing one his workplace enemies in the process. WPC Falls develops an unlikely relationship with a young, racist member of the British National Party, and Roberts tries to come to terms with the death of his wife. In the midst of the hunt for a serial killer who is targeting police officers, the various characters, all damaged in one way or another, support each other in small ways, almost as if by accident. The unlikely partnership between Brant and Porter Nash, an openly gay detective, is particularly interesting; Brant is violently unstable, but he is not a bigot.

Vixen (2003) pits the detectives against a female serial killer and further personal complications, and *Calibre* (2006) features a serial killer who targets rude people. In *Ammunition* (2007), Brant is shot by a crazed gunman while in a pub.

As is often the case with mystery and detective series, the Brant novels can be read out of order with only minimal difficulties; while there is continuity between them in terms of character development, each story is more or less discrete.

THE JACK TAYLOR NOVELS

The Jack Taylor novels, in contrast to the Brant novels, are much more closely related. The juxtaposition of these Galway novels with the Brant novels reveals the range of Bruen's talents; these first-person narratives are introspective and almost confessional



(though in an unsentimental way), while the Brant novels are not. If the characters in the Brant novels feel guilt or remorse, it is not foregrounded in the narrative. In general, the reader sees only as much of the characters as their peers would see. Jack Taylor, in contrast, is painfully aware of his sins and failures, though he often seems unable to rectify them. Character development, at least with regard to the protagonist, is much more detailed and explicit. Taylor's narration features lists, revealing the fragile discipline with which he hangs on to what is left of his life. It is also significant that Taylor is a voracious reader; his narration is full of literary allusions.

The first novel in the series, *The Guards*, shows Taylor wallowing in drunken self-pity, bitter over his dismissal from the police force, until he agrees to help a woman find out what has happened to her daughter. He is aided by his friend Sutton. In this novel the reader is

introduced to Cathy, a young English former junkie who tries to pass as Irish, and Jeff, the bartender she eventually marries. These tenuous connections form Taylor's extended family. The novel ends on a dark note that refuses to glorify the loner lifestyle that generations of detective novelists have depicted as romantic.

In *The Killing of the Tinkers* (2002), Taylor has returned to Galway after a year hiding out in London only to be commissioned to investigate the murder of young "travellers," a nomadic group originating in Ireland and found in the United Kingdom and the United States. The novel is also particularly interesting because it features a crossover between the Jack Taylor series and the Brant novels in the person of Keegan, a British police officer with a predilection for the novels of Ed McBain.

In *The Magdalen Martyrs* (2003), Taylor is in worse health and spirits than ever and assists a mysterious character by locating a person formerly associated with the Magdalen laundries, prisonlike facilities created by the Roman Catholic Church to house prostitutes, unwed mothers, and other women deemed to be in trouble.

The Dramatist (2004) opens with a reformed Jack Taylor who no longer drinks or uses cocaine. His former dealer, now in jail in Dublin, enjoins him to investigate his sister's death, which has been incorrectly ruled an accident. Taylor's literary training serves him well as he works to solve a case that the police do not even acknowledge as a murder.

In *Priest* (2006), Taylor has just returned to Galway after a stay in a mental institution, suffering from guilt at having perhaps caused the death of a child. He is called to investigate the murder of a pedophile priest, whose decapitated body has been found in the confessional.

Like the best novels in any genre, Bruen's detective novels ultimately defy being pigeonholed in a particular category; they are detective fiction, certainly, but they are so stylish and concise that they reward literary analysis. With many mysteries, the compulsion to read is abrogated by the solution to the puzzle or the mystery itself; however, Bruen's novels, like the best novels in any genre, are worth rereading.

James S. Brown

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SERGEANT BRANT SERIES: *A White Arrest*, 1998 (also known as *The White Trilogy, Book 1*); *Taming the Alien*, 1999 (also known as *The White Trilogy, Book 2*); *The McDead*, 2000 (also known as *The White Trilogy, Book 3*); *Blitz*, 2002 (also known as *Blitz: Or, Brant Hits the Blues*); *Vixen*, 2003; *Calibre*, 2006; *Ammunition*, 2007

JACK TAYLOR SERIES: *The Guards*, 2001; *The Killing of the Tinkers*, 2002; *The Magdalen Martyrs*, 2003; *The Dramatist*, 2004; *Priest*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Funeral: Tales of Irish Morbidities*, 1992; *Shades of Grace*, 1993; *Martyrs*, 1994; *Sherry, and Other Stories*, 1994; *Time of Serena-May and Upon the Third Cross*, 1995 (also known as *Time of Serena-May and Upon the Third Cross: A Collection of Short Stories*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Rilke on Black*, 1996; *The Hackman Blues*, 1997; *Her Last Call to Louis MacNeice*, 1997; *London Boulevard*, 2001; *Dispatching Baudelaire*, 2004; *American Skin*, 2006; *Bust*, 2006 (with Jason Starr)

EDITED TEXTS:

Dublin Noir: The Celtic Tiger Versus the Ugly American, 2006

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Breen, Jon L. "The Police Procedural." In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage, I-II*, edited by Robin W. Winks and Maureen Corrigan. New York: Scribner's, 1998. An article on the police procedural subgenre by the novelist and critic Jon L. Breen.

Bruen, Ken. The Website of Ken Bruen. <http://www.kenbruen.com>. The author's Web site includes synopses of his novels and a discussion board.

MacDonald, Craig. *Art in the Blood: Crime Novelists Discuss Their Craft*. A collection of interviews with contemporary crime novelists that features a substantial interview with Bruen.

Murphy, Paula. "'Murderous Mayhem': Ken Bruen and the New Ireland." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 24, no. 2 (Winter, 2006): 3-16. An exploration of how Bruen's Jack Taylor series addresses the preoccupations of postmillennial Ireland.

Swierczynski, Duane. "Through the Looking Glass: A Conversation with Ken Bruen." *Mystery Scene* 88 (Winter, 2005): 36-37. An interview with the author about his life and work.

JOHN BUCHAN

Lord Tweedsmuir

Born: Perth, Scotland; August 26, 1875

Died: Montreal, Quebec, Canada; February 11, 1940

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Richard Hannay, 1915-1936

Sir Edward Leithen, 1916-1941

Dickson Mc'Cunn, 1922-1935

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

RICHARD HANNAY is a mining engineer from South Africa. His virtues are tenacity, loyalty, kindness, and a belief in "playing the game." A self-made man, he is respected as a natural leader by all who know him.

SIR EDWARD LEITHEN is a great English jurist who frequently finds himself in adventures. Although he is always willing to accept challenges, he is less keen than Hannay to seek out adventure and danger.

DICKSON Mc'CUNN, a retired Scottish grocer, is a simple man with a Scottish burr who recruits a group of ragamuffins from the slums to aid him in his adventures. More so than Hannay or Leithen, Mc'Cunn is the common man thrust into uncommon experiences. He succeeds by sheer pluck and common sense, his own and that of the boys he informally adopts.

CONTRIBUTION

John Buchan is best known for *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), an espionage tale that succeeds through the author's trademarks: splendid writing, a truly heroic hero, and a sense of mission. Buchan eschews intricate plotting and realistic details of the spy or detective's world; his heroes are ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary situations. Buchan's classic tales are closer to the adventure stories of writers such as H. Rider Haggard or P. C. Wren than to true detective or espionage fiction. Like Graham Greene, who cites him as an influence, Buchan writes "entertainments" with a moral purpose; less ambiguous than Greene, Buchan offers the readers versions of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678), with the moral testing framed as espionage adventures.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1875, John Buchan was the eldest son of a Scots clergyman. His childhood was formed by the Border country landscape, wide reading, and religion; these influences also shaped his later life. He won a scholarship to Glasgow University, where he was soon recognized as a leader and a fine writer. Continuing his studies at Oxford University, he supported himself with journalism. With writing as his vocation, Buchan devised an exhaustive plan that included writing fiction, journalism, and histories in addition to pursuing his Oxford degree.

After completing his studies, Buchan accepted a government position in South Africa, an opportunity that allowed him to fulfill his desire for exotic travel. Though he did not lack the prejudices of his era, Africa became a beloved place to Buchan and was the setting of several of his fictions, including *Prester John* (1910). On returning to England, Buchan contin-

ued a double career as a barrister and as an editor for *The Spectator*, a leading periodical. His marriage in 1907 caused him to work even harder to ensure adequate finances for his wife and for his mother, sisters, and brothers.

Buchan served as a staff officer during World War I, as high commissioner of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, and as a member of Parliament. He completed his career of public service as governor general of Canada. By this time, he had received a peerage: He was now Lord Tweedsmuir. His varied responsibilities allowed him to travel extensively, and he was fascinated by the more distant explorations of others. As he grew older, though, his Scottish and Canadian homes and his family claimed a larger share of his attention.

The record of Buchan's public achievement shows a full life in itself, but throughout his public life he was always writing. His work includes histories, biographies, travel books, and especially fiction. A number of hours each day were set aside for writing. Buchan



John Buchan. (Library of Congress)

depended on the extra income from his popular novels, and he disciplined himself to write steadily, regardless of distractions. He continued to write and work even when his health declined. When he died suddenly of a stroke in 1940, he left behind nearly seventy published books.

ANALYSIS

John Buchan was already known as a political figure, biographer, and historian when he published his first “shocker,” as he called it, *The Thirty-nine Steps*, in 1915. It is not surprising, then, that he chose to have the tale appear anonymously in its serial form in *Blackwoods* magazine. Extravagant praise from friends and the general public, however, caused him to claim the work when it later appeared in book form.

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS

The Thirty-nine Steps was not truly a sudden departure for Buchan. Perhaps the recognition the book received helped him to realize the extent to which this shocker formed a part of much of his earlier work; he had planned it with the same care accorded to all of his writings. In 1914, he told his wife that his reading of detective stories had made him want to try his hand at the genre: “I should like to write a story of this sort and take real pains with it. Most detective story-writers don’t take half enough trouble with their characters, and no one cares what becomes of either corpse or murderer.”

An illness that prevented Buchan’s enlistment in the early days of the war allowed him to act on this interest, and *The Thirty-nine Steps* came into being. The popularity of the book with soldiers in the trenches convinced the ever-Calvinist Buchan that producing such entertainments was congruent with duty. The book’s popularity was not limited to soldiers or to wartime, however, and its hero, Richard Hannay, quickly made a home in the imagination of readers everywhere.

An energetic, resourceful South African of Scots descent, Hannay has come to London to see the old country. He finds himself immensely bored until one evening, when a stranger named Scudder appears and confides to Hannay some information regarding national security. The stranger is soon murdered, and Hannay, accused of the killing, must run from the po-

lice and decipher Scudder’s enigmatic codebook, all the while avoiding Scudder’s killers and the police. Hannay soon realizes that Scudder’s secret concerns a German invasion, which now only he can prevent.

Some critics have observed that various plot elements make this tale go beyond the “borders of the possible,” which Buchan declared he had tried to avoid. In spite of negative criticism, *The Thirty-nine Steps* won immediate popularity and remains a durable, beloved work of fiction. Its popularity stems from several sources, not the least of which is the nature of its hero. Hannay, as the reader first sees him, is a modest man of no particular attainments. Only as he masters crisis after crisis does the reader discover his virtues.

In a later book, Hannay says that his son possesses traits he values most: He is “truthful and plucky and kindly.” Hannay himself has these characteristics, along with cleverness and experience as an engineer and South African trekker. His innate virtues, in addition to his background, make him a preeminently solid individual, one whom Britons, in the dark days of 1915, took to heart. Hannay’s prewar victory over the Germans seemed prophetic.

Part of Hannay’s appeal in *The Thirty-nine Steps* is outside the character himself, created by his role as an innocent bystander thrust into the heart of a mystery. It was perhaps this aspect of the novel that appealed to Alfred Hitchcock, whose 1935 film of the novel is often ranked with his greatest works. One of Hitchcock’s favorite devices is the reaction of the innocent man or woman accused of murder, a premise he used in films such as *North by Northwest* (1959) and *Saboteur* (1942), among others. Yet little of Buchan’s hero survives in Hitchcock’s treatment: The great director’s Hannay is a smooth, articulate ladies’ man, and Scudder is transformed into a female spy.

Women are completely absent from Buchan’s novel. In Hannay’s next adventure, *Greenmantle* (1916), a woman is admitted to the cast of characters, but only as an archvillainess. In the third volume of the series, *Mr. Standfast* (1919), a heroine, Mary Lamingham, finally appears. She is repeatedly described as looking like a small child or “an athletic boy,” and she is also a spy—in fact, she is Hannay’s superior. (Hannay’s successes in forestalling the Ger-

man invasion have resulted in his becoming an occasional British agent.) *The Three Hostages* (1924) finds them married, but Mary is not oppressed by domestic life. She disguises herself and takes an active role in solving the kidnapping that actuates that novel.

Buchan allows Hannay to change through the years in his experiences, if not in his character. In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, he is alone in his adventures, his only comradeship found in his memory of South African friends and in his loyalty to the dead Scudder. As his history continues, he acquires not only a wife and son but also a circle of friends who share his further wartime espionage activities. Peter Pienaar, an older Boer trekker, joins the war effort, aiding Hannay with his fatherly advice. John Blenkiron, a rather comical American industrialist, is enlisted in *Greenmantle* and *Mr. Standfast* to help befuddle the Germans. One of Buchan's favorite devices is the "hide in plain sight" idea, which Blenkiron practices. He moves among the Germans freely, trusting that they will not recognize him as a pro-British agent.

THE THREE HOSTAGES AND THE ISLAND OF SHEEP

Hannay's espionage exploits cause him to be made a general before the end of the war. He then becomes a country gentleman. In *The Three Hostages* and *The Island of Sheep* (1936; also known as *The Man from the Norlands*), Buchan uses Hannay's transformation from a rootless, homeless man to a contented husband and father to show another of his favorite themes—that peace must be constantly earned. An appeal from a desperate father causes Hannay to risk everything to help free a child from kidnapers in *The Three Hostages*. In *The Island of Sheep*, a plea from the son of an old friend makes Hannay and some middle-aged friends confront themselves: "I'm too old, . . . and too slack," Hannay says when first approached. Nevertheless, he and his allies rally to defend their friend's son from vicious blackmailers in this tale, which is pure adventure with little mystery involved. *The Island of Sheep* is the least successful of the Hannay novels, which seem to work more dynamically when Hannay is offered challenges to his ingenuity. In *The Island of Sheep*, only his willingness to undergo hardship and danger is tested.

Another weakening element of this last Hannay novel is the lack of powerful adversaries. At one point, one of Hannay's companions characterizes the leader of the blackmailers, an old spy, D'Ingraville, as the devil incarnate, but the label is not validated by what the reader sees of D'Ingraville; it is instead a false attempt to heighten a rather dreary plot. Such is not the case in *The Thirty-nine Steps*, however, in which the reader is wholly convinced of the consummate evil of Ivery; he is the man with the hooded eyes, a master of disguise who finally meets his death in *Mr. Standfast*.

In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, Ivery is described as "more than a spy; in his foul way he had been a patriot." By the time Buchan wrote *Mr. Standfast*, however, he was thoroughly sick of the destruction and waste of the war. Ivery then becomes not simply a powerful adversary but the devil that creates war itself. Sentencing him to a death in the trenches, Hannay says, "It's his sort that made the war. . . . It's his sort that's responsible for all the clotted beastliness." Ivery's seductive interest in the virginal Mary not only intensifies the plot but also symbolizes the constant war of good against evil.

GOOD AND EVIL AND A MISSION

This basic conflict of good and evil animates the first three Hannay novels, which are clearly of the espionage genre. For Buchan, espionage was an appropriate metaphor for the eternal conflict. The author's Calvinistic background had taught him to see life in terms of this struggle and to revere hard work, toughness, and vigilance as tools on the side of good.

A major literary and moral influence on Buchan's life was *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*, the seventeenth century classic of devotional literature that crystallized Buchan's own vision of life as a struggle for a divine purpose. Thus, his heroes always define themselves as being "under orders" or "on a job" from which nothing can deter them. This attitude is a secular equivalent of a search for salvation. Hannay, Mc'Cunn, and Leithen are all single-minded in their devotion to any responsibility they are given, and such responsibility helps give meaning to their lives. In *Sick Heart River* (1941; also known as *Mountain Meadow*), for example, when Leithen is told by his doctors that he is dying, he

wishes only to be given a “job,” some task or mission to make his remaining months useful. Because Buchan’s heroes represent pure good opposed to evil, their missions are elevated to the status of quests.

A journey with a significant landscape is always featured. Buchan loved the outdoors and conveyed in his fiction the close attention he paid to various locales. In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, London is the equivalent of Bunyan’s Slough of Despond from which Hannay must escape. In addition, the spy’s quest always ends in some powerfully drawn location, which is then purged of the adversary’s ill influence and restored to its natural beauty. Buchan’s tendency to use landscape in this symbolic fashion sometimes overrules his good fictional sense, however, as in *The Island of Sheep*, when Hannay and a few allies leave Scotland to confront the blackmailers on the lonely island home of the victim.

The sense of mission that sends Hannay to the Norlands is also found in a second Buchan hero, Dickson Mc’Cunn. One of Buchan’s gifts was to create varied central characters, and Mc’Cunn could hardly be more different from Hannay, though they share similar values. A retired grocer, Mc’Cunn enjoys the pleasures of a simple life with his wife, believing somewhat wistfully that the romance of life has eluded him. Then he discovers a plot to depose the monarch of Evallonia, a mythical East European kingdom. Once involved, he carries out his duties with the good common sense that distinguishes him.

THE HOUSE OF THE FOUR WINDS

Unlike Hannay, Mc’Cunn is not physically strong or especially inventive, but he prides himself on being able to think through problems and foresee how people are likely to behave. In the course of his adventures—which always seem to surprise him—he informally adopts a gang of street urchins, the Gorbals Die-Hards. As the Mc’Cunn series continues, the boys grow up to be successful young men. One of them, Jaikie, a student at Cambridge University, becomes the central character of *The House of the Four Winds* (1935). Jaikie discovers new trouble in Evallonia and calls on Mc’Cunn for help; Mc’Cunn leaves his salmon fishing and goes to Evallonia disguised as a grand duke returning from exile. After a brief military en-

counter, the trouble is forestalled, and Mc’Cunn returns happily to Scotland.

A third Buchan hero is Sir Edward Leithen. According to Buchan’s wife, it is he who most resembles Buchan himself and speaks in his voice. Leithen lacks the simplicity of Mc’Cunn and the colorful background of Hannay. He is a distinguished jurist and member of Parliament, a man noted for his learning, hard work, and generosity. The tone of Leithen’s tales is generally more detached and contemplative than that of Hannay’s (both heroes narrate their adventures). This method has the effect of making Leithen into a character like Joseph Conrad’s Marlow, who has been called Conrad’s “moral detective.”

JOHN MACNAB

Oddly enough, Leithen is at the center of *John Macnab* (1925), one of Buchan’s lightest tales. Leithen and a few friends, discontent with their staid lives, decide to challenge some distant landlords by poaching on their grounds. Their adventures nearly get them shot, but Leithen and his friends are refreshed by the activity; they have now earned their comfort by risking it.

SICK HEART RIVER

Buchan’s last novel, *Sick Heart River*, features Leithen, now old and dying. He does not bemoan his fate, however, but wishes only for some quest on which to expend his last months. He wants to be “under orders” as he was in the war. When he hears of a man lost in the Canadian wilderness, he believes that it is his duty to risk what is left of his life to try to rescue the man. His only right, he believes, is the right to choose to do his duty.

Though *Sick Heart River* has some characteristics of a mystery, it is really an adventure story and is more of a morality play than either mystery or adventure. Thus, it forms an appropriate end to Buchan’s career as a novelist. For Buchan, the greatest mystery is the secret of human nature and human destiny. That mystery is solved by strength of character, through the working out of one’s own destiny. Buchan’s commitment to these great questions, carried through by his superbly vigorous writing, guarantees that his fiction will long be enjoyed.

Deborah Core

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RICHARD HANNAY SERIES: *The Thirty-nine Steps*, 1915; *Greenmantle*, 1916; *Mr. Standfast*, 1919; *The Three Hostages*, 1924; *The Island of Sheep*, 1936 (also known as *The Man from the Norlands*)

SIR EDWARD LEITHEN SERIES: *The Power-House*, 1916; *John Macnab*, 1925; *The Dancing Floor*, 1926; *Sick Heart River*, 1941 (also known as *Mountain Meadow*)

DICKSON MC'CUNN SERIES: *Huntingtower*, 1922; *Castle Gay*, 1930; *The House of the Four Winds*, 1935

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Courts of the Morning*, 1929; *A Prince of the Captivity*, 1933

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Watcher by the Threshold, and Other Tales*, 1902 (revised 1918); *The Moon Endureth: Tales and Fancies*, 1912; *The Runagates Club*, 1928; *The Gap in the Curtain*, 1932; *The Best Short Stories of John Buchan*, 1980

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Sir Quixote of the Moors, Being Some Account of an Episode in the Life of the Sieur de Rohaine*, 1895; *John Burnet of Barns*, 1898; *A Lost Lady of Old Years*, 1899; *The Half-Hearted*, 1900; *Prester John*, 1910 (also known as *The Great Diamond Pipe*); *Salute to Adventurers*, 1915; *The Path of the King*, 1921; *Midwinter: Certain Travellers in Old England*, 1923; *Witch Wood*, 1927; *The Blanket of the Dark*, 1931; *The Free Fishers*, 1934

SHORT FICTION: *Grey Weather: Moorland Tales of My Own People*, 1899; *Ordeal by Marriage*, 1915

POETRY: *The Pilgrim Fathers: The Newdigate Prize Poem 1898*, 1898; *Poems, Scots and English*, 1917 (revised 1936)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1911; *The Magic Walking-Stick*, 1932; *The Long Traverse*, 1941 (also known as *Lake of Gold*)

NONFICTION: 1896-1910 • *Scholar Gipsies*, 1896; *Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1897; *Brasenose College*, 1898; *The African Colony: Studies in the Reconstruction*, 1903; *The Law Relating to the Taxation of Foreign Income*, 1905; *A Lodge in the Wilderness*, 1906; *Some Eighteenth Century Byways, and Other Essays*, 1908

1911-1920 • *What the Home Rule Bill Means*,

1912; *Andrew Jameson, Lord Ardwall*, 1913; *The Marquis of Montrose*, 1913; *Britain's War by Land*, 1915; *Nelson's History of the War*, 1915-1919 (24 volumes); *The Achievements of France*, 1915; *The Battle of Jutland*, 1916; *The Battle of Somme, First Phase*, 1916; *The Future of the War*, 1916; *The Purpose of the War*, 1916; *The Battle of Somme, Second Phase*, 1917; *The Battle-Honours of Scotland, 1914-1918*, 1919; *The Island of Sheep*, 1919 (with Susan Buchan); *Francis and Riversdale Grenfell: A Memoir*, 1920; *The History of South African Forces in France*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Miscellanies, Literary and Historical*, 1921 (2 volumes); *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys*, 1922; *Days to Remember: The British Empire in the Great War*, 1923 (with Henry Newbolt); *The Last Secrets: The Final Mysteries of Exploration*, 1923; *The Memory of Sir Walter Scott*, 1923; *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, 1924; *Some Notes on Sir Walter Scott*, 1924; *The History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, 1678-1918*, 1925; *The Man and the Book: Sir Walter Scott*, 1925; *Two Ordeals of Democracy*, 1925; *Homilies and Recreations*, 1926; *The Fifteenth Scottish Division, 1914-1919*, 1926 (with John Stewart); *To the Electors of the Scottish Universities*, 1927; *Montrose*, 1928; *The Cause and the Causal in History*, 1929; *What the Union of the Churches Means to Scotland*, 1929; *Lord Rosebery, 1847-1930*, 1930; *Montrose and Leadership*, 1930; *The Kirk in Scotland, 1560-1929*, 1930 (with George Adam Smith); *The Revision of Dogmas*, 1930

1931-1947 • *The Novel and the Fairy Tale*, 1931; *Julius Caesar*, 1932; *Sir Walter Scott*, 1932; *Andrew Lang and the Border*, 1933; *The Margins of Life*, 1933; *The Massacre of Glencoe*, 1933; *Gordon at Khartoum*, 1934; *Oliver Cromwell*, 1934; *The Principles of Social Service*, 1934; *The Scottish Church and the Empire*, 1934; *The University, the Library, and the Common Weal*, 1934; *The King's Grace, 1910-1935*, 1935 (also known as *The People's King: George V*); *The Western Mind, an Address*, 1935; *A University's Bequest to Youth, an Address*, 1936; *Augustus*, 1937; *Presbyterianism: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 1938; *The Interpreter's House*, 1938; *Canadian Occasions: Addresses by Lord Tweedsmuir*, 1940; *Com-*

ments and Characters, 1940 (W. Forbes Gray, editor); *Memory Hold-the-Door*, 1940 (also known as *Pilgrim's Way: An Essay in Recollection*); *The Clearing House: A Survey of One Man's Mind*, 1946 (Lady Tweedsmuir, editor); *Life's Adventure: Extracts from the Works of John Buchan*, 1947

EDITED TEXTS: *Essays and Apothegms of Francis Lord Bacon*, 1894; *Musa Piscatrix*, 1896; *The Compleat Angler: Or, The Contemplative Man's Recreation*, 1901; *The Long Road to Victory*, 1920; *Great Hours in Sport*, 1921; *A History of English Literature*, 1923; *The Nations of Today: A New History of the World*, 1923-1924; *The Northern Muse*, 1924; *Modern Short Stories*, 1926; *South Africa*, 1928; *The Teaching of History*, 1928-1930 (11 volumes); *The Poetry of Neil Munro*, 1931

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.

Born: New York, New York; November 24, 1925

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Blackford Oakes, 1976-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

BLACKFORD OAKES, according to many critics, is an idealized version of his author: good-looking and well dressed, a Cold War Central Intelligence Agency operative with an offhand, almost drowsy manner of delivering his opinions that belies his strong inner convictions. Thoroughly at home with his identity as an American, he is determined to defend the American way at any cost. Still, the amiable and compassionate personality of Oakes has led some of Buckley's detractors to say that Oakes is not like Buckley at all.

CONTRIBUTION

In an effort to achieve what William F. Buckley, Jr., has called ideological egalitarianism, many authors of Cold War espionage thrillers have portrayed both Western and communist spies as equally amoral or equally heroic. In such portrayals, there is little to recommend either side. Buckley, a staunch traditionalist, views this moral relativism as an evil that prevents individuals from coming down squarely on the side of what is right and that does injustice to the American ideals of liberty that he has spent a lifetime defending. His contribution to the genre of espionage has been to create a world of clearly defined moral alternatives, accepting and even welcoming the likelihood that opposing values will polarize those who adopt them. This perspective on moral and political values makes Buckley's fiction an extension of his work as a conservative political philosopher.

Buckley's craftsmanlike thrillers present antagonists who, for the most part, are not simply caricatures of evil but fully realized individuals, intelligent and credible, with traits the reader can respect and admire. Indeed, one can feel compassion for certain of these characters, even though they are always on the wrong side while the Americans are always on the right side.

BIOGRAPHY

William F. Buckley, Jr., was born William Francis Buckley, the sixth of ten children in New York City on November 24, 1925, to William Frank Buckley, Sr., a Texas attorney, and Aloise Steiner Buckley. At the age of five, the young Buckley decided to change his middle name to Frank so that his entire name would be identical to his father's. The senior Buckley was a formative influence on his son, imparting to all of his children not only a resolute traditionalism but also the rebellious spirit of a conservative who had fallen from power. That spirit was aroused in the senior Buckley during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921), when insurgents took control of that nation, seized the Buckley family petroleum assets, and destroyed the family's influence. From then on, the father never missed an opportunity to inspire hatred of revolution in his children.

The family had other assets, however, principally in Venezuela, where William, Jr., spent most of his first year. Between the ages of four and eight, he lived with his family in Europe. Although the theme of conservatives who are outside the power structure would surface in many ways throughout Buckley's writings, his overseas experiences tended to mitigate the influence of his father's isolationism.

Another early trait of Buckley was his defiant stance toward the administrators and faculties of the schools he attended. At the age of thirteen, while enrolled in Saint John's Beaumont School in England, he heard of the Munich Agreement, whereby British prime minister Neville Chamberlain conceded Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany. In protest, Buckley hung an American flag over his bed—a gesture defiant of the administration but not in keeping with his father's isolationism. Later, as a Yale undergraduate, Buckley proposed a speech attacking the liberalism of the university faculty. Furious that the administration would not allow the speech, he afterward developed the same ideas into his first book, *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"* (1951), which immediately put him in the national limelight.

Buckley graduated from Yale in 1950, and in July 6

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

William F. Buckley, Jr., in 1965, when he was running for mayor of New York City.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

of that year he married Patricia Austin Taylor, from Vancouver, British Columbia. The couple's son, Christopher Taylor Buckley, was born in 1952. In 1951, Buckley was offered employment by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); he and Patricia were stationed in Mexico City. Concurrently, he worked as an editor for *The American Mercury*—the publication made famous in the 1920's by H. L. Mencken—but resigned after a year when the editors refused to publish an article he had written. The experience left him feeling that the United States needed a new conservative periodical.

In 1955, he founded such a publication, *The National Review*, with financial backing from his father and other prominent conservatives. Some backers had initially expressed skepticism, not about the validity of the cause but about the public reception of the conservative message. Although a Republican, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was president during this period, Buckley and others felt that the moderate Eisenhower did not truly represent the conservative philosophy. This, too, contributed to Buckley's preoccupation with what he

saw as the plight of conservatives who lacked power. Buckley was convinced that a nationwide publication, well financed and edited, could increase public awareness of the conservative philosophy and give the conservatives an equal voice in the debate over political and social issues. Moreover, he was one of the few who had a strong sense of the direction such a publication should take.

From the beginning, *The National Review* exhibited the trademark Buckley wit and sarcasm that set it off from other staunchly conservative publications, which tended to get mired in a solemn, moralizing tone. However, no one could mistake the seriousness of Buckley's total dedication to changing the status quo. Initially, without question-

ing specific tenets of belief, *The National Review* seemed to support just about any political conservative. Within a few years, however, Buckley and his publication became instrumental in sharpening the definition of conservatism in the United States—distancing it, for example, from both isolationism and anti-Semitism, which before his time had been identified with conservatism in the public mind.

Buckley achieved significant influence, which for many years was associated primarily with *The National Review*, and the publication achieved the political results he had envisioned for it. In time, he found additional avenues of expression. His Blackford Oakes novels of espionage, begun in the 1970's, were one such avenue.

ANALYSIS

William F. Buckley, Jr., had been publishing books for twenty-five years by the time he came to write the Blackford Oakes novels. The story goes that he told his book editor he wanted to write something like a "Forsyth novel." The editor thought Buckley planned a

story akin to John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (1922), perhaps featuring Buckley's colorful family. Buckley, however, was thinking of Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal* (1971), about a hired killer who agrees to assassinate French president Charles de Gaulle.

The book that Buckley produced—the first in the Blackford Oakes series—was *Saving the Queen* (1976), based in part on his own brief experience with the CIA in the early 1950's during the Cold War period. The prevailing belief, articulated by novelists such as Graham Greene and John le Carré, was that espionage involved no morally worthy goals but was simply a sordid game or at best a means of livelihood. Buckley was disgusted with books and films that portrayed the CIA as morally reprehensible, with plots that suggested (as he described it with characteristic sarcasm) that “the evil spirit behind the killing . . . was the President of the United States or, to be really dramatic and reach all the way up, maybe even Ralph Nader.” So he “took a deep breath and further resolved that the good guys would be—the Americans.”

In Blackford Oakes, Buckley's spy novels present what the author calls “the distinctively American male”: a hero who is intelligent but not pedantic, compassionate but not soft, a believer but not naïve, and a patriot but not a flag-waver. Blackford Oakes has much in common with his author as he is politically conservative but still very much the rebel. Buckley envisioned Oakes as a independent-minded American; he draws him as addressing his superiors with mutinous drollery and appreciating life's luxuries but expressing his satisfaction in an artless Yankee manner. In *High Jinx* (1986), Buckley describes Oakes thus: “At twenty-eight he wasn't yet willing to defer any presumptive physical preeminence in any group.” Fictional he may be, but Oakes is his own man and not his creator's puppet.

The American virtues embodied by Oakes appear seriously threatened by the Soviets in the Cold War milieu of the 1950's and 1960's. The Soviets invaded Hungary to put down a popular uprising; Fidel Castro came to power—and later set up a missile base—in Cuba, ninety miles from Florida; and the Soviet Union launched a satellite well ahead of the United States. Oakes and his agency are engaged in a serious struggle

to defend the tradition of freedom at all costs. As Buckley intended—and as might be expected from an author with his intense patriotism—the heroes and villains are in fact easily distinguishable.

SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR

Buckley's creed may be obvious, but he acknowledges and examines the complexity of the moral issues involved. For, despite the nobility of the cause, his hero Oakes is compelled to admit that both sides in the Cold War lie, cheat, and steal. An individual of Buckley's intelligence could do no less in his writing, nor could any less be expected in a well-crafted, credible work of fiction. Moreover, Buckley portrays the opposition in a curiously human, even compassionate, light. In *See You Later, Alligator* (1985), about Cuba during the missile crisis of 1962, Buckley portrays the Marxist Che Guevara as a humanitarian figure deserving of admiration and sympathy, and Fidel Castro is a fully realized character.

See You Later, Alligator finds President John F. Kennedy sending Oakes to Cuba in 1961. The assignment is to find out if Guevara, an official in Castro's government, is serious about a proposal he has made to reduce the antagonism between Washington, D.C., and Havana. Meanwhile, contrary to this proposal, Castro has become convinced he must arm Cuba with nuclear missiles to keep the Americans from invading. Despite obstacles, Oakes learns about the missiles and alerts the CIA to the threat. This novel incorporates a trademark Buckley device: the “behind-the-scenes” explanation of real historical events, an explanation that can be neither proved nor disproved.

A VERY PRIVATE PLOT

In 1995, Senator Hugh Blanton summons Blackford Oakes, now retired, to testify before Congress about a bygone CIA operation that reportedly almost triggered a nuclear war. Although Oakes refuses to divulge the details, the reader is given the “inside” story in *A Very Private Plot* (1994): that ten years earlier Oakes had encountered a moral dilemma when a group of young Russians conspired to murder Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev. When Oakes informed then-president Ronald Reagan, they were both uncertain whether to warn the adversary, Gorbachev, or withhold the warning to protect Oakes's key informa-

tion source. *A Very Private Plot* illustrates Buckley's skill in engrossing the reader in stories about historical events whose outcome is already common knowledge. Buckley's real target in the novel is Blanton's attempt to pass what is nearly an ex post facto law against espionage.

LAST CALL FOR BLACKFORD OAKES

Last Call for Blackford Oakes (2005), a kind of sequel to *A Very Private Plot*, is set in 1987, when Oakes is sixty-one years old. The story follows him to Moscow, this time with clear orders from President Reagan to uncover and foil a plot against the life of Gorbachev. The story mixes real with imaginary events as Buckley presents cameos of Garry Trudeau, Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer, and Graham Greene. Meanwhile, this latest rumor of an assassination plot proves false. Instead, Oakes has an intense confrontation with Kim Philby, a real-life double agent who in 1963 defected from the free world to the Soviet Union, and the action shifts to a dreadful psychological battle between spies who have almost run their race.

SPYTIME

Not a part of the Blackford Oakes series, *Spytime: The Undoing of James Jesus Angleton* (2000) relates both actual and fictitious events in the life of James Jesus Angleton (1917-1987), a historic figure who was associate deputy director of operations for counterintelligence in the CIA. The book explores the intellectual thrill of espionage: Like a brilliant chess player, Angleton displayed an uncanny intuition regarding adversaries' motives. However, the overzealous Angleton eventually was fired and blamed, fairly or unfairly, for the CIA's moral and ethical failures. Some critics complained that, as portrayed by Buckley, Angleton is not a fully realized character.

Thomas Rankin

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BLACKFORD OAKES SERIES: *Saving the Queen*, 1976; *Stained Glass*, 1978; *Who's on First*, 1980; *Marco Polo, if You Can*, 1982; *The Story of Henri Tod*, 1984; *See You Later*; *Alligator*, 1985; *High Jinx*, 1986; *Mongoose, RIP*, 1987; *Tucker's Last Stand*, 1990; *A Very Private Plot*, 1994; *The Blackford Oakes Reader*, 1994; *Last Call for Blackford Oakes*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Temptation of Wilfred Malachey*, 1985; *Brothers No More*, 1995; *The Redhunter: A Novel Based on the Life of Senator Joe McCarthy*, 1999; *Spytime: The Undoing of James Jesus Angleton*, 2000; *Elvis in the Morning*, 2001; *Nuremberg: The Reckoning*, 2002; *Getting It Right*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: 1951-1970 • *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom,"* 1951; *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and Its Meaning*, 1954 (with L. Brent Bozell); *Up from Liberalism*, 1959; *Rumbles Left and Right: A Book About Troublesome People and Ideas*, 1963; *The Unmaking of a Mayor*, 1966; *The Jeweler's Eye: A Book of Irresistible Political Reflections*, 1968; *Quotations from Chairman Bill: The Best of William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 1970; *The Governor Listeth: A Book of Inspired Political Revelations*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Cruising Speed: A Documentary*, 1971; *Inveighing We Will Go*, 1972; *Four Reforms: A Guide for the Seventies*, 1973; *United Nations Journal: A Delegate's Odyssey*, 1974; *Execution Eve, and Other Contemporary Ballads*, 1975; *Airborne: A Sentimental Journey*, 1976; *A Hymnal: The Controversial Arts*, 1978

1981-1990 • *Atlantic High: A Celebration*, 1982; *Overdrive: A Personal Documentary*, 1983; *Right Reason*, 1985; *Racing Through Paradise: A Pacific Passage*, 1987; *On the Firing Line: The Public Life of Our Public Figures*, 1989; *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country*, 1990

1991-2007 • *Windfall: End of the Affair*, 1992; *In Search of Anti-Semitism*, 1992; *Happy Days Were Here Again: Reflections of a Libertarian Journalist*, 1993; *Buckley: The Right Word*, 1996; *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith*, 1997; *Let Us Talk of Many Things: The Collected Speeches of William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 2000; *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*, 2004; *Miles Gone By: A Literary Autobiography*, 2004; *Cancel Your Own Goddam Subscription: Notes and Asides from the National Review*, 2007

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_____. *Miles Gone By: A Literary Autobiography*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2004. Includes remi-

niscences about the origin of the Blackford Oakes series and individual titles.

Judis, John. *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988. Briefly describes the background of *Saving the Queen* and the physical appearance of Blackford Oakes, and comments on Buckley's evenhandedness in portraying adversaries.

Rubins, Josh. "Blackford Oakes, One Stand-Up Guy." Review of *A Very Private Plot*, by William F. Buckley, Jr. *The New York Times*, February 6, 1994. Examines Buckley's playful style and the challenge of portraying historical events whose outcome is widely known.

JOHN BURDETT

Born: North London, England; July 24, 1951

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller; courtroom drama

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sonchai Jitpleecheep, 2003-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SONCHAI JITPLEECHEEP is biracial, born during the Vietnam War, the prod of a Thai prostitute and one of her customers, an American soldier on furlough in Bangkok. In his early thirties, he has straw-colored hair, a sharp nose, and is taller than the average Thai. A devout Buddhist—a believer in karma, meditation, reincarnation, and living in poverty—who is fluent in Thai, French, English, and American slang and speaks a smattering of other languages, Sonchai is a detective with the Bangkok police department. He works out of District 8, an area crammed with bars and sex clubs catering to both domestic visitors and an incredible variety of *farang* (foreign) tourists.

NONG JITPLEECHEEP is Sonchai's mother, once a beautiful young woman in great demand for her ser-

vices as a prostitute. During her heyday, Nong traveled, accompanied by her beloved son, to live with foreign lovers in France, Germany, the United States, and elsewhere, and she also speaks several languages. Now approaching fifty years of age, retired, and living in a small Thai village, Nong keeps current with modern technology via computer and cell phone and is up on the latest jargon. Contemptuous of the repressed Western attitude toward sex, so different from Thai openness and acceptance of sex as a natural part of life, she enters into partnership with Colonel Vikorn in the operation of a brothel specifically for aging Westerners, called the Old Man's Club.

COLONEL VIKORN, a short, squat man in his sixties, is the police chief of District 8 and Sonchai's boss. Like his counterparts from Bangkok's other districts, he has grown wealthy and powerful by taking advantage of his position to become involved in a variety of questionable activities—the import and export of drugs, transactions in stolen works of art, and rake-offs from the sex trade—in a city where such what Westerners would view as corruption is a normal, everyday part of doing business.

CONTRIBUTION

John Burdett has given the mystery world a unique detective working in a fresh literary setting. After demonstrating his talents for characterization, sharp dialogue, complex plotting, dark wit, and keen observation in writing his debut work, the courtroom drama-thriller *A Personal History of Thirst* (1996), he exploited an event of worldwide proportions for his second novel. *The Last Six Million Seconds* (1997) is centered on what was the impending transfer of power in Hong Kong from British to Chinese hands. As he had practiced law in Hong Kong for twelve years leading up to the takeover, his choice of subject matter was no surprise. However, although Southeast Asia, a vibrant, booming corner of the world, fascinated Burdett, Hong Kong was a creative dead end because the local film industry, led by the likes of John Woo and Jackie Chan, had already made the sights and sounds of the city familiar to an international audience. So Burdett, after traveling widely in search of the perfect setting, selected a lesser known though equally exotic and colorful setting for his next novels, moving the action a thousand miles south and west to the virgin territory—in the literary sense—of Bangkok. It was a wise choice as he was already acquainted with Bangkok from frequent recreational trips. Once the location was settled, Burdett immersed himself in the culture, history, and geography of his adopted country.

Burdett's firsthand research and his personal experiences in dealing professionally with ethnically diverse individuals involved in a wide spectrum of criminal behavior show to good advantage in his Sonchai novels. He skillfully engages all of the readers' senses in describing the intricacies and attitudes of Bangkok society, much of which revolves around the world's most active and open sex trade. He brings to life intriguing characters who are engaged directly or peripherally with the sex industry. His hero, an observant, introspective hard-boiled detective slightly softened with the pacifist tenets of Buddhism and susceptible to all the temptations that surround him, is likable despite his many faults. All these qualities have brought Burdett a warm reception from readers and critics alike, though acceptance of the Sonchai novels in the United States has been slower than in other parts of the world.

BIOGRAPHY

John Burnett was born on July 24, 1951, in north London, the son of police officer Frank Burdett and seamstress Eva Burdett. Interested in writing from his early teens, Burdett later turned to law as a means of earning a living.

He attended the University of Warwick, where he was particularly interested in the work of D. H. Lawrence and Graham Greene, and graduated in 1973. He afterward earned a degree at the College of Law and qualified as a barrister, in which capacity he worked for a time in London, practicing family law, before being sent to the British colonies as a government attorney. Burdett practiced for ten years in the criminal courts of Hong Kong, then went into private practice, eventually becoming a partner in the prestigious law firm of Johnson, Stokes, and Master. Burdett married Laura Liguori in 1995, and the couple produced one daughter before divorcing.

While still employed as a lawyer, Burdett used his spare time to write his first novel, *A Personal History of Thirst*, a London-based love triangle between ambitious working-class lawyer James Knight, a man named Oliver Thirst whom Knight successfully defended on a charge of theft, and Daisy Smith, a woman who was romantically involved with both men and is accused of killing Thirst. Burdett's second novel, *The Last Six Million Seconds*, was a thriller set in Hong Kong just before the Chinese takeover, in which half-Irish, half-Chinese detective Chan Siukai investigates a series of gruesome murders—the first salvo in a power struggle among various diverse factions including British diplomats, American mobsters, Chinese communists, and others to control Hong Kong after the transition of governments.

Although neither novel performed particularly well critically or commercially (though both were later adapted as audio recordings and have been optioned for film), Burdett resigned from the law firm to travel the world in search of an intriguing—and under-used—setting in which to base a series of mystery novels. After rejecting Morocco as a possible venue for his stories, Burdett selected Bangkok (which Thais call Krung Thep, the “city of angels”), where he had often vacationed while practicing law in Hong Kong.

For research purposes, he traveled to a monastery for a two-week meditation course on Theravada Buddhism—the form practiced in Southeast Asia—and spent many hours in the city’s red-light district absorbing the atmosphere and befriending bar girls.

Burdett’s first novel set in Thailand, *Bangkok Eight*, appeared in 2003. The first of a series featuring detective Sonchai Jitpleecheep—a unique character who is equal parts hard-boiled, hip, and Buddhist—the novel was critically acclaimed for its original sleuth; its intriguing secondary characters; its detailed descriptions that give the flavor of an exotic, chaotic city unfamiliar to many readers; and for its incorporation of Asian culture and philosophy. The series continued with the publication of *Bangkok Tattoo* (2005) and *Bangkok Haunts* (2007).

ANALYSIS

The groundwork for John Burdett’s critically acclaimed Sonchai Jitpleecheep mystery novels was laid in his second book, *The Last Six Million Seconds*. Like much of his later work, that novel is set in an exotic environment (Hong Kong), which allows for extensive sensual description. It deals with factual issues endemic to the region (the struggle for power among various factions in a time and place of political upheaval). It also features a detective of mixed blood (the half-Irish, half-Chinese protagonist, Inspector “Charlie” Chan Siukai) who brings a unique perspective to his investigation as he covers his culturally diverse territory.

Burdett has carried the strengths of *The Last Six Million Seconds* to his Sonchai novels, enhancing and deepening them. The first of the series, *Bangkok Eight*, is almost a sensory overload, a welter of pungent smells, strange sounds, foreign tastes, tactile textures as different as stone and silk, and sights captured as crisp as black-and-white snapshots, all of which contribute in capturing the atmosphere and frenetic pace of the Thai capital. Bangkok, though as bustling a metropolis as Hong Kong, has the sex industry at its heart and soul. This business, though presented openly and without shame throughout the red-light district twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to an eager international customer base, the trade has dark and devious underpinnings. Associated with the sex industry is a full range of criminal behavior: brisk drug deal-

ings, fierce battles over territory, sexual assaults, and perversions that are beyond the realm of social acceptance. Much of this criminal behavior leads to violence, resulting in deaths, which, if they occur in his district, Number 8, come to the attention of detective Sonchai, who works under the auspices of his commander, Colonel Vikorn.

A unique creation, Sonchai is a walking dichotomy. A Vietnam War-era product of the union between an anonymous American soldier and a young Thai prostitute, Sonchai embodies both Western brashness and Eastern circumspection. He has features that are a blend of Caucasian and Thai, and speaks both English and Thai fluently, so he is simultaneously a native and an outcast. He is equally attracted to and repelled by women. He lives in simplicity and poverty, though he sometimes has access to large sums of money. His noir outlook is darkness with light around the edges, thanks to Sonchai’s devotion to Buddhism; though he may be forced to resort to physical violence, inwardly he is in contemplation. He is a relatively incorruptible upholder of the law, yet he expediently violates certain provisions when necessary: to maintain alertness Sonchai occasionally ingests *yaa baa*, a drug that is a combination of methamphetamine and fertilizer; to relax he smokes *ganja* and sometimes drinks to excess; he accepts bribes; and he seeks personal vengeance. He is by turns respectful of and contemptuous toward his superior, Vikorn, who has become wealthy and powerful through his long-term and unabashed commitment to corruption. Vikorn, recognizing Sonchai’s talent for deduction, allows the detective considerable leeway in conducting investigations, only stepping in when the sleuth infringes on the colonel’s under-the-table income or when dignitaries are involved, where diplomacy and an administrator’s capacity to negotiate would be useful.

Sonchai and Vikorn are both well drawn, as are all characters, who speak in realistic and distinctive voices, because of Burdett’s ear for the rhythm and cadence of speech. *Bangkok Eight* has a wide, diverse cast. Several Americans are slyly portrayed: the United States Embassy attaché Jack Nape (perhaps a pun on “jackanapes”?), his assistant Ted Rosen, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent, Kimberly Jones, who is attracted to but flummoxed by Sonchai’s

contradictory disposition. Another influential, wealthy American, gem dealer and closet pervert Sylvester Warren, is seen as haughty and condescending. Elijah Bradley, the older brother of the American soldier whose death at the beginning of the novel precipitates the rest of the plot, is down to earth. A German former lover of Sonchai's mother—whom Sonchai compassionately assists by smuggling money to him—Fritz von Staffen loses his racial superiority and his thick head of hair while serving a long sentence in a primitive Thai prison for drug smuggling. A central character is Fatima, a beautiful half-black, half-Thai woman who started life as a boy but underwent complete gender reassignment to please a lover, unaware that she was being reshaped to match a particular vision in the mind of a murderer.

Later entries in the series also touch on the sex trade. *Bangkok Tattoo* is precipitated by the mutilation murder of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative, suspected to be the work of a beautiful bar girl. Complications naturally ensue with appearances by American agents, officers of the Thai army, religious fundamentalists, Japanese gangsters, and tattoo artists. Likewise, *Bangkok Haunts* begins with a video depicting the ultimate perversion, eroticism that results in murder.

The voice of the Sonchai series is as distinctive as the setting and is the thread that binds the many seemingly unrelated pieces of the central puzzle together. Told in first-person present tense from Sonchai's viewpoint as a half-caste Buddhist, the narrative incorporates elements of seemingly fatalistic Eastern philosophy, hard-boiled sensibilities, modern realities, and cross-cultural beliefs and attitudes. The stories themselves are complex though rewarding, tales of revenge, corruption, greed, and lust, in an unfamiliar environment where the Western temperament does not apply and the standard conventions of mystery, deduction, and a tidy, full resolution are constantly shattered.

BANGKOK EIGHT

A fascinating, if challenging, novel, *Bangkok Eight* opens with a bang. Detective Sonchai Jitpleecheep and his partner—and soul brother in the Buddhist sense—Pichai Apiradee, are under orders from their commander, Colonel Vikorn. They are following William Bradley, a very large African American soldier em-

ployed at the United States Embassy and suspected of being a major drug merchant, as he drives around the sprawling city in a Mercedes-Benz. The two police officers lose the soldier in the crush of traffic but, acting on a tip, locate the car under a bridge, where its door handles have been blocked with pieces of steel. When Sonchai and Pichai approach, a gigantic, drug-addled python is in the process of trying to swallow the American. The police officers unblock the doors, releasing an avalanche of drugged cobras, one of which bites Pichai in the eye, killing him as dead as the American.

The initial incident propels Sonchai, an intriguing, one-of-a-kind character, into a tangled investigation that involves many different parties—local authorities, the CIA, the FBI, drug dealers, merchants in stolen artwork, individuals engaged in some of the more bizarre aspects of the indigenous sex trade, and border tribesmen—in a case wherein various threads violently intersect.

BANGKOK HAUNTS

The third in the series, *Bangkok Haunts* drags Detective Sonchai Jitpleecheep—now living with a former prostitute pregnant with their child—into a case that begins with an anonymously received snuff film, in which Damrong, a woman the police officer knows, cares for, and erotically dreams about, has allegedly been killed. In the course of his investigation, Sonchai involves young, attractive FBI agent Kimberly Jones, and the sexual tension between the two increases as they join forces in following a twisting path toward the heart of the crime in pursuit of the perpetrator. *Bangkok Haunts* was critically well received for its tangled plot, authentic dialogue, well-rounded characters, fascinating setting, and multifaceted exploration of culture and crime.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SONCHAI JITPLEECHEEP SERIES: *Bangkok Eight*, 2003; *Bangkok Tattoo*, 2005; *Bangkok Haunts*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Personal History of Thirst*, 1996; *The Last Six Million Seconds*, 1997

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Fiction. New York: Random House, 2007. Contains a brief biography of Burdett along with analysis of *Bangkok Eight* and *Bangkok Tattoo*.

Dunn, Adam. "Crime and Cops, Thai-Style." Review of *Bangkok Eight*, by John Burdett. *Publishers Weekly* 250, no. 19 (May 12, 2003): 41-42. A starred review of *Bangkok Eight*, termed part thriller, part mystery, and part exploration of Thai attitudes toward sex, plus a brief interview with Burdett, who notes difficulties in interesting American audiences in non-American topics. Though praising the author's fresh approach to noir themes, the structure, and the depth of the novel, the review mildly criticizes the anticlimactic final chapter.

Grossman, Lev. "If You Read Only One Mystery Novel This Summer . . . Oh, Who Are We Trying to Kid? There's No Way We Could Choose Just One: Here Are Six of the Season's Twistiest, Tautest, Most Tantalizing Tales of Sleuthery." Review of *Bangkok Eight*, by John Burdett. *Time*, August 11, 2003, 58-60. This highly favorable review cites the exotic feel and flavor of the novel, which is featured alongside new works by Walter Mosley, Mark Haddon, and others.

Hepner, Will. Review of *The Last Six Million Seconds*, by John Burdett. *Library Journal* 122, no. 2 (February 1, 1997): 104. The reviewer praises the novel

for its protagonist, Hong Kong Royal Police chief "Charlie" Chan, who employs forensics and bureaucratic maneuvering to untangle a triple murder. The reviewer also notes the good characterizations, excellent use of the details of locale, and the complex plot.

Nathan, Paul. "Rights: Road from Hong Kong." *Publishers Weekly* 243, no. 7 (April 22, 1996): 24. A brief history of how Burdett's *A Personal History of Thirst* was brought from manuscript to print; includes details of film rights for the author's first two novels.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *A Personal History of Thirst*, by John Burdett. 242, no. 51 (December 18, 1995): 41. A favorable review that calls attention to the novel's underlying theme: the highlighting of ironies in the British class system. The reviewer notes the novel's three-part structure and terms it a "sharp-eyed morality tale."

Wright, David. Review of *Bangkok Eight*, by John Burdett. *Library Journal* 128, no. 10 (June 1, 2003): 163. A highly favorable review that pays particular tribute to the author's highly original sleuth; the consistent pace of a plot that encompasses psychological, cultural, metaphysical and mysterious conundrums; and the evocative, exotic portrayal of the Thai capital.

JAMES LEE BURKE

Born: Houston, Texas; December 5, 1936

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dave Robicheaux, 1987-

Billy Bob Holland, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAVE ROBICHEAUX is a police detective and recovering alcoholic working in and around his hometown, the south Louisiana city of New Iberia. Somewhat

cynical and disillusioned with the justice system, Robicheaux is a quiet man whose lifelong dream is to raise a family. He finds himself constantly thrown into a world populated by criminals and psychopaths, where he must use violent means to protect those he loves and restore a sense of order.

BILLY BOB HOLLAND is a former Texas Ranger who has gone to law school and works as a defense attorney. Like Robicheaux, however, trouble seems to seek him out, and often he ends up resorting to violence to bring evil people to justice.

CONTRIBUTION

Within a decade after publishing his first mystery novel, James Lee Burke established his reputation as one of America's premier practitioners of the genre. What sets him apart from others writing in a form that frequently emphasizes complex plotting at the expense of characterization and thematic development is his ability to incorporate elements of serious, mainstream fiction into his work. Burke explores important social, moral, and even philosophical themes while still incorporating the requisite elements of suspense and action expected in the kind of hard-boiled detective fiction that is his trademark.

Perhaps because Burke began his career writing other forms of fiction, he pays less attention to the kind of careful plotting found in the work of other mystery writers, and his heroes are thoughtful, introspective, and literate men. Through them Burke explores questions about human relationships—love, family, estrangement, alienation, and social responsibility—and about environmental issues such as the despoiling of the land by exploitative businesses. He also uses his novels to examine the role of corrupt, lax, or simply inefficient governmental officials in promoting or allowing the kinds of evil that pose real dangers to civil society.

BIOGRAPHY

James Lee Burke was born on December 5, 1936, in Houston, Texas. His mother was a Texan and his father a native of New Iberia, Louisiana, who worked for the oil and gas industry in the region. Early in his life Burke determined to become a writer. After completing high school, he enrolled at Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette) but did not graduate. Later he enrolled at the University of Missouri, earn-

ing a bachelor's degree in 1959 and a master's degree the following year.

Burke's first published works are what could be considered mainstream fiction. Modest success came relatively early. *Half of Paradise* (1965), a novel he completed when he was only twenty-three, was published to critical acclaim in 1965, and his next work, *To the Bright and Shining Sun* (1970), received a similar reception when it appeared in 1970. However, his third novel, *Lay Down My Sword and Shield* (1971), did not fare as well; critics panned it, and for fifteen years after it appeared in 1971, Burke did not sell another novel to a major publisher. To support himself, he worked at a variety of jobs, including social worker, oil-lease negotiator, newspaper reporter, and college English instructor. During the 1970's he fought alcoholism, finally achieving sobriety with the help of a twelve-step program in 1977.

After the publication of his third novel, he continued to write and submit his work for publication but without



James Lee Burke. (Tomm Furch/Courtesy, Hyperion Books)

success. More than a hundred publishers rejected *The Lost Get-Back Boogie* (1986), the story of a Louisiana convict transplanted to Montana. Finally, Burke revised and shortened the novel before offering it to Louisiana State University Press, which had published a collection of his short stories in 1985. The novel appeared in 1986 and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

Burke became a mystery writer almost by accident. In 1984, challenged by a friend, he tried his hand at a mystery novel. The result was *The Neon Rain*, a work set in New Orleans and introducing Detective Dave Robicheaux. Published in 1987, the novel immediately established Burke as a new voice in the genre. The Robicheaux novels began to appear at the rate of one each year, and the third in the series, *Black Cherry Blues* (1989), earned the 1989 Edgar Award for the year's best novel from the Mystery Writers of America.

By 1990 Burke's growing popularity brought sufficient financial security that he was finally able to devote full time to writing. He began dividing his time between homes in Montana and south Louisiana, the locales in which much of his fiction is set. The series of Robicheaux novels was interrupted in 1997 when Burke brought out *Cimarron Rose* (1997), the first of a new series of mysteries featuring Billy Bob Holland, a Texan whose fictionalized family history is modeled on Burke's mother's family. The work earned him his second Edgar Award, making Burke one of the few writers to receive multiple honors from the Mystery Writers Association. Additional novels featuring Robicheaux and Holland followed regularly, although Burke took time away from mystery fiction in 2001 to complete *White Doves at Morning* (2002), a historical novel set during the Civil War.

ANALYSIS

The designation of James Lee Burke as a member of the hard-boiled school of mystery and detective fiction is fully justified. His novels are dark and often cynical, filled with raw and earthy language spoken by characters from the lowest strata of society. Exceptionally adept at creating atmosphere in his work, Burke writes vividly about the places where the action of his novels occurs. Sometimes these settings mirror the mayhem and chaos being acted out by his charac-

ters; more often, however, the idyllic backdrops of the south Louisiana bayou country or the mountains and plains of Montana form a sharp contrast to the violence being perpetrated in them—and to them.

Burke's characters, good as well as bad, are prone to resort to violence to achieve their ends. His protagonists do not hesitate to mete out their own form of justice when they perceive that the legal system may not deliver the verdict they believe to be right. At the same time, they are not one-dimensional but rather more like the heroes of existential writers Albert Camus or Jean-Paul Sartre than those of Mickey Spillane or Raymond Chandler. Robicheaux and the cast of characters in the novels in which he is featured are reminiscent of characters created by southern writers such as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. There are echoes of southern gothic reminiscent of Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) and *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) throughout the Robicheaux series. In Burke's fiction, as in Flannery O'Connor's most celebrated novel, a truly good man—or woman—is sometimes very hard to find.

Burke's novels exude a great sense of irony as well. Both his major protagonists are men who emerge from violent pasts. Robicheaux is a Vietnam veteran who witnessed the horrors of war firsthand and suffers from alcoholism all his life. Holland, a former Texas Ranger, lives with the guilt of knowing he accidentally killed his partner during a drug raid. Both want to settle down to family life and escape the dangerous world in which they have been immersed. Robicheaux marries four times and even adopts a young Central American girl in his vain attempt to achieve some measure of normalcy in his life. Both Robicheaux and Holland have deep roots in the places in which they live, and environmental issues become a major theme in a number of the books.

What Burke demonstrates through all of his novels is that, no matter how hard these men try, they can never be at peace; they think too much and care too much about their families, their heritage, and their environment to let evil forces run unchecked. That is the central thematic issue running through the individual stories that make up the canon of one of America's great voices in mystery and detective fiction.

THE NEON RAIN

In *The Neon Rain*, the first of the Dave Robicheaux novels, Burke establishes a complex personal history for his protagonist while taking readers on an exciting and dangerous journey through the New Orleans underworld. Robicheaux's crusade to identify and apprehend the murderer of a young prostitute leads him into a web of sinister activity that eventually ends with his discovering a plot to smuggle arms to Nicaraguan rebels. His personal life is constantly in danger, and although he is thwarted in his investigation on more than one occasion, he manages to escape death and identify not only the prostitute's murderer but also the head of the smuggling ring, a retired Army general bent on preventing Nicaragua from falling to the communists as Vietnam had.

Robicheaux receives help in his investigation from his partner, Detective Cletus Purcel, whose moral code is considerably more lax and whose personal life is in even greater disarray than Robicheaux's. The two have a relationship that Burke has described as akin to that of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; their friendship allows them to forgive each other's failings no matter how egregious. Robicheaux also receives help of another kind from Annie Ballard, a social worker who recognizes in him an essential goodness that lies beneath the violent streak he exhibits when his life, or the lives of those he loves, is in danger. Both characters figure prominently in later novels in the Robicheaux series.

BLACK CHERRY BLUES

The third novel in the Robicheaux series, *Black Cherry Blues*, takes Robicheaux to Montana, another locale that Burke knows intimately. Following the suspected murderers of men involved in what he thinks may be a shady oil-lease deal, Robicheaux discovers that the trail leads to Sally Dio, a Mafia don for whom Clete Purcel is now working as a security guard. Robicheaux discovers that Dio is engaged in land speculation that involves swindling Native Americans out of the oil rights on tribal lands. Once again, Robicheaux's life is threatened, but Purcel comes to his aid; between them they do considerable damage to those Robicheaux suspects of trying to hurt him and of threatening his adopted daughter Alafair, who has accompanied him to Montana.

As *Black Cherry Blues* demonstrates, Burke's Robicheaux becomes more thoughtful and self-reflective in each succeeding novel of the series. The protagonist is now a widower, the death of his wife, Annie, having been chronicled in *Heaven's Prisoners* (1988), the second novel in the series. While Robicheaux tracks down murderers, he must fulfill the duties of a single parent, caring for the daughter he and Annie had adopted. These added complications make Robicheaux seem more like an Everyman, the character Burke has identified as his detective's literary prototype and forebear.

CIMARRON ROSE

Cimarron Rose, the first of the novels featuring Billy Bob Holland, revolves around attempts by the former Texas Ranger turned defense attorney to clear his illegitimate son, Lucas Smothers, of the murder of a young girl. Holland's investigation takes him into the world of the rich East Enders of Deaf Smith, Texas. One of his principal suspects is a young man from the East End who suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome, another a psychopathic drifter who seems to know quite a bit about Holland's past. Holland also stumbles into the midst of a federal investigation of drug operations and ends up falling in love with the agent working undercover in the local sheriff's office. Federal investigators are being aided by a Mexican drug agent who Holland recognizes as a former drug runner whom he had wounded years earlier in the attack during which Holland accidentally shot his partner, L. Q. Navarro. The complicated plot is resolved when Lucas is acquitted and Holland is able to identify the girl's killer.

In *Cimarron Rose*, Burke offers some serious reflections on the way the past influences the present. The action is interrupted regularly when Holland reads the diary of his great-grandfather, an outlaw turned preacher, a technique that allows Burke to suggest historical parallels between Holland and his ancestors. Burke also incorporates dream sequences in which Holland talks with his dead partner; the conversations function much like interior monologues, revealing not only what Holland must do to save Lucas but also how he must exorcise the demons from his past that give rise to his own violent tendencies.

PEGASUS DESCENDING

In *Pegasus Descending* (2006), nearly two decades after making his first appearance in *The Neon Rain*, an older, wiser, and even more philosophic Dave Robicheaux is again working full-time as a detective in the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office. When circumstances surrounding the apparent suicide of a college girl seem suspicious to him, he launches an investigation that brings him face-to-face with gangsters attempting to take over casino gambling operations in southern Louisiana. As Robicheaux gets closer to the truth, people begin to get hurt or die; Robicheaux must rely again on his friend Cletus Purcel to help identify the killers and foil his enemies' plans. In the process he is able to settle an old score by bringing to justice the man responsible for the murder of a friend slain twenty years earlier, when the alcoholic Robicheaux had been too drunk to prevent the killing.

In *Pegasus Descending*, Burke continues his exploration of themes that have interested him since the publication of his first Robicheaux novel: the plight of the people of south Louisiana trying to preserve their culture against the growing encroachment of outsiders; the exploitation of the working classes by those with money, power, or influence, and by corrupt government officials; and the duty of good people to stand up to injustice even if it means putting themselves in harm's way. Unlike many other writers of mystery and detective fiction, however, Burke brings a level of realism to his characters reminiscent of that found in mainstream fiction. The most notable example of this quality in *Pegasus Descending* is Burke's focus on the fact that his detective is aging. At the same time Robicheaux deals ruthlessly with those who perpetrate violence, he becomes even more cognizant of his own mortality and of the preciousness of the life he enjoys in the region of America where he was born and lives.

Laurence W. Mazzeno

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVE ROBICHEAUX SERIES: *The Neon Rain*, 1987; *Heaven's Prisoners*, 1988; *Black Cherry Blues*, 1989; *A Morning for Flamingos*, 1990; *A Stained White Radiance*, 1992; *In the Electric Mist with Confederate Dead*, 1993; *Dixie City Jam*, 1994; *Burning*

Angel, 1995; *Cadillac Jukebox*, 1996; *Sunset Limited*, 1998; *Purple Cane Road*, 2000; *Jolie Blon's Bounce*, 2002; *Last Car to Elysian Fields*, 2003; *Crusader's Cross*, 2005; *Pegasus Descending*, 2006; *The Tin Roof Blowdown*, 2007

BILLY BOB HOLLAND SERIES: *Cimarron Rose*, 1997; *Heartwood*, 1999; *Bitterroot*, 2001; *In the Moon of Red Ponies*, 2004

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Half of Paradise*, 1965; *To the Bright and Shining Sun*, 1970; *Lay Down My Sword and Shield*, 1971; *Two for Texas*, 1982 (also known as *Sabine Spring*); *The Lost Get-Back Boogie*, 1986; *Present for Santa*, 1989; *Spy Story*, 1990; *Texas City, 1947*, 1992; *White Doves at Morning*, 2002

SHORT FICTION: *The Convict, and Other Stories*, 1985

NONFICTION: *Ohio's Heritage*, 1989

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Coale, Samuel. *The Mystery of Mysteries: Cultural Differences and Designs*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000. A chapter on Burke's fiction outlines principal themes and characterization in the Robicheaux novels and links Burke with other southern writers. Also includes an interview with Burke.

Pepper, Andrew. *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Dis-

cusses Burke's novels as examples of the race, gender, and class conflicts that plague American society; extensive character analysis of Burke's detective Dave Robicheaux.

Schwartz, Richard B. *Nice and Noir: Contemporary*

American Crime Fiction. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. Discusses Burke's success as a regional novelist and as a master of creating setting and atmosphere; comments on his concerns for issues of family and heritage.

W. J. BURLEY

William John Burley

Born: Falmouth, Cornwall, England; August 1, 1914

Died: Holywell, Cornwall, England; November 15, 2002

Types of plot: Police procedural; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Wycliffe, 1970-2002

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHARLES WYCLIFFE is detective chief superintendent in the English West Country. Small of stature and cerebral—he gives the impression of being a monk rather than a police officer—he is interested in human behavior and motivation. His wife, Helen, and their children provide an occasional domestic backdrop that adds some dimension to his character. Wycliffe's professional colleagues change as they are promoted and transferred during the course of the series.

CHIEF INSPECTOR JAMES GILL, tough and cynical, is Wycliffe's chief aide in the early novels.

JOHN SCALES rises from being the squad's detective sergeant responsible for photography to being the most imaginative of Wycliffe's inspectors.

SERGEANT KERSEY works well with Wycliffe on a local case and eventually becomes a detective inspector.

DETECTIVE SERGEANT LUCY LANE becomes the first female member of the squad in *Wycliffe and the Four Jacks* (1985).

DR. FRANKS, the pathologist, with his passions for fast cars and young women, is a friend and colleague throughout the series.

HUGH BELLINGS, deputy chief constable, is a polit-

ically oriented administrator with whom Wycliffe is often at odds.

CONTRIBUTION

When W. J. Burley's Detective Superintendent Wycliffe reflects on how the study of the human species is far more engaging than the study of animals, he speaks for the author as well. Before Burley turned to writing mysteries past the age of fifty, he was a professionally trained zoologist. His novels are studies of human psychology and sociology, particularly of the inhabitants of small towns. Wycliffe is an engaging but not fully developed character who acts as the means through which readers encounters a range of interesting personalities and situations. The strength of the novels is in the local color Burley evokes and in his strong characterizations of the people Wycliffe observes. Though Burley—long a member but not a participant in the Crime Writers' Association—won no major awards for his writing, he was honored in a more tangible way by having his Wycliffe series dramatized on television. The popular broadcasts (more numerous than his books) not only provided considerable wherewithal to the author but also introduced his work to a large audience.

BIOGRAPHY

William John Burley was born in Falmouth, Cornwall, England, on August 1, 1914, the sixth child and first son in his family. His parents—William John Rule Burley and Annie Curnow Burley—were both natives of the West Country, and Burley's Cornish roots are at least five generations deep.

Trained as an engineer at Truro Central Technical Schools (1926-1930) and on scholarship at the Institution of Gas Engineers (1931), Burley rose to become manager of various gas undertakings in the southwest of England (including Truro Gas Company, 1938; Okehampton Gas Company, 1940; Crewkerne Gas and Coke Company, 1944; and Camborne Gas Company, 1946). Burley married school secretary Muriel Wolsey in 1938, and the couple produced two sons, Alan John and Nigel Philip. Because Burley was in an occupation judged vital to the United Kingdom during World War II, he was not inducted into the military but instead served as a sergeant in the Home Guard.

Burley in 1946 began attending natural history classes and became fascinated with local insect life. In 1950 he abandoned his career in energy—and lost his pension—to study zoology on a state scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. After he graduated with an honors degree in zoology in 1953, Burley went into teaching. He was head of the biology department at Richmond and East Sheen Country Grammar School for boys (1953-1955) before he became the head of the biology department and sixth-form tutor at Newquay Grammar School in Cornwall. Burley settled in Newquay with his wife and two children and remained at the school until his formal retirement.

Burley wrote his first novel, *A Taste of Power*, set in a school and featuring amateur detective Henry Pym, in 1966 and followed it with *Three-Toed Pussy* (1968), which introduced his best-known character, Superintendent Charles Wycliffe. After one more Pym novel, *Death in Willow Pattern* (1969), Burley returned to the Wycliffe series with *To Kill a Cat* (1970) and, except for occasional excursions outside the series, concentrated primarily on Wycliffe for the rest of his career.

Burley retired from teaching in 1974 to devote himself full time to writing. His background in the biological sciences and his interest in organic and social evolution show themselves in his various novels, especially in a nonseries work, *The Sixth Day* (1978). A science-fiction adventure, *The Sixth Day* concerns various groups of twentieth century men who are carried into the future by alien life-forms who have colonized the then-desolated Earth and who expose the humans to different life-forms and systems of social integration.

Throughout Burley's writing career, however, it was the Wycliffe novels that occupied most of the author's time and captured the bulk of reader attention. Burley's status was given a tremendous boost in 1993 when a pilot featuring the fictional police officer, "Wycliffe and the Cycle of Death," with actor Jack Shepherd in the title role, was broadcast in the United Kingdom. The following year, six Wycliffe episodes based on the books were broadcast, and through 1998 more than thirty-five episodes aired, giving Burley—then past his eightieth year—a level of financial comfort that he had not previously enjoyed. Despite his late success, Burley continued to write and produced four additional Wycliffe titles despite failing eyesight. He was working on a twenty-third novel in the series, *Wycliffe's Last Lap*, and had a twenty-fourth planned (*Wycliffe and the Dream Castle*) when he died in November, 2002.

ANALYSIS

W. J. Burley's mystery novels are rich in setting and character. The Wycliffe series is set in the West Country of Cornwall and Devon, an area Burley knew well and skillfully described. As head of the regional Criminal Investigation Division, Charles Wycliffe roams the area. Some of the murders he solves are close to his home base of Plymouth; others may occur in coastal resorts, on an island, in a hilly tin-mining region, or elsewhere in the Cornish countryside. Burley conveys a sense not only of the area's natural beauty and the character of its communities but also of the personalities of its people.

Wycliffe, the son of a Herefordshire tenant farmer, started his career in the police force as a beat officer at the age of nineteen. He made a name for himself as a detective in a Midland town and rose to the rank of detective chief superintendent, which he holds when the series begins. He met his wife, Helen, early in his career. The Wycliffes have twin children, and their relationship with them grows, as do their children, in the course of the series. The twins, David and Ruth, complete postgraduate studies and advance to careers of their own. Professional success enables the Wycliffes to buy the Watch House, a seaside home with a garden and a view of the estuary. Wycliffe's Nonconformist

upbringing and socialist views make him a bit uneasy about these outward signs of success, but Helen helps him learn to indulge himself and tries to develop his cultural instincts. Wycliffe, however, finds it hard to change his nature. He remains at heart a moralist who will mortify himself through self-denial when faced with a difficult decision. His socialism occasionally shows in his antipathy to prosperous businessmen.

Wycliffe is attracted to his job because it gives him an opportunity to interact with people. In almost all the novels, Wycliffe compares himself to a scientific observer of animal species.

Some men watched animals, building little hides to spy on badgers, birds or deer, but Wycliffe could not understand them. From a window on to a street, from a seat in a pub or a park, or strolling round a fairground, it was possible to observe a far more varied species, more complex, more intelligent, more perceptive and vastly richer in the pattern of their emotional response.

In many ways, Wycliffe's task is more difficult than that of an animal expert, for "he worked with human beings, on whom all studies had to be done in the wild."

Wycliffe gains an understanding of his own identity by seeing in others the same intimate thoughts and desires that he himself harbors. The same drive leads him to read autobiographies and diaries and to immerse himself in all aspects of a victim's life and surroundings when he is conducting an investigation. Interrogations are handled like conversations as he probes to learn more about the people involved in a case. As he absorbs data from his observations and from the reports of his team, Wycliffe withdraws into himself, becoming taciturn and irritable.

In the course of an investigation, after a seemingly endless series of interrogations, interviews and reports, when his ideas were confused and contradictory, his mind would suddenly clear and the salient facts stand out in sharp relief as though a lens had suddenly brought them into proper focus. At this stage he would not necessarily distinguish any pattern in the facts but he would, from then on, be able to classify and relate them so that a pattern would eventually emerge.

Wycliffe does not conform to the police force's ideal for conducting an investigation; he does too much of the investigative work himself and spends too little time coordinating tasks and organizing paperwork. Burley does, however, give some insight into the actual procedures of police work that occur around Wycliffe. He also gives the reader a view of the everyday tasks and office politics that consume much of Wycliffe's time, regardless of whether there is an investigation in progress.

The focus of these novels, however, is not on Wycliffe but on the people involved in a murder—the victims, their families and friends, the suspects, and the criminals. In some of the novels, Wycliffe is a late-comer to the action, the story having been well advanced before the police become involved. Burley delves into violence that erupts from a variety of sources: from the consequences of a smoldering and overprotective love (*To Kill a Cat* and *Death in a Salubrious Place*, 1973); from an illegitimate birth long kept secret (*Guilt Edged*, 1971; *Wycliffe and the Beales*, 1983; and *Wycliffe and the Quiet Virgin*, 1986); from greed and business deceit (*Wycliffe in Paul's Court*, 1980); from an attempt to prevent the revelation of a long-standing art fraud (*Wycliffe and the Winsor Blue*, 1987); from drug dealing and blackmail (*Death in Stanley Street*, 1974); from a desire for revenge for wrongful conviction in a murder case (*Wycliffe and the Pea-Green Boat*, 1975); from the trauma suffered by a victim and her family in a case of vicious schoolgirl hazing (*Wycliffe and the Schoolgirls*, 1976); from fear of disinheritance (*Wycliffe and the Scapegoat*, 1978); from the consequences of an unsolved robbery and murder committed years before (*Wycliffe and the Four Jacks*); and from the desire of a suicide's friends to punish the man who had pushed him to despair (*Wycliffe's Wild Goose Chase*, 1982). Although the motives are varied, there is one thing these violent acts share: deep roots. Long-hidden secrets become known, long-nursed grievances explode, and long-festering relationships finally produce violence.

Crime involves Wycliffe with all elements of society, from an old Catholic country family to antiquarian book dealers, from a former convict managing a seedy

seaside boardinghouse to a member of Parliament, from a leading author of popular yet critically acclaimed books to a widowed lighthouse keeper, and from a terminally ill rock star to the manager of a tourist caravan park. Burley is interested in the entire range of people who inhabit and visit his West Country, and he succeeds in making them come alive. As their lives and dreams are exposed, the reader, like Wycliffe, gains greater insight into the human condition.

WYCLIFFE AND THE TANGLED WEB

Set in a fictionalized version of the tiny Cornish seaside village of Mevagissey, *Wycliffe and the Tangled Web* (1988) unfolds at a leisurely pace. The story revolves around seventeen-year-old Hilda Clemo, a pretty, bright, if odd, girl whose visit to the local doctor propels the plot into motion. Soon after meeting with her boyfriend, Ralph Martin, Hilda vanishes, and when no trace of her is found for two days, Wycliffe and his team of investigators—Kersey, Scales, Lane, and others—is called in. During their weeklong enquiry, Wycliffe and his minions scour the surrounding area and question a variety of individuals as they methodically draw ever closer to the solution of what happened, when it happened, and who is responsible. They discover suspects in the disappearance—the boyfriend, the smarmy husband of Hilda's sister, the half-wit son of a relative living nearby—one after another before Hilda's body shows up in a quarry pond several days after police divers had already searched it. Possible motives for her murder change over time: originally, it was thought that the reason for her death was her pregnancy—Hilda had told several people she was going to have a baby—until an autopsy reveals that she was not pregnant. A connection to a missing, valuable Pissaro painting is revealed, pointing the finger of guilt at several possible candidates, before the real and uncomplicated cause of death comes to light: a simple impulsive reaction to Hilda's cruelty in telling the hurtful lie about her pregnancy to the wrong person.

Wycliffe and the Tangled Web illuminates the particular strengths of the series: Burley's ability to capture the atmosphere of small-town Cornwall; his skill in drawing believable, unique characters and the relationships between them; and his keen ear in reproduc-

ing dialogue. Mostly, Burley aptly demonstrates that the solutions to crimes in police procedurals lie not in the talents of a single law enforcer—Wycliffe, while efficient at using his resources and effective at orchestrating the investigation, is a plodder rather than someone capable of making brilliant leaps of deduction—but in the cumulative effect of an experienced team working together toward a common goal.

WYCLIFFE AND THE GUILD OF NINE

Burley's last completed installment in the Wycliffe series, *Wycliffe and the Guild of Nine* (2000) reintroduces characters from an earlier entry, *Wycliffe and the Quiet Virgin*. Set ten years later, the book opens with Wycliffe brooding over the fact that his new commanding officer is a woman and contemplating the recent death of Francine, a young woman who figured prominently in *Wycliffe and the Quiet Virgin*. The murder happens on the moors, where an astrologically influenced man named Archer and his pragmatic wife, Lina, have set up an artist's colony called the Guild of Nine. Francine, who had intended to invest in the colony, is found dead, asphyxiated because a gas heater has been deliberately sabotaged. Called into the case, Wycliffe discovers that several colonists have secrets that would make them reluctant to have police involvement. Complications arise, suspects multiply, and possibilities abound when two additional murders are perpetrated after Wycliffe's arrival. *Wycliffe and the Guild of Nine*, with Burley's trademark well-rounded characters and evocative setting, is a fitting conclusion to the popular Wycliffe series.

Francis J. Bremer

Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HENRY PYM SERIES: *A Taste of Power*, 1966; *Death in Willow Pattern*, 1969

CHARLES WYCLIFFE SERIES: *Three-Toed Puss*, 1968; *To Kill a Cat*, 1970; *Guilt Edged*, 1971; *Death in a Salubrious Place*, 1973; *Death in Stanley Street*, 1974; *Wycliffe and the Pea-Green Boat*, 1975; *Wycliffe and the Schoolgirls*, 1976; *The Schoolmaster*, 1977; *Wycliffe and the Scapegoat*, 1978; *Wycliffe in Paul's Court*, 1980; *Wycliffe's Wild Goose Chase*, 1982; *Wycliffe and the Beales*, 1983; *Wycliffe and the*

Four Jacks, 1985; *Wycliffe and the Quiet Virgin*, 1986; *Wycliffe and the Winsor Blue*, 1987; *Wycliffe and the Tangled Web*, 1988; *Wycliffe and the Cycle of Death*, 1990; *Wycliffe and the Dead Flautist*, 1991; *Wycliffe and the Last Rites*, 1992; *Wycliffe and the Dunes Mystery*, 1993; *Wycliffe and the House of Fear*, 1995; *Wycliffe and the Redhead*, 1997; *Wycliffe and the Guild of Nine*, 2000

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Sixth Day*, 1978; *Charles and Elizabeth*, 1979; *The House of Care*, 1981

NONFICTION: *Centenary History of the City of Truro*, 1977

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Burley, W. J. WJBurley.com: Celebrating a Unique Author. <http://wjburley.com>. Web site devoted to Burley. Contains a biography, information about his novels, the television series, and how he wrote novels.

Crossley, Jack. "A Policeman's Unhappy Lot." *The Times*, July 30, 1994. Brief profile of Burley looks at his motivation for writing and his love of Cornwall.

Fletcher, Connie. "Mysteries." Review of *Wycliffe and the Pea-Green Boat*, by W. J. Burley. *Booklist* 72, no. 8 (December 15, 1975): 551. This is a favorable review, which cites the skill of the author in using the past to explain present circumstances.

Hanson, Gillian Mary. *City and Shore: The Function of Setting in the British Mystery*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004. Looks at many major British novelists and their works in which setting was important. Sheds light on how Burley's fellow writers used setting, which was important to Burley.

Hubin, Allen J. "Criminals at Large." *Death in Willow Pattern*, by W. J. Burley. *The New York Times*, April 19, 1970, p. 37. Contains a favorable review in which Burley's lesser known protagonist Dr. Henry Pym, zoologist and sleuth, is invited to examine a wealthy nobleman's valuable family library during Christmas holiday and incidentally to investigate charges that the nobleman has been writing a series of poison-pen letters.

Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller, eds. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. Contains a brief analysis of Burley's *Wycliffe and the Scapegoat* by Pronzini and Newell Dunlap, which—through praising the colorful setting (an ancient All Hallow's Eve ritual in a small English town that involves a wheel of fire), and the well-drawn characters—pans the author's lack of flair and the book's pedestrian solution.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Wycliffe and the Quiet Virgin*, by W. J. Burley. 230, no. 14 (October 3, 1986): 98. Contains an unfavorable review. Praises the author's occasional evocative descriptions of the Cornish country but criticizes the novel's formulaic plot, somewhat plodding style, and its easily solved puzzle.

W. R. BURNETT

Born: Springfield, Ohio; November 25, 1899

Died: Santa Monica, California; April 25, 1982

Also wrote as John Monahan; James Updyke

Types of plot: Inverted; hard-boiled; police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

W. R. Burnett was a prolific novelist and screenwriter. His most popular and enduring work was in the area of crime fiction, a subgroup within the mystery and detective genre. Burnett helped to shape and refine the conventions of the hard-boiled crime novel—a type of fiction that seems particularly suited to dramatizing the garish and violent urban world of the twentieth century. His novels and films are rich with underworld characters, scenes, and dialogue that would become the stock-in-trade of other writers; in the popular imagination, his work was a revelation of how mobsters and modern outlaws thought, acted, and spoke in the urban jungle.

Burnett knew gangsters, did extensive research on some of them, and made a close study of crime's causes and effects. He sought in his works to present the criminal outlook and criminal activity in a direct and dramatic fashion, without explicit authorial comment or judgment. He believed that crime is an inevitable part of society, given human frailties and desires, and that it must be seen in its own terms to be understood. This belief explains the shock caused by many of his novels on first publication and his occasional difficulties with film censors. Burnett's crime stories, then, are characterized by a sense of objectivity, authenticity, and revelation. They realistically convey the glittery surface and shadowy depths of American society.

BIOGRAPHY

William Riley Burnett was born in Springfield, Ohio, on November 25, 1899, of old American stock. He attended grammar schools in Springfield and Dayton, high school in Columbus, and preparatory school in Germantown, Ohio. He was an adequate stu-

dent and an avid athlete. In 1919, he enrolled in the college of journalism at Ohio State University but stayed for only one semester. In 1920, he married Marjorie Louise Bartow; they were divorced in the early 1940's. In 1943, he married Whitney Forbes Johnstone; they had two sons.

From 1920 to 1927, Burnett worked in an office as a statistician for the Bureau of Labor Statistics; he hated office work but hung on while he tried tirelessly, but fruitlessly, to establish himself as a writer. Frustrated with his situation, he left Ohio for Chicago in 1927, taking a job as a night clerk in a seedy hotel. Bootlegging, prostitution, violence, and corruption were rampant at the time. Rival gangs indiscriminately carried out their territorial wars with tommy guns and explosives. Al Capone was king. The impact on Burnett's imagination was profound. Gradually, he came to know and understand the city and found in it the material and outlook he needed to become a successful writer.

Little Caesar (1929), Burnett's first published novel, quickly became a best seller. The film rights were purchased by Warner Bros., and the film version, which appeared in 1931, was a sensational success. In 1930, Burnett went west to California and worked as a screenwriter to subsidize his literary endeavors. He remained in California for the rest of his life.

Burnett had a long, productive, and financially rewarding career in films. He worked with some of Hollywood's best writers, directors, and actors. He also wrote scripts for a number of popular television series in the 1950's and 1960's. Nevertheless, he was first and foremost a writer of fiction, producing more than thirty novels and several shorter works during a career that spanned five decades.

Burnett wrote many novels outside the mystery and detective genre, stories dealing with a wide variety of subjects—boxing, dog racing, political campaigns, fascism in the 1930's, eighteenth century Ireland, the modern West Indies, the American frontier, and others. His strength, however, was as a writer of crime fiction; on this his reputation rests securely. In 1980, he

was honored by the Mystery Writers of America with the Grand Masters Award. He died in California on April 25, 1982.

ANALYSIS

In the introduction to the 1958 American reprint of *Little Caesar*, W. R. Burnett describes the elements out of which he created this career-launching novel. He recalls his arrival in Chicago and describes how the noise, pace, color, violence, and moral anarchy of the city shocked and stimulated him. He went everywhere, taking notes and absorbing the urban atmosphere that he would later use as a background. A scholarly work on a particular Chicago gang (not Capone's) gave him a basic plotline, the idea of chronicling the rise and fall of an ambitious mobster. From a hoodlum acquaintance, he derived a point of view from which to narrate the story—not the morally outraged view of law-abiding society, as was usually the case in crime stories of the time, but rather the hard-boiled, utterly pragmatic view of the criminal.

These were the essential ingredients on which Burnett's genius acted as a catalyst. These ingredients can be found in all of his crime fiction: the menacing atmosphere of the modern city, where human predators and prey enact an age-old drama; the extensive knowledge

of the underworld and its denizens; the grandiose plans undone by a quirk of fate; the detached tone that suggests a full acceptance of human vice and frailty without overlooking instances of moral struggle and resistance; the sense that criminals are not grotesques or monsters but human beings who respond to the demands of their environment with ruthless practicality; and the colloquial style. Some of the novels focus on the career of a single criminal, while others are more comprehensive in their treatment of crime and society.

LITTLE CAESAR

Little Caesar is the story of Cesare "Rico" Bandello, a "gutter Macbeth" as Burnett once referred to him in an interview. Rico comes to Chicago, joins one of the bigger gangs involved in the various lucrative criminal enterprises of the period, and eventually takes over as leader by means of his single-minded ferocity and cleverness. Everything Rico does is directed toward the aggrandizement of his power, influence, and prestige. He has few diversions, distractions, or vices—even the usual ones of mobsters. As he goes from success to success over the bodies of those who get in his way, he aspires to ever-greater glory, until fate intervenes, sending him away from Chicago and into hiding, where eventually he stops a police officer's bullet.

Rico is a simple but understandable individual: ambitious, austere, deadly. To some degree, the exigencies and opportunities of jazz-age Chicago made such men inevitable, as Burnett clearly suggests in the book. Rico's story is presented dramatically, in vivid scenes filled with crisp dialogue and the argot of mean streets; this mode of presentation conveys a powerful sense of immediacy, authenticity, and topicality. Just as powerful is the archetypal quality of Burnett's portrait of Rico, who emerges as the epitome of the underworld overachiever. This combination of the topical and the archetypal was extremely potent; it accounts for the fact that *Little Caesar* greatly

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Edward G. Robinson (right) played the title role in the 1931 film adaptation of W. R. Burnett's first novel, Little Caesar. (Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive)

influenced subsequent portrayals of gangsters in the United States.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Burnett was interested not only in the character and exploits of individuals who chose a life of crime but also in criminal organizations that increasingly were seen to corrupt the American political and legal establishments, especially after the end of World War II. The most extended exploration of this subject is found in his trilogy comprising *The Asphalt Jungle* (1949), *Little Men, Big World* (1951), and *Vanity Row* (1952). These novels dramatize gangland operations and the progressive corruption of a city political administration.

It is important to note that the Kefauver Senate hearings on organized crime in the early 1950's, which were omnipresent in newspapers, magazines, and on television, made these stories seem particularly timely and authentic. Burnett, however, did not claim to have inside knowledge about a vast, highly organized and hierarchical crime network controlled by the Mafia and linked to Sicily. His underworld is more broadly based and is peopled by many ethnic types as well as by native Americans. In other words, Burnett recognized that crime is rooted in human nature and aspirations and that it should not be attributed—as it often was in the wake of the hearings—to ethnic aberration or foreign conspiracy. The epigraph, taken from the writing of William James, that prefaces *The Asphalt Jungle* makes this point about human nature: “MAN, biologically considered . . . is the most formidable of all beasts of prey, and, indeed, the only one that preys systematically on its own species.”

THE ASPHALT JUNGLE

The setting of *The Asphalt Jungle* as well as *Little Men, Big World* and *Vanity Row* is a midsized, midwestern city that is physically and morally disintegrating. In *The Asphalt Jungle*, a new police commissioner is appointed to brighten the tarnished image of the city police force to improve the current administration's chances for reelection. The move is completely cynical on the part of the administration brass, yet the new commissioner does his best against strong resistance and bureaucratic inertia. Paralleling the commissioner's agonizingly difficult cleanup campaign is the planning and execution of a million-dollar

jewelry heist by a team of criminal specialists, who are backed financially by a prominent and influential lawyer. The narrative movement between police activity and criminal activity serves to heighten suspense and to comment on the difficulty of any concerted human effort in an entropic universe.

In *The Asphalt Jungle*, there is a genuine, if somewhat ineffectual attempt to deal with serious crime and official corruption within the city. The moral landscape may contain large areas of gray; there may be disturbing parallels and connections between police and criminal organizations. By and large, however, one can tell the guardians from the predators.

LITTLE MEN, BIG WORLD

In *Little Men, Big World*, there are several key political people involved with local crime figures, and a symbiotic relationship of some sort between political machines and organized crime seems inevitable. Thus, at the end of the story, a corrupt judge explains to a friend that in politics, “*success breeds corruption.*” One needs money to get and keep power. When legitimate sources of revenue are exhausted, it is natural to look to those who need protection to stay in business—gambling-house proprietors, bookies, panderers, and the like. In this novel, the city has reached what Burnett calls a state of imbalance. Not only is official corruption extensive and debilitating, but its exposure occurs purely by chance as well. Any housecleaning that results is superficial.

VANITY ROW

In *Vanity Row*, the political machine is so riddled with corruption that the highest people in the administration are themselves directly involved with criminal activity—illegal wiretaps, conspiracy, perjury, frame-ups—as they attempt by any means to retain power in a morally chaotic environment. When the story opens, a top administration official is found murdered. He was the mediator between the administration and the Chicago syndicate in a dispute over the cost of allowing local distribution of the wire service, a service that was necessary to the illegal offtrack betting industry.

The mayor and his associates assume that their friend was killed by the Mob as a warning to lower the price. In response, they order their “special investigator” in the police force to muddy the waters and make

sure that the connection between the dead man, themselves, and the syndicate is not discovered by the police. Burnett implies that there is nothing to keep the predators in check. The only hope for the city is that eventually the administration will succumb to its own nihilistic, anarchic impulses and make way for a reform group so the cycle can begin anew.

In each of these novels, the story is timely, the presentation is objective or dramatic, the language is colloquial, and the tempo is fast paced. In them, Burnett moved beyond a concern with individual criminals to explore the world of criminal organizations and corrupt political administrations.

GOODBYE, CHICAGO

In his last published novel, *Goodbye, Chicago: 1928, End of an Era* (1981), Burnett deals with the imminent collapse, through internal rot, of an entire society. The novel focuses on the Capone syndicate, the archetypal American crime organization, and on a small group of dedicated Chicago police officers attempting to deal with crime and corruption on an almost apocalyptic scale.

The story begins with a woman's body being fished from the river by crew members on a city fireboat. As in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1866), which opens with the discovery of a body floating in the Thames, the investigation of this death reveals a web of corruption connecting all levels of society and both sides of the law. Of all Burnett's novels, this one best shows the devastating effects of the interaction and interdependency of American legal and criminal organizations in the twentieth century.

The story is not divided into chapters or parts; instead, it unfolds in brief scenes whose juxtaposition is by turns ironic, suspenseful, comic, or grotesque. This cinematic technique of quick crosscutting seems particularly appropriate to a story revealing strange and unexpected connections among people and dramatizing their frantic, self-destructive activity in the final months before the onset of the Great Depression.

HIGH SIERRA

In his crime fiction, Burnett wrote about a gritty underworld that he knew well, a world of professional thieves, killers, thugs, mugs, con men, crime czars, and corrupt officials. Thus, his crime stories remain

convincing even decades after their publication. If Burnett were merely convincing, however, his books would have little more than historical interest. He is also a skilled novelist. There is, as film director John Huston once remarked, a powerful sense of inevitability about Burnett's stories. Character, situation, and destiny are thoroughly intertwined and appropriate. Consider for example, the fate of Roy Earle, the protagonist of *High Sierra* (1940).

Roy Earle, a proud and solitary figure, is a legendary gunman and former member of the Dillinger gang of bank robbers. At the beginning of the story, he is released from prison and drives west through the American desert toward what he hopes will be an oasis—an exclusive California hotel with a fortune in money and jewels protected by a temptingly vulnerable security system. The robbery itself is well planned and executed. Nevertheless, as always with Burnett's fiction, things go awry, and the promise of wealth proves mad-denyingly illusory. Finally, in another wasteland—which ironically completes the deadly circle begun in the opening sequence—Roy makes a defiant and heroic last stand among the cold, high peaks of the Sierras. Thus, characterization, imagery, and structure are remarkably integrated in this Depression-era story of a futile quest for fulfillment in a hostile environment.

POWERFUL SCENES AND CHARACTERS

Burnett's novels are packed with powerful scenes and tableaux of underworld activity and characters that became part of the iconography of crime writing: the would-be informant gunned down on church steps; funerals of dead mobsters who are "sent off" with floral and verbal tributes from their killers; the ambitious mobster making an unrefusable offer to a "business" rival; the ingenious sting operation; the caper executed with clockwork precision; the car-bomb assassination; and many more. Many of the images one associates with crime fiction and film have their first or most memorable expression in Burnett's works.

The novels contain a gallery of memorable characters; even minor characters are sketched with a Dickensian eye for the idiosyncratic and incongruous. The following, for example, is the introduction to police investigator Emmett Lackey, a minor figure in *Vanity Row*:

Lackey was a huge man of about forty. He was not only excessively tall, six five or more, but also very wide and bulky, weighing just under three hundred pounds. And yet, in spite of his size, there was nothing formidable about him. He looked soft, slack, and weak. Small, evasive blue eyes peered out nervously at the world from behind old-fashioned, gold-rimmed glasses. His complexion was very fair, pink and white, and had an almost babyish look to it. His manner was conciliatory in the extreme and he always seemed to be trying to appease somebody. . . .

But behind Lackey's weak smiles were strong emotions.

The brief sketch captures a recurring theme in all Burnett's crime stories—the use of masks to hide a vulnerable or corrupt reality. Many of Burnett's characters are obsessively secretive, especially the more powerful ones, who are happy to work in the background and manipulate those onstage, who take greater risks for far less gain.

Burnett has a wonderful ear for dialogue and authentic American speech, which partly explains the fact that so many of his novels were successfully adapted to film. For example, two crime reporters are talking about a voluptuous murder suspect in *Vanity Row*: According to the first, "That picture . . . It didn't do her justice." The second responds, "A picture? How could it? . . . It would take a relief map." The brassy, earthy language his characters use always seems natural to their personality, place, and calling.

Burnett's crime novels are believable, energetic, and literate. As some dramatists of William Shakespeare's time used the melodramatic conventions of the revenge play to explore the spiritual dislocations of their age, so Burnett used the conventions of crime fiction to explore dark undercurrents—urban decay, the symbiosis between criminal and legal institutions, the prevalence of masks in a hypocritical society, the elusiveness of truth and success in a mysterious world. In other words, there is a considerable amount of substance in Burnett's fiction, which explains their translation into more than twelve languages and constant reprintings. They are important and enduring portraits of life and death in the urban jungle.

Michael J. Larsen

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Little Caesar*, 1929; *The Silver Eagle*, 1931; *Dark Hazard*, 1933; *Six Days' Grace*, 1937; *High Sierra*, 1940; *The Quick Brown Fox*, 1942; *Nobody Lives Forever*, 1943; *Tomorrow's Another Day*, 1945; *Romelle*, 1946; *The Asphalt Jungle*, 1949; *Little Men, Big World*, 1951; *Vanity Row*, 1952; *Big Stan*, 1953 (as Monahan); *Underdog*, 1957; *Round the Clock at Volari's*, 1961; *The Cool Man*, 1968; *Goodbye, Chicago: 1928, End of an Era*, 1981

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Iron Man*, 1930; *Saint Johnson*, 1930; *The Giant Swing*, 1932; *Goodbye to the Past: Scenes from the Life of William Meadows*, 1934; *The Goodhues of Sinking Creek*, 1934; *King Cole*, 1936; *The Dark Command: A Kansas Iliad*, 1938; *Stretch Dawson*, 1950; *Adobe Walls*, 1953; *Captain Lightfoot*, 1954; *It's Always Four O'Clock*, 1956 (as Updyke); *Pale Moon*, 1956; *Bitter Ground*, 1958; *Mi Amigo*, 1959; *Conant*, 1961; *Sergeants Three*, 1962; *The Goldseekers*, 1962; *The Widow Barony*, 1962; *The Abilene Samson*, 1963; *The Winning of Mickey Free*, 1965

SCREENPLAYS: 1931-1950 • *The Finger Points*, 1931 (with John Monk Saunders); *The Beast of the City*, 1932; *Some Blondes Are Dangerous*, 1937 (with Lester Cole); *King of the Underworld*, 1938 (with George Bricker and Vincent Sherman); *High Sierra*, 1941 (with John Huston); *The Get-Away*, 1941 (with Wells Root and J. Walter Ruben); *This Gun for Hire*, 1941 (with Albert Maltz); *Wake Island*, 1942 (with Frank Butler); *Action in the North Atlantic*, 1943 (with others); *Background to Danger*, 1943; *Crash Dive*, 1943 (with Jo Swerling); *San Antonio*, 1945 (with Alan LeMay); *Nobody Lives Forever*, 1946; *Belle Starr's Daughter*, 1948; *Yellow Sky*, 1949 (with Lamar Trotti)

1951-1963 • *The Iron Man*, 1951 (with George Zuckerman and Borden Chase); *The Racket*, 1951 (with William Wister Haines); *Vendetta*, 1951 (with Peter O'Crotty); *Dangerous Mission*, 1954 (with others); *Captain Lightfoot*, 1955 (with Oscar Brodney); *I Died a Thousand Times*, 1955; *Illegal*, 1955 (with James R. Webb and Frank Collins); *Accused of Murder*, 1957 (with Robert Creighton Williams); *Septem-*

ber Storm, 1961 (with Steve Fisher); *Sergeants Three*, 1962; *The Great Escape*, 1963 (with James Clavell)

TELEPLAY: *Debt of Honor*, c. 1960

NONFICTION: *The Roar of the Crowd*, 1965

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Madden, David, ed. *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979. Collection of scholarly essays about the

hard-boiled subgenre and its practitioners; provides insight into Burnett's works.

Mate, Ken, and Pat McGilligan. "Burnett: An Interview." *Film Comment* 19 (January/February, 1983): 59-68. Interview with Burnett focusing on his many years in Hollywood and his experiences with the studios over four decades.

Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920's to the Present*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Places Burnett's work in the context of the other writers of hard-boiled detective fiction and helps chart the changes in his work over time as a function of the changes in the wider subgenre.

Seldes, Gilbert. Foreword to *Little Caesar*. New York: Dial Press, 1958. Foreword to Burnett's first detective novel by the editor of *The Dial*, discussing Burnett and his work's importance to the genre.

REX BURNS

Born: San Diego, California; June 13, 1935

Also wrote as Tom Sehler

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Gabe Wager, 1975-

Devlin Kirk, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

GABE WAGER is a detective sergeant on the Denver police force, assigned initially to Organized Crime (narcotics) and subsequently to Homicide. A "coyote" of mixed Hispanic-Anglo background, Wager is personally reserved, dedicated to his work, essentially isolated, and driven by his own demanding standards of honesty and duty.

CONTRIBUTION

Winner of the 1975 Mystery Writers of America

Edgar Award for best first novel, *The Alvarez Journal* (1975) established Rex Burns as a realistic writer with a spare and honest style. Without relying on violent action or bizarre characters, Burns shaped the police procedural into a novel that presents a convincing portrait of a man at work in a job that is both consuming and tedious. The realities of police work mean that building a case that will hold up in court may well be more difficult than discovering the identity of a criminal. The books featuring detective Gabriel Villanueva "Gabe" Wager, which Burns describes as "chapters" in a larger work, are noteworthy for the author's skill in using indirection and accretion to reveal the depths of a character who is reserved, self-contained, and virtually inflexible. His Colorado settings expose a working-class Rocky Mountain West that tourists never see. In addition to the Edgar Award, Burns has been a three-time recipient of the Top Hand Award from the Colorado League of Authors.

BIOGRAPHY

Rex Raoul Stephen Sehler Burns was born in San Diego, California, on June 13, 1935. His father, who dreamed of retiring from the navy to edit a local newspaper, was killed during World War II. Burns was graduated from Stanford University in 1958 and then did a tour of active duty with the United States Marine Corps Reserves, during which he served as regimental legal officer and reached the rank of captain. In 1959, he married Emily Sweitzer; the couple had three sons.

In 1961, Burns began graduate work at the University of Minnesota. He earned a master of arts degree in 1963 and a doctorate in American studies in 1965. His doctoral research took an interdisciplinary approach to American culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. Examining the “gospel of success” by looking at popular reading, children’s literature, labor periodicals, and the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, his dissertation became the basis of a scholarly book published in 1976 as *Success in America: The Yeoman Dream and the Industrial Revolution*. From 1965 to 1968, Burns was an assistant professor and director of freshman English at Central Missouri State College. In 1968, he moved to the University of Colorado at Denver, where he was active in the faculty assembly and chairman of the University Senate (1974-1975). He was promoted to associate and then full professor. He spent time as a Fulbright lecturer in Greece (1969-1970) and in Argentina (1977).

Beginning in 1971, in addition to teaching and scholarly writing, Burns began serving as a consultant to the Denver District Attorney’s office. The first of his detective novels was published in 1975. He remained a full-time professor; the popularity of late afternoon and evening classes for the students of an urban public university, who are often working adults, allowed him to spend mornings writing and to produce a book every year or two.

Burns has published numerous reviews of mystery fiction and maintained a regular review column for the *Rocky Mountain News*. A contributor to *Scribner’s Mystery and Suspense Writers*, he also serves as an adviser to the *Oxford Companion to Mystery*. In 2001, he signed on with the Starz Encore Mystery Channel as host of a recurring segment called *Anatomy of a Mys-*

tery—brief studies of elements found in mystery writing, with examples of popular films that employ those elements. He retired from teaching at the University of Colorado but still serves as professor emeritus in English.

ANALYSIS

In “The Mirrored Badge” in *Colloquium on Crime: Eleven Renowned Mystery Writers Discuss Their Work* (1986), Rex Burns describes the police procedural as a “novel of manners” and asserts that he was drawn to the form because he disliked the “false portrayals of cops and robbers which, especially in the mass media, can be perilous to viewers who accept them as real.” He also addresses the relationship between detective fiction and questions of psychological and moral importance. Although the genre requires a strict form, he writes, “crime is chaotic, an eruption into the ordered, public surface of our lives from some dark reservoir below—an intrusion, that is, of life’s formlessness.” The detective writer is thus faced with the problem of exploring the irrational: While “the detective wants only to solve the crime, the writer is faced with the need to explain it.” That attempt, Burns suggests, “can lead the mystery writer to the limits of explaining the possibly inexplicable.”

Burns’s style is generally spare yet sharp. In an article for *The Writer* in March, 1984, he used the term “imagistic compression” to identify his technique of description: “to determine, usually in revision, what precise image, in the fewest words, will blossom in the reader’s mind and make a setting visible to his imagination.” He also seeks descriptive techniques that contribute to the development of the action. As the people at the Mormon ranch in *The Avenging Angel* (1983) prepare for attack, the smoke rising from the house’s chimney “stood like a ghostly flagpole against the sky.” The flagpole simile, as Burns points out, not only sharpens the scene but also captures the “paradox of a domestic fire on a quiet evening and the smoke as a beacon for the invaders.” His dialogue is, in similar fashion, low-key yet distinctive. In particular, he uses the jargon of various occupations and the grammar and rhythms that betray education and social class to identify characters through their speech.

Burns uses a variety of physical and cultural settings to avoid the predictability of the police procedural, which, like actual detective work, tends to fall into repetitious patterns. He makes Gabe Wager a workaholic loner who goes undercover, pursues investigations on his own time, takes on detached assignments, and reluctantly agrees to use some of his accumulated vacation time when it dawns on him that he can go fishing in a locale that seems to have something to do with a questionable death. Thus, Burns can give Wager some of the range and independence of a private eye while letting him have access to the resources found only in a major law enforcement agency and subjecting him to the legal constraints of actual police work.

GABE WAGER

The character of Gabe Wager is a central attraction of Burns's writing. In his scholarly book on nineteenth century American culture, Burns identified two opposing traditions of success: the materialistic American Dream of the self-made individual rising from rags to riches and the competing ideal of competence, independence, and morality embodied in the image of the yeoman who possessed "wealth somewhat beyond [his] basic needs, freedom from economic or statutory subservience, and the respect of the society for fruitful, honest industry." To an extent, Gabe Wager is a twentieth century version of the sturdy yeoman: a working man who preserves his capacity for independent action by refusing either to join the union or to accept blindly the policies and politics of his superiors. The virtue of his independence is an extraordinarily strong sense of duty; the danger is in the inflexibility of his self-imposed moral code; and the price is loneliness.

Burns sees Wager's "hard struggle for self-definition in a world that has its labels all ready to apply" as giving him "a rigidity that is both strength and weakness." Wager is not wholly at home in either Chicano or Anglo culture. During his childhood in a barrio in Denver, relatives disapproved of his mother for having married an outsider.

Wager joined the Marines at sixteen and served for eight years in a period that stretched from the Korean Demilitarized Zone to Vietnam's Landing Zone Delta,

and as a consequence missed the normal experiences of the teen and early adult years, a time when most men learn something about women. There is a broken marriage in his background and a relationship with fellow police officer Jo Fabrizio that is constantly endangered by his emotional distance and stubborn pride.

Although the books use a third-person restricted viewpoint—everything is seen as if it had passed through Wager's consciousness—Wager is as reticent in his inner life as he is in his dealings with other people. Burns skillfully uses minimal outcroppings of introspection to humanize the humorless, self-sufficient workaholic.

Both the narrative voice and Wager's personal awareness, for example, undercut his apparent self-certainty in a spare passage such as this from *The Avenging Angel*: "What the hell, you didn't have to like your partner; all you had to do was work with him. Wager could tell himself that, and he could almost believe it."

THE ALVAREZ JOURNAL

Burns's first novel, *The Alvarez Journal*, established his dedication to the concrete reality of police work: No shot is fired, and the protagonist spends most of the book sitting in a car on surveillance. In the series that built on that beginning, Burns merged the structure and realism of the police procedural with the traditional American figure of an isolated hero who acts as a force for moral restitution.

Burns's "novel of manners" depicts the characteristic methods, mores, and folkways of various specialized subcultures, including that of the working police officer. In many police procedural series, the unit or squad serves as a substitute for the secure world of an idealized family, with unchanging characters cast in continuing roles and predictable relationships. Although the Gabe Wager books do contain some recurring characters in addition to the protagonist, they also portray the shifting nature of twentieth century police work: departmental administrators come and go, technologies and legal constraints change, and new social stresses arise. In addition, relationships among partners alter as their personal lives and their attitudes are shaped by experiences on or off the job.

To mirror the texture and actuality of the exterior world, Burns ties many of Wager's cases to other fairly closed subcultures. The world of rodeo in *Ground Money* (1986), of nude dancers in *Strip Search* (1984), of fundamentalist Mormonism in *The Avenging Angel*, of small-time modeling agencies in *Speak for the Dead* (1978) are given verisimilitude through concrete details. Only after the detective acquires insider knowledge and comes to appreciate the subculture's characteristic values and mental habits can he understand the patterns and motives that point to a solution.

THE AVENGING ANGEL

The techniques, characterization, and moral focus of the Gabe Wager novels are evident in *The Avenging Angel*. The novel opens with police routine, as Wager and his partner examine the body of a person found shot dead on a roadside. While the photographers, forensic teams, and uniformed patrol units do their jobs, Wager "let his mind play over the scene again, trying to see it from the angle of the victim. Then from that of the killer." The detective uses his imagination to visualize the scene and grope for the essence of its details, while the novelist economically uses the detective's visualization to create mood and atmosphere:

The rigor told Wager that the man was probably shot right here. Probably the killer or killers walked the victim straight down the embankment and stood just there while he turned to face them. Wind. Almost always a night wind out here on the prairie east of Denver and its bright glow. Maybe a step or two closer for a good shot. . . . Perhaps the victim's arms were already held out—don't shoot me, I don't have anything; perhaps they flew up as the bullet hit his chest like a baseball bat and knocked him flat and numb with shock and dead before he hit the ground. . . . Then he—or they—went through the pockets very quickly, not needing a light because of the sky glow of Denver. . . . Then that note, which was to tell someone why the man was shot, if not who pulled the trigger. Wager guessed that the note had been folded and resting in the killer's pocket, ready for use. Folded precisely into a rectangle whose edges were flush all around. When you're in the dark, and in a hurry, and you've just killed a man, you don't take time to align the edges of a folded slip of paper. That's something you do when you're carefully planning ahead.

The folded slip of paper is a photocopied drawing of an angel holding a sword. When a second such drawing turns up on a corpse in Pueblo and a third on a body in remote Grant County on the western slope, Wager is sent to look for connections. He discovers a rugged, thinly populated region of benchland and desert that retains a small-town openness and a frontier tolerance for individual differences—including the presence of unreconstructed Mormon polygamists. Because of his own nonjudgmental attitude, Wager is able to gain insight into the religious and political schisms among the Mormon groups and link the drawing to the nineteenth century religious vigilantes known as "avenging angels."

The information leads him—back in Denver—to a house full of massacred women and children; he returns to Grant County to join with the sheriff's office and one of the Mormon tribes to trap the murdering fanatics. The plan is endangered, however, by leaks from within; Wager realizes only at the last moment that two of the murders had been committed not for religious reasons but by a deputy sheriff who thereby secured water rights to develop land that he owned. Wager's solo expedition to a distant part of the state and the isolation of the physical setting and the society reinforce the essential isolation of his own character, and the knowledge that some law officers are corrupted by greed demonstrates the necessity for Wager's independence and self-reliance.

A passage in *The Avenging Angel* defines Gabe Wager's attitude toward crime:

A cop accepted the importance of the rules that tried to order the randomness of life and death, and his job was to go after those who did not accept the rules. Usually they were merely the careless ones; on rare occasions they were the ones who were neither careless nor blind to the rules, but who knew them and chose to stay outside them. . . . They reasoned what they did and they struck like feeding sharks at those penned in by the rules; they were the ones who crossed the line between order and chaos, and who brought to their victims not only a fear of death but a terror of the soul.

In this passage, Burns presents his own intellectual analysis of the source of evil in plain language suited

to a working detective. The police officer, furthermore, deals with people and the immediate consequences that harm individual victims; the morality that matters, in that context, is sometimes not contained in legal and social policies. In *The Alvarez Journal*, a criminal is caught but the crime continues; in *Angle of Attack* (1979), Wager drops information that motivates the mob to eliminate a criminal against whom the police are unable to build a case. He measures himself by his own scrupulous concept of duty: "He knew when he did a good job or a poor one; nobody else's blame, nobody else's satisfaction really counted." The inside leaks and the existence of law enforcement officers who use their position for private ends justify Wager's self-sufficiency and the necessity of creating his own standard of ethics.

THE KILLING ZONE

In *The Killing Zone* (1988), the murder victim is a black politician, and the book's sophisticated exploration of urban political and racial relations is as interesting as the solution to the crime. Equally impressive is the sensitive portrayal of the people whose lives are shaped by their role in a particular social context. Most realistic novelists presumably make characters convincing by learning to put themselves inside other people and to see the world through their eyes. Burns creates a detective who uses the same method to understand both criminals and victims.

The Gabe Wager series established Burns as a writer of detective novels with believable characters solidly embedded in a realistic social milieu. *Suicide Season* (1987) introduced the more upscale, glitzy, high-tech side of Denver life with private investigator Devlin Kirk, Stanford graduate, law school dropout, and former Secret Service agent who is a partner with former police detective Homer Bunchcroft in a firm that specializes in company security and executive protection. Although the Kirk series provided Burns with a new focus, he continues to write Gabe Wager novels. He has written that the Gabe Wager novels are single chapters in "a larger work that has its own architecture."

Sally Mitchell

Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

GABE WAGER SERIES: *The Alvarez Journal*, 1975; *The Farnsworth Score*, 1977; *Speak for the Dead*, 1978; *Angle of Attack*, 1979; *The Avenging Angel*, 1983; *Strip Search*, 1984; *Ground Money*, 1986; *The Killing Zone*, 1988; *Endangered Species*, 1993; *Blood Line*, 1995; *The Leaning Land*, 1997

DEVLIN KIRK SERIES: *Suicide Season*, 1987; *Parts Unknown*, 1990; *Body Guard*, 1991

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *When Reason Sleeps*, 1991 (as Sehler)

NONFICTION: *Success in America: The Yeoman Dream and the Industrial Revolution*, 1976

EDITED TEXT: *Crime Classics: The Mystery Story from Poe to the Present*, 1990 (with Mary Rose Sullivan)

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Burns, Rex. "Characterization." *The Writer* 101, no. 5 (May, 1988): 11-14. Burns discusses how he developed his two main characters, Gabe Wager and Devlin Kirk. He notes the importance of a balance between consistency and change when creating a character for a series.

_____. Rex Burns. <http://www.rexburns.com>. Burns's official Web site offers news of upcoming publications, descriptions of published works, and a biography.

Kelleher, Harry. "In the Dry, Dusty Distance, Gabe Wager Rides Again." Review of *The Leaning Land*, by Rex Burns. *Denver Post*, October 19, 1997, p. E05. Reviewer finds the novel, centering on four deaths on the Ute reservation, satisfying as a mystery but says it lacks emotional impact, partly because Gabe Wager is a remote character and the setting is sparsely populated areas of western Colorado.

Library Journal. Review of *The Avenging Angel*, by Rex Burns. 108, no. 3 (February 1, 1983): 223. Reviewer praises the novel's literary quality, depth of character, and its descriptions of the Colorado setting.

_____. Review of *Suicide Season*, by Rex Burns. 110, no. 12 (June 1, 1987): 131. In this Devlin Kirk

novel, he investigates the suicide of the primary suspect in a corporate espionage case. The reviewer found the novel to be an “engrossing mystery.”

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Priestman covers crime fiction from the eighteenth century to the present and includes analyses of thrillers and spy fiction, the Victorian

era, female and African American detectives, and postmodern uses of the detective genre.

Winks, Robin, ed. *Colloquium on Crime: Eleven Renowned Mystery Writers Discuss Their Work*. New York: Scribner, 1986. Contains an essay by Burns that describes his view of the police procedural and mystery writing.

C

JAMES M. CAIN

Born: Annapolis, Maryland; July 1, 1892

Died: Hyattsville, Maryland; October 27, 1977

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

James M. Cain is best remembered as the tough-guy writer (a label he eschewed) who created *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) and *Double Indemnity* (1936). Both books have enjoyed as much popularity as their film versions. Though Cain gained some fame as a Hollywood scriptwriter, he did not write the screen adaptations of either *The Postman Always Rings Twice* or *Double Indemnity*, which attained the status of classic films noirs. Cain had a significant impact on French writers, notably Albert Camus, who nevertheless denied the influence as forthrightly as Cain had done with that of Ernest Hemingway. In the Europe and United States of the 1930's, years in which laconic, unsentimental, hard-boiled fiction found ready readership, Cain contributed mightily to this style of writing. That his work is still popular in the twenty-first century is testament to his gift for spare prose and his insight into the darkness of the human soul.

Cain's narrative style entails a simple story, usually a "love rack" triangle of one woman and two men, presented at a very swift pace. His economy of expression was greater than that of any of the other tough-guy writers. Cain's characters and situations were consistent with no sociological or philosophical theme, although many were illustrative of the inevitability of human unhappiness and the destructiveness of the dream or wish come true. It was this structural and narrative purity, devoid of sentimentality and sustained by the perspective of the antiheroic wrongdoer, that won for Cain an enthusiastic readership in France, including the admiration of Albert Camus, and a secure place in the history of American literature.

BIOGRAPHY

James Mallahan Cain, born in Annapolis, Maryland, on July 1, 1892, was the first of the five children of James William Cain and Rose Mallahan Cain. His father was an academician, a professor at St. John's College in Annapolis, and later, in Chesterton, Maryland, president of Washington College, from which James M. Cain was graduated in 1910 and where he later, from 1914 through 1917, taught English and mathematics and completed work on his master's degree in dramatic arts. His early ambition to become a professional singer had been abandoned before his graduate work and teaching at Washington College, but his love of music never diminished. Throughout his life, Cain retained his ambition to become a successful playwright despite his repeated failures in dramaturgy and his own ultimate realization of the misdirection of this ambition.

Cain's career in writing began with newspaper work, first with the *Baltimore American* in 1918 and then with the *Baltimore Sun*. He edited the *Lorraine Cross*, his infantry-company newspaper, during his service with the Seventy-ninth Infantry Division in France. He returned from World War I to resume work on the *Baltimore Sun*, and in 1920 he married Mary Rebecca Clough, the first of his four wives. Cain's articles on the William Blizzard treason trial in 1922 were published by *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. He then became a feature writer and columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*. His inability to complete a novel set in the mining area of West Virginia, the site of the Blizzard trial, preceded and apparently brought about his departure from the *Baltimore Sun*; he then began teaching English and journalism at St. John's College.

H. L. Mencken furthered Cain's career by publishing his article "The Labor Leader" in *The American*



James M. Cain. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Mercury magazine (which had just been founded) and by putting him in touch with Walter Lippmann, who provided him with an editorial-writing position on the *New York World*. In 1925 his publication of a much-praised dialogue in *The American Mercury* fed Cain's ambition to write plays. His first effort, *Crashing the Gate*, produced in the following year, proved to be a failure. His two attempts, in 1936 and 1953, to adapt *The Postman Always Rings Twice* to the stage also failed—along with *7-11* (1938) and an unproduced play titled “The Guest in Room 701,” completed in 1955.

Cain's marriage to Mary Clough was dissolved in 1927, after which he married Elina Sjöstad Tyszecha, a Finnish woman with two children. The marriage ended in divorce in 1942. Cain was subsequently married to Aileen Pringle and, after his third divorce, Florence Macbeth. He had no children with any of his wives.

Cain published his first book, *Our Government*, a series of satirical dramatic dialogues, in 1930. He achieved national recognition with his first short story, “Pastorale,” published two years earlier, and his first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, published four years later. When the *New York World* changed ownership in 1931, Cain became managing editor of *The New Yorker* magazine but left that position in favor of Hollywood, where he worked irregularly from 1931 to 1947 as a scriptwriter for various studios. He continued to write novels and short stories and to see much of his fiction adapted to the screen by other scriptwriters. His attempt during this period to establish the American Authors' Authority, a guild protective of authors' rights, failed under considerable opposition.

Cain moved to Hyattsville, Maryland, in 1948. It was there that he and his fourth wife spent the remainder of their lives. After his wife died, Cain, having made the move with the intent to create high literature, continued to write, but with barely nominal success, until his death, at the age of eighty-five, on October 27, 1977.

ANALYSIS

Despite midcareer pretensions to high literature, James M. Cain wrote, admittedly, for two reasons: for money and because he was a writer. He had no lasting illusions about great literary art and had only contempt for critics who sought intellectual constructs in works of literature and who, for their own convenience, lumped writers into schools. Cain opposed and resisted the notion of the tough-guy school, and yet he developed a first-person style of narration that, in its cynical and incisive presentation of facts, merits the appellation “tough” or “hard-boiled.” Critic David Madden calls him “the twenty-minute egg of the hard-boiled writers.”

This style proved profitable, and Cain, in his own hard-boiled way, believed that “good work is usually profitable and bad work is not.” In the case of his fiction, this proved to be true. His work was profitable and remained in print during and after his lifetime. Good or bad, fiction is what Cain wanted most to write; he is quoted in an interview as saying, “You hire

out to do other kinds of writing that leaves you more and more frustrated, until one day you burst out, say to hell with it all and go sit down somewhere and write the thing you truly want to write.”

Yet it seems that it was not the mystery story in which Cain was most interested, despite his recognition in this genre by the Mystery Writers of America (which gave him its Grand Masters Award in 1970), but something like the novelistic equivalent of Greek tragedy. His frustration at his failure in dramaturgy was profound; it makes sense that his novels, like classical Greek tragic drama, demonstrate the essential unhappiness of life, the devastation borne by the hubris manifest in the lust and greed that lead to murder, and the human desires that predispose people to incest, homosexuality, or pedophilia. Cain's fictional personae are always minimal, as they are in Greek tragedy, and his descriptions of his characters are as spare in detail as a delineative tragic mask.

“PASTORALE”

“Pastorale,” Cain's first published short story, contains the standard constituents of almost all of his fiction: a selfishly determined goal, excessive and ill-considered actions in pursuit of that goal, and the inability of the pursuer to abide the self into which the successful actions have transformed the pursuer. A yokel narrator relates that Burbie and Lida, who want to be together, plot to kill Lida's husband, a man much older than she. Burbie enlists Hutch, a vicious opportunist, with the false bait of a money cache. Burbie, lusting after Lida, and Hutch, greedy for money, kill the old man.

Hutch, who learns that the money cache was a mere twenty-three dollars but not that it had been scraped together by Burbie and Lida, decapitates the corpse, intending to make a gift of the head to Lida. The intent is frustrated when Hutch drowns, and after Hutch's body and the husband's remains are discovered, it is assumed that Hutch was the sole killer. Burbie, although free to possess Lida, confesses everything and awaits hanging as the story ends. The story is abetted by Cain's standard elements of sex and violence.

THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

In 1934, Cain published his first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, which proved to be his mas-

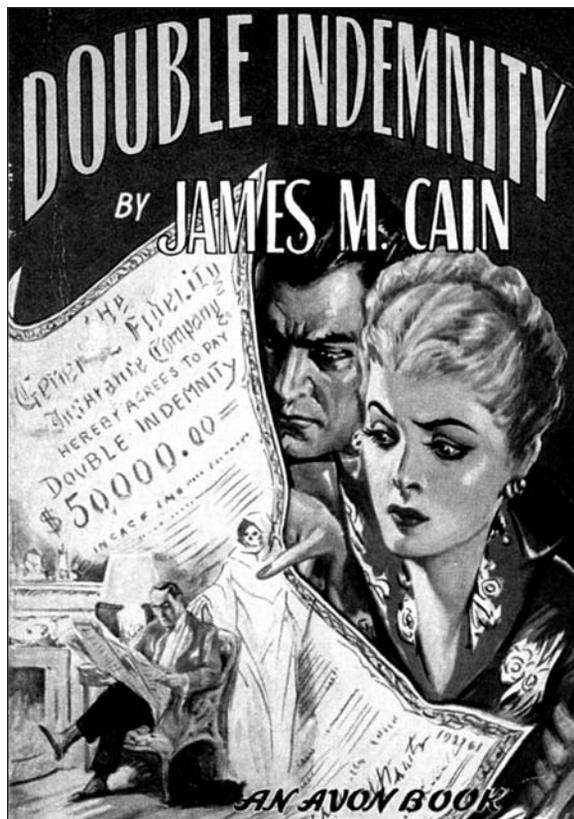
terpiece. In the story, a man and a woman, consumed by lust for each other and by monetary greed, successfully conspire to kill the woman's husband, again a man older than she but with a going business that will ensure the solvency of the conspirators. The incapacity of the principals to accommodate themselves to the fulfillment of their dream leads to the death of the woman and, as the novel closes, the imminent execution of the man.

The opening line of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (“They threw me off the hay truck about noon”) came to be acclaimed as a striking example of the concise, attention-getting narrative hook. Cain's use of “they” is existentialist in its positing of the Other against the Individual. Jean-Paul Sartre's story “Le Mur” (“The Wall”) begins in the same way: “They threw us into a big, white room. . . .” The last chapter of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, like its first paragraph, makes much use of the pronoun “they,” culminating with “Here they come,” in reference to those who will take the narrator to his execution. This classical balance of beginning and ending in the same context is characteristic of Cain's work.

DOUBLE INDEMNITY

Double Indemnity, Cain's masterly companion to *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, appeared first in serial installments during 1936 and was published again, in 1943, along with “Career in C Major” and “The Embezzler.” *Double Indemnity* presents a typical Cain plot: A man and a woman conspire to murder the woman's husband so that they can satisfy their lust for each other and profit from the husband's insurance. Their success is a prelude to their suicide pact.

Cain's literary reputation rests chiefly on these two works. Ross Macdonald called them “a pair of native American masterpieces, back to back.” Cain looked on both works as romantic love stories rather than murder mysteries; nevertheless, they belong more to the category of the thriller than to any other. In their brevity, their classical balance, and their exposition of the essential unhappiness of human existence, they evince tragedy. Cain did not see himself as a tragedian; he insisted that he “had never theorized much about tragedy, Greek or otherwise” and yet at the same time admitted that tragedy as a “force of circumstances



driving the protagonist to the *commission of a dreadful act*" (his father's definition) applied to most of his writings, "even my lighter things."

SERENADE

The two novels that followed the back-to-back masterpieces were longer works, marked by the readability, but not the golden conciseness, of their predecessors. *Serenade* (1937) is the story of a singer whose homosexuality has resulted in the loss of his singing voice, which is restored through his consummated love for a Mexican prostitute. The triangle in this novel is once more a woman and two men, the difference being that the woman kills the man's homosexual lover. The man joins his beloved in her flight from the law until she is discovered and killed. The discovery owes to the man's betrayal of their identities by failing to suppress his distinctive singing voice at a critical time. Cain's knowledge of music underscores *Serenade*, just as it gives form to "Career in C Major" and *Mildred Pierce* (1941).

MILDRED PIERCE

Mildred Pierce is the story of a coloratura soprano's amorality as much as it is the story of the titular character and her sublimated incestuous desire for the soprano who is her daughter. There is sex and violence in the novel but no murder, no mystery, and no suspense. The novel opens and closes with Mildred Pierce married to a steady yet unsuccessful man who needs to be mothered. Mildred does not mother him, and the two are divorced, the man finding his mother figure in a heavy-breasted woman and Mildred disguising her desire for her daughter as maternal solicitude. Mildred achieves wealth and success as a restaurateur, and her daughter wins renown as a singer. Mildred's world collapses as her daughter, incapable of affection and wickedly selfish, betrays and abandons her. Mildred, reconciled with her husband, whose mother figure has returned to her husband, finally finds solace in mothering him.

LOVE'S LOVELY COUNTERFEIT

Mildred Pierce is written in the third person, a style of narration that is not typical of Cain, who employed it in only a few of his many novels. It was followed by another third-person novel, *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* (1942), a gangster-thriller and a patent tough-guy novel, peopled with hoods (with names such as Lefty, Bugs, and Goose), corrupt police, and crime lords. The novel displays Cain's storytelling at its best and is perhaps his most underrated work.

PAST ALL DISHONOR AND MIGNON

Always conscientious about research for his novels, Cain, in his bid to become a serious writer, tended in novels such as *Past All Dishonor* (1946) and *Mignon* (1962) to subordinate his swift mode of narration to masses of researched details. Both of these novels are set in the 1860's, both are embellished with a wealth of technical details that are historically accurate, and both have a hard-boiled narrator who, with a basic nobility that gets warped by lust and greed, is hardly distinguishable from his twentieth century counterparts in Cain's other fiction. Like *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Past All Dishonor* ends with the narrator's saying "Here they come" as the nemeses for his crimes close in on him. Like *Mignon*, in which the narrator's loss of his beloved will be lamented with

“there was my love, my life, my beautiful little Mignon, shooting by in the muddy water,” *Past All Dishonor* has the narrator bemoan his loss with “my wife, my love, my life, was sinking in the snow.”

There is a discernible sameness to Cain’s fiction. He tends to make his leading male characters handsome blue-eyed blonds, he makes grammatically correct but excessive use of the word “presently,” his first-person narrators all sound alike, and his inclination is manifestly toward the unhappy ending (although several of his novels end happily). One upbeat novel is *The Moth* (1948), in which the leading male character loves a twelve-year-old girl. Again, almost all Cain’s fiction, with the prominent exception of *Mildred Pierce*, is a variation on his first two works of fiction.

SINFUL WOMAN AND JEALOUS WOMAN

The two novels by Cain that indisputably can be called murder mysteries are *Sinful Woman* (1947) and *Jealous Woman* (1950). Both novels focus on the solving of a murder, both have happy endings, and both are rated among Cain’s worst performances. Cain himself wrote them off as bad jobs. *Sinful Woman*, like *Mildred Pierce*, *Love’s Lovely Counterfeit*, and another, *The Magician’s Wife* (1965), is written in third-person narration, which Cain comes close to mastering only in *Love’s Lovely Counterfeit*.

THE BUTTERFLY

The Butterfly (1947), a story of a man with an incestuous bent for a young woman whom he mistakenly assumes to be his daughter, is perhaps the last of Cain’s best work; it includes the now-famous preface in which he disavows any literary debt to Hemingway while affirming his admiration of Hemingway’s work. Most of Cain’s post-1947 novels were critical and commercial disappointments. In addition to those already mentioned, these include *The Root of His Evil* (1951, first written in 1938), *Galatea* (1953), *The Rainbow’s End* (1975), and *The Institute* (1976)—none of which is prime Cain, although *Galatea* and *The Rainbow’s End* flash with his narrative brilliance.

CLOUD NINE

Cloud Nine, written by Cain when he was seventy-five, was edited by his biographer, Roy Hoopes, and published posthumously in 1984. It contains the usual sex and violence, including rape and murder. Its narra-

tor, however, is, not antiheroic but a highly principled thirty-year-old man only mildly touched by greed who marries a sexy and very intelligent sixteen-year-old girl. His half brother is an evil degenerate whose villainy is unrelieved by any modicum of goodness. The narrator’s dream comes true, and the story has a happy ending. The septuagenarian Cain was more than temporally remote from the hard-boiled Cain of the 1930’s, who would have made the villain the narrator and given the story a tragic cast.

Roy Arthur Swanson

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and

Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1934; *Serenade*, 1937; *Mildred Pierce*, 1941; *Love’s Lovely Counterfeit*, 1942; *Past All Dishonor*, 1946; *The Butterfly*, 1947; *Sinful Woman*, 1947; *The Moth*, 1948; *Jealous Woman*, 1950; *The Root of His Evil*, 1951 (also known as *Shameless*, 1979); *Galatea*, 1953; *Mignon*, 1963; *The Magician’s Wife*, 1965; *Rainbow’s End*, 1975; *The Institute*, 1976; *Cloud Nine*, 1984

SHORT FICTION: *Double Indemnity*, 1936; *The Embezzler*, 1940; *Career in C Major and Other Stories*, 1943; *Three of a Kind: Career in C Major, The Embezzler, Double Indemnity*, 1943; *The Baby in the Icebox, and Other Short Fiction*, 1981 (posthumous, Roy Hoopes, editor); *Career in C Major, and Other Fiction*, 1986 (Roy Hoopes, editor)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Enchanted Isle*, 1985

PLAYS: *Crashing the Gates*, pr. 1926; *Theological Interlude*, pb. 1928 (dialogue); *Trial by Jury*, pb. 1928 (dialogue); *Citizenship*, pb. 1929 (dialogue); *Will of the People*, pb. 1929 (dialogue); *The Governor*, pb. 1930; *Don’t Monkey with Uncle Sam*, pb. 1933 (dialogue); *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, pr. 1936 (adaptation of his novel); *7-11*, pr. 1938

SCREENPLAYS: *Algiers*, 1938; *Stand up and Fight*, 1938; *Gypsy Wildcat*, 1944

NONFICTION: *Our Government*, 1930; *Sixty Years of Journalism*, 1986 (Hoopes, editor)

MISCELLANEOUS: *The James M. Cain Cookbook:*

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STEPHEN J. CANNELL

Born: Los Angeles, California; February 5, 1941

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Shane Scully, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SHANE SCULLY, a tough-talking Los Angeles Police Department sergeant, investigates such criminal activities as police corruption, murder, and bribery. His investigations take him into the worlds of rap music, drug smuggling, money laundering, and political intrigue on the national and local levels. In his relentless pursuit of truth and justice, he faces off with members of organized crime and corrupt police and politicians. As the series develops, so does his relationship with Alexa, a police officer whom he eventually marries. Scully's tough ways are softened by his having a loving relationship with Alexa and a son, Chooch, whose mother was a prostitute and who, like Alexa, plays a part in some of Scully's investigations, turning crime fighting into a family enterprise.

CONTRIBUTION

Writing first for television, Stephen J. Cannell created a new kind of detective, one who is flawed, flouts authority, and is comfortable being nonviolent and slightly odd. This kind of protagonist is more human than heroic but manages to defeat evildoers nevertheless. Though somewhat of a loner, the detective has loyal friends who often provide aid and comic relief. The unusual and unexpected attracted Cannell from the beginning of his writing career. His main characters do not hesitate to break the law or use violence in the name of justice. After writing more than fifteen hundred television dramas, Cannell turned to writing novels with the same energy, commitment, and imagination that made his television scripts successful. The broader canvas of the novel enabled him to develop more complicated plots, to create more complex interaction among a larger group of characters, and to ex-

pand the main character's background and relationships.

The premise of many of Cannell's plots is violent conflict perpetrated by a menagerie of evil characters in gritty locations, earning him the nickname the "Merchant of Mayhem" and the reputation of a writer who features "bullets and babes." Some critics, perhaps doubting that a writer as prolific and successful as Cannell could be very good, have called his characters cartoonlike and shallow and his plots too action-oriented and too violent. However, the popularity of his television shows and novels and the longevity of his success are proof that he knows what makes writing good entertainment and how to provide it.

BIOGRAPHY

Stephen Joseph Cannell was born in Los Angeles on February 5, 1941, and grew up in nearby Pasadena, where he eventually settled with his wife, Marcia. Cannell's father, Joseph, was very successful in the interior decorating business and instilled in his son a strong work ethic and a good business sense. Stephen's mother, Carolyn Baker Cannell, was active in business as well, serving on the boards of several corporations.

Cannell's learning disability, dyslexia, caused him to repeat the first and fourth grades in school, and he eventually had to attend a remedial school. He excelled in sports, however, and was popular, always part of the in crowd. He attended the University of Oregon, where a creative writing professor encouraged him to write. After graduation in 1964, he returned to Los Angeles and married Marcia C. Finch, with whom he fathered two sons and two daughters; one of his sons died at the age of fifteen. Cannell began working for his father and writing after work each day and on the weekends. After five years, he finally sold a television script, an episode of *It Takes a Thief* (1968-1970), and followed that success with scripts for *Mission: Impossible* (1988-1990) and *Ironside* (1967-1975). He was hired as story editor and head writer on *Adam-12* (1968-1975), then worked as executive producer for

Roy Huggins, who became his mentor. Cannell quickly expanded his activities while continuing to write scripts. He both produced and coproduced many shows, creating and cocreating more than forty series. He also directed in television and did some acting.

After eight successful years as a prolific scriptwriter and producer and inspired by the business principles of his father, Cannell formed his own studio in 1979, starting with four employees and eventually reaching two thousand. Within twelve years, his was the third largest studio in Hollywood television, averaging at least five shows on television every year. As his company grew, Cannell diversified his efforts, producing films, commercials, and other television fare. He formed the

Cannell Studios in 1986 and moved his company to Canada to reduce production costs.

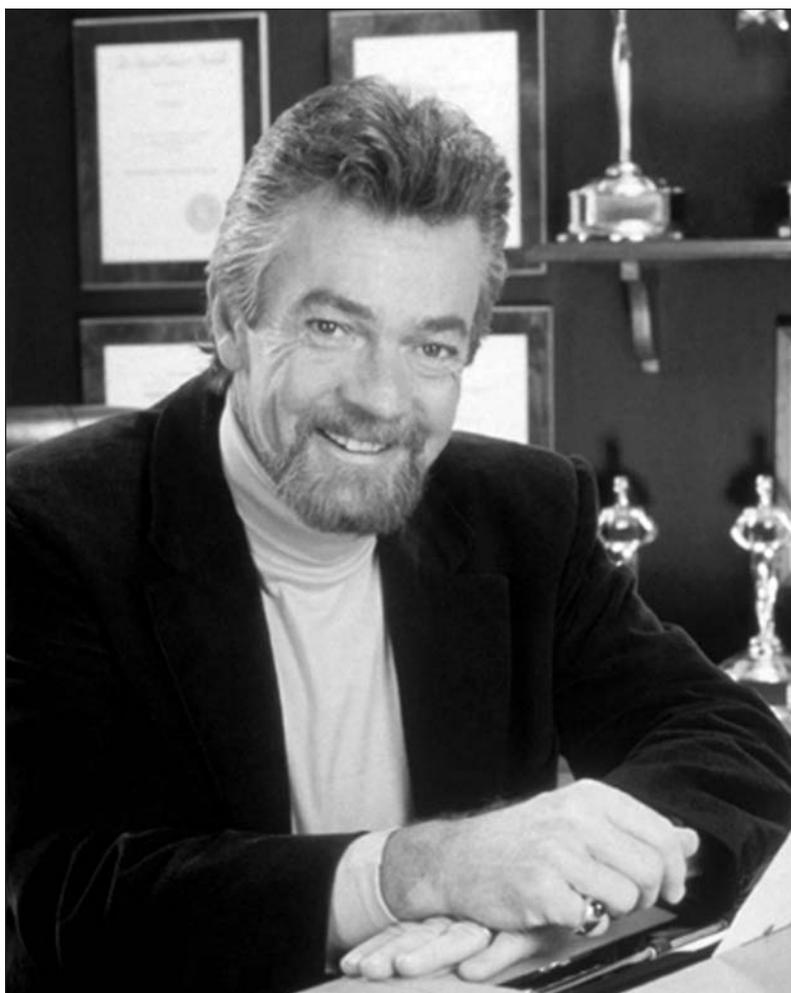
Along the way, Cannell won many awards, including the Mystery Writers Award in 1975; an Emmy Award in 1978 for outstanding drama series, for *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980); a Saturn Award for lifetime career achievement in 2005; and in 2006, both the Brandon Tartikoff Legacy Award and the Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award for television writing achievement.

In 1995, having had his fill of television, Cannell sold his production company and turned to writing novels. His first novel, *The Plan*, was published in 1995, and he published many additional series and nonseries novels, many of them best sellers. His life-

long struggle with dyslexia, which was not diagnosed until he was thirty-five years old, fueled his struggle to succeed and led to his serving as the national chairperson for the Orton Dyslexia Society and promoting awareness and understanding of the affliction in public speeches.

ANALYSIS

Stephen J. Cannell, an exceptionally fast writer with a fertile imagination, demonstrated an uncanny ear for the rhythms and vocabulary of streetwise characters and a talent for humor and for plot-driven drama. He once said that he developed his fictional heroes from the point of view of their attitudes, which he believed, along with their flaws, made them believable and interesting. His fiction reflects these gifts in ample supply: It is fast-paced, full of conflict, often violent, and peopled by oddball characters. He once said that he was more interested in a character's flaws than in his virtues; to Cannell, the flaws become vir-



Stephen J. Cannell. (Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

tues, making the character easily identifiable, interesting, and often likable.

In his novels, Cannell brought with him the same taste for action, complex plotting, finely etched quirky characters, and edgy, well-tuned dialogue that marked his television scripts. His first full-length novel, *The Plan*, builds on Cannell's formulaic plot and character development. The action covers territory from Los Angeles to New York to the Caribbean; the main character, Ryan Bolt, is an unlikely hero. He is a television producer who faces a mighty crime organization in a high-stakes attempt to put its man in the White House; along the way, Bolt falls in love with a woman who happens to be the bad guy's sister. The novel became a best seller and encouraged Cannell to continue in this genre, producing novels in quick succession, with many of them achieving best-seller status. All of them display the Cannell gift for fast action, surprising turns in the action, engaging characters, and snappy dialogue, a combination that rivets the thrill-seeking reader with its suspenseful outcomes.

An essential element in Cannell's fiction is its focus on contemporary issues and subjects that have made the news or have captured the attention of readers of the news and audiences of films and television. *Final Victim* (1997) deals with computer hacking, criminal profiling, and a maniacal serial killer who carves up his victims with a scalpel. One of Cannell's gifts is to repeat himself without becoming predictable or stale, and he does so by making his people believable and interesting and by continuing to surprise the reader even when it all seems familiar.

The hero of *Final Victim*, John Lockwood, has, like Jim Rockford, a problem with guns: Lockwood has never hit anyone at whom he has shot. Lockwood is another unlikely hero, a customs agent who is at odds with his superiors, resents authority, and generally does what he wants in order to catch the criminal. Some of the novel's entertainment comes from Cannell's playful names, Haze Richards, for example, as the presidential candidate; Beano X. Bates as a con man; a prosecutor nicknamed Tricky Vicky; women named Lucinda, Malavida, and Miss Laura Luna; and a long list of other names that seem oddly appropriate yet humorously inappropriate.

Some critics have bemoaned the amount of violence in Cannell's writing and the focus on misfits and on the seamier aspects of human behavior. Cannell was accused of taking part in the perceived trend of "dumbing down" television, but he did not let such criticism change the way he wrote or what he wrote. He has said that he writes for the fun of it, not for the money or for the awards, though his shows have made him very rich and earned many awards. He wants to entertain, and he sees entertainment as a blend of humor, unusual situations, and characters with interesting flaws and odd habits. He believes that fiction must move along—hence his emphasis on action; he believes that characters should be interesting and realistic—hence the flawed antiheroes and host of quirky minor characters.

THE TIN COLLECTORS

This first novel in the Shane Scully series, *The Tin Collectors* (2001), contains an element that appears in most of Cannell's fiction: a wrongly accused protagonist who strives to clear himself of criminal charges. His (sometimes her) journey to redemption is dangerous, violent, and bloody. He champions the underdog, despises pretense and sham, doubts authority, saves good people whenever he can, and mourns their death when he cannot. He values the qualities that make the world a better place, including truth, honesty, justice, and love. At the end of the action, evil is exposed, and he is shown to be not only innocent but also capable of deep feelings and love.

The first three novels in the Shane Scully series are narrated in the third person, then Cannell shifts to first-person narrative in the next three, bringing the main character closer to the reader, who sees the action through Scully's eyes and follows the main character's thinking more closely.

In the first novel of the series, Shane Scully, a Los Angeles police sergeant, shoots a fellow police officer and is accused of murder. In his quest to prove his innocence, he is befriended by Alexa Hamilton, a sergeant in Internal Affairs. She and Scully follow a trail of corruption from Los Angeles to Miami, where they survive a shootout at the Biscayne Bay estate of singer Elton John. Back at Lake Arrowhead, they rescue two kidnap victims—one of them turns out to be

Scully's son—and survive a shootout in which they both are wounded while killing half a dozen bad guys. A motorboat chase ends with Scully on fire and an attack from a helicopter, which Alexa shoots out of the air. Ultimately they uncover a conspiracy that involves the Long Beach City Council, the mayor of Los Angeles, the chief of police, a powerful land developer, and dozens of police officers. Scully takes his son to live with him, and Alexa and he declare a mutual attraction that promises a long future together.

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

In *The Devil's Workshop* (1999), Cannell chose a female protagonist, Stacy Richardson, to fight a conspiracy of scientists who plan to use genetic engineering to rid the world of certain ethnic groups. Like her male counterparts in Cannell's other novels, she is ordinary—she is a doctoral candidate married to the chairman of the department of microbiology at the University of Southern California. Events, including the death of her husband, turn her into a supersleuth and indomitable action hero bent on finding her husband's killers. Before the evil plot of the scientists is exposed and another threat to the world is thwarted, white supremacists become involved, along with a pair of wild hobos, a Hollywood producer, and a hero of Desert Storm; into the mix Cannell adds a train chase across the country and through hobo jungles that ends up in Washington, D.C. He creates a kaleidoscope of characters, events, names, and places that has become characteristic of his fiction as a whole. The technique is predictable but what emerges from it is consistently suspenseful, surprising, and pleasing to his readers.

HOLLYWOOD TOUGH

In 2001, Cannell returned to the Los Angeles police force for his main character, Shane Scully, perhaps wanting to stay close to his hometown. In the third novel in the Shane Scully series, *Hollywood Tough* (2003), Scully takes the reader into the seamy, crime-ridden streets of Los Angeles, and the plot mingles Mafia types, homegrown "gangstas," a likable confidence man, Hollywood stars, and a variety of other very dissimilar types. In addition to displaying an intimate knowledge of the film industry and its denizens, Cannell gives full display to his well-honed skill in capturing the nuances of different accents and

voices. Readers have found that Cannell's version of Brooklynese rings true, and he successfully captures the speech of Hispanics, African Americans, the film-industry people, and women.

RUNAWAY HEART

Six months after *Hollywood Tough*, Cannell published his ninth novel, *Runaway Heart* (2003), whose protagonist is a former partner of Shane Scully. Jack Wirta was shot in the spine while on duty as a Los Angeles police officer and is now a private investigator addicted to painkillers. Crusading attorney Herman Strockmire calls on Wirta to help him find the killer of his assistant, who had hacked into the files of a firm doing genetic research for the United States government. In the hunt, Strockmire, his beautiful daughter Susan, and Wirta discover a sinister government plot to replace human soldiers with genetically engineered animals. A mutual attraction between Susan and Wirta develops while the pair, along with Strockmire, battle the forces of evil in an effort to save the world. In Cannell's fictional laboratory, love thrives and evil is destroyed.

Cannell's greatest skill is his ability to create plots full of surprising twists, exciting action, and realistic dialogue. He is superb at creating characters, the odd ones more prevalent than the ordinary ones; and he is a master at building suspense as the plot unfolds in a seemingly endless stream. His plots have a familiar shape: At the outset, the protagonist's fortunes are at a low ebb, but they rise steadily, thanks to his toughness, his intelligence, and his moral goodness, along with a little help from his friends, and a loving companion. For Cannell, ridding the world of evildoers is a holy quest of purification, not only of the world but also of his heroes. He never loses sight of the action, however, and the perils that his hero faces. The Cannell equation is simple and foolproof: Greater dangers bring greater excitement, and if the evil is great, so much greater will be the victory when it is achieved.

Bernard E. Morris

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHANE SCULLY SERIES: *The Tin Collectors*, 2001; *The Viking Funeral*, 2002; *Hollywood Tough*, 2003; *Vertical Coffin*, 2004; *Cold Hit*, 2005; *White Sister*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Plan*, 1996; *Final Victim*, 1997; *King Con*, 1997; *Riding the Snake*, 1998; *The Devil's Workshop*, 1999; *Runaway Heart*, 2003; *No Chance* (with Janet Evanovich), 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *The Gypsy Warriors*, 1978; *Dead Above Ground*, 2002

TELEPLAYS: *Columbo: Double Exposure*, 1973; *Scott Free*, 1976; *Richie Brockelman: The Missing Twenty-Four Hours*, 1976; *The November Plan*, 1976; *The Jordan Chance*, 1978; *Dr. Scorpion*, 1978; *The Gypsy Warriors*, 1978; *The Chinese Typewriter*, 1979; *Stone*, 1979; *The Night Rider*, 1979; *Nightside*, 1980; *Brothers-in-Law*, 1985; *Thunderboat*, 1989; *The Great Pretender*, 1991; *Greyhounds*, 1994; *The Rockford Files: A Blessing in Disguise*, 1995; *The Rockford Files: Godfather Knows Best*, 1996; *The Rockford Files: Friends and Foul Play*, 1996; *Hunter: Return to Justice*, 2002; *Hunter: Back in Force*, 2003; *It Waits*, 2005; *The Tooth Fairy*, 2006

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- Edelstein, Robert. "Stephen J. Cannell." *Broadcasting and Cable* 137, no. 3 (January 15, 2003): A8. A profile of Cannell that concentrates on his career in television although it discusses his move to writ-

ing. Praises his ability to create memorable and unusual characters and to write rapidly and well.

Keller, Julia. "A Novel Idea: Former Television Giant Stephen Cannell Chooses Writing Books over Hollywood." *Knight Ridder Tribune News Services*, September 28, 2005, p. 1. This profile of Cannell done on his release of *Cold Hit* (2005) examines his decision to turn to novel writing not for the money but for his love of writing. He speaks of his dyslexia and a college professor who motivated him.

Marc, David, and Robert J. Thompson. *Prime Time, Prime Movers: From "I Love Lucy" to "L.A. Law"—America's Greatest TV Shows and the People Who Created Them*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995. Discusses television comedy shows and dramas and the people who made them; includes a chapter on Roy Huggins, who was Cannell's mentor, and Cannell himself. Although it focuses on Cannell as a television writer, it sheds light on his work as a novelist.

Pickett, Debra. "Sunday Lunch with . . . Stephen J. Cannell." *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 17, 2006, p. A20. Profile and interview with Cannell looks at his success and his values, which he says were influenced by his being born into wealth, the death of his fifteen-year-old son, his dyslexia, and his father's death.

Thompson, Robert J. *Adventures on Prime Time: The Television Programs of Stephen J. Cannell*. New York: Praeger, 1990. Sees Cannell as the epitome of the television "auteur" and surveys his television career and his works up to the success of *Wiseguy* (1987-1990). Helps readers understand Cannell's background.

HARRY CARMICHAEL**Leopold Horace Ognall****Born:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada; June 20, 1908**Died:** Leeds, England; April 12, 1979**Also wrote as** Hartley Howard**Types of plot:** Amateur sleuth; thriller; espionage**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Glenn Bowman, 1951-1979

Piper and Quinn, 1952-1978

Philip Scott, 1964-1967

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GLENN BOWMAN is the English equivalent of the American hard-boiled detective. The Bowman thrillers involve violence, sex, and intricate plotting.

JOHN PIPER is an insurance assessor, QUINN a crime reporter; their professions personally involve them in the crimes they investigate. Piper is the major or sole investigator in more of the novels, though Quinn dominates some of the books, especially those published in the 1970's. Generally, the two work together, the cynical humorist Quinn contrasting with the outwardly stable and competent Piper.

PHILIP SCOTT is a fringe member of a British espionage group. The two Scott books involve the same sort of intricate plotting, sex, and violence found in the Bowman series.

CONTRIBUTION

Harry Carmichael's thirty-odd novels featuring John Piper and his friend Quinn have been consistently underrated, although several authorities have pointed to the excellence of the series. Most impressive is the atmosphere of the books, seedy and grim though not depressing or despairing. Piper mourns his late wife, Ann, but he remarries in the course of the series; his essential aloneness and that of his generally hungover friend Quinn, who never marries, function as the psychological reality in which sordid criminal greed occurs. The plots are all puzzle mysteries, although the crimes are not of the impossible variety and the clues are all given fairly. In these and other re-

spects, the series maintains its quality from beginning to end.

BIOGRAPHY

Harry Carmichael was born Leopold Horace Ognall in Montreal, Canada, on June 20, 1908. Educated in Scotland, he worked in his father's business and then for various newspapers as reporter and editor, an important source of authoritativeness for his mysteries featuring the reporter Quinn. He also spent four years as an efficiency expert—the British say “engineer”—for the government; most of his life, however, was spent as a full-time freelance writer. Carmichael loved writing and said that he could not imagine a better way to live. Married in 1932, he had three children, two sons and one daughter, by his wife, Cecelia. One of his books, *Department K* (1964), was made into a film, *Assignment K* (1968), featuring Michael Redgrave. Carmichael continued to write up to his death on April 12, 1979, in Leeds.

ANALYSIS

The more than three dozen novels by Harry Carmichael featuring the insurance assessor John Piper and the reporter Quinn (his first name is not used) are most significant for plots that generally keep the basic events hidden from the reader, who is misled (along with the police) by the wiles of the criminals.

MURDER BY PROXY

The characteristic elements of a Carmichael plot appear in one of the best of the series, *Murder by Proxy* (1967), in which Piper meets his second wife, Jane Heywood, and falls in love at first sight. In this novel, Richard Armstrong, sentenced to jail for over a year for fraud involving the theft of more than twenty-five thousand pounds, escapes from the police surveillance initiated after he has served his sentence. The novel deals extensively with Armstrong until near the end, when he dies in a fire, but the main criminal is his partner, who has coerced Armstrong's wife into framing Armstrong. This plot has the wife and partner arranging an insur-

ance fraud with Armstrong as the goat. The reader is brilliantly misdirected; even the money Armstrong is convicted of taking has never been taken.

Aspects of this plot are typical of the series. Armstrong is the victim and is eventually murdered, but he deludes himself (and the reader) that he is cheating, indeed ruining his partner. This complicity of the victim, who is at least as criminal or morally corrupt as the murderer, is Carmichael's favorite pattern. It occurs in *False Evidence* (1976), with the self-righteous and vicious reaction of Dr. Ainsworth to his wife's seducer, as well as in *Stranglehold* (1959), in which the victim has been plotting to kill the murderer. Again and again, the reader is misled. In *Death Counts Three* (1954), a mystery solved by Piper without Quinn, Walter Parr, who presumably runs off with his employer's money, has been murdered and buried by his employer. Such ironic reversals keep the mysteries sufficiently involved so that the murderer's identity is well hidden—even in the novels of the 1970's, books in which Carmichael limits the field of suspects.

This reversal of the "truth" of the action is central to the mystery and detective genre, as the title of a work of criticism on mystery stories indicates: *What Will Have Happened: A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories* (1977), by Robert Champigny, analyzes what many critics have noted about such stories. Once the mystery is solved, past actions must be reinterpreted, sometimes necessitating long explanations by the detective, as in the Dr. Thorndyke series by R. Austin Freeman, where the concluding explanations are long and technical. The Carmichael stories, however, emphasize the "false" plot to an extraordinary degree, while arranging the endings in a way that makes long explanations unnecessary. The earlier stories often include a final meeting between criminal and detective in which the truth is revealed. Thus in the Piper story *Justice Enough* (1956), the truth comes out in the concluding visit by Piper to the hospital room of Mrs. Eastwood, who with her lover had planned the murder of her husband. As she had been almost killed herself in the disposal of the body, she appears to be a victim, not the instigator of the crime. The chapter gives a detailed explanation, although the dramatic nature of the scene makes it effective enough.

NAKED TO THE GRAVE

More typical of Carmichael's endings, especially in the later stories, is the lack of virtually any explanation, the story being laid out so clearly that the reader can apprehend the real situation. For example, *Naked to the Grave* (1972) has an entirely simple crime: A gardener, hearing of a woman's gambling winnings, kills her for them and later kills a gossip who knows too much. This simple tale is covered by a complex story of marital infidelity and greed that has nothing to do with the crime. The final confrontation between Piper and Quinn—this case is more Piper's—and the murderer is brief and sordidly pathetic. No explanation beyond a few simple facts is needed.

This superiority in constructing the mystery plot is combined with strong psychological portraits of Quinn and Piper, the police, and the suspects. In his famous preface to *The Second Shot* (1930), Anthony Berkeley predicted that psychological clues would become more important than clues of motive and opportunity. Although the Carmichael stories do deal with motive and opportunity, they all emphasize character psychology. All the major actors are analyzed in detail, not the least being Piper and Quinn themselves as a contrasting pair, though not in the Holmes-Watson mold. Each does appear alone, Quinn in a couple of stories, Piper in five. A good example of Quinn working by himself is *Requiem for Charles* (1960), a barroom mystery with a bartender as murderer and with the amusing Detective-Superintendent Mullett, who has a penchant for quoting William Shakespeare and William Congreve. The works in which Piper is featured tend to have strong thriller elements, as in the intricately plotted *Justice Enough*, which has Piper traveling around England and Spain, frequently encountering physical danger. In fact, recurrent physical involvement or danger is standard in the series, emphasized most strongly in the novels of the 1950's and 1960's. In *Stranglehold*, Quinn is in an automobile accident and is suspected of slaying his driver. The same book has Piper almost murdered in a car attack. In *Vendetta* (1963), mainly Piper's case, Piper saves Quinn from a fiery death. In *Put Out That Star* (1957), one of the few stories to show Quinn on the verge of marriage, Quinn and Piper save each other's lives.

Despite the physicality of some of the cases, however, the novels depend on thought and character. Piper is the dignified member of the pair. His first wife, Ann, died in an automobile accident while Piper was driving. His sad, guilty memory of her, the experience of his life without her, are brought up throughout the series, even after his second marriage. This successful, competent, action-oriented man of the world, handsome, well built, beautifully dressed, is always alone, plagued by his thoughts and feelings. Quinn, with his mocking, alcoholic, smoke-fogged view of the world, with his slight build and careless dress, suffers too. Yet Quinn has his strengths, and his writings on crime command the respect even of the police.

Although they differ so much, Quinn and Piper work in basically the same way. They interview suspects and then think again and again about what they have been told. This reporting of the sleuths' thoughts is characteristic of the stories. Seemingly innocent conversations are remembered, repeated, analyzed, until they are reinterpreted. In *Death Counts Three*, a scream at the beginning is repeated through the book in Piper's thoughts until it is tied in with a dying scream from the murderer, with whom Piper has fallen in love. In *Put Out That Star*, a few drops of blood on a suitcase are mulled over frequently, and in *Naked to the Grave*, Piper keeps rehearsing the sounds of a husband opening a door, about to find his murdered wife. These repeated analyses of one event or clue, almost cinematographic, recall Agatha Christie's repeated use of a scene in some of her later books. As with Christie, understanding the scene leads to the solving of the puzzle, though the scene in *Naked to the Grave* does not: It functions, instead, as a red herring.

OF UNSOUND MIND AND TOO LATE FOR TEARS

The motives in the series are generally simple: sex and money. Rarely are more exotic motives found, though *Of Unsound Mind* (1962) has Piper and Quinn analyzing a series of seven apparently unconnected deaths, all labeled suicides by the coroner. This novel begins with Quinn, like Mr. Pinkerton in David Frome's *Mr. Pinkerton Goes to Scotland Yard* (1934), betting that Scotland Yard never hears of many murders. Like Mr. Pinkerton, Quinn goes investigating and proves his point. Most of the tales, however, involve

simple plots based on love triangles and financial greed. *Too Late for Tears* (1973) is based on a husband avenging a wife who had been seduced years before. The murderer is far more sympathetic than the victim; indeed, the second murder in this story seems to have little purpose except to give an adequate reason to have the murderer caught and sentenced without offending the readers' sense of justice, a criticism that could be made also of *The Motive* (1974) and *False Evidence*.

The Piper and Quinn series is one of the best in detective fiction for plot and character. The atmosphere may seem grim to many, although the sordidness is not necessarily depressing. Indeed, much in the series is lightened by a comic spirit, especially Quinn's exchanges with his solicitous landlady, Mrs. Buchanan, a woman with a thick Scottish accent that Quinn mimics with absurd effects, and Quinn's frequent bar and hangover scenes. The police, too, are sometimes comic; most often mentioned is Inspector—later Superintendent—Hoyle of Scotland Yard, sarcastic toward but trusting of Piper and Quinn. In fact, Carmichael created a succession of well-realized police personalities of various pleasant and unpleasant types, from the literary Superintendent Mullett to Inspector Byram, who suspects Quinn of murder in *Remote Control* (1970). The police, though portrayed as "straight" characters, nevertheless tend to add to the comic effects of the stories and so lighten Carmichael's cynical depictions of betrayal and greed.

Stephen J. Curry

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

GLENN BOWMAN SERIES (AS HOWARD): 1951-1960 • *The Last Appointment*, 1951; *The Last Deception*, 1951; *Death of Cecilia*, 1952; *The Last Vanity*, 1952; *Bowman Strikes Again*, 1953; *The Other Side of the Door*, 1953; *Bowman at a Venture*, 1954; *Bowman on Broadway*, 1954; *No Target for Bowman*, 1955; *Sleep for the Wicked*, 1955; *A Hearse for Cinderella*, 1956; *The Bowman Touch*, 1956; *Key to the Morgue*, 1957; *The Long Night*, 1957; *Sleep, My Pretty One*, 1958; *The Big Snatch*, 1958; *Deadline*, 1959; *The Armitage Secret*, 1959; *Extortion*, 1960; *Fall Guy*, 1960

1961-1970 • *I'm No Hero*, 1961; *Time Bomb*, 1961; *Count Down*, 1962; *Portrait of a Beautiful Harlot*, 1966; *Routine Investigation*, 1967; *The Secret of Simon Cornell*, 1969; *Cry on My Shoulder*, 1970; *Room Thirty-seven*, 1970

1971-1979 • *Million Dollar Snapshot*, 1971; *Murder One*, 1971; *Epitaph for Joanna*, 1972; *Nice Day for a Funeral*, 1972; *Highway to Murder*, 1973; *Dead Drunk*, 1974; *Treble Cross*, 1975; *Payoff*, 1976; *One-Way Ticket*, 1978; *The Sealed Envelope*, 1979

PIPER AND QUINN SERIES: 1952-1960 • *Death Leaves a Diary*, 1952; *The Vanishing Track*, 1952; *Deadly Night-Cap*, 1953; *School for Murder*, 1953; *Death Counts Three*, 1954 (also known as *The Screaming Rabbit*); *Why Kill Johnny?*, 1954; *Money for Murder*, 1955; *Noose for a Lady*, 1955; *Justice Enough*, 1956; *The Dead of the Night*, 1956; *Emergency Exit*, 1957; *Put Out That Star*, 1957 (also known as *Into Thin Air*); . . . *Or Be He Dead*, 1958; *James Knowland, Deceased*, 1958; *Stranglehold*, 1959 (also known as *Marked Man*); *The Seeds of Hate*, 1959; *Requiem for Charles*, 1960 (also known as *The Late Unlamented*)

1961-1970 • *Alibi*, 1961; *Of Unsound Mind*, 1962; *The Link*, 1962; *Vendetta*, 1963; *Flashback*, 1964; *Safe Secret*, 1964; *Post Mortem*, 1965; *Suicide Clause*, 1966; *Murder by Proxy*, 1967; *A Slightly Bitter Taste*, 1968; *Death Trap*, 1970; *Remote Control*, 1970

1971-1978 • *Most Deadly Hate*, 1971; *The Quiet Woman*, 1971; *Naked to the Grave*, 1972; *Candles for the Dead*, 1973; *Too Late for Tears*, 1973; *The Motive*, 1974; *False Evidence*, 1976; *A Grave for Two*, 1977; *Life Cycle*, 1978

PHILIP SCOTT SERIES (AS HOWARD): *Department K*, 1964 (also known as *Assignment K*); *The Eye of the Hurricane*, 1968

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Question of Time*, 1958; *Confession*, 1961; *Double Finesse*, 1962 (as Howard); *The Stretton Case*, 1963 (as Howard); *Out of the Fire*, 1965 (as Howard); *Counterfeit*, 1966 (as Howard); *The Condemned*, 1967

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Chernaik, Warren. "Mean Streets and English Gardens." In *The Art of Detective Fiction*, edited by Warren Chernaik, Martin Swales, and Robert Vilain. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Chernaik's contrast of America's mean streets and genteel English gardens helps contextualize the distinctive nature of Carmichael's seedy English settings.

Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920's to the Present*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Detailed study of both the American and the British versions of the hard-boiled detective. Bibliographic references and index. Provides context for understanding Carmichael's work.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains an essay on hard-boiled fiction that sheds light on Carmichael's novels.

JOHN DICKSON CARR

Born: Uniontown, Pennsylvania; November 30, 1906

Died: Greenville, South Carolina; February 27, 1977

Also wrote as Carr Dickson; Carter Dickson; Roger Fairbairn

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Henri Bencolin, 1930-1938

Dr. Gideon Fell, 1933-1967

Sir Henry Merrivale, 1934-1953

History of London Police, 1957-1961

New Orleans, 1968-1971

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HENRI BENCOLIN, *juge d'instruction* of Paris, is a slender, elegantly dressed aristocrat, with a face that reminds suspects of Mephistopheles. There is an undercurrent of cruelty in Bencolin's makeup, and he frequently treats suspects with contempt. His interest in crime is solely in the puzzle.

JEFF MARLE, a young American living in Paris, whose father knew Bencolin in college, recounts the cases. Marle also narrates *Poison in Jest* (1932), in which Bencolin does not appear.

DR. GIDEON FELL is the opposite of Bencolin. He weighs nearly three hundred pounds and reminds suspects not of Satan but of Father Christmas. A historian, he has a wool-gathering mind and is interested in many types of obscure knowledge. He is warmhearted and genial and solves crimes to help those entangled in suspicion.

CHIEF INSPECTOR DAVID HADLEY of Scotland Yard, one of the more intelligent police officers in fiction, often works with Fell but who does not always follow Fell's leaps of imagination.

SIR HENRY MERRIVALE, a qualified barrister and physician, has a childish temper and a scowling appearance, as though he has smelled a bad egg. Like Fell, however, he is interested in helping those caught up in "the blinkin' awful cussedness of things in general."

INSPECTOR HUMPHREY MASTERS, who brushes his grizzled hair to hide his bald spot, works with Sir Henry but complains that he is always involved in cases that are seemingly impossible.

CONTRIBUTION

John Dickson Carr insisted that fair-play clueing is a necessary part of good detective fiction. Each of his books and short stories was constructed as a challenge to the reader, with all clues given to the reader at the same time as the detective. Within this framework, however, Carr was an innovator, combining mystery and detection with true-crime reconstruction, slapstick comedy, historical novels, and fantasy. Carr is best known, however, for his mastery of the locked-room murder and related forms of miracle crimes. In his books, victims are found within hermetically sealed rooms which were—so it seems—impossible for the murderers to enter or leave. Murders are also committed in buildings surrounded by unmarked snow or sand, and people do things such as enter a guarded room or dive into a swimming pool and completely vanish. Thus Carr's stories are constructed around two puzzles for the detective (and the reader) to solve—whodunit and "howdunit."

BIOGRAPHY

John Dickson Carr was born on November 30, 1906, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, the son of Julia Carr and Wooda Nicolas Carr. His father, a lawyer and politician, served in Congress from 1913 to 1915. After four years at the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, John Carr attended Haverford College and became editor of the student literary magazine, *The Haverfordian*. In 1928, he went to France to study at the Sorbonne, but he preferred writing and completed his first books, a historical novel that he destroyed, and *Grand Guignol*, a Bencolin novella that was soon published in *The Haverfordian*. Expanded, it became *It Walks by Night*, published by Harper and Brothers in 1930.

In 1932, Carr married an Englishwoman, Clarice



John Dickson Carr. (Library of Congress)

Cleaves, moved to Great Britain, and for about a decade wrote an average of four novels a year. To handle his prolific output, he began to write books under the nonsecret pseudonym of Carter Dickson. In 1939, Carr found another outlet for his work—the radio. He wrote scripts for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and after the United States government ordered him home in 1941 to register for military service, he wrote radio dramas for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) program *Suspense*. Ironically, the government then sent him back to Great Britain, and for the rest of the war he was on the staff of the BBC, writing propaganda pieces and mystery dramas. After the war, Carr worked with Arthur Conan Doyle's estate to produce the first authorized biography of Sherlock Holmes's creator.

A lifelong conservative, Carr disliked the postwar Labour government, and in 1948 he moved to Mamaroneck, New York. In 1951, the Tories won the election, and Carr returned to Great Britain. Except for some time spent in Tangiers working with Adrian Doyle on a series of pastiches of Sherlock Holmes,

Carr alternated between Great Britain and Mamaroneck for the next thirteen years before moving to Greenville, South Carolina. Suffering from increasing illness, Carr ceased writing novels after 1972, but he contributed a review column to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and was recognized as a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America in 1963. He died on February 27, 1977, in Greenville.

ANALYSIS

John Dickson Carr occupies an important place in the history of detective fiction, primarily because of his plot dexterity and his sense of atmosphere. No other author juggled clues, motives, and suspects with more agility, and none rang more changes on the theme of murder-in-a-locked-room and made it part of a feeling of neogothic terror.

IT WALKS BY NIGHT

His first novel, *It Walks by Night*, featuring Henri Bencolin, begins with a long statement about “a misshapen beast with blood-bedabbled claws” that prowls about Paris by night. The crime—beheading in a room all of whose entrances are watched—seems to have been committed by supernatural means. At the conclusion, however, Bencolin demonstrates that all that was necessary was a human murderer with human methods—and much clever misdirection by the author. *It Walks by Night* is a well-constructed book, but the atmosphere in it and in the next three Bencolin novels is synthetic. The mystery writer Joseph Hansen much later called *It Walks by Night* “all fustian and murk,” an overstatement but accurate in that the mood sometimes gets in the way of the story.

FROM BENCOLIN TO FELL AND MERRIVALE

Except for a reappearance in 1937 in *The Four False Weapons*, which lacks the oppressive mood of the earlier books, Bencolin disappeared from Carr's books, and Carr turned to two new detectives, Dr. Gideon Fell in 1933 and Sir Henry Merrivale in 1934 (books about the latter were published under the pseudonym Carter Dickson). On the publication of the second Fell book, *The Mad Hatter Mystery* (1933), Dorothy L. Sayers wrote a review indicating that Carr had learned how to present mood and place: “He can create atmosphere with an adjective, and make a pic-

ture from a wet iron railing, a dusty table, a gas-lamp blurred by fog. He can alarm with an allusion or delight with a rollicking absurdity—in short, he can write . . . in the sense that every sentence gives a thrill of positive pleasure.”

FAIR-PLAY TRICKS

Carr's books and short stories were strongly influenced by the writings of G. K. Chesterton, creator of Father Brown. He based the character and appearance of Fell on Chesterton, and like Chesterton, he loved the crazy-quilt patterns created by the incongruous. Carr wrote novels involved with such things as a street that no one can find, a bishop sliding down a banister, clock parts found in a victim's pocket, and unused weapons scattered about the scene of the crime. Also like Chesterton, Carr was uninterested in physical clues. There is no dashing about with a magnifying glass—Fell and Merrivale are too large to bend over a clue in Holmesian fashion—or the fine analysis of fingerprints, bullets, and bloodstains. Instead, the detective solves the crime by investigating less material indicators, clues based on gesture and mood, of things said and things left unsaid, which lead to understanding the pattern of the crime.

Carr's lack of interest in material clues was matched by his lack of interest in genuine police investigation. Many of the fair-play novelists of the Golden Age (the 1920's and the 1930's) allow the reader to follow the investigation of the detective, whether he is a gifted amateur such as Lord Peter Wimsey or a police detective such as Inspector French. In Carr's first book, the reader does follow the Sûreté's investigations, but two of Bencolin's later cases are placed outside France so that the detective will not have access to police laboratories. By the 1940's, Carr rarely emphasized detection per se in his books. The viewpoint character does not often participate with the amateur detective or the police in their investigations; he is instead overwhelmed by the mystery and the danger that the crime seems to pose to himself or to someone he loves.

Carr's emphasis was always fundamentally on the fair-play solution, not on detection. In his essay "The Grandest Game in the World," he defined the detective story not as a tale of investigation but as

a conflict between criminal and detective in which the criminal, by means of some ingenious device—alibi, novel murder method, or what you like—remains unconvicted or even unsuspected until the detective reveals his identity by means of evidence that has also been conveyed to the reader.

In some of Carr's later novels, especially *In Spite of Thunder* (1960) and *The Witch of the Low-Tide: An Edwardian Melodrama* (1961), the detective knows whodunit long before the conclusion of the story, but he does not reveal what is happening, for he is playing a cat-and-mouse game with the murderer. The reader, consequently, is trying to discover not only the solution to the crime but also why the detective is acting and speaking in a cryptic manner.

SIR HENRY MERRIVALE SERIES

The emphasis on fair-play trickery helps to understand the structure of the Sir Henry Merrivale novels. The first Merrivale novel, *The Plague Court Murders* (1934), is almost as atmospheric as the early Bencolin stories, as Carr makes the reader believe that a seventeenth century hangman's assistant has returned from the dead to commit murder. As the series developed, however, Carr increasingly made H. M. (as his friends call him) a comic character. Merrivale refers to members of the government as "Horseface," "Old Boko," and "Squiffy," and he addresses a jury as "my fatheads." His cases begin with Merrivale dictating scurrilous memoirs, learning how to play golf, taking singing lessons, chasing a runaway suitcase, or, in a memorable short story, stepping on a banana peel and falling flat on his behind. Carr always had a fondness for the Marx Brothers and other slapstick comedians, but his main reason for using comedy in his Merrivale novels is that "once we think an author is only skylarking, a whole bandwagon of clues can go past unnoticed."

The clues, whether interpreted by Bencolin, Fell, or Merrivale, usually lead to the solution of a locked-room murder or a seemingly impossible disappearance or some other variety of miracle crime. The locked-room murder has a long history, going back even before Edgar Allan Poe used it in the first detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Before Carr, Chesterton was the greatest exponent of the mir-

acle problem, writing more than twenty-five stories about impossible disappearances, murders seemingly caused by winged daggers, and the like. Carr came to love tricks and impossibilities by reading Chesterton, and he invented about one hundred methods for explaining the apparently impossible. In *The Three Coffins* (1935), Carr interrupts the story to allow Fell to deliver a locked-room lecture, discussing all the methods previously used to get a murderer into and out of a room whose doors and windows are securely locked.

Carr often ties the impossible crime to the past. From early books such as *The Red Widow Murders* (1935) to late ones including *Deadly Hall* (1971), Carr has ancient crimes repeated in the present. Carr was a historian manqué; he believed that “to write good history is the noblest work of man,” and he saw in houses and artifacts and old families a continuation of the past in the present. This love of history adds texture to his novels. His books make heavy use of such props as old castles, ancient watches, cavalier’s cups, occult cards, and Napoleonic snuffboxes. In addition, the concept that the past influences the present suggests that a malevolent influence is creating the impossible crimes, and this in turn allows Carr to hint at the supernatural.

Most of Carr’s mystery-writing contemporaries were content to have the crime disturb the social order, and at the conclusion to have faith in the rightness of society restored by the apprehension and punishment of the criminal. Carr, however, had the crime shake one’s faith in a rational universe. By quoting from seemingly ancient manuscripts and legends about witches and vampires, Carr implies that only someone in league with Satan could have committed the crime. Except for one book (*The Burning Court*, 1937) and a few short stories (“New Murders for Old,” “The Door to Doom,” and “The Man Who Was Dead”), however, Carr’s solutions never use the supernatural. Even when he retold Poe’s story “The Tell-Tale Heart” as a radio play, he found a solution to the beating of the heart that involved neither the supernatural nor the guilty conscience of the protagonist. If the comparison is not pushed too far, Carr’s detectives act as exorcists. Bencolin, Fell, and Merrivale arrive on the scene and banish the demons as they show that the apparently impossible actually has a rational explanation.

Carr’s interest in history was connected with the fact that he was never comfortable in his own age. A friend from his college days described Carr as a neoromantic, and his writings in *The Haverfordian* show a strong interest in historical romance. At the same time, he wrote an adventure story that combined elements from E. Phillips Oppenheim and the Ruritanian-Graustarkian novels of Anthony Hope and George Barr McCutcheon. Carr believed that the world should be a place where high adventure is possible. One of the characters in an early Carr novel, *The Bowstring Murders* (1933), hopes to find adventures in “the grand manner,” with Oppenheimian heroines sneaking into his railway carriage and whispering cryptic passwords. Many of Carr’s novels written during the 1930’s feature young men who travel to France or England to escape from the brash, materialistic world of America. Shortly after he moved to England, he wrote:

There is something spectral about the deep and drowsy beauty of the English countryside; in the lush dark grass, the evergreens, the grey church-spire and the meandering white road. To an American, who remembers his own brisk concrete highways clogged with red filling-stations and the fumes of traffic, it is particularly pleasant. . . . The English earth seems (incredibly) even older than its ivy-bearded towers. The bells at twilight seem to be bells across the centuries; there is a great stillness, through which ghosts step, and Robin Hood has not strayed from it even yet.

In 1934, Carr published *Devil Kinsmere* under the pseudonym of Roger Fairbairn. Although the book has some mystery in it, it is primarily a historical adventure story set in the reign of Charles II. Two years later, Carr wrote *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey* (1936), which treats a genuine murder of 1678 as a fair-play detective story, complete with clues, suspects, and a totally unsuspected murderer. Neither of these books sold well, and for some years Carr did not attempt historical reconstruction except in some radio scripts he wrote for the BBC in London and for CBS in New York. Notable among these is a six-part Regency drama, “Speak of the Devil,” about the ghostly manifestations of a woman who had been hanged for murder. As in his novels, Carr produced a rational explanation for the supernatural.

Following the conclusion of World War II, however, two things encouraged Carr to try his hand at historical detective novels. First, the election of a Labour government in Great Britain, and the continued rationing increased Carr's dislike of the twentieth century. Second, the success of his *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (1949) gave him what is now called "name recognition" to the extent that he believed that he could take a chance with a new type of novel.

THE DEVIL IN VELVET

Carr's gamble paid off, for *The Bride of Newgate*, a Regency novel published in 1950, sold very well, and its successor, *The Devil in Velvet* (1951), did even better. In the latter, Carr stretched the genre of the classic detective story to its limits, for it involved elements of fantasy. The hero, a middle-aged college professor of the twentieth century, longs to return to Restoration England, so he sells his soul to Satan and occupies the body of a dissolute cavalier. His goal is to prevent a murder and, when he fails to do so, to solve it. Though the solution is well clued, it breaks several rules of the fair-play detective story. The book was in large part wish-fulfillment for Carr, however, who, like the hero, wanted to escape his own era. In two later novels, *Fire, Burn!* (1957) and *Fear Is the Same* (1956), time travel also connects the twentieth century to ages that Carr preferred.

Between 1950 and 1972, Carr concentrated on detective novels in a period setting, with an occasional Fell novel tossed in. Six of his historical novels fit into two series, one about the history of Scotland Yard, the other about New Orleans at various times. His final novels, especially *Deadly Hall* and *The Hungry Goblin: A Victorian Detective Novel* (1972), show a decline in readability, probably a result of Carr's increasing ill health. They lack the enthusiasm of his previous books, and the characters make set speeches rather than doing anything. Even his final books are cleverly plotted, however, with new locked-room and impossible-crime methods. At his death in 1977, with almost eighty books to his credit, he had shown that with ingenuity and atmosphere, the fair-play detective story was one of the most entertaining forms of popular literature.

Douglas G. Greene

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HENRI BENCOLIN SERIES: *It Walks by Night*, 1930; *The Lost Gallows*, 1931; *Castle Skull*, 1931; *The Corpse in the Waxworks*, 1932 (also known as *The Waxworks Murder*); *The Four False Weapons*, 1937; *The Door to Doom, and Other Detections*, 1980

GIDEON FELL SERIES: *Hag's Nook*, 1933; *The Mad Hatter Mystery*, 1933; *The Eight of Swords*, 1934; *The Blind Barber*, 1934; *Death-Watch*, 1935; *The Three Coffins*, 1935 (also known as *The Hollow Man*); *The Arabian Nights Murder*, 1936; *To Wake the Dead*, 1938; *The Crooked Hinge*, 1938; *The Problem of the Green Capsule*, 1939 (also known as *The Black Spectacles*); *The Problem of the Wire Cage*, 1939; *The Man Who Could Not Shudder*, 1940; *The Case of the Constant Suicides*, 1941; *Death Turns the Tables*, 1941 (also known as *The Seat of the Scornful*); *Till Death Do Us Part*, 1944; *He Who Whispers*, 1946; *The Sleeping Sphinx*, 1947; *Dr. Fell, Detective, and Other Stories*, 1947; *Below Suspicion*, 1949; *The Third Bullet, and Other Stories*, 1954; *The Dead Man's Knock*, 1958; *In Spite of Thunder*, 1960; *The House at Satan's Elbow*, 1965; *Panic in Box C*, 1966; *Dark of the Moon*, 1967; *The Dead Sleep Lightly*, 1983

SIR HENRY MERRIVALE SERIES (AS CARTER DICKSON): *The Plague Court Murders*, 1934; *The White Priory Murders*, 1934; *The Red Widow Murders*, 1935; *The Unicorn Murders*, 1935; *The Magic-lantern Murders*, 1936 (also known as *The Punch and Judy Murders*); *The Peacock Feather Murders*, 1937 (also known as *The Ten Teacups*); *The Judas Window*, 1938 (also known as *The Crossbow Murder*); *Death in Five Boxes*, 1938; *The Reader Is Warned*, 1939; *And So to Murder*, 1940; *Nine—and Death Makes Ten*, 1940 (also known as *Murder in the Submarine Zone* and *Murder in the Atlantic*); *Seeing Is Believing*, 1941 (also known as *Cross of Murder*); *The Gilded Man*, 1942 (also known as *Death and the Gilded Man*); *She Died a Lady*, 1943; *He Wouldn't Kill Patience*, 1944; *The Curse of the Bronze Lamp*, 1945 (also known as *Lord of the Sorcerers*); *My Late Wives*, 1946; *The Skeleton in the Clock*, 1948; *A Graveyard to Let*, 1949; *Night at the Mocking Widow*, 1950; *Behind the Crimson Blind*, 1952; *The Cavalier's Cup*, 1953; *The Men Who Explained Miracles*, 1963

HISTORY OF LONDON POLICE SERIES: *Fire, Burn!*, 1957; *Scandal at High Chimneys: A Victorian Melodrama*, 1959; *The Witch of the Low-Tide: An Edwardian Melodrama*, 1961

NEW ORLEANS SERIES: *Papa Lâ-Bas*, 1968; *The Ghosts' High Noon*, 1969; *Deadly Hall*, 1971

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Poison in Jest*, 1932; *The Bowstring Murders*, 1933 (first edition as Carr Dickson and subsequent editions as Carter Dickson); *Devil Kinsmere*, 1934 (as Fairbairn; revised as *Most Secret*, 1964); *The Burning Court*, 1937; *The Third Bullet*, 1937 (as Carter Dickson); *Fatal Descent*, 1939 (with John Rhode, pseudonym of Cecil John Charles Street, and as Carter Dickson; also known as *Drop to His Death*); *The Emperor's Snuff-Box*, 1942; *The Bride of Newgate*, 1950; *The Devil in Velvet*, 1951; *The Nine Wrong Answers*, 1952; *Captain Cut-Throat*, 1955; *Patrick Butler for the Defence*, 1956; *Fear Is the Same*, 1956; *The Demoniacs*, 1962; *The Hungry Goblin: A Victorian Detective Novel*, 1972; *Crime on the Coast*, 1984 (with others)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Department of Queer Complaints*, 1940 (as Carter Dickson; also known as *Scotland Yard: Department of Queer Complaints*); *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, 1954 (with Adrian Conan Doyle)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Grand Guignol*, 1929

RADIO PLAYS: *The Bride Vanishes*, 1942; *The Devil in the Summerhouse*, 1942; *Will You Make a Bet with Death?*, 1942; *Cabin B-13*, 1943; *The Hangman Won't Wait*, 1943; *The Phantom Archer*, 1943; *Most Secret*, 1964

NONFICTION: *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey*, 1936; *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 1949; *The Grandest Game in the World: A Brilliant Critique*, 1963

EDITED TEXTS: *Maiden Murders*, 1952; *Great Stories*, 1959 (by Arthur Conan Doyle)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amis, Kingsley. "Unreal Detectives." In *What Became of Jane Austen? and Other Questions*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970. An appreciation

of Carr (among others) by one of Britain's leading postwar writers. To Amis, Dr. Fell is one of only three worthy successors to Sherlock Holmes, and Carr's best novels are "minor masterpieces."

Greene, Douglas C. *John Dickson Carr: The Man Who Explained Miracles*. New York: Otto Penzler Books, 1995. Indispensable biography and full-length study of Carr's works, with an exhaustive bibliography. Greene's main thesis is that Carr's explanations of seemingly miraculous events reveal a fundamental belief in the rationality of the universe.

_____. "A Mastery of Miracles: G. K. Chesterton and John Dickson Carr." *Chesterton Review* 10 (August, 1984): 307-315. This article pays homage to Carr's work particularly as it relates to that of G. K. Chesterton. Greene concentrates on Carr's short fiction but includes some biographical information too. Notes on sources are given at the end of the article.

Joshi, S. T. *John Dickson Carr: A Critical Study*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990. Joshi's study complements that of Douglas C. Greene. Joshi finds Carr's thematic interest to be ethical: Carr's explanations show the pervasiveness of human evil. Valuable chapters on Carr's philosophy and theories of detective writing.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green States University Popular Press, 2001. Includes readings of four of Carr's novels. Bibliographic references and index.

Panek, LeRoy. *An Introduction to the Detective Story*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987. References to Carr's work—in particular, his short fiction—are scattered throughout this text. Good for setting Carr in the context of his time. An index and a list of reference works are given at the end, and a separate list of history and criticism texts is also included.

_____. "John Dickson Carr." In *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain, 1914-1940*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979. Despite Carr's nationality, he is considered one of the finest British mystery writ-

ers. In his text, Panek devotes a detailed chapter to Carr, covering Carr's most famous detectives and works, including both long and short fiction. An appendix outlines the structure of the detective story. Supplemented by a chronology of Carr's works, notes on the Carr chapter, and an index.

Taylor, Robert Lewis. "Two Authors in an Attic, Part I." *The New Yorker* 27 (September 8, 1951): 39-44, 46, 48.

_____. "Two Authors in an Attic, Part II." *The New Yorker* 27 (September 15, 1951): 36-40, 42, 46, 48, 51. This pair of articles is extremely useful for detailed biographical information, as well as for Carr's own thoughts on his writing. Carr discusses with Taylor which writers influenced him most and goes into detail about his political and philosophical views. Invaluable for getting a personal look at Carr, despite its lack of references.

NICK CARTER

AUTHORS

NICK CARTER (DIME NOVELS AND PULPS)

? Andrews; A. L. Armagnac; ? Babcock; ? Ball; William Perry Brown (1847-1923); George Waldo Browne (1851-1930); Frederick Russell Burton (1861-1909); O. P. Caylor; Stephen Chalmers (1880-1935); Weldon J. Cobb; William Wallace Cook (1867-1933); John Russell Coryell (1851-1924); Frederick William Davis (1858-1933); William J. de Grouchy; E. C. Derby; Frederic M. Van Rensselaer Dey (1861-1922); ? Ferguson; Graham E. Forbes; W. Bert Foster (1869-1929); Thomas W. Hanshew (1857-1914); Charles Witherle Hooke (1861-1929); ? Howard; W. C. Hudson (1843-1915); George C. Jenks (1850-1929); W. L. or Joseph Larned; ? Lincoln; Charles Agnew MacLean (1880-1928); ? Makee; St. George Rathborne (1854-1938); ? Rich; ? Russell; Eugene T. Sawyer (1846-1924); Vincent E. Scott; Samuel C. Spalding; ? Splint; Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1930); Alfred B. Tozer; ? Tyson; R. F. Walsh; Charles Westbrook; ? Willard; Richard Wormser.

NICK CARTER (KILLMASTER)

Frank Adduci, Jr.; Jerry Ahern (1946-); Bruce Algozin; Michael Avallone (1924-1999); W. T. Ballard (1903-1980); Jim Bowser; Nicholas Browne; Jack Canon; Bruce Cassiday (1920-2005); Ansel Chapin; Robert Colby; DeWitt S. Copp; Bill Crider (1941-); Jack Davis; Ron Felber; James Fritzhand; Joseph L. Gilmore (1929-); Marilyn Granbeck (1927-); David Hagberg (1942-);

Ralph Hayes (1927-); Al Hine (1915-1974); Richard Hubbard (d. c. 1974); H. Edward Hunsburger; Michael Jahn (1943-); Bob Latona; Leon Lazarus (1920-); Lew Louderback (1930-); Dennis Lynds (1924-2005); Douglas Marland; Arnold Marmor; Jon Messmann; Valerie Moolman; Homer Morris; Craig Nova; William C. Odell; Forrest V. Perrin; Larry Powell; Daniel C. Prince; Robert J. Randisi (1951-); Henry Rasof; Dan Reardon; William L. Rohde; Joseph Rosenberger; Steve Simmons; Martin Cruz Smith (1942-); George Snyder; Robert Derek Steeley; John Stevenson; Linda Stewart; Manning Lee Stokes; Bob Stokesberry; Dee Stuart; Dwight Vreeland Swain (1915-1992); Lawrence Van Gelder; Robert E. Vardeman (1947-); Jeffrey M. Wallmann (1941-); George Warren; Saul Wernick (1921-); Lionel White (1905-1985); Stephen Williamson.

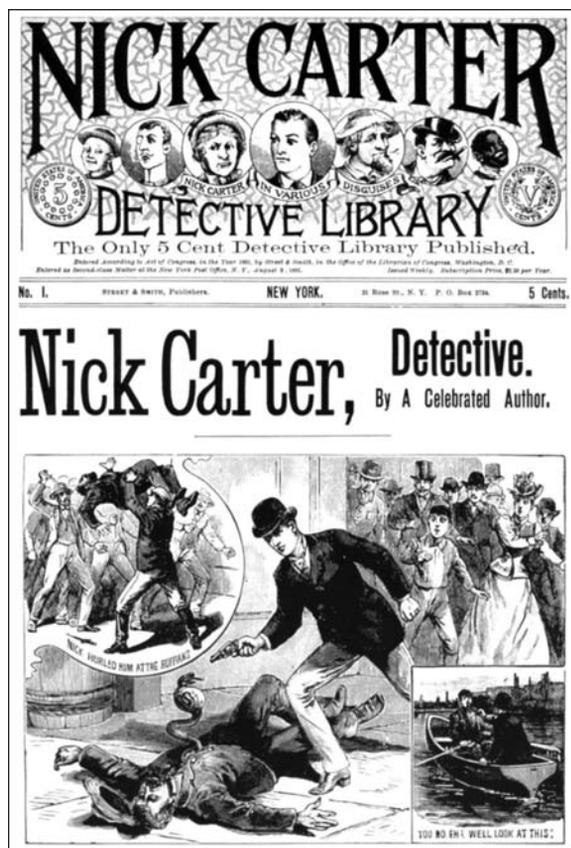
Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nick Carter (dime novels and pulps), 1886-1949
 Nick Carter/Killmaster, 1964-1990

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

NICK CARTER, as portrayed in the dime novels and pulp magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a private investigator of uncommon ability. Short (about five feet, four inches) and preter-



Cover of the first issue of the Nick Carter Detective Library, which chronicled Nick Carter's adventures from 1891 until 1915.

naturally strong, he is a master of disguise. He gradually took on more hard-boiled characteristics, in keeping with literary fashion. After a hiatus in the 1950's, Carter reappeared in the 1960's with a new identity: master spy. In this second incarnation he is sophisticated, possessed of enormous sexual magnetism, and like the first Nick Carter, physically powerful.

CONTRIBUTION

On the title page of many Street and Smith dime novels, Nick Carter is dubbed "the greatest sleuth of all time." The resourceful personage of Nick Carter, a "house name" used by three different publishers, has certainly outlasted most of his competition; appearing in more detective fiction than any other character in American literature, Nick Carter seems as ageless as the sturdiest of monuments. Beginning with the September 18, 1886, issue of the *New York Weekly*, under

the title "The Old Detective's Pupil; Or, The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square," Nick Carter's career has spanned more than a century. In origin, Carter exemplified the American individualist with the superior intellect of a Sherlock Holmes. From the self-confident youngster to the mature head of his own detective agency, from the hard-boiled crime fighter to the oversexed spy, Nick Carter has changed with his times. No other character offers such an encompassing reflection of the beliefs and motives of the American public.

BIOGRAPHY

Nick Carter was delivered into this world by the hands of John Russell Coryell in 1886. Street and Smith published Coryell's first three installments of Nick Carter, and at a luncheon not long after, Carter's fate as a serial character was sealed. Ormond G. Smith, president of the Street and Smith firm, decided to award Frederic M. Van Rensselaer Dey the opportunity of continuing the Carter saga. Dey accepted in 1891 and for the next seventeen years produced a 25,000-word story a week for a new weekly to be called the *Nick Carter Detective Library*, beginning with *Nick Carter, Detective* (1891). After the first twenty installments of the *Nick Carter Library* had appeared, Carter was reinstated in the *New York Weekly*, which was primarily a family-oriented publication.

The publications containing Carter material changed names frequently. In 1897, the *Nick Carter Library* became the *Nick Carter Weekly* and then the *New Nick Carter Weekly*, and then again the *New Nick Carter Library*. Finally, in 1912 the title changed to *Nick Carter Stories*. Old installments began appearing under new titles, a fact that has created headaches for those wishing to compile bibliographies of Nick Carter material. In 1897, Street and Smith had begun the Magnet Library—a kind of grandfather to the modern paperback—and used Carter stories along with those featuring other detectives, including reprints of Sherlock Holmes tales.

The majority of these books were signed by "Nicholas Carter," and some stories that had featured Nick Carter, detective, in earlier publications were changed to incorporate other detective protagonists. The series

was replaced in 1933 by the *Nick Carter Magazine*. *Nick Carter Stories* was given a pulp format and in 1915 became the influential semimonthly *Detective Story Magazine*, edited by “Nicholas Carter” (actually Frank E. Blackwell). The first issue contains work by a variety of writers including Nathan Day and Ross Beeckman, as well as one Nick Carter reprint.

The *Nick Carter Magazine* (later called *Nick Carter Detective Magazine*) lasted only forty issues; it published many novelettes by “Harrison Keith,” a character created by “Nicholas Carter” in the Magnet Library series. Immediately following, a Nick Carter story appeared in *The Shadow Magazine*; its author, Bruce Ellit, received a rare byline. Ellit would later write scripts for a number of Nick Carter comic strips, which became a regular feature of *Shadow Comics* until 1949.

With the advent of radio, the ever-adaptable Nick Carter left the failing pulps and recaptured public interest, beginning in 1943, with the weekly radio series *The Return of Nick Carter*. The early action-packed scripts were edited by Walter B. Gibson and remained true to the concept of the Street and Smith character. The radio series, soon called *Nick Carter, Master Detective*, starred Lon Clark and ran until 1955.

The film industry, too, made use of this popular character. As early as 1908, Victor Jasset produced *Nick Carter*, which was followed by *The New Exploits of Nick Carter* (1909), *Nick Carter vs. Pauline Broquet* (1911), and *Zigomar vs. Nick Carter* (1912). Several other films featuring Nick Carter were made before Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1939), starring Walter Pidgeon. This was followed by *Phantom Raiders* and *Sky Murder*, both from 1940. In 1946 a fifteen-chapter serial titled *Chick Carter, Detective* was produced starring Nick’s son (based on the radio series), but in them Nick is neither shown nor mentioned. After two French productions in the 1960’s, Carter surfaced on American television in *The Adventures of Nick Carter*, a series pilot set in early twentieth century New York City and starring Robert Conrad.

In 1964, another phase of Nick Carter’s life began. Lyle Kenyon Engel, originator of the packaged books concept, began working with Walter B. Gibson on re-issuing old Shadow material, and Engel decided to ob-

tain the rights to Nick Carter from Condé Nast, which had inherited the hibernating character from Street and Smith. Carter was resurrected as America’s special agent with a license to kill. Nick was now a suave lady-killer who worked for the top-secret espionage agency AXE. This agency, the name of which is taken from the phrase “Give ’em the axe,” is called on whenever world freedom is threatened. Carter, sometimes referred to as “Killmaster” or “N-3” (also “N3”), is no longer an independent detective but works for a supervisor, Mr. Hawks, who operates out of the agency’s Washington, D.C., cover—the Amalgamated News and Wire Services. Carter’s constant companions are a Luger named Wilhelmina, a stiletto called Hugo, and Pierre, a nerve-gas bomb. This is the Nick Carter who emerges from the first Killmaster novel, *Run, Spy, Run* (1964). More than 250 books were published in the

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Among the many magazines bearing the “Nick Carter” brand name was *Nick Carter Detective Magazine*, which appeared under that title only in 1936. (Courtesy, Conde Nast Publications)

Killmaster series between 1964 and 1990. The last Nick Carter book was *Dragon Slay* (1990).

ANALYSIS

Nicknamed “the Little Giant” within the pages of Street and Smith’s dime novels, Nick Carter was approximately five feet, four inches in height and astoundingly muscular. Robert Sampson quotes an early description of Carter that enumerates his talents: “He can lift a horse with ease, and that, too, while a heavy man is seated in the saddle. Remember that he can place four packs of playing cards together, and tear them in halves between his thumb and fingers.” Carter was schooled in the art of detection by his father, Sim Carter; he mastered enough knowledge to assist him through several lifetimes. He soon gets the opportunity to use these skills, as his father is murdered in his first case.

More than any other detective, the early Nick Carter depends on changing his identity to solve the crime. These adventures, in which few actually see the real face of Nick, are overflowing with delightful Carter-made characters such as “Old Thunderbolt,” the country detective, and Joshua Juniper, the “archetypical hayseed.” These disguises enable Carter to combat several archfiends. The most famous of these is Dr. Quartz, who first appeared in a trilogy of adventures with Nick Carter in 1891. Having preceded Professor Moriarty by two years, Quartz can be considered the first recurring villain in detective fiction. Although Quartz is supposedly killed, he returns as “Doctor Quartz II” in 1905 with little explanation.

Quartz typifies much of what would be later mimicked in Hollywood and on the paperback stands. He practices East Indian magic and is accompanied by exotic characters such as the Woman Wizard, Zanoni, and Dr. Crystal. In one episode, Quartz brainwashes Carter into believing that he is an English lord named Algernon Travers. Zanoni, commissioned to pass herself off as his wife, falls in love with him and spoils Quartz’s plans. She saves Nick’s life, and the detective’s three companions, Chick, Patsy, and Ten-Ichi, arrive just in time. The body of Quartz is sewed inside a hammock and dropped into the depths of the sea.

After the disguises ceased to appear, Carter as a

character proved himself to be adaptable. He had already broken new ground in popular fiction by being the first author/hero in the majority of his adventures, a trend that would be followed in the Ellery Queen series. As the installments increased (the number of titles concerning Nick Carter in the dime novels alone exceeds twelve hundred) and the dime novel gave way to the pulp era, Carter took on more hard-boiled characteristics. Although his stay in the pulps was fairly short-lived, his character mirrored that of other detectives. Though as a character he had matured, Carter was embarking on adventures that were even more far-fetched than before.

DANGER KEY

In 1964, in the wake of James Bond, Carter was resurrected as one who could fight better, love longer, swim farther, drive faster, and utilize more gadgets than any other superspy. The ethics of the old Nick Carter melted away like ice in straight whiskey. In books such as *Danger Key* (1966), Carter fights dangerously clever Nazis and sadistic Asians while enjoying an array of bikinied nymphets. Through yoga he is able to perform impossible feats (he is repeatedly trapped underwater, miles from the nearest air tank). In the atomic age, those who differ from the American Caucasian are portrayed as a dangerous threat to world peace and indeed to survival itself.

THE VENGEANCE GAME

With the advent of the Rambo films in the early 1980’s, Carter’s image changed yet again, although more subtly. His adventures were frequently set within the context of then-current events; he battled Tehran terrorists, for example, and *The Vengeance Game* (1985) is a retelling of the marine bombing in Beirut. As Nick Carter changed, his popularity prompted many spin-offs, most of which were short-lived. Carter undoubtedly reflects the ideology of his times, though there are certain constants (each adventure since 1964 is dedicated to the “men of the Secret Services of the United States of America”). For more than one hundred years, Nick Carter has pledged himself to uphold American morality against all foes and fears, both foreign and domestic.

Michael Pettengell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NICK CARTER (DIME NOVELS AND PULPS) SERIES: 1886-1887 • *The Old Detective's Pupil*, 1886; *One Against Twenty-One*, 1886; *A Wall Street Haul*, 1886; *The American Marquee*, 1887

1887-1917, A-C • *The Amazonian Queen*; *The Automobile Fiend*; *A Bad Man from Montana*; *A Bad Man from Nome*; *Bare-Faced Jimmy*, *Gentleman Burglar*; *A Beautiful Anarchist*; *The Brotherhood of Free Russia*; *By Command of the Czar*; *The Chemical Clue*; *The Conquest of a Kingdom*; *The Conspiracy of a Nation*; *The Countess Zita's Defense*; *The Crime Behind the Throne*; *The Crimson Clue*; *The Cross of Daggers*

1887-1917, D-F • *The Dead Man in the Car*; *A Dead Man's Hand*; *The Devil Worshipers*; *The Diplomatic Spy*; *Doctor Quartz Again*; *Doctor Quartz's Last Play*; *Doctor Quartz, the Second*; *Doctor Quartz, the Second, at Bay*; *An Emperor at Bay*; *The Empire of Goddess*; *Eulalia, the Bandit Queen*; *The Face at the Window*; *Facing an Unseen Terror*; *The Famous Case of Doctor Quartz*; *The Fate of Doctor Quartz*; *A Fight for Millions*; *Four Scraps of Paper*

1887-1917, G-L • *The Gentleman Crook's Last Act*; *The Ghost of Bare-Faced Jimmy*; *The Gold Mine*; *The Great Hotel Murders*; *The Great Spy System*; *The Haunted Circus*; *Her Shrewd Double*; *Holding Up a Nation*; *Ida, the Woman Detective*; *Idayah, the Woman of Mystery*; *The Index of Seven Stars*; *The International Conspiracy*; *Ismalla, the Chieftain*; *The Jiu-Jitsu Puzzle*; *Kairo, the Strong*; *Kid Curry's Last Stand*; *The Klondike Bank Puzzle*; *The Last of Mustushimi*; *The Last of the Outlaws*; *The Last of the Seven*; *A Life at Stake*; *The Little Giant's Double*; *Looted in Transit*

1887-1917, M • *The Madness of Morgan*; *Maguay, the Mexican*; *The Making of a King*; *The Man from Arizona*; *The Man from Nevada*; *The Man from Nowhere*; *The Master Crook's Match*; *The Master Rogue's Alibi*; *The Midnight Visitor*; *Migno Duprez, the Female Spy*; *Miguel, the Avenger*; *A Million Dollar Hold-Up*; *Murder for Revenge*; *A Mystery from the Klondike*; *A Mystery in India Ink*; *The Mystery Man of 7-Up Ranch*; *The Mystery of the Mikado*

1887-1917, N • *Nick Carter After Bob Dalton* (also known as *Nick Carter a Prisoner*); *Nick Carter Among*

the Bad Men; *Nick Carter and the Circus Crooks* (also known as *Fighting the Circus Crooks*); *Nick Carter and the Convict Gang*; *Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor*; *Nick Carter and the Hangman's Noose*; *Nick Carter and the Nihilists*; *Nick Carter at the Track*; *Nick Carter in Harness Again*; *Nick Carter's Master Struggle*; *Nick Carter's Midnight Visitor*; *Nick Carter's Strange Power*; *Nick Carter's Submarine Clue*; *The Nihilists' Second Move*

1887-1917, O-P • *Old Broadbrim in a Deep Case Sea Struggle*; *Old Broadbrim Leagued with Nick Carter*; *Old Broadbrim's Clew from the Dead*; *The Passage of the Night Local*; *Patsy's Vacation Problem*; *Pedro, the Dog Detective*; *A Plot for a Crown*; *The Plot of the Stantons*; *Plotters Against a Nation*; *A Plot Within a Palace*; *The Princess' Last Effort*; *The Prison Cipher*; *The Prison Demon*; *A Pupil of Doctor Quartz*

1887-1917, Q-S • *The Queen of the Seven*; *The Red Button*; *Return from the Dead*; *The Secret Agent*; *The Secret of the Mine*; *Secrets of a Haunted House*; *The Seven-Headed Monster*; *The Skidoo of the K.U. and T.*; *A Strange Bargain*

1887-1917, T-V • *Ten-Ichi, the Wonderful*; *The Thirteen's Oath of Vengeance*; *Three Thousand Miles of Freight*; *The Tiger Tamer*; *A Tragedy of the Bowery*; *Trailing a Secret Thread*; *The Two Chittendens*; *The Veiled Princess*

1887-1917, W-Z • *A White House Mystery*; *A Woman to the Rescue*; *The Woman Wizard's Hate*; *Zanoni the Terrible*; *Zanoni the Transfigured*; *Zanoni, the Woman Wizard*

1888-1897 • *The Crime of a Countess*, 1888; *Fighting Against Millions*, 1888; *The Great Enigma*, 1888; *The Piano Box Mystery*, 1888; *A Stolen Identity*, 1888; *A Titled Counterfeiter*, 1888; *A Woman's Hand*, 1888; *Nick Carter, Detective*, 1891; *An Australian Klondyke*, 1897; *Caught in the Toils*, 1897; *The Gambler's Syndicate*, 1897; *A Klondike Claim*, 1897; *The Mysterious Mail Robbery*, 1897; *Playing a Bold Game*, 1897; *Tracked Across the Atlantic*, 1897

1898 • *The Accidental Password*; *Among the Counterfeiters*; *Among the Nihilists*; *At Odds with Scotland Yard*, 1898; *At Thompson's Ranch*; *A Chance Discovery*; *Check No. 777*; *A Deposit Fault Puzzle*; *The Dou-*

ble Shuffle Club; Evidence by Telephone; A Fair Criminal; Found on the Beach; The Man from India; A Millionaire Partner

1899 • *The Adventures of Harrison Keith, Detective; A Bite of an Apple, and Other Stories; The Clever Celestial; The Crescent Brotherhood; A Dead Man's Grip; The Detective's Pretty Neighbor, and Other Stories; The Diamond Mine Case; Gideon Drexel's Millions, and Other Stories; The Great Money Order Swindle; A Herald Personal, and Other Stories; The Man Who Vanished; Nick Carter and the Green Goods Men; Nick Carter's Clever Protégé; The Puzzle of Five Pistols, and Other Stories; Sealed Orders; The Sign of Crossed Knives; The Stolen Race Horse; The Stolen Pay Train, and Other Stories; The Twelve Tin Boxes; The Twelve Wise Men; Two Plus Two; The Van Alstine Case; Wanted by Two Clients*

1900 • *After the Bachelor Dinner; Brought to Bay; Convicted by a Camera; The Crime of the French Cafe, and Other Stories; Crossed Wires; The Elevated Railroad Mystery, and Other Stories; A Frame Work of Fate; A Game of Craft; Held for Trial; Lady Velvet; The Man Who Stole Millions; Nick Carter Down East; Nick Carter's Clever Ruse; Nick Carter's Girl Detective; Nick Carter's Retainer; Nick Carter's Star Pupils; A Princess of Crime; The Silent Passenger; A Victim of Circumstances*

1901 • *The Blow of a Hammer, and Other Stories; A Bogus Clew; The Bottle with the Black Label; Desperate Chance; The Dumb Witness, and Other Stories; In Letters of Fire; The Man at the Window; The Man from London; The Man of Mystery; Millions at Stake, and Other Stories; The Missing Cotton King; The Mysterious Highwayman; The Murray Hill Mystery; The Price of a Secret; A Prince of a Secret; A Prince of Rogues; The Queen of Knaves, and Other Stories; A Scrap of Black Lace; The Seal of Silence; The Steel Casket, and Other Stories; The Testimony of a Mouse; A Triple Crime*

1902 • *At the Knife's Point; Behind a Mask; The Claws of the Tiger; A Deal in Diamonds; A Double-Handed Game; A False Combination; Hounded to Death; Man Against Man; The Man and His Price; A Move in the Dark; Nick Carter's Death Warrant; Played to a Finish; A Race for Ten Thousand; The Red*

Signal; Run to Earth; A Stroke of Policy; A Syndicate of Rascals; The Tell-Tale Photographs; The Toss of a Coin; A Trusted Rogue; Two Villains in One; The Vial of Death; Wearing the Web

1903 • *The Barrel Mystery; A Blackmailer's Bluff; A Blood-Red Badge; A Blow for Vengeance; A Bonded Villain; The Cashiers' Secret; The Chair of Evidence; A Checkmated Scoundrel; Circumstantial Evidence; The Cloak of Guilt; The Council of Death; The Crown Diamond; The Fatal Prescription; A Great Conspiracy; The Guilty Governor; Heard in the Dark; The Hole in the Vault; A Masterpiece of Crime; A Mysterious Game; Paid with Death; Photographer's Evidence; A Race Track Gamble; A Ring of Dust; The Seal of Death; A Sharper's Downfall; The Twin Mystery; Under False Colors*

1904 • *Against Desperate Odds; Ahead of the Game; Beyond Pursuit; a Broken Trail; A Bundle of Clews; The Cab Driver's Secret; The Certified Check; The Criminal Link; Dazaar, the Arch Fiend; A Dead Witness; A Detective's Theory; Driven from Cover; Following a Chance Clew; The "Hot Air" Clew; In the Gloom of Night; An Ingenious Stratagem; The Master Villain; A Missing Man; A Mysterious Diagram; Playing a Lone Hand; The Queen of Diamonds; The Ruby Pin; A Scientific Forger; The Secret Panel; The Terrible Threat; The Toss of the Penny; Under a Black Veil; With Links of Steel; The Wizards of the Cue*

1905 • *Accident or Murder?; A Baffled Oath; The Bloodstone Terror; The Boulevard Mutes; A Cigarette Clew; The Crime of the Camera; The Diamond Trail; Down and Out; The Four-Fingered Glove; The Key Ring Clew; The Living Mask; The Marked Hand; A Mysterious Graft; Nick Carter's Double Catch; Playing for a Fortune; The Plot That Failed; The Pretty Stenographer Mystery; The Price of Treachery; A Royal Thief; A Tangled Case; The Terrible Thirteen; Trapped in His Own Net; A Triple Identity; The Victim of Deceit; A Villainous Scheme*

1906 • *Baffled, but Not Beaten; Behind a Throne; The Broadway Cross; Captain Sparkle, Private; A Case Without a Clue; The Death Circle; Dr. Quartz, Magician; Dr. Quartz's Quick Move; From a Prison Cell; In the Lap of Danger; The "Limited" Hold-Up; The Lure of Gold; The Man Who Was Cursed; Marked*

for Death; Nick Carter's Fall; Nick Carter's Masterpiece; Out of Death's Shadow; A Plot Within a Plot; The Sign of the Dagger; Through the Cellar Wall; Trapped by a Woman; The Unaccountable Crook; Under the Tiger's Claws; A Voice from the Past

1907 • An Amazing Scoundrel; The Bank Draft Puzzle; A Bargain in Crime; The Brotherhood of Death; The Chain of Clues; Chase in the Dark; A Cry for Help; The Dead Stranger; The Demon's Eye; The Demons of the Night; Done in the Dark; The Dynamite Trap; A Fight for a Throne; A Finger Against Suspicion; A Game of Plots; Harrison Keith, Sleuth; Harrison Keith's Big Stakes; Harrison Keith's Chance Clue; Harrison Keith's Danger; Harrison Keith's Dilemma; Harrison Keith's Greatest Task; Harrison Keith's Oath; Harrison Keith's Struggle; Harrison Keith's Triumph; Harrison Keith's Warning; The Human Fiend; A Legacy of Hate; The Man of Iron; The Man Without a Conscience; Nick Carter's Chinese Puzzle; Nick Carter's Close Call; The Red League; The Silent Guardian; The Woman of Evil; The Woman of Steel; The Worst Case on Record

1908 • The Artful Schemer; The Crime and the Motive; The Doctor's Stratagem; The False Claimant; A Fight with a Fiend; From Peril to Peril; A Game Well Played; A Girl in the Case; The Hand That Won; Hand to Hand; Harrison Keith's Chance Shot; Harrison Keith's Crooked Trail; Harrison Keith's Diamond Case; Harrison Keith's Double Mystery; Harrison Keith's Dragnet; Harrison Keith's Fight for Life; Harrison Keith's Mystic Letter; Harrison Keith's Queer Clue; Harrison Keith's Strange Summons; Harrison Keith's Tact; Harrison Keith's Time Lock Case; Harrison Keith's Weird Partner; Harrison Keith's Wireless Message; A Hunter of Men; In Death's Grip; Into Nick Carter's Web; Nabob and Knave; Nick Carter's Cipher; Nick Carter's Promise; A Plunge into Crime; The Prince of Liars; A Ring of Rascals; The Silent Partner; The Snare and the Game; A Strike for Freedom; Tangled Thread; A Trap of Tangled Wire; When the Trap Was Sprung; Without a Clue

1909 • At Mystery's Threshold; A Blindfold Mystery; Death at the Feast; A Disciple of Satan; A Double Plot; Harrison Keith and the Phantom Heiress; Harrison Keith at Bay; Harrison Keith, Magician;

Harrison Keith's Abduction Tangle; Harrison Keith's Battle of Nerve; Harrison Keith's Cameo Case; Harrison Keith's Close Quarters; Harrison Keith's Death Compact; Harrison Keith's Double Cross; Harrison Keith's Dual Role; Harrison Keith's Green Diamond; Harrison Keith's Haunted Client; Harrison Keith's Lucky Strike; Harrison Keith's Mummy Mystery; Harrison Keith's Padlock Mystery; Harrison Keith's River Front Ruse; Harrison Keith's Sparkling Trail; Harrison Keith's Triple Tragedy; In Search of Himself; A Man to Be Feared; A Master of Deviltry; Nick Carter's Swim to Victory; Out of Crime's Depths; A Plaything of Fate; A Plot Uncovered; Reaping the Whirlwind; Saved by a Ruse; The Temple of Vice; When the Wicked Prosper; A Woman at Bay

1910 • Behind Closed Doors; Behind the Black Mask; A Carnival of Crime; The Crystal Mystery; The Disappearing Princess; The Doom of the Reds; The Great Diamond Syndicate; Harrison Keith—Star Reporter; Harrison Keith's Cyclone Clue; Harrison Keith's Death Watch; Harrison Keith's Labyrinth; Harrison Keith's Perilous Contract; Harrison Keith's Poison Problem; Harrison Keith's River Mystery; Harrison Keith's Studio Crime; Harrison Keith's Wager; The King's Prisoner; The Last Move in the Game; The Lost Chittendens; A Nation's Peril; Nick Carter's Auto Trail; Nick Carter's Convict Client; Nick Carter's Persistence; Nick Carter's Wildest Chase; One Step Too Far; The Rajah's Ruby; The Scourge of the Wizard; Talika, the Geisha Girl; The Trail of the Catspaw

1911 • At Face Value; Broken on Crime's Wheel; A Call on the Phone; Chase for Millions; Comrades of the Right Hand; The Confidence King; The Devil's Son; An Elusive Knave; A Face in the Shadow; A Fatal Margin; A Fatal Falsehood; For a Madman's Millions; The Four Hoodoo Charms; The Gift of the Gods; The Handcuff Wizard; The House of Doom; The House of the Yellow Door; The Jeweled Mummy; King of the Underworld; The Lady of Shadow; A Live Wire Clew; Madam "Q"; The Man in the Auto; A Masterly Trick; A Master of Skill; The Mystery Castle; Nick Carter's Close Finish; Nick Carter's Intuition; Nick Carter's Roundup; Pauline—A Mystery; A Plot for an Empire; The Quest of the "Lost Hope"; A Question of Time;

The Room of Mirrors; The Second Mr. Carstairs; The Senator's Plot; Shown on the Screen; The Streaked Peril; A Submarine Trail; The Triple Knock; The Vanishing Emerald; A War of Brains; The Way of the Wicked; A Weak-Kneed Rogue; When a Man Yields; When Necessity Drives; The Whirling Death

1912 • *Bandits of the Air; The Buried Secret; By an Unseen Hand; A Call in the Night; The Case of the Two Doctors; Clew by Clew; The Connecting Link; The Crime of a Century; The Crimson Flash; The Dead Man's Accomplice; The Deadly Scarab; A Double Mystery; The Fatal Hour; The House of Whisper; In Queer Quarters; In the Face of Evidence; In the Nick of Time; The Man with a Crutch; The Man with a Double; A Master Criminal; A Mill in Diamonds; The Missing Deputy Chief; The Mysterious Cavern; Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves; Nick Carter's Chance Clue; Nick Carter's Counterplot; Nick Carter's Egyptian Clew; Nick Carter's Last Card; Nick Carter's Menace; Nick Carter's Subtle Foe; On a Crimson Trail; Out for Vengeance; The Path of the Spendthrift; A Place for Millions; A Plot for a Warship; The Red Triangle; The Rogue's Reach; The Seven Schemers; The Silver Hair Clue; A Stolen Name; Tangled in Crime; The Taxicab Riddle; Tooth and Nail; The Trail of the Yoshiga; A Triple Knavery; A Vain Sacrifice; The Vampire's Trail; The Vanishing Heiress; When Jealousy Spurs; The Woman in Black; A Woman of Mystery; Written in Blood*

1913 • *The Angel of Death; The Babbington Case; Brought to the Mark; Caught in a Whirlwind; The Clutch of Dread; Cornered at Last; The Day of Reckoning; Diamond Cut Diamond; Doomed to Failure; A Double Identity; Driven to Desperation; A Duel of Brains; The Finish of a Rascal; For the Sake of Revenge; The Heart of the Underworld; The House Across the Street; In Suspicion's Shadow; In the Shadow of Fear; The International Crook League; Knots in the Noose; The Kregoff Necklace; The Man Who Fainted; A Maze of Motives; The Midnight Message; A Millionaire's Mania; The Mills of the Law; A Moving Picture Mystery; Nick and the Red Button; Nick Carter's New Assistant; Nick Carter's Treasure Chest Case; On the Eve of Triumph; Plea for Justice; Points to Crime; The Poisons of Exili; The Purple*

Spot; Repaid in Like Coin; A Riddle of Identities; A Rogue of Quality; The Sign of the Coin; The Spider's Parlor; The Sting of the Adder; The Sway of Sin; The Thief in the Night; A Tower of Strength; Toying with Fate; The Turn of a Card; The Unfinished Letter; Weighed in the Balance; When a Rogue's in Power; When All Is Staked; When Clues Are Hidden; While the Fetters Were Forged; Whom the Gods Would Destroy

1914 • *After the Verdict; Birds of Prey; A Blind Man's Daughter; Bolts from Blue Skies; The Bullion Mystery; Called to Account; Crime in Paradise; The Crook's Blind; The Deeper Game; Dodging the Law; The Door of Doubt; A Fight for Right; The Fixed Alibi; The Gloved Hand; The Grafters; A Heritage of Trouble; In the Toils of Fear; Instinct at Fault; The Just and the Unjust; The Keeper of the Black Hounds; Knaves in High Places; The Last Call; The Man of Riddles; The Man Who Changed Faces; The Man Who Paid; The Microbe of Crime; A Miscarriage of Justice; Not on the Records; On the Ragged Edge; One Object in Life; Out with the Tide; A Perilous Parole; A Rascal of Quality; The Red God of Tragedy; A Rogue Worth Trapping; A Rope of Slender Threads; The Sandal Wood Slipper; The Skyline Message; The Slave of Crime; Spoilers and the Spoils; The Spoils of Chance; A Struggle with Destiny; A Tangled Skein; The Thief Who Was Robbed; The Trail of the Fingerprints; Unseen Foes; The Wages of Rascality; Wanted: A Clew; When Destruction Threatens; With Shackles of Fires; The Wolf Within*

1915 • *As a Crook Sows; The Danger of Folly; The Gargoni Girdle; The Girl Prisoner; Held in Suspense; In Record Time; Just One Slip; The Middle Link; A New Serpent in Eden; On a Million-Dollar Trail; The \$100,000 Kiss; One Ship Wreck Too Many; Rascals and Co.; Satan's Apt Pupil; Scourged by Fear; The Soul Destroyers; A Test of Courage; To the Ends of the Earth; Too Late to Talk; A Weird Treasure; When Brave Men Tremble; When Honors Pall; Where Peril Beckons; The Yellow Brand*

1916 • *Broken Bars; The Burden of Proof; The Case of Many Clues; A Clue from the Unknown; The Conspiracy of Rumors; The Evil Formula; From Clue to Clue; The Great Opium Case; In the Grip of Fate;*

The Magic Necklace; The Man of Many Faces; The Man Without a Will; A Mixed-Up Mess; Over the Edge of the World; The Red Plague; Round the World for a Quarter; Scoundrel Rampant; The Sealed Door; The Stolen Brain; The Trail of the Human Tiger; Twelve in a Grave; When Rogues Conspire

1917 • *The Adder's Brood; For a Pawned Crown; Found in the Jungle; The Hate That Kills; The Man They Held Back; The Needy Nine; Outlaws of the Blue; Paying the Price; The Sultan's Pearls; Won by Magic*

1918 • *The Amphi-Theatre Plot; Blood Will Tell; Clew Against Clew; The Crook's Double; The Crossed Needles; Death in Life; A Network of Crime; Snarled Identities; The Yellow Label; A Battle for the Right; A Broken Bond; Hidden Foes; Partners in Peril; The Sea Fox; A Threefold Disappearance*

1920-1927 • *The Secret of the Marble Mantle, 1920; A Spinner of Death, 1920; Wildfire, 1920; Doctor Quartz Returns, 1926; Nick Carter Corners Doctor Quartz, 1926; Nick Carter and the Black Cat, 1927; Nick Carter and the Shadow Woman, 1927; Nick Carter Dies, 1927; Nick Carter's Danger Trail, 1927; Death Has Green Eyes, n.d.; Crooks' Empire, n.d. (also known as Empire of Crime); Bid for a Railroad, n.d. (also known as Murder Unlimited); Death on Park Avenue, n.d. (also known as Park Avenue Murder!); Murder on Skull Island, n.d. (also known as Rendezvous with a Dead Man); Power, n.d. (also known as The Yellow Disc Murder).*

NICK CARTER/KILLMASTER SERIES: 1964-1967 • *Run, Spy, Run, 1964; Checkmate in Rio, 1964; The China Doll, 1964; Fraulein Spy, 1964; Safari for Spies, 1964; A Bullet for Fidel, 1965; The Eyes of the Tiger, 1965; Istanbul, 1965; The Thirteenth Spy, 1965; Danger Key, 1966; Dragon Flame, 1966; Hanoi, 1966; The Mind Poisoners, 1966; Operation Starvation, 1966; Spy Castle, 1966; The Terrible Ones, 1966; Web of Spies, 1966; Assignment: Israel, 1967; The Chinese Paymaster, 1967; The Devil's Cockpit, 1967; Double Identity, 1967 (also known as Strike of the Hawk); The Filthy Five, 1967; The Golden Serpent, 1967; A Korean Tiger, 1967; Mission to Venice, 1967; The Red Guard, 1967; Seven Against Greece, 1967; The Weapon of Night, 1967*

1968-1970 • *Amsterdam, 1968; The Bright Blue Death, 1968; Fourteen Seconds to Hell, 1968; Hood of Death, 1968; The Judas Spy, 1968; Macao, 1968; Operation: Moon Rocket, 1968; Temple of Fear, 1968; The Amazon, 1969; Berlin, 1969; Carnival for Killing, 1969; The Casbah Killers, 1969; The Cobra Kill, 1969; The Defector, 1969; The Doomsday Formula, 1969; The Human Time Bomb, 1969; The Living Death, 1969; Operation Che Guevara, 1969; Operation Snake, 1969; Peking and The Tulip Affair, 1969; The Sea Trap, 1969; The Red Rays, 1969; Rhodesia, 1969; The Arab Plague, 1970; The Black Death, 1970; Cambodia, 1970; The Death Strain, 1970; The Executioners, 1970; Jewel of Doom, 1970; The Mind Killers, 1970; Moscow, 1970; The Red Rebellion, 1970; Time Clock of Death, 1970*

1971-1973 • *Ice Bomb Zero, 1971; The Mark of Cosa Nostra, 1971; Assault on England, 1972; The Cairo Mafia, 1972; The Inca Death Squad, 1972; The Omega Terror, 1972; Agent Counter-Agent, 1973; Assassination Brigade, 1973; Butcher of Belgrade, 1973; The Code, 1973; Code Name: Werewolf, The Death's-Head Conspiracy, 1973; The Devil's Dozen, 1973; Hour of the Wolf, 1973; The Kremlin File, 1973; The Liquidator, 1973; Night of the Avenger, 1973; Our Agent in Rome Is Missing . . . , 1973; The Peking Dossier, 1973; The Spanish Connection, 1973*

1974-1977 • *Assassin: Code Name Vulture, 1974; The Aztec Avenger, 1974; Beirut Incident, 1974; Death of the Falcon, 1974; Ice Trap Terror, 1974; The Man Who Sold Death, 1974; Massacre in Milan, 1974; The N3 Conspiracy, 1974; Sign of the Cobra, 1974; Vatican Vendetta, 1974; Counterfeit Agent, 1975; Dr. Death, 1975; The Jerusalem File, 1975; The Katmandu Contract, 1975; Six Bloody Summer Days, 1975; The Ultimate Code, 1975; The Z Document, 1975; Assignment: Intercept, 1976; Death Message: Oil 74-2, 1976; The Fanatics of Al Asad, 1976; The Gallagher Plot, 1976; The Green Wolf Connection, 1976; A High Yield in Death, 1976; The List, 1976; The Nichovev Plot, 1976; The Sign of the Prayer Shawl, 1976; The Snake Flag Conspiracy, 1976; Triple Cross, 1976; The Vulcan Disaster, 1976; Plot for the Fourth Reich, 1977*

1978-1980 • *Deadly Doubles, 1978; The Ebony*

Cross, 1978; *The Pamplona Affair*, 1978; *Race of Death*, 1978; *Revenge of the Generals*, 1978; *Trouble in Paradise*, 1978; *Under the Wall*, 1978; *The Asian Mantrap*, 1979; *The Doomsday Spore*, 1979; *Hawaii*, 1979; *The Jamaican Exchange*, 1979; *The Nowhere Weapon*, 1979; *The Pemex Chart*, 1979; *The Redolmo Affair*, 1979; *Reich Four*, 1979; *The Satan Trap*, 1979; *Thunderstrike in Syria*, 1979; *Tropical Deathpact*, 1979; *And Next the King*, 1980; *Day of the Dingo*, 1980; *Death Mission: Havana*, 1980; *Eighth Card Stud*, 1980; *Suicide Seat*, 1980; *Tarantula Strike*, 1980; *Ten Times Dynamite*, 1980; *Turkish Bloodbath*, 1980; *War from the Clouds*, 1980

1981-1983 • *Cauldron of Hell*, 1981; *The Coyote Connection*, 1981; *The Dubrovnik Massacre*, 1981; *The Golden Bull*, 1981; *The Ouster Conspiracy*, 1981; *The Parisian Affair*, 1981; *Pleasure Island*, 1981; *The Q-Man*, 1981; *Society of Nine*, 1981; *The Solar Menace*, 1981; *The Strontium Code*, 1981; *Appointment in Haiphong*, 1982; *Chessmaster*, 1982; *The Christmas Kill*, 1982; *The Damocles Threat*, 1982; *Deathlight*, 1982; *The Death Star Affair*, 1982; *The Dominican Affair*, 1982; *Dr. DNA*, 1982; *Earth Shaker*, 1982; *The Hunter*, 1982; *The Israeli Connection*, 1982; *The Last Samurai*, 1982; *The Mendoza Manuscript*, 1982; *Norwegian Typhoon*, 1982; *Operation: McMurdo Sound*, *The Puppet Master*, 1982; *Retreat for Death*, 1982; *The Treason Game*, 1982

1984-1986 • *Death Hand Play*, 1984; *The Kremlin Kill*, 1984; *The Mayan Connection*, 1984; *Night of the Warheads*, 1984; *San Juan Inferno*, 1984; *Zero Hour Strike Force*, 1984; *Blood of the Scimitar*, 1985; *Blood Raid*, 1985; *The Execution Exchange*, 1985; *Last Flight to Moscow*, 1985; *Macao Massacre*, 1985; *The Normandy Code*, 1985; *Pursuit of the Eagle*, 1985; *The Tarlov Cipher*, 1985; *The Vengeance Game*, 1985; *White Death*, 1985; *The Berlin Target*, 1986; *Blood Ultimatum*, 1986; *The Cyclops Conspiracy*, 1986; *The Killing Ground*, 1986; *Mercenary Mountain*, 1986; *Operation Petrograd*, 1986; *Slaughter Day*, 1986; *Tunnel for Traitors*, 1986

1987-1990 • *Crossfire Red*, 1987; *Death Squad*, 1987; *East of Hell*, 1987; *Killing Games*, 1987; *Terms of Vengeance*, 1987; *Pressure Point*, 1987; *Night of the Condor*, 1987; *The Poseidon Target*, 1987; *Target*

Red Star, 1987; *The Terror Code*, 1987; *Terror Times Two*, 1987; *The Andropov File*, 1988; *Dragonfire*, 1988; *Bloodtrail to Mecca*, 1988; *Deathstrike*, 1988; *Lethal Prey*, 1988; *Spykiller*, 1988; *Bolivan Heat*, 1988; *The Rangoon Man*, 1988; *Code Name Cobra*, 1988; *Afghan Intercept*, 1988; *Countdown to Armageddon*, 1988; *Black Sea Bloodbath*, 1988; *The Deadly Diva*, 1989; *Invitation to Death*, 1989; *Day of the Assassin*, 1989; *The Korean Kill*, 1989; *Middle East Massacre*, 1989; *Sanction to Slaughter*, 1989; *Holiday in Hell*, 1989; *Law of the Lion*, 1989; *Hong Kong Hit*, 1989; *Deep Sea Death*, 1989; *Arms of Vengeance*, 1989; *Hell-Bound Express*, 1989; *Isle of Blood*, 1989; *Singapore Sling*, 1990; *Ruby Red Death*, 1990; *Arctic Abduction*, 1990; *Dragon Slay*, 1990

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Cox, J. Randolph. *The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000. Contains an informative introduction to the dime novel publishing world from which Carter sprang, as well as discussion of Street & Smith.

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Fujiwara, Chris. *Jacques Tourneur: The Cinema of Nightfall*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998. Includes analysis of Tourneur's two Nick Carter films, *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1939) and *Phantom Raiders* (1940). Bibliographic references and index.

Murray, Will. "The Saga of Nick Carter, Killmaster." *The Armchair Detective* 15 (Fall, 1982): 316-329. Informative discussion of Nick Carter's superspy phase, in which the character was modified to capitalize on the popularity of James Bond.

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Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage, edited by Robin W. Winks and Maureen Corrigan. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1998. Comparison of Carter to other famous detectives and of his creators to other mystery and espionage writers.

Reynolds, Quentin. *The Fiction Factory: Or, From Pulp Row to Quality Street*. New York: Random House, 1955. Meticulous history of the Street & Smith publishing house, the publishers of the early dime novels featuring Nick Carter.

Sampson, Robert. *Glory Figures*. Vol. 1 in *Yesterday's*

Faces: A Study of Series Characters in the Early Pulp Magazines. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1983. Compares Carter to other popular pulp heroes, such as Doc Savage and the Shadow.

Srebnick, Amy Gilman, and René Lévy, eds. *Crime and Culture: An Historical Perspective*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005. Study focused largely on the evolution of crime literature around the start of the twentieth century. Concludes with a discussion of Nick Carter. Bibliographic references and index.

VERA CASPARY

Born: Chicago, Illinois; November 13, 1899

Died: New York, New York; June 13, 1987

Type of plot: Thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Vera Caspary's tales of life in large American cities and their suburbs are among the most evocative in the annals of mystery writing. Many of her works, however, have suffered the fate of less powerfully written works by lesser writers because they are out of print and hard to find even on library shelves. Without overtly judging the mores of her twentieth century America, Caspary nevertheless depicts a society of aloof, self-absorbed, and predatory loners and their unrealistic, selfless victims. Dreamers and romantics have little chance of seeing their dreams come true, and too many times they open themselves up to friendship or love, only to be hurt or killed by those whom they trusted.

Caspary's characters each have individual voices and distinct, original, and often unforgettable personalities. The majority of her characters are developed as three-dimensional rather than as the often disposable, one-dimensional characters of much mystery fiction. Neither her main characters nor her richly constructed settings are easily passed over en route to the conclusion of her stories, for she spends time and effort mak-

ing certain that they are as real as possible. Caspary writes not only to entertain but also to say something important about the kind of people and places she knows best.

BIOGRAPHY

Vera Caspary was born in Chicago on November 13, 1904, and spent most of her early years in that city. After graduation from the Chicago public schools, she took a variety of jobs, all of which helped her amass the experiences that she would later draw on in her books. She wrote copy at an advertising agency, worked as a stenographer, directed a correspondence academy, and served as an editor of the magazine *Dance* for two years before turning to freelance writing. Before becoming a mystery writer, however, she wrote novels of a highly romantic coloration between the years 1929 and 1932; in the mid-1930's, she began writing screenplays for Hollywood producers, an activity she continued until well into the 1960's.

In 1943, Caspary published what would become her most successful and most remembered mystery novel, *Laura*, which also became a well-received Broadway play and a film directed by Otto Preminger in 1944. In 1949, she married I. G. Goldsmith. Success with *Laura* led to the production of fourteen other mysteries, the most noted artistically having been

Evvie (1960). Caspary received the Screen Writers Guild Award for her screenplays in 1950. She died on June 13, 1987, in New York.

ANALYSIS

Vera Caspary's mystery tales often feature women as central characters. With their obscure or provincial backgrounds, they are often career women who have come to the big city for a climb up the corporate ladder or opportunists looking for a rich Mr. Right. Sometimes they are suburbanites unhappy with their situations.

In terms of technique, Caspary uses the devices of the red herring, multiple viewpoint, and double ending to great effect. In *Laura*, for example, just as the circumstantial case against Shelby Carpenter, Laura's suitor, becomes strong, the focus shifts to Laura herself, and the circumstantial evidence against her seems to make her, rather than Shelby, the true murderer of her young friend. The reader is allowed to discover that the murdered girl, Diane Redfern, and Shelby had had an affair that might have led to an even deeper romantic entanglement if it had been allowed to continue. Yet, in the background, out of sight and mind for a good portion of the novel, Waldo Lydecker, the murderer, congratulates himself on escaping detection. Only after it is apparent that Waldo had not only a motive (jealousy) but also a weapon like that which had killed Diane (a cane with a hidden shotgun), does he become the chief suspect.

Caspary's skill at creating double endings and writing from various perspectives makes her writing of exceptional interest. The tale of *Laura*, for example, is told from several angles: first from the perspective of Waldo Lydecker (an appropriately subtle and self-serving report on a murder by a man who committed it); then, when Waldo stops writing, the story is picked up by a more disinterested party—Mark McPherson, the Scottish-born police detective. Straightforward and austere written, McPherson's commentary is completely different in word choice and tone from Waldo's effete, precious, and self-serving version of things. Last comes Laura's own account of what transpired, which is, again, much different from what was said before. She is transfixed by the evil she witnesses,

and her commentary is full of concern and awe.

Caspary handles double endings, like multiple viewpoints, with great skill. At the end of *Evvie*, the advertising agency head, Carl Busch, a headstrong, vain, and at times violent man, is arrested for Evvie's murder, thus providing a seeming end to the novel, appropriate and commonsensical. Yet the novel has not run its course. Before it can end, there is a surprise waiting for readers: It was not the ad man who killed Evvie (nor was it the sinister gangster Silent Lucas described pages earlier); rather, it was the mentally retarded handyman.

In another example, *The Man Who Loved His Wife*, it is reasonable and even probable for the reader to assume that Elaine Strode was framed by her husband and her stepson and his wife because her husband created a diary that, on his death, would brand Elaine not only as an adulteress but as a murderer as well. There would appear to be no truth to his accusations, and his growing hatred of her seems to be the work of an unhinged mind. Toward the novel's end, when it is determined by the police detectives that Fletcher Strode was strangled when a dry cleaning bag was placed over the airhole in his neck from which he breathed, readers are led to think that the son and his wife had something to do with it. They would, after all, have a strong motive (insurance money) and the ability to conceive of the plan.

Nevertheless, with a characteristically wry twist, Caspary allows the novel to end with Elaine's confessing to the murder. The author has a laugh at the readers' expense, for anyone who truly followed the evidence in the case would know that it must have been Elaine who killed Fletcher. Yet, because readers like Elaine, they tend to overlook the evidence and vote with their hearts, not their minds. The facts are that Elaine, bored and restless, did have a brief affair, did get tired of seeing her husband lying inert in bed, did resent his bullying, and therefore solved all her problems by killing him.

Caspary's murderers, seldom obvious killers, range from the unusual and absurd to everyday people encountered on any street of any city. They have little in common with one another except a need to exert power. Some are genuine monsters; others are merely pawns of their own inner demons. Products of the heterogenous,

violent American cities and suburbs, they carry out the inner directives that others also receive but on which they fail to act. Just as interesting as Caspary's murderers are her victims. Sometimes readers know much about the victim before his or her death; other times, reader only learn about him or her through the reminiscences of others. In *Evvie*, for example, victim Evelyn Ashton, though she is dead from the outset of the novel, is resurrected for readers by the narrator Louise Goodman. The book becomes not only a murder mystery but also a celebration of the life of a career woman who loved much and died a sordid death.

Social commentary is an important part of Caspary's stories. Implicit in her work is the idea that Americans have created a dangerous society, a cultural split between the haves and have-nots, where the rich ignore the poor and flaunt their wealth and the poor, for their part, envy and hate the rich. Such a society always has violence below the surface, ready to erupt. The immorality of such a society is not so much a result of the breakdown of morals among bohemians but among those of the mainstream who set society's tone. In this period of human conflict, the moral calluses people have developed keep them from developing appropriate responses to the needs of others. Locked in selfishness and motivated by greed, Caspary's world is one in which human life is cheap. With her implicit critique of American mores, Caspary is more than a pedestrian mystery writer. She is a wonderfully accurate portrayer of young, romantic people living in an indifferent milieu that, by necessity, must destroy romance.

LAURA

Laura is set in New York City's well-heeled Lower East Side. Laura Hunt, the protagonist, is a lovely although spoiled young woman to whom men are easily drawn. Charming, intelligent, and upwardly mobile, she is emblematic of all Caspary's female protagonists. Despite the fact that Laura is resourceful, she is neither as self-sufficient nor as knowing as she believes herself to be. To her horror, she discovers early in the story that trusting, resourceful women can be the targets of murderers.

When it is made apparent that a female friend was murdered by mistake and that the real victim was to

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

The 1944 film adaptation of Vera Caspary's novel Laura is now considered a classic of film noir.

have been Laura herself, she becomes both disillusioned with human nature and extremely frightened. For perhaps the first time in her life, Laura finds that despite her beauty, wit, education, and money, life is no more secure for her than it is for a prostitute on the street. When detective Mark McPherson appears to ask her questions about her friend's death, she opens herself up to him, only to discover her vulnerability once more. She finds that she is a murder suspect, but she hopes that McPherson can shield her from harm.

Her self-perceived ability to evaluate the character of others is also severely undermined when she is told that the murderer must certainly be someone who knows her well. Finding no one close to her who fits that description, Laura is clearly baffled for the first time in her life. She not only learns to distrust people but also discovers that distrusting others is the basis of modern urban life.

EVVIE

More hedonistic but no less vulnerable than Laura Hunt, Evelyn Ashton—better known as Evvie—of the novel *Evvie* seems only to discover her worth through the men she loves, most of whom are of the fly-by-night variety. Idealistic and sensitive like Laura, Evvie wants to ease the painful existence of the less fortunate people she encounters in Chicago's streets, believing that by opening herself to them she will not be harmed. This dangerously cavalier attitude leads to her death when she allows a mentally retarded man whom she barely knows into her apartment, and he proceeds to bludgeon her to death with a candlestick in a fit of sexually induced frustration. Evvie's destruction can be seen as confirming the belief of conservative American society about the fate of young women who come to large cities and lead a single lifestyle there.

Unintentionally, perhaps, Caspary may be exhibiting this mainstream outlook that posits the idea that cities are evil and that single women ought to get married and live in the safer suburbs. Independence and rebelliousness will lead only to destruction. Evvie, wanting to lead a bohemian life, allows urban violence into her life and dies because of it. By so doing, she serves as a convenient scapegoat for her suburban sisters, who enjoy hearing tales of big-city adventurers without exposing themselves to big-city dangers.

THE MAN WHO LOVED HIS WIFE

Like Laura and Evvie, Elaine Strode of *The Man Who Loved His Wife* (1966) is a remarkable and resourceful woman of many talents who is victimized by a man. Yet, unlike them, she is also capable of being a victimizer and murderer. Caspary here seems to have altered her view of women's potential for violence. It would be hard to imagine the women in her stories about the 1920's, 1930's, and 1950's as anything but kind and considerate. Elaine, on the other hand, though as remarkable a woman as Laura or Evvie, is much tougher than either. Victimized to a limited extent by her domineering husband, Fletcher, Elaine takes charge of their lives after he loses his booming voice to cancer of the larynx. Unable to force his wife to do his bidding, he has to resort to manipulation based on her alleged sympathy for his plight.

Elaine, later found to be guilty of Fletcher's murder

by strangulation, is overall an appealing character—strong beautiful, intelligent, well-read, and resourceful, a good match for a successful, egotistical husband. Like other Caspary women, however, she is not content to remain a housebound American wife. For her, marriage has become hell. Distraught because of both her loss of physical contact with Fletcher and his increasingly paranoid delusions about her secret affairs, Elaine decides to change what she can change, despite the fact that these alterations can be ushered in only by murder.

Because she is highly sexed, Elaine resembles other Caspary characters whose physical needs often get them into trouble. By being overtly sexual, Elaine breaks a long-standing American taboo, a holdover from Victorian days, against women being sexually adventurous (even though men can be as venturesome as they wish).

One theme that emerges in Caspary's crime novels is a sense that conformity brings rewards to those who choose it over bohemianism and that those few who do rebel will often pay a fearsome price for their defiance of custom. Caspary's female characters are free spirits who choose to follow any force that dominates them, whether it be the pursuit of money, of fame, or of love. Male characters are magnetically drawn to these women and encourage them to be unconventional, yet they also try to take advantage of them.

This is not to imply that Caspary's Evvie, Laura, or other female characters are always admirable, for there is a certain lassitude to their personalities, a kind of amoral drift as a result of lack of concern for the effects of their actions, that makes them flawed characters. One of the author's gifts is that she, unlike many crime-novel writers, is able to render rounded portraits of these women and the men who surround them. That they sometimes act in contradictory or paradoxical ways is an indication that Caspary has created flesh-and-blood characters rather than one-dimensional cut-outs.

John D. Raymer

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Laura*, 1943; *Bedelia*, 1945; *Stranger than Truth*, 1946; *The Murder in the Stork Club*, 1946

(also known as *The Lady in Mink*); *The Weeping and the Laughter*, 1950 (also known as *Death Wish*); *Thelma*, 1952; *False Face*, 1954; *The Husband*, 1957; *Evvie*, 1960; *A Chosen Sparrow*, 1964; *The Man Who Loved His Wife*, 1966; *The Rosecrest Cell*, 1967; *Final Portrait*, 1971; *Ruth*, 1972; *Elizabeth X*, 1978 (also known as *The Secret of Elizabeth*); *The Secrets of Grown-Ups*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Ladies and Gents*, 1929; *The White Girl*, 1929; *Blind Mice*, 1930 (with Winifred Lenihan); *Music in the Street*, 1930; *Thicker than Water*, 1932; *Wedding in Paris*, 1956; *The Dreamers*, 1975

PLAYS: *Geraniums in My Window*, pb. 1934 (with Samuel Ornitz); *Laura*, pr. 1947 (with George Sklar); *Wedding in Paris: A Romantic Musical Play*, pb. 1956

SCREENPLAYS: *I'll Love You Always*, 1935; *Easy Living*, 1937 (with Preston Sturges); *Scandal Street*, 1938 (with Bertram Millhauser and Eddie Welch); *Service Deluxe*, 1938 (with others); *Sing, Dance, Plenty Hot*, 1940 (with others); *Lady from Louisiana*, 1941 (with others); *Lady Bodyguard*, 1942 (with Edmund L. Hartmann and Art Arthur); *Bedelia*, 1946 (with others); *Claudia and David*, 1946 (with Rose Franken and William Brown Meloney); *Out of the Blue*, 1947 (with Walter Bullock and Edward Eliscu); *A Letter to Three Wives*, 1949 (with Joseph L. Mankiewicz); *Three Husbands*, 1950 (with Eliscu); *I Can Get It for You Wholesale*, 1951 (with Abraham Polonsky); *The Blue Gardenia*, 1953 (with Charles Hoffman); *Give a Girl a Break*, 1954 (with Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich); *Les Girls*, 1957 (with John Patrick)

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Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Includes discussion of *Laura*. Bibliographic references and index.

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SARAH CAUDWELL**Sarah Caudwell Cockburn****Born:** Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England; May 27, 1939**Died:** London, England; January 28, 2000**Types of plot:** Cozy; comedy caper**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Hilary Tamar, 1981-2000

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HILARY TAMAR, middle-aged and of indeterminate gender, is a professor of medieval legal history at Oxford who keeps closely in touch with a group of barristers that contains several former students: Michael Cantrip, Desmond Ragwort, Selena Jardine, and Julia Larwood. The four young barristers, who share business quarters at 62 New Square in London, help Tamar solve cases, serving as auxiliary detectives by doing supplemental legwork to find evidence. They often are more involved in the thick of the action than the more intellectual Tamar, making the professor somewhat of a classic armchair detective. Although Tamar often relies on these reports from the field in making assessments of evidence and pursuing trails of inquiry, the professor nevertheless wields considerable intellectual authority and is charismatic in a cerebral way. Because the professor's gender is not revealed, Tamar is often referred to as simply Professor Tamar, the academic rank providing an ascribed identity in place of the unspecified gender.

CONTRIBUTION

Although the heyday of the lighthearted, cerebral mystery is often seen as the 1920's and 1930's, Sarah Caudwell reanimated this subgenre for the modern era. Her work's playfulness and zany high spirits, its acute observation of human foibles, and its intellectual trenchancy give it a distinct tone treasured by many readers. Although critics have sometimes found Caudwell overly derivative of Golden Age mystery novelists such as Dorothy L. Sayers and Michael Innes, her mystery plots depend far less on puzzles and more on a law-

yerlike detection of a loophole that her detective often perceives just in time to apprehend the criminal. In another departure from Golden Age mysteries, Caudwell took the puzzle story and plunged it into the milieu of supersonic airlines, the European Union, faxes, and feminism; she showed readers that the traditional detective story is not just an anachronism but, in the right hands, can be a vital contemporary form.

Caudwell also contributed much more rigor to a traditional aspect of the murder mystery: inheritance law and the intricacies of who gets the money after a person unexpectedly expires. As a tax lawyer, Caudwell was aware of loopholes and eccentricities in the British tax code that would supply a motive for murder when none was readily apparent. Caudwell's legal knowledge permeates the entire series and provides a realism that contributes to her novels' characteristic flavor.

Above all, however, Caudwell is best known for introducing a detective with no definite gender; this intriguing aspect allows Caudwell to move beyond the narrative of mystery into the mystery of the identity of the person who solves them.

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Caudwell Cockburn (pronounced COH-burn), who published her mysteries as Sarah Caudwell, was born to a family of prominent left-wing intellectuals in 1930's England. Her father, Claud Cockburn, was an influential radical journalist, a well-known sympathizer with the policies of the Soviet Union, and a highly regarded novelist. He was connected by marriage or friendship with such well-known British intellectuals as Evelyn Waugh, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Graham Greene. He married Jean Ross, his second wife, and the couple had Sarah before divorcing. He then, in 1940, married Patricia Arbuthnot Byron, with whom he had three sons, Patrick, Alexander, and Andrew. All three of Sarah Caudwell's half siblings became successful, at times controversial, political journalists. Sarah's work, on the

other hand, was cheerfully free of any political relevance.

Caudwell graduated from the University of Aberdeen in northeast Scotland with a baccalaureate degree in classics, then studied law at St. Anne's College, Oxford, at the time a women's college. Infuriated by the men-only policy of the Oxford Union, the university's famous debating society, Caudwell attempted to enter the premises of the union wearing male clothing as a protest. She qualified to practice as a barrister—a lawyer specializing in advocacy at trials before the Chancery Bar, which, in Caudwell's lifetime, dealt mainly with issues of estates and trusts. She practiced there for the better part of a decade, then was hired by Lloyd's of London, an insurance company, as a tax-law specialist. Caudwell, unlike her series protagonist, was never a professor of law, nor was legal history a particular speciality of hers. Her knowledge of inheritance and tax law, however, did play a major role in the narrative construction of the Hilary Tamar mysteries.

Though Caudwell's plots and characters might seem quintessentially English, her books were well received in the United States, appreciated not only by Anglophiles but also by practicing attorneys. Their covers were frequently illustrated by Edward Gorey, the best-known American artist associated with illustrating mystery fiction.

Caudwell lived for much of her life with her mother, Jean Ross, and her mother's sister in the southwest London suburb of Barnes. She never married and no romantic attachments are a matter of public record. She died of esophageal cancer shortly before what would have been her sixty-first birthday. Caudwell was a frequent pipe smoker; her half brother Alexander attributed her relatively early death from cancer to this habit.

Caudwell was an inveterate theatergoer, and her play, *The Madman's Advocate*, was staged in Nottinghamshire, England, in 1994, and in New York in 1995; the play, however, has never been published, nor did it receive any additional stagings in the author's lifetime.

ANALYSIS

Although the unspecified gender of Professor Hilary Tamar should not overshadow the wit and intellec-

tual cogency of Sarah Caudwell's detective novels, it is certainly the feature of her work that has garnered the most attention. This is, perhaps, because it lays bare crucial if often suppressed issues in the detective genre. Does the detective need a gender? In the traditional detective story, the detective is gendered but often sexless. Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot is obviously a man, and he often encourages young couples to marry and presides over marriages but is never personally involved in any union; that he has no perceptible love life is generally of little interest to his fans. He is free to remain the "mind" of the novel. If Hilary Tamar is, as some readers suspect, in fact, a woman, it is possible that Tamar is Caudwell's way of indicating that male detectives such as Poirot appear to be professionally unconstrained by their gender identity and are free to work as almost disembodied intellects. Caudwell, who had criticized Christopher Isherwood's partial portrait of her mother, Jean Ross, as the madcap flapper Sally Bowles in his Berlin stories, was aware of the potential narrative traps and scripts associated with women that would limit her protagonist's personal identity.

Hilary Tamar was the first detective to be without a specified gender; this innovation was heightened by Tamar's narration of the the four books in the series. Previous writers had featured female detectives with deliberately androgynous names and characters, such as American writer Marvin Kaye's Hilary Quayle in the 1970's, but Tamar was the first to be utterly genderless. Whereas the male hard-boiled writers of the 1930's gave their detectives aggressively masculine personae in contradistinction to the traditional detective's identity as genderless thinking machine, Caudwell emancipated her character entirely from characteristics determined by gender.

As with many names used for both men and women, the name Hilary was originally a largely male name; however, by the 1970's it had become more frequently used as a name for women. Caudwell deliberately gave her protagonist an ambisexual name to direct readers playfully at an enigma whose permanent shrouding is not simply a gimmick but a conceptual question that keeps readers alert and guessing throughout the series. Intriguingly, however, Tamar is

clearly a woman's name, borne by two female characters in the Bible; it is also the name of a well-known river in the English shire of Cornwall.

The society Caudwell portrays might seem parochial, cloistered, and elitist at times, and some of its preoccupations might seem fey, but it is also of considerable appeal because its blend of intellect, camaraderie, and humane values represents the best of British civilization. What makes characters commendable in Caudwell's universe is their charm, compassion, and curiosity, rather than blood descent or even meritocracy in the conventional sense. Jokes, conversation, and irreverence are the unifying chords of the ensemble of spirited young friends. The group also accepts one another's frailties and their more than occasional bouts of foolishness. Though unlike Tamar, all the young colleagues are depicted as sexually active, none have settled down permanently with a partner, contributing to the series' celebration of a time of seemingly permanent and endless youth and freedom.

Caudwell was never a writer who relentlessly churned out a book every year or two. This made her oeuvre resemble that of a literary writer, one who does not feel the pressure to produce work at regular intervals. In addition, she did not use her detective as merely a superficial unifier of a disparate chain of plots. Each of the four Hilary Tamar mysteries feature situations appropriate for her detective, and all are steeped in a particular mood and milieu that demonstrate something about Tamar. As Caudwell's career progressed, her books lengthened and often contained more digressions and subplots. Readers who had been attracted by the firm, hard prose of *Thus Was Adonis Murdered* (1981) sometimes found this more leisured pace disconcerting, but the longer format was another factor that brought Caudwell's mysteries closer to the mainstream novel.

THUS WAS ADONIS MURDERED

In *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, Julia Larwood, one of the young barristers who work with Hilary Tamar, goes to Venice and is smitten by a young man. After Larwood manages to cajole the man into bed, however, she is shocked when he dies during their sexual encounter. She quickly realizes she is being framed for his death. Larwood's cohorts, including Tamar, even-

tually come to her assistance, but this is delayed because of the narrative device of the story, an epistolary tale in which Julia's letters home deliver each new installment of her unlikely ordeal. While the hapless Julia lends her predicament a farcical aspect, a sub-theme of the book is cultural encounters between England and Italy. Readers learn much about various Venetian traditions, some of which turn out to be key to the plot.

THE SHORTEST WAY TO HADES

In *The Shortest Way to Hades* (1985), Deirdre Galloway is the sole member of a large family who will not assent to a conspiracy designed to evade taxation due on a family trust that benefits another Galloway, Camilla. This determination, prompted by greed and not integrity, costs her her life. All the other Galloways are suspects, but only Tamar's specialized knowledge will aid her former pupils, who are handling the affair for the trust, in getting to the bottom of the puzzle. Greek islands in the Aegean Sea play the crosscultural role assumed by Venice in the previous novel and provide both the venue of the denouement and its conceptual rationale.

THE SIRENS SANG OF MURDER

In *The Sirens Sang of Murder* (1989), telexes sent by Michael Cantrip, the lone Cambridge graduate among the coven of Tamar's Oxford-educated barristers, play the role that Julia's letters from Italy assumed in Caudwell's first volume. Cantrip careens around the Channel Islands, a notorious tax haven, as well as the French mainland, trying to ferret out the truth of the affairs of the Daffodil Settlement, a dispiritedly complicated trust in which the fortunes of many individuals are tangled. Cantrip, being a man, is more likely to engage in physical action than his female counterparts, but this does not mean that he is in any way proficient at it. Indeed, he falls victim to a number of humiliations, some of them traps set by his enemies, some products only of his own foolishness. A secondary plot is provided by Cantrip's ridiculous attempt to collaborate with Julia Larwood on a steamy romance novel, which ends up being not nearly as exciting as the real-life plot in which Cantrip finds himself enmeshed.

THE SYBIL IN HER GRAVE

Fortune-telling and insider stock trading are usually seen as being in disparate worlds, but Caudwell's last novel, *The Sybil in Her Grave* (2000), brings the two together. Julia Larwood's Aunt Regina, who lives in the southeast English county of Sussex, has cultivated the friendship of local fortune-teller Isabella del Camino, a flamboyant newcomer much resented by the established community. Aunt Regina has had good news lately, as an investment made by herself and some friends has given her a tidy profit. However, one of Julia's barrister colleagues, Selena Jardine, in the course of investigating the affairs of a rich banker, discovers that Aunt Regina's profits may well have come from illegal insider trading. Could Isabella have been, in two senses of the word, the medium for this infor-

mation? As is usual in Caudwell's novels, there is a European side to the action—this time in France, which further complicates a particularly intricate and tangled plot.

Nicholas Birns

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HILARY TAMAR SERIES: *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, 1981; *The Shortest Way to Hades*, 1985; *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, 1989; *The Sibyl in Her Grave*, 2000

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PLAY: *The Madman's Advocate*, pr. 1994

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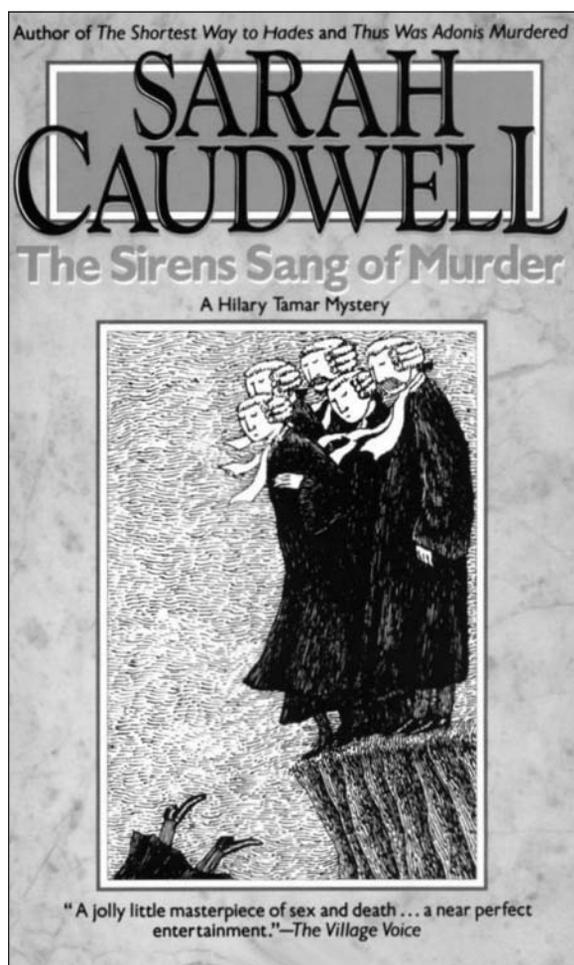
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JOHN NEWTON CHANCE

Born: London, England; 1911

Died: Cornwall, England; August 3, 1983

Also wrote as John Drummond; John Lymington; David C. Newton

Types of plot: Private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sexton Blake, 1944-1955

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SEXTON BLAKE is the hero of numerous dime novels. With a residence on Baker Street, a faithful assistant, and a motherly landlady, he would seem to be a clone of Sherlock Holmes. Yet Blake is less intellectual and more spontaneous. His cases offer the reader action and adventure in the style of the Nick Carter novels.

CONTRIBUTION

A prolific author of popular fiction, John Newton Chance wrote in several genres—including science fiction and juvenile fiction. Writing under his own name, he produced close to one hundred thrillers, among the best being *The Screaming Fog* (1944), *The Eye in Darkness* (1946), and *The Killing Experiment* (1969). Recurring characters in these novels are Superintendent "Smutty" Black, Jonathan Blake, David Chance, Mr. DeHavilland, and John Marsh. Working in the same literary tradition, that of the crime thriller, Chance wrote the Sexton Blake series under the name of John Drum-

mond. This series consists of some two dozen mysteries that were to constitute Chance's most sustained literary effort. Using the pseudonym of John Lymington, Chance became an outstanding writer of science fiction with such works as *The Night Spiders* (1964), *Froomb!* (1964), and *Ten Million Years to Friday* (1967). His international reputation seems to rest primarily on these works.

Throughout his narratives, Chance evidences fine talent in handling setting, especially the creation of atmosphere. He populates his settings with some vivid and memorable characters; they are usually purposely overdrawn, frequently grotesque, and always entertaining. His characters have been compared to those of Charles Dickens and even Geoffrey Chaucer. Further, Chance had a highly developed sense of timing—so crucial to both thrillers and detective fiction—and a deft touch in the handling of individual scenes in his novels.

BIOGRAPHY

John Newton Chance was born in London in 1911, the son of Robert Newton Chance, a comic-strip editor. In addition to his private educational training, he attended secondary school in London and Streatham Hill College. He was married to Shirley Savill, with whom he later collaborated on at least one book, and they had three sons.

Chance began his literary career in 1931 with a story written for the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Later, writing for the *Sunday Graphic*, he produced “Murder Mosaics,” a series of mystery dramas that, taken together, constituted a serial murder novel. After the publication of *Murder in Oils* in 1935, he became well known as an author of popular fiction and remained so throughout much of the twentieth century. His best works were produced from the 1930’s to the 1950’s; the later books, often categorized as potboilers, did not maintain the same high standards. Even for his fine early works, Chance did not receive the critical recognition he deserved, and his fame remains largely restricted to England.

During World War II, Chance flew with the Royal Air Force; he was invalided out of the service in 1944. His wartime experiences, as well as his literary ones, are chronicled in his autobiographical work *Yellow Belly* (1959). Chance died in Cornwall, England, on August 3, 1983.

ANALYSIS

Unlike most writers of thrillers and detective fiction, John Newton Chance does not demonstrate strength in the plotting of his works. Yet he largely offsets this weakness by creating a memorable atmosphere and by drawing vivid characters. Chance consistently makes use of a gothic setting—usually a mansion, castle, or palace that is deteriorating. Typically, these structures have many rooms and are filled with strange chambers, secret passages, and underground labyrinths. Trapdoors, sliding panels, shadowy hallways, and heavy gothic furnishings are the rule.

The Screaming Fog offers an excellent example of Chance’s gothic setting. From a distance, the village where the action takes place looks like some dream castle. It sits on a hill and is enveloped in mist, the roofs of the houses shining with a golden transparency. A closer look reveals the small English town to be shrouded in the “devilish breath of the smuggler’s marsh.” It was once a haven for smugglers, and all inns and barns are connected by passages and wells to a system of catacombs beneath the town. Also, the town is spiritually isolated, and the citizenry has consciously tried to maintain this isolation. Bordering the old walled town is the mud of the marshes that sucks victims down into its heaving bosom. The local inn,

called the Leather Pot, a focal point in the story, is filled with menacing shadows and is backed up against the city wall; beyond that wall is a sheer drop to the marshes below. In *The Screaming Fog*, Chance rejects the sleepy country village and manor house settings so common to British mystery novels. Instead, he uses strange settings pregnant with evil, hostility, and fear.

Using such settings to encourage his reader to suspend disbelief, Chance proceeds to offer fittingly bizarre and grotesque scenes: a skeleton wears a wristwatch, a lifelike dummy’s head falls off and rolls across the floor, and a skeleton wearing a suit, shirt, and tie is found in a cupboard.

Chance’s skill in characterization is on the same advanced level as his handling of setting. With the exception of Sexton Blake, he avoids centering his novels on one series character; instead, he repeatedly brings several performers back on his literary stage, gaining continuity but not limiting himself to one personality. As one would expect, those recurring characters are the protagonists of the works: Superintendent “Smutty” Black, the chief of police who looks like a deformed dwarf, and Mr. DeHavilland, a Rabelaisian character who upstages all others. Both first appear in Chance’s second novel, *Wheels in the Forest* (1935), and they reappear each time the author returns to the setting of the little forest village of Wey. David Chance, who is not given a first name until his third role, in *The Eye in Darkness*, is a former actor and a former thief now turned champion of justice and law. Chance, along with his fiancée, Sally Wilding, a beautiful journalist, first appears in *The Screaming Fog*. Also prominent in the novels is Jonathan Blake, who enters in *The Affair at Dead End* (1966). The blind menace named Rolf and his Circe-like wife, Evelyn, who also first appear in *The Screaming Fog*, are so delightfully villainous that they are brought back for repeat performances.

Chance’s many outstanding creations bear resemblance to those of Charles Dickens; they would not seem out of place on a Chaucerian pilgrimage and could grace the pages of François Rabelais. Chance draws his characters with a few broad strokes. His villains are especially grotesque; they include freaks, recluses, madmen, tyrants, and Satan figures. Although

these supervillains consistently lose the battle between good and evil, they usually steal the attention and often the hearts of the readers.

Chance's handling of his characters often reflects the influence of drama and the stage. His characters are overdrawn, often deformed, and their actions are bold and exaggerated. Chance likes a filled stage and constantly rushes his characters on and off the boards; he shifts scenes skillfully, engrossing the reader. (Illustrating these dramatic touches is the delightful series of comic encounters at the inn in *The Red Knight*, 1945.) Chance typically populates his fiction with a supporting cast of stock characters: scheming maids, suspicious family retainers, absentminded divines, shrewish wives, aspiring lovers beset by obstacles, and bumbling, good-natured gentry. One of the continuing characters in the novels, the former actor David Chance, is periodically forced into the role of private investigator. Also, the narratives often include dramatic performances; for example, in both *The Screaming Fog* and *The Red Knight* the action moves to its climax in a public performance scene.

Chance often falters in the plotting of his novels—although the basic conception behind the plot frequently displays a fine imagination. The problem usually arises in his efforts to sustain the action and development and to resolve the problems and conflicts in the narratives. Although his earlier works are considered far superior to his later ones, even Chance's novels of the 1930's and 1940's suffered from weak plots. For example, the plot in *The Screaming Fog* is exaggerated to the point of self-parody. Two young journalists have stumbled on an odd village where the leading townspeople, including the mayor and the chief of police, are plotting to take over the whole of England. This coterie of human freaks have stationed key men in every important town in England, and they have planted time bombs in strategic locations all over the country. The explosions are to occur at one o'clock in the morning; chaos will reign, and the leading townspeople will take control. The character Chance and Sally Wilding must uncover the plot and thwart it, thereby saving England. It is not surprising when Chance solves the problem, saves the country—and finds love. The archvillains, Rolf and Evelyn, survive

to oppose Chance again in *The Red Knight* (the sequel, which suffers from an even more mundane plot). In Chance's novels the motivation is often unclear, the crime is frequently only incidental, and the lines of development are vague.

THE EYE IN DARKNESS

Although his thrillers are flawed, Chance proved quite skillful at writing detective fiction. Bridging the gap between the two forms, the character Chance moves from a supporting role in *The Screaming Fog* and *The Red Knight* to the lead role in *The Eye in Darkness*, a somewhat standard whodunit—but a very good one. Lacking the grotesque elements, the humor, and many of the gothic gimmicks of the earlier works, *The Eye in Darkness* concentrates on a most worthy criminal, a cleverly conceived crime, and brilliant sleuthing. Paul Marlowe, an aging magician and delightful villain who arouses fear and hate while still eliciting the reader's sympathy, is the evil patriarch of Deadwater Park, where the tale is set. Devilish in appearance, action, and speech, he engineers an intricate and engaging plot that rivals those of the best of literary criminals. Having gathered his relatives together, he explains to them one evening that he is a dying man and is leaving a large sum of money to each. Yet all will be disinherited if he, Marlowe, is still alive the next morning. It would seem he has arranged for his own murder that night; he calls the situation an "experiment with human nature." Murder in *The Eye in Darkness* is to be a family affair.

The first victim is Mr. Raymond, the family solicitor, who is strangled in the library. The suspects are Laura Mallison, who is compared to a bejeweled Persian cat, and her husband, Joe, who has the appearance of a small lizard; Ann Marlowe, a golden-haired beauty, and her young lover, Tony Marston, a somewhat sullen but handsome knight; Betty Mears, the maid, who may be Marlowe's illegitimate daughter; and Barribal, the enigmatic family retainer. When the first two of these suspects also fall victim to the murderer, the solution should be made much more simple, but instead the situation becomes even more confused.

David Chance is forced to assume the role of detective. Trying to reach his wife, who is giving birth, he is thwarted by a snowstorm and seeks shelter at Dead-

water Park. There he learns of the three murders, and an attack is made on his own life. For self-preservation, if nothing else, he must discover the murderer. Assisting him is Dr. Hay, an unflappable old physician. Chance's investigation uncovers insidious hate and madness within the family. In addition, this detective novel offers a cast of characters isolated by the storm, a locked-room murder, blackmail, and many red herrings.

Unlike most of Chance's novels, *The Eye in Darkness* is well plotted. Telescoping the action into one night, the author creates and maintains fine suspense. The solution is a surprise, and the revelation scene is skillfully handled. The explanation is interspersed with action, creating an excitement often missing in other detective fiction. Whereas other Chance plots, especially in the thrillers, falter as the novel progresses, here the action is effectively sustained.

In Chance's fiction, individual scenes often display flashes of outstanding narrative skill. For example, the opening scene of each novel is usually one of well-calculated action meant to ensnare the reader: These include the garroting of a man in *The Red Knight*, the frenzied attempt to reach a pregnant woman in *The Eye in Darkness*, and the mysterious meeting of the cast at the Grindell house in *Spy on a Spider* (1987). Other noteworthy scenes include one at the inn in *The Red Knight* where there is great movement, turmoil, and confusion, and, in the same novel, the description of the epic battle and the resulting pandemonium.

THE SCREAMING FOG AND THE RED KNIGHT

Proving to be Chance's most effective narrative device, the flight-and-pursuit motif creates much drama in his fiction, and chase scenes are carefully inserted to heighten the action at key stages. Many of them are found in the early thrillers—for example, the flight of Sally and Chance through the underground passages and later over the rooftops as they are pursued by a bevy of freakish killers. Other chases involve an automobile; these include Colonel Handy's reckless drive across the marshes in *The Screaming Fog*, and, in *The Red Knight*, Chance's hectic ride through countryside and villages in an effort to beat Sally's taxi to the train station. In these scenes, a fine sense of recklessness is evident. Chance seems to have relished such overstated dramatic scenes.

Contributing to the sense of action in the novels is Chance's very effective use of counterpointing. He is able to sustain several exciting scenes until they merge. An example from *The Screaming Fog* is the segment balancing corresponding scenes by shifting from the villains who are planning Chance's downfall to Sally as she is attacked by Carne in the cellar to Chance sleeping in his chair at the inn. A similar example from *The Red Knight* features skillful movement back and forth from the scene where two of Rolf's men try to kidnap Sally to a parallel scene where three other of Rolf's men encounter Chance and DeHavilland on the lawn and face a strong counterattack. Finally, an even more effective use of this counterpointing is found in the inferior *Spy on a Spider*, where the scene shifts back and forth among the three settings for the novel: the house in the Lake District, the castle on Spider Island (three scenes on three floors there), and the old steamer lying off the coast. These separate scenes are handled simultaneously and are clearly shown to affect one another.

Complementing the setting as well as the action in the novels are vivid imagery, melodrama, and comic devices and situations. The latter are especially effective; throughout Chance's thrillers, one finds humor and comic relief. As Chance the character undergoes a series of hair-raising experiences, he is clearly having a good time despite the ever-present danger. Accompanied by his golden spaniel, he can laugh at horrible situations. The humor invested in both the characters and the actions is primarily Rabelaisian. For example, Bushy Bruin's lecture on the belly as the inspiration for and foundation of the arts is a prize comic mini-dissertation. Humor especially abounds in the several novels featuring Mr. DeHavilland.

ROMANCE

A secondary but significant element in Chance's narratives is romance, an area in which he lacked assurance. Often noted in various novels is the love between Chance and Sally Wilding, for example, but this is never effectively demonstrated. In *The Eye in Darkness*, the narrator even states that he is "no good" at sentimental scenes and then proceeds to demonstrate this fact in his handling of both romantic and familial love. Much later, in *Spy on a Spider*, Chance made an

effort to convey the emotion of love in his fiction; yet the depiction of romance and passion did not come easily to him. Instead, he excelled at depicting the harsher emotions—primarily hate, envy, greed, and fear.

Chance's novels are clearly not intellectual; at their best, they offer an escape from the ordinary and a playful sense of humor. Although his plots tend to be imitative (they borrow from sources ranging from William Shakespeare's plays to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*), his skill in writing individual scenes, his creation of a distinctive atmosphere, and his development of memorable characters guarantee a place for Chance in the history of the mystery and detective genre.

Max L. Autrey

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SEXTON BLAKE SERIES (AS DRUMMOND): *The Essex Road Crime*, 1944; *The Manor House Menace*, 1944; *The Painted Dagger*, 1944; *The Riddle of the Leather Bottle*, 1944; *The Tragic Case of the Station Master's Legacy*, 1944; *At Sixty Miles an Hour*, 1945; *The House on the Hill*, 1945; *The Riddle of the Mummy Case*, 1945; *The Mystery of the Deserted Camp*, 1948; *The Town of Shadows*, 1948; *The Case of the "Dead" Spy*, 1949; *The Riddle of the Receiver's Hoard*, 1949; *The Secret of the Living Skeleton*, 1949; *The South Coast Mystery*, 1949; *The Case of L. A. C. Dickson*, 1950; *The House in the Woods*, 1950; *The Mystery of the Haunted Square*, 1950; *Hated by All!*, 1951; *The Case of the Man with No Name*, 1951; *The Mystery of the Sabotaged Jet*, 1951; *The Secret of the Sixty Steps*, 1951; *The House on the River*, 1952; *The Mystery of the Five Guilty Men*, 1954; *The Case of the Two-Faced Swindler*, 1955; *The Teddy-Boy Mystery*, 1955

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1935-1940 • *Murder in Oils*, 1935; *Wheels in the Forest*, 1935; *The Devil Drives*, 1936; *Maiden Possessed*, 1937; *Rhapsody in Fear*, 1937; *Death of an Innocent*, 1938; *The Devil in Greenlands*, 1939; *The Ghost of Truth*, 1939

1941-1950 • *The Screaming Fog*, 1944 (also known as *Death Stalks the Cobbled Square*); *The Red Knight*, 1945; *The Eye in Darkness*, 1946; *The Knight and the Castle*, 1946; *The Black Highway*, 1947; *Co-*

ven Gibbet, 1948; *The Brandy Pole*, 1949; *The Night of the Full Moon*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Aunt Miranda's Murder*, 1951; *The Man in My Shoes*, 1952; *The Twopenny Box*, 1952; *The Jason Affair*, 1953 (also known as *Up to Her Neck*); *The Randy Inheritance*, 1953; *Jason and the Sleep Game*, 1954; *The Jason Murders*, 1954; *Jason Goes West*, 1955; *A Shadow Called Janet*, 1956; *The Last Seven Hours*, 1956; *Dead Man's Knock*, 1957; *The Little Crime*, 1957; *Affair with a Rich Girl*, 1958; *The Man with Three Witches*, 1958; *The Fatal Fascination*, 1959; *The Man with No Face*, 1959; *Alarm at Black Brake*, 1960; *Lady in a Frame*, 1960

1961-1965 • *Import of Evil*, 1961; *The Night of the Settlement*, 1961; *Triangle of Fear*, 1962; *Anger at World's End*, 1963; *The Forest Affair*, 1963; *The Man Behind Me*, 1963; *Commission for Disaster*, 1964; *Death Under Desolate*, 1964

1966-1970 • *Stormlight*, 1966; *The Affair at Dead End*, 1966; *The Double Death*, 1966; *The Case of the Death Computer*, 1967; *The Case of the Fear Makers*, 1967; *The Death Women*, 1967; *The Hurricane Drift*, 1967; *The Mask of Pursuit*, 1967; *The Thug Executive*, 1967; *Dead Man's Shoes*, 1968; *Death of the Wild Bird*, 1968; *Fate of the Lying Jade*, 1968; *Mantrap*, 1968; *The Halloween Murders*, 1968; *The Rogue Aunt*, 1968; *Involvement in Austria*, 1969; *The Abel Coincidence*, 1969; *The Ice Maidens*, 1969; *The Killer Reaction*, 1969; *The Killing Experiment*, 1969; *A Ring of Liars*, 1970; *The Mirror Train*, 1970; *The Mists of Treason*, 1970; *Three Masks of Death*, 1970

1971-1975 • *A Wreath of Bones*, 1971; *The Cat Watchers*, 1971; *The Faces of a Bad Girl*, 1971; *A Bad Dream of Death*, 1972; *Last Train to Limbo*, 1972; *The Dead Tale-Tellers*, 1972; *The Man with Two Heads*, 1972; *The Farm Villains*, 1973; *The Grab Operators*, 1973; *The Love-Hate Relationship*, 1973; *The Canterbury Kilgrims*, 1974; *The Girl in the Crime Belt*, 1974; *The Shadow of the Killer*, 1974; *The Starfish Affair*, 1974; *Hill Fog*, 1975; *The Devil's Edge*, 1975; *The Monstrous Regiment*, 1975

1976-1980 • *A Fall-Out of Thieves*, 1976; *Return to Death Valley*, 1976; *The Frightened Fisherman*, 1976; *The Laxham Haunting*, 1976; *The Murder Makers*, 1976; *Motive for a Kill*, 1977; *The House of the Dead*

Ones, 1977; *End of an Iron Man*, 1978; *The Ducrow Folly*, 1978; *A Drop of Hot Gold*, 1979; *The Guilty Witness*, 1979; *Thieves' Kitchen*, 1979; *A Place Called Skull*, 1980; *The Black Widow*, 1980; *The Death Watch Ladies*, 1980; *The Mayhem Madchen*, 1980

1981-1987 • *The Death Importer*, 1981; *The Mystery of Edna Favell*, 1981; *Madman's Will*, 1982; *The Hunting of Mr. Exe*, 1982; *The Shadow in Pursuit*, 1982; *Terror Train*, 1983; *The Death Chemist*, 1983; *The Traditional Murders*, 1983; *Looking for Samson*, 1984; *Nobody's Supposed to Murder the Butler*, 1984; *The Bad Circle*, 1985; *Time Bomb*, 1985; *Spy on a Spider*, 1987

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS LYMINGTON): *Night of the Big Heat*, 1960; *The Giant Stumbles*, 1960; *The Grey Ones*, 1960; *The Coming of the Strangers*, 1961; *A Sword Above the Night*, 1962; *The Screaming Face*, 1963; *The Sleep Eaters*, 1963; *Froomb!*, 1964; *The Green Drift*, 1965; *The Star Witches*, 1965; *Ten Million Years to Friday*, 1967; *Give Daddy the Knife, Darling*, 1969; *The Nowhere Place*, 1969; *The Year Dot*, 1972; *The Hole in the World*, 1974; *A Spider in the Bath*, 1975; *Starseed on Gye Moor*, 1977; *The Grey Ones, A Sword Above the Night*, 1978; *The Waking of the Stone*, 1978; *A Caller from Overspace*, 1979; *Voyage of the Eighth Mind*, 1980; *The Power Ball*, 1981; *The Terror Vision*, 1982; *The Vale of the Sad Banana*, 1984

SHORT FICTION: *The Night Spiders*, 1964

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Black Ghost*, 1947; *The Dangerous Road*, 1948 (as Newton); *Bunst and the Brown Voice*, 1950-1953; *The Jennifer Jigsaw*, 1951

NONFICTION: *Yellow Belly*, 1959; *The Crimes at Rillington Place: A Novelist's Reconstruction*, 1961

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Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Very useful overview of the history and parameters of the crime-fiction genre; helps place Chance's work within that genre.

The Times Literary Supplement. Review of *The Red Knight*, by John Newton Chance. June 16, 1945, p. 296. Review of the book featuring the characters Chance and Sally reveals what his contemporaries thought of Chance.

The Times Literary Supplement. Review of *The Screaming Fog*, by John Newton Chance. September 9, 1944, p. 437. Review of another Chance and Sally adventure provides an idea of Chance's reception in his native England.

RAYMOND CHANDLER

Born: Chicago, Illinois; July 23, 1888

Died: La Jolla, California; March 26, 1959

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Philip Marlowe, 1939-1958

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PHILIP MARLOWE is a private investigator and was formerly an investigator for the Los Angeles district attorney's office; he has never married. Marlowe is thirty-three years old in *The Big Sleep* (1939), and in the penultimate novel, *The Long Goodbye* (1953), he is forty-two. He is a tough, street-smart man with a staunch, though highly individual, code of ethics. This code not only defines his personal and professional character but also is the source of both his pride and his often-embittered alienation.

CONTRIBUTION

On the basis of only seven novels, two dozen short stories, and a few articles and screenplays, Raymond Chandler firmly established himself in the pantheon of detective-fiction writers. Though he was by no means the first to write in a hard-boiled style, Chandler significantly extended the range and possibilities for the hard-boiled detective novel. Along with Dashiell Hammett, Chandler created some of the finest works in the genre, novels that, many have argued, stand among the most prominent—detective or otherwise—in the twentieth century. Chandler's achievement is largely a result of three features: a unique, compelling protagonist, a rich, individual style, and a keen concern for various social issues. He established the measure by which other hard-boiled fiction would be judged, and numerous other detective novelists, including Mickey Spillane, Ross Macdonald, and Robert B. Parker, have acknowledged a strong indebtedness to Chandler's work.

BIOGRAPHY

Raymond Thornton Chandler was born on July 23, 1888, in Chicago, the only child of Maurice Benjamin

Chandler and Florence Dart Thornton. Within a few years, his parents separated, and Maurice Chandler disappeared entirely. In 1896, Florence Chandler brought Raymond to London, where he attended Dulwich College. Chandler was an excellent student, and the experiences of a British public school education shaped his character indelibly. After leaving Dulwich in 1905, Chandler spent a year in France and then Germany; he then returned to England and secured a civil service job, which he left to become a writer. During this period, he wrote for various newspapers and composed some poetry (many of these pieces have been collected in *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry*, 1973). In 1912, he returned to the United States and settled in California, but, with the outbreak of World War I, he enlisted in the Canadian army, saw action, was injured, and eventually returned to civilian life and California.

In 1919, after various jobs, Chandler became an executive (eventually a vice president) with the Dabney Oil Syndicate, and after the death of his mother in 1924 he married Cissy Pascal, a woman sixteen years his senior. In 1932, as his drinking increased and his behavior became more erratic, Chandler was fired. In 1933, his first story was published in the pulp magazine *Black Mask*, and he continued writing stories for the next six years, until the publication of *The Big Sleep* in 1939. In 1943, after the publication of three novels and more stories, Chandler went to work for Paramount Studios as a screenwriter, eventually working on the scripts for *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), both of which were nominated for Academy Awards and the latter of which earned an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. With these successes, Chandler commanded increasingly higher salaries, largely unprecedented in their day.

Chandler left Hollywood in 1946 and moved to La Jolla, where he remained for the next ten years. After a long and painful illness, his wife died in 1954. The next year, Chandler drank heavily and attempted suicide, and from 1956 to 1957 he lived alternately in



Raymond Chandler. (Library of Congress)

London and La Jolla. In 1955, he was awarded his second Edgar, for *The Long Goodbye*, and in 1959 he was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, but within a month, on March 26, 1959, he died of pneumonia.

ANALYSIS

Raymond Chandler began his writing career in London in 1908 as a poet. He would have remained anonymous, however, had he not begun publishing hard-boiled detective stories in *Black Mask* magazine in 1933. He worked slowly, producing twenty-one stories in five years, learning the craft under the tutelage of *Black Mask* editor “Cap” Shaw and attempting to match and even exceed his inspiration, Dashiell Hammett. With the publication of *The Big Sleep*, his first novel, Chandler not only reached his mature style but also created his most enduring protagonist, Philip Marlowe. In addition, one finds in that novel many of the themes and concerns that became representative of Chandler himself.

PHILIP MARLOWE

In Marlowe, Chandler wanted a new kind of detective hero, not simply a lantern-jawed tough guy with quick fists. Such a hero he found in Arthurian romance—the knight, a man dedicated to causes greater than himself, causes that could restore a world and bestow honor on himself. References and allusions to the world of chivalry are sprinkled liberally throughout the Marlowe novels. (The name Marlowe is itself suggestive of Sir Thomas Malory, author of *Le Morte d’Arthur*, 1485.) In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe visits the Sternwood mansion at the beginning of the novel and notices a stained-glass panel in which a damsel is threatened by a dragon and a knight is doing battle. Marlowe stares at the scene and concludes, “I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. He didn’t seem to be really trying.” Later, after foiling a seduction, Marlowe looks down at his chessboard and muses, “Knights had no meaning in this game. It wasn’t a game for knights.”

In *The High Window* (1942), a character calls Marlowe a “shop-soiled Galahad,” and the title of the next novel, *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), is an ironic reference to the supernatural character in Arthurian legends who provides Excalibur but who also makes difficult demands. At one point in that novel, Marlowe refers to life as “the long grim fight,” which for a knight would be exactly the case. In *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe becomes involved in Terry Lennox’s fate simply by accident but mainly because Lennox appears vulnerable. As Marlowe explains late in the novel to another character, “I’m a romantic. . . . I hear voices crying in the night and I go see what’s the matter.”

In keeping with his knightly attitudes, Marlowe practices sexual abstinence despite countless seduction attempts. In every novel, women are attracted to Marlowe and he to them. He continually deflects their advances, however, and dedicates himself to the rigors of the case. Chandler wrote about the necessity of keeping a detective’s interest solely on the case, but he tired of what he saw as the inhuman quality of such a man in such a business. Thus, in *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe sleeps with Linda Loring, though he refuses to run away with her to Paris. In *Playback* (1958), he

sleeps with two women, but the novel ends with his sending Linda Loring money to return to California. In "The Poodle Springs Story," a fragment of what was to be the next Marlowe novel, Chandler marries Marlowe to Loring and has them living, uneasily, in wealthy Palm Springs (here, Poodle Springs).

Marlowe also is scrupulously honest in his financial dealings, taking only as much money as he has earned and often returning fees he thinks are excessive or compromising. In case after case, Marlowe simply refuses money; as he explains in *The Big Sleep*, "You can't make much money at this trade, if you're honest." In *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), Marlowe persists in his investigation even after he has been warned by the police, simply because he accepted a fee and failed to protect his client adequately. As he explains at one point in *The Long Goodbye*,

I've got a five-thousand-dollar bill in my safe but I'll never spend a nickel of it. Because there was something wrong with the way I got it. I played with it a little at first and I still get it out once in a while and look at it. But that's all—not a dime of spending money.

It follows then that Marlowe's first allegiance is to the case or client; "The client comes first, unless he's crooked. Even then all I do is hand the job back to him and keep my mouth shut." Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this attitude comes in *The Long Goodbye*, when Marlowe remains silent and in jail for three days after being beaten by the police, rather than confirm what they already know. Later in the novel, he gives an official Photostat of a death confession, knowing that he may be beaten or killed by any number of outraged parties, because he wants to clear the name of his dead client-friend, Terry Lennox.

Often these clients become friends. In the case of Terry Lennox, however, a short but intense friendship is ultimately betrayed when the supposedly dead Lennox appears at the end of the novel and exhibits little appreciation for the difficulties through which he has put Marlowe. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe establishes a brief friendship with Red Norgaard, a former police officer who helps Marlowe get aboard a gambling ship. The most long-standing friendship, though, is with Bernie Ohls, the chief investigator with

the Los Angeles district attorney's office. Marlowe and Ohls were once partners, and though the relationship is strained since Marlowe's dismissal, Ohls frequently bails Marlowe out of trouble or smooths over matters with the authorities to allow the private eye to continue his investigation.

Another important aspect of Marlowe's code involves his uneasy attitude toward the law. Marlowe is clearly outraged by the exploitation around him, as criminal bosses, small-time hoods, and corrupt police allow crime to flourish. Marlowe is committed to a better world, a world that certainly does not exist in his Los Angeles, or anywhere else for that matter. As Marlowe disgustingly explains to Terry Lennox,

You had nice ways and nice qualities, but there was something wrong. You had standards and you lived up to them, but they were personal. They had no relation to any kind of ethics or scruples. . . . You were just as happy with mugs or hoodlums as with honest men . . . You're a moral defeatist.

Such an attitude explains Marlowe's mixed relations with the police. In almost every novel, Chandler portrays fundamentally honest, hard-working police offset by venal, brutal cops, usually from Bay City (Chandler's fictitious locale based on Santa Monica). Consistently, members of the district attorney's office are the best of these figures, men of principle and dedication. A look at *Farewell, My Lovely* provides a representative example of Chandler's treatment of these characters.

FAREWELL, MY LOVELY

Detective-lieutenant Nulty, an eighteen-year veteran, is a tired, resigned hack who dismisses the murder of a black bar-owner as "another shine killing" that will win for him no headlines or picture in the papers. His greatest flaws are his apathy and laziness; he even invites Marlowe into the case so that the private eye can solve matters for him.

Randall of Central Homicide is a lean, crisp, efficient police officer. He repeatedly warns Marlowe to drop the case and remains suspicious of Marlowe's motives. Randall continually and unsuccessfully tries to pry information loose from Marlowe, and their relationship is one of competition and grudging respect.

On the other hand, Blane, of the Bay City force, is a crooked cop who delights in beating Marlowe. Lacking any moral fiber, Blane is content to do the bidding of corrupt mobsters who own the town. His partner, Lieutenant Galbraith, is uneasy about the compromises he has made. At one point, he offers a compelling explanation for his position:

Cops don't go crooked for money. Not always, not even often. They get caught in the system. They get you where they have you do what is told them or else. . . . A guy can't stay honest if he wants to. . . . That's what's the matter with this country. He gets chiseled out of his pants if he does. You gotta play the game dirty or you don't eat. . . . I think we gotta make this little world all over again.

Marlowe clearly cannot accept such rationalizations and responds: "If Bay City is a sample of how it works, I'll take aspirin."

The important contribution Chandler makes with these figures is to balance the view of the police in detective fiction. The classic formula, established by Edgar Allan Poe and embraced by countless other writers, depicted police as well-intentioned bunglers. In hard-boiled fiction, the police are often brutal competitors with the private eye, but in Chandler's works they are human beings; allowed more of the stage, they often explain themselves and their world. Those who are corrupt are revealed as especially pernicious creatures because they have become part of the major network of crime; they aid and abet corruption rather than uphold their sworn duty to fight it. Too often "law is where you buy it," which explains the need for a man such as Marlowe.

Marlowe has equally ambivalent attitudes about women, and in each novel different types of women are paired off against each other. One critic, Michael Mason, contends that in Chandler's novels the "moral scheme is in truth pathologically harsh on women" and that "[w]arm, erotic feeling and loving contact with a woman are irreconcilable for Marlowe." Although Mason's contentions deserve attention, they overlook the fundamental nature and reasons for Marlowe's dilemma.

In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe claims that he

likes "smooth shiny girls, hardboiled and loaded with sin," and indeed he is more than casually interested in the voluptuous Helen Grayle. Anne Riordan, however, the police officer's daughter and Marlowe's confidante and assistant on the case, also commands much of Marlowe's attention. Marlowe's problem stems from his knightly view—he is continually torn between idealism and reality and cannot find a compromise between the two. One part of Marlowe seeks the ideal, perfect woman, a modern-day Guinevere, and Anne Riordan, with her background, independence, and intelligence, appears to be the perfect woman for Marlowe. Her house is a haven from crime and brutality, and Marlowe instinctively runs there after his incarceration in Dr. Sonderborg's drug clinic. Invited to stay the night, Marlowe refuses, worried that the sordidness of his world will invade the sanctuary of Riordan's life.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Another part of Marlowe is disgusted with women such as Helen Grayle and the dissolute Jesse Florian. They are either unintelligent and ugly or morally depraved, lustful creatures who pose threats to the knight's purity. They are seen as calculating and capable of deflecting the detective's attention and easily destroying him.

Marlowe's problem is clearly that he cannot see women as falling between these extremes. Thus, he is destined to be continually attracted but ultimately disappointed by women, and what makes his condition all the worse is his knowledge of it. Marlowe knows that he expects too much, that his sentiments are extreme and hopelessly sentimental. As Chandler reveals in the novel's last scene, where Marlowe argues with Randall that Helen Grayle may have died to spare her aged husband, "Randall said sharply: 'That's just sentimental.' 'Sure. It sounded like that when I said it. Probably all a mistake anyway.'"

Chandler was also aware of this hopeless position in which Marlowe was cast, and in the last two novels he gave Marlowe lovers to humanize some of these attitudes. True to form, however, Marlowe has difficulties finally committing to any of these women; in *Playback*, he explains his position,

Wherever I went, whatever I did, this was what I would come back to. A blank wall in a meaningless room in a meaningless house. . . . Nothing was any cure but the hard inner heart that asked for nothing from anyone.

Perhaps Chandler's greatest contribution to the genre, after the figure of Marlowe, is his distinctive style. He relies heavily on highly visual and objective descriptions that place a reader in a definite place at a definite time. Though he often changed the names of buildings and streets, Chandler has amazed readers with the clarity and accuracy of his depictions of Hollywood and Los Angeles of the 1930's and 1940's.

Chandler also devotes considerable attention to dialogue, attempting to render, although in a hyperbolic way, the language of the street, a language in which private eyes and hoodlums would freely converse. Chandler is especially adept at changing the tone, diction, and grammar of different characters to reflect their educational background and social status. The

hallmark of his distinctive style, however, is his use of wildly colorful metaphors and similes, such as his description of Moose Malloy's gaudy outfit in *Farewell, My Lovely*, "Even on Central Avenue, not the quietest dressed street in the world, he looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food."

Marlowe's speech is full of slang, wisecracks, colloquialisms, under- and overstatements, and clichés. The effect of having Marlowe narrate his own adventures is to emphasize the character's interior space—his thoughts and emotions—over a rapidly unfolding series of actions. As Chandler explains in a letter:

All I wanted to do when I began writing was to play with a fascinating new language, to see what it would do as a means of expression which might remain on the level of unintellectual thinking and yet acquire the power to say things which are usually only said with a literary air.

Chandler's overriding desire, as he reveals in another letter, was "to accept a mediocre form and make something like literature out of it [which] is in itself rather an accomplishment."

In making "something like literature" out of the hard-boiled formula, Chandler consistently relies on literary allusions, setting the detective's hidden frame against the banality of the world he inhabits. (To make these allusions more credible, Chandler establishes in *The Big Sleep* that Marlowe has spent some time in college.) Thus, Marlowe refers to Samuel Pepys's diary in *The High Window* and frequently alludes to William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (c. 1592) in *Farewell, My Lovely*. In fact, Chandler originally wanted to title that novel "The Second Murderer" after one of the characters in *Richard III*, but his editor discouraged the idea.

Chandler also delights in referring to various other detective novels in the course of his narratives. In *Playback*, for example, Marlowe picks up and quickly discards a paperback "about some private eye whose idea of a hot scene was a dead naked woman hanging from the shower rail with the marks of torture on her." The reference is almost certainly to a Mickey Spillane novel. In many of the novels, Marlowe refers derisively to S. S. Van Dine's Philo Vance, expressing Chandler's own distaste for Golden Age detective fiction.

Frequently, Chandler has Marlowe warn a client or a cop that a case cannot be solved through pure deductive reasoning, as a Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot might. As Marlowe reveals in *The Big Sleep*,

I don't expect to go over ground the police have covered and pick up a broken pen point and build a case from it. If you think there is anybody in the detective business making a living doing that sort of thing, you don't know much about cops.

Readers and critics have frequently lamented Chandler's Byzantine plots that end inconclusively or unconvincingly. Indeed, many of the problems resulted from Chandler's practice of cannibalizing short stories to construct the plots of his novels. In letters, Chandler repeatedly admits his shortcomings with plotting, as he does when remarking: "As a constructionist I have a dreadful fault; I let characters run away with scenes and then refuse to discard the scenes that don't fit. I end up usually with the bed of Procrustes."

These plots within plots that often end enigmatically, however, also reveal Chandler's deep-seated belief that crimes, like life itself, often defy clear, rational explanation. The plot of *Farewell, My Lovely*, which has been criticized for being confused, actually offers an ingenious comment on the irrationality of crime and motive. As he stumbles over crooked cops, crime bosses, quack doctors and spiritualists, gambling ships, and a host of other obstacles, Marlowe is convinced that an intricate conspiracy has been devised to keep him from the truth. As the conclusion reveals, however, many of these events and people operate independently of one another. Rather than inhabiting a perversely ordered world, Marlowe wanders through a maze of coincidence. Instead of the classic detective's immutably rational place, Marlowe lives in an existential universe of frustrated hopes, elliptical resolutions, and vague connections. The fundamental condition of life is alienation—that of the detective and everyone else.

In this way, Chandler infuses his novels with a wide range of social commentary, and when he is not examining the ills of television, gambling, and the malleability of the law, Chandler's favorite subject is California, particularly Los Angeles and Hollywood.

Chandler had a perverse fascination with California; though he claimed he could leave it at any time and never miss it, the fact is that once he settled in California, he never left for any extended period of time.

THE LITTLE SISTER

Over and over again, Marlowe is disgusted with California, which he describes in *The Little Sister* (1949) as "the department-store state. The most of everything and the best of nothing." Without firmly established history and traditions, California and Los Angeles are open to almost any possibility, and those possibilities are usually criminal. For Marlowe, Los Angeles is the modern equivalent of a medieval Lost City:

Out there in the night of a thousand crimes people were dying, being maimed, cut by flying glass, crushed against steering wheels or under heavy car tyres. People were being beaten, robbed, strangled, raped, and murdered. People were hungry, sick, bored, desperate with loneliness or remorse or fear, angry, cruel, feverish, shaken by sobs. A city no worse than others, a city rich and vigorous and full of pride, a city lost and beaten and full of emptiness.

As bad as it may be, however, Marlowe would never think of leaving.

As *The Little Sister* reveals, Los Angeles, and by extension California, has been permanently shaped by the presence of Hollywood and the films. Events repeatedly seem unreal and illusory, and characters appear to be little more than celluloid projections thrown into the world. Such unreality and insubstantiality breed corruption and exploitation; people accept filth and degradation, and Marlowe finds himself as the lone wanderer trying to dispel the dream.

David W. Madden

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PHILIP MARLOWE SERIES: *The Big Sleep*, 1939; *Farewell, My Lovely*, 1940; *The High Window*, 1942; *The Lady in the Lake*, 1943; *The Little Sister*, 1949; *The Long Goodbye*, 1953; *Playback*, 1958; *The Raymond Chandler Omnibus: Four Famous Classics*, 1967; *The Second Chandler Omnibus*, 1973; *Poodle Springs*, 1989 (incomplete manuscript finished by

Robert B. Parker); *Later Novels and Other Writings*, 1995

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Five Murderers*, 1944; *Five Sinister Characters*, 1945; *Finger Man, and Other Stories*, 1946; *Red Wind*, 1946; *Spanish Blood*, 1946; *The Simple Art of Murder*, 1950; *Trouble Is My Business*, 1950; *Pick-up on Noon Street*, 1952; *Smart-Aleck Kill*, 1953; *Pearls Are a Nuisance*, 1958; *Killer in the Rain*, 1964 (Philip Durham, editor); *The Smell of Fear*, 1965; *The Midnight Raymond Chandler*, 1971; *The Best of Raymond Chandler*, 1977; *Stories and Early Novels*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *Double Indemnity*, pr. 1946 (with Billy Wilder); *The Blue Dahlia*, pb. 1976; *Playback*, pb. 1985

SCREENPLAYS: *And Now Tomorrow*, 1944 (with Frank Partos); *Double Indemnity*, 1944 (with Wilder); *The Unseen*, 1945 (with Hagar Wilde and Ken England); *The Blue Dahlia*, 1946; *Strangers on a Train*, 1951 (with Czenzi Ormonde and Whitfield Cook)

NONFICTION: *The Blue Dahlia*, 1946 (Matthew J. Bruccoli, editor); *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, 1962 (Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorely Walker, editors); *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry*, 1973 (Bruccoli, editor); *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler and English Summer*, 1976 (Frank MacShane, editor); *Raymond Chandler and James M. Fox: Letters*, 1978; *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, 1981 (MacShane, editor); *The Raymond Chandler Papers: Selected Letters and Non-fiction, 1909-1959*, 2000 (Tom Hiney and MacShane, editors)

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LESLIE CHARTERIS

Leslie Charles Bowyer Yin

Born: Singapore; May 12, 1907

Died: Windsor, England; April 15, 1993

Type of plot: Thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Simon "the Saint" Templar, 1928-1980 (stories by other writers continued, with Charteris's approval)

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SIMON "THE SAINT" TEMPLAR, a modern Robin Hood. Templar changes but does not obviously age. Despite Charteris's incorporation of real-world events as a means of alluding to Templar's increasing years, screen depictions feature a perpetually youthful man. The Saint of the early stories resides in London. He lives the good life, made possible by his earnings as an adventurer. He is witty and debonair but also ruthless. Just before World War II, he moves to the United States, where he becomes a far more serious and solitary figure.

CONTRIBUTION

In Simon Templar, Leslie Charteris fashioned the perfect hero of popular fiction for the twentieth century. Templar, known by his sobriquet, the Saint, possesses all the modern virtues: He is bright and clever, but not intellectual; he is charming and sensitive, but not effete; he is a materialist who relishes good food, good drink, luxurious surroundings, and the company of beautiful women, but he lives by a strict moral code of his own devising.

Templar is "good," as his nickname indicates, but his view of good and evil does not derive from any spiritual or ethical system and has nothing whatever to do with Anglo-Saxon legalisms. Rather, his morality is innate and naturalistic. He is one of the very fittest in an incredibly dangerous world, and he survives with aplomb and élan. Even when he becomes more political (serving as an American agent during World War II), he supports only the causes that square with his own notions of personal freedom. He is always the secular hero of a secular age. As such, he has lived the life of the suave adventurer for more than sixty years,

in novels, short stories, comic strips, motion pictures, and television series. Moreover, because Simon Templar is not a family man, James Bond and every Bond manqué may properly be viewed as the illegitimate literary progeny of the Saint.

BIOGRAPHY

Leslie Charteris was born Leslie Charles Bowyer Yin on May 12, 1907, in Singapore, the son of Dr. S. C. Yin, a Chinese surgeon and Englishwoman Florence Bowyer. A slight air of mystery attaches to Charteris's origins. His father was reputed to be a direct descendant of the Yin family who ruled China during the Shang Dynasty (c. 1700-1027 B.C.E.). Charteris recalls that he learned Chinese and Malay from native servants before he could speak English and that his parents took him around the world three times before he was twelve. He valued the education afforded by this cosmopolitan experience far more than his formal education, which he received in England—at Falconbury School, Purley, Surrey (1919-1922) and at Rossall School, Fleetwood, Lancashire (1922-1924). However, he worked eagerly on school magazines, and sold his first short story at the age of seventeen.

After leaving school for a brief stay in Paris in 1924, Charteris was persuaded to enter King's College, Cambridge, in 1925. He stayed for little more than a year, spending his time reading voraciously in the fields of criminology and crime fiction. He left the university to pursue a career as a writer when his first full-length crime novel was accepted. Around this same time, he changed his name by deed poll to Leslie Charteris, though sources differ as to the year. At first, despite the popularity of the Saint, Charteris struggled to support himself, taking odd jobs in England, France, and Malaya un-

til 1935. Syndicated comic strips, such as *Secret Agent X-9* (mid-1930's) and *The Saint* (1945-1955), helped further his career, as did his work as a Hollywood scriptwriter. When his novel *The Saint in New York* (1935) was brought to the screen in 1938, Charteris gained international fame.

Over the next several years, Charteris developed a dashing persona, of which a monocle and a small mustache were manifestations. He married Pauline Schishkin in 1931 and was divorced from her in 1937. His only child, Patricia Ann, was born of this marriage. Charteris first came to the United States in 1932 and went to Hollywood the following year. He eventually returned to England but moved to New York after his divorce. In 1938, he married Barbara Meyer, an American, from whom he was divorced in 1943. That same year, he married Elizabeth Bryant Borst, a singer. He was naturalized an American citizen in 1946. He was divorced again in 1951, and the next year he married Audrey Long, a film actress.

Charteris also worked as a scenarist, columnist, and editor. His avocations—eating, drinking, shoot-

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The Saint as he appeared in Popular Detective magazine in 1938.

ing, fishing, flying, and yachting—mirror those of his dapper hero. His odd jobs reportedly included working in a tin mine and a rubber plantation, prospecting for gold, hiring on as a seaman on a freighter, fishing for pearls, bartending, working at a wood distillation plant, and becoming a balloon inflator for a fairground sideshow. He took a pilot's license, traveled to Spain, and became a bullfighting aficionado. He invented a universal sign language, which he named Paleneo. He once listed himself as his favorite writer. In 1992, he was awarded the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. He died in Windsor, England, in 1993.

ANALYSIS

Leslie Charteris's first novel, *X Esquire*, appeared in 1927 and was quickly followed by *Meet the Tiger* (1928), the first of the series that would make its author famous. It took some time, however, for the Tiger to evolve into the Saint. Charteris required another two years and another three novels to develop this character satisfactorily. When Charteris began writing Saint stories for *The Thriller* in 1930, Simon Templar had finally settled into a personality that would catch the fancy of the reading public.

To begin with, the hero's name was masterfully chosen. Along with other connotations, the name Simon suggests Simon Peter (Saint Peter), foremost among the apostles and an imperfect man of powerful presence. The name Templar reminds the reader of the Knights Templar, twelfth century crusaders who belonged to a select military-religious order. Thriller fiction at the time Charteris began to write was replete with young veterans of World War I who were disillusioned, restless, disdainful of law and social custom, and eager for any adventure that came to hand. Simon Templar was very much a member of this order. Like the Knights Templar and the outlaws of Sherwood Forest, the Saint and his fictional colleagues set out to rout the barbarians and foreigners. The villains of many thrillers of the period were foreigners, Jews, and blacks. Charteris certainly adopted the convention, and for this reason it has been remarked that his early novels sometimes had a racist, fascist cast to them.

"THE MILLION POUND DAY"

In chapter 1 of "The Million Pound Day," the second of three novelettes in *The Holy Terror* (1932), the Saint saves a fleeing man from a black villain, clad only in a loincloth, who is pursuing him along a country lane. The black is perfectly stereotypical. He is a magnificent specimen physically but is savage and brutal. He exudes primeval cruelty, and the Saint "seemed to smell the sickly stench of rotting jungles seeping its fetid breath into the clean cold air of that English dawn." The reader should not, however, make too much of such passages. Racial and ethnic sensibilities have been heightened considerably since 1932, so that the chauvinism and offhand use of racial epithets found in the work of some of the finest writers of Charteris's generation (for example, Evelyn Waugh) are quite jolting to the modern reader.

On the other hand, Charteris himself was something of an outsider in those days. Although he often deferred to the prejudices of his readers, his work contained a consistent undercurrent of mockery. Simon Templar mixes effortlessly with the members of the ruling class, but as often as not, his references to them are contemptuous. Like a Byronic hero, his background is mysterious, romantic, and essentially classless. It is significant that, during a period in which most fictional heroes are members of the officer class with outstanding war records, Simon Templar has no war record.

"THE INLAND REVENUE"

An example of how the Saint—and Charteris—tweak British smugness is found in "The Inland Revenue," the first of the novelettes in *The Holy Terror*. As chapter 2 opens, Simon Templar is reading his mail at the breakfast table. "During a brief spell of virtue some time before," Templar has written a novel, a thriller recounting the adventures of a South American "super-brigand" named Mario. A reader has written an indignant letter, taking issue with Templar's choice of a "lousy Dago" as his hero rather than an Englishman or an American. The letter writer grew so furious during the composition of his screed that he broke off without a closure. His final line reads, "I fancy you yourself must have a fair amount of Dago blood in you." Templar remarks with equanimity that at that

point the poor fellow had probably been removed to “some distant asylum.”

The earlier Saint stories are marked by such playful scenes. They are also marked by a considerable amount of linguistic playfulness and ingenuity. For example, Charteris often peppers the stories with poetry that is more or less extrinsic to the plot. In chapter 3 of “The Inland Revenue,” Templar is composing a poem on the subject of a newspaper proprietor who constantly bemoans the low estate of modern Great Britain. He writes of this antediluvian:

For him, no Transatlantic flights,
Ford motor-cars, electric lights,
Or radios at less than cost
Could compensate for what he lost
By chancing to coagulate
About five hundred years too late.

The Saint’s disdain for authority is more pronounced in the early books. He dispenses private justice to enemies with cognomens such as “the Scorpion,” and at the same time delights in frustrating and humiliating the minions of law and order. His particular foil is Claud Eustace Teal, a plodding inspector from Scotland Yard. Chief Inspector Teal is a device of the mystery genre with antecedents stretching back at least as far as the unimaginative Inspector Lestrade of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

“THE MELANCHOLY JOURNEY OF MR. TEAL”

There is—on the Saint’s part, at least—a grudging affection that characterizes the relationship between Teal and him. “The Melancholy Journey of Mr. Teal” in *The Holy Terror* is, in part, the story of a trap the Saint lays for Inspector Teal. Templar allows Teal temporarily to believe that he has finally got the goods on his nemesis, then Templar springs the trap and so shocks and mortifies the inspector that he appears to age ten years on the spot. The Saint has totally conquered his slow-witted adversary, yet “the fruits of victory were strangely bitter.”

THE SAINT EVOLVES

The Saint’s romantic interest in the early stories is Patricia Holm. Their relationship is never explored in detail, but it is clearly unconventional. The narrator hints at sexual intimacy by such devices as placing the

beautiful Patricia, without explanatory comment, at Templar’s breakfast table. Charteris moved to the United States in the late 1930’s, and the Saint moved with him. In *The Saint in Miami* (1940), Patricia, Hoppy Iniatz (Templar’s muscleman bodyguard), and other series regulars are in the United States as well. They fall away, however, as Simon Templar undergoes two decided changes.

First, the sociable Saint of the stories set in England evolves during the 1940’s into a hero more in the American mold. The mystery genre in the United States was dominated at that time by the hard-boiled loner, such as Raymond Chandler’s private eye, Philip Marlowe. During the war years, the Saint defends democracy, becoming more of a loner in the process. He never evolves into an American, but he becomes less of an Englishman. Eventually, he becomes a citizen of the world, unencumbered by personal relationships, taking his adventures and his women where he finds them.

Second, the Saint, like so many real people, was changed by his own success. Charteris had collaborated on a screenplay as early as 1933 and, during 1940 and 1941, he worked on three Saint films. He had earlier written a syndicated comic strip entitled *Secret Agent X-9*; he adapted Simon Templar to the medium in *Saint*, a strip that ran from 1945 to 1955. He had edited *Suspense* magazine in the 1940’s, and he turned this experience to the Saint’s account as well. Charteris was editor of *The Saint Detective Magazine* (later retitled *The Saint Mystery Magazine*) from 1953 to 1967. The wit, the clever use of language, the insouciance of the early stories and novels, however, did not translate well to films, comic strips, or television.

Still, the Saint of the screen remained very British. The first of the films, *The Saint in New York* (not written by Charteris), was produced in 1938, during a period in which a large contingent of British actors had been drawn to Hollywood. Among this group was Louis Hayward, who portrayed the Saint in his first screen appearance. The Saint films were rather short, low-budget pictures, designed for exhibition as part of a twin bill. George Sanders, a leading character actor in major Hollywood productions for more than thirty years, was an early Simon Templar. He was succeeded

in the role by his brother, Tom Conway, who resembled him greatly and whose voice was virtually identical to his.

As played by the brothers, the Saint was a sophisticated, well-dressed adventurer with a limpid manner. He spoke in flawless stage English, and his mature looks were emphasized by a pencil-thin mustache. Although Charteris had nothing to do with most of the films, he did collaborate on the screenplays for *The Saint's Double Trouble* (1940), *The Saint's Vacation* (1941), and *The Saint in Palm Springs* (1941). During the 1940's, he sold many Saint stories to American magazines, and he also wrote a radio series, *Sherlock Holmes*. The Saint also appeared in various productions on British, American, and Swiss radio from 1940 to 1951, with a return to British radio in 1995.

Saint films appeared at regular intervals through 1953, when the advent of television moved the popular Simon Templar from the large to the small screen. Several television movies appeared, as well as further feature-length films. During the 1960's, Roger Moore became television's Simon Templar. Moore was a larger, more physically imposing, more masculine Saint than his predecessors. This series was filmed in England, and it established London once again as the Saint's home base. Also back, largely for comic effect, was the stolid Inspector Teal.

In the next decade, Ian Ogilvy played the part and was the most youthful and handsome Saint of them all. His television series *Return of the Saint* took a new look at the classic hero, transforming him from a man outside the law serving his own brand of justice to one who helped the police by solving crimes with his wits rather than through further crime and violence. Initially perturbed by the Saint's increasingly youthful appearance, Charteris remarked,

God knows how we shall reconcile this rejuvenation with the written word, where there is incontrovertible internal evidence that by this time Simon Templar has got to be over seventy. After all, he is clearly recorded as having been over thirty during Prohibition, which senile citizens like me recall as having ended in 1933. Perhaps the only thing is to forget such tiresome details and leave him in the privileged limb of such immortals as Li'l Abner, who has never aged a day.

The Saint novels continued to appear with regularity through 1948, but their energy was largely spent. Simon Templar had become a profitable industry, of which Leslie Charteris was chairman of the board. For the next three decades, except for *Vendetta for the Saint* (1964), very little work of an original nature appeared. Charteris worked at some other projects, including a column for *Gourmet Magazine* (1966-1968). *Arrest the Saint*, an omnibus edition, was published in 1956. *The Saint in Pursuit*, a novelization of the comic strip, appeared in 1970. The remaining output of the period consisted largely of short-story collections. Many of the stories were adapted from the popular television series and were written in collaboration with others. In fact, Charteris often contented himself with polishing and giving final approval to a story written largely by someone else.

In the 1980's, the Saint even wandered over into the science-fiction genre. Not surprisingly, critics judged this work decidedly inferior to the early Saint stories. In fact, Charteris specifically began first collaborating with other writers, and then approving novels and stories written solely by others, as a means of ensuring that the Saint legacy would continue after his death. Other Saint novels and story collections, produced in collaboration with Charteris or alone, have involved such writers as Donne Avenell, Burl Barer, Peter Bloxson, Jerry Cady, Jeffrey Dell, Terence Feely, Jonathan Hensleigh, Ben Holmes, Donald James, John Kruse, Fleming Lee, D. R. Motton, Michael Pertwee, Christopher Short, Leigh Vance, Graham Weaver, and Norman Worker. In 1997, four years after Charteris's death, the motion picture *The Saint*, starring Val Kilmer as the Saint, was released.

The Saint's golden age was the first decade of his literary existence. The wit and charm of the hero and the prose style with which his stories were told will form the basis for Charteris's literary reputation in the years to come.

Patrick Adcock
Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BILL KENNEDY SERIES: *X Esquire*, 1927; *The White Rider*, 1928

SIMON "THE SAINT" TEMPLAR SERIES: 1928-1930 • *Meet the Tiger*, 1928 (also known as *The Saint Meets the Tiger*); *Enter the Saint*, 1930; *Knight Templar*, 1930 (also known as *The Avenging Saint*); *The Last Hero*, 1930 (also known as *The Saint Closes the Case* and *The Saint and the Last Hero*)

1931-1940 • *Alias the Saint*, 1931; *Featuring the Saint*, 1931; *She Was a Lady*, 1931 (also known as *Angels of Doom* and *The Saint Meets His Match*); *Getaway*, 1932 (also known as *Saint's Getaway*); *The Holy Terror*, 1932 (also known as *The Saint Versus Scotland Yard*); *Once More the Saint*, 1933 (also known as *The Saint and Mr. Teal*, 1933); *The Brighter Buccaneer*, 1933; *Boodle*, 1934 (also known as *The Saint Intervenes*); *The Misfortunes of Mr. Teal*, 1934 (also known as *The Saint in London*); *The Saint Goes On*, 1934; *The Saint in New York*, 1935; *The Saint Overboard*, 1936; *The Ace of Knives*, 1937 (also known as *The Saint in Action*); *Thieves' Picnic*, 1937 (also known as *The Saint Bids Diamonds*); *Follow the Saint*, 1938; *Prelude for War*, 1938 (also known as *The Saint Plays with Fire*); *The Happy Highwayman*, 1939; *The Saint in Miami*, 1940; *The Saint's Double Trouble*, 1940 (with Ben Holmes)

1941-1950 • *The Saint in Palm Springs*, 1941 (with Jerry Cady); *The Saint's Vacation*, 1941 (with Jeffrey Dell); *The Saint Goes West*, 1942; *The Saint at Large*, 1943; *The Saint Steps In*, 1943; *The Saint on Guard*, 1944; *Lady on a Train*, 1945; *Paging the Saint*, 1945; *The Saint Sees It Through*, 1946; *Call for the Saint*, 1948; *Saint Errant*, 1948

1951-1960 • *The Second Saint Omnibus*, 1951; *The Saint in Europe*, 1953; *The Saint on the Spanish Main*, 1955; *Arrest the Saint*, 1956; *The Saint Around the World*, 1956; *Thanks to the Saint*, 1957; *Concerning the Saint*, 1958; *Señor Saint*, 1958; *The Saint Cleans Up*, 1959; *The Saint to the Rescue*, 1959

1961-1982 • *Trust the Saint*, 1962; *The Saint in the Sun*, 1963; *Vendetta for the Saint*, 1964 (with Harry Harrison); *The Saint in Pursuit*, 1970 (with Fleming Lee); *The Saint and the People Importers*, 1971 (with Lee); *Saints Alive*, 1974; *The Saint's Sporting Chance*, 1980; *The Fantastic Saint*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Daredevil*, 1929; *The Bandit*, 1929 (also known as *The Black Cat*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *Sherlock Holmes* series, c. 1940 (with Denis Green)

SCREENPLAYS: *Midnight Club*, 1933 (with Seton I. Miller); *The Saint's Double Trouble*, 1940 (with Ben Homes); *The Saint in Palm Springs*, 1941 (with Jerry Cady); *The Saint's Vacation*, 1941 (with Jeffrey Dell); *Lady on a Train*, 1945 (with Edmund Beloin and Robert O'Brien); *River Gang*, 1945 (with others); *Two Smart People*, 1946 (with others); *Tarzan and the Huntress*, 1947 (with Jerry Grushkind and Rowland Leigh)

NONFICTION: *Spanish for Fun*, 1964; *Paleneo: A Universal Sign Language*, 1972

EDITED TEXTS: *The Saint's Choice of Humorous Crime*, 1945; *The Saint's Choice of Impossible Crime*, 1945; *The Saint's Choice of Hollywood Crime*, 1946; *The Saint Mystery Library*, 1959-1960; *The Saint Magazine Reader*, 1966 (with Hans Santesson; also known as *The Saint's Choice*)

TRANSLATION: *Juan Belmonte, Killer of Bulls: The Autobiography of a Matador*, 1937 (by Juan Belmonte and Manuel Chaves Nogales)

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Blakemore, Helena. "The Novels of Leslie Charteris." In *Twentieth-Century Suspense: The Thriller Comes of Age*, edited by Clive Bloom. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. Examines Charteris specifically as a crafter of suspense stories and analyzes the use of suspense in his work.

Greene, Suzanne Ellery. *Books for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-1945*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1974. This broader study looks at the Saint as a popular character in general, not merely as the protagonist of mystery thrillers.

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- Simper, Paul. *Saint: Behind the Scenes with Simon Templar*. New York: TV Books, 1997. Short book looking at the making of the television shows featuring Charteris's character.
- Trewin, Ion. Introduction to *Enter the Saint*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930. Commentary on the novel and its author by a famous and successful editor and publisher.

JAMES HADLEY CHASE

René Brabazon Raymond

Born: London, England; December 24, 1906

Died: Corseaux-sur-Vevey, Switzerland; February 6, 1985

Also wrote as James L. Docherty; Ambrose Grant; Raymond Marshall

Type of plot: Thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dave Fenner, 1939-1940

Vic Malloy, 1949-1950

Brick-Top Corrigan, 1950-1951

Steve Harmas, 1952-1963

Don Micklem, 1954-1955

Frank Terrell, 1964-1970

Mark Girland, 1965-1969

Al Barney, 1968-1972

Helga Rolfe, 1971-1977

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAVE FENNER, a former reporter who has become a private detective, is a loner, known for surviving in-

numerable violent, suspenseful situations. He is the main character in Chase's most popular novel, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939).

BRICK-TOP CORRIGAN is an unscrupulous private detective who leaves his clients without solving any cases, taking half of his fee with him. He worked as a commando before becoming a private eye.

STEVE HARMAS, a chief investigator who solves cleverly plotted insurance frauds. His beautiful wife, Helen, assists in solving these crimes in the art deco world of California in the 1930's.

DON MICKLEM, a millionaire, lives the life of a playboy and becomes involved in international intrigue.

FRANK TERRELL, a private investigator who works in Paradise City, Florida. He operates in a world of false identity, theft, and murder.

MARK GIRLAND, a former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency who lives a carefree and fast life in Paris, where he enjoys pleasures of the moment, particularly those involving beautiful women. Seeking always to earn money with as little effort as possible,

Girland has his adventures when he is hired by the CIA on special assignments in Paris.

AL BARNEY, a dissipated former skin diver, serves as the narrator of two novels set in Paradise City, Florida.

CONTRIBUTION

The canon of James Hadley Chase, comprising more than eighty-five books, has earned for him a reputation as the king of thriller writers in England and on the Continent. In France he is even compared with Fyodor Dostoevski and Louis-Ferdinand Céline. (Such hyperbole, however, must be attributed to the ephemeral popularity of the films based on his novels.) At the other end of the spectrum are those judgments by Julian Symons and George Orwell, who write, respectively, that Chase's work ranges from "shoddy" to "secondhand James M. Cain" and that it is filled with gratuitous sadism, brutality, and corruption, "a daydream appropriate to a totalitarian age."

Chase's own comment that he wrote "for a good read . . . for a wide variety of readers" comes closest to a true analysis of his work. In many ways, his works resemble the James Bond thrillers of Ian Fleming. Yet they are thrillers usually without the plot complexity and climactic endings, the sophistication in the main characters, and the well-chosen detail in description characteristic of Fleming. Chase's work typically involves violence wreaked on the innocent and weak as well as the guilty and strong, frequent though non-graphic sexual encounters, the hyperbolic machismo of the private investigator, and a tone of danger, excitement, and suspense.

BIOGRAPHY

James Hadley Chase was born René Brabazon Raymond on December 24, 1906, in London, England. After completing his education at King's School in Rochester, Kent, he left home and began selling encyclopedias door-to-door. Later he worked as a traveler for the book wholesaler Simpkin, Marshall in London. It was at this time that he wrote his highly successful first novel, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939; revised, 1961; also known as *The Villain and the Virgin*). The book is said to have sold more than 1 million cop-

ies in five years. It became one of the best-selling mysteries ever written and was made into a film in 1951. Four of Chase's other novels were made into films between 1951 and 1959. Chase later served as a squadron leader in the Royal Air Force and became an editor of the Royal Air Force journal. He married Sylvia Ray, with whom he had one son.

Although Chase set most of his novels in the United States, he made very few visits there, and then only to New Orleans and Florida. He preferred to learn about the United States from encyclopedias, slang dictionaries, and maps. Chase was reticent about his life and career, believing that his readers were uninterested in his personal affairs and asked only that he conscientiously write entertaining novels. If his books were selling well, he did not bother with interviews or the critics' responses. Chase died in Switzerland in 1985.

ANALYSIS

The career of James Hadley Chase began in 1939 with the stunning success of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. This success, along with the timeliness of his style and tone, gave impetus to his continued popularity. Critics have had varied responses to *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and his later works. Many judged his first novel unnecessarily violent, with one reader counting forty-eight acts of aggression, from rape to beatings to murder—approximately one every fourth page. Yet this violence clearly appealed to many readers. Later critics regarded Chase's work as part of the hard-boiled American school initiated by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett (and continued by Ross Macdonald and John D. MacDonald). Others, seeing more depth in his work, suggest that Chase's novels depict the bleakness of twentieth century America, which must remain unredeemed unless a new social structure is developed. This view, however, is not substantiated by Chase's own comments on his work.

The violence in Chase's novels is in fact far from being gratuitous; it is an essential element of the fantasy world of the hard-boiled thriller. This world is no less stylized than the world of the classic British detective story of Agatha Christie. Although the latter portrays an ordered universe cankered by a single act of murder, Chase's books depict an ordered world held

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

together by raw power, ceaselessly pummeled by the violence of lesser, opportunistic powers. Succeeding in such a society requires that the protagonist be more intellectually, emotionally, and physically powerful than the villains, while in the classic detective story, the hero need only be intellectually and emotionally stronger. This third, physical element, as in the hands of Chase and other members of the hard-boiled school, is another dimension of the same struggle for ascendancy between good and evil.

Along the same lines, critics note that Chase's heroes are often less than upright and trustworthy. Their motivation to fight on the side of good is often nothing more than financial; they are mercenaries in a power-hungry and materialistic world. For example, Mark Girland would never have become a special agent for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) if he had not needed the money. Yet this seemingly callous attitude underscores the quality of life in a post-

Darwinian world, where only the fittest survive and where idealism weighs one down, makes one less effective. It must be remembered that in all detective stories, heroes are heroes not because they are ethical but because they are effective and ultimately successful, whether they operate in the locked room or the world at large. Their methods are suited to the environment to ensure victory. Chase's detectives are loners, answerable only to themselves. Their ethical codes fit those of their society only if that society happens to agree with them.

Such traits in Chase's heroes are even more apparent when the books are categorized according to the classic characteristics of the American hard-boiled school. American hard-boiled detective stories are a hybrid of the traditional detective story and the mainstream novel. This hybrid results in less formulaic works. Set in American small towns or in the heated worlds of New York City or Los Angeles instead of London or English villages, these novels also feature more rounded characters. As more and more books in the hard-boiled school were written, however, they developed their own conventions of character: the fighting and lusty loner of a protagonist; his tolerant but admiring superior; the many pretty women who are strongly attracted to him; the fewer beautiful, exotic, mysterious, and dangerous women who are also strongly attracted to him; and the villains, either stupid or brilliant but always viciously brutal. Yet the potential does exist for even more rounded characters.

Although the plots, too, are said to be more plausible than those in the classic detective story, this is not necessarily the case. Extreme numbers of violent acts, a set of four or five murders trailing a detective through an evening's adventure in a single town, can hardly be considered plausible. Chase's plots fit such a mold, realistic because they involve commonplace things and events in the real world, unrealistic because they are based in plots of intrigue, with enormous webs of sinister characters woven together in strange twists and knots. Often involving robbery or the illusion of robbery, the overt greed in Chase's unsavory characters causes multiple murders and cruelty.

In *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, a small-time gang steals a diamond necklace; *The Things Men Do*

(1953) involves diamond theft from the postal van service; *You've Got It Coming* (1955, revised 1975), is based on the theft of industrial diamonds worth \$3 million; *You're Dead Without Money* (1972) shows hero Al Barney working out the events surrounding the theft of a famous stamp collection. Thefts such as these lead to violence that grows in almost geometric progression as the novel develops.

To suggest that Chase's works are scathing social commentaries calling for a new social structure would be inaccurate. Nowhere in the texts are there hints of statements proposing ideological change of any kind. The world, though violent and unpredictable, is drawn as a literary given, a place that is unchanging, not because humans are incapable of improving it but because it sets the tone for the story.

In the end, then, Chase provided the best analysis of Chase: He gave his reader "a good read," but he was not simply portraying the amoral world to which George Orwell alludes. Rather, Chase's heroes entertainingly adapt to whatever environment they enter; their success lies in their recognition that in the mean and dirty world of criminals and evil ideologies, to survive, they themselves must be the meanest and the dirtiest.

YOU HAVE YOURSELF A DEAL

One of Chase's works that exemplifies the conventions he uses is *You Have Yourself a Deal* (1966), a Mark Girland tale set in Paris and the south of France. Girland is asked by the director of the CIA to assist in the safekeeping and debriefing of a beautiful blond amnesia victim who was once the mistress of a fearsome Chinese nuclear scientist. Girland has recently lost five thousand dollars on "three, miserable horses" and is forced to earn what little he can as a street photographer. Therefore, when two CIA strongmen come to ask his assistance, he happily agrees, but not before sending one of them somersaulting down a long flight of stairs to serious injury and punching the other until he falls to his knees gasping. Girland has found the two of them somewhat overbearing and pushy.

Such is the tone of the novel. The blond woman, Erica, is sought by the Russians, who want her information, and by the Chinese, who want her dead.

Girland discovers, however, that she is involved in the theft of a priceless black pearl from China, a common twist in a Chase plot. Also typical is the resolution, which lies in the discovery of look-alike sisters, the more virtuous of whom is killed. Other innocent characters are murdered also: Erica's young and devoted nurse is shot, and the longtime secretary to the CIA chief is thrown to the ground from her upper-story apartment.

The world in which Girland operates is hostile, and it justifies his own violent excesses and other less than noble behavior. As an American in Paris, he is motivated entirely by his own financial gain and the fun of the mission, not at all by ethics or patriotic duty. This is especially true when he learns that Erica will not be a national security bonanza but could be a financial windfall to him, worth some half million dollars if the pearl is recovered and sold. At a lavish romantic dinner paid for by the CIA, Girland offers to leave his mission, go with her, find the pearl, and sell it. "I'm not only an opportunist," he tells her, "I am also an optimist." This is, however, the mind-set he must have to succeed in this world—a world of evil Asians, "with the unmistakable smell of dirt," and Russian spies, one of whom is "fat and suety-faced" and has never been known "to do anyone a favor."

Clearly Chase fits neatly into the hard-boiled American school of detective fiction, even allowing for his English roots. His books are, indeed, escapist and formulaic, but they are successfully so. Chase's work is of consistent quality and time and again offers the reader the thrills and suspense that are the hallmarks of this mid-twentieth century genre.

Vicki K. Robinson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVE FENNER SERIES: *No Orchids for Miss Blanford*, 1939 (revised 1961; also known as *The Villain and the Virgin*); *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*, 1940 (revised as *Twelve Chinamen and a Woman*, 1950; also known as *The Doll's Bad News*)

VIC MALLOY SERIES: *You're Lonely When You're Dead*, 1949; *Figure It Out for Yourself*, 1950 (also known as *The Marijuana Mob*); *Lay Her Among the Lilies*, 1950 (also known as *Too Dangerous to Be Free*)

BRICK-TOP CORRIGAN SERIES (AS MARSHALL):

Mallory, 1950; *Why Pick on Me?*, 1951

STEVE HARMAS SERIES:

The Double Shuffle, 1952; *There's Always a Price Tag*, 1956; *Shock Treatment*, 1959; *Tell It to the Birds*, 1963

DON MICKLEM SERIES (AS MARSHALL):

Mission to Venice, 1954; *Mission to Siena*, 1955

FRANK TERRELL SERIES:

The Soft Centre, 1964; *The Way the Cookie Crumbles*, 1965; *Well Now, My Pretty—*, 1967; *There's a Hippie on the Highway*, 1970

MARK GIRLAND SERIES:

This Is for Real, 1965; *You Have Yourself a Deal*, 1966; *Have This One on Me*, 1967; *Believed Violent*, 1968; *The Whiff of Money*, 1969

AL BARNEY SERIES:

An Ear to the Ground, 1968; *You're Dead Without Money*, 1972

HELGA ROLFE SERIES:

An Ace up My Sleeve, 1971; *The Joker in the Pack*, 1975; *I Hold the Four Aces*, 1977

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1939-1950

• *He Won't Need It Now*, 1939 (as Docherty); *The Dead Stay Dumb*, 1939 (also known as *Kiss My Fist!*); *Lady—Here's Your Wreath*, 1940 (as Marshall); *Miss Callaghan Comes to Grief*, 1941; *Just the Way It Is*, 1944 (as Marshall); *Miss Shumway Waves a Wand*, 1944; *Blondes' Requiem*, 1945 (as Marshall); *Eve*, 1945; *I'll Get You for This*, 1946; *Make the Corpse Walk*, 1946 (as Marshall); *More Deadly than the Male*, 1946 (as Grant); *The Flesh of the Orchid*, 1948; *Trusted Like the Fox*, 1948 (as Marshall); *The Paw in the Bottle*, 1949 (as Marshall); *You Never Know with Women*, 1949

1951-1960

• *But a Short Time to Live*, 1951 (as Marshall); *In a Vain Shadow*, 1951 (as Marshall); *Strictly for Cash*, 1951; *The Fast Buck*, 1952; *The Wary Transgressor*, 1952 (as Marshall); *I'll Bury My Dead*, 1953; *The Things Men Do*, 1953 (as Marshall); *This Way for a Shroud*, 1953; *Safer Dead*, 1954 (also known as *Dead Ringer*); *The Sucker Punch*, 1954 (as Marshall); *Tiger by the Tail*, 1954; *Ruthless*, 1955 (as Marshall); *The Pickup*, 1955 (as Marshall); *You've Got It Coming*, 1955 (revised 1975); *You Find Him—I'll Fix Him*, 1956 (as Marshall); *Never Trust a Woman*, 1957 (as Marshall); *The Guilty Are Afraid*, 1957; *Hit and Run*, 1958 (as

Marshall); *Not Safe to Be Free*, 1958 (also known as *The Case of the Strangled Starlet*); *The World in My Pocket*, 1959; *Come Easy—Go Easy*, 1960; *What's Better than Money?*, 1960

1961-1970 • *A Lotus for Miss Quon*, 1961; *Just Another Sucker*, 1961; *A Coffin from Hong Kong*, 1962; *I Would Rather Stay Poor*, 1962; *One Bright Summer Morning*, 1963; *Cade*, 1966; *The Vulture Is a Patient Bird*, 1969; *Like a Hole in the Head*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Want to Stay Alive?*, 1971; *Just a Matter of Time*, 1972; *Have a Change of Scene*, 1973; *Knock, Knock! Who's There?*, 1973; *Goldfish Have No Hiding Place*, 1974; *So What Happens to Me?*, 1974; *Three of Spades*, 1974; *Believe This, You'll Believe Anything*, 1975; *Do Me a Favour—Drop Dead*, 1976; *My Laugh Comes Last*, 1977; *Consider Yourself Dead*, 1978; *A Can of Worms*, 1979; *You Must Be Kidding*, 1979; *Try This One for Size*, 1980; *You Can Say That Again*, 1980

1981-1984 • *Hand Me a Fig-Leaf*, 1981; *Have a Nice Night*, 1982; *We'll Share a Double Funeral*, 1982; *Not My Thing*, 1983; *Hit Them Where It Hurts*, 1984

PLAYS: *Get a Load of This*, pr. 1941 (with Arthur Macrea); *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, pr. 1942 (with Robert Nesbitt; adaptation of his novel of the same name); *Last Page*, 1946

EDITED TEXT: *Slipstream: A Royal Air Force Anthology*, 1946 (with David Langdon)

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Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. This scholarly study of the thriller covers four of Chase's novels, including *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and *The Wary Transgressor*. Bibliography and index.

Orwell, George. "Raffles and Miss Blandish." In *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. London: Secker and Warburg, 1968. Or-

well, one of England's most famous authors and essayists, compares Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* with the Raffles stories of E. W. Hornung.

Smith, Susan Harris. "No Orchids for George Orwell." *The Armchair Detective* 9 (February, 1976): 114-

115. A response to Orwell's essay, defending Chase's work from Orwell's critique.

West, W. J. *The Quest for Graham Greene*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Explores the relationship between Chase and Greene and the influence of the one's works on the other.

G. K. CHESTERTON

Born: London, England; May 29, 1874

Died: Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, England; June 14, 1936

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Father Brown, 1911-1935

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

FATHER BROWN, a rather ordinary Roman Catholic priest, is at first sight a humorous figure in a shabby black habit with an umbrella and an armful of brown-paper parcels. Having a realistic view of human nature, he is able to solve crimes by applying common-sense reasoning. As the series progresses, he becomes increasingly concerned not only with solving the crime but also with redeeming the criminal.

CONTRIBUTION

In the Father Brown series, the detective short story came of age. The world portrayed in the stories reflects the real world. The stories are not meant merely to entertain, for example, by presenting an intriguing puzzle that is solved by a computer-like sleuth who possesses and applies a superhuman logic, à la Sherlock Holmes. Instead, Father Brown, by virtue of his role as a parish priest who has heard numerous confessions, has a better-than-average insight into the real state of human nature. Such insight allows the priest-sleuth to identify with the criminal, then to apply sheer commonsense reasoning to uncover the criminal's identity. G. K. Chesterton is interested in exposing and ex-

ploring spiritual and moral issues, rather than merely displaying the techniques of crime and detection.

The Father Brown stories, like all Chesterton's fictional works, are a vehicle for presenting his religious worldview to a wider audience. They popularize the serious issues with which Chesterton wrestled in such nonfictional works as *Orthodoxy* (1908) and *The Everlasting Man* (1925).

BIOGRAPHY

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born on May 29, 1874, in London of middle-class parents. Between 1887 and 1892, he attended St. Paul's School, a private day school for boys. From 1892 to 1895, he studied at the Slade School of Art, a part of the University of London.

Chesterton did not distinguish himself academically, although evidence of his future greatness was present. When only sixteen, he organized a debating club, and in March of 1891 he founded the club's magazine, *The Debater*. His limited talent as an artist bore fruit later in life, when he often illustrated his own books and those of close friends.

Prior to publication of his first two books in 1900, Chesterton contributed verse, book reviews, and essays to various periodicals, including the *Bookman*. He also did editorial work for two publishers between 1895 and 1901.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Chesterton was widely recognized as a serious journalist. Throughout his life, despite his fame as a novelist, literary critic, poet, biographer, historian, playwright,

and even philosopher-theologian, he never described himself as anything other than a journalist.

In 1901, Chesterton married Frances Blogg, the eldest daughter of a London diamond merchant. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Beaconsfield, where they lived until his death on June 14, 1936. Chesterton published his first mystery collection, *The Club of Queer Trades*, in 1905. The first collection of Father Brown detective stories appeared in 1911. He was elected the first president of the Detection Club, an association of mystery writers, at its founding in 1929. The mystery and detective tales were but a small part of an immense and varied literary output. Chesterton published around one hundred books during his lifetime. His autobiography and ten volumes of essays were published posthumously. His journalistic pieces number into the thousands.

Chesterton was a colorful figure. Grossly overweight, he wore a black cape and a wide-brimmed floppy hat; he had a bushy mustache and carried a sword-stick cane. The public remembers him as the lovable and whimsical creator of Father Brown; scholars also remember him as one of the most prolific and influential writers of the twentieth century.



G. K. Chesterton. (Library of Congress)

ANALYSIS

G. K. Chesterton began writing detective fiction in 1905 with a collection of short stories titled *The Club of Queer Trades*. Between 1905 and the appearance of the first collection of Father Brown stories in 1911, Chesterton also published a detective novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*, in 1908. There followed, in addition to the Father Brown series, one more detective novel and several additional detective short-story collections. It was the Father Brown stories, however, that became the most popular—though some critics believe them the least important—of Chesterton's works.

Students of Chesterton as an author of detective fiction make several general observations. They note that, like many who took up that genre, Chesterton was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. It is often said that the plots of many of the Father Brown stories are variations on the plot of Poe's story "The Purloined Letter," in which an essential clue escapes the observer's attention because it fits with its surroundings.

Chesterton was influenced also by Charles Dickens, whom he admired greatly, and about whom he wrote a biography (considered one of his most valuable works of literary criticism). Chesterton learned from Dickens the art of creating an atmosphere and of giving his characters a depth that makes them memorable. In this area Chesterton's achievement rivals that of Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown have outlived their rivals, in part because readers come to know them and their world too well to forget them.

Students of Chesterton agree, however, that there is one area in particular that distinguishes Chesterton's detective fiction from that of Doyle—and that of virtually all other mystery writers before him. This distinctive element accounts for critics' observation that Chesterton lifted the detective story beyond the level of light fiction into the realm of serious literature. Chesterton's hallmark is an ever-present concern with spiritual and moral issues: locating and exploring the guilt that underlies and is responsible for criminal activity. Some critics trace this emphasis on a universe with moral absolutes to Dickens's influence. The fact that it is a common theme throughout all Chesterton's writings, both

fiction and nonfiction, however, suggests that, although written to entertain, his detective stories were a means of popularizing ideas he argued on a different level in his more serious, nonfictional works.

FATHER BROWN SERIES

It is easy to see how Chesterton's orthodox Roman Catholic worldview permeates the Father Brown stories. It is evident in his understanding of the nature of criminal activity, as well as in the methodology by which Father Brown solves a mystery, and in his primary purpose for becoming involved in detection.

When the two Father Brown collections published before World War I are compared with those published after the war, a change in emphasis is revealed. In *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911) and *The Wisdom of Father Brown* (1914), the emphasis is on Father Brown's use of reason informed by faith, along with certain psychological insights gained from his profession, to solve a particular crime. In *The Incredulity of Father Brown* (1926), *The Secret of Father Brown* (1927), and *The Scandal of Father Brown* (1935), the emphasis is on using reason not only to identify the criminal but also to obtain a confession—and with it, the salvation of the criminal's soul.

Chesterton found the inspiration for Father Brown in 1904, when he first met Father John O'Connor, the Roman Catholic parish priest of St. Cuthbert's, Bradford, England. Writer and priest became lifelong friends; it was Father O'Connor who received Chesterton into the Roman Catholic Church on July 30, 1922, and who sang the Requiem Mass for him on June 27, 1936. O'Connor even served as the model for the illustration of Father Brown on the dust jacket of *The Innocence of Father Brown*.

Chesterton was impressed with O'Connor's knowledge of human nature warped by sin. O'Connor had a deep insight into the nature of evil, obtained through the many hours he had spent in the confessional. Chesterton observed that many people consider priests to be somehow divorced from the "real world" and its evil; O'Connor's experience, however, gave evidence that such was not the case. Thus, Chesterton became interested in creating a fictional priest-sleuth, one who outwardly appeared innocent, even naïve, but whose profound understanding of the psychology of evil



would give him a definite edge over the criminal—and over the average detective. Much of the reader's pleasure in the Father Brown stories lies in the ever-present contrast between the priest's appearance of worldly innocence and his astute insight into the workings of men's hearts and minds.

Chesterton's worldview, and therefore Father Brown's, assumes a moral universe of morally responsible people who possess free will. Yet every person's nature has been affected by the presence of sin. There exists within all human beings—including Father Brown—the potential for evil. Committing a crime is an exercise of free will, a matter of choice; the criminal is morally responsible for his or her acts. Chesterton will have nothing to do with the notion that some force outside the individual can compel the person to commit a criminal act. Crime is a matter of choice—and therefore there is the possibility of repentance and redemption for the criminal.

Many writers of detective fiction create an element of surprise by showing the crime to have been committed by one who appears psychologically incapable of it. In Chesterton's stories, by contrast, all the criminals are psychologically capable of their crimes. In fact, Father Brown often eliminates suspects by concluding that they are incapable of the crime being investigated.

It is Father Brown's recognition of the universality of sin that is the key to his method of detection. It is sometimes assumed that since Father Brown is a priest, he must possess supernatural powers, some spiritual or occult source of knowledge that renders him a sort of miracle-working Sherlock Holmes. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Chesterton makes it very clear that Father Brown does not possess any supernatural insight, that he relies on nothing more than the usual five senses. Whatever advantage Father Brown as a priest has over the average person lies in his exceptional moral insight, and that is a by-product of his experience as a parish priest.

"THE GREEN MAN"

Father Brown possesses an unusually keen sense of observation, but, unlike Sherlock Holmes, he does not apply it to the facts discoverable by an oversized magnifying glass. The essential clues, instead, are generally found in individuals' behavior and conversation. In "The Green Man," for example, Father Brown and a lawyer, Mr. Dyke, are interrupted and informed that Admiral Sir Michael Craven drowned on his way home:

"When did this happen?" asked the priest.

"Where was he found?" asked the lawyer.

This seemingly innocuous pair of responses provides Father Brown with the clue to the lawyer's identity as the murderer of Admiral Craven. It is not logical for one to ask *where* the body of a seaman returning home from sea was found.

Father Brown's method of detection is aimed at discovering the truth behind the appearance of things. His method rises above the rational methods of the traditional detective. The latter seeks to derive an answer from observation of the facts surrounding a crime. He fails because he cannot "see" the crime. Father

Brown's method, on the other hand, succeeds because the priest is able to "create" the crime. He does so by identifying with the criminal so closely that he is able to commit the act himself in his own mind.

"THE SECRET OF FATHER BROWN"

In "The Secret of Father Brown," a fictional prologue to the collection of stories by the same title, Father Brown explains the secret of his method of detection to a dumbfounded listener:

"The secret is," he said; and then stopped as if unable to go on. Then he began again and said:

"You see, it was I who killed all those people."

"What?" repeated the other in a small voice out of a vast silence.

"You see, I had murdered them all myself," explained Father Brown patiently. "So, of course, I knew how it was done." . . .

"I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully," went on Father Brown. "I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was."

Father Brown's secret lies in his acceptance of the simple truth that all men are capable of doing evil.

Thus, the Father Brown stories and other detective works by Chesterton are never simply clever stories built around a puzzle; they are moral tales with a deep religious meaning. In the stories written after World War I, Chesterton placed greater emphasis on Father Brown's role as a priest—that is, his goal being not simply determining the identity of the criminal but also gaining salvation of the offender's soul. Central to all the stories is Chesterton's belief that although people themselves are incapable of doing anything about the human predicament, God has come to their aid through his son, Jesus Christ, and the Church.

In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton compares the Church to a kind of divine detective, whose purpose is to bring people to the point where they can acknowledge their crimes (that is, their sins), and then to pardon them. The same idea appears in *Manalive* (1912), a kind of detective story-allegorical comedy, and in *The Everlasting Man*, a response to H. G. Wells's very popular *The Outline of History* (1920). In his *Autobiography*,

published posthumously in 1936, Chesterton identifies himself with his fictional creation, Father Brown—a revelation that supports the assertion that the Father Brown stories were meant by their author to do more than merely entertain.

“THE QUEER FEET”

There is much social satire in the Father Brown stories and other of Chesterton’s fictional works. In everything that he wrote, Chesterton was an uncompromising champion of the common people. In stories such as “The Queer Feet,” for example, he satirizes the false distinctions that the upper classes perpetuate to maintain their privileged position within the status quo. In this particular story, the aristocrats are unable to recognize the thief who moves among them, simply because the waiters, like the “gentlemen,” are dressed in black dinner jackets.

The Father Brown stories remain favorites of connoisseurs of mystery and detective fiction, for in their depth of characterization, their ability to convey an atmosphere, and the intellectually challenging ideas that lie just below the surface of the stories, they are without equal. Still, their quality may vary. By the time Chesterton was writing the stories that appear in *The Scandal of Father Brown*, they had become a major means of financial support for *G. K.’s Weekly*. When informed by his secretary that the bank account was getting low, Chesterton would disappear for a few hours, then reappear with a few notes in hand and dictate a new Father Brown story. It was potboiling, but potboiling at its best.

Chesterton inspired a number of authors, among them some of the best mystery writers. The prolific John Dickson Carr was influenced by him, as was Jorge Luis Borges—not a mystery writer strictly speaking, with the exception of a few stories, but one whose work reflects Chesterton’s interest in the metaphysics of crime and punishment. Of all the mystery writers who acknowledged their debt to Chesterton, however, perhaps none is better known than Dorothy



An illustration that G. K. Chesterton himself drew for *The Club of Queer Trades* in 1905.

L. Sayers. A great admirer of Chesterton, she knew him personally—and followed in his footsteps as president of the Detection Club.

Paul R. Waibel

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FATHER BROWN SERIES: *The Innocence of Father Brown*, 1911; *The Wisdom of Father Brown*, 1914; *The Incredulity of Father Brown*, 1926; *The Secret of Father Brown*, 1927; *The Scandal of Father Brown*, 1935

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*, 1908; *Manalive*, 1912; *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Club of Queer Trades*, 1905; *The Man Who Knew Too Much, and Other Stories*, 1922; *Tales of the Long Bow*, 1925; *The Moderate Murder and the Honest Quack*, 1929; *The Poet and the Lunatics: Episodes in the Life of Gabriel Gale*, 1929; *Four Faultless Felons*, 1930; *The Ecstatic Thief*, 1930; *The Vampire of the Village*, 1947; *The Paradoxes of Mr. Pond*, 1936

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Basil Howe: A Story of Young Love*, wr. 1894, pb. 2001; *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, 1904; *The Ball and the Cross*, 1909; *The Flying Inn*, 1914; *The Return of Don Quixote*, 1926

SHORT FICTION: *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Brown*, 1903; *The Perishing of the Pendragons*, 1914; *Stories*, 1928; *The Sword of Wood*, 1928

PLAYS: *Magic: A Fantastic Comedy*, pr. 1913; *The Judgment of Dr. Johnson*, pb. 1927; *The Surprise*, pb. 1952

POETRY: *Greybeards at Play: Literature and Art for Old Gentlemen—Rhymes and Sketches*, 1900; *The Wild Knight, and Other Poems*, 1900 (revised 1914); *The Ballad of the White Horse*, 1911; *A Poem*, 1915; *Poems*, 1915; *Wine, Water, and Song*, 1915; *Old King Cole*, 1920; *The Ballad of St. Barbara, and Other Verses*, 1922; *Poems*, 1925; *The Queen of Seven Swords*, 1926; *Gloria in Profundis*, 1927; *Ubi Ecclesia*, 1929; *The Grave of Arthur*, 1930

NONFICTION: 1901-1910 • *The Defendant*, 1901; *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 1902 (with W. Robertson Nicoll); *Thomas Carlyle*, 1902; *Twelve Types*, 1902 (revised as *Varied Types*, 1903, and also known as *Simplicity and Tolstoy*); *Charles Dickens*, 1903 (with F. G. Kitton); *Leo Tolstoy*, 1903 (with G. H. Perris and Edward Garnett); *Robert Browning*, 1903; *Tennyson*, 1903 (with Richard Garnett); *Thackeray*, 1903 (with Lewis Melville); *G. F. Watts*, 1904; *Heretics*, 1905; *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, 1906; *All Things Considered*, 1908; *Orthodoxy*, 1908; *George Bernard Shaw*, 1909 (revised edition, 1935); *Tremendous Trifles*, 1909; *Alarms and Discursions*, 1910; *The Ultimate Lie*, 1910; *What's Wrong with the World*, 1910; *William Blake*, 1910

1911-1920 • *A Defence of Nonsense, and Other Essays*, 1911; *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*, 1911; *The Future of Religion: Mr. G. K. Chesterton's Reply to Mr. Bernard Shaw*, 1911; *A Miscellany of Men*, 1912; *The Conversion of an Anarchist*, 1912; *The Victorian Age in Literature*; *Thoughts from Chesterton*, 1913; *London*, 1914 (with Alvin Langdon Coburn); *Prussian Versus Belgian Culture*, 1914; *The Barbarism of Berlin*, 1914; *Letters to an Old Garibaldian*, 1915; *The Crimes of England*, 1915; *The So-Called Belgian Bargain*, 1915; *A Shilling for My Thoughts*; *Divorce Versus Democracy*, 1916; *Temperance and the Great Alliance*, 1916; *A Short History of England*, 1917; *Lord Kitchener*, 1917; *Utopia of Usurers, and Other*

Essays, 1917; *How to Help Annexation*, 1918; *Charles Dickens Fifty Years After*, 1920; *Irish Impressions*, 1920; *The New Jerusalem*, 1920; *The Superstition of Divorce*, 1920; *The Uses of Diversity*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Eugenics and Other Evils*, 1922; *What I Saw in America*, 1922; *Fancies Versus Fads*, 1923; *St. Francis of Assisi*, 1923; *The End of the Roman Road: A Pageant of Wayfarers*, 1924; *The Superstitions of the Sceptic*, 1924; *The Everlasting Man*, 1925; *William Cobbett*, 1925; *A Gleaming Cohort, Being from the Words of G. K. Chesterton*, 1926; *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, 1926; *The Outline of Sanity*, 1926; *Culture and the Coming Peril*, 1927; *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 1927; *Social Reform Versus Birth Control*, 1927; *Do We Agree? A Debate*, 1928 (with George Bernard Shaw); *Generally Speaking*, 1928 (essays); *G. K. C. as M. C., Being a Collection of Thirty-seven Introductions*, 1929; *The Thing*, 1929; *At the Sign of the World's End*, 1930; *Come to Think of It*, 1930; *The Resurrection of Rome*, 1930; *The Turkey and the Turk*, 1930

1931-1940 • *All Is Grist*, 1931; *Is There a Return to Religion?*, 1931 (with E. Haldeman-Julius); *Chaucer*, 1932; *Christendom in Dublin*, 1932; *Sidelights on New London and Newer York, and Other Essays*, 1932; *All I Survey*, 1933; *G. K. Chesterton*, 1933 (also known as *Running After One's Hat, and Other Whimsies*); *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1933; *Avowals and Denials*, 1934; *Explaining the English*, 1935; *The Well and the Shallows*, 1935; *As I Was Saying*, 1936; *Autobiography*, 1936; *The Man Who Was Chesterton*, 1937; *The End of the Armistice*, 1940

1941-1971 • *The Common Man*, 1950; *The Glass Walking-Stick, and Other Essays from the "Illustrated London News," 1905-1936*, 1955; *Lunacy and Letters*, 1958; *Where All Roads Lead*, 1961; *The Man Who Was Orthodox: A Selection from the Uncollected Writings of G. K. Chesterton*, 1963; *The Spice of Life, and Other Essays*, 1964; *Chesterton on Shakespeare*, 1971

EDITED TEXTS: *Thackeray*, 1909; *Samuel Johnson*, 1911 (with Alice Meynell); *Essays by Divers Hands*, 1926

MISCELLANEOUS: *Stories, Essays, and Poems*, 1935; *The Coloured Lands*, 1938; *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, 1986-1999 (35 volumes)

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PETER CHEYNEY**Reginald Evelyn Peter Southouse Cheyney****Born:** London, England; February 22, 1896**Died:** London, England; June 26, 1951**Types of plot:** Hard-boiled; espionage**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Alonzo MacTavish, 1943-1946

Lemmy Caution, 1936-1953

Slim Callaghan, 1937-1953

Dark series, 1942-1950

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALONZO MACTAVISH, a rogue and a gentleman jewel thief, engages in elaborate ruses.

LEMMY CAUTION, an American G-man, slugs hoodlums, solves murders, and meets up with many dangerous dames. Caution narrates in a rough-and-tumble present tense that contributes to the speed and camp of the novels.

SLIM CALLAGHAN, a virtuoso liar and hard-boiled private eye, is also canny, resourceful, and tough. He chain-smokes Players cigarettes as he sleuths in the

dark streets of London. In the second novel, Callaghan Investigations has prospered and relocated from Chancery Lane to Berkeley Square, where Callaghan also keeps an apartment.

EFFIE THOMPSON, Callaghan's secretary, in the first book is called EFFIE PERKINS. Attractive and caustic, Effie barely contains her jealousy and anger over the many beautiful women Callaghan encounters.

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR GRINGALL of New Scotland Yard is Callaghan's rival on the police force. Although often exasperated by Callaghan's withholding of evidence, Gringall nevertheless gradually comes to respect Callaghan's basic integrity and shrewdness.

EVERARD PETER QUAYLE, the spymaster, coolly juggles his operatives so that each knows only as much as is needed for his part in a particular mission.

ERNIE GUELVADA is an agent who likes to perform his jobs with an artistic flair.

SHAUN ALOYSIUS O'MARA is a special operative who is called in whenever a job appears endangered.

CONTRIBUTION

At a time when British crime fiction exerted a strong influence on American writers, Peter Cheyney was the first British author to show that he was influenced by crime fiction in the United States. His novels about tough G-man Lemmy Caution and private eye Slim Callaghan combined fast action with surprises. A popular mystery writer with no literary pretensions, Cheyney sold more than 1.5 million books in 1944 alone. An examination of his popularity shows that he was versatile in the ways he could entertain his large audience. As he progressed, his writing became more subtle, and in his Dark series near the end of his career, Cheyney produced books that vividly conveyed a picture of the divided world of wartime espionage and its cynicism, violence, and double-crosses.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter Cheyney was born Reginald Evelyn Peter Southouse Cheyney on February 22, 1896, in the East End of London. His father helped operate a fish stall at Billingsgate, and his mother ran a corset shop in Whitechapel. Cheyney started writing while still in grammar school, publishing poems and articles in boys' maga-

zines. When his oldest brother found work as a performer in music halls, Cheyney became attracted to vaudeville and the stage. At seventeen, he was reworking comedy skits in knock-about farces and even toured briefly with one company as its stage manager.

World War I interrupted this informal apprenticeship, and Cheyney enlisted in the army, rising to the rank of lieutenant. After the war, he published two volumes of sentimental verse and wrote many songs and hundreds of short stories. In 1919, he married the first of his three wives.

Cheyney's initial attempt at a crime novel, a manuscript intended for the Sexton Blake series, was rejected in 1923. He was also undistinguished in his work as a shopkeeper, bookmaker, radio performer (adopting the first name Peter), politician (supporting Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists), and editor.

At the age of forty, Cheyney achieved popularity on his own with his first published novel, *This Man Is Dangerous* (1936), the book that introduced Lemmy Caution. When a reviewer predicted that readers would reject any Cheyney book not about Caution, Cheyney accepted the challenge and wrote *The Urgent Hangman* (1937), the first of many Slim Callaghan novels. Nevertheless, Cheyney considered the espionage novels that he wrote in the 1940's his best work.

One of the most prolific and popular crime writers of his day, Cheyney published at least two books a year, though he was more popular in England and France than in the United States. He died in 1951.

ANALYSIS

Peter Cheyney's most notable literary trait was his ability to surprise his readers with unexpected twists, hidden motives, and double-crosses. This unpredictability marked nearly all Cheyney's highly popular works and can even be traced to the short stories Cheyney wrote during the 1920's. His first recurring character, Alonzo MacTavish, appeared in a series of stories in which Cheyney honed his skills as a creator of surprising plots.

"SOLD!"

MacTavish is a gentleman jewel thief and rogue patterned after E. W. Hornung's amateur cracksman,

A. J. Raffles. The story "Sold!" furnishes a good example of Cheyney's use of surprise. In it, one of MacTavish's gang seemingly sells out his boss by alerting the police to MacTavish's next heist. When arrested with the goods, MacTavish indignantly claims that the stones in his possession are duplicates he purchased elsewhere and that he had arranged to show the fakes to the owner of the genuine jewels that night. He even challenges the police to summon the owner to verify his story; arriving at headquarters later, the owner does so. While this meeting is taking place, however, one of MacTavish's men steals the real jewels from the owner's safe, the creation of the duplicates having been MacTavish's ploy to lure the owner away from his home and supply a solid alibi during the robbery. Both police and reader spot the ruse too late. Even after the reader learns to expect a surprise in a Cheyney story, the author's misdirection usually produces enough twists to outfox any wary reader.

LEMMY CAUTION SERIES

The surprises in the Lemmy Caution books, which Cheyney began in 1936, center primarily on their action and pace, qualities that made the books very popular in England. Cheyney was the first British writer to attempt to copy the idiom of the hard-boiled crime fiction that appeared in pulp magazines such as *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective*. Mixing imitation Yankee slang with the argot of cops and crooks, narrator-hero Lemmy Caution ("let me caution you") pursues both foes and women with unshackled energy: "The big curtain that is swung across the dance floor goes away to one side an' one of the niftiest legged choruses I have ever lamped starts in to work a number that would have woke up a corpse."

G-man Caution was shaped by the popularity of characters such as Carroll John Daly's Race Williams and Robert Leslie Bellem's Dan Turner. Daly and Bellem both published regularly in the pulps; every issue of *Spicy Detective* featured a Dan Turner story. The American gangster film, which also rose to great popularity at this time, supplied another likely influence on the Caution books. Films such as *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and the many others ground out by Warner Bros. acquainted the public with Hollywood's version of mobsters. A subplot in-

volving rival Chicago bootleggers in Cheyney's novel *Dark Hero* (1946), for example, broadly parallels Howard Hawks's 1932 film *Scarface*, and references to film stars and filmgoing dot many of Cheyney's books. Also new and popular in the early 1930's were newspaper comic-strip cops such as Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* (syndicated in 1931), *Dan Dunn*, *Secret Operative 48* (1933), and Dashiell Hammett's and Alex Raymond's *Secret Agent X-9* (1934). The exaggerated, full-throttle style of the Caution books even reads like a novelized comic strip for adults, as in this example from *Don't Get Me Wrong* (1939):

Some little curtains at the back part an' out comes Zellara. Here is a dame who has got somethin'. She is a real Mexican. Little, slim an' made like a piece of indiarubber. She has got a swell shape an' a lovely face with a pair of the naughtiest lookin' brown eyes I have ever seen in my life. She sings a song an' goes into a rumba dance. This baby has got what it takes all right.

Me, I have seen dames swing it before but I reckon that if this Zellara hadda been let loose in the Garden of Eden Adam woulda taken a quick run-out powder an' the serpent woulda been found hidin' behind the rose-bushes with his fingers crossed. At the risk of repeatin' myself I will tell you guys that this dame is a one hundred per cent exclusive custom-built 1939 model fitted with all the speed gadgets an' guarantees not to skid goin' round the corners.

When the pulps gave way to paperback originals, detectives such as Race Williams, Dan Turner, Hammett's Continental Op, the Shadow, Doc Savage, and others made room for the likes of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer, who in many ways is a more sexual, violent version of Lemmy Caution. The tongue-in-cheek humor of the Caution books turned up later in paperbacks by writers such as Richard S. Prather. A clear echo of the voice of Lemmy Caution can be heard in Prather's private eye Shell Scott: "Man, she had a shape to make corpses kick open caskets—and she was dead set on giving me rigor mortis." Another of Cheyney's literary descendants was Ian Fleming. Before writing *Casino Royale* (1953), the first James Bond novel, Fleming studied Cheyney's work carefully. When a reviewer later referred to Bond as a Lemmy Caution for the higher classes, Fleming was delighted.

SLIM CALLAGHAN SERIES

In his series about hard-boiled British private eye Slim Callaghan, Cheyney maintained his popularity and combined his gift for surprise with writing that was much more understated. This restrained quality largely resulted from the change of setting from the United States (which Cheyney never visited until 1948) in the Caution books to England in the Callaghan novels. The switch from the headlong, first-person narration of Lemmy Caution to third-person narration also gave the Callaghan novels a grittier, more objective tone.

In the third book of the series, *You Can't Keep the Change* (1940), Cheyney introduced Windemere "Windy" Nikolls as Callaghan's assistant (replacing operative Monty Kells, who had been killed in the second novel). In subsequent adventures, Nikolls assumed the role of the wisecracking sidekick who flirts with secretary Effie Thompson, reminisces about his many dames, follows up leads, and generally provides comic relief. Windy is, if anything, aptly named, but the breezy street slang that was the staple of the Caution books is in the Callaghan series mostly confined to Windy. This change of emphasis struck a new balance for Cheyney. Windy, the background operative, is the man of instinct and action—not unlike Lemmy Caution—while the hero, Callaghan, who uses muscle when necessary, primarily thinks his way through a case by winnowing the real clues from the red herrings, untangling motives, and hazarding on some lucky hunches.

Such changes not only produced subtler books but also freed Cheyney to give more personality to his series hero. Callaghan himself is a seedy, hard-bitten, outwardly cynical detective who conceals a soft spot for a pretty face and figure. Cheyney applied his talent for surprise and intricate plotting to Callaghan's character as well. Sometimes surprising the reader by seeming to betray his own client, Callaghan might also plant incriminating evidence to frame another suspect or appear to blackmail someone linked to the case simply to enrich himself. This playing of both ends against the middle shapes the early novels more than the later ones, although most characters throughout the series size up Callaghan as an opportunist.

Callaghan's shady conduct is always explained, however, in the final chapters as simply tactics to gain time or goad the culprit into revealing his guilt. If Callaghan has a code, in fact, it would be to remain faithful to his client. The later, less violent novels even indicate a slight softening of the detective. In the opening chapters of *They Never Say When* (1944), for example, after he has found a client's jeweled coronet and stopped her blackmailer, Callaghan returns her retainer of a thousand pounds because, he says, the jobs were too easy. Cheyney wrote a number of Caution novels and Callaghan novels, and numerous short stories about these characters; this British hard-boiled tradition was later to continue in the works of James Hadley Chase and Carter Brown.

DARK SERIES

If the Callaghan books took the surprises of the MacTavish stories and the action of the Caution novels and added to them a more subdued, Hammett-like writing style, the Dark series of novels that Cheyney wrote in the 1940's was somewhat more ambitious. In these books, Cheyney began to focus more on character and theme. Although various characters recur in many of the novels in this group, the series is distinguished more by its brooding, sinister atmosphere than by any unifying hero. In fact, no single character appears in every book of the series, and some of the novels do not even deal directly with espionage.

For example, in *Dark Hero*, Cheyney presents a character study of a naïve youth who slides into crime and violence. Indirect exposition and a shifting narrative focus supply pieces of this character's personality. The prologue describes the wartime efforts of the hero, Rene Berg, to revenge himself on the subcommandant of his prisoner-of-war camp. Chapter 1 follows Berg after the war as he mysteriously contacts old acquaintances in his effort to hunt down and kill a woman who had also betrayed him. Flashing back to Prohibition Chicago, chapter 2 uncovers the roots of these two betrayals. A young Berg first arrives in the city in this chapter and gradually falls in with bootleggers at the midpoint of the novel. By breaking up the linear exposition of most crime novels and by revealing the effects of Berg's actions before their causes emerge, Cheyney is able to probe Berg's motivations

and to highlight his changing emotions more clearly.

Cheyney's fondness for involved plots and double-crosses lent itself perfectly to the shadow world of wartime espionage, where loyalties were suspect and treachery existed everywhere. *Dark Duet* (1942) is a good example of Cheyney's work in espionage fiction. The two protagonists, Michael Kane and Ernie Guelvada, are British agents assigned to kill a female saboteur loose in England. Cheyney's concern with the tensions between love and war both sharpens character and gives greater coherence and suspense to the developing story: Kane has concealed his espionage work from his lover, Valetta Fallon, and constantly warns his partner Guelvada about the perils of emotionalism in their work. It develops that Guelvada's least suspicious approach to the saboteur necessitates an innocent flirtation with her. After her eventual liquidation, Kane and Guelvada seek her paymasters in Lisbon, where Guelvada meets a former lover unknowingly in league with a Nazi agent. Suddenly, the truth of Kane's warnings begins to register on him. In the climax of the novel, the Nazis plan to retaliate against Kane by working through Valetta Fallon back in England. Exploiting her loneliness, they insinuate an agent into her company to kindle a romance and win her confidence. Through him, the Nazis tell Valetta that Kane has betrayed England and is really a secret German spy. Cheyney's surprises in the denouement of *Dark Duet* include Nazis working as false Scotland Yard men to feed Valetta more lies about Kane's wartime activities. Before the tension is resolved, both Kane and Guelvada must face squarely the difficulties of the conflicting pull between the lonely efficiency of the secret agent and his normal desire for company. Each ends the book alone.

Published in the 1940's, the Dark novels appeared at a time when espionage fiction was evolving from the patriotic chivalry and uncomplicated politics of John Buchan's thrillers to the more cynical, morally ambiguous climate of post-1960's spy novels. A breakthrough book that had helped trigger this change was W. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928). Eric Ambler's early spy novels (such as *Background to Danger*, 1937, and *Epitaph for a Spy*, 1938) also contributed to this development by emphasizing character, good writing, and a keen polit-

ical sense. Ambler published six of these novels before the start of World War II. Cheyney's Dark series played its part as well, and the atmosphere and tone of later books such as *The Secret Ways* (1959) by Alistair MacLean and Donald Hamilton's series of paperbacks about agent Matt Helm recall to some extent the sinister landscape in Cheyney's novels of intrigue. By the time of Len Deighton's *The Ipcress File* (1962) and John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), the action thriller of the World War II period had deepened into the more sophisticated and more literary espionage fiction of the Cold War.

Cheyney propounded no theory about crime fiction. He produced his books quickly and maintained a growing popularity in his lifetime. Yet this success was based on great versatility—unexpected twists, lower-keyed writing in the Callaghan novels, and an emphasis on character and theme in the Dark series.

Glenn Hopp

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ALONZO MAC TAVISH SERIES: *The Adventures of Alonzo MacTavish*, 1943; *Alonzo MacTavish Again*, 1943; *The Murder of Alonzo*, 1943; *He Walked in Her Sleep, and Other Stories*, 1946 (also known as *MacTavish*)

LEMMY CAUTION SERIES: *This Man Is Dangerous*, 1936; *Dames Don't Care*, 1937; *Poison Ivy*, 1937; *Can Ladies Kill?*, 1938; *Don't Get Me Wrong*, 1939; *You'd Be Surprised*, 1940; *Your Deal, My Lovely*, 1941; *Never a Dull Moment*, 1942; *You Can Always Duck*, 1943; *I'll Say She Does!*, 1945; *G Man at the Yard*, 1946; *Time for Caution*, 1946

SLIM CALLAGHAN SERIES: *The Urgent Hangman*, 1937; *Dangerous Curves*, 1939 (also known as *Callaghan*); *You Can't Keep the Change*, 1940; *It Couldn't Matter Less*, 1941 (also known as *Set-Up for Murder*); *Sorry You've Been Troubled*, 1942 (also known as *Farewell to the Admiral*); *The Unscrupulous Mr. Callaghan*, 1943; *They Never Say When*, 1944; *Uneasy Terms*, 1946; *Vengeance with a Twist, and Other Stories*, 1946; *You Can't Trust Duchesses, and Other Stories*, 1946; *A Tough Spot for Cupid, and Other Stories*, 1952; *Velvet Johnnie, and Other Stories*, 1952; *Calling Mr. Callaghan*, 1953

DARK SERIES: *Dark Duet*, 1942 (also known as *The Counter Spy Murders*); *The Stars Are Dark*, 1943 (also known as *The London Spy Murders*); *Date After Dark, and Other Stories*, 1944; *The Dark Street*, 1944 (also known as *The Dark Street Murders*); *Dark Hero*, 1946; *Dark Interlude*, 1947 (also known as *The Terrible Night*); *Dark Wanton*, 1948; *Dark Bahama*, 1950 (also known as *I'll Bring Her Back*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Another Little Drink*, 1940 (also known as *A Trap for Bellamy and Premeditated Murder*); *Sinister Errand*, 1945 (also known as *Sinister Murders*); *Dance Without Music*, 1947; *The Curiosity of Etienne MacGregor*, 1947 (also known as *The Sweetheart of the Razors*); *Try Anything Twice*, 1948 (also known as *Undressed to Kill*); *One of Those Things*, 1949 (also known as *Mistress Murder*); *You Can Call It a Day*, 1949 (also known as *The Man Nobody Saw*); *Lady, Behave!*, 1950 (also known as *Lady Beware*); *Ladies Won't Wait*, 1951 (also known as *Cocktails and the Killer*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *You Can't Hit a Woman, and Other Stories*, 1937; *Knave Takes Queen*, 1939; *Mr. Caution—Mr. Callaghan*, 1941; *Love with a Gun, and Other Stories*, 1943; *The Man with the Red Beard, and Other Stories*, 1943; *Account Rendered*, 1944; *A Tough Spot for Cupid, and Other Stories*, 1945; *Dance Without Music*, 1945; *Escape for Sandra*, 1945; *Night Club*, 1945 (also known as *Dressed to Kill*); *The Adventures of Julia*, 1945 (also known as *The Killing Game*); *A Spot of Murder, and Other Stories*, 1946; *The Man with Two Wives, and Other Stories*, 1946; *A Matter of Luck, and Other Stories*, 1947; *Lady in Green, and Other Stories*, 1947; *Cocktail for Cupid, and Other Stories*, 1948; *Cocktail Party, and Other Stories*, 1948; *Fast Work, and Other Stories*, 1948; *Information Received, and Other Stories*, 1948; *The Unhappy Lady, and Other Stories*, 1948; *The Lady in Tears, and Other Stories*, 1949; *Velvet Johnnie, and Other Stories*, 1952; *G Man at the Yard: A Lemmy Caution Novel and Three Short Sto-*

ries, 1953; *The Mystery Blues, and Other Stories*, 1954 (also known as *Fast Work*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *Three Character Sketches*, pb. 1927

RADIO PLAYS: *Knave Takes Queen*, 1941; *The Callaghan Touch*, 1941; *The Key*, 1941; *Again—Callaghan*, 1942; *The Lady Talks*, 1942; *Concerto for Crooks*, 1943; *Parisian Ghost*, 1943; *The Callaghan Come-Back*, 1943; *The Perfumed Murderer*, 1943; *The Adventures of Julia*, 1945; *Way Out*, 1945; *Duet for Crooks*, 1946; *Pay-Off for Cupid*, 1946

SCREENPLAYS: *Wife of General Ling*, 1937 (with others); *Uneasy Terms*, 1948

POETRY: *Poems of Love and War*, 1916; *To Corona, and Other Poems*, 1917

EDITED TEXT: *Best Stories of the Underworld*, 1942

MISCELLANEOUS: *Making Crime Pay*, 1944; *No Ordinary Cheyney*, 1948

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Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structuralist analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Briefly mentions Cheyney and helps readers place him within the context of the genre.

LEE CHILD**James Grant****Born:** Coventry, England; October 29, 1954**Type of plot:** Thriller**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Jack Reacher, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JACK REACHER is a former military police officer. The second son of a Marine father and a French mother, he was born in Berlin in 1960 and grew up at military bases all over the world. He attended West Point and rose to the rank of major before being let go in 1997 as a result of defense budget cuts. On his return to the United States, Reacher became a wandering loner, a modern knight-errant. Reacher has no set occupation but becomes involved in the problems of others because of chance circumstance or events from his past. He is physically imposing: six feet, five inches tall, and 250 pounds. He is a skilled marksman and a ruthless fighter, and his sense of justice is deep-seated and implacable.

CONTRIBUTION

Lee Child's key decision in creating Jack Reacher was to make him free from any psychological problems; unlike other modern thriller/mystery heroes, Reacher is in no way dysfunctional. In this way, Reacher resembles the character that initially inspired Child when he was thinking about creating a mystery/thriller hero: John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee. Reacher is consciously constructed as an almost mythical hero, whose antecedents stretch back to Homer and beyond. Even though Reacher appeared before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he is the perfect hero for the post-9/11 world, being smart, capable, ruthless, and always in search of justice, yet able to temper action with mercy when appropriate. Child's audience has grown with each book in the series, and his popularity has been strengthened by the regularity with which each book appears and the works' overall high quality. Child has said that he regards his promise

to produce a book a year as an obligation not only to his publishers but also to his fans. The books have been generally well received, and fans of the novels have organized Web sites about Reacher. Child does pay attention to fans' concerns, questions, and suggestions; he informed readers as to how Reacher became the man he is by writing *The Enemy* (2004), which takes place when Reacher was an officer in the military police.

BIOGRAPHY

Lee Child was born James Grant on October 29, 1954, in Coventry, England. As a boy, he enjoyed reading novels by Enid Blyton and the Gimlet series by Captain W. E. Johns. He grew up in Birmingham, won a scholarship to St. Edward's School (the same school that J. R. R. Tolkien attended), and went to college in Sheffield, reading law. He says that his skill in writing came from a physics teacher who valued concision over verbosity. Child spent eighteen years with Granada Television as a television presentation director and later union shop steward, then was let go with other veteran employees as an economizing measure. In search of a new career in his mid-forties, with a wife and daughter, Child gave himself a year to write a novel. After it was published, he moved to New York, his wife's hometown, in 1998. He began producing Reacher novels at the rate of one per year. Although Reacher's character and the plots he is involved in seem ideally suited for cinematic adaptation, plans to film Child's work have not materialized.

Child shares certain qualities with Reacher: for example, both are tall, which led to Reacher's name. Both defended older brothers in playground fights, both can tell the exact time without using a timepiece (a holdover from his television days, says Child), and both are New York Yankee fans. *Killing Floor* (1997) won the Anthony Award and the Barry Award in 1998, and *Die Trying* (1998) won the Thumping Good Read Award from the W. H. Smith Group in 1999. *Tripwire* (1999) won the Washington Irving Award in 1999, and

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Lee Child in 2006. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Running Blind (2000) won it the following year. In 2005 Child won the Bob Kellogg Good Citizen Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Internet Writing Community and the Nero Award for *The Enemy*.

ANALYSIS

Lee Child's greatest accomplishment is creating a believable thriller hero for the twenty-first century. Almost all thriller heroes require a certain suspension of disbelief. Ian Fleming's James Bond had the seeds of parody within him from the first novel, an aspect that the films about the character would ultimately reveal. Mitch Rapp, the hero of the political thrillers by Vince Flynn, is almost superhuman in his dispatching of foes. By making Reacher a former military police officer, Child takes advantage of the generally positive image the military enjoys in the United States.

Child gives Reacher the physical tools to accom-

plish his tasks and the knowledge of weaponry so beloved by certain fans of the genre. However, it is the basic premise of Reacher's character—that he learned his skills in the U.S. Army's military police and that his wandering was caused by his upbringing and the manner in which he was let go—that makes his appearance in a different part of the country at the beginning of each novel and his talent in unraveling the mystery and enforcing its solution all the more believable. MacDonald got around this credibility problem by making McGee a salvage expert. Child makes Reacher a sort of knight-errant, who wanders the countryside of his native land and becomes involved with people, sometimes almost against his will.

Child knows that the literary heritage of Jack Reacher begins with the heroes of the classics, then passes through medieval knights to the cowboy heroes of the American West. The tension in the Western hero is between his rugged individualism and the needs of the community; once the latter becomes too dominant, the hero rides off. In Reacher's case, as he readily admits, he always leaves. In some of the novels, Reacher becomes involved in a case through family or quasi-family pressures. His older brother and his fate haunt Reacher, as does the last quest of his military mentor and father figure, Leon Garber. However, often Reacher becomes involved by merely being in what he views as the wrong place at the right time.

During the course of Child's novels, the victims often are forced to grow into more capable, more self-aware characters. They are shaken out of their complacency because their mindless acceptance of a shifty business ethos has put them at the mercy of ruthless predators. A character whom Reacher dismisses as a Yuppie later grows into a character whom Reacher actually likes. If a husband does not develop into a better person, then his wife sometimes does. Even if victims express their independence by threatening Reacher, in one sense, Reacher's task has been accomplished.

Child fuses in Reacher both the intellectual and physical aspects of the hero, unlike MacDonald, who endowed his hero Travis McGee with physical strength and McGee's sidekick, Meyer Meyer, with intellect. However, Child often splits his villains into a team composed of mastermind and superhuman

henchman. The superhuman villain is often so imposing that Reacher seems outmatched—but the hero still manages to vanquish his foe. The masterminds are devious, but they are not bent on world domination or even on attacking the United States. Rather, they are motivated by the more commonplace of the seven deadly sins—greed, anger, and lust. They are nonetheless savage in carrying out their plans, and Reacher is equally savage in stopping them and exacting a rough-hewn justice.

Child walks a fine line in depicting both the villains' depravity and Reacher's quest for retribution. The modern thriller writer is always in danger of going over the edge in the depiction of violence: not enough violence, and the novel seems tame; too much, and the reader seems to be wallowing in sadism. Child seems to have a fairly precise knowledge of what is excessive; for example, the villain's torture and execution of two police officers in *Tripwire* is only hinted at by the mention of a scream. Child knows when to use his readers' imagination to fill in what the villain is doing.

Like almost all unattached thriller heroes, Reacher has a romance in every novel. The relationships are all sufficiently motivated so that none seems entirely gratuitous, although Child has been criticized for featuring basically the same woman, the "Reacher woman"—a tall, thin, blond professional in her early thirties—as Reacher's love interest in every novel. Reacher has been hurt in the past, losing someone he cared about to a villain, so he carries a whiff of the Byronic hero about him, but this quality is largely negated by his powerful and strong image.

The basic question about Reacher is the one asked about all heroes: Why is he heroic? Fleming's James Bond is, in the end, fulfilling Admiral Nelson's command that every Englishman do his duty. Child's Reacher, however, is only a few dollars away from vagrancy. Reacher admits that he always wanted to be a police officer, but because he was the son of a military man, he became an officer in the military police. However, now that he has been let go because of a reduction in forces, he values his freedom: He calls his first six months in the United States the happiest period of his life. When pressed by villains who sneer and ask if he is making the world safe for democracy, Reacher

answers that he is a "representative" of all victims of the villains and that he "stands up" for those victims. In a candid moment, he admits that his hatred for "the big smug people" overshadows any connection he might feel with the little guys. In giving Reacher this trait, a British author has created a quintessentially American hero.

KILLING FLOOR

Child's first Jack Reacher novel, *Killing Floor*, is a variation of the southern gothic theme in which the lurid underpinnings of a town are hidden beneath a glossy sheen of perfection. Reacher must defeat the source of the "swamp," as he calls Margrave, Georgia, a vicious villain with wolflike teeth and, it is hinted, psychosexual problems. The plot relies on a huge coincidence that connects the villain's schemes with Reacher's family, which Child explains just adequately enough by describing Reacher's love of the blues. The climax is satisfyingly apocalyptic, although Reacher's reasons for abandoning his romantic interest are somewhat perfunctory, relying on readers' familiarity with the necessity for this separation as a genre convention.

Killing Floor demonstrates Child's skill in writing a riveting opening scene and establishing a sense of place. Unlike private investigators who are often tied down to one corner of the country, Reacher is able to roam all over the country and see each place with a fresh eye, as Child does. Also, while the novel is narrated in the first person, it is only one of three Reacher novels written in this point of view. Reacher's voice is generally flat and serviceable, with only a flash of poetic intensity now and then.

TRIPWIRE

In *Tripwire*, Child's third book in the series, Reacher faces a particularly nasty villain, "Hook" Hobey, who does things with his hook that J. M. Barrie's villainous Captain Hook never dreamed of doing. Child shows himself to be a master at describing New York City and the rural environs around West Point, and the villain's lair is not secluded in the countryside but right in the midst of Manhattan, in the ill-fated World Trade Center. Once again Reacher is brought into this situation because of past loyalties, this time to his mentor in the military police, Leon Garber, whose daughter serves as

Reacher's love interest in this novel. At the end of the novel, Reacher has both a girlfriend and a house, but readers know that by the next novel, both ties will have been loosened.

A major stylistic change in *Tripwire* is Child's switch to a third-person point of view, the point of view he uses in the majority of his novels. Child maintains that it affords him more freedom in creating suspense. It also enables him to segment the narrative into smaller, more easily readable chunks and engage in more character investigation—even of the villain. However, it also makes for some awkward narrative moments, such as Reacher's being informed of the revelation that clears up the entire mystery—which is not revealed to the readers. As if to make sure the reader knows that Child realizes he is not playing fair, Reacher asks for this information to be repeated three times, and it is, with the reader remaining uninformed each time. The humor in Child's novels does not extend only to Reacher's wisecracks.

PERSUADER

Persuader perhaps is Child's finest Reacher novel, containing a beginning both exciting and mystifying, a double narrative and plot that explains Reacher's involvement in the present case, a thoroughly evil villain and his even more repugnant superhuman henchman, a wicked witch's castle that is almost out of a fairy tale, and a damsel who must be rescued and whose last name, fittingly, is Justice.

William E. Laskowski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JACK REACHER SERIES: *Killing Floor*, 1997; *Die Trying*, 1998; *Tripwire*, 1999; *Running Blind*, 2000; *Echo Burning*, 2001; *Without Fail*, 2002; *Persuader*, 2003; *The Enemy*, 2004; *One Shot*, 2005; *The Hard Way*, 2006; *Bad Luck and Trouble*, 2007

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- _____. "Lee Child: Late to the Crime Scene." Interview by Dick Donahue. *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 22 (May 31, 2004): 44-45. A detailed yet concise interview with Child, covering the main facets of his career.
- _____. "Lee Child: The Loner They Love." Interview by Benedicte Page. *Bookseller* (March 24, 2006): 20-21. Contains an interview with Child at a tenth anniversary party for his Reacher series.
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- Maslin, Janet. "Intrepid Hero Coolly Navigates a Grisly World of Hurt." Review of *The Hard Way*, by Lee Child. *The New York Times*, May 11, 2006, p. E11. This review of the tenth Reacher novel, *The Hard Way*, emphasizes Child's skill in plotting and in documenting Reacher's thought process.
- Trachtenberg, Jeffrey. "Odd Twist for Hero of Popular Thrillers: Women Like Him, Too." *The Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 2006, p. A1. Shows that women make up a large portion of Child's readers and attributes this popularity to an increasing acceptance by women of violence in the media and a post-9/11 outlook on the world's dangers.

ERSKINE CHILDERS

Born: London, England; June 25, 1870

Died: Dublin, Ireland; November 24, 1922

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Erskine Childers's fame as a mystery novelist rests on a single work of literary genius, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved* (1903), which introduced a new literary genre to English literature: the espionage adventure thriller. The only novel Childers ever wrote, it achieved instant acclaim when first published in England and has found admiring readers through many editions published since. It was published first in the United States in 1915 and has continued to be reissued almost every decade since then. John Buchan, writing in 1926, called it "the best story of adventure published in the last quarter of a century." It paved the way for Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), John Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), W. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928), and many similar espionage adventure thrillers by English novelists such as Graham Greene, Ian Fleming, Len Deighton, and John le Carré.

Childers invented the device of pretending that a manuscript narrating the adventure of two young men sailing a small boat in German coastal waters had come to his attention as an editor. He immediately saw the need to publish it to alert the general public to a situation that endangered the national security. He hoped that the story would cause public opinion to demand prompt changes in British national defense policy. Childers deliberately chose the adventure-story genre as a more effective means to influence public opinion than the more uninspired prose of conventional political policy treatises. This has remained an underlying purpose of many subsequent espionage adventure novelists.

BIOGRAPHY

Erskine Childers was born Robert Erskine Childers in London on June 25, 1870, the second son of Robert Caesar Childers, a distinguished English scholar of East

Indian languages, and Anna Mary Barton, daughter of an Irish landed family from Glendalough, County Wicklow, Ireland. The early death of Childers's father resulted in the removal of the family from England to the Barton family's home in Ireland, and it was there that Erskine Childers was reared and ultimately found his nationality. He was educated in a private school in England and at Trinity College, Cambridge University. After receiving his bachelor's degree in 1893, he was appointed a clerk in the House of Commons, serving there from 1895 until he resigned in 1910 to devote his efforts to achieving Home Rule for Ireland.

In 1900, Childers joined a volunteer company and served in action in the war against the Boers in South Africa. The daily letters sent to his sisters and relations, recording his impressions of the war as he was experiencing it, were edited by them and published without his knowledge as a surprise on his return (1900). The success of this volume of correspondence with the public led to Childers's second literary work, a history of the military unit in which he served (1903), and ultimately a volume in the London *Times's* history of the Boer Wars (1907).

During the long parliamentary recesses, Childers had spent his free time sailing a small thirty-foot yacht in the Baltic and North Seas and the English Channel. He had first learned to love the sea as a boy in Ireland, and he was to use his knowledge of these waters in July, 1914, to smuggle a large shipment of arms and ammunition from a German supply ship off the Belgian coast into the harbor of Howth, north of Dublin, to arm the Irish National Volunteers, a paramilitary organization formed to defend Ireland against the enemies of Home Rule. These arms were later used in the Easter Rebellion of 1916, which proclaimed the founding of the Irish Republic.

Childers's experiences as a yachtsman were put to good use in his first and only effort to write a novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*, published in 1903 and immediately making its author a celebrity. Shortly thereafter, while visiting Boston and his old military company, Childers met and married his American wife, Mary Alden

Osgood, who was his constant companion in war and peace, on sea and land, until his death. She espoused his own enthusiasm for the freedom of Ireland, for republicanism, and for the joys of yachting.

When war between Germany and Great Britain erupted in the late summer of 1914, Childers became a naval intelligence officer with special responsibility for observing the German defenses along the Frisian coast, the scene of his 1903 novel. He learned how to fly aircraft and was among the first to engage in naval air reconnaissance. For his services he received the Distinguished Service Cross and retired with the rank of major in the Royal Air Force. Returning to civilian life in 1919, Childers espoused the cause of the Irish Republic and was a tireless propagandist for the Republican movement in Irish, English, and foreign presses. He was elected to the Irish Republican parliament in 1921 and appointed minister for propaganda. He served as principal secretary to the Irish delegation that negotiated the peace treaty with England in the fall and winter of 1921.

Childers refused, however, to accept the treaty during the ratification debates, clinging steadfastly to the Republican cause along with Eamon de Valera, the Irish president. When the treaty was nevertheless ratified, Childers refused to surrender and joined the dissident members of the Irish Republican Army as it pursued its guerrilla tactics against its former comrades, who now composed the new government of the Irish Free State. He was hunted down by his former colleagues, captured in his own childhood home in the Wicklow hills, and singled out to be executed without trial and before his many friends might intervene. He was shot by a firing squad at Beggar's Bush barracks in Dublin on November 24, 1922. His unswerving loyalty to and services on behalf of the Irish Republic were ultimately honored by the Irish people who elected his son, Erskine Hamilton Childers, fourth president of the Irish Republic in 1973.

ANALYSIS

For readers who are yachtsmen, sailors, or deep-sea fishermen, Erskine Childers's depiction of the joys, hardships, and terrors of the sea and the skills needed to master the oceanic forces in his sole novel,

The Riddle of the Sands, are stunningly vivid, authentic, and insightful. His tale is a classic depiction of the sport of yachting, and the novel continues to find an appreciative audience among its admirers. In an essay on Childers, E. F. Parker noted, "In Ireland he is a legendary hero—one of the founders of the nation—but outside Ireland in the rest of the English speaking world, it is as a yachtsman he is best remembered and as the author of the splendid yachting thriller *The Riddle of the Sands*."

THE RIDDLE OF THE SANDS

Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* has been considered a masterpiece from three different perspectives. First, it is a remarkable piece of political propaganda. Childers explicitly claimed that he had "edited" the manuscript for the general public to alert it to dangers to the English nation's security posed by German naval maneuvers allegedly detected by two English amateur yachtsmen while sailing among the Frisian Islands off the northwestern coast of Imperial Germany. Childers had seen action as an ordinary soldier in the recent Boer Wars and had become very critical of Great Britain's military inadequacies. He had written several historical accounts of the Boer Wars before publishing *The Riddle of the Sands* and subsequently wrote several other military treatises urging specific reforms in British tactics and weaponry.

In the preface to *The Riddle of the Sands*, Childers reported that he opposed "a bald exposition of the essential facts, stripped of their warm human envelope," as proposed by the two young sailor adventurers. He argued that

in such a form the narrative would not carry conviction, and would defeat its own end. The persons and the events were indissolubly connected; to evade, abridge, suppress, would be to convey to the reader the idea of a concocted hoax. Indeed, I took bolder ground still, urging that the story should be made as explicit and circumstantial as possible, frankly and honestly for the purpose of entertaining and so of attracting a wide circle of readers.

Two points may be made about these remarks. First, the novel can be seen as a clever propaganda device to attract public attention to Great Britain's weaknesses

in its military defenses. In fact, Childers's novel coincided with a decision by British naval authorities to investigate their North Sea naval defenses and adopt measures that came in good stead during the Great War, which broke out in 1914. (See the epilogue Childers inserted at the end of the story.) Childers's novel proved to be a successful stimulus for public support for national defense policy reforms. Significantly, the book was banned from circulation in Germany. Childers's use of an espionage adventure novel to comment on wider issues of national defense policies has been emulated by many later authors of espionage adventure thrillers.

Second, the novelist achieved a masterful characterization of the two heroes, Carruthers and Davies. The readers' knowledge of these men unfolds gradually and naturally through the action. A steady buildup of mystery is structured on a chronological framework and descriptions of wind and weather reflective of a traditional sea captain's log. Verisimilitude is also heightened by myriad colorful details of personal dress, habits, moods, meals, and the trivia of the tasks of the two sailors. Details of the boat—its sounds and movements—along with the descriptions of the islands, sandbanks, and estuaries where the story unfolds are used to create spellbinding realism for the reader. In his preface, Childers states that he had foreseen and planned this method of exposition as necessary to involve the reader personally in the underlying propagandistic purposes of the novel.

From a third perspective, the novel is a tale of the hero's personal growth to new levels of maturity through exposure to physical and moral challenges unexpectedly confronted. Carruthers, a rather spoiled, bored, and supercilious young man, is suddenly caught up in an adventure that will test his mettle and allow the reader to watch him develop unexpected strengths of a psychological, moral, and intellectual character. His companion Davies is a masterful, self-contained, and skillful yachtsman who is seemingly as mature and psychologically solid as Carruthers is not. Yet Davies also is undergoing the pain of growth through an aborted romance with the only woman in the novel, the daughter of the suspected spy.

Carruthers, out of sheer desperation to escape his

previous boredom and not look the fool before his companion, is gradually introduced to the skills and spartan lifestyle of the master yachtsman Davies. He also detects a mystery about Davies and, after some testing of his spirit, is told of a strange event that Davies encountered while sailing along the Frisian Islands off the German coast. Intrigued, and now thoroughly admiring the manliness and virtues of Davies, he joins in a potentially dangerous effort to explore the channels and sandbanks lying between the Frisian Islands and the German coast.

The direct, simple construction of Childers's prose and its ability to create character and atmosphere through vivid and detailed yet economical description probably were the product of his earliest form of writing: the diary-as-letter, which he wrote almost daily during his South African adventure in 1900. That his letters were able to be successfully published without the author's knowledge or redrafting suggests that Childers's literary style was influenced by the directness of the letter form and the inability to adorn the prose, given the unfavorable physical situation in which the fledgling soldier-diarist found himself. The prose has a modern clarity and directness rarely found in late Victorian novels.

It is not surprising that Childers became a successful journalist and newspaper editor during the Irish war for independence. His ability to convey scenes with an economy of words yet richness of detail was already a characteristic of his prose in his great novel published in 1903.

Joseph R. Peden

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved*, 1903

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

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AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Mary Clarissa Mallowan

Born: Torquay, Devon, England; September 15, 1890

Died: Wallingford, Oxfordshire, England; January 12, 1976

Also wrote as Mary Westmacott

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hercule Poirot, 1920-1975

Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, 1922-1973

Superintendent Battle, 1925-1944

Jane Marple, 1930-1976

Ariadne Oliver, 1934-1961

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HERCULE POIROT, a private detective, after retiring from the Belgian police force in 1904, lives mostly in London. Short, with an egg-shaped head, eyes that turn a deeper shade of green at significant moments, and an elegant military mustache, he wears a striped three-piece suit and patent leather shoes. His foreign

accent and uncertain command of English suggest a buffoon (as does his surname: “poireau” in colloquial French means simpleton or fool), but “the little grey cells” are always seeking and finding the truth.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR HASTINGS is Poirot’s faithful, though dull-witted, chronicler. Hastings, wounded in World War I, is investigating a case for Lloyd’s of London when he meets Poirot. Even after he marries Dulcie Duveen and moves to Argentina, Hastings reappears occasionally to assist in and record his friend’s adventures.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS BERESFORD and PRUDENCE COWLEY BERESFORD, better known as Tommy and Tuppence, were childhood friends. Shortly after World War I, in which Tommy was twice wounded, they establish the International Detective Agency. Tommy has the common sense and Tuppence the intuition that make them successful in their cases, which usually involve international intrigue. The couple age realistically; by the time of their last adventure they are both more than seventy years old and living at the Laurels in Hollowquay.

SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE, the father of five children, is a large, muscular man who never displays emotion. Though little given to imagination, he believes that no one is above suspicion.

JANE MARPLE, who first appears as a seventy-four-year-old never-married woman in 1930 and hardly ages thereafter, lives in the village of St. Mary Mead. Tall, thin, with fluffy white hair and china-blue eyes, she is given to gardening, which provides her with an excuse to be outside at convenient moments, and bird-watching, a hobby that requires the use of a pair of binoculars—which she sometimes trains on nonfeathered bipeds. Her intuition is flawless.

ARIADNE OLIVER, an Agatha Christie alter ego who produces a prolific quantity of successful detective novels, is something of a feminist. She is attractive though untidy and is always experimenting with her plentiful gray hair. Despite her vocation, her detecting abilities sometimes falter.

CONTRIBUTION

Through some seventy mystery novels and thrillers as well as 149 short stories and more than a dozen



Agatha Christie. (Library of Congress)

plays, Agatha Christie helped create the form of classic detective fiction, in which a murder is committed and many are suspected. In the end, all but one of the suspects are eliminated, and the criminal dies or is arrested. Working within these conventions, Christie explored their limits through numerous variations to create her intellectual puzzles. Much of the charm of her work derives from its use of the novel-of-manners tradition, as she explores upper-middle-class life in the English village, a milieu that she made peculiarly her own.

Typical of the novel of manners, Christie’s works offer little character analysis, detailed description, or philosophy about life; as she herself noted, “Lots of my books *are* what I should describe as ‘light-hearted thrillers.’” Simply written, demanding no arcane knowledge, requiring only careful attention to facts, her works repeatedly challenge readers to deduce from the clues they have been given the identity of the culprit before she reveals the always surprising answer.

BIOGRAPHY

Agatha Christie was born Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller just outside Torquay, England, on September 15, 1890, to Frederick Alvah Miller and Clarissa Margaret Beohmer Miller. Because her two older siblings were at school, Agatha spent much time alone, which she passed by inventing characters and adventures for them. She was also often in the company of her two grandmothers (who later served as models for Jane Marple). Though she received no formal education except in music, she read voraciously and showed an early interest in writing, publishing a poem in the local newspaper at the age of eleven.

At eighteen, bored while recovering from influenza, Christie (then Miller) took her mother's suggestion to write a story. Her first attempt, "The House of Beauty," was published in revised form as "The House of Dreams" in the *Sovereign Magazine* in January, 1926, and two other stories from this period later grew into novels. Turning to longer fiction, she sent a manuscript titled "Snow upon the Desert" to Eden Phillpotts, a popular novelist who was a family friend, and he referred her to his agent, Hughes Massie, who would become hers as well.

After her marriage to Archie Christie on Christmas Eve, 1914, she went to work, first as a nurse and then as a pharmacist. The latter post gave her a knowledge of poisons as well as free time to apply that information as she composed *The Mysterious Affair at Styles: A Detective Story* (1920). Rejected by several publishers, the manuscript went to John Lane at the Bodley Head in 1917, where it lay buried for two years. In 1919, the year Christie's daughter, Rosalind, was born, Lane called Christie into his office and told her that he would publish the novel (with some changes), and he signed Christie to a five-book contract. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* sold a respectable two thousand copies in its first year, but Christie had not yet begun to think of herself as a professional writer, even after *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) earned for her enough money to buy a car.

Indeed, Christie did not need to write professionally as long as her husband supported her. In 1926, though, the year of her first major success with *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, her life changed: Archie an-

nounced that he wanted a divorce. Coupled with the recent death of her mother, this news overwhelmed Christie, who, suffering from hysterical amnesia, vanished for ten days in December. The resulting publicity boosted sales, a fortunate result as she now depended on her fiction to live.

On an excursion to Iraq in 1929, Christie met Max Mallowan, an archaeologist fifteen years her junior; they were married in Edinburgh on September 11, 1930. For the next decade she would travel between the Middle East and England while producing seventeen novels and six short-story collections. The war years were equally productive, yielding seventeen works of fiction and an autobiography.

In 1947, to help celebrate the birthday of the Queen Mother, Christie created a half-hour radio play, *Three Blind Mice*, which in 1952 opened in London's West End as *The Mousetrap*, a play that was to break all theatrical records. Her novels also fared well. *A Murder Is Announced* (1950) was her first book to sell more than fifty thousand copies in one year, and every book of hers thereafter sold at least as many. Honors, too, flowed in. These included the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America (1955), the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best foreign play (1955, for *Witness for the Prosecution*, pr. 1953), commander of the British Empire (1956), an honorary doctorate from the University of Exeter (1961), and dame of the British Empire (1971).

In 1970, at the age of eighty, Christie published her eightieth book. A fall the next year broke her hip, and she never fully recovered. On January 12, 1976, she died at her home in Wallingford, England, and she was buried at St. Mary's Churchyard in nearby Cholsey.

ANALYSIS

By 1980 Agatha Christie's books had sold more than four hundred million copies in 102 countries and 103 languages. Only the Bible and William Shakespeare have sold more, and they have had a few centuries' head start. If all the American editions of *Peril at End House* (1932) were placed end to end, they would reach from Chicago to the moon. *The Mousetrap*, which has earned millions of dollars, has exceeded all previous record runs by several decades, and Christie

is the only playwright to have had three plays being performed simultaneously in London's West End while another was being produced on Broadway. To what do her works owe the popularity that has earned for her the title "Queen of Crime"?

The solution to this mystery lies in Christie's combination of originality and convention, a fusion evident already in her first published novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. The detective she introduces here, Hercule Poirot, resembles not only Sherlock Holmes but also Marie Belloc Lowndes's Hercule Popeau, who had worked for the Sûreté in Paris, and Hercule Flambeau, the creation of G. K. Chesterton. Gaston Leroux's hero of *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1907; *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908), Joseph Rouletabille, as well as Rouletabille's rival, Frederick Larson, also contributed to Poirot, as did Christie's observations of Belgian refugees in Torquay. Similarly, Captain Arthur Hastings derives from Holmes's chronicler, Dr. Watson: Both have been wounded in war, both are unable to dissemble and hence cannot always be trusted with the truth, both are highly susceptible to female beauty, both see what their more astute friends observe, yet neither can correctly interpret the evidence before him.

However conventional these characters are, though, they emerge as distinct figures. One cannot imagine Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's cerebral detective referring to himself as "Papa" Holmes the way Christie's calls himself "Papa Poirot." To Holmes's intellect Christie has added a heart, one that has been captured by Countess Vera Rossakoff. Poirot refers to her much as Holmes speaks of Irene Adler, but one would not suspect Holmes of harboring any of the matrimonial or sexual interest toward Adler that Poirot seems to have for his "remarkable woman."

The differences between Hastings and Watson are equally noticeable, Christie's narrator being less perceptive and more comic. Watson is not "of an imbecility to make one afraid," nor would Watson propose to a woman he hardly knows. Christie's modifications made Poirot an enduring figure—Nicaragua put him on a postage stamp—but she quickly realized that Hastings lacked substance. He appears in only eight of the thirty-four Poirot novels, and as early as 1926 she

sent him to Argentina, allowing another character to recount *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES

Like this detecting duo, the plot of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* draws on the tradition of detective fiction but bears Christie's individual stamp. There is the murder in the locked room, a device popularized by John Dickson Carr. The wrong man is arrested and tried for the crime. Abiding by the rules of mysteries, Christie sets before the reader all the clues that Poirot discovers, often going so far as to number them. Yet the work exhibits a subtlety and misdirection characteristic of Christie's work. For example, she reproduces a letter that the victim supposedly wrote on the night she was murdered. The reader naturally tries to find some hidden meaning in the words, when in fact the clue lies in the spacing within the date. Early in the book one learns that Evelyn Howard has a low voice and mannish figure; still, when someone impersonates Arthur Inglethorp, the reader assumes that the impostor is a male.

The reader is not likely to make much of the fact that Evelyn Howard's father was a doctor or pay attention when Mary Cavendish says that her mother died of accidental poisoning from a medicine she was taking, even though Mrs. Inglethorp has been using a tonic containing strychnine. When Evelyn Howard finds the brown paper used to wrap a parcel containing a false beard, one assumes that she has fulfilled Poirot's expectations of her abilities. Since Poirot has taken her into his confidence, one hardly suspects that she is involved in the murder. Moreover, she seems too straightforward and blunt, too likable and reliable to be guilty.

Her cousin Arthur Inglethorp, on the other hand, seems too obviously the killer; even the dull-witted Hastings suspects him, and Hastings's suspicion should be enough to exonerate anyone. Inglethorp has an obvious motive—money—and is supposedly having an affair with another woman. Before leaving Styles early in the novel, Evelyn Howard further implicates him by telling Hastings to be especially wary of Mr. Inglethorp. Given all these clues, no one familiar with the conventions of the genre would regard him as the criminal. Any lingering doubt, moreover, seems

removed when Poirot remarks that considering Mrs. Inglethorp's kindness to the Belgian refugees, he would not allow her husband, whom she clearly loved, to be arrested now. One presumes that Poirot means that he is now sure that Arthur Inglethorp is innocent, though in fact the detective simply means "now," before the case against Inglethorp is complete.

The Mysterious Affair at Styles tricks the reader not only by making the most likely and least likely suspects both guilty of the crime but also by introducing many false leads. Dr. Bauerstein, a London toxicologist, unexpectedly appears at Styles on the night of the murder and is found very early the next morning walking, fully dressed, in front of the gates to the manor. Why does Lawrence Cavendish, Mrs. Inglethorp's son by her previous marriage, persist in maintaining that death was accidental? Why does Mary Cavendish cry out, when she learns that her mother-in-law has been poisoned, "No, no—not that—not that!" Why does she claim to have heard sounds in Mrs. Inglethorp's room when she could not possibly have heard them? What is one to make of the strychnine in John Cavendish's drawer or of Lawrence Cavendish's fingerprints on another bottle of the poison?

Typical, too, is the focus on the solution rather than the crime. Although Christie presents an account of Mrs. Inglethorp's final convulsions, the details are not gruesome because the description is sanitized. In most of Christie's subsequent works, the murders occur off-stage; significantly, the word "murder" itself does not often appear in her titles, particularly not in the titles that she, as opposed to her American publishers, chose. The reader's reaction to her crimes is therefore not "How terrible!" but "Who did it? How? Why?" Like Christie's detectives, the reader embarks on an intellectual quest to solve an intricate puzzle, not an emotional journey of revenge or purgation.

RED HERRINGS AND PLAIN EVIDENCE

Christie often allows the reader to engage in self-deceit. In *The Body in the Library* (1942), the clues are again so plain that one dismisses them as red herrings. In *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), the obvious suspects confess quite early, much to Jane Marple's surprise. The reader assumes that she believes that someone else is the actual culprit and so dismisses the

admissions of guilt. Actually, Miss Marple is merely perplexed that two people who worked so hard to create an alibi should give themselves up voluntarily. One would not expect the police officer in *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1939) to be the murderer any more than one would suspect Lettitia Blacklock, the apparent target of at least two murder attempts, of being the killer in *A Murder Is Announced*.

In each case, Christie presents the evidence; Dora Bunner, for example, often says "Lotty" instead of "Letty," a clear indication that Lettitia Blacklock is someone else. Yet the reader will dismiss these slips as signs of Dora Bunner's absentmindedness. Christie's most notable adaptations of conventional plotting appear in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in which the sympathetic narrator—who, like Evelyn Howard, seems to be in league with Poirot—turns out to be the killer, in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), in which all the suspects are in fact guilty, and in *Ten Little Niggers* (1939; also known as *And Then There Were None*), where all the suspects are victims.

ORDEAL BY INNOCENCE

At the same time that the crime itself is presented dispassionately, Christie recognizes its effect on the innocent. Cynthia Murdock and Lawrence Cavendish cannot be happy together as long as each secretly suspects the other of Mrs. Inglethorp's murder. The Argyle family (*Ordeal by Innocence*, 1958) is not pleased to learn that John Argyle did not kill his mother, for if John is not guilty, another family member must be, and no one can be trusted until the actual culprit is identified.

Such considerations are about as philosophical as Christie gets, though. For her the story is all; philosophy and psychology never go beyond the obvious. Much of the appeal of Christie's work lies in this very superficiality. Just as one needs no special knowledge of mysterious poisons or English bell-ringing rituals to solve her crimes, so to understand her criminals' motives one need not look beyond greed, hate, or love.

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization is similarly simple, again not to detract from the story. Mr. Wells, the attorney in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, is presented as "a pleasant man of middle-age, with keen eyes, and the typical

lawyer's mouth." Lawrence Cavendish looks "about forty, very dark with a melancholy clean-shaven face." Caroline Sheppard, in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, hints that her brother is "weak as water," but one does not otherwise get that impression of him.

Even Christie's most fully realized characters remain in many ways ambiguous. Readers were surprised to learn, for example, that Jane Marple is tall; the fact emerges rather late in the novels about her. So, too, Poirot, though seemingly minutely described, is in some ways enigmatic. There is, for example, the mystery about his age: If he retired from the Belgian police force in 1904, he should be about eighty by the time of Mrs. Inglethorp's death and 130 by the time of his own. His head is egg-shaped, but which way does the egg lie (or stand)? Exactly what are military mustaches? Christie cultivated this ambiguity, objecting to a dust jacket that showed so much as Poirot's striped pants and shoes. She preferred to allow readers to supply the details from their own experience or imagination.

UNIVERSALITY

Even the English village that she made particularly her own milieu for murder is but roughly sketched. Christie can offer detailed floor plans or maps when this information is necessary, but Wychwood (*Murder Is Easy*, 1939) might easily be Jane Marple's St. Mary Mead or Styles St. Mary:

Wychwood . . . consists mainly of its one principal street. There were shops, small Georgian houses, prim and aristocratic, with whitened steps and polished knockers, there were picturesque cottages with flower gardens. There was an inn, the Bells and Motley, standing a little back from the street. There was a village green and a duck pond, and presiding over them a dignified Georgian house.

This easy transferability of her settings applies even to her most exotic locales; Mesopotamia seems no more foreign than Chipping Cleghorn.

The lack of specific detail has given her works timelessness as well as universality. Speaking of *Death Comes as the End* (1944), set in the Egypt of the Eleventh Dynasty, Christie observed, "People are the same in whatever century they live, or where." In keeping with

the novel-of-manners tradition she does chronicle the life of the period: *A Murder Is Announced* shows how Britishers attempted to cope with post-World War II hardships through barter and the black market, with children who read *The Daily Worker*, with social changes that brought the breakup of the old manors and caused servants to disappear, and with new technology such as central heating. A decade later, St. Mary Mead has a new housing development, and Gosington Hall gets new bathrooms (*The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, 1962). Such changes are, however, superficial. As Christie writes, "The new world was the same as the old. The houses were different, . . . the clothes were different, but the human beings were the same as they had always been."

If live-in maids have vanished, a part-time cleaning person will serve as well to keep a house tidy and a plot complicated. Though the village is no longer the closed world it once was, all the suspects can still fit into the Blacklock drawing room or the dining room of Bertram's Hotel. The real action in Christie's works occurs within the reader's mind while sorting real clues from false, innocent characters from guilty. As long as people enjoy such intellectual games, Christie's books will endure, for, with her masterful talent to deceive, she has created highly absorbing puzzles. She will always be the first lady of crime.

Joseph Rosenblum

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HERCULE POIROT SERIES: 1920-1930 • *The Mysterious Affair at Styles: A Detective Story*, 1920; *The Murder on the Links*, 1923; *Poirot Investigates*, 1924; *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 1926; *The Big Four*, 1927; *The Mystery of the Blue Train*, 1928

1931-1940 • *Peril at End House*, 1932; *Lord Edgware Dies*, 1933 (also known as *Thirteen at Dinner*); *Murder on the Orient Express*, 1934 (also known as *Murder on the Calais Coach*); *Murder in Three Acts*, 1934; *Death in the Clouds*, 1935 (also known as *Death in the Air*); *The A. B. C. Murders: A New Poirot Mystery*, 1936; *Murder in Mesopotamia*, 1936; *Dumb Witness*, 1937 (also known as *Poirot Loses a Client*); *Murder in the Mews, and Other Stories*, 1937 (also known as *Dead Man's Mirror, and Other Stories*);

Death on the Nile, 1937; *Appointment with Death: A Poirot Mystery*, 1938; *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, 1939 (also known as *Murder for Christmas: A Poirot Story*); *The Regatta Mystery, and Other Stories*, 1939; *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*, 1940 (also known as *The Patriotic Murders*, 1941); *Sad Cypress*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Evil Under the Sun*, 1941; *Five Little Pigs*, 1942 (also known as *Murder in Retrospect*); *Poirot on Holiday*, 1943; *The Hollow: A Hercule Poirot Mystery*, 1946; *Poirot Knows the Murderer*, 1946; *Poirot Lends a Hand*, 1946; *The Labours of Hercules: Short Stories*, 1947 (also known as *Labors of Hercules: New Adventures in Crime by Hercule Poirot*); *Taken at the Flood*, 1948 (also known as *There Is a Tide . . .*)

1951-1960 • *The Under Dog, and Other Stories*, 1951; *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*, 1952; *After the Funeral*, 1953 (also known as *Funerals Are Fatal*); *Hickory, Dickory, Dock*, 1955 (also known as *Hickory, Dickory, Death*); *Dead Man's Folly*, 1956; *Cat Among the Pigeons*, 1959; *The Adventures of the Christmas Pudding, and Selection of Entrées*, 1960

1961-1975 • *Double Sin, and Other Stories*, 1961; *The Clocks*, 1963; *Third Girl*, 1966; *Hallowe'en Party*, 1969; *Elephants Can Remember*, 1972; *Hercule Poirot's Early Cases*, 1974; *Curtain: Hercule Poirot's Last Case*, 1975

TOMMY AND TUPPENCE BERESFORD SERIES: *The Secret Adversary*, 1922; *Partners in Crime*, 1929; *N or M? The New Mystery*, 1941; *By the Pricking of My Thumb*, 1968; *Postern of Fate*, 1973

SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE SERIES: *The Secret of Chimneys*, 1925; *The Seven Dials Mystery*, 1929; *Murder Is Easy*, 1939 (also known as *Easy to Kill*); *Towards Zero*, 1944

JANE MARPLE SERIES: *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 1930; *The Thirteen Problems*, 1932 (also known as *The Tuesday Club Murders*, 1933); *The Body in the Library*, 1942; *The Moving Finger*, 1942; *A Murder Is Announced*, 1950; *They Do It with Mirrors*, 1952 (also known as *Murder with Mirrors*); *A Pocket Full of Rye*, 1953; *4:50 from Paddington*, 1957 (also known as *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw!*); *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, 1962 (also known as *The Mirror Crack'd*, 1963); *A Caribbean Mystery*, 1964;

At Bertram's Hotel, 1965; *Thirteen Clues for Miss Marple: A Collection of Mystery Stories*, 1965; *Nemesis*, 1971; *Sleeping Murder*, 1976 (posthumous); *Miss Marple's Final Cases*, 1979

ARIADNE OLIVER SERIES: *Parker Pyne Investigates*, 1934 (also known as *Mr. Parker Pyne, Detective*); *Cards on the Table*, 1936; *The Pale Horse*, 1961

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Man in the Brown Suit*, 1924; *The Sittaford Mystery*, 1931 (also known as *The Murder at Hazelmoor*); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?*, 1934 (also known as *Boomerang Clue*, 1935); *Ten Little Niggers*, 1939 (also known as *And Then There Were None*, 1940); *Death Comes in the End*, 1944; *Sparkling Cyanide*, 1945 (also known as *Remembered Death*); *Crooked House*, 1949; *They Came to Baghdad*, 1951; *Destination Unknown*, 1954 (also known as *So Many Steps to Death*, 1955); *Ordeal by Innocence*, 1958; *Endless Night*, 1967; *Passenger to Frankfurt*, 1970; *The Scoop, and Behind the Screen*, 1983 (with others)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Mysterious Mr. Quin*, 1930; *The Hound of Death, and Other Stories*, 1933; *The Listerdale Mystery, and Other Stories*, 1934; *The Mystery of the Baghdad Chest*, 1943; *The Mystery of the Crime in Cabin 66*, 1943; *Problem at Pollensa Bay, and Christmas Adventure*, 1943; *The Veiled Lady, and The Mystery of the Baghdad Chest*, 1944; *Murder Medley*, 1948 (with others); *The Witness for the Prosecution, and Other Stories*, 1948; *The Mousetrap and Other Stories*, 1949 (also known as *Three Blind Mice and Other Stories*); *Star over Bethlehem, and Other Stories*, 1965 (as Mallowan); *The Golden Ball, and Other Stories*, 1971; *The Harlequin Tea Set, and Other Stories*, 1997

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Giants' Bread*, 1930 (as Westmacott); *Unfinished Portrait*, 1934 (as Westmacott); *Absent in the Spring*, 1944 (as Westmacott); *The Rose and the Yew Tree*, 1948 (as Westmacott); *Blood Will Tell*, 1951; *A Daughter's a Daughter*, 1952 (as Westmacott); *The Burden*, 1956 (as Westmacott)

PLAYS: *Black Coffee*, pr. 1930; *Ten Little Niggers*, pr. 1943 (also known as *Ten Little Indians*, pr. 1944);

Appointment with Death, pr., pb. 1945; *Murder on the Nile*, pr., pb. 1946; *The Hollow*, pr. 1951; *The Mousetrap*, pr. 1952; *Witness for the Prosecution*, pr. 1953; *Spider's Web*, pr. 1954; *Towards Zero*, pr. 1956 (with Gerald Verner); *Verdict*, pr., pb. 1958; *The Unexpected Guest*, pr., pb. 1958; *Go Back for Murder*, pr., pb. 1960; *Rule of Three: Afternoon at the Seaside*, *The Patient*, *The Rats*, pb. 1962; *Afternoon at the Seaside*, pr. 1962; *The Patient*, pr. 1962; *The Rats*, pr. 1962; *Fiddlers Three*, pr. 1971; *Akhnaton*, pb. 1973 (also known as *Akhnaton and Nefertiti*)

POETRY: *The Road of Dreams*, 1925; *Poems*, 1973

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Thirteen for Luck: A Selection of Mystery Stories for Young Readers*, 1961; *Surprise! Surprise! A Collection of Mystery Stories with Unexpected Endings*, 1965

NONFICTION: *Come Tell Me How You Live*, 1946; *An Autobiography*, 1977

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Shaw, Marion, and Sabine Vanacker. *Reflecting on Miss Marple*. London: Routledge, 1991. After a brief chronology of Christie's life, Shaw and Vanacker devote four chapters to one of her most memorable detectives, in the course of which they make a case for viewing Miss Marple as a feminist heroine. They do so by reviewing the history of female writers and the Golden Age of detective fiction, as well as the social context of Christie's Miss Marple books. The never-married Miss Marple, they conclude, is able to solve her cases by exploiting prejudice against unmarried older women.

MARY HIGGINS CLARK

Born: Bronx, New York; December 24, 1929

Also wrote as The Adams Round Table (with Thomas Chastain)

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; psychological; cozy; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Alvirah and Willy Mehan, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALVIRAH AND WILLY MEHAN are a comic working-class pair of amateur detectives who became free to travel and stumble on mysteries after Alvirah won a lottery. Alvirah has a nose for trouble, which leads her to a kidnapping amid a winter's storm, a stolen Christmas tree, an abandoned baby, and a mobster-laden cruise.

CONTRIBUTION

Mary Higgins Clark, one of the most popular and prolific modern suspense writers, has been called the "Queen of Suspense." Her fast-paced, tightly plotted award-winning best sellers capturing daily terrors have attracted readers worldwide for more than thirty years. In the tradition of Pat Flower, Margaret Millar, and Mignon Eberhardt, authors noted for portraying vulnerable women facing evil, Clark is at her best when she is writing about women who rise above personal weaknesses to protect and defend those less capable. Her success lies in part in her ability to understand the worries of wives, mothers, and working women: their fears for their children, their alienation from the men in their lives, their personal insecurities, their vaguely disturbing childhood memories, and their growing awareness of deception and lies beneath people's smiles. She connects the intimate and personal with broader public concerns to heighten the sense of suspense. Clark, who publishes one or two novels or story collections per year, weaves disparate plot strands into unexpected wholes, often exploring the same theme on multiple levels (for example, providing different degrees and types of betrayals or jeal-

ousies). Her strength is in creating vivid scenes that make readers experience apprehension, fear, discovery, and catharsis.

BIOGRAPHY

The daughter of Irish restaurant owner Luke Joseph Higgins and Nora C. (Durkin) Higgins, Mary Higgins grew up in the Bronx and attended Villa Maria Academy and Ward Secretarial School. She wrote her first poem at seven and frightened friends with scary ghost stories. The sudden deaths of her father and her older brother Joe affected her deeply. At seventeen she became a Remington Rand advertising assistant. Creative writing classes at New York University inspired her to join a writing group that became the Adams Round Table and eventually led to five short-story collections. While working as a Pan Am flight attendant (1949-1950), she married long-time friend and airline executive Warren F. Clark. When her husband died in 1964, Clark was left with five children to support. She wrote and produced radio scripts for Robert G. Jennings (1965-1970) while writing in her free time. When her first published book, *Aspire to the Heavens: A Biography of George Washington* (1969), proved a commercial failure, she turned to the mystery genre. In 1970 she went to work for Aerial Communications, where she served ten years as vice president, partner, and radio programming creative director/producer.

Clark's publication of *Where Are the Children?* (1975) earned more than \$100,000 in paperback royalties and marked the beginning of her long, successful second career as a mystery writer attuned to childhood fears, mother-child relationships, the traumatic loss of family members, and the spine-tingling fears of women alone in the dark. In 1978 she married attorney Raymond Charles Ploetz and moved to his Minnesota farm but soon had the marriage annulled. She received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Fordham University, graduating summa cum laude in 1979. In 1980 she became chair of the board and creative director of David J. Clark Enterprises in New York. Not until her

second thriller, *A Stranger Is Watching* (1977), earned a \$500,000 advance, more than \$1 million in paperback rights, and film rights from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer did Clark feel she had the financial security she needed to leave Aerial and raise her family in comfort. In 1989 she signed a then-record-breaking \$11.4 million contract with Simon & Schuster and in 1992 a \$35 million contract.

Clark served as president of the Mystery Writers of America in 1987 and has since served on the board of directors. As chair of the International Crime Writers Congress, she attended a Federal Bureau of Investigation lecture on serial killers using personal ads to entice victims, which became the inspiration for *Loves Music, Loves to Dance* (1991). Her literary interests have led her to join various authors' guilds and academies, including the American Irish Historical Society. In 1996 Clark established the *Mary Higgins Clark Mystery Magazine*, which publishes mystery and suspense stories.

In 1996, she married retired chief executive officer John J. Conheeny, whose name she uses in her private life. Their renovated home in Spring Lake, New Jersey, became the setting of *On the Street Where You Live* (2001). Clark continues to write novels, sometimes with her daughter Carol Higgins Clark, with whom she revived the Alvirah and Willy Mehan series by creating several Christmas-themed novels. Clark contributes regularly to periodicals on a wide variety of topics. More than twelve of her works have been filmed.

With more than fifty million books in print, Clark enjoys best-seller status worldwide. Her many awards include the New Jersey Author Award in 1969 for *Aspire to the Heavens*, the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière in 1980 for *A Stranger Is Waiting*, thirteen honorary doctorates, and the titles of dame of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, dame of Malta, and dame of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. In 2000 she was named Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America.

ANALYSIS

Mary Higgins Clark, whose book titles frequently come from those of songs, builds suspense quickly, with action moving forward rapidly as a sympathetic heroine rescues herself (and others) from a deranged

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

One of the most unusual mystery magazines ever published, the Mary Higgins Clark Mystery Magazine was an erratically issued, full-size "slick" published by Family Circle that lasted only from 1996 to 2001.

killer. Amid the suspense, Clark often comments on relevant social topics: dishonest fertility specialists (*The Cradle Will Fall*, 1980), greedy health maintenance organizations (HMOs) profiting at the expense of patients (*We'll Meet Again*, 1999), the failures of the federal witness protection program (*Pretend You Don't See Her*, 1995), and financial/pharmaceutical conspiracies (*The Second Time Around*, 2003). In her novels, she typically establishes a chain of responsibility involving blackmail and silence—fear of losing one's job, intimidation, and pride in knowing secrets—that makes more than one individual culpable.

Clark's characters are everyday people trapped in frightening situations amid the commonplace: a newlywed who discovers her husband's terrible secrets, a woman who finds the contractor building her new house is not what he seems, and a grieving stepdaughter who is buried alive. The psychological and philosophical are vital to her creative method. Her heroines

may be a photographer and amateur sculptor (*Moonlight Becomes You: A Novel*, 1996), a Manhattan real estate agent (*Pretend You Don't See Her*), the owner of an exclusive boutique (*While My Pretty One Sleeps*, 1989), a radio psychologist investigating disappearances (*You Belong to Me*, 1998), or just ordinary homemakers and mothers, but they all undergo a test of strength and prove extraordinary in their ability to endure and overcome adversity. Often they discover links between their private lives and a murderer, always an unquestionably deranged monster, whose evil lies hidden behind a respectable facade (such as the plastic surgeon who puts the beautiful face of a murder victim on patient after patient). A typical Clark heroine is Celia Foster Nolan (*No Place Like Home*, 2005), who as a child was falsely accused of murdering her parents. Her husband buys her family's house and presents it to her for her birthday, unaware of its special terrors. She becomes haunted by the past, especially when her parents' real killer stalks her and her son. A less common protagonist is the serial killer in *Nighttime Is My Time* (2004), a former geek once tormented by his high school classmates who seeks revenge by targeting members of the popular crowd at his twentieth reunion.

Clark is a master at conveying the back story and relevant facts through dialogue, multiple perspectives, stories within stories, and simultaneous episodes, while maintaining suspense and moving the action forward. Sometimes the suspense comes from uncertainty about the villain's identity or what the known killer will get away with before the heroine realizes the truth; sometimes there is a countdown to disaster; frequently, Clark leads readers' attention one way while she slowly builds a set of clues to implicate a far less obvious character. *Daddy's Little Girl* (2002) and *The Second Time Around* experiment with a first-person narrator.

Clark writes about the psychological (personality disorders in *Loves Music, Loves to Dance*; multiple personalities and childhood sexual abuse in *All Around the Town*, 1992; a stalker's mind-set in *Nighttime Is My Time*), medical science (genetic manipulation and in vitro fertilization in *I'll Be Seeing You*; nursing homes plagued by sudden death in *Moonlight*

Becomes You; plastic surgery in *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*, 1995, and *We'll Meet Again*), and household crime (burglaries in *Stillwatch*, 1984). A political thriller set among the Washington, D.C., elite, *Stillwatch* depicts two strong women, one modeled on Geraldine Ferraro, while *Weep No More, My Lady* (1987), with multiple suspects, is a celebrity mystery set at an exclusive spa. Occasionally, Clark's lifelong interest in the supernatural appears, for example, the ghost of the heroine's murdered mother in *While My Pretty One Sleeps*, the haunted house in *Remember Me* (1994), or the psychic phenomena in *Before I Say Goodbye* (2000), in every other way a political suspense story. The serial killer who stalks young women in a present-day New Jersey resort town (*On the Street Where You Live*) believes himself to be the reincarnation of a killer from the past century and plans over a twelve-day period to commit his historical crimes all over again.

Clark's sources are friends and family, news events, and personal experiences. Her tightly woven plots capture the suspicions that can plague family members facing murder close to home. Her themes include the insidious effects of the past on the present, human frailty (jealousy, greed, arrogance), vulnerability and innocence, the far-ranging effects of violence, abuses of the justice system, the dehumanization of systems supposedly existing for the public weal, the corrupting effect of money and politics, betrayals of trust both personal and professional, and questions of identity.

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

Clark's first suspense novel, *Where Are the Children?*, set in a misty, stormy Cape Cod and inspired by a New York trial of a woman accused of murdering her children, sets the pattern for her future novels in that it features a vulnerable young woman who, in a time of crisis, proves to be a resourceful survivor. Nancy Harmon, although innocent, is freed from certain conviction for gruesomely murdering her two children by a legal technicality. Relocated and remarried but still traumatized seven years later, she is forced to revisit the nightmare when the real killer tries to repeat his crime, abducting and abusing Nancy's two children from her second marriage. Nancy, confused and terri-

fied, must find the truth: A manipulative murderer with a multiple-personality disorder happily drugged his wife, killed his own children, and plans to murder Nancy's children. Despite the complicated back story, the novel spans only one day.

A STRANGER IS WATCHING

In *A Stranger Is Watching*, Clark questions a 1976 Supreme Court ruling permitting the death penalty. She sets her story over a three-day period leading to the eve of the execution of Ronald Thompson, who has been erroneously convicted of murdering Nina Peterson, and sends her heroine journalist Sharon Martin into harm's way in his defense. Sharon has fallen in love with Nina's husband, Steve, who is suffering because of his wife's death and trying to comfort his six-year-old son Neil, who witnessed his mother's murder. The real killer, a psychopath, takes Sharon and Neil hostage and hides them under Grand Central Station, which he intends to blow up. In a countdown to the execution and explosion, Clark intensifies the terror by shifting the point of view among Sharon, Neil, Steve, the killer, and the third-person narrator.

THE CRADLE WILL FALL

The Cradle Will Fall, a medical thriller inspired by the first test-tube baby, occurs over a week and features the recently widowed Katie DeMaio, an ambitious young prosecutor pathologically fearful of hospitals. When Kate is admitted to Westlake Hospital after a minor driving accident, she sees out her hospital window, amid snow and sleet, a familiar figure hiding a woman's body in his car. When she discovers the next day that the woman's death has been declared a suicide, Kate does not believe it, knowing that the dead woman had desperately wanted a child and was six months pregnant. She begins an investigation into the illegal activities of fertility specialists, including insertion of embryos into the wombs of sterile women. The most terrifying event in the novel is when the heroine must undergo surgery in the very hospital where the doctors she is investigating practice.

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

A Cry in the Night (1982) is a gothic tale set on a remote Minnesota farm and inspired by Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), and Clark's second marriage. This story depends on the

gullibility of Jenny MacParland, a divorced mother of two girls, making ends meet in a fashionable Manhattan art gallery. A Minnesota painter, whose portrait of a beautiful woman seems hauntingly familiar, sweeps Jenny off her feet. Her innocent assumption of this Prince Charming's goodness and her desire to please prove dangerous to her personal safety. She finds herself trapped in a horrifying world: An exquisite mansion becomes a prison, her life and those of her children are threatened, and the secrets of her husband's first wife reveal his own dark reality.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ALVIRAH AND WILLY MEEHAN SERIES: *Weep No More, My Lady*, 1987; *Death on the Cape, and Other Stories*, 1993; *The Lottery Winner: Alvirah and Willy Stories*, 1994; *All Through the Night*, 1998; *Deck the Halls*, 2000 (with Carol Higgins Clark); *The Christmas Thief*, 2004 (with C. H. Clark); *Santa Cruise*, 2006 (with C. H. Clark)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1975-1990 • *Where Are the Children?*, 1975; *A Stranger Is Watching*, 1977; *The Cradle Will Fall*, 1980; *A Cry in the Night*, 1982; *Stillwatch*, 1984; *While My Pretty One Sleeps*, 1989; *The Anastasia Syndrome, and Other Stories*, 1989

1991-2000 • *Loves Music, Loves to Dance*, 1991; *All Around the Town*, 1992; *I'll Be Seeing You*, 1993; *Remember Me*, 1994; *Silent Night: A Novel*, 1995; *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*, 1995; *Pretend You Don't See Her*, 1995; *Moonlight Becomes You: A Novel*, 1996; *My Gal Sunday*, 1996; *You Belong to Me*, 1998; *We'll Meet Again*, 1999; *Before I Say Goodbye*, 2000

2001-2007 • *He Sees You When You're Sleeping*, 2001 (with C. H. Clark); *On the Street Where You Live*, 2001; *Daddy's Little Girl*, 2002; *The Second Time Around*, 2003; *Nighttime Is My Time*, 2004; *No Place Like Home*, 2005; *Two Little Girls in Blue*, 2006; *I Heard That Song Before*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Sight Unseen*, 1990; *Angel of Mercy*, 1990; *Starting Over*, 1991; *Count Your Blessings*, 1992; *Cody's Last Stand*, 1992; *Good Morning, Miss Greene*, 1992; *Plumbing for Willy*, 1993 (with C. H.

Clark); *Groom Unknown*, 1994; *Two Hearts, Too Late*, 1994; *Early Harvest*, 1994; *The Plot Thickens*, 2000

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Ghost Ship: A Cape Code Story*, 2007

NONFICTION: *Aspire to the Heavens: A Biography of George Washington*, 1969 (reissued as *Mount Vernon Love Story*, 2002); *Mother* (with Maya Angelou and Amy Tan), 1996; *Kitchen Privileges: A Memoir*, 2001

EDITED TEXTS (AS THE ADAMS ROUND TABLE): *Missing in Manhattan*, 1986; *Justice in Manhattan*, 1995; *Murder in the Family*, 2002

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Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Essays on over one hundred women writers, including Clark; a useful overview essay on women mystery writers places Clark in the genre. Indexed.

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Peltzer, Linda C. *Mary Higgins Clark: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995. Analyzes Clark's early work, suspense conventions, and literary/family influences. Indexed.

ANNA CLARKE

Born: Cape Town, South Africa; April 28, 1919

Died: Brighton, East Sussex, England; November 7, 2004

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Paula Glenning, 1985-1996

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PAULA GLENNING is a lecturer in English literature at a London university. Small and fair, she is in her early thirties and divorced when she first appears. She is untidy, sensitive, and cares deeply about people whom she believes are hurt.

CONTRIBUTION

Anna Clarke's novels are primarily psychological studies of what makes seemingly ordinary people commit crimes; as such her works have much in common with those of Ruth Rendell. Unlike Rendell, however, Clarke rarely finds the mystery as intriguing as the mind of the criminal—and the mind of the sleuth. Her plots are nevertheless tightly woven and sometimes surprising in that, for a while, the reader may believe the sleuth to be the potential criminal or the criminal the potential victim. Clarke reveals a world in which psychological horrors lurk behind the commonplace, a world in which the innocent are forced to confront their own darkness and that of others.

Many of Clarke's plots make use of literary refer-

ences or revolve about the world of literature: Characters may be authors or literary critics. Frequently, the police believe the crime to be an unfortunate accident. They are not, however, “perfect crimes,” for always an interested party recognizes the crime and the criminal. What makes Clarke’s work particularly interesting and realistic is that the sleuth is no master of detection; rather, one average person (or, more often, two or three people) will arrive at the truth. Her tight plotting and strong character development have earned her a place in the world of mystery fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Anna Clarke was born on April 28, 1919, in Cape Town, South Africa, the daughter of Fred Clarke and Edith Annie Gillams Clarke. Her parents were both educators, and Clarke grew up with a love for reading. She attended schools in Cape Town and Montreal and attended universities in Toronto and Oxford. Planning a career in mathematics, she studied for and received an external degree in economics from London University in 1945. A severe illness, however, cut short her career plans, and she went to work as a publisher’s secretary in London. She was a private secretary for Victor Gollancz from 1947 to 1950, and in 1951 she took a similar job with Eyre and Spottiswoode, where she worked until 1953.

In 1956 Clarke became the administrative secretary for the British Association for American Studies, a post she retained until 1962. Plagued by the lingering effects of her illness, she quit full-time work and eventually returned to university studies, receiving a bachelor’s degree from the Open University in 1973 and a master of arts degree from the University of Sussex, Brighton, in 1975.

As an escape from office jobs, which she hated, Clarke turned to writing. Having no success with so-called straight novels, she began writing mysteries. Between 1968 and 1996, she produced twenty-seven novels of mystery and suspense. Clarke died on November 7, 2004, in Brighton, East Sussex.

ANALYSIS

Anna Clarke’s mysteries are often not what the average reader of detective fiction expects; in fact, they are

frequently not mysteries in any traditional sense but studies in the development of a murderer. A number of elements make Clarke’s novels strong and intriguing; the most interesting of these are her use of multiple sleuths, her focus on the psychology of crime, and the literary motif that runs through many of her works. These secure Clarke’s place among mystery writers.

Clarke’s use of multiple sleuths is the most unusual element of her writing. Although she introduced a series character, Paula Glenning, in *Last Judgement* (1985), in her earlier work she used different characters in each mystery. Her detectives are always amateurs because her interest lies in the human mind rather than in crime and detection. Indeed, unlike the traditional detective story, a Clarke story does not begin with a crime. Either the crime does not occur until the final chapters, or there is no awareness that a crime has occurred.

Perhaps surprisingly, Clarke’s approach to characterization does not lead to loose plotting. Indeed, her plots are tightly constructed. Because there is frequently no mystery for the reader to attempt to solve before the detective does, there is no need for red herrings and their attendant problems for a writer who must discreetly insert them. In *Last Judgement*, the plot moves inevitably from opening action to denouement. Although references to James’s obsessive desire to possess his grandfather’s papers suggest that he is capable of murdering the old man, the focus is always on Mary and her decline into madness. Also, the occasional breaks in action serve only to create suspense. Even in *Plot Counter-Plot* (1974), a complicated story of two authors at personal and professional odds with each other, there are no loose ends.

This care with plotting stems from Clarke’s literary interests, which in turn provide a motif for much of her work. In *Last Judgement*, characters include a renowned author, two professors of English literature, and a literary critic. The plot, as character James Goff points out on several occasions, resembles *The Aspern Papers* (1888) by Henry James. At the center of this plot is the struggle for possession of the notebooks, letters, and drafted novels of the great author. Again, in *My Search for Ruth* (1975) it is a literary form that dominates: A young woman writes a chronicle while searching for her true identity. According to the critic

Larry E. Grimes, Ruth chooses “a compulsive, personal, primary encounter with the stuff of literature itself—image, character, plot.”

Clarke said of her writing, “As far as I have any conscious feeling about writing novels at all beyond the obsessional story-telling, I am interested in the workings of the human mind and their effects on character and action.” This is borne out by all aspects of her work. Her characterization, her nontraditional use of sleuths and of criminal acts, her tightly woven plots, and even the literary motif she adopts so frequently support her interest in the mind. She is the purest of mystery writers, for as Nancy Pick says in *Desire to Kill* (1982), “All human beings are the stuff of which murderers are made.” It is this premise that lies at the root of mystery and detective fiction.

LAST JUDGEMENT

In *Last Judgement*, there are crimes against the heart or spirit, but there is no criminal act until the next-to-last chapter. The result is that the story, in part, is about how a number of individuals either come to understand that some violence will occur or remain oblivious to its possibility. For example, a male nurse, Hector Greenaway, sees Mary Morrison, the central character, as a trapped, weak animal that is likely to be dangerous; yet when he voices his concern to Dr. Joan Conway, the doctor sees only a young woman overworked and worried by her frail stepfather’s ill health. Hector does not understand how he knows what he does of Mary.

Similarly, Paula Glenning at one point comes to realize that Mary is laughing silently at her. Paula relives the scene:

She had had an overpowering sense of oppression in that horrible dark, dead room, and had seen Mary as trapped and crushed by it, unable to free herself.

But had Mary really felt like that? . . . It was Paula who had given way to her feelings. Was Mary such a helpless victim? Had she found her own way out?

Perhaps she had made up her mind to murder the old man. Perhaps she had already done so.

It is this sensitivity to atmosphere that marks Clarke’s amateur detectives.

Mary Morrison’s madness is precipitated by change.

Her stepfather’s grandson has begun to spend time with her in the hope of gaining access through her to the private papers of his grandfather, England’s greatest novelist. As G. E. Goff’s secretary, Mary could perhaps smooth the way for James Goff, long estranged from his grandfather. Suspecting James’s motives, but hoping that his true motive is to see her, Mary for the first time believes that love is possible for her, that she has not been entombed by her mother’s dying wish that she care for her aged stepfather. Against this is the desire of another man, Richard Grieve, to have the papers, and G. E.’s suspicion that Mary is plotting against him, a suspicion that leads him to reveal brutally the truth to her about her natural father and her beloved mother. This revelation, combined with the pressure of deciding what to do about the papers, drives Mary to madness.

Since her mother’s death, Mary has been somewhat unstable and needs someone to talk to. For Mary, it is her dead mother with whom she discusses her problems. This is a natural human action; it is only the extreme to which she takes the action that marks it as madness.

DESIRE TO KILL

Clarke’s use of sensitive amateur detectives is most noticeable in *Desire to Kill*. In this work, Nancy Pick and George Cunningham, two residents of a retirement home, discuss the other residents over games of chess. They reach the conclusion, based only on observation, that one of their number, Amy Langford, is quite mad and has systematically set about killing other residents through a series of apparent accidents. At one point, in an attempt to understand what is happening, they voice their vague misgivings:

“Damn it, there’s so little to go on. Just this vague feeling that something is very wrong, some malevolent force at work. The more we talk, the stronger it gets. You, too?”

“Me, too. Look here, if we haven’t any facts, let’s tackle it from the psychological angle. Let’s look for examples of malevolence. Who is there connected with Digby Hall who is actually capable of scheming to make somebody else suffer?”

Here, encapsulated, is the process Clarke’s detectives follow.

A key term is “psychological angle.” In creating her characters, Clarke concentrates on the thoughts that lie behind actions. In *Desire to Kill* the reader sees the disintegration of Amy Langford, and, as is often the case in Clarke’s novels, disruption of a lifestyle causes that disintegration. With her husband’s death, Amy has lost the center of her life; her son, unwilling to cater to her, places her in a retirement home. Feeling abandoned and lost, Amy speaks to her reflection in a mirror: “Don’t worry, Amy. . . . You’ve not been completely deserted. I’m going to look after you.” This is a very human response, but it marks the beginning of her madness. She continues, “I’m going to make sure that you get your due and that those who won’t give it you will suffer for it.” This becomes a motif through the book; Amy turns to the comfort of her reflection, her alter ego, whenever she is confused or frightened, and each time she descends more deeply into madness. The last time she looks in the mirror, she sees an image that appears momentarily at peace but becomes frightened almost immediately.

“I can’t help you,” she cried aloud. “I don’t know what to do. I know you want me to kill Mr. Horder, because he disappointed you so badly. But I don’t want to kill him. I want to be his friend. I like him. And he likes me!”

So strong is Clarke’s writing that both Amy Langford and Mary Morrison are believable even in extreme madness.

PLOT COUNTER-PLOT

This need to talk without fear of being overheard takes another form in *Plot Counter-Plot*. Mystery novelist Helen Mitchell lets loose her fears and her madness in a novel she is writing, her last novel. She has no life of her own; rather, she knows that her “most successful character creation of all was that of Helen Mitchell.” Now her greatest fear is about to come true: “Ever since I began to write it has haunted me, this fear that my imagination could take over my real life and that I could behave like one of the characters in my novels, even to the point of committing murder.” Yet Helen, by her own admission, has no real life, and as a character she has no real confidants, so she pours her fears, her madness, and her last acts into a novel.

Clarke’s literary connections are most evident in *Plot Counter-Plot*, wherein an author, Helen Mitchell, has an affair with Brent Ashwood, a writer with only one book in him; he attempts to steal her work—a novel based on him—and present it as an autobiographical novel. As the two plot against each other, the literary tangle thickens. Even the overall structure of the book shows an attentiveness to literary form; a prologue and epilogue establish the “real” world of Helen Mitchell and explain her writing of the “novel,” which appears between prologue and epilogue. It is this fictional creation that details her life with Brent and carries the plot of the mystery. It is the real world of the epilogue that provides the climax and the final plot twist.

Clarke’s concern with literary qualities is reflected in her style. Sentence patterns flow and build to a climax. For example, she begins *Plot Counter-Plot* thus:

At last I am alone in the room and can take up my pen to start the novel that may be the last one I shall ever write. I must work quickly and lose no time, for I must write in secret and everything I have written must be hidden from human eye. Jane Austen, it is said, slipped her manuscript sheets under the blotter to conceal them from the inquisitive glances of visiting acquaintances. My reason for concealment is more sinister.

Here the long, winding sentences reflect her subject: hidden texts. The punch of the last sentence emphasizes the sinister events to follow.

Another of Clarke’s stylistic strengths lies in her descriptive passages. In *Last Judgement*, she details the beginnings of a deadly fire:

The avalanche on the floor was now well alight, and pieces of burning paper were flying around the room, settling on the curtains, the winged armchair, the upright chairs, and the tables. The desk was already in flames and the carpet smouldering. Nothing, nobody on earth could stop it now. She had fulfilled her destiny. The entire room was ablaze.

The images of the avalanche bring a new understanding of fire to the reader. Though deadly and inescapable, the fire is beautiful in a frightening way.

Krystan V. Douglas
Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PAULA GLENNING SERIES: *Last Judgement*, 1985; *Cabin 3033*, 1986; *The Mystery Lady*, 1986; *Last Seen in London*, 1987; *Murder in Writing*, 1988; *Whitelands Affair*, 1989; *The Case of the Paranoid Patient*, 1991; *The Case of the Ludicrous Letters*, 1994; *The Case of the Anxious Aunt*, 1996

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Darkened Room*, 1968; *A Mind to Murder*, 1971; *The End of the Shadow*, 1972; *Plot Counter-Plot*, 1974; *My Search for Ruth*, 1975; *Legacy of Evil*, 1976; *The Deathless and the Dead*, 1976 (also known as *This Downhill Path*); *Letter from the Dead*, 1977; *One of Us Must Die*, 1977; *The Lady in Black*, 1977; *Poison Parsley*, 1979; *The Poisoned Web*, 1979; *Last Voyage*, 1980; *Game, Set, and Danger*, 1981; *Desire to Kill*, 1982; *We the Bereaved*, 1982; *Soon She Must Die*, 1984; *Legacy of Evil*, 1991

TRANSLATION: *Clinical Papers and Essays on Psychoanalysis*, 1955 (by Karl Abraham)

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Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery*

Writers: Classic to Contemporary. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay that discusses the life and writings of Clarke.

Library Journal. Review of *Last Judgement*, by Anna Clarke. 110, no. 2 (February 1, 1985): 115. Reviewer finds the work to be more an atmospheric story than a mystery. Criticizes the work for its melodrama and lack of believability.

Mabe, Chauncey. "A Child's Loss Makes for Superior Thriller." Review of *My Search for Ruth*, by Anna Clarke. *Sun Sentinel*, September 18, 1988, p. 8F. Discusses the work in which Ruth searches for her own identity as she lives with the headmistress of a boarding school, Miss Murray. Reviewer finds the novel psychologically satisfying and believable.

Rye, Marilyn. "Anna Clarke." In *Great Women Mystery Writers*, edited by Kathleen Gregory Klein. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Bio-critical study of Clarke's life and writing. Individual entries also include suggestions of writers with similar styles, as well as Internet resources for mystery and crime-fiction enthusiasts.

Vicarel, JoAnn. Review of *The Mystery Lady*, by Anna Clarke. *Library Journal* 111, no. 16 (October 1, 1986): 113. Review of a Paula Henning book in which Henning is to write a biography of romantic novelist Rosie O'Grady. Reviewer criticizes the work for containing too much talk between Henning and James Goff and finds it disappointing overall.

JON CLEARY

Born: Sydney, New South Wales, Australia;
November 22, 1917

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Scobie Malone, 1966-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SCOBIE MALONE is a rough-hewn young detective sergeant with Y Division of the police force of Sydney, Australia. Malone is courageous, straightforward, and plainspoken; in short, he possesses those virtues usually associated with the Australian man.

CONTRIBUTION

Jon Cleary is a writer of several genres of fiction, which share a high standard of craftsmanship. Whether adventures, mysteries, or popular novels, Cleary's works feature well-paced narratives, a strong sense of atmosphere, and realistic dialogue. His work reflects an awareness of social problems and his sympathy for suffering, even misguided, humanity. His mystery fiction is marked by such compelling characterizations that it consistently rises above the level of the formulaic.

Cleary began his writing career with a collection of short fiction about his military service in the Middle East during World War II. In 1966, he published the first in a long string of mystery novels featuring Scobie Malone, a rugged but sympathetic Australian detective. Through the voice of his intrepid detective, Cleary has produced a series that reflects the changing focus of mystery and crime narratives over several decades, as well as major social and cultural shifts in Australian society.

In a writing career that has spanned more than five decades, Cleary has produced short and long fiction, plays, radio plays, teleplays, and screenplays, in addition to his substantial contributions in the mystery and detective genre. His works have appeared in numerous foreign language translations. Cleary received the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers Association for his 1974 novel *Peter's Pence*. Other awards

include the Australian Broadcasting Commission prize for radio drama in 1944, the Australian Literary Society's Crouch Medal for the best Australian novel in 1950, and the Australian Crime Writers' Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 1996.

BIOGRAPHY

Jon Stephen Cleary was born on November 22, 1917, in one of the tougher, poorer districts of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. His father, Matthew Cleary, was a laborer, and his mother, Ida Brown Cleary, a homemaker; after Jon's birth, six more children were eventually born to them. Cleary has written that he has some of his father's working-class temperament and some of his mother's tightfistedness. He attended the Marist Brothers School at Randwick, New South Wales, from 1924 to 1932. He left school at age fifteen and worked at a variety of jobs, including commercial traveler, delivery man, laundry worker, sign painter, bush worker, and commercial artist.

When Cleary entered the army in 1940, he was considering a full-time career in commercial art. He served in the Australian Imperial Forces in the Middle East, New Guinea, and New Britain until 1945 and began to write during this period. By the time of his discharge, he had attained the rank of lieutenant and had sold several stories to American magazines. He had enough money to support himself for two years, during which time he planned to discover whether he could earn his living as a writer. With the exception of his employment as a journalist with the government of Australia News and Information Bureau in London (1948-1949) and in New York (1949-1951), he has worked exclusively as a freelance writer of fiction since 1945.

In 1946, Cleary met Constantine "Joy" Lucas, a resident of Melbourne, Australia, on a ship bound for England. They were married on September 6, two weeks after disembarking, and eventually became the parents of two daughters, Catherine and Jane. Joy died in 2003. Cleary, a practicing Roman Catholic, is essentially apolitical but has stated that he leans slightly to the left. He published a collection of short stories,

These Small Glories, in 1946 and began producing books at the rate of nearly one per year.

Cleary is also a dramatist and scenarist. He lives in New South Wales but travels constantly. Many of his stories are set in remote locales, and he has asserted that he never writes about a region of which he does not possess firsthand knowledge. His writing career has been marked by continued success in several fields of fiction.

ANALYSIS

Jon Cleary has written that the three things he most despises are hypocrisy, bigotry, and jingoism; his sympathies and his antipathies are apparent in his fiction. The reader senses his moral outrage at the unjust treatment of homeless Jews, as portrayed in *The Safe House* (1975). *Justin Bayard* (1955) contains an angry denunciation of absentee landlords in the Australian outback. *The Liberators* (1971) is, in part, a sympathetic study of the plight of the Bolivian Indians, who have long been exploited by the economic, political, and ecclesiastical power structure; in this novel, a young American priest and a United Nations agronomist attempt to help the Indians gain their rights.

Rejecting the label of didactic writer, Cleary admits that he allows himself to express his opinions in his novels from time to time, when to do so will not retard the pace of the narrative. *The Liberators*, considered by many to be one of Cleary's finest novels, succeeds in developing a serious theme without being preachy, while its sociological aspect melds naturally with the exciting and suspenseful plot.

THE SUNDOWNERS

Cleary set out to be a great writer, and he has written a number of serious novels. One of these, *The Sundowners* (1952), has become a minor classic and is by far Cleary's best-known work. It sold more than one million copies and has become assigned reading in many high school and college courses. In 1960, it was successfully adapted as a film (for which Cleary himself wrote the screenplay), featuring Robert Mitchum, Deborah Kerr, and Peter Ustinov. *The Sundowners* recounts a year in the life of Paddy Carmody and his family. Paddy is an itinerant Australian ranch worker, appealing but irresponsible. It is, in part, an initiation

novel—Paddy's son, Sean, attains manhood in the Australian wilderness of the 1920's. The novel is warmly nostalgic yet unsentimental in tone.

THE MOVE TO POPULAR FICTION

Despite the financial and critical success of *The Sundowners*, Cleary had decided by the age of thirty-five that he lacked the mental equipment to achieve greatness. He was aware, however, that he had a fine sense of narrative, an ability to convey atmosphere, and a gift for writing dialogue. He therefore made the conscious decision to give up his dream of writing the great novel and to use his gifts instead to produce the very best popular novels of which he was capable. For several decades, he has been eminently successful in that effort. As a matter of fact, Cleary's talent is so impressive that on occasion critics, in the course of praising his work, have expressed the wish that he would set for himself loftier literary goals. They consider him capable of attaining them. Cleary attempted a large-scale social novel in the manner of John P. Marquand, whom he admires. He worked for more than a year on a long novel dealing with political life in Sydney between 1930 and 1955, but his publisher rejected the manuscript.

Cleary's crime fiction is so varied that it is not easy to classify. Many of his novels hug the generic line between the thriller and the adventure story. Even *The Sundowners*, which is not considered an adventure story, contains quite a bit of adventure. Although Cleary denies that his novels contain messages, they usually have serious and well-developed themes. He enjoys exploring character as it is revealed through conflict in remote and often-forbidding regions of the globe. In *The Pulse of Danger* (1966), he recounts a thrilling chase over the Himalayas. *The Liberators* is set in an isolated Bolivian village, high in the Andes. Cleary's experience as a mountain climber helped him make this story credible.

A thumbnail summary of several other novels will attest the variety of Cleary's subject matter. In *Back of Sunset* (1959), a young Australian doctor gives up his lucrative practice in Sydney and joins a flying service that delivers medical care to isolated regions. *The Green Helmet* (1957) is a tale of automobile racing. *The Long Pursuit* (1967) is an account of a group of

refugees making their escape from Singapore in 1942. *Justin Bayard*, set in the outback, has been called an Australian Western. *Vortex* (1977) is the story of man's struggle against nature in rural Missouri, along the so-called Tornado Alley. *The Safe House* takes place in the immediate postwar period; it tells the dual story of displaced Jews attempting to slip past the British into the homeland in Palestine and of defeated Nazis fleeing to sanctuary in South America.

PETER'S PENCE

Cleary won an Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1974 for *Peter's Pence*, published in the same year. Saint Peter is the Peter of the ironic title, and the setting is the Vatican. The reader is reminded that Cleary is a Catholic who has said that his travels through Asia and Africa have persuaded him that Rome is not always right. *Peter's Pence* tells the story of an attempt by an international gang of thieves to loot the Vatican. The gang utilizes the subterranean passages of Saint Peter's Basilica to make off with the church's priceless art treasures.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

In 1966, *The High Commissioner*, the first of the Scobie Malone novels, appeared (this was the fourth of Cleary's novels to be adapted as a motion picture). By dint of hard work, Malone has attained the rank of detective sergeant in the Sydney police force. A number of parallels between the young police officer and his creator are rapidly evident to the reader with some knowledge of Cleary's personal history. Malone is the child of an Irish, Roman Catholic, working-class couple, Con and Brigid Malone. He grew up in a terrace house on a narrow street in Erskineville, a tenement district. His parents had wanted him to become a priest, but he became a police officer instead. Scobie felt no particular sense of vocation for police work; it was simply a job. Nevertheless, the work ethic is strong in him, and he takes pride in doing his job well. Scobie is engaged to Lisa Pretorious, a young Dutchwoman whose well-to-do parents live temporarily in Melbourne.

HELGA'S WEB

In *The High Commissioner*, Scobie goes to London on a security detail, and his adventures take place in the British metropolis. In the second novel of the series, *Helga's Web* (1970), he is back in the city of his

birth. Sydney, Cleary's lusty and boisterous hometown, is itself a character in this novel. After Helga Brand is found strangled in the Sydney Opera House, Malone follows a trail that leads through all levels of Sydney society. Helga's web is spread from Parliament to show business, from the enclaves of the rich to Sydney's docks. The plot is intriguing, but, as in the other Scobie Malone novels (*Ransom*, 1973, is the third), its greatest strength lies in the characterization. A domestic scene from the early chapters of *Helga's Web* serves as an example.

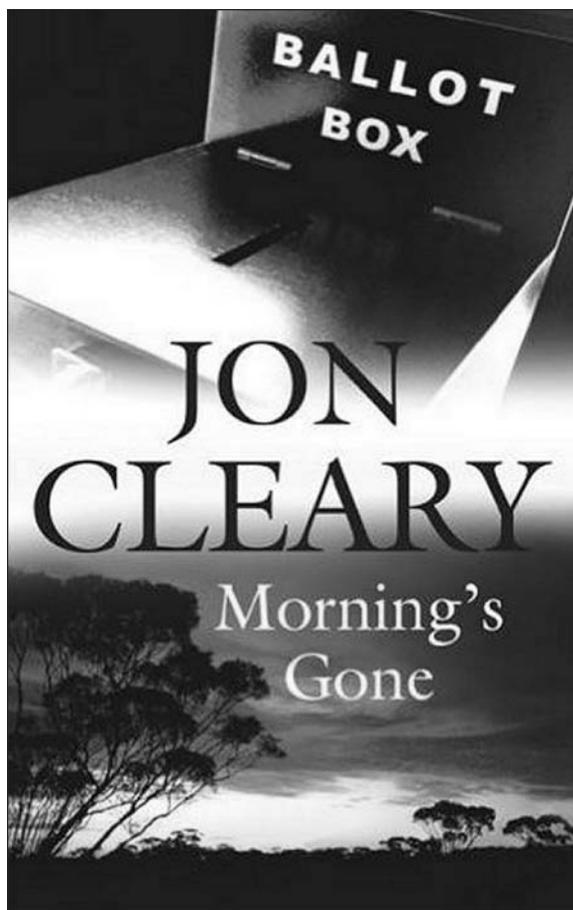
By way of introducing his fiancé to his parents, Scobie brings Lisa to their small terrace house for dinner. As they eat, they can hear the neighbors fighting just beyond the tissue-thin walls. Con is in an expansive mood, because he has had a peripheral contact with the opera house murder and has gotten his picture in the newspapers. Brigid is ill-concealing her prejudice against a future daughter-in-law who is not Catholic, working-class, or Australian. Nevertheless, Lisa doggedly plies her considerable charm and succeeds in winning over Con completely. The lifelong socialist and rhetorical revolutionary ends by making allowances for the girl's birth and breeding. This scene, though not essential to the movement of the plot, grounds Scobie and those close to him in reality and makes the reader care for them.

RANSOM

In *Ransom*, Malone and Lisa, his wife, are visiting New York City on election eve. Lisa is kidnapped, along with the mayor's wife. The kidnappers demand the release of five anarchists being held in the Tombs. As Malone investigates, learning first the identity and eventually the location of the kidnappers, the reader is treated to a view of New York City through Australian eyes. Cleary's crime fiction, like his general fiction, combines suspenseful plots with solid characterization and a deep sense of humanity.

THE DARK SUMMER CYCLE

Dark Summer (1991) is the first of a cycle of four Scobie Malone mysteries set in Sydney in which Cleary blends mystery with sociology to depict changes in the fabric of life in the Australian capital. The death of a police informant leads Malone to investigate what might prove to be related murders in the



Sydney docklands, a former haunt of his estranged father, and discovers an elaborate drug ring. *Bleak Spring* (1993) follows Malone's search for the killer of Will Rockne, a suburban Sydney lawyer. An intriguing cast of characters include a suspiciously detached widow, a cadre of disreputable bankers, street thugs, a menacing Russian, and the posthumous discovery of \$5 million in Rockne's personal safe. In *Autumn Maze* (1994), Malone delves into the complex world of Sydney politics when the son of the police minister son turns up dead. *Winter Chill* (1995), the fourth in the cycle, finds Malone facing a potentially explosive international incident when a prominent American lawyer is found murdered on the Sydney monorail.

MORNING'S GONE

In *Morning's Gone* (2007), Cleary turns to the landscape of politics. His protagonist is Matt Durban,

a seasoned Australian politician who returns to his roots in rural Collamundra to reconnect with his constituency and his family. The strain of political life has begun to erode his marriage and alienate Durban from his family. However, other forces may be at work to cripple his political ambitions when a decades-old murder of a young woman—Durban's former girlfriend—makes fresh headlines. Cleary provides a detailed character study of an ambitious but principled politician and his fiercely independent wife, both of whom have made powerful enemies over the years. *Morning's Gone*, like most of Cleary's best-known works, combines powerful storytelling with a keen interest in the interior lives of his characters.

Patrick Adcock

Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SCOBIE MALONE SERIES: *The High Commissioner*, 1966; *Helga's Web*, 1970; *Ransom*, 1973; *Now and Then*, *Amen*, 1988; *Babylon South*, 1989; *Murder Song*, 1990; *Dark Summer*, 1991; *Pride's Harvest*, 1991; *Bleak Spring*, 1993; *Autumn Maze*, 1994; *Winter Chill*, 1995; *Endpeace*, 1996; *A Different Turf*, 1997; *Five Ring Circus*, 1998; *Dilemma*, 1999; *The Bear Pit*, 2000; *Yesterday's Shadow*, 2001; *The Easy Sin*, 2002; *Degrees of Connection*, 2003

NONSERIES NOVELS: *You Can't See Around Corners*, 1947; *The Long Shadow*, 1949; *Just Let Me Be*, 1950; *The Climate of Courage*, 1954 (also known as *Naked in the Night*); *Justin Bayard*, 1955 (also known as *Dust in the Sun*); *A Flight of Chariots*, 1963; *Forests of the Night*, 1963; *The Fall of an Eagle*, 1964; *The Pulse of Danger*, 1966; *The Long Pursuit*, 1967; *Season of Doubt*, 1968; *The Liberators*, 1971 (also known as *Mask of the Andes*); *Peter's Pence*, 1974; *The Safe House*, 1975; *A Sound of Lightning*, 1976; *High Road to China*, 1977; *Vortex*, 1977; *The Beaufort Sisters*, 1979; *A Very Private War*, 1980; *The Golden Sabre*, 1981; *The Faraway Drums*, 1982; *The City of Fading Light*, 1985; *Dragons at the Party*, 1987; *Morning's Gone*, 2007

SHORT FICTION: *These Small Glories*, 1946; *Pillar of Salt*, 1963

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Sundowners*, 1952; *The Green Helmet*, 1957; *Back of Sunset*, 1959; *North from Thursday*, 1960; *The Country of Marriage*, 1962; *Remember Jack Hoxie*, 1969; *The Ninth Marquess*, 1972 (also known as *Man's Estate*); *Spearfield's Daughter*, 1982

PLAY: *Strike Me Lucky*, pr. 1963

RADIO PLAY: *Safe Horizon*, 1944

SCREENPLAYS: *The Siege of Pinchgut*, 1959 (with Harry Watt and Alexander Baron); *The Sundowners*, 1960; *The Green Helmet*, 1961; *Sidecar Racers*, 1975 (also known as *Sidecar Boys*)

TELEPLAY: *Just Let Me Be*, 1957

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Dickinson, Jane. Review of *Dilemma*, by Jon Cleary. *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, June 18, 2000, p. 8E. Favorable review of this Scobie Malone novel about the kidnap and murder of a five-year-old child. Praises Cleary's solid psychological insights and writing.

Kelly, Ed. Review of *Dark Summer*, by Jon Cleary. *Buffalo News*, September 5, 1993, p. Book. Review

of this Scobie Malone book calls Cleary a "stand-out" among contemporary crime-fiction writers. Notes the brisk interactions between Malone and his partner, Russ Clements, and the details about Malone's family. Also identifies a resemblance to J. J. Marric's novels about George Gideon.

Knight, Stephen. *Continent of Mystery: A Thematic History of Australian Crime Fiction*. Vic., Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1997. A chronicle of nearly two centuries of Australian crime fiction that covers hundreds of authors, including Cleary, and evaluates their contributions to the country's unique slant on crime and mystery fiction.

_____. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Knight provides a useful overview of the crime genre in the last two centuries, with discussions of various authors, works, and influences. Helps place Cleary in the mystery genre.

Pitt, David. Review of *Morning's Gone*, by Jon Cleary. *Booklist* 103, no. 17 (May 1, 2007): 41. Review of this novel about how a politician's past comes to haunt him is called "a revealing character study" about a politician and his wife.

LIZA CODY

Born: London, England; April 11, 1944

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Anna Lee, 1980-

Eva Wylie, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ANNA LEE, a former police officer turned private investigator, is employed by Brierly Security in London, where she is the lone female detective in a sea of circling male sleuths. In her quest to solve crimes, Lee is a capable and determined young woman, but she finds herself impeded by workplace and societal gender barriers. Estranged from her family and unable to

form long-term attachments to men, Lee finds solace in her friendship with her downstairs neighbors.

BEA and SELWYN, Lee's neighbors, rent the unit below hers. The couple, a long-suffering wife and her poet-husband, act as an emotional counterpoint to the private detective's tough-skinned rational demeanor. Often they elicit Lee's aid and even her sympathies.

MARTIN BRIERLY is Lee's boss, an egoist who second-guesses her competence for the job in spite of her obvious contributions to the firm.

EVA WYLIE supports herself through an assortment of odd jobs, including bouncer, scrapyards security guard, and amateur sleuth. Wylie wrestles professionally under the moniker "the London Lassassin." Although streetwise, Wylie lacks social grace and mental quick-

ness. Not as tough as her large bulk and gruff demeanor suggest, she is emotionally more fragile than Lee.

CONTRIBUTION

Award-winning author Liza Cody is recognized for broadening the scope of the British detective genre. Not content merely with incorporating a modern female detective into the mold, she has created works that complicate what it means to be a detecting woman in a field traditionally reserved for tough male protagonists and spinsterish female amateurs. Identified primarily with her two feminist detective series, featuring Anna Lee and Eva Wylie, Cody also writes short fiction and novels of suspense.

Certain features of Cody's style resemble those of master detective writer Raymond Chandler. Her prose is realistic and sparse, replete with believable and frequently witty dialogue. Like Chandler's characters, Cody's detectives are loners wary of connections with others but in search of them nonetheless. The world they investigate is a dark one, in which human nature is deceptive and the task of piecing together clues labyrinthine.

Cody is notable for her development of original female detectives, both professional and amateur, and for her examination of the intersection of gender, authority, and justice in her works. Like her contemporaries, American authors Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton, Cody populates her novels with sleuthing women who are tough-minded, physically strong, independent in lifestyle, and otherwise defiant of sexual stereotypes.

BIOGRAPHY

Born Liza Nassim on April 11, 1944, Liza Cody spent her childhood in London. Attracted to the visual and graphic arts, she studied at the London Art School and later at the Royal Academy School of Art, where she excelled at painting and design. Cody's training and abilities led her to a position at Madame Tussauds wax museum in London, where she worked as a studio technician. An interesting milieu for a future writer of crime fiction, Tussauds houses some grim likenesses of notorious London killers, including Jack the Ripper. Cody found additional employment as a graphic

designer and painter, but it was not in the art world that she would leave her mark on British popular culture. On the successful publication of her first novel, *Dupe* (1980), Cody focused her energies full time on writing.

Cody would pen additional novels featuring Anna Lee, including *Bad Company* (1982), *Stalker* (1984), *Head Case* (1985), *Under Contract* (1986), and *Backhand* (1991). The popularity of Anna Lee led to a successful British television series based on Cody's novels produced by London Weekend Television (LWT) Productions. Later, Arts & Entertainment (A&E) aired the five episodes on American television. Purportedly Cody's dissatisfaction with the medium's interpretation of her chief character, Anna Lee, led the author to begin a new series with a different female lead, professional wrestler Eva Wylie.

Cody dedicated the 1990's to developing her series of novels featuring Eva Wylie. The appearance of *Bucket Nut* (1992) is a dividing mark in Cody's oeuvre. Instead of featuring an upwardly mobile professional sleuth, like Anna Lee, at the helm of the investigation, the Eva Wylie series focuses on an amateur sleuth from a lower sphere of society, one who circulates among the most desperate of human beings, frequently social outcasts with nothing to lose. *Monkey Wrench* (1994) and *Musclebound* (1997) soon followed. Although her characters and their circumstances were descending, Cody's reputation as a writer was rising into the ranks of Britain's most respected writers of modern detective fiction.

Cody achieved recognition as a writer of short fiction as well. Widely anthologized in mystery and detective collections, she has published independent collections of short stories including *Murder and Company* (1988) and *The Lucky Dip, and Other Stories* (2003). In addition to her ongoing work as an author, she has edited volumes of detective fiction, assisting Michael Lewin with the numerically designated Culprit series. The inaugural volume, *First Culprit: An Annual of Crime Stories* appeared in 1992 to great acclaim.

ANALYSIS

Although Liza Cody's characters cross literary boundaries in terms of gender expectations, scholars

are split on their response to the author's female detectives and their placement in the genre. Some critics believe that Cody's women, in addition to defying traditional depictions of female sleuths, break with stereotypes of the literary detective in general, truly transforming the genre. Others insist that Cody's protagonists, Anna Lee and Eva Wylie, are essentially male private eyes in drag. Many critics have noted resemblances between Cody's British Anna Lee and her American counterparts, Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone and Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski, primarily their independent natures. Eva Wylie, however, appears to have no equal in the field of feminist detective fiction.

In the Anna Lee series, the title character finds herself not only solving crimes but also battling workplace politics. Lee's boss, Commander Martin Brierly (a thorn in Lee's side), and his office manager, Beryl Doyle (as old-fashioned and traditional as the doily that her name suggests), are committed to upholding the patriarchal hierarchy of their small investigative firm, one that puts Lee on the bottom rung. Her boss assigns her only the most minor of cases, which typically balloon into significant and difficult investigations. Over the years her successes garner Lee a private office and the begrudging respect of her employer. Still, the final novel of the series, *Backhand* (1991), concludes with Lee in a homeless and jobless state, less secure than in her inaugural appearance in *Dupe*.

In many respects, Anna Lee is a woman in a man's world, capable of doing the job but slowed by social roadblocks she must circumvent. As a female detective, Lee breaks new ground in urban, rural, and foreign environs (subsequent novels take her out of London to the English countryside, on tour with a rock star, and across the ocean to Florida), but her progress is impeded by entrenched attitudes of male privilege. In Cody's novels, Lee's grit and intellect are often insufficient tools to forge gender equality where it is not wanted: the male-dominant enclave of a private detective agency. Ironically, Lee's status as a marginalized player at Brierly's allows her to see events with enhanced clarity and to pursue cases with greater freedom. She finds herself on the same fringes of society where the criminals she seeks take refuge. Self-reliant

in the extreme (she has trust issues), alienated from her family (out of touch with her respectable middle-class sisters), and underappreciated by colleagues (who find both her gender and her methods suspect), Lee finds companionship with her neighbors, Bea and Selwyn, and in short-lived sexual encounters with men who come into and go out of her life with increasing frequency.

The Lee series can be read as a fictional chronicle of a working woman's slow but steady progress in the investigative field during the 1980's. In contrast, Cody's 1990's series featuring Eva Wylie (the wily Eve) further disrupts traditions associated with women protagonists in British detective fiction. Anna Lee might be a distant relative of mystery great Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, but Wylie is not even descended from the same family tree. A wrestler by avocation and a part-time security guard by financial necessity, Wylie's forays into detection are the product of dire circumstance, not professional calling. Her moniker on the wrestling circuit is the "London Lassassin," and her bulk, street smarts, and reputation for toughness equip her to navigate, if not negotiate, the murky regions of the city's underside. Like Lee, Wylie is beyond the pale but at a greater distance. By virtue of her gender, class, and occupation (and occasional lack thereof), Wylie is thrice removed from mainstream detective fiction and its traditions.

DUPE

Critics have dubbed Anna Lee Britain's first feminist private eye. Her debut in *Dupe* finds Lee, a former police officer, joining a private detective firm, Brierly Security. Her first case involves the suspicious death of a black sheep socialite, Deirdre Jackson. When the young woman's parents doubt the accidental nature of their daughter's car wreck, Lee investigates, discovering in the process evidence of wrongdoing and a cover-up. Further complicating her investigation are the barriers Lee faces in the workplace. Her patriarchal boss, Martin Brierly, objects to women detectives in general, and Lee in particular. He seems intent on proving her incompetence despite her progress in the investigation.

In 1980 *Dupe* received the British Crime Writers' Association's John Creasey Memorial Award and was

nominated for the Edgar Award in the same calendar year. Critics responded positively to the lead character's unique personality, part steely-eyed detective and part sympathetic human being. Anna Lee is a woman who possesses the rational acumen to re-create a crime scene and track events back to the killer. Equally, her ability to sympathize with the victim's family, if not perhaps the deceased (whose disagreeable reputation in life follows her to her grave), spurs Lee's dedication to the case. The heroine's blend of overt intelligence and covert compassion proved so appealing a combination to readers that Cody featured her in five additional novels. Lee even makes cameo appearances in the Eva Wylie novels. Ironically, in these works, Lee, now in charge of her own agency, is perceived by Wylie to be a suspicious outsider. When Lee attempts to hire Wylie on one occasion and thus legitimize the underdog's status, the wrestler rejects her offer.

BUCKET NUT

Approaching the marginalization of women from a different vantage point, *Bucket Nut* (1992) introduces Eva Wylie, professional wrestler and amateur sleuth. Because Wylie is a member of the underclass, her identification is with the criminals and those labeled miscreants by society; law enforcement officials are the "others," those not to be believed. Cody provides sufficient background information on Wylie to explain her deep-rooted suspicion of authority and her solidarity with the downtrodden. Abandoned by her drunken mother, Wylie was reared in a series of abusive foster homes. Trust issues are second nature to the adult Wylie, and her wariness is her amulet against harm in the first installment of the series.

In the process of resolving a case involving extortion, drug running, and a missing person, Wylie commits a few criminal acts herself, including the heist of a vehicle and a wallet. Because her neighborhood is populated by Mafia men, drug dealers, and a jazz club singer with connections to both, Wylie's interactions with ne'er-do-wells are frequent and her avoidance of law enforcement all too necessary. Critics raved about this new female antidetective. Loud, crude, in-your-face Wylie is not necessarily likable, but she is unforgettable. The novel merited the prestigious Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger Award for 1992.

LUCKY DIP, AND OTHER STORIES

The seventeen entries in *Lucky Dip, and Other Stories* (2003) feature an assortment of women in dire predicaments, most of whom survive their ordeals and live to tell their tales. Although many of the stories appeared in previous anthologies, two are new to the volume, and two, "Doing It Under the Table" and "Chalk Mother," were originally radio dramas broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The title story, "Lucky Dip," which received an Anthony for best short story in 1993, features an abandoned urchin navigating life on the backstreets of London. In stark contrast to the title story, the stories "Where's Stacy?" and "A Card or a Kitten" are quirky, lighthearted tales reflective of the arena in which they take place, Florida. Readers who prefer mysteries of a darker nature will be pleased with the remainder of the entries, set in Cody's trademark murky environs of London.

Dorothy Dodge Robbins

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ANNA LEE SERIES: *Dupe*, 1980; *Bad Company*, 1982; *Stalker*, 1984; *Head Case*, 1985; *Under Contract*, 1986; *Backhand*, 1991

EVA WYLIE SERIES: *Bucket Nut*, 1992; *Monkey Wrench*, 1994; *Musclebound*, 1997

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Gimme More*, 2000

SHORT FICTION: *Murder and Company*, 1988 (with others); *Lucky Dip, and other Stories*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Rift*, 1988

EDITED TEXTS: *First Culprit: An Annual of Crime Stories*, 1992 (with Michael Lewin); *Second Culprit: An Annual of Crime Stories*, 1993 (with Lewin); *Third Culprit: An Annual of Crime Stories*, 1994 (with Lewin)

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Irons, Glenwood, and Joan Worthing Roberts. "From Spinster to Hipster: The Suitability of Miss Marple and Anna Lee." In *Feminism in Women's Detective Fiction*, edited by Glenwood Irons. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Compares Anna Lee to her detective predecessor, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, acknowledging that Cody has updated the genre by coarsening the image of the female investigator.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Views private investigator Anna Lee

as less capable than her male complements in the genre. Questions whether Cody has truly liberated the female detective or fallen back on stereotypes.

_____, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains a biocritical essay on Cody.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Monkey Wrench*, by Liza Cody. 242, no. 15 (April, 1995): 57. Praises the authenticity of Cody's Eva Wylie and her environs, the seedy London district where wrestlers, drug users, and prostitutes converge.

Zvirin, Stephanie. Review of *Musclebound*, by Liza Cody. *Booklist* 93, no. 22 (August, 1997): 1882. Notes the manner in which the skeptical former wrestler and amateur sleuth, Eva Wylie, departs from Cody's previous heroine, the analytic private investigator Anna Lee.

MARGARET COEL

Born: Denver, Colorado; October 11, 1937

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Vicky Holden and Father John O'Malley, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

VICKY HOLDEN is an Arapaho attorney who has returned to the Wind River Reservation area in Wyoming to practice law. She hopes to help her people but faces traditional cultural views that now see her as an outsider because she divorced her husband and studied and lived within the white culture. With her two children, Lucas and Susan, now grown, she tries to make her own way personally and professionally. Her efforts to aid her Arapaho clients, usually individuals with little money or social standing, lead to professional interactions with Father John O'Malley and to a strong romantic interest in him.

FATHER JOHN O'MALLEY, a Jesuit priest and recov-

ering alcoholic, arrives at St. Francis Mission on the Wind River Reservation seeking a refuge where he can carry out his efforts at recovery. Before long, he develops great respect and fondness for the Arapahos, and they in turn come to trust him. He reciprocates Vicky's romantic feelings for him, but they both know that his vow of celibacy and his dedication to his priestly vocation preclude any sort of sexual relationship.

TED GIANELLI is the local Federal Bureau of Investigation agent. A friend of Father John, he shares the priest's love of Italian opera. Much of his time is spent trying to persuade Father John to stay out of harm's way as the priest becomes involved in criminal cases that threaten his life as well as Vicky's.

BEN HOLDEN is Vicky's former husband and the father of her children. Although Ben is well respected by most people who know him, his heavy drinking and physical abuse of Vicky destroyed their marriage. Ben makes occasional appearances in the novels until he is murdered in *The Shadow Dancer* (2002).

ADAM LONE EAGLE is an attorney whose personal and professional relationship with Vicky fluctuates greatly. In *Killing Raven* (2003), he persuades Vicky to take a position at a new casino, inadvertently putting her in a position that could lead to her death. In later novels he becomes Vicky's lover and law partner, although the relationship inevitably seems like something of a consolation prize for Vicky, who cannot have the man whom she most wants.

CONTRIBUTION

Margaret Coel's series about Vicky Holden and Father John O'Malley is among the most culturally rich of several detective series featuring Native American detectives. The series places a high premium on psychological realism, depicting in depth the main characters in their complex mixtures of desires, ambitions, fears, and anxieties. The author to whom Coel is most often compared is Tony Hillerman.

Coel has kept the Holden and O'Malley series flowing smoothly and steadily, producing about a novel per year since 1995 as well as short stories about the characters. The novels have usually been reviewed favorably, with positive comments focusing on Coel's realistic character development and her accurate depictions of Arapaho history and culture. Although not Native American, Coel has engaged in extensive research on Arapaho culture and history for years. She regularly visits the Wind River Reservation and St. Stephen's Mission (the model for the fictional St. Francis Mission).

Coel has made the best-seller lists of such newspapers as *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Denver Post*. Both *The Spirit Woman* (2000) and *The Shadow Dancer* won the Colorado Book Award, with the former also winning the Willa Cather Award for best novel of the West.

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Coel was born Margaret Speas on October 11, 1937, in Denver, Colorado, to Samuel F. Speas and Margaret (McCloskey) Speas. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she met her future husband, George W. Coel. They married on July 22, 1962, and had three

children, William, Kristin, and Lisa.

Coel began a career as a journalist in 1960, reporting for the *Westminster Journal* in Westminster, Colorado. She worked for the *Boulder Daily Camera* in Boulder as a feature writer from 1972 to 1975. She then continued writing as a freelancer and, over the years, occasionally served as a writing instructor and lecturer at the University of Colorado and other institutions.

Coel's interest in Western history grew out of her family background. A fourth-generation member of a pioneer family, she has given credit to her father, who worked for a railroad, for her early interest in history and Native Americans. Her father's stories about railroading in the West led to a collaborative effort between daughter and father, *Goin' Railroading: A Century on the Colorado High Iron* (1986). Several years earlier, she had published her first book, *Chief Left Hand: Southern Arapaho* (1981), about a chief who was mortally wounded at the Sand Creek massacre in 1864 in Colorado.

Deeply interested in the history of the Native Americans of Colorado, Coel has explained that her special interest in Arapahos derives from her recognition of their history as traders and their profound spirituality. After attending a lecture by novelist Tony Hillerman, famous for his novels dealing with Navajo culture, Coel began considering writing fiction. She spent about four years working on her first novel, *The Eagle Catcher* (1995). Berkley Publishing decided to publish it, but only in paperback. When the book became one of the winners in a contest sponsored by the University Press of Colorado, the university press agreed to release it in hardback. The substantial sales led Berkley to publish each subsequent novel in the series first in hardback and later in paperback.

In 1995, Coel began concentrating on fiction, publishing about a novel per year about Vicky Holden and Father John. She has also started writing a series of short stories about these characters, basing the plots of each story on one of the ten Arapaho commandments, which are similar to, but worded slightly differently from, the standard Judeo-Christian commandments.

The Holden and O'Malley series reflects several aspects of Coel's life. One is Coel's long-term study

of Arapaho history and culture, consistently demonstrated in the many aspects of Arapaho culture present in and often at the heart of the narratives. Others include her Catholicism and Irish heritage. A lifelong Catholic, she grew up attending Catholic schools in Denver and joined an Irish-Catholic parish. She was not able to follow several relatives to the Jesuit-run Regis University in Denver (which then admitted only men), so she attended another Jesuit institution, Marquette. However, Regis is the site of an occasional visit from Father John, whose membership in the Jesuits reflects the author's long-term respect for the religious order. Father John's love for opera and his past experience as a history teacher also are reflections of the author's interests.

ANALYSIS

Margaret Coel's stories feature Vicky Holden and Father John O'Malley as amateur sleuths from widely different backgrounds: a divorced Arapaho female attorney and a Boston-Irish Jesuit priest. The pairing, which quickly assumes the level of close friendship and mutual respect and before long tempts both toward a romantic entanglement that they cannot honorably consummate, establishes dual cultural contexts for the stories. Between Vicky and Father John, though, there is no clash of cultures, as Father John, deeply interested in Arapaho history and profoundly respectful of the tribe's culture, quickly achieves status as the "Indian priest."

Although Vicky and Father John do not experience a cultural divide, cultural clashes emerge in other areas of their lives. Vicky, having been immersed for years in a white culture during law school and then at a Denver law firm, and now known to her people as *Hi sei ci nihi*, or *Woman Alone*, because of her divorce, is treated as more of an outsider by the Arapahos than is the Boston Jesuit. Vicky's last name, "Holden," represents her attempts to hold on to her cultural heritage despite her lengthy stay outside it. Meanwhile, Father John feels largely separated from his Jesuit community because of his alcoholism and his feeling that his superiors have little confidence in him.

These intercultural and psychological dimensions reflect Coel's belief that the success of a mystery story

depends on characters who resonate with readers. Reading Coel's stories is like following two close friends through the ups and downs of their lives and rooting for them to find happiness and to triumph in their risky efforts to bring criminals to justice and exonerate the innocent.

Because neither Vicky nor Father John is a professional detective or private investigator, their forays into criminal investigation grow out of their broader desire to help others, Vicky by assisting her usually poverty-stricken clients and Father John by helping his parishioners. Father John consistently defines parishioners far more broadly than just those who attend Mass at St. Francis, a practice that helps lead to the great trust that the Arapaho community places in him. Similarly, Vicky regularly takes on clients that no one else wants, much to the chagrin of her law partner, Adam Lone Eagle.

The popularity of the series also grows out of the extensive cultural and historical context provided within the stories. History is regularly surfacing in the present, and cultural attitudes ranging from deep respect for elders to a spiritual intermingling of traditional and Christian rituals permeate the novels and short stories. These elements are usually integrated effectively and accurately into the stories, the result of Coel's care in planning her stories and her wide-ranging and ongoing research. In addition to reading extensively about Arapaho history, Coel regularly visits the reservation and consults with both Arapahos and Jesuits to ensure that the stories are respectful of Arapaho ways and realistically depict what an Arapaho woman and a Jesuit priest might credibly do.

In addition, many of the stories involve current issues affecting Native Americans as well as other segments of American society. Land and water rights, alcoholism, drug abuse, building of casinos on reservation land, poverty, efforts to retain one's cultural heritage, ownership of cultural artifacts, and sexual abuse of minors by priests, as well as many other contemporary issues, appear within Coel's stories, further wedding the past to the present.

THE STORY TELLER

One of the most culturally rich novels in the series, *The Story Teller* (1998), finds Vicky and Father John trying to solve the murder of a graduate student, Todd

Harris. Harris was planning to manage a new Arapaho museum on the grounds of St. Francis Mission after he completed his graduate work, but while doing research for his thesis, he discovered an extremely valuable ledger.

The novel draws heavily on Coel's earlier research into the Sand Creek massacre for the book *Chief Left Hand*. It also reflects the growing interest in Native American cultural and funerary objects and the application of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The ledger, a book designed for recording expenditures and revenue and used to draw pictures depicting important events, is the catalyst for the mystery.

This ledger, which contains information about the Sand Creek massacre, would prove that Arapahos as

well as Cheyennes died during the attack, a fact now widely accepted but earlier in dispute. The book is of enormous financial value, which provides the primary reason for the theft and murders that ensue.

WIFE OF MOON

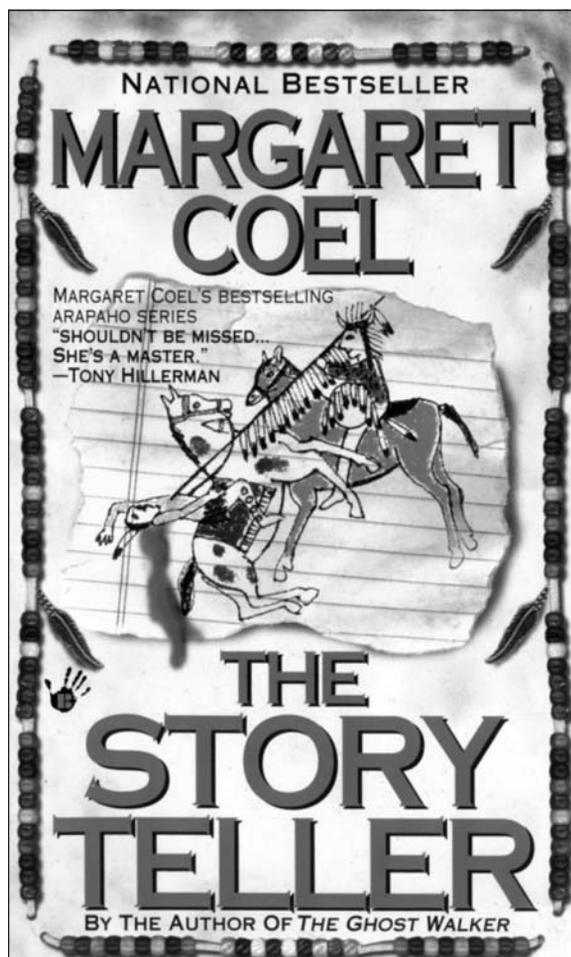
Wife of Moon (2004) fuses past and present through a pair of crimes related to photographs. The museum at St. Francis Mission is displaying photographs by the famous photographer Edward S. Curtis. A descendant of the tribal chief in one of the photographs is murdered, and the library curator is missing.

The novel conveys the ongoing romantic tension between Father John and Vicky, who attempt to restrain their love for each other by remaining apart, but who are brought together by the murder and Vicky's defense of a husband accused of murdering his wife. At the same time, Adam Lone Eagle expresses increased romantic interest in Vicky while pushing for them to become law partners. Again Coel synthesizes the main characters' interrelationships, mysteries that must be solved, and the merging of past and present.

THE DROWNING MAN

The Drowning Man (2006) moves Vicky and Father John further along their life paths and seemingly farther apart. Vicky is established in both a romantic relationship and a professional partnership with Adam Lone Eagle. Neither arrangement, though, is going particularly well. Father John is worried that his years at St. Francis Mission may be coming to an end, as he finally has an assistant, Father Ian McCauley, who is both competent and seemingly content to be at the mission, making him a viable possibility as a replacement.

The mystery turns on a large petroglyph called the Drowning Man that is cut out of a cliff and stolen. At the same time, Vicky is called on to reopen the case of Travis Birdsong, who is serving time for manslaughter. He is believed to have killed his partner after they stole a similar petroglyph seven years earlier. Vicky believes that Travis is innocent of manslaughter, even if he was involved in the theft, and, much against the wishes of both her partner and the Arapaho elders, agrees to help him. The two petroglyph thefts turn out to be related, and Vicky's actions put her life in serious jeopardy, which means that Father John also faces great danger in coming to her aid.



The stealing of the petroglyph in Coel's novel reflects the real-life need to protect Native American artifacts from theft by unscrupulous collectors. The novel also touches on the issue of Native American land rights and the sex abuse scandal that has rocked the Catholic Church. Complicating Father John's attempts to reach out to Arapaho youth on the reservation is his discovery that the elderly priest who has come to the reservation, supposedly to live out his final days, is guilty of having molested juveniles. As in the previous novels, Coel manages to bring the past vividly into the present and confront the challenge of maintaining past traditions while addressing current problems.

Edward J. Rielly

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

VICKY HOLDEN AND FATHER JOHN O'MALLEY

SERIES: *The Eagle Catcher*, 1995; *The Ghost Walker*, 1996; *The Dream Stalker*, 1997; *The Story Teller*, 1998; *The Lost Bird*, 1999; *The Spirit Woman*, 2000; *The Thunder Keeper*, 2001; *The Shadow Dancer*, 2002; *Killing Raven*, 2003; *Wife of Moon*, 2004; *Eye of the Wolf*, 2005; *The Drowning Man*, 2006; *The Girl with Braided Hair*, 2007

TEN COMMANDMENT SERIES: *Dead End*, 1997; *Hole in the Wall*, 1998; *Honor*, 1999; *Stolen Smoke*, 2000; *My Last Goodbye*, 2002; *Bad Heart*, 2004; *Day of Rest*, 2005; *Nobody's Going to Cry*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Sunken Sailor*, 2004 (with others)

NONFICTION: *Chief Left Hand: Southern Arapaho*, 1981; *The Next 100 Years: A Report*, 1983; *The Tivoli: Bavaria in the Rockies*, 1985 (with Jane Barker and Karen Gilleland); *Goin' Railroadin': A Century on the Colorado High Iron*, 1986 (with Sam Speas; revised as *Goin' Railroadin': Two Generations of Colorado Stories*, 1991); *A New Westminister*,

1987; *Four Hundred Fifty Best Sales Letters for Every Selling Situation*, 1991 (with Gilleland); *The Pride of Our People: The Colorado State Capitol*, 1992

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Donaldson, John K. "Native American Sleuths: Following in the Footsteps of the Indian Guides." In *Telling the Stories: Essays on American Indian Literatures and Cultures*, edited by Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson and Malcolm A. Nelson. New York: Peter Lang, 2001. Discusses only books in which the central character is a Native American and therefore does not discuss Coel's novels, despite Vicky Holden sharing sleuthing duties with Father John O'Malley, but provides good information on the subgenre of Native American detective fiction. Indexed.

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Trenholm, Virginia Cole. *The Arapahoes, Our People*. 1970. Reprint. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986. Traces Arapaho history from prehistoric times to the late twentieth century with considerable attention to the Arapaho way of life. Illustrations, maps, indexed.

OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

Born: Charleston, South Carolina; June 26, 1891

Died: Los Angeles, California; January 6, 1959

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

David Carroll, 1919-1922

Jim Hanvey, 1923-1934

Max Gold, 1945-1947

Marty Walsh, 1948-1950

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAVID CARROLL, the slender, boyish, blue-eyed star detective of Berkeley City, is a nationally famous private investigator. He respects the methodical procedures of his police counterparts and sometime allies, but his own gifts lie in the use of psychology and intuition.

JIM HANVEY, a large, somewhat pear-shaped man with disturbing fishlike eyes, is deliberate of movement, though not as slow-witted as he appears. A large gold toothpick, which was given to him by one of his favorite criminals, hangs on a gold chain from his vest; when not otherwise occupied—with food, observation, or “figgering”—he constantly plays with it.

MAX GOLD is a black-eyed, black-haired detective with the New York City Police Department’s homicide squad. Laconic, yet unfailingly polite, he methodically eliminates false leads, refusing to jump to conclusions, although he usually does not arrive at the solution solely through his own efforts.

MARTY WALSH, of the Los Angeles Police Department, looks more like a real estate salesperson than a police detective. He is “short and slender and neat,” but his keen eyes belie his innocuous appearance.

CONTRIBUTION

Although he was more famous for his southern black dialect fiction of the 1920’s and early 1930’s, which he considered neither biased nor derogatory, Octavus Roy Cohen also created a memorable detective. *Jim Hanvey, Detective* (1923), the collection of

short fiction that first recounted the adventures of the big, slow-moving, cigar-smoking sleuth, was considered by Ellery Queen to be “a book of historical value with a high quality of literary style.” Two of the short stories, “Common Stock” and “Pink Bait,” were later chosen by Eugene Thwing as part of his anthology of mystery fiction, *The World’s Best One Hundred Detective Stories* (1929). In addition, Cohen’s work represented one of the early, minor crossovers to the more realistic detective fiction of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

BIOGRAPHY

Born and reared in Charleston, South Carolina, Octavus Roy Cohen attended Porter Military Academy, from which he was graduated in 1908. After receiving his bachelor of science degree from Clemson College in 1911, Cohen worked first as a civil engineer, then as a journalist, before he passed the bar in 1913. Two years later, he decided to become a writer full time. In October of 1914, he was married to Inez Lopez; they had one son, named for his father. In 1935, the family moved to New York, where Cohen continued his writing career; later, they moved to Los Angeles.

Cohen’s first book, *The Other Woman* (1917; with J. U. Giesy), marked the beginning of his prolific literary career. According to *The New York Times*, at the time of his death he had written at least 250 short stories and contributed fiction to *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier’s* magazine as well as producing “more than sixty books [and] five plays.” In addition, he had written for the highly popular *Amos ’n’ Andy* radio show from 1945 to 1946. One of his plays, *Come Seven* (pr. 1920), which was adapted from his novel of the same name, had a run of more than seventy performances on Broadway. Cohen died of a stroke at the age of sixty-seven in Los Angeles.

ANALYSIS

Critics have received Octavus Roy Cohen’s detective fiction with mixed emotions. Anthony Boucher

considered Cohen, in his early phase, one of the precursors of “the tough, realistic school”; others have been less sure of his contribution.

The uncertainty stems in part from the fact that Cohen was not an innovator. Rather, he was a skilled recreator of an established formula who used some interesting variations that seem to prefigure other later techniques. His best-known creation, Jim Hanvey, remained squarely within the tradition of what Julian Symons calls the detective as “Plain Man.” Unlike the detectives modeled on Sherlock Holmes, the Plain Man had no superhuman powers of ratiocination; nor did he share the Holmesian detective’s lack of “emotional attachments and . . . interest in everyday life.” Hanvey is a clever and resourceful man, but his investigative ability—like that of Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe—is more the result of a large store of common sense, an excellent memory for faces, and an acquaintance with most of the important members of the criminal world.

Even his childlike enjoyment of the simple things—

especially all things related to eating—precludes his membership among Symons’s “Superman” detectives. The crude Hanvey can often prove embarrassing to his more refined companions. In “Common Stock,” for example, Gerald Corwin, whose “every cultured gesture” marks him “unmistakably a gentleman,” is appalled by Hanvey’s habit of “sitting by the hour toying with his [gold] toothpick.” When someone mentions that “the weapon might better be concealed,” Hanvey is honestly surprised that anyone would want to hide “absolutely the swellest toothpick in captivity.” Then, too, his table manners are less than desirable, since “eatin’ ain’t no art with me. It’s a pleasure.”

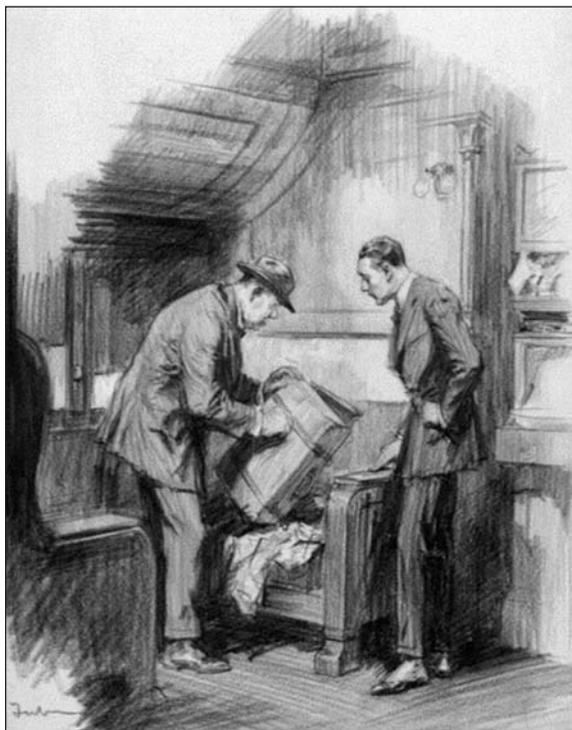
THE CRIMSON ALIBI

The Crimson Alibi (1919), the first novel in the David Carroll series, contains—although the suspects all seem to be wronged innocents, who, in the best tradition of mystery fiction, would be more than justified in killing the unpopular and unscrupulous Joshua Quincy—a backbone of corrupt, highly placed citizens and tough-minded investigators that would later be fleshed out in the American subgenres. Quincy’s lawyer, the eminent Thaddeus Standish, though less than fully involved in his client’s less savory schemes, nevertheless knew of them—though not “in an official capacity.” The police, though considered honest public servants, delight in grilling suspects and using snitches.

The murder, too, foreshadows those of later fiction. Neither mysterious poisons nor other exotic manners of dealing death are employed: Quincy is felled by a silver dagger, his own possession, which has been wiped clean of fingerprints.

LOVE HAS NO ALIBI

Particularly in his later works, Cohen could define a character or create an atmosphere with a few sure strokes; little time is wasted on extraneous details. In *Love Has No Alibi* (1946), for example, one of the least likely murder suspects, Dr. Arthur Maybank, is a mousy little man, rejected even by the army, who has “scraped and struggled and sweated and slaved” to survive; his sparse hair and slumped, skinny shoulders belong to a man who has never had “even the hope of having something.” When accused of murder, he is “bewildered,” like a man in a trance or “a shock victim.” The club where most of the action of the novel



Scene from Octavus Roy Cohen’s 1922 story “Common Stock” illustrated by Ernest Fuhr in *Saturday Evening Post*. (Library of Congress)

takes place has a cabaret in which the dancers are “young and beautifully proportioned and . . . lovely unless, or until, you [happen] to look at their eyes, which [are] hard and wise and blank”—a proper setting for a group of citizens who almost all are hiding shady pasts.

Cohen’s crime fiction is an odd cross between the pure-puzzle and the more character-oriented genres. Cohen rigorously followed the fair-play rule of giving his reader all the information necessary to solve the case; all that remains necessary is the kaleidoscopic twist—a clue placed in its proper context—for the case to be solved. *A Bullet for My Love* (1950) hinges on a married couple’s special way of telling time, mentioned early in the story, for its solution, while “Common Stock” seems to be a straightforward account of a failed job, until Hanvey reveals that he has been hired to carry the all-important proxy instead of merely acting as guard to the ostensible messenger, Gerald Corwin.

Nevertheless, some psychological development has its place. The denouement of *Love Has No Alibi* focuses on the step-by-step manner in which an ordinary citizen begins a series of murders, almost by accident, while “Pink Bait” tells the story of Tommy Braden’s “perfect” con based on the ordinary person’s desire to name-drop. A nice touch to the latter work is that Cohen tells it entirely from the con artist’s point of view. In addition, even though Jim Hanvey foils Tommy’s scheme, the detective’s sense of justice allows him to watch over his foe’s interests as well as his client’s—he warns Tommy that it is dangerous to cash a bad check written by his “victims.”

In his later work, Cohen released the reins on his tendency toward sentimentality. Increasingly, his relatively tough-minded police and private investigators gave way to “the slick glamour” of bumbling but good-hearted all-American heroes who unexpectedly manage to solve the crime; noble, innocent heroines; fallen women with hearts of gold; dyed-in-the-wool villains, who are not necessarily the murderers; and polite police officers. As Boucher notes, Cohen wrote about “a set of characters with too much money, too much charm and too much beauty,” making them likable and telling “their story at . . . a smooth, fast tempo with . . . lightly amusing dialogue.”

DAANGEROUS LADY

Throughout most of his career, perhaps as a result of his journalistic and later dramatic experience, Cohen wrote crisply and clearly. Little time is wasted on extraneous details; he is sparing of words, and those he uses he uses to great effect. Unlike *The Crimson Alibi*, which occasionally becomes mired in descriptive passages, the “glamour” novels have almost no descriptive passages. Details are either implied or given in conversation. In *Dangerous Lady* (1946), for example, the oddities of a relationship between an heiress and a fortune hunter are related not by an omniscient narrator but by the torch singer who loves “the louse”: “All of a sudden he slapped her. Smacko! Twice. And hard. She took it. Then she walked around the car and climbed in . . . and they drove off.”

Although Cohen was not a major innovator in the detective genre, his extensive canon provided considerable entertainment to legions of mystery readers, and his minor variations on an established formula proved durable, appearing later in the hard-boiled subgenre. Jim Hanvey proved to be a popular and unforgettable figure; in addition to his printed adventures, he appeared in a film, *Jim Hanvey, Detective* (1937), and in a radio play, *The Townsend Murder Mystery* (1933). Although much of Cohen’s work is now nearly impossible to find, it deserves its place in the annals of detective and mystery fiction.

Ginia Henderson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVID CARROLL SERIES: *The Crimson Alibi*, 1919; *Gray Dusk*, 1920; *Six Seconds of Darkness*, 1921; *Midnight*, 1922

JIM HANVEY SERIES: *Jim Hanvey, Detective*, 1923; *The May Day Mystery*, 1929; *The Backstage Mystery*, 1930 (also known as *Curtain at Eight*); *Star of Earth*, 1932; *The Townsend Murder Mystery*, 1933; *Scrambled Yeggs*, 1934

MAX GOLD SERIES: *Danger in Paradise*, 1944; *Love Has No Alibi*, 1946; *Don’t Ever Love Me*, 1947

LIEUTENANT MARTY WALSH SERIES: *More Beautiful than Murder*, 1948; *My Love Wears Black*, 1948; *A Bullet for My Love*, 1950

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Other Woman*, 1917

(with J. U. Giesy); *The Iron Chalice*, 1925; *The Outer Gate*, 1927; *Child of Evil*, 1936; *I Love You Again*, 1937 (also known as *There's Always Time to Die*); *East of Broadway*, 1938; *Strange Honeymoon*, 1939; *Romance in Crimson*, 1940 (also known as *Murder in Season*); *Lady in Armor*, 1941; *Sound of Revelry*, 1943; *Romance in the First Degree*, 1944; *Dangerous Lady*, 1946; *Lost Lady*, 1951; *The Corpse That Walked*, 1951; *Love Can Be Dangerous*, 1955 (also known as *The Intruder*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Detours*, 1927; *Cameos*, 1931

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Come Seven*, 1920; *Sunclouds*, 1924; *The Other Tomorrow*, 1927; *Spring Tide*, 1928; *The Light Shines Through*, 1928; *The Valley of Olympus*, 1929; *Epic Peters, Pullman Porter*, 1930; *Lilies of the Alley*, 1931; *Scarlet Woman*, 1934; *Transient Lady*, 1934; *Back to Nature*, 1935; *With Benefit of Clergy*, 1935; *Kid Tinsel*, 1941; *Borrasca*, 1953

SHORT FICTION: *Polished Ebony*, 1919; *Highly Colored*, 1921; *Assorted Chocolates*, 1922; *Dark Days and Black Knights*, 1923; *Bigger and Blacker*, 1925; *Black and Blue*, 1926; *Florian Slappey Goes Abroad*, 1928; *Carbon Copies*, 1932; *Florian Slappey*, 1938

PLAYS: *The Crimson Alibi*, pr. 1919; *Come Seven*, pr. 1920; *Shadows*, pr. 1920; *The Scourge*, pr. 1920; *Every Saturday Night*, pr. 1921; *The Melancholy Dame*, pr. 1927; *Alias Mrs. Roberts*, pr. 1928

RADIO PLAYS: *The Townsend Murder Mystery*, 1933; *The Amos 'n' Andy* series, 1945-1946

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G. D. H. COLE and MARGARET COLE

MARGARET COLE

Born: Cambridge, England; May 6, 1893

Died: Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, England;
May 7, 1980

G. D. H. COLE

Born: Cambridge, England; September 25, 1889

Died: London, England; January 14, 1959

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Superintendent Henry Wilson, 1923-1942

Everard Blatchington, 1926-1935

Dr. Benjamin Tancred, 1935-1936

Mrs. Elizabeth Warrender, 1938-1941

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SUPERINTENDENT HENRY WILSON of Scotland Yard is neither flamboyant nor eccentric. He is a perfect example of the typical English senior police officer of the interwar period. He is competent, thorough, and respected by his colleagues.

CONTRIBUTION

G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole contributed little that had an immediate impact on the mystery and detective genre. Although their thirty-odd full-length novels and several collections of short stories are well written, they are, on the surface, very conventional and often predictable. The writing of mysteries was for the Coles an avocation, an escape from a very active involvement in the academic, political, and economic life of Great Britain between the two world wars.

The Coles shared the task of writing, and while one might be responsible for the completion of a particular story, the other never failed to make suggestions or actual contributions to the narrative. The assumption on the part of some critics that their fiction contains few references to their political and economic thought betrays a superficial treatment of their work. Among the most prominent and outspoken socialist thinkers in modern England, the Coles infused their fictional

works with ideas, experiences, and bias that give each novel or short story a special significance. Through their polished and often amusing prose, the mystery story becomes an unconscious vehicle for the dissemination of socialist dogma.

BIOGRAPHY

Although he was born in Cambridge, England, late in 1889, George Douglas Howard Cole spent most of his life in Oxford, first as a student and later as a professor. It was during his undergraduate years that Cole developed his passion for socialism. First as a member of the Fabian Society and then as a worker in the Independent Labour Party, he began to make a name for himself among the radical elements in Great Britain in the years before World War I. It was while he was a member of the Fabian Research Department that he met Margaret Isabel Postgate, to whom he was married in 1918.

Born Margaret Isabel Postgate, Margaret Cole was also a native of Cambridge and took her degree at Cambridge University and served as classical mistress at St. Paul's Girls' School in London between 1914 and 1916. Like her husband, Margaret Cole was very interested in adult education, and for a quarter of a century she helped combat illiteracy. Although the Coles became permanent residents of Oxford in 1925, when G. D. H. Cole became a fellow of University College and university reader in economics, they kept a residence in London and remained actively involved in the political life of the capital. Three children did not deter either Cole from pursuing a career, remaining involved in socialist circles, and publishing a remarkable number of books and pamphlets.

During his years at Oxford, G. D. H. Cole distinguished himself as a leading economist, and he gathered around him a group of students and teachers who still remain very active in the political and economic life of Great Britain. G. D. H. Cole died in 1959 after a long illness. Awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1965 and made a dame of the British Empire in 1970, Margaret Cole survived her husband by twenty-

one year, dying in a nursing home at Goring-on-Thames (near Oxford) in 1980.

ANALYSIS

G. D. H. Cole's career as a writer of mystery and detective fiction began in 1923 as a cure for the boredom that attended a long recuperation from a mild case of pneumonia. Detective stories were the rage among members of the British intelligentsia in the years between the two world wars, and Cole, who was an avid reader of mystery stories, proposed to try his hand at writing one. Spurred by his wife's contention that he would not finish it, Cole quickly completed *The Brooklyn Murders* (1923). It marked the first appearance of Superintendent Henry Wilson, and it was the only work to which Cole ever willingly made substantial revisions at the request of a publisher. The original draft supposedly contained too many murders.

Already well established as an author of numerous works in the areas of economics and politics, Cole had no difficulty finding a publisher for his first novel. The plot is a simple one, and to a student of detection the murders of the two nephews of Sir Vernon Brooklyn, who are also his heirs, are easily solved. What is important in this work is the examination of greed as a motive for crime. Again and again the Coles would explore this weakness of a capitalist society and its malevolent influence on the human character.

THE DEATH OF A MILLIONAIRE

A second novel, *The Death of a Millionaire* (1925), marked the beginning of the partnership between Cole and his wife. More radical than her husband, and often more intense in her espousal of socialist economic principles, Margaret Cole nevertheless possessed a finely honed sense of humor that somewhat softened her criticism of capitalism in the mysteries she would coauthor.

Corruption in the world of business formed the theme of this second novel, and it is particularly interesting because the reader is given the socialist view of the sordid world of finance with a touch of satire. This lesson in leftist economic theory in no way detracts from the story. The element of humor continued to be an important part of the mysteries written by the

Coles. Many of their characters exhibit that charm and wit so often associated with the British upper classes. The repartee of the gentleman's club and the college senior common room is often echoed in the remarks of the men and women who people their books. With their second mystery the Coles began to experiment with techniques for developing memorable characters using a minimum of words. Over the years they were able to create a host of major and minor actors in their mystery novels who were genuinely alive to their readers.

THE BLATCHINGTON TANGLE

This talent for creating memorable portraits with a minimum of words is ably demonstrated in *The Blatchington Tangle* (1926) when Henry Wilson, the professional police officer, encounters Everard Blatchington, the amateur sleuth. Among the protagonists in this mystery is a rather obnoxious American who immediately becomes a suspect when the body of a crooked financier is found in Lord Blatchington's library. Although G. D. H. Cole may not be accurately described as anti-American, he did have suspicions about the economic policies of the United States in the years after World War I. This attitude hardened into open hostility during and following World War II. His American suspect seems to combine in his personality every unpleasant characteristic associated with his fellow countrymen.

GREEK TRAGEDY

It is interesting to contrast this almost pathological distrust of capitalism in all of its forms with the apologetic tone assumed by the Coles with respect to communism. In *Greek Tragedy* (1939), they offered their readers a glowing endorsement of the Left. In a workers' paradise there might be no Blatchington rubies to tempt a criminal to commit murder.

THE MURDER AT CROME HOUSE

With the publication of *The Murder at Crome House* (1927), the Coles seemed to settle down to the writing of detective fiction that would appeal to an ever-growing audience, instead of using the mystery novel as a device for pleading the cause of socialism. Drawing on their varied experiences, they also began to experiment with various techniques of detection and literary devices that render their novels among the

most intellectually stimulating in the genre. The locales of the Coles' mysteries written between 1927 and 1943 are as diverse as the crimes they sought to unravel. *The Murder at Crome House* and *Double Blackmail* (1939) are set in country houses and combine romance with amateur detection. This pleasant mixture is made all the more palatable by a generous portion of humor.

SCANDAL AT SCHOOL

The Coles often used laughter both to lighten the varied tragedies that formed the core of their novels and to give depth to the characters they created with such care. *Scandal at School* (1935) contains an air of authenticity born of a long association with the academic world. G. D. H. Cole was first and foremost a teacher, and it is for his brilliant performance as a lecturer that he is most fondly remembered. Margaret Cole also was no stranger to the classroom. Using the innocence of childhood, they construct a gruesome crime that almost baffles Blatchington. Throughout the mystery, the antics of the students and the responses of their teachers and the other adults add the touch of humor that is so necessary to relieve the tension.

POISON IN THE GARDEN SUBURB

From time to time the Coles explored problems that required a depth of knowledge beyond their areas of expertise. With the thoroughness of first-class scholars they mastered a number of fields and then used their ability to produce remarkable mysteries. In 1929, a year before Dorothy L. Sayers published her classic mystery, *Strong Poison*, the Coles won critical acclaim for their latest addition to Superintendent Wilson's adventures, *Poison in the Garden Suburb*. The knowledge of toxicology displayed by the Coles was truly remarkable—indicative of the care they took while writing their books. While exploring a new subject of endeavor, the Coles did not neglect the exploration of characters: *Poison in the Garden Suburb* contains the memorable portrait of Miss Lydia Redford.

The writing of mystery and detective fiction had begun as an avocation, but by 1930 it had come to absorb an increasing amount of the Coles' time and creative energies. The mysteries that appeared over the next five years were well received by the public and the critics. Having achieved popular success, they

were able to experiment with new techniques, literary devices, and characters.

BURGLARS IN BUCKS

In *Burglars in Bucks* (1930), the Coles presented their readers with chronological evidence as it would appear to the investigator, in this case Superintendent Wilson. One by one, letters, telegrams, bits of conversations, and other clues are presented in a confusing way. Thus the reader becomes an amateur sleuth, as bewildered as the professional detective.

END OF AN ANCIENT MARINER

The critics found *End of an Ancient Mariner* (1933) somewhat unnerving because the villain is revealed rather early in the story and then the authors proceed to disclose the reasons for his actions. This is a novel of crime and retribution, a psychological mystery and not a mere whodunit. Unfortunately, in places it is rather carelessly written, probably because the Coles were at that time less concerned with polished fiction than with the realities of the Great Depression. It is interesting to note that the least successful of their mysteries were written and published in those years in which the Coles devoted their prime energies to economics and politics for a scholarly audience. In the midst of a world financial crisis, they explored the theme of the corruption of capitalism in their fiction. *Big Business Murder* (1935) is filled with the technical language of finance made simple for the average reader. Satire is employed to unmask the crooks who dominated the world of business. To the informed reader—the audience for whom the Coles preferred to write—it was a very disturbing book.

DR. TANCRED BEGINS AND LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Dr. Tancred Begins: Or, The Pendexter Saga, First Canto (1935) introduced a new and very clever sleuth who was featured again the following year in *Last Will and Testament: Or, The Pendexter Saga, Second (and Last) Canto* (1936). Already masters of character analysis, the Coles used their skill to create a wonderful Cornish setting in which Dr. Tancred might solve his mysteries.

Superintendent Wilson, who began his career as a rather two-dimensional character, gained depth and a certain professional dignity in mysteries such as

Corpse in Canonicals (1930); *Death in the Quarry* (1934), in which he is reunited with Everard Blatchington; *The Brothers Sackville* (1937); *Off with Her Head!* (1938); and *Double Blackmail*. In all these tales, the plots are developed with a literary style only rarely marred by a flippancy that some readers might find irritating. The mysteries are usually well planned, always studious in tone, and at times almost poetic in their descriptions of people and places. In some mysteries, such as *Dead Man's Watch* (1931), the characters and their delineation become more important than the story itself.

MURDER AT THE MUNITION WORKS AND KNIFE IN THE DARK

Two of the Coles' final works, *Murder at the Munion Works* (1940) and *Knife in the Dark* (1942), deal with labor, politics, and social problems. The former book is particularly worthy of mention because of the wealth of detail devoted to labor relations. In a Great Britain besieged by fascism, it became a text for popular consumption on the economic theories of the British Left. The Coles' last published mystery novel, *Topper's End* (1942), appeared just as the tide of battle was turning in favor of the Allies. Another mystery, half completed at the time, was never finished, as the Coles turned their energies to helping reshape postwar England. Although his extreme views on many subjects denied G. D. H. Cole a place in the Labour Party government of Clement Attlee, he continued to publish his ideas both in print and from the podium until his death. Margaret Cole carried on her husband's work until her own failing health forced her to retire. It is regrettable that their witty and entertaining works are all but forgotten, relics of a time when crime and its detection was a genteel obsession.

Clifton W. Potter, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SUPERINTENDENT HENRY WILSON SERIES: *The Brooklyn Murders*, 1923; *The Death of a Millionaire*, 1925; *Superintendent Wilson's Holiday*, 1928; *The Man from the River*, 1928; *Poison in the Garden Suburb*, 1929; *Corpse in Canonicals*, 1930 (also known as *Corpse in the Constable's Garden*); *Dead Man's*

Watch, 1931; *The Great Southern Mystery*, 1931 (also known as *The Walking Corpse*); *End of an Ancient Mariner*, 1933; *Death in the Quarry*, 1934; *Big Business Murder*, 1935; *The Brothers Sackville*, 1937; *The Missing Aunt*, 1938; *Off with Her Head!*, 1938; *Double Blackmail*, 1939; *Greek Tragedy*, 1939; *Counterpoint Murder*, 1940; *Murder at the Munion Works*, 1940; *Wilson and Some Others*, 1940; *Topper's End*, 1942

EVERARD BLATCHINGTON SERIES: *The Blatchington Tangle*, 1926; *Scandal at School*, 1935 (also known as *The Sleeping Death*)

DR. BENJAMIN TANCRED SERIES: *Dr. Tancred Begins: Or, The Pendexter Saga, First Canto*, 1935; *Last Will and Testament: Or, The Pendexter Saga, Second (and Last) Canto*, 1936

MRS. ELIZABETH WARRENDER SERIES: *Mrs. Warrender's Profession*, 1939; *Knife in the Dark*, 1942

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Murder at Crome House*, 1927; *Burglars in Bucks*, 1930 (also known as *The Berkshire Mystery*); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Death of a Star*, 1932; *The Affair at Aliquid*, 1933; *Murder in Four Parts*, 1934; *Disgrace to the College*, 1937

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *A Lesson in Crime, and Other Stories*, 1933; *Death in the Tankard*, 1943; *Strychnine Tonic and A Dose of Cyanide*, 1943; *Birth-day Gifts, and Other Stories*, 1946

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Rents, Rings, and Houses*, 1923; *The Intelligent Man's Guide Through World Chaos*, 1932 (also known as *A Guide Through World Chaos*); *A Guide to Modern Politics*, 1934; *The Condition of Britain*, 1937

EDITED TEXTS: *The Bolo Book*, 1921; *The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine, with Other Records of His Early Career in England and America*, 1927 (by William Cobbett); *The Ormond Poets, 1927-1928; Rural Rides in Southern, Western, and Eastern Counties of England, Together with Tours in Scotland and the Northern and Midland Counties of England and Letters from Ireland*, 1930 (by Cobbett); *The Opinions of William Cobbett*, 1944

OTHER MAJOR WORKS (BY G. D. H. COLE)

POETRY: *The Record*, 1912; *New Beginnings and The Record*, 1914; *The Crooked World*, 1933

NONFICTION: 1913-1920 • *The Greater Unionism*, 1913 (with William Mellor); *The World of Labour: A Discussion of the Present and Future of Trade Unionism*, 1913 (revised 1915); *Labour in War Time*, 1915; *Trade Unionism in War Time*, 1915? (with William Mellor); *Self-Government in Industry*, 1917 (revised 1920); *Some Problems of Urban and Rural Industry*, 1917 (with others); *The British Labour Movement: A Syllabus for Study Circles*, 1917 (revised 1922); *The Principles of Socialism*, 1917; *Trade Unionism on the Railways: Its History and Problems*, 1917 (with R. Page Arnot); *An Introduction to Trade Unionism*, 1918 (revised 1929; also known as *Organised Labour*); *Labour in the Commonwealth: A Book for the Younger Generation*, 1918; *The Meaning of Industrial Freedom*, 1918 (with William Mellor); *The Payment of Wages: A Study in Payment by Results Under the Wage-System*, 1918 (revised 1928); *Workers' Control in Industry*, 1919; *Chaos and Order in Industry*, 1920; *Democracy in Industry*, 1920; *Guild Socialism Re-stated*, 1920; *Guild Socialism*, 1920; *Social Theory*, 1920 (revised 1921)

1921-1930 • *Guild Socialism: A Plan for Economic Democracy*, 1921; *The Future of Local Government*, 1921; *Unemployment and Industrial Maintenance*, 1921; *English Economic History*, 1922?; *British Trade Unionism: Problems and Policy*, 1923; *Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry 1914-1921*, 1923; *Out of Work: An Introduction to the Study of Unemployment*, 1923; *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, 1923; *Unemployment*, 1923; *Workshop Organisation*, 1923; *The Life of William Cobbett*, 1924 (revised 1947); *The Place of the Workers' Educational Association in Working Class Education*, 1924?; *A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, 1925-1927* (revised 1937, 1948); *Robert Owen*, 1925 (also known as *The Life of Robert Owen*); *William Cobbett*, 1925; *Industrial Policy for Socialists*, 1926; *A Select List of Books on Economic and Social History*, 1927 (with H. L. Beales); *The Economic System*, 1927; *What to Read on English Economic History*,

1928; *Politics and Literature*, 1929; *The Next Ten Years of British Social and Economic Policy*, 1929; *Gold, Credit, and Unemployment: Four Essays for Laymen*, 1930

1931-1940 • *The Crisis: What It Is, How It Arose, What to Do*, 1931 (with Ernest Bevin); *Unemployment Problems in 1931*, 1931 (with others); *How Capitalism Works*, 1931; *The Bank of England*, 1932; *Banks and Credit*, 1932; *British Trade and Industry, Past and Future*, 1932; *Economic Tracts for the Times*, 1932; *Modern Theories and Forms of Industrial Organisation*, 1932; *Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory*, 1932; *Some Essentials of Socialist Propaganda*, 1932; *The Essentials of Socialisation*, 1932; *The Gold Standard*, 1932; *Theories and Forms of Political Organisation*, 1932; *War Debts and Reparations: What They Are, Why They Must Be Cancelled*, 1932 (with Richard Seymour Postgate); *What to Read on Economic Problems of Today and Tomorrow*, 1932; *A Plan for Britain*, 1933; *Saving and Spending: Or, The Economics of "Economy,"* 1933; *Socialism in Pictures and Figures*, 1933 (with J. F. Horrabin); *The Intelligent Man's Guide to Europe Today*, 1933 (with Margaret Cole); *The Need for a Socialist Programme*, 1933 (with Dick Mitchison); *What Is This Socialism? Letters to a Young Inquirer*, 1933; *Planning International Trade*, 1934; *Some Relations Between Political and Economic Theory*, 1934; *Studies in World Economics*, 1934; *What Marx Really Meant*, 1934; *A Study-Guide to Socialist Policy*, 1934?; *Marxism*, 1935 (with others); *Principles of Economic Planning*, 1935 (also known as *Economic Planning*); *The Simple Case for Socialism*, 1935; *Fifty Propositions About Money and Production*, 1936; *Practical Economics: Or, Studies in Economic Planning*, 1937; *The People's Front*, 1937; *What Is Ahead of Us?*, 1937 (with others); *Étude du statut de la production et du rôle du capital*, 1938 (with Thomas Nixon Carver and Carl Brinkmann); *Economic Prospects: 1938 and After*, 1938; *Living Wages: The Case for a New Minimum Wage Act*, 1938; *Persons and Periods: Studies*, 1938; *Socialism in Evolution*, 1938; *The Common People 1746-1938*, 1938 (revised 1946; with Richard Seymour Postgate; also known as *The British Common People*); *The Machinery of Socialist*

Planning, 1938; *British Trade-Unionism Today: A Survey, with the Collaboration of Thirty Trade Union Leaders and Other Experts*, 1939 (revised as *An Introduction to Trade Unionism*, 1953); *Plan for Democratic Britain*, 1939; *War Aims*, 1939

1941-1950 • *A Letter to an Industrial Manager*, 1941; *British Working Class Politics 1834-1914*, 1941; *Chartist Portraits*, 1941; *Europe, Russia, and the Future*, 1941; *James Keir Hardie*, 1941; *The War on the Home Front*, 1941; *A Memorandum on the Reorganization of Local Government in England*, 1942; *Beveridge Explained: What the Beveridge Report on Social Security Means*, 1942; *Great Britain in the Post-War World*, 1942; *The Fabian Society, Past and Present*, 1942 (revised 1952); *Victory or Vested Interest?*, 1942; *Building Societies and the Housing Problem*, 1943; *Fabian Socialism*, 1943; *John Burns*, 1943; *Monetary Systems and Theories*, 1943; *Richard Carlile, 1790-1843*, 1943; *The Means to Full Employment*, 1943; *When the Fighting Stops*, 1943; *A Century of Co-operation*, 1944; *How to Obtain Full Employment*, 1944; *Money: Its Present and Future*, 1944 (revised 1947, 1954; also known as *Money, Trade, and Investment*); *The British Working-Class Movement: An Outline and Study Guide*, 1944 (revised 1949); *The Planning of World Trade*, 1944; *Building and Planning*, 1945; *Reparations and the Future of German Industry*, 1945; *The Co-ops and Labour*, 1945; *Welfare and Peace*, 1945 (with John Boyd Orr); *Labour's Foreign Policy*, 1946; *Banks and Credit*, 1946?; *A Guide to the Elements of Socialism*, 1947; *Local and Regional Government*, 1947; *Samuel Butler and "The Way of All Flesh,"* 1947; *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Post-War World*, 1947; *The Rochdale Principles: Their History and Application*, 1947; *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 1948; *British Social Services*, 1948; *Europe and the Problem of Democracy*, 1948; *The Meaning of Marxism*, 1948; *The National Coal Board: Its Tasks, Its Organisation, and Its Prospects*, 1948; *Why Nationalise Steel?*, 1948; *Consultation or Joint Management? A Contribution to the Discussion of Industrial Democracy*, 1949 (with J. M. Chalmers and Ian Mikardo); *Facts for Socialists*, 1949; *Labour's Second Term*, 1949; *World in Transition: A Guide to the Shifting Political*

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POETRY: *Bits of Things*, 1914 (with others); *Poems*, 1918

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Story of Santa Claus for Little People*, 1920

NONFICTION: 1921-1940 • *The Control of Industry*, 1921; *An Introduction to World History for Classes and Study Circles*, 1923; *Local Government for Beginners*, 1927; *A Book List of Local Government*, 1933; *The New Economic Revolution*, 1937; *Books and the People*, 1938; *Marriage, Past and Present*, 1938; *Women of Today*, 1938

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1951-1971 • *Robert Owen of New Lanark*, 1953; *What Is a Comprehensive School? The London Plan in Practice*, 1953; *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, 1955; *Plan for Industrial Pensions*, 1956; *Servant of the Country*, 1956; *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 1961; *Robert Owen: Industrialist, Reformer, Visionary*, 1971 (with others); *The Life of G. D. H. Cole*, 1971

EDITED TEXTS: *Twelve Studies in Soviet Russia*, 1933; *The Road to Success: Twenty Essays on the Choice of a Career for Women*, 1936; *Democratic Sweden: A Volume of Studies Prepared by Members of the New Fabian Research Bureau*, 1938 (with Charles Smith); *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society*, 1940 (with Richard Padley); *Our Soviet Ally*, 1943; *Our Partnership*, 1948 (by Beatrice Webb; with Barbara Drake); *The Webbs and Their Work*, 1949; *Beatrice Webb: Diaries 1912-1924 and 1924-1932*, 1952-1956

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MAX ALLAN COLLINS

Born: Muscatine, Iowa; March 3, 1948

Also wrote as Barbara Allan; Peter Brackett; Max Collins; Patrick Culhane

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nolan, 1973-
Quarry, 1976-
Mallory, 1983-
Nathan Heller, 1983-
Eliot Ness, 1987-
Disasters, 1999-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MALLORY, a former police officer and Vietnam veteran, lives in Port City, Iowa, where he both writes and solves mysteries. Modeled after his creator, Mallory is law abiding and helpful to people in his community, although the books he aspires to write tend to feature hard-boiled characters and plots.

NATHAN HELLER, a native Chicagoan and former police officer, recalls famous people he knew while investigating unsolved crimes. He created the A-1 Detective Agency after leaving the Chicago police force because he was disgusted by corrupt practices with which he had complied, such as lying while testifying in court, to advance professionally. Heller served with the U.S. Marines during World War II.

ELIOT NESS is a fictionalized depiction of the real Ness when he was in his thirties and public safety director in Cleveland, Ohio, combating corrupt police, politicians, and organized crime during the Depression. In short stories and novels, he frequently allies with Heller to solve cases and apprehend criminals.

CONTRIBUTION

Max Allan Collins is an innovative writer whom many critics credit with being the first to write hard-boiled historical detective stories and with shaping the genre for other writers. His most significant protagonist is private investigator Nathan Heller, who appears

in works frequently lauded by reviewers. Collins created a female private investigator, Ms. Tree, around the same time Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky introduced their women detectives. Collins gained popular acclaim when he wrote the *Dick Tracy* detective comic strip. His prominence increased with the release of the film *Road to Perdition* (2002) based on his graphic novel published in 1998. In addition to writing mysteries, Collins has enhanced scholarship of that genre with his nonfictional essays and books.

Collins's peers have recognized his writing with awards. The Private Eye Writers of America (PWA) presented Collins a Shamus Award for outstanding novel for *True Detective* (1983). He received his second Shamus for *Stolen Away* (1991). Many of his other works were also nominated for Shamus awards. In 2006, the PWA honored Collins with its most notable prize, The Eye, recognizing his lifetime contributions to the private investigator genre. The Mystery Writers of America presented Collins an Edgar Allan Poe Award for his critical book, *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer* (1984; with James L. Traylor). Reviewers have had mixed opinions of Collins's mysteries. Many critics praise his plotting and action, while others consider his narratives weakened by superfluous details. Some reviewers dislike his occasionally unrealistic, and sometimes demeaning, characterizations of historical characters.

BIOGRAPHY

Max Allan Collins, Jr., was born on March 3, 1948, in Muscatine, Iowa, to Max Allan Collins and Patricia Ann Rushing Collins. His parents encouraged artistic expression. Collins's father worked as a music director for Muscatine High School and Muscatine Community College. When Collins was a toddler, his mother read Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* comics to him. Later, Collins used his allowance to buy *Dick Tracy* issues. After Collins's mother sent his drawings to Gould, the cartoonist mailed Collins a letter for his eighth birthday, praising his artistry.

Collins read books by Mickey Spillane, Dashiell

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Max Allan Collins in 2002. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Hammett, and other detective authors. He began writing fiction while he was in junior high, submitting his work to publishers. At Muscatine High School, Collins acted in plays, ran track, and lettered in football. His senior profile in his high school's *Auroran* yearbook stated that his ambition was to become a professional writer. After graduating in 1966, Collins studied at Muscatine Community College, completing an associate of arts degree in 1968. On June 1, 1968, he married Barbara Jane Mull. Their son Nathan was born in 1982.

Collins was a *Muscatine Journal* reporter from 1968 through 1970. He enrolled in creative writing workshops at the University of Iowa, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in 1970. He was accepted to that university's graduate writers' workshop and earned a master of fine arts degree in 1972. From 1971 through 1977, Collins taught at Muscatine Community College. He attended Boucheron conventions, meeting PWA founder Robert Randisi, who became a supportive colleague. In 1977, when Gould retired from teaching, Collins submitted his successful proposal, "Dick Tracy Meets Angeltop," to write *Dick Tracy*. A contract dispute ended Collins's employment in 1993.

Collins experienced an epiphany in the 1970's

when he read *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930) and noticed its copyright, realizing that private investigators had existed throughout the twentieth century. Fascinated by unsolved crimes and mysteries, he envisioned stories set during the Depression and into the 1960's, featuring private eye Nathan Heller investigating crimes associated with famous events and people. To develop his idea, Collins researched in archives and libraries and interviewed eyewitnesses. His first Heller novel, *True Detective*, appeared in 1983.

Collins began writing screenplays in 1994. In 1998, his graphic novel, *Road to Perdition*, was published, securing international attention for his writing. Publishers hired Collins to write novels based on films and television shows. Collins edited anthologies of Mickey Spillane's short stories and finished Spillane's novels in progress after his death. Collins also co-authored mysteries with his wife. In 1999, Collins contributed a chapter to the serial mystery, *Sixteen Thousand Suspects: A RAGBRAI Mystery*, written by Iowa authors to honor the *Des Moines Register's* Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa.

Collins has served on the board of directors for the Mystery Writers of America and PWA and has judged nominations for Shamus and Edgar Awards.

ANALYSIS

Max Allan Collins perceives himself as a storyteller who writes primarily to entertain readers. He shapes his stories to appeal to his audience by incorporating cultural references, jargon, and attitudes. Themes of violence and corruption resonate in Collins's writing. He uses dark humor and irony to establish sinister tones. His stories are often set during the 1930's Depression or wars to intensify ominous themes and suggest characters' jaded, pessimistic outlooks. Characters, both male and female, are prone to narcissism and hedonism, with men frequently displaying misogynistic behavior.

Collins focuses on depicting unsolved twentieth century crimes in the United States, appropriating historical persons and events for his stories' foundations. Because he manipulates history, he prints disclaimers and historical notes to distinguish fact from fiction, emphasizing that his protagonist Nathan Heller pre-

sents original, factually sound hypotheses to solve infamous cases. Name dropping in these provocative mysteries, thick with historical casts, is often overwhelming and distracts from the crime solving.

Collins creates unreliable, flawed narrators who are often angry and dishonest and survive on the periphery of society. Truth and memory are constant themes as characters lie, create stories and identities, and withhold or divulge information according to their perceptions, motivations, loyalties, and weaknesses. He frequently casts his characters as being more accurate than standard historical accounts, and Heller reveals that recorded facts are untrue. Collins enjoys surprising his readers with unexpected plot twists and variations on clichés.

Family and home are themes that contrast with horrific images in Collins's works. He presents characters' positive attributes, noting people and places to which they have emotional ties, to reveal their vulnerabilities and humanity, no matter how brutal they are to others. Collins emphasizes father-son relationships. Settings in Iowa and Illinois, places familiar to the author, add a sense of realism to his stories and enhance his strong visual writing style.

TRUE DETECTIVE

In *True Detective*, Collins introduces Nathan Heller living in 1933 Chicago. Describing Heller's story as a memoir, Collins implies that his investigator, using first-person narration, is recalling an incident from his past, and his memory might not be completely accurate. A police officer, Heller refuses to lie while testifying in a murder trial involving police and gangster Frank Nitti, Al Capone's associate. After relinquishing his badge, Heller establishes a detective agency, traveling to Atlanta to meet with imprisoned Capone, who hires him to stop Nitti from killing Chicago mayor Anton Cermak. Returning to the Midwest, Heller interacts with his friends, Eliot Ness and Dutch Reagan (whose comments are humorous because Collins knows Reagan's future election to the U.S. presidency). Heller witnesses Cermak's assassination, which the press believes was intended for visiting President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as has been explained in history texts.

Collins states that he presumes histories of infamous crimes are usually incorrect, so he reveals the

truth, supported with research, through Heller's eyes as a witness. This premise continues in his second Heller memoir, *True Crime* (1984), which states that John Dillinger has survived federal agents' attempt to kill him. Collins's innovative concept applies private-eye genre elements with various mystery structures. His short story "The Strawberry Teardrop" pairs Heller and Ness as they identify a serial killer, which inspired *Butcher's Dozen* (1988) and Collins's Ness series.

STOLEN AWAY

In *Stolen Away*, Nathan Heller locates a bootlegger's abducted son in Chicago, resulting in speculation that he can find a kidnapped toddler, Charles Lindbergh, Jr. After traveling to the Lindberghs' Hopewell, New Jersey, estate, Heller meets Lindbergh; his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh; and Colonel Schwarzkopf, who is in charge of the investigation. Examining the crime scene, Heller evaluates the evidence, including ransom notes, and interviews the staff. Near Washington, D.C., he encounters Gaston B. Means, who claims he knows where the Lindbergh child is located, and Heller assumes Means is a con man. Heller flies with Lindbergh, searching for a boat that the ransom notes state the boy is aboard; their searches are unsuccessful. Heller leaves, disgusted by how the Lindberghs permit Means to manipulate them.

Following the case in newspapers, Heller learns that a child's body, recovered near Hopewell, has been identified by Lindbergh as that of his child. While attending accused kidnapper Bruno Hauptmann's trial, Heller realizes that the man did not abduct the Lindbergh child. He develops a theory that the Lindberghs' son is living on an Illinois farm and travels there. He meets the farmers' adopted boy before violence erupts and assassins attack, wounding Heller. Decades later, a middle-aged man named Harlan Jensen visits Heller, and they discuss the possibility that he is the kidnapped Lindbergh toddler. Having constructed a detailed account, Collins explains why his alternate ending is plausible. Themes of hope, despair, and deceit reinforce Collins's depiction of Heller's investigations, which convinced many reviewers and readers that they were actually reading a nonfictional account in what is often considered Collins's strongest novel.

ROAD TO PERDITION

Family, loss, loyalty, and betrayal are the primary themes in Collins's best-known crime novel, *Road to Perdition*, which explores the mysterious and deadly world of gangsters from their viewpoint. In 1930, Michael O' Sullivan, Jr.'s innocence is shattered when he observes his father killing a group of men. Michael learns that his father is a hit man for the Irish crime boss John Looney in the Tri-Cities stretching across the Mississippi River into Iowa and Illinois. Because of family allegiances, Michael O'Sullivan, Sr., is loyal to Looney, who calls him the Archangel of Death as he performs any hits Looney orders. O'Sullivan intensely loves his wife and two sons and had kept his profession secret until he was observed by his son. John Looney's son Connor kills Michael's mother and younger brother Peter, mistaking him for Michael, whom John had ordered silenced.

Michael and his father flee, heading for safety with relatives in Perdition, Kansas, because they know they are targeted for death in the Tri-Cities. During their travels, which take them first east through Illinois, Michael watches his father kill enemies to avenge his family, then confess his sins to priests. Michael is devastated when he kills a man to save his father's life and is confused about his religious obligations both to honor his father and not to kill. Michael arrives in Perdition only to lose his father to a hit man. He seeks a priest to perform last rites, absolving his father of his crimes. Confession strengthens Michael, who becomes a priest, wanting to tend souls, not destroy them. However, Collins's later novel, *Road to Paradise* (2005), depicts a middle-aged Michael O' Sullivan, Jr., who is reluctantly involved in violent Mafia activity and longs for a normal life with his wife and daughter.

THE LONDON BLITZ MURDERS

Notable authors of classic detective novels become sleuths in Collins's Disasters series. In *The London Blitz Murders* (2000), set in February, 1942, Londoners fear both the Blackout Ripper and German bombing raids. During the Blitz, several women are slain and mutilated. Detective Edward Greeno of Scotland Yard investigates, summoning forensic expert Sir Bernard Spilsbury to examine the bodies. Novelist Agatha Christie Mallowan works in a hospital pharmacy while

her second husband is stationed in North Africa. Mallowan, the name she prefers, competently handles her duties, writing in the evenings and awaiting a play based on her writing to be staged in London.

Admiring Sir Spilsbury, who also works at the hospital, Mallowan accompanies him to murder scenes, which intrigue the novelist. She recognizes one of the victims, Nita Ward, as an actress who had auditioned for her play. Mallowan provides names of theater people who might divulge information about Ward. She alerts detectives to clues they have overlooked. As evidence accumulates, Mallowan considers who the most likely suspects are and discovers proof, which results in the murderer's capture.

Collins's disaster mysteries are less hard-boiled than his Heller novels. With a style reminiscent of Christie's cozy mysteries, this book does not fully convey the tension and stress that wartime Londoners constantly experienced. Some reviewers praised Collins's appropriation of Mallowan as a sleuth, while other critics thought her presence at crime scenes was unrealistic and doubted that she would have contributed directly to solving such horrific crimes.

Elizabeth D. Schafer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOLAN SERIES: *Blood Money*, 1973; *Bait Money*, 1973; *Hard Cash*, 1981; *Fly Paper*, 1981; *Hush Money*, 1981; *Scratch Fever*, 1982; *Spree*, 1987; *Mourn the Living*, 1999

QUARRY SERIES: *The Dealer*, 1976; *The Broker*, 1976; *The Broker's Wife*, 1976; *The Slasher*, 1977; *Primary Target*, 1987; *The Last Quarry*, 2006

MALLORY SERIES: *The Baby Blue Rip-Off*, 1983; *No Cure for Death*, 1983; *Kill Your Darlings*, 1984; *A Shroud for Aquarius*, 1985; *Nice Weekend for a Murderer*, 1986

NATHAN HELLER SERIES: *True Detective*, 1983; *True Crime*, 1984; *The Million-Dollar Wound*, 1986; *Neon Mirage*, 1988; *Stolen Away*, 1991; *Dying in the Postwar World*, 1991; *Carnal Hours*, 1994; *Blood and Thunder*, 1995; *Damned in Paradise*, 1996; *Flying Blind*, 1998; *Majic Man*, 1999; *Kisses of Death*, 2001; *Angel in Black*, 2001; *Chicago Confidential*, 2002

ELIOT NESS SERIES: *The Dark City*, 1987; *Butcher's Dozen*, 1988; *Bullet Proof*, 1989; *Murder by the Numbers*, 1993

DISASTERS SERIES: *The Titanic Murders*, 1999; *The Hindenburg Murders*, 2000; *The Pearl Harbor Murders*, 2001; *The Lusitania Murders*, 2002; *The London Blitz Murders*, 2004; *The War of the Worlds Murder*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Midnight Haul*, 1986; *Ms. Tree*, 1988 (illustrated by Terry Beatty); *Road to Perdition*, 1998 (illustrated by Richard Piers Rayner); *Road to Purgatory*, 2004; *Road to Paradise*, 2005; *Antiques Roadkill*, 2006 (as Allan); *Black Hats*, 2007 (as Culhane); *A Killing in Comics*, 2007; *Antiques Maul*, 2007 (as Allan)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Mommy*, 1997; *Mommy's Day*, 1998; *Regeneration*, 1999 (with Barbara Collins); *Bombshell*, 2004 (with Collins)

SHORT FICTION: *Blue Christmas, and Other Holiday Homicides*, 2001; *Murder—His and Hers*, 2001 (with Barbara Collins)

PLAY: *Eliot Ness: An Untouchable Life*, pr. 2005

SCREENPLAYS: *Mommy*, 1995; *Mommy's Day*, 1997; *Mike Hammer's Mickey Spillane*, 1999

NONFICTION: *Jim Thompson: The Killers Inside Him*, 1983 (with Ed Gorman); *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer*, 1984 (with James L. Traylor); *The Best of Crime and Detective TV*, 1988 (with John Javna); *The Mystery Scene Movie Guide: A Personal Filmography of Modern Crime Pictures*, 1998; *The History of Mystery*, 2001

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Breen, Jon. "Murdering History: How the Past Became Fair Game for Detective Stories." *The Weekly Standard*, January 3, 2005, pp. 31-34. Discusses Collins's historical mysteries, evaluating the Disasters series books and noting merits and flaws. Contemplates standards for creating historical mysteries and writers' obligations to history and readers.

Crouch, Bill, Jr., ed. *Dick Tracy: America's Most Famous Detective*. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1987. Chapter profiles Collins and his contributions to *Dick Tracy*, providing biographical details that show how that comic detective influenced Collins's historical detective writing.

Hoffman, Carl. "Return to the Primal Noir: Two Modern Authors on the Black Dahlia." *Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 3 (September, 2003): 385-394. Compares Collins's *Angel in Black* with James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia*, noting strengths and weaknesses in their appropriation of that notorious crime to construct mysteries.

Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller, eds. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. In this work, John Lutz discusses literary elements of *True Detective*. Includes Collins's essays examining books by James M. Cain, Richard Stark, Jim Thompson, William March, and several other authors.

Randisi, Robert J. Interview of Max Allan Collins. *The Armchair Detective* 11, no. 3 (July, 1978): 300-304. Collins describes his writing techniques for his Mallory mysteries and early adventure series and how detective writers influenced his style.

MICHAEL COLLINS

Dennis Lynds

Born: St. Louis, Missouri; January 15, 1924

Died: San Francisco, California; August 19, 2005

Also wrote as William Arden; Nick Carter; John Crowe; Carl Dekker; John Douglas; Maxwell Grant; Mark Sadler

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Shadow, 1964-1967

Dan Fortune, 1967-1995

Kane Jackson, 1968-1973

Paul Shaw, 1970-1986

Buena Costa County, 1972-1979

Nick Carter, 1974-1976

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DAN FORTUNE is a one-armed private investigator of Polish ancestry who resides in the Chelsea district of New York City and plies his investigative trade primarily among the district's lowly inhabitants. Intelligent and introspective, he is a philosopher of the slums who intuits solutions and relates to human weaknesses. He is concerned not only with the solutions to crimes but also with the values that guide and measure a person's life. Later in the series, he moves to Santa Barbara, California.

CONTRIBUTION

Michael Collins is the pseudonym under which Dennis Lynds wrote a hard-boiled detective series and juvenile mysteries, among other works. Lynds used various other pen names to write many other mysteries and novels. The novels of the Dan Fortune series are probably Collins's most original works. The narrator-protagonist of these novels is often compared to the hard-boiled detectives of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald. However, although Dan Fortune is a maverick, he lacks the violent, brutal approach to his work characteristic of the hard-boiled detective. Essentially nonaggressive, even passive at times, he is marked by his compassion and

vulnerability. Fortune is a more rounded and credible character than most detectives in this genre.

Strongly competing with the protagonist for primary importance in the early Fortune novels is the setting, the Chelsea district on New York's East Side. Collins gave the reader a realistic view of this area, its residents, and the conditions there, which contribute to the many crimes. The result is a sociological study of and commentary on the living conditions that shape the characters, who engage in violence and commit crimes. So pervasive is the sociological emphasis that critics have termed his later novels sociodramas. Collins moved Fortune from Chelsea to Santa Barbara in his fourteenth novel, but his protagonist's character remained the same, and the California landscape played an important part in the later novels.

Although teeming with characters, the Fortune series novels contain few stereotypes. Collins created individual portraits that are often extremely complex. The plots are also more complicated than in more orthodox detective fiction and are largely free of coincidences and contrivances. In keeping with the realistic characters, setting, and plots, the novels focus on the violence and brutality that stem in large part from the characters' backgrounds, which Collins described in detail. Employing a gradual buildup, Collins increased the intensity of action until the story reached a cathartic climax. Told in a lucid style, the highly original plots hold interest without destroying credibility.

A member of various writers' guilds, Collins served as president of the Private Eye Writers of America in 1985. Among the awards he received are the Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best first mystery novel, *Act of Fear* (1967); the Mystery Writers of America's Special Award for the short story "Success of a Mission" (1968); a special commendation from the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriminalliteratur for his total contribution to mystery fiction (1981); a nomination from the Private Eye Writers of America for best short story (1984); and guest of honor at the eighth Festival du Roman et du Film Policiers, Reims, France (1986).

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Collins was born Dennis Lynds in St. Louis, Missouri, on January 15, 1924. His parents were Archibald John Douglas Lynds, a revolutionary politician who had become an actor, and Gertrude (Hyem) Lynds. The family moved to New York, where Collins attended Brooklyn Technical High School and Cooper Union. He then enrolled in Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College at College Station in 1943. From 1943 to 1946, he was in the United States Army Infantry, serving in the European theater of operations. He was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and three battle stars. Following his military service, he returned to the state of New York for the rest of his education, receiving his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Hofstra University in 1949 and his master's degree in journalism from Syracuse University in 1951.

Collins was married three times: to Doris Flood, 1949-1956; Sheila McErlean, 1961-1985; and Gayle Hallenbeck Stone, 1986. With McErlean, he had two daughters, Katherine and Deirdre. Collins worked at many jobs; he was an actor, farmworker, chemist, executive, and teacher. His primary nonliterary employment, however, was as editor of various chemistry trade journals. Although he claimed that he quit his editorial job and became a full-time writer in 1960, he occasionally returned to editing scientific journals. Collins had a highly productive career in various literary genres. He gained major recognition as a writer of detective fiction with such successful novels as *Act of Fear*, which introduced the character Dan Fortune. *A Dark Power* (1968), which he wrote as William Arden, brought forth the series character Kane Jackson and utilized Collins's interest in business and industry, but the novels about industrial espionage were not commercially successful.

Having lived most of his early life in New York, Collins moved to California. There he found what appeared to be an ideal location in which to work. The direct result was his Buena Costa County mysteries, written as John Crowe. Collins did not, however, desert his New York background. Dan Fortune, as well as Paul Shaw in the mysteries written as Mark Sadler, continued to work out of New York headquarters, although Fortune later moved to Santa Barbara, California, where the last of the series novels take place.

Collins died in August of 2005 at the age of eighty-one. He had been ill for some time and died in San Francisco while en route to visit his hospitalized daughter.

ANALYSIS

Dennis Lynds once said of "Michael Collins" that he

is more than a pen name; he is my alter ego—part of me that isn't the same man who writes my other books. I live far from New York now, but Collins will never leave that complex city-world where everything changes and yet never changes. When I decided to write about Dan Fortune, his city and his people, I knew I needed Michael Collins—the perpetual New Yorker no matter where he is.

Michael Collins and his creation, Dan Fortune, are associated with the Chelsea district on the East Side of New York City. Collins presents a microcosm heavily burdened with crime and poverty. The cast of characters in each novel is large and complex, with virtually all characters playing significant roles. People of numerous nationalities mingle, and multiple ethnic groups struggle to form a cohesive society. Highly varied occupations must fit into the human puzzle: police, priests, prostitutes, smugglers, merchants, racketeers, gangsters, show girls, addicts, gamblers, professional people, and crime lords. Collins presents the communality of the members of Chelsea society as being greater than their differences; the people of Chelsea share ambitions, needs, fears, and weaknesses.

Along with a few continuing characters, each of the Dan Fortune mysteries offers its own memorable cast. For example, in *Freak* (1983), much of the action centers on a four-member band of criminals with extensive records. Jasper "J. J." Murdoch, the leader of the gang, had been mauled and castrated by a bear when young and therefore cannot have sexual relations with women. This caused him to develop a perverted anti-social nature and turn to smashing things and committing brutal killings. Second in command is a large black man with the well-earned name of Dog; the remaining two members of the group are the American Indian Charley and Flaco Sanchez.

As psychological studies, the Fortune novels explore questions pertaining to the evil and violent actions of people. Because few of the characters are stereotyped, virtually all have some saving graces; despite social and economic differences, most characters also have a dark side and the potential for violence and brutality. Collins rips the facades off normal citizens to reveal the violence hidden beneath and the propensity to commit crime. His typical characters wrestle with their fates: The weakest succumb to evil and crime, and the strongest fight against it, yet destiny can destroy any of them. The revelation of true character comes at a moment of crisis; the inner person builds up over an extended period of time and finally explodes into overt action. Although the result is frequently brutal and violent, Collins still saw himself as an optimist; as he once explained, "I write about the darkness in man because I believe it doesn't have to be dark, and that makes me an optimist."

Although Collins populates his novels primarily with the criminal element, he gives the works needed contrast and balance by introducing various socially acceptable characters. His ability to weave the divergent elements into a literary whole may well be his greatest strength as a novelist. Skillful handling of interrelationships among the characters is demonstrated in *Blue Death* (1975), in which Franklin Weaver of International Metals and Refining, an executive, is driven by his business concerns to become involved in four deaths. In this mystery, the plot moves far below the corporate level to include such people as a belly dancer and her husband, as well as other executives and scientists. The settings also shift—from cheap hotels and lowly bars to luxurious office suites and penthouses.

As a protagonist in detective fiction, Dan Fortune is both conventional and unconventional. He must serve as a master investigator who gathers, retains, and fits together the often seemingly disparate pieces relating to a crime. Average in size and appearance and dressed in an old blue duffle coat and a black beret, Fortune patrols the Chelsea district, where he has his office-apartment in a loft. His one distinctive physical feature is his missing left arm. Because of this handicap, dating back to his boyhood, and because he seldom car-

ries his old "cannon," Fortune poses little physical threat to his opponents. However, he has learned to compensate, to use what abilities he does possess. His limited fighting skills consist of cunning, speed, good legs (he is not ashamed to run if conditions favor it), and a quick wit. He will act when necessary; he simply does not seek out or relish violence. The lost arm actually works to his advantage in some ways; for example, it humanizes him in the eyes of others. Also, while the loss tends to alienate him, it drives him to assert his selfhood. Collins indirectly, but effectively, makes the reader aware that the world is filled with disabled people and that virtually all are worse off than Fortune, especially the motley population of Chelsea.

Fortune's inner strength sets him apart from his fellow private investigators. Among his many ennobling traits is his great compassion for others—criminals as well as their victims—especially the downtrodden. As a very sensitive person, even "something of a sentimentalist," he has to guard against becoming too emotionally involved with his clients. Also, as the pseudophilosopher of the slums, he has to guard against becoming too "preachy"; he often makes pithy comments on various aspects of life.

Essentially a passive man, Fortune seems to be sought out by crime. *Minnesota Strip* (1987) offers a typical start to one of his cases. A young woman, seeking his aid in finding her boyfriend and a young Eurasian woman, explains how she chose him from the telephone book: "Your name sounded like good luck: Dan Fortune. Your address sounded cheap. I didn't know about the arm." He accepts the mission and, because of his compassion, charges a much lower rate than usual. Like this case, which becomes a study of prostitution, drug trafficking, white slavery, arms smuggling, and terrorism and involves at least ten violent deaths, all of Fortune's cases tend to burgeon. Despite his reluctance, he is drawn into complicated patterns of crime and violence. In attempting to solve his cases, Fortune does not try to manipulate lives—only to understand them as well as his own. He has a driving need to gain answers to basic human questions and dilemmas, and the role of private investigator gives him the license to inquire. His findings are often presented to his readers in the form of a miniature lecture or sermon.

Fortune has great fluidity of movement among the various social and economic classes—a decided advantage for a private investigator. He has good relationships with the police, especially with Captains Gazzo and Pearce in New York and Sergeant Gus Chavalas in Santa Barbara, and even has a long-lasting, if somewhat ambiguous, relationship with Andy Pappas, a crime lord. His strongest ties, however, are to the poor; he recognizes their shared characteristics as well as their individual needs. A lonely figure, he rides (more often walks) like a knight through the mire and muck of the Chelsea district. He is essentially without armor, made vulnerable by his passion and sacrifice for truth. He not only “gets dirty” in his investigation of the slime found in Chelsea, but also is shot, beaten, drugged, held prisoner, bombarded by insults, and injured in various other ways. Also, there are few women waiting to comfort him; he has only occasional sexual relationships, frequently with women as alienated as he. Nevertheless, he is always determined to fulfill his mission and to complete his quest, even at the risk of his own life.

Throughout his many exploits, the character of Fortune undergoes few changes. Middle-aged when he first appears in *Act of Fear*, he ages very little in the following novels. He does increase his daily fee and expenses, but he is sometimes too modest to insist on them. His personal relationships undergo some modification; for example, his friend on the police force, Captain Gazzo, is gunned down on the East Side in *The Nightrunners* (1978) and replaced by Captain Pearce at Homicide Central, and his bartender-friend, Joe Harris, ceases to appear in the works. Fortune also loses his girlfriend, Marty Adair, to the West Coast and marriage. She is replaced by Kay Michaels, who runs a model agency. Eventually, Fortune moves to a virtually secluded life bearing strong resemblance to that of many other detectives.

Although Collins chooses to place primary emphasis on characterization, he does not shortchange the reader on action. His plots are highly original, while still retaining much of the formula of detective novels. Although complex, his plots are logical and essentially free of melodrama. The motivating act is often seemingly insignificant: A man loses his lease or some-

one's friend breaks an engagement. The complication that follows is the strength of Collins's narrative. Early in the narrative, Collins mixes action scenes with scenes of quiet philosophical discussions. Each work eventually shifts into sudden and violent action. This violent action is usually not committed by Fortune, as he seldom moves to such a state; however, he is frequently its target. The building complication rapidly exposes the weaknesses and obsessions of characters, leading to a multitude of crimes, including a generous number of murders. The story line moves in various directions, acquires complementing subplots, and depends heavily on complex interrelationships among characters and events. The result is to draw Fortune deeper into the web of violence and death.

A typical Collins plot is found in *Minnesota Strip*, in which Fortune is hired by a young woman to find a missing Eurasian woman and the client's boyfriend. Early in the novel it is discovered that the Eurasian woman has been brutally murdered and that the boyfriend has become a self-appointed vigilante seeking freedom and justice in the world. Fortune's investigation takes him from the chaos of the inner city to the cleanliness and orderliness of the suburbs, from the Minnesota Strip to the California Gold Coast, and from brothels to executive suites. He encounters such characters as an Irish Italian who would like to be an American Indian because the Indians have tribes to which they belong and a supposedly benevolent man who is helping Vietnamese escape to the United States but is concerned only with his own profits. There are hangings, stabbings, shootings, and mutilations.

Collins's novels usually move to a last climactic scene, marked by a bloodbath, in which the struggle for order and justice culminates. When the elements finally fall into place, Fortune experiences a revelation. All that remains is the explanation of the solution. This conclusion is more realistic than in most detective works. However, if a reader demands the usual fare of a clear and decisive judgment and action—a resolution that sorts out all elements and categorizes them, with the detective punishing and rewarding justly—then Collins's works may not satisfy. His world is not this simple; the characters and actions are consistently multifaceted and often intentionally am-

biguous, and the usual resolution leaves the reader knowing that greed is not abated, drugs are not eliminated, and, given the right set of circumstances, violence leading to murder is a future certainty.

Although Collins's plots are engrossing and entertaining and often deal with significant topics in a realistic manner, the primary value of his novels is found in the highly individualized characters he creates, the sociological studies he offers, and, to a more limited degree, the philosophical statements he makes.

ACT OF FEAR

Act of Fear well illustrates the typical setting, plot, characters, and investigatory methods found in the Dan Fortune novels. Early in the narrative, Fortune explains, "It's not the facts, the simple events, that tell a story. It's the background, the people and what they have inside, the scenery a man lives with, the shadows all around him he never knew were there." Chelsea furnishes this background as well as the cast of characters and the motivation for the story. Although the residents of Chelsea are destined to live out their lives there, most of them do not have an American Dream but, instead, live with their personal nightmares, which are often bred by poverty.

In *Act of Fear*, three seemingly separate crimes are committed: A young, inexperienced police officer is mugged in broad daylight, and all of his possessions are taken, including his summons book; a teenage boy hires Fortune to find his friend, who has been missing for four days; and a chorus girl has been killed. Armed with few clues—primarily a losing stub on a slow horse at Monmouth Park and a charm in the shape of a red Ferrari—Fortune sets out to find the boy and, in the process, to discover the relationship among the three crimes. His investigation takes him from Chelsea to Florida, gets him pursued and beaten by criminals, brings him up against a code of silence, exposes him to several deaths, and occasionally leads him to Marty Adair for the solace her love can give. Further, the investigation brings Fortune in contact with a young female addict living in a tenement, an alcoholic who instructs mechanics, a crime lord and his henchmen, a secret lover turned killer, a woman who works at a travel bureau, and an old garage man. He also encounters a young boy who is willing to sacrifice his best

friend because a girl rejected him, parents who are more worried about themselves than their children, and another young boy who shows promise of escaping the slums. As the detective moves among these people, he lectures his audience on such matters as family obligations, love and marriage, operations of the underworld, the American Dream, the rules of slum life, misplaced loyalty, and the need for self-survival. These many and varied activities are all in a book's work for Dan Fortune, a slightly soiled knight who never quits. Even when he discovers the solution to the crimes, however, neither he nor his audience is fully satisfied with the resolution. Victory for him is always qualified.

RED ROSA

In *Red Rosa* (1988), Lenny Gruenfeld hires Fortune to investigate the attempted murder of her grandmother, Rosa "Red Rosa" Gruenfeld, a leftist political activist with connections to the Communist Party. The murder takes place in Chelsea, but the action leads Fortune to North Paterson, New Jersey, where the local police resent Fortune's investigation. Before the novel ends, the Black Liberation Front, the Communist Party, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Mafia with their ties to local politicians are all involved. As in other Fortune novels, Collins provides histories for many of his characters, especially for Rosa, who was married to Flaco and faked his death with the help of local police and who reappears later in the novel. Despite warnings (from the police and in the form of a brick through a window) and attacks, Fortune persists, even while further attempts are made on Rosa's life. Typically, one crime leads to another, in this case the murder of Johnny Agnew, but although Fortune discovers that Rosa's shooting was accidental and that later attempts on her life were made by her son, Agnew's killer is not caught until the end of the novel. In a Collins twist, it is the Mafia, not the police, who "get" the villain, F. X. Keene—they shoot him. In the course of the novel, Fortune unravels motives, discovers the collusion between Keene and the North Paterson police to frame a black militant for a murder, and decides, with the help of the visiting Kay Michaels, that he is ready for California, his destination at the end of the book.

THE IRISHMAN'S HORSE

In *The Irishman's Horse* (1991), Fortune, now living in California, takes on the job of finding Paul Valenzuela, an idealistic diplomat serving in Guatemala; his wife has not heard from him. It is a typical Fortune assignment, one that quickly mushrooms into murder and political corruption. As he investigates the murder of a drug dealer, he is aided by Sergeant Chavalas and is harassed by government agents, who encourage Valenzuela's wife to trust the government, although several government officials are working with Guatemalan drug lords to promote American policy. The Irishman of the title is Tyrone Earl, a drug dealer who helps Fortune escape from danger and later takes him and Paul to Guatemala, where he tells them about the complicity between drug dealers and the government. After Earl gives Paul the information, Paul and Fortune return to California, where Paul and his wife are killed in a car explosion before he can reveal the incriminating evidence to the appropriate government agents. Meanwhile, Earl and his minions are attacked and killed by government troops. The person "behind the scenes" is Martin Dobson, a former elected official and successful entrepreneur who has power without any accountability. Educated at public expense, Dobson has ironically become an Ayn Rand follower and a staunch conservative. In the novel, Collins provides his readers with a sympathetic treatment of the poor and the repressed, both in Guatemala and in the United States. Reading the histories, including Fortune's own, provides readers with the motivations and values of the poor. In this novel, however, the crimes committed by the political "haves" do pay, and the poor are punished and unsuccessful. It is one of the bleakest of the Fortune novels.

CASSANDRA IN RED

Cassandra in Red (1992) begins with the murder of Cassandra "Iron Cassie" Reilly, a homeless political activist in Santa Barbara. The novel deals not only with the plight of the homeless but also with American xenophobia. The police who harass the homeless and the wealthy who want to take the country back from "the bums and foreigners and liberals" create a climate that leads to violence. Fortune is hired by Al Benton, the "Marx of city hall" and the "guru of the gutter."

Initially Jerry Kohner, Cassie's boyfriend, is the suspect, but he kills himself and his family members. As Fortune probes further, he begins to suspect the Latino gangs, the Westside Rockers and the Hondos, but they are also innocent. Collins supplies his readers with individual histories that explain the motivations of Jerry and the Latino kids. In the course of the investigation Fortune is attacked and almost killed—he is saved once by Kay (one of her few appearances in the novel) and once by Super Barrio, a ludicrously costumed figure who is a kind of Latino Superman. Fortune's attention is then devoted to the Seven, a group of students at the Western Service Institute who fancy themselves patriotic militarists devoted to maintaining the purity of the United States. Fortune's investigation leads to the deaths of the school principal and one of the students. This novel, one of Collins's most political, explains how the power and the fear of losing that power cause the most extreme of the "comfortable voting majority" to resort to violence. At the end of the novel Fortune does not see "any bombs bursting, any rockets glaring"; he just sees "stars and the blackness." The novel is an indictment of the far-right.

THE CADILLAC COWBOY

The protagonist of *The Cadillac Cowboy* (1995), also set in California, is Langford "Ford" Morgan, a forty-six-year-old former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency in retirement in Costa Rica. His former wife calls Ford back to California to help her son Johnny prove that he is innocent of the charge of attempted murder of his father, Ralph Baliol. Ford soon finds himself involved in murder and corporate shenanigans. Part of the reason for Ford's return is his notion of "unfinished business," and he resumes sexual relations with his former wife for a while and ignores Lareina Alvaro, a wealthy and beautiful Costa Rican actress. He then becomes enamored of Barbara Allison Schoenhausen, who finally tells him that his "love" is just an "illusion." At the end of the novel Barbara has teamed with Roy Shepherd, the "Cadillac cowboy," a hired killer for Ralph Baliol. Because Baliol had killed his business partner Fletcher Comrie, Ford, who is a witness to Barbara killing Baliol, walks away from the murder, allowing Barbara and Shepherd to get away. Later he sees Lareina again, but their

relationship is over. She decides to return to Costa Rica, and he decides to buy the Northern California company Baliol and Comrie had owned and robbed. At the end of the novel Ford realizes there is no security and that his life story is unimportant. Justice will be served not by him but by the authorities.

Max L. Autrey

Updated by Thomas L. Erskine

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE SHADOW SERIES (AS GRANT): *The Shadow Strikes*, 1964; *Cry Shadow*, 1965; *Shadow Beware*, 1965; *The Shadow's Revenge*, 1965; *Mark of the Shadow*, 1966; *Shadow—Go Mad!*, 1966; *The Night of the Shadow*, 1966; *The Shadow—Destination: Moon*, 1967

DAN FORTUNE SERIES: *Act of Fear*, 1967; *The Brass Rainbow*, 1969; *Night of the Toads*, 1970; *Walk a Black Wind*, 1971; *Shadow of a Tiger*, 1972; *The Silent Scream*, 1973; *Blue Death*, 1975; *The Blood-Red Dream*, 1976; *The Nightrunners*, 1978; *The Slasher*, 1980; *Freak*, 1983; *Minnesota Strip*, 1987; *Red Rosa*, 1988; *Castrato*, 1989; *Chasing Eights*, 1990; *The Irishman's Horse*, 1991; *Cassandra in Red*, 1992; *Resurrection*, 1992; *The Cadillac Cowboy*, 1995

KANE JACKSON SERIES (AS ARDEN): *A Dark Power*, 1968; *Deal in Violence*, 1969; *The Goliath Scheme*, 1971; *Die to a Distant Drum*, 1972 (also known as *Murder Underground*); *Deadly Legacy*, 1973

PAUL SHAW SERIES (AS SADLER): *The Falling Man*, 1970; *Here to Die*, 1971; *Mirror Image*, 1972; *Circle of Fire*, 1973; *Touch of Death*, 1981; *Deadly Innocents*, 1986

BUENA COSTA COUNTY SERIES (AS CROWE): *A Touch of Darkness*, 1972; *Another Way to Die*, 1972; *Bloodwater*, 1974; *Crooked Shadows*, 1975; *When They Kill Your Wife*, 1977; *Close to Death*, 1979

NICK CARTER KILLMASTER SERIES (AS CARTER): *The N3 Conspiracy*, 1974; *The Green Wolf Connection*, 1976; *Triple Cross*, 1976

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Combat Soldier*, 1962 (as Lynds); *Uptown, Downtown*, 1963 (as Lynds); *Lukan War*, 1969; *The Planets of Death*, 1970; *Woman in Marble*, 1973 (as Dekker); *Charlie Chan Returns*, 1974 (as

Lynds); *Charlie Chan in the Temple of the Golden Horde*, 2003; *S.W.A.T.—Crossfire*, 1975 (as Lynds)

SHORT FICTION: *Why Girls Ride Sidesaddle*, 1980 (as Lynds); *Crime, Punishment, and Resurrection: Dan Fortune Thrillers*, 1992; *Talking to the World*, 1995 (as Lynds); *Spies and Thieves, Cops and Killers, Etc.*, 2002; *Fortune's World: Stories*, 2000; *Slot-Machine Kelly: The Collected Private Eye Cases of the "One-Armed Bandit,"* 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS ARDEN): *The Mystery of the Moaning Cave*, 1968; *The Mystery of the Laughing Shadow*, 1969; *The Secret of the Crooked Cat*, 1970; *The Mystery of the Shrinking House*, 1972; *The Mystery of the Blue Condor*, 1973; *The Secret of Phantom Lake*, 1973; *The Mystery of the Dead Man's Riddle*, 1974; *The Mystery of the Dancing Devil*, 1976; *The Mystery of the Headless Horse*, 1977; *The Mystery of the Deadly Double*, 1978; *The Secret of Shark Reef*, 1979; *The Mystery of the Purple Pirate*, 1982; *The Mystery of the Smashing Glass*, 1984; *The Secret of Wrecker's Rock*, 1986; *Hot Wheels*, 1989

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Baker, Robert A., and Michael T. Nietzel. *Private Eyes: One Hundred and One Knights*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. Contains a brief biography of Collins, as well as a synopsis with an analysis of both the Dan Fortune novels through *Freak* and the Mark Sadler novels through *Touch of Death*. The authors see Fortune as the sociological private eye who succeeded the "naturalistic Spade," the "romantic Marlowe," and the "psychological Archer."

Carpenter, Richard. "Michael Collins." In *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, edited by John M. Reilly. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's

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choice of the name "Michael Collins" was made because of his interest in Michael Collins, the Irish revolutionist, and praises Collins for his melding of a political point of view with a solid plot.

Geherin, David. *The American Private Eye: The Image in Fiction*. New York: Ungar, 1985. In "The Compassionate Eye," Geherin discusses the first eleven Dan Fortune novels, focusing on the symbolic use of Fortune's missing arm, the novel as sociodrama, the quest for justice, the New York setting of the novels, and the lack of humor and sex in the novels.

WILKIE COLLINS

Born: London, England; January 8, 1824

Died: London, England; September 23, 1889

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

CONTRIBUTION

Wilkie Collins is the father of modern English mystery fiction. In his own time, his tales were called "sensation stories." He was the first to broaden the genre to the proportions of a novel and to choose familiar settings with ordinary people who behave rationally, and he was also the first to insist on scientific exactitude and rigorously accurate detail.

Collins was one of the most popular authors of his day, reaching a wider circle of readers in England and the United States than any author except Charles Dickens. Many of his books were translated for a highly appreciative French public. Although Collins claimed that he wrote for the common man, in his heyday critics classed him with Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, and Charlotte Brontë.

Now only two of Collins's twenty-two novels are considered masterpieces: *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). They have been highly praised by such discriminating critics as Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, T. S. Eliot, and Dorothy L. Sayers (who felt so much indebted to Collins that she embarked on a biography of him, a project that E. R.

Gregory completed after Sayers's death). It is safe to say that without Wilkie Collins, the modern English detective story could never have achieved its present level.

BIOGRAPHY

William Wilkie Collins was the son of a successful painter, William Collins, and a cultured mother. With his parents and his younger brother, Charles, he spent his twelfth and thirteenth years on the Continent, mostly in Italy, looking at buildings and paintings with his father and becoming proficient in French and Italian.

Back in England, Collins was sent to a private school, where the prefect made him tell stories at night under threat of a cat-o'-nine-tails. He left school at seventeen and preferred being apprenticed to a firm of tea importers to continuing his education at Oxford or Cambridge. At work, he wrote stories instead of bills of lading and requested frequent long holidays, which he usually spent in France enjoying himself and running up debts. In 1846, he left the tea business and entered Lincoln's Inn, becoming a barrister in due time. He never practiced law, but this training enabled him to write knowledgeably about legal matters.

After the death of his father, Collins lived with his mother, who often entertained members of the Pre-Raphaelite group of artists and writers; these became his chief friends.



Wilkie Collins. (Library of Congress)

When Collins was twenty-seven, he met Charles Dickens. Their subsequent friendship led to Collins's involvement in amateur theatricals and to his writing of plays, as well as to the publication of many of his stories in *All the Year Round* and *Household Words* (whose staff he joined in 1856).

At the age of thirty-five, Collins fell in love with Caroline Graves, who became the model for *The Woman in White*. They lived more or less openly together until Caroline married someone else. Collins then formed a liaison with Martha Rudd, with whom he had three children. Caroline returned to Collins's side, however, for the last twenty years of his life.

During these last years, Collins was plagued by ill health. He frequently used opium, which was at that time a household remedy. Because of his illness—or because of the opium—the quality of his writing de-

clined. He did not, however, seem aware of this fact, and his readers continued to be enthusiastic.

ANALYSIS

Wilkie Collins was responsible for turning the early nineteenth century "sensation story" of mystery and imagination into the detective novel. In his own sensation story, *Basil: A Story of Modern Life* (1852), it is possible to see the characteristics that were to mark his famous mystery novels; in fact, everything is there except the detective. There is the righteous young man who falls deeply in love with a beautiful girl who proves to be utterly unworthy of him—not because she is a tradesman's daughter (and this was a surprising innovation) but because of her sexual immorality; there is the young man's adoring sister, his stern father, and the memory of a devoted mother; there is an inscrutable, irredeemable villain, this one named Mannion, a man who has vowed vengeance against the righteous young man because the latter's father had condemned his father to be hanged.

There are scenes of life in mansions and in cottages and vivid descriptions of nature. Here, the vivid pictures are of the coast of Cornwall and surely show the influence of Collins's father, the painter. There is a detailed manuscript, like the later diaries, and lengthy letters from various characters. Finally, there is the happy ending with the villain dead, the mystery exposed, and all the good people living happily ever after. All these elements, with Collins's marvelous skill at narrative construction, were carried over into the detective novels, where the amateur detective was added.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE

The detective in *The Woman in White* is Walter Hartright. His name is significant: His heart is in the right place. He meets the beautiful Laura, for whom he would soon be glad to sacrifice his life, when he comes to Limmeridge House, the Fairlie estate, as drawing master for her and her half sister, Marian Halcombe. The sensible sister, who worships Laura, soon surmises that Laura returns his love. Because her sister is about to be married to Sir Percival Glyde, in accordance with her dead father's last wishes, Marian persuades Hartright to depart.

Before he leaves, Hartright tells Marian about an

encounter with a woman in white that had taken place on the eve of his departure from London. While walking alone across the heath after midnight, he had met a young woman, dressed entirely in white, who asked for his help in getting to London. The young lady supplied no information about herself except that she wished to see Limmeridge House again and that she was devoted to the memory of Mrs. Fairlie. After reaching the outskirts of London and gallantly putting her into a cab, Hartright was startled by the arrival of a chaise containing two men. One of them told a police officer that they were trying to catch a woman in white who had escaped from his asylum.

Marian is intrigued by Hartright's story and discovers in one of her mother's old letters a reference to a child named Anne Catherick who had promised to dress thenceforth only in white and who strongly resembled Laura.

When Laura receives an anonymous letter warning her against her future husband, Hartright begins his detective work. By chance, he finds Anne Catherick, whom he at once recognizes as the woman in white whom he had met at night on the heath. Now she is wiping Mrs. Fairlie's gravestone with her handkerchief. He makes her admit that she had written the warning letter, and he deduces that it was Sir Percival who had caused her to be shut up in the asylum. The next day, the detective leaves Limmeridge House, presumably forever.

After about ten months, Walter Hartright, having narrowly escaped death three times, returns to England and learns of Lady Glyde's death. The fact that the three narrow escapes are mentioned in as many lines shows how much Collins resisted including violence in his books. A good third of the book, then, is given over to events that take place during the detective's absence.

Hartright decides to seek comfort at the tomb of Laura—where, to his utter surprise, he encounters Marian Halcombe and Laura herself. He arranges for the two women to live with him as his sisters in a humble London lodging while he sets about proving that it is Anne Catherick, not Laura, who is buried beside Mrs. Fairlie. This is where his detective work really begins—about two-thirds of the way through the

book. From this point onward, his efforts are directed toward restoring Laura to her inheritance. Extensive and clever investigations bring about a happy ending. Clearly, the emphasis is still on mystery rather than detection.

THE MOONSTONE

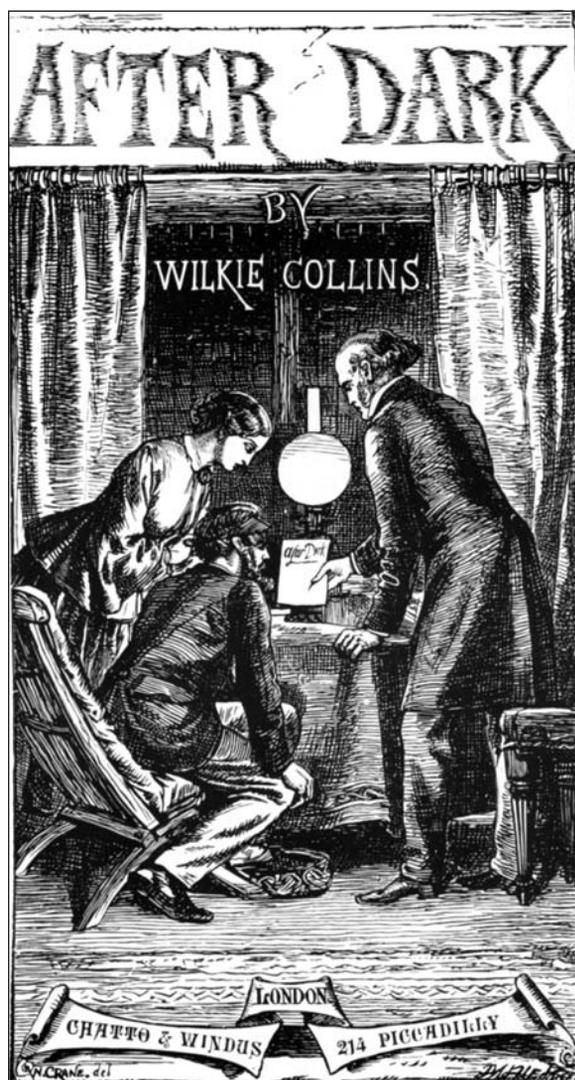
In *The Moonstone*, the amateur detective Franklin Blake, like Hartright, arrives on the scene at the beginning of the book and falls in love with the heroine, in this case Rachel Verinder. He brings with him a fateful gem, which disappears a few nights later, after a dinner party celebrating Rachel's birthday. A superintendent of police and a Sergeant Cuff, neither of whom would be out of place in a twentieth century detective tale, make no progress in their investigations and are inexplicably dismissed. Rachel rebuffs Blake, and he goes abroad to try to forget her. Eventually, the death of his father brings him back to England, where Rachel steadfastly declines to see him. He discovers that she has been mortally offended by the assistance that he provided to the police after the theft. He cannot understand this and resolves to unravel the mystery himself.

Only the last third of the book is reserved for his detective efforts. Finally he is able to prove to Rachel that he did indeed, as she believed, steal the moonstone, but that he was at the time in a trance induced by an overdose of laudanum. He is also able to prove who had actually taken the jewel from him in his sleep. Again, love triumphs and the real criminal is punished. Once more, the amateur detective's role is relatively small, but it is crucial to the resolution of the mystery.

Collins held very definite theories on the art of storytelling. He declared that to make the reader accept the marvelous, the author must give accurate and precise descriptions from everyday life, including the most prosaic details. Only thus could he hope to fix the interest of the reader on things beyond personal experience and to excite suspense. Collins's gift of observation permitted him to describe minutely and realistically the backgrounds of his characters; his father's social position as a famous painter enabled him to write with confidence about life in big country houses, while his stint at Lincoln's Inn and his habit of collecting police reports provided him with a knowledge of life

among the less privileged sections of the London population.

In his preface to *Basil*, Collins points out that since he is writing for people of his own time and about people of his own time, he cannot expect even the slightest error to pass unnoticed. He is irrevocably committed to realism. Later, Collins assured his readers that the legal points of *The Woman in White* were checked by “a solicitor of great experience” and that the medical issues in *Heart and Science* (1883) were vouched for by “an eminent London surgeon.”



E. G. Dalziel's title page for Wilkie Collins's 1856 collection of stories, *After Dark*.

Collins reserves the right, however, to ask his readers to take some extraordinary events on faith. These are the events that will capture their imagination and induce them to continue the story. This formula, which had been advanced by Pierre Corneille in the seventeenth century in France and was adopted by Charles Dickens, worked so well that *Harper's Monthly* was restored to popularity by installments of *Armada* (1866). The first edition of *The Woman in White* sold out in one day in London, and six subsequent editions appeared within six months. It was read, says one biographer, by paperboys and bishops.

Collins's way of telling a story was unique. He usually had each important character write down his own version of the facts, sticking strictly to what he knew from personal observation or from speeches he had overheard. This system resulted in a variation on the epistolary novel, which had been popular in the eighteenth century but had not been used before in mystery stories. In *The Woman in White*, the narrators are Walter Hartright, the drawing teacher; Vincent Gilmore, a solicitor; Marian Halcombe, whose diary is reproduced; Frederick Fairlie, owner of Limmeridge House, where a large part of the action takes place; Eliza Michelson, housekeeper at Blackwater Park, where the villain, Fosco, is introduced; Hester Pinhorn, an illiterate servant of Fosco whose testimony is written for her; and a doctor who reports on the supposed Lady Glyde's death. Nearly all these people provide their testimony at great length and in the language of educated persons; there is very little differentiation of style.

In each narration the reader picks up a clue to the solution of the incredibly complicated and ingenious plot, which contains all the trappings of a modern English detective story: large country estates with lonely pavilions, altered church registers, sleeping draughts, abductions, secret messages, intercepted letters, and an insane asylum. Eventually, all the ends are neatly tied up with the help of several incredible coincidences. For example, Hartright, on a four-day business trip to Paris, happens, on his way to visit the Cathedral of Notre Dame, to see the body of Fosco exposed in the window of the morgue. The tale is so gripping, however, that the enthralled reader takes these unlikely events in stride.

Numerous critics, including Thomas Hardy, have said that Collins is good on plot but weak on characterization. On the whole, this criticism seems just, for the same types recur in novel after novel. Nevertheless, Collins was capable of creating extraordinarily vivid characters; even the servants are real people with real emotions—a departure from most Victorian literature. It is true that his personages are either angels or devils, but they are real. Fosco, for example, is a short, round foreign man, unfailingly polite, fond of his canaries and pet mice, who has cowed his wife into utter subservience, who dominates his host, who is cool and clever and absolutely unscrupulous.

In *The Moonstone* there is another unforgettable full-length portrait: that of Drusilla Clack. This is a caricature that reminds one of Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*, a novel written fifteen years earlier (1852-1853). Miss Clack is a conceited, self-righteous single woman, a dedicated worker in the Mothers'-Small-Clothes-Conversion-Society and the British-Ladies'-Servants-Sunday-Sweetheart-Supervision-Society. She is insatiably curious about the lives of others and picks up information and gossip while scattering tracts in any home to which she can gain entry.

Although opinions may vary on Collins's portrayal of character, there is unanimity in praising him as a storyteller. The public of his time was wildly enthusiastic. Installments of his stories were eagerly awaited when they appeared in serial form in a wide variety of English and North American periodicals; any magazine that carried his short stories was in great demand. Probably the best known of these short stories is "A Terribly Strange Bed," originally printed in *After Dark* (1856). It has all the suspense and horror that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe later succeeded in creating in their tales. No wonder audiences in England and across the Atlantic in 1873-1874 flocked to hear Collins read his stories.

All the acclaim that Collins received from the public may have contributed to the decline in quality of his later work. After about 1870, he seemed determined to prove that he was more than an entertainer: He began writing didactic books. *Man and Wife* (1870) deals with the injustice of the marriage laws of Scotland; *The New Magdalen* (1873) examined efforts to redeem

fallen women; *Heart and Science* treated the question of vivisection. He had always tried to prove that all forms of vice are self-destructive; he had always made sure that virtue was rewarded; he had often excited sympathy for physical disabilities, for example, with the hearing impaired in *Hide and Seek* (1854) and the visually disabled girl in *Poor Miss Finch: A Novel* (1872). His stepped-up efforts to make the world a better place, however, diminished the literary quality of his stories. The general public did not perceive this until well after the turn of the century, but the enthusiasm of critics diminished during the last twenty years of Collins's life.

Despite the weaknesses of the later novels, Collins's high place in literary history is assured by *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. J. I. M. Stewart, in his introduction to the 1966 Penguin edition of the latter, sums up thus: "No English novel shows a structure and proportions, or contrives a narrative tempo, better adapted to its end: that of lending variety and amplitude to a story the mainspring of which has to be a sustained interest in the elucidation of a single mysterious event."

Dorothy B. Aspinwall

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Basil: A Story of Modern Life*, 1852; *Hide and Seek*, 1854; *The Dead Secret*, 1857; *The Woman in White*, 1860; *No Name*, 1862; *Armadale*, 1866; *The Moonstone*, 1868; *Man and Wife*, 1870; *Poor Miss Finch: A Novel*, 1872; *The New Magdalen*, 1873; *The Law and the Lady*, 1875; *The Two Destinies: A Romance*, 1876; *My Lady's Money*, 1878; *The Haunted Hotel: A Mystery of Modern Venice*, 1879; *A Rogue's Life*, 1879; *The Fallen Leaves*, 1879; *Jezebel's Daughter*, 1880; *The Black Robe*, 1881; *Heart and Science*, 1883; *I Say No*, 1884; *The Evil Genius: A Dramatic Story*, 1886; *The Guilty River*, 1886; *The Legacy of Cain*, 1889; *Blind Love*, 1890 (completed by Walter Besant)

SHORT FICTION: *Mr. Wray's Cash-Box: Or, The Mask and the Mystery*, 1852; *After Dark*, 1856; *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, 1857 (with Charles Dickens); *The Queen of Hearts*, 1859; *The Frozen Deep*, 1866; *Miss or Mrs.? and Other Stories*,

1873; *The Frozen Deep, and Other Stories*, 1874; *Alicia Warlock: A Mystery, and Other Stories*, 1875; *The Guilty River*, 1886; *Little Novels*, 1887; *The Yellow Tiger, and Other Tales*, 1924

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Antonina: Or, The Fall of Rome*, 1850

SHORT FICTION: *The Seven Poor Travellers*, 1854; *The Wreck of the Golden Mary*, 1856

PLAYS: *The Lighthouse*, pr. 1855; *The Red Vial*, pr. 1858; *No Thoroughfare*, pr., pb. 1867 (with Charles Dickens); *The Woman in White*, pr., pb. 1871 (adaptation of his novel); *Man and Wife*, pr. 1873 (adaptation of his novel); *The New Magdalen*, pr., pb. 1873 (adaptation of his novel); *The Moonstone*, pr., pb. 1877 (adaptation of his novel)

NONFICTION: *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, R. A.*, 1848 (2 volumes); *Rambles Beyond Railways*, 1851; *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, 1999 (William Baker and William M. Clarke, editors); *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, 2005 (4 volumes; William Baker, editor)

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Pykett, Lyn, ed. *Wilkie Collins*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. An excellent place for the beginning student to start. Includes bibliographical references and an index.

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Thoms, Peter. *The Windings of the Labyrinth: Quest and Structure in the Major Novels of Wilkie Collins*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992. Delves into the function of mazelike structures in Collins's narratives and their mirroring of spiritual or intellectual labyrinths within the stories.

SUSAN CONANT

Born: Merrimack Valley, Massachusetts; May 20, 1946

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dog Lover's, 1990-
Cat Lover's, 2005-
Gourmet Girl, 2006-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HOLLY WINTER is a dog trainer and journalist in her thirties who writes for *Dog's Life* and lives with her Alaskan malamutes, Rowdy and Kimi, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She promotes humanitarian treatment of animals and encourages responsible dog ownership and obedience training. Exhibiting many of the traits she admires in dogs, Winter is a loyal friend and nurtures her relationships. A good daughter, she tolerates the interest of her widower father, Buck, in wolf hybrids and strives to honor the dog handler legacy of her deceased mother, Marissa. Crimes confront Winter as she interacts with dog owners and eccentric Cambridge residents.

FELICITY PRIDE is a middle-aged retired kindergarten teacher who is the author of the Prissy LaChatte cat mysteries but lacks experience with felines until she adopts a murdered man's pets. She lacks Winter's sincerity and naïveté. Jaded regarding her profession, Pride jealously resents rival authors whose cat mystery series sell more copies than her books and discourages novice writers whom she perceives as lacking talent. Pride lives in a luxurious house in Newton Park, Massachusetts, that she inherited from her uncle and endures her difficult mother's and neighbors' demands while trying to solve mysteries immediately affecting her.

CHLOE CARTER is a social work graduate student in her twenties who attends a Boston college near her Brighton, Massachusetts, apartment only to fulfill stipulations in her uncle's will so that she may receive his money. Unenthused by her classes and an internship at a help line, narcissistic Carter constantly re-

paints her apartment and seeks satisfying romance, stylish clothing, and delicious food, meanwhile stumbling into criminal situations. She is immature compared with Winter and Pride but shares their impulsive nature, which often results in her revealing clues and culprits.

CONTRIBUTION

Susan Conant published her first dog mystery, *A New Leash on Life*, in 1990, a year before authors Sue Henry and Mary Willis Walker published crime novels depicting female dog training sleuths and working dogs. Although some critics identify Conant as initiating the dog mystery genre, she and her writing peers had prior literary canine-related mystery inspirations, including Sherlock Holmes. In 1983 Barbara Moore wrote *The Doberman Wore Black*, which featured a veterinarian sleuth assisted by a dog. Nonetheless, Conant established herself as a leading author in that subgenre.

Scholars have generally ignored Conant's contributions to the mystery genre. Although some critics have found fault with Conant's writing style, particularly her plotting and development of mystery elements, others have praised her dialogue, depictions of settings, and characterizations, which became more complex and admirable as her writing matured. Her fan base assured Conant of consistent commercial success, and she continued to produce new dog mysteries annually. In 2005, Conant's reputation as an author who delivered satisfying stories to readers interested in dog mysteries resulted in her introducing a series for cat enthusiasts. Her success also enabled her to pursue writing mysteries with her daughter, addressing a lifestyle and cultural interests unlike those readers experienced in her animal-themed novels.

Conant has striven to introduce readers to the dog world and educate them regarding topics and issues that might otherwise be unfamiliar to them. The Dog Writers' Association of America has rewarded Conant's works with its Maxwell Award several times.

BIOGRAPHY

Susan Jane Conant was born on May 20, 1946, in the Merrimack Valley, Massachusetts, to Eugene A. Conant and Dorothy Morrison Conant. At the time of her birth, Susan's father served as president of Anderson-Wills Incorporated, a business selling automobiles in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where her mother's family lived. A resident of nearby Methuen, Massachusetts, her mother had previously worked as a secretary for Anderson-Wills. Susan's paternal grandfather had worked as a high school principal in Maine. Susan grew up in the Merrimack Valley, spending part of her childhood in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Her father trained pointers and encouraged his daughter's interest in dogs.

In 1964, Susan Conant moved to the Boston area, enrolling at Radcliffe College, where she studied anthropology and social relations. She received a bachelor's degree summa cum laude in June, 1968. Also in 1968, Conant wed Carter Conrad Umbarger, who received his doctorate in psychology from Brandeis University the following year.

Conant moved to Philadelphia, where she was employed as a kindergarten teacher for public schools during 1969. During that year and the next, she served as a group therapist for the Child Study Center of Philadelphia. Conant relocated with her husband to Newton, Massachusetts, and he established a clinical psychology practice in nearby Cambridge. They have one daughter, Jessica.

In 1973, Conant began studies focusing on human development at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. During 1974 and 1975, she served as a research assistant for the University of Houston. Conant completed a master's degree in education at Harvard in June, 1975. She then enrolled in a doctoral education program at Harvard. Her primary research studied preschool children with language disabilities.

From 1976 to 1978, Conant worked as a teaching assistant for Harvard's Graduate School of Education and as a Harvard Extension School grader. She then was a research associate at the Research Institute for Educational Problems in Cambridge during 1978. Conant received an doctorate in education from Harvard in 1978.

During the next decade, Conant pursued a career as a special education researcher. In the fall of 1986, Conant experienced chronic fevers, aches, and a fluctuating white blood cell count and suffered abnormal fatigue. Conant acquired an Alaskan malamute puppy, which stayed with her during her extended illness. Conant was frustrated when her illness persisted and doctors could not determine what was wrong. Gradually, her symptoms stopped and she recovered. Conant interviewed other people suffering chronic fatigue and wrote a nonfictional book about their experiences.

Conant had enjoyed reading Nancy Drew and other mysteries as a child. While she was sick, she enjoyed mysteries by her favorite authors, including Margery Allingham, and considered writing mysteries. While attending weekly dog training classes in 1988, Conant began writing mysteries when she envisioned a plot involving a trainer disappearing during an obedience exercise. Conant submitted her manuscript to a publisher, who presented her a contract for a dog mystery series.

In addition to novels, Conant wrote articles and reviews for dog magazines, contributing to the opinion column "Point of View" in *Pure-bred Dogs/American Kennel Gazette*. She edited *Pawprints*, the New England Dog Training Club's newsletter. Conant belongs to both the New England Dog Training Club and Charles River Dog Training Club and competes in matches to earn obedience titles with her dogs. She helped establish Alaskan Malamute Rescue of New England and became the Massachusetts coordinator of the Alaskan Malamute Protection League in 1988.

Conant has served on the board of directors of the New England chapter of the Mystery Writers of America and belongs to Sisters in Crime, the Dog Writers' Association of America, and the Cat Writers' Association.

ANALYSIS

Susan Conant's style is reminiscent of that found in popular mystery fiction featuring strong female protagonists, such as the series of Marcia Muller and Sue Grafton, which were popular during the 1980's, when Conant was first inspired to write mysteries. In her character-driven mysteries, Conant presents her sto-

ries through the first-person narrative of Holly Winter, whose perceptions of people and situations she encounters are sometimes unreliable and distorted by her emotional reactions. Winter's point of view is the narrative device in all of Conant's dog mysteries. Her voice gains maturity as she survives various attacks and seeks justice for mistreated dogs and people.

Conant's literary strength is her use of humor, particularly her characterizations of eccentric and pretentious people. Winter recognizes the flaws of her Cambridge, Massachusetts, environment, wittily commenting about Ivy League culture and the abundance of psychologists. Conant's professional background as a language educator enables her to present dialogue well.

Conant's depiction of places immerses readers in her settings. Her expertise and insights regarding dogs can be considered both a strength and a weakness. At times, the details are welcome, but sometimes they seem intrusive and overwhelming. Conant admits that she has an interest in teaching readers about proper dog ownership and care. Through her characters, she stresses themes of animal welfare and humanitarian treatment, warning readers of abuses at puppy mills and animal research laboratories.

Conant's experiences as a psychologist's wife and longtime resident of Cambridge provides authenticity while sometimes presenting information that eludes readers unfamiliar with those subjects. Usually, such incidental descriptions and revelations are not essential for resolution of Conant's mysteries and do not serve as red herrings. Conant's mysteries are sometimes predictable and have weak conclusions. Villains' motivations occasionally seem unbelievable and not substantial enough for the individuals to resort to committing crimes or murders. Narrative pacing is frequently slowed by too many unnecessary details and introspection, particularly involving psychological disorders and treatments.

Conant's characterizations of dogs are often more vividly portrayed and developed than those of humans. Her canine characters exhibit authentic dog behavior, while some of her people are caricatures. Through her characters, Conant emphasizes themes of service and loyalty as well as of disobedience and

stubbornness. In particular, her canine characters underscore her overall themes of companionship and devotion. Conant's presentations of exploited, abused, and neglected characters, both human and animal, stress her themes of mercy, tolerance, and the possibilities of redemption, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

A NEW LEASH ON DEATH

Conant introduces Holly Winter in her first mystery, *A New Leash on Death*, which foreshadows many of the situations and relationships that are important to Winter in later books in the series. By revealing Winter's reactions to crises, Conant establishes Winter's independent personality and commitment to dogs. Readers learn that the dog trainer is resourceful and determined to protect animals from negligent owners and that she will seek assistance when necessary to achieve her aim.

In *A New Leash on Death*, Dr. Frank Stanton is choked to death with his leash while training Rowdy, an Alaskan malamute. Winter taps her father, Buck, and specific dog breeders for information and contacts while researching a tattoo number to discover the background of Rowdy, who Stanton claimed he owned.

Holly's vulnerabilities are revealed when she reminisces about her mother and wishes she were as talented with dogs as her mother, a dog trainer, had been. Her manipulative side is also shown in her negotiations with her neighbor, Kevin Dennehy, a police officer who has inside information regarding crimes. Knowing he is romantically interested in her, Winter allows Dennehy to keep beer and meat at her house because his strictly religious mother forbids him to have these items in the home they share. Although she convinces Dennehy to divulge secrets, Winter rarely reciprocates and discourages an intimate relationship. Instead, she pursues a romance with her veterinarian, Steve Delaney. Winter also confides in Rita, a therapist who rents an apartment in Winter's three-story house.

Conant reveals the socioeconomic diversity of dog enthusiasts, which enables her to create a broad cast of potential culprits. Greed and pride are emphasized as motives. Winter realizes her resilience and courage when confronted by the killer, who tries to choke her. That ordeal, with Rowdy by her side, establishes the foundation for their future teamwork.

SCRATCH THE SURFACE

Conant's tone in *Scratch the Surface* (2005), the first novel in her cat mystery series, is often sarcastic and cynical. Protagonist Felicity Pride's experiences as an author of cat mysteries are far from ideal. Few fans show up at her book signings, a Russian publisher is selling her book illegally, and her rival Isabelle Hotchkiss has better sales. Pride's problems intensify when Quinlan Coates, a professor, is found dead in her vestibule. A cat waits beside him. Although Pride is a cat mystery writer, she knows nothing about cats. She initially views the cat and murder as an opportunity for publicity that might advance her career but is disappointed by the meager, and often inaccurate, coverage of the case.

Pride makes fumbling efforts to care for both of Coates's cats and solve the mystery of why he was murdered, although such efforts are not natural for someone with her seemingly rigid, selfish, aloof personality, which alienates many of her neighbors and peers. Pride becomes attached to the cats while trying to determine their identity and generously assisting detective Dave Valentine, whom she desires romantically, as she learns more about the cats and their owner's secrets.

Although Conant includes brief chapters revealing the two cats' perspectives, she does not give them human qualities or have them speak. Through Pride, she reveals details of the mystery-writing profession, expressing some dissatisfaction with the process through Pride's thoughts. Pride is not the animal lover that Winter is, but she does develop into a caring person capable of being kind to both people and animals, enhancing her public image as a cat mystery writer.

GAITS OF HEAVEN

In *Gaits of Heaven* (2006), Conant exposes her broad knowledge of psychology, psychiatry, and pharmacology as Winter deals with a couple, Ted and Eumie Green, who refuse to control their Aussie huskapoo Dolfo when they attend a class at her training club. Ted and Eumie ask Winter to help them but ignore her traditional training advice. After Eumie dies from what is assumed to be an overdose but might be murder, Winter permits Eumie's overweight daughter Caprice, who is a Harvard classmate of Winter's cousin Leah, to stay in her home. She soon realizes

that the Green family has extensive problems involving Caprice's father, Monty; her stepfather, Ted; and her stepbrother Wyeth.

Feeling empathy for Dolfo and Caprice, Winter intercedes, putting herself at risk to protect the vulnerable dog and girl. Conant's narrative bogs down as she introduces the characters' countless therapists and other medical professionals. The plot becomes too convoluted, introducing subplots such as mysterious squirrel poisonings and Winter dealing with her husband's former wife, Anita Fairley, who attacks Winter and her dogs.

STEAMED

Because Conant collaborated with her daughter, Jessica Conant-Park, to write *Steamed* (2006), her style is not as apparent as in her animal mysteries. Conant primarily plotted the mystery, which seems formulaic, relying on her daughter to provide information about young-adult culture in the early twenty-first century. The most obvious difference is that dogs are not a major component of the life of the protagonist, Chloe Carter. Instead, she is consumed with gourmet food and how her peers perceive her, looking for acceptance based on her clothes and other superficial factors. She studies only to retain her inheritance, which finances her lifestyle.

Intent on finding a boyfriend, Carter signs up with a dating Web site with the username GourmetGirl. Her blind date with DinnerDude, the obnoxious Eric Rafferty, is disrupted when he is murdered in a restaurant bathroom. Carter passively permits Rafferty's parents to believe she was engaged to their son but pursues a handsome chef, Josh Driscoll, at the reception after Rafferty's funeral. Carter continues her relationship with Driscoll although his knife is revealed to be the murder weapon. Like Winter, Carter unearths lies, suspects her love interest, and cultivates a close relationship with a female friend, but her revelations result more from coincidences and impulsiveness than reasoned action.

Elizabeth D. Schafer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DOG LOVER'S SERIES: *A New Leash on Death*, 1990; *Dead and Doggone*, 1990; *A Bite of Death*,

1991; *Paws Before Dying*, 1991; *Gone to the Dogs*, 1992; *Bloodlines*, 1992; *Ruffly Speaking*, 1994; *Black Ribbon*, 1995; *Stud Rites*, 1996; *Animal Appetite*, 1997; *The Barker Street Regulars*, 1998; *Evil Breeding*, 1999; *Creature Discomforts*, 2000; *The Wicked Flea*, 2002; *The Dogfather*, 2003; *Bride and Groom*, 2004; *Gaits of Heaven*, 2006; *All Shots*, 2007

CAT LOVER'S SERIES: *Scratch the Surface*, 2005

GOURMET GIRL SERIES (WITH JESSICA CONANT-PARK): *Steamed*, 2006; *Simmer Down*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Teaching Language-Disabled Children: A Communication Games Intervention*, 1983 (with Milton Budoff and Barbara Hecht); *Living with Chronic Fatigue*, 1990

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Beegan, Daniel. "Her Life's Work: Going to the Dogs, Books Feature Canines, People in Their Lives." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 6, 1994, p. 3E. An Associated Press feature profile based on an interview with Conant, which provides biographical information and addresses her goal to educate people

regarding dogs through her mysteries.

Conant, Susan. "Mysterious Presence." *Radcliffe Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (Spring, 1998): 11. Conant compares her research and fiction writing, emphasizing the pleasure of being an academic turned novelist, and discusses her difficult relationship with her mother.

Dale, Steve. "Cover to Cover with Mystery Writer Susan Conant." *Dog World* 90, no. 5 (May, 2005): 24-25. Includes personal details about Conant based on conversations with her and her friends and reveals some of her inspirations for her characters and settings.

Heising, Willetta L. *Detecting Women: A Reader's Guide and Checklist for Mystery Series Written by Women*. 3d ed. Dearborn, Mich.: Purple Moon Press, 2000. Lists include Conant's books with a brief biography, placing her in context with other dog writers.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Brief sketch of Conant concluding with literary criticism of her early novels.

MICHAEL CONNELLY

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; July 21, 1956

Types of plot: Police procedural; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HIERONYMUS "HARRY" BOSCH, named for the fifteenth century Dutch painter of sins and earthly degradation, is a Los Angeles Police Department homicide detective constantly in trouble with the department bureaucracy for his inability to take orders and his "cowboy" attitude toward murder investigations. Orphaned at eleven when his mother was mur-

dered by an unknown assailant, he sees his mission in life as the pursuit of criminals. His obsession with his cases causes him to solve them in his own way, ignoring the consequences. He is twice divorced, drinks heavily, has few friends, and manages to alienate nearly everyone with whom he comes into contact, including a series of partners on the force, nearly all of whom grudgingly respect his police skills. His experience in the Vietnam War as a "tunnel rat," trained to enter Vietcong tunnels and crawl along in total darkness to find and eliminate the enemy, left indelible marks on his psyche. Images of groping in the dark and searching for the light dominate Bosch's interior mental landscape.

CONTRIBUTION

In many ways, Michael Connelly's novels featuring Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch fit neatly into the convention of hard-boiled detective fiction; however, the novels also display the author's complex plotting skills and his insights into the psychological makeup of both the criminal and the detective. Many of his characters (criminals and sometimes those on the side of the law) are best categorized as "monsters," social or psychological deviants capable of committing horrific crimes of torture and mutilation: the Dollmaker, the Poet, the Follower, and the Eidolon. For Connelly, often the psyches of these characters and that of Bosch are more interesting than the actual solution of the crime. Connelly views almost all pathological actions to be the result of social and familial forces; the born killer seems not to exist in his world. His protagonists must heed philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's warning, loosely paraphrased by a character in *Lost Light* (2003) as "whoever is out there fighting the monsters . . . should make damn sure they don't become monsters themselves."

Connelly won an Edgar Award for best first novel for *The Black Echo* (1992); Anthony awards for *The Poet* (1996), *Blood Work* (1998), and *City of Bones* (2002); a Nero Award for *The Poet*; Barry awards for *Trunk Music* (1997) and *City of Bones*; and a Shamus Award for *The Lincoln Lawyer* (2005). He was twice elected president of the Mystery Writers of America (2003 and 2004), the only writer ever to be accorded this honor.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Joseph Connelly was born in Philadelphia on July 21, 1956, and spent the first eleven years of his life there. His mother's extensive library, especially the works of Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle, opened the world of the mystery story to him. His family moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and he spent the rest of his formative years in that state, eventually attending the University of Florida and graduating with a degree in journalism. At the university, he was introduced to the works of Raymond Chandler by one of his mentors, novelist Harry Crews. Connelly knew from that moment he wanted to be a novelist, but

unlike many reporters-turned-crime-novelists, he thought that crime-beat reporting would be the best apprenticeship to the world of crime fiction and majored in journalism with an eye toward future fiction writing. His first jobs after graduation were as a beat reporter in Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach. In 1985 he covered the crash of Delta Flight 191, interviewing the survivors, most of whom were from the Fort Lauderdale area. A subsequent magazine article based on this coverage was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and soon after he was hired by the *Los Angeles Times* as a crime reporter.

Connelly published his first novel, *The Black Echo*, which introduced Harry Bosch, in 1992, basing it on a murder that occurred the day after he arrived in Los Angeles. After that came *The Black Ice* (1993), *The Concrete Blonde* (1994), and one of the central novels in the Bosch series, *The Last Coyote* (1995), the first book he completed after leaving reporting to write novels full time. Originally intended as the final installment in the series, *The Last Coyote* concerns Bosch's attempt to find his mother's murderer and



Michael Connelly. (Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

solve the case long relegated to the cold case files by the Los Angeles Police Department. Connelly's next novel, *The Poet*, introduces Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Rachel Walling in the pursuit of a serial murderer who preyed on children. After Connelly became a father, he said that he probably could not or would not write about such a character again.

By Connelly's own admission, the Bosch character was too interesting for him to drop, and in 1997 he returned to Bosch in *Trunk Music*. He has continued to write both Bosch series and nonseries novels, and he published a collection of his earlier journalism, *Crime Beat: A Decade of Covering Cops and Killers* (2006). Connelly and his family moved to Florida in 2002. In that year Clint Eastwood produced, directed, and starred in a film based on the novel *Blood Work*, which famously changed the ending and the identity of the murderer. The publication of *The Lincoln Lawyer* in 2005 introduced a new protagonist for Connelly, cynical lawyer Mickey Haller, who the author planned to use in future novels. In 2006 two events marked watersheds in Connelly's career: the serialization of a new Bosch novella, *The Overlook* (published in book form in 2007), in *The New York Times*, and his selection as one of the five mystery authors to host a personally chosen installment of Court TV's true-crime series *Murder by the Book* (began 2006).

ANALYSIS

Michael Connelly's supreme creation is the haunted and tormented Los Angeles Police Department detective Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch. Through the character of Bosch, Connelly is able to portray much of the loneliness and despair of living in a violent, decadent, and surrealistic Los Angeles that is in many ways a modern embodiment of the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Much of the corruption Bosch finds in his investigations is in the actual institutions: the Los Angeles Police Department, the press, and the film industry. It seems that the only way Connelly can expose this corruption is with an insider who is also a loner and a renegade: Hence the character of Harry Bosch. Many of those in the police bureaucracy are corrupt—guilty of

cover-ups, shoddy investigations, and outright criminal behavior. The mentality seems to be to seek political gain rather than honesty or justice, and this is especially grating to a detective like Bosch.

One of the most common themes in Connelly's writing is the warning issued by Nietzsche: "He who fights against monsters should see to it that he does not become a monster in the process. And when you stare persistently into an abyss, the abyss also stares into you." Dealing with society's monsters, Connelly seems to say, places one in great danger of becoming a monster. This is evident in Bosch, who, though not a monster, is an emotional train wreck. He has one goal in life—to catch criminals—and everything else in his life is subsumed by this. Bosch has lived much of his life believing his mother's murder would never be solved, and when he solves it in *The Last Coyote*, the double trauma of knowing the details of his mother's murder and the fact that it was related to high-powered political cover-ups causes Bosch to seriously consider retirement. He stares at the monsters, and he fears that he may become one, or already has.

Connelly is justly praised for his complex plots, surprise endings, and the clarity and power of his style, honed at his reporter's desk. The amount of research he does is well known. Each of his novels has the ring of gritty truth, derived both from his own years of experience as a crime-beat reporter and from additional research into forensics, technology, autopsies, weapons, jazz performers, or whatever else is required by his plots. Plot details, even the most minute, are meticulously accurate and give an unusually heightened sense of reality. Especially noteworthy is Connelly's Los Angeles: Many authors set their crime stories on the streets of Los Angeles, but Connelly's detail—street names, highways, buildings, architectural types, neighborhood characteristics, and the archaeology of the La Brea Tar Pits—is unusual in its comprehensiveness and accuracy.

THE LAST COYOTE

The Last Coyote, originally intended to be Harry Bosch's swan song, has become one of Connelly's most critically acclaimed novels. After throwing his commanding officer through a plate-glass window, Bosch is placed on extended leave and required to take

anger-management classes before he is reinstated. With spare time on his hands, he resurrects a cold case from thirty years before that the Los Angeles Police Department had never solved: the murder of prostitute Marjorie Lowe, Bosch's mother. In the course of tracking down the killer, Bosch again and again sees a lone coyote in the woods surrounding his house—a rare sighting, Bosch thinks, because civilization has all but driven out these creatures. It is no stretch to assume that Bosch himself is the last of a breed.

Paralleling Bosch's investigations is a subplot involving the psychiatrist assigned to his case. Through this plot device the reader is given a deep look into Bosch's troubled mind. Bosch is angry, rebellious, and resentful of authority. He reveals his stern, almost self-righteous moral code in the first session: "Everybody counts or nobody counts." This is the code, the religion, that Bosch lives by, and he is unyielding in its observance.

CHASING THE DIME

Chasing the Dime (2002) was sparked by an actual incident in Connelly's life: He was issued a phone number that had belonged to a woman who had disappeared. Though not a Bosch series novel and not received as well critically as some of Connelly's other novels (ironically because the plot turns on an almost Hitchcockian device thought to be improbable—the wrong phone number), *Chasing the Dime* is important in Connelly's works because it reinforces many of the major themes of the Bosch novels, particularly the effects of obsessiveness in the face of a mystery. In the novel, Henry Pierce, a chemist and chief executive officer of his own startup company, is about to become a multimillionaire as soon as certain patents are granted and funding is acquired, but his whole life—business, professional, personal, and romantic—is derailed by an obsession to discover what happened to the woman, a prostitute, who previously had his phone number and is now missing. Betrayed by friends and business partners and framed for murder, Pierce becomes adrift in a world of evil that he only slowly begins to understand. He solves the mystery and absolves himself of the murder charge but in the process is nearly killed by a severe beating and loses his fiancé (whom he incorrectly suspects of being in on the plot to destroy him),

his best friends, and the financial backing for his business. Nearly everything Pierce once believed is turned upside-down, and he knows he will live with deep suspicions for the rest of this life.

LOST LIGHT

Lost Light (2003) was Connelly's first Bosch novel written after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. As such, it shows Connelly's increasing interest in the social and political issues of the day, though the focus remains strongly on the psyche of Bosch. It is also the only Bosch novel written in the first person (although the Bosch segments of *The Narrows*, 2004, are also written in first person), allowing the reader an insight into the mind of Bosch not possible with more objective third-person approaches.

Fed up with the Los Angeles Police Department bureaucracy at the end of *City of Bones* (2002), Bosch retires. At the beginning of *Lost Light*, Bosch is a freelance private detective, free of the department but also stripped of the status and security that a gun and badge afford. He chooses to concentrate on cold cases, the ones that got away while he was on the force, and starts with the case of Angella Benton, an apparent innocent bystander in a botched robbery on a motion picture set that resulted in the deaths of a number of bystanders and participants. Bosch is haunted by the placement of her hands in the crime scene photos, innocent and almost prayerlike. He resolves to find her killer and in the process uncovers more bureaucratic corruption and cover-ups in the Los Angeles Police Department, the treachery of friends and colleagues, the depths of venality in the film industry, and the almost unlimited power granted to law enforcement and intelligence agencies by the Homeland Security Act, power that begs to be abused.

In a rare moment of joy and happiness, Bosch discovers at the end of *Lost Light* that his first wife had given birth to a daughter whose existence has been kept from him, and Bosch feels for perhaps the first time in his life a sense of salvation, of pure happiness. In true Connelly fashion, however, all this happiness is crushed even before the opening of the next Bosch novel, *The Narrows*.

H. Eric Branscomb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HIERONYMUS “HARRY” BOSCH SERIES: *The Black Echo*, 1992; *The Black Ice*, 1993; *The Concrete Blonde*, 1994; *The Last Coyote*, 1995; *Trunk Music*, 1997; *Angels Flight*, 1999; *A Darkness More than Night*, 2001; *City of Bones*, 2002; *Lost Light*, 2003; *The Narrows*, 2004; *The Closers*, 2005; *Echo Park*, 2006; *The Overlook*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Poet*, 1996; *Blood Work*, 1998; *Void Moon*, 2000; *Chasing the Dime*, 2002; *The Lincoln Lawyer*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Crime Beat: A Decade of Covering Cops and Killers*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *The Best American Mystery Stories 2003*, 2003; *Murder in Vegas: New Crime Tales of Gambling and Desperation*, 2005

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Anderson, Patrick. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Contains a chapter on Connelly that details his life and his works, including the Harry Bosch novels. Discusses *The Black Echo*, *The Last Coyote*, *A Darkness More than Night*, and *City of Bones*, among others.

Bertens, Hans, and Theo D’haen. *Contemporary Amer-*

ican Crime Fiction. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Discusses Connelly extensively in the introduction and devotes a chapter to “Los Angeles Police Department: Ellroy’s and Connelly’s Police Procedurals.”

Fine, David M. *Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004. Sees *The Concrete Blonde* and *The Last Coyote* in the tradition of the “murdered, mutilated or disfigured woman” following the Black Dahlia murder and the works of James Ellroy.

Gregoriou, Christiana. “Criminally Minded: The Stylistics of Justification in Contemporary American Crime Fiction.” *Style* 37, no. 2 (Summer, 2003): 144-159. Uses an analysis of style and narrative point of view to argue that the monstrous character of the Eidolon in *The Poet* is a product of his environment, not his birth.

Kreyling, Michael. *The Novels of Ross Macdonald*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. Briefly discusses Harry Bosch as a direct descendant of Ross Macdonald’s protagonist Lew Archer but notes that the “world of Harry Bosch is far more lethal than Archer’s.”

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Uncensored: Views and (Re)views*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2006. Devotes a chapter titled “L.A. Noir” to *A Darkness More than Night*, noting that Bosch is a “flawed, deeply troubled and isolated man.”

JOHN CONNOLLY

Born: Dublin, Ireland; May 31, 1968

Also wrote as Laura Froom

Types of plot: Horror; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Charlie Parker, 1999-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHARLIE PARKER is a former New York City police detective with a tormented past: the loss of his wife and daughter to a serial killer. Handsome, brooding, and em-

pathetic, he is driven to help the vulnerable at whatever cost. There is a dark side—indeed, eschatologically dark—to him, which is impossible for him to ignore. He is a fallen angel, driven to atone for his sin against God by fighting the other fallen angels who prey on humanity.

CONTRIBUTION

John Connolly’s first novel, *Every Dead Thing* (1999), brought him nearly equal amounts of praise and condemnation. Critics agreed that the tale is dark, terrifying, thrilling, and disturbing, not only because

of its gruesome violence but also because of the hero's single-minded quest for retribution. Some critics extolled Connolly's lyrical prose style and the intensity of the story's drama. Others found the violence simply repellent and the themes irremediably grim. The *Los Angeles Times* reviewer deftly characterized Connolly's literary impact in remarking that the novel "holds the reader fast in a comfortless stranglehold."

Connolly's subsequent novels delve ever more into the supernatural to prepare readers for the psychotic killers and macabre violence of the plots. These novels are as much horror fiction as mysteries. The supernatural elements, however, rather than providing escapism, allow Connolly to examine the pathology and psychology of violent crime. British critic Mark Timlin wrote that as Charlie Parker's character evolves through the novels, Connolly demonstrates the possibility of moral choice and the necessity of action in the face of evil. In this regard, Connolly likes to quote the eighteenth century English political philosopher Edmund Burke, who observed that evil triumphs when good people stand by and do nothing to stop it. It is this thematic approach, critics agree, that makes Connolly's fiction more than simply thrilling entertainment. Connolly is also recognized for the meticulous research behind his settings and behind his use of esoteric supernatural lore.

BIOGRAPHY

John Connolly was born in Dublin on May 31, 1968, and raised in the city's Realto section, a rough neighborhood plagued by drugs. His father was a rent collector and his mother a schoolteacher with an interest in writing. At her urging, he read avidly from an early age. He claimed to an interviewer that he began to write a year after he began reading and that a teacher encouraged him by paying him for each Tarzan story that he wrote. Connolly completed secondary school at the age of seventeen and took a job in the accounting department of a local government office. For three years he largely forgot about writing. At last, bored with the job, he quit and entered Dublin's Trinity College, majoring in English. Among the subjects he studied was American crime fiction. It was his first introduction to authors who came to influence his own

fiction, among them Ross Macdonald, James Lee Burke, and Ed McBain. During one summer, Connolly went to Delaware to work as a waiter. However, he did not like the location and on a whim took a bus to Maine, which entranced him. He returned to Maine during subsequent summer holidays, working there and exploring the state. After taking his bachelor's degree, Connolly earned a master's degree in journalism from Dublin City University.

Following graduation, Connolly worked as a freelance writer for *The Irish Times*, the nation's leading daily newspaper. He specialized in feature stories, particularly about education, but he found the writing formulaic and frustrating. To escape from the grind of journalism, he began writing his first novel, *Every Dead Thing*. Before he finished the manuscript, he mailed out sample chapters to seventy publishers. All turned him down. However, one editor wrote a favorable comment on the rejection slip and encouraged Connolly to finish the work.

Connolly left freelancing and moved to Maine for a year, working as a waiter while he revised the manuscript. He resubmitted the novel, which was accepted and in 1999 brought him the largest advance on royalties for any Irish writer up to that time. The novel was nominated for the Bram Stoker Award for best first novel by the Horror Writers Association and for the Berry Award for the best British crime novel by *Deadly Pleasures* magazine, and it won the 2000 Shamus Award for best first private eye novel from the Private Eye Writers of America, making Connolly the first non-American author to receive the honor. *The White Road* (2002) won the 2003 Barry Award, and several other novels and short stories received award nominations, notably *The Book of Lost Things* (2006), which was nominated for the 2007 Irish Novel of the Year.

Connolly is a dedicated reader and music collector. For his fifth Charlie Parker novel, *The Black Angel* (2005), he included a compact disc, *Voices from the Dark*, whose music selections are to help set the mood for each chapter. Long a resident of Dublin, Connolly has frequently revisited Maine, where many of his stories take place.

ANALYSIS

Reviewers compared John Connolly's novels to those of Stephen King and Thomas Harris in his use of the supernatural and his emphasis on deranged killers. However, in Connolly's treatment, it is history, personal and collective, that receives the primary emphasis. History influences and often overwhelms his characters. History not only contributes to present thought and attitudes but also intrudes in a more tangible manner: Connolly's hero Charlie Parker must deal with the actual, if shadowy, appearances of the dead and the presence of diabolical "black angels" who have fallen from heaven and maim, torture, and kill humans to spite God. In *The White Road* Connolly writes that people, by their actions in this life, make their own hell in which to exist in the afterlife. Conversely, doing a good deed can atone for some past evil. Most important is Connolly's conception of evil itself: the absence of empathy. That is, people commit evil when they treat others merely as objects.

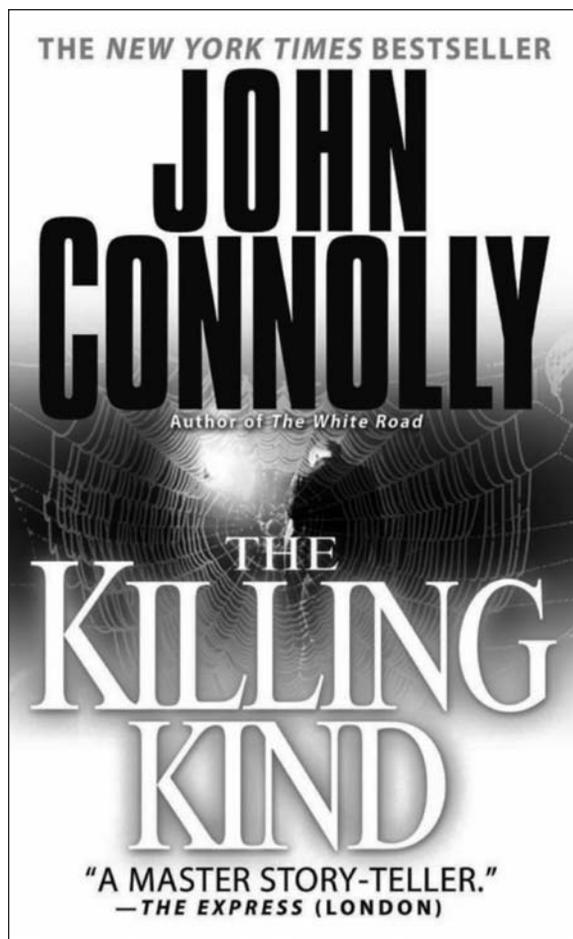
From this moral metaphysics come Connolly's three main themes: compassion, atonement, and salvation. Although these may sound like religious goals, for Parker they have a practical importance and numinous consequences that Connolly does not connect to any faith or organization. (Connolly's research draws freely from Christian, Judaic, animistic, and Manichean beliefs.) *Every Dead Thing* opens with Parker drinking away his frustrations with life and work as a New York City homicide detective while his wife and daughter are being tortured and murdered at home. He discovers the bodies and initially is the prime suspect. This personal history haunts him through the novel as he frees himself from suspicion and then sets off on a quest to track down the murderer, a sadist known as the Traveler. In later novels, family history likewise presses on him: For example, his father, also a New York City police officer, killed a woman and child under mysterious circumstances before taking his own life. Moreover, there is a darkness to each generation of his family that he has inherited. Through *The Killing Kind* (2001) and *The White Road*, it becomes clear that an unimaginably greater history plagues him: He is himself a fallen angel, a status made explicit in *The Black Angel*. He is among

twenty former angels doomed to roam among humans, trapped in human form forever unless their bodies are destroyed by violence, in which case they are reborn into a new body.

Nineteen of these angels hunt and kill people, for various reasons, and from their number come the most villainous of Connolly's antagonists, such as Kittim, Reverend Faulkner, and Brightwell. Alone among the black angels, Parker feels compassion for the vulnerable and victimized. The compassion derives from his private and family history; an additional motivation, beginning in *The Black Angel*, is his desire to atone for his original sin against God. He therefore fights the bad angels, an unremitting moral war that has lasted, Connolly intimates, through many incarnations. The novels give little indication that Parker's crusade will win him personal forgiveness from God. Salvation, Connolly hints, is the active pursuit of justice rather than a reward for a good life.

Parker's life cannot be described as good in any conventional moral or religious sense. Working as a private investigator, he is loyal and ethical to clients and friends but frequently ignores all else—laws, customs, judicial procedures, and common morality. In pursuit of a culprit, he regularly kills, both in self-defense and to ensure that villains do not escape. Connolly's novels place little faith in the judicial system or police, assuming that red tape and corruption cripples these institutions in the face of evil. Moreover, Parker's helpers are frequently as criminal and violent as are his nemeses. These include an array of Mafiosi and former convicts, but the most outstanding are Louis and Angel, a biracial gay couple who regularly rescue Parker from dangerous situations by unstinting use of powerful firearms.

Louis and Angel act as foils to Parker in two ways. First, they provide most of the rare comic relief in the novels as they joke with each other and sometimes with Parker, who is otherwise grim, brooding, contrary, and haunted by macabre visions. Second, they have the only stable love relationship in the series. After Parker loses his wife and daughter, he is slow to find another love interest. When he falls in love with another woman, he has difficulty committing himself to her because of fear for her safety and his long ab-



sences during investigations. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter, and they live together, but Parker's crusades constantly disrupt his family life, and their long-term prospects look doubtful at the end of *The Black Angel*.

Evil expresses itself through grotesque terror in the Connolly novels. Horrible deformities of the human body, mutilation, artworks of human bone and flesh, deadly spiders, subterranean passages, and visitations of the dead are the means of menacing the helpless among the characters and of creating suspense for readers. The extent and superhuman power of the evil that Parker faces impels him to act as his enemies act, with cunning, obsessive perseverance, and violence. Indeed, in Connolly's novels the distinction between justice and vengeance is vanishingly thin, even when he acts on behalf of the innocent and helpless.

THE KILLING KIND

In *The Killing Kind*, Parker is hired to investigate the mysterious suicide of a former girlfriend, Grace Peltier. Before she was discovered dead on a lonely Maine road, Peltier had been researching her master's thesis topic: a fundamentalist sect known as the Aroostook Baptists, who all disappeared in the early 1960's. Parker reluctantly investigates, eventually with help of his friends Louis and Angel, after a mass grave in northern Maine is accidentally uncovered. The grave contains the members of the long-missing sect, or most of them. Parker encounters a murky television evangelist organization that is a front for antiabortion, antihomosexual, anti-Semitic militants. Among its reptilian members is Mr. Pudd, whose uses poisonous spiders to kill those who he considers sinners. Another is a state police officer who has killed Peltier for taking a handmade book, bound in human skin, that implicates the organization in many murders. The book turn out to have been made by Reverend Faulkner, once the leader of the Aroostook Baptists and responsible for their deaths. Before Parker finally kills Pudd and captures Faulkner, Angel is tortured by Faulkner, and Parker meets a series of creepy characters, including the Golum, an assassin sent by a militant Jewish group to stop Faulkner. Prominent among the themes is the destructive effect of extremist religion and the lingering hold of past atrocities on the living.

THE WHITE ROAD

In *The White Road*, Parker is asked by an old acquaintance to help protect Atys Jones, a young black man, from being killed by white vigilantes. Jones is accused of raping and murdering the daughter of a leading white family in South Carolina. He is innocent but doomed, for the woman's death is linked to a long series of tragedies involving the families of the young man and the woman, going back to the times when the young man's ancestors were slaves owned by the white family. Moreover, Parker's friend, the defense lawyer, has an agenda of his own. He secretly uses Parker to deflect those seeking to kill him because of the gang rape and murder of Jones's mother and aunt twenty years earlier, an event in which the lawyer participated. As Parker tries to shield Jones and unravels the tangled history behind the various rape-murders,

he comes across another fallen angel, Kittim, who works for the dead girl's brother and entertains himself by slowing torturing to death those who threaten to expose the family's history. Parker barely escapes that fate, with the help of Louis and Angel (who have already conducted a murderous vigilante campaign of their own on elderly members of a long-ago lynch mob). In the end, nearly everyone is left dead, including Jones and the lawyer. The Old South's history of mob justice, lynching, white supremacists, and simmering racial conflict figures prominently. However, there is a second plot: The Reverend Faulkner of *The Killing Kind* is still alive and manipulates his way out of jail on bond. Faulkner vows to kill Parker and his pregnant girlfriend, Rachel. In the end Parker, Louis, and Angel shoot him dead in a joint volley.

THE BLACK ANGEL

In *The Black Angel*, Parker is enlisted to find a missing young woman, a relation of Louis. The attempt leads him deep into the supernatural. Already haunted by the apparitions of his dead wife and daughter, he discovers that those behind the woman's disappearance and hideous murder are black angels, one of whom steals his victims' souls. He is Brightwell, an immensely obese but agile man. Brightwell is in turn the lieutenant of the chief black angel on Earth. The plot involves their search for the chief angel's twin, captured and immured long ago by Cistercian monks. Catholic medieval history, grotesque artworks, and demonology all eventually lead Parker to the chief angel, who, in a deft stroke of black humor, turns out to be a dealer of antiquities. As in previous novels, many people die as Parker investigates and as, in turn, he becomes the black angels' prey, for they want to punish him for defying them, not only in his present life but also in past lives. The climax sees Parker killing Brightwell (who promises to be reborn and track him down) and trapping the chief angel. This success, however, leads to personal failure. Parker's girlfriend, Rachel, leaves him, taking their infant daughter with her because of attempts on their lives by Brightwell and his agents.

Roger Smith

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHARLIE PARKER SERIES: *Every Dead Thing*, 1999; *Dark Hollow*, 2000; *The Killing Kind*, 2001; *The White Road*, 2002; *Every Dead Thing/Dark Hollow*, 2003 (omnibus); *The Black Angel*, 2005; *The Unquiet*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Bad Men*, 2003; *The Book of Lost Things*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Nocturnes*, 2004

NONFICTION: *Married to a Stranger: A True Story of Murder and the Multi-Million Dollar Mail-Order Bride Business*, 2006 (with Gaylen Ross)

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Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2000. Horsley analyzes noir fiction starting with Joseph Conrad, focusing on the theme of hidden evil in normal life, which is important to the Charlie Parker novels, though the novels are not addressed directly.

Karim, Ali. "On the Road to Redemption with John Connolly." *January Magazine* (April, 2003). <http://www.januarymagazine.com>. An extensive article and interview with Connolly that dwells on his background, writing habits, and literary interests.

Nolan, Yvonne. "An Irishman in Darkest Maine." *Publishers Weekly* 249 (September, 2002): 45. Nolan comments on Connolly's use of Maine as a setting for his novels, his views on the appeal of violent crime in fiction, and how he writes.

Schwartz, Richard B. *Nice and Noir: Contemporary Crime Fiction*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. Schwartz discusses the mythology and mentality informing noir fiction. The fourth chapter, "Avenging Angel," presents an insightful introduction to themes appearing in the Charlie Parker novels, which are not discussed directly.

THOMAS H. COOK

Born: Fort Payne, Alabama; September 19, 1947

Types of plot: Thriller; police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Frank Clemons, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

FRANK CLEMONS is an Atlanta homicide detective whose wife left him shortly after the suicide of their teenage daughter. Clemons is the son of a minister, and his alcoholism threatens to destroy what is left of his life. In the course of the series, he moves to New York City, primarily out of a sense of loyalty to his girlfriend, the sister of the first victim whose murder he solves. His girlfriend eventually ends up leaving him, and in an effort to occupy his mind, Clemons offers his services as a private investigator, working out of a basement office on Forty-ninth Street. Described as a tall, slender man, Clemons finds that his troubles have aged him, giving him the stooped shoulders of a much older man.

CONTRIBUTION

Thomas H. Cook has elevated the police procedural from a marginalized subgenre of detective fiction to a more popularly acceptable genre of popular literature—the psychological novel. The archetypal Cook hero is an isolated loner with just enough human feelings left to respond to the needs of other individuals. The hero is almost destroyed by his empathy, yet he finds eventual redemption in his sacrifices. Cook pays a great deal of attention to detail, especially in his depiction of the process of suppressed memory recollection. This careful use of the psychological method shows Cook's desire to transcend the boundaries of thriller and true-crime writing. Cook has written only a few novels in the Frank Clemens series, preferring nonseries novels so that he may experiment with and examine a variety of narrators and their individual voices and traumatic life experiences. He has also delved into other genres: He wrote the novelization of

the science-fiction television series *Taken* (2002) and mainstream fiction such as *Elena* (1986) and *Moon over Manhattan* (2004), a comic novel he wrote with television interviewer Larry King. Cook's abilities as a writer have been rewarded with growing respect from the mystery reading public and have led to his being presented with the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Award for best novel for *The Chatham School Affair* (1996).

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas H. Cook was born on September 19, 1947, in Fort Payne, Alabama, the son of Virgil Richard Cook and Myrick Harper Cook. He started writing at an early age and claims that his first novel was based on his experiences with Heiman Zeidman, a Jewish immigrant from Poland who was one of only a handful of Jewish residents in Cook's small, southern town. Zeidman, a close friend of the family, treated the young Cook as a grandson, taking him to films and even on his first trip to New York City. Cook received degrees in English and philosophy from Georgia State College in 1969 and graduate degrees in American history from Hunter College, City University of New York (1972) and Columbia University (1976). He married Susan Turner, who wrote for radio, on March 17, 1978, and has one child, Justine Ariel.

As a student Cook worked in jobs ranging from advertising executive for U.S. Industrial Chemicals to secretary for the Association for Help of Retarded Adults. He also taught English and history at DeKalb Community College in Clarkson, Georgia, for three years before making the difficult decision to become a full-time writer. Also from 1978 to 1982, Cook served as contributing editor and book reviewer and editor of *Atlanta* magazine, where his critical abilities, his writing, and his first short stories earned praise. He also wrote a number of feature articles on midcentury America, notably the deterioration of the pop-culture movement; essays on modern southern fiction; and articles about the changes in Atlanta neighborhoods and the gentrification of some of the old neighborhoods,

especially the Grant Park area, which would figure as the site of a murder in one of his novels. In addition to his mystery and detective novels, he has written several books of true crime and has contributed reviews and short fiction to a variety of popular publications including *The New York Times Review of Books*.

ANALYSIS

Although Thomas H. Cook has produced several books in the Frank Clemons series, most of his novels are psychological mysteries without recurring characters. The investigators in these psychological novels are isolated, tortured individuals haunted by their own bad luck and their personal tragedies. Nevertheless, they find themselves compelled to help solve some of the more grisly murders in modern crime fiction. Cook's protagonists typically find themselves prisoners of their own pasts. His victims are often young and rich, but the wealth that makes their lives easy cannot shield them from bloody fates. Elements of faith and sacrifice are hallmarks of his fiction, as are his realistic portrayals of violent death. He is drawn to crimes known for their ability to shock—not only in fiction, but in his true-crime books, such as *A Father's Story* (1994), ghostwritten for Lionel Dahmer, father of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer.

BLOOD INNOCENTS

Blood Innocents (1980) begins in the Central Park Children's Zoo, a place of frolic, fun, and innocence. This morning, however, a horrendous scene meets the eyes of bystanders. Two of the deer donated to the zoo by a wealthy entrepreneur have been stabbed to death—one deer has been stabbed fifty-seven times and the other killed with a single slash. As if this were not horrible enough, the scene has been repeated in Greenwich Village, where two women are found dead—one stabbed fifty-seven times and the other with a single slash across her neck. New Yorkers fear that a crazed killer is loose.

Meanwhile, John Reardon, a New York City police officer born into a family of officers, has nothing left but his job. His wife is dead after a prolonged illness, and he is alienated from his adult son. His bosses see his skill and dedication to his work and assign him to work exclusively on the deer slaying. When the

women are discovered murdered in Greenwich Village, Reardon is assigned to that case as well. Although he has doubts about the guilt of the initial suspect, Reardon finds himself under pressure to arrest someone and bring the case to trial. Big-city politicians decide that the cases are not connected, enraging Reardon and encouraging him to initiate his own private investigation. He is personally dedicated to finding the truth though the pressure to drop his inquiry becomes intense. Reardon, like many of Cook's heroes, has only his stubbornness and devotion to his duty to drive him on to the inevitable conclusion. Like the victims, Reardon experiences his own destruction, but in his case, it leads to his redemption and his acceptance of the consequences of his former life.

SACRIFICIAL GROUND

In *Sacrificial Ground* (1988), the first volume of the Frank Clemons series, Cook's protagonist is a homicide detective in Atlanta whose beautiful teenage daughter has committed suicide and whose wife left him soon after their daughter's death. Clemons, who is slipping into alcoholism, is called to work on a particularly puzzling murder case. The dead teenager, Angelique Devereaux, found at her autopsy to be pregnant, has apparently been living a double life. She was fabulously wealthy—living in a mansion with her sister Karen, an artist—and at the same time “slumming” in the Grant Park area art galleries and carrying on with an unknown lover. Her school friends know little about her and nothing about her activities, and Clemons begins to compare her murder to the death of his own daughter. If this rich, privileged teenager had secrets, he wonders if there might have been secrets that his own daughter had kept from him. Clemons follows Angelique's trail through her last few days of life, finally arriving at a staggering truth. Like all of Cook's novels, the ending comes quickly and is surprisingly intense. The reader cannot help but sympathize with Clemons and his own private devils as he unravels the details of the case.

FLESH AND BLOOD

Cook's second Frank Clemons novel, *Flesh and Blood* (1989), finds the former Atlanta homicide detective living in the grittier north—New York City. Now a private investigator, Clemons lives a comfort-

able life on the Upper East Side, but he finds himself falling out of love with his girlfriend, the older sister of the murdered teenager in *Sacrificial Blood*. As a private eye, he finds himself less inclined to work for the wealthier people of the city and more drawn toward the needs of Manhattan's poor. That is one reason why he accepts the case of Hannah Karlsberg even though it offers little in the way of financial reward. Hannah, an elderly woman, has been brutally murdered in her apartment. Clemons is hired by her employer, a fashion designer, to locate Hannah's next of kin so that her body can be released and buried.

Clemons finds, however, that Hannah's life and her past present some mysteries, reminiscent of the secrets surrounding Angelique's life in *Sacrificial Blood*. Where had Hannah come from? Who had she encountered? What had she done or had done to her? There are too many questions and too few answers. In search of the truth, Clemons begins his investigation with the fashion industry itself. From the sweatshops of the Lower East Side, where Hannah in her youth was a striker representing the infant American Garment Workers' Union and protesting the inhuman conditions borne by many young women working in the factories, to a small village in Colombia, and finally back to Brooklyn, Clemons's investigation uncovers cruelty and inhumanity that arouse in him a sense of isolation and feelings of betrayal. Cook's knowledge of history and the beginnings of the labor movement in the United States allow him to create this story that leads to a gripping climax.

NIGHT SECRETS

In *Night Secrets* (1990), the third book in the series, Frank Clemons still lives in Manhattan and is still fighting the personal demons that drove him to leave the South. To make a living and to keep himself busy, he has taken on two cases: In the first, he is following a philandering rich wife when she visits men other than her husband; in the second, he is trying to find clues in the murder of an old Gypsy woman. He finds out what he can about Gypsies from his friend Farouk, whose mother was a Gypsy. Although someone has confessed to the murder—a young woman of dubious sanity—Clemons finds himself in a quandary. The young lady who has confessed belongs to an obscure

Gypsy cult that carries out rituals based on a child supposedly born to Christ and Mary Magdalene and has questionable reasons for her confession based on her personal sense of guilt. Clemons is sure the young woman is innocent and tries to clear her but finds her to be obstinate in her desire to be a martyr. Cook's descriptions of New York's big-city atmosphere, alive twenty-four hours a day, complete with homeless people and all-night diners, makes Clemons's profound loneliness real to the reader as he solves both cases.

INSTRUMENTS OF NIGHT

With *Instruments of Night* (1998), Cook departs from detective fiction to introduce a different kind of narrator—someone more creative than deductive and sharing Cook's own choice of career. Paul Graves is a mystery writer who draws on his own tragic past to write his fiction. Graves has been summoned to Riverwood, an artists' community in the Hudson River Valley, for the purpose of creating fiction out of fact. He is asked to write a story that will answer the many questions about the murder of Faye Harrison, the teenage daughter who lived on the estate more than fifty years ago. Graves is not sure he can solve the mystery—he is a fiction writer by trade, not a detective. However, Faye's mother, now elderly and near death, wants some sort of closure to the tragedy of her daughter's fate.

EVIDENCE OF BLOOD

In *Evidence of Blood* (1991), Jackson Kinley, like Paul Graves, is a crime-fiction writer. Coming home after a number of years, Kinley finds a true-crime mystery in his own hometown, Sequoyah, Georgia. The death of Kinley's friend, Sheriff Ray Tindall, leaves many loose ends for the family and friends of the sheriff. What was he investigating when he died? Why had he reopened the case of convicted murderer Charles Overton—and then just as abruptly closed it? As Kinley delves into the facts regarding the murder of teenager Ellie Dinker more than forty years ago, he is faced with even more questions. Why was Ellie's body never found, and what was the truth about the only piece of evidence, the bloody dress? His search for answers leads to a web of corruption and lies—and finally into a deadly secret hidden for more than forty years.

Julia M. Meyers

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FRANK CLEMONS SERIES: *Sacrificial Ground*, 1988; *Flesh and Blood*, 1989; *Night Secrets*, 1990

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Blood Innocents*, 1980; *Tabernacle*, 1983; *Streets of Fire*, 1989; *The City When It Rains*, 1991; *Evidence of Blood*, 1991; *Mortal Memory*, 1993; *Breakheart Hill*, 1995; *The Chatham School Affair*, 1996; *Instruments of Night*, 1998; *Places in the Dark*, 2000; *Interrogation*, 2002; *Peril*, 2004; *Into the Web*, 2004; *Red Leaves*, 2005; *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Orchids*, 1982; *Elena*, 1986; *Moon over Manhattan*, 2002 (with Larry King); *Taken*, 2002

PLAY: *American Song*, pr. 2000

NONFICTION: *Early Graves: A Shocking True Crime Story of the Youngest Woman Ever Sentenced to Death Row*, 1990; *Blood Echoes: The True Story of an Infamous Mass Murder and Its Aftermath*, 1992; *A Father's Story*, 1994 (ghostwritten for Lionel Dahmer)

EDITED TEXTS: *Best American Crime Writing*, 2002 (with Otto Penzler); *Best American Crime Writing*, 2003 (with Penzler); *Best American Crime Writing*, 2004 (with Penzler)

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Dahlin, Robert. "Thomas H. Cook: Stretching the Mystery Envelope." *Publishers Weekly* 245, no. 42 (October, 1998): 43. Short profile on Thomas Cook

that relates some of the true-life incidents that inspire his writing in general as well as *Breakheart Hill* in particular. It also gives the reader a better sense of Cook's motivations for writing.

Donnelly, Barry. "Cook's Tour." *The Armchair Detective* 30, no. 3 (1997): 294-298. This extended discussion of Cook's writings from *Blood Innocents* to *The Chatham School Affair* attempts to put the author's writing in the context of psychological thrillers and detective fiction of the twentieth century. Includes extensive quotations from correspondence with Cook.

Graham, Keith. "Ex-Atlantan Delves into True-Crime Fiction." *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, December 23, 1990, p. N2. Brief profile of Cook that examines his fictional writing and his first true-crime book, *Early Graves*.

Lee, Michael. "The South Rises Again and Again." *The Barnstable Patriot* (October, 2003). This brief article describes how Cook is representative of a new breed of southern writer in step with modern life. Much of Cook's fiction is based in his home state of Georgia and has southern themes as its primary focus.

Shankman, Sarah. Introduction to *A Confederacy of Crime*. New York: Signet, 2001. The purpose of this collection of short stories was to compile a selection of the best unpublished mysteries describing life in the Deep South. Besides Cook, authors include Jeffrey Deaver, Steven Womack, and Julie Smith.

PATRICIA CORNWELL

Born: Miami, Florida; June 9, 1956

Also wrote as Patricia D. Cornwell; Patricia Daniels Cornwell

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kay Scarpetta, 1990-

Andy Brazil, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. KAY SCARPETTA is Virginia's chief medical examiner. She is a striking blonde woman who is such a brilliant and famous forensic pathologist/detective that she becomes the obsession of several psychopathic serial killers. She enjoys gardening and cooking the northern Italian dishes of her ethnic heritage. She is "Auntie Kay" to Lucy Farinelli, the only child of her sister Dorothy, who frequently leaves her daughter in Scarpetta's care. As Lucy grows from a ten-year-old to a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent and finally the founder of her own private investigating firm, Scarpetta also branches out. She becomes an FBI consultant, colludes with Interpol, and relocates to Florida to become a private forensic consultant.

ANDY BRAZIL is a recent college graduate, reporter, and volunteer police officer in Charlotte, North Carolina. At the request of his editor, he patrols with Deputy Chief Virginia West. His energy and impetuosity anger West and Chief Judy Hammer, yet endear him to them. His unorthodox methods help him crack seemingly impossible cases.

CONTRIBUTION

Patricia Cornwell's first work of detective fiction, *Postmortem* (1990), is the only novel to win five prestigious awards in the same year: the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America, the John Creasey Award from the Crime Writers' Association, the Anthony Award sponsored by Bouchercon, World Mystery Convention, and the Macavity Award from Mystery Readers International, all for best debut crime

novel, and the French Prix du Roman d'Aventure. The book stood out because of its protagonist as well as its approach of using forensics to solve a crime. Dr. Kay Scarpetta is a tough yet vulnerable female medical examiner. In 1999, the character of Scarpetta won the Sherlock Award for the best fictional detective created by an American author. Although Scarpetta comes into contact with suspects more often and more closely than real-life medical examiners actually do, crimes are solved in Scarpetta's mind and on her autopsy table. As she examines the victims' bodies, she gathers clues to help identify the killers. This approach was noteworthy because of Cornwell's precise descriptions of actual forensic methods, descriptions that unfold with textbook accuracy and length, before such approaches were popularized by television crime dramas such as *CSI*, which began in 2000. Her fourth Scarpetta mystery, *Cruel and Unusual* (1993), won the Golden Dagger Award of the Crime Writers' Association.

BIOGRAPHY

Patricia Cornwell was born Patricia Daniels on June 9, 1956. Her father, Sam Daniels, was a lawyer, and her mother, Marilyn Zenner Daniels, was a secretary. The family lived in Miami until Cornwell was five years old, when Sam Daniels left the family. Cornwell's mother took her and her two brothers to Montreat, North Carolina. Several years later, Marilyn Daniels began a series of hospitalizations for depression, and she entrusted her children to evangelist Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth, who placed them with a family recently returned from missionary work in Africa.

Cornwell attended King College in Tennessee and transferred to Davidson College in Charlotte, North Carolina, on a tennis scholarship that she later gave up. She graduated in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in English. She began a two-year stint as a reporter for the *Charlotte Observer*. She found her niche as a crime reporter, and the North Carolina Press Association honored her with an award for her investigative reporting series on prostitution. In 1980 she married Charles

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Patricia Cornwell (right) with actor Bernadette Peters (left) and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in December, 1999, when all three women were given Police Athletic League women-of-the-year awards. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Cornwell, an English professor seventeen years older than she. In 1981, Charles Cornwell left Davidson College to pursue a divinity degree at Union Theological Seminary. Cornwell accompanied her husband and worked with him to expand a newspaper article that she had written about Ruth Graham into a book published in 1983 as *A Time for Remembering: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham*. The book won the Gold Medalion Book Award for biography sponsored by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

In 1984, Cornwell began writing her first novel about a detective named Joe Constable. Although she had been a crime reporter, she had not experienced crime investigation from the viewpoint of the police. She consulted Dr. Marcella Fierro, a Richmond, Virginia, medical examiner, who hired Cornwell first as a part-time scribe to record autopsies and later as a full-

time computer analyst, a position she held for approximately six years. Cornwell also worked as a volunteer police officer in Richmond and spent three years with homicide detectives on the 4:00 P.M. to midnight shift. Two more novels about Constable followed, and editors repeatedly rejected all three. Finally, Cornwell asked for advice from Sara Ann Fried, an editor with Mysterious Press who had written encouraging rejection letters. She suggested that Cornwell dump her male detective and focus on Dr. Kay Scarpetta, originally a secondary character.

Cornwell's breakthrough came in the summer of 1987 when a series of killings gripped Richmond. One victim was a female physician. In a 1991 interview with Joanne Tangorra of *Publishers Weekly*, Cornwell denied studying the killings but described them as a springboard for thinking about how Scarpetta might cope with a simi-

lar situation. In 1988, Cornwell met *Miami Herald* journalist Edna Buchanan, herself a mystery writer, who suggested an agent for Cornwell's newly completed draft. Scribner's bought *Postmortem* for a six-thousand-dollar advance, and the book was published in 1990, the same year that Cornwell and her husband divorced.

Over the next ten years, Cornwell published eleven Scarpetta novels, two mysteries featuring Andy Brazil, a revision of the Graham biography, a children's book, and *Scarpetta's Winter Table*. Her novels soared to the top of the best-seller lists and were translated into twenty-two languages. She is reported to be one of the highest paid mystery writers and commands an advance of several million dollars per book.

Cornwell has used her earnings to fund her interests and research as well as to donate to charitable causes. Research for her 2002 case study, *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper—Case Closed*, included collecting artifacts and running DNA and forensic tests to prove her theory that painter Walter Sickert was in fact Jack the Ripper. Cornwell later donated her collection of Sickert paintings to Harvard University. She endowed a writing scholarship to Davidson College's Creative Writing Program. In 2006, after her two English bulldogs were treated at Cornell University's Veterinary Hospital, she donated one million dollars to establish the Patricia Cornwell Intensive Care Unit for Companion Animals at the College of Veterinary Medicine. She also helped found the Virginia Institute of Forensic Science and Medicine, serving as chair of the board, and she funded scholarships to the University of Tennessee's National Forensics Academy.

ANALYSIS

Patricia Cornwell's Dr. Kay Scarpetta and Andy Brazil series feature female detectives in new roles: Scarpetta, a medical examiner, and Virginia West and Judy Hammer, police chiefs. The Scarpetta series also broke new ground with its use of forensic technology, much of which Cornwell later used to investigate the series of murders attributed to Jack the Ripper in her true-crime book. The Scarpetta series is the most scrutinized and has attracted praise and censure for the elements that boosted it to the top of the best-seller lists: its narrative technique and its characters.

As the Scarpetta series grew, critics termed the dominance of forensic detail both gripping and formulaic, and the protagonist both compelling and one-dimensional. In a 1991 *Publishers Weekly* interview, Cornwell stated that she was no longer as "infatuated" with forensics and "more interested in the psychological and spiritual nuances of Scarpetta's life." The early volumes in the series are written in the first person from the point of view of Scarpetta. The relentlessly technical and scrupulously precise descriptions of her forensic work function as organizational and moral forces trying to contain the amoral chaos let loose on society by psychopathic and sociopathic killers. They also underscore the less-than-scrupulous nature of the institutions that support these procedures. At times, the crime being investigated takes a back seat to jockeying for position in the institutions dedicated to solving crimes. Scarpetta is a highly educated professional who must fight to keep her position because she is a woman in a male-dominated profession. In later volumes in the series, Cornwell's narrative experiments with multiple points of view help draw back the curtain even further on the people and institutions that seek to maintain the norm. This behind-the-scenes look at what is sometimes a less than single-minded search for truth and justice counterbalances what some critics point out as implausibilities in the plot.

The Andy Brazil series, although not as critically well received, offers a counterpoint. Brazil is an earnest, if blundering, rookie volunteer police officer whose athleticism, stamina, and intellect rival a superhero's. In each volume, solving the killings is second to the routine of the local newspaper, police precinct, government, and underworld. In the debut volume, *Hornet's Nest* (1996), Brazil pops open the trunk of the patrol car instead of activating the siren. On traffic duty he halts a hearse; the coffin slides out and Brazil runs after it. Brazil's enthusiasm influences Chief Judy Hammer and Deputy Chief Virginia West to brush up on their community policing skills, yet he irritates them as he publishes details of the serial killings as well as a profile on West. The trio's personal and professional tensions reveal their altruism and their colleagues' selfishness.

Scarpetta is and is not a typical fictional detective.

She is determined to restore order, yet she is no lone wolf or superhero. She needs her cohorts, even if they are flawed. Scarpetta, her headstrong niece Lucy, and her rough but shrewd colleague, police detective Pete Marino, have messy personal lives. Marriages end in divorce, and love affairs come and go, sometimes violently: Benton Wesley, FBI profiler and Scarpetta's married lover, fakes his own death in *Point of Origin* (1998). Their judgment in all matters is not unerring, but Scarpetta, Lucy, and Marino depend on one another. Each member of the trio contributes information that helps solve the mystery or catch the perpetrator. In *Postmortem*, Marino has been watching Scarpetta's house on a hunch that she may be the next target, and he shoots the murderer before Scarpetta is harmed. In this way, they are as true to type as the more one-dimensional Brazil characters: Their jobs preclude the normal lifestyle that they seek to protect. A *Kirkus Reviews* description of the Scarpetta book *Black Notice* (1999) noted that the "brilliantly paced adventure" complemented the characters that continue to "become more and more themselves."

POSTMORTEM

Postmortem, Cornwell's breakthrough novel, established her protagonist and her technique, and presented two challenges for further works in the series: how to make Scarpetta a more complex character and how to refocus the use of forensic technology. In the novel, a series of killings hit home for Richmond medical examiner Kay Scarpetta when a female physician is murdered. Cornwell uses first-person narration to reveal as much about Scarpetta and her colleagues as she does about the murders. However, Scarpetta appears as absorbed in herself as she is in solving the case: comments about her former husband, her preference for travel by train rather than by airplane, her memory of a nun at her parochial school, and other tidbits are essentially non sequiturs. Because the conversation between Scarpetta and FBI profiler Benton Wesley is so technical, her description of his Florshiem shoes is the best clue to his personality. In contrast, her interaction with Lucy, balanced between technical and emotional topics, reveals her love for her niece as well as Lucy's headstrong personality. Finally, Scarpetta becomes the focus of the killer, who,

in this volume, is a complete unknown. An obsession with Scarpetta is a constant for many of the villains in this series, and several of the villains appear in more than one volume.

BLOW FLY

Beginning with *Blow Fly* (2003), Cornwell started experimenting with narrative techniques such as third-person omniscient narration, which moves the story along from multiple viewpoints, including the killer's. Because *Blow Fly* is the twelfth Scarpetta mystery, readers have had many previous volumes from which to gather details about the main characters' pasts and relationships. The new narrative technique allows the reader to get into each character's head without sacrificing a complex, fast-moving plot. Scarpetta has relocated to Florida. Lucy has grown up and opened her own firm in New York. Marino is retired and discontent. When each of them receives a letter from a nemesis on death row, Jean-Baptiste Chandonne, they reunite. Although the chapters from Chandonne's point of view seem over the top, the chapters written from each of the trio's points of view help probe their motivations as well as the flaws that make them complex characters.

PREDATOR

Predator (2005) is the fourteenth volume in the Scarpetta series. The narrative still switches between viewpoints, but the focus of the plot is on the fine line between good and evil. In this story, Benton Wesley conducts a psychological study of a serial killer. The goal of the study, whose acronym is PREDATOR, is to create the ultimate profile of a predatorial killer. However, as Scarpetta shrewdly suspects, the predator in this story, Hog (*Hand of God*), confounds all expectations. The villain is neither a man nor a bad-to-the-bone psychopath like the Chandonne twins of previous volumes but a victim of evil herself. The novel ends with Scarpetta and Wesley sifting through decomposing bodies in the hope of finding the truth about who, a decade earlier, had tortured and abused the then twelve-year-old Helen Quincy so severely as to trigger multiple personalities, one of whom is a killer. Cornwell stretches the conventions of the genre. Her characters have developed to the point that they need a more nebulous universe to inhabit. Scarpetta

still pursues truth and justice, but right and wrong have become much more difficult to define, and she finds herself defending in some way what in earlier volumes would have been indefensible.

Cecile Mazzucco-Tham

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DR. KAY SCARPETTA SERIES: *Postmortem*, 1990; *Body of Evidence*, 1991; *All That Remains*, 1992; *Cruel and Unusual*, 1993; *The Body Farm*, 1994; *From Potter's Field*, 1995; *Cause of Death*, 1996; *Unnatural Exposure*, 1997; *Point of Origin*, 1998; *Black Notice*, 1999; *Potter's Field*, 2000; *The Last Precinct*, 2000; *Origin*, 2002; *Blow Fly*, 2003; *Trace*, 2004; *Predator*, 2005; *Book of the Dead*, 2006

ANDY BRAZIL SERIES: *Hornet's Nest*, 1996; *Southern Cross*, 1998; *Isle of Dogs*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *At Risk*, 2006

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Life's Little Fable*, 1999

NONFICTION: *A Time for Remembering: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham*, 1983; *An Uncommon Friend: The Authorized Biography of Ruth Bell Graham*, 1983; *Ruth, A Portrait: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham*, 1997; *Scarpetta's Winter Table*, 1998; *Food to Die For: Secrets from Kay Scarpetta's Kitchen*, 2001 (with Marlene Brown); *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper—Case Closed*, 2002

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COLIN COTTERILL

Born: London, England; October 2, 1952

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dr. Siri Paiboun, 2004-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. SIRI PAIBOUN is a seventy-two-year-old Paris-trained Laotian physician who served nearly forty years beside his wife—a rabid revolutionary—as field surgeon to the communist Pathet Lao before they took control of Laos in the mid-1970's. Reluctantly appointed the country's only coroner in late 1975, the widowed Dr. Siri works in Vientiane, from an ill-equipped morgue in a hospital. Cynical, a fan of Georges Simenon's detective Maigret, Siri is white-haired and stooped, with bushy white eyebrows and emerald-green eyes. The son of a Hmong shaman and the re-embodiment of Yeh Ming, a shaman who lived a thousand years before, Siri is a lapsed Buddhist and often dreams of the dead, gaining insight into their personalities and an inkling of how they died.

CHUNDEE "DTUI" CHANTAVONGHEUAN is a trained nurse who serves as Siri's assistant in the morgue. Plain-faced and solidly built, she is the only adult survivor of eleven children and lives with her mother, who suffers from cirrhosis. Dtui is intelligent, kind, and resourceful, with a wicked sense of humor, and a fan of comic books. She has aspirations of furthering her education to become a certified pathologist.

MR. GEUNG is a morgue technician who works with Siri and Dtui. A friendly, hard worker with a cheerful manner, Geung was born with Down syndrome, which limits his learning abilities; however, he possesses an almost photographic memory. He is usually the first to arrive at the morgue each working day.

CIVILAI, two days older than Siri (thus jocularly called "Ai," older brother) and the doctor's best friend, is a member of the ruling politburo. Brilliant, eccentric, scrawny, and bald, he wears large glasses that give him an inquisitive appearance. Civilai shares lunch with Siri daily on the banks of the Mekong River, act-

ing as a sounding board for the doctor's theories, and he often assists his friend in his dealings with the government.

INSPECTOR PHOSY is a member of the National Police Force, and an ally of Dr. Siri. A handsome, slender man in his forties who has the ability to procure items in short supply—such as alcoholic beverages that he shares with Siri as they discuss cases—Phosy tools about Vientiane on a lilac-colored Vespa.

CONTRIBUTION

Colin Cotterill, a career educator in underserved regions of the world and a strong children's advocate, began writing genre fiction early in the twenty-first century. He has drawn considerable attention in short order. His main literary contribution consists of the creation of a unique protagonist operating during a specific—and intriguing—historical time frame, within a colorful, largely unfamiliar cultural environment.

Cotterill knows his territory well, having lived and worked for years among the ordinary folk of Australia, Thailand, Japan, and Laos. A landlocked country, Laos is sandwiched between Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and China. Its capital is Vientiane, situated on the Mekong River along the border of Thailand. The country, the city, and the era—the mid-1970's, after the Pathet Lao, backed by the Soviet Union and North Vietnam, forced King Savang Vatthama to abdicate—are all brought to life by Cotterill's straightforward, ironic, readable prose.

The author paints a geographic, social, and historical backdrop against which a fascinating cast of characters, led by wise man and wise guy Dr. Siri Paiboun, are put into motion. The actors, like breathing humans from any place or time, are prey to all life's foibles, like lust, greed, jealousy, and revenge. They gripe about the weather and the inflation rate. They make errors of judgment and leap to conclusions. Their speech, like that of real people, is peppered with profanity and slang, and they prove by example that despite differences in place, time, and heritage, people are all alike in some ways.

Cotterill's series novels have picked up momentum, both critically and commercially, since *The Coroner's Lunch* debuted to acclaim in 2004. In 2007, following its translation into French, the novel won an award for Best European Crime Novel given by the French National Railways, entitling the author to a year's free rides on French trains. Cotterill's follow-up, *Thirty-three Teeth* (2005), won the Dilys Award as a booksellers' favorite.

BIOGRAPHY

Colin Cotterill was born October 2, 1952, in London and grew up near Wimbledon, where he was an avid reader of comic books, material that inspired his own love of illustration. He attended Berkshire College, earning a teacher-training diploma in 1975, and afterward embarked on a career as a teacher, teaching instructor, and curriculum developer that led him to various parts of the world. He was a physical education instructor in Israel before moving to Australia, where from he taught grades four through six at Corpus Christi in Glenroy, Victoria. In Perth, Western Australia, Cotterill worked with refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma as a teacher with the Migrant Education Department (1978-1979), an experience that spurred his further interest in Southeast Asia. After receiving a graduate diploma at Sydney University, Cotterill worked in New South Wales as an adult migrant educator (1980-1982) and as a materials developer (1985-1986). Between stints, he taught (1982-1983) at Tokai University, Kanagawa, Japan.

From 1986 to 1988, Cotterill served as teacher and curriculum developer at Chiang Mai University in Thailand. For the next two years, working in the television department of Open University in Nonthaburi, Thailand, he was writer, producer, editor, and actor in a nationally broadcast, English-language teaching program in the form of a situation comedy series, *English by Accident*.

Between 1990 and 1994, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Cotterill served as a teacher trainer and curriculum developer for the Ministry of Education at Dong Dok University and Dakse Teachers' College in Vientiane, People's Democratic Republic of Laos. He

returned to Thailand, where from 1995 to 1997 he wrote curricula at Prince of Songkla University in Phuket and became project director for Child-Watch, an organization formed for the protection of sexually abused and exploited children. Cotterill served as a teacher-trainer and materials developer at refugee camps on the Thai-Burmese border, then received a certificate in community welfare from the Sydney Institute of Technology in Australia.

After serving another year with Child-Watch—during which time Cotterill wrote articles and drew cartoons for local publications, and produced a novel and two nonfictional books about child protection, published in English in Thailand—he became involved with ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes). For two years he acted as training coordinator for the organization in Bangkok.

In 2002, Cotterill settled in northern Thailand, where he works as a writer, cartoonist, and occasional graduate teacher at Chiang Mai University. Following the publication of another Thai-published novel, *Evil in the Land Without: From England to Burma, a Monster Seeks Revenge* (2003), Cotterill released his first internationally distributed novel, *The Coroner's Lunch*, which introduced the mystery series character Dr. Siri Paiboun. The series continued with *Thirty-three Teeth*, which won the Dilys Award; *Disco for the Departed* (2006); and *Anarchy and Old Dogs* (2007). He contributed a Dr. Siri short story to *Damn Near Dead: An Anthology of Geezer Noir* (2006) and also published a comic novel, *Pool and Its Role in Asian Communism* (2005), available only in Thailand. Cotterill was married in 2006.

ANALYSIS

Colin Cotterill's major protagonist, Dr. Siri Paiboun, represents the conjunction of several qualities unusual in mystery and detective fiction. At seventy-two years of age, Siri is more elderly than typical sleuths (Agatha Christie's Miss Marple is a notable exception). The doctor is also a communist of long standing, albeit chronically lackadaisical about adhering strictly to the tenets of socialism. Though other communist detectives exist, including Russians such

as Martin Cruz Smith's Arkady Renko and Stuart M. Kaminsky's Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov, Laotian communist sleuths are scarce.

Siri, a Paris-trained physician and longtime field surgeon during successive communist movements, is pressed into service as a coroner despite his advanced age and lack of specialized training. Although he just wants to retire, he is appointed coroner for the entire country, a key official position fraught with political and social consequences. Siri, ever curious, makes the best of a bad situation that features antiquated instruments, eager but meager help from a pair of assistants, a nonexistent budget, and uncooperative bureaucrats. The son of a Hmong shaman and the embodiment of Yeh Ming, an ancient shaman, Siri struggles to understand his own seemingly supernatural powers—he constantly dreams of dead people and gains subtle clues about their demise. He meanwhile has to cope with local superstition and custom, Buddhist beliefs, and atheistic communist thought when traveling to view corpses in the far-flung corners of Laos. His day job is dissecting cadavers brought to the morgue of a hospital in Vientiane, a city of only 150,000, diminished in population because many people fled to neighboring Thailand before the communist takeover.

The milieu of Cotterill's Dr. Siri novels is already intriguing for its ethnic and geographic diversity, its indigenous beliefs and customs, its colorful garb and exotic foodstuffs, and its ancient monuments and temples. Elephants, tigers, bears, extravagant flowers, and gaudy butterflies can be seen in the mountains and jungles and along Mekong riverbanks. The immediate political climate lends a further layer of interest. Each of Cotterill's series novels, beginning with *The Coroner's Lunch*, is set during a time of upheaval in a region of widespread unrest. The Pathet Lao movement that culminated in the forced abdication of the Laotian king mostly escaped notice in the West, grown weary of Southeast Asia after skirmishes in Indochina turned into the full-scale conflict of the Vietnam War. The situation provides opportunities for clashes among various factions: primitive tribes, Communist true believers, bureaucrats and paper-pushers, peasants, Buddhist monks, and ordinary Laotians of every stripe.

Siri—grown cynical but not overly crusty from hav-

ing seen much in his years—moves restlessly among the throng. He has a forceful, direct personality and often must swim against the flow of a rigidly structured society to make waves. Siri is blessed with a subtle, sarcastic wit (his zingers often go right over the heads of his superiors), an insatiable curiosity, an occult connection to mysterious spiritual forces, an intuitive nature, and superior deductive abilities. A cadre of regulars assists him in the pursuit of truth—practical Dtui, cheerful Mr. Geung, efficient Phosy, and his brilliant, witty boyhood chum Civilai—each of whom brings particular skills and lends a distinct personality to the mix.

Realistic dialogue and dark humor are two final indispensable ingredients to the popularity of Cotterill's series. The author has a talent for description and is particularly skilled at matching speech to character in such a way that attributions are seldom necessary: A reader always knows who is speaking. Siri's witty, anarchistic observations, Dtui's sarcastic remarks, and Civilai's grouching comments are echoed in the novel's pun-filled chapter headings, which add to the fun (chapters in *Thirty-three Teeth*, for example, are titled "Tomb Sweet Tomb," "A Day at the Maul," and "Das Capital Royal"). A continuing humorous theme is the sweltering Laotian countryside. This standard exchange, apparently the native manner of greeting, recurs so many times in so many different places between so many different characters that the reader begins to anticipate it:

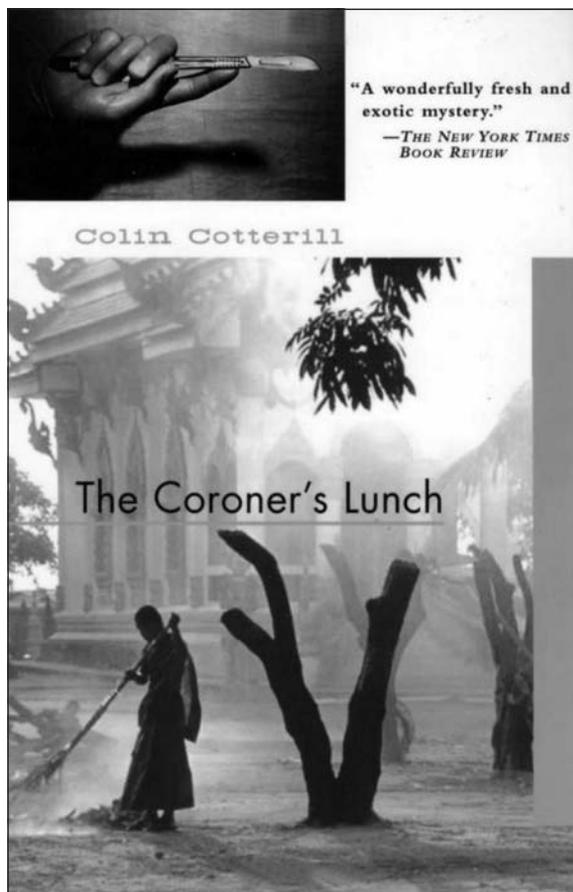
"Hot, isn't it?"

"Damned hot."

Those terse words serve to explain much about Laos and its people: the preoccupation with weather, the natural friendliness of citizens, the fatalistic acceptance of the unchangeable, and the conformity to long tradition. They also underscore the multiple appeals of Cotterill's mystery fiction.

THE CORONER'S LUNCH

The Coroner's Lunch, the first novel in the Dr. Siri Paiboun series, introduces Dr. Siri, the feisty elderly coroner with almost supernatural powers of deduction, thanks to his allegedly being the reincarnation of Yeh Ming, a powerful Hmong shaman. As is typical throughout the series, Siri is presented with a variety of diverse cases to resolve to the satisfaction of a



mistrustful, paranoiac government in transition from kingdom to communist bureaucracy, despite the fact that he has had no training in pathology and is provided with few supplies and inadequate tools to do a proper job. In the initial novel in the series, Siri must work to unravel the truth behind the accidental death of a fisherman, the appearance of three bodies that rise from the Mekong River after being dropped into the water with Chinese bombs tied around their ankles, the sudden demise of the wife of a high-ranking official, and the apparent suicide of the man's mistress. Siri must also cope with efforts from different sources to prevent his work: bodies that are removed from the morgue's freezer, autopsy notes gone missing, sabotage, assassination attempts, and administrative roadblocks.

A fascinating glimpse into a little-known society during events largely ignored in the West following the fiasco of the Vietnam War, *The Coroner's Lunch*

sets in motion a cast of well-drawn characters with individual mannerisms and speech patterns that bring them to vibrant life. The novel skillfully incorporates colorful Laotian culture, history, and geography while capturing the atmosphere of a volatile era.

THIRTY-THREE TEETH

Thirty-three Teeth, the second novel in the series (the title refers to the legend that Buddha, like Dr. Siri, was alleged to have an extra tooth, a sign of great power) witnesses the hero involved in a number of diverse cases. The coroner enlists the aid of his usual allies—Dtui, Gueng, Phosy, and Civilai—to reconstruct the events surrounding and the causes behind a series of mysterious deaths: two men found together beside a crushed bicycle, a pair of women clawed to death by either an escaped bear or a marauding tiger, and a pair of charred corpses found in Luang Prabang, apparently shot before burning.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DR. SIRI PAIBOUN SERIES: *The Coroner's Lunch*, 2004; *Thirty-three Teeth*, 2005; *Disco for the Departed*, 2006; *Anarchy and Old Dogs*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Evil in the Land Without: From England to Burma, a Monster Seeks Revenge*, 2003; *Pool and Its Role in Asian Communism*, 2005

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Kirkus Reviews. Review of *The Coroner's Lunch*, by Colin Cotterill. 72, no. 16 (August 15, 2004): 779. The reviewer terms the novel "an embarrassment of riches" for its unique sleuth, political satire, and droll comedy.

Klett, Rex E. "Mystery: The Noir Detectives." Review of *The Coroner's Lunch*, by Colin Cotterill. *Li-*

brary Journal 129, no. 20 (December, 2004): 94-95. A brief, favorable review, among reviews of eight other works by contemporary noir writers, which cites as strengths the engaging protagonist, the humor, and the alien setting.

Sennett, Frank. Review of *Anarchy and Old Dogs*, by Colin Cotterill. *Booklist* 103, no. 17 (May 1, 2007): 20-21. Siri's investigation involves a possible plot to overthrow the communist government in this

work, which the reviewer described as the most thoughtful in the series as it addresses issues concerning the newly formed communist government. Stasio, Marilyn. "Crime: Immaterial Witness." Review of *The Coroner's Lunch*, by Colin Cotterill. *The New York Times Book Review*, December 26, 2004, 22. A highly favorable review of *The Coroner's Lunch*, called a "wonderfully fresh and exotic mystery."

GEORGE HARMON COXE

Born: Olean, New York; April 23, 1901

Died: Old Lyme, Connecticut; January 30, 1984

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; police procedural; private investigator; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jack "Flashgun" Casey, 1934-1964

Kent Murdoch, 1935-1973

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JACK "FLASHGUN" CASEY, a photographer for the Boston *Globe*, later joins the Boston *Express*. Casey weighs in at 215 pounds and stands six feet, two inches tall. A hard-drinking, quick-tempered, but thoroughly professional newspaperman, Casey has a profound contempt for phonies and an energetic and persistent loyalty for a friend in trouble.

KENT MURDOCK, the picture chief for the Boston *Courier-Herald*, is about thirty years old when he first appears; throughout the series, he never goes beyond the age of forty. Darkly handsome, cultured, and sophisticated, he is primarily a cerebral detective, although by no means of the Sherlock Holmes/C. Auguste Dupin school. Murdoch handles himself well in a fight, but he fights only as a last resort.

CONTRIBUTION

The crime novels of George Harmon Coxe offer a marked departure from the hard-boiled school of

Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Although the action is brisk and the dialogue crisp, Coxe's stories are never sensationally violent, tending more toward carefully constructed plots that follow a more workmanlike approach to criminal detection. There is a decided emphasis on clearly developed characterization and a meticulous depiction of physical setting. It was Coxe who introduced into detective fiction the newspaper photographer as amateur sleuth, a refreshing variation on the familiar former-cop-turned-private-eye pattern.

BIOGRAPHY

George Harmon Coxe was born on April 23, 1901, in Olean, New York, the son of George H. Coxe and Harriet C. Coxe. After attending public schools in Olean and the Free Academy in nearby Elmira, Coxe spent the academic year of 1919-1920 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. The following year, he attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Coxe left Cornell without finishing and drifted into a variety of odd jobs, including work in a lumber camp and later on an automobile assembly line. During this period he also wrote two stories, which he sold to *Detective Story Magazine*.

Moving west in 1922, Coxe became a journalist for the Santa Monica *Outlook* and later joined the Los Angeles *Express*. Moving back to New York, Coxe worked for the Utica *Observer-Dispatch*, the New

York *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, and the *Elmira Star-Gazette*. In 1927, Coxe left newspaper work and wrote and sold advertising for Barta Press, an agency in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1929, he married Elizabeth Fowler.

In 1932 Coxe gave up advertising and became a full-time writer, turning out crime and detective stories for *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines. From 1932 until the publication of his first crime novel in 1935, he published more than fifty detective stories. From 1935 to 1976, he published sixty-three crime novels, twenty-one of them featuring the exploits of photographer Kent Murdock. From 1936 to 1938 (and briefly in 1944-1945), Coxe worked in Hollywood as a screenwriter. He shared screen credit for *Arsène Lupin Returns* (1938) and for *The Hidden Eye* (1946), for which he had written the original story.

During World War II, Coxe wrote scripts for a radio series, *The Commandos*, and an audition script for *Casey, Crime Photographer*, a radio drama based on the Flashgun Casey stories. In 1945, he served as a special war correspondent in the Pacific theater. After the war, Coxe expanded his interests, writing stories on subjects other than detective fiction for more sophisticated magazines such as *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In 1952, Coxe was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, and in 1964 he received the organization's Grand Masters Award. Largely inactive after the late 1970's, he died on January 30, 1984.

ANALYSIS

George Harmon Coxe's brief career as a newspaperman proved a determining factor in the style and structure of his detective fiction. Avoiding the more scientific, logical approach of the Arthur Conan Doyle school, Coxe concentrated on the development of characterization, personality, and human fallibility. His victims generally die in conventional ways: They are shot, stabbed, or occasionally, as in *Eye Witness* (1950), bludgeoned to death. A cast of characters is assembled; they are then tracked and observed by the detective hero. The plot proceeds like a journalism primer, raising and gradually answering a series of who, what, when, where, why, and how questions.

"RETURN ENGAGEMENT"

Coxe had been publishing detective stories for more than two years when he sold the first Flashgun Casey story, "Return Engagement," to *Black Mask* in the spring of 1934. The idea of a news photographer as a detective hero was a genuine innovation in the crime-fiction market, then largely the province of sleuthing lawyers, reporters, and private investigators. It came directly from Coxe's personal experience. From his own days as a reporter, he knew that "while the reporter with his pad and pencil could describe a warehouse . . . fire from a safe distance," it was the photographer who accompanied him who "had to edge far closer to get a negative that would merit reproduction." For Coxe, it was a case of giving the photographer his due.

The other fictional creation for which Coxe is known is Kent Murdock. Both Murdock and Casey are Boston newspaper photographers, but it was Casey who brought Coxe a strong following from the time of his debut in *Black Mask*. Closer to the hard-boiled school of Hammett and Chandler than is Murdock, Casey is frequently isolated by self-induced conflict, having antagonized editors, police, and the criminal element. For all of his rough edges, however, Casey is a highly appealing character, both compassionate and sentimental. Like Murdock, he is a combat veteran, having served as an American Expeditionary Force sergeant in France in 1918. Both Casey and Murdock are for the most part uncynical and, when the question arises, patriotic. Although wartime combat seems a *sine qua non*, Coxe's emphasis lies in developing his two most memorable creations, shaping interesting, clearly delineated characters, rather than in portraying action and violence.

MURDER WITH PICTURES

Kent Murdock first appeared in the 1935 novel *Murder with Pictures* and is what Coxe himself has termed a "smoothed-up version" of Jack Casey—the Boston photographer polished and reshaped for an expanded audience. Coxe's reasons for the reshaping were more practical than they were literary. He believed that Murdock, "not unlike Casey in many ways . . . but better dressed and better mannered," would be "more appropriate for a book."

Ironically, Casey has been the more enduring of the two. Although only six novels were written about him, Casey appeared in dozens of short stories as well as a radio series and two feature films: *Women Are Trouble* (1936) and *Here's Flash Casey* (1937). One of the reasons many readers may have identified with Casey is that unlike most fictional detectives, he ages over the years. At his inception he is about thirty-two. By the time he appears in *Deadly Image* (1964), his hair is graying and he has put on weight. By Coxe's own reckoning, Casey in the final book is about forty-five, but his wit and perception remain as sharp as ever.

For a time, Coxe apparently entertained the possibility of a Mr. and Mrs. Kent Murdock as a detective team, perhaps along the lines of Hammett's Nick and Nora Charles. Joyce Murdock, bright, independent, and self-reliant, appears in *Mrs. Murdock Takes a Case* (1941), but she evidently proved to be more dominant a personality than Murdock, or Coxe for that matter, could endure. By the time *The Jade Venus* (1945) was published, Joyce Murdock has been dropped by the author, a similar fate having befallen Hestor, Murdock's estranged first wife, who appeared in *Murder with Pictures* at the beginning of the Murdock series.

Coxe developed other series, although none of them was quite as popular as the Murdock/Casey ventures: Paul Standish, medical examiner; Sam Crombie, a stolid but persistent investigator; Max Hale, a somewhat reluctant detective; and Jack Fenner, Murdock's fearless but good-natured sidekick. Fenner is a private eye who appears in *Four Frightened Women* (1939) and *The Charred Witness* (1942). He is featured in three of the last five of Coxe's novels, most notably in *Fenner* (1971), in which he takes center stage.

Approximately half of the novels Coxe wrote are not series novels; nevertheless, they are characteristically well structured, if somewhat predictable. Often the non-series books are set in exotic locales. Sixteen novels alone are set in the Caribbean, most notably *Murder in Havana* (1943), *One Minute Past Eight* (1957), and *Woman with a Gun* (1972).

BLACK MASK MAGAZINE

Coxe's development as a writer of mystery and detective fiction gained its greatest impetus from his connection with *Black Mask* magazine, an association that

began early in 1934. Coxe had been writing for pulp magazines for several years, and he had produced more than thirty short stories for publications such as *Top Notch*, *Complete Stories*, and *Detective Fiction Weekly*; it was not until his association with Joseph Thompson Shaw, who edited *Black Mask* from 1926 to 1936, however, that he further developed and enhanced the lean, economical style and the rigorous, stoic image of the central character that would become primary characteristics of his novels. Coxe was one of the writers whom Shaw was particularly proud of recruiting, along with Frederick Nebel, Paul Cain, and Lester Dent. Yet among Shaw's more notable prizes in his stable of writers were Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Erle Stanley Gardner. Hammett in particular was the example Shaw held up to Coxe and other *Black Mask* writers, specifically requesting them to study the economy of his prose. Coxe's style was thus developed through the process of imitation, an imitation of the better aspects of the prevailing pulp standard. Through this observation of his colleagues' work, Coxe perfected the ability to write a distinctively American prose, developing an acute sense of the rhythm and idiom of the urban American vernacular.

What distinguishes Coxe from the others, however, is the delineation of his hero. The heroes in the plots of the stories and novels of his *Black Mask* colleagues often went Hammett one better, having a hero who not only accepted but also exulted in violence. Each beating and shooting of a "hood" gave clear satisfaction because it was done in support of what was "good."

The world of *Black Mask* crime and detection was essentially nihilistic, a place where people could exert no real control over their existence. Stoicism and violence were often depicted as the only alternatives in a life that seemed to offer little of significance beyond the passing of time. Coxe's protagonists made their way in this world, and although formidable and ready for action, they also seemed to subscribe to a code of unwritten but civilized behavior and values—the code of a gentleman. Clearly, Coxe's heroes owe something to such rugged but refined and polished crime fighters as Richard Harding Davis's Van Bibber and the heroes of the adventure novels of John Buchan.

THE BIG GAMBLE

The hero of a Coxe novel, while considerably less hard-boiled than the typical tough guy found in the work of his contemporaries, possesses all the more admirable requisites of the pulp-fiction hero of the day: chivalry, personal loyalty, and unremitting physical courage. Violence is generally a defensive reaction, a secondary rather than primary solution to a problem, always limited to what is necessary—and no more. Consider the following example, from *The Big Gamble* (1958), which is typical of the way in which a Coxe protagonist (in this case, Murdock) handles himself in a tight spot. Having discovered a man searching his apartment, Murdock apprehends him. As Murdock escorts him to the door, the man, whose name is Herrick, pulls a punch

that would have floored Murdock if he hadn't been warned by the look he had seen. It was not a clever move because it was a roundhouse punch that started too far back and took too much time. Murdock pulled his chin back. The fist missed by two inches, the force of the blow pulling the big man off balance, and leaving his shoulders and head partly turned. Before he could recover, Murdock stepped in and slammed the side of the gun against the side of Herrick's head, not savagely but with authority.

Herrick leaves peacefully, having been restrained "not savagely but with authority," a phrase that sums up the standard method of operation for a Coxe protagonist in a desperate situation.

Some critics have found Coxe's work anachronistic, viewing the novels of the 1950's through the 1970's as artifacts of the 1930's. For many of Coxe's followers, however, that fidelity to the pace and structure of an earlier time is part of the author's appeal, and his loyal readers are familiar and comfortable with the pattern. His novels are always reliable entertainment: fast-paced, sharply detailed, cleverly plotted, consistently plausible. They are, in the final analysis, detective stories told in a style that is formal yet deceptively simple. Coxe's readers know what to expect, and he rarely disappoints them.

Richard Keenan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JACK "FLASHGUN" CASEY SERIES: *Silent Are the Dead*, 1942; *Murder for Two*, 1943; *Flash Casey, Detective*, 1946; *Error of Judgment*, 1961 (also known as *One Murder Too Many*); *The Man Who Died Too Soon*, 1962; *Deadly Image*, 1964

KENT MURDOCK SERIES: *Murder with Pictures*, 1935; *The Barotique Mystery*, 1936 (also known as *Murdock's Acid Test*); *The Camera Clue*, 1937; *The Glass Triangle*, 1940; *Mrs. Murdock Takes a Case*, 1941; *The Jade Venus*, 1945; *The Fifth Key*, 1947; *The Hollow Needle*, 1948; *Lady Killer*, 1949; *Eye Witness*, 1950; *The Widow Had a Gun*, 1951; *The Crimson Clue*, 1953; *Focus on Murder*, 1954; *Murder on Their Minds*, 1957; *The Big Gamble*, 1958; *The Last Commandment*, 1960; *The Hidden Key*, 1963; *The Reluctant Heiress*, 1965; *An Easy Way to Go*, 1969

MAX HALE SERIES: *Murder for the Asking*, 1939; *The Lady Is Afraid*, 1940

SAM CROMBIE SERIES: *The Frightened Fiancée*, 1950; *The Impetuous Mistress*, 1958

JACK FENNER SERIES: *No Place for Murder*, 1975; *Four Frightened Women*, 1939 (also known as *The Frightened Woman*); *The Charred Witness*, 1942; *Fenner*, 1971

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1941-1950 • *No Time to Kill*, 1941; *Assignment in Guiana*, 1942; *Alias the Dead*, 1943; *Murder in Havana*, 1943; *The Groom Lay Dead*, 1944; *Woman at Bay*, 1945; *Dangerous Legacy*, 1946; *Fashioned for Murder*, 1947; *Venturous Lady*, 1948; *Inland Passage*, 1949

1951-1960 • *The Man Who Died Twice*, 1951; *Never Bet Your Life*, 1952; *Uninvited Guest*, 1953; *Death at the Isthmus*, 1954; *Top Assignment*, 1955; *Man on a Rope*, 1956; *Suddenly a Widow*, 1956; *One Minute Past Eight*, 1957; *Slack Tide*, 1959; *One Way Out*, 1960

1961-1974 • *Moment of Violence*, 1961; *Mission of Fear*, 1962; *One Hour to Kill*, 1963; *With Intent to Kill*, 1965; *The Ring of Truth*, 1966; *The Candid Imposter*, 1968; *Double Identity*, 1970; *Woman with a Gun*, 1972; *The Silent Witness*, 1973; *The Inside Man*, 1974

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *Casey, Crime Photographer*, 1943-1952; *The Commandos* 1943-1950, 1954-1955 (radio series based on his fiction)

SCREENPLAYS: *Arsène Lupin Returns*, 1938 (with James Kevin McGuinness and Howard Emmett Rogers); *The Hidden Eye*, 1945 (with Harry Ruskin)

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ROBERT CRAIS

Born: Independence, Louisiana; June 20, 1953

Also wrote as Elvis Cole; Jerry Gret Samouche

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Elvis Cole and Joe Pike, 1987-
Carol Starkey, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ELVIS COLE is a wisecracking, straight-talking West Hollywood private investigator in his thirties said to resemble Kevin Costner, Moe Howard, and Errol Flynn. A Vietnam War veteran with Ranger training and a former security guard, he lives with a cantankerous cat and has a fondness for loud Hawaiian shirts, cooking, classic rock, Disney memorabilia, and his 1966 yellow Corvette. His physical and mental prowess (he is unafraid of violent confrontation) is honed by his practice of the Eastern arts of hatha yoga and tai chi.

JOE PIKE is Cole's muscle and his closest friend, an

enigmatic presence and a victim of childhood abuse. Formerly a Force Reconnaissance Marine in Vietnam and a Los Angeles police officer with an inscrutable quietness and a compelling code of integrity, Pike is now a mercenary with an extensive résumé in paramilitary covert operations. A vegetarian who never smiles, Pike listens to the Doors and always wears massive pilot sunglasses. He is tattooed with red arrows along his deltoids to signify his credo: Never Back Up. He shadows with predatory skills and kills without hesitation

CAROL STARKEY is a tough, street-hardened detective in the Los Angeles Police Department Criminal Conspiracy section whose assignment is bomb squad investigations. Currently under the care of therapists, she is haunted by the death of her partner and lover at an explosion site at which she herself was horrifically scarred—indeed, she thinks of herself as a sort of Frankenstein, put back together and returned from the dead. She wrestles with vivid and violent nightmares and copes through a self-destructive regimen of junk food, prescription ulcer medicine, and gin.

CONTRIBUTION

Before Robert Crais turned to detective fiction in the late 1980's, he had for more than a decade enjoyed a lucrative career as one of network television's premiere scriptwriters, developing scripts for top-rated crime shows, most prominently *L.A. Law* (1986-1994), *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987), *Baretta* (1975-1978), *Cagney and Lacey* (1982-1988), and *Miami Vice* (1984-1989). That long and successful association helped shape the elements of Crais's signature narratives: snappy dialogue, hip characters, fast-paced storytelling, ingenious plot twists, and sustained momentum toward a dramatic shoot-out/showdown. In addition, Crais's long background in the Hollywood environment gives his prose a postmodern edge as he alludes to a wide range of classic films, television, and popular music. From Ernest Hemingway, Crais mastered a prose line that is economic and clean of ornamentation, and from John Steinbeck, he adopted a dark vision of a morally bankrupt universe in which nobility, trust, and compassion are rare.

However, it was Crais's love of the hard-boiled detective fiction of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett that influenced the creation of Elvis Cole, who solves crimes as much with relentless investigation and hard evidence as with intuitive perceptions and a sixth sense about character. A solitary moral agent in an otherwise seamy and mercenary universe, Cole sees himself as the protector of the vulnerable, particularly imperiled women and lost children. Unlike Chandler and Hammett, Crais renders modern Los Angeles, despite its criminal excesses, with keen compassion, respecting its diversity, its energy, its hard neon beauty, its cheesy glitz, and its unrelenting cool.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Kyle Crais grew up near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in a blue-collar family made up largely of Gulf Coast oil refinery engineers and beat police officers. An avid reader as a child, he purchased at the age of fifteen a used copy of Raymond Chandler's *The Little Sister* (1949), in which a distraught woman from Kansas approaches Philip Marlowe to help find her brother. The hard-edged prose style entranced the young Crais, and he decided that he would be a writer.

While supporting himself through a series of menial jobs and attempting college, he produced homemade comic books, amateur films, and even short fiction, for which he received scores of rejection letters. Crais decided he needed to head West to achieve whatever writing success he could. In 1976, he arrived in Hollywood and found work almost immediately writing for television—ironic as he did not own a television at the time and learned scriptwriting by watching department store televisions and studying sample scripts. Eventually he worked on landmark law-and-order series, including *Baretta*, *Cagney and Lacey*, and *Hill Street Blues*; a script developed for the latter was nominated for an Emmy.

Given his childhood dream of being a novelist, Crais grew uncomfortable with the collaborative dynamic of television production. It was the sudden death of his father in 1985 that ultimately convinced Crais to try novel writing. His mother, long dependent on his father, was suddenly left vulnerable, a complex dilemma that Crais would treat fictionally in his first novel, *The Monkey's Raincoat* (1987), which introduced private investigator Elvis Cole, who helps a distraught wife in her thirties find her husband and son who disappeared after her husband, an out-of-work Hollywood agent, got involved with loan sharks and drug kingpins. The novel—an homage to classic Chandler (Cole speaks in a pitch-perfect hard-boiled first person) and part of the renaissance in noir fiction initiated by Ross Macdonald and Robert B. Parker—found immediate success, unusual in that it was published in paperback without major fanfare. It was recognized with numerous best first mystery novel nominations and won the Macavity Award. Over the next ten years, Crais produced six new Cole titles, dissecting the decadent lifestyles of the entertainment industry, the corruption and moral indifference of the police department, the unrelenting pressure of gang violence and organized crime, and the mayhem of street drug trafficking and the skin trade.

With each title, Crais earned more success, becoming something of a celebrity himself. There was some criticism of his formulaic plots and his preference for action over character—both reminiscent of series television—as well as his disinclination to probe the inte-

rior life of his central characters. Despite the presumed intimacy of first-person narration, Elvis Cole remained an inaccessible character known more for quirky habits and smart-alecky banter. It was the publication of *L.A. Requiem* (1999) that changed that perception. This groundbreaking work marked a new maturity. It was far more sophisticated in its structure, having multiple points of view, and explored for the first time not only the interior psychology of Elvis Cole but also the long and troubling background of Cole's sidekick Joe Pike, who until this novel had been a shadowy, if eccentric presence.

In *Demolition Angel* (2000), Crais introduced a new series centering on Carol Starkey, a bomb squad detective/technician. That permitted Crais to examine a classic premise of noir fiction—the sudden intrusion of violence—and the complex psychology of lives spent on the edge, anticipating death, brutal and messy, as part of every working day. In a later title, Crais brought Elvis Cole and Carol Starkey together in *The Forgotten Man* (2005), involving an investigation of the homicide of an unidentified indigent in a run-down hotel, who claimed shortly before he died that he was Cole's estranged father. Crais has written nonseries novels, most prominently *Hostage* (2001), a taut psychological thriller (later a major film) about a hostage negotiator whose family is taken hostage during a standoff involving the family of a bookkeeper for a mob boss. Crais continues to develop Elvis Cole, and unlike other long-running serials that succumb to parody or improbabilities, the plots and the character development have become more intricate, and Elvis Cole, who began the series as a kind of Peter Pan figure, has emerged as a nuanced and psychologically compelling adult.

ANALYSIS

Early in the Elvis Cole series, Robert Crais's dedication to the craft and vision of classic hard-boiled detective-fiction writers is apparent. Cole maintains a private code of integrity and genuine compassion within a Southern California rank with corruption, deceit, violence, and greed. For all his edgy swagger, his hip cynicism, and his violent cunning, Cole espouses a romantic code that values friendship, particularly to

his enigmatic partner Joe Pike, and duty as a kind of moral authenticity maintained against a universe of cutthroat mercenaries and unrelieved pretense. Like the classic hard-boiled detectives, Cole finds his greatest calling—and his deepest professional reward—in rescuing beautiful damsels in distress and lost or kidnapped children. Cole has little interest in puzzling out the psychology of the criminal mind and a crime's motives and rationales but rather accepts as a given that fallible people—Crais's preferred adjective is "lost"—are capable of committing evil. World-weary, Cole refuses to concede. The associations that Crais makes between Cole and childhood, through references to Peter Pan and characters from familiar children's books, cartoon classics, and Disney films, suggest that Cole's unshakeable faith in fundamental values stems from a childlike faith in the ability to triumph over a world of corrupt adults. As the series developed, Crais has allowed Cole to evolve from a hip outsider with an engaging cynicism to a complex character who comes to accept as emotionally necessary the fragile bond to significant others, not only Joe Pike but also to a Louisiana lawyer and part-time television personality named Lucy Chenier, who joined the series in *Voodoo River* (1995).

In the Carol Starkey series, Crais investigates the darkest implications of Cole's problematic moral vision. If Cole, amid a chaotic world busy with crime, is cool, calm, and together (as suggested by his Eastern rituals), Starkey is fragmented, troubled, and coming apart. She is not a private investigator. As a police officer, she must exist within the harrowing reality of mayhem. As a bomb squad detective, she is involved in disarming devices and therefore plunged into criminal activity. She is constantly aware of crime and its consequences because of the scars that she bears, the ghastly cross-stitching on her body that is the result of her own brush with death. Her considerable struggles with private demons—most notably her troubling dreams, her alcohol abuse, and her testy aloofness—suggest a kind of anti-Cole. Whereas with Cole, the truth, finally revealed, heals, with Starkey, the truth hurts, the very message left at a bombing site by the serial bomber in *Demolition Angel*.

THE MONKEY'S RAINCOAT

In the first book of the series, *The Monkey's Raincoat*, Elvis Cole helps Ellen Lang track down her missing son and husband, a hapless talent agent who has become involved in a vast underworld of drug running to help continue his Hollywood lifestyle. The private investigator is first defined to readers through the title of the work itself. Inspired by a haiku by Matsuo Bashō (“Winter downpour / Even the monkey/ needs a raincoat”), it suggests Cole’s function as a protector, both to Ellen and to her young son. First Ellen’s son, Perry, then Ellen herself are kidnapped as part of a negotiation for two missing kilograms of prime cocaine. As Cole investigates, he affirms a classic theme of noir fiction: how strikingly ordinary people can get involved in nefarious actions and tangled in criminal activity. However, the far larger moral narrative here is the gradual evolution of Ellen out of dependency and midlife confusion into confidence and self-assertion; she will be the one to shoot the syndicate boss who threatens her son. This moral evolution is guided by Cole, who along the way becomes her lover. In the end, after Cole and Joe Pike stage a sophisticated paramilitary raid on the drug lord’s compound to rescue Ellen, she uncovers a difficult truth about her dead husband—how desperately he had tried to protect his son from the drug runners—that completes her moral maturation.

L.A. REQUIEM

By positioning the shadowy Joe Pike at the center of *L.A. Requiem*, Crais virtually reinvented the Elvis Cole series at the point where, after a half dozen titles, its formula was starting to wear. Pike asks Cole to help him find a missing woman, a powerful Latino community leader’s daughter, who is subsequently found shot dead along a jogging path. As the dead woman’s past romantic ties to Pike surface, Crais departs from the restricting structural device of first person to explore not only Pike’s difficult childhood but also his brief stint as an officer with the Los Angeles Police Department twelve years earlier. Pike had been suspected of killing his partner during the arrest of a pedophile when his partner threatened the child molester with vigilante-style punishment. When the missing woman’s death is linked to a series of killings and a

witness places Pike at the scene, the police, who still hold a grudge against Pike, are quite willing to pin the killings on him. Cole, who drops his characteristic flip humor in this case, must examine the value of friendship and the cost of betrayal and reacquaint himself with the necessary element of sacrifice in any relationship and the difficult trick of trust. Without sacrificing the hard edge of a detective thriller, the narrative expands the genre’s scope by investigating the damage done by secrets and ultimately how criminal investigations, even the most diligent, lead to resolution but seldom to understanding.

DEMOLITION ANGEL

Published on the heels of the critical success of *L.A. Requiem*, *Demolition Angel* continued that novel’s exploration of the implusive nature of the past, the dark power of secrets, and the difficult act of self-forgiveness. Ironically, given the on-the-spot nature of Carol Starkey’s detective duties defusing live bombs, she is lost in the past, haunted by her lover’s death nearly three years earlier. That struggle—to make peace with her own history and to accept her scarred self—is the centerpiece narrative. A disgruntled bomb squad detective tries to rig an explosive to kill another detective, who is sleeping with his wife, by mimicking the modus operandi (MO) of a serial bomber who, as it turns out, takes umbrage in having his work amateurishly copied. The real bomber, a monomaniac who yearns to be listed among the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) Most Wanted, comes to Los Angeles to set things right. However, for Starkey, the investigation into the serial bomber (she comes to communicate with him through an Internet chat room in chilling exchanges that recall Hannibal Lechter and Clarice Starling) is as much an investigation into herself and her past via her growing interest in a rogue FBI agent, Pell, whose sight had been permanently damaged by one of the serial bomber’s earliest devices and who now vows revenge. In the end, a violent confrontation with the bomber costs Pell his sight entirely; dependent and vulnerable, he accepts Starkey’s invitation to move in with her. The closing scene is not the typical procedural resolution: Starkey and Pell make love in the dark, and the blind Pell quietly tells Starkey, “You’re beautiful.” It is a complicated, psychologically compelling resolution that



marks Crais as a novelist interested in the subtle evolution of character rather than as a former television scriptwriter interested in the flashy spectacle of action.

Joseph Dewey

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ELVIS COLE/JOE PIKE SERIES: *The Monkey's Raincoat*, 1987; *Stalking the Angel*, 1989; *Lullaby Town*, 1992; *Free Fall*, 1993; *Voodoo River*, 1995; *Sunset Express*, 1996; *Indigo Slam*, 1997; *L.A. Requiem*, 1999; *The Forgotten Man*, 2005; *The Watchman*, 2007

CAROL STARKEY SERIES: *Demolition Angel*, 2000; *The Last Detective*, 2003

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Hostage*, 2001; *The Two-Minute Rule*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

TELEPLAYS: *In Self Defense*, 1987; *Cross of Fire*, 1989

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JOHN CREASEY

Born: Southfields, Surrey, England; September 17, 1908

Died: Bodenham, Salisbury, England; June 9, 1973

Also wrote as Gordon Ashe; M. E. Cooke; Margaret Cooke; Henry St. John Cooper; Norman Deane; Elise Fecamps; Robert Caine Frazer; Patrick Gill; Michael Halliday; Charles Hogarth; Brian Hope; Colin Hughes; Kyle Hunt; Abel Mann; Peter Manton; J. J. Marris; James Marsden; Richard Martin; Anthony Morton; Ken Ranger; William K. Reilly; Tex Riley; Jeremy York

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage; police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Department Z, 1933-1953

Baron John Mannering, 1937-1979

Sexton Blake, 1937-1943

The Toff, 1938-1978

Patrick Dawlish, 1939-1977

Bruce Murdoch, 1939-1972

Roger West, 1942-1978

Dr. Palfrey, 1942-1973

Liberator, 1943-1945

Martin and Richard Fane, 1951-1953

Commander George Gideon, 1955-1976

Mark Kilby, 1959-1960

Dr. Emmanuel Cellini, 1965-1976

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

BARON JOHN MANNERING, an art dealer, is married to Lorna Mannering, a painter. Wealthy and polished, he moves easily among the highest levels of society, but he is kind and considerate toward the humble people who sometimes consult him because they know that they can trust him, whether for an honest valuation of a painting or for help in a perilous situation.

THE HONOURABLE RICHARD "THE TOFF" ROLLISSON, a wealthy man-about-town who divides his time between Mayfair and London's East End. Tall, handsome, and polished, he is tough enough to intimidate the most vicious criminal; yet when his investigations

carry him into the East End, he is often defended by those whom he has charitably helped in the past.

PATRICK DAWLISH, a British detective as famous as Sherlock Holmes, who operates first as deputy assistant commissioner for crime at Scotland Yard and later independently as an unofficial investigator in cooperation with the Yard. Dawlish is a huge, polite man, handsome despite a once-broken nose, which reminds the reader that he is capable of sudden and decisive action. He is devoted to his wife, Felicity.

ROGER WEST, an inspector at Scotland Yard, nicknamed "Handsome," is a large, powerful man who has two passions, his work and his family. The demands of his job have put great stress on his relationship with his wife, Janet, and at one time a divorce seems inevitable. As the series progresses, however, Janet comes to accept the situation, partly, no doubt, because their two sons, Martin and Richard, seem to thrive despite their father's unpredictable absences and his too-predictable exhaustion when he is at home.

DR. STANISLAUS ALEXANDER "SAP" PALFREY, a specialist in pulmonary diseases, is a pale, round-shouldered, scholarly-looking man with a weak chin, whose real strength is not immediately apparent. He is actually the brilliant and decisive head of Z5, a secret international organization designed to defeat the forces that threaten the peace of the world. In the grimmest situations, he is almost godlike in his serenity; generally he has contingency plans, but always he has faith in the rightness of his cause.

COMMANDER GEORGE GIDEON of Scotland Yard's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is the hero of John Creasey's most admired series. Gideon is a dogged crime fighter who is often impatient with the politically motivated demands of his superiors. Although Gideon and his wife, Kate, have six children, she cannot forget the loss of a seventh, a loss she blames on Gideon's devotion to duty, which kept him away from her at a crucial time. Gideon's sensitivity is revealed by his understanding of her feelings, his thoughtfulness, and his unflinching interest in family concerns, no matter how pressured he may be.

CONTRIBUTION

John Creasey is notable as the most prolific writer of mystery stories in the history of the genre. Changing from pen name to pen name and from sleuth to sleuth, Creasey mass-produced as many as two novels a week. At his death, he was credited with more than 550 crime novels, which had sold sixty million copies in twenty-six languages. Despite his great commercial success, Creasey was not highly ranked by critics, who pointed out that no matter how clever his plot outlines might be, his characters too often were pasteboard creations rather than psychologically interesting human beings, his situations geared to fast action rather than to the development of atmosphere that characterizes the best mystery novels. Sensitive to such criticisms, in some of his novels Creasey took time for fuller development of character; the Gideon series, written under the pseudonym J. J. Marric, ranks with the best of the genre.

BIOGRAPHY

John Creasey was born on September 17, 1908, in Southfields, Surrey, England, the seventh of nine children of Joseph Creasey, a coachmaker, and Ruth Creasey. The family was poor, and life was difficult, made more difficult for John by a bout with polio that delayed his learning to walk until he was six. John's first encouragement in a writing career came when he was ten; impressed by a composition, a schoolmaster assured John that he could be a professional writer. Then began a long, discouraging period of fourteen years when only Creasey himself had hopes for his future. His family found his dreams laughable; after he left school at fourteen, he was fired by one employer after another, often for neglecting his work in order to write. He later commented that he collected 743 rejection slips during this time.

At last, after nine of Creasey's novels had been turned down by publishers, his tenth was accepted. It was *Seven Times Seven* (1932), and it was a mystery. Its acceptance vindicated Creasey's faith in himself, and he soon decided to depend on writing for his sole income. Clearly he could not support himself on the mystery writer's traditional two books a year. Therefore he decided to work on a number of books at once, concealing

his identity under various pseudonyms; during the rest of his life, Creasey continued to produce mysteries, as well as other books, at a feverish pace.

Creasey's method of producing novels brought him popularity and wealth. He bought a forty-two-room manor in England and a Rolls-Royce. When he wished, he traveled, often to the United States, sometimes to other parts of the world. He was also deeply involved in politics, twice running unsuccessfully for Parliament, the second time representing a party that he had founded. Furthermore, he devoted much of his time to refugee work and famine relief.

Meanwhile, Creasey was periodically getting married and divorced. His marriage to Margaret Elizabeth Cooke lasted four years and produced a son; his second marriage, to Evelyn Jean Fudge, lasted twenty-nine years; during that time, two more children were born. There was a brief third marriage to Jeanne Williams, followed by a final marriage to Diana Hamilton Farrell a month before his death.

Although the critics were lukewarm about the quality of many of Creasey's works, his colleagues elected him chairman of the Crime Writers' Association, which he had founded, and of the Mystery Writers of America. In 1946, he was made a member of the Order of the British Empire. Later he was honored twice by the Mystery Writers of America, in 1962 for *Gideon's Fire* (1961) and in 1969 with the Grand Master Award for his contributions to the genre of the mystery novel.

On June 9, 1973, Creasey died of congestive heart failure in Bodenham, Salisbury, England. At the time of his death, he had a backlog of books waiting to be published. The final new work by Creasey did not appear until 1979.

ANALYSIS

It was John Creasey's phenomenal production that led many critics to accuse him of running a mystery-novel factory, of sacrificing quality to quantity. Early in his career, Creasey admitted to turning out two books a week, with a break for cricket in midweek. Later, in response to criticism, Creasey slowed down and took more pains with revision and with character development. Even in this later period, however, Creasey averaged one book a month.



In Creasey's 1935 story "Murder of a Tramp," Richard "the Toff" Rollison combats evil Asian criminals.

The fact that the Roger West and the Gideon mysteries can hold their own with books by writers who were less prolific than he may be explained by Creasey's driving will and by his superb powers of organization. In an interview published in *The New York Times* (June 10, 1973), Creasey was asked why, having attained wealth and success, he continued driving himself to write six thousand words a day. In his reply, Creasey referred to the years of rejection, when neither his family nor the publishers to whom he submitted his works expected him to turn out salable work. Evidently a few successes were not enough for Creasey; each new sale negated that long neglect and validated his faith in his own ability.

Creasey is not unique among writers, however, in having the will to succeed. His productivity is also explained by the system that he devised, a system that he explained in various interviews. He began where all writers begin, with a rough draft, which he turned out in seven to ten days of steady effort. Then, like most writers, he put the draft aside so that he could later

judge it with the eyes of a critic rather than a creator. It was at this point that Creasey differed from most other writers. While the draft of one book was cooling, he began another, and then another, and another. At any one time, he would have as many as fifteen books in process. Eventually, he hired professional readers to study his drafts, suggesting weaknesses in plotting, characterization, or style.

Creasey himself did not return to the first draft until at least six months had passed. By the time he had completed several revisions and pronounced the book ready for publication, it would have been a year since he began to write that particular book. Thus, it is unfair to accuse Creasey of simply dashing off his mysteries, at least in the last twenty-five or thirty years of his life. Instead, he mastered the art of juggling several aspects of the creative process at one time, thinking out one plot, developing another, and revising a third and a fourth, while most writers would have been pursuing a single idea.

Creasey is unusual in that one cannot trace his development by examining his books in chronological order. There are two reasons for this critical difficulty. One is that he frequently revised his books after they had initially been published, improving the style, updating details, even changing names of sleuths. Thus, it is difficult to fit many novels into a time frame. There is, however, an even greater problem. At one and the same time, Creasey would be dashing off a novel with a fast-moving plot and fairly simple characters (such as those of the Toff series) and one of the much-admired Gideon books, which depend on psychological complexity and the juggling of multiple plots, or perhaps one of the suspenseful, slowly developing Inspector Roger West books. Therefore it is as if Creasey were several different writers at the same time, as his pseudonyms suggest; if anyone but Creasey were involved, one would find it difficult to believe that one person could bring out in a single year books that seem to reflect such different stages of artistic development.

Perhaps because his productivity was so amazing, perhaps because he himself was obsessed with it, Creasey's comments about his art generally deal with his system of composition. An intensely practical man,

he considered the mystery novel an art form but was impatient with what he saw as attempts to make the art itself mysterious. Responsive to criticism, as well as to sales figures, Creasey was willing to change and to improve to please his public. Not only did he take more pains with his writing after his early books, though commercially successful, were classified as mediocre by the critics, but he also developed a character, Inspector Roger West, specifically to suit the tastes of an American public that until 1952 had not shown an interest in Creasey's work. With *Inspector West Cries Wolf* (1950; published as *The Creepers* in the United States), Creasey captured the American market, and his Inspector West novels continue to be the Creasey books most frequently encountered in American bookstores.

INSPECTOR WEST CRIES WOLF

Inspector West Cries Wolf, the first book by Creasey to be published in the United States, illustrates many of the qualities of his best work. The style is generally simple. For example, the murder of an informer is described briefly: "The man behind Squinty raised his right arm; the flash of his knife showed in the headlamps' beams. The knife fell. Even above the roar of the engine, Roger fancied that he heard Squinty scream." Yet Creasey's finest books have more than fast action. Inspector Roger West is a sensitive and troubled human being, whose marital difficulties are intensified by his profession. When he penetrates a character's mind, Creasey adjusts his rhythms accordingly: "Roger thought: I'm hitting a new low; but although he admitted that to himself, he felt inwardly cold, frozen, the whisky hadn't warmed him." By the end of this thoughtful passage, Roger has become convinced that his comfortable, loving relationship with his wife has vanished forever.

In handling setting, too, Creasey can adjust to his subject. He handles London settings exceptionally well, whether he is describing one of the Toff's favorite East End haunts or the seedy Rose and Crown, where Creasey lingers long enough to create the atmosphere, the reek of stale beer, the air blue with smoke. Similarly, when he sends West to the country house Morden Lodge, Creasey dwells on the contrast between the overgrown, neglected approach to the lodge and the crystal chandelier and red-carpeted stairway

inside it. Not only is Creasey slowing down enough to describe his scene, but he also is suggesting the difference between exterior and interior, a distinction that applies inversely to the characters at the lodge, who at first appear attractive but finally are shown to be as ugly as evil.

Even in his least fleshed-out novels, Creasey's situations are interesting, and his best works have fine plots. In *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, silent burglars are terrorizing London; Creasey's novel twist is the fact that all the gang members have the mark of a wolf on their palms. The police are frustrated by the fact that none of those captured will talk, clearly because they are more afraid of their leader, Lobo, than of the law.

In all Creasey's novels, the problem is stated almost immediately, and soon some elements of suspense are introduced, generally threats to a seemingly helpless person, to someone with whom the protagonist is closely involved, or perhaps to the protagonist himself. *Inspector West Cries Wolf* begins with a telephone call to West, who has barely fallen asleep, demanding that he return to duty because of Lobo's gang. It is obvious that Roger's wife, Janet, is frightened, and even though the fact that she has been threatened is not revealed for several chapters, her very real terror increases the suspense. In the second chapter of the book, a man and his wife are brutally murdered by a member of the wolf-gang, and their young son escapes only by accident. Now the danger of death is no longer theoretical. In the third chapter, West visits the scene of the crime and talks to the young orphan. The hunt is on, and with the peril to West's informers, to his family, and to himself mounting chapter by chapter, the story proceeds. By now, if his reader has the power of imagination, Creasey has captured him.

All Creasey's protagonists are brave and intelligent. Roger West is particularly appealing, however, because in a profession that might tend to harden a man, he continues to be sensitive. Sometimes that sensitivity is an advantage to him, as when he speaks to the young boy whose parents have just been murdered by one of Lobo's men; at other times, it causes him difficulty, as when he understands too well Janet's unhappiness and yet has no choice but to leave her to be

protected and amused by his friend Mark Lessing while West pursues his quarry. Because he is sensitive, West is aware not only of Janet's wayward impulses but also of his own, and when Janet's jealousy of Margaret Paterson is inflamed, West must admit to himself that Janet's suspicions have some validity. It is the complexity of Roger West as a character, the fact that his intelligence is used not only to capture criminals but also to analyze his own motives, that places this series so far above some of the other Creasey mysteries.

It has been pointed out that except for those involved in crime, Creasey's characters are generally kindly and decent. In this novel, Janet West honestly wants her relationship with Roger to recover; she displays the same courage in dealing with their subtle problems as she does in facing her kidnappers. Bill Sloan, who finds himself pub-crawling with the mysterious and seductive Margaret, never contemplates being unfaithful to his absent wife. Creasey's non-criminal characters live up to his expectations of them; thus, by the end of *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, compassionate neighbors have offered a home to the orphaned boy.

It is significant that at the end of a Creasey novel there is both an unmasking and punishment of the criminals—as is expected in a mystery—and a reconciliation among all the sympathetic characters. Creasey's faith in human nature is evident in the happy ending for the orphan. It is similarly evident in the restoration of the friendship between Roger and Mark and in the reestablishment of harmony and understanding in the Wests' marriage. Thus in *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, as in all Creasey's books, evil is defeated and goodness triumphs. What marks the difference between a Roger West book and one of Creasey's less inspired works is the seeming lack of haste. However rapidly Creasey may have turned out even his finest mysteries, in the West books at least he developed the atmosphere by paying due attention to detail and brought his characters to life by tracing the patterns of their thoughts and feelings. When to his usual imaginative plot Creasey added these qualities, he produced mystery novels that rank with the best.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DEPARTMENT Z SERIES: 1933-1940 • *Redhead*, 1933; *The Death Miser*, 1933; *First Came a Murder*, 1934 (revised 1969); *Death Round the Corner*, 1935 (revised 1971); *The Mark of the Crescent*, 1935 (revised 1970); *The Terror Trap*, 1936 (revised 1970); *Thunder in Europe*, 1936 (revised 1970); *Carriers of Death*, 1937 (revised 1968); *Days of Danger*, 1937 (revised 1970); *Death Stands By*, 1938 (revised 1966); *Menace!*, 1938 (revised 1972); *Murder Must Wait*, 1939 (revised 1969); *Panic!*, 1939; *Death by Night*, 1940 (revised 1971); *The Island of Peril*, 1940 (revised 1970)

1941-1957 • *Go Away Death*, 1941; *Sabotage*, 1941 (revised 1972); *Prepare for Action*, 1942 (revised 1966); *The Day of Disaster*, 1942; *No Darker Crime*, 1943; *Dangerous Quest*, 1944 (revised 1965); *Dark Peril*, 1944 (revised 1969); *The Peril Ahead*, 1946 (revised 1969); *The League of Dark Men*, 1947 (revised 1965); *The Department of Death*, 1949; *The Enemy Within*, 1950; *Dead or Alive*, 1951; *A Kind of Prisoner*, 1954; *The Black Spiders*, 1957

BARON JOHN MANNERING SERIES (AS MORTON): 1937-1940 • *Meet the Baron*, 1937 (also known as *The Man in the Blue Mask*); *The Baron Returns*, 1937 (also known as *The Return of Blue Mask*); *The Baron Again*, 1938 (also known as *Salute Blue Mask!*); *The Baron at Bay*, 1938 (also known as *Blue Mask at Bay*); *Alias the Baron*, 1939 (also known as *Alias Blue Mask*); *The Baron at Large*, 1939 (also known as *Challenge Blue Mask!*); *Call for the Baron*, 1940 (also known as *Blue Mask Victorious*); *Versus the Baron*, 1940 (also known as *Blue Mask Strikes Again*)

1941-1950 • *The Baron Comes Back*, 1943; *A Case for the Baron*, 1945; *Reward for the Baron*, 1945; *Career for the Baron*, 1946; *The Baron and the Beggar*, 1947; *A Rope for the Baron*, 1948; *Blame the Baron*, 1948; *Books for the Baron*, 1949; *Cry for the Baron*, 1950; *Trap the Baron*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Attack the Baron*, 1951; *Shadow the Baron*, 1951; *Warn the Baron*, 1952; *Danger for the Baron*, 1953; *The Baron Goes East*, 1953; *The Baron in France*, 1953; *Nest-Egg for the Baron*, 1954 (also known as *Deaf, Dumb, and Blonde*); *The Baron Goes*

Fast, 1954; *Help from the Baron*, 1955; *Hide the Baron*, 1956; *Frame the Baron*, 1957 (also known as *The Double Frame*); *Red Eye for the Baron*, 1958 (also known as *Blood Red*); *Black for the Baron*, 1959 (also known as *If Anything Happens to Hester*); *Salute for the Baron*, 1960

1961-1970 • *A Branch for the Baron*, 1961 (also known as *The Baron Branches Out*); *Bad for the Baron*, 1962 (also known as *The Baron and the Stolen Legacy*); *A Sword for the Baron*, 1963 (also known as *The Baron and the Mogul Swords*); *The Baron on Board*, 1964; *The Baron and the Chinese Puzzle*, 1965; *Sport for the Baron*, 1966; *Affair for the Baron*, 1967; *The Baron and the Missing Old Masters*, 1968; *The Baron and the Unfinished Portrait*, 1969; *Last Laugh for the Baron*, 1970

1971-1979 • *The Baron Goes A-Buying*, 1971; *The Baron and the Arrogant Artist*, 1972; *Burgle the Baron*, 1973; *The Baron, King-Maker*, 1975; *Love for the Baron*, 1979

SEXTON BLAKE SERIES: *The Case of the Murdered Financier*, 1937; *The Great Air Swindle*, 1939; *The Man from Fleet Street*, 1940; *The Case of the Mad Inventor*, 1942; *Private Carter's Crime*, 1943

THE HONOURABLE RICHARD "THE TOFF"

ROLLISON SERIES: 1938-1940 • *The Toff on the Trail*, 1937; *Introducing the Toff*, 1938 (revised 1954); *The Toff Goes On*, 1939 (revised 1955); *The Toff Steps Out*, 1939 (revised 1955); *Here Comes the Toff!*, 1940; *The Toff Breaks In*, 1940 (revised 1955)

1941-1950 • *Salute the Toff*, 1941; *The Toff Proceeds*, 1941; *The Toff Goes to Market*, 1942; *The Toff Is Back*, 1942; *Accuse the Toff*, 1943; *The Toff Among Millions*, 1943 (revised 1964); *The Toff and the Curate*, 1944 (also known as *The Toff and the Deadly Parson*); *The Toff and the Great Illusion*, 1944; *Feathers for the Toff*, 1945 (revised 1964); *The Toff and the Lady*, 1946; *The Toff on Ice*, 1946 (also known as *Poison for the Toff*); *Hammer the Toff*, 1947; *The Toff and Old Harry*, 1948 (revised 1964); *The Toff in Town*, 1948 (revised 1977); *The Toff Takes Shares*, 1948; *The Toff on Board*, 1949 (revised 1973); *Fool the Toff*, 1950; *Kill the Toff*, 1950

1951-1960 • *A Knife for the Toff*, 1951; *The Toff Goes Gay*, 1951 (also known as *A Mask for the Toff*);

Hunt the Toff, 1952; *Call the Toff*, 1953; *Murder out of the Past and Under-Cover Man*, 1953; *The Toff Down Under*, 1953 (also known as *Break the Toff*); *The Toff at Butlin's*, 1954; *The Toff at the Fair*, 1954; *A Six for the Toff*, 1955 (also known as *A Score for the Toff*); *The Toff and the Deep Blue Sea*, 1955; *Make-Up for the Toff*, 1956 (also known as *Kiss the Toff*); *The Toff in New York*, 1956; *Model for the Toff*, 1957; *The Toff on Fire*, 1957; *The Toff and the Stolen Tresses*, 1958; *The Toff on the Farm*, 1958 (also known as *Terror for the Toff*); *Double for the Toff*, 1959; *The Toff and the Runaway Bride*, 1959; *A Rocket for the Toff*, 1960; *The Toff and the Kidnapped Child*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Follow the Toff*, 1961; *The Toff and the Teds*, 1961 (also known as *The Toff and the Toughs*); *A Doll for the Toff*, 1963; *Leave It to the Toff*, 1963; *The Toff and the Spider*, 1965; *The Toff in Wax*, 1966; *A Bundle for the Toff*, 1967; *Stars for the Toff*, 1968; *The Toff and the Golden Boy*, 1969; *The Toff and the Fallen Angels*, 1970

1971-1978 • *Vote for the Toff*, 1971; *The Toff and the Trip-Trip-Triplets*, 1972; *The Toff and the Terrified Taxman*, 1973; *The Toff and the Sleepy Cowboy*, 1974; *The Toff and the Crooked Copper*, 1977; *The Toff and the Dead Man's Finger*, 1978

PATRICK DAWLISH SERIES (AS ASHE): 1939-1950 • *Death on Demand*, 1939; *The Speaker*, 1939 (also known as *The Croaker*); *Secret Murder*, 1940; *Terror by Day*, 1940; *Who Was the Jester?*, 1940; *'Ware Danger!*, 1941; *Death in High Places*, 1942; *Murder Most Foul*, 1942 (revised 1973); *There Goes Death*, 1942 (revised 1973); *Death in Flames*, 1943; *Two Men Missing*, 1943 (revised 1971); *Rogues Rampant*, 1944 (revised 1973); *Death on the Move*, 1945; *Invitation to Adventure*, 1945; *Here Is Danger!*, 1946; *Give Me Murder*, 1947; *Murder Too Late*, 1947; *Dark Mystery*, 1948; *Engagement with Death*, 1948; *A Puzzle in Pearls*, 1949 (revised 1971); *Kill or Be Killed*, 1949; *Murder with Mushrooms*, 1950 (revised 1971)

1951-1960 • *Death in Diamonds*, 1951; *Missing or Dead?*, 1951; *Death in a Hurry*, 1952; *Sleepy Death*, 1953; *The Long Search*, 1953 (also known as *Drop Dead*); *Death in the Trees*, 1954; *Double for Death*, 1954; *The Kidnapped Child*, 1955 (also known as *The Snatch*); *Day of Fear*, 1956; *Wait for Death*, 1957;

Come Home to Death, 1958 (also known as *The Pack of Lies*); *Elope to Death*, 1959; *Don't Let Him Kill*, 1960 (also known as *The Man Who Laughed at Murder*); *The Crime Haters*, 1960; *The Dark Circle*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Rogues' Ransom*, 1961; *Death from Below*, 1963; *A Promise of Diamonds*, 1964; *The Big Call*, 1964; *A Taste of Treasure*, 1966; *A Clutch of Coppers*, 1967; *A Shadow of Death*, 1968; *A Scream of Murder*, 1969; *A Nest of Traitors*, 1970

1971-1976 • *A Rabble of Rebels*, 1971; *A Life for a Death*, 1973; *A Herald of Doom*, 1974; *A Blast of Trumpets*, 1975; *A Plague of Demons*, 1976

BRUCE MURDOCK SERIES (AS DEANE): *Dangerous Journey*, 1939; *Secret Errand*, 1939; *The Withered Man*, 1940; *Unknown Mission*, 1940 (revised 1972); *I Am the Withered Man*, 1941 (revised 1972); *Where Is the Withered Man?*, 1943 (revised 1972)

ROGER WEST SERIES: 1942-1950 • *Inspector West Takes Charge*, 1942 (revised 1963); *Inspector West Leaves Town*, 1943 (also known as *Go Away to Murder*); *Inspector West at Home*, 1944; *Inspector West Regrets—*, 1945 (revised 1965); *Holiday for Inspector West*, 1946; *Battle for Inspector West*, 1948; *Triumph for Inspector West*, 1948 (also known as *The Case Against Paul Raeburn*); *Inspector West Kicks Off*, 1949 (also known as *Sport for Inspector West*); *Inspector West Alone*, 1950; *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, 1950 (also known as *The Creepers*)

1951-1960 • *A Case for Inspector West*, 1951 (also known as *The Figure in the Dusk*); *Puzzle for Inspector West*, 1951 (also known as *The Dissemblers*); *Inspector West at Bay*, 1952 (also known as *The Blind Spot* and *The Case of the Acid Throwers*); *A Gun for Inspector West*, 1953 (also known as *Give a Man a Gun*); *Send Inspector West*, 1953 (also known as *Send Superintendent West*); *A Beauty for Inspector West*, 1954 (also known as *The Beauty Queen Killer* and *So Young, So Cold, So Fair*); *Inspector West Makes Haste*, 1955 (also known as *The Gelingnise Gang*, *Night of the Watchman*, and *Murder Makes Haste*); *Two for Inspector West*, 1955 (also known as *Murder: One, Two, Three* and *Murder Tips the Scales*); *A Prince for Inspector West*, 1956 (also known as *Death of an Assassin*); *Parcels for Inspector West*, 1956 (also known as *Death of a Postman*); *Accident for In-*

spector West, 1957 (also known as *Hit and Run*); *Find Inspector West*, 1957 (also known as *The Trouble at Saxby's* and *Doorway to Death*); *Murder, London—New York*, 1958; *Strike for Death*, 1958 (also known as *The Killing Strike*); *Death of a Racehorse*, 1959; *The Case of the Innocent Victims*, 1959; *Murder on the Line*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Death in Cold Print*, 1961; *The Scene of the Crime*, 1961; *Policeman's Dread*, 1962; *Hang the Little Man*, 1963; *Look Three Ways at Murder*, 1964; *Murder, London—Australia*, 1965; *Murder, London—South Africa*, 1966; *The Executioners*, 1967; *So Young to Burn*, 1968; *Murder, London—Miami*, 1969; *A Part for a Policeman*, 1970

1971-1978 • *Alibi*, 1971; *A Splinter of Glass*, 1972; *The Theft of Magna Carta*, 1973; *The Extortioners*, 1974; *The Thunder-Maker*, 1976; *A Sharp Rise in Crime*, 1978

DR. PALFREY SERIES: 1942-1950 • *Traitors' Doom*, 1942; *The Legion of the Lost*, 1943 (revised 1974); *The Valley of Fear*, 1943 (also known as *The Perilous Country*); *Death in the Rising Sun*, 1945 (revised 1970); *The Hounds of Vengeance*, 1945 (revised 1969); *Shadow of Doom*, 1946 (revised 1970); *The House of the Bears*, 1946 (revised 1962); *Dark Harvest*, 1947 (revised 1962); *Sons of Satan*, 1948; *The Wings of Peace*, 1948; *The Dawn of Darkness*, 1949; *The League of Light*, 1949; *The Man Who Shook the World*, 1950

1951-1960 • *The Prophet of Fire*, 1951; *The Children of Hate*, 1952 (also known as *The Children of Despair*; revised as *The Killers of Innocence*, 1971); *The Touch of Death*, 1954; *The Mists of Fear*, 1955; *The Flood*, 1956; *The Plague of Silence*, 1958; *The Drought*, 1959 (also known as *Dry Spell*)

1961-1973 • *Terror: The Return of Dr. Palfrey*, 1962; *The Depths*, 1963; *The Sleep!*, 1964; *The Inferno*, 1965; *The Famine*, 1967; *The Blight*, 1968; *The Oasis*, 1969; *The Smog*, 1970; *The Unbegotten*, 1971; *The Insulators*, 1972; *The Voiceless Ones*, 1973

THE LIBERATOR SERIES (AS DEANE): *Return to Adventure*, 1943 (revised 1974); *Gateway to Escape*, 1944; *Come Home to Crime*, 1945 (revised 1974)

SUPERINTENDENT FOLLY SERIES (AS YORK): *Find the Body*, 1945 (revised 1967); *Murder Came*

Late, 1946 (revised 1969); *Close the Door on Murder*, 1948 (revised 1973)

MARTIN AND RICHARD FANE SERIES (AS HALLIDAY): *Take a Body*, 1951 (revised 1964); *Lame Dog Murder*, 1952; *Murder in the Stars*, 1953; *Murder on the Run*, 1953

COMMANDER GEORGE GIDEON SERIES: 1955-1960 • *Gideon's Day*, 1955 (as Marris; also known as *Gideon of Scotland*); *Gideon's Week*, 1956 (as Marris; also known as *Seven Days to Death*); *Gideon's Night*, 1957 (as Marris); *Gideon's Month*, 1958 (as Marris); *Gideon's Staff*, 1959 (as Marris); *Gideon's Risk*, 1960 (as Marris)

1961-1970 • *Gideon's Fire*, 1961 (as Marris); *Gideon's March*, 1962 (as Marris); *Gideon's Ride*, 1963 (as Marris); *Gideon's Lot*, 1964 (as Marris); *Gideon's Vote*, 1964 (as Marris); *Gideon's Badge*, 1966 (as Marris); *Gideon's Wrath*, 1967 (as Marris); *Gideon's River*, 1968 (as Marris); *Gideon's Power*, 1969 (as Marris); *Gideon's Sport*, 1970 (as Marris)

1971-1976 • *Gideon's Art*, 1971; *Gideon's Men*, 1972; *Gideon's Press*, 1973; *Gideon's Fog*, 1974; *Gideon's Drive*, 1976

MARK KILBY SERIES (AS FRAZER): *Mark Kilby Solves a Murder*, 1959 (also known as *R.I.S.C.* and *The Timid Tycoon*); *Mark Kilby and the Miami Mob*, 1960; *Mark Kilby and the Secret Syndicate*, 1960; *The Hollywood Hoax*, 1961; *Mark Kilby Stands Alone*, 1962 (also known as *Mark Kilby and the Manhattan Murders*); *Mark Kilby Takes a Risk*, 1962

DR. EMMANUEL CELLINI SERIES (AS HALLIDAY; AS HUNT IN UNITED STATES): *Cunning as a Fox*, 1965; *Wicked as the Devil*, 1966; *Sly as a Serpent*, 1967; *Cruel as a Cat*, 1968; *Too Good to Be True*, 1969; *A Period of Evil*, 1970; *As Lonely as the Damned*, 1971; *As Empty as Hate*, 1972; *As Merry as Hell*, 1973; *This Man Did I Kill?*, 1974; *The Man Who Was Not Himself*, 1976

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Dark Shadow*, 1930's; *The House of Ferrars*, 1930's; *Seven Times Seven*, 1932; *Men, Maids, and Murder*, 1933 (revised 1973); *Four Motives for Murder*, 1938 (as Hope); *Triple Murder*, 1940 (as Hughes); *Mr. Quentin Investigates*, 1943 (as Morton); *Introducing Mr. Brandon*, 1944 (as Morton); *Murder on Largo Island*, 1944 (as Hogarth;

with Ian Bowen); *Keys to Crime*, 1947 (as Martin); *Vote for Murder*, 1948 (as Martin); *The Man Who Stayed Alive*, 1955 (as Ashe); *No Need to Die*, 1956 (as Ashe; also known as *You've Bet Your Life*); *Kill Once, Kill Twice*, 1956 (as Hunt); *Kill a Wicked Man*, 1957 (as Hunt); *Kill My Love*, 1958 (as Hunt); *The Mountain of the Blind*, 1960; *To Kill a Killer*, 1960 (as Hunt); *The Foothills of Fear*, 1961; *Danger Woman*, 1966 (as Mann); *The Masters of Bow Street*, 1972; *The Whirlwind*, 1979

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS M. E. COOKE): *Fire of Death*, 1934; *Number One's Last Crime*, 1935; *The Black Heart*, 1935; *The Casino Mystery*, 1935; *The Crime Gang*, 1935; *The Death Drive*, 1935; *The Stolen Formula Mystery*, 1935; *The Big Radium Mystery*, 1936; *The Day of Terror*, 1936; *The Dummy Robberies*, 1936; *The Hypnotic Demon*, 1936; *The Moat Farm Mystery*, 1936; *The Secret Formula*, 1936; *The Successful Alibi*, 1936; *The Hadfield Mystery*, 1937; *The Moving Eye*, 1937; *The Raven*, 1937; *For Her Sister's Sake*, 1938; *The Mountain Terror*, 1938; *The Verrall Street Affair*, 1940

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS HALLIDAY): 1937-1950 • *Four Find Danger*, 1937; *Three for Adventure*, 1937; *Two Meet Trouble*, 1938; *Heir to Murder*, 1940; *Murder Comes Home*, 1940; *Murder by the Way*, 1941; *Who Saw Him Die?*, 1941; *Foul Play Suspected*, 1942; *Who Died at the Grange?*, 1942; *Five to Kill*, 1943; *Murder at King's Kitchen*, 1943; *No Crime More Cruel*, 1944; *Who Said Murder?*, 1944; *Crime with Many Voices*, 1945; *Murder Makes Murder*, 1946; *Lend a Hand to Murder*, 1947; *Mystery Motive*, 1947; *First a Murder*, 1948; *No End to Danger*, 1948; *The Dying Witnesses*, 1949; *Who Killed Rebecca?*, 1949; *Dine with Murder*, 1950; *Murder Week-End*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Quarrel with Murder*, 1951 (revised 1975); *Death out of Darkness*, 1953; *Death in the Spanish Sun*, 1954; *Out of the Shadows*, 1954; *Cat and Mouse*, 1955 (also known as *Hilda, Take Heed*); *Murder at End House*, 1955; *Death of a Stranger*, 1957 (also known as *Come Here and Die*); *Runaway*, 1957; *Murder Assured*, 1958; *Missing from Home*, 1959 (also known as *Missing*); *Thicker than Water*, 1959; *How Many to Kill?*, 1960 (also known as *The Girl with the Leopard-Skin Bag*)

1961-1969 • *The Edge of Terror*, 1961; *The Man I Killed*, 1961; *The Quiet Fear*, 1961; *Hate to Kill*, 1962; *The Guilt of Innocence*, 1964; *Go Ahead with Murder*, 1969 (also known as *Two for the Money*)

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS MANTON): *Murder Manor*, 1937; *Stand By for Danger*, 1937; *The Greyvale School Mystery*, 1937; *The Circle of Justice*, 1938; *Three Days' Terror*, 1938; *Death Looks On*, 1939; *Murder in the Highlands*, 1939; *The Crime Syndicate*, 1939; *The Midget Marvel*, 1940; *Police-man's Triumph*, 1948; *Thief in the Night*, 1950; *No Escape from Murder*, 1953; *The Charity Murders*, 1954; *The Crooked Killer*, 1954

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS YORK): *By Persons Unknown*, 1941; *Murder Unseen*, 1943; *No Alibi*, 1943; *Murder in the Family*, 1944; *Yesterday's Murder*, 1945; *Wilful Murder*, 1946; *Let's Kill Uncle Lionel*, 1947 (revised 1973); *Run Away to Murder*, 1947; *The Gallows Are Waiting*, 1949; *Death to My Killer*, 1950; *Sentence of Death*, 1950; *Voyage with Murder*, 1952; *Safari with Fear*, 1953; *So Soon to Die*, 1955; *Seeds of Murder*, 1956; *Sight of Death*, 1956; *My Brother's Killer*, 1958; *Hide and Kill*, 1959; *To Kill or to Die*, 1960

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS DEANE): *Play for Murder*, 1947 (revised 1975); *The Silent House*, 1947 (revised 1973); *Intent to Murder*, 1948 (revised 1975); *Why Murder?*, 1948 (revised 1975); *No Hurry to Kill*, 1950 (revised 1973); *The Man I Didn't Kill*, 1950 (revised 1973); *Double for Murder*, 1951 (revised 1973); *Golden Death*, 1952; *Look at Murder*, 1952; *Murder Ahead*, 1953; *Incense of Death*, 1954

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Love of Hate*, 1936 (as Fecamps); *Chains of Love*, 1937 (as Cooper); *Love's Pilgrimage*, 1937 (as Cooper); *Love's Triumph*, 1937 (as Fecamps); *True Love*, 1937 (as Fecamps); *One-Shot Marriott*, 1938 (as Ranger); *The Greater Desire*, 1938 (as Cooper); *The Tangled Legacy*, 1938 (as Cooper); *Love's Ordeal*, 1939 (as Cooper); *Roaring Guns*, 1939 (as Ranger); *The Lost Lover*, 1940 (as Cooper); *Adrian and Jonathan*, 1954 (as Martin)

NOVELS (AS MARGARET COOKE): *For Love's Sake*, 1934; *False Love or True*, 1937; *Troubled Journey*, 1937; *A Mannequin's Romance*, 1938; *Fate's*

Playthings, 1938; *Love Calls Twice*, 1938; *The Road to Happiness*, 1938; *Web of Destiny*, 1938; *Whose Lover?*, 1938; *Crossroads of Love*, 1939; *Love Comes Back*, 1939; *Love Triumphant*, 1939; *The Turn of Fate*, 1939; *Love's Journey*, 1940

NOVELS (AS RILEY): *Gun-Smoke Range*, 1938; *Two-Gun Girl*, 1938; *Gunshot Mesa*, 1939; *Masked Riders*, 1940; *Rustler's Range*, 1940; *The Shootin' Sheriff*, 1940; *Death Canyon*, 1941; *Guns on the Range*, 1942; *Range Justice*, 1943; *Outlaw Hollow*, 1944; *Hidden Range*, 1946; *Forgotten Range*, 1947; *Trigger Justice*, 1948; *Lynch Hollow*, 1949

NOVELS (AS WILLIAM K. REILLY): *Range War*, 1939; *Two Gun Texan*, 1939; *Gun Feud*, 1940; *Stolen Range*, 1940; *Outlaw's Vengeance*, 1941; *War on Lazy-K*, 1941; *Guns over Blue Lake*, 1942; *Rivers of Dry Gulch*, 1943; *Long John Rides the Range*, 1944; *Miracle Range*, 1945; *The Secrets of the Range*, 1946; *Outlaw Guns*, 1949; *Range Vengeance*, 1953

PLAYS: *Gideon's Fear*, pr. 1960; *Strike for Death*, pr. 1960; *The Toff*, pb. 1963; *Hear Nothing, Say All*, pr. 1964

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: 1930's • *Dazzle and the Red Bomber*; *John Brand, Fugitive*; *Our Glorious Term*; *The Captain of the Fifth*; *The Fear of Felix Corde*; *The Night of Dread*

1935-1940 • *Ned Cartwright—Middleweight Champion*, 1935 (as Marsden); *The Men Who Died Laughing*, 1935; *Blazing the Air Trail*, 1936; *The Jungle Flight Mystery*, 1936; *The Killer Squad*, 1936; *The Mystery 'Plane*, 1936; *Murder by Magic*, 1937; *The Air Marauders*, 1937; *The Black Biplane*, 1937; *The Fighting Footballers*, 1937 (as Gill); *The Laughing Lightweight*, 1937 (as Gill); *The Mysterious Mr. Rocco*, 1937; *The Mystery Flight*, 1937; *The S.O.S. Flight*, 1937; *The Secret Aeroplane Mystery*, 1937; *The Treasure Flight*, 1937; *Mystery at Manby House*, 1938; *The Double Motive*, 1938; *The Doublecross of Death*, 1938; *The Fighting Flyers*, 1938; *The Flying Stowaways*, 1938; *The Miracle 'Plane*, 1938; *The Missing Hoard*, 1938; *Dixon Hawke, Secret Agent*, 1939; *Documents of Death*, 1939; *Mottled Death*, 1939; *Peril by Air*, 1939; *The Battle for the Cup*, 1939 (as Gill); *The Blue Flyer*, 1939; *The Fighting Tramp*, 1939 (as Gill); *The Flying Turk*, 1939; *The Hidden Hoard*, 1939; *The*

Jumper, 1939; *The Monarch of the Skies*, 1939; *The Mystery of Blackmoor Prison*, 1939; *The Mystery of the Centre-Forward*, 1939 (as Gill); *The Sacred Eye*, 1939; *The Ship of Death*, 1939; *The Ten-Thousand-Dollar Trophy Race*, 1939 (as Gill); *Dazzle—Air Ace No. 1*, 1940; *Five Missing Men*, 1940; *The Poison Gas Robberies*, 1940; *The Secret Super-Charger*, 1940 (as Gill)

1941-1947 • *Log of a Merchant Airman*, 1943 (with John H. Lock); *The Cinema Crimes*, 1945; *The Missing Monoplane*, 1947

NONFICTION: *Heroes of the Air: A Tribute to the Courage, Sacrifice, and Skill of the Men of the R.A.F.*, 1943; *The Printers' Devil: An Account of the History and Objects of the Printers' Pension, Almshouse, and Orphan Asylum Corporation*, 1943; *Man in Danger*, 1949; *Round Table: The First Twenty-five Years of the Round Table Movement*, 1953; *Round the World in 465 Days*, 1953 (with Jean Creasey); *Let's Look at America*, 1956 (with others); *They Didn't Mean to Kill: The Real Story of Road Accidents*, 1960; *African Holiday*, 1963; *Optimists in Africa*, 1963 (with others); *Good, God, and Man: An Outline of the Philosophy of Selfism*, 1967; *Evolution to Democracy*, 1969

EDITED TEXTS: *Action Stations! An Account of the H.M.S. Dorsetshire and Her Earlier Namesakes*, 1942; *The First Mystery Bedside Book*, 1960; *The Second Mystery Bedside Book*, 1961; *The Third Mystery Bedside Book*, 1962; *The Fourth Mystery Bedside*

Book, 1963; *Crimes Across the Sea: The Nineteenth Annual Anthology of the Mystery Writers of America*, 1964; *The Fifth Mystery Bedside Book*, 1964; *The Sixth Mystery Bedside Book*, 1965

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Harvey, Deryk. "The Best of John Creasey." *The Armchair Detective* 7 (November, 1973): 42-43. Checklist selecting the very best examples of Creasey's work from throughout his prolific career.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structuralist analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Briefly mentions Creasey and helps the reader place him in the broader context of the genre.

Rzepka, Charles J. *Detective Fiction*. Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2005. Overview of detective fiction written in English, placing Creasey's many works in context. Bibliographic references and index.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains an essay on hard-boiled fiction that mentions Creasey and provides background for understanding the writer.

EDMUND CRISPIN

Robert Bruce Montgomery

Born: Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire, England; October 2, 1921

Died: Devon, England; September 15, 1978

Also wrote as Bruce Montgomery

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Gervase Fen, 1944-1977

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

GERVASE FEN, a professor of English language and literature at Oxford University and an infallible amateur sleuth. He is a brilliant, eccentric Oxford don whose powers of deductive reasoning are matched by his wit, impatience, and exceedingly high opinion of himself. By turns childish, charming, irrepressible, and easily bored, Fen is married and a father, although his family plays almost no part in the series.

CONTRIBUTION

Edmund Crispin's Gervase Fen mysteries are among the wittiest and most literate entries in the genre. Carrying on in the tradition of Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie, Crispin's novels fall into that category of British murder mystery in which an amateur sleuth correctly ferrets out the killer from a small group of suspects, baffling the police with his deductive powers. The hallmarks of Crispin's style are its humor and its playful artifice; he is a writer less concerned with realism than with imaginatively entertaining his readers, and his books are well written, wickedly amusing, and laced with erudite literary references, courtesy of Professor Fen, who sees murder as a grand intellectual diversion. Although psychological motivations figure importantly in his plots, Crispin's stories are not so much explorations of human nature as cleverly constructed jigsaw puzzles, full of unexpected twists and farfetched conclusions.

BIOGRAPHY

Edmund Crispin is the pen name of Robert Bruce Montgomery. Crispin was born in Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire, England, on October 2, 1921, the fourth child and only son of Robert Ernest Montgomery, a onetime secretary to the High Commissioner for India, and Marion Blackwood (née Jarvie) Montgomery. Reared in the country, Crispin attended the Merchant Taylors' School in Moor Park and went on to study modern languages at St. John's College, at Oxford University. Early interests in both music and writing flourished while Crispin was at Oxford, and he participated in all aspects of the university's musical life, eventually becoming the organist and choirmaster for St. John's College.

It was also at Oxford that Crispin first turned his hand to detective fiction, writing the first of his Gervase Fen novels, *The Case of the Gilded Fly* (1944), while still an undergraduate. After earning his degree in 1943, Crispin taught school for several years before becoming a full-time writer and composer. The success of his Gervase Fen series, which includes nine novels and two collections of short stories, led to Crispin's appointment as the crime-fiction reviewer for the London *Sunday Times*, a position he held for several years.

As a composer, Crispin's works (published under the name Bruce Montgomery) include songs, choral pieces, and a number of film scores, the best known of which are those he wrote for several of the popular "Carry On" comedies. Indeed, for the last two-and-a-half decades of his life, Crispin worked primarily as a composer, editor, and critic; there was a twenty-five year gap between the publication of *The Long Divorce* (1951) and the final Fen novel, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1977). Crispin spent those years living quietly in Devon, where he died in 1978.

ANALYSIS

The novels and short stories of Edmund Crispin are part of a long tradition of mystery writing that has most often been associated with British detective fiction. It is a style of mystery referred to by Dilys Winn in *Murder Ink: The Mystery Reader's Companion* (1977) as the "cozy"—a reference to the eccentric characters, quaint settings, and somehow genteel crimes that constitute its world. Far removed from the tough, streetwise tone of the hard-boiled genre or the detailed, often violent realism of the police procedural, these mysteries are entertaining intellectual puzzles meant to be read on rainy nights with a cup of tea at one's side.

Crispin's Gervase Fen series is a leading example of the style. His plots, which unfold in such locations as small English villages, film studios, and Oxford University, feature an impossibly self-assured amateur detective who is able to piece together the details of the crime, outsmart the police, and capture the culprit, usually after a chase dominated by elements of farce and slapstick. The mysteries themselves are in the classic mold, centering on a murder—or two or three—committed within the confines of a closed setting or group. Fen's task is inevitably to single out the proper perpetrator from a gathering of suspects, all of whom have motives and not one of whom has a convincing alibi.

The appeal of this format is the opportunity it provides for the reader to solve the crime along with the detective; a convention of the genre in which Crispin—with Fen—delights. A recurring scene throughout the series depicts Fen arriving at a solution to the case well

before his companions and announcing this fact with undisguised glee; a self-congratulatory stance intended to twit not only his fellow characters but the reader as well. Crispin prides himself on following the rules of fair play, presenting his readers with all the information necessary for them to arrive at Fen's solution; that the reader is rarely able to do so is a testament to the skill with which Crispin has buried the nuggets of information on which the solution will turn.

BURIED FOR PLEASURE

For Crispin, the conventions of the mystery genre are primarily a springboard to his real aim: entertaining his readers with a combination of wit and imagination. *Buried for Pleasure* (1948) features a character who is himself a mystery writer, and he is first discovered by Fen in a field, acting out a scene he is planning for one of his books. His explanation—"One's plots are necessarily *improbable* . . . but I believe in making sure that they are not *impossible*"—captures the essence of Crispin's approach to storytelling. "Far-fetched" and "contrived" are words that might easily be applied to several of his solutions, were they not so expertly constructed and charmingly told. One always senses in a Crispin novel that the author is gently spoofing the genre itself, abiding by its conventions yet refusing to take them seriously.

THE CASE OF THE GILDED FLY AND HOLY DISORDERS

This attitude is seen most clearly in the books' frequent self-referential jokes, a device that begins early in the series with Fen proclaiming in *The Case of the Gilded Fly*, ". . . I'm the only literary critic turned detective in the whole of fiction." It is a pronouncement that at first startles and then delights the reader when it becomes clear that Fen is indeed referring to himself as a fictional character; this remarkable degree of self-knowledge is called into play throughout the series. *Holy Disorders* (1945) finds Fen dubbing a particular type of knot the "Hook, Line and Sinkers" because, as he explains, the reader has to swallow it, while a later book describes Fen lost in thought, inventing titles for Crispin. This playful schism between character and creator is occasionally reinforced by footnotes from Crispin himself, elaborating on or taking issue with a com-

ment from Fen. Crispin's willingness to shatter his readers' suspension of disbelief denotes both confidence in his skills as a writer and an engaging notion that, for their author, these stories are an elaborate game, a lark—exactly as Fen's murder cases are for him.

GERVASE FEN

The source of much of the humor and high spirits in Crispin's work is Gervase Fen himself. Drawing on the time-honored idea of British university dons as brilliant eccentrics, Crispin has fashioned his hero in their image. Fen is indeed brilliant and decidedly eccentric, given to odd hobbies and interests as well as sudden shifts in mood that can find him gloomy and petulant one moment and bursting with manic energy the next. Described as tall and lean with a blithely cheerful manner, blue eyes, and brown hair that stands out on his head in unruly spikes, he is impatient and easily bored, shamelessly immodest, and yet capable of acts of great kindness and goodwill. His wife, Dolly, figures peripherally in the earlier books of the series, and the pair enjoy a happy marriage, although their relationship is never developed. Fen seems to spend most of his time in his private rooms at the university.

Fen's two abiding passions are literature and detection, but his restless intelligence propels him enthusiastically down a variety of paths, pursuing momentary interests that he picks up and discards like a child in a room full of toys. In *Holy Disorders*, he has developed a fascination with insects, which he drops, by the time of *Buried for Pleasure*, in favor of running for Parliament. *Love Lies Bleeding* (1948) finds him embarking on a project that brings an impish symmetry to the series' self-reflexive streak: He is writing a detective novel. (Set improbably in the Catskill Mountains, it begins, naturally, "on a dark and stormy" night.) First and foremost, however, Fen is an avid sleuth whose pleasure in his own accomplishments easily equals their brilliance. Interviewed in *Swan Song* (1947) for an article on great detectives, he declares, "The era of my greatest success . . . may be said, roughly speaking, to extend from the time when I first became interested in detection to the present moment. . . ."

HUMOR AND MYSTERY

It could be argued that Crispin's books are as much comic novels as they are mysteries; certainly they owe as much to Evelyn Waugh and H. L. Mencken (two of Crispin's favorite writers) as they do to Dorothy L. Sayers or Michael Innes, with whom he has often been compared. The sheer verbal wit of the books is extraordinary, present in both the dialogue and the descriptive passages, and the parade of comic figures and incidents ranges from an aging don named Wilkes, who stumbles through several of the stories, leaving chaos in his wake, to the black humor of *The Glimpses of the Moon*, in which a severed head finds its way into a number of unlikely places. Frantic chase scenes abound in the stories' conclusions, with Fen leading the way in his beloved rattletrap jalopy, Lily Christine.

Crispin's humor also extends to the animal kingdom. *Love Lies Bleeding* features Mr. Merrythought, a senile bloodhound given to sporadic fits of rage; *The Long Divorce* offers Lavendar the cat, stalker of invisible Martians; and *Buried for Pleasure* boasts a pig with the instincts of a homing pigeon. It is in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, however, that Crispin's four-legged creations reach full flower with a whippet, a tomcat, a tortoise, and a sleepwalking horse. Otherworldly creatures also make an appearance; *Buried for Pleasure* details Fen's encounter with a lively poltergeist. Clearly, Crispin's purpose throughout his books is to amuse his readers as thoroughly as he baffles them, and in this goal he succeeds admirably.

Despite the air of frivolity that characterizes his work, however, Crispin's humor also takes the form of social satire, and many of his novels offer witty, expertly sketched portraits of a particular community or profession. Oxford—a setting Crispin knew well—figures often in the series, with its pubs, peculiar dons, and eager undergraduates portrayed most affectionately. Indeed, Crispin has given the city a chief constable who is well suited to its academic environment: Sir Richard Freeman, who cares as deeply about literature as Fen does about crime. Three of the books are set in the behind-the-scenes world of the performing arts—the theater (*The Case of the Gilded Fly*), the opera (*Swan Song*), and motion pictures (*Frequent Hearses*, 1950)—with all the egos, petty jealousies, and artistic

temperaments that those settings imply. *The Long Divorce* takes place in a small English village where spite, class distinctions, and violence lurk beneath a seemingly peaceful exterior, while *Holy Disorders* examines that most benign of settings, a church, and finds it plagued by the same human flaws that exist in the secular world. *The Glimpses of the Moon* takes on everything from television commercials to modern fiction, and *Love Lies Bleeding* offers a look at a private boys' school in which greed leads to murder, and befuddled masters greet every parent with "Your boy is doing splendidly. I have great hopes for him." Crispin's sharpest satirical portrait, however, is found in *Buried for Pleasure*, in which Fen runs for Parliament, loses interest in the election, publicly ridicules the voters, and ends up winning their support.

THE MOVING TOYSHOP

Crispin's mysteries are as well written as they are witty. Indeed, his extensive vocabulary led writer Catherine Aird to comment in an essay on his work that his books are best read with a dictionary by one's side. A strong grounding in English literature is also of use, as Crispin is among the most literate of mystery writers. Fen, as do many of the characters, quotes liberally from classic works ranging from William Shakespeare to Lewis Carroll, and the majority of the books' titles are literary references. *The Moving Toyshop* (1946) finds Fen playing a game he calls "Unreadable Books" (his choices include James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 1922, and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, 1759), and two of the novels make use of literary conceits: *Love Lies Bleeding*, in which Crispin posits the existence of a lost Shakespearean play, and *The Long Divorce*, which borrows elements from Charles Dickens's unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870).

That Crispin's writing is so eminently readable is one of the great joys of the Gervase Fen series. Admirers of darker themes and a leaner prose style may quibble with his approach and perhaps opt for the far grittier world of the hard-boiled novels of Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler, but connoisseurs of imaginative plotting, effortless wit, and an elegantly turned phrase will continue to rank Crispin among the most delectable of mystery writers.

Janet E. Lorenz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

GERVASE FEN SERIES: *The Case of the Gilded Fly*, 1944 (also known as *Obsequies at Oxford*); *Holy Disorders*, 1945; *The Moving Toyshop*, 1946; *Swan Song*, 1947 (also known as *Dead and Dumb*); *Buried for Pleasure*, 1948; *Love Lies Bleeding*, 1948; *Frequent Hearses*, 1950 (also known as *Sudden Vengeance*); *The Long Divorce*, 1951 (also known as *A Noose for Her*); *Beware of the Trains: Sixteen Stories*, 1953; *The Glimpses of the Moon*, 1977; *Fen Country: Twenty-six Stories*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAY (AS BRUCE MONTGOMERY): *Raising the Wind*, 1961

EDITED TEXTS: *Best SF: Science Fiction Stories*, 1955-1970; *Best Detective Stories*, 1959-1964; *Best Tales of Terror*, 1962-1965; *The Stars and Under: A Selection of Science Fiction*, 1968; *Best Murder Stories 2*, 1973; *Outwards from Earth: A Selection of Science Fiction*, 1974

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the British literary tradition in which he fits.

DeMarr, Mary Jean. "Edmund Crispin." In *Twelve Englishmen of Mystery*, edited by Earl F. Bargainnier. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984. Critical overview of Crispin's life and work discussing his distinctive contributions to the history of the British detective novel.

"Edmund Crispin." In *Modern Mystery Writers*, edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1995. Critical, scholarly essay on Crispin, his cultural significance and ideological investments.

Nover, Peter, ed. *The Great Good Place? A Collection of Essays on American and British College Mystery Novels*. New York: P. Lang, 1999. Compilation of essays focused on crime fiction set at college campuses or feature academic characters. Provides context for the character of Gervase Fen.

Routley, Erik. *The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story: A Personal Monograph*. London: Gollancz, 1972. Idiosyncratic but useful discussion of crime fiction in terms of nominally puritanical ideology. Sheds light on Crispin's work.

Sarjeant, William A. S. "Edmund Crispin: A Memorial and Appreciation." *The Poisoned Pen* 3 (May/June, 1980): 3-10. Homage to Crispin provides a brief survey of his work and its significance.

FREEMAN WILLS CROFTS

Born: Dublin, Ireland; June 1, 1879

Died: Worthing, Sussex, England; April 11, 1957

Types of plot: Police procedural; inverted; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector (later Superintendent) Joseph French, 1925-1957

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

INSPECTOR JOSEPH FRENCH of Scotland Yard, is comfortably middle-aged, stoutish, slightly below average height, clean-shaven, with alert but kindly blue

eyes, happily married, an amateur gardener, a dapper dresser, and polite. French ages little in the series and resents cases that prevent his spending weekends at home. He believes in "reconstructing his cases from the point of view of time" (*Mystery on Southampton Water*, 1934), and he says about his promotions, a "rise in position means a corresponding increase in loneliness."

CONTRIBUTION

Freeman Wills Crofts's twenty-eight novels featuring Inspector Joseph French are generally under the

control of a third-person narrator, who allows the reader to share completely the actions and the thinking of the characters. Opting for the Wilkie Collins-Émile Gaboriau school of detective fiction as opposed to the C. Auguste Dupin-Sherlock Holmes super-sleuth school so popular before World War I, Crofts's trademarks are meticulous planning by the criminal and the even more meticulous "alibi busting" by Inspector French. Crofts's language is simple and straightforward, and his style is natural and unforced. He helped shape the subgenre that is known today as the psychological thriller.

The reader is informed from the outset of everything that French sees, does, and knows, and accompanies him step-by-step as French unravels the mystery. Some find Crofts's method tedious, but fellow writers such as Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler have written warmly and admiringly of his craft. His appeal is to those who wish to be intellectually stimulated, not those seeking pure entertainment. His popularity in England and throughout Europe has been strong, but he has been less successful in the United States, where tastes run more toward the hard-boiled detective and urban violence. Crofts's finely crafted plots seem to come naturally to a mind trained in mathematics and engineering.

BIOGRAPHY

Freeman Wills Crofts was born June 1, 1879, in Dublin, the son of a British army doctor who died during foreign service while his son was still a child. His widowed mother later married Archdeacon Harding of the Church of Ireland, and Crofts was reared in the Harding home. He attended Methodist and Campbell colleges in Belfast and, at seventeen, began his engineering studies under his uncle, Berkeley D. Wise, then chief engineer of the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway. In 1899, Crofts was appointed junior assistant engineer for the construction of an extension of the Donegal Railway. In 1900, he was named district engineer at Coleraine for the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway and, ten years later, chief assistant engineer at Belfast for the same line. In 1912, he married Mary Bellas Canning, daughter of the manager of a local bank.

During a long illness and recovery in 1919, Crofts began to write to amuse himself. The result was *The Cask*, published in London by Collins in 1920, a novel generally hailed as a masterpiece of pure detection. He continued to publish almost yearly until 1929, when another serious illness forced him to choose between engineering and writing. He elected to continue writing; after he resigned his position with the railway, he and Mary moved near London, where he lived most of the rest of his life. In 1939, he was elected to the Royal Society of Arts. He died April 11, 1957, at the age of seventy-seven. Crofts's other interests included gardening, carpentry, and music, as both an organist and a conductor. These interests are reflected by the characters in his novels. The personal traits most obvious in the novels, and especially in Inspector French, are those of a mind trained in mathematics and engineering methodically applying perseverance and logic to solving a problem or a murder.

ANALYSIS

The horrors of World War I effectively put a stop to most entertaining writing in Europe. The super-sleuth antics of the Sherlock Holmes school lost much of their appeal as the last vestiges of the gaslight era of Victoria and Edward died in the technological advances demanded by war. A new breed of hero was in the making, led in part by John Buchan's short novels for the boys in the trenches. Buchan's novels featured a generally realistic Richard Hannay, who engaged in sophisticated battles of wit with his opponents.

THE CASK

Freeman Wills Crofts's first novel, *The Cask*, begun during his illness in 1919 and published in 1920, reflects the change then under way. The novel features the steady, systematic, and realistic police work that culminated in the creation of Inspector Joseph French in Crofts's fifth novel. The influence of Émile Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq—his painstaking reconstruction of the crime and the criminal's movements through his analysis of footprints in the snow, scraps of material, the time necessary to move from one place to another—is apparent in Crofts's early work. H. Douglas Thomson, in his *Master of Mystery* (1931), says of Lecoq, "Here is Inspector French's prototype."

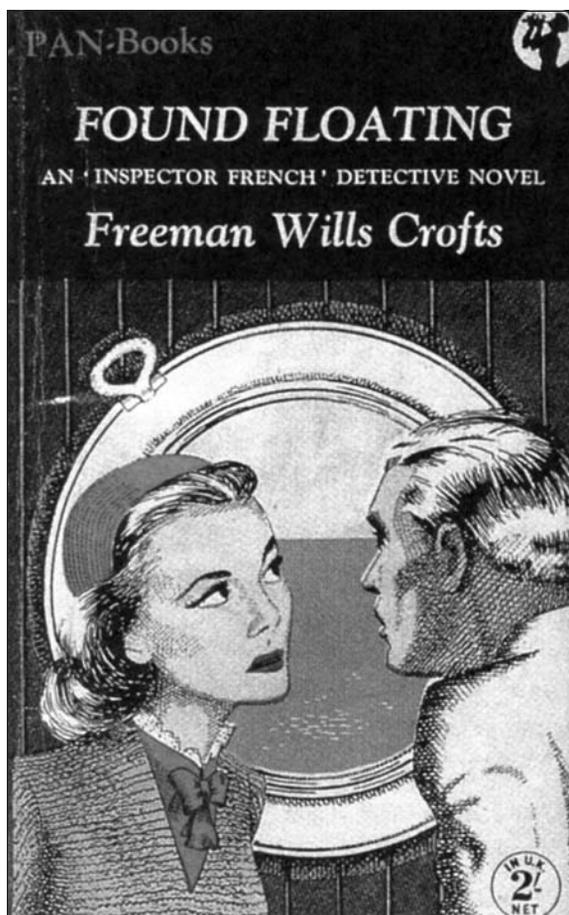
INSPECTOR FRENCH'S GREATEST CASE

Inspector French first appeared in the presumptuously titled *Inspector French's Greatest Case* in 1925. Using bits and pieces from such diverse forerunners as Monsieur Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Monsieur Lecoq, and Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff, Crofts created one of the most memorable characters in detective fiction. Like his predecessors, French carefully and methodically investigates everything, considers everything, notes everything, catalogs everything. Nothing escapes his attention and consideration. As French himself tells the reader, "The evidence is cumulative," and the reconstruction of the crime, like the railway timetables with which Crofts was so familiar, falls neatly into place as each bit of information is slotted into its appropriate niche.

Crofts's method of building a novel, police procedural or inverted, is relatively simple. Through the impersonal guidance of the unnamed, third-person narrator, the reader is kept informed of the action and of what is going on in the minds of both the criminal and the detective. The narrator lays out before the reader the actions and the thoughts of both. The excitement comes from the sustained attention to detail as the criminal attempts to cover his trail and as Inspector French re-creates the time-and-space sequence of the crime. French measures distances, times how quickly one can row a boat across a particular body of water, clocks how long it would take for a man the size of the suspect to climb out a window, cross a tract of land, scale a wall, and commit the crime. With Crofts, the nineteenth century Holmesian sleuth gives way to the sometimes plodding, always methodical, hardworking, routine investigator of the *roman policier*. Crofts's influence on such detective-fiction writers as A. E. Fielding (Dorothy Fielding), Charles Barry, A. W. Marchmont, and J. S. Fletcher, among others, has been remarked by most historians of the genre. Peter Falk's television investigator, Columbo, is directly descended from Inspector French.

Some critics consider as a flaw in Crofts's work his dependence on the ability of French to remain the patient, kindly, thorough reader of clues and time passage. It is probably true that after twenty-eight novels, Crofts's imagination had worn a little thin, partly as a

result of his disinclination to create characters that go much beyond simulacra of types. His criminals are, however, finely drawn, within limits, and are usually well-placed individuals facing financial ruin or suffering from that ancient pair of human flaws, greed and lust. They turn to crime, usually murder, to alleviate their particular problem, plotting and scheming carefully to eliminate what each considers the potential of error. On the surface and to the average speculator, the crime is perfect because it is not obvious, but to Inspector Joseph French something simply does not quite fit, and he begins to test for flaws—and he finds them. His method is simple. He questions everybody and everything; he rereads his notes constantly, looking for what he must have overlooked earlier; and he times and measures and conjectures, and finally finds



Paperback reprint of Freeman Wills Crofts's 1937 novel *Found Floating*.

what he is looking for. The murderer then pays the ultimate penalty.

THE 12:30 FROM CROYDON

The 12:30 from Croydon (1934) is a fine example of Crofts's inverted detective story and of Inspector French's technique. Charles Swinburn owns a motor manufacturing plant that is in financial trouble, as a result of both the conditions of the time and antiquated machinery. His uncle, Andrew Crowther, who began the plant and made it into a successful business, is retired and in ill health. Crowther sees Swinburn's difficulties as the result of laziness and a refusal to work hard and reminds him of this attitude whenever they meet. Peter Morley, Crowther's son-in-law, is also experiencing difficulties with his business, farming, and Crowther's attitude toward him is much the same. The novel opens with the death of Crowther on a flight to Paris, a death the authorities in Paris do not consider to be of natural causes. The autopsy shows potassium cyanide sufficient to cause death, and the police are notified.

Crofts then takes the reader back in time and outlines the series of events that led to Swinburn's decision to murder his uncle, after Crowther refused to lend him more than a thousand pounds to save the business. Swinburn needs five thousand, at least, to buy new machinery to make the business competitive. Swinburn considers introducing a poisoned pill into Crowther's bottle of Salter's Anti-Indigestion Pills, knowing that eventually Crowther will take that pill and die. Swinburn is aware that he and Elsie, Crowther's daughter and Morley's wife, are the principal beneficiaries to Crowther's estate, and he decides to put his plan into action.

Swinburn also contemplates a future without Una Mellor, the somewhat indifferent lady with whom he is in love—a future that would certainly end should he go bankrupt. Swinburn then takes the valuable paintings his father left him and pawns them in London, acquiring enough cash to get the needed machinery. Using another's name, he purchases an ounce of potassium cyanide on the pretense of wanting to destroy a wasps' nest and buys a bottle of Salter's Anti-Indigestion Pills and experiments until he is able to fill a pill with the poison and put it back together so that it

looks like the other pills. At another dinner engagement with his uncle, as Crowther is preparing to take his usual pill, Swinburn "accidentally" spills a glass of wine and in the confusion slips the deadly pill in among the others. He then takes a cruise to provide an alibi. Later, on a plane trip, Crowther takes the pill and dies.

John Weatherup, Crowther's valet and companion, casually reminds Swinburn of the wine spilling and notes that he had observed the exchange of pills. He mentions money and tells Swinburn that he has written down what he has seen, giving the information in a sealed envelope to Peter Morley, to be opened should something happen to him. It is blackmail, but more urgently it is a direct threat to Swinburn's life, his hopes for the success of the plant, and for a future with Una Mellor. He begins to plan another murder, and the reader accompanies him as he lures Weatherup to the boathouse, kills him, weighs him down and drops him into the lake, and then reenters the house to look for the letter. Although things now appear to be looking up for Swinburn, Inspector French is making visits and asking questions of everyone associated with Swinburn and with Crowther's household. A final visit by French is to Swinburn, which results in the arrest of Swinburn for the murders of Andrew Crowther and John Weatherup.

The trial of Swinburn is short. The prosecution and the defense arguments are given, and evidence of which Swinburn cannot imagine the source is introduced. The scene is calmly and straightforwardly played, while Swinburn mentally and silently feels the horror of what is to happen. He is convicted, his appeal is dismissed, and he is hanged. A few weeks later, Inspector French and the defense attorney team meet for dinner, and French carefully outlines the means by which he trapped and convicted Swinburn. The reader learns how he located the chemist who sold Swinburn the poison, how he traced the lead pipe used to weigh down the body of Weatherup to a plumber who had done work for Swinburn, how he matched up the sawed ends of the pipe to Swinburn's saw, how he came to realize that the key that had been returned to Morley's study on the night of Weatherup's death could have been returned only by someone who knew

the house, and how the evidence accumulated to the point that every indicator pointed to Swinburn. It was then that French arrested Swinburn and gave the evidence he had gathered to the prosecution.

MYSTERY ON SOUTHAMPTON WATER

A similar story, but with a more surprising ending, is *Mystery on Southampton Water*. A rivalry between two concrete manufacturers, Brand and King, leads to the accidental death of a nightwatchman. Brand and King fake an auto accident to conceal the death, but Inspector French discovers that the carburetor was smashed so that the car would burn. He also finds the stone used to smash the carburetor. Later, the officials at Chayle, the rival manufacturer, come to Brand, King, and their boss James Tasker with a proposal to franchise them with the new concrete formula in return for 75 percent of their profits. King, on the night the watchman died, had stolen the formula and some cash, which he had placed in the car with the murdered man. The Chayle people do not know this, but King decides to eliminate potential problems by rigging with a bomb the motor boat in which the three executives are traveling. It explodes, but Noel Samson, Chayle's chief engineer, survives. French reenters the scene and analyzes the watchman's death, the faked automobile accident, the boat accident, and the two companies. He has the remains of the boat raised by divers and discovers how the bomb was triggered. He times the trip and concludes that if the three men had not made a detour to visit a sister of one of the men, the craft would have exploded at such a point that no recovery would have been possible and no survival probable.

French has an "inspiration" and times how long it would take for two men to leave King's laboratory, row across the water, climb the wall of Chayle's plant, kill the watchman, burglarize the office, take the body away, and stage the accident. He finds a gramophone and a recording that consists of a dialogue between King and Tasker (Tasker had to memorize his lines) to suggest that King was in his office, when in fact he was rigging the boat for destruction. French times this adventure as well, and finds that it corresponds with the length of the recording. A different dimension of French is now made clear to readers of this book: his ability to interpret people for who they are and for

what they may be hiding. The surprise occurs when Tasker is revealed as the mastermind behind King's actions. Brand is the innocent dupe. Tasker and King are convicted, and Brand leaves for other environments. French returns to London and his wife, home, and garden.

Crofts was an innovator, a good storyteller, and a first-rate craftsman in his chosen literary field. Although most of his Inspector French novels were published in the United States, many of those under the Dodd-Mead Red Badge Books imprint, he was never as much of a force for American readers as he was for British and Continental readers. His books enjoyed steady if not spectacular sales and were translated into nearly all the European languages. Crofts played a significant part in the development of the psychological thriller. His body of work includes splendid examples of the police procedural and inverted subgenres. Finally, Crofts introduced his readers to Inspector (later Superintendent) Joseph French, a very fine literary invention indeed.

William H. Holland, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR JOSEPH FRENCH SERIES: 1925-1930 • *Inspector French's Greatest Case*, 1925; *Inspector French and the Cheyne Mystery*, 1926 (also known as *The Cheyne Mystery*); *Inspector French and the Starvel Tragedy*, 1927 (also known as *The Starvel Hollow Tragedy*); *The Sea Mystery*, 1928; *The Box Office Murders*, 1929 (also known as *The Purple Sickle Murders*); *Sir John Magill's Last Journey*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Mystery in the Channel*, 1931 (also known as *Mystery in the English Channel*); *Death on the Way*, 1932 (also known as *Double Death*); *Sudden Death*, 1932; *The Hog's Back Mystery*, 1933 (also known as *The Strange Case of Dr. Earle*); *Mystery on Southampton Water*, 1934 (also known as *Crime on the Solent*); *The 12:30 from Croydon*, 1934 (also known as *Wilful and Premeditated*); *Crime at Guildford*, 1935 (also known as *The Crime at Normes*); *Man Overboard!*, 1936 (also known as *Cold-Blooded Murder*); *The Loss of the "Jane Vosper,"* 1936; *Found Floating*, 1937; *Antidote to Venom*, 1938; *The End of Andrew Harrison*, 1938 (also known as *The Futile Al-*

ibi); *Fatal Venture*, 1939 (also known as *Tragedy in the Hollow*); *Golden Ashes*, 1940

1941-1957 • *James Tarrant, Adventurer*, 1941 (also known as *Circumstantial Evidence*); *The Losing Game*, 1941; *Fear Comes to Chalfont*, 1942; *The Affair at Little Wokeham*, 1943 (also known as *Double Tragedy*); *Enemy Unseen*, 1945; *Death of a Train*, 1946; *Silence for the Murderer*, 1948; *Dark Journey*, 1951 (also known as *French Strikes Oil*); *Anything to Declare*, 1957

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Cask*, 1920; *The Ponson Case*, 1921; *The Pit-Prop Syndicate*, 1922; *The Groot Park Murder*, 1923 (with others); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Double Death*, 1932 (with others); *Six Against the Yard*, 1936 (with others; also known as *Six Against Scotland Yard*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Hunt Ball Murder*, 1943; *Mr. Sefton, Murderer*, 1944; *Murderers Make Mistakes*, 1947; *Many a Slip*, 1955; *The Mystery of the Sleeping Car Express, and Other Stories*, 1956

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *The Nine-Fifty Up Express*, 1942; *Chief Inspector's Cases*, 1943; *Mr. Pemberton's Commission*, 1952; *East Wind*, 1953; *The Greuze*, 1953

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Young Robin Brand, Detective*, 1947

NONFICTION: *Bann and Lough Neagh Drainage*, 1930; *The Four Gospels in One Story*, 1949

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DEBORAH CROMBIE

Deborah Lynn Darden

Born: Dallas, Texas; June 5, 1952

Types of plot: Police procedural; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DUNCAN KINCAID is a Scotland Yard detective superintendent from a privileged background. At the beginning of the series, he is a divorced man who is trying to lose himself in his job.

GEMMA JAMES, initially a Scotland Yard sergeant in the series, is the single mother of Toby James. A disparity in social rank between Gemma and Duncan complicates their working relationship. However, despite their differences, the pair begin a romance, which is interrupted sporadically by career and personal issues.

CONTRIBUTION

Deborah Crombie's first book, *A Share in Death* (1983), introduced Scotland Yard detectives Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James and was an immediate success. Crombie's special talent is to create convincing English whodunits despite having been born and educated in Texas. In this Crombie resembles Martha Grimes, but her novels are more wide-ranging than those of Grimes. They are heavily atmospheric with evocative detail that contributes to the experience of the reading. Crombie's idiosyncratic mode of writing is something a little darker than the typical cozy, but she does tend to follow the traditions established by Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham, and Dorothy L. Sayers. She tends to follow the Christie technique of providing a parade of suspects at the end of a novel and surprising the reader by the final conclusion. However, her characters are far more layered and realistic than Christie's. Crombie has updated the traditions of the Golden Age female mystery novelists and provided believable, likeable new characters. Moreover, the buildup of suspense in the Crombie novels is unmatched.

Like many detective series novels, Crombie's books provide an extended narrative of the relationship between the two main characters, and Crombie adds depth to these characterizations by filling in more background with each book. There are many minor characters who appear and disappear in the series, but the main characters grow. The novels are police procedurals only in the broadest sense; the emphasis is on intuitive discovery. Crombie's strengths include a persuasive British location, appealing series characters, and psychological realism. She is often compared with Elizabeth George as well as Grimes, but Crombie has a stronger emphasis on setting, and her settings are more dynamically involved with the characters and their actions.

Crombie received Agatha and Macavity Award nominations in 1993 for her first novel, *A Share in Death*, and *Dreaming of the Bones* (1997) won the



Deborah Crombie. (Library of Congress)

Macavity Award, was named *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, and was nominated for numerous awards. Her novels have been published in England, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, France, the Czech Republic, and Germany.

BIOGRAPHY

Deborah Crombie was born Deborah Lynn Darden in 1952 in Dallas. She spent a good deal of her childhood reading, began writing poetry in junior high school, and was soon a committed writer. After sporadic experiments with higher education, she graduated from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, in 1977 with a major in biology—she then wished to be a field biologist or ornithologist. For her graduation present, her parents took her to England, and she says:

that must have been the true turning point in my life. On the bus from Gatwick to London . . . I sat with my nose pressed to the window and tears running down my face. I had the most tremendous sense of homecoming, of belonging, that I still feel whenever I set foot on British soil.

This trip with her parents sparked a repeat trip by herself, and a lifelong love affair with the British Isles.

Crombie's first marriage to Peter Crombie, a Scot, did not survive the publication of her first book. In 1994 she married Rick Wilson. Crombie for a time lived in the United Kingdom, where her stories are set. It was after a visit to Yorkshire that she began her Emma James-Duncan Kincaid series. Crombie eventually settled in Dallas, later noting that if she were to live in England, she would be divided emotionally and that her novels might not be as intense emotionally, as they would lack the element of longing for England. According to M. K. Graff, Crombie "agrees with her role model P. D. James that setting drives her characters, dictating their actions and behavior." Crombie immerses herself in the settings of her novels to present them as vividly as possible.

After publishing her first novel, Crombie became a full-time writer. Previously she worked in newspaper advertising and also for a family business.

ANALYSIS

The interaction between Deborah Crombie's two main characters helps illustrate some British truths about class and money. As the relationship between Gemma James and Duncan Kincaid grows, they each learn something about the class system to which they belong, and so does the reader. The characters' interactions with others provide subtle messages concerning authority and power, including how they affect others. The varied settings provide ample opportunity to present a study of British social values.

Crombie's first books are more completely police procedurals, with clear explanations of the various stages of the investigation from discovery of the body to finding the culprit. She describes autopsies and investigation techniques convincingly. Some of the books end with explorations of various possible perpetrators before zeroing in on the always surprising culprit. A lot of the atmosphere of the books comes from the interaction between the two investigators.

Some of the later books are moody, overcast, even gothic. *A Finer End* (2001), for example, contains undeniable supernatural elements that play a significant part in the story, while in other books, the supernatural may be marginally present as a possibility. In *A Finer End*, the supernatural grows out of the environment, which makes it seem more natural. It may remind the reader of the notion of rememory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), in which places are believed to carry images or traces of traumatic events that have occurred there. The notion of the effect of a place and its history on the present action is behind the apparently supernatural deviations from the norm in *A Finer End*. Vivid descriptions of natural scenes and of architecture in this book and others underscore the action and help explain it.

Major themes in Crombie's work include the relationships between parents and children: how strong these bonds are and what they cause people to do and the terrible grief of losing a child. She also writes about the problems inherent in romantic relationships between people from different social backgrounds. Other important concerns are the effect of place on inhabitants, providing opportunities and obstacles, and the causes and effects of betrayal and how it damages that

primary necessity, trust. Over and over in the novels, Crombie deals with the issue of trust, not only between Gemma and Duncan but also between other characters.

MOURN NOT YOUR DEAD

The 1996 novel *Mourn Not Your Dead* recounts the bludgeoning death of an unpopular police official, Division Commander Alastair Gilbert, who was widely known for his cruelty. Some missing jewelry suggests the killer may be a burglar who has been operating in the area, but other circumstances suggest a more complicated motive. The fragile-appearing widow and the daughter of the victim are mysterious women whose actions cannot be read. The scene shifts back and forth from Gilbert's village to London as Duncan and Gemma investigate all the tormented links between Gilbert and others—almost any of which could have resulted in a murder. However, the conclusion is a genuine surprise.

This novel continues the romance between Gemma and Duncan, who had tentatively begun a relationship in the previous novel, *Leave the Grass Green* (1995). They must put their relationship aside in favor of the investigation, but they learn something about themselves from the outcome. This novel is straightforward and direct, with detailed representations of minor characters.

DREAMING OF THE BONES

Dreaming of the Bones (1997) is an award-winning novel that has been discussed in academic circles for its use of biography as part of the plot. In this work, the lives of Gemma and Duncan are complicated by the re-emergence of Duncan's former wife, Dr. Victoria "Vic" McClellan, who is writing a biography of poet Lydia Brooke, who apparently committed suicide five years earlier. However, it seems unlikely to Vic that Lydia's death was a suicide, because everything looked good for the poet at the time. Duncan reluctantly agrees to investigate and soon finds evidence that Vic may be right. The investigation has disastrous results, though, including a murder—someone does not wish the inquiry to continue. Through a close examination of Lydia's life and a long-lost poem, Gemma discovers the secret that will lead to the resolution of the case.

This novel is the favorite in the James-Kincaid series for many readers, as it is plausible, romantic, and well written. Those not fans of detective stories like it

also, as it is a fine novel, in part about biography, that can be categorized with books like A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and Alison Lurie's *The Truth About Lorin Jones* (1998). The novel also exhibits a distinct and unusual form of feminism, which has caught the eye of feminist scholars.

A FINER END

A Finer End begins with the unusual experiences of Duncan's cousin Jack Montfort, who suddenly finds himself writing in Latin and wonders what is happening to him. He is in Glastonbury, the legendary burial place of King Arthur and Guinevere; it is also the location of an old abbey where long ago, tragic events that ended the monks' peaceful worship took place.

Jack calls Duncan, who reluctantly agrees to visit Glastonbury. There Duncan and Gemma find a complex situation involving both history and the present, current and ancient violence. The two have to find a solution that will both end the present violence and right a situation that has been wrong for centuries. The quest to do these things brings them into dangerous situations.

The novel is dominated by the gloomy abbey and the frightening Tor, which pulls people toward it even as they are repelled by it. This novel is well researched; the spookiness is stronger for being founded in fact. The tone of this novel is a departure for Crombie, but the unusual atmosphere makes the book well worth reading.

IN A DARK HOUSE

In a Dark House (2004) is one of the best of the James-Kincaid mysteries, having a complex and yet believable plot, a frightening atmosphere, and plenty of accurate police-procedural techniques to keep the reader informed. As the novel begins, a fire is being set by an arsonist; this fire results in a corpse. The fire takes place next to a home for battered women, and soon Duncan must interview the young female resident who reported seeing something the day of the fire, as well as others staying at the home. Gemma, meanwhile, is investigating the disappearance of a woman whose housemate is a friend of vicar Winifred Catesby. There is another mystery: a child who has been abducted, perhaps by a parent. The mysteries prove to be related, of course, and the threads of story come together in an explosive conclusion.

Duncan's personal life is also in crisis—he is threatened with loss of custody of his son Kit. His relationship with Gemma is uneasy, and the makeshift family they have created seems likely to pull apart. The bond between parents and children and its demands is the underlying theme of this novel, both in the mystery and in the ongoing story of the two detectives. Perhaps more than any other novel in the series, this story focuses on the intense bond between parents and children and the internal and external dangers to it.

Janet McCann

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DUNCAN KINCAID AND GEMMA JAMES SERIES: *A Share in Death*, 1993; *All Shall Be Well*, 1994; *Leave the Grave Green*, 1995; *Mourn Not Your Dead*, 1996; *Dreaming of the Bones*, 1997; *Kissed a Sad Goodbye*, 1999; *A Finer End*, 2001; *And Justice There Is None*, 2002; *Now You May Weep*, 2003; *In a Dark House*, 2004; *Water like a Stone*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The Sunken Sailor*, 2004 (with others)

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Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an essay discussing Crombie's work and her life and their interactions.

AMANDA CROSS

Carolyn Gold Heilbrun

Born: East Orange, New Jersey; January 13, 1926

Died: New York, New York; October 9, 2003

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kate Fansler, 1964-2002

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

KATE FANSLER is a professor of English at a New York City university. She is married, at the end of the

third novel in the series, to her longtime friend from the district attorney's office, Reed Amhearst. An academic and a feminist as witty as she is principled, she is a friend of those with imagination and character and an enemy of unthinking conventionality.

CONTRIBUTION

Amanda Cross set out, with the invention of Kate Fansler, to reanimate a venerable but then neglected tradition within detective fiction: that of elegant arm-

chair detection. Learning her lessons from the masters of the old school—Dorothy L. Sayers, Josephine Tey, Ngaio Marsh, and Agatha Christie—Cross infused her whodunits with a healthy moral awareness. She chose the academic milieu, particularly well suited for the testing of ethical positions and social responsibilities, a place where personal and political rivalries can be intense but where murder itself is still a shock. Here, too, the detective can be appreciated as an individual of exceptional sensibility and imaginative power; in this world, in fact, the detective can be a woman.

Through Cross's creation of Kate Fansler, a professor-sleuth, the art of literate conversation at last gained credence in the American detective novel. Through her, too, Cross worked out a dynamic balance between irony and earnestness, between romance and realism, and strove to create out of the detective-story conventions something more.

BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Cross was the pseudonym and persona of Carolyn Gold Heilbrun, who was born on January 13, 1926, in East Orange, New Jersey. She attended Wellesley College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa; she was graduated in 1947, having married James Heilbrun in 1945. She was the mother of Emily, Margaret, and Robert.

Cross's academic life was a full one, started with accomplishments and recognition. She received both a master's degree and a doctoral degree from Columbia University, in 1951 and 1959 respectively. Her teaching career began at Brooklyn College in 1959; the next year, she moved back to Columbia, where she moved up the academic rungs from instructor to full professor by 1972. Finally, Columbia gave her a chair, making her Avalon Foundation professor in the humanities. She served as visiting professor in numerous places (not unlike the peripatetic Kate Fansler), and she held four honorary degrees. Cross served as president of the Modern Language Association in 1984 and, over the years, received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

It was in 1963 that Cross began to create the kind of detective fiction she enjoyed but could no longer

find in the bookstores. Beginning in 1964 she published fourteen Kate Fansler mysteries that, running counter to the prevailing hard-boiled school, secured for her a substantial readership as well as honors. Her awards included a Mystery Writers of America Scroll for *In the Last Analysis* (1964) and the Nero Wolfe Award for Mystery Fiction for *Death in a Tenured Position* (1981). Cross died in New York in 2003.

ANALYSIS

From the beginning, Amanda Cross knew what she wanted to do with her detective. She wrote that Kate Fansler “sprang from [her] brain” as a champion of the decencies, of intelligent conversation, and of a literary legacy that challenges those who know it to be worthy inheritors. Kate was also conceived as a combatant of “reaction, stereotyped sex roles, and convention that arises from the fear of change.”

A certain Noël Cowardesque conversational flair is a hallmark of the Cross mystery. This prologue from *In the Last Analysis* illustrates the connection between the sparkling wit and the probing intelligence that make Kate a stimulating teacher, a successful detective, and a good friend:

“I didn't say I objected to Freud,” Kate said. “I said I objected to what Joyce called Freudful errors—all those nonsensical conclusions leaped to by people with no reticence and less mind.”

“If you're going to hold psychiatry responsible for sadistic parlor games, I see no point in continuing the discussion,” Emanuel answered. But they would continue the discussion nonetheless; it had gone on for years, and showed no sign of exhausting itself.

A conversation that goes on for years is just what Cross had in mind: provocative conversation about modern dilemmas and timeless issues, into which, now and then, Death intrudes.

Kate Fansler's conversations ring with allusions, analogies, and epigrams. The first page alone of the first novel makes mention of T. S. Eliot, Julius Caesar, William Butler Yeats, Johann Sebastian Bach, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Jane Austen. These scholarly references are more than surface ornamentation, it should be said; to this erudite detective, the word-

hoard of Western civilization suggests both theme and imaginative method. There is a particular figure, for example, looming behind the mystery of who killed Kate's student on her psychiatrist's couch: Sigmund Freud himself.

POETIC JUSTICE

In *The James Joyce Murder* (1967), it is the Irish literary genius who serves as the intellectual model, and the poet W. H. Auden is the sleuth's guiding spirit in the third novel, *Poetic Justice* (1970). Frustrated by the blind waste of the campus revolts, Kate thinks a line of Auden's: "... unready to die, but already at the stage when one starts to dislike the young." She later recovers her tolerance of the young; in later novels she even succeeds in appreciating them, and she matures in other ways as well. That success, her continued

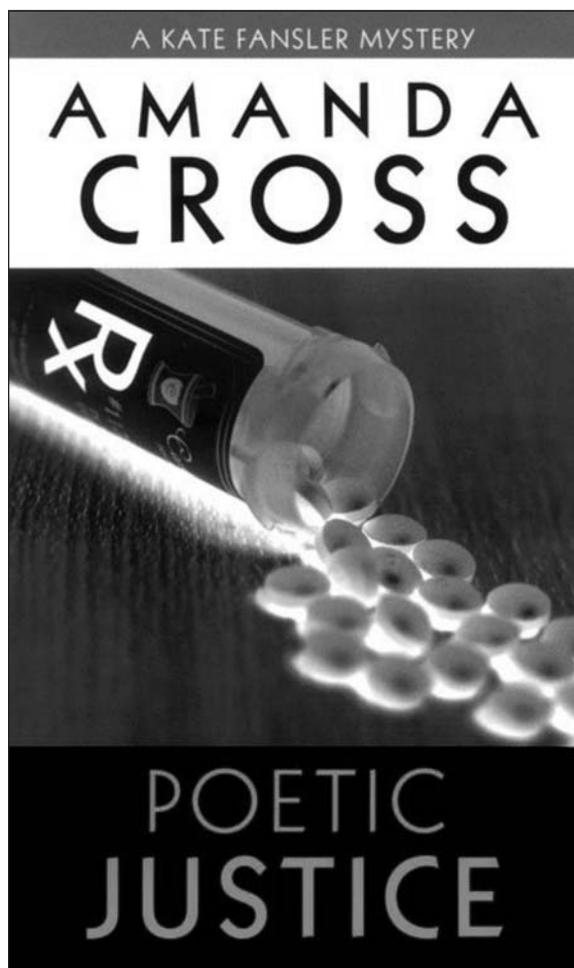
growth as a character, the reader is made to sense, is in large part attributable to such influences as that of Auden, who, for his pursuit of frivolity balanced by earnestness, she calls "the best balancer of all."

Auden's influence reaches beyond the events of one novel, actually, and into the broader considerations of theory. It was Auden, after all, who laid down with such left-handed ease the consummate protocol for Aristotelian detective plotting in "The Guilty Vicarage." Dorothy L. Sayers, whom Kate quotes frequently, edited the perceptive survey *The Omnibus of Crime* (1928-1934) and wrote "Aristotle on Detective Fiction," an entertaining and imaginative look at the detective story's qualifications as genuine art. These two serve as Cross's authorities on matters of form.

Particularly in her early novels, Cross adheres rather closely to the formal requirements and conventional elements of the classic detective story. Her stories begin in peaceful settings or retreats, such as Kate's office, a pastoral campus, or the edenic Berkshires; this is the stage Auden calls False Innocence. Quite soon ironic shadows develop. (The campus is so quiet, for example, because students have captured the administration building.) Then a murder is discovered. Kate finds herself in a predicament because she knows and feels some commitment to the victim, the suspect, or both, and she stays because her sense of decency impels her.

After noting numerous clues and considering various apparently innocent suspects (and engaging in fascinating conversations), Kate, assisted by Reed and sometimes by her own version of the Baker Street Irregulars, tests the evidence, makes her deductions, and reaches a solution. The story ends with an arrest, a confession, or some final illumination and a return to a peaceful state. In Auden's terms, the Real Guilt has been located and True Innocence achieved.

Though her plotting is solid, plotting is not Cross's principal concern. Like any mystery author worth her salt, Cross wants to challenge the conventions and transcend the formula. She is greatly interested in change, growth, and innovation, and she is deeply concerned about resistance to change, stagnation, and suspicion of the new. In one novel Kate calls this kind of poor thinking confusing morality with convention. Kate seems in-



variably to take the unconventional position—defending psychiatry, supporting young Vietnam draft resisters, advocating feminism—but in reality she, too, is subject to the conventions through which all human beings see and understand their lives, and she, too, is challenged to change. In effect, with each new novel Cross tests her hypothesis that when conventions (literary or social) no longer promote genuine morality or serve a civilizing purpose, they should be modified.

By insisting on the primacy of character—that is, of personal integrity—Cross bends one of the cardinal rules of the detective genre. Sayers herself, following Aristotle, wrote that there can be a detective story without character, but there can be no story without plot. Without neglecting plot, Cross makes character the solution to the crime of *In the Last Analysis*. It is Kate's belief in the intrinsic nature of her friend Emanuel—something that the police investigators cannot know and cannot consider—and her willingness to trust Nicola's dream that lead her to the distant witness who eventually remembers the physical evidence without which the police cannot work. Similarly, the discussions of Freudian analysis and of dreams in that same novel make the point that intuitive and associative thinking can be as productive as deductive logic, and thereby broaden what have been the conventional expectations of ratiocinative tales.

THE THEBAN MYSTERIES AND THE QUESTION OF MAX

Cross continued to reshape the formal elements of the whodunit with each subsequent novel. In her fourth, *The Theban Mysteries* (1971), she extends the usually brief preamble and predicament segments and withholds the usually numerous suspects so that the crisis in faith between the generations displaces yet illuminates the lesser crisis of the dead parent. The model of ratiocination here is Kate's *Antigone* seminar, a beautifully crafted conversation of a special kind that illustrates the art of deciding what is worth examining. In her next novel, *The Question of Max* (1976), Cross achieved what some consider her greatest success in blending experimentation and tradition: She identifies the murderer from the beginning, the better to focus attention on that individual's character, social conditioning, and misogynist motives.

NO WORD FROM WINIFRED

As she has gone about reshaping the detective story to suit her moral vision, feminism has remained foremost among the positions Cross champions. Kate herself represents the achieving woman in a once all-male domain, and there are distinctive portraits of other academic women: Grace Knowles, "the greatest living medieval scholar"; Miss Tyringham, headmistress of the Theban and "a genius at her job"; Janet Mandlebaum, the first woman on the English faculty at Harvard University; and Patrice Umphelby, "a professor, widely known and widely loved." In *No Word from Winifred* (1986), the central figure of mystery is not an academic but a woman whose distinction lies in knowing what she wants. No Cross novel better illustrates the zest and the discernment that she brings to the investigation of what it means to be an exceptional woman in the late twentieth century.

As the novel opens, Larry Fansler is complaining to his law partner about the risks they will be running by inviting his strong-minded sister Kate to the annual associates party. At the novel's close a year later, this same curmudgeon of a brother is relieved to reflect that "her being there didn't make the slightest difference," expressing the paternalistically mellow sentiment that "a man ought to see his kid sister once in a while." Within this masculine frame of reference exists a most thoroughly feminist mystery quest. Unknown to her unimaginative eldest brother, Kate has, in fact, made a significant difference in the lives of the women and men who help her piece together the puzzle of the missing woman; one of those men is Larry's law partner, Toby Van Dyne.

As usual, allusions enrich the detection process, beginning with Leighton's suspicion that something very wrong has happened at the law office and her desire to play Watson to her aunt Kate's Holmes. Charlotte Lucas is the first clue: Leighton knows her as a very nice coworker; Kate recognizes the name of a character of Jane Austen; the knowing reader is allowed the special pleasure of seeing in this name a reference to a stifflingly conventional approach to marriage.

When Kate needs help, she turns to professionals in both literary and investigatory fields, treating the

detective Mr. Fothingale to a British high tea and playing the attentive neophyte in the headquarters of the Modern Language Association in order to take a sleuthing shortcut. In her dual role of professor and detective Kate rings changes on the conventional detective puzzle. By drawing attention to the nature of the story and people's tendency to live by stories, Cross demonstrates that the detective formula can be transformed into an instrument of imaginative expression. Moreover, in *No Word from Winifred* she discriminates between conventional stories and living stories.

This is a feminist book that transcends the stereotypical. Both the women and the men whom Kate encounters along the trail of clues are believable individuals, as recognizable as Geoffrey Chaucer's pilgrims must have been to literate Londoners at the close of the fourteenth century—typical in some ways, atypical in others. Kate is introduced to Winifred's story, what there is of it at first, by Charlie, that is, Charlotte Lucas (who is keeping her relationship with Toby Van Dyne secret). As the biographer of the Oxford novelist Charlotte Stanton, Charlie had escorted Winifred, Stanton's honorary niece, from her rural retreat in the United States to England, where Winifred disappeared.

The "evidence" Charlie brings to Kate consists of Winifred's journal and Charlie's own letters to Toby written during the trip to England. This is the beginning of a chain of communication—much of it written—from woman to sympathetic woman that organizes and gives meaning to the entire narrative, enabling Kate at last to piece together Winifred's surprising story, a classic mystery of identity, unknown parentage, and a love triangle. Of particular stylistic merit are the journal entries, in which an entirely new and compelling voice evokes the missing woman's presence. There is an appealing description of a childhood summer in Oxford and of the pleasure of dressing as a boy.

The motif of the quest is conventionally associated with male adventure stories (in which the female characters may be damsels in distress, tempting witches, or repulsive hags). *No Word from Winifred* reverses this pattern: The men have problems and the women are on quests. First, there is Winifred, whose quest for the

precious time and the quiet place to write is detailed in her journal. Then comes Charlie, who has been tenacious in pursuing her desire to write the biography of Stanton. As a detective Kate is in quest of a solution, and as a connoisseur of character she is committed to preserving Winifred's. Finally, Leighton, who has been casting about for a real occupation and who first brought the puzzle to Kate's attention, decides to set out for the fabled Orient, to meet the paragon of womanhood face to face—and then, Leighton says, perhaps to write a book about the experience.

THE PLAYERS COME AGAIN

Later Fansler novels continued in the same vein of challenging what is "accepted," specifically focusing on feminism and the role of women in modern society. *The Players Come Again* (1990) investigates human interactions, relationships, genealogy, and the influence of Greek myths on the way Western civilization views men and women. Kate's exploration into Gabrielle Foxx, the wife of respected author Emmanuel Foxx, begins the novel. Emmanuel wrote his groundbreaking work *Ariadne* in 1927, a novel extraordinary primarily in that it was written with a female protagonist from a feminine point of view. As Kate uncovers layers of truth she explores Gabrielle's "counter novel," written in a speculative manner that questions the gender roles perpetuated by the ancient myths surrounding Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur. A complex story that relies heavily on letters, diaries, photographs, and records for a solution, *The Players Come Again* successfully intertwines plots within plots without losing the edge necessary in a modern mystery.

THE PUZZLED HEART

The Puzzled Heart (1998) returns to a simpler style, a more straightforward mystery in which Kate's husband is kidnapped by a group of nameless individuals who insist she write an article retracting her views on feminism for publication in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Kate, joined by a Saint Bernard puppy named Bancroft, enlists the help of friends to track down Reed and solve a subsequent murder. Kate returns to more of an active academic setting for this novel, investigating colleagues, observing departmental politics, and interacting with students and faculty in pursuit of answers. Although still addressing concerns

regarding modern issues (feminism, racism) this novel lacks the complexity of earlier works and relies heavily on action as opposed to research, although the intellectual dialogue continues to amuse fans. After Emma Wentworth, an acquaintance of Reed, offers a quote from a notebook, she says, "I keep those sentences around to quote, because they sum up neatly the bottom line for those on the far right."

"William Bennet, Allan Bloom, and Jesse Helms, in short," Kate said. "Well, yes, as far as their ideas go, if one can accuse Jesse Helms of having anything describable as an idea."

HONEST DOUBT

Fansler's novel *Honest Doubt* (2000) actually casts Kate in the role of mentor to a new investigator, Estelle "Woody" Woodhaven. Woody, a former New York defense attorney turned private eye, is in her mid-thirties, rides a motorcycle, and possesses a portly figure. Although Kate plays only a supporting role, her guiding influence leads Woody through the hallowed ivory towers of stereotypical university life so prevalent in earlier Fansler tales. The victim is an arrogant chauvinist who also happens to be a Tennyson scholar at Clifton College, providing the literary slant Cross favors and seamlessly integrating it into a potential motive for murder.

Cross's characters are, for the most part, gentle people. Further, they are intelligent people, and their stories, under the scrutiny of a lady professor detective, become stories of romance, perhaps, or stories of psychological realism, often ironic and frequently comic, but just as tellingly angry, just as readily compassionate. In using detective fiction as a forum for addressing prevalent issues of today, Cross offers a distinctive weaving of modern academia, feminism, and mystery unique to the genre. Through Kate Fansler, her frivolous air and her sincere heart and her literary mind, the American detective story achieves charm, spirit, and intellectualism.

Rebecca R. Butler

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Mickey Rubenstien

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KATE FANSLER SERIES: *In the Last Analysis*, 1964; *The James Joyce Murder*, 1967; *Poetic Justice*,

1970; *The Theban Mysteries*, 1971; *The Question of Max*, 1976; *Death in a Tenured Position*, 1981 (also known as *A Death in the Faculty*); *Sweet Death, Kind Death*, 1984; *No Word from Winifred*, 1986; *A Trap for Fools*, 1989; *The Players Come Again*, 1990; *An Imperfect Spy*, 1995; *The Puzzled Heart*, 1998; *Honest Doubt*, 2000; *The Edge of Doom*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Collected Stories*, 1997

NONFICTION (AS HEILBRUN): *The Garnett Family*, 1961; *Christopher Isherwood*, 1970; *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny: Aspects of Male and Female in Literature*, 1973 (also known as *Towards Androgyny*); *Reinventing Womanhood*, 1979; *Writing a Woman's Life*, 1988; *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*, 1990; *The Education of a Woman: A Life of Gloria Steinem*, 1995; *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*, 1997; *Women's Lives: The View from the Threshold*, 1999; *When Men Were the Only Models We Had: My Teachers Barzun, Fadiman, and Trilling*, 2001

EDITED TEXTS (AS HEILBRUN): *Gender and Culture* series, 1974-2002 (with Nancy Miller); *Lady Ottoline's Album*, 1976; *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, 1983 (with Margaret R. Higonnet)

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JAMES CRUMLEY

Born: Three Rivers, Texas; October 12, 1939

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Milo Milodragovitch, 1975-

C. W. Sughrue, 1978-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MILTON "MILO" MILODRAGOVITCH is a sometimes private eye, sometimes security worker in Meriwether, Montana. A Korean War veteran, a former deputy sheriff, and the son of a former drunken scion of the town who eventually committed suicide, Milo is counting the days until his fifty-third birthday, when he will inherit the family fortune. A heavy drinker and cocaine abuser in the early novels, Milo often identifies with the very members of society he was once paid to police.

C. W. "SONNY" SUGHRUE, a native of Texas, is a part-time private eye and part-time repo man and bartender based in Meriwether, Montana. A Vietnam War veteran, Sughrue is a more controlled, physically capable, and confident investigator than Milo. *Border-snakes* (1996) uses both characters as narrators; earlier

novels had hinted that the two characters had once been partners in a private-eye firm.

CONTRIBUTION

Compared with the output of many mystery-fiction authors, James Crumley's publications have been limited. Since the publication of his first novel, *One to Count Cadence*, in 1969, he has produced only two or three novels per decade. However, Crumley has had an immense impact on the genre of detective fiction.

Perhaps partly because Crumley's first novel was a mainstream book about the military, his detective novels have been afforded the critical respect and reception more typically associated with literary fiction. During the 1980's Random House printed his books in the Vintage Contemporaries line, dedicated to showcasing rising literary talents like Richard Ford, who later won a Pulitzer Prize, and short-story writer Raymond Carver. As a result, Crumley developed a serious readership beyond the ranks of mystery aficionados. Furthermore, his mystery novels managed to both update and subvert the genre parameters within which they were operating. His detectives abused drugs and were respectful to women but also libidinous; the in-

creased level of violence, and occasionally the absurdity of its abundance, in his books reflected a new take on the genre.

BIOGRAPHY

James Crumley was born in 1939 in Three Rivers, Texas, and was raised in south Texas, largely in the town of Santa Cruz. He attended the Georgia Institute of Technology on a Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship; however, in 1958 he dropped out of college and served a three-year tour in the United States Army. Like his character C. W. Sughrue, Crumley was reluctant to submit to military discipline and often found himself in conflict with his commanding officers. After his Army discharge, he attended Texas College of Arts and Industries on a football scholarship; despite taking time off occasionally to work, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in history in 1964. He then pursued a master of fine arts in creative writing in the writing program at the University of Iowa, where he worked with novelists such as Richard Yates and R. V. Cassell. His thesis was eventually published as *One to Count Cadence*, his first novel.

Crumley became a professor at the University of Montana in Missoula. However, when *One to Count Cadence* was well received, he left and held a series of writing professorships. From 1969 to 1984 he worked briefly for the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville; Colorado State University; Reed College in Portland, Oregon; Carnegie-Mellon; and the University of Texas at El Paso.

Crumley made the move to detective fiction after his friend, the poet and novelist Richard Hugo, loaned him several novels by hard-boiled detective novelist Raymond Chandler. Taken with Chandler's ability to create a memorable character in brief strokes and his character Philip Marlowe's adherence to a code of integrity, Crumley crafted his own detective novel, *The Wrong Case* (1975).

In 1975, Crumley married Judith Anne Ramsey. After divorcing her, he married Bronwyn Pughe in 1979, whom he later divorced. He has five children. He moved to Montana in the mid-1980's, but his wanderlust appears in his novels; a number of them (*The Last Good Kiss*, 1978; *The Mexican Tree Duck*, 1993;

and *Bordersnakes*) send his characters on road trips about the West.

In the mid-1980's Crumley began to spend less time in academic settings and worked as a full-time writer, not only producing magazine pieces but also venturing into film. He wrote a screen adaptation of his novel *Dancing Bear* (1983) and a screenplay called *The Pigeon Shoot* (1987), which was released as a limited edition publication. He worked on screenplays for the science-fiction comic book film *Judge Dredd* (1995) and wrote a screen adaptation of James Ellroy's novel *The Big Nowhere* (1988). In 2006 a film was made from the screenplay he wrote with Rob Sullivan, *The Far Side of Jericho*.

ANALYSIS

James Crumley did not begin his career as a detective novelist. However, many of the elements that define his detective novels are present in his first novel, *One to Count Cadence*: elevated violence, a countercultural perspective, and rebellious characters who refuse to conform to the mainstream. Crumley's main inspiration and primary literary antecedent, as Crumley often states, is Raymond Chandler. Like Chandler, Crumley is a high stylist, who always writes in the first person and relishes the well-turned phrase, particularly apt description, and judicious use of original similes. Just as Chandler's Philip Marlowe is a lone private investigator who works outside the official channels of law enforcement, Crumley's Milo and Sughrue are characters at odds with the authorities, whether they are corrupt police departments or government agencies. Like Marlowe, Sughrue and Milo make up in persistence, endurance, and toughness what they lack in Sherlock Holmesian levels of intellect.

As great as Crumley's debt is to Chandler, however, the plots of his novels follow directions that may have been unimaginable to Chandler. Members of the generation of baby boomers who came of age in the 1960's, Milo and Sughrue are familiar with the counterculture and its politics, with drug users and dealers, the sexual revolution, gay rights, and feminism. Crumley's detectives are more familiar with the down-and-out people in their society than they are with the respectable elements. Their friends are drunks, drug

dealers, burned-out veterans, and bartenders. Both detectives drink too much and are willing to snort both cocaine and methamphetamine. Crumley's detectives rarely find themselves at odds with everyday criminals. In the latter novels, particularly, Sughrue and Milo tend to engage in conflicts with corrupt senators, billionaires, corporations, and upper echelon Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents.

The private-eye characters, the first-person, wise-cracking narrative, the pacing, and the violence in Crumley's novels clearly place them within the hard-boiled category of detective fiction. However, violence in Crumley's novels—particularly the latter ones—tends to be simultaneously more extreme and more complicated than in earlier hard-boiled novels. In *Dancing Bear*, Milo shoots more men during the climactic showdown than Philip Marlowe does in his entire series; on the other hand, the violent death of a friend and drunk in *The Wrong Case* sends Milo on an alcohol and cocaine bender that almost kills him.

Crumley's novels also differ from those of other hard-boiled detective writers because they are not essentially urban tales. Although parts of the novels are set in the small town of Meriwether, Montana, and other small cities, the narratives are largely set in the open West, from Montana in the north to Texas in the south. Crumley's detectives do not lose tails by dodging in and out of taxis or subway cars but by following National Forest Service maps onto logging roads. The corruption of humankind and civilization is made even starker when juxtaposed with the mountain forests of *Dancing Bear* and the desert Southwest of *The Mexican Tree Duck* and *Bordersnakes*.

THE WRONG CASE

The Wrong Case, Crumley's first detective novel, introduces Milton "Milo" Milodragovitch. The great-grandson of a Russian Cossack émigré to the old west, Milo is a thirty-nine-year-old private investigator, a Korean War veteran (having enlisted at the age of sixteen), and a former corrupt deputy sheriff whose business has dried up because of the relaxing of Montana divorce laws. Milo's father, while wealthy, had become a drunk and a philanderer in the years before his suicide; Milo's mother (also an alcoholic and, eventu-

ally, also a suicide) placed the family fortune into a trust that Milo will not inherit until he turns fifty-three. Milo's life is further complicated in that his oldest friend, Jamison, is also his oldest enemy; after serving in the Korean War together, Jamison became a police officer with Milo and went on to become a detective lieutenant. Jamison even married Milo's former wife and is raising Milo's son.

The Wrong Case clearly reveals Chandler's influence: Helen Duffy's request that Milo locate her missing younger brother is reminiscent of Chandler's *The Little Sister* (1949), and the brother is similar to a minor character in *The Long Goodbye* (1953). Milo, however, is no Philip Marlowe. Whereas Marlowe is a character almost without a past, Milo is weighed down by the past everywhere he turns: his dead father's clothes, donated to thrift stores, appear on homeless men and drunks.

The case turns out to be one that is wrong in every way. The missing brother is an aggressive homosexual junkie with a fetish for cowboy clothing. Everything Milo thinks he knows about Helen Duffy is wrong, and their budding romance quickly falls apart. Even the inadvertent villain of the story turns out to be a local bar owner with ties to organized crime who hopes he can sell enough drugs to become important. The only lesson that Milo can learn from the chaos is that the two main things a man has to learn to do are to survive and to forgive.

THE LAST GOOD KISS

The Last Good Kiss is Crumley's first novel with C. W. (for Chauncey Wayne) "Sonny" Sughrue. Sughrue is a former Army sergeant who committed a war crime while in Vietnam. After a month in the bush without sleep, he dropped a grenade into a hideaway hole in a village and killed the hidden women and children of a Vietnamese family. To avoid prosecution, he worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency in San Francisco, infiltrating hippie culture. However, he came to identify with the hippies more than with his superiors. Sughrue is a more formidable detective than Milo and more in control of his emotions and actions. While perhaps harboring even fewer illusions than Milo, he is in some ways more of a romantic.

Like *The Wrong Case*, *The Last Good Kiss* owes a

large debt to Chandler. Just as Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* is about Marlowe being hired to protect a drunken and suicidal writer, *The Last Good Kiss* begins with Sughrue being hired to locate poet and famous novelist Abraham Trahearne, a World War II veteran and alcoholic who has gone on a drinking binge. The novel departs from *The Long Goodbye*'s plot, however, when Sughrue is asked by an aging bar owner to locate her runaway daughter, Betty Sue Flowers. With Trahearne in tow, Sughrue begins searching for Betty Sue and soon runs afoul of a mob-connected pornography ring.

Widely regarded as Crumley's best novel, *The Last Good Kiss* brings together many of the author's trademark themes and qualities. The plot goes through several dizzying changes of direction; the dialogue is understated and clipped; Sughrue rebels instinctively against authority, whether it is in the form of law enforcement or social class; minor characters have depth and personality (as well as surprises to reveal); loyalties and alliances shift; and the violence is swift, bleak, rendered in bloody and exquisite detail, and has surprising ramifications for the characters. Like Milo, the novel ends with Sughrue having nowhere to find peace except in his own ability to survive and endure.

DANCING BEAR

Published five years after *The Last Good Kiss*, *Dancing Bear* features Milo. The intervening eight years have not been kind to Milo. His practice has failed, and he is employed as a security worker for an older veteran who helps out hard-luck cases. Milo is hired by an elderly woman, a former lover of his dead father, ostensibly to discover the identities of young lovers she has watched from her porch. Again, the plot darts in directions not anticipated by the reader, and before long, Milo's life is in danger when he discovers that a gigantic corporation, with both underworld and corrupt government connections, is illegally disposing of toxic waste.

Milo's persona as the "antidetective" is revealed again when he is followed while tailing a subject of his investigation, and as a result his subject is killed. Also, he understands too late what seems clear throughout—that he has been set up by his employer. The end sequence of the novel is patterned somewhat after the

rescue sequence in *The Last Good Kiss*. Milo and his confederate burst into a conference, armed and loaded, but hoping that the meeting will not end in bloodshed. Someone reaches for a gun and mayhem ensues. Although this confrontation in *Dancing Bear* is, like the one in *The Last Good Kiss*, tightly written, exciting, and vicious, it does create the formula for the novels to come.

LATER NOVELS

Ten years separate *The Mexican Tree Duck* from *Dancing Bear*. In *The Mexican Tree Duck*, Sughrue seems in some ways to bear a resemblance to a more dangerous incarnation of Milo, with his constant use of cocaine and amphetamine as well as alcohol, than he does the laconic and determined narrator of *The Last Good Kiss*. In *The Mexican Tree Duck*, Sughrue—now as out of work as Milo—is hired to find a drug-dealing biker's mother, who turns out to be the wife of a senator and drug lord. Sughrue gathers together a disparate crowd of Vietnam War veterans to lead assaults on drug cabals dealing in cocaine. Multiple encounters with incompetent and corrupt DEA and FBI agents are counterbalanced with gunfights fueled by automatic weapons. Crumley's *Bordersnakes* picks up on the hints dropped in earlier novels by reuniting former partners Sughrue and Milo. Like *The Mexican Tree Duck*, the novel quickly dissolves into a tangled plot punctuated by episodes of bloody and horrific violence. *The Final Country* (2001) follows the mode of the earlier novels as Milo is betrayed by the woman with whom he falls in love, the climax coming in a hail of gunfire. *The Right Madness* (2005) finds Sughrue betrayed by his employer as he ferrets out a trail of corruption.

Scott D. Yarbrough

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MILTON "MILO" MILODRAGOVITCH SERIES: *The Wrong Case*, 1975; *Dancing Bear*, 1983; *The Final Country*, 2001

C. W. "SONNY" SUGHRUE SERIES: *The Last Good Kiss*, 1978; *The Mexican Tree Duck*, 1993; *The Right Madness*, 2005

MILO AND SUGHRUE SERIES: *Bordersnakes*, 1996

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *One to Count Cadence*, 1969

SHORT FICTION: *Whores*, 1988; *The Muddy Ford, and Other Things*, 1991

SCREENPLAYS: *The Pigeon Shoot*, 1987; *The Far Side of Jericho*, 2006 (with Rob Sullivan)

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Silet, Charles L. P. "James Crumley." In *Talking Murder: Interviews with Twenty Mystery Writers*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999. Contains an interview with Crumley by Silet, who has published interviews in *Mystery Scene* and *Armchair Detective*.

E. V. CUNNINGHAM

Howard Fast

Born: New York, New York; November 11, 1914

Died: Old Greenwich, Connecticut; March 12, 2003

Also wrote as Walter Ericson; Howard Fast

Types of plot: Police procedural; inverted; amateur sleuth; espionage; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Harvey Krim, 1964-1984

Larry Cohen and John Comaday, 1965-1966

Masao Masuto, 1967-2000

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HARVEY KRIM, a thirty-five-year-old insurance investigator, is cynical about love, human motives, and insurance companies. Accused of being nasty, unreliable, and unprincipled, he himself cultivates that image. A man who does not like loose ends, who works

with police only when it is to his advantage to do so, and who is willing to temper deduction with hunches and to manipulate evidence in a good cause, he easily sees through shams and feels alienated at times. Nevertheless, he is still able to care about certain people.

LARRY COHEN, a district attorney in New York City, is one part of a background team in two comic mysteries. A sharp young criminal lawyer with a nose for the truth, no matter how unlikely, he is nevertheless a dupe for a sharp mind.

JOHN COMADAY, a New York City police commissioner, is the second part of the team. Although a political animal, tough with underlings but smooth with superiors, he is always susceptible to a pretty face.

MASAO MASUTO, a lean, six-foot-tall Nisei attached to the Beverly Hills Police Department, is a Zen Buddhist; his meditative philosophy provides the

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Howard Fast (E. V. Cunningham) testifying before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 1953. (AP/Wide World Photos)

calm, the self-assurance, and the introspective insights that mark his detection. He is married to a Japanese American woman. Masuto speaks Spanish and empathizes with the common worker. He is sometimes cruelly taunted about his Nisei heritage and must learn to deal with the acid tongues of Southern Californians.

CONTRIBUTION

E. V. Cunningham is the pseudonym used by Howard Fast for his mystery fiction. Notable for his prolific output (two or more books a year), he brought a social conscience to the detective genre, with works that expose the pitfalls of power and wealth and the virtues of the simple life. Cunningham was praised for his lifelike characters and action-packed narratives, but it was his commitment to liberal and humanitarian

values that truly distinguished his work. His novels are characterized by a sympathetic treatment of women: They are portrayed as courageous, witty, and in some ways superior to men in intuition, reason, and values, empathizing with cultural outcasts, understanding of the pressures that sometimes force decent men to conform, and disdainful of prejudice, hypocrisy, and abuse of power. His Nisei detective allowed him to explore the values of Zen philosophy while facing the materialism and inhumanity of the rich. In sum, Cunningham combined political statement with enjoyable entertainment.

BIOGRAPHY

E. V. Cunningham was born Howard Melvin Fast in New York City on November 11, 1914, the son of

Barney Fast and Ida Miller Fast. Educated at George Washington High School and the National Academy of Design in New York, he later worked at odd jobs and was a page at the New York Public Library while working on his first novel. In 1933, he received the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Award. On June 6, 1937, he married Bette Cohen; they had two children, Rachel and Jonathan. From 1942 to 1943, Cunningham served overseas with the Office of War Information. In 1944, while with an Army film project, he became a war correspondent; in 1945, he became a foreign correspondent for *Esquire* and *Coronet*.

Cunningham had a long career as prolific writer, lecturer, and political activist. His early novels, written as Fast, focused primarily on the Revolutionary War, and *The Last Frontier* (1941) received particular praise as a taut and moving story of the abuse and extermination of three hundred Cheyenne. These provocative works tried to humanize history and historical figures, from George Washington to Thomas Paine, admitting their weaknesses and demonstrating the processes that led them to greatness.

In 1943, Cunningham's antifascist feeling, which had led him to work in a hospital for wounded Spanish Republicans during the Spanish Civil War, led him to the communist cause; during this period, he created one-dimensional, doctrinaire works with capitalist villains and proletarian heroes. He continued to write historical fiction, but more and more with a Marxist slant. In 1947, he was imprisoned for contempt, having refused to give the House Committee on Un-American Activities information about the supporters of the Spanish hospital. While serving his term, he wrote *Spartacus* (as Fast; 1951), a controversial treatment of the great slave revolt of 71 B.C.E., which won for him numerous prizes.

Cunningham later founded the World Peace Movement, and, between 1950 and 1955, he served as a member of the World Peace Council. In 1952, he campaigned for Congress on the American Labor Party ticket. Unable to find a publisher, in 1952 he founded the Blue Heron Press in New York to publish his own materials. By 1957, however, tired of communist pressures to change his works and disenchanted with the Communist Party, he wrote *The Naked God: The*

Writer and the Communist Party (as Fast), clearly and completely recanting.

Until the 1980's, Cunningham turned out about one book per year: historical fiction, science fiction, and thrillers. These works vary considerably in quality, but they all try to teach, usually focusing on compassion and humanism rather than doctrine. As a consequence, he received the National Association of Independent Schools Award in 1962. Always an idealist, Cunningham believed that books "open a thousand doors, they shape lives and answer questions, they widen horizons, they offer hope for the heart and food for the soul"; thus, a writer has an obligation to portray the truth. He died in New York in 2003.

ANALYSIS

E. V. Cunningham built a series of novels around extraordinary women in a striking variation on the detective genre. Sometimes the leading woman is the criminal; occasionally, she is the co-investigator, the instigator, or the inspiration of the crime. Cunningham's women may not be stunningly beautiful, but they possess an intelligence, a resourcefulness, and an honesty that makes them attractive in every sense. They may have to deal with husbands or lovers who underestimate their spirit and their capabilities, but once caught up in sometimes bizarre situations, they show pluck, courage, and wit. A typical Cunningham woman is wisecracking, tough, and honest Shirley: soft and vulnerable, at times as hard as nails, able to cope with tough cops, death threats, and complex difficulties, bright and funny, and, for the men around her, exasperating. So, too, is Sylvia, a woman of strength and beauty who began life as an abused child but who, through sheer guts and determination, fought her way into polite society, teaching herself languages, reading voraciously, and lying all the way. These women move in a comic world, with the comedy resulting from their perception of male pretensions; they are willing to play the game, to build on men's illusions, delusions, and limitations to achieve their own ends.

PENELOPE

In *Penelope* (1965), a charming socialite, independently wealthy and bored with her banker husband's

arrogant complacency, takes to theft. She plays Robin Hood to the local parish and associated charities and charms the police commissioner and district attorney, while providing the police with clue after clue to implicate herself. Ironically, their preconceptions prevent their accepting the truth even when they are confronted with irrefutable evidence.

Another character, Margie, is an innocent mistaken for a thief and then for an oil-rich countess; as a result, she is kidnapped twice and threatened with torture and murder, but somehow she remains unflappable, her whole adventure comic and resolvable.

Others, such as Phyllis, Lydia, Alice, and Helen, move in a more somber world, with loss of family, friends, and lives a real possibility. Phyllis finds her mother brutally beaten to death; Lydia sees her father pushed to suicide, her inheritance stolen, and her own life threatened; Alice's child is kidnapped and terrorized; and Helen must confront sexual sadists. Yet amid such horrors, these women remain quick-witted and humane. Alice, for example, finds her family torn apart when she is caught up in a devilish conspiracy that results in a violent midnight rendezvous, all because a stranger clung to her husband for a second in a subway station. Sally, on the other hand, told that she has only a few months to live, hires a professional gunman to end it all quickly; when she learns that the original diagnosis was wrong, however, she is ready to fight for life and a chance at love.

MASAO MASUTO SERIES

Cunningham's tribute to women continues in his Masao Masuto series. Masuto's wife, Kati, participates in consciousness-raising sessions and occasionally chides her husband for his insensitivity to her and the family. Even Masuto's belief that most detectives underestimate women and as a result miss evidence relevant to a case grants women an equality that is often missing from detective fiction. *Samantha* (1967) focuses on a young woman's calculated and bloody revenge after she is raped by half a dozen young men on a Hollywood set, while *The Case of the Poisoned Eclairs* (1979) takes a hard look at some of the uglier costs of wealth.

Cunningham always includes people who are tinged with prejudice but convinced that they have

none. He is particularly disturbed by anti-Jewish sentiments, having earlier written a semifictional biography of a Polish-Jewish financier who helped in the American Revolution, as well as a history of the Jews. The hero of *The Wabash Factor* (1986) is a Jewish police officer with an instinct for foul play, while Masuto's partner is Jewish and must fight against a Nazi mentality, even in Southern California. In *The Case of the Russian Diplomat* (1978), Arab and German terrorists kidnap and terrorize Masuto's daughter, assassinate a diplomat, and plan an explosion that will take hundreds of innocent lives, all to undermine the Jewish Defense League. In other works, the terrors of the Holocaust continue to affect modern events. Former Nazis, brutal, intolerant, and twisted, dominate the landscape. The villain in *Lydia* (1964) is a suave German actor, one of Adolf Hitler's close associates, who blackmails his fellow Nazis living in the United States. He has no qualms about eliminating all who stand in his way.

AN ANTIFASCIST VIEWPOINT

Furthermore, Cunningham's strongly antifascist sentiments come across in his mysteries. The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses strong-arm tactics, intimidation, and authority to break the rules and manipulate events, and untouchable entrepreneurs and the unimaginably wealthy prove to be frauds, thieves, and murderers. Income-tax evasion leads to multiple murders, which city police are quick to cover up, and politicians engage in white-collar crime and sometimes even drug smuggling. In *Millie* (1973), a general and a senator head a heroin-smuggling operation. In *The Case of the Sliding Pool* (1981), powerful financial forces act to prevent an investigation, and speculators in big industry play games with people's lives and break the rules with impunity. In *The Case of the Murdered Mackenzie* (1984), the Central Intelligence Agency turns civilized Beverly Hills into a jungle, fixing evidence, condoning double murder, and even trying to eliminate nosy local investigators to protect a double agent.

PHYLLIS

In *Phyllis* (1962), when an American and a Soviet nuclear scientist disappear and leave warnings of atom bombs set to go off if an antinuclear peace pact is not

signed immediately, a world-weary police officer and a lonely female physicist are tortured and abused by their own people because they claim, but cannot prove, that the bombs do not exist. Ironically, the alienated Americans have more in common with the Soviet scientist than with their closest American associates. Running through Cunningham's canon is a consistent thread of moralism and sentimentality, though his politics change slightly over the years and some of his mysteries celebrate precisely those capitalist and intellectual types whom he identified as the oppressors in earlier works.

THE WABASH FACTOR AND THE WINSTON AFFAIR

A related concern is that of conspiracy: Octopus-like secret committees arrange "accidents" to eliminate the best and the brightest—those devoted to peace and humanity. In *The Assassin Who Gave Up His Gun* (1969), such a group is totally committed, carefully calculating, and ultimately indestructible, while in *The Wabash Factor* the method used (causing a stroke with a medical prescription) seems almost certainly unprovable. The latter book uses the mystery genre as an excuse to attack American support of Central American regimes that depend on drugs and death squads for power; it argues that, by turning a blind eye to such horrors, the American government opens the way for drugs and death squads to become a reality in the United States. Cunningham is also interested in the law being used to railroad a cause or a victim; he focuses on this in both *Helen* (1966) and *The Winston Affair* (1959). The latter centers on the court-martial of an American soldier who is accused of killing a British one; the defense counsel is under pressure to let his client hang in the interests of Anglo-American relations. Cunningham throughout his works suggests the world's weaknesses and wrongs through a selected individual crisis.

THE ASSASSIN WHO GAVE UP HIS GUN

Cunningham's heroes are often disillusioned, wary, and alienated. They have seen too much of the lunacies of life, of war, of injustice; they have responded to the horrors, and they have reached a point in life where they are without hope. It is then that they are plunged into a situation that challenges and puzzles them and

demands that they reevaluate their lives. Often this reevaluation is initiated or accelerated by an unexpected but ego-shaking contact with a woman, a woman of competence, intelligence, and conscience. Ironically, before any sort of personal understanding and permanent attachment can be developed, Cunningham's heroes must deal with political ambition, intrigue, and death. The cold, methodical professional killer in *The Assassin Who Gave Up His Gun*, for example, is a rational man whose response to irrationality is to lose himself in his job and do it efficiently. Acting for a secret international political group determined to undermine any major peace movement, he lives on the knife's edge; although recognizing that he himself may be hurt in his turn, after facing a Buddhist's calm acceptance of death, he begins to question his acts. Later, when his assigned victim is a woman to whom he immediately responds, he must play the game to the end, maneuvering to save her though it means his own death.

HELEN AND MILLIE

In *Helen*, a corruptible lawyer, assigned to defend a prostitute who is clearly guilty of the cold-blooded murder of a state supreme court judge (who is also the number-two man in the state's mafia syndicate), finds that he must deal with questions of good and evil. In *Millie*, a successful public relations man responsible for the "images" of senators and rock stars must face the emptiness of his marriage and his profession in a deadly battle for self-respect. Ultimately in Cunningham's works, awareness is not enough; action, even self-destructive action, must result if a person is to be free in heart and mind.

THE CASE OF THE ONE-PENNY ORANGE

Cunningham's detective Masuto has already found his niche, his values, his human contact; now he must try to live accordingly. Masuto's method combines Buddhist meditation with Holmesian ratiocination. Observation is a part of Masuto's religion and of his way of life, and the close observation that allows him to see beauty in the ugly also allows him to see the ugly and mundane behind the facades that surround him. Intuitive leaps of both reason and imagination result, and his colleagues and superiors are left trying to figure out what produced these conclusions, which

further investigation, physical evidence, and testimony confirm. For example, *The Case of the One-Penny Orange* (1977) begins as a routine investigation of a local burglary, but it leads to a murdered stamp dealer and a missing SS commander. Masuto links these seemingly unconnected events with a stamp worth half a million dollars and a revenge ritual originating in the bitterness of the Holocaust.

THE CASE OF THE RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT

The Case of the Russian Diplomat, in turn, begins with the apparent drowning of a nude fat man—reported to the police by a hotel hooker—but the nature of the scene leads Masuto to an East German spy, Arab terrorists, and a plot to assassinate some Soviet agronomists. While the federal investigators are still trying to cover up a Russian diplomat's unseemly demise, Masuto is uncovering the actual plot. He does so step-by-step, beginning with marks on the dead man's nose that suggest glasses and gray metal fillings that suggest foreign dental work and proceeding to the incongruity of the death—which to him suggests chloral hydrate. Parts of the puzzle float around in his mind for days, then come together in a pattern that could explain all.

THE CASE OF THE SLIDING POOL AND THE CASE OF THE KIDNAPPED ANGEL

The Case of the Sliding Pool is unique in that identifying the body (a long-buried skeleton) will in effect identify the murderer, while the solution to *The Case of the Kidnapped Angel* (1982) hinges on a sex-change operation and an old-fashioned revenge plot. In Masuto's eyes, crime encapsulates the general illness of humankind. As a Buddhist, he is involved with humankind, but he must constantly battle his own hatred while struggling with people who are an affront to humanity.

Despite Cunningham's sympathy with the proletariat, his dialogue is most credible when it is spoken by the educated. When he attempts slang, heavy accents, or the diction of gangsters, street people, and the down-and-out, rhythms ring so false that some critics have accused Cunningham of having a tin ear. Occasionally, his characters will elaborate on a metaphor that sums up their lives or situation, but in the main, the writing is straightforward and unadorned. It is with

the exchange of wisecracks or cynicisms in his comic mysteries that he feels most comfortable.

Basically, Cunningham disapproves of anyone or anything that tries to reduce humankind to a class, an ideology, a nonentity. He values above all else struggle, self-awareness, love and affection, family, privacy, and humanitarian values. His attack on funeral homes in *The Case of the Murdered Mackenzie* is typical of his sensibilities: He disapproves of any group that tries to force people into mechanical categories or that denies genuine emotion. His style is simple and direct; for him the message outweighs all else.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HARVEY KRIM SERIES: *Lydia*, 1964; *Cynthia*, 1968

LARRY COHEN AND JOHN COMADAY SERIES: *Penelope*, 1965; *Margie*, 1966

MASAO MASUTO SERIES: *Samantha*, 1967 (also known as *The Case of the Angry Actress*); *The Case of the One-Penny Orange*, 1977; *The Case of the Russian Diplomat*, 1978; *The Case of the Poisoned Eclairs*, 1979; *The Case of the Sliding Pool*, 1981; *The Case of the Kidnapped Angel*, 1982; *The Case of the Murdered Mackenzie*, 1984

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Fallen Angel*, 1952 (as Ericson; also known as *The Darkness Within* and *Mirage*, as Fast); *The Winston Affair*, 1959 (as Fast); *Sylvia*, 1960; *Phyllis*, 1962; *Alice*, 1963; *Shirley*, 1964; *Helen*, 1966; *Sally*, 1967; *The Assassin Who Gave Up His Gun*, 1969; *Millie*, 1973; *The Wabash Factor*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS FAST): 1933-1940 • *Two Valleys*, 1933; *Strange Yesterday*, 1934; *Place in the City*, 1937; *Conceived in Liberty*, 1939

1941-1950 • *The Last Frontier*, 1941; *The Tall Hunter*, 1942; *The Unvanquished*, 1942; *Citizen Tom Paine*, 1943; *Freedom Road*, 1944; *The American: A Middle Western Legend*, 1946; *Clarkton*, 1947; *The Children*, 1947; *My Glorious Brothers*, 1948; *The Proud and the Free*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Spartacus*, 1951; *Silas Timberman*, 1954; *The Story of Lola Gregg*, 1956; *Moses, Prince of Egypt*, 1958; *The Golden River*, 1960

1961-1970 • *April Morning*, 1961; *Power*, 1962; *Agrippa's Daughter*, 1964; *Torquemada*, 1966; *The Hunter and the Trap*, 1967; *The General Zapped an Angel*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The Crossing*, 1971; *The Hessian*, 1972; *Second Generation*, 1978; *The Immigrants*, 1978; *The Establishment*, 1979

1981-1987 • *The Legacy*, 1981; *Max*, 1982; *The Outsider*, 1984; *The Immigrant's Daughter*, 1985; *The Dinner Party*, 1987

SHORT FICTION (AS FAST): *Patrick Henry and the Frigate's Keel, and Other Stories of a Young Nation*, 1945; *Departures, and Other Stories*, 1949; *The Last Supper, and Other Stories*, 1955; *The Edge of Tomorrow*, 1961; *A Touch of Infinity*, 1973; *Time and the Riddle: Thirty-one Zen Stories*, 1975

PLAYS (AS FAST): *The Hammer*, pr. 1950; *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, pb. 1950; *George Washington and the Water Witch*, pb. 1956; *The Crossing*, pr. 1962

SCREENPLAYS (AS FAST): *The Hill*, 1964; *The Hessian*, 1971

TELEPLAYS (AS FAST): *What's a Nice Girl Like You . . . ?*, 1971; *Twenty-one Hours at Munich*, 1976 (with Edward Hume)

POETRY (AS FAST): *Never to Forget the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto*, 1946 (with William Gropper)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS FAST): *The Romance of a People*, 1941; *Tony and the Wonderful Door*, 1952 (also known as *The Magic Door*)

NONFICTION (AS FAST): *Haym Solomon, Son of Liberty*, 1941; *Lord Baden-Powell of the Boy Scouts*, 1941; *Goethals and the Panama Canal*, 1942; *The Picture-Book History of the Jews*, 1942; *The Incredible Tito*, 1944; *Intellectuals in the Fight for Peace*, 1949; *Literature and Reality*, 1950; *Tito and His People*, 1950; *Peekskill, U.S.A.: A Personal Experience*, 1951; *Spain and Peace*, 1952; *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti: A New England Legend*, 1953; *The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party*, 1957; *The Howard Fast Reader*, 1960; *The Jews: Story of a People*, 1968; *The Art of Zen Meditation*, 1977

EDITED TEXTS (AS FAST): *The Selected Works of Tom Paine*, 1946; *The Best Short Stories of Theodore Dreiser*, 1947

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D

CARROLL JOHN DALY

Born: Yonkers, New York; September 14, 1889
Died: Los Angeles, California; January 16, 1958
Also wrote as John D. Carroll
Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Race Williams, 1923-1955
Vee Brown, 1933-1936
Satan Hall, 1935-1951

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

RACE WILLIAMS, a hard-boiled private investigator, first appeared in the June 1, 1923, issue of *Black Mask*. A tough-talking, no-nonsense thirty-year-old, Williams makes his living hunting down criminals for his clients. His credo: "I ain't afraid of nothing providing there's enough jack in it." He also asserts, "My ethics are my own."

CONTRIBUTION

Usually credited with creating the hard-boiled detective, Carroll John Daly began his writing career in 1922, and between that year and his death he published more than a dozen novels and 250 short stories. Daly was a pathfinder whose writing skills were unpolished but whose sense of audience in the 1920's and early 1930's was unerring. Race Williams, the protagonist in eight novels and a number of the short stories, became the prototype out of which Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, and Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer developed. Not a gifted writer, Daly focused on providing his readers with violent physical action and uncomplicated plots. Race Williams uses his handguns and his fists in a direct assault on evildoers. He is always his own man. The novels and tales are heavily laden with racial and sexual

stereotyping; their popularity in the decades before World War II attests that Daly understood the popular mind.

BIOGRAPHY

Carroll John Daly was born in Yonkers, New York, on September 14, 1889. The son of Joseph F. Daly and Mary Brennan Daly, he was educated at Yonkers High School and, subsequently, at De La Salle Institute and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. Daly was married in 1913. Abandoning pursuit of a career on the stage, he became a projectionist and then the owner and operator of theaters in Yonkers and Averno, New York, and Atlantic City and Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Daly's writing career was launched in October, 1922, with the publication in *Black Mask* of a tale entitled "Dolly." He followed that success with another story for *Black Mask*, "Roarin' Jack," published in December under the pseudonym John D. Carroll. Now a published author, Daly moved his wife and their only child, John Russell Daly, to White Plains, New York, where the family lived until he retired in 1953. A man of many idiosyncrasies, Daly is alleged to have never left home during winter and to have insisted on a highly organized household. His success as a writer and his income from theaters he owned or operated allowed him to live comfortably, though not luxuriously.

In 1953, Daly and his wife moved to Montrose, California, a suburb of Los Angeles. Their son, John, had found employment as a screen actor and occasional performer on television on the West Coast. Made an honorary member of a writers' club in Santa Monica, Daly lived in a modest apartment and continued writing for a few more years, publishing his last story in mid-1955. His health failing, he and his wife moved to Coachella, a desert area. Daly spent the last three years

of his life in and out of hospitals; he died on January 16, 1958, in the Los Angeles County General Hospital.

ANALYSIS

The novels and tales of Carroll John Daly reveal a world constantly beset by a variety of criminals bent on shaping their surroundings to fit their desires for money and the power that it brings. For the most part, Daly's characters are not well developed and represent a very traditional view of the way in which the seven deadly sins corrupt humankind. Yet Daly was able to create in the fictional detectives Race Williams, Vee Brown, and Satan Hall men who were often as avaricious as the criminals they faced and as willing to go beyond the pale of law in bringing their prey to earth.

Race Williams first appeared in the story "Knights of the Open Palm" in *Black Mask* in June, 1923. He is described as being five feet, eleven and one-half inches tall, having black eyes and dark brown hair, and weighing 183 pounds. The reader is thus made aware of the fact that Williams is a physically powerful man to whom fear is probably a stranger. For some time before Daly's work appeared in *Black Mask*, the magazine had been accepting detective stories and Western fiction; the detective stories, however, were usually of the "amateur sleuth" variety, and the Westerns conformed to the conventions that had characterized dime novels for several decades. What made Williams, the forerunner of Sam Spade and the Continental Op, different was that he was not an agency detective or an arm of the police authority. His fists and his gun were for hire, and he was generally not very particular about the character of his employer. He acted according to a simple code: Never kill anybody who does not deserve it.

THE SNARL OF THE BEAST

With Williams as a first-person narrator and characterized by sequential plotting, Daly's stories quickly became a fixture in *Black Mask* in the 1920's and early 1930's. Daly's second novel—and the first to feature Race Williams—was *The Snarl of the Beast* (1927). In it, Williams's help is sought by the police in their attempt to capture a fiendish criminal known as the Beast. This master, who seems impervious to bullets, stalks the streets of the city, and the police are power-



The November, 1947, British edition of *Thrilling Detective* featured a retitled version of one of John Carroll Daly's Race Williams stories.

less to stop him. Williams agrees to hunt down the Beast if he is allowed to collect the reward money. Already a popular figure with readers of *Black Mask*, Williams attracted an even wider audience to Daly's fiction, and Daly went on to produce seven more Race Williams novels.

The appeal of the two-fisted, often two-gun, tough-talking hero is not difficult to fathom. In the United States, the hard-riding, straight-shooting Western hero had been well established by the 1920's. Appearing on the frontier in an age of lawlessness, the Western hero had come to represent truth, justice, and fair play. These "riders of the plains" were more than a match for a variety of evildoers bent on poisoning the well of a fledgling nation. Yet with the passing of the nineteenth century and the disillusionment arising from the ashes of World War I, American audiences seemed less and less interested in the romances of the Ameri-

can West. Even though the 1920's has been romanticized as the Jazz Age, the fact is that the vast majority of Americans were struggling to make ends meet and dreaming of the day "their ships would come in." Fair play, hard work, and honesty had not made them rich or famous. Although they certainly had freedom to do as they pleased, many felt powerless to change the conditions of their existence. Given this growing disenchantment with the American Dream, then, there certainly must have been a yearning to be able to control one's destiny, to exercise power, to be an individual unfettered by rules. Daly's conception of Race Williams provided his readers with a vicarious means of fulfilling that desire.

In story after story, novel after novel, Williams confronts a wide array of malefactors: petty thieves, corrupt politicians, gangland bosses, sinister foreigners, conniving women, and master criminals bent on taking over the nation or the world. Yet no matter what the magnitude of the threat these criminals pose, Williams is their master. He litters the urban streets with their corpses, and he is well paid for his efforts. When Raymond Chandler created Philip Marlowe in the 1930's, he made him a kind of knight-errant who sallied forth into the mean streets to do battle with evil. Williams, although he was the crude prototype from which detectives such as Marlowe developed, is not a crusader. His allegiance is to himself; he does not labor for king and country. Daly's hero, then, whether he is called Race Williams, Vee (short for Vivian) Brown, or Satan Hall, is a man who has power, who has control, who can to some extent shape his world.

The genesis of Daly's hard-boiled private investigator can be traced to "The False Burton Combs," a story that he published in the December, 1922, issue of *Black Mask*. The unnamed first-person narrator of this tale describes himself at the outset:

I ain't a crook; just a gentleman adventurer and make my living working against the law breakers. Not that I work with the police—no, not me. I'm no knight-errant, either. It just came to me that the simplest people in the world are crooks. They are so set on their own plans to fleece others that they never imagine that they are the simplest sort to do.

Classifying himself as a kind of "fellow in the center—not a crook and not a policeman," this nameless adventurer expresses his willingness to help anybody if the price is right. The protagonist of "The False Burton Combs" is an Eastern version of the bounty hunter figure of the nineteenth century American West. A nameless, faceless, ruthless individual less concerned with the guilt or innocence of an individual than with the price society had placed on his head, the bounty hunter of the frontier was replaced in the twentieth century by the hard-boiled private investigator.

Magazines such as *Black Mask* built their readership by providing stories heavy on action but light on characterization. When "Knights of the Open Palm" appeared in the June, 1923, issue of *Black Mask*, perceptive readers must have recognized in the character of Race Williams (who first appears in that story) the nameless adventurer of "The False Burton Combs." In this story, Williams takes on the Ku Klux Klan, but his motive is not predicated on moral superiority. The Klan is involved in graft and corruption, but its activities with respect to minority groups are of no particular concern to Williams. "I'm just a halfway house between the law and crime," he states, but "I never bumped off a guy who didn't need it." Like many fictional private investigators, Williams often gives grudging respect to some of his adversaries, particularly those who display the same kind of toughness and machismo that he does.

MURDER FROM THE EAST

On occasion, Williams shows gentler emotions. He is very much taken with a beautiful female underworld figure nicknamed the Flame, who first appears in *The Tag Murders* (1930). In *Murder from the East* (1935) Williams involves himself in a case because a twelve-year-old girl has been kidnapped. These flashes of passion and compassion represent Daly's attempts to give Williams some depth of character, but it is the protagonists' belief in rigid justice that dominates all Daly's detective fiction. Cunning and guile are weapons of the weak; Williams uses fists and bullets, emerging sometimes bloody but always victorious.

THE THIRD MURDERER

The Third Murderer (1931) pits Williams against the three Gorgon brothers, powerful gangsters. Williams, as first-person narrator, alludes to Nathaniel

Hawthorne's use of the Gorgon myth in a short story. Here, as occasionally elsewhere, Daly gives the reader a picture of Williams as a man with some formal education. Also in this novel, Williams continues his relationship with the Flame, offering a brief psychological description of her:

Certainly, if she was built to do great wrong, she might just as well be built to do great good. You see, the dual personality doesn't fit in with my practical nature. I always sort of look on it as synonymous with "two-faced." That is that it's an outward change, and doesn't really take place in the individual—but only in the mind of some one who knows the individual. In plain words, there were times when I thought The Flame was all bad, and the good—that youthful, innocent sparkle—was put on to fool others. But fair is fair. There were times also when I felt that The Flame was really all good, and the hard, cruel face—that went with the woman of the night—was put on to hide the real good in her.

The give and take between these two lovers in *The Third Murderer* eventually results in a scene mirroring the confrontation between Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Sam Spade near the end of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930). Yet, unlike Hammett, Daly has Williams let the Flame go, even after telling her, "I've got to turn you in. It isn't you I'm going to live with. It isn't your eyes I'm going to look into the rest of my life. It's myself I've got to live with. It's myself I've got to face in the glass each morning."

Daly's plotlines were not particularly clever nor was he skilled at creating dialogue that had the flavor of genuine human discourse. Still, he had a good sense of pace and moved the narrative along briskly. For the most part, his characters were essentially two-dimensional figures who, by the 1930's, were familiar to a generation quickly growing accustomed to the "cops and robbers" versions of good and evil emanating from Hollywood.

Although the literary reputations of Hammett and Chandler place them in the front rank of writers of detective fiction, a modern reader should understand that it was the work of Carroll John Daly that whetted the popular audience's appetite for the hard-boiled detective.

Dale H. Ross

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RACE WILLIAMS SERIES: *The Snarl of the Beast*, 1927; *The Hidden Hand*, 1929; *The Tag Murders*, 1930; *Tainted Power*, 1931; *The Third Murderer*, 1931; *The Amateur Murderer*, 1933; *Murder from the East*, 1935; *Better Corpses*, 1940

VEE BROWN SERIES: *Murder Won't Wait*, 1933; *Emperor of Evil*, 1936

SATAN HALL SERIES: *Death's Juggler*, 1935 (also known as *The Mystery of the Smoking Gun*); *Ready to Burn*, 1951

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The White Circle*, 1926; *Two-Gun Gerta*, 1926 (with C. C. Waddell); *The Man in the Shadows*, 1928; *Mr. Strang*, 1936; *The Legion of the Living Dead*, 1947; *Murder at Our House*, 1950

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, George Parker, and Julie B. Anderson, eds. *American Hard-Boiled Crime Writers*. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. Daly is one of about thirty authors covered in this survey of the genre.

Barson, Michael S. "'There's No Sex in Crime': The Two-Fisted Homilies of Race Williams." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 2 (Fall/Winter, 1981): 103-112. Examines the character of Race Williams created by Daly.

Geherin, David. "Birth of a Hero." In *The American Private Eye: The Image in Fiction*. New York: F. Ungar, 1985. Credits Daly with the creation of the hard-boiled detective figure.

Haining, Peter. *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000. Looks at Daly's contribution to the pulps and the relationship of pulp fiction to its more respectable literary cousins.

Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre. Includes readings of Daly's *The Snarl of the Beast* and *The Adventures of Satan Hall*.

Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920's to the Present*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Detailed study of hard-boiled detective fiction tracing its origins and subsequent evolution. Contains a discussion of Daly. Bibliographic references and index.

ELIZABETH DALY

Born: New York, New York; October 15, 1878

Died: Roslyn, New York; September 2, 1967

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Henry Gamadge, 1940-1954

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HENRY GAMADGE, an author and consultant on old books, manuscripts, autographs, and inks, lives in the fashionable Murray Hill district of New York. Young and unmarried when he first appears, Gamadge marries in the course of the series and has a son. Because of his reputation as a writer on the subjects of literary and criminal detection, Gamadge is frequently called on to solve mysteries that have baffled professional investigators.

CONTRIBUTION

Elizabeth Daly's sixteen novels featuring Henry Gamadge, a New York gentleman of independent means whose interest in mysteries associated with old books and manuscripts frequently leads him into mysteries associated with crimes, follow the tradition established in Great Britain during the Golden Age of detective fiction. Working in the vein of Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Agatha Christie (who once named Daly as her favorite American author), Daly superimposed on the geography of New York and New England the upper-class settings of these writers' novels. Although Gamadge is American, his language and his social habits are British, to the point that individuals use "torches" instead of flashlights and cars "hoot" rather than honk. Despite these anomalies and sometimes awkward dialogue when working-class individuals are involved, Daly's books are, for the most part, carefully crafted, reflecting her conviction that detective fiction is a high form of literary art.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Daly was born in New York City on October 15, 1878, the daughter of Joseph Francis Daly, a

justice of the Supreme Court of New York County, and Emma Barker Daly. She was the niece of Augustin Daly, a famous playwright and producer of the 1890's.

Daly was educated at Miss Baldwin's School, Bryn Mawr College, and Columbia University. She received a bachelor of arts from Bryn Mawr in 1901 and a master of arts from Columbia in 1902. In 1902, she returned to Bryn Mawr College, where she was a reader in English and a tutor in French and English until 1906. She also coached and produced amateur plays and pageants.

At the age of sixteen, Daly had experimented with light verse and prose, some of which was published. Her primary interest during most of her life, however, was in amateur theatricals. From an early age, Daly had shown a fondness for games and puzzles, and this fondness resulted in a lifelong interest in detective fiction. She was particularly fond of the works of Wilkie Collins.

In the late 1930's, Daly attempted to write detective stories. It was not until 1940, when she was sixty-two, however, that her first novel, *Unexpected Night*, was published. Fifteen more novels featuring the amateur sleuth Henry Gamadge and one novel of manners, *The Street Has Changed* (1941), followed during the next twelve years. Daly died in St. Francis Hospital, on Long Island, on September 2, 1967.

ANALYSIS

After a false start in 1894, Elizabeth Daly began her career as a writer of detective fiction with the publication, in 1940, of *Unexpected Night*. Set in Maine, *Unexpected Night* introduces Henry Gamadge, a New York socialite and bibliophile who dabbles in criminal investigation. Fifteen Gamadge adventures followed, resulting in a series of novels that provide nostalgic glimpses of a vanishing era while chilling the reader's blood with literate stories of sophisticated wickedness.

Daly's interest in writing detective stories may be traced to her fondness for puzzles and games and to an early appreciation for the works of Wilkie Collins. She was not particularly concerned with the theory of detective fiction. Having devoted the previous thirty or

so years of her life to reading, travel, and the production of amateur plays, Daly began to write because she found detective stories fascinating. Like her fictional creation, Henry Gamadge, who repeatedly becomes involved in criminal investigations simply because he loves a mystery and has no job to distract him, Daly wrote because she loved puzzles, enjoyed writing, and had the leisure to indulge herself. As a writer, her only objective appears to have been to baffle and entertain the reader with an ingeniously conceived and well-presented mystery.

Each of the sixteen Gamadge novels is a literate and ingenious exercise in logic that uses an assortment of stock characters as set pieces around which a mystery can be developed. The principal character, Henry Gamadge, is a kind of English gentleman disguised as one of New York's aristocracy. Slightly resembling Dorothy L. Sayers's Peter Wimsey—and sometimes displaying a sophistication even greater than Wimsey's—Gamadge is, nevertheless, not a stereotypical dashing and attractive drawing room detective hero. Daly herself characterized him as “the semi-bookish type, but not pretentious . . . not good-looking, but eye-catching. He represents everything in a man eager to battle the forces of evil.”

Despite Daly's characterization, the average reader will find Gamadge too sophisticated to be a convincing representative of a man eager to stand up against evil. After a careful search of the series, the reader may come to the conclusion that Gamadge's involvement with criminal investigations, like Daly's involvement with detective fiction, reflects his enjoyment of puzzles more than any moral passion.

UNEXPECTED NIGHT

Even though Daly had a rather lofty concept of Gamadge, she was careful to balance her descriptions, avoiding the creation of a kind of otherworldly superhero. Although his powers of detection are extraordinary, Gamadge is not perfect, as Daly makes clear in her initial, and typical, description of him in *Unexpected Night*:

Mr. Henry Gamadge . . . wore clothes of excellent material and cut; but he contrived, by sitting and walking in a careless and lopsided manner, to look presentable

in nothing. He screwed his grey tweeds out of shape before he had worn them a week, he screwed his mouth to one side when he smiled, and he screwed his eyes up when he pondered. His eyes were greyish green, his features blunt, and his hair mouse-coloured. People as a rule considered him a well-mannered, restful kind of young man; but if somebody happened to say something unusually outrageous or inane, he was wont to gaze on the speaker in a wondering and somewhat disconcerting manner.

Because Gamadge is independently wealthy, he has the leisure to pursue his interest in old books and manuscripts and has established a reputation as an authority not only on the papers, inks, and handwriting of old books and manuscripts but also on the mysteries associated with them. It is his expertise in handwriting and ink that gets Gamadge involved in his first case, and his success in solving this and subsequent mysteries ensures that he will be drawn repeatedly, often unwillingly, into mysteries associated with the sordid world of crime.

In addition to Gamadge, Daly's stock characters include Gamadge's wife, Clara, and their son; his assistant, Harold Bantz; his cat, Mickey; and his aging manservant—along with a number of other characters who accumulate as the series develops. The development of these characters, whose individual characteristics are firmly established from their first introduction, is secondary to Daly's primary objective, which is to provide clues to the puzzle facing Gamadge so that during his sometimes lengthy concluding explanation, Daly, through Gamadge, can in effect say to the dubious readers that they have had all the clues.

The style of these stories is literate without being patronizing or bookish. Nevertheless, Daly's writing is somewhat flawed by her inability to develop an ear for the speech of individuals outside her and Gamadge's social and cultural circles and by her insistence on using British spellings and terminology. Workmen with whom Gamadge comes in contact use the same kind of language Gamadge uses but drop their *g*'s (“goin’,” “comin’”) and interrupt long, articulate explanations with the wrong tense or convoluted syntax. “Color” becomes “colour,” and cars, equipped with “lamps” instead of headlights, “hoot” rather than honk.

There are other, more serious flaws, one of which might be said to stem from what is, in itself, one of Daly's virtues as a writer. Daly was a careful crafter who took each manuscript through four revisions. She had the plot firmly in mind before beginning the writing, but once the actual writing began, by her account, "all kinds of things" turned up to influence the final outcome. This creative openmindedness is one of Daly's virtues. Because she did not slavishly follow her preconceived plot, Daly was able not only to avoid the production of a series of formula-written clones of preceding Gamadge tales but to bring a certain freshness to each as well. Although for the most part this is a virtue with Daly, it can, and often does, result in a kind of literary clutter because of Daly's reluctance to discard elements once they have been introduced. Characters, for example, have a way of staying on for the next novel. Gamadge rescues Clara Dawson, then marries her, eventually adding a dog and then a son to the Gamadge household. The household increases steadily as clients or individuals indirectly involved with clients are added to Gamadge's staff. This tendency to save everything and everybody, as some people save string, often arrests the plot's development, making heavy going for the reader.

ARROW POINTING NOWHERE

Another characteristic that weakens Daly's stories is her tendency to be too clever, so that the credulity of the reader is strained by Gamadge's ultimate explanation. In *Arrow Pointing Nowhere* (1944), for example, wadded-up notes picked up by a postal carrier eventually reach Gamadge. The logic of this device is explained by Gamadge at the novel's conclusion:

Clara's face wore a slight frown. "Henry," she said, "when Mrs. Grove threw that first paper ball out of the window she didn't know a thing about you. The Fenways didn't expect you to call, they can't have talked about you much."

"No, my angel, they can't."

"Then how could she know that you'd understand her message, and somehow get into the house? How did she know you'd care?"

Gamadge smiled at her. "Blake Fenway said he had my books. Perhaps she'd read them."

"They wouldn't tell her all that!"

"Something of an author is supposed to get in his books, though. Perhaps mine told her that I always answer my letters."

After Gamadge decides to accept the case, other crumpled notes turn up, two of which are railroad timetables marked with arrows. The first points to the Rockville station on the Hudson River, indicating that the person who marked the timetable (whom Gamadge cannot identify but refers to as his client) wants Gamadge to visit Rockville. Later, a second timetable is marked with an arrow pointing away from the Rockville station (arrow pointing nowhere), and Gamadge knows that his client is urging him to get someone at Rockville away from there. In this instance, Gamadge's remarkable ability to decipher the most obscure of clues is exceeded only by the perceptiveness of his unknown client, who understands that Gamadge has accepted the case when he appears on the scene carrying a book called *Men Working*. Other Daly works exhibit this same kind of excessive cleverness, provoking one reviewer to grumble, after reading *The Wrong Way Down* (1946), that although Gamadge was a nice change from the hard-as-nails characters featured in most detective fiction, his solution did put considerable strain on the reader's credulity.

It cannot be denied that the strain is often there, but for those who are not inclined to demand plausibility, the works of Daly offer tantalizing puzzles in an engaging form.

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HENRY GAMADGE SERIES: *Unexpected Night*, 1940; *Deadly Nightshade*, 1940; *Murders in Volume Two*, 1941; *The House Without the Door*, 1942; *Evidence of Things Seen*, 1943; *Nothing Can Rescue Me*, 1943; *Arrow Pointing Nowhere*, 1944 (also known as *Murder Listens In*); *The Book of the Dead*, 1944; *Any Shape or Form*, 1945; *Somewhere in the House*, 1946; *The Wrong Way Down*, 1946 (also known as *Shroud for a Lady*); *Night Walk*, 1947; *The Book of the Lion*, 1948; *And Dangerous to Know*, 1949; *Death and Letters*, 1950; *The Book of the Crime*, 1951

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NOVEL: *The Street Has Changed*, 1941

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Barzun, Jacques, and Wendell Hertig Taylor. *A Catalogue of Crime*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. Massive, nearly one-thousand-page critical bibliography of mystery, detective, and spy stories. Provides context for understanding Daly. Includes an index.

Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Although Daly is only mentioned, the Golden Age female writers of which she is a part are discussed at length.

Huang, Jim, ed. *They Died in Vain: Overlooked, Underappreciated, and Forgotten Mystery Novels*.

Carmel, Ind.: Crum Creek Press, 2002. Daly is among the authors discussed in this book about mystery novels that never found the audience they deserved.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains a biocritical essay on Daly.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Although Daly is not discussed in this work, it describes the work of Agatha Christie, who admired Daly's writings.

Waldron, Ann. "The Golden Years of Elizabeth Daly." *Armchair Detective* 7 (November, 1973): 25-28. Mystery writer Ann Waldron looks at the best writings of the creator of the Henry Gamadge series.

LIONEL DAVIDSON

Born: Hull, Yorkshire, England; March 31, 1922

Also wrote as David Line

Types of plot: Thriller; historical; police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

Lionel Davidson's novels are well-crafted thrillers that vary in setting, point of view, and theme. Davidson skillfully depicts scenes in London, Israel, Germany, and Prague, capturing the idiosyncratic speech in each country. His heroes, often cranky bachelors, enjoy drink and women. Although Davidson may coolly poke fun at his heroes and their adventures, some of his novels also consider historical themes and social issues and are suspenseful and humorous. In *The Chelsea Murders* (1978), he treats the genre of the murder mystery itself with irony. In all of his novels, there is an engaging intellectual component.

BIOGRAPHY

On March 31, 1922, Lionel Davidson was born in Hull, Yorkshire. His father was from Poland and his mother from Russia. When he was two years old, his father died. Four years later, the family relocated to London. When he was fourteen, Davidson had to leave school to seek employment, beginning as an office boy for a shipping firm; he soon found a similar position at *The Spectator*. When he was fifteen, his first story appeared in that magazine. Later, he wrote for a Fleet Street agency. During World War II, Davidson joined the Royal Navy. Afterward, he became a freelance journalist in Europe. Davidson married Fay Jacobs in 1949.

The publication of Davidson's first novel, *The Night of Wenceslas* (1960), was delayed for some time because of a strike. Not knowing of the delay and believing that the book was a failure, he began *The Rose of Tibet*, which appeared in 1962. Both books proved to be highly successful. *The Night of Wenceslas* was

recognized as both the most promising first novel in 1960, receiving the Author's Club Silver Quill Award, and the best crime novel of the year, winning the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award. Davidson's work was likened to that of Graham Greene and Kingsley Amis.

In 1965 Davidson published his first book for adolescents, *Soldier and Me*, under the pseudonym David Line. A year after its American publication, it appeared in England as *Run for Your Life*. His next novel, *A Long Way to Shiloh* (1966), published in the United States as *The Menorah Men*, was written partly in response to his travels in Israel. The novel, a best seller for months, received the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award for best crime novel of the year.

Two years later, Davidson published another novel, *Making Good Again* (1968), a low-key thriller, which deals with anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Soon after he completed the novel, Davidson and his family moved to Israel, which was the setting of two later novels, *Smith's Gazelle* (1971) and *The Sun Chemist* (1976). *Smith's Gazelle*, lyrical and allegorical, was awarded Israel's President's Prize for Literature. In the early 1970's, Davidson wrote a second book for adolescents, *Mike and Me* (1974).

After living in Israel for ten years, Davidson returned once again to England. *The Chelsea Murders*, a bloodcurdling mystery, was set in Chelsea, London. It received the Gold Dagger Award for best crime novel of the year in 1978 and was soon followed by *Under Plum Lake* (1980), a fanciful children's allegory. Davidson spent several years revising this short novel. In 1985, he completed another novel for adolescents, *Screaming High*. In 2001, he was awarded the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger award for life achievement.

ANALYSIS

Lionel Davidson's fiction is characterized by its wit and ingenuity. The main characters of his thrillers and mystery novels quickly enter a world of circumstance that tests their mental and physical prowess. Many of the novels are propelled forward by, first, the perplexing mysteries and, second, the protagonists' subsequent action-packed flight from danger. David-

son gracefully fuses an intellectually engaging mystery—which often involves some form of scholarship—with sparkling action. Davidson's interest in scholarship is also suggested by the fact that his novels are well researched. Finally, humor and irony add another dimension to much of his fiction.

THE NIGHT OF WENCESLAS

The Night of Wenceslas, written from the viewpoint of a self-centered, spoiled young Englishman, Nicholas Whistler, plots his journey to a vividly described Prague and his subsequent flight from the communist secret police. Through a complicated set of circumstances, Whistler is tricked by a man into unwittingly passing or almost passing state secrets. After sleeping with a giant Czech woman with "twin luscious bombs" and being pursued by the Czech police, he manages to enter the British embassy dressed as a milk delivery person.

A LONG WAY TO SHILOH

A Long Way to Shiloh is also written in the first person; the main character, Caspar Laing, who likes to drink, has an affair with a young Yemenite woman who is engaged to someone else. Soon after he meets Shoshana, Laing thinks to himself, "Hadn't this girl been demonstrating some rather over-matey solidarity with me of late?" Thus Davidson conveys the young Englishman's carefree attitude through his tone and diction.

The novel also has an engaging plot. Set in modern Israel, it considers the nation's preoccupation with its ancient history. Laing is a renowned young scholar employed by an Israeli archaeologist to help locate an ancient menorah—to which a scroll fragment alludes—before the Jordanians find it. After following numerous faulty leads and barely escaping death at the hands of Arabs, Laing concludes that the menorah is likely to be buried in the middle of a construction site for a vast hotel. Because he fails to prevail over the developer, Laing cannot continue the search. Ironically, a council of rabbis concludes that a library should be constructed in the hotel in the exact area in question. Much of the novel is devoted to Laing's efforts to decipher the fragment and interpret its meaning. Because he cannot pursue his final lead, the novel thereby ends somewhat inconclusively.

THE ROSE OF TIBET

The Rose of Tibet is even more indefinite. By placing the main story within a framing plot, Davidson cleverly renders it suspect. Two stories are presented, one involving high adventure in Tibet and the other—one that is quite rarefied—recounting the story of an editor's effort to get in touch with an author. Charles Houston, an Englishman, has supposedly written an account of his search for his brother in Tibet, his journey through the Himalayas, his affair with a priestess, his own deification by the people, and his flight from the approaching Chinese army. Because the editor is unable to contact Houston (who has been the subject of several newspaper articles), Davidson's reader is confronted with the possibility that an elderly Latin teacher—who passed the manuscript to the editor—actually wrote the narrative himself. It may not have been, as he claims, material that was dictated to him by Houston.

The novel opens with a prologue in which Davidson himself appears as an editor of a publishing company. It closes with the editor's failure to resolve the mystery of Houston's whereabouts and thus the identity of the manuscript's author. Between the opening and ending lie pages of thrilling adventure through the Himalayas. In concise prose, somewhat like Ernest Hemingway's, Davidson describes the inexperienced Houston's fight for survival. At one point, "he tried to eat wood and leaves. He boiled them to make a soup. The soup was bitter . . . and it merely made him vomit. He had to stop quickly, for he could not afford to waste what he had already eaten."

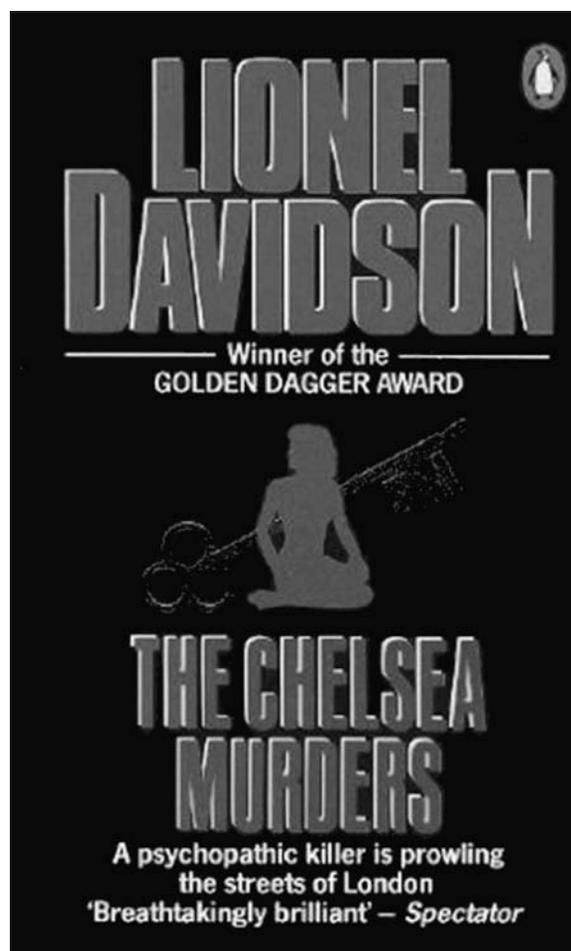
THE SUN CHEMIST

A scholar's work preparing an edition of a famous man's letters is the modus operandi of *The Sun Chemist*; Davidson weaves a story around his protagonist's research on Chaim Weizmann's letters. While Igor Druyanov, a historian, is editing a volume of Israel's founder's letters, his assistant is attacked. In addition, Druyanov soon finds that several scientific notebooks mentioned in the letters are missing. These contain the formula for a fermentation process that converts sweet potatoes into high-octane fuel. Finally, Druyanov's knowledge of the past places him in the direct line of danger in the present, and he is almost killed by another scientist, who attempts to drown him.

As in the novels mentioned previously, Davidson combines physical adventure and intellectual intrigue. Although *The Sun Chemist* does not end in Davidson's typical ambiguity, it is not without his characteristic wit. Ironically, the main clue of the novel is tied to a humorous circumstance. A significant passage in the memoirs was muddled because Weizmann's transcriptionist misunderstood him when he dictated without his false teeth. Davidson's well-researched plot, his humor, and his skillful characterization brought the novel almost universal praise.

THE CHELSEA MURDERS

The Chelsea Murders, a highly ingenious detective story, also received mostly favorable reviews. A group of murders takes place in Chelsea, London, the home of such famous writers as Oscar Wilde, Algernon



Charles Swinburne, Leigh Hunt, W. S. Gilbert, and Hilaire Belloc; each victim has the initials of one of these authors. In addition, the murderer tantalizes the police with literary quotations. Most reviewers of the novel commented on Davidson's inventiveness and character portrayal. Nevertheless, some responded negatively to its conclusion and the inclusion of unresolved leads. An insightful reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* observed that the novel both "acknowledges and flouts the convention of [its] genre."

MAKING GOOD AGAIN

Making Good Again also reveals Davidson's perspective on mystery and adventure fiction. The central mystery and resultant action skillfully weave a fabric rich in thematic texture. The complex attitudes of postwar Germany toward Jews are presented within the context of a fast-paced plot. Once again, Davidson successfully fuses the concrete and the abstract.

As in so many of Davidson's novels, the main character—James Raison, an English attorney—drinks heavily and has an affair. Nevertheless, through third-person narration, several other characters are fleshed out, including Heinz Haffner, a German lawyer, and another attorney, Yonah Grunwald, who is a concentration-camp survivor. Davidson considers anti-Semitism and its various manifestations along with the meaning of German reparation.

The lawyers hope to discover the fate of Helmut Bamberger—a wealthy German Jew—to determine the status of his fortune, which seems to have been placed in a numbered Swiss bank account. They assume at first that he was one of the millions of Jews who perished in the Holocaust, but later they decide that he is still alive. Raison, a calm Englishman, represents Bamberger's daughter. Haffner, who represents the German government, wishes only to resolve the case. Grunwald, who lives in Israel, hopes to use the estate for charitable purposes. Raison, Grunwald, and an Israeli attorney eventually go to a small German town on the Czechoslovakian border hoping to find news of Bamberger. In a hideous scene in the Bavarian forest, the lawyers are doped and Grunwald is attacked; the old man barely survives.

The novel also addresses more subtle expressions of anti-Semitism. Although Haffner does not consider

himself racist and his legal tasks involve providing reparations, he believes that Germany's Jews who survived the Holocaust did so because they were devious. In addition, he detests his daughter's Jewish boyfriend. At the end of the novel, he finally confronts some of his prejudices. Although Davidson treats the German attorney with biting irony—Haffner is both impotent and compulsive—Davidson also presents some profound questions concerning the Holocaust. For example, Haffner believes that "there's no honor anymore. After all, obedience is a part of honor, isn't it—loyalty? But what's one to be obedient or loyal to? Such things happened here." Echoing some of the issues raised by Karl Eichmann's trial and Hannah Arendt's book on it, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1964), Haffner wonders, "how can you prosecute people for crimes under the law that weren't then crimes under the law?"

Although *Making Good Again* explores the philosophical and social issues raised by the Holocaust, it also includes comic relief. Haffner's sister, Magda, who was married to a Nazi and is now widowed, recalls the Nazi period with great nostalgia. A woman of vast appetites, she tries desperately to seduce Raison. Although he keeps her at bay, he tolerates her advances because from her he may learn Bamberger's fate. Finally, to protect himself, when Magda leaves a second-story bedroom to go down a ladder to the kitchen, Raison closes the trapdoor behind her. The half-drunk Magda smashes her head against it as she ascends the ladder. When she recovers several hours later, she still calls for the Englishman: "I know you're there. . . . Süsser, what's the sense in you being there and me here? . . . I want to be with someone." Despite her pleas, Raison continues to hide in the loft; she violently cleans the house. Ironically, the sex-crazed woman knows more about Bamberger and his money than does anyone else. Her revelations to Raison about her husband's takeover of a bank put the lawyers onto a path that may lead to the solution of the mystery of Bamberger's estate. Thus, a scene that seems to function merely as comic relief turns out to be essential to the plot.

Irony has a central role in *Making Good Again*. The lawyers act against their better judgment and play right into the hands of a former Nazi. In the chapter "The Son

of Man and Other Sons,” Grunwald attempts to drape a cloth over a crucifix in his hotel room so he may pray without its presence; as he does so, the cross falls and breaks. Thus, Grunwald unintentionally breaks the symbol for Christianity—the professed religion of the Nazis. Later, while he is attempting to produce some good from evil by claiming Bamberger’s fortune, he is again the victim of violent anti-Semitism.

Davidson’s mysteries and thrillers to varying degrees conform to the conventional treatment of these genres. In Davidson’s fiction, however, mystery and its myriad uncertainties symbolize the human experience, which is in his view rife with ambiguity.

Kathy Rugoff

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Night of Wenceslas*, 1960; *The Rose of Tibet*, 1962; *A Long Way to Shiloh*, 1966 (also known as *The Menorah Men*); *Making Good Again*, 1968; *The Sun Chemist*, 1976; *The Chelsea Murders*, 1978 (also known as *Murder Games*); *Kolymisky Heights*, 1994

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Smith’s Gazelle*, 1971

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *Run for Your Life*, 1966 (as Line; also known as *Soldier and Me*, 1965); *Mike and Me*, 1974 (as Line); *Under Plum Lake*, 1980; *Screaming High*, 1985 (as Line)

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- James, Michael. “A Writer After a Good Hiding: Lionel Davidson.” *The Times*, March 12, 1994. Describes Davidson’s background and notes his successful *The Night of Wenceslas* as bringing gritty new realism to the thriller. His sixteen-year absence from writing ended with the publication of *Kolymisky Heights*. Davidson said he started two other books during his hiatus but abandoned them because he felt they were not good enough.
- Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Critical study consisting of fifteen overview essays devoted to specific genres or periods within crime fiction. Contains a chapter on thrillers, which sheds light on Davidson’s work. Bibliographic references and index.
- Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains chapters on police procedurals and crime thrillers, which help place Davidson’s work in context.

L. P. DAVIES

Born: Crewe, Cheshire, England; October 20, 1914

Also wrote as Leo Berne; Robert Blake; Richard Bridgeman; Morgan Evans; Ian Jefferson; Lawrence Peters; Thomas Phillips; G. K. Thomas; Leslie Vardre; Rowland Welch

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

L. P. Davies’ fascination with science (and pseudoscience), psychology, psychic phenomena, and the su-

pernatural has resulted in a series of crime and mystery novels that he calls “psychic fiction.” The majority of these novels reflect this fascination and feature plots in which the principal character is experiencing some form of identity crisis or mental disorientation as a result of an operation, an accident, or the surreptitious administration of drugs. In developing these plots, Davies frequently introduces elements of science, pseudoscience, or the supernatural. As a result, his novels have sometimes been placed in the cat-

egory of science fiction rather than crime and mystery. Davies' novels belong in the latter category, however, because like their more traditional counterparts, their solutions depend on the use of the processes of logical deduction. It is this ability to flavor crime and mystery stories with elements of science fiction that constitutes Davies' principal contribution to the literature.

BIOGRAPHY

Leslie Purnell Davies was born on October 20, 1914, in Crew, Cheshire, England, the son of Arthur Davies and Annie Sutton Davies. From 1930 to 1939, Davies worked as a dispensing pharmacist in Crewes. Educated at Manchester College of Science and Technology, University of Manchester, he qualified as an optometrist in 1939 (fellow, British Optical Society). On November 13, 1940, he married Winifred Tench.

During World War II, Davies was in the British army, serving with the Medical Corps in France and with the Eighth Army in North Africa and Italy. He achieved the rank of staff sergeant. Following the war, he spent two years as a freelance artist in Rome before returning to England. From 1946 to 1956, he was postmaster at West Heath, Birmingham. In 1956, he moved to Deganwy, North Wales, where he established a private practice in optometry and operated a gift shop. In 1975, he moved to the Canary Islands, Spain.

The author of more than 250 short stories published under at least ten pseudonyms, Davies used his own name when he published his first crime novel, *The Paper Dolls* (1964). It is a practice that he continued with each succeeding novel he published in the United States.

ANALYSIS

L. P. Davies began his career as a writer in 1964 with the publication of *The Paper Dolls*, a novel rejected by four publishers because it did not fit into any of their categories. The Davies novels that followed *The Paper Dolls* and that Davies calls "psychic fiction" are just as difficult to categorize but could be described as crime and mystery thrillers with science-fiction overtones. These science-fiction overtones are a result of Davies' fascination with science, psychic phenomena, the supernatural, and the workings of the

human mind.

There are times when the overtones appear to be the dominant theme. Nevertheless, Davies' novels can be categorized as crime and mystery thrillers because, like other works in the same category, they conclude with down-to-earth solutions that reveal that events that seemed to border on the supernatural have, after all, completely logical explanations. Davies' characters, who often battle forces that appear to combine traditional black magic with twenty-first century technology, use their minds to resolve their problems, arriving at their conclusions by the familiar process of putting clues together and, through logical deduction, weaving them into solutions that are as rational and as satisfyingly plausible as any offered by Peter Wimsey, Father Brown, or Sherlock Holmes.

WHAT DID I DO TOMORROW?

One of Davies' strengths as a writer lies in his ability to bring about these conclusions. In *What Did I Do Tomorrow?* (1972), for example, a very confused young man continues to function rationally, assembling and analyzing clues as any professional sleuth might do, even though he is convinced that someone has transported him five years into the future. His problem is finally explained in terms of psychiatric practices that are relatively well established in fiction and television drama, if not in the real world. Similarly, in *The White Room* (1969), Davies uses an accepted tenet of folk psychology—that the dummy can take over the ventriloquist or the role the actor—to explain what has been happening to a man who believes that someone is manipulating his mind to force him to commit a murder.

THE ARTIFICIAL MAN

Davies followed *The Paper Dolls* with a second novel, *Man out of Nowhere* (1965), but it was not until his third novel, *The Artificial Man* (1965), that he began to write stories involving individuals who are uncertain of their identities. In the novels that followed *The Artificial Man*, Davies returned repeatedly to plots in which the principal character has experienced some form of mental disorientation or depersonalization as the result of an accident, brain surgery, hypnotism, a cunningly devised deception, or the clandestine administration of drugs.

THE SHADOW BEFORE

Davies' preoccupation with characters who are experiencing a disorientation or identity crisis has been described as an obsession, but although it is true that he does work the theme for all it is worth, the careful reader will discover that Davies has something of importance to say about human freedom and moral responsibility. Davies hints at this conviction in words given to a Dr. Cowley, in *The Shadow Before* (1970).

Lester Dunn, the principal character, has had an operation to remove a small brain tumor. During surgery, he has a dream, which seems to be more than a dream. Deeply disturbed, he confronts one of the doctors who performed the surgery, asking questions about such things as "extrasensory perception and precognition." The doctor responds by discussing dreams in general, then concludes his discussion:

Now it could well be that under the deeper sleep artificially induced by anaesthesia the subconscious selects items, . . . producing a dream that [is a] logical, understandable sequence of happenings. And I see no reason why that sequence shouldn't be projected into the future. But obviously the future of what *could* be, not what *is* to be. And there is a world of difference between the two. It is as if the subconscious were saying to itself: "Because this is how things were yesterday and today, this is how I think they could work out tomorrow." But that dream tomorrow is certainly not inevitable. We are all free agents, even though we are at the mercy of our natural inclinations.

In story after story, the principal characters find themselves in a world turned upside down, victims of some kind of mysterious psychic disturbance. Davies' heroes do not accept this situation, nor do they seek excuses for what is happening or for what they are doing. Instead, they begin a mighty struggle to reorient themselves and to set the world rightside up again. Consistently, each one succeeds, in spite of drugs, deception, and all kinds of diabolical scientific machinations. This pattern suggests that the stories Davies claimed were written only to entertain have a deeper message, namely that each individual is a free agent who has the power to make moral choices and who is morally responsible for the choices made.

STRANGER TO TOWN

Even though he is described as being obsessively concerned with disoriented characters, Davies is not absolutely predictable. He is capable of adding an unexpected twist to the end of his stories or, as in the case of *Stranger to Town* (1969), of exploiting the notion that he is predictable. The charm of *Stranger to Town*, one of Davies' best stories, could be attributed in part to his skill in creating in the mind of the reader an assumption that this story is simply a variation on a very familiar theme.

Stranger to Town opens with a characteristic Davies scene: A man discovers himself in a strangely familiar place and is at a loss to explain even to himself why he is there. There are people whose names he knows, and there are things he knows that even the local citizens do not know. A widow is confronted with bits of conversation only she and her dead husband could have known. The widow, who belongs to a church that believes in the return of the dead, appears convinced that her husband has come back in the body of this stranger. Eventually, the widow, the townspeople, and the reader discover that things are not as they seem, and that there is a very logical explanation for the supposedly supernatural events accompanying the stranger's arrival in town.

Davies' skill in creating the illusion that something supernatural is involved is demonstrated dramatically in *Stranger to Town*. It is so skillfully done, in fact, that the casual reader, on discovering that he or she has been fooled along with the widow and the citizens of the town, will at first assume that Davies has not "played fair" in spite of his claims to the contrary. What Davies actually does is to suggest interior monologue in the opening pages so that the reader has the impression that it is the stranger's mind that is being exposed. What the casual reader assumes to be interior monologue is, in fact, a description of the stranger's actions from the point of view of the one witnessing them.

THE LAND OF LEYS

Although in general Davies' writing is fast paced and exciting, his habit of returning repeatedly to the identity crisis-disorientation theme can result in writing that labors and plods. *The White Room* and *Assign-*

ment Abacus (1975) both try the reader's patience with plots that move forward one-half step, then return a full step or more as the heroes, on the verge of making major breakthroughs, become disoriented by yet another in what seems to be an interminable sequence of druggings. Plodding through this kind of plot development, the reader is likely to believe that continuing is not worth the effort. Unfortunately, this same feeling can come at the beginning of the book to a reader having previous experience with Davies. *The Land of Leys* (1979), for example, begins with an amnesia victim regaining consciousness only to discover that all clues to his identity have been removed by a person or persons unknown. Discovering this familiar situation in chapter 1, the reader may simply decide that enough is enough.

Although understandable, such an attitude is unfortunate, for it prevents the reader from discovering the variety beneath the surface similarities of plot and characterization. Bringing a distinctive approach to the mystery and detective genre, Davies has produced a series of novels that feature well-told stories while providing the reader with tantalizing excursions into the mysteries of science, science fiction, and the unknown.

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Paper Dolls*, 1964; *Man out of Nowhere*, 1965 (also known as *Who Is Louis Pinder?*); *The Artificial Man*, 1965; *The Lampton Dreamers*, 1966; *The Reluctant Medium*, 1967 (also known as *Tell It to the Dead*); *Twilight Journey*, 1967; *A Grave Matter*, 1968 (also known as *The Nameless Ones*);

Stranger to Town, 1969; *The White Room*, 1969; *The Shadow Before*, 1970; *Give Me Back Myself*, 1971; *What Did I Do Tomorrow?*, 1972; *Assignment Abacus*, 1975; *Possession*, 1976; *The Land of Leys*, 1979; *Morning Walk*, 1983

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Psychogeist*, 1966; *Twilight Journey*, 1967; *The Alien*, 1968; *Dimension A*, 1969; *Genesis Two*, 1969; *Adventure Holidays Ltd.*, 1970

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Wilson, Neil. *Shadows in the Attic: A Guide to British Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1950*. Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, England: British Library, 2000. This study of Davies' immediate and Victorian precursors helps elucidate both his influences and his innovations. Bibliographic references and index.

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DETECTIVE FICTION**

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AND
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AUTHORS

LINDSEY DAVIS

Born: Birmingham, England; 1949

Type of plot: Historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Didius Falco, 1989-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MARCUS DIDIUS FALCO, a proud Roman citizen of plebeian rank, was born in 41 C.E. After an army career in Britain (59-69 C.E.), he became a professional informer in his beloved Rome. He led the rough and roguish life of a bachelor and professional informer in his native city of Rome until he met the high-ranking Helena, who became first his girlfriend, then his common-law wife, adviser, partner, and eventually mother of his children. Although an avid supporter of anachronistic Roman Republican principles, Falco often finds himself employed on commission by the imperial bureaucracy or by the emperor Vespasian. Falco's work takes him on dangerous assignments around the Roman world, often accompanied by Helena or her troublesome brothers.

CONTRIBUTION

In the Didius Falco series, Lindsey Davis renders tangible the history and daily life of first century C.E. Rome and its empire but does it in the wisecracking style of twentieth century detective fiction. Falco treads through both the dregs and the gems of Roman society as he solves bizarre murders and other strange puzzles. Davis's humorous and sympathetic hero wanders the ancient Roman world in pursuit of his cases, from Britain to Syria, from Germany to North Africa.

In 1995 the Crime Writers' Association gave Davis a Dagger in the Library Award, which is given to the author who has given the most pleasure to library users. In 1999 she received the same association's first Ellis Peters Historical Dagger (renamed the Ellis Peters Award in 2006) for *Two for the Lions* (1998). In 2000 Didius Falco was recognized as Best Comic Detective by *Sherlock* magazine.

Several of the Didius Falco novels have been pro-

duced by the British Broadcasting Corporation as drama serials on Radio 4, with Anton Lesser starring as Falco. These serials were adapted for radio by Mary Cutler, Davis's schoolmate and one of the author's oldest friends. Falco novels have been published in more than sixteen languages and are widely acclaimed not only by lovers of detective fiction but also by those fond of the ancient Roman world.

In addition to the Didius Falco series, Davis is the author of a number of short stories, mostly detective in genre. Of particular note because of their ancient subject matter are "Investigating the Silvius Boys" (1995), about the death of Romulus, founder of Rome, and "Abstain from Beans" (1996), in which the death of the philosopher Pythagoras is solved by the boxer Milo of Croton. Davis has also written introductions to a number of volumes, including *Is Skin Deep, Is Fatal* by H. R. F. Keating (1995), *Sharpe's Tiger* by Bernard Cornwell (1997), *Green for Danger* by Christianna Brand (1999), and *Life in Ancient Rome* by Simon Adams (2005). She has served as chair of the Crime Writers' Association and was honorary president of the United Kingdom Classical Association in 1997-1998.

BIOGRAPHY

Lindsey Davis grew up in Birmingham, England, and attended Oxford University, where she read English as a member of Lady Margaret Hall College. She was employed for several years in the Property Services Agency, where her responsibilities included arranging contracts related to ancient monuments and London Museums and serving as a committee secretary and as assistant to a deputy secretary.

After resigning her position in the civil service, Davis survived for several years on a modest government stipend as she struggled to become a successful writer. Her romantic novel about the British Civil War was runner-up for the 1985 Georgette Heyer Historical Novel Prize. Davis became intrigued by the story of the Roman emperor Vespasian and his mistress Antonia Caenis and produced the novel *The Course of Honour* (not published until 1997). As she gathered

information about first century Rome for this project, Davis conceived of the fictional Didius Falco, whose first adventure appeared as *The Silver Pigs* (1989). For this novel Davis received the 1989 Author's Club Best First Novel Award.

In interviews Davis has attributed her interest in first century Rome to the Roman occupation of her native Britain, where much of the action in *The Silver Pigs* takes place. Davis brings her hero back to Britain twice, in *A Body in the Bath House* (2001), which features references to the famous archaeological site known as the Fishbourne Roman Palace, and in *The Jupiter Myth* (2002), set in Londinium (London). Davis's career as a British civil servant also helps explain her fascination with the imperial civil service with which Falco deals throughout the series.

After producing Falco novels annually for seventeen years, Davis slowed her pace following the completion of *See Delphi and Die* (2005). The recipient of a corneal transplant, Davis became a staunch advocate of organ-donor programs.

ANALYSIS

Some fiction writers who depict the Roman world, like Steven Saylor, tend to set their work during the traumatic time of Julius Caesar and M. Tullius Cicero in the late first century B.C.E.; others, like Robert Graves, set their works amid the ruthless intrigues of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the early first century C.E. Lindsey Davis's Didius Falco detective series, however, is unusual among Roman historical novels in its focus on the period surrounding the relatively peaceful reign of the emperor Vespasian (69-79 C.E.). The emperor himself, his sons, and his staff appear as occasional characters in Davis's novels. Falco faces imperial summons, commissions, and less frequent rewards for services rendered. Even in absentia, the powerful imperial presence is often felt in the novels.

In her first novel, *The Silver Pigs*, Davis introduced her tough hero Falco in 70 C.E., early in the reign of Vespasian. By her seventeenth novel, *See Delphi or Die* (2005), only six years had passed. Because of the relative political stability of Vespasian's reign, Davis is able to send her hero around the Roman world from Britain in *The Silver Pigs* to Greece in *See*

Delphi or Die, and to every place in between.

Several major historical events underlie Davis's plots. Falco's older brother M. Didius Festus lost his life fighting in the Fifteenth Legion in Judaea in 68 C.E. during the First Jewish Revolt, famously described by the historian Josephus (37-c. 100). From about 59 to 66, Falco and his friend Petronius served in Britain in the infamous Second Legion (Augusta), which was disgraced following the uprising of Queen Boudicca in 60/61. Neither man speaks much about the nightmare events of this war, but their military experiences and training prepare them well for their careers as imperial informer and captain of the urban vigiles (or firefighters) in Rome. Inevitably any Falco adventure calls on the hero to demonstrate hand-to-hand fighting and even fighting dirty, skills acquired growing up on the streets of Rome and honed in the army. As Falco wanders through his beloved Rome during the eighth decade of the first century, he watches the construction of the huge Flavian Amphitheatre, known today as the Colosseum. Vespasian's great census of 73 C.E. sets the scene for another Falco adventure in *Two for the Lions*.

Except for members of the Roman imperial family, all the characters in Davis's novels are fictional. Many of their names are intentionally humorous and reinforce the satirical tone of the series. The name of Nux, Falco's pet dog, for example, means "worthless" in Latin and is a commentary on the animal's usefulness and reliability. The name of Ventriculus, the plumber in *Shadows in Bronze* (1990), means "Little Pipe." Davis has said that Leonidas and Draco, the title characters in *Two for the Lions*, bear the Latin names for herbs, but much more transparent are the references in these names to famous ancient Greeks. Although the name sounds Latin, the name of Smaractus, a greedy husband in *Two for the Lions*, is humorous because it sounds like "smart act." Another character in the same novel, Fidelis, acts just the opposite of what his name would suggest.

Throughout the series, Davis draws modern parallels as she makes fun of various ancient Roman trades, including construction, banking, antiques, and tourism. She uses this Roman backdrop to draw her readers into the ongoing and often intertwined profes-

sional and personal adventures of Falco. Typically each Falco mystery serves as an excuse for the next installment in Falco's life and family history. The eldest surviving son of a large family, Falco often finds himself involved in complicated transactions with various shrewish sisters and their neglected children and delinquent spouses, as well as his sharp-tongued mother, roguish father, and mysterious uncles. In particular, throughout the series the reader follows plebeian Falco's romance with the patrician Helena, from their first encounter in *The Silver Pigs* to their decision to share a household and eventually to the birth of their daughters Julia Junilla Laeitana (in 73) and Sosia Favonia (in 75). As these events unfold, Falco is transformed from a die-hard bachelor and ladies' man to a devoted husband and father. Meanwhile his common-law wife, Helena, serves as confidant and partner in many of his adventures.

The striking contrast between Falco's working-class family and Helena's wealthy, aristocratic clan occasions frequent awkwardness and humor in the novels. Falco struggles to maintain his dignity and independence in the face of Helena's powerful family and the foibles of his own relatives. Davis's hero is especially appealing because of his ability to laugh at his own embarrassments and inadequacies, financial and otherwise. The well-educated and sophisticated Helena is an excellent foil to the earthy wiseacre Falco, as she smiles at her lover's weaknesses and affectionately aids him in his work. Their unlikely union is the glue that holds the attention of the reader through the series.

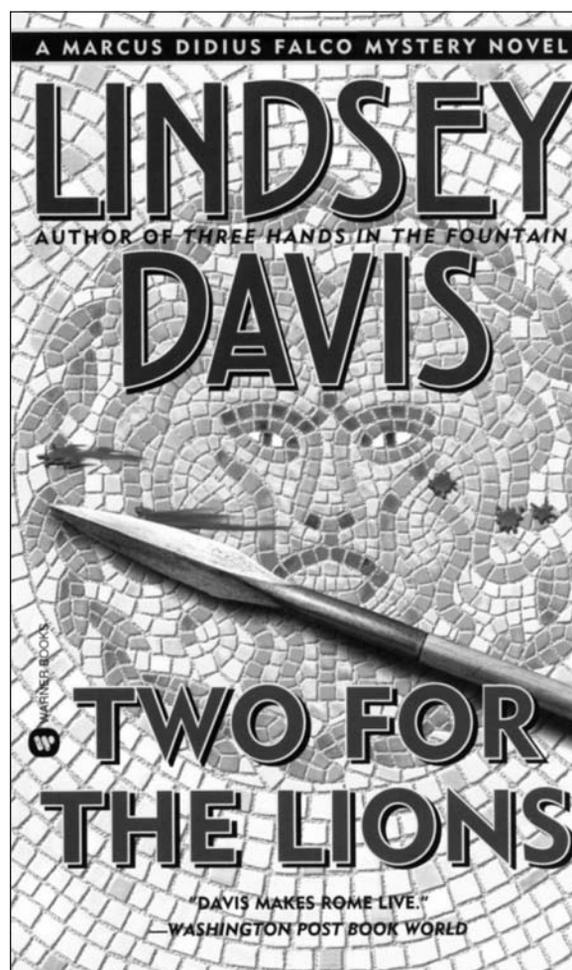
THE SILVER PIGS

The title of the first Falco novel, *The Silver Pigs*, includes a metal, as do the titles of the next four novels in the series: *Shadows in Bronze*, *Venus in Copper* (1991), *The Iron Hand of Mars* (1992), and *Poseidon's Gold* (1993). The silver pigs are valuable ingots that disappear in apparent connection with the death of a young girl named Sosia Camilla. The complex plot takes Falco from Rome to Britain and eventually into the arms of the recently divorced Helena. To solve the mystery of the missing silver ingots, Falco disguises himself as a miscreant slave condemned to work in the silver mines of Britain, where, near death, he is even-

tually rescued by Helena. Besides Falco and Helena, Davis introduces several other principal characters of the series, including Falco's mother, his friend Petronius, Helena's parents, and the emperor Vespasian and his sons.

TWO FOR THE LIONS

In *Two for the Lions*, is the second of three novels in the Partners trilogy, in which Falco works with a series of potential partners. Falco is appointed tax auditor by Vespasian and reluctantly takes on his nemesis Anacrites as a partner, as the two pursue imperial tax dodgers. Their investigations lead them to Tripolitania (modern Libya) in North Africa and to murder and intrigue in a gladiatorial school. Justinus, Helena's younger brother, has run off to Africa with his fiancé in search of a valuable but extinct herb



called silphium. As is typical of Falco's adventures, personal and professional matters merge as Falco travels to Africa with Helena and their infant daughter to deal simultaneously with his wayward brother-in-law and with tax evasion and murder. Antonia Caenis, Vespasian's mistress, the main character of *The Course of Honour* (Davis's only major work of fiction not in the Didius Falco series), makes a brief appearance in this novel.

SEE DELPHI AND DIE

Helena's other wayward brother Aulus is the catalyst for the adventures in *See Delphi and Die*. Sent by his parents to study in Athens, Aulus is diverted by the disappearance of a recent bride. Falco and his wife are sent by her parents to Greece to set Aulus on the right track but, at the insistence of Aulus, wind up joining a party of tourists traveling through Greece to solve the mystery. The Greek setting limits Falco's encounters with his complex family as he and Helena set out on this adventure without their daughters. Luckily, however, they take along their faithful dog Nux.

Thomas J. Sienkewicz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MARCUS DIDIUS FALCO SERIES: *The Silver Pigs*, 1989; *Shadows in Bronze*, 1990; *Venus in Copper*, 1991; *The Iron Hand of Mars*, 1992; *Poseidon's Gold*, 1993; *Last Act in Palmyra*, 1994; *Time to Depart*, 1995; *A Dying Light in Cordoba*, 1996; *Three Hands in the Fountain*, 1997; *Two for the Lions*, 1998; *One Virgin Too Many*, 1999; *Falco on His Metal*, 1999 (omnibus); *Ode to a Banker*, 2000; *A Body in the Bath House*, 2001; *The Jupiter Myth*, 2002; *Falco on the Loose*, 2003 (omnibus); *The Accusers*, 2003; *Scandal Takes a Holiday*, 2004; *See Delphi and Die*, 2005; *Saturnalia*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NOVEL: *The Course of Honour*, 1997

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Buller, Jeffrey. *Historical Novels in the Classroom*. Oxford, Ohio: American Classical League, 1989.

This study appeared at the same time Davis's first novel was being published, but it offers useful perspectives on teaching historical novels similar to those in the Didius Falco series. Topics include using novels as sources of historical information, using the students' own historical knowledge to "correct" a novel, using historical novels as a means of understanding historiography and improving students' understanding of unpopular characters or events, and using historical novels and ancient history to uncover repeated patterns in human affairs.

Davis, Lindsey. "I'm Supposed to Be Famous for My Smells." Interview by Hannah Stephenson. *The Press and Journal*, February 24, 2007, p. 10. Davis discusses why she is not eager to have her books turned into films, based partly on reservations about recent film adaptations of Roman historical novels. She also discusses her transition from civil servant to novelist.

Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Contains a brief entry on her works that notes her popularity.

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Lindzey, Ginny. "The Official Website of Lindsey Davis." <http://www.lindseydavis.com.uk>. A rich resource of information about Davis. Includes her biography and bibliography, a photograph album, Falco's biography, a map of the novels, recent news, and various other related topics.

Mench, Fred. "Historical Novels in the Classroom." *Classical World* 87 (1993): 49-54. This survey of Roman historical fiction, intended as a pedagogical reference for Latin teachers, contains a brief introduction to the first three Didius Falco novels.

WILLIAM L. DeANDREA

Born: Port Chester, New York; July 1, 1952

Died: Bethel, Connecticut; October 9, 1996

Also wrote as Philip DeGrave; Lee Davis
Willoughby

Types of plot: Master sleuth; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Matt Cobb, 1978-1996

Niccolo Benedetti, 1979, 1992-1994

Lobo Blacke and Quinn Booker, 1995-1996

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MATT COBB, former college basketball star, is a network wunderkind, vice president of special projects for a Manhattan media conglomerate, a vaguely defined job that puts him in charge of managing embarrassing incidents involving high-maintenance and highly paid executives, eccentric media gurus, network divas, and even demented fans. An English major with an intolerance for grammatical errors and a fondness for jelly-beans and leggy women, Cobb is a no-nonsense type.

PROFESSOR NICCOLO BENEDETTI is less an investigator and more a philosopher who studies evil, who paints abstract canvases as a way to guide himself through his byzantine speculations. Fascinated by the impulse behind criminal activity, he demands as part of his fee for solving a mystery a session with the killer before the arrest to better understand the perplexing nature of evil.

LOBO BLACKE is a celebrated frontier marshal wounded by a cowardly shot in the back. He now uses a wheelchair and has "retired," working in the newspaper business to keep an eye on the corrupt landowner whom he believes responsible for his injury.

QUINN BOOKER is an East Coast dime novelist who made considerable money writing about Blacke's adventures. When he relocates to the Wyoming Territory, he becomes the legs of Blacke.

CONTRIBUTION

Before his early death from a blood infection after a tumor on his appendix had been misdiagnosed, Wil-

liam L. DeAndrea emerged as one of the most prominent of the hip new writers of classic-style detective works and was among the heirs apparent to Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, and Rex Stout. DeAndrea's defining detective, the highly literate Matt Cobb, often draws on his familiarity with the classic detective canon in a kind of postmodern self-reflexivity that gives the series its wry comic feel. That Matt Cobb works in television adds to DeAndrea's unsettling sense of how appearances deceive and how truth is often an easily spun commodity.

DeAndrea's interest is not in the psychological exploration of criminals but rather in the intricacies of a well-plotted detection exercise. His master detectives operate through painstaking analysis until, in a moment of inspiration, they see the solution. DeAndrea provides a collection of clues that allows the diligent reader to share in the pursuit of the solution. The reader must consider numerous possible killers, second-guess the inevitable false arrests, and gather the slenderest clues dropped at the most casual moments. Typically, DeAndrea orchestrates a closing scene that gathers the suspects for a classic drawing-room revelation of the real killer, most often the least suspected among the ensemble.

BIOGRAPHY

William Louis DeAndrea was born on July 1, 1952, in Port Chester in affluent Westchester County along Long Island just outside Manhattan. His father was an engineer and his mother a nurse. DeAndrea grew up in a period of prosperity, happily discovering the new medium of television. After working briefly as a journalist for a Westchester County newspaper (1969-1970), a job that trained him in diligent observation and the importance of fact gathering, DeAndrea graduated with a bachelor of science degree from Syracuse University in 1974 and worked for a time with Electrolux. Finding himself restless within a scientific-technological environment, bored by the relentless routine of factory work, and drawn by his own love of mysteries, DeAndrea quit his job to pursue writing.

DeAndrea's first mystery, *Killed in the Ratings* (1978), which introduced Matt Cobb, drew on his childhood love of television (although DeAndrea himself had never worked in the medium). The book found immediate success. DeAndrea was hailed as a promising new voice and earned an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for outstanding first novel. The urban-cool network vice president Matt Cobb proved particularly resilient; the series came to include eight titles.

In 1979, before beginning a second Cobb title, DeAndrea introduced another signature detective: the formidably cerebral Professor Niccolo Benedetti. In contrast to the breezy postmodern feel of the Cobb books, the Benedetti series proved far darker in its speculations about the corrupt human heart. The first volume, *The HOG Murders* (1979), about a calculating killer who manipulates a series of accidents to convince a small town in rural New York that it is being terrorized by a serial killer to hide his murder of a corrupt police officer, garnered DeAndrea's second Edgar, for outstanding paperback.

Now a success and married since 1984 to Orania Papazoglou, who published her own mysteries under the name Jane Haddam, DeAndrea extended his narrative range to historic mysteries—most successfully *The Lunatic Fringe* (1980), a political thriller involving terrorists in Theodore Roosevelt's New York City—and a highly respected series of Cold War espionage thrillers. DeAndrea's conservative bias against what he perceived to be the liberal tolerance of communist principles tends to make the books seem quaintly nostalgic now. In addition, assisted by his son Matt, he completed three children's books that featured extravagant and often fantastic elements. A lifelong fan of detective fiction and a longtime columnist in *Armchair Detective*, DeAndrea published the massive *Encyclopedia Misteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television* (1994), for which he accepted his third Edgar, for best critical/biographical work.

In the mid-1990's, the Lobo Blacke and Quinn Booker trilogy, set in the Wyoming Territory in the closing years of the frontier, placed DeAndrea's fiction in an entirely new landscape brought to life by his

meticulous research. Ironically, the narrative thread that was to have compelled the series—the discovery of who fired the shot that put Marshal Blacke in a wheelchair—would remain a mystery, as DeAndrea died without completing the series.

ANALYSIS

Although William L. DeAndrea wrote with a keen eye for comic effect, clever puns, and tongue-in-cheek allusions to Golden Age detective classics, at the center of his fiction is a profound concern for the search for objective truth and his deep faith that, despite the moral chaos of a modern world, truth can still be found. Enthralled early on by television, DeAndrea brought to his fiction not only a gift for storytelling honed by his familiarity with the electronic medium but also a sensibility sharpened by a visual medium that so freely manipulates truth. Also, DeAndrea was raised under pre-Vatican II Catholicism and was versed in the absolutes of the Baltimore Catechism, which explained the dark heart of humanity as part of the Roman Catholic Church's vision of humanity as good people living in a fallen world. Further, as a child of the Cold War, DeAndrea grew up tuned into the deep paranoia of the era, which shaped world events into the tidy logic of an accessible truth. Finally DeAndrea's interest in the shattering intrusion of violent death into ordinary people's lives and in the intricate work of puzzling through a situation to achieve a satisfying closure was shaped by his generation's struggle with the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the authorities' failure to deduce any satisfying truth about the killing despite significant gathered evidence.

DeAndrea's fiction is a search for truth. He is most interested in empowering readers to assemble the puzzle that he constructs. With his signature style of reportorial accessibility (disciplined by his apprenticeship in journalism), his pitch-perfect ear for dialogue (honed by his passion for television), his keen sense of breakneck pacing and narrative momentum, and his fondness for twists and the apparently insignificant clue that comes to crack the case, DeAndrea found a natural rapport with his readers. However, far more than just engaging the readers, he sought to share with them the complex joy that comes from wrestling a

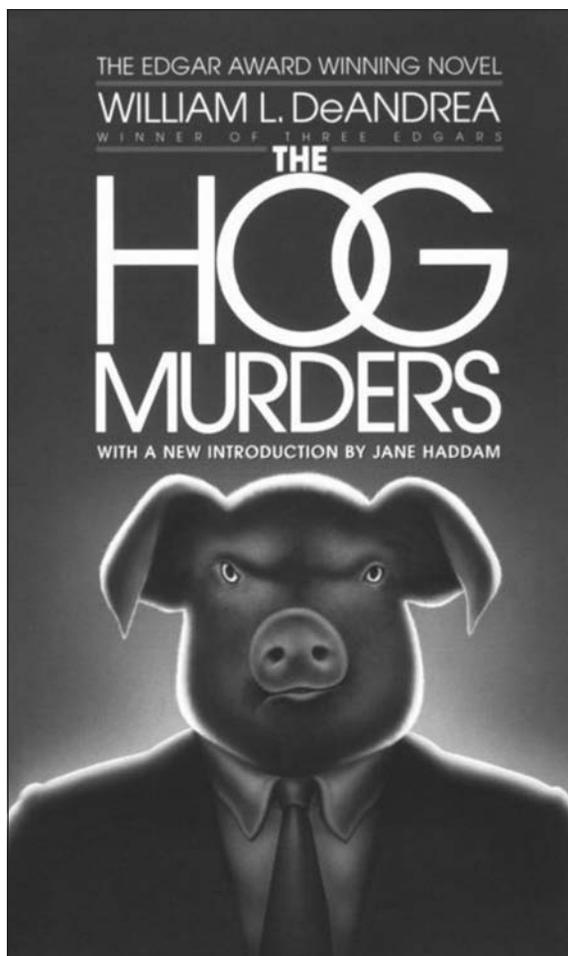
slender but viable truth in a world otherwise rank with deceit and illusions and peopled by the shadowy and the mercenary.

KILLED IN THE RATINGS

Killed in the Ratings introduced master of spin Matt Cobb, who must deal with cutthroat television executives who rig industry ratings to achieve selfish career objectives. An ambitious network executive's wife pays a computer specialist, who has a large gambling debt, to rig the ratings for a promising show, a revolutionary genre-bending drama, so that it is canceled. The woman is trying to achieve career success for her executive husband by catapulting him over another executive who had pinned his career hopes on the new show's success. Eventually this intrigue involves the network's respected chief executive officer, the father of the ambitious wife. As Cobb investigates, he unearths a crime syndicate that has been manipulating ratings to extort money from hapless television executives whose careers live—and die—by the ratings their shows receive. Given DeAndrea's unapologetic love of television, such chicanery at the expense of quality programming is an unforgivable betrayal. As the conspiracy is finally revealed in a board-room variation of the drawing-room revelation, it becomes evident that love motivated the mayhem: the love of a wife for a middling success of a husband, the doting love of an aging father convinced that his perfect daughter had married the wrong man, and ultimately the love of television itself. Matt Cobb, beneath his smart-alecky cool, very much believes in television and is determined to protect the integrity of the medium.

THE HOG MURDERS

The darker side of DeAndrea's conviction that truth must be sought in the quagmire of modern life dominates the Benedetti series. In *The HOG Murders*, the first Niccolo Benedetti mystery and in many ways DeAndrea's finest work, a respected investigative reporter is driven to kill a corrupt police officer, who through a brief stint in jail, learned about the reporter's southern roots, which include his family's prominent role in an underground racist organization. The irony, which DeAndrea manipulates even as the reader begins to suspect the crusading reporter, is that the re-



porter is driven to kill because revelation of his past would jeopardize the only chance he has to secure his family's trust fund, which will permit him to pour his considerable resources into revitalizing the southern town where he was raised. In the Benedetti series, good and evil are inextricably bound in ways that the Cobb mysteries merely suggest.

Indeed, the violence in the Benedetti books is more brutal, the series' characters driven by deep-seated hatreds that render inexplicable the psychology of the criminal. In *The HOG Murders*, for example, to mask the killing of the corrupt police officer, the reporter mimics the taunting letters typical of serial killers to create the appearance of a psychotic killer on the prowl, taking what are otherwise random accidents and suggesting to the police that a single killer was involved. He dubs himself the HOG Killer and only at

the end is it clear that the letters stand for the fickle and often harsh *hand of God*. There is a chilling feel to the mystery, which is set against an oppressively harsh central New York state winter, unlike the Cobb mysteries where terrible things happen, certainly, but amid the carnival atmosphere of television. Unlike Matt Cobb, who is ably assisted by colorful New York detectives, Benedetti works apart from the much-vaunted judicial system. He solves the mystery through an inward process of analysis and intuition as he paints canvases that inevitably come to reflect his approaching realization. As Benedetti philosophizes, detectives, not criminals, are the actual authors of crimes. Detectives are given the ending—that is, the dead body—and must patiently backtrack until an inevitable narrative emerges, an epiphany that reveals the killer. Although Bendetti is assisted by a willowy criminal psychologist and a streetwise private eye, he works through the evidence largely unassisted, delighting in coaxing his less-gifted assistants to see finally what is right in front of their eyes.

WRITTEN IN FIRE

Toward what would prove the end of his career, DeAndrea fused the murder mystery and the Western with *Written in Fire* (1995). The Lobo Blacke and Quinn Booker series is a cleverly executed and highly entertaining homage to Nero Wolfe. Marshal Blacke uses a wheelchair, therefore Quinn Booker serves as his investigative legs—much as Archie Goodman helps the overweight and apartment-bound Nero Wolfe. However, the series is also an intricately crafted search for truth and moral accountability in a forbidding landscape long defined by American pop culture for its wholesale abandoning of law and order. That DeAndrea places in the Wyoming Territory two characters who together represent the unswerving dedication to truth marks his signature interest. That the series was never completed and the secret of the marshal's shooting never revealed is an appropriate testimony to DeAndrea's own restless search for an elusive truth.

Written in Fire, the first volume in the series, centers on the newfangled camera. A cache of photographs taken by a highly successful photojournalist on assignment to the Western frontier includes an unflattering prison shot of a murderer. This murderer is mas-

querading as a cultured British aristocrat so that he may marry the daughter of the same powerful land boss Blacke suspects of shooting him. When the photojournalist is found dead, Blacke and Booker must sort through an elaborate frame-up of a local thug to unearth the real killer. DeAndrea uses the medium of photography (much as he did television) to suggest the deceptive quality of surfaces. The eventual clue is an overexposed photographic plate left in the camera in which the photojournalist, certain he was to be killed, used the tip of his lighted cigar to "write" in fire the name of the killer.

What compels the narrative, however, given the sobering question of who shot Marshal Blacke, is the intriguing friendship Blacke maintains with the land boss he is sure is responsible for shooting him. They engage in tense checkers matches that suggest with eerie effect their underlying psychological dynamic. Within that dynamic, DeAndrea, after a twenty-year career delighting in finding truth, introduces a character-driven narrative that relies not so much on clues and solution as in the far more disturbing truth available only when the reader confronts the stark mystery of human behavior itself.

Joseph Dewey

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MATT COBB SERIES: *Killed in the Ratings*, 1978; *Killed in the Act*, 1981; *Killed with a Passion*, 1983; *Killed on the Ice*, 1984; *Killed in Paradise*, 1988; *Killed on the Rocks*, 1990; *Killed in Fringe Time*, 1995; *Killed in the Fog*, 1996

NICOLO BENEDETTI SERIES: *The HOG Murders*, 1979; *The Werewolf Murders*, 1992; *The Manx Murders*, 1994

LOBO BLACKE AND QUINN BOOKER SERIES: *Written in Fire*, 1995; *Fatal Elixir*, 1997

CLIFFORD DRISCOLL SERIES: *Cronus*, 1984; *Snark*, 1985; *Azrael*, 1987; *Atropos*, 1990

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Lunatic Fringe*, 1980; *Five O'Clock Lightning*, 1982; *The Voyageurs*, 1983 (as Willoughby); *Unholy Moses*, 1985 (as DeGrave); *Keep the Baby, Faith*, 1986 (as DeGrave)

SHORT FICTION: *Murder—All Kinds*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*, 1994

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (WITH MATT DE-ANDREA): *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Basement*, 1995; *The Night of the Living Yogurt*, 1996; *The Pizza That Time Forgot*, 1999

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Prentice-Hall, 1994. An invaluable one-volume compendium, written without scholarly pretense, that helps sort through DeAndrea's own arcane allusions to Golden Age texts.

Library Journal. Review of *Killed in the Ratings*, by William L. DeAndrea. 103, no. 9 (May 1, 1978): 998. A contemporary review of the first in the Matt Cobb series.

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Illuminating essays that explicate the intricacies of constructing a mystery.

Van Dover, J. Kenneth. *At Wolfe's Door: The Nero Wolfe Novels of Rex Stout*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Borgo Press, 1991. Accessible guide to the series that influenced DeAndrea.

LEN DEIGHTON

Born: London, England; February 18, 1929

Type of plot: Espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Anonymous spy, 1962-

Bernard Samson, 1983-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

The ANONYMOUS SPY (named Harry Palmer in film adaptations) is an unmarried, lower-class, wisecracking field operative in the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). A consummate cold warrior with few illusions, he is intent on foiling the complicated machinations of communist agents and of moles within his own service.

BERNARD SAMSON, aged forty and married, is a former field agent who has become a senior staff member in the SIS. The novels featuring him chronicle his wry unmasking of double agents, his analysis of disinformation, and his sorting out of his personal life, stretching back to childhood in Berlin, in the con-

text of a career in the service. He has been compared to John le Carré's George Smiley but is younger and very different in background.

CONTRIBUTION

Len Deighton's espionage novels, with those of John le Carré, sounded a new and sustained note in fiction in the 1960's just as the vogue for Ian Fleming's James Bond series of spy fantasies was growing in international scope. Indeed, Deighton's anonymous spy plays himself off against his flashy fictional colleague by referring to Bond by name. Like le Carré, Deighton depicts the Cold War in highly realistic detail and portrays both the complex plots and plans necessary to the world of espionage and the minutiae of everyday life. Among Deighton's many gifts is his ability to probe the rivalries and insecurities of his characters as they move their own front lines forward in the secret war. Another is his skill in creating engagingly flippant and shrewd but self-deprecatory spies who tell their stories with a mordancy that reminds one of the hard-boiled

detectives of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on February 18, 1929, the son of a London chauffeur, Leonard Cyril Deighton grew up in London and was educated at the Marylebone Grammar School. He worked as a railway clerk before doing his National Service stint as an air cadet in the Royal Air Force, where he was also assigned as a photographer attached to the Special Investigation Branch. These experiences were to become extremely influential in his writing about World War II.

After his discharge in 1949, Deighton went to art school at the St. Martin's School of Art and then to the Royal College of Art on a scholarship, schools at which he studied illustration. He tried his hand at various occupations, among them waiter, dress-factory manager, teacher, British Overseas Airways Corporation steward; and he founded a literary agency. It was during his time as a waiter in the evenings that he developed an interest in cooking and learned the skills of pastry chef. He worked as an illustrator in New York City and as an advertising agency art director in London.

Deighton was a lifetime subscriber to *Strategy and Tactics* magazine, and during the 1950's, while living in London, was a member of the British Model Soldier Society. At that time the society enacted large-scale war games with full teams working on military actions. (Deighton based his 1974 novel *Spy Story* on a war game.) In the early 1960's Deighton produced a comic strip on cooking for *The Observer*. Its appeal led him to write cookery books, *Action Cook Book: Len Deighton's Guide to Eating* (1965) and *Où Est le Garlic: Or, Len Deighton's French Cook Book* (1965) among them. Meanwhile, in 1960, he married Shirley Thompson.

When the Deightons moved to Dordogne, Deighton worked on his first novel, *The Ipcress File* (1962). The book became an immediate and spectacular success at a crucial time in the Cold War, just following the erection of the Berlin Wall, which was to become a sinister symbol in most of his fiction—and at a time when the American president, John F. Kennedy, had inspired a literary fashion of reading espionage novels.

The British intelligence community was also shaken in this era by a succession of scandals and defections and the ferreting out of moles. In more than a dozen espionage novels, Deighton chronicled the Cold War and its secret armies. In the late 1970's, he turned his attention to writing nonfictional chronicles and histories of World War II air combat, all of which are highly regarded. One historian has called his book *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (1979) “a superlative study of the contrast between French and German doctrinal approaches to war.”

To the delight of his fans, Deighton returned to espionage fiction with the Bernard Samson series in the late 1980's and mid-1990's. In *Winter: A Berlin Family* (1987), he added to the Samson chronicles by introducing Samson's father and associates into the history of a Berlin family from the start of the twentieth century to the Nuremberg trials.

Deighton's popular success as a novelist was enhanced by the film adaptations of *The Ipcress File*, *Funeral in Berlin*, and *Billion Dollar Brain* in the 1960's. Actor Michael Caine played his anonymous spy, who was called Harry Palmer in the films. In the 1990's, these films were followed by a pair of cable television sequels. Deighton can also boast of an unusual collector's item in the form of “German Occupation of Britain” stamps featuring Hitler, printed to promote his 1978 alternate-history novel *SS-GB: Nazi-Occupied Britain*; these stamps have become rare and expensive. On the strength of and to protect his literary and film revenues, Deighton left his native England for Ireland.

ANALYSIS

Len Deighton achieved instant popular success with *The Ipcress File*, begun while he was on holiday in France, and followed it between 1963 and 1967 with four more crisp, tightly constructed novels that established him as one of the foremost writers in the espionage genre. Deighton uses footnotes and appendixes in these early novels to buttress his stories with information about espionage agencies, technical terminology and jargon, and historical events. These anchors to the reality beyond his fiction serve to heighten verisimilitude. References to then-current events, popular songs, living political figures, characters in popu-

lar fiction (such as James Bond), and brands of food and drink add to the sense of reality in the novels but also date them: The topicality that helped Deighton gain instant mass appeal in the 1960's eventually became a liability, for many of his references are inaccessible to later readers.

Most remarkable is Deighton's ability to create protagonists, in the cases of both the anonymous spy and Bernard Samson, who are hard-bitten but nevertheless engaging. They are drawn from lower-class or middle-class backgrounds to compete alongside and often against the aristocrats who control the ministries and departments of Great Britain's government. Frequently they are called on to expose members of the Oxbridge set, who were schooled at the ancient universities at Oxford and Cambridge, as venal and self-serving betrayers of England or ideologically motivated counter-intelligence penetrants of English security forces. In pitting the ordinary field agent or senior staff member risen from the ranks against those born of privilege, Deighton emphasizes the value of talent over inheritance, of dogged hard work over easily gained postings, and of resourcefulness, stamina, and deviousness over deviousness alone.

In many respects, Harry Palmer and Bernard Samson share a deeply felt conviction about the importance of their work. Each of the novels contains some speculation about the meaning of individual effort in the context of political action. These speculations are most frequently personal, bittersweet comments on the realities of working with diminished ideals. Deighton's protagonists are quite clear about the motive for espionage: Spying is not the "Great Game" Rudyard Kipling described; it is a war fought against oppression yet making use of the tools and tactics of oppressive government. Thus, in *London Match* (1985), Samson responds to a colleague's naïveté about the working of politics in Bonn by saying that espionage is about politics and that to remove politics would be to render espionage unnecessary. So, while holding a healthy disrespect for politicians, Samson can still realize the inevitable political motivation for his work.

Deighton's usual narrative technique combines first-person observation, realistically reconstructed conversations, and intricately plotted sequences of

events. He is at his best when his characters tell their own stories, although the interspersal of third-person narrative in *Funeral in Berlin* (1964), for example, is also effective. The reader is taken into the confidence of the narrator, who shares his own version of events, his assessment of others' motivations, and his attitudes and observations concerning a variety of subjects. Both Samson and Palmer are keen observers who give a false impression of being incompetent or obtuse: This is their secret weapon.

Deighton's use of dialogue serves to heighten the immediacy of his characters and to fix them in their social and cultural spheres. So, for example, in the "American" novels (*Spy Story*, 1974; *Yesterday's Spy*, 1975; *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy*, 1976), he captures the essence of the American military culture through diction and syntax. Similarly, his ear is finely tuned to the idioms peculiar to German speakers of English (sometimes phrases appear to be translated directly from the German) and to the varied classes of British speakers exemplified in characters ranging from Samson's cockney brother-in-law, George, to the studied Oxbridge manner of Palmer's master, Dawlish. Deighton thus updates George Bernard Shaw's acute observations of the English-speaking world in *Pygmalion* (1913). There is also a pleasurable Dickensian predictability in the speech of recurring characters such as Lisl Hennig, Werner Zolkmann, and Zena Volkmann in the Samson trilogy. Deighton makes his characters individualized and memorable by giving the reader some entry into their psychological makeup through their speech.

Like many of his contemporaries, Deighton revels in a virtuosity of plot construction. Indeed, many of the developments in espionage fiction in the 1970's and 1980's owe much to Deighton's pioneer work in developing highly complicated, intricate story lines. Many conventions of the spy novel have their origins in the works of Deighton and le Carré, who may be considered the forgers of a new genre of postmodern espionage fiction peculiar to the era of the Cold War.

THE IPCRESS FILE AND FUNERAL IN BERLIN

In Deighton's first novel, *The Ipcress File*, the twists and turns of plot, false starts, mistaken motives, and carefully concealed identities are interwoven with



Len Deighton (left) on the set of *The Ipcress File* with actor Michael Caine, who played the film's Harry Palmer—the British spy who is nameless in Deighton's novel.

the ordinary concerns of the narrator. The narrator communicates his growing consciousness of the actual conspiracy at work in the British Intelligence Service directly to the reader, who experiences a simultaneity of discovery.

In *Funeral in Berlin*, the action takes strange turns as the real motivation for an alleged defection and the preparations for it are slowly revealed to have wholly unexpected sources. Far from being a straightforward narrative recounting an actual Russian defection to the West, replete with technical material about new developments in chemical warfare, the novel gradually uncovers a different story altogether, one that stretches back to the time of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. At the novel's core are long-held secrets of murder and false identities. Many of the interagency rivalries on both sides of the Iron Curtain complicate plots and counterplots as agents bend their efforts to outsmart and outflank one another in search of an

enigmatic and, in the end, fictitious defector. The real object of the exercise is only gradually understood by Palmer, who is as much manipulated as the other intelligence agents until he divines the intent of his actual adversary, the occasion for the funeral in the novel's title, and the ironic need for some unplanned funerals. The novel culminates in the strange tale of and end of "King" Vulkan and of his British coconspirator, Robin James Hallam.

BERLIN GAME, MEXICO SET, AND LONDON MATCH

Having discovered a highly successful formula, Deighton proceeded to perfect it in his subsequent works. The trilogy comprising *Berlin Game* (1983), *Mexico Set* (1984), and *London Match* provides prime examples of Deighton's mature work. It represents his most extensive, sustained study of a character, one who is, in the course of the trilogy, situated in an extended family, in a circle of friends (some going back to childhood), and in the worst possible espionage dilemma, as the husband of a mole on the eve of and immediately following her defection to the East. Thus, Deighton gives Bernard Samson a personal history, a history that makes him a more rounded and developed character than Deighton's earlier creations.

Samson's children, who play only minor roles, become pawns in the struggle between Bernard and his wife, Fiona, the new chief of the East Berlin station of the KGB. As usual, Deighton takes many opportunities to expose the folly of the British class system, here in the person of Fiona's father, David Kimber-Hutchinson, the quintessential self-made man and a latter-day Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. George Kosinski, Bernard's brother-in-law, and his irrepressibly promiscuous wife, Tessa, add to the familial constellation. Bernard's new girlfriend, Gloria, and his mentor, Silas Gaunt (Uncle Silas), round out his extended family in England.

Samson is a citizen of two worlds, complete with a set of Berlin friends and acquaintances. "Tante Lisl" Hennig, an aged, faded beauty from the glorious days of Old Berlin, runs a hotel in her grand old home, where Bernard spent much of his childhood. One of his childhood friends, Werner Volkmann, an occasional agent with whom Bernard works and on whom

he relies, has a new young wife, Zena, who has her own agenda for making money through helping an East German agent, Erich Stinnes, come to the West. To complicate matters even more, Zena is tied romantically to Frank Harrington, head of the SIS Berlin Field Unit.

Samson's third "family" is the SIS senior staff, an uneasy family plagued by internal strife and competition in the wake of Fiona Samson's defection. The dotty director general is propped up by his hatchet man, Morgan, who takes great delight in opposing and tormenting Samson, Dicky Cruyer (German stations controller), the American Bret Rensselaer, and Frank Harrington. Samson is, naturally, under some suspicion following his wife's departure. Rensselaer, too, becomes a target of suspicion as a possible second agent in league with Fiona and controlled by an operative who too conveniently falls into Samson's hands, escapes and seemingly drowns, and reappears in East Berlin so that Volkmann can find her.

Deighton, then, by situating Samson in these three sometimes overlapping communities, is able to give him depth and dimensions that the anonymous spy, for example, does not possess. Similarly, by developing and stretching his intricately woven plot over a lengthy period of time, he depicts an even more complex, many-sided, comprehensive image of the epic struggle between London and Moscow, played out in Berlin, Mexico, and London. That struggle, in its simplest terms, arises from a Russian offensive against London, by planting first Fiona and then Stinnes. Stinnes, indeed, is a cool, calculating professional whose job it is to sow discord and suspicion in London and to go through London's files under the pretext of helping to ferret out the second agent in place within SIS.

Deighton's mastery of plot construction is clear as he weaves together the personal and professional dimensions of Samson's lives, in a series of inevitable encounters that lead up to the summit between Bernard and Fiona at the end of the trilogy to swap the now-exposed Stinnes for the captive Volkmann at Checkpoint Charlie. Thus, the manipulation of Samson's public and private loyalties is complete, and the action that began the work comes full circle. This is not to suggest that the action is forced or that Deighton

has become trapped in his own conventions. Rather, he focuses on the probable and the plausible and capitalizes on the extent to which seeming coincidences can be shown to be the work of a careful, meticulous intelligence staff out to cover every possible contingency.

In this respect, Deighton as novelist is the architect who must first set up and then conceal the true motives of his characters and must allow his protagonist to appear to stumble onto the truth through a combination of hard work and apparent coincidence. Deighton's art consists of the careful arrangement of character, place, and situation in an unfolding of narrative that is compellingly realistic, finely drawn, and filled with plausible surprises.

SPY HOOK, SPY LINE, AND SPY SINKER

Deighton brought Samson back in two later trilogies that develop the characters of Bernard and Fiona more deeply: *Spy Hook*, *Spy Line*, and *Spy Sinker* (1988-1990) and *Faith, Hope, and Charity* (1994-1996). *Spy Hook* is an exciting thriller about a conspiracy of swindlers, but *Spy Line* is darker, finding Samson branded as a traitor and forced to go into hiding in perilous Berlin. Samson's apparent betrayal by the Secret Service results in soul-searchings that enrich the cat-and-mouse game.

Spy Sinker, meanwhile, is unusual in that it tells the story of Fiona from a third-person point of view. The espionage adventures ignite when Fiona's sister, Tessa, is accidentally killed in a shoot-out with two KGB watchers, but much of the story emphasizes the stress and pressures Fiona feels as a result of spending years as a triple agent and longing for her children and friends.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

Spy Sinker raised questions that made the third trilogy welcome. With danger and entanglements at every turn, from the closed doors of upper-echelon meetings to a growing sense of estrangement between Bernie and Fiona, Samson needs more than his namesake's strength to pursue the conspiracy behind Tessa's death in *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, so that the title of the first book becomes a running theme for all three.

It is, however, in his use of personal history in his later works that Deighton transcends the stereotypical espionage novel, which has its primary emphasis on

action, and becomes a writer of novels about people engaged in espionage. The distinction is a useful one: Without diminishing the necessity for action, adventure, and forceful confrontations complete with bullets and bloodshed, Deighton increases his hold on the novelist's art by the use of literary, historical, and cultural allusions, the invention of life histories, the exploration of inner life, and the exposition of social and domestic relationships.

His later novels, then, represent a major artistic advance over his early (but still classic) works. Clearly this is the case with *Winter*, a work that only touches on espionage as it traces the history of a Berlin family and involves such characters as Lisl Hennig, Bernard Samson's father, and Werner Volkmann's parents in the historical sweep of the first half of the twentieth century.

John J. Conlon

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE ANONYMOUS SPY SERIES: *The Ipcress File*, 1962; *Horse Under Water*, 1963; *Funeral in Berlin*, 1964; *Billion-Dollar Brain*, 1966; *An Expensive Place to Die*, 1967; *Spy Story*, 1974; *Yesterday's Spy*, 1975; *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy*, 1976 (also known as *Catch a Falling Spy*)

BERNARD SAMSON SERIES: *Berlin Game*, 1983; *Mexico Set*, 1984; *London Match*, 1985; *Winter: A Berlin Family*, 1987; *Spy Hook*, 1988; *Spy Line*, 1989; *Spy Sinker*, 1990; *Faith*, 1994; *Hope*, 1995; *Charity*, 1996

NONSERIES NOVELS: *SS-GB: Nazi-Occupied Britain, 1941*, 1978; *XPD*, 1981; *Goodbye Mickey Mouse*, 1982; *MAMista*, 1991; *City of Gold*, 1992; *Violent Ward*, 1993

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Only When I Larf*, 1968; *Bomber*, 1970; *Close-Up*, 1972

SHORT FICTION: *Declarations of War*, 1971 (also known as *Eleven Declarations of War*)

SCREENPLAY: *Oh! What a Lovely War*, 1969

TELEPLAYS: *Long Past Glory*, 1963; *It Must Have Been Two Other Fellows*, 1977

NONFICTION: *Action Cook Book: Len Deighton's Guide to Eating*, 1965 (also known as *Cookstrip Cook Book*); *Où Est le Garlic: Or, Len Deighton's French Cook Book*, 1965 (revised as *Basic French Cooking*, 1979); *Len Deighton's Continental Dossier: A Collection of Cultural, Culinary, Historical, Spooky, Grim, and Preposterous Fact*, 1968; *Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain*, 1977; *Airshipwreck*, 1978 (with Arnold Schwartzman); *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk*, 1979; *Battle of Britain*, 1980; *Blood, Tears, and Folly, Volume 1: The Dark Days*, 1993

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that he deals with serious issues, that he has an abiding interest in his craft, and that his central character has grown and developed. Nevertheless, Panek concludes that Deighton has not transcended the genre.

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LESTER DENT

Born: La Plata, Missouri; October 12, 1904

Died: La Plata, Missouri; March 11, 1959

Also wrote as Kenneth Robeson; Tim Ryan

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; hard-boiled; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Doc Savage series, 1935-1984

Chance Malloy series, 1946

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DR. CLARK "DOC" SAVAGE, a strong, muscular man with superior intellect, has been scientifically trained since birth to fight crime. He is a master of disguise and has a photographic memory. He uses the wealth provided by gold from a Mayan mine to fill a hanger on the Hudson River with a fleet of boats, planes, and cars. He lives on the top floor of a skyscraper in New York City and has a hideout in the Arctic.

CONTRIBUTION

Writing under the publisher-imposed pseudonym Kenneth Robeson, Lester Dent created the Doc Savage character, who, along with the Shadow, became one of the most popular heroes of pulp magazines during the 1930's and 1940's. He also wrote seven novels and numerous short stories featuring a variety of detectives. His crime fiction is widely regarded as epitomizing the best of the *Black Mask* school of writers,

although he published only two tales, "Sail" and "Angelfish," in that magazine. Over time, however, his work on the Doc Savage material, for which he was paid handsomely, seems to have dulled his talent.

BIOGRAPHY

Lester Dent was born in La Plata, Missouri, on October 12, 1904, to Bernard Dent, a farmer and rancher, and Alice Norfolk Dent, a former schoolteacher. In the final stages of her pregnancy, Alice Dent stayed in La Plata with her parents, although she and her husband had been living in Wyoming, where they ran a ranch near Pumpkin Buttes. Lester and his mother returned to Wyoming, and he attended a country grade school until the eighth grade, when, the ranching endeavor having failed, the family returned to La Plata, where the elder Dent began a dairy farm.

An only child, Lester Dent spent much of his early years in Wyoming without playmates, and his return to the little town in northeastern Missouri did not change this situation significantly. He attended Chillicothe Business College in Chillicothe, Missouri, in 1923, intent on banking as a career, but he changed his mind when he discovered that telegraphers made more money. He taught at the college for one semester, and in the fall of 1924, he took a job as a telegrapher for Western Union in Carrollton, Missouri. In mid-1925,

Dent moved to Ponca City, Oklahoma, to work as a telegrapher for the Empire Oil and Gas Company. On August 9 of that year, he married Norma Gerling, and in 1926 he and his wife moved to Chickasha, Oklahoma, where he worked first as a telegrapher for the Associated Press (AP) and later as a teletype operator. When one of his coworkers for the AP in Tulsa, Oklahoma, sold a story to a magazine for a large sum of money, Dent decided to try his hand at writing. Because he worked the night shift, he had time on his hands and was soon able to sell novels and stories to several pulp magazines. By 1929, his name had become sufficiently well recognized that Dell Publishing in New York offered him five hundred dollars a month to work as a house writer. Taking a leave of absence from AP, he and his wife moved to New York City in January, 1931.

Dent had limitless reserves of energy and was soon writing on contract for Dell as well as selling stories to various pulp magazines. He read widely and his interests were boundless: He earned a radio operator's license; he passed electrician's and plumber's examinations; he got a pilot's license; he climbed mountains; he studied aerial photography; he learned to sail, bought his own boat, and spent two years cruising with his wife; he became an expert deep-sea fisherman and swimmer; and he plied the waters of the Caribbean hunting for treasure.

The extraordinary success of the Doc Savage series enabled Dent to retire to a dairy farm in La Plata in 1940. From this base he continued to write, although his production (which at times in the 1930's approached 140,000 words a month) slowed considerably. It was during this period that Dent produced several well-received mystery and detective novels, four of which were published by the Doubleday Crime Club. A severe heart attack in February, 1959, confined Dent to a hospital. He failed to recover and died on March 11 of that year.

ANALYSIS

Late in his career, Lester Dent lamented the departure from *Black Mask* of Joseph T. Shaw, who gave up the editorship in 1936:

In my thirty-five years of free lancing fiction, no one stands out so. . . . Here was an editor who thought his writers were truly great . . . and an editor who didn't pretend his writers were crud-factories was unbelievable. . . . I have never met another like him.

Dent claimed that Shaw had put the magazine many cuts above other pulps for which he himself had written "reams of salable crap." Over the years of his writing career, Dent produced a tremendous amount of material, publishing stories in a wide variety of periodicals. He also wrote an incredible number of novels (275 by one estimate), and he gained a loyal—if small—following for his mystery and detective fiction. Though he published only two stories in *Black Mask*, commentators on the genre point to his work as representative of the detective fiction the magazine published.

Dent created several fictional detectives, many of whom were patterned after Craig Kennedy, Arthur B. Reeve's university professor and scientist. Kennedy solved many crimes using scientific devices such as gyroscopes, seismographs, and lie detectors. Dent gave his pulp audiences figures such as Click Rush, otherwise known as the Gadget Man, who unraveled mysteries and brought criminals to justice using devices he invented. The reliance on science and technology to combat evil came easily to Dent, the creator of Dr. Clark "Doc" Savage, who with his five lieutenants roamed the world in search of adventure. (Adventure tales are classified as science fiction by some, and although the Doc Savage novels of the late 1940's do involve some elements of the mystery story, they still belong in the fantastic fiction category.)

Oscar Sail, however, was a Dent creation who had much more in common with Race Williams and the Continental Op than he had with the Gadget Man. Dent used the character in his two stories published in *Black Mask*. An extraordinarily tall man, Sail wears black clothing, smokes a black pipe full of black tobacco, and owns a boat named *Sail*, which has a black hull and black sails. Sail is a private investigator who is not too choosy about clients as long as they have the money to pay him. Like many of his *Black Mask* forebears, he relies principally on the use of force to achieve his ends.

“ANGELFISH”

Dent tended to rely on relatively simple plots, many of them built around variations on the treasure-hunt theme. In “Angelfish,” for example, Sail is hired by a young female geologist who has aerial photographs in her possession that indicate the possibility of an oil deposit. Competitors, who are trying to obtain the photographs, pursue her and attempt to steal the pictures to turn a quick profit. Shootings (faked and real), fights between Sail and the villains, and a wild sea chase in an approaching hurricane punctuate the story. What separated some of Dent’s detective fiction from that of his pulp contemporaries, however, was his ability to arouse his reader’s attention through carefully organized and precisely worded descriptions:

She was a long, blue-eyed girl who lay squarely on her back with the sun shining in her mouth. Her teeth were small and her tongue was flat, not pointed, and there was about two whiskey glassfuls of scarlet liquid in her mouth.

As she turned her head slowly to the side, the scarlet emptied out on the black asphalt walk, splashing her tan columnar neck and the shoulder of her white frock.

Sail stood beside her and kept looking at the gun in his hand. It was a long, black gun.

Opening a story with such a carefully crafted passage reveals to the reader a writer interested in creating mood and tension. Dent was also capable of giving his audience bright, fresh metaphors and similes, such as: “Pain gave Sail’s mouth the shape a rubber band takes when it lies loose on a desk.”

DEAD AT THE TAKE-OFF

In the 1940’s, Dent began to write mystery and detective novels, the first of which, *Dead at the Take-Off* (1946), introduced a character named Chance Malloy, who owned a small, nearly bankrupt airline. Believing his financial plight to have been caused by a crooked politician, Malloy begins a search for evidence to prove that he is right. A drugged woman, attempts on Malloy’s life, and confrontations on board an airplane figure in the action of the novel. The Malloy character is fairly well realized, and when Dent published *Lady to Kill*, featuring Malloy, in 1946, readers had every reason to believe that a series character had been born.

Inexplicably, however, Dent never used him again.

The writing in *Dead at the Take-Off* has some of the same sharpness of image and vitality of metaphor that characterized Dent’s work for *Black Mask*; on balance, however, the novel never rises much above the level of melodrama. Dent did, however, display in *Dead at the Take-Off* and elsewhere in his detective fiction some talent for characterization, but all too often he relied on stereotypes and conventional plot devices to advance the narrative. Though he produced other mystery and detective novels, his work in this genre was probably never better than in *Dead at the Take-Off*.

WOMEN

An important characteristic of Dent’s crime fiction—and one that he shares with many other writers in the genre—is that women are often the causative agents of the problem around which the story or novel is built. Titles such as *Lady to Kill*, *Lady Afraid* (1948), *Lady So Silent* (1951), and *Lady in Peril* (1959) reflect Dent’s use of the femme fatale device. As early as “Angelfish,” for example, Dent used a female geologist to get Sail ensnared in a ruse that almost costs both of them their lives. In *Lady in Peril*, Mitchell Loneman, another ordinary citizen turned detective, gets involved in a complex of problems in an attempt to shield his wife from trouble. Again and again, Dent gives the reader pictures of women—some strong, some weak—whose machinations lead to violence. In novel after novel, Dent creates protagonists enmeshed in intrigue and life-threatening situations because of the actions of a woman. This focus in his mystery and detective fiction led Dent to become increasingly concerned with the psychology of his characters and with the complex motives that drive them. He was never completely able to distance himself, however, from the pulp-magazine formula with which he was so familiar. In novels such as *Dead at the Take-Off* and *Cry at Dusk* (1952), however, he almost succeeded in achieving the promise that informs his *Black Mask* stories of the 1930’s.

Dale H. Ross

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DOC SAVAGE SERIES (AS ROBESON): 1935-1945 •

The Man of Bronze, 1935; *The Land of Terror*, 1935; *Quest of the Spider*, 1935; *The Men Vanished*, 1940; *The All-White Elf*, 1941; *Birds of Death*, 1941; *Mystery Island*, 1941; *The Invisible Box*, 1941; *The Pink Lady*, 1941; *The Devil's Black Rock*, 1942; *The Fiery Menace*, 1942; *Men of Fear*, 1942; *The Three Wild Men*, 1942; *The Too-Wise Owl*, 1942; *The Goblins*, 1943; *The Running Skeletons*, 1943; *The Secret of the Su*, 1943; *Waves of Death*, 1943; *The Derelict of Skull Shoal*, 1944; *The Three Devils*, 1944; *Weird Valley*, 1944; *King Joe Cay*, 1945; *Rock Sinister*, 1945; *Strange Fish*, 1945; *The Terrible Stork*, 1945; *Terror Takes Seven*, 1945; *The Thing That Pursued*, 1945; *Trouble on Parade*, 1945; *The Wee Ones*, 1945

1946-1950 • *Colors for Murder*, 1946; *Death Is a Round Black Spot*, 1946; *The Devil Is Jones*, 1946; *The Exploding Lake*, 1946; *Five Fathoms Dead*, 1946; *Measures for a Coffin*, 1946; *Se-Pah-Poo*, 1946; *Terror and the Lonely Widow*, 1946; *Danger Lies East*, 1947; *Let's Kill Ames*, 1947; *The Monkey Suit*, 1947; *No Light to Die By*, 1947; *Once Over Lightly*, 1947; *I Died Yesterday*, 1948; *The Angry Canary*, 1948; *The Pure Evil*, 1948; *The Swooning Lady*, 1948; *Terror Wears No Shoes*, 1948; *The Green Master*, 1949; *Return from Cormorant*, 1949; *Up from Earth's Center*, 1949

1951-1965 • *Meteor Menace*, 1964; *The Thousand-Headed Man*, 1964; *Brand of the Werewolf*, 1965; *The Monsters*, 1965; *The Lost Oasis*, 1965; *The Mystic Mullah*, 1965; *The Polar Treasure*, 1965; *Quest of Qui*, 1965

1966-1970 • *The Fantastic Island*, 1966; *Fear Cay*, 1966; *Land of Always-Night*, 1966; *The Phantom City*, 1966; *Pirate of the Pacific*, 1967; *The Red Skull*, 1967; *The Sargasso Ogre*, 1967; *The Secret of the Sky*, 1967; *The Spook Legion*, 1967; *The Annihilist*, 1968; *The Czar of Fear*, 1968; *The Deadly Dwarf*, 1968; *Death in Silver*, 1968; *The Flaming Falcons*, 1968; *Fortress of Solitude*, 1968; *The Green Eagle*, 1968; *Hex*, 1968; *The Mystery Under the Sea*, 1968; *The Other World*, 1968; *The Dagger in the Sky*, 1969; *Dust of Death*, 1969; *The Gold Ogre*, 1969; *Mad Eyes*, 1969; *The Man Who Shook the Earth*, 1969; *Merchants of Disaster*, 1969; *Red Snow*, 1969; *Resurrection Day*, 1969; *The*

Squeaking Goblin, 1969; *The Terror in the Navy*, 1969; *World's Fair Goblin*, 1969; *Devil on the Moon*, 1970; *The Feathered Octopus*, 1970; *The Golden Peril*, 1970; *He Could Stop the World*, 1970; *The Mental Wizard*, 1970; *The Midas Man*, 1970; *The Sea Angel*, 1970; *The Sea Magician*, 1970; *The Vanisher*, 1970

1971-1975 • *The Giggling Ghosts*, 1971; *The Green Death*, 1971; *The Living Fire Menace*, 1971; *The Majii*, 1971; *The Motion Menace*, 1971; *The Munitions Master*, 1971; *The Pirate's Ghost*, 1971; *Poison Island*, 1971; *The Submarine Mystery*, 1971; *The Yellow Cloud*, 1971; *The Freckled Shark*, 1972; *Mad Mesa*, 1972; *The Mystery on the Snow*, 1972; *Spook Hole*, 1972; *The Derrick Devil*, 1973; *Land of Fear*, 1973; *The Mental Monster*, 1973; *The Seven Agate Devils*, 1973; *The Crimson Serpent*, 1974; *The Devil Genghis*, 1974; *The South Pole Terror*, 1974; *The King Maker*, 1975

1976-1980 • *The Boss of Terror*, 1976; *The Evil Gnome*, 1976; *The Mountain Monster*, 1976; *The Red Terrors*, 1976; *The Stone Man*, 1976; *The Angry Ghost*, 1977; *The Flying Goblin*, 1977; *The Magic Island*, 1977; *The Roar Devil*, 1977; *The Spotted Men*, 1977; *The Awful Egg*, 1978; *The Purple Dragon*, 1978; *The Hate Genius*, 1979; *Mystery on Happy Bones*, 1979; *The Red Spider*, 1979; *Tunnel Terror*, 1979; *Hell Below*, *The Lost Giant*, 1980; *Satan Black*, *Cargo Unknown*, 1980

1981-1984 • *Jiu San: The Black, Black Witch*, 1981; *The Pharaoh's Ghost*, *The Time of Terror*, 1981; *They Died Twice*, *The Screaming Man*, 1981; *The Whiskers of Hercules*, *The Man Who Was Scared*, 1981; *One-Eyed Mystic*, *The Man Who Fell Up*, 1982; *The Shape of Terror*, *Death Had Yellow Eyes*, 1982; *The Talking Devil*, *The Ten Ton Snake*, 1982; *Pirate Isle*, *The Speaking Stone*, 1983; *The Golden Man*, *Peril in the North*, 1984; *The Laugh of Death*, *The King of Terror*, 1984

CHANCE MALLOY SERIES: *Dead at the Take-Off*, 1946 (also known as *High Stakes*); *Lady to Kill*, 1946

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Lady Afraid*, 1948; *Lady So Silent*, 1951; *Cry at Dusk*, 1952; *Lady in Peril*, 1959; *Hades and Hocus Pocus*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *Scotland Yard*, 1931; *Doc Savage*, 1934; *The Incredible Radio Exploits of Doc Savage*, 1983-1984

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Farmer, Philip Jose. *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*. Rev. ed. New York: Bantam, 1975. Lengthy treatise on Doc Savage that includes a biography of Dent and a bibliography of all Doc Savage's adventures.

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Circle" discusses the importance of Doc Savage to the success and evolution of pulp fiction.

Haining, Peter. *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000. Looks at Dent's contribution to the pulps and the relationship of pulp fiction to its more respectable literary cousins.

Hutchison, Don. *The Great Pulp Heroes*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Mosaic Press, 1996. Doc Savage is compared with his equally famous codenizens of the pulps: the Shadow, Tarzan, Zorro, and so on.

McCarey-Laird, M. Martin. *Lester Dent: The Man, His Craft, and His Market*. West Des Moines, Iowa: Hidalgo, 1994. Biography that looks at the life and works of this man, focusing on his writing.

Widen, Larry, and Chris Miracle. *Doc Savage, Arch Enemy of Evil: A Pictorial Reference to the Man of Bronze*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Fantasticon Press, 1993. A bibliography of Doc Savage works.

AUGUST DERLETH

Born: Sauk City, Wisconsin; February 24, 1909

Died: Sauk City, Wisconsin; July 4, 1971

Also wrote as Romily Devon; Will Garth; Stephen Grendon; Eldon Heath; Kenyon Holmes; Tally Mason; Michael West; Simon West

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth; horror

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Judge Peck, 1934-1953

Solar Pons, 1945-1973

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JUDGE EPHRAIM PEABODY PECK, a longtime resident of Sac Prairie, now retired from legal practice, acts as an amateur sleuth assisting the police in their investigations. Something of an anachronism with his frock coat, wide-brimmed hat, and umbrella, he solves the riddle behind difficult murders through keen observa-

tion, deduction, and an understanding of human nature.

SOLAR PONS, a private investigator in the mold of Sherlock Holmes, has his practice at 7B Praed Street, London. His dress and appearance—"a tall, thin gentleman wearing an Inverness cape and a rakish cap with a visor on it"—parallel those of "the Master," as do his deductions en route to solving crimes.

DR. LYNDON PARKER, a "stolid, middle-class, rather unimaginative Englishman," is Solar Pons's faithful companion and observer and recorder of his adventures, much as Dr. Watson was for Sherlock Holmes.

CONTRIBUTION

August Derleth's contributions fall into the areas of detective fiction and horror. Although he is considered a minor American author, his writings are diverse and voluminous—and include poetry, regional history, and science fiction as well as mystery and detective fiction. His major contribution to detective fiction is his

series of Sherlock Homes pastiches (the Solar Pons series), which kept alive the spirit and style of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work after Doyle had ceased writing new adventures. Derleth also created the Judge Peck series of murder mysteries, complete with clues for the reader to solve the crime; all the Peck works are set in the Sauk City region of Wisconsin, which Derleth knew so well. In the related genre of horror fiction, Derleth, as editor and publisher, is credited with preserving and bringing to the reading public the macabre tales of the important American writer H. P. Lovecraft.

BIOGRAPHY

August William Derleth was born in Sauk City, Wisconsin, on February 24, 1909. As a child he went to St. Aloysius School and Sauk City High School, after which he attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1930. Derleth sold his first story, "Bat's Belfry," when he was fifteen, and his interest in horror stories continued throughout his life. Some of his tales, such as those collected in *The Mask of Cthulhu* (1958), are written on themes reminiscent of Lovecraft, whose work Derleth greatly admired.

As a boy, Derleth read and enjoyed the Sherlock Holmes stories. When he was nineteen, he wrote to Doyle, asking if he would write any more adventures. When the reply contained no promise to do so, Derleth decided to continue the tradition himself. Thus, in 1928 while still at the university, he wrote "The Adventure of the Black Narcissus," using Solar Pons and Dr. Lyndon Parker as his main characters, clearly modeled on Holmes and Dr. Watson. The story appeared in *The Dragnet* magazine in February, 1929. With this success, Derleth quickly wrote new adventures, including "The Adventure of the Missing Tenants," "The Adventure of the Late Mr. Favershaw," and "The Adventure of the Limping Man." He wrote quickly, once composing three Solar Pons stories in one day, one of which was the much-praised story "The Adventure of the Norcross Riddle."

Derleth worked as an editor for Fawcett Publications in Minneapolis in 1930-1931 and was a lecturer in American regional literature at the University of Wisconsin from 1939 to 1943. As owner and co-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

August Derleth. (AP/Wide World Photos)

founder of Arkham House Publishers in Sauk City from 1939 to 1971, he made some of his greatest contributions, including the preservation of Lovecraft's fiction in book form after the original collections went out of print in the late 1940's and 1950's. In 1953 Derleth married Sandra Winters; they had one daughter and one son. They were divorced in 1959.

Derleth wrote more than one hundred books during his life and edited dozens of others. Among the honors he received are a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1938, the *Scholastic* Award in 1958, the Midland Authors Award (for poetry) in 1965, and the Ann Radcliffe Award in 1967. He died on July 4, 1971.

ANALYSIS

Solar Pons, August Derleth's major mystery series character, had his first adventure, "The Adventure of the Black Narcissus," in 1928, when the author was nineteen years old and a junior at the University of Wisconsin. Because Doyle had written to him that he

was not going to write more Sherlock Holmes adventures, Derleth was determined to carry on the tradition. He believed, however, that he could not use the Holmes character directly; instead, the form of the stories had to be, in Derleth's own words, "not that ridiculing imitation designed for laughter, the parody, but that fond and admiring one less widely-known as the pastiche." The name Solar Pons, meaning "bridge of light," was an adolescent creation with the same syllables as Sherlock Holmes, and the 7B Praed Street address was chosen after consulting necessary guidebooks, since his own knowledge of London was limited. (No other setting seemed appropriate.)

FELL PURPOSE AND NO FUTURE FOR LUANA

Although Derleth sold his first story, the stock-market crash of 1929 prevented others written at the same time from being published in *The Dragnet*. As a result, Solar Pons was set aside, and Judge Ephraim Peabody Peck became the focus of Derleth's first series of detective stories. The ten books of this series take place in Derleth's hometown, which he names Sac Prairie. Yet the works themselves were written hastily and lack the polish of his later Solar Pons stories. They seem to cover a period in which Derleth was developing his craft. Easy to read and conversational in tone, they bear the hallmarks of popular literature. As such, the conversations often contain turns of phrase that seem outmoded, and that at the same time capture the local color of Sac Prairie speech: for example, from *Fell Purpose* (1953), "he'd never have gumption enough to go out and sock somebody on the jaw," "he's a good egg," "hot-tempered as the devil," and "you're falling just off bounds of charging me with murder." Sentences are composed of short phrases, and descriptions show a straightforward line of reasoning. The narrator, Judge Peck's young secretary, reports the scene of the crime for the reader in *No Future for Luana* (1945), illustrating this style of writing:

Judging by appearances, such as they were, someone had entered the dressingroom, slugged her, and then, taking no chances, had held her mouth and head and pushed the thorn into her eye. It was not a nice way to die. . . . The make-up table showed that she had just about completed her make-up, which meant that she must have been murdered just shortly before she was

discovered. Eyelashes had been attached, dark color for under eyes had been used and set aside, the lipstick was still open, showing that she had probably put it down not long before her assailant entered the dressing-room; the disorder before the mirror was due solely to her having fallen forward among the boxes of cosmetics and other paraphernalia of the theatre.

Only such detail as is pertinent to solving the crime is included, as though the reader were following the actual logical processes in the mind of the narrator.

Judge Peck himself is less open to scrutiny. He smokes his cigar and observes closely as the police proceed with their investigations. Outwardly Peck seems like an absentminded old man, but, as his companion notes, "that large, square-jawed face and the strange, opaque eyes resembled nothing so much as a calculating machine when his mind was agile." His method involves careful, detached observation, followed by "cerebration": "He took the whole puzzle, divided it into subproblems, and began to ratiocinate." The reader is shown the same evidence the judge and his secretary see, as well as an explanation at the end when the riddle is solved. Judge Peck's character, although quickly drawn, is quite evidently in the mold of the rational "sleuth only by courtesy" whose talent for solving the riddle of difficult crimes comes from being a "student of what human nature Sac Prairie afforded."

"IN RE, SHERLOCK HOLMES"

Derleth maintains in *A Praed Street Dossier* (1968) that Solar Pons "had always had more reality" in his thoughts than Judge Peck, in spite of the fact that London was a much less familiar milieu to him than Wisconsin. When, in 1944, Derleth had the opportunity to consider publishing a group of Solar Pons stories as a book, the earlier stories seemed "very amateurish" to the author; so he revised them and wrote new ones that he finally published himself in 1945 as "*In Re, Sherlock Holmes*": *The Adventures of Solar Pons*. Included in this collection are three of his best stories: "The Adventure of the Late Mr. Favershaw," "The Adventure of the Purloined Periapt," and "The Adventure of the Norcross Riddle."

Derleth admitted to composing the Solar Pons stories around titles, with the title as a challenge to bring

the full story into existence. The revised and newly composed stories are clearly better fiction than the earlier Judge Peck series. Here Derleth borrows motifs and characters from the Sherlock Holmes series and makes them his own.

Solar Pons is an investigator in the Holmes tradition set perhaps two decades later; the character Pons was born circa 1880 in Prague and was involved in cases dating from 1919 through the 1930's. The parallels between Pons and Holmes are intentional, involving episodes such as the first meeting between Pons and Dr. Parker, easily recognizable expressions, and the stable of characters, including a long-suffering landlady, Mrs. Johnson, and an archenemy, Baron Ennesfred Kroll. Dr. Parker records the adventures of his companion as an observer in the manner of Watson, including his often-reported confusion with the methods used to uncover puzzling crimes.

A PRAED STREET DOSSIER

Yet it is the "Sherlock Homes of Praed Street" who is the focus of the reader's attention. In *A Praed Street Dossier*, Derleth delineates Pons's curriculum vitae, including his parents ("Asenath Pons, consular official at Prague, and Roberta McIvor Pons") and a younger brother "of Bancroft Stoneham, in His Majesty's Service." He has a public school education and was graduated from Oxford summa cum laude in 1899. He is unmarried, served in British Intelligence during both world wars, and wrote various monographs relating to chess, logic, evidence, and "the inductive process." Derleth adds his own interest in tales of the macabre by having Pons also write "An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others." Beyond that, a physical description given by Dr. Parker includes the familiar cape and hat as well as features with clear Holmesian resonance: "the thin, almost feral face; the sharp, keen dark eyes with their heavy, but not bushy brows; the thin lips and the leanness of the face in general."

The fascination with the Holmes character is the result of the combination of the rational and irrational that produces a hero surrounded by mystery and appeal. His ability in deduction allows him to solve seemingly impossible crimes, and in this he is a genius serving the forces of order in Victorian society. Yet for all of his knowledge of the sciences and rational

thought, Holmes is egocentric, misanthropic, remote, and aloof. Acting against the established order in his private life, he drugs himself with cocaine to relieve the boredom between cases. The strength of his appeal lies in the dual aspects of his personality.

With regard to the dark side of his personality, Solar Pons is less interesting. Much of what Holmes is, Pons is also, although the most objectionable trait from the point of view of society has been removed—Pons does not use cocaine but rather his vice is smoking "the most abominable shag ever prepared by the hand of man." He has personal traits that recall the Master: He pulls at his earlobe and closes his eyes when in deep thought, his eyes are keen and alive, and he lounges in well-worn dressing gowns. He is also a master of disguise. (One of his best is the egocentric, rude Baron Egon Von Ruber in "The Adventure of the Orient Express.")

It is in the manner of his deductive reasoning that Pons is eminently Holmesian. The beginning of "The Adventure of the Norcross Riddle" yields an excellent example in which Pons examines a calling card and concludes that its owner is an American by birth who has resided a long time in Great Britain, a "man of independent means," between thirty-five and thirty-nine, of southern United States ancestry whose parents were Republicans. In "From the Notebooks of Dr. Lyndon Parker," Pons's thoughts on probability are reported. According to him, the correct solution can be found by examining all possible solutions to find the one "that will exactly fit all the facts." Pons works logically, observing the facts to make sure nothing is overlooked. His deduction is a process of elimination: If none of the probable solutions fits all the facts, then, he concludes, "whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the correct solution" (a strictly Holmesian pronouncement). All the Solar Pons tales are built around that hypothesis, involving a situation where the improbable is shown to be the correct solution.

The main focus of Pons's activities is to solve the problem, normally leaving the question of justice and punishment to the authorities. Both he and Holmes, however, are students of human nature, which often helps them to decide how to act on information they uncover. In "The Adventure of the Bookseller's

Clerk,” purchasers of forged signed copies of books are not told of the deception, since that would make them unhappy without good reason. Although Parker is not convinced, Pons himself appreciates the ambiguity of life’s circumstances and remarks that, although people would like a simpler world “composed of black and white or right and wrong,” such a world would also be “inferentially dull.” The challenge of the puzzle is at the center of his character.

Viewed as a whole, Derleth’s two detective-style series fit the genre of mystery and detective fiction without any question. His horror stories fit more easily into science fiction (*Harrigan’s File*, 1975) or macabre tales (*Dwellers in Darkness*, 1976, for example). Yet many of these tales can be read as mysteries in the broadest sense. They delve into the irrational, which fascinated Derleth. Many of the stories present a mystery that the individual is trying to unravel, as does *Dwellers in Darkness*, where the suggested solution lies in the supernatural, and *The Mask of Cthulhu*, in which people disappear, leaving their clothes behind “in the horrible, life-like position of a man sitting there.” Sometimes people are transformed after contact with mythological creatures from the world of Lovecraft. These stories form an interesting contrast to the Solar Pons series, in which the rational faculty clearly dominates, revealing strictly logical explanations for seemingly irrational occurrences.

Derleth’s main body of mystery and detective work, the Solar Pons series, was clearly undertaken as an imitation. It has been noted that its intention was never to deceive, only to please, and specifically to recall for Holmes fans the wonderful adventures of Baker Street. For this alone, Derleth merits a place among American writers of this genre. His greatest contribution, however, seems to be in knowing excellence in the works of writers such as Doyle and Lovecraft and striving to preserve them for the public, both in his own writing following their models and in his activities as publisher and editor.

Susan L. Piepke

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JUDGE PECK SERIES: *Murder Stalks the Wakely Family*, 1934 (also known as *Death Stalks the Wakely*

Family); *The Man on All Fours*, 1934; *Sign of Fear*, 1935; *Three Who Died*, 1935; *Sentence Deferred*, 1939; *The Narracong Riddle*, 1940; *The Seven Who Waited*, 1943; *Mischief in the Lane*, 1944; *No Future for Luana*, 1945; *Fell Purpose*, 1953

SOLAR PONS SERIES: “*In Re, Sherlock Holmes*”: *The Adventures of Solar Pons*, 1945 (also known as *The Adventures of Solar Pons*, 1975); *The Memoirs of Solar Pons*, 1951; *Three Problems for Solar Pons*, 1952; *The Return of Solar Pons*, 1958; *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons*, 1961; *Praed Street Papers*, 1965; *The Adventure of the Orient Express*, 1965; *The Casebook of Solar Pons*, 1965; *A Praed Street Dossier*, 1968; *Mr. Fairlie’s Final Journey*, 1968; *The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians*, 1968; *The Chronicles of Solar Pons*, 1973; *The Final Adventures of Solar Pons*, 1998

NONSERIES NOVEL: *Death by Design*, 1953

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Consider Your Verdict: Ten Coroner’s Cases for You to Solve*, 1937 (as Mason)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Still Is the Summer Night*, 1937; *Wind over Wisconsin*, 1938; *Restless Is the River*, 1939; *Bright Journey*, 1940; *Evening in Spring*, 1941; *Sweet Genevieve*, 1942; *Shadow of Night*, 1943; *The Lurker at the Threshold*, 1945 (with H. P. Lovecraft); *The Shield of the Valiant*, 1945; *The House on the Mound*, 1958; *The Hills Stand Watch*, 1960; *The Trail of Cthulhu*, 1962; *The Shadow in the Glass*, 1963; *The Wind Leans West*, 1969; *The Wind in the Cedars*, 1997

SHORT FICTION: *Place of Hawks*, 1935; *Any Day Now*, 1938; *Country Growth*, 1940; *Someone in the Dark*, 1941; *Something Near*, 1945; *Not Long for This World*, 1948; *Sac Prairie People*, 1948; *The House of Moonlight*, 1953; *The Survivor and Others*, 1957 (with H. P. Lovecraft); *The Mask of Cthulhu*, 1958; *Wisconsin in Their Bones*, 1961; *Lonesome Places*, 1962; *Mr. George and Other Odd Persons*, 1963 (also known as *When Graveyards Yawn*); *Colonel Markesan and Less Pleasant People*, 1966 (with Mark Schorer); *The Shadow out of Time, and Other Tales of Horror*, 1968 (with H. P. Lovecraft); *A House Above Cuzco*, 1969; *The Watchers out of Time and Others*,

1974 (with H. P. Lovecraft); *Harrigan's File*, 1975; *Dwellers in Darkness*, 1976; *Aunt May Strikes Again!*, 1996; *Shane's Girls*, 1997; *The Quest for Cihulhu*, 2000

POETRY: 1933-1950 • *To Remember*, 1933; *Hawk on the Wind*, 1938; *Elegy: On a Flake of Snow*, 1939; *Man Track Here*, 1939; *Here on a Darkling Plain*, 1940; *Wind in the Elms*, 1941; *Rind of Earth*, 1942; *And You, Thoreau!*, 1944; *Selected Poems*, 1944; *The Edge of Night*, 1945; *Habitant of Dusk: A Garland for Cassandra*, 1946

1951-1960 • *Rendezvous in a Landscape*, 1952; *Psyche*, 1953; *Country Poems*, 1956; *Elegy: On the Umbral Moon*, 1957; *West of Morning*, 1960

1961-1997 • *This Wound*, 1962; *Country Places*, 1965; *The Only Place We Live*, 1966; *By Owl Light*, 1967; *Collected Poems, 1937-1967*, 1967; *Caitlin*, 1969; *The Landscape of the Heart*, 1970; *Last Light*, 1971; *Love Letters to Caitlin*, 1971; *In a Quiet Graveyard*, 1997

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: 1945-1960 • *Oliver; the Wayward Owl*, 1945; *A Boy's Way: Poems*, 1947; *It's a Boy's World: Poems*, 1948; *The Captive Island*, 1952; *The Country of the Hawk*, 1952; *Empire of Fur: Trading in the Lake Superior Region*, 1953; *Land of Gray Gold: Lead Mining in Wisconsin*, 1954; *Father Marquette and the Great Rivers*, 1955; *Land of Sky-Blue Waters*, 1955; *St. Ignatius and the Company of Jesus*, 1956; *Columbus and the New World*, 1957; *The Moon Tenders*, 1958; *The Mill Creek Irregulars*, 1959; *Wilbur, the Trusting Whippoorwill*, 1959; *The Pinkertons Ride Again*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Ghost of Black Hawk Island*, 1961; *Sweet Land of Michigan*, 1962; *The Tent Show Summer*, 1963; *Forest Orphans*, 1964 (also known as *Mr. Conservation*, 1971); *The Irregulars Strike Again*, 1964; *The House by the River*, 1965; *The Watcher on the Heights*, 1966; *Wisconsin*, 1967; *The Beast in Holger's Woods*, 1968; *The Prince Goes West*, 1968; *The Three Straw Men*, 1970

NONFICTION: 1931-1950 • *The Heritage of Sauk City*, 1931; *Atmosphere of Houses*, 1939; *Still Small Voice: The Biography of Zona Gale*, 1940; *Village Year: A Sac Prairie Journal*, 1941; *Wisconsin Regional Literature*, 1941 (revised 1942); *The Wiscon-*

sin: River of a Thousand Isles, 1942; *H. P. L.: A Memoir*, 1945; *Writing Fiction*, 1946; *Village Daybook: A Sac Prairie Journal*, 1947; *Sauk County: A Centennial History*, 1948; *The Milwaukee Road: Its First Hundred Years*, 1948; *Wisconsin Earth: A Sac Prairie Sampler*, 1948

1951-1996 • *Arkham House: The First Twenty Years: 1939-1959*, 1959; *Some Notes on H. P. Lovecraft*, 1959; *Walden West*, 1961; *Concord Rebel: A Life of Henry D. Thoreau*, 1962; *Countryman's Journal*, 1963; *Three Literary Men: A Memoir of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters*, 1963; *Wisconsin Country: A Sac Prairie Journal*, 1965; *Vincennes: Portal to the West*, 1968; *Walden Pond: Homage to Thoreau*, 1968; *Wisconsin Murders*, 1968; *The Wisconsin Valley*, 1969; *Emerson, Our Contemporary*, 1970; *Return to Walden West*, 1970; *Thirty Years of Arkham House: A History and a Bibliography, 1939-1969*, 1970; *Country Matters*, 1996

EDITED TEXTS: 1937-1950 • *Poetry out of Wisconsin*, 1937; *The Outsider and Others*, 1939 (by H. P. Lovecraft); *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, 1943 (by Lovecraft); *Marginalia*, 1944 (by Lovecraft); *Sleep No More: Twenty Masterpieces of Horror for the Connoisseur*, 1944; *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, 1945 (by Lovecraft); *The Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft*, 1945 (by Lovecraft); *Who Knocks? Twenty Masterpieces of the Spectral for the Connoisseur*, 1946; *Dark of the Moon: Poems of Fantasy and the Macabre*, 1947; *The Night Side: Masterpieces of the Strange and Terrible*, 1947; *The Sleeping and the Dead*, 1947; *Strange Ports of Call: Twenty Masterpieces of Science Fiction*, 1948; *The Other Side of the Moon*, 1949; *Beyond Time and Space: A Compendium of Science Fiction Through the Ages*, 1950

1951-1960 • *The Haunter of the Dark, and Other Tales of Horror*, 1951 (by H. P. Lovecraft); *Far Boundaries: Twenty Science-Fiction Stories*, 1951; *The Outer Reaches: Favorite Science-Fiction Tales Chosen by Their Authors*, 1951; *Beachheads in Space: Stories on a Theme in Science-Fiction*, 1952; *Night's Yawning Peal: A Ghostly Company*, 1952; *Worlds of Tomorrow: Science Fiction with a Difference*, 1953; *Portals of Tomorrow: The Best of Science*

Fiction and Other Fantasy, 1954; *Time to Come: Science Fiction Stories of Tomorrow*, 1954; *The Survivor and Others*, 1957 (by Lovecraft); *The Shattered Room, and Other Pieces*, 1959 (by Lovecraft); *Collected Poems*, 1960 (by Lovecraft)

1961-1997 • *Fire and Sleet and Candlelight: New Poems of the Macabre*, 1961; *Dreams and Fancies*, 1962 (by Lovecraft); *Dark Mind, Dark Heart*, 1962; *When Evil Wakes: A New Anthology of the Macabre*, 1963; *Autobiography: Some Notes on a Nonentity*, 1963 (by Lovecraft); *The Dunwich Horror, and Others: The Best Supernatural Stories of H. P. Lovecraft*, 1963 (by Lovecraft); *Over the Edge*, 1964; *At the Mountains of Madness, and Other Novels*, 1964 (by Lovecraft); *Dagon, and Other Macabre Tales*, 1965 (by Lovecraft); *H. P. Lovecraft Selected Letters 1911-1924*, 1965 (by Lovecraft); *Wisconsin Harvest*, 1966; *The Dark Brotherhood, and Other Pieces*, 1966 (by Lovecraft); *Travellers by Night*, 1967; *H. P. Lovecraft Selected Letters 1925-1929*, 1968 (by Lovecraft); *The Shadow out of Time, and Other Tales of Horror*, 1968 (by Lovecraft); *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, 1969 (by Lovecraft); *The Tomb, and Other Tales*, 1969 (by Lovecraft); *New Poetry out of Wisconsin*, 1969; *The Horror in the Museum, and Other Revisions*, 1970 (by Lovecraft); *H. P. Lovecraft Selected Letters, 1929-1931*, 1971 (by Lovecraft); *Something About Cats, and Other Pieces*, 1971 (by Lovecraft); *Dark Things*, 1971; *The Angler's Companion*, 1997

MISCELLANEOUS: *Wisconsin Earth: A Sac Prairie Sampler*, 1948; *Buster Brown*, 1974 (with Richard Felton Outcault); *The Katzenjammer Kids*, 1974 (with Rudolph Dirks); *The Only Place We Live*, 1976

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WILLIAM DEVERELL

Born: Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada; March 4, 1937

Also wrote as William H. Deverell

Type of plot: Courtroom drama

CONTRIBUTION

William Deverell's chief contribution to the genre of mystery and detective fiction has been the legal crime novel, with its emphasis on lawyers and courtrooms, criminals and police, the manifold activities that bring these forces together, and the often strange results of their dramatic encounters.

Deverell's novels, like those of his American contemporaries Scott Turow and John Grisham, reflect the public fascination with criminal law and fictional depictions of legal proceedings that have the ring of authenticity. The appeal of legal crime fiction intensified tremendously in the aftermath of the televising of the O. J. Simpson criminal trial in the United States in 1995.

Most of Deverell's fiction is set along the west coast of Canada, around Vancouver, a part of the country often associated with flamboyance, eccentricity, radicals, and excess. Deverell's stories are filled with eccentric characters, colorful dialogue, and strange and surprising twists and turns. They are also enriched by references to classical literature and by Deverell's deep concern for environmental issues.

Deverell's novels are often based on actual legal cases and incidents. A practicing lawyer for many years, Deverell was involved in hundreds of cases. For his novels, he conducted extensive research to ensure accuracy. His work has enjoyed enormous popularity in Canada and worldwide. In terms of quality and impact, Deverell's fiction bears comparison with the best in the field, including that of Turow and Grisham.

BIOGRAPHY

William Herbert Deverell was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, on March 4, 1937. He worked for several years as a newspaper reporter and graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with his law degree in

1963. Deverell practiced law for fifteen years, acting primarily as a defense lawyer in hundreds of cases, including murder trials. During that time he also represented some minor and major figures in the drug trade, and this experience is particularly evident in his novels.

After tiring of his work as a criminal lawyer, Deverell began writing fiction in the late 1970's. He struggled with his first novel for several months but finally found his voice, and *Needles* was published in 1979. It was an immediate commercial and critical success. *Needles* won the fifty-thousand-dollar Seal First Novel Award in 1979 and the Book of the Year Award in 1981.

The financial and critical success of the novel consolidated Deverell's career move. He began publishing novels regularly, about one every other year, and went from success to success. In the early 1990's Deverell and his wife, Tekla, built a small cottage on Pender Island, off the coast of Vancouver, that served as a place for him to write. They also built a winter home in Costa Rica. The exotic locations and inhabitants of both Pender Island and Costa Rica have figured in Deverell's later work, particularly in his preoccupation with the fragility and beauty of nature, and the deprivations wrought by urbanization.

In the mid-1980's Deverell wrote a screenplay that became the basis of one of Canada's most successful television series, *Street Legal*, which ran from 1986 to 1994. Deverell also wrote the screenplay for the film *Mindfield*, based on his novel of the same name, published in 1989. *Fatal Cruise: The Trial of Robert Frisbee* (1991) is Deverell's nonfictional account of his defense of a man accused of killing his employer.

From 1991 to 1992, Deverell was visiting professor in the creative writing department at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. In 1994 and again in 1999 he was the chair of the Writers' Union of Canada. His fiction continued to win major awards, including the Dashiell Hammett Prize for literary excellence in crime writing in North America for *Trial of Passion* (1997) and the 2006 Arthur Ellis Award for crime writing for *April Fool* (2005). The Arthur Ellis

Award recognizes the best works in Canadian crime fiction and scholarship.

Deverell's favorite author is the novelist John Updike. He shares with Updike a fascination with the mystery and complexity of apparently ordinary people and events, as well as a reverence for the natural world and a prose that is rich, evocative, and precise.

ANALYSIS

Most of William Deverell's fiction is grounded in fact and contemporary events. For example, *Needles* begins with a reference to a major report to the government of Canada on the illegal drug trade, published in the early 1970's. *High Crimes* (1981) draws on his experience as a defense attorney in a famous drug smuggling case. *Trial of Passion* is loosely based on a sensational sexual harassment case at a university in British Columbia. *Mindfield* draws on the United States government's clandestine experiments with LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) in Canada in the 1950's.

The pervading sense of authenticity and realism conveyed by Deverell's novels is strengthened by his incorporation of "evidence" into his narratives: excerpts from court testimony, police and private detective reports, psychological assessments, wiretaps, and the like. All of this tends to convey a sense of direct, unfiltered contact with primary material. The reader often seems positioned as a juror, weighing and assessing testimony and evidence throughout the story.

Despite the aura of realism, Deverell is also a compulsively self-reflexive writer, often engaging in subtle and humorous postmodern touches. In *Kill All the Lawyers* (1994), for example, one of the main characters is writing a crime novel following the instructions in a how-to book entitled *The Art of the Whodunit*. His "fictional" plot strangely anticipates some important developments in the "real" story. The character also relaxes by discussing classic murder mystery fiction with the local police detective, who solves the mystery of the "real" story by methods gleaned from his reading of such writers as Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie.

Deverell often focuses intensely on the inherent drama of the courtroom duel between the prosecution and the defense. His work is enhanced by and reflects

his knowledge of police procedure; forensic science; the interaction of local, provincial, national, and international police forces; and justice as affected by notoriety, power, and money.

Despite the humor and exuberance that mark Deverell's characters, plot, and dialogue, there is throughout his work a sense of the importance and pervasiveness of legal concepts and structures in people's lives. As one of his characters says, "The law. The law! I'm trapped in the bloody clutches of the law. Presumption of innocence, reasonable doubt, grand precepts, aren't they?" Deverell would emphatically say that they are but that they are enacted by flawed and fallible human beings. This volatile mix is what makes his depiction of crime and punishment so readable and relevant.

NEEDLES

Set in Vancouver, *Needles* explores the underworld links between Asian suppliers of heroin and the vast, voracious North American market for their product. Dr. Au, "the Surgeon," a Chinese national and Canadian land-owning immigrant, is the local Asian syndicate leader charged with responsibility for the Canadian end of the drug trade. The story opens with a shocking scene of vivisection, as Dr. Au slowly and methodically tortures and then kills one of his underlings who has been uncovered as a police informant.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the local authorities have been keeping Dr. Au and his operation under surveillance for some time and eventually arrest him for the murder. A twist in the plot is that the RCMP officer who recruited the murdered informer is also on the payroll of Dr. Au, and he plays both sides of the law. At this point, the story's protagonist enters—Forster Cobb, a former government prosecutor who is pressured to take the lead in the prosecution of Dr. Au. Cobb is reluctant partly because he has relapsed into drug use because of professional and domestic stress. Eventually he agrees to take the case.

From this point, the novel details the complex preparations by the prosecution and the defense for the trial of Dr. Au, including strategic delays and pretrial motions. Deverell includes the police activity in court and behind the scenes, including wiretaps, the disposition of evidence, and the protection and preparation of witnesses.

All of this is interwoven with the complex personal lives of the major figures, culminating in some surprising and profoundly human revelations about characters on both sides of the law, including the macabre and sexually deviant Dr. Au. However, the heart of the story is the ebb and flow of the trial itself with all of the legal and sometimes illegal maneuvering that money and power can buy.

HIGH CRIMES

Where *Needles* focuses primarily on the trial and the activities that accompany it, *High Crimes* is at times a caper, a legal thriller, and a police procedural. With a few brief snapshots at the beginning, Deverell outlines the main elements of his story. A rich, corrupt Colombian politician has a huge crop of exceptionally high-grade marijuana that he wants transported to the United States. Rudy Meyers, an American businessman involved in a variety of intrigues, offers his services as a middleman. Meanwhile, Central Intelligence Agency personnel are monitoring suspicious activity among the Colombian drug lords. Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are doing likewise. In Newfoundland, home to generations of daring sailors and fishermen, Captain Peter Kerrivan is about to beat a major drug smuggling charge on a technicality.

For several years, Kerrivan had been pursued by Inspector Mitchell of the RCMP, Canada's chief narcotics officer, in a joint Canadian and American effort at drug interdiction. Mitchell is the embodiment of the righteous lawman—stern, relentless, and methodical. Kerrivan, however, is the embodiment of the romantic outlaw—handsome, brave, and reckless. From the beginning of the story, these two are on a collision course.

Mitchell sets in motion a complex and costly sting operation to nab Kerrivan and his crew with a major drug shipment in Canadian waters. Through the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, Mitchell learns about and then engages the services of Rudy Meyers. For a half-million-dollar fee, Meyers agrees to lure Kerrivan to the Columbian drug lord, broker a drug deal between them, and set an ingenious trap that will ensure Kerrivan's capture and conviction.

The scene shifts to Columbia, where Kerrivan acquires an aging tanker and arranges to buy fifty tons of high-grade marijuana for transportation to Newfound-

land and then New York. He and his crew stand to make more than twenty million dollars for the delivery. The narrative then traces the vectors of both police and smugglers, as plans evolve and complications arise for both groups. The tempo is extremely fast paced throughout and enlivened by an eccentric cast of characters.

As Kerrivan and crew sail toward apparent disaster, the RCMP's political masters in the nation's capital get wind of some details of the sting, including its huge cost and some of the shady characters involved. They apply pressure to abort it, fearing a public inquiry. Eventually, Kerrivan and crew are arrested, and the scene moves back into the courtroom. There, the scope of the crime and the notoriety of the accused ensure a complex and sensational trial. The ending is as convincing as it is completely unexpected.

TRIAL OF PASSION

Trial of Passion is one of Deverell's most accomplished novels in terms of characterization, suspense, and pacing. Jonathan O'Donnell is a handsome, successful lawyer and academic in his mid-thirties. He has recently been named acting dean of a major British Columbia law school when he is accused of rape by one of his students, Kimberly Martin, a bright and beautiful young woman who is also a gifted actress.

The facts that are not in dispute include the following: There was an end-of-term dance at which students and professors mixed. O'Donnell and some students, including Kimberly Martin, continued partying afterward and in the early morning hours ended up at O'Donnell's home. There was a considerable amount of drinking and drug use during the evening. Martin passed out on O'Donnell's living room chair, and the other students soon left. What happened between O'Donnell and Martin after the students left is the question that propels the narrative forward.

The story opens with court testimony from a preliminary hearing of the sexual assault charge. With this dramatic opening, the reader is plunged into the heart of a "she said, he said" dilemma: Who and what does one believe, and why? Further excerpts of testimony at the preliminary hearing, and later at the trial, give the reader insight into the complexities and limitations of the legal process. These include the rules

about disclosure of evidence, hearsay, voir dire testimony, the selection of juries, pretrial agreements, and the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of actual courtrooms. Despite all the testimony at the preliminary hearing and later at the sensational trial, the basic question of what transpired remains elusive.

Deverell complicates the reader's response to the principal figures throughout the novel in a variety of ways. He provides, for example, private letters that each writes to friends, colleagues, and legal counsels. Although the reader cannot know how candid each is, in every case the voice in question seems forthright about actions, motives, and recollections. Later, the reader is given excerpts of conversations that O'Donnell and Martin have with their respective therapists. Again, these suggest candid, privileged revelations, but again they are inconclusive about an assault. In fact, the more the reader learns about each character, the more appealing, sympathetic, and believable each seems. The reader does learn that there was a growing attraction between them, but that it was kept in check by their mutual recognition of the proprieties of the professor-student relationship and by other commitments in their lives.

At trial, students and colleagues are put on the witness stand to testify to what they saw and heard the night in question. Medical testimony is entered into evidence. Every fact and assertion seems able to be interpreted in contradictory ways. The one touchstone the reader has in this maze is Arthur Beauchamp, a sixty-three-year-old celebrated defense attorney.

The reader is given privileged access into Beauchamp's mind. His sensibility and outlook—erudite, self-deprecating, tolerant, and fair-minded—account a great deal for the story's warmth, humor, and thematic depth. His struggles with the question of whether to take O'Donnell's case and later of how to mount a defense reveal a fundamental principle from which the legal system derives its moral authority. Beauchamp expresses this principle in terms of his commitment to the old Roman maxim: *Fiat justitia, ruat caelum* (let justice be done though the heavens fall). For Beauchamp, the law is ultimately about the search for truth rather than a contest for victory.

How Beauchamp elicits the truth in open court and how that truth exonerates both the accused and the accuser is a brilliant and powerful insight into the mystery of human beings not only to others but also to themselves. The courtroom may be a place of theatrical performance, but as with all great drama, it can be a place where the most profound and significant human secrets are revealed.

Michael J. Larsen

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Needles*, 1979; *High Crimes*, 1981; *Mecca*, 1983; *The Dance of Shiva*, 1984; *Platinum Blues*, 1988; *Mindfield*, 1989; *Kill All the Lawyers*, 1994; *Street Legal: The Betrayal*, 1995; *Trial of Passion*, 1997; *Slander*, 1999; *The Laughing Falcon*, 2001; *Mind Games*, 2003; *April Fool*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Fatal Cruise: The Trial of Robert Frisbee*, 1991

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COLIN DEXTER

Norman Colin Dexter

Born: Stamford, Lincolnshire, England; September 29, 1930

Also wrote as N. C. Dexter; Norman Colin Dexter

Types of plot: Police procedural; master sleuth; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Morse, 1975-1999

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR MORSE is a brilliant, Eton-educated, curmudgeonly bachelor with a love for classical music, especially that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Richard Wagner, and for solving crossword puzzles. He smokes too much and is overly fond of ale, beer, and scotch. He works for the Thames Valley Constabulary of Kidlington, Oxon, and in the early novels, he is depicted as slim, gray-eyed, and dark-haired, but perhaps under the influence of the actor John Thaw, who played Morse in the British television series, he is described in the later novels as paunchy, blue-eyed, and white-haired.

SERGEANT LEWIS is Morse's associate and contrasts sharply with his boss. He comes from a working-class background and was not as well educated as Morse. He was a boxer as a young man and then married and had a family. He is described as a grandfather early in the series, but because of the influence of the young actor Kevin Whately, who played him in the television series, Lewis is described as younger than Morse in the later novels. Dexter says that he created Lewis to serve as "target, scapegoat, and sounding-board" for Morse.

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT STRANGE of the Thames Valley Police at Kidlington is a large man and Morse's superior, who is critical of the time that Morse spends in pubs, which Morse claims aids in his crime solving. Strange is pleased, however, when some of Morse's cases achieve national interest.

MAXIMILIAN "MAX" THEODORE SIEGFREID DE BRYN is the pathologist who is often called on to ex-

amine the corpses in the crimes Morse investigates. He is very professional and has few friends at Thames Valley Police Headquarters. He dies in 1992.

DR. LAURA HOBSON takes over Max's job after his death. A bespectacled small woman in her early thirties, she objects to Morse's calling her "dear" and insists on the professional "Dr. Hobson."

CONTRIBUTION

Colin Dexter's major accomplishment was his creation of the unforgettable Inspector Morse. The novels of the Morse series have made Dexter an important and influential figure in modern English detective fiction. In a poll, Dexter's fellow mystery writers chose Morse as their favorite male sleuth, ahead of Sherlock Holmes, Philip Marlowe, Nero Wolfe, and Adam Dalgliesh. Others have compared Dexter to Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler because he has written not only good detective stories but also high-quality literature. The novels of the Morse series have brought Dexter fame, fortune, and fans around the world, some of whom travel to Oxford to meet him and to relive their favorite scenes from the novels. The Crime Writers' Association has awarded him its Silver Dagger Award twice (1979 and 1981) and its Gold Dagger Award twice (1989 and 1992). He has also received this organization's Cartier Diamond Dagger for outstanding services to crime fiction.

Morse made his first appearance in *Last Bus to Woodstock* (1975), a novel that introduced several of Dexter's principal techniques and themes, such as insightfully choosing epigraphs relevant to each chapter's subject and mood. Readers also encounter the theme of Morse's fallibility, because he often misidentifies the murderer in the early stages of his investigations. Dexter also uses Morse's companion, Sergeant Lewis, to update this relationship between detective and associate that began with Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. Like Holmes, Morse is an eccentric bachelor, but he is unlike Holmes in his passion for good English grammar, satisfying food and drink, and

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Colin Dexter in 1997. (AP/Wide World Photos)

intelligent, attractive older women. Like Watson, Sergeant Lewis is less intelligent than the master sleuth, but the Morse-Lewis relationship tends to be more acrimonious than that of Doyle's pair. Unlike the traditional puzzle-solving detective, Morse rarely discovers clues in a straightforward fashion. They are scrambled, and he manages to use them in specious but false explanations, so that when the reader finally learns the truth, it is usually a surprise.

As the series evolved, so, too, did Morse, whose interests in poetry and modern literature are explored. In *The Wench Is Dead* (1989), which some critics have praised as the best novel in the series, Morse's physical and moral weaknesses are on display. Immobilized with a severe illness in a hospital, the cantankerous Morse is nevertheless able to solve a dead case from the Victorian period. By 1999, with *The Remorseful Day*, which Dexter insisted was "the final Inspector Morse novel," the author told interviewers that he had said all that he wanted to say about this character, and unlike Doyle and Holmes, there would be no resurrec-

tions. Dexter's reputation was further enhanced by the success of the Inspector Morse series on British television between 1987 and 2000. Dexter himself, à la Alfred Hitchcock, made cameo appearances in several of the episodes.

BIOGRAPHY

On September 29, 1930, Colin Dexter was born in Stamford, England, a small town in Lincolnshire about seventy miles north of Oxford, which would later become his residence and the scene of his Morse novels. Alfred Dexter, his father, was a taxi driver, and Colin was educated at Stamford School from 1940 to 1949. After national military service in the Royal Corps of Signals, Dexter read classics at Christ's College of Cambridge University, from which he received his bachelor's degree in 1953. For the next three years he was an assistant classics master at Wyggeston School in Leicester, an East Midlands institution about twenty-five miles west of Stamford. He married Dorothy Cooper, a physiotherapist, in 1956 (they eventually had two children, Sally and Jeremy). After receiving his master's degree from Cambridge, he took a post as sixth form classics master at Loughborough Grammar School. In 1959 he moved closer to Stamford when he became senior classics master at Corby Grammar School. Early in his life Dexter described himself as a socialist in politics and a Methodist in religion, but later he added "lapsed" to each of these descriptors.

In 1966 increasing deafness forced Dexter to retire from teaching, and he became a senior assistant secretary to Oxford University Delegacy of Local Examinations in Summertown. Dexter developed a fascination with crossword puzzles, and he became so adept that he became national champion in the Ximenes competitions. He once said that this interest influenced his style of creating mysteries.

Dexter was forty-two years old before he became interested in writing mystery stories. The precipitating event occurred when he and his family were on vacation in Western Wales on the shore of the Irish Sea. A rainstorm confined him to a kitchen, where, with nothing to do, he wrote the first few paragraphs of a detective novel. Within a few years he published *Last Bus to*

Woodstock (1975), which introduced Inspector Morse to the world. He had no plans for other Morse stories, but the success of his effort led him, in his spare time, to continue developing the character in a series of mysteries. Every year or two another Morse mystery appeared, and the novels began being translated into other languages, and Morse mania spread throughout the world.

To satisfy this great appetite for Morse, Dexter agreed to allow his novels to be dramatized for television. They appeared as part of the *Mystery!* series. While several films made use of Dexter's plots, not always accurately, others used his characters to formulate plots of their own. Dexter decided to bring the series of novels to an end in 1999, and John Thaw, the actor who played Morse so effectively in the television series, died in 2002 at the age of sixty.

Dexter continued to be honored after the series came to an end. In 2000 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his services to literature. He also began to devote himself more assiduously to his hobbies, which, like those of Morse, included doing crossword puzzles and listening to classical music.

ANALYSIS

Colin Dexter once described the essential nature of his Inspector Morse novels, which represent the core of his literary achievement, as "the exploitation of reader-mystification." By this he meant that the novels incorporate both traditional and modern elements. The Morse novels are in the puzzle-solving tradition, and Morse is the agent in restoring reason and order after a crime has created chaos. Dexter also observes Father Ronald Knox's ten commandments for writing detective fiction. Knox, who was the Roman Catholic chaplain at Oxford University, issued in 1929 a list of such rules as "No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right." Indeed, Morse often has intuitions that turn out to be wrong. However, Morse is a modern detective not only in his mode of transportation, a Lancia or a red Jaguar, but also in his reliance of the unconscious to do a lot of his work. As Dexter states in *The Daughters of Cain* (1994), Morse would toss clues into "the magnetic field of his mind," trusting

that the explanation for the crime would "suddenly appear under his nose."

LAST BUS TO WOODSTOCK

The mixture of the traditional and modern can be seen in Dexter's first Inspector Morse novel, *Last Bus to Woodstock*, in which the inspector tries to discover the murderer of Sylvia Kaye, a provocatively clad young woman who was found bludgeoned to death outside a pub in Woodstock, a small town about eight miles northwest of Oxford. Morse customarily began his cases with a surfeit of confidence, and he is certain that he can solve this murder if he can find and interview the young woman who was seen hitching a ride with Sylvia on that fateful September evening. However, when he finally gets to talk with this woman, she does not tell him what he wants to know. In addition, neither her girlfriends nor her other "Oxford playmates" provide the information he seeks. Indeed, he is frustrated by their withholding of facts and feelings. He settles on the wrong person as the murderer before a husband and wife, each of whom confessed to the murder, are murdered themselves. This tragedy leads the way to the resolution and the identification of the woman murderer, who claims to be in love with Morse. In this novel Dexter makes use of red herrings, which were a staple of traditional puzzle-solving mysteries, but his early misidentification of the culprit and the sexual themes make it modern.

SERVICE OF ALL THE DEAD

Service of All the Dead (1979), which won for Dexter his first Silver Dagger Award, is the fourth in the series, and it centers on the murders of a churchwarden and a vicar. Inspector Morse postpones a vacation to Greece to investigate the seemingly senseless killing of a churchwarden, which the Oxford police have been unable to solve. Furthermore, Morse believes the death of the vicar in a fall from a church tower, which the police think was accidental, was murder. The way Dexter introduces the clues of this ecclesiastical murder mystery is similar to the techniques used in traditional puzzle-solving mysteries, but the way he scrambles the clues once they seem to mesh is modern. Modern, too, are the lives of the vicar's congregation, which exhibit the mixture of unholy lusts and disreputable desires of characters in American hard-boiled

mysteries. During Morse's investigations the number of unexplained deaths increases before he is able to "serve" all these dead persons by finally fitting all the pieces together to complete the true picture of what happened.

THE DEAD OF JERICHO

The Dead of Jericho (1981), which won for Dexter his second Silver Dagger Award and which fans voted their favorite Morse story, focuses on Anne Scott, a woman Inspector Morse meets at a party. She later appears to have hanged herself in Jericho, a lower-middle-class section of Oxford. At the inquest, the jury brings back a verdict of death by suicide, but Morse cannot accept this. His subsequent investigations lead him to his usual early wrong conclusions, while he tries to untangle the very messy former life of this beautiful but enigmatic woman, to whom Morse was attracted, and whom, he feels, he might have saved.

THE WENCH IS DEAD

The Wench Is Dead (1989), the eighth novel in the series, won the Gold Dagger Award for the best mystery of the year. The title comes from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (pr. c. 1589): "Thou hast committed—/Fornication; but that was in another country,/ And besides, the wench is dead." For Dexter, the past is this other country, and this novel is unusual in that it centers on a murder that occurred in 1859. Inspector Morse comes across the case during his stay in Oxford's Radcliffe Hospital while he recuperates from a stomach hemorrhage and an enlarged liver. In a hospital library book, he learns of the murder of Joanna Franks, a young woman whose body was found floating in the Oxford Canal, but he becomes convinced that the two men hanged for the murder were innocent. With the help of the hospital librarian and Sergeant Lewis, he begins to collect the pieces of the puzzle, but he is unable to put them together until he is discharged from the hospital. He discovers the solution, of which he is 99 percent certain, through an anagram.

THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS

The Way Through the Woods (1992), which won for Dexter his second Gold Dagger Award, is the tenth novel in the series. Inspector Morse's interest is piqued when a young woman disappears and he be-

lieves that she has been murdered, but when a year later she turns up neither alive nor dead, the case remains unsolved. Then the police receive an anonymous letter with a puzzling poem that the writer claims provides the solution to the young woman's disappearance. The police publish the letter and poem, which Morse reads while he is on vacation in Dorset. After some surprising twists in the plot, Morse solves the poem's riddle, and the persons responsible for the crime are taken into custody by the Thames Valley police. Incidentally, in his letter of thanks to *The Times*, Morse reveals the first initial, *E*, of his first name, which remains unknown to the reader.

THE REMORSEFUL DAY

Dexter culminates his series in *The Remorseful Day* (1999) with Inspector Morse's unofficial investigation of the death of a local nurse, Yvonne Harrison, with whom he was once romantically involved. The case has baffled the police for two years, and Morse, even after new evidence surfaces, refuses to lead the reinvestigation of the crime, but he does collect clues on his own, which puzzles Sergeant Lewis. Morse, who is in failing health, also has to contend with the criticisms of Lewis and Chief Superintendent Strange. Morse eventually discovers the truth, which proves to be disturbing to all those involved.

Following the making of his will, in which Morse leaves his body to medical research and his property to Lewis and the British Diabetes Association, Morse's "confession" of what was good and bad about his life brings him a kind of personal redemption, and his death brings the series to an emotionally moving end.

Robert J. Paradowski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR MORSE SERIES: *Last Bus to Woodstock*, 1975; *Last Seen Wearing*, 1976; *The Silent World of Nicholas Quinn*, 1977; *Service of All the Dead*, 1979; *The Dead of Jericho*, 1981; *The Riddle of the Third Mile*, 1983; *The Secret of Annexe Three*, 1987; *The Wench Is Dead*, 1989; *The Jewel That Was Ours*, 1991; *The First Inspector Morse Omnibus*, 1991; *The Second Inspector Morse Omnibus*, 1991; *The Way Through the Woods*, 1992; *The Third Inspector Morse Omnibus*, 1993; *Morse's Greatest Mystery*,

and Other Stories, 1993; *The Daughters of Cain*, 1994; *Death Is Now My Neighbor*, 1996; *The Fourth Inspector Morse Omnibus*, 1998; *The Remorseful Day*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

TELEPLAYS: *The Secret of Annexe Three*, 1987; *Service of All the Dead*, 1988

NONFICTION: *Liberal Studies: An Outline Course*, 1964 (2 volumes.; as N. C. Dexter; with E. G. Rayner); *Guide to Contemporary Politics*, 1966 (as N. C. Dexter; with Rayner)

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Dexter, Colin. "The Man Behind Inspector Morse." Interview by David Brown. *Christian Science Monitor* 89 (April 2, 1997): 15. This transcript of a radio interview conducted in Boston deals with the personal background to the novels, an analysis by Dexter of Morse's character, and his explanation of why the novels and the television series have been so successful.

Edmonds, Joanne. "Creation, Adaptation, and Re-Creation: The Lives of Colin Dexter's Characters." In *It's a Print! Detective Fiction from Page to Screen*, edited by William Reynolds. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994. Some critics have complained about the omissions and distortions in the televi-

sion versions of Dexter's Inspector Morse novels, and this article analyzes what is lost and gained when his characters appear in the new medium.

Heinz, Drue, et al. "Criminal Conversations." *The Paris Review* 44 (Winter, 2002-2003): 178. This is the fifth in a series of conversations with well-known writers to be published by *The Paris Review*. It is an edited version of discussions on the subject of crime writing held at a villa on Lake Como in Italy, and Dexter was very much a part of this seminar.

Karnick, S. T. "Detective and Mystery Stories." *American Spectator* 33 (December, 2000/January, 2001): 40-55. In this article, Dexter's first Inspector Morse novel is compared with Edward D. Hoch's "The Problem of the Covered Bridge" and Tony Hillerman's *Skinwalkers* (1986). These, and other examples Karnick analyzes, are seen as representatives of how new authors have breathed life into the moribund puzzle-solving mystery.

May, Radmila. "Murder Most Oxford." *Contemporary Review* 277 (October, 2000): 232-239. This article seeks to answer the question of why the Oxford setting has proved so important and beneficial in the novels of the Inspector Morse series and in the novels of other authors. May tries to show how both the real and mythical Oxford informed these stories.

MICHAEL DIBDIN

Born: Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England; March 21, 1947

Died: Seattle, Washington; March 30, 2007

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological; thriller; historical; amateur sleuth; metaphysical and metafictional parody

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Aurelio Zen, 1988-2007

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

AURELIO ZEN, an Italian detective, is still somewhat a man of mystery, although he has appeared in eleven novels and is Michael Dibdin's best-known character. He is described as middle-aged, tall and thin, with a prowlike nose, but little else is known about his appearance. His history is likewise sparse. A native of Venice, he lost a father whom he barely knew during World War II. He has been married and has had

a series of romantic relationships of various lengths and depths. In the beginning of the series, he is living in a Rome apartment with his mother and has been working at a desk job within the police ministry, in disgrace because he investigated the kidnapping of Italian prime minister Aldo Moro, which ended badly, with the murder of the official. Zen is world-weary, cynical, and fatalistic, with a dark sense of humor, a habit of ironic introspection, and an expedient morality that changes to fit circumstances. Though an excellent and persistent investigator—in a methodical, plodding manner—he sometimes resorts to deceit and illegal activities that make him part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

CONTRIBUTION

Michael Dibdin may have achieved widespread fame only late in his career, with the publication of his first Aurelio Zen novel, *Ratking*, in 1988, on the verge of his fortieth birthday, and he may have written only eighteen novels in his thirty-year career, but he has left a lasting legacy in the mystery genre. An innovative and experimental writer who chose words with great care and devised multilayered plots that brought greater depth and meaning to crime fiction, Dibdin successfully tested the boundaries of mystery and thriller conventions throughout his life. Keenly observant and blessed with a well-developed sense of dark humor, he produced the homage to the classical detective, *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978). He paid tribute to Agatha Christie and others from the Golden Age of traditional mysteries with *The Dying of the Light* (1993). He produced a historical sleuth (*A Rich Full Death*, 1986), subtle studies of psychological suspense (*The Tryst*, 1989, and *Thanksgiving*, 2000), social satire (*Dirty Tricks*, 1991), and a chilling examination of random American violence (*Dark Specter*, 1995).

However, the contribution that Dibdin will undoubtedly be best remembered for is his creation of Aurelio Zen, the cynical, philosophical Italian detective who in the course of his investigations prowls the length and breadth of his native country attempting to bring order out of chaos. Dibdin presents the grimy underbelly of Italy unknown to tourists—contradic-

tory, corrupt, and culturally heterogeneous, a nation with a long and volatile history that has seen everything and seemingly grown blasé about crime—and sets his protagonist to work at almost impossible tasks in a milieu where his job is often undermined by the authorities in charge. Dibdin, who often stated that he never planned a series but was merely fictionalizing his experiences from his sojourn in Italy during the 1980's, was forced by popular demand to continue writing about Aurelio Zen; the books have been translated into more than fifteen languages. Critics (except those in Italy, who are apparently indifferent to the crime genre) have been almost universal in their praise of the Zen novels. For his efforts, Dibdin won the Crime Writers' Association's Golden Dagger Award for the initial entry, *Ratking*, and a *New York Times* notable book citation for a nonseries novel, *Dirty Tricks*.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael John Dibdin was born on March 21, 1947, in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England, the son of physicist and science lecturer Frederick John Dibdin and health worker Peggy Taylor Dibdin. From the age of seven he was raised in Lisburn, Northern Ireland—a small, isolated community where storytelling was a primary form of entertainment—and attended schools in Scotland. An eager reader, Dibdin devoured classical and modern novels, nonfiction, poetry, and plays, and read the Sherlock Holmes stories at age fourteen.

Dibdin attended the University of Sussex, earning a bachelor of arts in English literature in 1968, and was briefly a part-time lecturer at the College of Technology in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 1969, he gained a master of arts in English literature from the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada, and studied for his doctorate for a semester before dropping out of school. Dibdin worked for several years in Canada as a contract painter and decorator and at a variety of other part-time jobs. He married Benita Mitbrodt in 1971, and the couple had a daughter, Moselle.

With his family, Dibdin returned to England, settling in London. He wrote three novels that remained unpublished before penning a pastiche, *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, pitting the famous detective against Jack the Ripper, which received mixed and

generally lukewarm reviews and moderate sales. Dibdin's marriage dissolved soon after, and his wife returned to Canada. Dibdin then obtained a teaching certificate to enable him to travel abroad and spent some five years at the International House in Perugia, Italy, first as an English teacher and later as a language assistant.

After returning to England, Dibdin wrote the historical mystery *A Rich Full Death* (1986), featuring poet Robert Browning as an amateur sleuth. The same year, he married Sybil Sherington, with whom he had a daughter, Emma Yvette; that marriage also later ended.

Dibdin attracted considerable attention with the publication of his third novel, *Ratking*, which introduced his continuing character, Italian police detective Aurelio Zen. The novel won the Gold Dagger Award as best novel from the Crime Writers' Association, and opened the floodgates of Dibdin's imagination. Thereafter, the author—while occasionally contributing short stories to such periodicals as *Granta* and *Modern Painters* and book reviews to the *Independent on Sunday*—published a full-length work of fiction on an almost yearly basis. Dibdin typically alternated between well-received nonseries thrillers (such as *The Tryst*, *Dirty Tricks*, and *The Dying of the Light*) and further entries in the critically acclaimed Zen series.

In the early 1990's, while attending a crime writers' conference in Barcelona, Spain, Dibdin met fellow mystery writer and single parent K. K. (Katherine Kristine) Beck, who sometimes writes as Marie Oliver and who created amateur sleuth Iris Cooper and private investigator Jane da Silva. Dibdin and Beck married and moved to her home in Seattle, Washington. There, Dibdin wrote his first American-based novel, *Dark Specter*, and continued producing entries in his popular Aurelio Zen series until his death. Dibdin died in Seattle after a brief illness, on March 30, 2007, shortly after celebrating his sixtieth birthday.

ANALYSIS

From the beginning of Michael Dibdin's career, no one questioned his storytelling or writing abilities. The strongest criticisms he experienced focused on his first novel, *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, and were

leveled at the author for his violation of certain Sir Arthur Conan Doyle conventions. After the publication of the critically successful *A Rich Full Death*, and particularly following the initial entry in the Aurelio Zen series, *Ratking*, dissenting opinions on Dibdin's work have been few and far between.

Dibdin's fertile imagination roamed over many diverse topics that he set against the backdrop of crime: spiritualism (*A Rich Full Death*), mental disintegration (*The Tryst*), British class distinctions (*Dirty Tricks*), the treatment of the elderly (*The Dying of the Light*), and the arrhythmia and violent nature of American society (*Dark Specter*). Both in these nonseries works and in Dibdin's Zen series—which deals with various Italian-based crimes culminating in murder—his plots are complex and meticulously structured. The Zen novels in particular consist of many separate twisted skeins painstakingly woven together to present a rich, atmospheric tapestry of life, corruption, and violent death, Italian-style. Aurelio Zen himself may be theorized to represent facets of one or both of two Latin root words that might have inspired his name: Aurelio suggests both *aur-* (hearing: a detective must develop the ability to listen and hear the unspoken to be successful) and *aurum* (gold: the investigator as a shining nugget among drab dross). Zen, an unusual sobriquet in a country where surnames typically end in vowels, suggests an embodiment of the principles of Zen Buddhism: the study of self-discipline and a commitment to meditation, with the objective of attaining enlightenment through intuitive insight and to achieving transcendent truths beyond the intellect—all lessons that must be learned in the nonlogical and paradoxical venue of Italy.

Dibdin, who can always be counted on to employ words with exacting precision, is at his most lyrical stylistically when writing of detective Zen. The author is a master at evocative descriptions of the Italian countryside and in drawing distinctions among the qualities of the places where his investigator carries out dubious, dangerous, and often futile assignments. He sketches Zen and other characters with uncanny skill; produces pungent, realistic dialogue filled with insight and sly humor; and seasons his narrative with pithy similes and well-thought-out metaphors that

subtly underlie each entry in the series, making for a highly satisfying reading experience. Dibdin's body of work has achieved a rare critical distinction that usually eludes most genre writers: It is considered literature.

THE DYING OF THE LIGHT

At first glance, *The Dying of the Light* presents the typical cast of a traditional English mystery. Gathered in the lounge of a country hotel, the Eventide Lodge, are Colonel Weatherby, reading a newspaper; Mrs. Hargreaves, a hypochondriac who constantly plays solitaire; an aged couple—Charles Symes and Grace Lebon—who work at a jigsaw puzzle; Samuel Rosenstein, talking into a telephone; Lady Belinda Scott, fingering the keys of a piano; Canon Purvey, reading a book; George Channing, a millionaire manufacturer of corned beef; and a pair of elderly ladies, Rosemary Travis and Dorothy Davenport, who like twin Miss Marples sit together speculating about who could have committed a series of murders.

Closer examination, however, reveals that appearances are deceiving and that the props are leftovers from earlier times. The colonel's newspaper is many years old. Mrs. Hargreaves' deck of cards is actually a pack of ancient postcards. The jigsaw is made up from several sets of puzzle pieces. The phone is not connected. The piano's strings are missing. The canon's book is really a 1951 appointment diary. All the characters, far from being guests, are aged patients in a run-down nursing home run by a venal, cold-hearted brother and sister who are bilking—and perhaps conspiring to dispose of—their charges.

Always inventive, author Dibdin has in *The Dying of the Light* turned the cozy mystery on its head to produce a novel that is by turns shocking in its believability, gently humorous in its exploration of the resilience and wisdom of the aged, and respectful of the Golden Age mystery even as he stretches the genre's conventions.

BLOOD RAIN

Blood Rain (1999), the seventh entry in Dibdin's popular Aurelio Zen mystery series, sees the taciturn Italian detective posted to Catania, Sicily, where he is charged with secretly overseeing the governmental effort to investigate and quell Mafia activities. Zen's

adopted daughter, Carla Arduini, a computer systems installer working for the Direzione Investigativa AntiMafia (DIA, an organization charged with putting an end to mob rule), is also in the town in the shadow of volcanic Mount Etna and divides her time between her newfound father and a burgeoning friendship with an anti-Mafia judge, Corinna Nunziatella.

The catalytic incident of the novel is the discovery in an abandoned railroad boxcar in a deserted area of the island of a decomposing body, which is suspected to be corpse of the son of a Mafia chieftain. The murder sets off a new wave of violence among various competing factions: mob clans, law enforcement officials of questionable loyalty, and corrupt government officials. The resulting power struggle threatens to sweep Zen, his daughter, officials, vicious mafiosi, and innocent bystanders into a deadly cauldron of danger and death.

Atmospheric, incisively observant of local customs, history, and geography, *Blood Rain* is peppered with authentic characters who seem to step from the pages. Dialogue, often sprinkled with profanity and local imprecations, rings true. Beneath every passage is a darkly humorous, world-weary sensibility that gives the series a satisfying flavor that allows readers to overlook the fact that plot threads are sometimes left dangling—just as in real life.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

AURELIO ZEN SERIES: *Ratking*, 1988; *Vendetta*, 1990; *Cabal*, 1992; *Dead Lagoon*, 1994; *Così Fan Tutti*, 1996; *A Long Finish*, 1998; *Blood Rain*, 1999; *And Then You Die*, 2002; *Medusa*, 2003; *Back to Bologna*, 2005; *End Games*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, 1978; *A Rich Full Death*, 1986; *The Tryst*, 1989; *Dirty Tricks*, 1991; *The Dying of the Light*, 1993; *Dark Specter*, 1995; *Thanksgiving*, 2000; *The Vine*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

EDITED TEXTS: *The Picador Book of Crime Writing*, 1993; *The Vintage Book of Classic Crime*, 1997

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- Library Journal*. Review of *Cosi Fan Tutti*, by Michael Dibdin. 122, no. 8 (May 1, 1997): 144. A favorable review of the Zen novel *Cosi Fan Tutti*, which finds the detective in Naples, where, in a darkly comic turn he is mistaken for a mafioso while helping a wealthy widow prevent her daughters from marrying men who are connected to the Mafia.
- Ott, Bill. Review of *Blood Rain*, by Michael Dibdin. *Booklist* 96, no. 14 (March 25, 2000): 1333. A highly favorable review of the Aurelio Zen entry *Blood Rain*, wherein the detective heads to Sicily to spy on the state police's anti-Mafia operation for the rival Interior Ministry. Ott calls it a welcome and darker novel, compared with several previous entries that had a comic flavor, and terms *Blood Rain* "Crime fiction at its multifaceted best."
- Petrusza, David. Review of *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, by Michael Dibdin. *National Review* 30, no. 23 (August 18, 1978): 1036. An unfavorable review of *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, which, though praising the novel's brisk pace, condemns the author's sloppy research and the unforgivable sin—in a mystery—of telegraphing the solution to the story.

- Publishers Weekly*. Review of *A Rich Full Death*, by Michael Dibdin. 246, no. 20 (May 17, 1999): 59. A very favorable review of *A Rich Full Death*, in which poet Robert Browning teams with expatriate American Robert Booth to investigate a series of murders in Florence, Italy. The novel is praised for its lively dialogue, historical details, and believable characters, with special attention paid to the many allusions to Dante's *Inferno*. Called a "sure-handed command of literature, history and humor in an intricate, literate period piece."
- Spinella, Michael. Review of *Thanksgiving*, by Michael Dibdin. *Booklist* 97, no. 13 (March 1, 2001): 1226. A favorable review of *Thanksgiving*, in which a middle-aged British journalist, having recently lost his beautiful, mysterious wife in a plane crash, becomes obsessed with tracing her past and is entangled in a murder. Called a "chilling and suspenseful psychological drama."
- Stasio, Marilyn. "Crime." Review of *A Long Finish*, by Michael Dibdin. *The New York Times Book Review*, October 11, 1998, p. 28. A favorable review of the darkly comic *A Long Finish*, in which detective Zen is off to Piedmont, Italy, where he accidentally becomes the cause of violence that flares among feuding families, rival vintners, and truffle harvesters in an old-world culture changed by crime, cited especially for its "all-embracing sense of place."

CHARLES DICKENS

Born: Portsmouth, Hampshire, England; February 7, 1812

Died: Gad's Hill, near Rochester, Kent, England; June 9, 1870

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Although Charles Dickens did not gain his fame as a writer of mystery and detective fiction, he was un-

questionably the nineteenth century master of the genre known as the "sensation novel," a melodramatic fiction in which mystery, crime, villainy, and secret evil predominate. Moreover, Dickens made use of his knowledge of the newly created Metropolitan Police Force in England, focusing on the force's detective procedures in several short works and in one of his most respected novels, *Bleak House* (1852-1853). His unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*



Charles Dickens in his Gad's Hill study. (Library of Congress)

(1870), because it has stimulated many readers to provide their own ending, has become one of the most famous detective novels in literary history.

BIOGRAPHY

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, the second of eight children of John Dickens and Elizabeth Barrow Dickens. Because his father's job as clerk in the Naval Pay Office paid very little and made it necessary for him to travel, Dickens spent a penurious youth in many different places. At the age of twelve, he faced the traumatic experience of being put to work in a shoeblack warehouse while his father was imprisoned for debt. *Oliver Twist's* hard young life is the best-known fictional result of what Dickens considered to be an act of desertion by his parents.

After his father was released from prison, Dickens went to school at a London academy. At the age of fif-

teen, he worked as a solicitor's clerk in law offices and two years later became a freelance reporter for the courts—experiences that he later put to good use in his fiction. At the age of twenty-one, he began publishing "Sketches by Boz" and joined *The Morning Chronicle* as a newspaper reporter. The year 1836 was important for Dickens, for he published the Boz sketches as a book; married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a journalist; and began *Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837), a serialized work so phenomenally popular that he was on the way to becoming the most widely read author in England.

While *Pickwick Papers* was still running in serial form, Dickens began *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) and shortly thereafter *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839), both popular successes. He seldom took time off, writing novel after novel at an astonishingly prolific rate; his serial fictions ran in London magazines or newspapers almost constantly. The high point of his career

was between 1850 and 1860; during that period, he published his most respected novels—*David Copperfield* (1849-1850), *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1860-1861).

When he was not writing novels, Dickens was touring the United States or the Continent, editing various journals and newspapers, working with amateur theatrical groups, and giving public readings from his works. This extremely heavy work load finally took its toll on his health. On June 8, 1870, after working all day, he suffered a stroke at his Gad's Hill home; he died the next day. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

ANALYSIS

Crime and imprisonment are frequent themes in the novels of Charles Dickens; few modern readers are unaware of the efforts of Fagin to ensnare the young Oliver Twist into a life of crime, and few are unaware of the horrible significance of the Bastille and the guillotine in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Nevertheless, Dickens's most important works to focus on the nature of crime are *Bleak House*, the plot of which is the classic mystery-story pattern of the effort to uncover secret guilt, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, that famous unfinished detective novel that has so piqued the interest of numerous amateur sleuths.

Because Dickens spent much time in his early life as a court reporter, he published several minor works focusing on mysterious murder and detective investigations even before *Bleak House* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. An early Dickens story, "A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second," written in 1841, which has been suggested as the



Illustration from an 1870 American edition of *Barnaby Rudge*. (Library of Congress)

source of Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart," focuses on the obsession to commit murder. In "Three Detectives: Anecdotes," published in the early 1850's, Dickens deals with the methods of the detective branch of the newly created Metropolitan Police Force.

BARNABY RUDGE

The first of his full-length novels to deal with a mysterious murder and an investigative effort to discover the murderer, however, is *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of '80* (1841), a historical novel that primarily deals with the Gordon Riots of 1780 and the

attack on Newgate Prison. It is a novel of various strands that do not always successfully come together; the subplot of *Barnaby Rudge* most relevant to the detective genre focuses on the efforts of Geoffrey Hare-dale to find the murderer of his brother, even though it is obvious throughout that the villain is the father of the idiot boy, Barnaby Rudge. The novel is also important in the history of detective fiction in that the great amateur detective Edgar Allan Poe deduced the plot and the ending of the story after having read only the first two serial installments, deduced it so accurately, in fact, that Dickens himself was reported to be astonished by his accuracy.

BLEAK HOUSE

It is with the publication of *Bleak House* that Dickens makes the most extensive use in a major novel of the motif of secret crime and detection. Inspector Bucket, who is introduced about midway through the novel, in a chapter entitled simply "Mr. Bucket," is said to be the first professional detective in English crime fiction. Indeed, since the novel was published, it has been generally assumed that Bucket is based on Inspector Charles Frederick Field, one of the most famous detectives of his time and the subject of an earlier nonfictional article by Dickens. A professional rather than an amateur detective like Poe's C. Auguste Dupin, the methodical Bucket is a harbinger of the numerous inspectors of Scotland Yard who populated twentieth century detective fiction.

Bleak House stands as a milestone in history for another reason. Its entire plot—from the ominous fog that hangs, both literally and figuratively, over the law courts at Chancery at the novel's beginning to the death of Lady Dedlock at its end—follows what has come to be recognized as the classic pattern of the detective novel. It is only when the crucial final discoveries of Lady Dedlock's secret and the significance of her lawyer's murder make all the seemingly disconnected events meaningful that the latent structure of the work becomes manifest and the novel achieves the kind of closure associated with the classics of the detective genre.

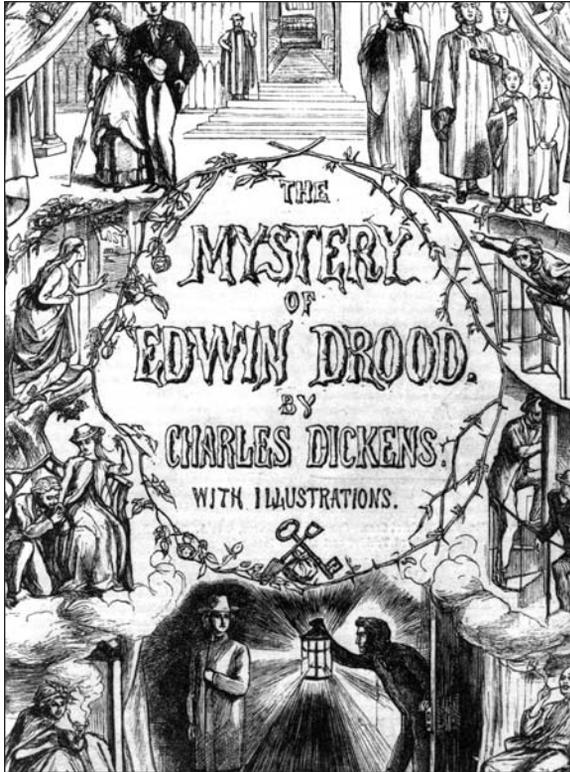
Although when *Bleak House* was first published some reviewers complained that it had no plot, more recent critics have perceived the elaborate symbolic

parallels and contrasts between characters and events that make up the intricate mystery pattern of the novel. Edgar Johnson, one of Dickens's most perceptive critics, argues that the plot of the novel is like a whirlpool that circles faster and tighter until it draws all the characters into its destructive funnel. At the center of the whirlpool is Lady Dedlock, whose secret indiscretion threatens to be revealed until her blackmailing solicitor, Tulkinghorn, is mysteriously murdered. As Inspector Bucket proceeds to solve the mystery of the murder, the symbolic web of the case of Jarndyce versus Jarndyce in the law courts at Chancery fatefully ensnares all who become involved in it. A powerful work that transcends its sensation-novel model, *Bleak House* not only satirizes the baroque complexity of the law but also constructs a profound symbolic microcosm of the complex mysteries of human hopes and secret sins.

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Although *Bleak House* is his most brilliant novel to make use of the detective-story model, the most famous work to establish Dickens as a master of the detective genre is the uncompleted and, compared to *Bleak House*, uncomplicated *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The story of its origin and the reported assumptions about Dickens's intentions for it have been told many times. According to Dickens's biographers, Dickens planned the work in an effort to beat Wilkie Collins (whose novel *The Woman in White*, 1860, has been credited with creating the English detective story) at his own game.

The central character in Dickens's novel is not Edwin Drood but rather his uncle, John Jasper, the choirmaster of Cloisterham, who in the first scene of the book is found in a squalid opium den. The plot revolves around the mysterious disappearance of Drood, a student engineer who has come to stay with his uncle. Although Dickens's death prevented him from solving the mystery of Drood's disappearance, the existing parts of the novel suggest quite clearly the villain's identity. Drood has been betrothed to the orphaned Rosa Bud since childhood, but Jasper's behavior around Rosa makes it obvious that he is obsessed by her. Although Jasper seems the most apparent suspect, the plot is complicated by the involvement



of Neville Landless and his sister Helena, who have recently arrived from Ceylon. Landless, a passionate, swarthy man, also admires Rosa and strongly dislikes Drood, with whom he argues. After Drood's disappearance during a storm, Landless is the most likely suspect, especially since shortly thereafter he also disappears. Adding to the mystery is the arrival of a stranger in Cloisterham named Dick Datchery, whose white-haired appearance makes it clear that he is in disguise. The novel ends with Jasper's return to the opium den and its owner, Opium Sal, hearing him mumble in his stupor about having done something.

Although there seems little mystery here to be unraveled, detective-story aficionados have long been fascinated with what *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* leaves untold. First of all, there is the mystery of Jasper. Although he seems to be the villain of the piece, the novel never makes it clear that he has committed any crime. The one bit of external evidence for his guilt has been reported by Dickens's friend and biographer John Forster, who wrote that Dickens said one feature of the story was to be the discovery by the mur-

derer that he did not have to commit the murder to achieve his objective. Because the reader finds in the section of the novel that Dickens completed that Rosa and Edwin agree to break their betrothal, it seems clear that if Jasper did kill Drood because of his desire for Rosa, then that act indeed was unnecessary.

The second mystery is the fate of Edwin Drood. Some readers have suggested that because Dickens considered using other titles for the novel, such as "The Disappearance of Edwin Drood" or "Edwin Drood in Hiding," Drood is not even dead. In fact, of the many theories accounting for the novel's conclusion, roughly one-third take this approach. The third mystery revolves around the character Dick Datchery, who seems to be one of the other characters in disguise. Although the most likely candidate is Neville Landless, come back in disguise to discover the true murderer of Drood and thus clear himself, other readers have suggested several other characters in the novel, including Drood himself.

The most basic reason that detective-story fans are fascinated with resolving the mystery of a story that seems so utterly lacking in mystery is one of the most powerful conventions of the detective story itself: The most obvious suspect for the crime is often not the criminal at all. Although Jasper is the only character in the novel who seems to have the personality and the motive for killing Drood, many readers refuse to believe that Dickens intended to make the solution so easy, especially if he were indeed interested in showing Collins that he could beat him at his own genre.

What makes *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, in spite of its uncompleted status, a powerful work is its consideration of one of the central concerns of nineteenth century fiction—a man split between powerful instinctive urges and his sense of social responsibility. Although Poe in the United States and Fyodor Dostoevski in Russia also dealt with this theme of the double nature of man, the most famous work in English fiction to focus on it is Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). John Jasper, like Dr. Jekyll, has his socially respectable side as the choirmaster of Cloisterham; nevertheless, hiding within him are powerful erotic urges and drug-induced hallucinations that make him seem like

the bestial Mr. Hyde. The way the novel deals with the Freudian conflict between the urge-driven Id and the socially responsible Superego within the detective-story genre accounts for much of its power.

More readers have been concerned with the practical mysteries of the unfinished plot of the book, however, than they have with its thematic implications. A critical industry of Droodiana has grown up around *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as numerous readers and critics have tried to solve the mystery or provide their own ending. An early effort to write the missing ending, Richard Anthony Proctor's *Watched by the Dead: A Loving Study of Dickens' Half-Told Tale* (1887), takes the approach, since followed by various stage versions of the story, that Drood is not dead at all. The best-known film version of the novel, a 1935 film with Claude Rains as John Jasper, however, "finishes" the story by making Neville Landless, disguised as Dick Datchery, the obvious hero and thus the means by which Jasper is revealed as the murderer of Drood.

Dickens, the most widely read novelist of the Victorian era, and still the best-known writer of that period, has the enviable distinction of being both a best-selling author who knew precisely how to create memorable characters and involve his readers in powerful, page-turning stories and a critically acclaimed artist who was able to make use of popular melodramatic and sensational fictional modes to explore the secret mysteries of human motivation and the complications of living within the social contract.

Charles E. May

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Oliver Twist*, 1837-1839 (also known as *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*); *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of '80*, 1841; *Bleak House*, 1852-1853; *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, 1870 (unfinished)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Pickwick Papers*, 1836-1837 (also known as *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*); *Nicholas Nickleby*, 1838-1839 (also known as *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*); *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1840-1841; *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1843-1844 (also known as *The Life and Adventures of*

Martin Chuzzlewit); *Dombey and Son*, 1846-1848 (also known as *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation*); *David Copperfield*, 1849-1850 (also known as *The Personal History of David Copperfield*); *Hard Times*, 1854 (also known as *Hard Times for These Times*); *Little Dorrit*, 1855-1857; *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859; *Great Expectations*, 1860-1861; *Our Mutual Friend*, 1864-1865

SHORT FICTION: *Sketches by Boz*, 1836; *A Christmas Carol*, 1843; *The Chimes*, 1844; *The Cricket on the Hearth*, 1845; *The Battle of Life*, 1846; *The Haunted Man*, 1848; *Reprinted Pieces*, 1858; *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 1860; *George Silverman's Explanation*, 1868; *Christmas Stories*, 1871

PLAYS: *The Strange Gentleman*, pr. 1836; *The Village Coquettes*, pr., pb. 1836; *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, pr., pb. 1851 (with Mark Lemon); *No Thoroughfare*, pr., pb. 1867 (with Wilkie Collins)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Child's History of England*, 1852-1854; *The Life of Our Lord*, 1934

NONFICTION: *American Notes*, 1842; *Pictures from Italy*, 1846

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PETER DICKINSON

Born: Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia); December 16, 1927

Also wrote as Malcolm de Brissac

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

James Pibble, 1968-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JAMES PIBBLE is a nondescript Scotland Yard detective. He is timid, yet persevering and honest, and capable of brilliant flashes of insight into character and motive. His eccentricity ensures that he is given the most bizarre and seemingly unsolvable cases. Of lower-middle-class origin, he is troubled by memories of his dead father's failures.

CONTRIBUTION

The first of Peter Dickinson's James Pibble series, *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest* (1968), signaled the emergence of a major, if offbeat talent. However, even before he had finished with the Pibble series, Dickinson had begun writing nonseries crime novels, many of them with historical settings. One of the most stylistically innovative writers in the field, Dickinson often tests or redefines the boundaries of crime fiction. His characters are unconventional, his settings are exotic or deliberately disturbing, and his plots, especially in the later nonseries novels, vie with mainstream fiction in their complex juxtapositions of past and present. Although Pibble is too eccentric a police officer to have inspired many imitators, Dickinson's nonseries novels may justly be compared with those of his contemporary, Ruth Rendell, for having creatively blurred the distinctions between crime writing and main-

stream fiction, thus clearing fresh ground for the generation of writers who followed.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter Malcom de Brissac Dickinson was born in Livingston, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) on December 16, 1927, to English parents. His father was a British civil servant. Dickinson has written fondly of his childhood in Africa. In 1935 Dickinson's family returned to Berkhamstead, England.

In 1940 Dickinson entered Eton, a prestigious English preparatory school, did military service just after World War II, then attended King's College, Cambridge, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1951. For seventeen years, Dickinson worked as an editor and book reviewer for the magazine *Punch*. Subsequently, he turned to writing fiction full time.

Completed when Dickinson was almost forty, *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest* won the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award for best work of fiction. In 1969 Dickinson won the Gold Dagger a second time for *The Old English Peep Show*. In addition, Dickinson has won several awards for his work as a writer of children's fiction, including the Whitbread Book Award for the novel *Tulku* in 1969.

ANALYSIS

Peter Dickinson's Pibble novels, while they may be classified technically as police procedurals, do not fit comfortably into that niche. Pibble is a Scotland Yard detective, but by contrast to the more conventional detectives of the genre, he generally works alone, and his investigations do not consistently adhere to realistic police methods. Although Pibble does a fair amount of evidence gathering, fingerprinting, and so on, he more often than not solves his cases by way of inspired leaps of intuition underlaid by a subtle and painstaking process of deduction.

A more radical distinction may be drawn between the character of Pibble and the police detectives of the Golden Age of crime fiction that preceded World War II: the somewhat dimwitted plodders, such as Agatha Christie's Inspector Battle, forever outclassed by the brilliance of Hercule Poirot, or the idealized and heroic police detectives who, like Ngaio Marsh's

Inspector Roderick Alleyn, are often from aristocratic backgrounds. Pibble conforms to neither type. He is from a lower-middle-class background and is far from heroic in any conventional sense. However, neither is he dimwitted or plodding. He is possessed of a retentive memory for details, is well-read and an avid crossword puzzler, and often displays flashes of intuitive brilliance. Nevertheless, he frequently makes mistakes and, partly because of class insecurities, allows himself to be bullied by others, both police associates and suspects. Because Pibble is one of the most introspective investigators in the history of the police procedural, his thoughts and perceptions are at times labyrinthine as the reader follows him, often stumbling and seemingly lost, toward a final solution. Thus Pibble is to some extent a deliberate inversion of the heroic Golden Age model of the police detective.

Although the character of Pibble is the most distinguishing feature of the Pibble series, Dickinson's crime scenes, which are often so bizarre as to verge on the surrealistic, are also notable. In *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest*, for example, a small group of New Guineans is resettled in a London house, where their chief is brutally murdered. Dickinson cleverly interweaves the story of Pibble's investigation of the murder with the story of the group's life in New Guinea and the events leading up to its migration to England. Equally unconventional is the fourth novel in the series, *Sleep and His Brother* (1971), in which a recently retired Pibble is drawn into a series of baffling events occurring on the premises of a country house near London, now remodeled and serving as an institution for the care of children suffering from a rare disease that may also produce paranormal powers.

Although it is difficult to generalize about Dickinson's nonseries mysteries, most of them may be loosely classified as historical fiction. Typically, they begin in the present but seek to unravel some mystery—usually a murder—that remains hidden in the past. Often, the past that these elegant mysteries explore is the period of the Golden Age of crime fiction, and the setting for these hidden crimes is a country house reminiscent of the country house settings of Golden Age fiction. However, whereas authors like Christie and Marsh portrayed that world as essentially

static and its hierarchical social world still intact, Dickinson reconstructs that same world from a post-World War II perspective, allowing signs of its disintegration to become more apparent. Most representative of these historical reconstructions is *The Last House Party* (1982), much of which is set in a country manor.

THE GLASS-SIDED ANTS' NEST

The "ants" to which this *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest* refers are a small tribe of New Guineans called the Ku. The reasons for their removal to England are revealed in fragments as the novel unfolds, in part through the narrative of Dr. Eve Ku, the English daughter of a missionary to New Guinea, who grew up there and has become a member of the tribe. Before the tribe was removed from New Guinea during World War II, its members had almost all become Christians. However, the degree to which the men of the tribe have accepted a Christian and more "civilized" way of life in England becomes a thematic issue explored at some length by Dickinson. Dr. Ku, whom the tribe regards as a man, is an anthropologist and is working on a study of the tribe's customs. Thus her position in the tribe is ambiguous; she is both participant in and observer of the customs she studies.

The major weakness of this novel is that the solution to the murder of the chief, Aaron, is only tangentially related to its anthropological theme. This weakness is offset somewhat by the fact that the men of the tribe become major suspects in the investigation when Pibble discovers that they have secretly begun to resurrect their pre-Christian practices, largely involving the ritual invocation of an almost forgotten tribal god. The tribe's chief, Aaron, a firm convert to Christianity, had opposed such practices. The other men, Pibble suspects, may have conspired to murder Aaron to remove the primary obstacle to their attempt to preserve their ancient religious beliefs. Thus much of the investigation points toward a solution to the crime that would have been intrinsic to the tribal conflicts whose depiction lies at the thematic center of the novel. However, Dickinson sacrifices the integrity of his plot for the sake of a surprise ending.

Nonetheless, *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest* well deserved the praise lavished on it at the time of its publication. Most enduring is the novel's juxtaposition of

primitive and civilized cultures, the former deeply embedded in ritual and taboo, and the latter, by contrast, typified by a random and apparently meaningless (from the tribe's point of view) frenzy of activity. In this way, the novel functions as a powerful critique of modern urban society, though it does so without idealizing a more primitive way of life.

SLEEP AND HIS BROTHER

In Greek mythology the phrase "sleep and his brother" refers to Hypnos, the god of sleep and dreams, and Thanatos, the god of death. In *Sleep and His Brother*, the name of Hypnos is never explicitly mentioned, but he is clearly the symbolic deity who presides over the premises of the south London Sospice estate, now home to the McNair Foundation, which provides care for cathypnics, children afflicted by a rare sleeping sickness (cathypny). This purely fictitious disease, the result of a hormonal abnormality, lowers the body temperature of those afflicted, and generally leads to an early death. The god of death appears here explicitly in the form of a Greek millionaire and developer, Athanasius Thanatos, who is one of the McNair Foundation's financial backers, but whose motives may be more sinister than they at first appear.

When the novel opens, Pibble has been forced into early retirement by his Scotland Yard superiors, and is feeling at odds with himself and more than a little resentful that he has been deprived of an occupation. His involvement with the McNair Foundation has nothing to do, initially, with a criminal investigation. Instead, he is cast in the role of reluctant private consultant, called in by the foundation's secretary. Pibble soon suspects that the foundation's resident psychiatrist, Dr. Ram Silver, may be a fraud—a con man masquerading as a doctor. He becomes involved, as well, with Thanatos, and begins to suspect that this seeming philanthropist is secretly conspiring to turn the Sospice mansion into an exclusive resort. Although no death occurs until someone dies in the midst of an apparent arson at the novel's dramatic conclusion, Pibble is convinced that a murder has indeed occurred; but he lacks the kind of proof that would convince his former Scotland Yard colleagues.

In this novel, Dickinson might be said to be deliberately deconstructing the traditional police proce-

dural in several ways. The suspected murderer, for example, is never publicly exposed, preventing the reader from gaining any traditional sense of closure. Moreover, when late in the novel Pibble's former colleagues from the Yard are called in, they are presented in satirical fashion as brutal careerists, dealing out physical and verbal abuse to hapless bystanders.

Sleep and His Brother draws extensively on contemporary scientific research to create not only a fictitious and yet utterly convincing disease but also a strikingly unconventional setting in which the children afflicted by that disease emerge as sympathetic and engaging characters. These cathypnic children have subnormal intelligence but manage to communicate effectively with vocabularies of no more than three hundred words. Fat and cherubic in appearance, they inspire obsessive affection in everyone. They are also believed to have paranormal abilities, a theme that Dickinson explores at some length, drawing some interesting parallels between Pibble's own intuitive investigative methods and the supposed telepathic powers of the children. In addition, the novel explores questions of medical ethics—especially those involving eugenics and euthanasia—that were in the 1970's (and remain) issues of political and social concern but which are rarely dealt with so seriously in crime fiction. In fact, the solution to this hypothetical murder turns on the willingness of one researcher to use the cathypnic children as sacrificial lambs in his quest for a Nobel Prize.

THE LAST HOUSE PARTY

The party in *The Last House Party* is a gathering of the English social elite for a weekend of games, political intrigue, sumptuous dinners, and a glittering ball. The party takes place at the Snailwood mansion in 1937, amid portents of the coming war with Germany. At the climax of these events, an eight-year-old girl, daughter of Lady Snailwood's secretary, is sexually assaulted. Decades later that little girl, Sally Dubigny, has become the caretaker of the Snailwood estate, but the identity of her assailant remains a mystery. The arrival one day of an old man offering to repair Snailwood's famous tower clock, stopped since 1937, opens up a window into the past and a possible solution to the mystery.

Although Dickinson has been justly praised for the Pibble novels, it is in the later nonsensical works that his fictional powers attain their full maturity. In *The Last House Party*, plot, characterization, theme, setting, and symbolism are all unified and consistently developed. Dickinson's portrayal of the so-called Snailwood Gang, the aristocratic circle of which the beautiful Lady Zena Snailwood is the cold and calculating centerpiece, is completely convincing. With a sure ear for the dialog of the period, Dickinson explores the conflicting political currents of the era as well as the underlying personal obsessions and perversions that often shape them.

What is most compelling in this novel, however, is the recognition that the country house mystery that it re-creates was, in essence, a ritual tale of guilt and expiation, requiring a scapegoat and a sacrificial victim. Numerous critics of Golden Age fiction have noted that most of the crime novels of the period depict a world that is essentially static, its social hierarchies and customs depicted as eternal and unchanging. Although that placid order is momentarily shattered by murder, its social equilibrium is restored in the end by an unambiguous identification of the killer and by his or her expulsion, symbolically speaking, from the community. *The Last House Party*, by contrast, while it recreates the glittering surface of that lost world, and alludes frequently to the sacrificial theme, does not offer its readers the same ritual closure. The sacrificial victim is not murdered, but lives on, carrying the repressed memories of that childhood tragedy into the present. In her efforts to find some satisfying closure, she fashions a narrative about past events, believing that she has correctly identified the identity of her assailant. However, that narrative proves to have been built on false supposition and wish fulfillment. In the end she is shattered by the revelation of the assailant's true identity. So, also, is the reader's confidence shaken when the assailant proves to have been not simply the most unlikely suspect but also the most sympathetic. Such an assault on the reader's confidence would have been antithetical to the aims of the Golden Age crime writer.

Jack E. Trotter

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION**DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT JAMES PIBBLE**

SERIES: *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest*, 1968 (also known as *Skin Deep*); *The Old English Peep Show*, 1969 (also known as *A Pride of Heroes*); *The Sinful Stones*, 1970 (also known as *The Seals*); *Sleep and His Brother*, 1971; *Lizard in the Cup*, 1972; *One Foot in the Grave*, 1979

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Green Gene*, 1973; *The Lively Dead*, 1975; *The Walking Dead*, 1977; *A Summer in the Twenties*, 1981; *The Last House Party*, 1982; *Hindsight*, 1983; *Death of a Unicorn*, 1984; *Tefuga*, 1986; *Perfect Gallows*, 1987; *The Yellow Room Conspiracy*, 1994; *Some Deaths Before Dying*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Poison Oracle*, 1974

TELEPLAY: *Mandog* series, 1972

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: 1968-1980 • *The Weathermonger*, 1968; *Heartsease*, 1969; *The Devil's Children*, 1970; *Emma Tupper's Diary*, 1971; *The Iron Lion*, 1972; *The Dancing Bear*, 1972; *The Gift*, 1973; *Chance, Luck, and Destiny*, 1975; *Presto! Humorous Bits and Pieces*, 1975; *The Changes*, 1975; *King and Joker*, 1976; *The Blue Hawk*, 1976; *Anner-ton Pit*, 1977; *Hepzibah*, 1978; *The Flight of Dragons*, 1979; *Tulku*, 1979; *City of Gold, and Other Stories from the Old Testament*, 1980

1981-1990 • *The Seventh Raven*, 1981; *Healer*, 1983; *Giant Cold*, 1984; *A Box of Nothing*, 1985; *Merlin Dreams*, 1988; *Eva*, 1988; *AK*, 1990

1991-2007 • *A Bone from a Dry Sea*, 1992; *Time and the Clockmice, Etcetera*, 1993; *Shadow of a*

Hero, 1994; *Chuck and Danielle*, 1996; *The Lion Tamer's Daughter, and Other Stories*, 1997; *Mann's Story*, 1998; *Suth's Story*, 1998; *Noli's Story*, 1998; *Po's Story*, 1998; *The Ropemaker*, 2001; *The Tears of the Salamander*, 2003; *The Kin*, 2003; *Inside Granddad*, 2004; *Angel Isle*, 2007

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Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel—A History*. 3d ed. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993. Symons's analysis of the Golden Age country house mystery is essential for grasping Dickinson's later novels.

HEIMITO VON DODERER

Born: Weidlingau, near Vienna, Austro-Hungarian Empire (now in Austria); September 5, 1896

Died: Vienna, Austria; December 23, 1966

Types of plot: Historical; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Heimito von Doderer is the undisputed master of the modern Austrian novel. Although not a writer of mystery and detective fiction in the narrow sense of the term, Doderer, like Fyodor Dostoevski, adapted the conventions of the genre to his own ends. In his novels, as in Dostoevski's, crime and detection have a metaphysical significance. Doderer's readers must themselves become "detectives," able to distinguish between different levels of reality. In his short fiction as well, Doderer reveals the influence of the mystery genre; his treatment of the mysterious and the supernatural is in the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe.

BIOGRAPHY

Heimito von Doderer was born on September 5, 1896, in the small town of Weidlingau, near the city of Vienna, Austria. He was the youngest of six children of Wilhelm Ritter von Doderer and Luise Wilhelmine von Doderer. He grew up and went to school in Vienna. In the fall of 1914, he matriculated as a law student at the University of Vienna.

In 1915, Doderer entered the military service and advanced to the rank of lieutenant. The following summer he was taken prisoner of war in Russia, where he was interned in various camps in Siberia and East Asia. In 1920, he fled from a camp and walked from the Kirghiz Steppe back to Vienna. He resumed his studies at the university, now in history and psychology. He earned a doctorate in medieval history in 1925.

Doderer started to write in 1916 and continued while a prisoner of war. In the 1920's he managed to publish some of his poetry and short stories, but he failed to gain widespread recognition. In the late 1920's he supported himself primarily by writing historical feuilletons for various Vienna newspapers. In

1929, Doderer encountered the work of the writer and painter Albert Paris Gütersloh, a profound experience that was to guide him as a writer and thinker for the remainder of his life. He articulated the influence that this artist had on him in the monograph *Der Fall Gütersloh* (1930; the Gütersloh case).

The 1930's were important but turbulent years. In 1930, Doderer married Gusti Hasterlik, a woman he had loved for ten years. The marriage failed after two years, and they were divorced in 1938. In 1933, Doderer became a member for several years of the then-illegal Austrian Nazi Party. After two years of extensive study and instruction, Doderer converted to Catholicism in 1940. In that decade he also gained literary prominence with the publication of *Ein Mord den jeder begeht* (1938; *Every Man a Murderer*, 1964) and *Ein Umweg* (1940; a detour).

During World War II, Doderer served as a lieutenant and captain in the German air force. While stationed in France, he began writing *Die Strudlhofstiege: Oder, Melzer und die Tiefe der Jahre* (1951; the Strudlhof steps), the novel that made him famous in Europe. In 1952 he married Maria Emma Thoma. In 1956 he published *Die Dämonen: Nach der Chronik des Sektionsrates Geyrenhoff* (*The Demons*, 1961), the work that brought him worldwide recognition as one of the most important prose writers of German literature in the twentieth century.

During the last decade of his life, Doderer published other novels, several volumes of short stories, numerous essays, and his diaries. He also began writing a grandly designed tetralogy to be called *Roman No 7* (novel number 7). The first part was completed as *Erster Teil: Die Wasserfälle von Slunj* (1963; *The Waterfalls of Slunj*, 1966). The second part, *Zweiter Teil: Der Grenzwald* (1967; the forest at the border), was published posthumously. Doderer died on December 23, 1966, in Vienna, Austria.

ANALYSIS

Heimito von Doderer's fictional world is a delightful mixture of excruciatingly close adherence to pre-

cise description of concrete details and an equally strong dedication to belief in the mysteries of the fantasy world. It is known, for example, that Doderer would examine meteorological records in Vienna simply to ensure that his description of the weather on a particular day would be in absolute congruence with the facts of that day in history. His descriptions of Vienna, to cite another example, are so accurate that the reader of his fiction can rely on them perfectly and use them as a traveler's guide without fail.

As a trained historian—he had a doctorate in medieval history from the University of Vienna and was a member of the Institute for the Study of Austrian History—Doderer approached his task as a writer with an uncanny appreciation for details and valid facts. A part of his training required that he learn the various languages and dialects that were in use during medieval times. Consequently, when the plot of *The Demons* called for the inclusion of a manuscript on medieval sorcery found in the library of a castle that dated back to those times, Doderer was able to create a fictional manuscript that truthfully reflected the topic of witchcraft in the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the manuscript—which is fifty pages long in the printed text—was written in the South Bavarian dialect of Early New High German. (The translators have rendered the manuscript in the language of William Caxton, the first English printer, who flourished in the second half of the fifteenth century.)

The fantasy world is created with the same attention paid to order and detail. In virtually all Doderer's major works there appear forms of dragons. These mythical beasts took on various guises, as Doderer explained in his essay "The Return of the Dragons" (1958). In his own lifetime, Doderer experienced the appearance of strange creatures: a lobster or crab found in the French Bay of Toulon that was more than three feet long, well over twice the previously known size of this species; an eel-type fish caught in the Danube near Vienna that was about five feet long, with a head whose circumference was well over two feet and a weight close to sixty pounds; a grass or ring snake that he saw as a youth near his summer home draped across a brook like a garland, which he estimated to have been close to ten feet long.

These examples of strange creatures may not in fact resemble the terrible monsters with crested heads and tremendous claws, often spouting fire, which the medieval knight fought to gain the love of a fair maiden. They are, however, modern manifestations of the same concept. Doderer reproves the nineteenth century zoologists for excluding this ancient form of animal from their taxonomic descriptions of the animal world merely because they could find no living examples of the dragons. As one proof of their continued existence, Doderer gives the example of the famous Komodo dragon, a lizardlike animal found in the wild interior of the island of Java, which is almost twenty feet long and has all the physical characteristics of the dragon except that, when angered, it spews a very foul smell rather than fire. Despite such evidence, Doderer concludes, the scientists of the nineteenth century established a "type of zoological totalitarianism in which things (such as dragons) cannot be, which are not allowed to be." One should, he adds, be cautious when walking through the woods alone. Suddenly, passing a cavernous ravine, one may encounter a ferocious beast that needs to be slain before one can gain the love of a fair maiden.

Virtually all Doderer's novels and short stories, even many of his "shortest" stories, are detective stories in which the psychological and biographical motivations of an individual or group are examined. The results of such an investigation lead generally to a greater apperception of the self or the group. The cause of the "crime" is normally found to be the character's living in a state of nonacceptance of reality. Doderer calls this the "second reality."

In the essay "Principles and Function of the Novel" (1958), Doderer states that to bring about the "first reality"—whether for author, character, or reader—it is essential to go through a process of experiencing an event, of forgetting that event, and finally of remembering. "Writing," Doderer maintains, "is the unveiling of grammar through a sudden burst of coincidental remembering." The remembered experience undergoes a conversion to the medium used by the writer, namely language. At this point, the significance of the experience is also examined and transformed by the writer as moralist. Consequently, the completed work

is a psychological novel of development. The individual character has undergone a process that not only has led to that stage of greater apperception of the self—the “first reality”—but also has made him become a more humane individual.

In the same essay, Doderer also speaks about the structure of the novel. A lifelong admirer of Ludwig van Beethoven, he compares the novel to the symphony, an elaborate composition in three or four movements: The novel, like a symphony, comprises an exposition in which numerous contrasting themes are introduced, a development of these themes, a recapitulation of the themes, and a coda that brings the composition to a satisfactory conclusion. A “great symphony” of several movements would repeat the basic form numerous times. Because the classic symphony requires the use of a very strict and specific form, Doderer makes the same demand of the novel. And as he writes, he gives initial priority to the form of the novel rather than the content.

To have an overall picture while working on a novel, Doderer developed a series of sketches or blueprints, just as an architect draws a plan for a building.



Heimito von Doderer.

He mentions having used a drawing board to plot the major novels, especially the later polygraphic works. In this way, Doderer was able to keep track of the scores of characters and the highly convoluted plots that are so characteristic of his work. As a result of this technique of writing, the reader always enjoys a heightened experience of suspense, while at the same time following a story that is realistically told and that is consistent within itself.

EVERY MAN A MURDERER

A closer examination of the two major novels that have been translated into English illustrates Doderer’s theory and technique. *Every Man a Murderer* begins:

Everyone’s childhood is plumped down over his head like a bucket. The contents of this bucket are at first unknown. But throughout life, the stuff drips down on him slowly—and there’s no sense changing clothes or costume, for the dripping will continue.

The man whose life is to be related here . . . might almost serve as a proof that no one can ever wash away that bucket’s contents.

With this statement as a motto, the life of Conrad Castiletz is examined in a leisurely and very methodical fashion. It begins with detailed descriptions of the child and his family, the home life of a relatively well-to-do textile merchant in a major urban environment around the turn of the twentieth century. The narrative resembles a traditional psychological study of the well-ordered life of this young man. Indeed, nothing seems to be extraordinary. Yet, it becomes disturbing when the life of young Conrad continues in this orderly, almost nonhuman way. He seems to avoid all experiences that cannot be subjected to his control: Every morning he previews the day’s events to ensure that he is properly prepared to meet them without fail or surprise. There are nevertheless times when he is confronted by the unexpected. In such cases, when he cannot impose order on an event, Conrad has the facility to relegate it to his subconscious.

Yet, in Doderer’s work and clearly in *Every Man a Murderer*, both what is unexpected and what is ordinary on first occurrence are often a “second reality.” Events may seem transparent or they may seem mysterious. Neither Conrad nor the reader perceives the

“first reality” until life—and the novel—continues, the events forgotten and then remembered. What is initially not a crime becomes one; what was a mystery is resolved. Conrad’s life, which once had been in a state of nonacceptance of reality, becomes a fully apperceived life, the “first reality.”

THE DEMONS

The Demons deals with the confusion of “second reality” and the ultimate emergence of a “first reality” on a more massive scale. Doderer begins:

And yet—in fact you need only draw a single thread at any point you choose out of the fabric of life and the run will make a pathway across the whole, and down that wider pathway each of the other threads will become successively visible, one by one. For the whole is contained in the smallest segment of anyone’s life-story; indeed, we may even say that it is contained in every single moment; start up your dredging machine and you take it all up, no matter whether ecstasy, despair, boredom, or triumph happens to fill the moving buckets on their endless chain of ticking seconds.

This passage introduces the motto of this polygraphic novel of more than thirteen hundred pages in which Doderer examines not one character but an entire cross section of society at a critical point in history. The novel is set in Vienna from the fall of 1926 until July, 1927; it is narrated, however, from the perspective of twenty-eight years later, 1955.

The main narrator is the retired civil servant Georg von Geyrenhoff, who assures the reader that the historical events that led up to the burning of the Palace of Justice are fully and convincingly recorded in these pages. In 1955, when he submits his report, Geyrenhoff realizes that that event was “the Cannae of Austrian freedom,” even though no one knew it at that time. Austria had fallen victim to the false ideology of German Nazism—a “second reality” in which an entire country lived. It could not recover until it experienced the total depth of destruction of World War II and realized that it had subjected itself to demoniac forces. Doderer noted that the refusal to perceive reality in a valid manner—he named this “deperception”—can be seen on a national level as well as on an individual basis. To recover from the illness of a time

and become humane once more requires a conscious perception of reality, an apperception or a living in a “first reality.”

The novel, however, is far more than a historical or philosophical report. To arrive at the “first reality” requires detection, and mysteries must be solved. An apparently upright member of the community is a secret thief. An underworld character commits a seemingly senseless murder. The subterranean sewers of Vienna harbor a demoniac force, and there are other forms and creatures that threaten life from below, but they cannot be readily perceived.

Evil forces from the depths of time reside in the medieval manuscript found in the Neudegg Castle. It reports the 1464 trial of two women charged with practicing sorcery, specifically the sexual power of magic. It was, however, not a real trial, since the entire scheme served only the voyeuristic perversions of the master of the castle, Achaz Neudegger. The manuscript is a detailed account of the establishment of a “second reality” in a fantasy world of times past. Parenthetically it can be observed that the current owner and the reader of the manuscript will reach the desired level of apperception only after they have critically examined the manuscript and have established the false ideology that it reports.

From the lower depths of the subconscious comes “Kap’s Night Book,” a diary of dreams kept by Anna Kapsreiter. The two chapters of the novel devoted to this diary are limited to thirteen dreams. All a reflection of Anna’s waking life, the dreams are, at the same time, prophetic. Unlike the thoughts, feelings, and actions of many other characters, those of Anna Kapsreiter occur on the level of a “first reality.” She was perhaps the only one who knew that the burning of the Palace of Justice signified “the Cannae of Austrian freedom.” Unfortunately, she could not tell everyone else.

This massive novel has 142 characters, of which almost three dozen are main characters. There is no single or main plot, but many plots that involve all characters in some way. Some lead almost normal lives, while the stories of others can be absurd and grotesque, fanciful, or totally lacking in imagination, modern or medieval. In the end, Doderer certainly ties

up all the threads, completing the metaphor with which the novel begins, but his own comparison to music is more reflective of this work. In *The Demons*, Doderer has composed a “great symphony” with its elaborate movements of contrasting themes fully developed and a final coda that brings the entire composition to a satisfactory conclusion.

Thomas H. Falk

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Das Geheimnis des Reichs*, 1930; *Ein Umweg*, 1940; *Die erleuchteten Fenster*, 1950; *Die Strudlhofstiege: Oder, Melzer und die Tiefe der Jahre*, 1951; *Die Merowinger*, 1962; *Roman No. 7, Erster Teil: Die Wasserfälle von Slunj*, 1963 (*The Waterfalls of Slunj*, 1966); *Roman No. 7, Zweiter Teil: Der Grenzwald*, 1967 (fragment)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Die Bresche*, 1924; *Ein Mord den Jeder begeht*, 1938 (*Every Man a Murderer*, 1964); *Das letzte Abenteuer*, 1953 (novella); *Die Dämonen: Nach der Chronik des Sektionsrates Geyrenhoff*, 1956 (*The Demons*, 1961)

SHORT FICTION: *Die Posaunen von Jericho*, 1958; *Die Peinigung der Lederbeutelchen*, 1959; *Meine neunzehn Lebensläufe und neun andere Geschichten*, 1966; *Unter schwarzen Sternene*, 1966; *Frühe Prosa*, 1968; *Die Erzählungen*, 1972

POETRY: *Gassen und Landschaft*, 1923; *Ein Weg im Dunkeln*, 1957

NONFICTION: *Der Fall Gütersloh*, 1930; *Julius*

Winkler, 1937; *Grundlagen und Funktion des Romans*, 1959; *Tangenten: Tagebuch eines Schriftstellers, 1940-1950*, 1964 (diaries); *Repertorium*, 1969; *Die Wiederkehr der Drachen*, 1970; *Commentarii: Tagebücher 1951 bis 1956*, 1976; *Commentarii: Tagebücher 1957-1966*, 1986; *Heimito von Doderer-Albert Paris Gütersloh: Briefwechsel, 1928-1962*, 1986

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D. J. DONALDSON

Born: Sylvania, Ohio; 1941

Also wrote as David Best; Don Donaldson

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Andy Broussard and Kit Franklyn, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ANDY BROUSSARD is a well-seasoned, expansive, and self-indulgent medical examiner in New Orleans. He thrives on the challenge of finding answers and the truth, but he never loses sight of the effect that death has on the living. He is an eclectic mix of the sophisticate and down-to-earth regular guy, having a fondness for opera, Louis L'Amour novels, and lemon drops.

KIT FRANKLYN, a psychologist who works as a suicide investigator in the coroner's office, is a perfect foil to Broussard as she focuses on the emotional and psychological aspects, particularly motive, rather than the physical facts. Her personality, too, is the opposite of his: She is idealistic and inexperienced, with a natural caution tempered by some curiosity and a tendency to find herself in awkward and dangerous situations.

CONTRIBUTION

D. J. Donaldson is distinguished as one of the first authors to use a forensic scientist as a primary character in a mystery series. Despite the attention he pays to forensic detail in his works, they are not grotesque and include just enough violence and criminal intent to have some of the elements of a hard-boiled detective novel. In addition, the main characters, Andy Broussard and Kit Franklyn—the traditional, experienced forensic scientist and the younger, more expressive psychologist—are accessible to a broad audience.

Donaldson's Broussard and Franklyn series is notable for its setting of New Orleans; he makes the city virtually a character in and of itself. The incidents in the novels take place all over the city, in front of its singular urban backdrops and in the bayous with alligators and fishing shacks. Donaldson liberally peppers

his novels with details about the city's history and culture to lend credence to the milieu, which is also enhanced by recurring characters who have a strong cultural flavor right down to their accents.

After writing six novels in the Broussard and Franklyn series, Donaldson began to write psychological/medical thrillers, employing his expertise in neurology and anatomy. Written as Don Donaldson and David Best, these works all take place in medical or psychological settings and have the same underlying theme of scientific discovery taking precedence over ethical concerns such as patients' rights. Oddly enough, another prevalent theme is the struggle of the primary character, who is always a woman, to achieve confidence and recognition in her chosen, usually male-dominated profession.

BIOGRAPHY

Donald Jay Donaldson grew up in Sylvania, Ohio, and married his wife, June, in Florida in February, 1961. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Toledo and returned to Sylvania to become a teacher of ninth-grade general science. This lasted only six months until Donaldson began pursuing a doctorate in human anatomy.

Donaldson relocated to New Orleans and spent five years at Tulane University working on his doctorate. He has admitted that New Orleans did not impress him while he was there. It was not until he began writing fiction that he came to appreciate all that New Orleans had to offer, saying that there was only one place he wanted to write about, "mysterious, sleazy, beautiful New Orleans."

After finishing his degree, Donaldson moved again, this time to Tennessee, where he became a professor of anatomy and neurobiology at the University of Tennessee Medical School, teaching microscopic anatomy. Although he enjoyed teaching, he felt that something was missing, and he determined that he wanted to try his hand at writing fiction.

To prepare for writing what would ultimately become the Broussard and Franklyn series, Donaldson

spent some time at the county forensic center with medical examiner Jim Bell. He attributed much of his first novel, including the inspiration for his primary character, to Bell:

Unfortunately, Jim died unexpectedly after falling into a diabetic coma a few months before the first book was published. Though he was an avid reader, he never got to see a word of the book he helped me with. In many ways, Jim lives on as Broussard. Broussard's brilliant mind, his weight problem, his appreciation of fine food and antiques, his love for Louis L'Amour novels . . . that was Jim Bell.

ANALYSIS

D. J. Donaldson's Andy Broussard and Kit Franklyn series is in the seductive and seedy setting of New Orleans, and centers on a medical examiner and his newly hired suicide investigator/psychologist. Their relationship is very hierarchical, both in professional terms because Broussard is Franklyn's boss and in emotional terms because he is her mentor and her protector in a world that is both male dominated and violence driven. Their relationship develops over the six novels: Broussard goes beyond the role of a mentor, becoming more parental and protective, and Franklyn suffers "growing pains" when she faces violence, death, and evil intent, and struggles to make sense of it all in the world of law enforcement.

Like the authors of many forensic-science novels, Donaldson strives to remain true to the science and stoicism of police work. He focuses on the evidence, specifically the physical and corporal detail, using it not only to determine cause of death but also to infer means and motive. Periodically, however, Donaldson takes a morbid turn, as when he writes "a dreadful array of bone and blood, sinew and skin. Through the gore, a displaced eye could be seen dangling like a spent flower." This gruesome imagery is as much a part of the Donaldson formula as is his interest in having characters die of exotic causes and then providing detailed descriptions of the diseases' effects.

This formula carries through to the novels written later, under the names of Don Donaldson and David Best. They also have common themes that exploit the ethical and political issues that seem to be inherent in

the practice of medicine and medical research, areas with which the author is professionally familiar.

CAJUN NIGHTS

Cajun Nights (1988) is the first book in the Andy Broussard and Kit Franklyn series and definitely has one of the more intriguing plots, focusing as it does on the connection between nursery rhymes and classic cars. The modern-day mystery is interwoven with the tale of a man who was hanged in Louisiana in 1738. His dying words are repeated by one of the characters as if to explain some mysterious deaths:

one day I will return and right this wrong as I did the other. And the streets of this city will run with blood as friend slays friend, fathers slay their children and rampant suicide sends the souls of men by the hundreds to everlasting hell. . . . beware the songs you loved in youth.

What seem at first to be a couple of unrelated murder-suicides are revealed as more nefarious after Franklyn investigates. Both victims owned the same rare classic car model, and both were observed to be acting strangely and singing nursery songs right before they murdered their families and then killed themselves. The story plays on the mystic past of New Orleans and creates some memorable characters in the city's residents, but it is the investigative science that uncovers an insane legacy of revenge.

OTHER BROUSSARD AND FRANKLYN NOVELS

Franklyn's expertise and maturity develop throughout the succeeding novels, with Broussard standing by to help guide her, providing sage advice and lemon drops for comfort. *Blood on the Bayou* (1991) exploits the legend of the loup-garou, or lycanthrope, against the backdrop of a southern plantation. It also introduces Franklyn to Teddy Labiche, who comes to play a larger role in her life in subsequent novels. *No Mardi Gras for the Dead* (1992) employs the unlikely weapon of a rose as a mood-altering instrument, with a would-be suitor literally falling dead at Franklyn's feet. *New Orleans Requiem* (1994) draws Franklyn and Broussard into a gruesome game of scrabble with letters left on the mutilated chests of corpses. A further-reaching and insidious killer is introduced in *Louisiana Fever* (1996) with an ebola-like virus as a by-

product of a smuggling ring. In *Sleeping with the Crawfish* (1997), Franklyn and Broussard face down a ruthless scientist, uncover a crooked police officer, and bring down a governor. The book ends with an affirmation from Broussard—"There's no one who can do your job better. Please come back. Andy."—which persuades Franklyn, who had been contemplating a more mundane career, to return to fighting the good fight with Broussard.

DO NO HARM

Do No Harm is somewhat different from the novels in Donaldson's initial series in that the violence is recounted as it occurs, rather than recreated from an examination of what is left at the scene as Franklyn and Broussard habitually do. This introduces an element of impending danger, speeds up the pace, and underscores the malevolence of the plot, which is a twist on the story of a doctor "playing God" with an experimental treatment on unaware and uninformed patients. The reader is introduced to the villain in the beginning of the story, the motive and method are kept a mystery, and it is the means and the science behind the motive that are revealed a bit at a time.

Sarchi Seminoux, a pediatric resident, is drawn into the plot when her nephew has a sudden, unexplained neurological attack. After some angst, her nephew is miraculously cured by neurosurgeon Dr. Latham but with some inexplicable side effects. Seminoux investigates, researching neurological disorders, consulting specialists, and interviewing Latham's former patients. All of this leads her to suspect him of some improper conduct or malpractice. Dr. Latham, a respected neurosurgeon, has been using the database of the Cord Blood Repository to match healthy children from that database to patients in his own clinic with Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, and similar neurological disorders.

Seminoux does nothing to hide her suspicions, assuming instead that drawing the attention of the appropriate authorities will resolve the issue. She does not anticipate either the politics involved in medicine nor the fact that Latham is willing to go to great lengths to protect his own interests. Latham employs a number of suspicious characters to set her up and "gaslight" Seminoux, in an effort to distract her, make her doubt

her findings, and discredit her with her colleagues.

In *Do No Harm*, as in the Broussard and Franklyn novels, the heroine is gothic in her naïveté, bordering on trite in her inability to take charge of a situation at least in the beginning. Donaldson depicts a woman, really an ingénue, in a male-dominated profession who is tested throughout the events of the novel, through violence, malice, and death. She comes through these events forever changed, but stronger for the struggle.

Dr. Koesler, a counterpoint for Seminoux and playing the same role of a superior man as Broussard, sums it up in the last pages of *Do No Harm* with this statement:

We live in a soft country where things come easily and people can get along fine without backbone if they're bright enough. You were once that way. . . . You don't work with me there unless you're a fine doctor and have the fiber to stand straight under fire. After what you've done in the last few weeks, you, Dr. Seminoux, are just such a person.

It certainly underscores this theme of trial by fire, whether it is just the age-old story of innocence meeting adversity and maturing to triumph or seeking to underscore the struggle that female doctors and scientists face professionally.

AMNESIA

Donaldson again looks at the perversion of medicine in *Amnesia*, epitomized in the opening thoughts of the villain:

The logical next step in his research unfolded in his mind like the birth of something hideously deformed. And he found it appalling. But even as he stood there, marshaling all the reasons it couldn't . . . shouldn't be done, he knew it was only a matter of time before he gave in.

The story starts at a medical conference where a disagreement ensues about the possibility of "making movies of memory." When the speaker, Oren Quinn, an administrator at Gibson State Mental Hospital, picks Marti Segerson out of the audience and asks her opinion, Segerson acknowledges the possibility. Soon the reader discovers that Segerson had contacted Quinn in an effort to secure a position in his hospital.

Segerson is a psychiatrist who sees an opportunity

to resolve personal issues and questions by taking a position in the mental hospital that houses the serial killer who confessed to murdering her sister. Oddly enough, the “eccentric” administrator of the hospital is as sociopathic as the serial killer, performing experiments on memory and recall on patients and medical staff alike and surgically implanting a device that can revise memories as well as record them, all in the name of scientific advancement. He uses one of his patients, a serial killer, as he might a rat in a maze, implanting certain instructions or giving him orders and setting him free to stalk a new victim. As Segerson continues to investigate and discovers these abnormal experiments, she becomes the doctor’s next subject.

The novel concludes with an explanation of what has transpired. As Segerson prepares to forget and move on, she is asked a riddle by a “wise” patient with whom she had developed a friendship, “When is the most progress made with the fewest steps?” She comes to a sudden, life-changing realization that it is “when it is right in front of you,” and with that, she commits to staying to help the patients in the asylum.

Donaldson’s work is accurate in its depiction of the forensic science and the investigative process, with a little drama thrown in to further the plot. His characters are likable and engaging if somewhat contrived and superficial, but his depiction of New Orleans—its glamour, its seamy side, its rich southern history, and natural beauty—is accurate.

Wendi Arant Kaspar

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ANDY BROUSSARD AND KIT FRANKLYN SERIES: *Cajun Nights*, 1988; *Blood on the Bayou*, 1991; *No Mardi Gras for the Dead*, 1992; *New Orleans Requiem*, 1994; *Louisiana Fever*, 1996; *Sleeping With the Crawfish*, 1997

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Do No Harm*, 1999 (as Don Donaldson); *In the Blood*, 2001 (as Don Donaldson); *The Judas Virus* (as Best), 2003; *Amnesia* (as Best), 2004

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FYODOR DOSTOEVSKI

Born: Moscow, Russia; November 11, 1821

Died: St. Petersburg, Russia; February 9, 1881

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Although most of Fyodor Dostoevski's major works deal with crime, especially murder and suicide, only two of his works fit into the genre of detective fiction, and only one is frequently associated with the popular form known as the murder mystery. *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912) deals with a murder, a manhunt, and a trial, but *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) focuses more closely on the nature of crime and its detection. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevski elevates the murder mystery to the level of great art. Engaging in a penetrating study of the criminal mind, he probes deeply into the psychopathology of crime. He follows the criminal through his obsessions, his anxieties, and his nightmares.

By highlighting the effects of poverty and isolation on potential criminals, Dostoevski depicts the social milieu that breeds crime and encourages criminal behavior. Furthermore, he re-creates big-city life, with its nefarious characters and its hopeless derelicts living at the brink of despair. Probing deeply into the shadows of the human condition, he tries to unearth the root of crime itself.

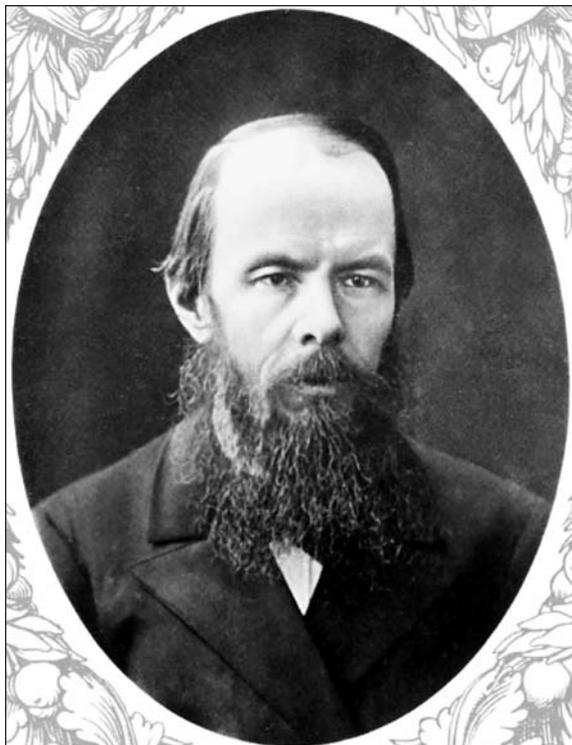
Dostoevski goes beyond the sociology of crime and murder, however, to explore its politics and metaphysics. Instead of asking who the murderer is, he explores such questions as, is murder permissible? If so, by whom? Under what conditions does one differentiate between the revolutionary and the common criminal? He also follows the criminal beyond the act of his apprehension to explore how crime should be punished. To Dostoevski, crime becomes sin, a sin that must be expiated through deep personal suffering and a mystical transformation of character. Dostoevski does not ask who committed the murder, but why there is murder. In his opinion, the murder mystery is merely a vehicle for exploring the mystery of murder.

BIOGRAPHY

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevski was born in Moscow on November 11, 1821. His father, a member of the minor nobility, was a former army surgeon at the Marinsky Hospital for the poor; thus, very early in life, Dostoevski came into contact with poverty, disease, and death—topics that were to haunt his literary works. His father was a tyrannical man, while his mother was a meek, frail woman. During his education in Moscow, Dostoevski was attracted to literary studies, but at his father's bidding, he entered the St. Petersburg Military Academy. While at school, he avidly studied the works of William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Nikolai Gogol, and Honoré de Balzac, and especially the romantic dramas of Friedrich Schiller.

In 1839, Dostoevski's father was murdered by his own serfs; thus, murder and its effects touched Dostoevski deeply, as borne out in his last and greatest novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Also, during his student days in St. Petersburg, he came into close contact with poverty, alcoholism, and prostitution as he wandered through the notorious Haymarket district of the city. After completing his education, Dostoevski embarked on a literary career, writing translations, articles, and novels. Soon he came under the influence of radical underground organizations and began publishing subversive articles and working with known revolutionaries. In 1849, he was arrested, imprisoned, condemned to death, and paraded before a firing squad, only to be reprieved at the last minute by the czar, who had never intended to kill him. This experience impressed on him indelibly what it was like to be a condemned criminal.

Escaping execution, he was sentenced to four years of hard labor in Siberia. There he learned not only about the effects of punishment on crime but also about the inner workings of the criminal mind. His close contact with a prisoner named Orlov allowed him to observe the behavior of a cold-blooded murderer who had no fear of punishment. Dostoevski's years of imprisonment were followed by four years of exile as a common soldier.



Fyodor Dostoevski. (Library of Congress)

In 1857, he embarked on a stormy marriage with the tubercular, volatile Maria Isayeva. Meanwhile, he had trouble rekindling his literary career. After several failures in establishing a literary journal, the deaths of his brother and wife, a tempestuous but ill-fated love affair, and a disastrous series of gambling sprees, the impoverished, debt-ridden, and ailing Dostoevski hired Anna Snitkina to help him meet his contractual obligations to his publishers. With her help, he completed *Crime and Punishment* in 1866, and the next year he married her. Under her guidance, he was able to straighten out his financial affairs and to complete his three great novels: *Idiot* (1868; *The Idiot*, 1887), *Besny* (1871-1872; *The Possessed*, 1913), and *The Brothers Karamazov*. He died on February 9, 1881, of a lung hemorrhage. Throngs of admirers attended his funeral.

ANALYSIS

Fyodor Dostoevski is one of the most important figures in the history of the modern novel. His works explore such existential dilemmas as universal guilt,

human alienation, the meaning of human suffering, and the limits of morality. His characters are tormented individuals living on the fringe of society, torn between their sensual appetites and their longings for spiritual fulfillment. They are split apart by their self-centered egotism and their need to be a part of the human community and are always searching for certainty in an uncertain world. Dostoevski explores the ambivalence of human emotions, plumbs the nightmare world of the human psyche, and lays bare the anguish of the human soul, torn between self-glorification and self-abasement. His characters reach salvation only through a life of pain and suffering. Only by experiencing the dregs of life can they partake of the mystery of redemption.

Although his themes are somewhat lofty for the detective and mystery genre, Dostoevski foreshadowed many of the character types who would later populate the modern detective thriller. His novels are inhabited by rapists, child molesters, sadists, prostitutes, and cold-blooded murderers who hold themselves above the laws of God and human beings; he also portrays revolutionaries, insurgents, spies, and counterspies. Dostoevski takes the reader into the stench and squalor of the slums, where vice and corruption are a way of life. In his novels, scenes of violence intermingle with drunken orgies. His works deal with lengthy criminal investigations, detailed police interrogations, and prolonged manhunts.

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

Although elements of crime and detection are a staple part of Dostoevski's canon, only two novels, as noted above, can be truly considered detective novels or murder mysteries: *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*. *The Brothers Karamazov* is a crime thriller and a mystery novel. When Fyodor Karamazov is brutally murdered, the evidence points clearly to his son Dmitri, who has threatened and attacked his father over money matters and their attempts to woo the same woman. Because he is caught escaping from his father's house on the night of the murder and is found spending large sums of money, he is arrested, tried, and convicted of murder. He is not, however, the murderer. The real murderer commits suicide. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the detectives

and prosecutors discover clues, compile evidence, and listen to reliable testimony but miss the essential points. Nevertheless, the novel is more than a detective story; it is a story about universal guilt, a story in which God, himself, is put on trial.

In critical articles on the detective novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* is cited less often than *Crime and Punishment*. Yet the critical debate over *Crime and Punishment* demonstrates how controversial is Dostoevski's status as a writer of murder mysteries. According to W. H. Auden, *Crime and Punishment* is not a true detective story but a work of art because "its effect on the reader is to compel an identification with the murderer." In his opinion, the detective story is a fantasy story, and "fantasy is always an attempt to avoid one's own suffering," whereas *Crime and Punishment* is a work of art that allows the reader to share "in the suffering of another."

Disagreeing with Auden, Julian Symons writes that the crime story can be a work of art but "a work of art of a peculiar flawed kind, since an appetite for violence and a pleasure in employing a conjurer's sleight of hand seem somehow to be adulterating the finest skills of a novelist." In addition, Symons believes, "at his best the crime writer can illuminate the condition of society and interpret psychotic states of mind, but he never moves like Dostoevski in mystical regions where spiritual truths are being considered." John Cawelti dismisses *Crime and Punishment* on purely formal grounds. In his opinion, a murder mystery must conceal the crime, focus on an inquiry into hidden clues, and leave the revelation of the criminal until the end of the story. He finds that "*Crime and Punishment* does not fulfill a single one of the basic structural conditions of the classical detective formula."

It would be beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the definitive elements of a detective story. Certainly, Dostoevski does not strictly follow the Edgar Allan Poe/Sir Arthur Conan Doyle formula. Doyle did not start writing his Sherlock Holmes stories until 1887, after Dostoevski had already completed his major novels. Clearly, Dostoevski was not interested primarily in a tale of ratiocination based on a whodunit model. In discussing *Crime and Punishment*, he states that he is writing a "psychological account of a crime,"

a true murder mystery that takes into account not only the crime but also the criminal.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Crime and Punishment shows the way in which Dostoevski skillfully creates the suspenseful elements of the murder mystery thriller. Raskolnikov, a derelict student, plans to kill an elderly pawnbroker. He cases her home carefully, discovers that she will be alone at a certain time, and counts the 750 steps to her apartment (exhibiting a truly Holmesian eye for detail). Despite his careful planning, the murderer is caught in the act when the pawnbroker's demented sister comes in, and he is forced to kill her. Later, two clients show up at the door at the same time as two house painters in an adjacent room are having a brawl. The murderer ducks into a vacant room, making a narrow escape. When he wakes up out of a delirious sleep, he is summoned to the police station, but the police want him simply because he owes his landlady money.

Dostoevski pulls a double reversal, as the murderer hears the story of the murder being discussed and faints. Soon the hunt is on. A mysterious informant appears; just when the detective seems to have the murderer trapped, another suspect dashes in with a false confession. Then, when Raskolnikov confesses his crime to a sympathetic prostitute, the man who wants to seduce Raskolnikov's sister overhears the confession, adding the complication of blackmail. For all of its lofty themes, *Crime and Punishment* is built around plot machinations similar to those of the thrillers devoured by modern audiences.

Dostoevski, however, is writing more than a pot-boiler. He is writing a murder mystery that can serve as an archetypal study of the genre. Often, the victim in a murder mystery is reduced to the status of a deserving victim. Dostoevski highlights this point; his murderer establishes philosophical grounds for murdering a loathsome person. In a letter to his publisher, Dostoevski described the murder victim as "an old woman, deaf, stupid, evil, and ailing, who herself does not know why she continues living . . . and who after a month, perhaps, would die anyway." Raskolnikov sees her as an insect, without the right to live and thus deserving of death. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan questions his father's right to live and finds a clear ra-

tionale for murdering the despicable drunkard even though he himself does not commit the murder. Dostoevski defines the murder victim as a person, who, at least in the eyes of the murderer, deserves to die.

Dostoevski also defines the detective. In *Crime and Punishment*, Porfiry antedates not only Sherlock Holmes but many of the other creations of the early twentieth century mystery writers as well; nevertheless, in him, one can see some of the traits of the modern detective. He is an ordinary civil servant working out of a modest apartment. Like many modern detectives—Peter Falk's Lieutenant Columbo is a classic example—Porfiry is a middle-aged, corpulent man who is aware that his appearance and manners often reveal him to be a slightly comic figure. Thus, it is easy for people to underestimate this master of criminal psychology, adept at using small talk, non sequiturs, and circumlocutions to entrap his quarry.

Porfiry subtly drops hints that he knows Raskolnikov's every move, tells him that he likes to keep criminals at bay so that they can ensnare themselves, works Raskolnikov up to a frenzy using evasive tactics, and then calms him by opening a window to give him fresh air. Like a modern detective, he takes an interest in the suspect and is moved by Raskolnikov's misguided actions. He combines the toughness of a grueling interrogator, who keeps the criminal dangling in a cat-and-mouse game, with the sympathetic concern of a father confessor, who wants the fallen sinner to admit the error of his ways.

Another modern characteristic of Dostoevski's murder mystery is the creation of the anguished world out of which the crime arises. Raskolnikov walks down what Raymond Chandler calls the mean streets of the fallen city. Wandering through the St. Petersburg slums, Raskolnikov encounters a would-be rapist about to take advantage of a delirious young girl, watches a woman throw herself off a bridge, and finds a drunkard who has been run over and left bleeding in the street.

Raskolnikov's environment is oppressive. His apartment is a cramped cubicle with soiled wallpaper, the streets through which he flounders are teeming with squalor, and the world in which he lives is filled with sensuality and violence. In one scene, which could come directly out of a modern detective thriller,

Raskolnikov's sister fends off a would-be rapist. She shoots him, grazing his head, but her anger only arouses him more; he dares her to kill him.

Finally, in the bulk of his novel, Dostoevski examines the psychology of the criminal mind. Raskolnikov becomes the archetype for many modern criminals. Like most criminals, he sees himself as above the law. He holds the doctrine that exceptional individuals such as himself are allowed to murder ordinary individuals who stand in their way. Dostoevski highlights this point not only in Raskolnikov's philosophy but also in Ivan Karamazov's dictum that all things can be made lawful.

The criminal is also seen as an isolated and alienated individual. Haunted and hunted, he is suspicious of everyone and breaks off all human contact. Raskolnikov severs all ties with family and friends. The criminal is seen as pathological, for as Raskolnikov writes in his article, crime begets illness. Raskolnikov is delirious, agitated, subject to delusions, and haunted by nightmares. The criminal is viewed not as a stock villain but as a troubled individual plagued by a dual nature, capable of great kindness as well as of extreme cruelty. Raskolnikov can give his money away to a poor widow and save children from a burning fire at the same time that he can kill a helpless mentally disabled girl. Such is the case of the modern mobster in the gangland thriller; a godfather figure can minister to the needs of his family while at the same time casually ordering murders. This focus on the criminal's divided nature adds complexity to the crime novel.

One of the key factors in standard detective fiction is the search for a single motive, but Dostoevski, anticipating a more modern perspective, does not limit the criminal's motives to one factor. So complex are Raskolnikov's motives that he himself cannot sort them out. Besides examining the complexity of the criminal's motives, Dostoevski highlights two central aspects of criminal behavior: the return to the scene of the crime and the compulsion to confess. In a modern mystery, the murderer often stealthily returns to the scene of the crime, perhaps to destroy some pieces of evidence, but Raskolnikov brazenly returns to the pawnbroker's room and asks about the blood. He dares two painters to come to the police station so that

he can explain his snooping. This scene also shows his compulsion to confess.

Often the murder mystery focuses on the detective's exposure of the murderer and the murderer's bold confession, which comes as a final catharsis. Raskolnikov wants to confess from the moment he commits the crime. No less than a dozen times, he finds himself on the verge of admitting the truth. In many a murder mystery, it is this subconscious will to confess that often causes the murderer to slip up and leave himself vulnerable to the ever-prying detective. Finally, in his confessions, Raskolnikov discovers the real nightmare of the murder mystery. The murderer in the act of killing another kills himself. Even in a simple murder mystery, the murderer faces execution or the ruin of his life. In Dostoevski's work, he destroys his soul.

Dostoevski uses many stylistic devices to capture the workings of the criminal mind. He uses interior monologues composed of short, clipped sentences and intersperses rambling soliloquies with rapid-fire dialogue. He also depends heavily on repetition of key words and associates certain words with certain characters. Characters' names are associated with their psychological traits as well; Raskolnikov is derived from *raskolnik*, meaning a schismatic.

In many ways, Dostoevski transcends the limits of the mystery genre; in others, he is thoroughly modern. Both Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald held that the modern hard-boiled detective novel is about goodness in the midst of evil, pure-heartedness in the midst of depravity, and courage in the midst of cowardice. Both writers believed that the murder mystery is about the art of redemption, and the art of redemption is the key to Dostoevski's murder mysteries. Instead of a finely tuned aesthetic experience based on cleverly developed, rational deductions, he offers the reader a deeply felt, mystical experience based on sin, suffering, and redemption.

Paul Rosefeldt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye*, 1866 (*Crime and Punishment*, 1886); *Bratya Karamazovy*, 1879-1880 (*The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Bednye lyudi*, 1846 (*Poor Folk*, 1887); *Dvoynik*, 1846 (*The Double*, 1917); *Netochka Nezvanova*, 1849 (English translation, 1920); *Unizhennye i oskorblyonnye*, 1861 (*Injury and Insult*, 1886; also known as *The Insulted and Injured*); *Zapiski iz myortvogo doma*, 1861-1862 (*Buried Alive: Or, Ten Years of Penal Servitude in Siberia*, 1881; better known as *The House of the Dead*); *Zapiski iz podpolya*, 1864 (*Letters from the Underworld*, 1913; better known as *Notes from the Underground*); *Igrok*, 1866 (*The Gambler*, 1887); *Idiot*, 1868 (*The Idiot*, 1887); *Vechny muzh*, 1870 (*The Permanent Husband*, 1888; also known as *The Eternal Husband*); *Besy*, 1871-1872 (*The Possessed*, 1913; also known as *The Devils*); *Podrostok*, 1875 (*A Raw Youth*, 1916); *The Novels*, 1912 (12 volumes)

SHORT FICTION: *Sochineniya*, 1860 (2 volumes); *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, 1865-1870 (4 volumes); *Povesti i rasskazy*, 1882; *The Gambler*, and *Other Stories*, 1914; *A Christmas Tree and a Wedding, and an Honest Thief*, 1917; *White Nights, and Other Stories*, 1918; *An Honest Thief, and Other Stories*, 1919; *The Short Novels of Dostoevsky*, 1945

NONFICTION: "Zimniye zametki o letnikh vpechatleniyakh," 1863 ("Winter Notes on Summer Impressions," 1955); *Dnevnik pisatelya*, 1876-1887, 1880-1881 (2 volumes; partial translation *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, 1916; complete translation *The Diary of a Writer*, 1949); *Pisma*, 1928-1959 (4 volumes); *Iz arkhiva F. M. Dostoyevskogo: "Idiot,"* 1931 (*The Notebooks for "The Idiot,"* 1967); *Iz arkhiva F. M. Dostoyevskogo: "Prestupleniye i nakazaniye,"* 1931 (*The Notebooks for "Crime and Punishment,"* 1967); *F. M. Dostoyevsky: Materialy i issledovaniya*, 1935 (*The Notebooks for "The Brothers Karamazov,"* 1971); *Zapisnyye tetradi F. M. Dostoyevskogo*, 1935 (*The Notebooks for "The Possessed,"* 1968); *Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings*, 1963; *F. M. Dostoyevsky v rabote nad romanom "Podrostok,"* 1965 (*The Notebooks for "A Raw Youth,"* 1969); *Neizdannyy Dostoyevsky: Zapisnyye knizhki i tetradi 1860-1881*, 1971 (3 volumes; *The Unpublished Dostoevsky: Diaries and Notebooks, 1860-1881, 1973-1976*); *F. M. Dostoyevsky ob iskusstve*, 1973;

Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, 1987

TRANSLATION: *Yevgeniya Grande*, 1844 (of Honoré de Balzac's novel *Eugénie Grandet*)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 1972-1990 (30 volumes)

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SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; May 22, 1859

Died: Crowborough, East Sussex, England; July 7, 1930

Type of plot: Master sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sherlock Holmes, 1886-1927

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SHERLOCK HOLMES is a private investigator and an eccentric researcher in virtually all areas of criminology. He begins taking cases when in his twenties and continues into his sixties, though he has by then retired from his rooms at 221B Baker Street, London, to beekeeping on a South Downs farm. Though loyal to friends and the social order, he remains above his cases, casting the cool light of reason on seemingly insoluble puzzles. A connoisseur of crime, he languishes in de-

pression when no problem worthy of his great powers is before him.

DR. JOHN H. WATSON is a friend and constant companion of Holmes and historian of his cases. Watson meets Holmes while seeking someone to share a flat. Though married and widowed more than once and maintaining a practice as a physician, Watson aids Holmes regularly until his retirement. He admires and emulates his strange and brilliant friend but can never solve the intricate puzzles on which Holmes thrives.

PROFESSOR MORIARTY, an unscrupulous schemer, the undisputed ruler of London's labyrinthine underworld, is one of Holmes's few intellectual equals.

CONTRIBUTION

Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories and novellas featuring Sherlock Holmes became enduring classics of the mystery and detective genre. Doyle is credited with



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. (Library of Congress)

refining and developing the formula first realized by Edgar Allan Poe in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Purloined Letter.” In so doing, he created a form for the detective story that remained enormously popular until World War II and that remained the supreme example of crime fiction throughout the twentieth century. According to John G. Cawelti, this form makes a mythic game of crime; the criminal act becomes a manifestation of potential chaos in the self and society, but the detective asserts reason’s power over this element, reassuring the reader of control over the self and safety within the social order. The continuing popularity of Doyle’s stories is evidenced by their remaining in print in an abundance of competing editions, the scholarly activity they stimulate, and the proliferation of film and video adaptations—as well as new Holmes tales by other authors.

BIOGRAPHY

Arthur Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the fourth child of Charles Doyle and Mary Foley Doyle. Irish Catholics in

Protestant Edinburgh, the family felt its minority status. Charles, an artist and public servant, was eventually institutionalized for epilepsy and alcoholism. Seeing talent in young Arthur, the strong and practical Mary Doyle procured for him an excellent education despite their difficult circumstances and eventually saw him through medical school at the University of Edinburgh (1877-1881).

While studying medicine, Doyle published his first story, “The Mystery of Sasassa Valley,” in 1879. Also while at the university, he met his model for Holmes, Dr. Joseph Bell, to whom he dedicated his first collection, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892). He married Louise Hawkins after completing his M.D. in 1885. His medical practice was never financially successful. After the publication of his first Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), he gradually became able to earn a good living at writing, and he abandoned medical practice in 1891.

Though his Holmes tales earned for him fame and fortune, Doyle’s dream was to become a great historical novelist like Sir Walter Scott. A prolific writer, Doyle continued to produce painstakingly researched and rendered historical romances, few of which found many readers. Doyle became frustrated as the stories he considered potboilers appeared in *The Strand*, a new popular magazine, and demand for more of them increased. He tried to “kill off” Holmes in “The Final Problem,” but seven years later he was again writing about him.

Doyle’s private career was nearly as eventful as Holmes’s. He was twice a ship’s medical officer. In the Boer War, he served under terrible conditions and without pay as a medical officer. His published defense of the British conduct of the war won for him knighthood. He interested himself in reform movements and twice ran unsuccessfully for Parliament. In 1897, he met and fell in love with Jean Leckie. He married her ten years later, after the death of his first wife from tuberculosis. With his first wife he had two children, with his second, three.

The loss of his first son, Kingsley, and several friends in World War I motivated Doyle to join the spiritualist movement, about which he wrote extensively. He continued to produce memorable fiction,

not only Holmes stories but also an adventure series with Professor Challenger as the hero. *The Lost World* (1912) is the best-known novel in this series. Doyle died of heart disease at his home, Windlesham, in Crowborough, East Sussex, England, on July 7, 1930.

ANALYSIS

Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the Holmes stories mainly to earn money. He did not think of them as serious works of art and was somewhat dismayed at their success. He had apparently stumbled on a formula that would hold the readers of the new mass-circulation magazines that catered to urban readers educated in the public schools of the late nineteenth century. For much of his professional career he felt ambivalent about his creation. While a Holmes story (or later a play) was sure to bring income, Doyle really wanted to be writing in other, more respectable genres. While his Holmes stories were consciously artful, Doyle thought of them as “mere” fantasies, often privately expressing a disdain for them similar to that which Holmes expresses toward Watson’s overly sensationalized narratives of his brilliant cases.

Many critics attribute Doyle’s success in this series to his conceptions of Holmes, Watson, and their relationship. There are, in fact, central elements of the classic detective formula. Holmes is passionate about solving problems and about little else. For example, the only woman ever to earn much of his respect is Irene Adler, the beautiful songstress of “A Scandal in Bohemia” who outsmarts him when he attempts to steal an incriminating photograph from her. Yet his aloofness from ordinary life does not entirely exempt him from ordinary values. He cares touchingly for Watson and at least adequately for the innocent victims of crimes. He devotes his talents to the cause of justice, and he takes his country’s part against all enemies. In contrast, his most dangerous adversaries possess Holmes’s skills but use them solely for themselves. The most famous of these is Professor James Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime, who figures in several tales but most vividly in “The Final Problem.”

As in the case of trying to steal Irene Adler’s photograph, Holmes is not above bending or even breaking the law, but he does so mainly in the service of

higher levels of social order or justice. He will steal a photograph to preserve order in European ruling families. A killer may go unpunished if the murder seems justified, as in “The Abbey Grange.” Although Holmes may stray from the letter of the law, he never violates its spirit.

Holmes battles crime for two reasons: to preserve order and for the sheer pleasure of solving challenging intellectual problems. Virtually every area of knowledge to which he has applied himself relates to solving crimes. He is credited with writing monographs on codes and ciphers, tattoos, tobacco ashes, marks of trades on hands, typewriters, footprints, the human ear, and many other highly specialized subjects. Among his eccentricities, perhaps only his devotion to the violin and to listening to music are not directly related to his work.

A STUDY IN SCARLET

The learning Holmes cultivates serves his particular method of detection. This method is established in *A Study in Scarlet*, when Holmes says on meeting Watson for the first time, “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.” After considerable delay, Holmes explains how close observation of Watson’s skin, appearance, and posture, combined with knowledge of current events led quickly and inevitably to his conclusion. Holmes cultivates close observation of relevant detail to form and verify hypotheses. That is the same general method C. Auguste Dupin describes when explaining how he managed to read his friend’s mind in Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” An incident of such observation and reasoning becomes part of the formula of a Holmes story. Holmes considers himself a scientific detective; for this reason he holds himself above the more ordinary human passions that might cloud his reasoning powers. His objectivity can make him seem callous. For example, in “The Dancing Men,” he shows little concern for the victims and is more interested in the solution of the puzzle than in protecting those threatened.

This weakness in Holmes is counterbalanced in part by Watson. Holmes’s interest in a case tends to end when the puzzle is solved and the culprit captured, but Watson’s narratives often offer brief summaries of the subsequent lives of criminals and victims. Watson

provides the more mundane human interest. As Cawelti and others have shown, the good doctor is the reader's representative in the story. Although he lacks Holmes's transcendent rational powers, Watson has all the endearing qualities of courage, energy, compassion, patriotism, and loyalty, as well as an ordinary intelligence. A kindly and admiring middle-class gentleman, Watson connects the reader to the strange and powerful genius of the detective. Furthermore, within the stories, Watson connects Holmes with the ordinary world, repeatedly calling attention to the human needs of other characters. While Holmes is the specialist in crime, Watson is the generalist, a well-rounded person, dependable when action is necessary but falling short in the art of detection.

One of Watson's most important functions is to conceal what goes on in Holmes's mind. Holmes is given the irritating but essential characteristic of refusing to reveal what he knows until he has completed his solution, sometimes waiting until the criminal is caught. Such concealment is essential to the dramatic power of the stories; it creates suspense and an eagerness to continue reading, and it allows the story to build toward the moment of surprising revelation of the criminal or the crime.

Though he developed them in unique ways, Doyle borrowed these elements from Poe: the detached and rational detective, the admiring and more prosaic companion, and the relationship between them that helps connect the reader with the detective while concealing the sleuth's thinking. Cawelti gives Doyle credit for discovering the full potential of the Watson type of narrator, thus using this sort of character to establish the classical detective genre. Doyle also borrowed the form of his plot from Poe. Cawelti points to six elements that have become conventional, though in varying order, in the plot of the classical detective tale: introduction of the detective, description of the crime, the investigation, the solution, the explanation of the solution, and the denouement. Doyle develops these elements into the modern formula that transforms what was present in Poe into a powerful popular genre.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

The Hound of the Baskervilles (1901-1902), perhaps the greatest of the Holmes tales, illustrates Doyle's de-

ployment of these plot elements as well as the highest level of his artistic achievement in this series. Watson introduces Holmes's powers by means of a friendly competition that becomes an important structural and thematic element. Watson examines a walking stick left by a client and makes inferences about the client's identity, concluding that Dr. James Mortimer is a successful elderly country practitioner. Holmes notes that while Watson is partly correct, he is mostly wrong. Mortimer is a country doctor, but he is city-trained, young, active, and unambitious, and he owns a dog. Holmes is careful to point out that Watson's errors helped him to find the truth. This pattern is repeated in the central portion of the novella, the investigation. This introduction of Holmes, Watson, and their relationship emphasizes the relative power of Holmes to get at the truth in tangled and fragmentary evidence. Watson's attempt is well done and intelligent, but it cannot match Holmes's observation and reasoning. This difference becomes much more important thematically when the duo is trying to prevent a murder.

Doyle artfully handles the description of the crime. Mortimer presents three accounts of events that set up an opposition between supernatural and natural explanations of the recent death of Sir Charles Baskerville at Dartmoor, his Devon estate. The first is a document telling how a remorseless ancestor brought a curse on the Baskervilles in the shape of a hound from Hell that kills those who venture on Dartmoor with evil in their hearts. The second is a newspaper account of the inquest into Sir Charles's death. The coroner concluded that he died of his weak heart while on an evening stroll, but Mortimer has noted details of the scene he investigated that suggest foul play. Sir Charles's behavior was unusual, and there was at least one footprint of a gigantic dog at the scene. Mortimer has come to Holmes to ask what should be done to protect the new heir, Sir Henry Baskerville, soon to arrive from Canada. After illustrating Holmes's incredible powers, Doyle presents him with a problem that may be beyond those powers: dealing with a supernatural agent.

One consequence of Doyle's development of the potential of Watson as a character narrator is the extension of the investigation section of the story. As it becomes possible to extend this section in an interest-

ing manner, the story can become longer. In *A Study in Scarlet* and in his later novella, *The Valley of Fear* (1914), as well as in several stories, Doyle stretches the narrative by interpolating long adventures from the past that explain the more recent crime. Though such attempts seem clumsy, they point toward the more sophisticated handling of similar materials by writers such as Ross Macdonald and P. D. James. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* Doyle prolongs the story while exploiting the gothic aspect of his theme by making Watson the investigator.

After several clues and mysteries develop in London, Holmes sends Watson with Mortimer and Sir Henry to Dartmoor. The brief London investigation sets up another theme indicative of Doyle's art. The



Sidney Paget's illustration of Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty fighting to the death near the top of Reichenbach Falls in "The Adventure of the Final Problem" for the December, 1893, issue of The Strand Magazine. The story itself provides only circumstantial evidence of Holmes's death—making it easier for Doyle later to bring Holmes back.

man who shadows Sir Henry proves to be a worthy adversary of Holmes, using an effective disguise and successfully evading Holmes's attempts to trace him. On his departure, this suspect names himself Sherlock Holmes. This doubling of Holmes and his adversary continues throughout the tale.

At Dartmoor, Watson studies the few local residents and encounters a number of mysteries. His investigation successfully eliminates the servants as suspects and discovers the secret relationship between them and Selden, an escaped convict in hiding on the moor. On the whole, however, Watson is bewildered by the mysteries. The moor becomes a symbolic setting; Watson often reflects that the landscape of the moor, with its person-swallowing muck, mirrors the danger and impenetrability of the mystery. Though he can see and understand much of what happens, he cannot fit together all the pieces. The only master of the landscape appears to be Mr. Stapleton, a naturalist who has come to know the area in his pursuit of butterflies.

Holmes, however, has also mastered the moor by studying maps and, without Watson's knowledge, hiding on the moor to investigate the situation secretly. Almost as soon as Watson learns of Holmes's presence, the rival masters of the landscape prove to be rivals in crime as well, for Holmes has concluded that Stapleton is the man responsible for Sir Charles's death and for the attempt on Sir Henry that the two sleuths witness that evening. Within a day of Holmes's arrival, the whole crime has been solved. Holmes learns that Stapleton is really a lost Baskerville relative who can claim the inheritance when Sir Henry dies, and he learns how Stapleton tricked a woman into luring Sir Charles outside at night, where he could be frightened to death.

Doyle creates a characteristic sensation by having Holmes suddenly appear on the scene and show that he has effectively mastered the situation. The gothic mystery and ambiguity of the moor pushes men of common sense such as Sir Henry and Watson toward half belief in the supernatural, toward confusion and irrational fear. Like a gothic villain, Stapleton feeds these weaknesses, using his superior intelligence and the power of his knowledge of the landscape. Only Stapleton's good double, Holmes, can understand and

thus resist this power. Even Holmes has difficulty, though, when the moor seems to help Stapleton (a dense fog develops on the night of the capture), and Stapleton succeeds in surprising the generally unflappable Holmes. Stapleton does this by smearing glowing phosphorus on his killer hound's muzzle to give it the supernatural appearance of a hound from Hell. The sleuths are surprised that the dog is able to attack Sir Henry before they can shoot it.

Both the fog and the dog work against Stapleton finally, showing that nature is, in reality, a neutral force in human affairs, as it must be if Holmes's scientific art is to triumph in finding the truth and bringing justice. Stapleton's wife, an unwilling accomplice, finally rebels against using the hound to kill and reveals Stapleton's hiding place. Stapleton apparently loses his way in the fog and sinks into the mire.

In this novel, the explanation of the crime coincides on the whole with its solution. These are the most important and dramatic parts of a classical detective story because they satisfy both the reader's anxiety for the fates of the possible victims and the reader's desire to understand the mystery. Bringing them together as Doyle does produces a sensational and dramatic effect appropriate to a detective story with a gothic setting and gothic themes.

The denouement belongs partly to Holmes and partly to Watson. Watson deals with the human interest, explaining something of the fates of the important characters. Holmes clears up a few remaining mysterious details, including the one clue that led him from the first to suspect the Stapletons, the brand of perfume that so slightly emanated from the anonymous warning note they received in London at the beginning of the case.

The Hound of the Baskervilles illustrates Doyle's more important contributions to the familiar conventions of the classic detective story. His invention and exploitation of the relationship between Holmes and Watson enable him to engage the reader more deeply in the human interest as well as in the intellectual problem of the tale. Furthermore, the relationship enables Doyle to extend the investigation portion of the plot, forging an effective structure for longer tales.

One element of Doyle's art in these tales that ought not to go unmentioned is his wit and humor, of which

this novel offers many examples, not the least of which is Holmes's successful deducing of the breed of Mortimer's dog by observing it from his Baker Street window. The thematic oppositions Doyle establishes between Watson and Holmes, the natural and the supernatural, and Holmes and Stapleton are evidence of Doyle's art as well. Doyle knowingly develops these oppositions within his gothic setting, making a symbolic landscape of the moor and creating ambiguous images of nets, tangles, and the detective himself to underscore what Cawelti has identified as the central thematic content of the classical detective genre.

According to Cawelti, one characteristic of the classic formula is that the frightening power of the gothic villain is brought under control and used for the benefit of society. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, that struggle for control is directly reflected in the doubling of Stapleton and Holmes, as it was in the earlier Holmes works through the doubling of Moriarty and Holmes. Furthermore, Cawelti observes that classic detective fiction addresses the issue of middle-class guilt over repressed sexuality and aggression and over exploitation of the lower classes. The detective rescues ordinary characters from irrational fear and superstition and discovers that one person, a criminal or outsider, is the real enemy. This pattern of removing generalized guilt and pinning it onto an outsider is clear in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*—even though the victim has a title. Sir Henry, a modest Canadian farmer suddenly elevated in status by his uncle's death, intends to benefit his community with his new fortune. Stapleton's opposition threatens to frustrate this noble purpose and to turn the power of the estate toward the pure selfishness of the originally cursed ancestor; he would reinstate the old, evil aristocracy at the expense of the new, socially responsible aristocracy toward which the middle class aspires.

Doyle's achievements in the Sherlock Holmes series include creating memorable characters and stories that have remained popular throughout the twentieth century, expanding the classic detective formula invented by Poe into an effective popular genre, and bringing considerable literary art to a form he himself thought subliterate.

Terry Heller

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION**SHERLOCK HOLMES AND DR. WATSON SERIES:**

A Study in Scarlet, 1887 (serial; 1888, book); *The Sign of Four*, 1890 (also known as *The Sign of the Four*); *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1892; *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, 1894; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1901-1902 (serial; 1902, book); *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, 1905; *The Valley of Fear*, 1914-1915 (serial; 1915, book); *His Last Bow*, 1917; *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 1927; *The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1981 (revised and expanded 2001)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Mystery of Cloomber*, 1888; *The Surgeon of Gaster Fell*, 1895

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Mysteries and Adventures*, 1889 (also known as *The Gully of Bluemansdyke, and Other Stories*); *The Captain of Polestar, and Other Tales*, 1890; *My Friend the Murderer, and Other Mysteries and Adventures*, 1893; *The Great Keinplatz Experiment, and Other Stories*, 1894; *An Actor's Duel, and the Winning Shot*, 1894 (with Campbell Rae Brown); *Round the Red Lamp: Being Fact and Fancies of Medical Life*, 1894; *The Green Flag, and Other Stories of War and Sport*, 1900; *The Last Galley: Impressions and Tales*, 1911; *Danger! and Other Stories*, 1918; *Tales of the Ring and Camp*, 1922 (also known as *The Croxley Master, and Other Tales of the Ring and Camp*); *Tales of Terror and Mystery*, 1922 (also known as *The Black Doctor, and Other Tales of Terror and Mystery*); *Tales of Twilight and the Unseen*, 1922 (also known as *The Great Keinplatz Experiment, and Other Tales of Twilight and the Unseen*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Micah Clarke*, 1889; *The Firm of Girdlestone*, 1889; *Beyond the City*, 1891; *The Doings of Raffles Haw*, 1891; *The White Company*, 1891; *The Great Shadow*, 1892; *The Refugees*, 1893; *The Parasite*, 1894; *The Stark Munro Letters*, 1895; *Rodney Stone*, 1896; *The Tragedy of the Koroska*, 1897 (also known as *A Desert Drama*); *Uncle Bernac*, 1897; *A Duet, with an Occasional Chorus*, 1899 (revised 1910); *Sir Nigel*, 1905-1906 (serial; 1906, book); *The Lost World*, 1912; *The Poison Belt*, 1913; *The Land of Mist*, 1926

SHORT FICTION: *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard*, 1896; *The Man from Archangel, and Other Stories*, 1898; *The Adventures of Gerard*, 1903; *Round the Fire Stories*, 1908; *One Crowded Hour*, 1911; *Three of Them*, 1923; *Last of the Legions, and Other Tales of Long Ago*, 1925; *The Dealings of Captain Sharkey, and Other Tales of Pirates*, 1925; *The Maracot Deep, and Other Stories*, 1929; *Uncollected Stories: The Unknown Conan Doyle*, 1982

PLAYS: *Foreign Policy*, pr. 1893; *Jane Annie: Or, The Good Conduct Prize*, pr., pb. 1893 (with J. M. Barrie); *Waterloo*, pr. 1894 (also known as *A Story of Waterloo*); *Halves*, pr. 1899; *Sherlock Holmes*, pr. 1899 (with William Gillette); *A Duet*, pb. 1903; *Brigadier Gerard*, pr. 1906; *The Fires of Fate*, pr. 1909; *The House of Temperley*, pr. 1909; *The Pot of Caviare*, pr. 1910; *The Speckled Band*, pr. 1910; *The Crown Diamond*, pr. 1921; *Exile: A Drama of Christmas Eve*, pb. 1925; *It's Time Something Happened*, pb. 1925

POETRY: *Songs of Action*, 1898; *Songs of the Road*, 1911; *The Guards Came Through, and Other Poems*, 1919; *The Poems: Collected Edition*, 1922

NONFICTION: 1900-1910 • *The Great Boer War*, 1900; *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, 1902; *The Case of Mr. George Edalji*, 1907; *Through the Magic Door*, 1907; *The Crime of the Congo*, 1909

1911-1920 • *The Case of Oscar Slater*, 1912; *Great Britain and the Next War*, 1914; *In Quest of Truth, Being a Correspondence Between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Captain H. Stansbury*, 1914; *To Arms!*, 1914; *The German War: Some Sidelights and Reflections*, 1915; *Western Wanderings*, 1915; *A Visit to Three Fronts*, 1916; *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, 1916-1919 (6 volumes); *The Origin and Outbreak of the War*, 1916; *A Petition to the Prime Minister on Behalf of Roger Casement*, 1916(?); *The New Revelation*, 1918; *The Vital Message*, 1919; *A Debate on Spiritualism*, 1920 (with Joseph McCabe); *Our Reply to the Cleric*, 1920; *Spiritualism and Rationalism*, 1920

1921-1984 • *Fairies Photographed*, 1921; *The Evidence for Fairies*, 1921; *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, 1921; *The Case for Spirit Photography*, 1922 (with others); *The Coming of the Fairies*, 1922; *Our Ameri-*

can Adventure, 1923; *Memories and Adventures*, 1924; *Our Second American Adventure*, 1924; *Psychic Experiences*, 1925; *The Early Christian Church and Modern Spiritualism*, 1925; *The History of Spiritualism*, 1926 (2 volumes); *Pheneas Speaks: Direct Spirit Communications*, 1927; *A Word of Warning*, 1928; *What Does Spiritualism Actually Teach and Stand For?*, 1928; *An Open Letter to Those of My Generation*, 1929; *Our African Winter*, 1929; *The Roman Catholic Church: A Rejoinder*, 1929; *The Edge of the Unknown*, 1930; *Arthur Conan Doyle on Sherlock Holmes*, 1981; *Essays on Photography*, 1982; *Letters to the Press*, 1984

EDITED TEXTS: *Dreamland and Ghostland*, 1886; *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission*, 1921 (by Mrs. Douglas Home); *The Spiritualist's Reader*, 1924

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Orel, Harold, ed. *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1992. Including both evaluations by Doyle's contemporaries and later scholarship—some of it commissioned specifically for inclusion in this collection—*Critical Essays* is divided into three sections: "Sherlock Holmes," "Other Writings," and "Spiritualism." Harold Orel opens the collections with a lengthy and comprehensive essay, which is followed by a clever and classic meditation by Dorothy L. Sayers on "Dr. Watson's Christian Name."

Press, Charles. *Looking over Sir Arthur's Shoulder: How Conan Doyle Turned the Trick*. Shelburne, Ont.: Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2004. Study of Doyle as stylist, seeking to explain exactly what features of his writing account for its massive popularity.

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ANNETTE VON DROSTE-HÜLSHOFF

Born: Castle Hülshoff, near Münster, Westphalia (now in Germany); January 10, 1797

Died: Meersburg, Baden (now in Germany); May 24, 1848

Type of plot: Historical

CONTRIBUTION

Although primarily known within the history of German literature as an outstanding lyrical poet of the nineteenth century, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff also wrote a novella, *Die Judenbuche: Ein Sittengemälde aus dem Gebirgichten Westfalen* (1842; *The Jew's Beech Tree*, 1914), that ranks among the best of both novellas and the historical mystery genre. Tightly constructed and vividly written, this story of murder, guilt, and the eventual triumph of justice presents a realistic picture of village life in Westphalia (now in Germany) during the late eighteenth century as well as psychological portraits of individual characters that suggest the author's keen sense of observation. In 1844, Droste-Hülshoff began another mystery prose piece, "Joseph: Eine Kriminalgeschichte" (Joseph: a crime story), but it unfortunately remained a fragment and has never been translated.

BIOGRAPHY

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff was born January 10, 1797, on the Hülshoff estate near Münster, in the province of Westphalia. She was born into a long-established line of conservative Catholic nobility and remained very attached to her large family. A highly intelligent and sensitive girl, Droste-Hülshoff was well versed in five languages. In her early teens she began writing poetry in the style of Friedrich Schiller and Gottfried August Bürger. After two disappointing experiences with lovers, she grew depressed and stopped writing for a number of years. The death of her father in 1826 further burdened her spirit.

In 1834, Droste-Hülshoff left the protective circle of her family and their country estate, Rüschaus, to live with her sister Jenny, who had married a widowed Swiss scholar. They moved to the Castle Meersburg on

the shore of Lake Constance. At this time, Droste-Hülshoff met and fell madly in love with Levin Schücking, a man seventeen years younger than she, whose mother had been her close friend. This intense relationship rekindled her poetic muse, and she produced a number of fine poems. She managed to have her brother-in-law employ the young man in his library, and the two lovers spent their days walking and reading each other's poetry. In April, 1842, however, Schücking left Meersburg and later returned with his young bride. Droste-Hülshoff was devastated by the loss of her lover and poetic confidant. In 1844, Schücking published a small volume of Droste-Hülshoff's poetry, thereby establishing her reputation as a lyric genius. Her poems deal with a spiritualized vision of nature and with issues of religious faith and doubt.

Ill-fated in love, the poet never married. The disappointing affair with Levin Schücking had caused Droste-Hülshoff great emotional stress, and in 1843 she grew seriously ill from nervous exhaustion. A sickly individual with a tubercular condition as well as psychosomatic complaints, Droste-Hülshoff died of an embolism at the age of fifty-one in Meersburg.

ANALYSIS

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff began work on *The Jew's Beech Tree* in 1837 and completed it in 1841. It was based on a true incident that had occurred in the latter half of the previous century. She had heard of the story from her grandfather, who had been a magistrate assigned to the case. She also used an 1818 newspaper account of the murder—written by her uncle, August von Haxthausen—as a basis for her tale. The case involved a Christian man who had murdered a Jew and had left the country before he could be brought to trial. Captured by the then-invading Turkish army, he had spent twenty-five years in slavery. When he escaped, he returned home. Because of the hardship he had already endured, he was not prosecuted for his crime, but his conscience drove him to commit suicide, and he hanged himself from the tree where the original murder had taken place. This strange story of guilt and

justice preoccupied Droste-Hülshoff, and she set out to write a fictional account of the events. The novella went through several revised versions and was first serialized in the spring of 1842 in a literary magazine, *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser*.

THE JEW'S BEECH TREE

The Droste-Hülshoff work is the story of Friedrich Mergel, a poor shepherd boy whose father, a drinker, is found dead one day. He and his mother are in dire straits. His uncle, Simon, and Simon's illegitimate child, Johannes Niemand, take Friedrich under their protection. Friedrich and the pale and worn-looking Johannes, who appears as if he were Friedrich's brother, become close friends. Simon is, however, involved with a ruthless band of poachers who, thwarting the efforts of the authorities, roam the forests nightly and steal wood from private lands. Despite the efforts of his honest mother, Friedrich becomes involved with this band of thieves and serves as a lookout. One night, he deliberately misleads the forester Brandis, sending him to his death at the hands of one of the poachers. He later recognizes the murder weapon, an ax, as belonging to his uncle.

One day, in the autumn of 1760 during a community dance, Friedrich, now a proud and boastful young man, is publicly warned by a Jewish moneylender, Aaron, that he has not yet paid for the watch he had bought. Friedrich is shamed before his fellow villagers. The next day Aaron is found murdered under a beech tree, and Friedrich and his cousin Johannes are missing. Members of the Jewish community are outraged by the incident, and they purchase the tree with the assurance that it will never be cut down—as a living memorial to their murdered friend. With an ax, they carve a warning on the tree in Hebrew: "If you ever approach this place, what has been done to me will also be done to you."

Twenty-eight years later, on Christmas Eve, 1788, an old and beaten man returns to the village. He claims to be Johannes Niemand. He has spent his years as a slave to the Turks and finally escaped. Later he is found hanged from the beech tree, where the original murder had occurred. From a prominent scar on the corpse it is clear to Brandis's son, who is the one to find the decomposing body, that the hanged man is in

truth Friedrich Mergel, driven to suicide by the burden of his guilt.

The Jew's Beech Tree is a realistic tale of poverty and desperation, racial prejudice and criminal greed, and murder and nagging guilt. It contains elements of the English gothic novel—stormy nights and a ghostly forest—that lend it a mysterious, supernatural atmosphere. The novella's German subtitle—literally, "a portrait of manners and customs from the mountain region of Westphalia"—suggests its objective, almost sociological perspective on the behavior and morals of the community in which Droste-Hülshoff lived. In her narration of the murders of the forester Brandis and the Jew Aaron, Droste-Hülshoff leaves out connecting commentary so that the reader is placed in the role of "detective" who must deduce the perpetrator of the crimes. She also provides the reader with random details—such as the uncle's ax—that serve as clues to the guilty individual.

As is the case with most examples of mystery and detective fiction, the Droste-Hülshoff story ultimately revolves around the themes of justice and injustice. The issues of right and wrong are, in keeping with the realistic tone of the story, by no means idealized or clear-cut. The young and naïve Friedrich Mergel is born into impoverished circumstances, and although his mother attempts to rear him with the proper sense of right and wrong, he succumbs to the weight of poverty and leads the immoral life of a criminal. As a vain and arrogant individual who commits a heinous murder because of his injured pride, however, he deserves his ultimate fate. He is also the son of a violent and abusive drunkard, and the story suggests the tragic social determinism of hereditary traits.

Johannes Niemand, the illegitimate child whose name translates as "John Nobody," is also an apparent victim of the shadowy world into which he is born. Because he is an outcast within the bourgeois world, a life of crime on the fringes of society seems to be his only option. A major theme of *The Jew's Beech Tree*—and of much crime fiction—is therefore an ethical one: Life presents choices, and the ones the individual makes determine his personal guilt. The Droste-Hülshoff text questions the role of free will and draws attention to the existence of evil in the world.

The issue of racial prejudice is the most obvious example of social injustice in the novella and points to the central theological theme of the story. Aaron's murder and the final revenge of the Jewish community suggest a biblical and divine sense of justice as in the Old Testament pronouncement of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." As in most detective and mystery novels, in which the case is always solved, the murderers eventually caught, there is in the Droste-Hülshoff story a metaphysical sense of absolute justice, an underlying conviction that all crimes within the universe are ultimately punished.

In one of the early versions of the novella, the exact day of the murder was October 28, and as is also the case in the final version, Friedrich returns to the village twenty-eight years later. Similarly, it is the son of the forester whom Friedrich had sent to his death at the hands of his uncle who finds Friedrich's hanged corpse. These seeming coincidences again suggest the existence of a transcendent order of justice—a divinely established universe—behind the seemingly chaotic and random flux of appearances. Droste-Hülshoff, reared as a strict Catholic, was very much concerned with matters of faith and was horrified at the idea that no God, no transcendent order existed in the universe. Thus, in a very real sense, the "mystery" in her tale of Friedrich Mergel and his just fate is that of faith itself, and the "solution" to the crime becomes a revelation of the divinity and the divine plan.

The most interesting character in the story is certainly that of Johannes Niemand. He is described as closely resembling Friedrich. In the poor light of the fire one night, even Friedrich's mother mistakes the haggard and brooding Johannes for her son. Droste-Hülshoff employs here a time-honored literary device, that of the *doppelgänger*, or double. As Mr. Hyde is to Dr. Jekyll in the well-known Robert Louis Stevenson novel, the outcast Johannes serves as the dark alter ego of Friedrich, the aspect of his personality that is attracted to the criminal side of life. Thus the Droste-Hülshoff story remains very much a psychological one, Friedrich Mergel/Johannes Niemand symbolically depicted as two sides of one person. The psychology of the criminal mind—the influence of heredity and environment—is another major theme in the

genre of crime fiction, and the dual characters in the Droste-Hülshoff story suggest the inner struggle between good and evil within the self. As the horrible Mr. Hyde takes over the personality of the benevolent Dr. Jekyll, the criminal life of Johannes consumes the existence of Friedrich. It is fitting that Friedrich returns to the village and commits the act of suicide in the guise of his cousin Johannes.

Within the genre of the historical mystery, Droste-Hülshoff ultimately presents a moral tale that reaffirms her belief in a structured, divinely based universe. The naturalistic world of her story is one in which a transcendent reality underlies the chaotic appearance of events. This duality of reality versus appearance is a fundamental structural principle of most mystery and crime fiction in the sense that the task of the detective—and that of the reader—is to uncover the truth of events by interpreting the seemingly random clues found at the scene of the crime. The investigator seeks the order hidden within the chaos of details. Because the detective's job is to bring the criminal to justice, the central issue in mystery and crime fiction, as it is in *The Jew's Beech Tree*, is one of morality.

Thomas F. Barry

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *Die Judenbuche: Ein Sittengemälde aus dem Gebirgichten Westfalen*, 1842 (*The Jew's Beech Tree*, 1914)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *Perdu: Oder, Dichter, Verleger, und Blaustrümpfe*, 1840

POETRY: *Gedichte*, 1838; *Spiritus familiaris des Rosstäuschers*, 1842; *Gedichte*, 1844; *Das geistliche Jahr*, 1851; *Letzte Gaben*, 1860

NONFICTION: *Westfälische Schilderungen aus einer westfälischen Feder*, 1845

MISCELLANEOUS: *Sämtliche Werke*, 1955

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- Webber, Andrew. "Traumatic Identities: Race and Gender in Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's *Die Judenbuche* and Freud's *Der Mann Moses*." In *Harmony in Discord: German Women Writers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, edited by Laura Martin. New York: P. Lang, 2001. Focuses on the distinctively nineteenth century German nature of Droste-Hülshoff's mystery and its particular representation of race and gender.
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ALEXANDRE DUMAS, PÈRE

Born: Villers-Cotterêts, France; July 24, 1802

Died: Puy, France; December 5, 1870

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical

CONTRIBUTION

Although Alexandre Dumas, *père*, was an extremely prolific playwright and novelist, he owes his fame largely to *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844; *The Three Musketeers*, 1846) and *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1844-1845; *The Count of Monte-Cristo*, 1846). In these works, Dumas made use of well-known events in French history to tell fascinating and well-structured tales. These two romances have remained popular both in France and elsewhere since their publication.

In his biography of Dumas, Richard S. Stowe stressed similarities between *The Count of Monte-Cristo* and works in other literary genres, specifically mystery and detective fiction. Stowe's insight reveals

an important element of *The Count of Monte-Cristo*: Edmond Dantès, the main character in this novel, does in fact become a private investigator after his escape from a prison near Marseilles. Dantès first seeks to identify and then to punish those responsible for his unjust imprisonment. He uses numerous disguises, obtaining relevant documents from unsuspecting individuals. This information enables Dantès to prove the treachery committed against him. He then prepares and carries out a systematic and fearful revenge against the four men whose actions brought about his fourteen years of imprisonment.

BIOGRAPHY

Alexandre Dumas, *père*, was born on July 24, 1802, in Villers-Cotterêts, a small town northeast of Paris. His father, Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, was a general in the French army and his mother, Marie-Louise-Elisabeth Dumas, was the daughter of inn-



Alexandre Dumas, père. (Library of Congress)

keepers from Villers-Cotterêts. Thomas-Alexandre Dumas died when his son was only four years old, and Mme Dumas decided to move back into her parents' inn, where she reared her son and daughter. Dumas spent his childhood and adolescence in his native town.

In 1823, he moved to Paris, where, during the 1820's and 1830's, he established a solid reputation in literary circles and came to know such important French writers and artists as Victor Hugo, Gérard de Nerval, Eugène Delacroix, and Alfred de Vigny. Between 1829 and 1851, Dumas wrote, either by himself or in collaboration with other dramatists, more than sixty plays. His many historical dramas and melodramas were well received by both Parisian theatergoers and critics. Despite their enormous popularity during his lifetime, Dumas's plays have largely fallen into oblivion.

In 1838, he began to write historical romances. The year 1844, when *The Three Musketeers* appeared in print, was the most important in his literary career; during the same year, he began to publish chapters from *The Count of Monte-Cristo* in the *Journal des débats*, a Parisian literary journal. During the last

twenty-four years of his life, Dumas continued to write extensively, but he was never able to duplicate the extraordinary popular and critical success of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte-Cristo*. The French public associated Dumas so closely with *The Count of Monte-Cristo* that he decided to call his own house "le château de Monte-Cristo" (the castle of Monte-Cristo).

Although Dumas was married to the actress Ida Ferrier from 1840 to 1848, they had no children. Nevertheless, he did have three children from different mistresses: two daughters and a son, Alexandre, who became a famous playwright himself. To avoid confusing them, most critics call the father Alexandre Dumas, *père*, and his son Alexandre Dumas, *fils*. In the summer of 1870, Dumas, *père*, became paralyzed as the result of a stroke. On December 5, 1870, he died at his son's home in Puys, a small city on the coast of Normandy.

ANALYSIS

The 118 chapters of *The Count of Monte-Cristo* may seem excessively long to many modern readers. The novel is divided into three major sections of unequal length. The first thirty chapters take place in Marseilles before, during, and just after Dantès's imprisonment in the Château d'If, a prison in the harbor there. After his escape from prison, Dantès assumes the identity of the Count of Monte-Cristo, and the next nine chapters take place in Italy, where the now-wealthy Count of Monte-Cristo is living. The relevance of these chapters becomes clear to readers only in the third part of this novel, which takes place largely in France, where Dantès carries out his vengeance against those who sent him to prison.

THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO

Edmond Dantès is an odd, not totally sympathetic character. Although he was the victim of a legal injustice, his vengeance can only be called extreme. To punish his now-politically influential enemies, he does not hesitate (twenty-three years later) to destroy the lives of their wives, children, and other relatives. As an excuse for his retribution, in chapter 91 Dantès claims that he is merely carrying out God's wishes. Nevertheless, Dantès was not the only Frenchman to have been

imprisoned unjustly during the Napoleonic era and the restoration of the Bourbons to the French throne. Dumas's own father had been imprisoned unjustly for twenty months; these months in prison had adversely affected his health, causing him to die young. Unlike Dantès, however, Dumas's father never sought vengeance against those who sent him to prison.

The structure of *The Count of Monte-Cristo* parallels that of many other detective novels. At the beginning, everything seems to favor Dantès. He has just become the captain of the *Pharaon*, a commercial boat owned by the kind and generous M. Morrel, and is engaged to Mercédès, whom he plans to marry the next day. Unfortunately, there are two obstacles to his happiness: Fernand, who also loves Mercédès, wishes to stop this marriage, and Danglars, the apparently dishonest accountant for the *Pharaon*, is afraid that Dantès will discover financial irregularities in the ship's accounts. Fernand and Danglars are delighted to learn that the dying M. Leclère, whom Dantès replaced as captain of the *Pharaon*, has asked Dantès to deliver a letter to Napoleon Bonaparte, then a prisoner on Elba. Although indifferent to politics, Dantès takes his letter to Elba and receives a letter from Napoleon for a certain M. Noirtier in Paris. Fernand and Danglars denounce Dantès to the local prosecutor, claiming that he is a traitor who is attempting to restore Napoleon to the throne. A neighbor named Caderousse knows of the plot but remains silent. That evening, Dantès is arrested and then questioned by Villefort, an assistant prosecutor in Marseilles. After examining the compromising letter from Napoleon, Villefort orders that Dantès be taken, untried, to the Château d'If, where political prisoners are kept.

During the first few years, Dantès does not understand the reasons for his imprisonment, finally becoming convinced that it must be part of a divine plan. He believes that someday he will be freed and those who punished him will in turn be punished. The possibility of vengeance brings him extreme pleasure. Thus, even before he escapes from prison, readers do not feel completely sympathetic toward him.

After several years in solitary confinement, Dantès finally makes contact with Abbé Faria, a prisoner in an adjoining cell, who has dug a tunnel between their cells while seeking to escape. Faria helps Dantès recall

the events before his arrest and during his interrogation. Thus, Dantès comes to an understanding of how Danglars and Fernand may have profited by his arrest and why Villefort was so displeased by Napoleon's letter. In the 1790's, Faria had known Noirtier, the addressee, who was then a fervent Bonapartist. Noirtier is Villefort's father, and his active opposition to King Louis XVIII might well have endangered Villefort's career. Thus, it was in Villefort's interest to destroy this letter and send Dantès to prison without the inconvenience of a public trial.

Readers of *The Count of Monte-Cristo* must accept an extraordinary number of coincidences, such as the fact that this Italian priest personally knew Villefort's father. Nor is this the last of the almost unbelievable developments. Faria also reveals to Dantès that a fabulous cache of diamonds and other precious jewels has been hidden since the fifteenth century on Monte-Cristo, a small island near Corsica. Only Faria knows that this treasure exists. After his friend's death, Dantès escapes from prison by pretending to be the dead man. Bodies at the prison are placed in sacks and large weights are attached to the legs; the sacks are then dropped into the sea. Despite these precautions, Dantès frees himself easily and swims safely to shore—fourteen years to the day after his arrest.

Now that he is free, Dantès begins planning his "implacable vengeance" against Caderousse, Villefort, Danglars, and Fernand. Were he to forgive these four men, it would constitute a grievous sin in his mind. Although readers may empathize with Dantès, they also realize that a long imprisonment has transformed him into a bitter individual. Soon after his escape from the Château d'If, Dantès reaches the island of which Faria spoke. Without much difficulty, Dantès transports a fortune to Italy, where he will spend most of his time until 1838.

During this period, Dantès does return briefly to Marseilles to save the generous Morrel from financial ruin. Nevertheless, Dantès does not reveal his true identity to the Morrels, who treated him well in 1815. Dantès also learns that his own father died of starvation, reinforcing his belief that the four wrongdoers must be punished. In his mind, they are indirectly responsible for his father's death. The count uses his

enormous wealth and a series of disguises to obtain all the information relevant to his case, including what has happened since 1815 to the four men who sent him to prison.

Caderousse has become a common criminal, often imprisoned. (Dantès provokes Caderousse's former cellmate, whom he has cheated, to kill him.) Fernand, now known as the Count of Morcerf, is a French general. Danglars is a powerful and wealthy Parisian banker. Villefort has become the chief prosecutor in France.

Dantès's vengeance against Fernand is especially painful for him because his beloved Mercédès is married to Fernand, who assured her that Dantès died in prison. Mercédès recognizes the Count of Monte-Cristo; he in turn convinces her that she and her son can save their honor only by leaving her husband. They do so and the count pushes Fernand to suicide. Dantès's vengeance against Danglars is imaginative and incredibly effective. While in Italy, Dantès befriended a notorious bandit named Luigi Zampa, who frequently kidnapped travelers and held them for exorbitant ransoms. Zampa will do whatever his benefactor asks. Zampa kidnaps the wealthy Danglars and proceeds to bleed him dry: Danglars must pay for his meals, and each one costs 100,000 francs, while a bottle of wine or mineral water costs 25,000 francs. Danglars's immense fortune soon disappears.

Villefort's punishment is especially cruel. His second wife desires that her son, Édouard, and not her stepdaughter, Valentine, inherit her husband's fortunes. A number of people are poisoned, apparently including Valentine. Later, however, the reader discovers that Valentine has not actually died, and she weds Maximilien Morrel (the son of the shipowner). When Villefort confronts his wife with proof of her murders, he gives her a choice: If she does not kill herself, he will have her arrested for murder. She goes him one better, killing herself and their young son Édouard. After this murder-suicide, Villefort goes mad. Although Mme de Villefort was clearly an unstable and violent woman, Dumas never fully explains her relationship with the Count of Monte-Cristo, leaving readers to suspect that the count encouraged her murderous penchant.

The death of the young and clearly innocent Édouard de Villefort finally convinces Dantès that his revenge has gone too far, because he can no longer control the destructive forces that he set into motion; he leaves Paris. Before sailing away, Dantès brings together Maximilien Morrel and Valentine de Villefort on his island of Monte-Cristo. In their marriage, they may attain the happiness that Edmond Dantès never experienced.

Although it may be more accurate to describe *The Count of Monte-Cristo* as a psychological novel than as a detective novel, it does possess several elements common to that genre. The first crime in this novel is a wrongful imprisonment, Faria relies on his own experience to explain Dantès's punishment, and Dantès then obtains documents and testimony to prove Faria's hypotheses. A detective novel strives to prove the innocence or guilt of specific characters. *The Count of Monte-Cristo* does this quite successfully, but it also illustrates the destructive force of hate. The count's vengeance does not result in justice. Ultimately, readers feel little sympathy for the original victim. Instead, the young Édouard de Villefort is the victim who is remembered and pitied.

Edmund J. Campion

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, 1844-1845 (*The Count of Monte-Cristo*, 1846)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: 1838-1840 • *Acté*, 1838 (English translation, 1904); *La Salle d'Armes*, 1838 (includes *Pauline* [English translation, 1844], *Pascal Bruno* [English translation, 1837], and *Murat* [English translation, 1896]); *Le Capitaine Paul*, 1838 (*Captain Paul*, 1848); *La Comtesse de Salisbury*, 1839; *Le Capitaine Pamphile*, 1840 (*Captain Pamphile*, 1850); *Othon l'Archer*, 1840 (*Otho the Archer*, 1860)

1841-1850 • *Aventures de Lyderic*, 1842 (*Lyderic, Count of Flanders*, 1903); *Ascanio*, 1843 (with Paul Meurice; English translation, 1849); *Georges*, 1843 (*George*, 1846); *Le Chevalier d'Harmental*, 1843 (with Auguste Maquet; *The Chevalier d'Harmental*, 1856); *Amaury*, 1844 (English translation, 1854); *Gabriel*

Lambert, 1844 (*The Galley Slave*, 1849; also known as *Gabriel Lambert*, 1904); *Les Frères corses*, 1844 (*The Corsican Brothers*, 1880); *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, 1844 (*The Three Musketeers*, 1846); *Sylvandire*, 1844 (*The Disputed Inheritance*, 1847; also known as *Sylvandire*, 1897); *Une Fille du Régent*, 1844 (with Maquet; *The Regent's Daughter*, 1845); *La Guerre des femmes*, 1845-1846 (*Nanon*, 1847; also known as *The War of Women*, 1895); *La Reine Margot*, 1845 (with Maquet; *Marguerite de Navarre*, 1845; better known as *Marguerite de Valois*, 1846); *Vingt Ans après*, 1845 (with Maquet; *Twenty Years After*, 1846); *La Dame de Monsoreau*, 1846 (*Chicot the Jester*, 1857); *Le Bâtard de Mauléon*, 1846 (*The Bastard of Mauléon*, 1848); *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, 1846 (with Maquet; *Marie Antoinette: Or, The Chevalier of the Red House*, 1846; also known as *The Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, 1893); *Les Deux Diane*, 1846 (with Meurice; *The Two Dianas*, 1857); *Mémoires d'un médecin*, 1846-1848 (with Maquet; also known as *Joseph Balsamo; Memoirs of a Physician*, 1846); *La Véloce*, 1848-1851; *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, 1848-1850 (with Maquet; *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, 1857; also as 3 volumes: *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*, 1893; *Louise de la Vallière*, 1893; and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, 1893); *Les Quarante-cinq*, 1848 (with Maquet; *The Forty-five Guardsmen*, 1847); *Le Collier de la reine*, 1849-1850 (with Maquet; *The Queen's Necklace*, 1855); *La Tulipe noire*, 1850 (with Maquet and Paul Lacroix; *The Black Tulip*, 1851)

1851-1860 • *Ange Pitou*, 1851 (*Six Years Later*, 1851; also known as *Ange Pitou*, 1859); *Conscience l'Innocent*, 1852 (*Conscience*, 1905); *Isaac Laquedem*, 1852-1853; *Olympe de Clèves*, 1852 (English translation, 1894); *La Comtesse de Charny*, 1853-1855 (*The Countess de Charny*, 1858); *Catherine Blum*, 1854 (*The Foresters*, 1854; also known as *Catherine Blum*, 1861); *El Saltéador*, 1854 (*The Brigand*, 1897); *Ingénue*, 1854 (English translation, 1855); *Le Page du Duc de Savoie*, 1854 (*Emmanuel Philibert*, 1854; also known as *The Page of the Duke of Savoy*, 1861); *Les Mohicans de Paris*, 1854-1855 (and *Salvator*, 1855-1859; *The Mohicans of Paris*, 1875; abridged version); *Charles le Téméraire*, 1857 (*Charles the Bold*, 1860); *Les Compagnons de Jéhu*, 1857 (*Roland de Montrevel*,

1860; also known as *The Companions of Jéhu*, 1895); *Les Meneurs de loups*, 1857 (*The Wolf Leader*, 1904); *Ainsi-soit-il!*, 1858 (also known as *Madame de Chamblay*, 1862; *Madame de Chamblay*, 1869); *L'Horoscope*, 1858 (*The Horoscope*, 1897); *Le Capitaine Richard*, 1858 (*The Twin Captains*, 1861); *Histoire d'un cabanon et d'un chalet*, 1859 (*The Convict's Son*, 1905); *Le Chasseur de Sauvagine*, 1859 (*The Wild Duck Shooter*, 1906); *Le Médecin de Java*, 1859 (also known as *L'Île de Feu*, 1870; *Doctor Basilius*, 1860); *Les Louves de Machecoul*, 1859 (*The Last Vendée*, 1894; also known as *The She Wolves of Machecoul*, 1895); *La Maison de Glace*, 1860 (*The Russian Gipsy*, 1860); *Le Père la Ruine*, 1860 (*Père la Ruine*, 1905)

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DAPHNE DU MAURIER

Lady Daphne Browning

Born: London, England; May 13, 1907

Died: Par, Cornwall, England; April 19, 1989

Types of plot: Historical; horror; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Daphne du Maurier's three mystery novels, *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Rebecca* (1938), and *My Cousin Rachel* (1951), are landmarks in the development of the modern gothic romance. Working out of the tradition of the nineteenth century British gothic novel, du Maurier breathed new life into the form through her

evocations of the brooding, rugged landscapes of Cornwall and its ancient buildings and mansions. She created a world filled with a rich history of superstitions, danger, and mystery. Manderley, the great house in *Rebecca*, haunted by the ghostly presence of its dead mistress, and Jamaica Inn, an isolated tavern near the Cornish coast, filled with dark secrets and violence, are so powerfully drawn as to become equal in importance to the characters who inhabit them. The naïve heroines of these two novels must overcome their anxieties and insecurities in the face of physical

and psychological threats and penetrate the secrets that surround them before they can achieve final happiness, peace, and love. Du Maurier's use of setting, her characters, and her plots became models for the countless gothic tales and romances that followed on the publications of these novels.

My Cousin Rachel retains some of the gothic flavor of her earlier works but focuses more on the ambiguous psychology of its heroine. Unlike the typical mystery or detective novel, this book ends with, rather than solves, a mystery: Is Rachel an innocent, misunderstood woman or a sinister, calculating murderer?

In her two famous short stories, "The Birds" and "Don't Look Now," du Maurier establishes the twentieth century sense of dislocation. These tales of horror show the accepted order of things suddenly and for no apparent reason disintegrating. Her characters find themselves battling for their lives against creatures they have always assumed to be their inferiors: birds and children. The continuity of time itself is in question in "Don't Look Now," where du Maurier introduces the startling theme of precognition. Her innovative use of horror in "The Birds" has given rise to a host of stories and films about creatures, ranging from ants to rabbits, that threaten to destroy civilization.

BIOGRAPHY

Daphne du Maurier was born on May 13, 1907, in London, the daughter of the famous actor-manager Sir Gerald du Maurier. Although she enjoyed the company of her two sisters when she was growing up, her best friend was always her father, an exciting, romantic, and somewhat irresponsible man. As a young girl she desperately wished that she had been born a boy so that she could be free to live an adventurous and unorthodox life like her father's. She even adopted the persona of a fictitious character she named Eric Avon, captain of a cricket team, to act out her fantasies of male independence.

Du Maurier was determined not to model her life on that of her mother, who seemed to her too limited by domestic concerns. As she matured, du Maurier romanced the ghost of her father in both her fiction and her life. Her fantasies about him shaped the heroes of her novels and were embodied in the man she eventu-

ally married, while the needs of the "boy in the box," her alternate persona, were satisfied by deep and lasting friendships with women, including romantic relationships with two of them.

After attending private schools in England, du Maurier attended finishing school at Camposena, outside Paris, in 1923. By the end of that decade, she had begun writing short stories and developed an obsessive interest in three things: the history of her family and of Cornwall (where her parents owned a large house), the sea, and a mysterious old house called Menabilly. These three interests became inextricably bound up with her career as a writer. Shortly after the publication of her first novel, *The Loving Spirit* (1931), she married a thirty-five-year-old major in the Grenadier Guards, Frederick A. M. Browning.

Although eager to settle down in Cornwall, especially because she was soon the mother of three children, she and her family were frequently uprooted as they followed her husband to his various military stations. No matter where she was, however, Cornwall was always at the center of her thoughts and her fiction. In fact, it was during her time in Alexandria, Egypt, that she wrote her greatest Cornish novel, *Rebecca*.

The fame and wealth she acquired after the publication of *Jamaica Inn* in 1936 and *Rebecca* in 1938 only increased in the following years, for Alfred Hitchcock adapted these novels into films. Starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine, *Rebecca* won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1940. Her work then in great popular demand, du Maurier went on to write ten novels, two plays, and several biographies, histories, and memoirs. Almost all the novels became best sellers and had a special appeal to women. It may be for those reasons that highbrow reviewers (mostly men) have patronized her work and academic critics have chosen to ignore it.

In 1943, du Maurier moved into Menabilly, the mysterious mansion that had captured her imagination as a young girl and which she had transformed into Manderley, the grand home of Maxim de Winter. In 1952, du Maurier was made fellow of the Royal Society of Literature; in 1969, she became Dame Commander, Order of the British Empire. Despite these

honors and her growing fame, du Maurier became a recluse, confining herself to her writing and her family in Menabilly after the death of her lover and inspiration, Gertrude Lawrence. Her small, private world began to come apart after the death of her husband in 1965. In 1969, her lease on Menabilly expired, and she moved a few miles away to another historic house, Kilmarth, at Par, on the coast of Cornwall.

She won the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award in 1978. In the same year she published *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer*, an autobiography that ends at the date of her marriage. In 1980, she published *The Rebecca Notebook, and Other Memories*, a work that illuminates the creative process that lay behind her most famous work. In 1989, du Maurier's will to live seemed to wither as she ate less and less and made her rounds to visit family and friends, breaking her stringently observed routines, to say good-bye. She died in her sleep on April 19, 1989. In 2000, du Maurier received an Anthony Award for best novel of the century for *Rebecca*.

ANALYSIS

Daphne du Maurier's first two novels, *The Loving Spirit* and *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932), began to kindle an interest in romances during a period when realism was still in vogue. Her next novel, *The Progress of Julius* (1933), was much bolder: It introduced the theme of incest between father and daughter. This work was followed by du Maurier's biography of her father, in which she attempts to sort out her complex feelings about him, to gain a perspective on him that would allow her the freedom to develop her independence.

JAMAICA INN

In *Jamaica Inn*, du Maurier combines the elements of her earlier popular romances with those of the gothic novel to create her first mystery. This haunting tale, set on the Bodmin moor around the year 1835, is the story of an assertive, independent woman named Mary Yellan. The twenty-three-year-old heroine (who appears to embody du Maurier's own fantasies of love and adventure) goes to live with her aunt and uncle, who manage Jamaica Inn, an isolated tavern whose dreadful secrets have driven Mary's aunt mad. Mary's

uncle, Joss, it turns out, is a vicious smuggler. He and his consorts make secret trips to the coast, where they use lights to lure ships to crash on the rocks. These "wreckers," as they are called, then murder the survivors and steal their goods, which they store at Jamaica Inn.

A noteworthy psychological dimension separates *Jamaica Inn* from the conventional mystery romance: Du Maurier bifurcates the demon-lover father of *The Progress of Julius* into two characters for this novel. Mary's uncle, Joss, a powerful, huge, older man, embodies pure malignancy; his young brother, Jem, is a handsome, arrogant, mysterious figure who, by the end of the novel, becomes Mary's lover and presumed husband.

Jamaica Inn is the first of du Maurier's novels to contain the main features of the gothic romance: the isolated, bleak landscape; a house filled with mystery and terror; violence and murders; mysterious strangers; villains larger than life; and a strong-minded woman who bravely withstands hardships and brutality and is rewarded with marriage and the promise of a full life. Du Maurier renders her material in a style remarkable for its simplicity. She rarely employs metaphoric language except in her descriptions of landscape and buildings—and then does so with restraint, allowing highly selective details to convey the spirit of the atmosphere.

REBECCA

Du Maurier's masterpiece, *Rebecca*, combines features of the popular romance, the gothic novel, the psychological novel, and autobiography to create one of the most powerful tales of mystery and romance in the twentieth century. Following the tradition of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), du Maurier's novel contains most of the trappings of the typical gothic romance: a mysterious, haunted mansion, violence, murder, a sinister villain, sexual passion, a spectacular fire, brooding landscapes, and a version of the madwoman in the attic. Du Maurier's novel, however, is much more than a simple thriller or mystery. It is a profound and fascinating study of an obsessive personality, of sexual dominance, human identity, and the liberation of the hidden self. The real power of the work derives from du Maurier's obsession with her father and her resolution of that ob-

session through the fantasy structure of the novel.

In this sophisticated version of the Cinderella story, the poor, plain, nameless narrator marries Maxim de Winter, a handsome, brooding, wealthy man twice her age, and moves into Manderley, a mansion haunted by secret memories of his first wife, Rebecca. The macabre housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, is dedicated to protecting the memory of Rebecca from the innocent new mistress of the house. Mrs. Danvers is the evil witch, the embodiment of Rebecca's sinister spirit, the Other Woman, who must be destroyed before the fairy tale can be happily concluded. Like Rebecca herself, Mrs. Danvers represents a powerful hold on Maxim that recreates the Oedipal triangle in du Maurier's own life. The nameless narrator must compete with and overcome the Other Woman to obtain her father-lover. When Maxim finally admits that he never loved the domineering Rebecca—indeed, that he hated and murdered her—the great mystery surrounding Maxim and Manderley is solved.

It is not marriage (as in the typical romance) that brings du Maurier's heroine happiness, but the symbolically significant death of Mrs. Danvers, the fiery destruction of Manderley, and the exorcism of the spirit of Rebecca, events that crown the narrator with her true and unique sense of identity as Mrs. de Winter and assure her that she is the solitary recipient of Maxim's love and devotion.

MY COUSIN RACHEL

My Cousin Rachel is du Maurier's tour de force. In making her narrator, Philip Ashley, a man who is unaccustomed to the company of women, sexually naïve, and somewhat paranoid, she creates a wonderfully ambiguous storyteller. Philip suspects that the mysterious and seductive Rachel has poisoned his wealthy cousin and benefactor, Ambrose Ashley. He comes to see this beautiful half-English, half-Italian adversary as a femme fatale;

nevertheless, he soon falls in love with her himself. Throughout the novel, his attitude toward her fluctuates between adoration and trust and fear and suspicion. Toward the end, though he apparently has come to view her as innocent, he allows her to walk across a bridge that he knows will not hold her weight, and she is killed.

Du Maurier's technique is similar to that used by Robert Browning in his dramatic monologues, in which the narrators present the "facts" through their own limited and often-misguided perceptions, revealing their own characters more fully than those of the people they describe. Du Maurier thus captures the rich ambiguity of life itself, the hazy border between fact and fantasy, truth and illusion.

"THE BIRDS"

In its depiction of horror, du Maurier's short story "The Birds" far surpasses Alfred Hitchcock's popular film adaptation with its intrusively added love story. She strictly limits the focus of her tale to a British farmer, Nat Hocken, and his family, tracing their developing panic as thousands of seagulls begin to menace the countryside. In this small world, humans have ceased to have dominion over the birds and beasts.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Tipi Hedren in a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 film The Birds, which was loosely adapted from Daphne du Maurier's short story of the same title.
(Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive)

The serenity of English village life and the wisdom and common sense of the inhabitants are displaced by terror and confusion in this sudden reversion to a Darwinian world of the survival of the fittest. Nat hears reports on his radio that birds in London are also becoming predators, but du Maurier continues to confine the sense of horror to the Hocken family, which becomes a microcosm of an apparently worldwide disaster. She concludes her tale with Nat listening to the birds as they attack his house, about to break through and destroy him and his family; the reader is left to conclude that civilization itself may be on the verge of extinction.

“DON’T LOOK NOW”

The motion-picture version of du Maurier’s other great tale of mystery and horror, “Don’t Look Now,” has been described as “the fanciest, most carefully assembled Gothic enigma yet put on the screen.” Directed by Nicholas Roeg and starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie, the film captures du Maurier’s suffocating sense of terror through its subtle and enigmatic imagery. The story centers on an English couple, John and Laura, on vacation in Venice in an attempt to distract themselves from the crushing memory of the recent death of their young daughter, Christine. They meet two strange sisters, one of whom is blind and, like Tiresias, has psychic powers. She tells Laura that Christine has contacted her to warn John that he is in danger in Venice.

Laura later returns to England to attend to her son, who has become ill at school; John becomes convinced that during her absence he has seen her in Venice riding a vaporetto in the company of the two weird sisters. At the end of the story it becomes clear that John has the power of precognition and that he did indeed see his wife and the two women. They were riding in the vaporetto carrying his corpse to the church. In his wife’s absence, John had come to the assistance of a person whom he assumed to be a small child, perhaps resembling Christine, who was running from some men. The pursuers prove, however, to be police, and the fugitive is a dwarf, a psychopathic killer who stabs John to death. John’s memories of Christine and his vision into the future thus blend into a horrifying clarity of understanding as he dies.

Du Maurier’s skillful presentation of the gothic setting of a decaying Venice, the mad dwarf, the recurring glimpses into the future, the suspense, and the violence makes this an innovative mystery. As in a Greek tragedy, the characters seem inextricably entangled in a fatalistic course of events. Like the blind sister, John is possessed of psychic powers, but he refuses to credit or understand his fatal foreknowledge. On a psychological level, the story suggests the hero’s guilt over the death of his daughter and how that emotion leads to his fatal compassion for the murderous dwarf.

Richard Kelly

Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Jamaica Inn*, 1936; *Rebecca*, 1938; *My Cousin Rachel*, 1951; *The Scapegoat*, 1957; *The Flight of the Falcon*, 1965; *The House on the Strand*, 1969

SHORT FICTION: *The Apple Tree: A Short Novel and Some Stories*, 1952 (also known as *The Birds, and Other Stories* and as *Kiss Me Again, Stranger: A Collection of Eight Stories*); *The Breaking Point*, 1959 (also known as *The Blue Lenses, and Other Stories*); *Not After Midnight, and Other Stories*, 1971 (also known as *Don’t Look Now*); *Echoes from the Macabre*, 1976

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Loving Spirit*, 1931; *I’ll Never Be Young Again*, 1932; *The Progress of Julius*, 1933; *Frenchman’ Creek*, 1941; *Hungry Hill*, 1943; *The King’ General*, 1946; *The Parasites*, 1949; *Mary Anne*, 1954; *Castle Dor*, 1962 (with Arthur Quiller-Couch); *The Glass-Blowers*, 1963; *Rule Britannia*, 1972

SHORT FICTION: *Come Wind, Come Weather*, 1940; *Happy Christmas*, 1940; *Early Stories*, 1955; *The Treasury of du Maurier Short Stories*, 1960; *The Rendezvous, and Other Stories*, 1980; *Classics of the Macabre*, 1987

PLAYS: *Rebecca: A Play in Three Acts*, pr. 1940, pb. 1943 (adaptation of her novel); *The Years Between*, pr. 1944, pb. 1945; *September Tide*, pr. 1948, pb. 1949

NONFICTION: *Gerald: A Portrait*, 1934; *The du Mauriers*, 1937; *The Infernal World of Branwell*

Brontë, 1960; *Vanishing Cornwall*, 1967; *Golden Lads: Sir Francis Bacon, Anthony Bacon, and Their Friends*, 1975; *The Winding Stair: Francis Bacon, His Rise and Fall*, 1976; *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer*, 1977 (also known as *Myself When Young: The Shaping of a Writer*, 1977); *The Rebecca Notebook, and Other Memories*, 1980; *Letters from Menabilly: Portrait of a Friendship*, 1994 (Oriël Mallet, editor)

EDITED TEXTS: *The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of His Letters 1860-1867*, 1951; *Best Stories of Phyllis Bottome*, 1963

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SARAH DUNANT

Born: London, England; August 8, 1950

Also wrote as Peter Dunant (with Peter Busby)

Types of plot: Private investigator; thriller; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hannah Wolfe, 1991-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HANNAH WOLFE is a private detective, the sole employee of Frank Comfort, hard-boiled former police officer and owner of Comfort and Security, a private

security firm. Hannah is tough and independent, yet real and vulnerable. Her straightforward security jobs, such as shepherding a rich teenager on a shopping expedition in London, tend to turn into more complex investigations because of her intelligence and feisty persistence. Hannah has a wry sense of humor, often turned on herself, and is unlucky in love.

CONTRIBUTION

Sarah Dunant has created a realistic female private investigator in Hannah Wolfe, adding a feminist slant to the detective-fiction genre. She has added psychologi-

cal and issue-oriented elements to the genre without sacrificing the necessary strengths of plot and action. Her later novels *Transgressions* (1997) and *Mapping the Edge* (1999) stretch the boundaries of the psychological thriller genre, developing themes of women who refuse to become victims and exploring the relationship between sexuality, fear, and control. Her style is intelligent and literary, blurring the lines between detective fiction, psychological thriller, and literary fiction. Dunant's work bridges the gap between commercial fiction and the literary novel. Hannah Wolfe's self-conscious commentary is reminiscent of postmodernism, while both *Transgressions* and *Mapping the Edge* maintain complex parallel plots that are experimental in form. The first Hannah Wolfe mystery, *Birth Marks* (1991), was shortlisted for Britain's prestigious Gold Dagger Award. *Fatlands* (1994), the second Wolfe mystery, won the Silver Dagger Award.

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Dunant was born on August 8, 1950, in London. She earned a degree in history from Newnham College, Cambridge University, in 1972, and began working as a producer for British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio in 1974. She became a successful broadcaster, critic, and writer, well-known to British audiences as a presenter of BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*; BBC Television's *The Late Show*, a nightly cultural news program; and BBC Radio 3's *Nightwaves*.

Dunant wrote her first two novels, the thrillers *Exterminating Angels* (1983) and *Intensive Care* (1986), with Peter Busby under the joint pseudonym, Peter Dunant. The first novel Dunant published under her own name, *Snow Storms in a Hot Climate* (1988), is a psychological thriller with a complex web of psychology, eroticism, humor, twisting plot, and intelligent writing that foreshadow the elements of the her later mysteries.

Dunant then wrote three mysteries in the Hannah Wolfe series. Her objective was to create a realistic modern female detective who would be clever yet vulnerable. Set in London, *Birth Marks* introduces Hannah Wolfe, a working-class young woman who works for a security firm. She takes a job tracking down a missing ballet dancer, and an unexpectedly

complex tale of action and ideas unfolds. *Fatlands*, perhaps the most compelling Wolfe mystery, followed in 1994. Further revelations about Hannah's philosophy of life are intertwined in a novel that manages to be frightening, violent, and witty at the same time and leaves the reader thinking about contemporary issues and feminist lifestyles. The third novel in the series, *Under My Skin* (1995), is set in the milieu of an upscale women's spa and features the murder of a prominent plastic surgeon. Once again, action and feminist issues are intertwined with the engaging character of Hannah.

Dunant edited two nonfiction collections, *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Debate* (1995) and *The Age of Anxiety* (1996), continuing her successful double career as writer and broadcaster. Two nonseries psychological thrillers followed, *Transgressions* and *Mapping the Edge*. Both books are complex, stretching the boundaries of form as well as what is traditional and permissible behavior for a woman. She was criticized by feminists for the controversial rape scene in *Transgressions*, in which the heroine deflects the potential violence of her attacker by seducing him.

In 2000, Dunant bought an apartment in Florence, Italy, and turned to historical fiction. *The Birth of Venus* (2003), set in fifteenth century Florence, is the story of an intelligent young woman, Alessandra Cecchi, who longs to be a painter. She makes a marriage of convenience with an older man who turns out to be a homosexual but who allows her to paint. She becomes the lover of her young painting teacher, and then her world explodes with the rise of the fiery fundamentalist monk Savonarola. In this novel, Dunant combines her background in history and art with her insights into female sexuality. The book was highly successful, becoming a best seller.

Following *The Birth of Venus*, Dunant gave up her work for the BBC to devote more time to her two teenage daughters, Zoe and Georgia, and to her writing. A second historical novel, *In the Company of the Courtesan* (2006), is set in Venice and recounts the adventures of a beautiful courtesan who becomes the model for Titian's "Venus of Urbino," narrated by the heroine's servant, a dwarf.

ANALYSIS

Sarah Dunant writes sharp and witty, complex literary mysteries. Her heroines are contemporary women who are realistic and candid. Her novels incorporate a subtext of challenging women's traditional roles, especially regarding sexuality. These are women who take charge of their own destinies and value independence over security. Even when they become victims of violence, they struggle for control. They are vulnerable yet credible. However, the elements of character and contemporary issues are always subordinate to plot and action. The story keeps moving through unexpected twists and turns right up to the last page; there are no easy answers or unsatisfactory endings in Dunant's novels.

BIRTH MARKS

Birth Marks, the first Hannah Wolfe mystery, is a novel of psychology as well as a traditional detective

novel. This novel introduces Hannah Wolfe, a single security investigator in her thirties. Hannah's assignments are generally less-than-glamorous jobs such as providing security to rich women on shopping jaunts or department store surveillance. As the novel opens, Hannah takes a missing person assignment: A young ballet dancer has fallen out of touch with her elderly teacher/guardian.

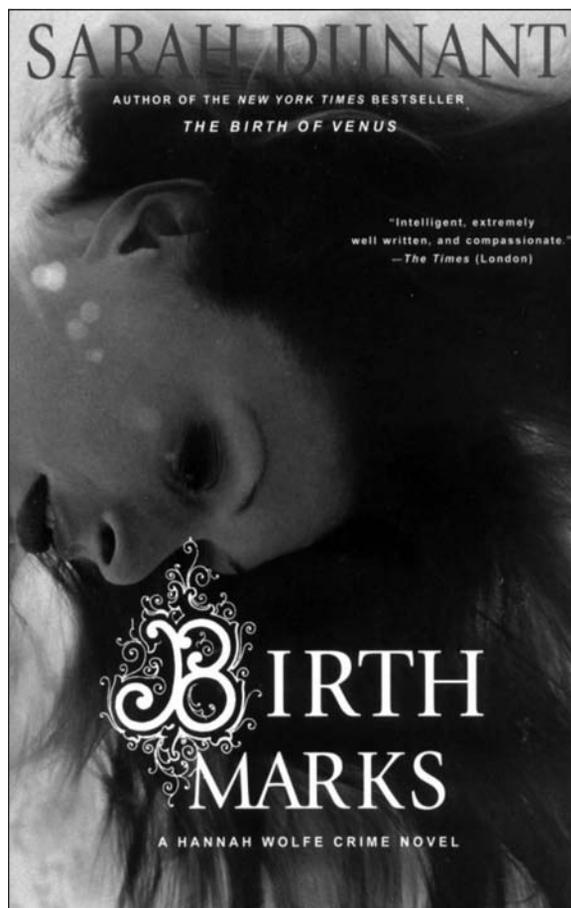
Set in London, the tale is told in the first person. Hannah comments with humor and irony on her business and the people around her as well as on her own life. She is tough and idealistic at the same time. Her commentary pays homage to Raymond Chandler's hard-boiled style with nods to Agatha Christie. She speaks directly to the reader in a wryly self-conscious style.

When the eight-months' pregnant dancer is found drowned in the Thames, an apparent suicide, the police consider the case closed. However, Hannah is both persistent and insightful. Considering her own biological clock, she understands that an eight-months' pregnant woman is likely to be looking toward new life, not death. Intelligence and observation, the detective's tools of the trade, contribute to her suspicion that the suicide note was not in the dancer's apartment when Hannah was snooping there shortly before the death was discovered. Hannah digs deeper, tracks the dancer to Paris, and the tale becomes one of artificial insemination and surrogate motherhood. The dancer had been recruited to bear a child for a rich and childless war hero and had been leading a double life.

The ending has a twist; it is not what it first appears to be, revealing the moral ambiguity and complexity of modern life. Hannah reveals an intelligence, attitude, humor, and self-knowledge that makes the reader eager to read more about her. The book is a rich combination of character, setting, psychology, voice, and contemporary issues with solid plot and action.

FATLANDS

The second Hannah Wolfe mystery, *Fatlands*, lives up to the promise of the first. Hannah has taken a job shepherding a spoiled, rich fourteen-year-old on a shopping trip in London. While the young girl is in her charge, she is blown up in a car explosion presumably meant for her father, a research scientist who has re-



ceived death threats from animal rights activists. Stunned, grieving, and feeling responsible, Hannah unravels an increasingly complex and compelling plot that navigates through factory farming, international corporate politics, and the deadly potential of chemicals in people's food.

Fatlands is a page-turner that is notable for its central scene of violence to Hannah and the aftermath of that violence. Viciously beaten by her unknown antagonist in a dark country lane, Hannah ends up in the hospital. Through her brutally honest first-person narration, the attack is seen and felt through Hannah's own eyes. She continues her investigation, emotionally scarred but determined to find and confront her attacker. In the thrilling ending, she comes face to face with her attacker and faces not only her fear but also the motivation for violence against women. In *Fatlands*, Dunant introduces the relationship between sex and violence, pain and fear, and the refusal of a woman to become a victim that would be further developed in the later novel *Transgressions*.

Fatlands was a popular and critical success. Critics and the public praised the book for its intelligence and style, for its observation and wit, for its feminist perspective and its use of ideas, all pleasingly subordinate to its action and plot.

UNDER MY SKIN

Hannah Wolfe returns in *Under My Skin*, the third mystery in the series. As the new plot unfolds, the reader is made aware that Hannah suffers from post-traumatic shock syndrome as a result of the severe beating she received in *Fatlands*. She bears a physical scar on her face in addition to the emotional scars, so it is ironic that her new case is set at a health and beauty spa outside London, among women who will do almost anything to be as perfectly beautiful as possible.

As in all of the Hannah Wolfe mysteries, a straightforward case with a relatively easy solution, sabotage at the upscale health spa, evolves into something more challenging: the murder of the plastic surgeon husband of the spa's beautiful, surgically altered owner. As Hannah investigates, interviewing a number of his unsatisfied clients, witty and ironic commentary on the contemporary fascination with youth and beauty abounds. At the same time, Hannah is informally in-

vestigating the seeming infidelity of her sister's husband, of whom Hannah has never been fond. Once again, the obvious and easy conclusions are not the end of the story, and the twists and turns of the plot's ending are ultimately both surprising and satisfying.

Dunant succeeds in creating another novel that combines ideas about contemporary life and relationships, a solid page-turning detective story, and insights about men and women with a deeper exploration of the character of Hannah Wolfe. This is an entertaining book, compelling for those readers who are by now hooked on Hannah's life and work, but it does not reach the depth of complexity and psychological insight of *Fatlands*.

TRANSGRESSIONS

Transgressions, a nonseries psychological thriller, is Dunant's most controversial novel. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Skorvecky, recently separated from her boyfriend of several years, lives alone in a rambling house on the outskirts of London. She has isolated herself from her friends while she translates a steamy, almost pornographic, Czech detective novel into English. When strange things begin to happen in her house, she first suspects her former boyfriend, then poltergeists, but finally realizes that she is being stalked by a potential rapist, possibly even a serial killer.

The central and most controversial scene of the thriller is the rape scene. When Lizzie finds the stalker in her bedroom, she overcomes her fear and refuses to become a victim. Desperately hoping to defuse the violence and save her life, she takes control and seduces her rapist. Dunant wrote the scene graphically from both the erotic and psychological viewpoints and received some scathing criticism from feminists and critics as a result.

The form of the book is literary and complex: As the two stories unfold, the story of what is happening to Lizzie and the story that she is translating begin to merge. When Lizzie realizes that her stalker has been reading the erotic drafts of her translation, taking them from her curbside trash bins, she begins to write for him, creating a third level of narrative. Rather than give in to her fear, she begins to orchestrate the climax of the plot. Determined to trap him, she calls him to return by writing vivid and arousing scenes. Suspense

and tension build. Again, Dunant's ending does not disappoint.

In this novel, Dunant stretches the boundaries of what is permissible in a rape scene. She creates a heroine who refuses to become a victim at the same time that she fears she is losing her grip on reality. She explores the complex relationship between sexual obsession, violence, power, and fear, and she creates a compelling psychological thriller that keeps the reader engrossed until the last page.

MAPPING THE EDGE

Once again Dunant stretches the boundaries of form and genre in her novel of suspense, *Mapping the Edge*. Anna, an investigative journalist and single mother living in London, leaves her beloved young daughter with trusted friends and departs for a brief vacation in Florence. When she does not return as planned, her friends have to face the possibility that she is not coming back. Missing, but why? Abducted? Murdered? Lingered with a lover? Dunant interweaves two parallel possible scenarios, Anna kidnapped by a stranger or Anna involved in a romantic interlude that becomes increasingly sinister, with the story of the tension among those who wait at home, narrated by Anna's best friend, Estella. Estella, trying to solve the mystery of what has become of Anna, and speaking in the first person, is somewhat reminiscent of Hannah Wolfe in tone, intelligence, and attitude.

Anna, in either scenario, needs to rise above the role of passive victim or lover to take control of the situation and return to her daughter. Both possible scenarios are fraught with suspense. In one, she must escape her kidnapper by cooperating enough to determine his motives and weaknesses. In the other, as she gradually realizes that her lover is a scam artist, she must unravel his motives and secrets to foil his plan to use her in his art smuggling scheme.

Familiar Dunant elements of intelligent, independent women, psychological thriller, suspense, and a victim who overcomes her fear to take charge of her fate, along with commentary on contemporary sexuality, lifestyle, and relationships, and a plot that keeps the reader turning the pages late into the night create another satisfying and unsettling novel. It is never revealed which is the true reason for Anna's disappear-

ance, as she grapples with the conflict between motherhood and duty and the desire to return to a freer, less restricted life.

Susan Butterworth

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HANNAH WOLFE SERIES: *Birth Marks*, 1991; *Fatlands*, 1994; *Under My Skin*, 1995

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Exterminating Angels*, 1983 (as Dunant; with Peter Busby); *Intensive Care*, 1986 (as Dunant; with Peter Busby); *Snow Storms in a Hot Climate*, 1988; *Transgressions*, 1997; *Mapping the Edge*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Birth of Venus*, 2003; *In the Company of the Courtesan*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Debate*, 1995; *The Age of Anxiety*, 1996 (with Roy Porter)

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Guardian, May 27, 1997, p. T008. Dunant responds to the criticism about her protagonist turning a rape into a seduction in *Transgressions*. Steinberg, Sybil. "Sarah Dunant: Fate and Fiction in

Florence." *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 10 (March 8, 2004): 43-44. Profile of Dunant that discusses her background, themes, and writing *The Birth of Venus*.

ROBERT L. DUNCAN

Robert Lipscomb Duncan

Born: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; September 9, 1927

Died: Norman, Oklahoma; January 28, 1999

Also wrote as W. R. Duncan; James Hall Roberts

Type of plot: Espionage

CONTRIBUTION

Robert L. Duncan, who sometimes used the pseudonym James Hall Roberts, wrote a new kind of spy novel, one in the tradition of John le Carré and Graham Greene, but different in its focus on international conspiracies that a persistent individual can undo. His recurrent message is that, despite seemingly impossible odds, a determined, resilient man with the courage of his convictions and a sense of right can make a difference in today's world. His strengths are his expertise in Far Eastern history, politics, psychology, and culture, and his willingness to break traditional molds. *The Q Document* (1964), for example, is unique in its application of New Testament studies and scholarship on the deciphering of ancient manuscripts to an intriguing thriller plot. Duncan's novels are regularly published in Great Britain, France, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Japan, and South America.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on September 9, 1927, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the son of Norman Duncan (an attorney) and Eva Pearl (Hall) Duncan, Robert Lipscomb Duncan was married to Wanda Scott, a writer, on April 12, 1949. He received his bachelor of arts degree in 1950 and his master of arts degree in 1972, both from the University of Oklahoma. While attending school

he began his career as a writer, but he also worked as a lecturer in television writing at the University of California, Irvine, between 1967 and 1968; a coordinator of a seminar in business aspects of the arts from 1969 to 1970; and a writer-in-residence at Chapman College in Orange, California. Teaching professional writing part-time at various universities gave Duncan the satisfaction of passing on practical advice about the craft and about marketing, though he decided that writing per se and a love of language and order cannot be taught. From 1972 to 1980, he was an associate professor of journalism at the University of Oklahoma School of Professional Writing.

Duncan said that he knew he wanted to be a novelist and nothing else when he read Ellery Queen at the age of twelve and that realizing that dream allowed him to indulge his curiosity about the world and to travel extensively. He went on book promotion tours in New Zealand and Australia, visited the South Pacific, and did research in Denpasar, Bali; Jakarta; Bangkok; and Moscow. He thought of himself as more an "international writer than an American" and used his writings "as a way of affirming the conviction that individual belief, translated into action, can be effective in solving some of the problems of the world which, on first glance, seem beyond solution." His method was first to engage in travel and research, then to allow a gestation period for sorting out his impressions. He found that, given a bit of time, characters and situations begin to form; he got glimpses of scenes and flashes of dialogue until these nebulous elements finally coalesced into a solid story. Sometimes he toyed with an idea for more than forty years, as he did with *China Dawn* (1988).

ANALYSIS

Robert L. Duncan's novels are marked by convincing, highly detailed backgrounds, with Tokyo and resort areas in Japan a favorite, but all the Far East is familiar territory in his novels. In *the Enemy Camp* (1985), for example, focuses on Indonesia, its people, its politics, its past, and its present struggles. The exotic music of the gamelan, the intricately staged Balinese dance, and the lush tropical villas of the rich are set against the dangerous alleyways of Jakarta and the *pencak silat* fighters battling over bets. In *The Queen's Messenger* (1982), the action ranges from the jungles of Thailand to the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator, from Hong Kong and Bangkok to the London offices of the British intelligence service, and involves Thai police, American deserters from the Vietnam War era, Britishers gone native, and a rogue agent driven by nightmarish memories of Russian-paid Thai torturers. The hero in *Brimstone* (1980), in contrast, remains in the United States but flees cross-country, frequently switching cars and planes, from Pennsylvania to Nebraska, from California to Nevada, experiencing the flavor of each on his way.

Such movement allows for what Duncan says he finds most exciting: the clash of cultures. A majority of his novels involve the collision of different groups, whether members of contrasting nations or of competing cultures within one nation, such as humanists versus militarists or professional intelligence operatives. These clashes may be minor, for the sake of characterization or background information: a working-class midwesterner's sense of inferiority and clumsiness in the face of the "snobbish grace" of San Francisco's urbane and mannered executives; the unbridgeable gap between a twenty-year-old sex queen and her middle-aged sugar daddy; the contrast between Amish traditionalists and their modern neighbors. The clashes may also be central to the action and to the message, as is the conflict between civilian and military values in *The Day the Sun Fell* (1970), *The February Plan* (1967), and *Brimstone*, or that between Western and Asian logic in *The Day the Sun Fell*, *The Queen's Messenger*, *Fire Storm* (1978), and *China Dawn*. The military logic usually involves well-intended ends but monstrous means: plots by high-level superpatriots to assure political sta-

bility or peace by using nuclear or neutron bombs. In contrast, Asian logic seems clear at first but then proves inscrutable, an illusion shielding an illusion. The hero of *Fire Storm*, for example, has worked in Asia for years, but he admits that he does not and never will understand the Japanese mind; he might be able to project with some accuracy what the Japanese might do, but he will never understand why they would do it. The Japanese highway system with its real police interspersed amid numerous police mannequins baffles him, as do the taxi drivers who never pay attention to addresses, and the justice system, which builds on illusion and indirection. One Japanese police inspector, who later proves corruptible, defends his system as complex and difficult for Westerners to understand but still capable of "a high batting average." The attempt of representatives from different cultures and different value systems to understand one another's minds and emotions, nevertheless remaining continually at odds in niggling ways, is a mainstay of Duncan's canon.

In *Temple Dogs*, as in so many of Duncan's novels, a key feature is the conflict between a single individual and the organization. In *Fire Storm*, another big-business novel, a Japanese port is deliberately incinerated as part of an international plot, and the American shipbuilding executive who witnesses the destruction finds himself forced to battle both corrupt Japanese officials and his own former associates. In *Brimstone*, a computer technician accidentally calls up maps of Russian towns, part of project *Brimstone*, a secret operation connected with the missing eighteen-minute segment of Richard Nixon's White House tapes, and finds himself caught up in an ongoing military conspiracy. In *The Dragons at the Gate*, an honest operative in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) struggles to avoid being sacrificed by his own apparatus to assure the economic dominance of the United States. Despite imprisonment and interrogation, he ultimately forces the CIA to cancel a morally repugnant operation. This ability of one individual to make a difference in an overwhelmingly corrupt world accounts in large part for the appeal of Duncan's novels.

At times Duncan's descriptions border on the satiric, especially when they relates to the villains: the military "hawk" whose technical expertise exists

“only in the phenomenal work of the legislative aide who wrote speeches for him,” the urbane and internationally respected British lord who conspires with terrorists, the references to genuine military and intelligence operations such as experiments with LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) in the 1960’s, and the military focus on “gamesmanship” as real events transpire. One hero, in disgust, postulates that this is “the age of the accountants” and that the true autocrat is that “watchdog of the watchdogs,” the CIA, while others declaim against those who refuse to get involved, whether the bureaucrats who allow decisions by default or the ordinary citizen who lacks compassion or a sense of patriotic duty. Duncan clearly believes that the world has changed for the worse. His villains are often figures reminiscent of Dr. Strangelove, yet carefully grounded in real events and real personages. The novels tend to build on problems that were major moral and social concerns when they were written: for example, bribery of Japanese businessmen by American corporations in *Temple Dogs* (1977), written shortly after the actual scandals.

LONERS AS HEROES

Duncan’s heroes tend to be loners, working for a large organization but always psychologically on the fringe, independent and stubborn in their defense of the right. Sometimes they are troubleshooters for a large multinational company, as in *Temple Dogs* and *Fire Storm*. Inevitably they end up struggling against a large, powerful organization—sometimes their own, sometimes one closely related to their own, but always one corrupt at its core. Sometimes they have been set up as scapegoats by their own superiors. These heroes are usually believers in “old-fashioned” values such as honor and loyalty, in contrast to their opponents, who are motivated by self-interest, economic pragmatism, or computer-generated decisions. The hero in *The Queen’s Messenger*, for example, bears the scars of enemy torture and feels compelled to rescue a captured compatriot from a similar fate.

In spite of the international settings, Duncan’s protagonists have much in common with the traditional hero of the American Western: They are men, neither old nor young, and somewhat alienated from society, especially the society of women. Although intelligent

and articulate when the occasion calls for it, they tend toward the taciturn. Like the cowboy hero, they often feel little initial responsibility toward other people, but become involved after suffering repeated indignities at the hands of an arrogant and mechanistic organization. The nastier and more impossible the odds against them, the more stubbornly they pursue their nemesis. They may verbally vacillate, but when it comes to action, they feel as does the hero of *Fire Storm*, who makes a partial truce with a kamikaze member of a Japanese terrorist group to undermine the enemy behind the enemy, the amoral and murderous corporate heads of several “American” multinational oil companies: “In my own way, I’m a dyed-in-the-wool revolutionary. They’re trying to take over by killing some enemies who I happen to believe are worthwhile people. I mean to change things.” Heroes are accompanied in this battle by strong but often unhappy women, who, compelled by love, loyalty, a sense of right, or a need for truth, join forces with them and find some measure of comfort at the resolution.

Unlike the cowboy hero, Duncan’s protagonists prefer mental weapons to physical ones, using an array of talents that no computer can match. Typically, the hero must decode a cryptic document, a confused set of circumstances or relationships, a puzzling message, or a tape, using scholarly or parascholarly skills. Often, the opposition has concocted an array of forged documents that, taken as a package, seem to constitute absolute proof. Next, the protagonist must make sense of the plot or scheme behind the code, and sometimes his initial interpretation must be revised or modified in the face of new evidence that reveals even subtler possibilities than those first conceived. Sometimes an incongruity of detail or of character sets him on the right track, but both logical conclusions and intuitive insights put him in mortal danger. An extended and exciting chase scene results, with the setting varying from downtown Tokyo to Japanese ski resorts to the American Southwest, and the territory covered ranging from city streets to the entire Pacific Ocean. Duncan liked to set manhunts in resort areas, with the dragnet taking place against pleasant rural vistas, the hero’s agonies invisible to the tourists enjoying the scenery.

Whatever the setting, the hero is always ingenious and unpredictable in his escape strategies, usually foiling the computer-based thoroughness and rationality of his would-be captors. Pamela Marsh of *The Christian Science Monitor* sums up the typical Duncan action: "Our hair is kept constantly on end as searches, captures, escapes, hunts, follow in rapid series with corpses beginning to accumulate and an inevitable World War III but days away." The hero must resist the temptation to panic and force himself to use reason against the manhunters' mechanistic thoroughness. Sometimes, a selfish, spoiled woman abets the escape only to attempt a betrayal, but the hero overcomes this impediment. Sometimes thieves fall out, and he benefits from the results. He may be offered bribes or even his life; he may be "reasoned with" through physical force, psychological pressure, or philosophical debate, but conflict only makes him stronger in his convictions, in contrast to those around him who prove weaker and more yielding. Pressure and the need to become involved transform the hero into a force with which to be reckoned.

PLOTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Duncan's originality resides in his choice of situations and protagonists as well as thematic concerns: In *The Q Document*, for example, a biblical scholar is caught up in a conspiracy as he investigates documents that purport to show Christianity as based on fraudulence and false prophets. In *The Burning Sky* (1966), Evan Cummings, a field anthropologist working in the Arizona desert, must find a colleague missing in no-man's-land and in the process searches for Indian ruins that other scholars have rejected as fantasy. Duncan's later works adhere more closely to the conventions of the detective genre but remain unique in focus and in control of setting. Newgate Callendar, a critic for *The New York Times*, points out that a writer as skillful as Duncan can use "the most conventional of materials" and still devise fresh and intriguing plots: In *Temple Dogs*, a retired American general depends on assassination, blackmail, terrorism, and the threat of war to protect his Far Eastern corporate interests while the protagonist works to expose him and undermine his activities.

Duncan favored neat conclusions, with all plot

strands satisfactorily resolved. Moreover, these resolutions usually provide the reader with an intellectually satisfying surprise. Emotionally, on the other hand, his novels can be disappointing. There are simply too many characters who refuse to see the facts that confront them, who refuse to become involved with other people, and who are weakened and undone by the powerful machinery of a company or a party. Furthermore, often the innocent prove victims, and the curious suffer for their vice. Sightseers are blown to bits; bystanders get shot. A child dies from a stray bullet, a fishing village bursts into flame, a young girl is butchered to force information from her father, and a friendly cabby is eliminated for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes the hero's young assistant is killed, as in *The Dragons at the Gate* (1975) and *Temple Dogs*. In the psychological thriller *In the Blood* (1984), several young women are mutilated and murdered simply because their profiles match an image engraved in the mind of a deranged ax murderer; moreover, the author raises questions of innocence, guilt, and personal responsibility as both the psychotic killer and the persistent New York police officer who pursues him through peaceful Pennsylvania Dutch farmland are driven to atone for the sins of their Jewish fathers, one by ritualistic murder, the other by learning to understand and forgive. In like manner *The Day the Sun Fell* contrasts the cruelty, stubbornness, madness, and humanity of two warring nations as Nagasaki is bombed.

THE SERPENT'S MARK

The individual, however, is also capable of profound malice. In his last novel, Duncan again singles out an individual for heroic action, this time through the manipulations of a messianic mass murderer—one man against another. *The Serpent's Mark* (1989) features Peter Stein, a retired police detective who once specialized in apprehending serial killers and is now a consultant trying to live quietly for the sake of his family's safety. He is ironically driven out of retirement not by his desire to return to action and find the killer but by the killer's own determination to roust Stein from inaction. Refusing to be lured or threatened, Stein finally responds to the killer's baiting when a young girl is kidnapped and tortured. Mutilation and

murder follow in rapid repetition as Stein pursues his mad quarry. The killer is finally discovered, but only after numerous innocents and Stein's own family are placed in grave danger.

Andrew F. Macdonald
Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Q Document*, 1964 (as Roberts); *The Burning Sky*, 1966 (as Roberts); *The February Plan*, 1967 (as Roberts); *The Day the Sun Fell*, 1970; *The Dragons at the Gate*, 1975; *Temple Dogs*, 1977; *Fire Storm*, 1978; *Brimstone*, 1980; *Sphere*, 1981; *The Queen's Messenger*, 1982 (with Wanda Duncan; as W. R. Duncan); *In the Blood*, 1984; *In the Enemy Camp*, 1985; *China Dawn*, 1988; *The Serpent's Mark*, 1989

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *If It Moves Salute It*, 1961; *The Voice of the Stranger*, 1961; *The General and the Coed*, 1962

SHORT FICTION: *The Dicky Bird Was Singing*, 1952; *Buffalo Country*, 1959

NONFICTION: *Castles in the Air: The Memoirs of Irene Castle*, 1958 (with Wanda Duncan); *Reluctant General: The Life and Times of Albert Pike*, 1961

SCREENPLAY:

Black Gold, 1962

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by Robert L. Duncan. *The New York Times*, November 23, 1980, p. A37. Callendar praises Duncan's novel, saying that the author makes the events credible and the adventure involved make the novel suitable for filming.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, a former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional accounts of espionage with actual cases. Although Duncan is not mentioned, the book provides an understanding of the genre in which he wrote.

Oliver, Myrna. "Obituaries: Robert Duncan; Novelist, TV Screenwriter." *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1999, p. 27. Obituary of Duncan notes his mysteries, his writings as James Hall Roberts, his writings with his wife as W. R. Duncan, and his work for television, which included many Westerns.

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. An excellent, all-around trove of information for the reader. Contains a full chapter devoted to the spy novel. Another chapter addresses the thriller.

Williams, Gene. "It's Murder, They All Write." Review of *The Serpent's Mark*, by Robert L. Duncan. *The Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1990. Williams reviews several books that he sees as similar to those of Thomas Harris. He finds Duncan's work memorable and suspenseful but feels he is an inferior writer to Harris.

JOHN DUNNING

Born: Brooklyn, New York; January 9, 1942

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; hard-boiled; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Cliff “the Bookman” Janeway, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CLIFF JANEWAY owns a used bookstore, specializing in rare books and first editions. A retired Denver police officer, he has begun a new life as a small-business owner with a passion for expensive books. The behind-the-scenes details and the diverse characters inhabiting the book world provide interesting and sometimes even fascinating twists to the stories. Janeway is a more cerebral, more sensitive, more modern representative of the hard-boiled detective tradition. He can be disarmingly charming and physically intimidating by turns, like Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade, but his intellect and sensibilities are more like Robert B. Parker’s Spenser.

CONTRIBUTION

John Dunning has shone a bright light on the arcane world of book collecting, unintentionally making the job of the used book dealer much harder. *Booked to Die* (1992), the first title in the Janeway series, was an instant success largely achieved through word of mouth via the vast underground network of bibliophiles. The novel dealt with collecting books and searching for rare books and the collectors themselves, and it cross-bred the hard-boiled tradition with the BiblioMystery. Dunning found a literate, largely untapped audience; a series hero who appealed equally to men and women; and a reason to keep writing novels when he was on the brink of giving up.

Dunning found early success in the mystery genre with two titles, *Looking for Ginger North* (1980) and *Deadline* (1981), both nominated for Edgar Awards. However, it was eleven long years between *Deadline* and *Booked to Die*, which won a Nero Wolfe Award. During those years, Dunning operated a bookstore in

Denver and has said he would have been content to remain on the selling side of the book business.

Before the Janeway series, Dunning had written five titles, three of them mysteries. He had met with limited success, but his circle of Denver literary acquaintances urged him to keep writing. Warwick Downing, a friend and fellow Denver author, suggested that he write a book about a dealer in rare books. *Booked to Die* is dedicated to Downing. Dunning’s Janeway series foreshadowed a recent trend and no doubt influenced the publication of popular and more recent titles focused on the world of rare books, including Arturo Perez-Reverte’s *El club Dumas* (1993; *The Club Dumas*, 1996) and Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason’s *The Rule of Four* (2004).

BIOGRAPHY

John Dunning was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1942. He grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, where he earned a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Despite his lack of formal education, he was an avid writer from a young age. Dunning’s early literary influences included the Edward Stratemeyer Syndicate’s Hardy Boys, Rover Boys, and Tom Swift series. He was even more influenced by Walter Farley’s Black Stallion series. However, Dunning found it difficult to find an audience for his writing as he lacked the proper credentials. He entered the U.S. Army but was quickly discharged because of a broken eardrum. Subsequently, he worked as a glass cutter in Charleston and then in Denver. His interest in horses drew him to a local track, where he was hired as a groomer. Five years as a groomer, sleeping in tack rooms and traveling the western United States opened Dunning’s eyes to a simpler life and an easy camaraderie among horse trainers, jockeys, and his fellow groomers. Dunning still wanted to earn a living by writing, so he made repeated requests for work at the *Denver Post*.

Dunning began as a copy boy at the *Denver Post* and slowly rose to copy boy/reporter, writing book reviews and covering the police beat. After years of persisting, he was appointed a member of the newspa-

per's three-man investigative team. Working as an investigative reporter introduced Dunning to police detectives and helped him hone his research skills.

Dunning's first published novel was the mystery *The Holland Suggestions* (1975), a book that blended the subjects of history and hypnosis. However, he sent his follow-up mystery novel, *Looking for Ginger North* (1980), to twenty-two publishers before one accepted it. Its original title was *Bloodline*, but the book took so long to reach publication that in the meantime, Sidney Sheldon published his own *Bloodline* (1978), and Dunning's book had to be renamed. Dunning's third mystery title, *Deadline* (1981), had a completely different reception. Written in only a few months, the book was sold to the first publisher who read it.

After *Deadline*, Dunning hit a rough eleven-year patch of publisher rejections. He had sold a non-mystery novel, *Denver* (1980), and he was successful in publishing a book about one of his other passions, old-time radio. Dunning eventually wrote a second reference book on old-time radio, a one-volume work that is still considered the definitive source on the subject. For twenty-five years, he broadcast a radio show in Denver featuring old-time radio programs. Using his knowledge of old-time radio, he helped score Robert Altman's 1974 film *Thieves Like Us*. Dunning and his wife, Helen, bought Old Algonquin Books in Denver, a shop that served as the real model for Janeway's fictional Twice Told Books. The shop in Denver was closed after *Booked to Die* was published, but Old Algonquin Books became an online retailer.

ANALYSIS

John Dunning has attention deficit disorder, which was undiagnosed for most of his life. This condition probably explains why he did not finish high school and why his writing process is slow. Dunning has said that it sometimes takes him ten hours to get two hours of work done. Despite his condition, he has written best-selling novels and a number of nonfiction works.

For most of his writing career, Dunning wrote on a manual typewriter, saying the personal computer was a left-brained tool trying to do a right-brain job. In many ways, he is a throwback to earlier times when authors such as James M. Cain (Dunning's favorite

mystery writer), Cornell Woolrich, and Raymond Chandler wrote tight plots with terse, fast, hard-hitting dialogue. Dunning's hero, Cliff Janeway, however, has more modern sensibilities than those authors' lonely detectives in the knight-errant tradition. For example, he can relate to a woman without necessarily having to rough her up.

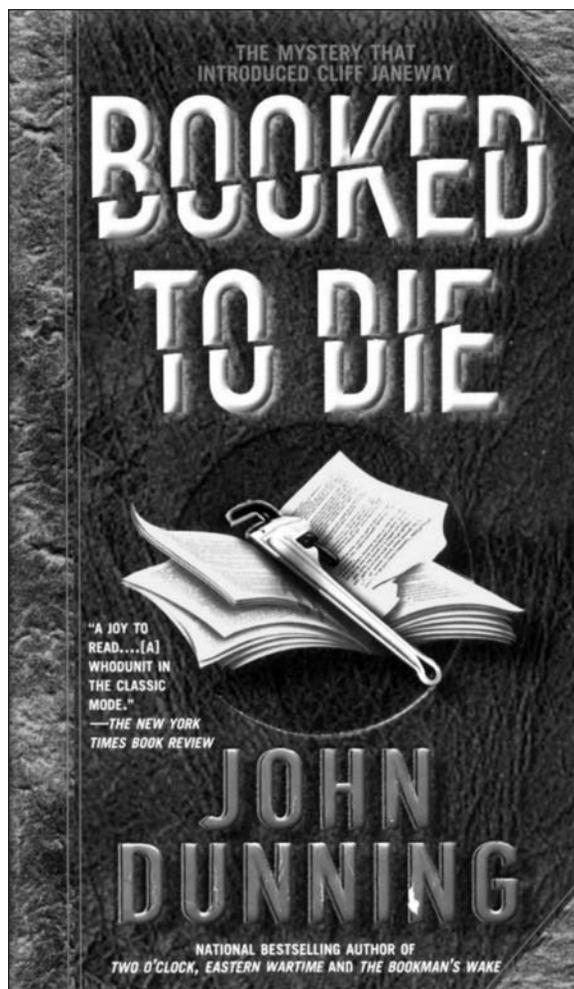
The Janeway series appeals to the intellect without being overly erudite and is suited for the reader who enjoys fast-paced action and solid dialogue and can appreciate the insights that Dunning offers based on his own experiences. To read an author is to share his passions: Dunning's novels about rare-book collecting, journalism, old-time radio, and horse racing are all reflections of his own world and experiences. The art of the novel lies in the ability to present one's world in an honest, compelling, dynamic way that connects with the reader's own intellect.

DEADLINE

In *Deadline*, Dunning's third mystery novel, Dalton Walker is a reporter covering a circus-tent fire in which an eight-year-old girl has died. The fire story runs parallel to another assignment, an interview with dancer Diana Yoder, who was raised in the Amish faith. These two seemingly different stories intertwine. Except for the hero Walker, the characters, especially some of the women, are not as cleverly drawn as those in the Janeway series. Despite this flaw, this is a tightly written novel with plenty of Dunning's typically well-researched background. Dunning has stated an intent to write a sequel to *Deadline*, which was written in less than two months and sold to the first publisher to see it.

BOOKED TO DIE

The first title in the Cliff Janeway series, *Booked to Die* (1992) met with great reviews. After reading the novel, which was full of details about the book trade, readers who were lovers of books were converted overnight into part-time book scouts (a person who finds bargain books and sells them to bookstores for less than full value). In the book, police officer Cliff Janeway is forced off the force and opens a little bookstore to pursue his hobby and make some money. Jackie Newton, a local man Janeway loathes, becomes a suspect in the murder of book scout Bobby Westfall. The terse, tight prose combined with the revelations



about the book trade made *Booked to Die* a valuable book among collectors. Original hardback editions more than quadrupled in value.

THE BOOKMAN'S WAKE

In *The Bookman's Wake* (1995), Janeway returns to try to save an ingenue book scout who has jumped bail and is suspected in the theft of a priceless edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, a book some experts claim was never even printed. The book scout, who calls herself Eleanor Rigby, has purportedly stolen the rare edition printed by master printers Darryl Grayson and Richard Grayson and has run off to Seattle. The Grayson brothers died under mysterious circumstances years earlier when fire destroyed their business. Janeway joins with Trish Aandahl, the biogra-

pher of the Grayson brothers, and determines that the fire in the Grayson publishing house was no accident. Digging even deeper, they discover a serial killer who may have committed five other murders. *The Bookman's Wake* attempts to do for fine printing what *Booked to Die* did for book collecting. The reader certainly learns a great deal about the printing process and bookbinding.

THE BOOKMAN'S PROMISE

Nine years after the second installment in the Janeway series, *The Bookman's Promise* (2004) finds Cliff Janeway counting the money he made from his career in *The Bookman's Wake*. What should he do with this windfall? Of course, he buys an expensive book. He buys Richard Francis Burton's famous account of his travels to Mecca and Medina. Janeway is fascinated by the eighteenth century explorer and is reveling in the purchase of his book when the rightful owner inconveniently shows up in his bookstore. Josephine Gallant, who is in her nineties, is the granddaughter of Charles Warren, companion to Burton during his pre-Civil War visit to the United States. She once had a great collection of Burton titles but was cheated out of her collection by Dean Treadwell and Carl Treadwell, unscrupulous book dealers in Baltimore. The chase takes Janeway east and to the past. Dunning takes the reader to 1861, when Burton, presumably on a secret mission at the bidding of Britain's prime minister, lands in South Carolina. Strangely, though Burton's travels have been extensively chronicled, there appears to be no existing account of this trip. Dunning has Burton meeting with Abner Doubleday, and they discuss the possible defense of Fort Sumter.

During the years between the second and third novels in the series, Dunning was working on the reference work *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* (1998). Because of this commitment, he delayed the third installment in the Janeway series even as his many fans demanded more. Although he had allowed significant gaps to form between publishing the first three novels in the Janeway series, Dunning completed the next two books in the series in rapid succession: *The Sign of the Book* (2005) and *The Bookwoman's Last Fling* (2006).

Randy L. Abbott

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CLIFF JANEWAY SERIES: *Booked to Die*, 1992; *The Bookman's Wake*, 1995; *The Bookman's Promise*, 2004; *The Sign of the Book*, 2005; *The Bookwoman's Last Fling*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Holland Suggestions*, 1975; *Looking for Ginger North*, 1980; *Deadline*, 1981; *Two O'Clock Eastern Wartime*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Denver*, 1980

NONFICTION: *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976*, 1976; *Deadly Deviates*, 1986; *Mystical Murders*, 1989; *Cryptic Crimes*, 1990; *Mindless Murders*, 1991; *Carnal Crimes*, 1991; *Madly Murderous*, 1991; *Truly Murderous: Horrific Modern Murders Reconstructed*, 1991; *Mysterious Murders*, 1991; *Occult Murders: Chilling Accounts of Satanic Crimes*, 1997; *Strange Deaths: A Chilling Collection of Terrifying Murders*, 1997; *Murderous Women: Shocking True Stories of Women Who Kill*, 1997; *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, 1998

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discusses the nine-year gap since the previous series title.

Dunning, John. "The Bookman's Eye." Interview by Charles L. P. Silet. *The Armchair Detective* 28, no. 2 (1995): 124-133. This is a far-ranging interview done just before the release of *The Bookman's Wake*, the second title in the Janeway series.

_____. "The Bookman's Progress." Interview by Charles L. P. Silet. *Mystery Scene* 84 (March 1, 2004): 26-29. This interview discusses Dunning's historical mystery novel *Two O'Clock Eastern Wartime*, his nonfictional reference works on radio history, and the background research done for *The Bookman's Promise*.

Lambert, Pam. "The Thrill of the Hunt." *People Weekly* 23, no. 43 (June 12, 1995): 27. Written soon after the release of *Booked to Die*, the article discusses book collecting and Dunning's background as a dealer in rare books.

Old Algonquin Books. <http://www.aldalgonquin.com>. The Web site for the online store run by Dunning and his wife, Helen, contains a good deal of biographical information about Dunning and publication information on each of his titles.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains chapters on hard-boiled mysteries and historical crime fiction that shed light on Dunning's work.

FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT

Born: Konolfingen, Switzerland; January 5, 1921

Died: Neuchâtel, Switzerland; December 14, 1990

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hans Bärlach, 1950-1951

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HANS BÄRLACH, the inspector of the criminal in-

vestigations department of the Bern Police, has spent much of his life abroad. Never married, he has made a name for himself as an expert in the detection of crime, first in Constantinople and later in Germany, where he has been in charge of the criminal investigation department in Frankfurt-on-Main. In 1933, he returned to his native Bern, because of a conflict with the new Nazi government. Though Bärlach is old and dying of cancer, he goes on to pursue justice. Nothing

in this world has made him believe that one day final justice will be achieved through his efforts, but he continues to perform his duty, even on his deathbed.

CONTRIBUTION

The detective novel is not a highly regarded genre in German-speaking countries. Therefore, there were not many twentieth century authors of mystery and detective fiction in German, in spite of some promising beginnings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Friedrich Schiller, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, for example). Mystery and detective novels are considered trivial entertainment for mass audiences. German-speaking readers of detective novels are, therefore, mostly dependent on American, British, French, and Scandinavian authors in translation. Although Friedrich Dürrenmatt was one of the most successful dramatists of the European stage in the 1960's and 1970's, he did not hold detective fiction in the same kind of contempt that his colleagues, critics, and educated audiences were accustomed to display. Dürrenmatt was the only modern German-speaking author of stature to write detective fiction. He employed the detective novel to express his basic concept of justice, of humankind's relationship to justice, and of humankind's duty to work for a better world.

Dürrenmatt's language is economical, deceptively simple, yet philosophically profound. For the most part, his characters are ordinary people, but there are also archvillains who display dimensions of metaphysical evil. His books portray Swiss life and have a strong sense of place, namely the city of Bern and its surroundings. As an author of detective novels, Dürrenmatt has been favorably compared to Arthur Conan Doyle, P. G. Wodehouse, and Georges Simenon. Yet, as Martin Esslin has noted, "unlike those writers, Dürrenmatt's basic purpose is always deeply serious, even philosophical." According to some German critics, Dürrenmatt dealt with the same topics as Dashiell Hammett, Rex Stout, and Raymond Chandler, namely with the conflict of two parties, one of which is represented by the individual detective. Working in this tradition, Dürrenmatt surpassed his models in terms of moral and metaphysical issues raised.

BIOGRAPHY

Friedrich Dürrenmatt was born on January 5, 1921, in Konolfingen, near Bern, the son of a Protestant minister and the grandson of a Swiss *Nationalrat*, a member of the national parliament. In 1935, the family moved to Bern, where Dürrenmatt attended the local high school. Originally he had wanted to become a painter, but after studying German literature, art history, science, and philosophy at the Universities of Zurich and Bern, he eventually turned to writing, achieving his first success with his play *Es steht geschrieben* (pr., pb. 1947; revised pr., pb. 1967, as *Die Wiedertäufer*; *The Anabaptists*, 1967), which caused a minor scandal when it premiered in Zurich in 1947.

Also in 1947, Dürrenmatt married Lotti Giessler, an actress. In 1952, they moved to a home in Neuchâtel. His career as a writer was mainly that of a dramatist. By 1965, Dürrenmatt had achieved international fame with his plays *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (pr., pb. 1956; *The Visit*, 1958) and *Die Physiker* (pr., pb. 1962; *The Physicists*, 1963).

The first of Dürrenmatt's detective novels, *Der Richter und sein Henker* (*The Judge and His Hang-*

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

man, 1954), was first published serially in a Swiss periodical in 1950. It was followed by *Der Verdacht* (1953; *The Quarry*, 1961), also published serially, and *Das Versprechen: Requiem auf den Kriminalroman* (1958; *The Pledge: Requiem for the Detective Novel*, 1959). All three have been reprinted frequently and have been made into films. They are favorite school texts in German-speaking countries, and they are frequently read in German-language classes at American universities. More than two million copies of *The Judge and His Hangman* have been sold.

During his career, Dürrenmatt received many prestigious literary awards and honorary degrees. To commemorate his approaching sixtieth birthday, in 1980 his Swiss publisher brought out a thirty-volume edition of Dürrenmatt's collected works. His dramatic work, including adaptations and radio dramas, is collected in seventeen volumes. Six volumes are devoted to his novels and short stories. The final seven volumes contain his nonfiction and a bibliography. He died in December, 1990.

ANALYSIS

According to Friedrich Dürrenmatt, part of his business as a modern writer was to reach a mass audience through his detective novels, promoting the one main idea that informs most of his other writings: the pursuit of justice. His production of mystery and detective fiction was, however, relatively small in comparison to his other literary endeavors. His detective novels make up only two of the thirty volumes of his collected works of 1980.

THE JUDGE AND HIS HANGMAN

Dürrenmatt began his career as writer of detective fiction with the Hans Bärlach series. In *The Judge and His Hangman*, a lieutenant of the Bern police department has been murdered. Inspector Bärlach gets the case, but because he is old and sick, he requests that a younger police officer, named Tschanz (in English, Chance), be assigned to assist him. They discover a mysterious character, a man named Gastmann, who has some connection with the murdered lieutenant. Tschanz is for the hard-boiled approach, but Bärlach restrains him. Bärlach recognizes Gastmann as a master criminal, a man whom he has been trying to trap with-

out success for decades. According to a commentary by one of the characters, Gastmann represents evil. For Gastmann, evil is not the expression of a philosophy or an instinct, but of his freedom, the freedom of a nihilist. Bärlach characterizes him as a devil in human disguise. Once, Gastmann had killed a man in broad daylight in front of Bärlach, only to prove that the detective would not be able to pin the crime on him. This murder had been the result of a blasphemous wager. Since that time, Gastmann had tried to become an even more elusive criminal, while Bärlach had tried to become an even better detective to trap his satanic opponent.

Bärlach now realizes that the murdered lieutenant had also been on Gastmann's trail in an illegal international arms deal. Bärlach uses Tschanz to go after Gastmann, who is killed with his two servants during a shoot-out. The gun that killed the lieutenant is found in the hand of one of the servants. Yet this is not the solution to the case. In fact, Tschanz is the real murderer. He killed the lieutenant to take his place on the force and to acquire his car and his girlfriend. From the beginning, Bärlach has been aware of Tschanz's involvement in the crime, but he set him up against Gastmann, dog against dog. Bärlach appoints himself the judge and Tschanz the hangman. After his metaphysical opponent has been defeated, the old detective does not bother to arrest Tschanz. He leaves Tschanz's punishment to chance: The murderer is accidentally killed in a car-train accident.

THE QUARRY

The Quarry, the second and last novel of the series, is another story of Bärlach and his refusal to abandon the pursuit of justice. His illness, which is considered terminal, confines him to the hospital and forces him to retire from the Bern police department. He is expected to live out his life with stoic resignation and dignity. On his deathbed, Bärlach recognizes an unpunished war criminal from a photograph in *Life* magazine. The war criminal is a concentration camp doctor who continues his evil practices in a sanatorium in Bern. Bärlach has himself transferred to this sanatorium to trap the sadistic doctor and to deliver him to justice. Bärlach, however, becomes trapped by his opponent, who schedules him for an operation without anesthesia. Only at the last moment, Bärlach is saved

by a former concentration camp victim who comes to his rescue. The evil doctor is forced to commit suicide. If it had not been for Bärlach, a dying man who was no longer on the police force, the war criminal would have escaped his punishment. His search for justice never ends, regardless of retirement or cancer.

These two novels allowed Dürrenmatt to establish himself as a serious writer of mystery and detective fiction. After *The Quarry*, however, the short life expectancy of the principal series character put an untimely end to this series. There is not much to write about a series character who has only one year to live.

THE PLEDGE

Dürrenmatt found a new voice with *The Pledge*. The novel tells of a grisly murder of a little girl. A police inspector who has received a prestigious appointment abroad gets involved in this case. He is obsessed with the idea that he must solve the crime because he has “pledged” himself to do so to the mother of the murdered child. A peddler, who has admitted to the crime after exhaustive police interrogations, commits suicide. Thus, for the police, the case is closed. The police inspector, however, insists on pursuing the case, because he considers the peddler innocent. Even after he has been discharged from the police for his obsessive behavior, he continues to investigate and set up a trap for the real murderer. His hunches are correct, he has logic on his side, but he ultimately fails; he has not accounted for coincidence. The criminal dies in an automobile accident on the way to committing his next crime.

The novel is a demonstration of the role of chance and illustrates humankind’s inability to understand the world by means of logic only. It is a requiem for the detective novel because, according to Dürrenmatt, the nineteenth century detective novel was based on a logical plot structure and crime was presented as solvable, like a chess game, by logical analysis. Dürrenmatt’s criticism is that pure chance, or coincidence, was not taken into account. *The Pledge* is the demonstration of the failure of a police officer who conducts an investigation like a nineteenth century detective and must therefore necessarily end in failure. He becomes a victim of his own brilliant logical reason, and he ends up a dropout and a drunkard. Although the crimi-

nal does not escape punishment, his crime is never exposed. It is a failure of justice both in the legal sense and on the level of poetic justice. It is also the failure of a genre, as the subtitle indicates.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Der Auftrag (1986; *The Assignment: Or, On the Observing of the Observer of the Observers*, 1988), Dürrenmatt’s novella about a psychiatrist, the mysterious rape and murder of his wife, and a filmmaker who is hired to investigate the murder, appears to be a pure language experiment. This text meets the challenge to write a novella in twenty-four sentences, each chapter consisting of one sentence. Although the means of detection, like film cameras and binoculars, have become more refined, the identification of criminals has become even more difficult. The same observation appears to apply to language as a means of detection. The refinement of language does not make it easier to discover the truth.

Dürrenmatt’s novels are parables about the fight against evil, and their revelations deal less with the detection and arrest of the criminal than with the chance for justice and truth in this world. In this fight, human reason has to account also for the role of coincidence and irrationality in its search for the truth, but there is the hope that justice will prevail as long as people are willing to pursue its cause.

Ehrhard Bahr

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HANS BÄRLACH SERIES: *Der Richter und sein Henker*, 1950 (*The Judge and His Hangman*, 1954); *Der Verdacht*, 1953 (*The Quarry*, 1961)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Die Panne*, 1956 (*Traps*, 1960; also known as *A Dangerous Game*); *Das Versprechen: Requiem auf den Kriminalroman*, 1958 (*The Pledge: Requiem for the Detective Novel*, 1959); *Aufenthalt in einer kleinen Stadt: Fragment*, 1980; *Der Auftrag*, 1986 (*The Assignment: Or, On the Observing of the Observer of the Observers*, 1988); *Justiz*, 1985 (*The Execution of Justice*, 1989)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Griechen sucht Griechin*, 1955 (*Once a Greek . . .*, 1965); *Der Sturz*, 1971 (*The Coup*, 2006)

SHORT FICTION: *Der Hund*, 1952; *Der Tunnel*, 1952; *Die Stadt*, 1952; *Smithy*, 1976; *Das Sterben der Pythia*, 1976; *Mr. X Macht Ferien*, 1978; *Nachrichten über den Stand des Zeitungswesens in der Steinzeit*, 1978; *Abu Chanifa und Anan Ben David*, 1978; *Aus den Papieren eines Wärters*, 1980

PLAYS: 1947-1960 • *Es steht geschrieben*, pr., pb. 1947 (revised pr., pb. 1967, as *Die Wiedertäufer; The Anabaptists*, 1967); *Der Blinde*, pr. 1948, pb. 1960; *Romulus der Grosse*, pr. 1949 (second version pr. 1957, pb. 1958, third version pb. 1961; *Romulus the Great*, 1961); *Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi*, pr., pb. 1952, second version pb. 1957 (*The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*, 1958); *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon*, pr. 1953, pb. 1954 (second version pb. 1957; *An Angel Comes to Babylon*, 1962); *Herkulus und der Stall des Augias*, wr. 1954, pr., pb. 1959 (radio play), pr., pb. 1963 (staged; *Hercules and the Augean Stables*, 1966); *Der Besuch der alten Dame*, pr., pb. 1956 (*The Visit*, 1958); *Komödien I-III*, pb. 1957-1972 (3 volumes); *Frank der Fünfte: Opera einer Privatbank*, pr. 1959, pb. 1960 (libretto; music by Paul Burkhard)

1961-1970 • *Die Physiker*, pr., pb. 1962 (*The Physicists*, 1963); *Four Plays*, pb. 1964; *Der Meteor*, pr., pb. 1966 (*The Meteor*, 1966); *König Johann*, pr., pb. 1968 (adaptation of William Shakespeare's play *King John*); *Play Strindberg: Totentanz nach August Strindberg*, pr., pb. 1969 (adaptation of August Strindberg's play *The Dance of Death*; *Play Strindberg: The Dance of Death*, 1971); *Portrait eines Planeten*, pr. 1970 (revised pr., pb. 1971; *Portrait of a Planet*, 1973); *Titus Andronicus*, pr., pb. 1970 (adaptation of Shakespeare's play); *Urfaust*, pr., pb. 1970 (adaptation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play)

1971-1983 • *Der Mitmacher*, pr. 1973, pb. 1976 (*The Conformer*, 1975); *Die Frist*, pr., pb. 1977; *Achterloo*, pr., pb. 1983

RADIO PLAYS: *Der Doppelgänger*, wr. 1946, 1961; *Der Prozess um des Esels Schatten*, wr. 1951, 1958 (based on Christoph Martin Wieland's *Die Abderiten*; *The Jackass*, 1960); *Stranitzky und der Nationalheld*, 1952; *Das Unternehmen der Wega*, 1955; *Die Panne*, 1956 (adaptation of his novel; *The Deadly Game*, 1963); *Gesammelte Hörspiele*, 1961

NONFICTION: *Theaterprobleme*, 1955 (*Problems of the Theater*, 1958); *Theater-Schriften und Reden*, 1966 (*Writings on Theatre and Drama*, 1976); *Gespräche, 1961-1990*, 1996 (interviews; Heinz Ludwig Arnold, editor)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Stoffe I-III*, 1981; *Plays and Essays*, 1982; *Werkausgabe in 30 Bänden*, 1982 (30 volumes); *Friedrich Dürrenmatt: Selected Writings*, 2006 (3 volumes)

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E

MIGNON G. EBERHART

Born: University Place, Nebraska; July 6, 1899

Died: Greenwich, Connecticut; October 8, 1996

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sarah Keate and Lance O'Leary, 1929-1932

Sarah Keate, 1942-1954

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SARAH KEATE, a middle-aged, unmarried nurse, is intelligent and plucky. She has, along with the wit to solve baffling crimes, a penchant for complicating their solutions by stumbling into perilous situations.

LANCE O'LEARY is a promising young police detective who works with Nurse Keate. Described as being extremely observant, he also has a knack for extricating Keate from the situations into which she repeatedly blunders.

CONTRIBUTION

Mignon G. Eberhart's first five novels, which featured nurse Sarah Keate and police detective Lance O'Leary, reflect the early influence of Mary Roberts Rinehart on Eberhart's writing. Breaking from this influence after the publication of her fifth Keate-O'Leary novel, Eberhart found her own voice in an extensive series of novels that combine murder and detection with elements of the gothic romance. Formula-written for the most part but remarkably free from the mechanical sterility of ordinary formula fiction, the Eberhart novels are unique in that the traditional classic detective story is presented in the context of a gothic romance's eerie atmosphere of impending danger.

BIOGRAPHY

Mignon G. Eberhart was born Mignon Good on July 6, 1899, in University Place, Nebraska, the

daughter of William Thomas Good and Margaret Hill Bruffey Good. Eberhart attended Nebraska Wesleyan University from 1917 to 1920, but left before she was graduated. She married Alanson C. Eberhart, a civil engineer, on December 29, 1923. The Eberharts were remarried in 1948, following their divorce and Mrs. Eberhart's marriage to John Hazen Perry in 1946.

Eberhart began writing in the late 1920's, primarily as an escape from the boredom resulting from traveling with her husband as he pursued his career as a civil engineer. Beginning with short stories, Eberhart switched to novels when her short stories stopped selling regularly. Her first published novel was *The Patient in Room 18*, which appeared in 1929.

In 1930, Eberhart received the five-thousand-dollar Scotland Yard Prize for her second novel, *While the Patient Slept*. She was given an honorary doctorate by her alma mater, Nebraska Wesleyan University, in 1935, and in 1971 won the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award. In 1994, she received the Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement. She died in Greenwich, Connecticut, on October 8, 1996.

ANALYSIS

Mignon G. Eberhart began her career with a series of five detective novels that featured Sarah Keate, a never-married nurse turned amateur detective, and Lance O'Leary, a promising young police detective. These first novels, which were written in the Mary Roberts Rinehart tradition, have been described by Joanne Harrack Hayne as "reminiscent of Rinehart at her most mediocre," with Nurse Keate exhibiting the paradoxical "pluckiness and stupidity which are characteristic of the worst of the 'Had-I-But-Known' narrators." In many ways, Nurse Keate's penchant for stumbling into perilous situations from which Detective O'Leary must rescue her anticipates the typical heroine of the

later Eberhart novels, except that the romantic element is absent in the Keate-O'Leary novels.

For a brief period during the 1930's, the Keate-O'Leary novels were very popular with Hollywood filmmakers. Between 1935 and 1938, Sarah Keate, renamed Sally Keating and growing progressively younger, appeared in five film adaptations. Even so, the Keate-O'Leary novels do not constitute a particularly significant contribution to the corpus of detective fiction.

Nurse Keate, without O'Leary, reappeared in two later novels, *Wolf in Man's Clothing* (1942) and *Man Missing* (1954), and Eberhart experimented with two other amateur detectives, mystery writer Susan Dare and banker James Wickwire, who appeared in their own series of short stories. The Dare stories, which were first collected in *The Cases of Susan Dare* (1934), are also reminiscent of Rinehart. The Wickwire stories, seven of which are included in *Mignon G. Eberhart's Best Mystery Stories* (1988), as far as Eberhart's attempts to create a series character are concerned, are the most successful. In the Wickwire series Eberhart seems to have been able to allow more of her own keen sense of humor and eye for the foibles of humanity to come through, and the result is that Mr. Wickwire's is a more rounded characterization than those of Dare and Keate.

After the publication of the fifth Keate-O'Leary novel, *Murder by an Aristocrat* (1932), Eberhart abandoned the principal series character formula in her major works, having found her own voice in her own unique blending of classic detective fiction and modern gothic romance. This blending is not always successful, and even though Eberhart denied that she wrote gothics, on the ground that "all the changes on *Jane Eyre* have been done," the gothic overtones have persisted, to the point where one reviewer, after reading Eberhart's *Three Days for Emeralds* (1988), concluded that the work is "more of a modern-day Gothic romance" than a mystery.

Although this criticism has its own validity, it must be noted, in Eberhart's defense, that the gothic element in Eberhart's work does not stem from a deliberate effort to write in that genre. Eberhart's murders take place in exotic settings because those places have an inherent eeriness that heightens suspense. Eber-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Mignon G. Eberhart. (AP/Wide World Photos)

hart's choice of locations is best explained by one of her favorite quotations from the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: "There are houses which demand to be haunted, coasts set apart for shipwrecks, and certain dark gardens that cry aloud for murder." There are also, as everyone knows, certain kinds of atmospheric conditions—blizzards, hurricanes, and "dark and stormy nights," that "cry aloud for murder." Eberhart uses these, along with houses, coasts, and shipwrecks, not because they are the standard fixtures of the gothic romance but because they serve to heighten suspense and to provide a background for the psychological development of her principal characters.

The fact that Eberhart's exotic settings are effective may be attributed to her ability to inject a considerable degree of realism into her descriptions of houses, lands, and circumstances. This is probably attributable to the fact that, as the wife of an engineer, she had traveled widely, so that she was usually able to write from experience. "A good many of these places," she once said, "I've lived in myself." For the most part, Eberhart's settings reflect firsthand experience, and her characters do not enter through doors that do not exist in previous chapters, as her preliminary work on a

novel often included the drawing of detailed house plans. This attention to detail—in her words, “walking the tight-rope” between too much and too little realism—has resulted in a body of work that has accurately been described as “plausible and entertaining.”

Like the exotic settings, the budding romances that characterize a typical Eberhart mystery are not introduced because of Eberhart’s deliberate attempt to employ the elements of gothic fiction. Rather, the romance appears because of Eberhart’s conviction that romance is, unavoidably, a fact of life. “Take any small group of twelve to fifteen people,” she once told an interviewer, “and show me one such group where there is not a romance.” As a result, the standard Eberhart novel, which often includes twelve or fifteen characters, will invariably feature at least one romance.

Obviously, the combination of an exotic setting and a budding romance will suggest gothic romance to the casual observer, but that which distinguishes an Eberhart detective/gothic novel is that no matter what the setting or how turbulent the romance, murder will quickly intrude and be the dominant factor. Eberhart has been reported as emphatic on this point: “You just can’t write a detective story without at least one murder. Nobody is going to read 300 pages just to find out what became of Lady Emily’s jewels.”

As might be surmised from the preceding comments, the Eberhart novels are primarily formula-written, with the typical Eberhart novel featuring, as noted, an exotic setting, a budding romance, and, inevitably, a murder or series of murders. The context for these murders will usually be, in Eberhart’s words, “a conflict within a group of people who are closely related,” so that “ideally, the motive for murder comes from the conflict, and the resolution of the murder resolves the conflict.”

According to the Eberhart formula, the small group will include a helpless young woman, frequently an orphan, who embodies all Nurse Keate’s ineptitude, often without showing any signs of her pluckiness. This naïve or sometimes merely scatterbrained individual either will be engaged to someone for whom she does not really care or will have been married to a man who has abused or abandoned her and who, even in his absence, exercises psychological control over her. Also

within the group will be a potential husband and an older person who opposes the marriage and who also dominates the heroine to some degree. If there is a first husband, he is usually involved in the murder, either as the one murdered or as the murderer. If he is murdered, the innocent young widow will be the prime suspect. Although the heroine generally helps in the final solution, the development of an Eberhart plot depends to a great extent on the heroine’s talent for making matters worse through her own propensity for stumbling into perilous situations, from which she must be rescued by the doggedly determined romantic lead, who eventually solves the murders and is rewarded by being allowed to marry the heroine.

MESSAGE FROM HONG KONG

Eberhart’s handling of this formula may be illustrated by reference to one of her novels. In *Message from Hong Kong* (1969), for example, the conflict involves four people: Marcia Lowry; her missing husband, David “Dino” Lowry; her father-in-law, Mr. Lowry; and her would-be fiancé, Richard Blake. Dino Lowry has disappeared and is presumed dead, and Richard and Marcia want to be married, but Marcia, an orphan who has been reared by an aunt and befriended by Dino’s father, cannot break the psychological hold of Dino and his father. When a message comes from Hong Kong that suggests to Mr. Lowry that his son is, in fact, alive, Marcia travels to Hong Kong, where she barely misses being the prime suspect in a murder. From Hong Kong, Marcia is pursued by a deadly crew of five smugglers and is not saved from them or from husband Dino until the long-suffering Richard Blake has traveled to Hong Kong, has endured (with Marcia and the five smugglers) a hurricane in Florida, and has, somehow, managed to stop Marcia from periodically undoing all that has been done up to a given point in the story’s development. Eventually, back in the home where it all began, Blake—following the Eberhart formula—effects a resolution of the murders; the conflict is solved, and he and Marcia are free to wed.

With few exceptions, Eberhart’s stories are told from a female character’s point of view. One of those exceptions may be found in Eberhart’s Wickwire stories, which are narrated by James Wickwire, the bachelor senior vice president of a New York bank “within

whose walls [he has] spent most of [his] life.” Wickwire, who is “elderly enough to be entrusted with the somewhat difficult chore of advising . . . widows who seem strangely determined to invest in nonexistent uranium ore deposits and dry oil wells,” frequently finds himself embroiled in a murder, largely because of his particular duties at the bank.

NEXT OF KIN

Like the narrators of the Eberhart stories, Eberhart’s murderers are, also with few exceptions, male. When the murderer is female, as in *The White Dress* (1946) or *Next of Kin* (1982), either she is transformed from the archetypal Eberhart heroine into a creature displaying all the stereotypical masculine attributes or her crime may be treated as simply another form of the blundering-into-crisis situations characteristic of Susan Keate or Marcia Lowry. In *Next of Kin*, for example, petite Lettie Channing, after having murdered two men, one of whom was her husband, is whisked off to Australia by an uncle, who apparently subscribes to the belief that Lettie’s murders may be blamed more on his having neglected her than on any particular evil latent in her character. In other words, Lettie has stumbled into crime the way that Nurse Keate, and scores of other Eberhart heroines, stumble into perilous situations.

Eberhart’s last novel, her sixtieth, was published in 1988, when she was eighty-nine. Any reader who attempts to read each one of these books will discover much that is tediously repetitive, primarily because in the totality of her production, the Eberhart formula will become more obvious than her own distinctive skills as a writer. More selective readers, however, taking Eberhart in limited doses, will find that while her plotting is formulaic, her writing is seldom mechanical. Her dialogue is natural and unhurried and serves to reiterate, rather than advance, the plot, permitting Eberhart to intensify the suspense while slowing the pace to allow for character development.

In 1994 Eberhart was awarded the Malice Domestic Lifetime Achievement, and the following year several of her early works were reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press. Critics reassessed Eberhart’s writing and praised both her atmosphere and timing, and an entirely new generation was introduced to Nurse Sarah Keate. Although Sarah’s experiences are tame com-

pared to the exploits of Sue Grafton’s Kinsey Millhone or Sara Paretsky’s V. I. Warshawski, Eberhart’s adventures filled a niche that has nonetheless stood the test of time. Eberhart’s writings may lack some depth in characterization or plotting, but they are pleasantly entertaining and well written. These talents, combined with her ability to inject a note of realism into her exotic settings, make Eberhart an important writer in the field of detective fiction. As Hayne noted, “Within the confines of formula fiction, the novels of Mignon G. Eberhart embody an unusual degree of clarity and intelligence.”

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and
Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SARAH KEATE AND LANCE O’LEARY SERIES:

The Patient in Room 18, 1929; *The Mystery of Hunting’s End*, 1930; *While the Patient Slept*, 1930; *From This Dark Stairway*, 1931; *Murder by an Aristocrat*, 1932 (also known as *Murder of My Patient*)

SARAH KEATE SERIES: *Wolf in Man’s Clothing*, 1942; *Man Missing*, 1954

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1933-1940 • *The Dark Garden*, 1933 (also known as *Death in the Fog*); *The White Cockatoo*, 1933; *The House on the Roof*, 1935; *Fair Warning*, 1936; *Danger in the Dark*, 1937 (also known as *Hand in Glove*); *The Pattern*, 1937 (also known as *Pattern of Murder*); *Hasty Wedding*, 1938; *The Glass Slipper*, 1938; *Brief Return*, 1939; *The Chiffon Scarf*, 1939; *The Hangman’s Whip*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Strangers in Flight*, 1941 (revised as *Speak No Evil*, 1941); *With This Ring*, 1941; *The Man Next Door*, 1943; *Unidentified Woman*, 1943; *Escape the Night*, 1944; *Wings of Fear*, 1945; *Five Passengers from Lisbon*, 1946; *The White Dress*, 1946; *Another Woman’s House*, 1947; *House of Storm*, 1949; *Hunt with the Hounds*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Never Look Back*, 1951; *Dead Men’s Plans*, 1952; *The Unknown Quantity*, 1953; *Postmark Murder*, 1956; *Another Man’s Murder*, 1957; *Melora*, 1959 (also known as *The Promise of Murder*); *Jury of One*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Cup, the Blade, or the Gun*, 1961 (also known as *The Crime at Honotassa*); *Enemy in*

the House, 1962; *Run Scared*, 1963; *Call After Midnight*, 1964; *R.S.V.P. Murder*, 1965; *Witness at Large*, 1966; *Woman on the Roof*, 1967; *Message from Hong Kong*, 1969; *El Rancho Rio*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The House by the Sea*, 1972; *Two Little Rich Girls*, 1972; *Murder in Waiting*, 1973; *Danger Money*, 1975; *Family Fortune*, 1976; *Nine O'Clock Tide*, 1978; *The Bayou Road*, 1979; *Casa Madrone*, 1980

1981-1988 • *Family Affair*, 1981; *Next of Kin*, 1982; *The Patient in Cabin C*, 1983; *Alpine Condo Crossfire*, 1984; *A Fighting Chance*, 1986; *Three Days for Emeralds*, 1988

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Cases of Susan Dare*, 1934; *Five of My Best*: "Deadly Is the Diamond," "Bermuda Grapevine," "Murder Goes to Market," "Strangers in Flight," "Express to Danger," 1949; *Deadly Is the Diamond*, 1951; *Deadly Is the Diamond, and Three Other Novelettes of Murder*: "Bermuda Grapevine," "The Crimson Paw," "Murder in Waltz Time," 1958; *The Crimson Paw*, 1959; *Mignon G. Eberhart's Best Mystery Stories*, 1988

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *320 College Avenue*, pb. 1938 (with Fred Ballard); *Eight O'Clock Tuesday*, pb. 1941 (with Robert Wallsten)

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- Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Although Eberhart is just mentioned, her fellow female Golden Age writers are discussed at length, which provides context for understanding Eberhart.
- Eberhart, Mignon G. Interview by J. Mercier. *Publishers Weekly* 206 (September 16, 1974): 10-11. Brief but interesting interview with the author.
- Gussow, Mel. "Mignon Eberhart, Novelist, Ninety-seven: Blended Mystery and Romance." *The New York Times*, October 9, 1996, p. D19. Obituary of Eberhart written by an influential theater critic, whose opinion could make or break careers.

UMBERTO ECO

Born: Alessandria, Italy; January 5, 1932

Types of plot: Historical; metaphysical and metafictional parody

CONTRIBUTION

Umberto Eco was a well-known academician when his first novel, *Il nome della rosa*, was published in Italy in 1980. By the time the book was translated into English by William Weaver as *The Name of the Rose* in 1983, Eco had achieved literary superstardom. With its medieval setting, Sherlock

Holmes-like main character, and seemingly traditional detective plot, *The Name of the Rose* was a popular and critical success, later made into a film starring Sean Connery and Christian Slater.

In addition to achieving worldwide popularity, the novel was also a sort of philosophical treatise, a place for Eco to test his own theories of signs and language. *The Name of the Rose* clearly demonstrates the influence of Jorge Luis Borges, the great Argentine writer who also reveled in both philosophy and detective fiction.

Eco followed this novel in 1988 with *Il pendolo di Foucault*, translated into English by William Weaver and published as *Foucault's Pendulum* in 1989. This volume does not fit easily into the mystery and detective genre because it is in many ways a parody; nevertheless, the book, with its endless array of esoteric clues and obligatory corpses has led many critics to see in it the inspiration for Dan Brown's 2003 *The Da Vinci Code*.

Although Eco has offered only two novels to the field of mystery and detective fiction, his contribution has nonetheless been enormous, largely because of the way he has both expanded and subverted the traditional conventions of the genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Umberto Eco was born on January 5, 1932, in Alessandria, Italy. He attended the University of Turin, studying medieval philosophy and aesthetics. He became fascinated with semiotics, the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. This early interest would emerge not only in his academic work but also in his later popular successes, *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*.

Eco completed his doctoral work in 1954, publishing his dissertation on Saint Thomas Aquinas in 1956. During the same year, he began his academic career by accepting a post as a lecturer at the University of Turin, a position he held for the next eight years. At the same time, Eco also worked in radio and television in Italy as a cultural editor. He met many influential avant-garde writers and artists. Together, they became the heart of the Italian intellectual community.

In 1962, Eco published *Opera aperta* (*The Open Work*, 1989), a seminal book on text and meaning. In this book, Eco argues for the open text, a work that requires the reader to piece together meaning through an examination of the clues left by the writer. As a result, open texts do not have one, enduring meaning but rather many meanings, depending on the reader and the context of the reading. These concepts, while sophisticated and complex, are essential for understanding Eco as a writer of detective fiction. Indeed, for Eco, mystery and detective fiction offers a vehicle to illustrate these very concepts.

During the 1960's and 1970's, Eco found himself in increasing demand as a lecturer, writer, and editor. He wrote for some of the most important, if widely diverse, periodicals in Italy. Beginning in 1959, he was a senior editor at Bompiani publishers in Milan, a position he held through 1975. In 1971, it appeared that Eco had reached the pinnacle of success as a scholar when he accepted a position as the first professor of semiotics at the University of Bologna. He also became the vice president of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in 1979, founding and editing *VS*, the journal of semiotics. Throughout the next two decades, he wrote some of the most important works to date on the study of semiotics.

In 1978, Eco began work on the novel that would become *The Name of the Rose*. Even Eco was surprised over the attention garnered by his book. The popular reading public enjoyed the riveting mystery, while critics and scholars found the religious, philosophical, and historical content of the story to be worthy of study. In 1988, Eco published *Il pendolo di Foucault*, published in translation as *Foucault's Pendulum* in 1989. This novel, set in the modern world, draws in the esoteric mythology of the Knights Templar for its plot. This novel was also both a critical and popular success.

After the publication of *Foucault's Pendulum*, Eco wrote three more novels as well as many books on language, semiotics, and literature. In addition, he has continued to contribute columns to magazines and journals.

ANALYSIS

As a semiotician, Umberto Eco is particularly interested in the study of signs and symbols and how the interpretation of signs and symbols is affected by cultural contexts. In this, he has been influenced by Jorge Luis Borges, who turned to mystery and detective fiction as a means of exploring signs and symbols. Eco, like Borges before him, knows well the conventions and readers' expectations of detective fiction, and like Borges, he uses these conventions to subvert the very stories he tells.

In a number of his theoretical works, Eco examines detective-fiction writers such as Edgar Allan Poe,

G. K. Chesterton, and Ian Fleming to flesh out his theory of signs. He uses his knowledge to both extend and undermine the genre, creating in the process what some critics have termed the “antidetective” novel. In effect, Eco creates a parody of traditional detective fiction by demonstrating the ways that conventions can both reveal and conceal, lead and mislead.

In addition, Eco demonstrates the role that readers play in determining the meaning of a text. For Eco, a text’s meaning is not definitive but is rather a function of a reader approaching a text from a particular cultural context. Writers, according to Eco, produce work out of their own “encyclopedia,” or collection of knowledge. Likewise, readers bring to a text their own particular encyclopedia. The meaning of a text for a particular reader, therefore, takes place in the nexus of

the reader and writer encyclopedic intersection, the place where there is an overlapping knowledge base. Necessarily, then, not all readers will take the same meaning from a book because their encyclopedias differ. Moreover, in his detective fiction, Eco uses his main character as a stand-in for the reader, someone who must make a cohesive story out of the many signs and symbols strewn along the way, interpreting these signs through the context of his own knowledge.

By explicitly using his own philosophical work concerning texts, readers, and language within the conventions of detective fiction, Eco has opened the genre dramatically. Eco’s books are nothing if not intertextual: by using references to other works, philosophers, historical figures, and genres, Eco increases the possibilities for interpretation. Unlike the classic detective story where everything is revealed in the final pages, Eco creates stories that, although they appear to be of the genre, actually do not lead a reader to a final interpretation. Instead, readers are left to find their own paths through the labyrinth, leading to a place of possible, but not conclusive, interpretation.

THE NAME OF THE ROSE

The Name of the Rose is Eco’s first foray into mystery and detective fiction. In this novel, he uses his deep knowledge of medieval philosophy and his ongoing interest in the study of semiotics to produce an intertextual work that combines a number of unlikely genres, ranging from biblical exegesis, medieval history, literary theory, and detective fiction. Eco populates the novel with puns, allusions, puzzles, and play, in spite of the violence and hysteria that also fill the pages.

Eco was deeply influenced by the work of Jorge Luis Borges in this novel; indeed, Eco’s inclusion of a blind librarian named Jorge of Borgos is an intentional and direct link to Borges as is Eco’s use of the library, mirrors, and labyrinth, all favorite Borgesian devices. In addition, Borges’s short story “Death and the Compass,” a detective fiction in which the detective incorrectly reads the signs, leading him to his death, provides a model for Eco. Eco also draws heavily on the work of Arthur Conan Doyle, creating a main character remarkably similar to Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. There is a deliberate mixing of historical and fictional

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Umberto Eco in 2004. (AP/Wide World Photos)

characters in *The Name of the Rose*, yet another way that Eco plays games with his readers. At its heart, *The Name of the Rose* is a book about books, and fittingly, the central image in the novel is the labyrinthine library.

The main action of *The Name of the Rose* takes place at a northern Italian abbey in 1327. The narrator is Adso of Melk, an aging monk who many years later writes down what he remembers of his visit to the abbey with an English Franciscan, William of Baskerville. The pair are at the abbey to attend an important religious meeting, but the murder of several monks leads William to investigate. The story grows steadily more complicated as William uncovers superstitions, conspiracies, and heresy. Like the reader, William attempts to make sense of all the clues in front of him, weaving them together into a coherent story. However, unlike most detective mysteries, the clues do not lead to a definitive end. Indeed, although William finally uncovers who is responsible for the murders, it is by accident; his careful reasoning through the clues, while convincing, proves to be utterly wrong.

FOUCAULT'S PENDULUM

In *Foucault's Pendulum*, Eco draws on his encyclopedic knowledge to create an intertextual work taking as its subject nearly all of human history. The novel is not detective fiction, but does fall loosely into the thriller/suspense genre. His characters find themselves in very dangerous waters because of a mystery they create themselves.

Eco opens the book in Paris in the 1980's. His narrator, Casaubon, a scholar, is hiding in the Musée des Arts et Métiers, in front of physicist Léon Foucault's pendulum, a device to provide evidence for the rotation of the earth. Casaubon is hiding from members of the Knights Templar who he believes have kidnapped his friend, Jacopo Belbo.

From here, the story unfolds in flashback, and readers learn that Casaubon and two of his friends many years earlier decided to invent a conspiracy theory for fun. They imagine a plot started by the Knights Templar in the Middle Ages that would lead to world domination. The three grow increasingly immersed in their imaginary world, calling their plot "The Plan," and providing a detailed history complete with aca-

demical references, both real and imaginary. Through a series of very complicated plot devices, The Plan is leaked to outsiders, who believe that it is real. The hidden treasure of the Templars is vast and provides an irresistible motive for assorted sundry evildoers to accost anyone who seems to have a clue concerning its whereabouts. As a result, Casaubon's friends are killed, and Casaubon finds himself in grave danger.

What makes *Foucault's Pendulum* so compelling (and also sometimes so humorous) is Eco's incredible mastery of countless esoteric details. He intentionally mixes the factual with the fictional, just as his main characters do in their construction of The Plan, demonstrating that his readers can be fooled by material that looks "real," in just the same way that the characters in his story mistake the false conspiracy for the real thing. Indeed, the furor over Dan Brown's runaway hit, *The Da Vinci Code*, demonstrates the difficulty readers have in decoding fact from fiction. Thus, while *Foucault's Pendulum* is on one level a suspense thriller of a joke gone awry, it is also a meditation on the power of text to create whole worlds.

Diane Andrews Henningfeld

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Il nome della rosa*, 1980 (*The Name of the Rose*, 1983); *Il pendolo di Foucault*, 1988 (*Foucault's Pendulum*, 1989)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *L'isola del giorno prima*, 1994 (*The Island of the Day Before*, 1995); *Baudolino*, 2000 (English translation, 2002); *La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana*, 2004 (*The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, 2005)

NONFICTION: 1956-1970 • *Il problema estetico in San Tommaso*, 1956 (*The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 1988); *Sviluppo dell'estetico medievale*, 1959 (*Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, 1986); *Opera aperta*, 1962 (*The Open Work*, 1989); *Apocalittici e integrati*, 1964 (*Apocalypse Postponed*, 1994); *Le poetiche di Joyce: Dalla "Summa" al "Finnegans Wake,"* 1966 (*The Aesthetic of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, 1982); *La struttura assente*, 1968; *Opera aperta, la definizione dell'arte*, 1968

1971-1990 • *Le forme del contenuto*, 1971; *A Theory of Semiotics*, 1976; *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text*, 1979; *Sette anni di desiderio: Chronache 1977-1983*, 1983; *Postille a "Il nome della rosa,"* 1983 (*Postscript to "The Name of the Rose,"* 1984); *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 1984; *Faith in Fakes*, 1986; *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays*, 1986; *Diario minimo*, 1988 (*Misreadings*, 1993); *I limiti dell'interpretazione*, 1990 (*The Limits of Interpretation*, 1990)

1991-2002 • *Il secondo diario minimo*, 1992 (*How to Travel with a Salmon, and Other Essays*, 1994); *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 1992; *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea*, 1993 (*The Search for the Perfect Language*, 1995); *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 1994; *In cosa crede chi non crede?*, 1996 (*Belief or Nonbelief? A Confrontation*, 2000; with Carlo Maria Martini); *Cinque scritti morali*, 1997 (*Five Moral Pieces*, 2001); *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, 1998; *La bustina di Minerva*, 1999; *Kant e l'ornitorinco*, 1999 (*Kant and the Platypus: Essays on Language and Cognition*, 1999); *Conversations About the End of Time*, 1999; *Experiences in Translation*, 2001; *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: Esperienze di traduzione*, 2003; *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*, 2003; *Sulla letteratura*, 2002 (*On Literature*, 2004)

EDITED TEXTS: *Storia figurata delle invenzioni: Dalla selce scheggiata al volo spaziali*, 1961 (*The Picture History of Inventions from Ploughs to Polaris*, 1963; with G. Zorzoli); *Il caso Bond*, 1965 (*The Bond Affair*, 1966; with Oreste del Buono); *I fumetti di Mao*, 1971 (*The People's Comic Book: Red Women's Detachment, Hot on the Trail, and Other Chinese Comics*, 1973; with J. Chesneaux and G. Nebiolo); *A Semiotic Landscape*, 1979 (with Seymour Chatman and Jean-Marie Klinkenberg); *The Sign of the Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*, 1984 (with Thomas A. Sebeok); *Meaning and Mental Representations*, 1988 (with Marco Santambrogio and Patrizia Violi); *Povero Pinocchio*, 1995; *Storia della bellezza*, 2004 (*The History of Beauty*, 2004; *On Beauty*, 2004)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *I tre cosmonauti*, 1988 (*The Three Astronauts*, 1995)

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BARRY EISLER

Born: New Jersey; 1964

Type of plot: Thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Rain, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN RAIN is a half-Japanese, half-white American hired killer, who specializes in assassinations and learned his trade serving in the Vietnam War. That morally ambiguous experience explains, in part, why he cannot adjust to a normal, conventional world. Deft plotting and a vivid evocation of the evil world Rain has to confront create extraordinary empathy for a hero who would ostensibly seem not to merit such understanding.

DOX, Rain's affable sidekick, is a superb sharpshooter and the assassin's antithesis. A former Marine, Dox believes in camaraderie. He is constantly annoying Rain because he talks too much and risks their security. At the same time, the extroverted Dox brings Rain partly out of his shell, making it possible for him to become more of a complete human being. Dox is the one operative whom Rain can implicitly trust.

CONTRIBUTION

Seldom has the thriller genre featured such a flawed (morally compromised) and yet attractive figure as Barry Eisler's John Rain. On one hand, he seems amoral; on the other, his sensitivity, especially toward women, is remarkable. Rain also revels in describing the meals he eats and his lovemaking.

Eisler may be Tom Clancy's only serious rival in the creation of techno-thrillers. Like Clancy, Eisler loves to dwell on his hero's use of the latest technology, but unlike Clancy's protagonists, Rain is a more believable human being—conflicted about killing but also aware that governments employ agents just like him, especially when the bureaucracy cannot act quickly. Rain becomes indispensable because the governments who give him assignments cannot go through regular channels.

Unlike the traditional thriller where the hero often does not age (James Bond, for example) or who manages to continue his work without serious internal disturbance, Rain grows increasingly tense about the toll his assassinations have taken on his psyche. Thus the Rain series has a kind of tragic trajectory, and its hero is fast approaching the point where he must leave "the life" and begin a new existence as a law-abiding citizen. Eisler's contribution to the thriller genre is located in the nexus he explores between the individual's state of mind and the geopolitical concerns of global terrorism and government-sponsored violence.

BIOGRAPHY

Barry Eisler, who is deliberately reticent about supplying details about his life, was born in New Jersey in 1964. His father, Edgar, was an entrepreneur, salesman, and president of an office products company. His mother, Barbara, was a painter, poet, sculptor, nonfiction writer, and volunteer in environmental causes. Eisler attributes his interest in solving mysteries to his reading about Harry Houdini. The great magician and escape artist had secret knowledge, and Eisler was thrilled with the idea of a career that would involve this kind of adventure. He began collecting books on lock picking, breaking and entering, and other clandestine and undetectable forms of crime (killing without using weapons) that are a significant part of John Rain's assassination tool kit. Houdini's physical prowess also clearly influenced Eisler, who trained in the martial arts and made these skills another crucial part of Rain's repertoire.

Eisler received a bachelor of arts degree in 1986 and a juris doctor degree in 1989 from Cornell University. He wrote a column on foreign policy for the school newspaper and early on evinced an interest in fiction. He began writing short stories as a teenager. He spent three years (1989-1992) in the Directorate of Operations of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a covert operative. He learned spy craft, including surveillance and countersurveillance, antiterrorism tactics, improvising explosive devices, recruiting agents,

and interrogation techniques—activities and skills that are crucial to John Rain’s work. Learning Japanese and working in Japan were also part of Eisler’s CIA work.

After leaving the CIA in 1993, Eisler remained in Japan. He studied at Kodokan International Judo Center in Tokyo while immersing himself in the country’s language and culture. His year-long explorations of Tokyo’s streets and back alleys, visiting jazz clubs and whiskey bars, provided him with a feel for the seamier side of the city and of crime that is featured so authentically in his novels. It was through observing this nightlife that Eisler began to think of characters engaged in secret crimes and with connections to both the underworld and to government operatives and corporations. At the same time, his work for the law firm of Hamada and Matsumoto in Tokyo provided him with access to the upper echelons of society and the business world, where in theory an assassin like John Rain might be hired to do high-level assassinations. In 1995, Eisler became in-house counsel for Matsushita Electric and Industrial in Osaka. After two years he returned to the United States.

Eisler’s transition to full-time writing was not easy. He received more than fifty rejections from publishers before his first John Rain novel was published. He rewrote that first novel several times, relying on advice from an agent, before it appeared in print. Like other writers in his field—such as Patricia Cornwell—Eisler does extensive research for his books, making the settings, the characters, and the crimes as real as possible, based on his frequent travels to Japan and other parts of Asia. His work has been translated into twenty languages, demonstrating the international appeal of his thrillers.

ANALYSIS

Barry Eisler’s John Rain, a Japanese American trained in the martial arts, is at home in Japan and other parts of Asia. He provides an international perspective as he involves himself with intelligence agencies such as the Mossad, the Israeli covert organization that uses assassination as a political weapon. Rain realizes that his work will someday result in a reckoning for him even as he searches for ways to retreat from

his bloody profession. He has a moral center that he cannot escape; in other words, he is a redeemable character. The problem is how to survive in the dangerous world he has made for himself. In this respect, quite aside from the gruesome details of his trade, his problems are universal. He is involved in the human predicament, attempting to construct not only a viable and authentic identity but also a place for himself in a world that includes love and family. Although his efforts to do right fail, he brutally confronts the nature of his crimes and earns considerable respect.

RAIN FALL

Rain Fall (2002), the first John Rain novel, conveys Eisler’s deep immersion in Japanese culture. As one reviewer put it, the fiction is “rich and atmospheric.” Rain is a Vietnam War veteran, trained by Special Forces. He is an alienated hero, however, not entirely comfortable with his Japanese father or his American mother, and tortured by memories of atrocities he committed in Vietnam.

Rain specializes in making assassinations look like natural events. On a subway, he plants a microchip on the back of a bureaucrat, thus interfering with the frequency of the man’s pacemaker and inducing a fatal heart attack. Rain’s trouble begins when he realizes that he has murdered a man about to expose Japanese political corruption. At the same time, Rain is also at cross-purposes with a CIA agent who was trouble for him in Vietnam. Even worse, he falls in love with his victim’s daughter, Midori, who is an accomplished jazz pianist. The consequences of this assassination and of this love affair, which ends badly, continue to plague Rain in subsequent novels.

Eisler’s evocation of the intricate love-hate relationship between Japan and America, the complexities of the Japanese criminal classes, including a right-wing guru and his spies, and the complications ensuing when a Japanese police officer investigates Rain’s activities, all combine to present a riveting exploration of international intrigue. Some reviewers lauded Eisler’s plotting but felt some of the characters were not very well developed. However, Eisler’s command of procedure—of how crimes are planned and committed—and his portrayal of exotic places made this first novel an impressive achievement.

HARD RAIN

This second novel in the John Rain series, *Hard Rain* (2003), draws on Eisler's experience in the CIA. Always a loner, Rain seems even more isolated when he is implicated in the agency's efforts to exploit the corruption of the Japanese political and business system. Rain's professionalism and intelligence make him a fascinating figure. At the same time, the wear and tear of his work is beginning to show, and his qualms contribute considerably to mitigating the cold-blooded aspects of his activities. As several reviewers note, the plot is constructed with great literary skill.

Rain relies on Tatsu, a Japanese intelligence officer, whose goal is to rid the Japanese government of corruption. Tatsu's integrity is one of Rain's mainstays. In the shady world of Tokyo, which has been compared to Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles, Rain has few allies on whom he can count. Tatsu is also a kind of mentor. Rain is constantly measuring his actions against Tatsu's example.

RAIN STORM

In *Rain Storm* (2004), the strain of Rain's work causes him to escape to Brazil. There he believes he can retire from the assassination business. However, the CIA seeks him out, and Rain finds himself plunged once again into international intrigue—this time involving arms deals and South Asian criminal gangs. Rain, expecting a big payday (\$200,000), vows that this will be his last job.

Rain soon finds that there is an assassin on his trail. He turns for help to Dox, an easygoing former Marine sniper and a new character who becomes increasingly important in Eisler's next two novels. Dox draws out the loner Rain. With Dox's prodding, Rain begins to confront his own demons. It is very difficult for Rain to trust anyone, but the shrewd Dox is a good complement to the intense, wary Rain.

KILLING RAIN

Set in the Philippines, *Killing Rain* (2005) finds Rain involved with the Israeli intelligence service, the Mossad. His task is to quietly kill an arms dealer whose work threatens Israeli security. Rain's moral concerns are now beginning to interfere with his work, although he is assisted again by Dox, who becomes essential to Rain's plans when the so-called surgical kill turns into

a bloodbath, with Rain himself becoming a target when Israeli security decides that Rain is a liability.

This novel begins to explore the complexity of Rain's character and those of the people he loves, including Midori and the Israeli agent, Delilah. Torn between these two women, Rain is attempting to achieve the impossible: affect a reconciliation with Midori while remaining faithful to Delilah. To even approach Midori may put her in harm's way of the assassin who is after him. To expect Delilah to wait until he settles matters with Midori is asking too much, especially because without Delilah's help, Rain will not be able to extricate himself from the chain of events that has made him a target.

Eisler's developing emphasis on character does not diminish his deft handling of plot and point of view. In this novel, Eisler experiments with using first- and third-person narrators who provide both a sense of immediacy and perspective on the action and the characters.

REQUIEM FOR AN ASSASSIN

In the sixth novel in the John Rain series, *Requiem for an Assassin* (2007), Rain has to rely on the work of several intelligence agencies to free his friend, Dox, who has been kidnapped by Rain's arch enemy Jim Hilger. Hilger's idea of revenge is to make Rain commit three assassinations to obtain Dox's release. Rain quickly figures out that the third hit will be a setup in which he will be the target. Rain battles not only with Hilger, trying to figure out where Dox is being held, but also with Delilah, a Mossad agent who has fallen in love with him. Is there room for love in his life? Rain wonders. He calls his other self "the Iceman," the killer who cannot allow himself to be distracted by normal feelings such as love and compassion.

Like all Eisler's novels, this one includes intricately choreographed scenes of violence and sex, descriptions of the latest spy technology and weapons. This exciting novel, in which the true nature of Hilger's plot is not revealed until the final pages, speaks directly to contemporary concern with terrorism, the role of the United States in the Middle East, and the extent to which official channels and intelligence agencies are still equipped to cope with threats to Western civilization.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN RAIN SERIES: *Rain Fall*, 2002; *Hard Rain*, 2003; *Rain Storm*, 2004; *Killing Rain*, 2005; *The Last Assassin*, 2006; *Requiem for an Assassin*, 2007

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_____. "PW Talks with Barry Eisler: Paying a Horrible Price." Interview by Robert C. Hahn. *Publishers Weekly* 253, no. 18 (May 1, 2006): 32. Eisler, a

former CIA operative, talks about terrorism and surveillance, as well as his plans for the Rain series.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, a former inspector general of the CIA, contrasts spy novels with actual espionage cases. Although it does not mention Eisler’s works, it contains a chapter on assassination, which sheds light on Rain’s possible duties.

Pitt, David. Review of *The Last Assassin*, by Barry Eisler. *Booklist* 102, no. 17 (May 1, 2006): 27-28. Reviewer notes that this installment in the series does not have the protagonist’s name in the title and starts with the information that Rain is a father, perhaps marking a change in direction on Eisler’s part.

_____. Review of *Requiem for an Assassin*, by Barry Eisler. *Booklist* 103, no. 17 (May 1, 2007): 23. The reviewer wonders about the sustainability of a series in which the hit man wants simply to retire but hopes that Eisler can continue the series for a while.

AARON ELKINS

Born: Brooklyn, New York; July 24, 1935

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Gideon Oliver, 1982-

Chris Norgren, 1987-

Lee Ofsted, 1989-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GIDEON OLIVER, a forensic anthropologist, uses his talents to solve murders. The first novels in the series show his struggle with grief over his first wife’s death and his meeting with Julie Tandler, who becomes his second wife and companion for the later adventures.

CHRIS NORGREN, a young antiques expert and curator of Renaissance art at the Seattle Art Museum, applies his knowledge to crimes within the antiques world.

LEE OFSTED, a professional golfer, stumbles over mysteries while working on improving her game and participating in competitions. Her adventures and investigations provide an insider’s view of the golf world.

CONTRIBUTION

Aaron Elkins published his first book, *Fellowship of Fear*, a Gideon Oliver mystery, in 1982. His main character, Gideon Oliver, is a witty and sensitive forensic anthropologist who, at the beginning of the se-

ries, is recovering from the death of his wife from cancer. As the series progresses, he meets, falls in love with, and marries Julie Tendler. Gideon applies his forensic skills to murder victims, following up the clues that he finds in their bones.

The Gideon Oliver novels are an example of a popular subgenre of mystery: the amateur sleuth whose adventures are neither bloodless nor graphically gruesome and who introduces readers to worlds ordinarily closed to them. Elkins and his wife, Charlotte, have traveled all over the world, and the settings of these novels are realistic and informative as well as romantic. Information about forensic anthropology is knit seamlessly into the action.

The Chris Norgren series gives readers a look at the antiques business while the protagonist tracks down killers within the art world. Chris is less developed as a character than Gideon, but his adventures and knowledge are intriguing, especially for readers interested in art. The Lee Ofsted series, created by Elkins with his wife, features light but pleasant mysteries connected with golf; this series is closest to the cozy subgenre. Elkins's nonseries mysteries are tightly structured thrillers with fast-paced action and sympathetic characters.

Elkins's novels are appealing to the mystery reader for several reasons. His novels are a pleasing mixture of both the hard-boiled and the cozy mystery. The plots are highly satisfying, with unpredictable but persuasive conclusions. In addition, the main characters, in particular Gideon, are psychologically convincing as well as likeable. Gideon is a multilayered character with a believable background that gains depth with each novel. Other forensic anthropologists have joined Gideon on the mystery scene, but Gideon presents a the perfect level of forensic detail—not so much science that readers are bored or so little that they are mystified as to the importance of clues. The Oliver mysteries contain enough information to enlighten and teach the reader, but the information is presented as an organic part of the narrative. Similarly, the golf novels and the antiques novels present an insider's view but do not overload the reader with information. The lively dialogue and glints of humor add to the attractiveness of Elkins's work.

BIOGRAPHY

Aaron J. Elkins was born July 24, 1935, in Brooklyn, New York, to Irving Abraham Elkins and Jennie Katz Elkins. He was raised in New York and received his bachelor's degree from Hunter College in 1956, becoming one of the first men to attend what had been a women's college. His graduate degrees include a master's degree from the University of Arizona (1960), a second master's degree from California State University (1962), and a doctorate in education from the University of California at Berkeley (1976). He married Toby Siev in 1959, and they had two children. The marriage ended in divorce, and he married Charlotte Trangmar in 1972. A writer, she has collaborated with Elkins on the novels in his Lee Ofsted series.

Elkins has had many varied careers, from personnel analyst for Los Angeles County to university professor. He has taught in a number of universities including the University of Maryland, Santa Ana College, California State University, and Golden Gate University, and has lectured in various fields including anthropology, psychology, and business. He said he got the idea for Gideon Oliver, the "skeleton detective" who features in his most extensive series, during a class he was teaching in anthropology.

Elkins's work has won important awards, including the 1988 Edgar Award for the novel *Old Bones* (1987); the 1993 Agatha Award for the best short story for "Nice Gorilla," written with his wife, Charlotte Elkins; and the 1994 Nero Wolfe Award for the novel *Old Scores* (1993).

ANALYSIS

Aaron Elkins began with Gideon Oliver and keeps returning to this highly appealing figure. Gideon's wit, composure, and basic values make him someone the reader is glad to meet again.

Place is a major component of Elkins's novels, revealing the author's eye for details of culture as well as of place, developed in his travels around the world. In his novels, unlike many series novels, no sense of sameness develops—the locations are so different and the plots involve such a variety of issues and populations that each adventure seems fresh and new. Most series mysteries have a repeated location—a city, per-

haps, or a small town—and this may contribute to the sense of familiarity that is a characteristic of the cozy mystery. Although Elkins's novels have a number of continuing characters, the action is spread over the world.

Although Elkins wrote three series, his novels are all different. Although characters develop within a series, his writing does not exhibit a definite evolution over time. In each novel, Elkins divides the emphasis among plot, character, and setting. The plots are often tours de force; the conclusion is so logical when it is revealed, and yet it cannot be discerned earlier. His mysteries are not the classic type that drops clues to the point where the clever reader arrives at the conclusion almost simultaneously with the detective. The plots communicate a sense of the expansiveness and unpredictability of the world—and yet the concluding events fit and satisfy. If there is a difference between the earliest and the latest Elkins books, it might be that the humor is more prevalent and more pronounced in the later works. Also, the setting is more fully developed in the later novels, which sometimes have more exotic backgrounds.

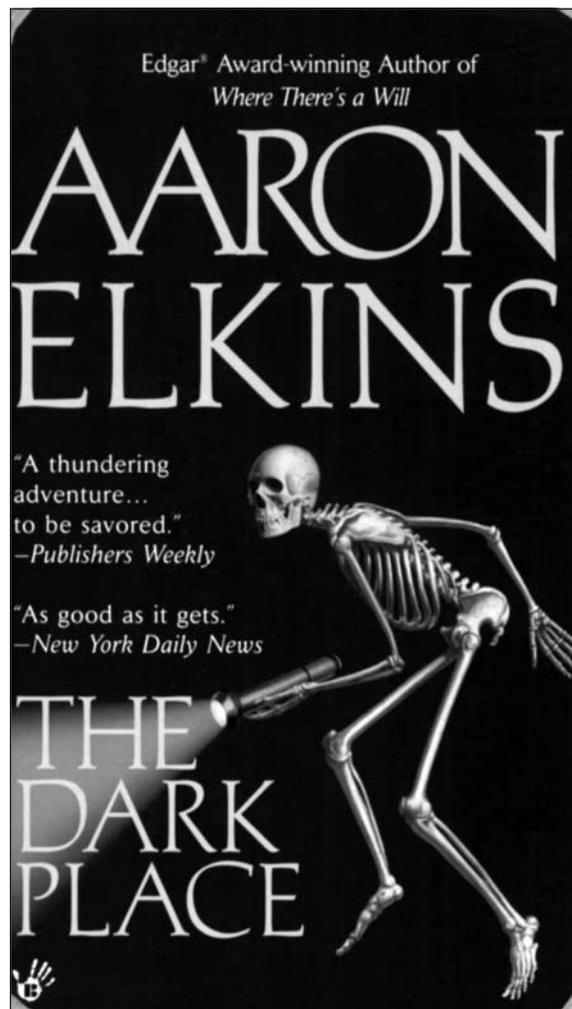
Elkins's frequent theme is the complex interaction between good and evil and the impossibility of separating them completely. Characters are often as morally ambiguous as people tend to be in real life. Heinous acts are committed out of misplaced idealism; good may be done by accident. Another theme is that actions always have consequences and that it is possible to trace the chain of cause and effect back to its root cause, which may be something larger than an individual's desire for revenge or profit. One of the draws of the books is that the story often fits into some larger context.

The romance element tends to be quietly satisfying in Elkins's novels; in the Gideon Oliver books, his falling in love with Julie and marrying her, and her consequent participation in his adventures are part of the background and do not distract from the main action. Elkins's novels often demonstrate the maxim that "old sins have long shadows," but without the total bleakness and sense of fatality that looms over the hard-boiled detective novel.

THE DARK PLACE

The Dark Place (1983) is one of the earlier adventures of Gideon Oliver. Gideon is not yet married to Julie Tandler, who is chief park ranger. The story is set in Washington's Olympic National Park, where hikers have been disappearing. When bones are found, Gideon finds that superhuman strength has been responsible for a young man's death—and his public pronouncement of this finding brings forth all the Bigfoot hunters. The scientific community threatens to discredit him.

This novel involves lost tribes—and cites the case of Ishi, a lost-tribe survivor whose appearance in the early twentieth century caused much public discovery and allowed some major research. The case of Ishi has



been well researched and adds a historical dimension to the fiction. The conclusion is satisfying and surprising, and the story is also a chapter in the romance of Gideon and Julie, who are looking forward to their future together at its end.

One of Elkins's main themes is the ambiguity of good and evil. This trait alone separates his works from the cozies, which usually provide a scapegoat villain whose removal will purge society and leave it healthy. Good and evil are inextricably bound in the Elkins novels, including this one, as they are in reality—the conclusion can be only partially a rebirth.

OLD BONES

Old Bones, the winner of the 1988 Edgar Award for the best mystery novel, links present and past in a multilayered tale of family deceit and violence. Set in France, it begins with the drowning of Resistance hero Guillaume de Rocher, who had called his family together at his home to discuss an important but unidentified issue. Shortly thereafter, some bones are discovered in the basement of the de Rocher residence, and Gideon Oliver is called in to examine them. He finds that the bones are from the World War II era, and it is believed that they were from a young man who also had a connection with the Resistance. More and more information turns up, leading to an old story of treachery and Nazi collaboration, which is linked to a murder in the present.

This novel has a complicated plot with many turns and red herrings; the outcome is satisfying if not totally surprising. The war in France, with its maze of loyalties and fears, betrayals and vengeance, is clearly one of Elkins's strong interests, as it is handled differently but equally effectively in *Turncoat* (2002).

TURNCOAT

Turncoat, one of Elkins's nonseries mystery novels, is a richly textured thriller with a background in World War II, like *Old Bones*. The story begins on the day President John F. Kennedy was killed, November 22, 1963, when the father of Lily, Pete Simon's French wife, turns up and is turned away rudely by his daughter. Shortly afterward Lily's father is killed, and Lily disappears. Trying to understand what happened, Pete pursues several leads about the past of his wife and her father. He finds himself in Europe investigating the

Nazi horrors and the confusing aftermath of the war in France, when Resistance fighters tried to ferret out Nazi collaborators and punish them. Some of the collaborators fled to Spain, where Pete must go in search of the truth of this complex matter. The involvement of his wife's family in the war must be clarified before the tension can begin to be resolved and the villains and victims determined.

Turncoat intersperses tension with humor in an entertaining fashion; however, it also educates the reader about the aftermath of the war. Few modern readers know about the confusion that followed the war and the pursuit of collaborators that lasted until the amnesty in the 1950's pardoned all but the most involved and ruthless collaborators. Moreover the accounts of what it meant to be a collaborator or to be a member of the Resistance help sweep away stereotypes and oversimplifications.

GOOD BLOOD

In *Good Blood* (2004), Gideon Oliver and his wife, Julie, visit an island in Lake Maggiore, Italy, owned by the family of their good friend Phil. The action in this novel takes place partly in the town of Stresa and partly on the family island, where things have remained the same for a long time. When the padrone's son Achille is kidnapped and some old bones are found by a construction team, Gideon must uncover the sins of the past that have led to the current situation. Setting is powerfully depicted in this novel, and the Italian family structure is precisely sketched. The vivid snapshots of Stresa and the Lake Maggiore islands are interspersed with hard-hitting and tense action. Elkins's typical mixture of humor and drama permeate the story as Gideon follows his investigations to their conclusion. Once again good and evil are intertwined, so that there is no scapegoat but rather a realistic conclusion.

Janet McCann

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

GIDEON OLIVER SERIES: *Fellowship of Fear*, 1982; *The Dark Place*, 1983; *Murder in the Queen's Armes*, 1985; *A Deceptive Clarity*, 1987; *Old Bones*, 1987; *Curses!*, 1989; *Icy Clutches*, 1990; *Make No Bones*, 1991; *Dead Men's Hearts*, 1994; *Twenty Blue*

Devils, 1997; *Skeleton Dance*, 2000; *Good Blood*, 2004; *Where There's a Will*, 2005; *Unnatural Selection*, 2006; *Little Tiny Teeth*, 2007

CHRIS NORGREN SERIES: *A Deceptive Clarity*, 1987; *A Glancing Light*, 1991; *Old Scores*, 1993

LEE OFSTED SERIES (WITH CHARLOTTE ELKINS): *Wicked Slice*, 1989; *Rotten Lies*, 1995; *Nasty Breaks*, 1997; *The Golf Mystery*, 2003; *Where Have All the Birdies Gone?*, 2004; *On the Fringe*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Loot*, 1999; *Turncoat*, 2002

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Schulze, Sydney. "Gideon Oliver: Skeleton Detective of America." *Clues* 13, no. 1 (1992): 81-89. An informative essay on the development and characteristics of Gideon Oliver throughout the series.

STANLEY ELLIN

Born: Brooklyn, New York; October 6, 1916

Died: Brooklyn, New York; July 31, 1986

Types of plot: Private investigator; psychological; thriller; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Milano, 1979-1983

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JOHN MILANO, a private investigator, is single, in his mid-thirties, cosmopolitan in his general awareness but decidedly ethnic in his deeper sensibilities, particularly in the self-assured, quiet pride he takes in

his New York Catholic, Italian American heritage. Milano is a keen observer, particularly of the quirks in human nature. He views society with a general hopefulness, although it is tinged with cynicism. He combines a strong sense of professional integrity with an active social conscience.

CONTRIBUTION

Indisputably a master of plot structure in both the short story and the novel, Stanley Ellin is more highly regarded by many critics for the ingenious imagination at work in his short fiction. His mystery novels, however, have a wide and loyal following, and it is in his

novels that Ellin most effectively demonstrates his opposition to the view that crime fiction is at best merely escapist fare. Ellin identifies not only with Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, and Arthur Conan Doyle but also with Fyodor Dostoevski and William Faulkner, who also dealt with the theme of crime and punishment. Ellin simultaneously works within and transcends the traditional formulas of mystery and crime detection, creating, quite simply, serious fiction on the problem of evil—in all of its psychological complexity.

BIOGRAPHY

Stanley Bernard Ellin was born on October 6, 1916, in the Bath Beach section of Brooklyn, New York, the son of Louis Ellin and Rose Mandel Ellin. He was an only child, and his parents were intensely devoted to him and to each other. His childhood was extremely happy, and his parents served as excellent role models, approaching life with simplicity and integrity.

Ellin was a bright and somewhat precocious student. After graduation from New Utrecht High School, he attended Brooklyn College, where he edited and wrote for the school literary magazine. He was graduated, at nineteen, in 1936, during the height of the Depression. Following graduation, he worked as a dairy farm manager, a junior college teacher, a magazine salesperson and distributor, a boilermaker's apprentice, and a steelworker. In 1937, he married Jeanne Michael, a freelance editor and former classmate. They had one child. Although he tried unsuccessfully to sell his fiction during the difficult years of the Depression, he had, not unhappily, reconciled himself to a career as a shipyard and construction worker.

After a short stint in the Army at the end of World War II, Ellin saw his literary fortunes change. Discharged in 1946, he decided once again to attempt a career as a writer. Combining his veteran's unemployment allowance with his wife's editing income, Ellin became a full-time writer. His first published short story, "The Specialty of the House," appeared in 1948 in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and won the Ellery Queen Award for the best first story of that year. Also in 1948, Simon and Schuster published his first

novel, *Dreadful Summit*. Altogether, Ellin published fourteen novels and four collections of short stories. He was a three-time winner of the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award, twice for short stories in 1955 and 1957, and in 1959 for his novel *The Eighth Circle* (1958). In 1974, the French edition of *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* (1972) won Le Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. In 1981, Ellin received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award. With the exception of some travel abroad and some time spent in Miami Beach, Ellin lived all of his life in Brooklyn, where he died at Kings County Hospital of complications following a stroke, on July 31, 1986.

ANALYSIS

Although generally acknowledged as a master of the well-constructed plot, Stanley Ellin actually placed considerably greater emphasis on the value of characterization. In a brief essay titled "Inside the Mystery Novel," published in the 1982 edition of *The Writer's Handbook*, Ellin offers what is for him the basic principle of fiction writing: "Plot is the skeleton, characterization the flesh, everything else the clothing." He further states that there are two vital elements in "putting the story across": "the characterization of the protagonist—demonstrated in his pursuit of his goal—and the ambience of the locales through which he moves." Although the plot is undoubtedly essential, it is the center of attention for the literary critic rather than for the reader, and as Ellin indicates, its failure is far more notable than its success:

[The author] must provide a plot for his story that makes dramatic sense, but if he achieves this, he will not be judged by it. If, however, he totally fails to construct a sound plot, he will be judged by it in very unkind terms.

DREADFUL SUMMIT

In his first novel, *Dreadful Summit*, Ellin illustrates these precepts. The plot is relatively simple: A bartender is taunted and sadistically beaten by a customer. His teenage son witnesses the beating and determines to avenge his father's (and his own) humiliation. Focusing on the development of the teenage protagonist, Ellin creates a three-dimensional character whose

youthful sense of responsibility is distorted by the emotional effects of profound humiliation and the desire for vengeance. The result is an admirable study of adolescent psychology, a story in which a Dostoevskian protagonist struggles with and is all but overwhelmed by impulsive and destructive vindictiveness.

THE KEY TO NICHOLAS STREET AND STRONGHOLD

In his second novel, *The Key to Nicholas Street* (1952), Ellin expands beyond the concentration on a central protagonist to a narrative of shifting viewpoints, revealing how five characters are variously affected when the woman next door is found dead at the bottom of her cellar stairs. Once again the mechanism of the plot, although expertly contrived, is subtly overshadowed by intriguing characterization. Ellin takes a similar approach to group characterization in *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*, in which he explores psychosexual areas relatively new to the mystery novel, and in *Stronghold* (1975), the story of four escaped convicts, the two women they hold hostage, and the father and son-in-law who fight for the women's freedom. *Stronghold*, however, is somewhat flawed by its breadth of characterization; it is clearly a novel that needs an effective center, a central protagonist to provide the core of strength, integrity, and sanity through which the actions of such a diversified array of personalities could be more effectively analyzed and interpreted.

THE EIGHTH CIRCLE

Ellin does provide such a protagonist in *The Eighth Circle*, his third novel and the first to introduce the private investigator as central figure. Murray Kirk is a private eye unlike any of his predecessors in the genre. A disillusioned lawyer who joins Frank Conmy's detective agency as a trainee operative, Kirk soon finds success as a gumshoe; he also puts the agency on a sound fiscal footing, expanding and increasing its efficiency. As the novel opens, Frank Conmy has died and Kirk is in control of Conmy and Kirk. Conmy, however, almost constantly in Kirk's thoughts, maintains a shadowy presence in the novel as father figure and alter ego. Kirk has even taken over Conmy's Manhattan apartment and continues to weigh his daily decisions and actions under the influence of his deceased partner.

The Eighth Circle is on the surface a conventional New York detective story, complete with the requisite illegal gambling and bookmaking operations, police corruption, and politically ambitious district attorney. Yet, on another level, it is a philosophical novel, in which Kirk and his interior ghost of Frank Conmy reflect on such diverse questions as social strata and the effects of the Great Depression on the common person. At heart, Kirk is a cynic, but his self-assurance and personal integrity are unwavering. The world in which he operates is Dante's "eighth circle," the bottom of Hell, populated by pimps, panderers, seducers, sycophants, grafters, thieves, and liars. *The Eighth Circle*, however, is not without humor, an often-overlooked attribute of Ellin's work. Ellin is particularly adept at portraying social pretensions, and nowhere in his work is he more effective or more entertaining than in *The Eighth Circle* when a wealthy crime boss, who has left the Lower East Side without having it leave him, offers his philosophy of fine wines and how to select them.

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT

Many of Ellin's more ardent followers regret that Murray Kirk did not make an appearance in subsequent books. The Kirk characterization is transformed, however, and finally reemerges as John Milano in *Star Light, Star Bright* (1979) and in *The Dark Fantastic* (1983). Like Kirk, Milano is an ace detective, highly proficient in observation and deduction. He is also a tougher, more physically formidable version of Kirk. It is difficult to imagine Milano taking the kind of beating that little Billy Caxton, the former bantamweight, gives to Murray Kirk in *The Eighth Circle*. In the opening pages of *Star Light, Star Bright*, Milano disarms a fence who has assisted him in recovering stolen property but who also has a flair for extortion at gunpoint, teaching him in emphatic terms that one does not "change the rules in the middle of the game." He is also known and respected by other characters in the novel, who are aware of how he effectively persuaded Frankie Kurtz, the physically abusive manager of an actress, to take up another line of work. In the course of their professional relationship, the actress and Milano have become lovers, although she still fears Kurtz and his "muscle." Milano's solution to the problem is coldly precise in its evident logic:

As for the muscle, I came to the conclusion . . . that my girl must be made to understand that Frankie wasn't the only one ready and willing to use it. It took a little doing to get him up to that Chelsea flat, and with Sharon cowering against its locked door, to provide her with the necessary bloody demonstration.

This side of Milano's character is clearly a throwback to the hard-boiled approach reminiscent of Hammett's Sam Spade. Nevertheless, Milano is not simply a thug opting for the physical solution. Like Murray Kirk, he is a man of high integrity; he is incorruptible, relaxed and at ease at any level of society. Above all, he is a realist, fully aware that his New York, like Kirk's, is the "eighth circle," and he deals with it accordingly. Unlike Kirk, Milano is the consummate realist, with little time or inclination for introspection or cynicism.

VERY OLD MONEY

In addition to his work in the private investigator subgenre, Ellin wrote a collection of densely plotted thrillers that follow a similar pattern: A young man, down on his luck, becomes involved with people of wealth and power who are using him to further some nefarious end. Control of an estate or legacy is frequently the objective. Following this pattern are *House of Cards* (1967), *The Valentine Estate* (1968), *The Bind* (1970), and *The Luxembourg Run* (1977). *Very Old Money* (1985) is the final entry in the group, offering a slight variation on the theme: The hapless "young man" becomes a married couple, unemployed schoolteachers hired as domestics to work in a large and mysterious mansion in Manhattan. In two of the novels in this group, the protagonist is a former athlete: Chris Monte, a former Wimbledon champion, in *The Valentine Estate*, and Reno Davis, a former heavyweight boxer, in *House of Cards*.

HOUSE OF CARDS

The design of *House of Cards* is a fairy-tale motif, in which a knight-errant, Davis, risks all to save a beautiful princess, Anne de Villemont, from the Parisian mansion where she and her nine-year-old son, Paul, are being held captive. Anne is independently wealthy, but her former husband's family is slowly but steadily drawing on her funds to finance a fascist overthrow of the world's democratic governments. Davis

rescues the distressed Anne, initiating a chase by train, boat, and car over most of France and at least half of Italy. It is no surprise to readers of Ellin that Davis ultimately rescues the lady, retrieves her son, and aborts the entire world revolution. It is one of Ellin's strong points as a writer of suspense thrillers that he effectively renders situations that defy credulity eminently believable.

Richard Keenan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN MILANO SERIES: *Star Light, Star Bright*, 1979; *The Dark Fantastic*, 1983

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Dreadful Summit*, 1948 (also known as *The Big Night*); *The Key to Nicholas Street*, 1952; *The Eighth Circle*, 1958; *The Winter After This Summer*, 1960; *The Panama Portrait*, 1962; *House of Cards*, 1967; *The Valentine Estate*, 1968; *The Bind*, 1970 (also known as *The Man from Nowhere*); *Mirror*; *Mirror on the Wall*, 1972; *Stronghold*, 1975; *The Luxembourg Run*, 1977; *Very Old Money*, 1985

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OTHER MAJOR WORKS

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JAMES ELLROY

Lee Earle Ellroy

Born: Los Angeles, California; March 4, 1948

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; police procedural; private investigator; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Lloyd Hopkins trilogy, 1984-1986

L.A. quartet, 1987-1992

American Underworld trilogy/Underworld USA trilogy, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LLOYD HOPKINS is a Los Angeles Police Department detective in his forties. Blessed with a brilliant mind and a natural instinct for investigative work, Hopkins enjoys his job but hates music because it disrupts his thought processes. An imposing physical specimen, he is highly protective of women. Because of his special intuitive talents, he is typically assigned to match wits with repeat criminals, such as serial killers and bank robbers. Hopkins is not averse to using extreme violence in the course of bringing his opponents to justice.

DUDLEY LIAM SMITH is an Irish detective who rises into the upper echelons of the Los Angeles Police Department between the late 1930's and the late 1950's. A soft-spoken man with a large vocabulary, he is in the habit of calling junior officers "Lad." Smith, a corrupt manipulator, works from within law enforcement to secure financial and political power for himself. He ruthlessly eliminates impediments by playing off legal and criminal elements against one another. A racist with a particular antipathy for African Ameri-

cans, Smith engineers drug heists, murders, blackmail and extortion schemes, pornography rings, and other malfeasance while pursuing his own objectives. Smith, introduced in *Clandestine* (1982), appears in three of the four books of the L.A. quartet.

WAYNE TEDROW, JR., is a young police officer with the Las Vegas force in the early 1960's to early 1970's. While carrying out a chain of dubious assignments, he becomes enmeshed with mobsters, mogul Howard Hughes, the Ku Klux Klan, J. Edgar Hoover, the Kennedy clan, Richard Nixon, and other real and imaginary characters during a volatile time. Tedrow appears in the latter two books of the American Underworld/Underworld USA trilogy.

CONTRIBUTION

James Ellroy's first hard-boiled novel, *Brown's Requiem* (1981), and his first series, the Lloyd Hopkins trilogy (1984-1986), were set in the present. Of varying quality when viewed through the perspective of time, these novels sold well and established two of the author's characteristics: a pessimistic outlook blended with romanticism and shocking violence mixed with dark humor. In the years that followed, Ellroy was recognized for his skill in resurrecting the feel of postwar Los Angeles. *The Black Dahlia* (1987), a fictionalized account of a genuine, still-unsolved 1947 murder, launched his best-selling noir-flavored L.A. quartet.

Beginning with *American Tabloid* (1995), Ellroy has moved beyond the confines of Southern California. His American Underworld/Underworld USA trilogy forges creative links between real and imagined

figures connected to crimes surrounding major historical events of the 1960's and 1970's.

Since Ellroy arrived on the literary scene, his novels have been critically acclaimed for the author's innate, if quirky, storytelling abilities. The novels have been commercially successful as well: Six Ellroy works have been made into well-received motion pictures, and several others are potentially forthcoming.

Though his plots have become more intricate, Ellroy's real concern has always been the contradictory nature of character. He closely examines the evils that good people do in the pursuit of justice and the good hidden in the worst of society's inhabitants. His insights into criminal behavior, his intricate plotting, his ear for dialogue, and his stripped-down, rhythmic prose have lifted Ellroy into an elite class: one of only a few modern crime writers whose work transcends genre and approaches literature.

BIOGRAPHY

James Ellroy was born Lee Earle Ellroy on March 4, 1948, in Los Angeles, the son of Armand Ellroy, a part-time accountant and full-time anti-Semite, and Geneva Odelia "Jean" Hilliker Ellroy, a registered

nurse. Ellroy's parents, married in 1940, were divorced in 1954. His mother, reputedly a promiscuous alcoholic, was granted custody and moved with her son to El Monte, then a working-class suburb.

A defining moment of young Ellroy's life occurred on June 22, 1958, when his mother was found murdered. Afterward, James lived with his father, who inspired the future writer with a birthday gift: a written history of the Los Angeles Police Department, which the boy studied. An obsessive reader, Ellroy fed his habit by frequenting libraries and stealing crime, detective, and mystery fiction from bookstores.

Ellroy attended largely Jewish Fairfax High School but was expelled in 1965 after parroting his father's Nazi philosophy. He joined the U.S. Army but quickly realized he was not military material. After faking a stutter, he soon received a general discharge. Ellroy's father died shortly after his son returned home.

For a time, Ellroy lived on the streets, surviving by shoplifting and burglary. He drank, used drugs, and squatted in deserted houses. Between 1965 and 1977, Ellroy was arrested many times for intoxication, theft, and trespassing. Convicted of numerous offenses, he spent eight months in jail. After his release, he held menial jobs, such as passing out flyers and working as a mailroom clerk and a cashier at a pornographic bookstore. He continued to drink and abuse nasal inhalers. After contracting pneumonia and suffering paranoid delusions, Ellroy submitted to treatment, achieving a measure of sobriety by 1975. He found steady work as a caddy at golf and country clubs and, following intensive sessions at Alcoholics Anonymous, began writing.

Ellroy's first novel, *Brown's Requiem*, a semi-autobiographical crime novel in the Raymond Chandler style, revolves around Fritz Brown, a former police officer and recovering alcoholic who has become a private eye. Brown

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

James Ellroy. (AP/Wide World Photos)

is sucked into a world of arson, extortion, and pornography after being hired to follow a caddy's sister. Ellroy's follow-up novel, *Clandestine* (1982), in which a former police officer relentlessly pursues the killer of a former lover, was nominated for an Edgar Award.

Since his debut, Ellroy has turned out a steady stream of hard-hitting crime novels. He began to hit his stride with the Lloyd Hopkins trilogy (*Blood on the Moon*, 1984; *Because the Night*, 1984; and *Suicide Hill*, 1986) and quit caddying in 1984 to write full time. After a disturbing side trip, the first-person narrative of a serial killer, *Killer on the Road* (1986), Ellroy began the L.A. quartet (*The Black Dahlia*, 1987; *The Big Nowhere*, 1988; *L.A. Confidential*, 1990; and *White Jazz*, 1992), which brought him national and international prominence. The *Big Nowhere* garnered the 1990 Prix Mystère Award. *L.A. Confidential* was made into an Academy Award-winning film in 1997, *The Black Dahlia* became a film in 2006, and *White Jazz* was optioned for development.

Between 1993 and 2004, Ellroy contributed fictional and nonfictional pieces to *GQ* magazine. These were collected in such volumes as *Hollywood Nocturnes* (1994), *Crime Wave: Reportage and Fiction from the Underside of L.A.* (1999), and *Breakneck Pace* (2000; an electronic book known during auction as *Widespread Panic*). His *GQ* piece "My Mother's Killer" was expanded into his memoir-cum-nonfictional murder investigation chronicle, *My Dark Places: An L.A. Crime Memoir* (1996).

Ellroy's American Underworld/Underground USA trilogy postulates that manipulations among mobsters, governmental agencies, and political action groups were behind major national events of the late 1950's through the early 1970's, including the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinations.

Twice married and divorced (from Mary Doherty and Helen Knode), James Ellroy in 2005 moved from New Canaan, Connecticut, to Los Angeles.

ANALYSIS

James Ellroy's earliest works represent his attempt to come to grips with crimes of the sort that touched his life—especially the murder of his mother and his own antisocial behavior after the death of his father—

and his efforts to find his voice as a writer. The Chandler homage, *Brown's Requiem*, and the thinly disguised initial exploration of his mother's murder in *Clandestine* are manifestations of a talented writer's growing pains while settling on topics worthy of exploration and developing the proper perspective and tone in the telling. He rapidly learned his craft in making the transition from novice to author of stature.

With the publication of *Blood on the Moon*, the first entry in his Lloyd Hopkins trilogy, Ellroy discovered the value of series characters. In *The Black Dahlia*, the first novel in his L.A. quartet, he found his niche as a fictional chronicler of the recent past. In *American Tabloid* (1995), the opening salvo in his American Underworld/Underground USA series, he broadened his horizons from local to international events.

An outspoken fan of the Los Angeles Police Department, Ellroy does not always portray the force in a favorable light. Especially in the Hopkins and L.A. quartet novels, he details the legwork, procedures, and collaborative efforts necessary to solve crimes and unravel the overarching mystery. Solutions to baffling puzzles follow a crooked rather than a straight line, and truths are hidden under layers of subterfuge.

From the beginning, Ellroy has exhibited skill in drawing fully rounded characters that blur the lines between hero and villain. In later novels, his fictional creations interact with historical personalities. Virtually all of Ellroy's crime solvers are professionals: current or former police officers or deputies, former agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or Central Intelligence Agency, often depicted as brilliant in their ability to make leaps of deduction. Antagonists—mafia bosses, corrupt politicians, thugs, criminal masterminds, and rogue police officers—are devious, vicious, and determined. The combatants are capable of anything in the pursuit of their goals.

Ellroy frequently incorporates newspaper clippings or other documents to aid narrative flow or to provide information that could not be included by other means. He has generally eschewed extensive use of literary pyrotechnics, such as simile or metaphor. Though there are occasional mildly amusing set pieces and instances of broad parody, Ellroy cannot truly be

called a humorous writer. His style has become more clipped and staccato over time; his language is pared to its essence, and sentences are often reduced to fragments. His slangy, pungent, and profane dialogue relentlessly propels his narrative forward in a manner that is both distinctive and compulsively readable.

Ellroy's works have grown panoramic in scale and epic in length. Complex stories may involve dozens of characters and play out over weeks, months, or years. He deals with a full range of crimes, from corruption in high places to perversion and from robbery to murder. He constantly reminds readers that extreme violence and its corroding influence are just a heartbeat away.

BLOOD ON THE MOON

Part thriller, part police procedural, part psychological study, *Blood on the Moon* (1984) follows the paths of two disparate individuals who must inevitably collide. The first is Teddy Verplanck, a weakling and would-be poet who is raped by a bullying classmate. Unhinged by the experience, Teddy reshapes himself into an efficient killing machine. Over fifteen years, he murders a succession of young women by a variety of methods to avoid detection. Teddy commemorates each crime by sending roses and anonymous poems to his beloved, a beauty from his former high school with whom he has long been secretly infatuated. The second individual is Lloyd Hopkins. A National Guardsman about to enter the police academy, Hopkins undergoes his baptism of blood during the Watts riot of 1965. By the time he catches on to the pattern of Teddy's crimes, Hopkins—assisted by Captain Arthur “Dutch” Pelz, Hopkins's mentor, surrogate father, and loyal disciple—has risen to detective sergeant, meanwhile gaining a reputation for his genius in solving difficult cases. The suspenseful novel intertwines the movements of the two men as they spiral toward a final, violent confrontation.

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

A dense neo-noir novel, evocative of the 1950's, *L.A. Confidential* connects panoplies of crimes to a single horrific event: a mass murder in a late-night diner. The complicated, multilayered story is told through the perspectives of three vastly different officers in the Los Angeles Police Department. Ed Exley is an educated, ambitious officer, eager to surpass the

legacy left by his father, a former police officer who became a wealthy construction magnate. Jack “Trashcan” Vincennes is a sleazy vice officer who accepts bribes from a scandal magazine to dig up dirt on Hollywood celebrities. Wendell “Bud” White, who as a child watched his father beat his mother to death, is a brutal officer who explodes into violence whenever he witnesses abuse of women.

Though initially working at cross-purposes, the three officers form an uneasy alliance to pool their special skills in unraveling a tangled skein of crimes. In the course of pursuing seemingly unrelated events that lead to intertwined conspiracies, they uncover perversions of the rich and famous, gangland schemes, and widespread corruption among political and police officials.

Richly textured and well-paced, steeped in the prejudices of the times, and populated with a wealth of fascinating secondary characters—including the slippery, Machiavellian Dudley Smith—*L.A. Confidential* is one of Ellroy's most accessible and popular novels.

AMERICAN TABLOID

A sprawling novel that encompasses the years 1958 to 1963, *American Tabloid* is the first volume in the American Underworld/Underworld USA trilogy. The novel is structured similarly to *L.A. Confidential* in that it is presented through the eyes of three main characters. Pete Bondurant, a former Los Angeles County deputy sheriff, is now a hit man and Howard Hughes employee. FBI special agent Kemper Boyd is a J. Edgar Hoover confidant and troubleshooter. Ward Littell, another FBI agent, is assigned to infiltrate the Communist Party of the United States.

The three men are sometimes separate, sometimes combined, as pawns in a power struggle among the mob, politicians, government agencies, unions, and other powerful forces that covertly and overtly engineer elections, invasions, and assassinations. Massive, convoluted, yet plausible, *American Tabloid* is one of Ellroy's most accomplished works.

MY DARK PLACES

My Dark Places is Ellroy's attempt to finally put the ghost of his murdered mother to rest. Divided into four sections, the book explores the crime and its aftereffects from the perspectives of the victim, survivors, law enforcement, and possible culprits. In the fi-

nal section, Ellroy details his work with the original investigating officer, retired detective Bill Stoner, as they minutely reexamine original evidence from the case in a fruitless effort to identify viable suspects.

A fascinating study of police procedure, *My Dark Places* also provides a revealing glimpse into the author's psyche and troubled early life.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LLOYD HOPKINS TRILOGY: *Blood on the Moon*, 1984; *Because the Night*, 1984; *Suicide Hill*, 1986

L.A. QUARTET SERIES: *The Black Dahlia*, 1987; *The Big Nowhere*, 1988; *L.A. Confidential*, 1990; *White Jazz*, 1992

AMERICAN UNDERWORLD/UNDERWORLD USA TRILOGY: *American Tabloid*, 1995; *The Cold Six Thousand*, 2001

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Brown's Requiem*, 1981; *Clandestine*, 1982; *Killer on the Road*, 1986 (also known as *Silent Terror*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Hollywood Nocturnes*, 1994 (also known as *Dick Contino's Blues*); *Crime Wave: Reportage and Fiction from the Underside of L.A.*, 1999; *Destination: Morgue!*, 2004

NONFICTION: *Murder and Mayhem: More than Seventy-five Case Histories of Heinous Crimes*, 1991; *My Dark Places: An L.A. Crime Memoir*, 1996

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Farley, Terry McCarthy. "James Ellroy Confidential."

Time 157, no. 20 (May 21, 2001): 89-91. A profile of Ellroy that examines his opinions on American culture and politics in the 1960's. Also deals with his feelings about his mother's death.

Grobel, Lawrence. *Endangered Species: Writers Talk About Their Craft, Their Visions, Their Lives*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2001. A collection of essays and interviews conducted with a dozen authors, including a lengthy, revealing conversation with Ellroy.

Haut, Woody. *Heartbreak and Vine: The Fate of Hard-boiled Writers in Hollywood*. London: Serpent's Tail, 2002. An examination of the experiences of living and deceased authors who have worked with the film industry in Hollywood, including Ellroy. Indexed with filmography.

_____. *Neon Noir: Contemporary American Crime Fiction*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1999. The story of American crime fiction and related films as told through the work of such writers as Ellroy. Indexed with filmography.

Jakubowski, Maxim, ed. *One Hundred Great Detectives: Or, The Detective Directory*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993. A collection of essays that includes an appreciation of Ellroy's multifaceted creation, Dudley Smith.

Silet, Charles L. P. *Talking Murder: Interviews with Twenty Mystery Writers*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999. In one chapter of this work, Silet, an interviewer for *Mystery Scene* and *Armchair Detective*, talks with Ellroy about his work and his life.

Terr, Lenore. *Unchained Memories: True Stories of Traumatic Memories, Lost and Found*. New York: Basic Books, 1995. A psychological study of five cases of repressed memory, including a chapter about the effect of his mother's murder on Ellroy. Indexed.

LOREN D. ESTLEMAN

Born: Ann Arbor, Michigan; September 15, 1952

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled; historical; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Amos Walker, 1980-
Peter Macklin, 1984-
Detroit, 1990-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

AMOS WALKER is a rugged, ruffled Detroit private investigator. The divorced loner is a tough guy amused by his toughness. He cannot resist a witty comeback no matter what the circumstances. Walker is also a Vietnam War veteran, though his memories of the war and military metaphors play a less significant role as the series progresses. He hates hypocrisy but is less cynical than he pretends to be. His creator has said that Walker has an instinct for survival rivaling that of Bugs Bunny. As the series progresses, he becomes less cocky and more world-weary.

PETER MACKLIN is freelance professional assassin operating out of Detroit. He tries to retire and ease into domestic life but cannot seem to separate himself from violence. Macklin is a vaguer character than Walker because blandness is an excellent cover for his work.

CONTRIBUTION

Loren D. Estleman is one of the most stylish followers of the hard-boiled detective tradition invented by Dashiell Hammett, refined by Raymond Chandler, and imitated by hundreds of others. Although many hard-boiled detective-fiction writers strain for effect or lapse into parodies of the genre, Estleman is rarely self-conscious, allowing the colorful descriptions and humorous quips to emerge from the characters and situations rather than being clumsily imposed on his material.

Detroit and its environs are even more central to Estleman's fiction than to that of fellow Michigan native Elmore Leonard, to whom he is often compared. In all three of his series, Estleman portrays the city as

an urban playground for decay and violence. Amos Walker's nostalgia for the past is in part a reaction to what has happened to a once-great city. Estleman treats Detroit inhabitants more sympathetically than he does the spoiled, even more dangerous folks who have fled to the affluent suburbs. Just as it is difficult to imagine Hammett without San Francisco and Chandler without Los Angeles, Estleman owns the Motor City.

Estleman's many awards include American Mystery Awards from *Mystery Scene Magazine* for *Downriver* (1988) and *Whiskey River* (1990) and four Shamus Awards from the Private Eye Writers of America for *Sugartown* (1984) and the short stories "Eight Mile and Dequindre" (1984), "The Crooked Way" (1988), and "Lady on Ice" (2003), and he was twice named Outstanding Mystery Writer of the Year by *Popular Fiction Monthly*. He was honored by the Michigan Foundation of the Arts in 1987 and received the Michigan Author Award from the Michigan Library Association in 1997. He earned several other honors for his Western fiction. Estleman received an honorary doctorate from Eastern Michigan University in 2002.

BIOGRAPHY

Loren D. Estleman was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on September 15, 1952, to Leauvett Charles Estleman, a truck driver, and Louise Milankovich Estleman, a postal clerk. He grew up in an 1867 farmhouse whose upper floor, including his bedroom, was unheated. He began submitting short stories to publications when he was fifteen and received 160 rejections over the next eight years. After his father became disabled, Estleman's mother went to work to support the family. To reduce expenses, Estleman commuted to Eastern Michigan University, majoring in English and journalism. After graduating in 1974, he worked as a police-beat reporter and editor for the *Ypsilanti Press*; *Community Foto-News* in Pinckney, Michigan; *Ann Arbor News*; and *Dexter Leader* until becoming a full-time fiction writer in 1980.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Loren Estleman in 1999. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Estleman's early novels include two Sherlock Holmes pastiches, but he found his true voice when he began the Amos Walker series. As a reporter, he spent considerable time with police officers, absorbing their jargon and learning the rhythms of their speech, which he puts to excellent use in his fiction. Estleman had long been fascinated by the criminal world. His Austrian-born grandmother was an acquaintance of Al Capone through frequenting gambling casinos.

Estleman eventually settled in Whitmore Lake, Michigan. He married Carole Ann Ashley, a marketing and public relations specialist, on September 5, 1987, was divorced in 1990, and married mystery and Western writer Deborah Morgan, a descendant of an outlaw in the famous Dalton gang, in 1993.

Estleman has reviewed books for several newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washing-*

ton Post. He has said that his favorite writers are Edgar Allan Poe, Jack London, Edith Wharton, W. Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, and Raymond Chandler. The influences of Chandler, Hemingway, Poe, and London are apparent throughout his work.

ANALYSIS

Loren D. Estleman's Amos Walker is a fish out of water, someone who might have been much more comfortable practicing his trade in the 1940's and 1950's, when morality was less ambiguous, than in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He smokes, drinks, winds down by listening to jazz singer Anita O'Day, and watches George Sanders as the Falcon on television. Walker is bemused when he encounters a twenty-five-year-old receptionist who does not recognize the name Al Capone.

The city where Walker lives is central to his life; Estleman has said that the detective would be only half a character without Detroit. The Walker series gives a complex view of Detroit and its suburbs, presenting drug dealers, prostitutes, pornographers, automotive executives, television personalities, bounty hunters, killers of police officers, reporters, politicians, and jazz singers.

Although racial tensions are important in Estleman's fiction, the author is equally concerned with the class differences between the wealthy who have abandoned the city and those left behind who simply want to live what passes for normal lives. Anyone who exploits these people, from dirty police officers to corrupt politicians, is a target of the writer's ire. Though Estleman uses crime as a metaphor for the ills of society, he keeps sociology simmering in the background, never letting it overshadow his plots and characters.

Although the roughhewn Walker could easily be on the other side of the law, hit man Peter Macklin is successful at his work because he seems so ordinary. Macklin finds himself encountering terrorists in *Kill Zone* (1984), guards a television evangelist in *Any Man's Death* (1986), and becomes the target of another killer in *Roses Are Dead* (1986).

Originally planned as a trilogy, the Detroit series looks at the city's flamboyant history during the early twentieth century in *Thunder City* (1999), the 1920's

and 1930's in *Whiskey River* (1990), the 1940's in *Jitterbug* (1998), the 1950's in *Edsel* (1995), the 1960's in *Motown* (1991), the 1970's in *Stress* (1996), and the 1990's in *King of the Corner* (1993). The topics range from labor unions to organized crime to racism in the police department to the origins of the automobile industry, with a few characters appearing in more than one novel. Estleman uses the city to embody the promise of the American Dream and those who find the quest unattainable.

Estleman's fiction is crammed with popular-culture references, particularly to films. Everyone from Willie Best, the black character actor of the 1930's and 1940's, to Fred Astaire is mentioned. A house in Birmingham, Michigan, is said to resemble the Mount Rushmore residence of James Mason in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), a hint that danger lurks there. The framed, original *Casablanca* (1942) poster in Walker's office lets readers know he is a tough guy with a romantic, even sentimental streak.

King of the Corner features a former relief pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, and Estleman's books frequently have references to the baseball team representing the best of the city's achievements. Hall of Fame outfielder Al Kaline, who played for the Tigers from 1953 to 1974, is an important touchstone for Estleman.

Estleman has written almost as much about the West as about crime and is equally acclaimed in that genre. Historical figures such as Buffalo Bill Cody, Will Bill Hickok, and Pat Garrett appear frequently in his Westerns. His U.S. Marshal Page Murdock series resembles his mysteries with its colorful characters and snappy dialogue.

DOWNRIVER

Considered one of the best in the Walker series, *Downriver* finds the detective hired by former convict Richard DeVries, who has just completed a twenty-year sentence. During the 1967 Detroit riot, DeVries threw a firebomb while an armored-car robbery was taking place nearby. Framed for the robbery, he wants Walker to locate the \$200,000 stolen during the heist, which he feels he deserves.

The trail leads Walker to an unlikely suspect, Alfred Hendriks, an executive with Marianne Motors. Hendriks, Walker discovers, is far from the only per-

son involved in the case who is not exactly what he seems.

Downriver is one of the surprisingly few Estleman novels to involve the automotive industry for which Detroit is most famous. Estleman is sympathetic toward Timothy Marianne, who simply wants to put out a good product but finds himself surrounded by greedy manipulators. The climactic shoot-out inside Marianne's plant is one of Estleman's best action scenes.

WHISKEY RIVER

Whiskey River, the first title in the historical Detroit series, focuses on importing and selling liquor during the final years of Prohibition. Newspaperman Connie Minor, who appears in several Detroit titles and is an intimate of gangster Jack Dance, narrates the events from the perspective of 1939.

Minor uses this friendship and his inside knowledge to propel himself to prominence as a syndicated crime reporter. Minor even acts as Dance's go-between with the police, with whom he has an uneasy relationship. Dance emerges as a vivid, likable character because of the reporter's fondness for him. Minor may represent Estleman's ambivalent attitude toward the way reporters, police, and criminals intermingle.

A SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE TIGER

Many of the Walker books involve the detective's investigations of events in the past. In *A Smile on the Face of the Tiger* (2000), Walker is hired to find Eugene Booth, who long ago published *Paradise Valley*, a fictional account of a 1943 riot that left several African Americans dead. Booth agrees that Louise Starr can republish the book, changes his mind, and disappears. Walker tracks down Booth to discover the writer plans to create a new version of *Paradise Valley* revealing the truth about the role of the Detroit police in the riot. Booth is murdered, however, before he can complete his revision.

A Smile on the Face of the Tiger is notable for its colorful characters. The son of the artist who illustrated the covers of Booth's books, Lowell Birdsall, Jr., lives in an apartment full of 1950's memorabilia. Though she resides in a nursing home, Fleta Skirrett, a former model for the artist Birdsall, remains larger than life. Glad Eddie Cypress is a retired hit man on a

bloody book tour for his autobiography. Through these characters, Estleman explores how the sins of the past live on in the present.

RETRO

Retro (2004) resembles *A Smile on the Face of the Tiger* in that Walker investigates an old crime involving racial issues. A dying madam hires Walker to find Delwayne, the illegitimate result of a 1949 affair between a black boxer and a white Hollywood starlet. Delwayne, a fugitive from an antiwar bombing case in the 1960's, is then murdered, just as his father was a half century earlier.

While evading the Mafia, Walker must sort through clues from three decades to piece together the truth. Walker learns that the same gun killed both father and son. Estleman excels at exploring the complicated ways in which racism continues to haunt the United States.

LITTLE BLACK DRESS

In *Something Borrowed, Something Black* (2002), Laurie Macklin thinks she has married a nice, quiet older man only to discover on their honeymoon that he is a retired assassin. In *Little Black Dress* (2005), she takes Peter Macklin to meet her mother, Pamela Ziegenthaler, who manages a chain bookstore in Toledo, Ohio.

Pamela's store is targeted by a gang of thieves intending to branch out from robbing video stores. Ironically, Pamela's new boyfriend, Ben Grinnell, whom she takes to be as dull as Laurie initially thought her husband, is the gang point man. Grinnell and Macklin quickly spot each other as outlaws, almost mirror images, and move warily through a slowly evolving predicament.

Such Macklin books are a departure for Estleman not only because they focus on a criminal but also because they show domestic life and criminal activity co-existing uneasily. Macklin does not like his obnoxious, bossy mother-in-law, but neither does he want to see her hurt. He has nothing against Grinnell, a fellow professional, but will stop him if necessary.

Little Black Dress, whose title refers to Laurie's sophisticated attire for a book signing at her mother's store, features more overt humor than in the Walker novels. There are colorful, though dangerous, crooks

named Wild Bill and Mark Twain to show that the Wild West still lives on in the twenty-first century, and best-selling author Francis Spain is Estleman's satirical attack on those writers who manage to be successful without actually knowing how to write.

Michael Adams

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Amos Walker: Motor City Blue*, 1980; *Angel Eyes*, 1981; *The Midnight Man*, 1982; *The Glass Highway*, 1983; *Sugartown*, 1984; *Every Brilliant Eye*, 1985; *Lady Yesterday*, 1987; *Downriver*, 1988; *General Murders: Ten Amos Walker Mysteries*, 1988; *Silent Thunder*, 1989; *Sweet Women Lie*, 1990; *Never Street*, 1996; *The Witchfinder*, 1998; *The Hours of the Virgin*, 1999; *A Smile on the Face of the Tiger*, 2000; *Sinister Heights*, 2002; *Poison Blonde*, 2003; *Retro*, 2004; *Nicotine Kiss*, 2006; *American Detective*, 2007

PETER MACKLIN SERIES: *Kill Zone*, 1984; *Roses Are Dead*, 1985; *Any Man's Death*, 1986; *Something Borrowed, Something Black*, 2002; *Little Black Dress*, 2005

DETROIT SERIES: *Whiskey River*, 1990; *Motown*, 1991; *King of the Corner*, 1993; *Edsel*, 1995; *Stress*, 1996; *Jitterbug*, 1998; *Thunder City*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Oklahoma Punk*, 1976 (also known as *Red Highway*); *Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula: Or, The Adventure of the Sanguinary Count*, 1978; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes*, 1979; *Peeper*, 1989; *The Judge*, 1994; *The Rocky Mountain Motion Picture Association*, 1999

SHORT FICTION: *People Who Kill*, 1993

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Hider*, 1978; *The High Rocks*, 1979; *Stamping Ground*, 1980; *Aces and Eights*, 1981; *The Wolfier*, 1981; *Murdock's Law*, 1982; *Mister St. John*, 1983; *This Old Bill*, 1984; *The Stranglers*, 1984; *Gun Man*, 1985; *Bloody Season*, 1988; *Western Story*, 1989; *Sudden Country*, 1992; *City of Widows*, 1994; *Billy Gashade*, 1997; *Journey of the Dead*, 1998; *White Desert*, 2000; *The Master Executioner*, 2001; *Black Powder*, *White Smoke*, 2002; *Port Hazard*, 2004; *The Undertaker's Wife*, 2005; *The Adventures of Johnny Vermillion*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *The Best Western Stories of Loren D. Estleman*, 1989

NONFICTION: *The Wister Trace: Classic Novels of the American Frontier*, 1987; *Writing the Popular Novel*, 2004 (with John T. Lescroart)

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_____. "The Man from Motor City." Interview by Keith Kroll. *The Armchair Detective* 24, no. 1 (1991): 4-11. Interview with Estleman in which he discusses how his police-beat reporting inspired his fiction, the importance of Detroit to his work, and the influence of Raymond Chandler.

_____. "Not Enough to Be a Good Man." Interview by Leonard Picker. *Publishers Weekly* 254, no. 7 (February 13, 2006): 65. Interview in which Estleman explains how Walker has mellowed over the years and how he differs from Robert B. Parker's Spenser.

Hynes, Joseph. "Looking for Endings: The Fiction of Loren D. Estleman." *Journal of Popular Culture* 29, no. 3 (Winter, 1995): 121-127. Compares the Walker and Detroit series, analyzing the first three titles in the latter. Concludes that the Detroit books have a more panoramic view than the Walker novels.

Walker, Dale L. "Loren Estleman." *Mystery Scene* 58 (1997): 56-59, 65. Good overview of Estleman's career as both mystery and Western writer, with emphasis on the latter.

HELEN EUSTIS

Born: Cincinnati, Ohio; December 31, 1916

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Helen Eustis has a gift for portraying characters in various states of mental anxiety, ranging from the normal through the highly neurotic to the psychotic. In the post-World War II era, she helped introduce into crime fiction a new quality of realism and sophistication in the portrayal of both the villain and the victim—the guilty and the innocent—which foreshadowed the development of the psychological plot. Her stories show how people placed in threatening circumstances react in bizarre, often incriminating ways.

Influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and Fyodor Dostoevski, to whom she alludes in *The Horizontal Man* (1946), Eustis adds a note of clinical realism to the gothic terrors experienced by her characters by explaining their behavior in terms of the pathology of the criminally insane. In *The Horizontal Man*, Eustis com-

bined knowledge of abnormal psychology with mastery of the genre's least-likely-suspect convention to produce a tour de force rivaling Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926).

BIOGRAPHY

Helen White Eustis was born December 31, 1916, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the daughter of Henry Claypoole Eustis. She spent her childhood in Cincinnati, where she received her early education at Hillside School. She later attended Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, from which she was graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1938. While she was at Smith, she won an award for creative writing. Eustis subsequently did graduate work at Columbia University in New York City but did not earn an advanced degree.

When Eustis was at Smith College, she met and was eventually married to a professor in the English Department, Alfred Young Fisher. They had one son, Adam Eustis Fisher. The marriage ended in divorce.

Eustis was married a second time, to Martin Harris, a press photographer, but was also eventually divorced from him.

Although she studied literature as an undergraduate and a graduate student, Eustis did not opt for a teaching career. Her interest in literature has been manifested in exercising her own creative talents. She has written novels, a number of short stories, and children's literature. She has also translated a number of works from French to English, including Georges Simenon's *Quand j'étais vieux* (1970; *When I Was Old*, 1971).

Eustis's literary reputation is based on her first book, *The Horizontal Man*, which was awarded the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best first novel in 1947. This novel attracted much attention and elicited much admiration from critics and aficionados of the genre. Nearly a decade later she wrote a second novel, *The Fool Killer* (1954), which received less critical acclaim. She seems to have preferred the short-story format, for she has written much short fiction over the years. Not all of her stories are mysteries, but all of them involve psychological suspense. Eustis has lived and worked in New York for many years.

ANALYSIS

A critical assessment of Helen Eustis's literary contributions to the genre of crime fiction must be based on her most famous novel, *The Horizontal Man*.

THE HORIZONTAL MAN

The novel's title is a phrase taken from a poem by W. H. Auden, "Shorts." Eustis quotes only one of the two stanzas that constitute a middle portion of Auden's poem. The entire section, which bears little relation to other parts, reads as follows:

Those who will not reason
Perish in the act;
Those who will not act
Perish for that reason.

Let us honour if we can
The vertical man,
Though we value none
But the horizontal one.

As Richard Hoggart remarked about Auden's early verse, "The epigrams usually enshrine memorable social and psychological observations." Elsewhere, Hoggart claimed that Auden "surveys from a great height the interesting but muddled life of those below; he can see a possible order in the muddle which they do not see, and he would like to help it emerge. He is detached and slightly cynical." The same could be said of Eustis's comments about life and death and the human condition.

For example, one of her less inhibited characters, Freda Cramm, delivers the following remarks on crime and its punishment:

Violence that strikes in our midst shakes us in a strange way. . . . Personally, I think there are not enough murders. They feed us in some way. See how avidly we devour all accounts of crime, or detective stories! And after all, the responsibility of giving death is a small one which we regard so seriously in comparison to the responsibility of giving life, which we take so lightly:

There are two separate pleasures. . . . The pleasure of vicarious violence, and the pleasure at the detection and punishment of the crime of another. In the first we can enjoy the emotional outlet without undertaking the penalty, and in the second we can shiver deliciously with the knowledge that we cannot be found out, since our share in the business was secret, and of the mind.

Surprisingly enough, *The Horizontal Man* is a roman à clef. At the time it was written, acquaintances of the author were struck by the obvious similarities between the fictional New England women's college it featured, Hollymount, and the author's alma mater, Smith College. Parallels extended beyond the locale to include characters, many of whom were based on well-known campus figures. For example, the villain was rumored to be a composite portrait of two professors from Smith's English department—a well-known modern critic (Newton Arvin) and a medievalist (Howard Rollin Patch). The victim closely resembled the author's husband, Alfred Young Fisher, formerly her professor, whom she was divorcing at the time. According to one source, Eustis began writing *The Horizontal Man* on the advice of her therapist to exorcize some of her hostility toward her spouse.

Eustis's knowledge of abnormal psychology and

psychoanalytic theory is evident in the narrative and helps to create verisimilitude. Essentially a puzzle novel with gothic overtones, *The Horizontal Man* is a tour de force with an ingenious surprise ending. The spectacular climax exposes the criminal pathology of a schizophrenic killer and completes a complex psychological portrait. Although the clinical details are completely correct, Eustis does not settle for mere psychiatric accuracy. Instead, in the Russian manner, she goes much further to create a disturbing yet compassionate picture of a tortured soul whose tragic suffering is caused by what she calls “the poetry of unreason.” Eustis strives to represent mental illness realistically, not only through clinical detail but also through literary allusion:

But when . . . I've thought of madness, it seems most easily explained to me as poetry in action. A life of symbol rather than reality. On paper one may understand Gulliver, or Kafka, or Dante. But let a man go about *behaving* as if he were a giant or a midget, or caught in a cosmic plot directed at himself, or in heaven or hell, and we feel horror—we want to disavow him, to proclaim him as far removed as possible from ourselves.

The literary technique is sophisticated. Although the emphasis is placed on characterization, the narrative is as carefully plotted as a detective story must be. The characters are revealed as the investigation proceeds. The mental focus is reminiscent of Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886), but unlike Dostoevski, Eustis avoids the inverted structure. Instead, she preserves the integrity of the puzzle by shifting the narrative viewpoint among several characters. Both plot and characterization profit from the use of this device, because several characters claim attention while the puzzle is being unraveled.

By skillful employment of the interior monologue, Eustis reveals character while simultaneously sustaining suspense by shifting from one figure to another. As the narrative develops, the reader gains greater insight into the personalities of the various suspects—primarily by means of internal monologue and secondarily through confrontational dialogue. Finally, in a dramatic climax, the killer's identity is disclosed in a direct confession, which functions to solve the puzzle as

well as to complete the revelation of character. Eustis's genius lies in her realization that she could combine the conventions of the classic detective novel with her interest in psychological character development to produce an original work. She recognized that the tradition of presenting the murderer as the least likely suspect offered an opportunity to exercise her rare talents for psychological portraiture.

The Horizontal Man concerns the murder of a handsome and brilliant English professor, Kevin Boyle, who is found stretched out on the floor in front of his sitting-room fireplace with a crushed skull. One of the suspects is a young student, Molly Morrison, who is so infatuated with him that she is devastated by his death. She even entertains the delusion that she is responsible for his death because she did not foresee and prevent the attack. Her guilt is so intense that she signs a confession at the police station. Several colleagues also fall under suspicion: Freda Cramm, a local femme fatale who is known to have quarreled with Boyle; Leonard Marks, a gauche junior member of the English faculty who lives in the same apartment house and who was jealous of Boyle; and George Hungerford, a distinguished older scholar whose ability to write seemed to atrophy after his mother's death but who served as friend and mentor to Boyle.

In addition to the suspects, each of whom tries to help solve the crime, several other amateur sleuths are involved in the investigation. The efforts of a homely but intelligent young student, Kate Innes, and an eager young newspaper reporter, Jack Donnelly, serve to complicate matters. Although all these people uncover pertinent information, no one person actually solves the case. The culprit finally confesses to the college psychiatrist, who provides a full explanation for the president in the novel's denouement.

In the course of the narrative, Eustis successfully depicts people in various states of anxiety ranging from the normal through the highly neurotic to the psychotic. Molly's emotional reactions as well as her therapy seem authentic. The normal, if naïve, worldview of the other students accentuates the bizarre outlook of Molly. She, in turn, offers an important contrast to Hungerford and Marks because she is so much younger and simultaneously more vulnerable and

more resilient. Because of their age and sex, both Hungerford and Marks seem less seriously disturbed. The plotting is extremely complex—the focus alternates among Molly, Hungerford, and Marks.

In his first appearance in the novel, Hungerford registers a strong death wish. The reader learns that he has attempted suicide and that he finds his life a painful burden: “I know who that is, said his mind. That is Death. That is the old Reaper, gumshoeing behind you. He thought he would turn and shake Death’s hand when Death came abreast of him. . . .” Hungerford’s subsequent hallucinations become more intense and clearly indicate the seriousness of his aberration: “He whirled about and faced the dark room, his hands against the window sill, like a criminal at bay, facing his tormentors. The furniture seemed to take on the appearance of people he knew.”

In contrast to Hungerford’s wild imaginings, Molly’s misinterpretations of reality are laced with rational doubts regarding her own sanity. She becomes objectively analytical and even questions Dr. Forstmann about the difference between hallucinations and delusions. (“Hallucinations, it must be. That’s when you really imagine direct sensation instead of just sort of distant things like persecution, isn’t it?”) Her conviction that she must be mad is followed by dizzy excitement when she discovers the scratch across her wrist that her own bitten fingernails never could have made and realizes that she had not imagined the dreadful attempt on her life. Ironic genius informs her joyous insight: “She was not crazy—except crazy with happiness—someone—some real person had actually tried to strangle her!”

Then there is the poignant moment when Molly, seeking reassurance that she is not insane, runs away from the infirmary and asks Hungerford to tell her what really happened during the interval when she thought she was being attacked—only to be told that he cannot remember, that he is suffering from amnesia. Yet the two compare notes and find comfort in shared feelings of paranoia.

Marks’s fears are projected onto harmless nature in a gothic episode in which he feels threatened by encroaching darkness in the woods and runs in panic from the menacing antagonism of Cramm:

In the woods darkness had already begun. Darkness collected like a mist around the boles of the trees, rose in a vapour from the dead leaves that carpeted the forest floor. . . . The strangeness was too much for him; he could not bear it; he found himself shaking and clutching the trunk of the tree. Then, without his intention, the words formed in his mind: I must get away from here . . .

He ran and ran, blindly stumbling in the ruts of the uneven road. He could see nothing, he only trusted the feel of the ground under him. The road through the wood stretched endlessly—it seemed the trees would never end.

Eustis demonstrates consummate control as her characters move gracefully from moments of panic-stricken fear to tender pathos and gentle humor. *The Horizontal Man* is an unusual detective story because it embodies the techniques and themes of mainstream literature as it follows the formula of the puzzle novel. It offers sophisticated insights into the human psyche and compassion for the human condition rare in a genre in which rigid conventions usually prevail.

THE FOOL KILLER

Written nearly ten years later, Eustis’s second novel, *The Fool Killer*, is entirely different. Based on a rural American folk legend, it has been described as “a mystery novel for both children and adults, somewhat consciously imitative of Mark Twain.” In the mid-1960’s, a film was made from the book starring Anthony Perkins, Edward Albert, and Salome Jens.

In *The Fool Killer* the main character is a young boy named George Mellish, a twelve-year-old orphan rather like Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer who runs away from harsh foster parents and meets Dirty Jim Jelliman. Dirty Jim is a disreputable old man who tells him of the Fool Killer, a great tall fellow—eight feet or over—who carries a sharp ax and kills people. When George meets Milo Bogardus and becomes his traveling companion, he begins to wonder whether he has teamed up with the Fool Killer. Eustis demonstrates considerable craftsmanship in evoking the naïve mentality of the lad and in projecting his growing anxieties. As in *The Horizontal Man*, in *The Fool Killer* she reveals great gifts in creating and sustaining psychological suspense.

B. J. Rahn

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Horizontal Man*, 1946; *The Fool Killer*, 1954

SHORT FICTION: *The Captains and the Kings, and Other Stories*, 1949

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Mr. Death and the Red-headed Woman*, 1983

TRANSLATIONS: *Cats Don't Care for Money*, 1965 (by Christiane Rochefort); *To Forget Palermo*, 1968 (by Edmonde Charles-Roux); *When I Was Old*, 1971 (by Georges Simenon)

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scholars of mystery and detective fiction, arguing for the novel's place in the annals of the genre.

Nover, Peter, ed. *The Great Good Place? A Collection of Essays on American and British College Mystery Novels*. New York: P. Lang, 1999. Compilation of essays focused on crime fiction set at college campuses or feature academic characters. A valuable source of contextualization for *The Horizontal Man*.

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Piekarski, Vicki. Introduction to *Westward the Women: An Anthology of Western Stories by Women*, edited by Vicki Piekarski. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988. Includes discussion of Eustis's contributions to genre fiction.

JANET EVANOVICH

Born: Saddle River, New Jersey; April 22, 1943

Also wrote as Steffie Hall

Type of plot: Comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Stephanie Plum, 1994-

Alexandra Barnaby, 2004-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

STEPHANIE PLUM is a bumbling, big-haired, brash bounty hunter who lives in the Chambersburg section of Trenton, New Jersey. She is surrounded by colorful characters in both her professional and personal lives. Her complicated love life contributes a romantic element to the series, while her unusual family and business associates provide comic background.

ALEXANDRA "BARNEY" BARNABY is cute, smart, and sassy. Known as Barney to her friends, this Baltimore native relocates to Florida to pursue a life with National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing

(NASCAR) driver Sam Hooker and his Saint Bernard. This series, like the Plum series, contains elements of romance and family dysfunction.

CONTRIBUTION

After Janet Evanovich had written for ten years without selling a single book, she took her collection of rejection letters and burned them in the street. Shortly afterward, a publisher called to buy one of her manuscripts. In 1987, she published her first book, *Hero at Large*, a romance novel. After publishing twelve romance novels in five years, Evanovich decided to pursue another genre and spent a couple of years doing research. She hired a new agent, began spending time with police officers, and learned how to shoot a gun. One night, while watching *Midnight Run* (1988), a film about a bounty hunter starring Robert DeNiro and Charles Grodin, inspiration struck.

One for the Money, Evanovich's first Stephanie Plum novel, was published in 1994. Evanovich saw an

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Janet Evanovich. (AP/Wide World Photos)

unfilled need for comedy in mystery and detective fiction. She compares her Stephanie Plum books to the television sitcom *Seinfeld* (1990-1998). Stephanie Plum, like Jerry Seinfeld, is surrounded by a cast of characters who vie for attention and sometimes almost steal the show. For example, Stephanie's Grandma Mazur enjoys visiting funeral homes on a regular basis to compare the corpses' cosmetic makeovers, and her African American coworker Lula is a former prostitute fond of short, tight dresses and blond wigs.

The titles of the novels in the Stephanie Plum series contain numbers in sequence: *One for the Money*, *Two for the Dough* (1996), *Three to Get Deadly* (1997), and upward. Each book has gained a wider audience for Evanovich. *High Five* (1999) was the first of her novels to reach number one on *The New York Times* best-seller list. Stephanie's love life, divided between

police officer Joe Morelli and Ranger, a mysterious Cuban bounty hunter, plays an important role in the series. Evanovich's background in romance writing serves her well as the love triangle plays out through the series.

BIOGRAPHY

Early in life, Janet Evanovich wanted to be a painter. She graduated from Douglass College (part of Rutgers) and married her high school boyfriend, Peter Evanovich. The couple had two children, Peter and Alexandra, and lived in New Jersey before moving to Virginia. Her husband, a Navy engineer, became a professor of mathematics, and she became a lingerie buyer. After the children had grown up, Evanovich decided to pursue a new career. Although she had never taken a course in writing, did not know any writers, and had never had a word published, she began writing during her free time. Despite her lack of initial success, her family remained supportive of her efforts.

After several unsold works and years of frustration, Evanovich tried writing a romance novel at the suggestion of a friend. Her romance novels were published under the pen name Steffie Hall. Many of these romance titles have since been re-released under her real name. Evanovich gave up writing romance novels as Steffie Hall because she grew tired of the constraints of the genre and its formats, although she joked that it was because she ran out of sexual positions. Creating Stephanie Plum gave Evanovich a character whose story mirrored important themes in her own life: humor, love, family, friends, and New Jersey. Evanovich did not abandon the romance genre totally, however. In 2002, she began coauthoring romance novels in the Full series with Charlotte Hughes. The first book, *Full House*, was an expanded version of a romance Evanovich originally published in 1989 under the name Steffie Hall.

The Chambersburg neighborhood of Trenton, New Jersey, is the setting for the Stephanie Plum series. Evanovich was born and raised in Saddle River, a vibrant community much like Stephanie Plum's Burg. Everyone in Evanovich's hometown knew everyone else's business, and children were safe to roam the streets because everyone in the neighborhood was

watching. As a child, like Stephanie Plum's niece Mary Alice, the author enjoyed pretending that she was a horse. She grew up listening to the stories of her aunt, her grandmother, and all of their friends, who scanned the local obituaries each day to plan which funeral homes they would visit, much like Stephanie's Grandma Mazur. Evanovich's fiction contains a good deal of autobiography.

For her second mystery series, Evanovich moved the action to Florida. Her heroine, Alexandra "Barney" Barnaby, in *Metro Girl* (2004) and *Motor Mouth* (2006) is loosely based on the author, her children, and her interests. The protagonist, Alexandra Barnaby, is named after Evanovich's daughter Alexandra and her daughter's Saint Bernard Barnaby. The series also features a Saint Bernard, and NASCAR (of which Evanovich is a fan) plays a central role in the series. Barney, as the character is known to her friends, has a degree in engineering, works in the pits as a spotter, and moonlights as a research and development expert for her love interest, the NASCAR driver Sam Hooker.

Evanovich, whose sense of humor extends to herself, has said her motivation for writing is always the same: a huge mortgage. Being a mother is important to Evanovich, and her family has been very involved in her professional life. The family has built a cottage industry around her books, with her son, Peter, managing her money, and her daughter, Alexandra, running her Web site.

ANALYSIS

The word madcap might best describe the novels of Janet Evanovich. Her heroines seem to be hanging on to life by a thin thread. Far from the typical self-sufficient loner depicted in hard-boiled mysteries and classic detective fiction, the Evanovich heroine is needy. Taking gross incompetence to an art form, Stephanie Plum bumbles from one botched arrest to another and depends on dumb luck and the men in her life to bail her out.

Evanovich writes to entertain the reader. Her character-driven novels combine generous amounts of romance and comedy. The author draws heavily from her own life and her own interests for the plots and settings of the novels. Like Stephanie Plum, Evanovich

once owned a hamster, was born in New Jersey, and enjoys driving fast. The author has compared Stephanie to a younger, more attractive version of herself.

Stephanie's sexual allure is key to the success of the series. The love triangle among Stephanie, Joe Morelli, and Ranger is like a continuing soap opera. The series is reminiscent of Nancy Drew, where the end of each chapter finds the heroine in peril, and the reader speeds through the story only to find once again that the heroine has been saved by her network of fumbling family members and macho protectors. Stephanie's family members—her fertile sister Valerie, the spry and cocky Grandma Mazur, her long-suffering father and doting mother, and her bail bondsman cousin Vinnie, for whom she works—all provide a constant background noise to further complicate her daily life.

HARD EIGHT

Hard Eight (2002) in the Stephanie Plum series is one of Evanovich's better titles. It is a little darker, a little more menacing, and slightly deranged. Eddie Abruzzi, local mob boss with a Napoleon complex, seeks a former bar owner associate who may have stolen property belonging to Eddie. Stephanie enters the scene through the back door, as she had been recruited to find the former bar owner's wife, Evelyn Soder, and her daughter Annie. She has taken on this case for free.

A mad killer in a rabbit costume chases Stephanie around Trenton, blowing up her brand new car. Her apartment is broken into, and she finds a dead man on her couch. Meanwhile, Ranger is showing more interest than ever in Stephanie, although she is spending most of her free time with Evelyn Soder's ineffectual lawyer, Albert Kloughn. The lawyer becomes a love interest for Stephanie's sister Valerie.

In between potentially fatal near misses, Stephanie attempts to capture two bail jumpers, one unusually thin and one unusually fat. These two polar opposites lead to comical complications for Stephanie during the attempted performance of her duties.

TO THE NINES

In the Plum series novel *To the Nines* (2003), the players of a game murder each other in the process of trying to win the prize, Stephanie. The bounty hunter travels to Las Vegas with Lula in tow. The always

lively Lula has become a devotee of the “meat only” diet plan. As a result, her purse is usually stuffed with pork chops and barbecued ribs, and this makes her popular with dogs. Stephanie and Lula are looking for Samuel Singh, who has jumped bail and disappeared, apparently with his girlfriend’s family dog. Singh’s employer, TriBro, is anxious to have him back, since they put up the bail money. The three brothers who own TriBro each have their own secrets.

Meanwhile, life at the Plum family home is hectic. Stephanie’s sister Valerie is pregnant with her third child and has moved in with her parents and grandmother and brought along her two children and the father of her latest child, attorney Albert Kloughn. Stephanie’s father is threatening to move out. Someone is stalking Stephanie and leaving her floral bouquets of red roses and white carnations. Afraid for her life, Stephanie moves in with her boyfriend Joe Morelli and Gramma Bella, who is having visions of someone’s death, maybe Stephanie’s.

Both of Stephanie’s love interests, Joe Morelli and Ranger, along with a few of Ranger’s subordinates, are trying hard to protect her despite the inevitable complications such as crooks falling from roofs, babies being born, and the usual car catastrophes common to Plum series novels.

TEN BIG ONES

Ten Big Ones begins with the robbery of a snack food truck. The perpetrator was on the no-carbohydrates diet and apparently lost all control. The beginning sets the tone for this entry in the Plum series. Stephanie’s sister Valerie is getting married to Albert Kloughn, and the wedding planner is a transvestite bus driver by the name of Sweet Sally. A convenience store is robbed, and Stephanie’s ability to identify the culprit leads to a contract on her life. Ranger offers the comfort and safety of his home. The inner sanctum of Ranger’s life is finally revealed: tastefully furnished rooms and closets full of black clothes. Stephanie’s usual hardships, wrecked cars, and lost handcuffs add a familiar tone. However, an explosive, fresh finish helps save this story from stale predictability.

Randy L. Abbott

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

STEPHANIE PLUM SERIES: *One for the Money*, 1994; *Two for the Dough*, 1996; *Three to Get Deadly*, 1997; *Four to Score*, 1998; *High Five*, 1999; *Hot Six*, 2000; *Three Plums in One*, 2001; *Seven Up*, 2001; *Hard Eight*, 2002; *Visions of Sugar Plums*, 2002; *To the Nines*, 2003; *Ten Big Ones*, 2004; *Eleven on Top*, 2005; *Twelve Sharp*, 2006; *Plum Lovin’*, 2007; *Lean Mean Thirteen*, 2007; *More Plums in One*, 2007

ALEXANDRA BARNABY SERIES: *Metro Girl*, 2004; *Motor Mouth*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Hero at Large*, 1987 (as Hall); *The Grand Finale*, 1988 (as Hall); *Thanksgiving*, 1988; *Manhunt*, 1988; *Full House*, 1989 (as Hall; expanded version as Evanovich with Charlotte Hughes. 2002); *Foul Play*, 1989 (as Hall); *Ivan Takes a Wife*, 1989 (also known as *Love Overboard*); *Back to the Bedroom*, 1989; *Smitten*, 1990; *Wife for Hire*, 1990 (as Hall); *Rocky Road to Romance*, 1991; *Naughty Neighbor*, 1992 (as Hall); *Full Tilt*, 2003 (with Hughes); *Full Speed*, 2003 (with Hughes); *Full Blast*, 2004 (with Hughes); *Full Bloom*, 2005 (with Hughes); *Full Scoop*, 2006 (with Hughes); *Hot Stuff*, 2007 (with Leanne Banks)

NONFICTION: *How I Write: Secrets of a Bestselling Author*, 2006 (with Ina Yalof)

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Evanovich, Janet. “Three to Get Deadly: An Interview with Janet Evanovich, Creator of the Stephanie Plum Novels.” Interview by Pamela James. *The Armchair Detective* 30, no. 1 (1997): 50-52. A discussion of Evanovich’s first three Plum novels, including her inspiration for the series and writing habits.

Janet Evanovich Online. <http://www.evanovich.com>.

This lively Web site designed and run by the author's daughter provides information on the novels, a short biography, book signing dates, and games.

Nussbaum, Debra. "Imagine Trenton. One Author Did." *The New York Times*, November 3, 2002, p. 14NJ4. Discusses the author's family, her home in New Hampshire, and her similarities with Stephanie Plum.

Papinchak, Robert Allen. "Janet Evanovich: It's All in the Family." *Writer* 115, no. 8 (August, 2002): 34-37. Discusses her struggles as a beginning writer and her influences, including Donald Duck's Uncle Scrooge and Junie B. Jones.

Plagens, Peter. "Standing in the Line of Fire: Best-Selling Author Janet Evanovich Faces Down a Critic." *Newsweek*, July 5, 2004, p. 56. Presents

Evanovich on the occasion of her tenth Stephanie Plum novel and discusses the simplicity of her writing style and the percentages of women versus men who read her novels.

Stern, Kate. "Evanovich, Janet." *Current Biography* 62, no. 4 (April, 2001): 23-26. A biography of Evanovich that deals with her childhood and what motivates her to write.

Wilson, Leah, ed. *Perfectly Plum: An Unauthorized Celebration of the Life, Loves, and Other Disasters of Stephanie Plum, Trenton Bounty Hunter*. Dallas: BenBella Books, 2007. Largely positive essays that analyze the Plum series from the perspective of chick lit and examine Plum's propensity for wrecking cars and ability to attract men.

F

LINDA FAIRSTEIN

Born: Mount Vernon, New York; May 5, 1947

Types of plot: Thriller; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Alex Cooper, 1996-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALEXANDRA “ALEX” COOPER, a tall, single, blond woman in her mid-thirties, is an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, in charge of the Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit. A dedicated, tireless champion for the victims of sexual assault and related violence, Alex often becomes entangled in cases in which her own personal safety is placed in jeopardy.

MIKE CHAPMAN is a tall, lean, dark-haired detective with the New York Police Department (NYPD) Homicide Squad. By turns jovial and hard-boiled, bachelor Mike—who was involved with a woman who died after falling into a crevasse—frequently works with Alex in pursuing cases in which victims of sexual violence have died; he and Alex have a friendly, platonic relationship, filled with good-natured banter.

MERCER WALLACE is a lieutenant with the NYPD Special Victims Squad, a transfer from the Homicide Squad. A very tall, bulky African American in his early forties, Mercer is married and the father of a young daughter. He teams with Alex and Mike, with whom he is in constant contact during the investigation of sexual assault and murder cases.

CONTRIBUTION

As an attorney, Linda Fairstein worked with rape and violent assault victims in New York City. From 1974 until 2002, she worked under District Attorney Frank Morgenthau, becoming chief of the Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit in 1976. During Fairstein’s tenure, she led prosecution teams in many high-profile cases, nota-

bly the so-called preppy murder of Jennifer Levin and the beating and rape of the woman known to the media as the Central Park jogger. In the course of her work, Fairstein radically altered the manner in which rape cases were investigated and tried, stressing forensics, pioneering the use of DNA evidence, seeking confessions from perpetrators, and thoroughly questioning victims. A member of many legal and nonprofit organizations advocating for the rights of victims (including the Mount Sinai Hospital Friends of the Rape Crisis Intervention Program, New York Women’s Agenda Domestic Violence Committee, Governor Cuomo’s Task Force on Rape, and President Clinton’s Violence Against Women Advisory Council), Fairstein has been in demand as a lecturer on a variety of topics related to violence, particularly violence against women.

For her efforts as an advocate, Fairstein has garnered considerable local and national recognition, and has served as the model for the character of a prosecutor on several television shows and films. Among dozens of honors she has collected are a Federal Bar Council Award for distinguished public service; a University of Virginia Distinguished Alumna Award; inclusion among the American Bar Association’s Outstanding Young Lawyers; *Glamour’s* and *New Woman’s* 1993 Woman of the Year Awards; National Women’s Political Caucus 1994 Achievement Award; Boy Scouts of America 1994 Distinguished Woman of the Year Award; Soroptomists 1996 International Woman of Achievement Award; and the National Conference of Christians and Jews 1996 Humanitarian Award. As one of the United States’ premier experts on sexual and domestic violence, Fairstein has served as a criminal justice consultant to the major television networks and to many cable news programs.

Fairstein’s first book, the nonfictional *Sexual Violence: Our War Against Rape*, appeared in 1993. With a

recap of her career as a prosecutor, a history of public perceptions and treatment of rape cases, and harrowing descriptions of actual crimes, *Sexual Violence* was tabbed as a *New York Times* notable book of the year. The book achieved widespread acclaim, both for its timeliness in dealing with a long-neglected subject and for its author's passion and dedication to her cause.

After the success of her book, Fairstein turned to fiction. Her Alex Cooper thrillers—starting with *Final Jeopardy* (1996)—are essentially extensions of the author's day job. Heroine Cooper resembles Fairstein physically, mentally, and emotionally. Though sometimes taken to task critically for her lack of a distinctive writing style (characterized by a tendency to over-explain police procedures, to lecture about certain topics, and to put wooden dialogue into the mouths of characters), Fairstein has nonetheless achieved acclaim among readers and critics alike for including well-researched information about New York landmarks and lesser known historical or geographic features. Fairstein's plots are typically convoluted, involving dozens of characters and many scene changes. Virtually all Fairstein's novels have achieved best-seller status. Her fourth entry in the Alex Cooper series, *The Deadhouse* (2001), was nominated for a Macavity Award as best novel.

BIOGRAPHY

Linda A. Fairstein was born of Jewish heritage into an upper-middle-class family on May 5, 1947, in Mount Vernon, New York. She was the daughter of physician Samuel Johnson Fairstein and registered nurse Alice Atwell Fairstein. An eager early reader, Fairstein began writing in childhood and was torn between careers in literature, ballet, and public service as a youth.

Fairstein attended Vassar College, graduating in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in English literature. She afterward entered the University of Virginia School of Law, acquiring her jurisprudence degree in 1972. She immediately joined the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and soon was named an assistant district attorney. Fairstein succeeded Leslie Crocker Snyder as head of the district attorney's Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit in 1976 and served in that capacity until leaving in 2002 to

concentrate on writing, lecturing, and serving as a consultant in her specialty. Fairstein in 1987 married Justin N. Feldman—former senior partner in a Manhattan law firm who helped run Robert F. Kennedy's 1964 United States Senate campaign—becoming stepmother to Feldman's three children.

Fairstein's tenure with the District Attorney's Office was frequently marked by controversy. This was because of her penchant for inserting herself into high-profile cases, for claiming credit for legal innovations she did not instigate, and for speaking publicly about them—though she without question did make many inroads into the way rape and domestic violence cases are prosecuted. All these elements were perceived as being indications of her having ambition for higher office, a perception that was exacerbated when she was interviewed in 1993 as a candidate to become U.S. attorney general under President Bill Clinton. Fairstein also feuded with her predecessor, Snyder, with office rivals, with feminists, and with victims' rights groups. She was widely criticized for writing about some of her major cases, thinly disguising them as fiction, while still employed by the District Attorney's Office. Additionally, several of her unit's most successful cases—notably that involving the woman known as the Central Park jogger—were eventually overturned, and their convictions vacated.

Despite such setbacks and occasional public scorn, Fairstein has moved forward. She published the well-received *Sexual Violence* and followed up with her first novel, *Final Jeopardy*, in which she introduced protagonist Alexandra Cooper. She has continued to add to the popular Cooper series—virtually all series novels have been on domestic or international best-seller lists, and the fourth was nominated for the Macavity Award—and has also contributed to a collaborative novel, *I'd Kill for That* (2004), with Rita Mae Brown, Anne Perry, Kathy Reichs, and seven other female writers. With publisher Otto Penzler, Fairstein edited the nonfictional *The Best American Crime Reporting 2007* (2007).

ANALYSIS

Linda Fairstein's alter ego is her protagonist Alexandra "Alex" Cooper, a younger, thinner, blonder, but

no less outspoken or dedicated version of the author. Like Fairstein, the workaholic Alex heads Manhattan's Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit and is a passionate advocate for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Alex typically works with a pair of professional law enforcement officers: hard-as-nails detective Mike Chapman of the NYPD Homicide Squad and Lieutenant Mercer Wallace of the NYPD Special Victims Squad. The prosecutor and the police officers spend considerable time together on and off the job and, over the course of the series, become staunch friends. The three major protagonists are likable, making it easy for readers to root for them as they ferret out the scummy, devious criminals who inhabit Fairstein's novels.

Alex Cooper debuted in *Final Jeopardy*; the title refers to Alex, Mike, and Mercer's habit when working cases to place bets on which of them will come up with the question for the last answer on the popular television quiz show *Jeopardy!* (1964-1975, 1978-1979, beginning in 1984). With this novel, Fairstein established a number of conventions that have been followed in later novels in the series. First, she tells each story in first-person, past tense, from Alex Cooper's viewpoint (not a surprising decision, since Alex reflects the impact and result of everyday occurrences from Fairstein's thirty-year career as a prosecutor). Second, each of her stories contains at least one major thread surrounding a sex crime or a crime with a possible sexual subtext (a requirement, given the restrictions of the protagonist's profession) and several lesser crimes, which crisscross in numerous and complicated plot twists before the final denouement. Third, each story offers Fairstein the opportunity to expound on New York's historical or geographic features, with occasional excursions to the author's (and protagonist's) vacation home on Martha's Vineyard. Fourth, every story will provide insights into police and legal procedures. Fifth, all stories will, at some point, put the heroine in peril—a departure from Fairstein's actual experiences during her time with the District Attorney's Office.

The first three of these conventions—the positive characterization of the main protagonist from her own viewpoint, the concentration on crimes of a sexual na-

ture (while continually reminding readers of the heavy caseload under which sex crimes prosecutors labor), and a focus on local or regional landmarks in the course of an investigation—are the strongest hallmarks of Fairstein's work. In the second novel in the series, *Likely to Die* (1997), for example, the subject under scrutiny is the daily workings of a hospital, following the murder of a Manhattan neurosurgeon. *Cold Hit* (1999) investigates the sleazy world of unscrupulous art dealers, while highlighting a Fairstein contribution to legal procedures instituted in real life in the same year: a “cold hit” unit in which prosecutors pursue suspects identified from more than sixteen thousand rape kits sitting in storage. One of the stronger entries in the series, *The Deadhouse* (2001), deals with a murder linked to a genuine New York landmark, Roosevelt Island, site of a nineteenth century smallpox sanitarium, insane asylum, and prison. *The Bone Vault* (2003) connects a crime with New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History. The title of *The Kills* (2004) serves double duty: It describes both a series of sex-related murders and the local name for the venue of the investigation, the numerous creeks and canals that honeycomb lower Manhattan.

Fairstein's main characters mature, though they do not age at a normal rate. Both Alex Cooper and Mike Chapman acquire and lose romantic interests, but such interludes do not deflect them from their purpose: the arrest and conviction of perpetrators of sex crimes. To give recurring characters dimension, Fairstein spends considerable time describing what they wear, what they eat, what they drink, and other habits, which become familiar to the reader.

Character, plot, and setting are Fairstein strengths, but literary style is her weakness. Her documentary-like narratives are often slowed by minutiae of police and legal procedure with which television-weaned readers may be expected to be already familiar. Fairstein sometimes stops a story cold to lecture, to over-describe a scene, and to give unnecessary detail, and the result is sometimes a plodding tale, too long by half. Favorite terminology—like “buccal swabs”—is repeated again and again. Infrequent literary devices, such as similes and metaphors, are labored and awk-

ward. Dialogue is a continual problem: For all Fairstein's experience and authoritative tone when dealing with legal issues and the day-to-day workings of a busy prosecutor's office, she does not have a keen ear for the way in which people converse, and exchanges on occasion sound stilted.

Despite perceived flaws in her literary skills, Fairstein has sufficient verve in those facets of writing that she performs well to have acquired a faithful audience of enviable size willing to suspend disbelief long enough to devour her latest Alex Cooper release. Fairstein's efforts may not produce great literature, but for millions of readers she turns out a satisfying genre product.

THE DEADHOUSE

One of the most interesting entries of the Alex Cooper series, *The Deadhouse* deals with the murder of King's College professor Lola Dakota who, it turns out, had been conducting an archaeological dig at notorious Roosevelt Island, site of a century-old sanatorium where smallpox victims were sent to die. Filled with fascinating details of a forgotten aspect of New York's past and geography and authoritative in tone when concerning day-to-day prosecutorial business, the plot drags a bit because of a subplot involving the heroine in a love affair, and the resolution is reached somewhat abruptly, leaving several plot threads hanging.

DEATH DANCE

Based on the 1980 real-life disappearance at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center of a young violinist who vanished between acts, was murdered during the performance of an opera, and whose body was found in an airshaft, *Death Dance* (2006) involves Alex Cooper, Mike Chapman, and Mercer Wallace in the investigation into the similar death of an aging ballerina. The story, reflecting Fairstein's long-time interest in ballet, mixes rumor, gossip, legend, and fact while exploring New York's colorful history in the performing arts. Although the background information, as always, is interesting, and the main characters are believable, the dialogue does not ring true, the pace is plodding, and the suspense—mostly confined to the latter quarter of the book—seems contrived.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ALEX COOPER SERIES: *Final Jeopardy*, 1996; *Likely to Die*, 1997; *Cold Hit*, 1999; *The Deadhouse*, 2001; *The Bone Vault*, 2003; *The Kills*, 2004; *Entombed*, 2005; *Death Dance*, 2006; *Bad Blood*, 2007; *Killer Heat*, 2008

NONSERIES NOVELS: *I'd Kill for That*, 2004 (with others)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Sexual Violence: Our War Against Rape*, 1993; *The Best American Crime Reporting 2007*, 2007 (with Otto Penzler)

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This highly favorable review focuses on the novel's historical and geographical information about Roosevelt Island.

Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Contains a brief entry on Fairstein that notes her position as one of the few women writing legal thrillers.

Fairstein, Linda. *Sexual Violence: Our War Against Rape*. New York: William Morrow, 1993. This nonfictional work covers Fairstein's experiences as prosecutor, historical perspectives on rape and sex crimes, and depictions of actual sex crimes. Sheds light on Fairstein's motivations for writing and her main protagonist.

_____. "The Trials of Convicting Rapists." Interview by Margaret Carlson. *Time* 138, no. 15 (October 14, 1991): 11-22. Fairstein describes her daily experiences as a sex crimes prosecutor, noting that "rapists come in every size, shape and background."

Kaminer, Wendy. "What Is This Thing Called Rape?" Review of *Sexual Violence*, by Linda Fairstein. *The New York Times Book Review* (September 19, 1993): 1, 42. The review praises the work for its simple language and insightful examination of the prosecution process, but faults it for its episodic structure and awkward-though-earnest style.

Lehman-Haupt, Christopher. "Divergent Views of Rape as Violence and Sex." Review of *Sexual Violence*, by Linda Fairstein. *The New York Times*, September 19, 1993, p. C15. The work—part memoir, part history, part legal analysis, and part crime report—notes that for centuries rape and other acts of sexual violence have been underreported, the survivors ignored by legal and medical communities, the nature of the crime misunderstood, and the victims stigmatized. The reviewer mildly faults the author for not including a summary of the psychology of sexual assailants.

Melton, Emily. Review of *Likely to Die*, by Linda Fairstein. *Booklist* 93, no. 17 (May 1, 1997): 1460. Though the likable heroine and the forensic details are praised, the reviewer disliked the wandering plotline and the pedantic lectures throughout.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *The Bone Vault*, by Linda Fairstein. 249, no. 42 (October 21, 2002): 53. A mostly positive review of the work, which is deemed authoritative and filled with facts, though termed heavy-handed in dumping information into dialogue, with a plot resolution that challenges credibility.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

Born: New Albany, Mississippi; September 25, 1897

Died: Byhalia, Mississippi; July 6, 1962

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

William Faulkner is one of many literary novelists to use violent death (often under mysterious circumstances) as a central plot element. One thinks of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-1853) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), Fyodor Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912), Mark Twain's *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), and many more. Faulkner differs from those other novelists, however, in that he produced a fairly large body of work, written primarily during the decade of the 1930's, which is identifiable as crime and mystery fiction. Faulkner read and admired the detective novel and wrote his first detective story, "Smoke," in 1930. His story "An Error in Chemistry" won second place in the *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* contest in 1946. At least four of his novels and a number of his short stories employ crime and mystery as the basic structural elements of the plot. Because of the depth of his characterizations and

the poetic quality of his prose, Faulkner's crime stories have a resonance that mystery fiction seldom achieves. If one can overcome the natural reluctance to hedge in Faulkner with an epithet, one might argue that he is the most literate and the most American of all the mystery and detective writers.

BIOGRAPHY

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi, the son of Murry C. Falkner and Maud Butler Falkner. The eldest of four brothers, William would eventually change the spelling of his family name to Faulkner, which he believed to be its original form. He moved with his family to Oxford, Mississippi, in 1902. There he grew up and was educated, until he left high school without receiving his diploma. He joined the Royal Air Force in Canada in 1918 and trained as a pilot but was never sent to Europe. From 1919 to 1920, Faulkner attended the University of Mississippi. From 1921 to 1924, he served without distinction as university postmaster; he may even have been discharged from the position (the evidence is inconclusive). During this period, Faulkner was primarily writing poetry, and in 1924 *The Marble Faun*, a book of verse, was privately published. Then he took up a six-month residence in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he became friendly with Sherwood Ander-

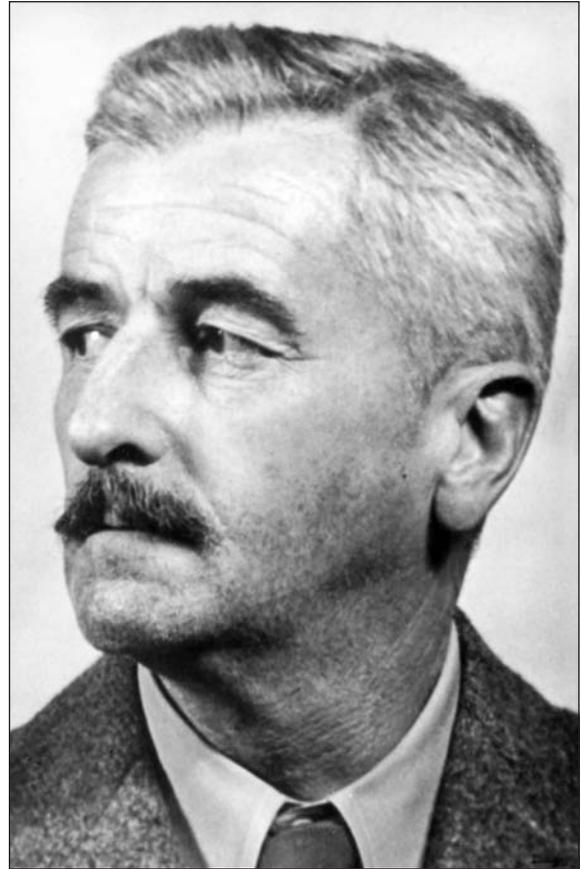
son and wrote sketches for the *Times-Picayune* and *The Double Dealer*. Anderson later helped him to publish his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926).

After spending some time in Paris and in northern Italy, Switzerland, and England, Faulkner returned to Oxford, where he would live for most of the rest of his life. From 1926 onward, he was a full-time writer. He married Estelle Oldham Franklin in 1929, and they had one daughter. Having published five novels that were qualified critical successes but financial failures, he wrote *Sanctuary* (1931) expressly to make money. The book gave him a popular reputation for the first time and, because it was adapted as a motion picture, introduced him to Hollywood. He intermittently worked as a Hollywood screenwriter during three separate periods: from 1932 to 1933 for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, from 1935 to 1937 for Twentieth Century Fox, and from 1942 to 1945 for Warner Bros.

Although Faulkner's books sold only modestly for many years, he accumulated a wealth of critical honors, including two O. Henry Awards, two National Book Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, and the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1939 and was named writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia in 1957. By the end of his life, he was acknowledged to be, along with Ernest Hemingway, the foremost American novelist of his generation. He died at Byhalia, Mississippi, on July 6, 1962.

ANALYSIS

William Faulkner's eminence is such that his work is not considered in generic terms. He is not considered a regional writer, but he was once so labeled. He is not regarded as a writer of mystery and detective fiction, but a number of his novels and short stories employ the conventions and devices of the genre. Faulkner belonged to the world when in 1950 he accepted the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature (which had been withheld for a year). One should remember, however, that only a few years earlier he had been regarded as a rather quaint writer with a provincial perspective. As late as 1942, a popular reference work had characterized Faulkner as "a minor Balzac of a subhuman world." The commentator who chose that phrase cer-



William Faulkner. (© The Nobel Foundation)

tainly regarded the southern gothic ambience of some of the books as the paramount quality in the author's work.

During much of the 1930's and again late in the 1940's, Faulkner repeatedly used crime, mystery, and suspense as key elements in developing his themes. For example, the theme of Faulkner's best-known (certainly his most anthologized) short story, "A Rose for Emily," is the seductive appeal of the South's dead past. He uses a horrific surprise ending as the final, palpable proof of the force of that past. The story begins at the funeral of Miss Emily Grierson, the last member of an old Jefferson, Mississippi, family. At her death, Miss Emily lived in the once-fine, now dilapidated, family home in a once-fashionable, now seedy, neighborhood. The narrator tells her story through a series of nonchronological flashbacks. Miss Emily's father (the past) protected her with a horsewhip from the attentions of the young men

(the present and the future) of Jefferson. When he died, she refused to release the body for three days, denying that he was dead. Jefferson was both scandalized and vindicated when Miss Emily, too good for any of the local men, took up with a brash Yankee named Homer Barron, who had come to town as foreman of a construction crew. After a courtship that had the locals expecting a wedding, Homer Barron suddenly moved on—apparently. As the years passed, Miss Emily became more and more of a recluse. Following her funeral, the narrator and other townsmen force their way into a locked room upstairs. There they find, on the bed, Homer Barron's desiccated corpse. On the pillow beside him is an indentation in the shape of a head and a long strand of iron-gray hair.

Miss Emily's necrophilia is only the most graphic evidence of her rejection of the present, her embrace of the past. "A Rose for Emily," however, can be read chiefly as a tale of madness and horror. There is also a strong element of the detective story: Miss Emily buys arsenic from the druggist (for "rats"); just before Barron's disappearance, he is seen entering the Grierson house at dusk by the kitchen door; and for a time a dreadful stench surrounds Miss Emily's house. Faulkner furnishes the perceptive reader with all the clues required to anticipate the shocking climax.

SANCTUARY

Sanctuary plays on the deep-seated fear of southern males that their women will be stolen from them and defiled. Temple Drake (whose first name suggests the idealized purity of southern womanhood) is a college girl who accompanies Gowan Stevens, a product of the University of Virginia, to a bootlegger's lair near Jefferson. Stevens, who represents the vanity and ineffectuality of the old southern aristocracy, gets drunk and beaten up, and abandons Temple to Popeye, a psychopathic little gangster from Memphis. Lee Goodwin, the white-trash bootlegger, and Tommy, his feeble-minded and good-hearted flunky, attempt to protect Temple from Popeye, who, despite his impotence, lusts after her. Temple hides, cowering, in a corncrib in the barn. At this point, the narrative becomes very lurid indeed.

Popeye shoots and kills Tommy, rapes Temple with a corn cob, and flees to Memphis with her as his pris-

oner. In Memphis, Popeye ensconces Temple in Miss Reba's brothel, showering her with clothes, jewelry, and cosmetics. He enlists Alabama Red, another local gangster, as his surrogate and sits panting and drooling at the foot of the bed while Red has intercourse with Temple. Meanwhile, Goodwin has been arrested for Tommy's murder. Ruby, his common-law wife and a former prostitute, portrayed throughout the novel with a limp, comatose baby in her arms, seeks help from the lawyer Horace Benbow. Horace is a good but deluded man who has been dominated for years by his cold wife and even colder sister, Narcissa.

Back in Memphis, Temple's corruption is complete; she develops a wild passion for Red. Popeye's response is to shoot Red between the eyes. Red's funeral at a Memphis roadhouse is a masterpiece of black comedy. Red's lugubrious former employer unwisely gives free liquor to the mourners. They begin to carouse, eventually to fight. When the casket is knocked over, Red loses his cap, and the piece of wax plugging the bullet hole in his forehead pops out. Temple is rescued by those employed by her influential father. To keep the Memphis episode quiet, she gives perjured testimony against Goodwin, who is wrongfully convicted. A mob, inflamed by the introduction into evidence of the offending corn cob, breaks Goodwin out of jail and burns him alive. Popeye, on his annual pilgrimage to his mother's home in Pensacola, Florida, is arrested for the murder of an Alabama police officer (ironically, one of the few he did not commit). Like Goodwin, he is wrongfully convicted and subsequently hanged. Temple goes to Paris with her father to forget the sordid past.

LIGHT IN AUGUST

Light in August (1932) bears some superficial resemblance to *Sanctuary*. The setting is Faulkner's pied-à-terre, Jefferson, seat of Yoknapatawpha County. The central character, Joe Christmas, is a bootlegger. As the final chapter of *Sanctuary* summarizes Popeye's life story in flashback, seven of the central chapters of *Light in August* recount Christmas's unhappy life. Christmas lives and conducts his illegal business on land owned by a reclusive single woman, Miss Burden. She is viewed with suspicion and hostility by the townspeople, owing to her New England abolitionist

ancestry. As in *Sanctuary*, there is an abandoned young woman: Lena Grove has come all the way from Alabama seeking the father of her unborn child. Christmas murders Miss Burden with his razor. He is eventually shot to death and castrated by Percy Grimm, a National Guard officer, who represents the same mentality as did the mob in *Sanctuary*. The Reverend Hightower, who lives alone and in disgrace, plays the role that Horace Benbow did in the earlier novel: the sensitive and intellectual observer who attempts to draw some meaning from the tragic events he witnesses.

Yet the differences between the two novels are more striking than the similarities. The problem of race is at the heart of *Light in August*, whereas it is barely touched on in *Sanctuary*. The orphaned Christmas believes that his father may have been of mixed racial stock. Although no one questions his status as a white man, Christmas occasionally blurts out that he is black. When among blacks, he asserts just as vehemently that he is white. He is not at ease in either culture and compulsively estranges himself from both. At the end of their illicit affair, Miss Burden tries to send Christmas to a black college, where he will be groomed as a leader in the advancement of his people. When he refuses, she attempts to kill him with a Civil War pistol, but he kills her instead.

The prose of *Sanctuary* is lush, often purple. The prose of *Light in August* is more restrained, but it is in other ways a less conventional novel. The narrative is more or less chronological, but Faulkner experiments with time in another way—by switching between the past and present tense throughout. The characters' names alone remind the reader that *Light in August* is a novel of ideas: Christmas, for the sacrificial victim of society's rigid stereotypes; Burden, for the guilt-ridden puritan; Grimm, for the avenging zealot; Hightower, for the fallen minister.

ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

Sanctuary is basically a lurid crime story, emphasizing incident but suggesting certain southern themes. *Light in August* is a thematic novel that uses crime and violent death to develop those themes. *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), however, considered by some critics to be Faulkner's finest novel, is among

other things a detective story. *Absalom, Absalom!* is the story of Thomas Sutpen, who came as a poor white to Jefferson in 1833 and by the time of the Civil War had built a great plantation and a reputation as a gentleman. His story—featuring miscegenation, incest, and two murders—is a mixture of fact, legend, and myth (like southern history itself). The structurally complex narrative employs three distinctly different points of view: that of Rosa Coldfield, Sutpen's sister-in-law (chapters 1 and 4); that of Mr. Compson, son of General Compson, Sutpen's only friend (chapters 2 through 4); and that of Quentin Compson, who narrates "That Evening Sun" and commits suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* (chapters 6 through 9). Quentin, like a brilliant detective of popular fiction, pieces together the varied and conflicting accounts so as to reconstruct the "truth" about Sutpen's life. He is assisted by his Harvard roommate, Shreve, a matter-of-fact Dr. Watson type. In this case, however, the detective is a victim as well. Quentin regards Sutpen's tragedy as representative. It is the South's tragedy and also his personal tragedy. Quentin will soon take his own life.

During Faulkner's last extended tenure in Hollywood, he worked on screenplays adapted from Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), a mystery featuring the hard-boiled private eye Philip Marlowe, and Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* (1937), a tale of rumrunners and bank robbers in Cuba and the Florida Keys. While working on *The Big Sleep* in 1945, Faulkner began writing a murder mystery of his own. It was published in 1948 as *Intruder in the Dust*.

INTRUDER IN THE DUST

In *Intruder in the Dust*, Lucas Beauchamp, a black man, has been charged with murder and jailed. He is in danger of being lynched. Charles Mallison, Jr., the young narrator, and his bombastic uncle, Gavin Stevens, set out to prove Beauchamp's innocence. Following instructions given them by the jailed Beauchamp, they solve the crime and free him. The melodramatic novel is also polemical; it was thought at the time of publication to contain the most direct (and controversial) observations Faulkner had ever made on race relations in the South.

KNIGHT'S GAMBIT

Knight's Gambit (1949) consists of a novella, the

title of which gives the book its name, and five previously published detective stories, including "Smoke" and "An Error in Chemistry," which had missed first place in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* contest by only one vote. Gavin Stevens is the protagonist, the detective, in each story and, as in *Intruder in the Dust*, Charles Mallison, Jr., is the narrator.

FAULKNER'S RANGE

Faulkner is a writer of tremendous range. His work runs the gamut from the epic and elegiac to the farcical and burlesque. For example, Miss Reba's brothel in *Sanctuary* is Temple Drake's sordid prison, where Popeye corrupts and debases her, while Miss Reba, totally devoid of a moral perspective, muses over Temple's luck in having Popeye spend so much money on her. The hugely fat and asthmatic madam, constantly swilling beer and gin, veers between episodes of excessive mourning for her deceased pimp and violent outbursts, directed especially against the two lapdogs who constantly leap and snap around her feet. In *The Reivers: A Reminiscence* (1962), a comic novel and a paean to Faulkner's southern boyhood, the adolescent protagonist visits Miss Reba's brothel in 1905. Even allowing for the fact that Miss Reba is twenty-five years younger in *The Reivers*, the alteration is remarkable. All the grotesque menace attaching to the madam and her house in *Sanctuary* is gone. The Miss Reba of *The Reivers* is more like one of John Steinbeck's whores with a heart of gold. She has become a piece of nostalgia. When tones of horror, suspense, or mystery suit Faulkner's purposes, however, his rank among twentieth century mystery and detective writers must be considered.

Patrick Adcock

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Sanctuary*, 1931; *Light in August*, 1932; *Absalom, Absalom!*, 1936; *Intruder in the Dust*, 1948

SHORT FICTION: *Knight's Gambit*, 1949

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Soldiers' Pay*, 1926; *Mosquitoes*, 1927; *Sartoris*, 1929; *The Sound and the Fury*, 1929; *As I Lay Dying*, 1930; *Pylon*, 1935; *The Unvanquished*, 1938; *The Wild Palms*, 1939; *The Hamlet*, 1940; *Go Down, Moses*, 1942; *The Bear*, 1942 (novella); *Re-*

quiem for a Nun, 1951; *A Fable*, 1954; *The Town*, 1957; *The Mansion*, 1959; *The Reivers*, 1962; *The Wishing Tree*, 1964 (fairy tale); *Flags in the Dust*, 1973 (original version of *Sartoris*); *Mayday*, 1976 (fable)

SHORT FICTION: *These Thirteen*, 1931; *Doctor Martino, and Other Stories*, 1934; *The Portable Faulkner*, 1946, 1967; *Collected Short Stories of William Faulkner*, 1950; *Big Woods*, 1955; *Three Famous Short Novels*, 1958; *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*, 1979

SCREENPLAYS: *Today We Live*, 1933; *To Have and Have Not*, 1945; *The Big Sleep*, 1946; *Faulkner's MGM Screenplays*, 1982

POETRY: *The Marble Faun*, 1924; *A Green Bough*, 1933

NONFICTION: *New Orleans Sketches*, 1958; *Faulkner in the University*, 1959; *Faulkner at West Point*, 1964; *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*, 1965; *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962*, 1966 (Malcolm Cowley, editor); *Lion in the Garden*, 1968; *Selected Letters*, 1977

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Singal, Daniel J. *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. A study of the thought and art of Faulkner, charting the development of his ideas from their source in his reading to their embodiment in his writing. Depicts two Faulkners: the country gentleman and the intellectual man of letters.

Williamson, Joel. *William Faulkner and Southern History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. A distinguished historian divides his book into sections on Faulkner's ancestry, his biography, and his writing. Includes notes and genealogy.

KENNETH FEARING

Born: Oak Park, Illinois; July 28, 1902

Died: New York, New York; June 26, 1961

Also wrote as Donald F. Bedford

Types of plot: Inverted; hard-boiled; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Kenneth Fearing's best novels are constructed around a core of mystery that seems to become more complex the more carefully it is examined. Set in the mean streets of Manhattan and within the claustrophobic confines of self-enclosed, self-protective organizations, their mood reflects the despair of the Depression and projects the postwar paranoia of the Cold War. Their language is the sometimes brittle, often laconic,

rough-edged vernacular of a poet familiar with the underside of existence.

Fearing's characters are isolated people, standing wary and apart from a mechanized world they despise and then driven further into a kind of exile by the loss of the only person on whom they counted for romance. Accurately reflecting the loss of certainty of the modern era, Fearing's protagonists are both victims and avengers, their guilt or innocence never completely established, the ambiguity of their moral position forcing them to make decisions based on the precept that their only means of creating value is through action. In the process of solving the mystery they face, Fearing casts them as versions of the non-aligned detective as existential explorer, aware of the

ultimate absurdity of existence, struggling to survive in a nightmare world.

BIOGRAPHY

Kenneth Flexner Fearing was born on July 28, 1902, in Oak Park, Illinois, the same relatively genteel suburb where Ernest Hemingway spent his childhood. He attended public school there while his father worked as an attorney in Chicago. Fearing attended the University of Wisconsin, where he was graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1924. After working briefly in Chicago as an apprentice journalist, he moved to New York City, where he settled in the artists' enclave of Greenwich Village in lower Manhattan. He held several jobs as a salesperson and clerk during the next few years before beginning a career as a publicity writer, a freelance journalist, and an editorial writer for several newspapers in 1927. At the same time, Fearing was contributing stories to pulp magazines and writing poetry regularly. He has been described by Kenneth Rexroth as one of the first "poets of the contemporary American city," and his first book of poems, *Angel Arms*, was published in 1929. Fearing completed two other books of poetry during the 1930's and was awarded a fellowship in creative writing by the Guggenheim Foundation.

In 1939, drawing on the experiences of his first wife, who was a nurse, Fearing wrote *The Hospital*, a novel whose multinarrative scheme became his trademark as a writer of fiction. The relative success of this novel enabled Fearing to turn his attention to fiction, and he produced novels steadily through the 1940's, achieving his greatest success with the publication of *The Big Clock* in 1946. The story was made into a film in 1948.

Fearing continued to write poetry and fiction throughout the 1950's, but aside from *Loneliest Girl in the World* (1951)—a book that presented trenchant observations about society while describing a giant "talking" computer, the crucial element in the mystery—he was not particularly successful either critically or commercially. He died of cancer on June 26, 1961, a year after the publication of his last novel, an exposé of big business called *The Crozart Story*.

ANALYSIS

Kenneth Fearing was so determinedly an artist of an avant-garde sensibility that even his most conventional work is marked by some unusual stylistic and structural devices. His concern for the innovative worked against his instinctive gift for constructing an elaborate but ultimately rigorously clear and logical mystery story, and his desire to provide a sympathetic perspective for all of his major characters tended to limit the depth of the central character in each of his novels. At the same time, Fearing's inclination to see events from a consciously unconventional stance contributed to his ability to capture the distinctive psychological ethos surrounding his characters, and this permitted him to portray his protagonists as versions of the modernist rebel/hero wavering on a fault line between legal and criminal behavior.

Fearing's life as an artist anticipated the drift into bohemian patterns of living pursued on a widespread if temporary basis in the 1960's, but although most would-be dropouts in the 1960's went fairly quickly from an extreme radicalism back to a standard job and its concomitant demands, Fearing managed to combine relatively conventional employment with a sustained commitment to his avant-garde artistic credo. While supporting himself as a copywriter, publicist, and editorial writer for several New York newspapers, he wrote poetry steadily, beginning with a Carl Sandburg-influenced voice of the proletariat but gradually shifting toward the style of E. E. Cummings, a neighbor in Greenwich Village. Fearing was published in Ezra Pound's magazine *Exiles* in the mid-1920's and found his true voice and subject in the reproduction of the moods and rhythms of life in his vision of the city as a great urban wasteland. Described by Rexroth as "rhetorical, denunciatory, agitational in intent," his poems were designed to express the feelings of a normally mute and ignored underclass and are "immersed in the lingo of the mass culture." The world of many of Fearing's poems is the world of the desperate, nighttime streets of Manhattan, a setting of lurking violence, driven inhabitants, and a crazed kind of energy flow that made life exciting if uncertain.

By the time Fearing began to write crime fiction in the 1940's, his empathy for the underdog, his com-

mand of the language of the street-corner cynic, and his belief that artistic expression was an important means of establishing value in a chaotic world had all been fairly well developed in his poetry. Latent in his work was a real contempt for middle-American society and organizations, a deep suspicion about the efficacy of the system of criminal justice operating in New York, and a fascination with the psychology of a man under severe stress.

THE HOSPITAL

To explore these motifs further, Fearing realized that he would have to work in an area that gave him the opportunity to develop some of the ideas that he had been asserting in his poetry; because he had already been writing short stories for popular magazines, the extension to a novel was not that great a departure from his previous efforts. Even so, Fearing may have felt more confident handling short narratives, for in his first novel, *The Hospital*, he created a discontinuous narrative style that became a kind of signature. Each chapter in *The Hospital* is presented in a first-person voice by a different character. In addition, influenced by the literary experiments of other contemporary poets, Fearing distorted conventional chronology by setting the entire novel at approximately three o'clock in the afternoon.

The repetition of action from different points of view is inherently cinematic and may have accounted for the two successful adaptations of his best novel, *The Big Clock*. It is also an excellent method for building suspense, as tension accumulates with each successive variation of the core action. The hour around which the action pivots is also the moment when crises in the lives of all the principal characters reach a point of climax. Although some sympathy for each character is dissipated by the continual shift in narrative focus, the Zolaesque sense of gritty, realistic detail and the language that one critic likened to a "staccato prose poem" made the novel generally successful. In spite of some adverse critical commentary (to which Fearing responded by portraying several critics and literary careerists as dilettantes in his 1941 novel *Dagger of the Mind*), Fearing continued to use a multiple narrative scheme in all of his work.

Paradoxically, although the presentation of narra-

tive action from each character's point of view is supposed to evoke some understanding for everyone's motives, its effect in Fearing's work is actually to undercut sympathy for all the characters; the reader is kept at a distance from the field of action because none of the characters matters that much. The "objectivity" offered as a virtue is actually the bogus impartiality of an observer who conceals his position so totally that commitment is absent in a moral crisis that demands an individual response. According to Rexroth, Fearing was convinced that "Western civilization was already dead on its feet, a walking corpse bled of all value," and the appearance of authorial diffidence undercut the response he intended. That is particularly true in those novels in which Fearing excludes himself so completely from the action that he has no close correspondence with any character.

Reluctant to give up a narrative strategy in which he evidently believed (*Clark Gifford's Body*, published in 1942, has thirty separate narrators), Fearing, in his best work, made his protagonist the primary narrator, the voice that begins and concludes the narrative, and put his or her fate at the center of the narrative. In this way, his scorn for society, an attitude he shared with such hard-boiled writers of mystery and detective fiction as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett and such contemporary novelists as Ernest Hemingway and Henry Miller, formed the narrative sensibility from which the action unfolded. This embedded an edgy vibrancy in the "voice" and enabled Fearing to use his talent for constructing an ingenious, compelling mystery without the distraction of the other narrative threads he had to weave around the plot in his weaker work. Instead, the core of the mystery was contained within the life of the principal narrator.

DAGGER OF THE MIND

Fearing's three strongest novels—*Loneliest Girl in the World*, *Dagger of the Mind*, and *The Big Clock*—operate on this principle. In each case, the narrator is an outsider. What sets him (or her, in *Loneliest Girl in the World*) apart is a sense that the values of mainstream society are worthless and that an individual's personal resources are the only things on which one can rely. In a sense, this person shares, with the Hemingway "Code Hero," a set of personal principles, de-

veloped through some testing situation, which form the basis for behavior under conditions of intense pressure. Once they have been drawn into the mystery that becomes the absolute center of their lives, the characters exhibit behavior similar to that of a detective operating as the existential outsider.

For Fearing, however, the main narrator is never actually a detective. Instead, he is a person pulled into the world of criminal activity by two factors. One is an apparently random combination of circumstances that seem to have been initiated for no discernible reason but that close like a snare on the narrator. The other stems from a curious fascination for life beyond laws that seem inadequate or ludicrous. Once the narrator becomes involved, both his interest in the mystery as a challenge and his need to face a threat to his survival engage his deductive abilities. Yet rational thinking, no matter how impressively organized, is never sufficient, as forces beyond the narrator's control and sometimes beyond his understanding seem to be at work to thwart his most ingenious designs.

Of Fearing's two best books, the narrator of *The Big Clock* survives—for the moment. The narrator of *Dagger of the Mind* does not. In each case, his "guilt" is debatable, but there is no way he could be considered completely innocent. In each case, mitigating circumstances, the complicating factors always present in a world where loose ends remain loose and no mess is ever really cleaned up, undermine any attempt at a clear definition of right or wrong. For Fearing, who was writing in the same Zeitgeist that led Albert Camus to his thoughts on the absurdity of existence, no one is free of guilt, because the act of living in an absurd universe precludes the possibility of establishing standards of behavior that could justify universal judgments of human action.

Thus, the character George Stroud tries to get a few steps ahead of "the Big Clock," which Fearing uses as a symbol of an indifferent, inexplicable cosmos that eventually grinds everything within its wheels. Although he frequently disregards the letter of the law, Stroud draws the line at murder and survives. Christopher Bartel, the artist who narrates *Dagger of the Mind*, does not consciously plan to kill but commits three murders. He is convicted and executed. In Fearing's

world, the fate of the two men could easily have been reversed. In fact, Stroud's relief at his escape is tempered by his feeling that "the big, silent, invisible clock . . . would get around to me again. Inevitably. Soon." Bartel, as he faces death, shares with Camus's Meursault an exceptional keenness of mind and a sense of revelation about to occur.

The ultimate destinies of the two men, then, are not presented as a judgment on their lives. Actual survival is dependent on too many things beyond human control. What matters is the manner in which each man reacts to the unfolding events in the process of his struggle to locate the key to the mystery. The choices they make, especially those regarding the temptation to resort to violence, to bludgeon their way through perplexing problems, become the measure of the morality of their character. Both men are the most accomplished of all the principal characters in the arts of detection, and in that sense they have the greatest opportunity to choose alternative courses of action. If their choices fully involve their intelligence, diligence, perception, insight, and ability to hold contradictory forces in suspension while organizing people, ideas, and events into an investigation, then they have the potential to be "heroic" (inasmuch as that word applies at all in Fearing's world).

The fact that these characters are pulled into the investigation when a person they love is murdered adds to the gravity and importance of the situation and also makes the solving of the mystery a method for restoring some sense of solidity to their lives. Although both men have families, their participation in the process of detection is clearly the most vivid and satisfying aspect of their lives. Like Camus's absurd hero, they can create value in a universe of random events by applying logic, by trusting their minds, even when their instincts tell them that hunch and chance are as likely to lead to a conclusion as their plans.

Although *Dagger of the Mind* works well as a psychological thriller, or, as one reviewer put it, as a "study in abnormal psychology," the fact that Christopher Bartel, the primary narrator, is himself the murderer and the fact that the mystery depends on the withholding of this information from the reader destroys the tension of the narrative at the point when it should be most gripping.

THE BIG CLOCK

In Fearing's finest work, *The Big Clock*, there are no such seams through which narrative tension might escape. The development of a situation of almost unbearable suspense is plotted so well that it has served as the basis for two good films, the 1948 version of the same title directed by John Farrow and the riveting *No Way Out* (1987), which reaches too far for an unnecessary double-reverse conclusion but captures the essential drama of George Stroud's frantic efforts to avoid exposure. Stroud is the editor of a specialty magazine, *Crimeways*, in a Henry Luce-like publishing empire. The magazine covers the criminal world, reporting, investigating, sometimes inducing, and occasionally inventing crimes. When he falls in love with his employer's mistress, Pauline Delos, in an encounter so powerful that the normally wary, slightly cynical Stroud is overwhelmed, his reserves are removed to reveal that he, like Philip Marlowe, has a hidden romantic nature. When Earl Janoth, the chief executive of the organization that publishes *Crimeways*, accidentally kills Pauline Delos, Stroud has just left her and is the only witness to Janoth's presence at the scene of the crime. Janoth sees someone but does not recognize that it is Stroud. Because he knows that he has been spotted, Janoth decides to utilize the full investigative power of the organization to find the witness and silence him. As Mary M. Lay puts it, "The reader knows that George cannot escape his own pursuit; the suspense comes from wondering how long he can avoid the investigators he has assigned to help in the search."

What makes the book so compelling is that Stroud's attempts to shield himself, implicate Janoth, and maintain a front of nonconcern while intimately being involved in every detail of the investigation and while personally enraged by the murder are rendered in remarkably vivid terms. A complex manhunt is kept comprehensible so that the reader is caught up in the case, and Stroud, although never becoming a figure of cheap sentiment, is nevertheless presented as relatively likable and decent—much like actor Kevin Costner's conception of the character in the film *No Way Out*.

As the investigation narrows its focus toward Stroud himself, every element of his character is tested. His

acuteness, his organizational strategy, and his sense of justice are all engaged so that he is both frightened and fully alive. As his options are removed, Stroud becomes more responsive to some of the things (his nice family, challenging job, life in the great city) that had grown stale for him and begins to cherish them when faced with their destruction. The irony of his increasing desperation is underscored by the fact that he is trying to preserve a life that he would have discarded for his lover. The irony of his dilemma—that he must appear to be avidly pursuing the investigation while actually trying to subvert it—is reinforced by the fact that chance and luck keep altering everyone's plans.

Unlike the world of Ross Macdonald, the world of Fearing discloses no "connections" that ultimately make sense of his characters' lives. Stopping just short of nihilism, Fearing offers the temporary pleasures afforded by quirks of character, fine art, the elusive possibility of love, and the excitement of a formidable mental challenge. It is the film noir world of the 1940's, in which the voice of the narrator delivers opinions, observations, and wry humor through a haze of cigarette smoke that drifts across a table covered with half-empty whiskey glasses. It is past midnight and it is raining. It has been for quite some time.

Leon Lewis

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Dagger of the Mind*, 1941 (also known as *Cry Killer!*); *The Big Clock*, 1946; *Loneliest Girl in the World*, 1951 (also known as *The Sound of Murder*); *The Generous Heart*, 1954; *The Crozart Story*, 1960

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Hospital*, 1939; *Clark Gifford's Body*, 1942; *John Barry*, 1947 (as Donald F. Bedford, with Donald Friede and Henry Bedford-Jones)

POETRY: *Angel Arms*, 1929; *Poems*, 1935; *Dead Reckoning: A Book of Poetry*, 1938; *Collected Poems*, 1940; *Afternoon of a Pawnbroker, and Other Poems*, 1943; *Stranger at Coney Island, and Other Poems*, 1948; *New and Selected Poems*, 1956; *Complete Poems*, 1993

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Burns, Jim. *Beats, Bohemians, and Intellectuals*. Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England: Trent Editions, 2000. Fearing is one of the figures to whom a chapter is devoted in this study of American popular culture of the 1950's. Bibliographic references and index.

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essay that contends that Fearing is an ideal spokesperson for his age. Deutsch considers his poetry in technical terms, concentrating on tone and rhythm in particular, but his analysis can be used to understand the place of his detective fiction in American culture as well.

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Kalaidjian, Walter. *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Discusses Fearing's avant-garde approach to text. Primarily a poetic study, but important to an understanding of all Fearing's writings. Bibliographic references and index.

E. X. FERRARS**Morna Doris Brown****Born:** Rangoon, Burma; September 6, 1907**Died:** Place unknown; March 30, 1995**Also wrote as** Elizabeth Ferrars**Types of plot:** Amateur sleuth; police procedural; cozy**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Toby Dyke, 1940-1942

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

TOBY DYKE, an upper-class university graduate of about twenty-five, employed as a journalist. His air of indolence and amused detachment conceals a shrewd intelligence.

CONTRIBUTION

E. X. Ferrars cannot be considered one of the major innovators of detective fiction. Nevertheless, she had a solid core of admirers, who included the late Anthony Boucher, mystery reviewer for *The New York Times*. Her work was in the classic British tradition: The prin-

cipal characters belong to the upper or the middle class, great emphasis is placed on intricate plotting, and the story aims principally at unraveling a puzzle. In contrast to many other classic authors, Ferrars was an excellent analyst of character, and her stories often turn on psychological points. She avoided depicting violence in any detail; her style is clear and efficient, with an occasional resort to literary quotation.

BIOGRAPHY

E. X. Ferrars was born Morna Doris MacTaggart on September 6, 1907. Although born in Rangoon, Burma (at that time a British protectorate), she lived most of her life in Scotland and was in character and style firmly British. She attended Bedales School in Hampshire from 1918 to 1924 and University College, London, from 1925 to 1928. She received a diploma in journalism from the latter institution in 1928.

In 1940, MacTaggart (Ferrars) married Robert Brown, a Scottish academic. In the year of her marriage, she began her long career as a writer of detective

fiction, adopting her mother's maiden name, Ferrars, as her pseudonym.

Besides her prolific output of novels and stories, Ferrars played an active role in organizations of crime writers. She was a founding member of the Crime Writers' Association in 1953. She was also a member of the Detection Club and the Mystery Writers of America. Throughout her career, Ferrars continued to produce a similar type of story. Her writing career lasted for more than forty-five years.

ANALYSIS

E. X. Ferrars's career may be conveniently divided into an early and late phase. At first, her novels were high-spirited and often humorous, with one episode following another in quick succession. Later, her novels became more down-to-earth, and the psychological complexity of her characters assumed a greater importance. The differences between the two stages should not, however, be exaggerated. All of her mysteries have been of a traditional type, in which the principal goal of the work is to disguise from the reader the identity of the criminal.

DON'T MONKEY WITH MURDER

An examination of one of Ferrars's first novels, *Don't Monkey with Murder* (1942), will illustrate both her early pattern and some constants throughout her career. (The work appeared in the United States under the title *The Shape of a Stain*.) Its main character, Toby Dyke, has the odd habit of turning up when friends of his have just been murdered. He seems at first to be a member of the idle rich, whose alleged employment as a journalist hardly disguises his indolence. Dyke finds it relatively easy, however, to pinpoint the murderer of the man he had visited and discovered dead, the owner of a castle in Scotland. Like most of Ferrars's early novels, this work features a brisk pace, frequent humorous episodes, and a large cast of characters. Dyke enters into a platonic romance with a young woman who, as the reader quickly realizes, can have nothing to do with the crime, in spite of appearances to the contrary. Ferrars's story is in fact so "packed with matter" that following its twists becomes difficult.

Because of the crowded nature of the book and its emphasis on humor, characterization here takes a back

seat. The reader does get a vivid impression of Dyke, but his constant quips place him within British tradition (particularly during the 1930's and 1940's) of witty male protagonists and thus impede his being seen as an individual. The profusion of his witticisms makes Dyke reminiscent of Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and even the Jeeves of P. G. Wodehouse.

On the strength of her early work, Ferrars might have become a practitioner of the humorous detective story, along the lines of her modern Henry Cecil. Such was not to be the case, however, for her career evolved in a much more conventional fashion.

THE WANDERING WIDOWS

A characteristic novel of her later period is *The Wandering Widows* (1962), whose main character is once again a young man, Robin Nicholl. Nicholl is, however, a much more serious, and incidentally more middle-class, figure than Dyke. Robin has a few weeks available before starting a new job, and he decides to spend his time by vacationing on the island of Mull, one of the Hebrides. His reason for choosing this island is his preference for solitude: It is a romantic, isolated place, whose atmosphere is conducive to long, pensive walks. Ferrars, who clearly knows the Hebrides well, skillfully uses the geography and ambience of Mull to suggest the main features of Robin's personality.

Robin's desire for a few weeks of peace in which, like Heraclitus, he could "seek for himself," is thwarted by his encounter with the Wandering Widows. These are four melancholic women who roam the island, wearing expensive jewels. They soon prove to have personalities as strange as their attire, and, as one might anticipate, murder is in the offing.

From this description, a similarity between Ferrars's earlier work and her subsequent endeavors leaps to one's attention. Here, as before, a bizarre element is present. Oddness is not, however, emphasized for its own sake. Rather, Ferrars devotes considerable care to her depiction of the personalities and difficulties of the widows. The reader has a vivid sense of each as a genuine person rather than a stereotyped comic character.

HANGED MAN'S HOUSE

Ferrars showed her ability to vary from her usual

pattern of domestic intrigue leading to murder in *Hanged Man's House* (1974). This novel represents her closest approach to an espionage story. In this novel, Dr. Charles Gair, a scientist working at the Martindale research establishment, is found hanged. It soon transpires that he was not killed by hanging but had died before. Subsequently, a second body is discovered in Gair's house—this one perfectly mummified. This victim turns out to be a foreign visitor who had been missing for a year. What does his death have to do with Gair's? Why is the latter's passport missing? These are among the questions confronting the book's protagonist, Inspector Patrick Dunn.

From the material so far presented, a reader might expect that an espionage tale would follow, but appearances can mislead, and they often do in Ferrars's work. She never deviated too much from her usual sort of story. Here, as before, there is a handsome, shrewd, kind young man who solves the crime. Further, the plot has nothing at all to do with espionage, whatever expectations the story's setting may have aroused. A romantic entanglement, involving among others the wife of the research center's administrative officer and Gair's estranged wife, lies at the center of the plot.

ALIVE AND DEAD

Similarly, in another novel published in the same year as *Hanged Man's House*, *Alive and Dead*, Ferrars only superficially departs from her usual *donnée*. *Alive and Dead* is set in a home for unwed mothers. Ferrars does not use this setting, however, as an opportunity to comment on the controversial social issues of poverty and abortion. Quite the contrary, a traditional story once more ensues. A young woman working at the home finds oddities in the patterns of referral the home employs. She does not allow her dismissal from the home to impede her attempt to get to the bottom of the strange referrals—but murder soon muddies the waters.

If, once more, Ferrars has not much altered her course, it does not follow that she was uninterested in women's issues. Her female characters often tend to be well-educated career women, whose pursuit of a career does not take second place to romance and marriage. Her emphasis on strong, independent female characters allies her more with later writers such as P. D. James than with her slightly older contemporaries

Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh. Still, Ferrars cannot be viewed as a particularly ardent advocate of women's rights. The question of women's position is treated in her novels more as a matter of nuance than as a major theme. She cannot in this regard be compared to Gladys Mitchell, for whom the place of women was all-important.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

In the works so far discussed, Ferrars stressed plot much more than character, however much her approach to the latter increased in seriousness and depth over the years. A change took place in some of Ferrars's later works, beginning with *Last Will and Testament* (1978). Here a new character is introduced, Virginia Freer, who reappears in *Frog in the Throat* (1980). She is a woman in her mid-thirties who has had to divorce an irresponsible husband, who has some connection, never fully specified, with the criminal underworld. Ferrars analyzes at considerable length Virginia's attitudes toward her former husband, demonstrating a remarkable skill in the depiction of precise shadings of emotion. Sometimes, Virginia admires him; at others, she resents him; more frequently, she does both at once. Yet, although her attitude toward him is never unreservedly hostile and her problems as a divorcée are candidly mentioned, she never seriously entertains the thought of reuniting with him. She is no romantic cutout, but a realistically conceived person whose personality elicits a shock of recognition from the reader.

Unlike P. D. James and Ruth Rendell, however, Ferrars resisted firmly any tendency to move from detective fiction to a standard novel. If Virginia is a personality one might easily come across in a novel, her fellow characters are not. Her former husband, for example, has many of the traits of Ferrars's familiar heroes, including good humor and remarkable powers of intuition and detection. Although he finds it at least as difficult to speak truthfully as most people do to tell a significant lie, he is nevertheless a likable character. Further, the story itself is fairly conventional. Virginia's husband has been promised a legacy, but interfering and malicious relatives of the old woman who has died soon complicate matters. The elderly benefactress has not died a natural death but has been murdered.

In summary, Ferrars was a hardworking professional within a well-established literary genre. Paradoxically, as the style of detective fiction she practiced went out of fashion, her work became more original simply by remaining constant. In the 1940's, Ferrars was but one of many writers of classic mysteries; by the 1970's and 1980's, when mystery fiction rarely followed the conventions once customary in the English detective story, she came to seem unique.

Ferrars's style is direct and to the point. She displayed a wide familiarity with literature, although she did not clutter her pages with allusions to the classics in the style of Sayers. Characters will sometimes quote a line or two of appropriate verse; Walter de la Mare is a frequent source, although generally not explicitly named.

One characteristic of her style sharply distinguished Ferrars from many contemporary mystery writers. Although her stories involve murder, violence is never described; the details are left entirely to the reader's imagination. Although she was no prude, she avoided the modern custom of explicitly describing sexual encounters. Her characters all speak in educated English, and she displayed no interest in portraying members of other classes whose characteristic form of expression would differ from this. Vulgar or abusive language is also conspicuous by its absence. If the world she portrayed was a limited one, it was nevertheless one she thoroughly explored with persistence and ingenuity over her long career.

David Gordon

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TOBY DYKE SERIES: *Give a Corpse a Bad Name*, 1940; *Remove the Bodies*, 1940 (also known as *Rehearsals for Murder*); *Death in Botanist's Bay*, 1941 (also known as *Murder of a Suicide*); *Don't Monkey with Murder*, 1942 (also known as *The Shape of a Stain*); *Your Neck in a Noose*, 1942 (also known as *Neck in a Noose*)

VIRGINIA FREER SERIES: *Last Will and Testament*, 1978; *Frog in the Throat*, 1980

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1945-1960 • *I, Said the Fly*, 1945; *Murder Among Friends*, 1946 (also known as *Cheat the Hangman*); *With Murder in Mind*, 1948;

The March Hare Murders, 1949; *Hunt the Tortoise*, 1950; *Milk of Human Kindness*, 1950; *Alibi for a Witch*, 1952; *The Clock That Wouldn't Stop*, 1952; *Murder in Time*, 1953; *The Lying Voices*, 1954; *Enough to Kill a Horse*, 1955; *Always Say Die*, 1956 (also known as *We Haven't Seen Her Lately*); *Murder Moves In*, 1956 (also known as *Kill or Cure*); *Count the Cost*, 1957 (also known as *Unreasonable Doubt*); *Furnished for Murder*, 1957; *Depart This Life*, 1958 (also known as *A Tale of Two Murders*); *Fear the Light*, 1960; *The Sleeping Dogs*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Busy Body*, 1962 (also known as *Seeing Double*); *The Wandering Widows*, 1962; *The Decayed Gentlewoman*, 1963 (also known as *A Legal Fiction*); *The Doubly Dead*, 1963; *Ninth Life*, 1965; *No Peace for the Wicked*, 1966; *Zero at the Bone*, 1967; *The Swaying Pillars*, 1968; *Skeleton Staff*, 1969; *The Seven Sleepers*, 1970

1971-1984 • *A Stranger and Afraid*, 1971; *Breath of Suspicion*, 1972; *Foot in the Grave*, 1972; *The Small World of Murder*, 1973; *Alive and Dead*, 1974; *Hanged Man's House*, 1974; *Drowned Rat*, 1975; *The Cup and the Lip*, 1975; *Blood Flies Upward*, 1976; *Murders Anonymous*, 1977; *The Pretty Pink Shroud*, 1977; *In at the Kill*, 1978; *Witness Before the Fact*, 1979; *Experiment with Death*, 1981; *Thinner than Water*, 1981; *Skeleton in Search of a Cupboard*, 1982 (also known as *Skeleton in Search of a Closet*); *Death of a Minor Character*, 1983; *Something Wicked*, 1983; *Root of All Evil*, 1984

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Designs on Life*, 1980

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

EDITED TEXT: *Planned Departures*, 1958

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a fellow mystery writer and therefore an important example not merely of her craft but also of her portrayal of that craft to her peers.

Herbert, Rosemary. Review of *Something Wicked*, by E. X. Ferrars. *Library Journal* 109, no. 4 (March 1, 1984): 511. A professor comes to an English village where he discovers that the snow covers hatred and evil stemming from the long-ago death of a neighbor. Reviewer notes the “intriguing characterization.”

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Very useful overview of the history and parameters of the crime-fiction genre; helps place Ferrars’s work within that genre.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains a biocritical essay on Ferrars and deals at length with many of her contemporaries.

ROBERT L. FISH

Born: Cleveland, Ohio; August 21, 1912

Died: Trumbull, Connecticut; February 23, 1981

Also wrote as Robert L. Pike; Lawrence Roberts

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Captain José da Silva, 1962-1975

Police Lieutenants, 1963-1976

Kek Huuygens, 1967-1976

Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs, 1968-1979

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN JOSÉ DA SILVA, the swarthy, romantic, mustachioed captain of police in Rio de Janeiro, is independent, intuitive, witty, and courageous. He is also the liaison between the Brazilian police and Interpol.

WILSON, an undercover agent from the United States embassy in Rio, acts as da Silva’s assistant. A friend and generous supporter of the captain, he is both a help and a major source of frustration to the officer.

LIEUTENANT CLANCY of the Fifty-second Precinct in New York and LIEUTENANT JIM REARDON of San Francisco are representatives of the demanding and dangerous life of the professional law enforcement officer. Clancy is the older veteran, and Reardon is the younger and more passionate officer. Both are humane and resourceful men who face personal problems and tough decisions as they resolve their cases.

KEK HUUYGENS, an international smuggler, is a man of cultivated tastes, a collector of fine art, and a master of his calling; he appears in several novels and short stories.

CARRUTHERS, SIMPSON, and BRIGGS are a set of intriguing and reprobate former writers of detective fiction whose exploits are recorded with amusement and tolerance.

CONTRIBUTION

As Robert L. Fish said in numerous interviews and speeches, his work was written with the view to entertain. He wanted his characters to be realistic and their locales to be authentic, however, and believed that he wrote best when describing that with which he was familiar. His lifetime of travel and work throughout the world permitted him to achieve this authenticity naturally. With wit and charm, Fish informed his public of the relentless demands and scant rewards of the professional law enforcement agencies, the importance of one dedicated individual in a moment of crisis, and the universality of human foibles.

Fish’s craftsmanship is immediately apparent: His well-defined characters change and grow in sophistication and maturity in his series; his plots are constructed with care; and his prose is economical, cogent, and polished. His impressive body of work includes pastiche/parody, thrillers, and delightful short stories as well as his celebrated series.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Lloyd Fish was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 21, 1912. He received a bachelor of science degree from the Case School of Applied Science, later Case Western Reserve University, in 1933 and served in the Ohio National Guard from 1933 to 1936. He married Mamie Kates in 1935, and the couple had two daughters. Fish's career as an engineer was highly successful. He held numerous managerial positions in major companies, including Firestone Tire and Rubber. He was a consultant on vinyl plastics in many parts of the world—Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, and Venezuela, among others. When he submitted his first effort at detective fiction to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1960, he was forty-eight years old and had lived with his family in Rio de Janeiro for ten years.

Fish was to have as successful a career in writing as he had in engineering. Several popular series established his reputation after he received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for *The Fugitive*, written in 1962. He collected two more Edgars from that organization and served as its president in 1978. Two of his stories were made into films. *Mute Witness* (1963) was the basis for *Bullitt* (1968), starring Steve McQueen and Robert Vaughn, and *The Assassination Bureau* (1963), which was the completion of a Jack London spy story, was made into an English film with Diana Rigg, Telly Savalas, and Curt Jurgens; the film, however, departs so far from the original as to be unrecognizable.

Failing health did not deter Fish. He had open heart surgery in 1971 but continued to work at his Connecticut home until his death on February 23, 1981, when he was found in his study, pen in hand. A moving tribute from his friends in a memorial section of *The Armchair Detective* indicates that he was also a humane and compassionate man. In 1984, the Mystery Writers of America established the Robert L. Fish Memorial Award, sponsored by the author's estate. The award honors the best mystery short story by a previously unpublished author.

ANALYSIS

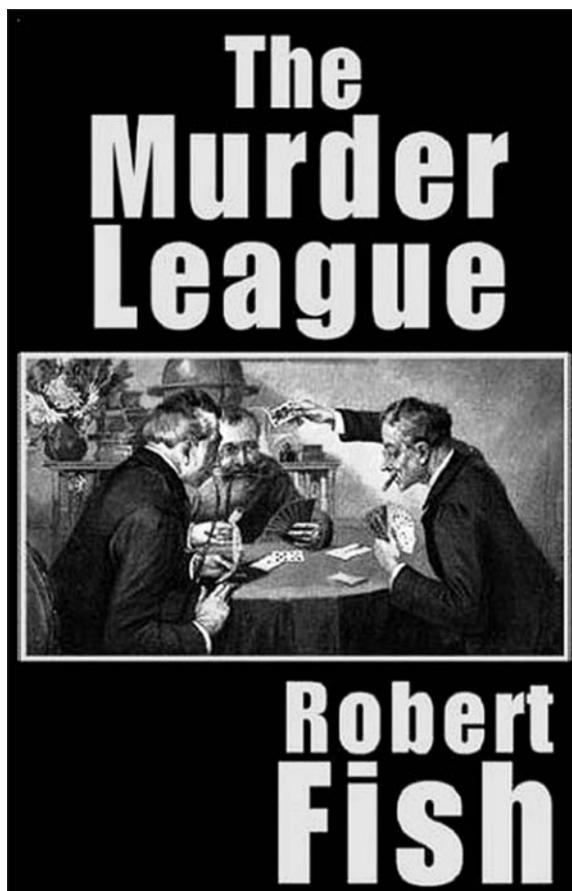
Robert L. Fish's career began in 1960 with a short story, "The Case of the Ascot Tie," which introduced

the memorable character of Schlock Homes. Eleven more Homes stories were written between 1960 and 1966, all of which first appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Clearly, Fish was a student of Arthur Conan Doyle and knew the canon well enough to use the latter's style and devices both creatively and comically. His stories are, in the opinion of most critics, excellent pastiches and parodies of Doyle's work. Schlock has a friend and narrator, Dr. Whatley; Mrs. Essex lovingly keeps house; Schlock is frequently confronted by the evil plans of Professor Marty; and much of the action takes place at 221B Bagel Street. Inevitably a worried or desperate person appears hoping to win the assistance of the great detective. Questioning these clients in a manner that does credit to his model, getting at the pertinent facts by the most logical of deductive reasoning, Schlock is nearly always wrong in every particular.

The tales are laced throughout with puns that are described by every critic as outrageous. Fish had a reputation among his friends for puns and could string together dozens of them in a matter of minutes. Excellent examples of this penchant for puns may be found in the titles of the stories. When Homes offers his help to a group of Polish men, the result is "The Adventure of the Danzig Men." The tale of a British aristocrat forced by his conduct to resign from his clubs is dubbed "The Adventure of the Dismembered Peer." It is noteworthy that no member of the Baker Street Irregulars protested the fun; evidently, they recognized that the parodies were a form of affectionate tribute. The Mystery Writers of America awarded a prize to "The Case of the Ascot Tie," arguably the best of the Homes stories.

THE FUGITIVE

Fish's first full novel, *The Fugitive*, was more serious in tone. With this book, which concerns Nazis who have escaped to South America, Fish introduced the most popular of his heroes, Captain José da Silva of the Rio de Janeiro police force. Da Silva, a large, swarthy, pockmarked man with black, curly hair and a fierce mustache, evokes the image of a romantic highwayman and immediately captures the reader's attention. As the plot develops, it is evident that da Silva's dramatic presence is less important than the gifts of in-



In Fish's 1968 novel The Murder League, three former mystery writers take up contract killing, only to discover that performing actual murders is far more difficult than writing about murders.

telligence, humanity, and sensitivity with which he is endowed. Yet his character remains credible. Although he is vulnerable to women, he is realistic in his assessment of them in the course of his investigations. He has an almost obsessive fear of flying, certain that any flight he endures will be his last. He can never relax on an airplane, which interferes with his appreciation of the attendants' physical charms and his partaking of the available libations. In moments of great physical danger, he knows fear and dreads dying.

Nevertheless, da Silva is a man of extraordinary courage. It has been suggested that the earlier volumes in the series, particularly *Isle of the Snakes* (1963), in which da Silva must contend with several poisonous reptiles, and *The Shrunken Head* (1963), which involves him with bands of head-shrinking Indians, tend

to emphasize the primitive facets of his homeland, while the later volumes describe the wealth and culture of the cities, the other face of Brazil. *Brazilian Sleigh Ride* (1965) emphasizes that da Silva is at home even on the sidewalks of New York, as he confronts a gambling syndicate in Manhattan.

POLICE LIEUTENANTS SERIES

One trait that seems a constant in the makeup of Fish's detectives is first explored in da Silva's character: He is remarkably independent. Although he holds the rank of captain, he is a part of a bureaucracy. He wastes little time with authority, however, and acts on his own. Clancy and Reardon of the Police Lieutenants series operate in much the same fashion on their respective police forces but are more conscious of the penalties that independence carries. Clancy is well aware that his duty may be complicated by superiors and politically ambitious prosecutors. Reardon's superiors seem convinced of his ability and value, yet his independence makes them nervous, and he is often closely questioned. Nevertheless, each of Fish's operatives displays a willingness to assume great risk in following his own best ideas to achieve the end.

WOMEN AND HUMOR

The female characters in Fish's novels are not as well defined as the men, which is not to imply that they are denigrated. Many of them are professionals. Reardon's female friend, for example, is an architect. Although their relationship is intimate, it does not provoke steamy bedroom scenes. Reardon's problems with her center on the conflict caused by his profession, which may mean that a long-awaited dinner at a favorite restaurant is interrupted. Reardon is always being called away on his current case. Fish's detectives are clearly attracted to beautiful women, but they are never blinded to the fact that such women may be culprits in a given case. None of these men reacts in a hard-boiled manner, as do some famous detectives. Women are not "dames" in this author's work, and the female criminal is often viewed with sympathy and is always treated fairly. Sex is a fact of life in Fish's work, but it is never the major theme.

Humor is not abandoned in the police procedural works. Da Silva is paired with a somewhat mysterious figure, Wilson, an American agent of considerable

ability. His intelligence sources are never revealed, but he is always well-informed about da Silva's cases. Although he is no Watson, he serves as a sounding board for da Silva's observations and deductions. He is also used to exchange banter with da Silva, where humor, usually subtle, is always present. In all Fish's novels, principal characters find a backup in the department or a friend who fulfills the twin assignment of assisting in the crucial moment and sharing remarkably witty repartee. It would seem that Dr. Watson's usefulness in Doyle's stories left a lasting impression.

CARRUTHERS, SIMPSON, AND BRIGGS SERIES

The later characters of the Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs series are more humorous in their adventures. More frequent and obvious use of humor is characteristic of this group. Incidents and actions are played for greater comic effect, and the three older men are essentially rogues. Indeed, humor was fundamental to Fish's outlook, as is illustrated by a well-known incident in his career. Fish disagreed with his publisher concerning the pseudonym under which he would write his Police Lieutenants series. He wanted to write as A. C. Lamprey, with the projected plan of doing a subsequent series as D. C. Lamprey, a brother of the first author. He lost this battle and wrote as Robert L. Pike.

The craftsmanship of Fish's plots is evident in his novels and his excellent short stories, though some are more successful than others. Once the crimes are delineated, the plots unfold and the clues add up in a convincing manner. In his best stories, the ultimate clue is something very small and tantalizing that eludes the detective for a period of time. Some fleeting scene, some insignificant thing out of its normal place, suddenly remembered, brings the pattern to completion.

One of Lieutenant Reardon's cases is an excellent example. What appears to be an accident in which a pedestrian is killed on a darkened street by a repentant driver, proves to be premeditated murder involving theft and smuggling. With the murderer dead after a chase through San Francisco streets and a fog-shrouded harbor, his accomplice escapes safely. The mental image of a bottle of milk left on the table instead of being returned to the refrigerator, however, is enough to lead the officer to the accomplice.

Fish's critics have noted that he is a writer who describes action with a cinematographer's eye. It is no accident that *Bullitt*, based on one of his novels, features one of the most spectacular car chases ever filmed. Fish's descriptive passages are rich because he knows his scene. The authenticity of his Brazilian landscapes, for example, is a result of his having lived more than a decade in that country. One reviewer commented on Fish's creation of a genuine ethnic detective in da Silva. Fish created da Silva because he knew Brazilians like him, not to make a social statement. When he had no contact with an area, he traveled to see it before attempting to describe it. He researched *The Gold of Troy* (1980) during a long sojourn that took him to several parts of the world, and he did not write *Pursuit* (1978) until he had traveled to Israel to gain a sense of the people and the land.

His characters are appealing because they, too, are authentic. They are not larger than life but seem very much like ordinary people, with strengths and weaknesses, problems and disappointments, and they sometimes experience moments of reward and great happiness. The author liked people and had friends around the world. Yet he was direct, blunt, and outspoken, often labeled contentious. One friend spoke of his belligerent integrity, a trait that might also describe some of his creations. His plots are sound and satisfy the reader. Although nicely timed surprises sometimes catch his public off guard, he does not make the reader wait until the end of the book to learn the details of the plot. Instead, he reveals the evidence gradually, and the timing of his clues is excellent.

Above all, Fish believed mystery writers are given too little credit for their contribution to literature. His long association with the Mystery Writers of America made him their champion. He encouraged young writers and fought for writers struggling with their publishers, insisting on the worth of crime and mystery fiction. No one can describe Fish's creed better than he did himself:

I write to entertain; if it is possible to inform at the same time, all the better, but entertainment comes first. I like to write using places I have been and enjoyed as the background location for my stories and books. I

write the kind of stories and books I like to read, and if I can get a reader to turn the page, I feel I have succeeded in what I started out to do.

Anne R. Vizzier

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CAPTAIN JOSÉ DA SILVA SERIES: *The Fugitive*, 1962; *Isle of the Snakes*, 1963; *The Shrunken Head*, 1963; *Brazilian Sleigh Ride*, 1965; *The Diamond Bubble*, 1965; *Always Kill a Stranger*, 1967; *The Bridge That Went Nowhere*, 1968; *The Xavier Affair*, 1969; *The Green Hell Treasure*, 1971; *Trouble in Paradise*, 1975

POLICE LIEUTENANTS SERIES (AS PIKE): *Mute Witness*, 1963 (also known as *Bullitt*); *The Quarry*, 1964; *Police Blotter*, 1965; *Reardon*, 1970; *The Gremlin's Grampa*, 1972; *Bank Job*, 1974; *Deadline 2 A.M.*, 1976

KEK HUUYGENS SERIES: *The Hochmann Miniatures*, 1967; *Whirligig*, 1970; *The Tricks of the Trade*, 1972; *The Wager*, 1974; *Kek Huuygens, Smuggler*, 1976

CARRUTHERS, SIMPSON, AND BRIGGS SERIES: *The Murder League*, 1968; *Rub-a-Dub-Dub*, 1971; *A Gross Carriage of Justice*, 1979

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Assassination Bureau*, 1963; *Trials of O'Brien*, 1965; *A Handy Death*, 1973 (with Henry Rothblatt); *Pursuit*, 1978; *The Gold of Troy*, 1980; *Rough Diamond*, 1981

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Incredible Schlock Homes*, 1966; *The Memoirs of Schlock Homes*, 1974

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS ROBERTS): *Weekend '33*, 1972 (with Bob Thomas); *The Break In*, 1974; *Big Wheels*, 1977; *Alley Fever*, 1979

NONFICTION: *Pelé, My Life and a Wonderful Game*, 1979 (with Pelé)

EDITED TEXTS: *With Malice Toward All*, 1968; *Every Crime in the Book*, 1975

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Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. This reference work for fans places Fish's novels in their proper context.

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Sutton, Michael, and Anthony Fingleton. *Over My Dead Body*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1998. This play was inspired by and represents a reinterpretation of and commentary on Fish's *The Murder League*.

IAN FLEMING

Born: London, England; May 28, 1908

Died: Canterbury, Kent, England; August 12, 1964

Also wrote as Robert Markham

Type of plot: Espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

James Bond, 1954-1966

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JAMES BOND, thirtyish, a special agent in Great Britain's secret service, is one of the few with a double-zero prefix (007) on his identification number, giving him permission to kill. A knight-errant of the Atlantic alliance, he brings his adversaries to bay through superior endurance, bravery, resourcefulness, and extraordinarily good luck.

"M," Admiral Sir Miles Messervy, K.C.M.G., the head of the secret service, is Bond's boss and father figure. A cold fish with "grey, uncompromising eyes," he sends his agents on dangerous missions without showing much concern, or, in case of mishap, remorse. Nevertheless, Bond finds him lovable.

FELIX LEITER, an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, joins forces with Bond from time to time to provide support in the war against the enemies of Western civilization. Bond has great affection for him.

CONTRIBUTION

Through a masterful suspension of disbelief, Ian Fleming fashioned the exploits of his flashy and conspicuous hero in the mold of earlier fictional adventurers such as Candide, Baron Münchhausen, and Phileas Fogg. Unlike these predecessors, however, James Bond is not freelance. He is a civil servant and does what he does for a living. In performing his duties for the British government, he also acts as a protector of the free world. Fleming's creation has gained an international coterie of fans, from John F. Kennedy and Allen Dulles to Prince Philip and, more important, among countless members of the hoi polloi who have bought his books in the multimillions, making James Bond (with much interest generated by the film adap-

tations) the greatest and most popular fantasy figure of modern times. Fleming attributed his stunning success to the lack of heroes in real life. "Well, I don't regard James Bond precisely as a hero," he added, "but at least he does get on and do his duty, in an extremely corny way, and in the end, after giant despair, he wins the girl or the jackpot or whatever it may be."

BIOGRAPHY

Ian Lancaster Fleming, from an upper-middle-class Scottish family, was brought up, as he said, "in a hunting-and-fishing world where you shot or caught your lunch." His was a conservative and patriotic environment in which "Rule Britannia" was accepted both as a duty and as a right conferred by God. Ian's father, Major Valentine Fleming, was a Tory member of Parliament from South Oxfordshire who lost his life on the Somme in 1916. His obituary in *The Times* was written by Winston Churchill.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Ian Fleming. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Fleming received an education in conformity with the traditions and expectations of his place in society: first at Eton College, for which he was presumably registered for admission at birth, then at the famous Royal Military College at Sandhurst, where he learned to shoot well enough to participate on the school's rifle team when it competed against West Point. He became a second lieutenant, but the prospect of serving in a modern mechanized army gave him little joy: "A lot of us decided we didn't want to be garage hands running those bloody tanks." He resigned his commission and, following his mother's advice, began to prepare for a career in the diplomatic service.

Fleming attended the Universities of Geneva and Munich to learn French and German. He placed seventh in the foreign-service entrance examination, but diplomatic postings were rare and only the top five were selected. In 1931, Fleming joined Reuters as a foreign correspondent. He was sent to Moscow, where he learned Russian and, on one assignment, reported the trial of some British engineers accused of espionage. He later described the whole Soviet experience as "fun . . . like a tremendous ball game."

In the next four years, Fleming rose to the position of assistant general manager for the news agency's Far East desk. The job did not pay well, however, and in 1933 he decided to earn some money by going into investment banking. He remained a stockbroker until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, when he secured a commission in the Royal Navy.

During the war, Fleming served in the key post of personal assistant to the director of naval intelligence, Rear Admiral J. H. Godfrey, who became the model for the character "M" in Fleming's later fiction.

Fleming's return to civilian life marked his return to journalism. From 1945 to 1959, he was with the Kemsley Press, principally as foreign manager of *The Sunday Times*. By the time of his resignation, he was already famous as the creator of James Bond. From the appearance of his first book, *Casino Royale*, in 1953, Fleming managed to turn out one volume per year, writing at the rate of two thousand words a day. A heavy smoker—usually consuming three packs a day—Fleming suffered his first heart attack in 1961. Three years later, his second coronary proved fatal.

ANALYSIS

Ian Fleming refused to take his work seriously and had few pretensions about its literary merit, although he was always thoroughly professional in his approach to writing. He claimed that his sort of fiction reflected his own adolescent character: "But they're fun. I think people like them because they're fun."

Critics, however, seldom take authors at their own word. Ernest Hemingway, countering those who were searching for hidden meanings in his *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), snapped, "If you want a message, go to Western Union." Similarly, Fleming had to protest against those who insisted that his works were more than entertainment. "My books have no social significance, except a deleterious one; they're considered to have too much violence and too much sex. But all history has that."

This disclaimer has not prevented critics from analyzing the Bond books in terms of Freudian psychology, or as a reflection of the decline of Western society, or as a working out of the "phallic code," or even as an expression of an intent "to destroy the modern gods of our society which are actually the expressions of the demonic in contemporary disguise."

Reviewers have split into two general camps: those who refuse to take the stories seriously and those who do. The former category might be represented by L. G. Offord of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who wrote of *Doctor No* (1958): "Hardly anything could make critics look sillier than to fight over a book like this. . . . [It is] so wildly funny that it might almost be a leg-pull, and at the same time hair-raising in a loony way." Representing the other point of view is Paul Johnson, who, also writing about *Doctor No* in a lead article in the *New Statesman*, said that he had never read a nastier book. He criticized it specifically for pandering to the worst forms of English maladies: "the sadism of a schoolboy bully, the mechanical, two-dimensional sex-longings of a frustrated adolescent, and the crude, snob-cravings of a suburban adult."

Though he may not have realized it, Johnson's attack explains Fleming's popularity. Most James Bond readers would probably agree with Fleming's own statement that his work possesses no special significance, and they would see nothing reprehensible in

reading about cruelty. Maybe they would even find adolescent sex-longings desirable and the possession of a bit of snobbery attractive and necessary. In any case, what difference does it make as long as the work provides suspense and fast-paced action? One of Fleming's greatest admirers, the writer Kingsley Amis, remarked that the strength of Fleming's work lies "in its command of pace and its profound latent romanticism."

MOONRAKER

Fleming—as he would have been first to admit—does not rank with the major writers of his age, but he wrote well and with great individuality, and he especially knew how to set a scene with style. Note, for example, his description of the dining room at Blades just before the famous bridge game in *Moonraker* (1955):

The central chandelier, a cascade of crystal ropes terminating in a broad basket of strung quartz, sparkled warmly above the white damask tablecloths and George IV silver. Below, in the centre of each table, branched candlesticks distributed the golden light of three candles, each surmounted by a red silk shade, so that the faces of the diners shone with a convivial warmth which glossed over the occasional chill of an eye or cruel twist of a mouth.

Moonraker was Fleming's third Bond adventure. By this time, his main character had achieved his definitive persona—that of the suave, dashing, indestructible, not-so-inconspicuous secret agent—the quintessential cop of the Western powers. Fleming originally had intended him to be otherwise. "When I wrote the first one [*Casino Royale*] in 1953," Fleming related, "I wanted Bond to be an extremely dull, uninteresting man to whom things happened; I wanted him to be the blunt instrument." Fleming explained that the name of his character was taken from the name of the author of *Birds of the West Indies*, and that he had chosen it because it struck him as the dullest name he had ever heard. "Now the dullest name in the world has become an exciting one."

Indeed, fictional heroes can develop lives of their own and grow in importance and become transformed in the act of creation. Their exploits can also evolve, becoming, as in Bond's case, more fanciful and in-

creasingly wild and extravagant. In *Casino Royale*, Le Chiffre wants to recoup his losses at the gaming table to pay back the money he has stolen from the Soviet secret service. Bond beats him at baccarat and Le Chiffre is ruined. In *Moonraker*, however, Hugo Drax's ambition is to destroy the city of London with an atomic missile. In *Goldfinger* (1959), the title character wants to steal all the gold from Fort Knox. Emilio Largo in *Thunderball* (1961) is involved with hijacking nuclear bombs and threatening to destroy British and American cities if Washington and London do not pay an appropriate ransom. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963), Blofeld wants to infect Great Britain with a virus to wipe out its crops and livestock.

Part of the allure of such a series is having a well-described, morally reprehensible villain, and Fleming does not disappoint. Some of his villains are self-employed, but most of them are members of villainous organizations: either SMERSH, a Soviet terror organization, or SPECTER, a private international criminal consortium. Fleming knew the advantages of reworking basic themes and formulas, the most fundamental being a dramatization of the struggle between good and evil. He makes Bond the agent of divine retribution, who, like his ancient Greek counterparts, exhibits certain character flaws to emphasize his humanity. The villains also possess certain classical vices, chief among these being hubris, which predictably contributes to their downfall.

The books follow a common organizational pattern by being divided into two sections. In the first, there is the identification of the villain and the discovery of his evil scheme. Next, the protagonist plots and carries out a strategy to bring the wrongdoer to destruction. The book ends with the restoration of an equilibrium—to exist, presumably, until the next adventure. In a sense, the story line of the books is as obvious as that of a Hollywood Western. In fact, this very predictability compensates for Fleming's frequently weak plotting.

JAMES BOND SERIES

The reader is comfortable in his knowledge that James Bond will duel with his adversaries over women, money, pride, and finally over life itself, and that Bond will humiliate them on all these levels. He will best them at the gaming tables and on the playing fields. He will expose them for not being gentlemen, outwit them,

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Sean Connery (lying down) as James Bond in the 1964 film Goldfinger, adapted from Ian Fleming's novel. Gert Frobe (standing) plays Auric Goldfinger.
(Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive)

and uncover their essential boorishness. Thus, it is no surprise that he emerges triumphant in golf and canasta in *Goldfinger*, wins at bridge in *Moonraker*, and takes the chemin-de-fer pot in *Thunderball* and *Casino Royale*. The villains cheat, but Bond outcheats them—exactly what an honest man should do in a dishonest situation. Assuredly, the hero will attack his adversaries sexually by taking away their women, as he does from *Goldfinger*, *Largo*, and *Mr. Big*.

All this standard competition paves the way for the ultimate, surrogateless, life-or-death showdown. Bond must now rely on his own bravery and on his intellectual and physical prowess. In this supreme trial he must successfully withstand the test of courage and pain—a kind of latter-day Pamino with his magic flute making his way through a dangerous land toward the safety of the golden temple. Bond's test, however, is never over; he must prove himself in one assignment after another.

Bond's rewards come from playing the game. Certainly the monetary rewards are not great. Bond is not particularly wealthy, nor does he seek great wealth. (He even turns down a million-pound dowry offered by father-in-law Michel-Ange Draco in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.) Occasionally, he experiences a

windfall, such as the fifteen thousand pounds he wins at bridge when playing Drax, but he seems to care little about accumulating much money for his retirement. Bond does not think about such mundane things.

He is a dedicated workaholic. His identity with his job is so complete that he hates to take vacations. If he does not have anything official to do, he soon becomes restless and disoriented. In short, he is a rather humorless man of few inner resources, possessing a great disdain for life that comes too easy. This attitude includes a great disgust for the welfare state, a system that, he believes, has made Great Britain sluggish and flabby. The expensive pleasures that he enjoys—fine wines, gourmet foods, posh hotel rooms—come almost entirely as perks in the line of duty, as, indeed, does his association with women.

Part of the appeal of the Bond fantasy series comes from the hero's sexual prowess. Bond beds women but only once does he marry. (His bride, Tracy, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, is killed shortly after the wedding.) Thus, he appears to be a veritable Don Juan. In fact, on an episode-by-episode basis, his conquests are modest—one, not more than two—virtual monogamy. What he misses in quantity, however, he makes up in quality. Bond's women are the stuff of which modern dreams are made. They are energetic, athletic, resourceful, beautiful . . . and submissive. They can be passive, but they are perfectly capable of initiating sex. All are longing to be dominated by a man. Thus, as Bond sizes up Domino Vitali in *Thunderball*:

The general impression, Bond decided, was of a willful, high tempered, sensual girl—a beautiful Arab mare who would allow herself to be ridden by a horseman with steel thighs and velvet hands, and then only with a curb and saw bit—and then only when he had broken her to bridle and saddle.

This rather trite metaphor, shifted to a nonsexual context, sums up Bond's relationship with his employers, who have most certainly succeeded in bridling him to their will. His superiors, specifically M, give his life the fundamental sense of purpose that he in turn must give to his female companions. Women are the means through which he can compensate for his loss of control to the British establishment. Bond responds well, however, to such direction, coming from a society that dotes on hierarchies and makes a virtue of everyone knowing his or her place.

Fleming also manages to pour into his character the nostalgia that he must have felt for the heyday of the British Empire. His works evoke the Rupert-Brookean vision of England as the land "where men with splendid hearts must go."

Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JAMES BOND SERIES: *Casino Royale*, 1953 (also known as *You Asked for It*); *Live and Let Die*, 1954; *Moonraker*, 1955 (also known as *Too Hot to Handle*); *Diamonds Are Forever*, 1956; *From Russia, with Love*, 1957; *Doctor No*, 1958; *Goldfinger*, 1959; *For Your Eyes Only: Five Secret Occasions in the Life of James Bond*, 1960; *Thunderball*, 1961; *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1962; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1963; *You Only Live Twice*, 1964; *The Man with the Golden Gun*, 1965; *Octopussy*, and *The Living Daylights*, 1966

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Diamond Smugglers*, 1957

SCREENPLAY: *Thunderball*, 1965 (with others)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*, 1964-1965

NONFICTION: *Thrilling Cities*, 1963; *Ian Fleming Introduces Jamaica*, 1965

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JOAN FLEMING

Joan Margaret Gibson

Born: Horwich, Lancashire, England; March 27, 1908

Died: London, England; November 15, 1980

Types of plot: Psychological; amateur sleuth; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nuri Iskirlak, 1962-1965

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

NURI ISKIRLAK is an impoverished scholar and philosopher of some repute in Istanbul. A bachelor, his goal in life is to visit Oxford, where he believes must lie the answers to all of life's important questions. He becomes an amateur sleuth not of his own volition but because circumstances demand it.

CONTRIBUTION

Part of the fun of reading mystery fiction is the discovery of an author with whom one was previously not familiar. Joan Fleming's work is unique in that with each of her novels one has that same sense of discovery. It is not possible to be comfortable with Fleming if what one expects is to be able to anticipate familiar patterns, characters, settings, or turns in plot. It is possible to become assured, however, that each novel will have been painstakingly crafted, that it will be charmingly English, and that it will be altogether delightful.

Fleming's goal appears to have been to write as well as she possibly could, and that she wrote well, there is no doubt. What the reader can question is whether it was her intent to write category novels or whether she meant to write well-crafted novels in which she could choose to use a crime or a mystery as a means of moving her characters from place to place and giving them something on which to act and against which to react. It would seem that the latter is true, for scene and character are what the reader comes to care about in Fleming's novels. More than with "who" or "how," one's curiosity is absorbed with "why."

BIOGRAPHY

Joan Fleming was born Joan Margaret Gibson, the daughter of David and Sarah Elizabeth (née Suttcliffe) Gibson. She was born in Horwich, Lancashire, England, on March 27, 1908. Her education was at Brighthelmston School, Southport, Lancashire, and in Switzerland at Grand Belle Vue, Lausanne, and Lausanne University. She worked in London as a secretary to a doctor from 1928 to 1932, when she married Norman Bell Beattie Fleming. They had three daughters and a son. Her husband died in 1968.

Fleming wrote more than thirty novels that are classified as mysteries (some are historical mysteries), at least five works of juvenile fiction, and a nonfictional volume concerning William Shakespeare. In 1962, she received the Gold Dagger Award given by the Crime Writers' Association for that year's best mystery publication, *When I Grow Rich*. She won the award again in 1970 for her novel published that year, *Young Man, I Think You're Dying*. Fleming died on November 15, 1980.

ANALYSIS

Writers are advised always to write about that which they know and with which they are familiar. Joan Fleming knew about many things; she wrote competently in her mysteries about subjects as varied as rare antique books, ancient Chinese porcelain, modern art dealers, receivers of stolen goods, drug addiction, Oxford's academic community, and life and values in exotic places, to name only a few. One senses that Fleming was intent on giving herself as much pleasure in the writing as she hoped her readers would find in her work, and that it was toward such an end that she put new characters in new settings in almost every one of her novels. Even Nuri Iskirlak, as the principal, has a different set of characters to play against in each of the two mysteries in which he appears (*When I Grow Rich* and *Nothing Is the Number When You Die*, 1965).

Emphasis in Fleming's work is on character. Her

protagonists are often forced into positions or situations for which they have had little or no preparation, but in which they handle themselves gracefully. The best example of this is Nuri Iskirlak, the Turk who, seeking to help his friends and to see justice done, forfeits his own goals to put a stop to the link that the ancient Miasma has provided in the flow of opium-based drugs between his country and Europe.

NOTHING IS THE NUMBER WHEN YOU DIE

Another well-defined character is the English aunt of Tamara, the woman Nuri loves in *Nothing Is the Number When You Die*. Nuri meets the eighty-two-year-old eccentric while he is in England to search for Tamara's missing son. Lady Mossop first appears pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with horse manure with which she intends to dose her magnolia tree. Lady Mossop is described as "an enormously tall old woman wearing brown corduroy slacks, tied with twine at the knee." Nuri says that her face is "by no means handsome," but he likes the fact that she smiles at him, something Turks seldom do for foreigners. When Nuri reveals to Lady Mossop his fear that Tamara's son, like some of his acquaintances at Oxford, may have become addicted to drugs, she assures him that the longing for affection is stronger than the longing for drugs can ever be. One is sure that Lady Mossop would have never been exposed to the world of drugs, nor would she have had any knowledge of it, had she not felt affection for the young man whom Nuri seeks. Lady Mossop is not happy about the situation, but with good grace she determines to participate in bringing about the reunion of Tamara and her son, meanwhile protecting him from his father's murderer.

HOW TO LIVE DANGEROUSLY

Another appealing Fleming character is Martin Pendle Hill (*How to Live Dangerously*, 1974). For thirty-five years he has lived comfortably in an eleven-room maisonette above the flat of elderly Miss Smite, who owns the building, which had been her family home before its conversion to separate units on the death of her parents. Pendle Hill decides to ask Miss Smite whether he might take in lodgers, as his unit is much too large for his needs. Once her shock and dismay have subsided, the two of them develop a brief but pleasant relationship. Pendle Hill, meanwhile, won-



ders to himself again and again why he had spent so many years avoiding Miss Smite, when during all that time they could have been good friends. Miss Smite is murdered, and Pendle Hill discovers the body. Despite his years of retirement and the pain of a broken hip on the mend, he feels compelled to discover the reason for her death. He, too, is one of Fleming's innocent bystanders, thrust into an unpleasant situation but capable of rising to its demands.

A strong characterization in the same novel is that of Mrs. Rafferty, Pendle Hill's housekeeper and devoted defender. She boasts that she knows him "through and through," and Pendle Hill is sure that the hardship would have been greater for him had she been the one with the broken hip. Mrs. Rafferty is deeply troubled when her master succeeds in taking a lodger over Miss Smite's objections, because she fears that he will suffer because of it—and eventually he

does. Mrs. Rafferty provides contrast in the novel to the somewhat stuffy Pendle Hill. Her language is that of the English tradesman, full of colorful slang, as is that of her husband, who listens dutifully to her concerns about Pendle Hill. The Raffertys remain loyal long after others, out of fear, have deserted the home of the late Miss Smite.

WHEN I GROW RICH

The settings of Fleming's novels are most often England; sometimes the action takes place in large cities and sometimes in rural villages, as it does in *The Man from Nowhere* (1960) and in *Midnight Hag* (1966). From all accounts, Fleming's personal travels were the sources for her foreign settings. Whether it was her own experience or the accounts of others that inspired the use of Istanbul in at least two of her novels (*When I Grow Rich* and *Nothing Is the Number When You Die*), the city is given special treatment by this imaginative and capable writer. In *When I Grow Rich*, one's sympathies are drawn to the city of Istanbul. One looks forward to more intimate knowledge of it on reading an early description of it: "Neither Eastern nor Western, it has a strange exotic flavour of its own, at times deadly dull and at other times causing such a penetrating wave of emotion that those who feel it never forget it nor do they get quite the same thrill anywhere else." The reader suffers sudden culture shock when Nuri, approaching the home of his friend, Miasma, sees in the distance what appear to be bundles or sacks of rags in the road. Only when he hears from that same source the sounds of a funeral chant does he recognize that the bundles are not rags but human beings. In another scene, Nuri kicks a kitten aside when it cries in hunger, "because in Istanbul no one takes any more notice of a starving kitten than of a fallen leaf." Whether Fleming uses for the setting of her story the city of Helsinki (*You Won't Let Me Finish*, 1973), or Paris (*The Good and the Bad*, 1953), or a Portuguese fishing village (*Death of a Sardine*, 1963), the place is so important a part of many of the novels that it can be said to play the role of at least a minor character. That is true even of the house in which Pendle Hill has lived for so long.

For what is often a psychological approach to fiction, in which she examines the underlying feelings of those who must react in some way to a crime that has

occurred, Fleming is sometimes compared to Patricia Highsmith, an American considered by some to be the best of her time at using human relationships to develop her crime plots.

Paula Lannert

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NURI ISKIRLAK SERIES: *When I Grow Rich*, 1962; *Nothing Is the Number When You Die*, 1965

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1949-1960 • *Two Lovers Too Many*, 1949; *A Daisy-Chain for Satan*, 1950; *The Gallows in My Garden*, 1951; *The Man Who Looked Back*, 1951 (also known as *The Cup of Cold Poison*); *Polly Put the Kettle On*, 1952; *The Good and the Bad*, 1953; *He Ought to Be Shot*, 1955; *The Deeds of Dr. Deadcert*, 1955 (also known as *The Merry Widower*); *Maiden's Prayer*, 1957; *You Can't Believe Your Eyes*, 1957; *Malice Matrimonial*, 1959; *Miss Bones*, 1959; *The Man from Nowhere*, 1960

1961-1970 • *In the Red*, 1961; *Death of a Sardine*, 1963; *The Chill and the Kill*, 1964; *Midnight Hag*, 1966; *No Bones About It*, 1967; *Hell's Belle*, 1968; *Kill or Cure*, 1968; *Young Man, I Think You're Dying*, 1970

1971-1978 • *Grim Death and the Barrow Boys*, 1971 (also known as *Be a Good Boy*); *Screams from a Penny Dreadful*, 1971; *Alas, Poor Father*, 1972; *Dirty Butter for Servants*, 1972; *You Won't Let Me Finish*, 1973; *How to Live Dangerously*, 1974; *Too Late! Too Late! the Maiden Cried: A Gothick Novel*, 1975; . . . *To Make an Underworld*, 1976; *Every Inch a Lady*, 1977; *The Day of the Donkey Derby*, 1978

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Dick Brownie and the Zaga Bog*, 1944; *Mulberry Hall*, 1945; *The Riddle in the River*, 1946; *Button Jugs*, 1947; *The Jackdaw's Nest*, 1949

NONFICTION: *Shakespeare's Country in Colour*, 1960

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orthodox mystery mixing imagination and murder.

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Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Does not deal directly with Fleming but helps to place her among other female mystery writers.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New

York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Comprehensive overview of the development of crime fiction in the twentieth century helps place the nature and importance of Fleming's distinctive contributions.

Symons, Julian. *Mortal Consequences, a History: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972. This history of detective fiction, written by a successful novelist in his own right, places Fleming's work in the context of the evolution of the genre from one concerned with puzzles and detection to one focused on the portrayal of crime and criminality.

J. S. FLETCHER

Born: Halifax, Yorkshire, England; February 7, 1863

Died: Dorking, Surrey, England; January 30, 1935

Also wrote as A Son of the Soil

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ronald Camberwell, 1931-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

RONALD CAMBERWELL is a private inquiry agent in London in partnership with a former inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department. A self-effacing man, Camberwell cooperates with Scotland Yard and local constabularies and lets his partner, Chaney, or their associates, Chippendale and Fanny Pratt, reap the glories of success. Though Camberwell's primary role is that of reporter in the manner of Dr. Watson, he and the others share the legwork in their cases.

CONTRIBUTION

Though J. S. Fletcher often utilizes traditional rural English settings in his detective fiction, his novels also are notable for an urban realism that is lacking in most of his contemporaries' works. He can be depended on, too, to offer complex and original problems with an extensive array of rapid-paced incidents and logical,

and yet surprising, conclusions. He also brought a journalist's skill to the writing of crime fiction; because only a small proportion of his output was part of a series, his books offer more variety of characterization than is typical of the form. Despite the rapidity with which he turned out his whodunits (seventeen in one three-year period), reviewers in the 1920's lavished praise on his works and marveled at his seemingly inexhaustible imagination. By that time, he had become a best-selling author on both sides of the Atlantic. His major achievement is *The Middle Temple Murder* (1919), one of the few Fletcher whodunits still being read; it is historically significant because its young detective, Frank Spargo, is one of the first newspaperman-sleuths, a type that later became popular in England and in the United States. During his career, Fletcher created many young sleuths, men in their twenties and thirties, whose energy and dedication compensated in part for their lack of experience.

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph Smith Fletcher was born on February 7, 1863, in Halifax, Yorkshire; his father, John Fletcher, was a Nonconformist clergyman. Orphaned as a child, Fletcher was reared by a grandmother and educated at Silcoates School and by private tutors. By the time he was twenty, he had published four books, including

three volumes of poetry, and had gone south to London. There he wrote about rural life for newspapers and magazines, using the pseudonym "A Son of the Soil." He also produced editorials for the *Leeds Mercury* and began to write biographies, historical studies, and romances. By 1898, he had decided to forsake journalism and devote himself solely to books. For the next thirty-seven years—until his death on January 30, 1935, at Dorking, Surrey—Fletcher published at least three books per year, gaining renown as a historian of his native Yorkshire for such works as *A Picturesque History of Yorkshire* (1899-1901), *The Cistercians in Yorkshire* (1919), *The Reformation in Northern England* (1925), and *Yorkshiresmen of the Restoration* (1921). For these and other historical works, he was made a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He also was a chronicler of racing and continued to write poetry throughout his life. He was married to Rosamond Langbridge, the daughter of the canon of Limerick, and they had one son.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Fletcher began writing mystery fiction, which became his primary literary activity in the last decades of his life. About the origin of his work in the genre he said:

I believe I got my interest in criminology right from the fact that a famous case of fraud was heard at the Quarter Sessions at a town where I was at school—its circumstances were unusual and mysterious and the truth hard to get at; oddly enough, I have never yet used this as the basis of a story. Then, when I left school, I meant to be a barrister and I read criminal law and attended a great many queer trials for some time. But turning to journalism instead, I knew of a great many queer cases and mysteries, and now and then did "special commissions" for various big papers on famous murder trials. Also, I learnt a good deal about criminology in conversations with the late H. B. Irving, the famous actor, who was an expert.

ANALYSIS

In the late 1800's, J. S. Fletcher began writing short fiction. Within a decade, he published six volumes of stories; one of them was *The Adventures of Archer Dawe, Sleuth-Hound* (1909), an undistinguished collection of puzzlers. Much better is *Paul Campenhaye*,

Specialist in Criminology (1918), ten stories narrated by a likable private investigator who not only labels himself a specialist in criminology but also says that he is not a detective and has nothing to do with the police. Indeed, Campenhaye works with only a clerk and a mysterious man about London, and some of his cases do not lead to police or legal action, partly because of his generosity toward women. Though most of the stories are set in London—about which Campenhaye is singularly knowledgeable—some cases take him as far north as Yorkshire. (Fletcher favored London and his beloved Yorkshire for his settings throughout his career.) A master of disguise as well as an astute observer of people and places, he nevertheless succeeds purely by chance, as in "The Champagne Bottle" and "The Yorkshire Manufacturer." There is little doubt that Fletcher had Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes in mind when he wrote the Campenhaye stories, but such imitation was commonplace with aspiring detective-fiction writers at the time.

Not until 1931 did Fletcher again create a serial sleuth. Ronald Camberwell, a London private eye, debuted in *Murder at Wrides Park* and was the narrator-sleuth in ten more novels, two of which were published after Fletcher died in 1935.

MURDER OF THE NINTH BARONET

A typical example of the Camberwell series is *Murder of the Ninth Baronet* (1932). Fletcher whodunits frequently center on a disappearance that is followed years later by an unexpected reappearance. In this novel, however, John Maxtondale disappears again, within a day of his return after a decades-long disappearance. As a young man, the eldest son of a Warwickshire baronet, he had eloped with Lucy, a tenant farmer's daughter, and completely dropped out of sight. Because worldwide efforts to locate him were fruitless, John's younger brother Stephen inherited the title when the baronet died, but with the provision that if John ever returned, both title and estate would revert to him. The mystery of John's second disappearance is solved when his body is found on the family estate. Among the several suspects are Sir Stephen and his son Rupert (John was childless), a dismissed workman, and a man who years earlier had vowed ven-

geance on John for his elopement with Lucy. When this would-be avenger and Sir Stephen are murdered, the focus of attention shifts to the dismissed workman, who has disappeared. Then Camberwell and his team learn that Rupert has secretly married the gamekeeper's daughter and is living part of the time in London with her and their son under assumed names. With its action shifting between country and city, the book proceeds at a rapid pace, each brief chapter full of stirring action and surprising revelations. Camberwell's efforts not only take him from country to city and back again but also have him shifting back and forth between the past and the present. The basic elements of the narrative—property, an inheritance, and longstanding rivalries—are commonplace, but Fletcher's deft handling results in a compelling mind teaser.

THE EBONY BOX

The Camberwell books were so popular that although Fletcher retired the sleuth after eight "Case-books," he brought him back within a year. The first of the new series was *The Ebony Box* (1934). Having retired from the detective life, Ronald Camberwell—a self-described "dull and retiring old bachelor" of thirty-one—becomes steward of a Yorkshire baronet's estate. Within a month, however, his master is dead, having mistakenly drunk potassium cyanide, which was stored in a brandy bottle in his photographic laboratory. This death initiates a series of events that center on a missing ebony box filled with jewels and negotiable securities that Sir John had given to his mistress. Camberwell, having lost his post as steward after a conflict with the family solicitor, drifts back to his old firm and joins the search for the box and for the baronet's missing valet. This difficult and dangerous quest, which includes local police and Scotland Yard, leads to the discovery of the murdered valet as well as the box and its contents.

Even more than in his other books, Fletcher's detectives in *The Ebony Box* join so many chases and stalking missions that they have little time for reflection. Camberwell and his former partner Chaney, particularly, are so caught up in the hunt that they fail to assimilate information; as a result, they make hasty judgments that are quickly proved wrong. They are little more than legmen in this case, and when Chaney is

ready to concede failure, unwilling to waste any more of his time on a futile case, his new partner Chippendale must rally the group. Camberwell, whose retirement led to Chippendale becoming Chaney's partner in the firm, has high praise for the young man's abilities:

He was a typical specimen of the naturally sharp-witted Londoner, whose native acuteness had been further accentuated and deepened by a good deal of experience in quarters where readiness of perception and quickness of resource were necessary—moreover, before ever entering our service, he had been a solicitor's clerk and had acquired a legal outlook on things.

Chippendale solves the case, demonstrating that he has more of a natural instinct for detection than do his partners and the police. As for Camberwell, though he again narrates the book and is involved in the investigation, he reveals even less intellectual acumen in this novel than in earlier ones. Luck, legwork, and the perceptiveness of a junior partner are what lead to the apprehension of the thief-murderer, Smorfitt; nevertheless, *The Ebony Box* concludes with key questions unanswered:

I have never been able to decide in my own mind between two possible theories. Did Smorfitt find out, somehow, that Marsh had stolen the contents of the ebony box?—or did Marsh, having stolen them, . . . turn for help in getting rid of his swag to the sly and cold-hearted scoundrel who coolly murdered him?

Once again, Fletcher has created a marvelous puzzle to challenge the reader, but missing is the awesome intellect of a Holmes or a Hercule Poirot to orchestrate a solution that provides the expected enlightenment.

The Eleventh Hour (1935) was the second of the new series of Camberwell novels, but Fletcher died before he completed the third. Edward Powys Mathers, known by the pen name Torquemada, finished it, and it was published in 1937 as *Todmanhawe Grange* in England and as *The Mill House Murder* in the United States.

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

The popularity of this series notwithstanding, Fletcher's best detective novel is *The Middle Temple Murder*. Praised by President Woodrow Wilson on its

American publication, it became a best seller and established Fletcher's reputation in the United States. In 1951, Howard Haycraft and Ellery Queen included the book in their Definitive Library of Detective-Crime-Mystery Fiction as a cornerstone selection. Fletcher's fluent style, realistic urban setting, and unusually complex puzzle offered jaded mystery readers a fresh approach to the genre; these qualities also attracted many readers who had scorned crime fiction as an inferior literary form. In a sense, he can be said to have made the reading of whodunits respectable.

The story begins when London newspaperman Frank Spargo happens on a murder scene in Middle Temple Lane: An old man has been bludgeoned to death. His curiosity aroused, Spargo starts to work on the case, first with a Scotland Yard detective, later independently. Using the columns of his paper to seek witnesses and information, he identifies the victim as John Marbury, recently returned to England from Australia. Later, however, Spargo determines that Marbury actually is John Maitland, a convicted bank embezzler who disappeared after serving a prison term. A barrister friend of Spargo, Ronald Breton, coincidentally turns out to be Maitland's son (though Breton has always believed that he was an orphan whose maternal aunt entrusted his upbringing to a barrister). Stephen Aylmore, a member of Parliament and the father of Breton's fiancé, is charged with Marbury-Maitland's murder (under a different name, Aylmore had been a prison mate of the dead man). Spargo's investigation (which takes him to Yorkshire) eventually clears Aylmore, establishes Marbury-Maitland's innocence (as he claimed at his trial years earlier), and exposes Breton's aunt as the murderer of her brother-in-law, whom she hated.

Too many coincidences surface at crucial times in the book, a recurring problem in Fletcher's work as a whole, but the multifaceted problem is replete with unexpected twists, and everything meshes neatly. Like Ronald Camberwell, Frank Spargo is a pleasant chap who is more akin to Watson than to Holmes, but the reporter's diligence compensates for any lack of ratiocinative skills. The reader cannot help but be pleased at the end of the novel, when Spargo seems ready to make a match with Jessie Aylmore.

THE CHARING CROSS MYSTERY

A 1923 novel, *The Charing Cross Mystery*, is the only other Fletcher work that continues to attract interest, perhaps as much for its similarities to *The Middle Temple Murder* as for its own merits. Fletcher's sleuth again is a young man, this time a wealthy barrister named Hetherwick who spends more time pursuing his private interests than he does his profession. Like Spargo, he accidentally comes on a crime and engages in an investigation increasingly independent of the police. The book also has its share of coincidences, including the fact that one of Hetherwick's friends is from the same town as the first victim and knows his granddaughter. At the end of the novel, Hetherwick and this heiress are about to marry. There are more similarities between this novel and *The Middle Temple Murder*, including the pervasive influence of the past on the present and the disappearance of a key character who emerges years later with a new identity. As in the earlier novel, this reappearance opens old wounds and spawns new crimes. *The Charing Cross Mystery* is a weaker book, however, for the villains are unrealistic, and the resolution is predictable. Finally, although there are dramatically realistic London and Yorkshire moors sequences, many scenes lack verisimilitude.

Given the prodigious output that Fletcher maintained for so many years, there are bound to be similarities in plot, technique, characterization, and setting from one novel to another, though some are indigestible to the form. His skill as a puzzler, however, cannot be denied, and while he worked within the bounds of traditional English detective fiction, Fletcher's books are written in a distinctive style, feature young sleuths who are engagingly different from the typical eccentrics of his contemporaries, and accurately present aspects of Great Britain's landscape, both rural and urban.

Gerald H. Strauss

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RONALD CAMBERWELL SERIES: *Murder at Wrides Park*, 1931; *Murder in Four Degrees*, 1931; *Murder in the Squire's Pew*, 1932; *Murder of the Ninth Baronet*, 1932; *Murder of the Only Witness*, 1933; *Mystery of the London Banker*, 1933; *Who*

Killed Alfred Snowe?, 1933; *Murder of the Secret Agent*, 1934; *The Ebony Box*, 1934; *The Eleventh Hour*, 1935; *Todmanhawe Grange*, 1937 (with Torquemada; also known as *The Mill House Murder*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1892-1910 • *Old Lattimer's Legacy*, 1892; *The Death That Lurks Unseen*, 1899; *The Golden Spur*, 1901; *The Three Days' Terror*, 1901; *The Investigators*, 1902; *The Secret Way*, 1903; *Marchester Royal*, 1909; *Hardican's Hollow*, 1910

1911-1920 • *The Pinfold*, 1911; *The Bartenstein Case*, 1913; *The Ransom for London*, 1914; *The Shadow of Ravenscliffe*, 1914; *The Wolves and the Lamb*, 1914; *The King Versus Wargrave*, 1915; *Lynne Court Spinney*, 1916; *The Annexation Society*, 1916; *Malvery Hold*, 1917; *The Rayner-Slade Amalgamation*, 1917; *The Amaranth Club*, 1918; *The Chestermarke Instinct*, 1918; *The Borough Treasurer*, 1919; *The Middle Temple Murder*, 1919; *The Seven Days' Secret*, 1919; *The Talleyrand Maxim*, 1919; *The Valley of Headstrong Men*, 1919; *Dead Men's Money*, 1920; *Exterior to the Evidence*, 1920; *Scarhaven Keep*, 1920; *The Herapath Property*, 1920; *The Lost Mr. Linthwaite*, 1920; *The Orange-Yellow Diamond*, 1920; *The Paradise Mystery*, 1920

1921-1930 • *The Root of All Evil*, 1921; *The Markenmore Mystery*, 1922; *In the Mayor's Parlour*, 1922; *Ravensdene Court*, 1922; *The Heaven-Kissed Hill*, 1922; *The Middle of Things*, 1922; *Rippling Ruby*, 1923; *The Ambitious Lady*, 1923; *The Charing Cross Mystery*, 1923; *The Copper Box*, 1923; *The Million-Dollar Diamond*, 1923; *False Scent*, 1924; *The Cartwright Gardens Murder*, 1924; *The Kang-He Vase*, 1924; *The Mazaroff Mystery*, 1924; *The Safety Pin*, 1924; *The Time-Worn Town*, 1924; *Sea Fog*, 1925; *The Great Brighton Mystery*, 1925; *The Mill of Many Windows*, 1925; *The Stolen Budget*, 1926; *The Green Rope*, 1927; *The Mortover Grange Affair*, 1927; *The Murder in the Pallant*, 1927; *The Passenger to Folkestone*, 1927; *The Strange Case of Mr. Henry Marchmont*, 1927; *Cobweb Castle*, 1928; *The Double Chance*, 1928; *The Wild Oat*, 1928; *The Wrist Mark*, 1928; *The Box Hill Murder*, 1929; *The House in Tuesday Market*, 1929; *The Matheson Formula*, 1929; *The Secret of Secrets*, 1929; *The Borgia Cabinet*, 1930; *The Dressing Room Murder*, 1930; *The*

South Foreland Murder, 1930; *The Yorkshire Moorland Murder*, 1930

1931-1938 • *The Guarded Room*, 1931; *The Burma Ruby*, 1932; *The Grocer's Wife*, 1933; *The Murder in Medora Mansions*, 1933; *And Sudden Death*, 1938

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Fear of the Night*, 1903; *The Diamonds*, 1904 (also known as *The Diamond Murders*); *The Adventures of Archer Dawe, Sleuth-Hound*, 1909 (also known as *The Contents of the Coffin*); *Paul Campenhaye, Specialist in Criminology*, 1918 (also known as *The Clue of the Artificial Eye*); *The Secret of the Barbican, and Other Stories*, 1924; *Green Ink, and Other Stories*, 1926; *Safe Number Sixty-nine, and Other Stories*, 1926; *The Massingham Butterfly, and Other Stories*, 1926; *Behind the Monocle, and Other Stories*, 1928; *The Ravenswood Mystery, and Other Stories*, 1929 (also known as *The Canterbury Mystery*); *The Heaven-Sent Witness*, 1930; *The Malachite Jar, and Other Stories*, 1930 (also known as *The Flamstock Mystery*); *The Marrendon Mystery, and Other Stories of Crime and Detection*, 1930; *The Man in No. 3, and Other Stories*, 1931; *The Man in the Fur Coat, and Other Stories*, 1932; *Find the Woman*, 1933; *The Carrismore Ruby, and Other Stories*, 1935

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1879-1900 • *The Bride of Venice*, 1879; *Frank Carisbroke's Stratagem: Or, Lost and Won*, 1888; *Andrewlina*, 1889; *Mr. Spivey's Clerk*, 1890; *The Winding Way*, 1890; *When Charles the First Was King*, 1892; *The Quarry Farm: A Country Tale*, 1893; *The Wonderful Wapentake*, 1895; *Where Highways Cross*, 1895; *At the Gate of the Fold*, 1896; *Mistress Spitfire*, 1896; *God's Failures*, 1897; *The Builders*, 1897 (also known as *The Furnace of Youth*); *The Making of Matthias*, 1898; *At the Blue Bell Inn*, 1898; *The Paths of the Prudent*, 1899; *Morrison's Machine*, 1900; *The Harvesters*, 1900

1901-1910 • *Bonds of Steel*, 1902; *The Arcadians: A Whimsicality*, 1902; *Anthony Everton*, 1903; *Lucian the Dreamer*, 1903; *Owd Poskitt*, 1903; *The Air-Ship*, 1903; *David March*, 1904; *The Pigeon's Cave*, 1904; *Grand Relations*, 1905; *The Threshing-Floor*, 1905; *A*

Maid and Her Money, 1906; *Highcroft Farm*, 1906; *Daniel Quayle: A Morality*, 1907; *Mr. Poskitt*, 1907; *The Harringtons of Highcroft Farm*, 1907; *The Queen of a Day*, 1907; *Mothers in Israel*, 1908; *The Harvest Moon*, 1908; *The Mantle of Ishmael*, 1909

1911-1923 • *The Adventures of Turco Bullworthy, His Dog Shrimp, and His Friend Dick Wynyard*, 1912; *The Fine Air of Morning*, 1912; *The Golden Venture*, 1912; *The Town of Crooked Ways*, 1912; *I'd Venture All for Thee!*, 1913; *The Secret Cargo*, 1913; *Both of This Parish*, 1914; *The Marriage Lines*, 1914; *Leet Livvy*, 1915; *Families Repaired*, 1916; *The Perilous Crossways*, 1917; *Many Engagements*, 1923

SHORT FICTION: *Pasquinado*, 1898; *From the Broad Acres: Stories Illustrative of Rural Life in Yorkshire*, 1899; *For Those Were Stirring Times!, and Other Stories*, 1904; *The Ivory God, and Other Stories*, 1907; *The Wheatstack, and Other Stories*, 1909; *Mr. Poskitt's Nightcaps: Stories of a Yorkshire Farmer*, 1910

PLAY: *Hearthstone Corner*, pr. 1926

POETRY: *The Juvenile Poems of Joseph S. Fletcher*, 1879; *Songs After Sunset*, 1881; *Early Poems*, 1882; *Poems, Chiefly Against Pessimism*, 1893; *Ballads of Revolt*, 1897; *Collected Verse, 1881-1931*, 1931

NONFICTION: 1884-1900 • *Anima Christi*, 1884; *Deus Homo*, 1887; *Jesus Calls Thee!*, 1887; *Our Lady's Month: A Manual of Devotion for the Month of May*, 1887; *A Short Life of Cardinal Newman*, 1890; *Through Storm and Stress: Being a History of the Remarkable Adventures of Richard Fletcher of York*, 1892; *The Remarkable Adventure of Walter Trelawney*, 1893; *The Wonderful City*, 1894; *Where Shall We Go for a Holiday?*, 1894; *In the Days of Drake*, 1895; *Life in Arcadia*, 1896; *A Picturesque History of Yorkshire, 1899-1901*; *Baden-Powell of Mafeking*, 1900

1901-1920 • *The History of the St. Leger Stakes, 1776-1901*, 1902; *A Book About Yorkshire*, 1908; *The Enchanting North*, 1908; *Recollections of a Yorkshire Village*, 1910; *Nooks and Corners of Yorkshire*, 1911; *Memories of a Spectator*, 1912; *Memorials of a Yorkshire Parish*, 1917; *The Making of Modern Yorkshire, 1750-1914*, 1918; *Leeds*, 1919; *Sheffield*, 1919; *The Cistercians in Yorkshire*, 1919; *Harrogate and Knares-*

borough, 1920; *Pontefract*, 1920

1921-1932 • *Yorkshiremen of the Restoration*, 1921; *Halifax*, 1923; *The Life and Work of St. Wilfrid of Ripon, Apostle of Sussex*, 1925; *The Reformation in Northern England*, 1925; *The Solution of a Mystery: Documents Relative to the Murder of Roger Maidment at Ullathwaite in the County of Yorkshire in October 1899*, 1932

MISCELLANEOUS: *One of His Little Ones, and Other Tales in Prose and Verse*, 1888

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Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. This tightly focused reading of fifteen years of British detective fiction is crucial for placing Fletcher's early work and for understanding his overall career's trajectory.

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PAT FLOWER

Patricia Mary Bryson

Born: Kent, England; February 23, 1914

Died: Australia; September 15, 1977

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Detective Inspector Swinton, 1958-1966

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR BERT SWINTON, of the Sydney police force, is a moral, somewhat naïve man, not an intellectual. He uses close examination of detail and intuition to solve crimes, though he considers himself an unimaginative man. He is middle-aged and a bit thick about the waist, relies on Australian meat pies for sustenance and comfort, and lives with his wife, Mary, and their family in the suburbs of Sydney.

CONTRIBUTION

Pat Flower wrote within two mystery traditions: the police procedural and the novel of psychological suspense. Her novels featuring Detective Inspector Bert Swinton, however, have little in common with the gritty realism of novels by such police-procedural writers as Ed McBain. There is a playfulness about the series, evidenced first by the titles, all but two of which allude to Flower's surname, yet there is also often a disturbing undercurrent to the action that does not disappear with the resolution of the case. Flower enjoys foiling the reader's expectations; Swinton is not always correct in his deductions. Twists of plot and surprise endings are the norm, and characters tumble in and out of being the most unlikely suspect.

Flower's psychological suspense novels have their share of surprise endings, but the overall mood is much darker and the novels more successful. In these stories, murder is almost incidental; Flower's emphasis is not on detection but on the revelation of character. She depicts characters caught in webs of their own making, their images of themselves destroyed by circumstances, their self-delusions exposed; or she portrays seemingly normal people who are gradually revealed to be mad.

Flower is not well known in the mystery field and her books received few reviews, but certainly her novels of psychological suspense deserve more attention than they have yet received.

BIOGRAPHY

Pat Flower was born Patricia Mary Bryson in Kent, England, on February 23, 1914. At the age of fourteen, she moved to Australia, where she spent the rest of her life and where most of her mysteries are set. She created the character of Inspector Swinton with her first novel, *Wax Flowers for Gloria*, published in 1958. In the 1970's, Flower turned to novels of psychological suspense, producing eight novels in as many years. Flower was also active in the Australian entertainment industry, writing numerous radio and television plays between the late 1940's and the 1960's. One of her plays, *The Tape Recorder* (pr. 1966), was chosen for inclusion in *Best Short Plays, 1969*, and was the first play to be produced in color on British television. She won acclaim for her screenwriting, receiving an award for the film *From the Tropics to the Snow* (1965), written with her husband, Cedric Flower, and earning the Mary Gilmore Award for *Tilley Landed on Our Shore* (pr. 1968), a one-hour television play. She also published a book of verse, *Pistils for Two*, in 1963. Flower died in 1977.

ANALYSIS

Comments from the brief reviews that Pat Flower has received for her mysteries have ranged from "unputdownable" to "clever and unobvious" to "a poor show." Her writing does vary in quality, with her later novels more successful than early efforts. She uses, however, similar techniques in both her police procedurals and her later psychological mysteries. Her plots are complex and take surprising turns, she aims for comic and ironic effects, she avoids the omniscient voice, and she misleads the reader by telling the story from the point of view of an uninformed or psychologically unstable character. Flower is ultimately inter-

ested in what lies beneath the surface of events and characters; in *A Wreath of Water-Lilies* (1960), she writes, "Once the surface gave way anywhere that part of the wall would collapse in chaos. Just as in this situation there were cracks in the surface . . . now the smooth civilized top layer was unreliable."

Unlike many mystery novels, however, Flower's mysteries, especially her novels of psychological suspense, do not reassure the reader that order will be restored, that the unjust will be punished and virtue rewarded. Indeed, her suspense novels often end with the disturbing notion that madness lies close at hand. Her police procedurals are only occasionally more comforting; the criminals are usually caught, but in such novels as *Goodbye, Sweet William* (1959), three murderers, who have, in Flower's ingenious plot, all independently killed the same man, go unpunished in

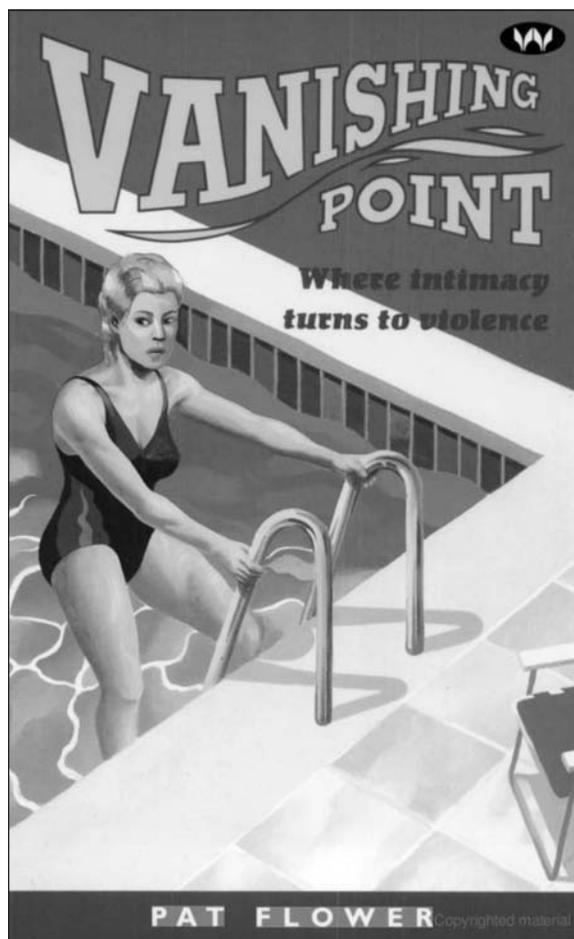
a curious ironic twist. In *Fiends of the Family* (1966), three old women share the family trait of being a psychotic murderer. In *A Wreath of Water-Lilies*, the criminals are caught, but through no effort of Inspector Swinton, the ostensible detective, who has been on the wrong track through most of the book.

A WREATH OF WATER-LILIES

A Wreath of Water-Lilies breaks other conventions in addition to having a detective who comes up with the wrong answers. In it, Flower combines strong elements of farce with the expected progression of a mystery. Inspector Swinton of the Sydney police is sent to France to handle a sensitive matter involving a French diplomat and the scent of scandal. After he finishes his business and still regretting not being able to meet the great Inspector Maigret of the Sûreté, Swinton travels to Provence on a sightseeing tour. In a small village outside Marseilles, while quietly becoming drunk on Pernod, he meets Martha Tilley, an expatriate Australian who insists that he must stay a night at the château of her employer, Pearl Langham. The next morning, Swinton finds another of Pearl's guests, Ricard, dead in a pond; he knows immediately that it is murder, though the other guests assume that it was an accident.

The farcical plot elements surface on Swinton's first night at the château, and Flower makes it clear that this is her intent: Swinton comments that he feels part of "one of those English bedroom farces where the siren turns out to be engaged in some ridiculous business for a foreign power and the trusting, bumbling hero is saved by his own clumsiness and stupidity." The setting of a country house is perfect for a farce, and characters enter and exit rooms quickly, chatting brightly and drinking to excess. Swinton must endure two ludicrous seduction scenes. Echoing Aristophanes, Flower even introduces a nightly chorus of frogs, a sly comment on the follies of the characters.

The elements of coincidence that make a farce entertaining are, however, deadly to a mystery. Much of the plot of *A Wreath of Water-Lilies* depends heavily on coincidence: Swinton's meeting Martha in the village, overhearing bits of conversations, witnessing assassinations, and spotting two of the suspects in the village on the day they claim to have spent in Marseilles. The most difficult plot element to accept is that the



French police would let Swinton run an unofficial investigation at all, yet they apparently give him their blessing and a reception that borders on adoration. Flower proceeds, however, to turn all these situations to farce as well: Swinton really is the “trusting, bumbling hero [who] is saved by his own clumsiness and stupidity.” He avoids being killed because he believes the murderer when he claims to be a police officer on the trail of an art-fraud ring.

A Wreath of Water-Lilies is ultimately frustrating because the reader must depend on the misled Swinton for clues to the mystery. Flower pokes fun at the conventions of the mystery at the expense of logic. She does provide enough information for the reader to be able to deduce the art-fraud scheme, but Swinton’s misinterpretations of character prevent a logical guess at the murderer. Underneath the farce, too, Flower’s preoccupation with warped psychology surfaces in many of the characters. Pearl is an alcoholic who lives in a fantasy world, complaining of her suffering under a Nazi occupation of the house that never occurred, clutching at the “friends” who abuse her hospitality. Jean, another of Pearl’s guests, is a lonely middle-aged woman who feels out of place among the others’ sophisticated talk of art and wine, and when her one attempt at seduction is cruelly transformed by a note passed under Swinton’s door, she clutches at him in boozy despair. The reader finishes the book uneasy at its portrayal of humankind, despite Swinton’s hearty goodness.

Flower’s novels of psychological suspense are even more disturbing. Several of these novels portray characters on the edge of madness; others portray characters caught in webs of their own making from which they cannot extricate themselves. Flower employs surprise endings to good effect in these novels: Although the turn in the plot catches the reader off guard, the development is nevertheless believable. Murder is usually involved but is not the basis for the novel; there are no detectives following up clues here. Flower often uses an unreliable point of view in these novels, though they are usually written in the third person; the reader only gradually becomes aware that perception is skewed.

CAT’S CRADLE

Cat’s Cradle (1973) is told from the perspective of a tubercular invalid who may also be a paranoid. Rich Jane Fenton has returned to England from Australia to nurse her illness and restructure her life. Soon, however, she becomes dependent on the companionship of a young man she once saw in Australia, and they are married, though he admits being interested in her money. Simon Pacey manipulates Jane into returning to Australia by publicly announcing “their” plans and apparently spreading the rumor that she is mentally unstable. Once back in Australia, Jane begins plotting revenge.

Flower keeps the reader off balance by portraying Simon’s obvious manipulations; it is only as the book progresses that the reader begins to wonder about his object. Yes, he wants money, but is Jane more of a skinflint than she portrays herself to be? Is she interpreting his motives correctly? When Jane murders Mrs. Barnes, her slovenly housekeeper, by pushing her into a pool of water to drown, and when she later kills Simon by thrusting her embroidery scissors into his ear while they are on an outing at the beach, the reader suddenly must reinterpret the entire novel. Jane no longer seems a trustworthy commentator. Yet Jane’s perceptions of persecution may still be entirely correct: At the end of the novel, Monica, Simon’s former wife, volunteers to take care of Jane. She asks Jane’s lawyer to draw up a will under which Monica would inherit, saying that these are Jane’s instructions. Even that, however, is told from Jane’s perspective, and she may be inventing it all.

SLYBOOTS

Slyboots (1974), too, is told from the point of view of an unreliable character. *Slyboots* is not as successful at building suspense as *Cat’s Cradle*, but the method of plot development is the same: the slow revelation of events that throw suspicion on the main character’s version of reality. One begins *Slyboots* thinking that the main character, Rick Coleman, is an opportunist, but he seems sane enough. By the end of the novel, however, he has killed two people, one of them a child, and Flower suggests that he has previously killed several others as well. As the novel progresses, one realizes that Rick seems to be believing his own lies, so that again, as in *Cat’s Cradle*, the reader must reinterpret

pret everything that has gone before. Though disturbing in its final scene of hallucinatory madness, *Slyboots* has a sense of closure that *Cat's Cradle* does not, which oddly makes it less successful.

SHADOW SHOW

Like *Cat's Cradle*, *Shadow Show* (1976), Flower's last novel, ends with the sense that the novel is not really over: The plot will continue to work itself out after the reader closes the book. *Shadow Show* portrays a man who becomes trapped by fear. Richard Ross discovers unethical business practices at his work but does not report his suspicions immediately, because he has no proof. Instead, he visits the man he suspects is running the deal, Athol Cosgrove. Cosgrove apparently has devised a plan to implicate Ross in a burglary of his flat and by extension in the fraudulent dealings. A neighbor boy is accidentally murdered during the plan's execution, and Ross becomes a suspect in the killing as well. In *Shadow Show*, none of the characters is mad, but Flower portrays the deterioration of Ross's ethics under the strain of being a murder suspect. By the end of the novel, Ross, who has self-righteously prided himself on his moral code, has become a liar, a heavy drinker, and nearly a murderer. He has trapped himself with his own self-protective lies.

Flower's view of the world is a dark one filled with self-deceiving characters and psychological as well as physical violence. Though her books are quite well written and her mastery of the suspense form obvious, little attention has been paid to her work, perhaps because her books are so relentlessly disturbing in their view of human nature. Her police procedurals are often amusing, but in these, and more so in the suspense novels, her vision of what lies below the "smooth civilized top layer" seems to find no redeeming grace there.

Casey Schmitt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR SWINTON SERIES: *Wax Flowers for Gloria*, 1958; *Goodbye, Sweet William*, 1959; *A Wreath of Water-Lilies*, 1960; *One Rose Less*, 1961; *Hell for Heather*, 1962; *Term of Terror*, 1963; *Fiends of the Family*, 1966

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Hunt the Body*, 1968; *Cobweb*, 1972; *Cat's Cradle*, 1973; *Odd Job*, 1974; *Sly-*

boots, 1974; *Vanishing Point*, 1975; *Crisscross*, 1976; *Shadow Show*, 1976

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *This Seems as Good a Time as Any*, pr. 1948; *Love Returns to Umbrizi*, pr. 1949 (with Cedric Flower); *From the Tropics to the Snow*, pr. 1965 (with Cedric Flower); *Anonymous*, pr. 1966; *Done Away With*, pr. 1966; *Easy Terms*, pr. 1966; *Marleen*, pr. 1966; *The Empty Day*, pr. 1966; *The Lace Counter*, pr. 1966; *The Prowler*, pr. 1966; *The Tape Recorder*, pr. 1966; *The V.I.P.P.*, pr. 1966; *Tilley Landed on Our Shore*, pr. 1968

POETRY: *Pistils for Two*, 1963

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- Macdonald, Virginia. "Pat Flower." In *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, edited by John M. Reilly. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Discussion of Flower's crime fiction, its relative merit, and its relation to both British and Australian culture.
- Nile, Richard. *The Making of the Australian Literary Imagination*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2002. Discussion of prevalent features of Australian writing and the cultural and geographic influences on the continent's literary history; provides perspective on Flower's work.
- Wilde, William H., Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. General overview of Australian literature and culture. Creates a background for understanding Flower. Bibliographic references and index.

KEN FOLLETT

Born: Cardiff, Wales; June 5, 1949

Also wrote as Martin Martinsen; Symon Myles;

Bernard L. Ross; Zachary Stone

Types of plot: Espionage; historical; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Apples Carstairs, 1974-

Piers Roper, 1974-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

APPLES CARSTAIRS is a successful businessman who is forced to become an amateur detective.

PIERS ROPER is an ambitious and effective industrial spy who becomes involved in hostile takeovers and corporate battles.

CONTRIBUTION

Ken Follett writes exciting tales of espionage and adventure set in various locales and periods. Thoroughly researched, his novels mix historical fact and colorful protagonists to create intelligent—if not intellectual—entertainments. He also presents complex, believable characters whose personal lives are often as chaotic as their social and political milieus. He has consciously courted bestsellerdom by employing vivid heroines to appeal to female readers. Although his work resembles the tradition of Helen MacInnes and Alistair MacLean more than that of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene, Follett's novels are carefully crafted and generally well written in a deceptively simple style. Of all the espionage writers since the heyday of Ian Fleming, Follett writes perhaps the easiest plots to follow—without skimping on complexity and ambiguity of motive.

BIOGRAPHY

Kenneth Martin Follett was born on June 5, 1949, in Cardiff, Wales, the son of Martin D. Follett and Lavinia C. Evans Follett. His father was an Inland Revenue clerk and later a lecturer at a school for tax inspectors. After growing up in Cardiff, Follett studied philosophy at the University of London. He married

Mary Emma Ruth Elson in 1968, and their son, Emanuele, was born later that year. A daughter, Marie-Claire, was born in 1973. Follett's wife worked as a bookkeeper while he continued his education. After he graduated in 1970, he worked as a reporter and popular-music columnist for the *South Wales Echo* in Cardiff. In 1973, he became a crime reporter for the *Evening News* in London for a year. Follett's switch from journalism to fiction resulted from financial necessity. His daughter had just been born and the family had recently bought a house when Follett's car broke down. Because a fellow journalist had made some quick money by selling a mystery novel, Follett hurriedly wrote *The Big Needle* (1974), a mystery about drug dealers. The book paid Follett's car repair bill and encouraged him to continue pursuing fiction.

In 1974, Follett joined the staff of Everest Books, a modest London publisher, to learn the essentials of writing best sellers. He spent the following years rising to deputy managing director of the firm and writing nine more books—mysteries, thrillers, and children's mysteries—under his own name and a series of pseudonyms, earning about five thousand dollars for each. Follett told the *Los Angeles Times* that he learned to create good books “by writing mediocre ones and wondering what was wrong with them.” He also attempted to make some of these early efforts at least different from the flood of popular fiction, with industrial spying the subject of *The Shakeout* (1975) and *The Bear Raid* (1976).

Follett's breakthrough came with *The Eye of the Needle* (1978). The novel, which resulted from an English publisher's request for an adventure novel having something to do with World War II, was an international success. It sold more than ten million copies and won the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America. It established Follett as a novelist. After publishing *Triple* with Arbor House in 1979, he signed a three-million-dollar deal for three more books with New American Library/William Morrow. He then took his family to a village near Nice, France, where they lived until returning to England in 1982.

During the 1980's, Follett continued to write spy novels but also ventured into other fields. The success of the American industrialist H. Ross Perot's company in rescuing hostages from the Iranian government provided the material for Follett's *On Wings of Eagles* (1983), a nonfictional book. In 1989, he published his first historical novel, *The Pillars of the Earth*, a family saga involving the building of a medieval cathedral. Despite the book's controversial sexual content, it was judged one of England's best one hundred novels by a British Broadcasting Company poll in 2003. Owing in part to that novel's success, Follett signed a deal with Dell Publishing Company to write two more books for \$12.3 million. However, although Dell was pleased with *A Dangerous Fortune* (1993), it was less enthusiastic about *A Place Called Freedom* (1995), a saga set in the United States. Eventually Crown Publishers negotiated a deal with Dell and published the book, enabling Follett to retain authorial control of his work.

Meanwhile, during the 1980's, Follett and his wife divorced. Afterward, Follett married Barbara Broer, who was a Labour Party member of Parliament for Stevenage, England, where the couple settled.

ANALYSIS

The Eye of the Needle and Ken Follett's subsequent spy novels clearly illustrate the fruits of his apprentice period. His fiction is economically written, with few wasted words, scenes, or characters. Compared with the espionage novels of John le Carré, Len Deighton, Frederick Forsyth, and Robert Ludlum, Follett's books are tightly constructed and remarkably easy to follow, yet Follett displays the intelligence, ambiguities, subtleties, and didacticism associated with the best spy fiction. Despite a quiet socialism that distrusts the rich and powerful and sides with the oppressed and disadvantaged, Follett never allows his concerns to get in the way of telling an exciting story.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Ken Follett (center) with South African novelist Nadine Gordimer (left) and American mystery writer Donna Leon at an international book event in Germany in 2003. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Follett does not limit himself to specific times and places. His novels take place in World War II Britain and Egypt, Israel in the 1960's, England in the days leading up to World War I, and the Afghanistan of the early 1980's, with side trips to Germany, Russia, France, and the United States. His protagonists are spies, military men, revolutionaries, prostitutes, and homemakers. He occasionally includes historical personages, such as Sir Winston Churchill and a young Anwar al-Sadat. Unafraid to resort to the unusual, unexpected, or unlikely, Follett, in *Triple*, has Israeli intelligence enlist the aid of a Mafia don to hijack a shipload of uranium.

Incident and character are the major elements in Follett's fiction. Each novel has at least one brilliantly conceived and executed sequence. One of the best and most cinematic action scenes occurs in *The Key to Rebecca* (1980), when the motorcycle-riding hero chases the running villain through the streets of Cairo. A different but equally gripping sequence appears in *Lie Down with Lions* (1985). When that novel's pregnant heroine witnesses a young Afghan boy's loss of a hand to a mine, she rips off her blouse to bind the wound, and begins carrying the boy to medical help. On the way, she is beaten by an anti-Western Afghan outraged by her nakedness. She continues struggling to reach the doctor, her husband, only to be left alone when her labor begins prematurely. Her daughter is later delivered by an ignorant midwife. Follett touches on a wide range of emotions throughout this series of events.

Follett's plots are crammed with details to assist in creating setting, mood, and verisimilitude. He writes, in *The Man from St. Petersburg* (1982), about Russian expatriates in pre-World War I London as if he had firsthand knowledge of their lives. Follett pays as much attention to the day-to-day details of life in a remote Afghan village as he does to the action of *Lie Down with Lions*. In the latter, he even includes a bibliography, listing the sources of his Afghan information.

Although Follett's protagonists may not be as fully realized as those in the works of le Carré or Deighton, he is never satisfied with mere stereotypes, carefully delineating the characters' social, political, economic, psychological, and sexual motives. His heroes are

nagged by doubts about themselves, their work, and their worlds. Nat Dickstein, the Mossad agent in *Triple*, and Ellis Thaler, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative in *Lie Down with Lions*, hate their jobs, feeling trapped in webs of deceit. Follett's villains are always interesting, with a thin line often separating the good from the bad. In *The Key to Rebecca*, the novelist draws numerous parallels between his English hero and German antagonist. The Russian anarchist of *The Man from St. Petersburg* is portrayed as both hero and villain.

Follett plans each of his novels with the advice of his agent and his editor, calculations aimed at producing best sellers. Realizing that the readership of espionage fiction is predominantly male and desiring to make his books more attractive to female readers, he has placed a strong woman character at the center of each book. This character is an average woman, non-professional, frustrated romantically, with whom many female readers can identify. She is also intelligent, courageous, and resourceful—the moral center of the novel, given to expressing some of Follett's social and political views. This heroine either assists the hero in foiling the villains or does so on her own. That she can be counted on to save the day makes Follett's novels somewhat formulaic. This woman can also expect sexual fulfillment, leading to graphically erotic scenes, especially in *Lie Down with Lions*.

Follett offers a fictional theory of sorts in his 1979 *Writer* essay "Books That Enchant and Enlighten." Claiming that most popular writers aim too low, while their more serious colleagues wallow in "the trivia of middle-class life," Follett asks novelists to refuse to settle for merely "exciting trash or thoughtful tedium." He attacks the entertainers for creating wooden characters and writing carelessly and the aesthetes for dispensing with plot and "the world outside the mind," suggesting that each type of writer incorporate elements of both popular and serious approaches:

The underwater knife fight is more exciting, not less, if it's described in graceful, powerful prose; the plot has more drama if it depends on character development as much as [on] external events; the romance is more thrilling if the tall dark hero nurses a genuine, credible sadness behind that handsome-but-cruel smile.

Writing successful fiction, according to Follett, is presenting numerous elements correctly, and he encourages novelists “to discover new things to get right.”

THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

All the elements of Follett’s fictional formula appear in *The Eye of the Needle*, and his later books have offered variations on his achievement in this first major success. The Germans’ best spy, Heinrich von Müller-Güden, has been an undercover agent in England since before World War II. His code name is Die Nadel (the needle), after the stiletto he uses to dispatch those who get in his way. This master spy, called Henry Faber (one of his British aliases) throughout the narrative, is a consummate professional who never allows anything to interfere with his duties, cutting himself off, as much as possible, from human emotions.

Faber has learned that the Allied base in Norfolk is a hoax, nothing but skeleton barracks, plywood tanks, rubber ships, and dummy aircraft. This stratagem is intended to convince the Germans that the inevitable invasion of the Continent will be at Pas de Calais. Faber must take his photographic evidence to Adolf Hitler in person so that all efforts will be directed farther down the French coast at Normandy. British intelligence must stop him before he reaches the submarine sent to pick him up somewhere off the coast of the United Kingdom.

Assigned to stop Faber are Professor Percival Godliman and Frederick Bloggs, a former Scotland Yard inspector. Godliman, who served in military intelligence during World War I, has engulfed himself in medieval studies following the death of his wife. Bloggs is also a widower, his wife, an ambulance driver, having been killed during the Blitz. Bloggs’s pursuit of Die Nadel is made more personal because he blames Faber for his wife’s death, since the spy’s reports have determined where German bombs are to fall.

Like Faber, Godliman and Bloggs are lonely men who retreat into their work as a substitute for their missing emotional lives. Ironically, both find refuge in the current chaos. The war simplifies moral issues and negates the daily banalities of ordinary existence. Follett’s characters have a need for the extraordinary to rescue them from the mundane. It is impossible to see them working in offices and living in the suburbs.

The other protagonists are Lucy and David Rose. David lost both legs in a traffic accident on their wedding day in 1940, just before he was to become a fighter pilot. Unlike Godliman and Bloggs, he has found no outlet for his frustrations and has become embittered, unable to escape his self-pity. He raises sheep on Storm Island, off the coast of Aberdeen, Scotland, where he and Lucy live with their son, Jo, and an elderly shepherd. Jo was conceived before the wedding, and the couple have not had sexual relations since the accident. David refuses to let Lucy touch him, but she has become reconciled to her life in this remote, bleak spot. Like Faber, she knows nothing but isolation.

The Roses’ lives are disrupted by the arrival of the fugitive Faber. Attempting to reach the U-boat and flee Bloggs, he has stolen a boat during a gale, only to be shipwrecked on Storm Island. Faber has been celibate for seven years, since any emotional involvement would distract him from his work, but he immediately senses a kinship with the lonely farmwife. Lucy is also drawn to the stranger whose kindness and humor are so different from her husband’s sullenness.

Lucy and Faber begin an affair, but the suspicious David finds the spy’s photographic negatives and confronts him. Their cliffside fight to the death is one of the most harrowing in all Follett’s fiction. Die Nadel has more difficulty killing this legless man than he has ever had with any of his other victims.

When Lucy discovers that her husband is dead, she retains her composure, even to the point of making love to her husband’s murderer. Escaping with Jo to radio for help, Lucy is pursued by Faber, and a bloody battle ensues. She takes an ax to Faber’s hand when he breaks into the cottage; then, she keeps him from contacting the submarine by sticking her fingers into a light socket to knock out the radio. Finally, she chases Faber to the shore and shoots him.

Lucy’s amazing determination does not come out of nowhere; Follett has painstakingly painted a believable picture of her troubled marriage, showing the courage she has needed simply to live with David. She draws on her unfulfilled needs in her passion for the stranger and finds similar strength growing out of her repression when she kills the man she loves but knows she must destroy.

The most interesting achievement in *The Eye of the Needle*, however, is Follett's convincing portrait of the German spy. Faber is an outsider who thinks that he can control the violent world around him. He has never joined the National Socialist Party, feels scorn for everyone in authority in Germany, dares to include sarcastic remarks in his reports because of his belief in his invulnerability, and provides false information to prevent the bombing of St. Paul's Cathedral because he respects it as a work of art.

Faber considers himself cool and dispassionate, yet he vomits whenever he kills someone. Attempting to turn his weaknesses into strengths, he realizes that he can use his fears and insecurities to advantage in his profession, since a spy mistrusts everyone and everything. His instinct for survival fails him only when he drops his defenses with Lucy. He can accomplish his mission and win the war for the country he loves if he kills her, but he cannot bring himself to murder the person who has reminded him of his human frailties.

Although Follett may admire Faber's efficiency as a spy, he does not intend for him to be a sympathetic character. He never allows his reader to forget that Die Nadel is a representative of one of the world's greatest evils, even if Faber does not think of himself as a Nazi. Follett's goal is to make the character a recognizable human being, to avoid the cardboard villain so common in escapist fiction. Follett's ability to create such believable, interesting characters is perhaps his greatest strength.

THE MAN FROM ST. PETERSBURG

The Man from St. Petersburg begins with a meeting between Stephen Walden, a British aristocrat, and Winston Churchill, a government minister, who asks Walden to negotiate an agreement between Russia and Great Britain on the eve of the outbreak of World War I. Although out of power and a political rival of Churchill, Walden patriotically agrees to represent Britain and deal with his wife's nephew, Prince Aleksy Andreyevich Orlov, the Russian envoy. The spy in enemy territory is Feliks Kschesinsky, a fearless anarchist whose torture and banishment to Siberia have made him despise authority and whose goal is the assassination of Orlov and the prevention of a Russian/British alliance. Muddying the waters is the fact that Char-

lotte, whom Walden believes is his daughter, is really the child of Lydia and Feliks, who once had a clandestine affair. When Charlotte, whose radical, liberal temperament resembles her mother's, meets Feliks, she is drawn to him because of his liberal politics and even helps him try to kill Orlov.

Within the first few chapters Follett establishes the conflicts: Labour versus Conservative parties, youth versus age, radical extremists versus upholders of the status quo, patriarchal men versus liberated women, and upper class versus lower class. Although both Feliks and Walden love people and want to help them, that "love" is in the abstract. Walden is a decent man but callously dismisses a pregnant, unwed servant, and Feliks does not fear death because he does not love anyone in particular, only the "masses" whom he thinks he serves. At the beginning of the novel Feliks is the predator and Orlov and Walden the prey, but after Walden's first attempt fails, he sets a trap for Feliks, only to have the talented and resourceful spy escape. From that point, Feliks becomes the hunted, and without Charlotte's help he would fail. Charlotte brings Feliks to Walden's mansion, where Orlov is staying, and in the conflagration that he starts, Feliks successfully kills Orlov but discovers Charlotte is trapped in her room. Walden and Feliks, who now realize that he truly loves his daughter and puts her escape ahead of his own, save Charlotte, but Feliks perishes in the attempt. Walden and Lydia discover that they are in love, and he realizes that he has been distant and aloof. Follett has it both ways: His spy is successful, but the treaty is not forestalled by Orlov's death because Churchill orders that history will record that the death was caused by the fire, not by Feliks's bullet.

THE KEY TO REBECCA

Perhaps the most "literary" of Follett's novels, *The Key to Rebecca* is tied to Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), a novel about the difficulties a young woman has fitting into the aristocratic world of her husband, whose dead wife seems to haunt their home. Like Rebecca, Elene Fontana feels unworthy of the cultured, privileged man she loves, and her Jewish/Bedouin culture differs sharply from that of the British expatriate colonists. William Vandam, the British in-

telligence officer she loves, is pitted against Alexander Wolff, a master German spy intent on aiding a German victory in North Africa. Initially, things go Wolff's way as he enlists the aid of a seductress who succeeds in getting information from a weak British officer, but gradually Wolff is the pursued, and Vandam, who has to contend with an officious and ineffective commanding officer, gains the upper hand. His capture of Wolff, however, depends on Elene's collaboration and the plucky behavior of his son Billy. As in most Follett novels, the "hero" is merely a public servant determined to do his job despite repeated setbacks, not a suave superman who is control throughout the story. As in many Follett novels, the emotionally arid hero learns to love and becomes a more complete human being.

LIE DOWN WITH LIONS

In *Lie Down with Lions*, two spies operate in Afghanistan. Ellis Thaler, the American CIA agent, is working against the Russians, and Jean-Pierre, a French communist whose father's past has shaped his son's political convictions, is working with the Russians. Caught in the middle is Jane Lambert, who first loves Ellis but spurns him when she discovers his CIA identity and who later marries Jean-Pierre and goes with him to Afghanistan, where he works as a doctor to the Afghans, whom he betrays. When Jane finds out that her husband is a traitor, she turns against him; and when Ellis turns up in Afghanistan, her love for him is rekindled. Ellis, earlier divorced from a wife who believed him to be cold and aloof, slowly allows his feelings for Jane to develop. When he and Jane flee from Jean-Pierre and his Russian comrades, it is Jane who assumes control of the plot. She refuses to bomb the young Russian soldiers who pursue them because she thinks of their mothers, but later it is she who kills Jean-Pierre so they can escape.

Like other spy novels, *Lie Down with Lions* is a love story about a strong woman, a man who finally allows his emotions to develop, and a villain whose past explains his behavior. It is also a political story about the contrasts between the Afghans and the Russians and between liberals and conservatives. The comparison between the American experience in Vietnam and the Soviet experience in Afghanistan is

drawn, and the futility of both suggests the end of colonialist incursions in the rest of the world. The moral superiority of women over men in historical affairs is also part of the message: diplomacy, not weapons, is the answer.

WHITEOUT

In *Whiteout* (2004), Follett abandons the spy novel and returns to espionage, this time a search for a stolen biochemical weapon that is being sent to terrorists. Toni Gallo, chief of security at a pharmaceutical company, is pitted against three malevolent but somewhat comic thugs and the son of the company's president, Stanley Oxenford, the older man she loves and from whom she is separated by class, income, and age. There are chase scenes, violent acts, interference from incompetents, and nods to historical events, but the novel essentially takes place during one day at the Oxenford home, where the family, dysfunctional at best and beset by friction, comes together as ostensibly weak men gain their courage and children gain maturity in order to defeat the villains. More so than in the other novels, family seems paramount and reconciliations between men and women and parents and children is the focus. As in the first few Follett novels, the technical information tends to overwhelm and ultimately disappoint Follett fans.

Michael Adams

Updated by Thomas L. Erskine

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

APPLES CARSTAIRS SERIES (AS MYLES): *The Big Needle*, 1974 (also known as *The Big Apple*); *The Big Black*, 1974; *The Big Hit*, 1975

PIERS ROPER SERIES: *The Shakeout*, 1975; *The Bear Raid*, 1976

NOVELS: *The Modigliani Scandal*, 1976 (as Stone); *The Eye of the Needle*, 1978; *Triple*, 1979; *The Key to Rebecca*, 1980; *The Man from St. Petersburg*, 1982; *Lie Down with Lions*, 1985; *Night over Water*, 1991; *A Dangerous Fortune*, 1993; *The Third Twin*, 1996; *The Hammer of Eden*, 1998; *Code to Zero*, 2000; *Jackdaws*, 2001; *Hornet Flight*, 2002; *Whiteout*, 2004

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Amok: King of Legend*, 1976 (as Ross); *Paper Money*, 1977 (as Stone); *Capricorn One*, 1978 (as Ross); *The Pillars of the Earth*, 1989; *Pillars of the Almighty*, 1994; *A Place Called Freedom*, 1995; *World Without End*, 2007

NONFICTION: *The Heist of the Century*, 1978 (with René Louis Maurice; also known as *The Gentlemen of 16 July*; revised 1986 as *Under the Streets of Nice: The Bank Heist of the Century*); *On Wings of Eagles*, 1983

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Secret of Kellerman's Studio*, 1976; *The Power Twins and the Worm Puzzle: A Science Fantasy for Young People*, 1976 (as Martinsen); *The Mystery Hideout*, 1991

SCREENPLAYS: *Fringe Banking*, 1978; *A Football Star*, 1979 (with John Sealey); *Lie Down with Lions*, 1988 (adaptation of his novel)

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terview published early in Follett's writing career.

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Ramet, Carlos. *Ken Follett: The Transformation of a Writer*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1999. Mixture of biography and analysis of the novels, quite helpful.

Turner, Richard C. *Ken Follett: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. Using a variety of critical approaches, Turner provides an indispensable analysis of all Follett's major works. Includes a biography and a bibliography of Follett's works and the secondary works about his fiction.

C. S. FORESTER

Cecil Lewis Troughton Smith

Born: Cairo, Egypt; August 27, 1899

Died: Fullerton, California; April 2, 1966

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Apart from the Hornblower saga, for which he is best known, C. S. Forester wrote modern naval fiction, historical biographies, travel books, war adventures set on land, a romantic adventure, several allegories set in Africa, and, early in his career, three psychological crime thrillers. Although the mystery contributions have always been overshadowed by the hugely successful adventure novels that followed, they present compelling stories in their own right. Not content to follow the classical detective format, Forester wrote inverted mysteries that penetrate the superficial mechanics of crime to reveal the psychologies of the per-

petrators. Forester never achieved any great measure of critical success, nor did he aspire to literary acclaim. He was well received by the public and will be remembered as a writer of good stories with fast-paced plots and meticulously researched details.

BIOGRAPHY

C. S. Forester, also known as Cecil Scott Forester, was born Cecil Lewis Troughton Smith on August 27, 1899, the youngest of five children in the family of George Smith, a British official in Cairo, Egypt, and Sarah Troughton Smith. He adopted the pen name when his family strenuously opposed his career change to writing. His mother returned to England with her children when he was two. Young Cecil found Great Britain cold and inhospitable. He was placed in council infants school at the age of three, by



C. S. Forester. (Library of Congress)

which time he was already able to read and write. Although he was an academic prodigy, his education was not without difficulties; he was a slight child who made an easy target for bullying classmates. His older siblings won scholarships, however, and he was expected to do the same.

Denied the usual childhood outlet of street play, Cecil turned to books, starting a lifelong habit of reading at least one a day. During World War I, the seventeen-year-old youth tried to enlist in the British army but failed the physical examination as a result of a heart irregularity. He began medical studies at Guy's Hospital, where, for the first time, his marks suffered. As a means of escape, he began to write small pieces for the hospital gazette and discovered that he enjoyed writing more than practicing medicine. Despite his parents' wishes, he made a clean break from medicine to become a full-time author. His first novel, a work he later admitted was "atrociously bad," was the product of a frantic, two-week effort; it was never published. He was to write three novels before the third one, *A Pawn Among Kings*, was accepted for publication in

1924. What followed were several Napoleonic histories before Forester returned to fiction with a mystery tale, *Payment Deferred*, published in 1926.

Forester married Kathleen Belcher, a sports instructor, in 1926. They later had two sons, John and George. *Payment Deferred* received favorable attention and was converted to a successful screenplay. The royalties from this book cemented his new occupation. Forester ultimately moved to California, where his fame grew. In 1943, Forester was stricken with arteriosclerosis, a painful affliction that made him a virtual invalid. A year later, he and Kathleen were divorced. He married Dorothy Ellen Foster in 1947. His body was crippled, but he continued to write as crisply as ever until suffering a stroke in 1964. He lingered until dying of heart disease on April 2, 1966.

ANALYSIS

Although C. S. Forester is best known, and will most be remembered, for his Hornblower series and other tales of dashing military actions, he served his apprenticeship writing mystery thrillers that are well worth reading. Of these, *Payment Deferred* and *Plain Murder* (1930) are the most successful. Both works follow the inverted format; that is, the stories are told from the viewpoint of the criminal. His protagonists are ordinary working-class people who somehow summon the nerve to commit murders, then suffer the disrupting consequences of their acts. Avoiding a common failing of classical mysteries, Forester put life into the plots by logically developing the complications and tension that consume criminals' lives after they perform these desperate acts. His mysteries then chronicle the killers' descent into the horrors that inevitably follow. Forester would have nothing of the classical English tea cozies with their bloodless victims, parades of clues, and faintly comedic overtones.

PAYMENT DEFERRED

William Marble, a shabbily dressed bank clerk who serves as the protagonist of *Payment Deferred*, is a man on the ragged edge of destitution, sorely pressed to pay the debts looming over his rented house in a dreary London suburb. He holds to a thin thread of respect from his coworkers and his family, a frail, weak-willed wife named Annie and two children. He would

be an alcoholic but for the fact that he cannot afford to buy enough whiskey. Opportunity knocks one blustery evening in the form of Jim Medland, a distant nephew from Melbourne. Jim has come to visit his only surviving family since the death of his mother. He makes the mistake, however, of flashing a wad of bank notes in his wallet. Marble's mind churns at the possibilities, and the reader is surprised to discover a mind capable of strong focus, at least for brief periods of time. This mental nimbleness under pressure is characteristic of all Forester's mystery protagonists and goes a long way toward rounding out their personalities. The same powers of superhuman concentration are also an important element of Forester's later series hero, Horatio Hornblower, a much more sympathetic character.

Marble offers drinks from his last precious bottle to young Jim and hints at the possibility of an inter-family loan, a prospect that Jim dodges most firmly. Now comes the crux of Marble's life: Feigning that he has heard someone cry out, he rushes upstairs, still holding the glass of whiskey he has been pouring for Jim. While there, Marble laces the drink with potassium cyanide from a cabinet of photographic chemicals. He returns with the glass and urges Jim to drink; death comes quickly for young Jim. As the body must be disposed of, that night Marble digs up a dormant flower bed in his rear garden and buries Jim. No one will miss the visitor from Australia or disturb the weedy gravesite—except in Marble's mind.

Now the story truly begins. Forester paints one man's degeneration into all-consuming obsession of which Edgar Allan Poe would have been proud. Marble gives Annie money to pay off the most urgent bills, but he withholds the larger denominations from Jim's wallet for fear that they will be somehow traced back to the missing Australian. Marble's need for money heightens when he realizes that his landlord could someday put him out of his house. New tenants might dig up the garden and discover the body. Nevertheless, Marble rises to meet this crisis as well. His job at the bank involves dealing with foreign currency exchange, and he puzzles out a risky but wildly profitable plan to trade on the volatile French franc. He uses a local bookmaker to front for him, buys into the exchange market at a strong leverage, and exits the next

day a newly rich man. Forester invents the scheme's workings with a marvelous richness of detail, giving the reader a sense of looking over Marble's shoulder as he follows the market's fluctuations. Readers cannot help being drawn into plots so carefully researched and written; this strength of Forester's writing goes far in explaining his great popularity.

At this point, all would seem well for Marble. The money, however, does not buy happiness. Gradually, he concludes that there is no escape for him even after buying the house. He purchases an extensive library of crime and forensic books, brooding over them for hours while drinking and watching the muddy tangle of weeds in his back garden. In a desperate attempt at diversion, he has a brief affair with a predatory dressmaker, Madame Collins. Annie finally realizes that her husband is a murderer, plunging Marble into a fresh paroxysm of terror that she will betray him. He pays her more attention, the very thing for which she has hungered, and for a time the Marbles are closer than ever—until Madame Collins sends a letter threatening to expose her affair with Marble unless he pays her off.

When Annie catches influenza and is put into a sickbed, Marble refuses the doctor's advice to get nursing help. Annie discovers the blackmail letter by mistake, its contents throw her into despair, and she crawls to the photographic cabinet for the cyanide. Her suicide is assumed to be murder at the hands of her husband, leading to a conviction for his wife's murder, which he has not committed, rather than for his nephew's murder. Marble has therefore not escaped payment for Jim's murder; it was merely deferred, with interest in the form of years of anguish over the horrible secret.

The genius of this book lies not in the tight, well-crafted plot but in the portrayal of the characters, particularly Marble. He is not only a sluggish and pathetic man who bullies his sitting-duck wife from the dubious comfort of a Victorian chair; but he is also the nervy, collected man who conceives and carries out the murder of a relative, all the while entertaining the victim. He is the man who can crack the code of international finance and parlay his modest spoils of murder into a small fortune. He is also, however, the man

who buries the body directly behind his house and spends the rest of his life in abject terror that a careless gardener or stray dog will uncover the bones. Marble is a marvelously developed character capable of brilliance as well as stupidity. It is this element of the book that sets it apart and, most likely, led *The Times* of London to include *Payment Deferred* on its list of the ninety-nine best crime stories.

ONE WONDERFUL WEEK

One Wonderful Week (1927) followed quickly after Forester's first commercial and critical success, but it is flawed by an uneven tone that rebounds unsettlingly among light comedy, slapstick, and crime. Where *Payment Deferred* maintains a consistent pace of degeneration into obsession, this book reminds the reader that it is, after all, only words printed on a page. It is a decided departure from Forester's usual mastery of verisimilitude.

PLAIN MURDER

Plain Murder returns to the format of *Payment Deferred* with a story of three clerks at an advertising firm who murder their superior because he has learned of their bribe taking and intends to report them to the firm's owner. Morris, their ringleader, comes to distrust the weakest conspirator and contrives his death by an apparent motorcycle accident. Oldroyd, the other surviving conspirator, fears Morris but cannot seek police protection, for obvious reasons. As in all of Forester's works, the plot flows smoothly and logically. It leads to a flawed ending, however, in which Oldroyd, the weaker character, steps unconvincingly out of the role Forester created for him to save himself and Morris's wife from being killed.

With all three of Forester's mysteries, readers might object to a few elements of style that today seem somewhat quaint. The books suffer from frequent shifts in points of view, even though Forester handles them smoothly. Another minor irritant comes in the form of heavy-handed authorial intrusions such as the one concluding chapter 11 of *Plain Murder*, "Those that read to the end of this book may better take their choice of these conflicting opinions." In Forester's defense, however, these lapses from modern stylistic standards were considered quite proper when he wrote them.

OTHER WORKS

Leaving the world of mystery, Forester turned to novels featuring equal measures of history and adventure. *The General* (1936) featured a British officer who reflected the World War I military philosophy of dogged, frontal assaults and trench warfare. On a slightly deeper level, the book is a bitterly ironic comment on the stupidities of war. Another important work is *The African Queen* (1935), the romantic adventure of a cockney mechanic and a never-married missionary in equatorial Africa, which was made into the classic Humphrey Bogart-Katharine Hepburn film. During World War II, at a time when England needed its spirits lifted, Forester wrote several rousing tales of modern naval fiction; the best of these, *The Good Shepherd* (1955), was not actually published until after the war.

For all the merit of Forester's crime fiction, he will be most remembered for his Hornblower series. Read voraciously in the United States as well as in England, Horatio Hornblower came to dominate Forester's efforts much the same as Sherlock Holmes dominated those of Arthur Conan Doyle. Forester ultimately wrote ten Hornblower novels (plus *The Hornblower Companion*, 1964, a book of naval charts and miscellany surrounding the entire saga) and was working on the eleventh when he died. Nevertheless, the book was published complete to the point at which illness stopped his work. In some ways, Hornblower's roots can be traced to William Marble of *Payment Deferred*. In spite of Marble's capacity for quick thinking at critical moments, the balance of his brutish personality sours his life. When Forester coupled this same trait of decisive thought with Hornblower's essential nobility, he crafted a character with whom readers are proud to identify.

Forester relished burdening his hero with the awesome responsibility of command, terming him "The Man Alone." Forester's use of this device, however, did not spring to life with the Hornblower saga. In *The Hornblower Companion*, he credits this concept as first having been used in *Payment Deferred*, writing, "The murderer, who, having committed his crime, dare confide in nobody and must plan his future actions without assistance, is one example of the single-handed man." Thus he had William Marble exercising his ironic com-

mand long before Hornblower walked the quarterdeck. Another strength of Forester's later writing first seen in *Payment Deferred* is his deft infusion of technical material into the plot, charging readers with a sense of being present at the scene of the story and leaving them believing that they have learned something. International finance was the subject in that early mystery; square-rigger seamanship and naval warfare were later detailed in the Hornblower series.

Unquestionably, Forester's characters are fascinating, and his verisimilitude is brilliant. These strengths alone may be enough to explain his popularity, or perhaps he wove some other magic through the pages that is too subtle to identify. Either way, one thing is certain: Forester's works provide escapist literature in the best sense of the term.

Richard E. Givan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Payment Deferred*, 1926; *One Wonderful Week*, 1927 (also known as *The Wonderful Week*); *Plain Murder*, 1930

SHORT FICTION: *The Man in the Yellow Raft*, 1969; *Gold from Crete*, 1970

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Pawn Among Kings*, 1924; *Brown on Resolution*, 1929; *Death to the French*, 1932 (also known as *Rifleman Dodd*, 1942); *The Gun*, 1933; *The Peacemaker*, 1934; *The African Queen*, 1935; *The General*, 1936; *Beat to Quarters*, 1937 (also known as *The Happy Return*); *Ship of the Line*, 1938; *Flying Colours*, 1938; *The Captain from Connecticut*, 1941; *The Ship*, 1943; *Commodore Hornblower*, 1945; *Lord Hornblower*, 1946; *The Sky and the Forest*, 1948; *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower*, 1950; *Randall and the River of Time*, 1950; *Lieutenant Hornblower*, 1952; *Hornblower and the Atropos*, 1953; *The Good Shepherd*, 1955; *Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies*, 1958; *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, 1962; *Hornblower and the Crisis*, 1967

SHORT FICTION: *The Nightmare*, 1954

NONFICTION: *Napoleon and His Court*, 1924; *Josephine, Napoleon's Empress*, 1925; *Louis XIV: King of France and Navarre*, 1928; *Nelson*, 1929; *The Bar-*

bary Pirates, 1953; *The Age of Fighting Sail*, 1956 (history); *Last Nine Days of the Bismarck*, 1959 (history; pb. as *Hunting the Bismarck* in England); *The Hornblower Companion*, 1964; *Long Before Forty*, 1967

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Forester, C. S. *Long Before Forty*. London: Michael Joseph, 1967. Forester wrote this posthumously published autobiography early in his life. Although it is an unreliable account of his early life, it provides fascinating glimpses into how he wrote his first books.

Forester, John. *Novelist & Storyteller: The Life of C. S. Forester*. 2 vols. Lemon Grove, Calif.: Author, 2000. By far the fullest biography of C. S. Forester, this book self-published by his oldest son is a richly detailed, iconoclastic, and often painfully revealing account of Forester's inner life. Although often difficult to read because of the son's obvious bitterness about his father's dishonesty, this is an important contribution to understanding Forester as a writer that will influence all future studies of the author.

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_____, ed. *The Hundred Best Crime Stories*. London: The Sunday Times, 1959. Places Forester's *Payment Deferred* as one of the hundred best crime stories of all time.

FREDERICK FORSYTH

Born: Ashford, Kent, England; August 25, 1938

Type of plot: Thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Frederick Forsyth's novels may best be described as the weaving of recent historical fact and imaginative fiction into intricate tales of thrilling suspense. Highly professional yet unorthodox heroes often find themselves in conflict with large organizations or well-known individuals. Detailed descriptions provide an air of authority and authenticity to the story, while complex plots and subplots, initially unconnected, gradually and inexorably mesh. Suspense is a major aspect of the plots, for the reader does not know until the final pages how the story will be resolved. Even then, Forsyth always adds an ironic twist to the ending. The success of his writing is indicated by his international readership, with sales of more than 35 million copies of his books in more than two dozen languages.

BIOGRAPHY

Frederick McCarthy Forsyth was born in Ashford, Kent, England, on August 25, 1938, the son of Frederick William Forsyth and Phyllis Green Forsyth. While at the Tonbridge School in Kent, he was a voracious reader, reading "anything I could get my hands on that had to do with adventure." He also developed a keen interest in foreign languages, learning French, German, and Spanish as well as some Russian and Italian. He frequently vacationed on the Continent, where he polished his language proficiency. He was also an avid motorcyclist, bullfighter, and airplane pilot. His formal schooling ended when he was seventeen. Only a few days after his seventeenth birthday, Forsyth had qualified for a pilot's license, and he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in May of 1956. He soon became the youngest fighter pilot in the RAF.

Forsyth left the military in 1958 to become a journalist, claiming that "it was the only job I could think of that might enable me to write, travel and keep more or less my own hours." He worked for the *Eastern*

Daily Press in Norfolk, England, for three years. He then joined Reuters, the international news service, as a reporter and was posted to Paris, where he covered the Secret Army Organization (OAS) campaign against French president Charles de Gaulle.

At the age of twenty-five, Forsyth was appointed chief reporter of the Reuters East Berlin bureau, where he was Reuters's sole representative covering events in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. In 1965, he became a radio reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); in 1967, he became an assistant diplomatic correspondent for BBC television. He was assigned to cover the civil war in Nigeria for the BBC, but his concern for the Biafrans made it difficult for him to follow the official position toward the conflict. He resigned and remained in Biafra as a freelance journalist for *Time* magazine, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Daily Express*. His experiences resulted in his first book, *The Biafra Story*, in 1969.

With his mind a repository of experiences, Forsyth turned to writing fiction. Using his observations of the 1962-1963 political crisis in France, he wrote *The Day of the Jackal* (1971). The book was rejected by several publishers before being picked up by Hutchinson. Nevertheless, it became a best seller and earned the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award. This work was quickly followed by *The Odessa File* (1972), a novel about neo-Nazi Germans, and *The Dogs of War* (1974), a novel set in a post-independence African nation.

Although Forsyth had declared that he would write only three novels, in 1979 he published *The Devil's Alternative*, a novel set in 1982 that offers insights into Soviet national and agricultural problems. *The Fourth Protocol* (1984) investigated the possibility of nuclear terrorism and international politics. In addition to his mystery novels, Forsyth has published *No Comebacks: Collected Short Stories* (1982), a collection of his mystery short stories, and *The Shepherd* (1975), a long short story for young adults about a ghostly plane helping a lost pilot.

The enormous success of Forsyth's novels has al-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Frederick Forsyth (left) with historian Andrew Roberts (center) and novelist John Mortimer in late 2006. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

lowed him to live comfortably. He left England in 1974 to escape heavy taxation on his earnings, spending one year in Spain and five years in a mansion outside Dublin, Ireland. On his return to England in 1980, he moved into a large house in a fashionable section of London. He married Carole Forsyth, a former model, and they had two sons.

ANALYSIS

Frederick Forsyth is a writer of suspense thrillers based on historical events. His novels are a fictional slice of life in a given place at a given time. Truth is blended with fiction in such a way that the reader rarely knows where one ends and the other begins. Forsyth uses his background as a journalist to create in his novels an atmosphere of “being there” for the reader. His general style is also that of the journalist: crisp, factual, and clear paragraphs that efficiently convey information.

Although each work by Forsyth stands individu-

ally, there are certain similarities which may be described as his stylistic formula for success: There is always an efficient hero who is at odds with the establishment; a historical backdrop frequently places the hero in contact with known public figures in known historical situations; intricate detail is offered, lending authenticity to the work; and ingenious plots, which resemble large jigsaw puzzles of seemingly disconnected actions or events, are developed. Other writers use one or more parts of the formula, but it is these four facets that, when used collectively, distinguish a Forsyth work.

The heroes of Forsyth’s novels are not unlike Forsyth himself was when he first created them. They are in their thirties, articulate, and bright. They do not suffer fools lightly, especially when the fools are in the organizational hierarchy at a higher level than the hero. Forsyth, however, is not antiestablishment; for each fool there is an individual who helps, trusts, or believes in the hero. The establishment is neither good

nor evil, only human. Still, the hero is usually forced to overcome not only the villains but also those on his own side. Fortunately, the hero is a man of action who is not bound by conventions, and he prevails.

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL

In Forsyth's first three novels, it is the hero who sets the pace and is the focal point of the action. Deputy Commissaire Claude Lebel, in *The Day of the Jackal*, is the ultimate professional detective; his antagonist, the Chacal, is the ultimate professional assassin. Only they can appreciate each other's thoroughness; only a Lebel is able to counter the actions of the Jackal.

The Day of the Jackal provides an example of how Forsyth uses known persons, events, or issues to establish the immediate background for the setting and to authenticate his story. There were several assassination attempts made by the OAS against de Gaulle. Although the reader knows that de Gaulle was never assassinated, the plotline of *The Day of the Jackal* is so compelling that suspense is maintained until the final lines of the book.

Forsyth also provides detail to add to the authenticity of his novels: Each book is a cornucopia of "how to" material, ranging from how to arrange an assassination to how to prepare a sunburn salve. Although the detail at times seemingly interferes with the pace of the story, it is a necessary aspect of the Forsyth formula, for it substantiates the action and informs and instructs the reader. For *The Day of the Jackal*, Forsyth interviewed assassins, a gun maker, and passport forgers, among others, to learn the techniques of assassination. His own interviews from the period provided intimate details regarding various participants. In each case, the trust developed by the reader for Forsyth's message is a by-product of the emphasis on detail.

THE ODESSA FILE

Peter Miller, in *The Odessa File*, is a highly competent crime reporter who, through dogged persistence and despite official opposition, counters the harsh professionalism of ODESSA, a German organization of former SS men seeking to undermine the Jewish state. It is known that there were secret organizations of former SS men in Germany after World War II, and there was a Captain Eduard Roschmann who had com-

manded a concentration camp at Riga, Latvia. Was there, however, a plot by such a group against Israel? *The Odessa File* makes a convincing case that it could have happened as described. The novel offers a short course on the Holocaust as well as one on bomb making. Cat Shannon, a mercenary with ideals, apparently works for a giant corporation to overthrow a corrupt African regime; however, he is also working for Africans to improve their future.

THE DOGS OF WAR

The Dogs of War was the result of Forsyth's concern about the fate of Africa under Marxist incompetents. His Biafran experiences and his contempt for the greed of Western businesses that had long exploited Africans provided the plot for the novel. *The Dogs of War* informs the reader, at length, about international financial machinations, weapons procurement and export, and mortar-shell trajectories. In his first three novels, Forsyth hoped that the reader would ask, "Is this the way that it happened?"

THE DEVIL'S ALTERNATIVE

After mining his personal experiences for his first three novels, Forsyth turned to the future. *The Devil's Alternative*, *The Fourth Protocol*, and *The Afghan* (2006) reflect intimate knowledge of subject matter; instead of known historical events, however, Forsyth poses questions regarding the future.

In *The Devil's Alternative* and *The Fourth Protocol*, the heroes are similar to earlier ones, but events and other characters become more significant. Adam Monro and John Preston are as active as earlier heroes, but the plot lines of each novel tend to focus more on world significance than on the abilities of the main character. *The Devil's Alternative* has as its background a famine-threatening grain crop failure in the Soviet Union. A faction in the Politburo suggests that the military be used to take the grain that it needs. The hijacking of an oil supertanker by Ukrainian nationalists, Kremlin infighting, and a beautiful Soviet spy provide the backdrop for the hero's efforts to ensure that the Soviets would get the grain they needed. In this novel, Forsyth wonders how the West can effectively deal with dedicated nationalist terrorist groups and how the Soviet Union can contend with its own myriad problems. He introduces national leaders and

national problems of which the reader should be aware and interweaves them into the plot. He describes in detail smuggling in the Soviet Union, flaws in the Soviet system, and giant oil tankers.

THE FOURTH PROTOCOL

The Fourth Protocol centers on a secret plot by an element within the Soviet State Security Committee (KGB) to detonate a nuclear weapon near an American air base in England. Such an incident would benefit the far-left wing of the Labour Party and would undermine the very foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although the hero travels the globe to unravel the plot, the message is as important as is the hero. Through this novel, Forsyth poses chilling questions about British domestic politics, the stability of NATO, and nuclear weapons. He describes how to assemble a nuclear bomb; even more disturbing are Forsyth's memoranda from Kim Philby regarding the Labour Party in British politics.

THE AFGHAN

An outspoken opponent of the Iraq War and the Tony Blair government, Forsyth withheld his opinions in *The Afghan*, while portraying people, places, and events that adhere so closely to their real counterparts that the reader is forced to question whether Forsyth had inside information. Again, the style is such that the reader should ask: "Could this actually happen?"

PLOTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The most significant element of the Forsyth formula is the plot. Each of his plots might be described as a jigsaw puzzle or as an intricate machine. Before assembly, each appears to be far too complex for anyone to make sense of it. To introduce his plots and subplots, Forsyth uses time reference to show parallel developments that are, at first, seemingly unrelated. In a Forsyth novel, there is always a hidden pattern governing the events, a pattern of which even the participants are unaware, yet Forsyth is able to interweave his persons, places, and events with his plot, at an ever-quickening pace, until the dramatic conclusion is reached. Adding to the drama is Forsyth's habit of never neatly ending a story. There is always a piece or two left over, which adds an ironic twist to the ending.

As a writer, Forsyth should be remembered for his mastery of the historical thriller. His fiction is cer-

tainly popular literature, as sales figures have indicated, but is it great literature? Forsyth himself answers that question in self-deprecating fashion:

I'm a writer with the intent of selling lots of copies and making money. I don't think my work will be regarded as great literature or classics. I'm just a commercial writer and have no illusions about it.

His fiction, however, stands out from the typical products of its genre. Forsyth is greatly concerned about certain issues of the day and is informing readers while tantalizing them with a story. The discerning reader of Forsyth's novels will learn about history and begin to understand the great issues of the post-World War II world. However, Forsyth is no moralizer, for, to him, there are no absolutes.

William S. Brockington, Jr.

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Day of the Jackal*, 1971; *The Odessa File*, 1972; *The Dogs of War*, 1974; *The Devil's Alternative*, 1979; *The Fourth Protocol*, 1984; *The Negotiator*, 1989; *The Deceiver*, 1991; *The Fist of God*, 1994; *Icon*, 1996; *The Phantom of Manhattan*, 1999; *Avenger*, 2003; *The Afghan*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *No Comebacks: Collected Short Stories*, 1982; *Used in Evidence, and Other Stories*, 1998; *The Veteran*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Shepherd*, 1975

NONFICTION: *The Biafra Story*, 1969 (revised 1983 as *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story*); *Emeka*, 1982; *I Remember: Reflections on Fishing in Childhood*, 1995

EDITED TEXT: *Great Flying Stories*, 1991

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Bloom, Bernard H. "In '94 Forsyth Novel, Hard-Hitting Truth of Today." *Times Union*, June 2, 2007, p. A6. Notes an intelligence report in Forsyth's 1994 *The Fist of God* that spells out what is likely to happen if Saddam Hussein's regime is toppled and remarks on how closely it matches what occurred in

real life. Provides evidence of Forsyth's realistic, journalistic style.

Forsyth, Frederick. Frederick Forsyth. [Http://www .booksat transworld.co.uk/frederickforsyth](http://www.booksattransworld.co.uk/frederickforsyth). The official Web site for Forsyth. Offers a biography, publication history, and links to interviews with the author.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, a former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional accounts of espionage with actual cases. Contains some discussion of Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*.

Jones, Dudley. "Professionalism and Popular Fiction: The Novels of Arthur Hailey and Frederick Forsyth." In *Spy Thrillers: From Buchan to le Carré*, edited by Clive Bloom. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. Offers close critical scrutiny of Forsyth's "faction"—

the blending of fact and fiction, particularly in his early work. Forsyth's use of footnotes and other gimmicks in *Day of the Jackal* create a novel that mimics the real world, while the narrative reflects an assassin's sociopathic detachment.

Pitt, David. Review of *The Afghan*, by Frederick Forsyth. *Booklist* 102, no. 22 (August, 2006): 50. Reviewer notes Forsyth's realistic style, which adds to the suspense of this novel about a terrorist plot.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Contains an excellent discussion of the spy thriller, including *Day of the Jackal* and *The Fourth Protocol*, describing the conventions of detective fiction in the wider context of Cold War conspiracies.

DICK FRANCIS

Born: Lawrenny, near Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales; October 31, 1920

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sid Halley, 1965-
Kit Fielding, 1985-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SID HALLEY, a former champion steeplechase jockey, was forced to leave racing after an accident that cost him the use of his left hand. He then went to work as a consultant to a detective agency, eventually becoming an independent private investigator.

CHRISTMAS "KIT" FIELDING, a successful steeplechase jockey, is involved in mysteries as an amateur sleuth, first to help his sister and then to help the owner of the horses he rides.

CONTRIBUTION

Dick Francis's distinctive formula has been the combination of the amateur sleuth genre with the world

of horse racing. Despite his reliance on these fixed elements of character and setting, he has avoided repetitiveness throughout his more than two dozen novels by working in horse racing from many different angles and by creating a new protagonist for almost every book. His extensive research—one of the trademarks of his work—enables him to create a slightly different world for each novel. Although many of his main characters are jockeys and most of his stories are set in Great Britain, he varies the formula with other main characters who work in a wide range of professions, many only peripherally connected with racing, and several of the books are set outside Great Britain—in America, Australia, Norway, South Africa, and the Soviet Union.

BIOGRAPHY

Dick Francis was born Richard Stanley Francis on October 31, 1920, in Lawrenny, near Tenby in southern Wales to George Vincent Francis and Catherine Mary (née Thomas) Francis. His father and grandfather were both horsemen, and Francis was riding from

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Dick Francis in 1990. (AP/Wide World Photos)

the age of five. He began riding show horses at the age of twelve and always had the ambition to become a jockey. Francis interrupted his pursuit of a riding career to serve as a pilot in the Royal Air Force during World War II, but in 1946 he made his debut as an amateur jockey and turned professional in 1948. At the peak of his career, Francis rode in as many as four hundred races a year and was ranked among the top jockeys in Great Britain in every one of the ten years he rode. In 1954, he began riding for Queen Elizabeth; in 1957, he retired at the top of his profession and began his second career.

Francis began writing as a racing correspondent for the *London Sunday Express*, a job he held for the next sixteen years, and started work on his autobiography, *The Sport of Queens: The Autobiography of Dick Francis* (1957). Although he had dropped out of high school at the age of fifteen, he refused the services of a ghostwriter, relying only on his wife, Mary Margaret

Brenchley, a former publisher's reader to whom he had been married in 1947, for editorial help, a job she performed for all of his books until her death in 2000. Reviewers were pleasantly surprised by Francis's natural and economical style, and he was encouraged to try his hand at other writing. He produced his first mystery novel, *Dead Cert*, in 1962, immediately striking the right blend of suspenseful plotting and the racing setting that has structured his books since. His work was an immediate popular and critical success, and he received the Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger Award for *For Kicks* (1965) and the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for *Forfeit* (1968) in 1970, *Whip Hand* (1979) in 1981, and *Come to Grief* (1995) in 1996. From 1973 to 1974 he was the chairman of the Crime Writers' Association, and in 1989 he received that organization's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. In 1996 Francis received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America, and in 2000 he received the Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement.

ANALYSIS

Dick Francis's novels, like those of most prolific mystery writers, rely on a relatively fixed range of predictable major elements within which the author achieves variation by the alteration and recombination of minor elements. The outstanding major feature for writers in the genre is usually the fixed character of the protagonist, who provides the guarantee of continuity in the series that is necessary to attract and maintain a steady readership. Variety is provided by the creation of a new cast of minor characters and a new criminal, though these new elements can usually be seen to form fairly consistent patterns over the course of an author's work, as can the different plots developed by an author. Well-known examples of the amateur sleuth series in this mold are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple novels. Francis, however, breaks with this tradition by creating a new main character for every book, with the exceptions of Sid Halley and Kit Fielding. Francis achieves the continuity and consistency expected of him by his large and

loyal public through the use of a general character-type rather than through one principal series character, and through a strong and stable emphasis on his customary setting, the world of horse racing.

THE FRANCIS HERO

Even though Francis seldom uses any character more than once, his two dozen or so protagonists are sufficiently similar that a composite picture of the paradigmatic Francis hero can be sketched. The only invariable rule is that the hero be a white male (no doubt because Francis, who has written all of his books in the first person, is reluctant to risk the detailed and extended portrayal of a character outside his own race and gender). The female characters in his work have drawn favorable reactions from feminist critics, who see his writing as going beyond the gender stereotypes common in most mystery and detective writing.

Allowing for a few exceptions to the rest of the features of the model, the hero is British; in his thirties; ordinary in appearance; of average or smaller than average stature; a member of the middle class economically, educationally, and socially; and interested in few pursuits outside his work. In other words, Francis's heroes do not initially appear exceptional or heroic at all, but almost boringly average. The appeal of Francis's books to a wide international audience is at least partly the result of the very ordinariness of his characters, which allows for a broad range of readers to identify readily with them, to feel that they, too, could be heroic under certain circumstances, just as Francis's protagonists are. That these characters nevertheless arrive at a sort of heroic stature by the end of the book is not so much the result of special skills, training, or intelligence as it is the result of a combination of dedication to the job and a mental toughness, an ability to withstand psychological as well as physical pain (which may be a result of emotional hardships to which they have been subject). One of the few statistically extraordinary features shared by these protagonists is that they often have an irregular, unsettled, or otherwise trying family background: They tend to be orphans, or illegitimate, or widowers, or divorced, or even if married, burdened by a disabled wife or child.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Francis heroes is that their work is usually connected with

horse racing, most often as steeplechase jockeys (Francis's own first career for a decade). Francis's later novels especially, however, are likely to feature some other profession, one that is peripherally or accidentally connected with racing. His heroes have been journalists (*Forfeit*), actors (*Smokescreen*, 1972), photographers (*Reflex*, 1980), bankers (*Banker*, 1982), wine merchants (*Proof*, 1984), writers (*Longshot*, 1990), architects (*Decider*, 1993), painters (*To the Hilt*, 1996), and glassblowers (*Shattered*, 2000). His extensive research into these professions results in detailed and realistic characterizations and settings. The reader of a Francis novel expects to be informed, not merely entertained—to learn something interesting about an unfamiliar professional world.

REFLEX

One of Francis's more successful integrations of this detailed exposition of a profession with the archetypal Francis racing character occurs in *Reflex*. Philip Nore is thirty years old, a moderately successful steeplechase jockey, and an amateur photographer. He is a quiet, agreeable man, fundamentally unwilling to make a fuss or fight—that is, a typical Francis Everyman. As an illegitimate child who never learned his father's identity, Nore has had the usual rocky personal life: He was shuttled through a series of temporary foster homes by his drug-addicted mother and eventually was reared by a homosexual couple, one of whom (an eventual suicide) taught him about photography. At the beginning of the book, Nore hardly seems heroic—he occasionally agrees to lose a race on purpose to help his boss win bets—but by the end he finds himself stronger than he believed himself to be.

This change in character has been triggered by his discovery of a series of photographic puzzles left behind by a murdered photographer. They appear to be simply blank or botched negatives or plain sheets of paper, but by the application of somewhat esoteric photographic technology each can be developed, and each turns out to contain material that could be, and in some cases evidently has been, used for blackmail. One of the fundamental rules for the Francis hero is that knowledge involves responsibility, and Nore cannot simply ignore this evidence once he has found it. His possession of the photographic evidence is discov-

ered, which poses a threat to the past and potential victims of the scheme to the extent that attempts are made on his life and he undergoes a brutal beating. (The suffering of severe physical abuse is a stock element in all Francis's books, and the stoical refusal to give in to it a stock attribute of all Francis's heroes.) Having broken each collarbone six times, his nose five times, and an arm, wrist, vertebra, and his skull once each, Francis is an authority on injury and pain, and in his novels such scenes are usually depicted in naturalistic detail. The sadistic damaging of Sid Halley's already maimed left hand in *Odds Against* (1965) provides a particularly chilling example. More often than not, however, the hero exacts a fitting revenge on the villain, a staple means of satisfying an audience that has come to identify closely with the hero/narrator.

The blackmail proves to have been in a good cause—the victims are all criminals, and the extorted money goes to charity—and Nore himself blackmails the last victim (for evidence against drug dealers) and adopts the career of his murdered predecessor, becoming a professional photographer with a girlfriend, a publisher whom he has met during the course of his investigations, who acts as his agent. The fairly clear Freudian outlines of the plot are not stressed but rather are left for the reader to fill in imaginatively, as are the details of the romantic subplot. Francis usually avoids the overly neat endings common in popular fiction (the murdered photographer in whose footsteps Nore follows could easily have proved to be his real father) and never dwells on sexual scenes or sentimental romance. The fusion of the photography lesson with the complicated plot and the relatively complex character of the protagonist are typical of Francis's better work.

FRANCIS AND THE RACING WORLD

The setting is always nearly as important as character and plot in these novels, and Francis's intimate knowledge of the racing world enables him to work it into each book in a slightly different way, usually from the jockey's point of view but also from that of a stable boy (*For Kicks*), a racing journalist (*Forfeit*), a horse owner's caterer (*Proof*), or a complete outsider who is drawn into the racing milieu by the events of the mystery. Horse racing, unfamiliar to most readers, plays much the same role of informing and educating the au-

dience as do the introduction of expertise from other professions and, especially in the later novels, the use of a variety of foreign locations, all of which Francis visits at length to ensure accuracy of detail. Francis and his wife traveled seventy-five thousand miles on Greyhound buses across America researching the setting of *Blood Sport* (1967).

Although some reviewers have complained that Francis's villains tend to be evil to the point of melodrama, his other characters, minor as well as major, are generally well drawn and interesting, not the stock role players of much formula fiction. His plots are consistently suspenseful without relying on trick endings or unlikely twists, and his use of the horse-racing environment is imaginatively varied from one book to another.

William Nelles

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SID HALLEY SERIES: *Odds Against*, 1965; *Whip Hand*, 1979; *Come to Grief*, 1995; *Under Orders*, 2006

KIT FIELDING SERIES: *Break In*, 1985; *Bolt*, 1986

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1962-1970 • *Dead Cert*, 1962; *Nerve*, 1964; *For Kicks*, 1965; *Flying Finish*, 1966; *Blood Sport*, 1967; *Forfeit*, 1968; *Enquiry*, 1969; *Rat Race*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Bonecrack*, 1971; *Smokescreen*, 1972; *Slayride*, 1973; *Knockdown*, 1974; *High Stakes*, 1975; *In the Frame*, 1976; *Risk*, 1977; *Trial Run*, 1978; *Reflex*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Twice Shy*, 1981; *Banker*, 1982; *The Danger*, 1983; *Proof*, 1984; *Hot Money*, 1987; *The Edge*, 1988; *Straight*, 1989; *Longshot*, 1990

1991-2007 • *Comeback*, 1991; *Driving Force*, 1992; *Decider*, 1993; *Wild Horses*, 1994; *To the Hilt*, 1996; *Ten-pound Penalty*, 1997; *Second Wind*, 1999; *Shattered*, 2000; ; *Win, Place, or Show*, 2004; *Triple Crown*, 2005; *Dead Heat*, 2007 (with Felix Francis)

SHORT FICTION: *Field of Thirteen*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAY: *Dead Cert*, 1974 (adaptation of his novel)

NONFICTION: *The Sport of Queens: The Auto-*

biography of Dick Francis, 1957 (revised 1968, 1974, 1982, 1988); *A Jockey's Life: A Biography of Lester Piggott*, 1986

EDITED TEXTS: *Best Racing and Chasing Stories*, 1966-1969 (with John Welcome); *The Racing Man's Bedside Book*, 1969 (with Welcome); *The Dick Francis Treasury of Great Racing Stories*, 1990 (with Welcome); *Classic Lines: More Great Racing Stories*, 1991 (with Welcome; also known as *The New Treasury of Great Racing Stories*)

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A study of Francis's contributions to detective fiction.

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Fuller, Bryony. *Dick Francis: Steeplechase Jockey*. London: Michael Joseph, 1994. Biography of Francis during his years as a professional jockey, looking ahead to his later career as a writer.

Lord, Graham. *Dick Francis: A Racing Life*. London: Little, Brown, 1999. This well-researched biography claims that Francis's wife, Mary, wrote (or cowrote) the novels.

Swanson, Jean, and Dean James. *The Dick Francis Companion*. New York: Berkley, 2003. Useful handbook includes everything from plot summaries of Francis's mysteries to lists of Web sites devoted to the author.

ANTONIA FRASER

Antonia Margaret Caroline Pakenham

Born: London, England; August 27, 1932

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jemima Shore, 1977-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JEMIMA SHORE, a celebrated investigative British television reporter, is unmarried, in her early thirties, stylish, and intelligent. Her television programs provide her with high visibility, a variety of settings, and plenty of opportunity to pursue her amateur detecting.

CONTRIBUTION

Lady Antonia Fraser has followed the tradition of such British mystery writers as Dorothy L. Sayers, Emma Lathen, Ruth Rendell, P. D. James, and Patricia Highsmith. Using her knowledge of the British aristocracy, history, Parliament, royalty, entertainment and literary circles, television, and contemporary affairs, she has introduced various issues along with a

rich blend of characters. As a heroine, Jemima Shore is a mixture of the traditional and contemporary woman caught up in often extraordinary circumstances. Some of these adventures are handled with black humor; all are dramatic and suspenseful. Developing a mystery series after writing several successful historical biographies has helped Fraser provide richness of characters and settings. The drama of real life has been successfully transferred to the mystery setting, and readers will perceive the changes in contemporary Great Britain much more easily after reading this series, which has captured the sense and complexity of that modern society.

BIOGRAPHY

Antonia Fraser's father was Francis Aungier Pakenham, who became the seventh earl of Longford in 1961. Her mother was Elizabeth Harman, related to the Chamberlains. Both parents went to Oxford University, belonged to the Labour Party in the 1930's, and converted to Catholicism in the 1940's. Lady

Longford became an early mentor and model. Fraser, the first of eight children, grew up in Oxford amid politics and war. Her formal education began at the Dragon School in 1940-1944, and she already showed a fascination with Mary, Queen of Scots. From 1946 to 1948, she went to school at St. Mary's Convent, in Berkshire, where she converted to Catholicism. From 1950 to 1953, she attended Oxford University, receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees there. After graduation, she worked for Lord Weidenfeld's publishing house, which published her first book in 1954. In 1956, she married Sir Hugh Charles Patrick Joseph Fraser. Fifteen years her elder, he was a handsome, charming Scottish nobleman. They were active in politics and reared a family in London and Scotland. By the mid-1960's, she was a celebrity, appearing in society pages and on television shows.

With a contract from Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Fraser began research for *Mary, Queen of Scots*. Published in 1969, it was one of five books written by the literary Pakenhams that year and received the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for biography, thus assuring her a position in literary circles. A best seller in eleven languages, Fraser's first attempt at biography gave her a devoted international readership. She continued to write biographies, including *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1992), *Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens* (1988), and *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (2001), which was adapted for a popular film in 2006.

In 1975, however, Fraser dramatically changed her lifestyle, moving in with the playwright Harold Pinter. After both the Frasers and Pinters were divorced, Pinter and Fraser were married in a civil ceremony. During this same period, the Jemima Shore mystery series was begun, and Fraser became active in various literary organizations. Her work on the seventeenth century earned the Wolfson History Prize

and the Prix Caumont-La Force. In addition, Hull University awarded her an honorary doctorate in 1986. For her Jemima Shore books, the Crime Writers' Association bestowed on her the Gold Dagger Award in 1996.

ANALYSIS

Antonia Fraser grew up in an England bound by class distinctions from which she benefited. Her mother, Lady Longford, has stated that Fraser was the most precocious of all her children, showing an early interest in history, biography, and genealogy. It was Lady Longford who provided the early support and model for all her children, most of whom are writers. Fraser's brother, Thomas, has written that in a large family of talkers and few listeners it is not surprising that writing should provide an outlet. Family members made their first impression on England in politics, but their greatest accomplishment has been in the literary field.

Fraser and her mother have often served as each other's critics, and Fraser dedicated *The Weaker Vessel* (1984) to her mother, calling her a most excellent heroine. Critics respect both women for their impressive research and readable style, although Fraser's primary

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Lady Antonia Fraser and her husband, playwright Harold Pinter, following her investiture as CBE (Commander British Empire) at Buckingham Palace, in 1999. (Photoshot/Landov)

strength lies in her narrative skill. This has sometimes been criticized as a storybook approach to history, but it also assures the popularity of her biographies. She seems to be at her best when writing on subjects to which she has some personal commitment, as may be seen in *Mary, Queen of Scots* and *The Weaker Vessel* as well as in her earlier children's writings and anthologies.

JEMIMA SHORE

In 1975, when Fraser left her marriage for a new relationship with Pinter, she also began working in a new literary genre, the mystery. Despite the changes, however, Fraser's narrative style and research methods have not been abandoned. The free-spirited Jemima Shore, a kind of fantasy figure, first appeared in *Quiet as a Nun* (1977). In her first appearance, Shore was in her early thirties, stylish and intelligent, and had carved out a niche for herself as an investigative reporter for the British Megalith Television after wartime schooling in a convent and at Oxford. It is tempting to see much of Fraser's own life reflected in her heroine. The locales are familiar; for example, Fraser's own convent education at St. Mary's in Berkshire is drawn on in this first full-length mystery novel, and her experience with British television serves her well in her portrayal of Shore's career.

For English audiences, the heroine's name itself has some interest; Jemima rings of Puritan virtue, while Shore reminds one of a king's mistress. Here is a verbal mixture of the traditional and modern virtues and vices. To the American reader, however, the names produce images of the South and popular entertainers. Nevertheless, despite the varying reaction to the name, the television adaptation in 1978 popularized Jemima Shore on both sides of the Atlantic.

Fraser has followed the example of such eminent writers as Sayers and James. It is also tempting to think of a young Miss Jane Marple in some of the situations in which Jemima Shore finds herself. Sayers believed that detectives should follow clues, not love, but an unmarried Jemima Shore finds time to fit love in with her investigations. Often, the love subplot seems to reflect the post-World War II generation's disillusionment, making Jemima Shore very much a contemporary figure.

The unmarried Jemima Shore has a greater freedom of action, reflecting some of the same freedoms discovered after World War I, but she does not have to be elderly or a widow to gain her liberty. Although Fraser follows in the British tradition of mystery writers, her use of the contemporary scene has allowed a greater range for her heroine. Jemima Shore can still get into extremely dangerous situations, even life-threatening ones, only to be rescued by traditional gallantry. She often depends on her intuition, but she usually is right in trusting to her instincts. She can disguise her nosiness with her television role, while other female detectives have had to rely on their age as an excuse. A confrontation with a person not suspected of the crime can endanger Jemima, but either a third person intervenes or the criminal acts in a more subtle way than the rough-and-tumble American male detectives. More is left to the reader's imagination, although the conventions of the detective novel are followed and are clearly understood by Fraser.

Fraser's use of black humor is reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe, while the sense of justice that pervades her works recalls the themes in Fyodor Dostoevski's novels, such as *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and Leo Tolstoy's *Voskreseniye* (1899; *Resurrection*, 1899). Jemima Shore seems to have more in common with Sherlock Holmes or Lord Peter Wimsey than Lew Archer or Bulldog Drummond. There is a trace of the romantic in the very modern Jemima Shore which would be recognizable to devotees of Georgette Heyer, Ellis Peters, and Josephine Tey. Jemima Shore's cat, Midnight, recalls the role animals play in the mystery novel and the writings of individuals such as Dick Francis or Ngaio Marsh. The English love of animals is legendary, and nothing sets off an English work better than a sympathetic handling of animals, which often show greater sense than their humans.

In addition to rich association of characters in different locales, contemporary issues are raised in several of the books, including public housing, religious freedom, press coverage, animal rights, feminist and educational issues, and the changing role of the aristocracy and royalty, to name only a few. By keeping in touch with the ongoing political scene, Fraser has been

able to enrich her mystery novels. Her knowledge of the entertainment field has enabled her to delineate the stresses of both legitimate-theater and pop performers, especially in *Cool Repentance* (1982).

OXFORD BLOOD

Probably the book *Oxford Blood* (1985) can most nearly be compared with Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (1935). Oxford University at the time of the commencement balls at various colleges in June is the setting of *Oxford Blood*. Shore's television program is to highlight the young aristocrats and cash in on the popularity of the television series *Brideshead Revisited*. Instead, it displays a young, privileged group of young people living dissolute lives full of drugs and alcohol, while England is faced with high unemployment and the world must deal with widespread famine. The tension grows, while an aristocratic inheritance is jeopardized by jealousy and vengeance.

YOUR ROYAL HOSTAGE

Jemima Shore's First Case, and Other Stories, a collection of short stories published in 1986, introduces the young Jemima Shore, who at the age of fifteen and in a convent school, is solving her first mystery. Fraser displayed drama and suspense, as well as some black humor, in these stories. Such humor also appears in *Your Royal Hostage* (1988), with its animal rights group, international interest in a royal wedding, high drama, suspense, and backdrop of London and its contemporary life.

One result of Fraser's interest in character is that the reader cares about Jemima Shore's future. Her own interest in contemporary issues reflects the modern scene and also reflects a change from the disillusionment and dissipation of the post-World War II generation, a change that includes a concern with material well-being but also nurtures those values that feed the spirit and the soul.

POLITICAL DEATH

British politics, in which Fraser was steeped from a young age, is fertile ground for stories of intrigue. *Political Death* (1996) illustrates her admission that powerful figures in government are more fascinating to her than actual policy. An aging actress, stricken with alcoholism and dementia, threatens to point a finger at a popular politician. Scandal, a skeleton, and an

apparent suicide ensue—a scenario fit for any era. Fraser, however, endows her heroine with a thoroughly modern set of investigative tools—a television camera and a high-profile position as a BBC journalist.

Fraser's ability to combine the traditional with the contemporary expands her appeal. Jemima Shore, like Peter Wimsey, can be enjoyed by both male and female readers. The richness of the characterizations in each work displays the biographical skills of the writer. Fraser's knowledge of various writing styles and modern issues provide depth to the standard mystery format. The descriptive details of specific locales delight the traveler, recalling individual memories and experiences. The veneer of civilization is shown to be quite thin at times, allowing the barbaric to take place, yet there is a return to those enduring ideals and standards which have allowed the human race to persevere and triumph over adversity.

Mary-Emily Miller

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JEMIMA SHORE SERIES: *Quiet as a Nun*, 1977; *The Wild Island*, 1978; *A Splash of Red*, 1981; *Cool Repentance*, 1982; *Oxford Blood*, 1985; *Jemima Shore's First Case, and Other Stories*, 1986; *Your Royal Hostage*, 1988; *Cavalier Case*, 1990; *Jemima Shore at the Sunny Grave, and Other Stories*, 1992; *Political Death*, 1996

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *On the Battlements*, 1975; *Penelope*, 1976; *The Heroine*, 1976

TELEPLAYS: *Charades*, 1977; *Mister Clay, Mister Clay*, 1985

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, 1954; *Robin Hood*, 1957

NONFICTION: *Dolls*, 1963; *A History of Toys*, 1966; *Mary, Queen of Scots*, 1969; *Cromwell, Our Chief of Men*, 1973 (also as *Cromwell, the Lord Protector*); *King James VI of Scotland, I of England*, 1974; *Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Historians*, 1974; *King Charles II*, 1979 (also as *Royal Charles*); *The Weaker Vessel*, 1984; *Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens*, 1988 (also known as *The Warrior*

Queen, 1989); *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 1992 (also known as *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 1992); *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot*, 1996 (also known as *The Gunpowder Plot*); *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*, 2001; *Love and Louis XIV: The Women in the Life of the Sun King*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *Scottish Love Poems: A Personal Anthology*, 1975; *The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England*, 1975; *Love Letters*, 1976; *Heroes and Heroines*, 1980; *Mary, Queen of Scots: An Anthology of Poetry*, 1981; *Oxford and Oxfordshire in Verse*, 1982

TRANSLATIONS: *Martyrs in China*, 1956 (by Jean Monsterleet); *Dior by Dior: The Autobiography of Christian Dior*, 1957

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Craig, Patricia, and Mary Cadogan. "A Curious Career for a Woman?" In *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. A somewhat dated but still informative article, written at a time when women writing in the detective genre tended toward gentility.

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Writers: Classic to Contemporary. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Discusses more than one hundred women writing in the mystery genre, including Fraser.

Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Devotes a chapter to gender in detective fiction. Knight contrasts "designer-style" Jemima Shore with her more hard-boiled rivals, such as Val McDermid's Kate Brannigan.

Mann, Jessica. *Deadlier than the Male: Why Are So Many Respectable English Women So Good at Murder?* New York: Macmillan, 1981. The author, herself a well-known member of the cohort she examines, probes the lives of Christie, Sayers, Marsh, and others of a remarkably similar background. Fraser unquestionably belongs in this unlikely club.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. While this study does not discuss Fraser at length, it does provide context and relevant exploration of gender and colonialism.

NICOLAS FREELING

F. R. E. Nicolas

Born: London, England; March 3, 1927

Died: Mutzig, France; July 20, 2003

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Van der Valk, 1961-1972

Henri Castang, 1974-1996

Arlette Van der Valk, 1979-1981

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR PIET VAN DER VALK is a middle-aged Dutch police officer. Caught within a bureaucracy he dislikes and distrusts, he reflects on the relationship between society and crime and believes that "crimi-

nal" is an arbitrary designation. Tough, realistic, and given to a quietly ironic humor, he is unorthodox, irreverent, and successful at his job.

ARLETTE VAN DER VALK, Van der Valk's French wife, is attractive, sexy, outspoken in expressing her amusement at Dutch conventionality, and generally opinionated. A fine cook, she has taught Van der Valk to appreciate good food. After Van der Valk's death, she marries a British sociologist and operates a private investigation service in Strasbourg. She and Van der Valk have two sons and an adopted daughter.

HENRI CASTANG is a thoughtful, tough veteran of the French National Police, an elite investigation corps that works something like Scotland Yard. Castang is a

devoted husband and father and a police officer who is given to analysis as well as action. Sometimes unconventional, he is always suspicious of the bureaucracy he serves.

VERA CASTANG, Castang's Czech wife, was a talented gymnast, but an accident left her paralyzed for several years; Castang patiently helped her regain mobility. Now she has a noticeable limp that may even enhance her Slavic beauty, and she has become a successful artist. The couple has a daughter.

ADRIEN RICHARD, the divisional commissaire, is a talented police officer and a good administrator; his integrity has left him well placed in the corps, but he lacks the ability to maneuver to the highest ranks. He respects Castang, and the two work well together.

CONTRIBUTION

Nicolas Freeling objected to comparisons of his work with that of Georges Simenon (Van der Valk hates jokes about Jules Maigret), and the reader can see that Freeling's work has dimensions not attempted by Simenon. Nevertheless, there are points of similarity. In both the Van der Valk and the Castang series, Freeling offered rounded portraits of realistic, likable police officers who do difficult jobs in a complicated, often impersonal world. Freeling's obvious familiarity with a variety of European settings, ranging from Holland to Spain, also reinforced his place as a writer of Continental novels. His concerns, however, were his own. Freeling stated his conviction that character is what gives any fiction—including crime fiction—its longevity, and he concentrated on creating novels of character. Van der Valk changed and grew in the course of his series, and Castang did the same. In *A Long Silence* (1972), Freeling took the startling step of allowing his detective to be killed halfway through a novel. Freeling's style evolved in the course of his career, and he relied increasingly on dialogue and indirect, allusive passages of internal narrative.

BIOGRAPHY

Nicolas Freeling was born F. R. E. Nicolas in Gray's Inn Road, London, on March 3, 1927. He was educated in England and France, and he attended the University of Dublin. He served in the Royal Air

Force from 1945 to 1947. After leaving the military, he spent more than a decade as a professional cook in European hotels and restaurants. In 1954, he married Cornelia Termes; they had four sons and a daughter. Freeling lived all of his adult life on the Continent.

Freeling's first mystery, *Love in Amsterdam* (1962), began the Van der Valk series. In it, a central character is jailed for several weeks for a murder he did not commit. The novel may partly have been inspired by Freeling's experience of having been wrongly accused of theft. The work marked the beginning of a prolific career in which Freeling published a novel almost every year. *Gun Before Butter* (1963) won Le Grand Prix de Roman Policier in 1965. *The King of the Rainy Country* (1966) won the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for 1967. Freeling died in France in 2003.

ANALYSIS

From his very first novel, *Love in Amsterdam*, and continuing throughout his career, Nicolas Freeling's dual concerns with character and society dominated his work. He obviously enjoyed the personalities he created: Piet Van der Valk and Arlette Van der Valk and Henri Castang and Vera Castang, as well as the people who surround them. The verisimilitude of those characters has been underscored by Freeling's strong sense of place; his attention to details of personality and setting ultimately define his concern—the conflicts between the individual and modern bureaucracy, clashes among social castes, contrasts among national types, and the social structures that allow, even encourage, the committing of crime. Freeling's interest in his characters required that he allow them to grow and change, and those changes, joined with the complexities of Freeling's own vision, are largely responsible for his works' great appeal.

The Van der Valk novels are dominated by the personalities of Van der Valk and his wife, Arlette. The inspector looks at his country through the eyes of a native. The child of a cabinetmaker, an artisan—a fact that he never forgets—Van der Valk is too smart not to recognize his own foibles when in *Strike Out Where Not Applicable* (1967) he celebrates his promotion by dressing like the bourgeoisie. He is well aware of the

significance of such things in a country where social class is clear-cut and important to everyone.

Arlette's French presence in the series adds a second level to this picture of Dutch life. In a mostly friendly way, Arlette mocks Dutch orderliness and insistence on conformity. Although living among the Dutch, she nevertheless maintains French standards, as in her cooking. Her self-assurance and her support reinforce her husband's willingness to risk failure while coping with the bureaucratic order that seems so congenial to most Dutchmen, but so life-denying to Van der Valk.

STRIKE OUT WHERE NOT APPLICABLE

Class is a constant issue for Freeling's characters. In *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, for example, all the characters are aware of the social hierarchy at the riding school that forms the novel's central setting. Without sinking to stereotypes, Freeling looks at the defensiveness of the girl of Belgian peasant stock who has married the successful bicycle racer. Sympathetically, Freeling points up their uneasy position at the edge of a society that will never accept them. The couple is compared to the Van der Valks themselves, another couple who will never truly join the upper middle class. The novel's victim is a successful restaurateur. When his very proper wife must arrange his funeral, Freeling gives significant attention to her dealings with the undertaker as she tries to ensure that everything will seem acceptable to the town gossips.

DOUBLE-BARREL

In *Double-Barrel* (1964), the town of Zwinderin—self-satisfied, rigid, repressive, relentlessly Protestant—becomes a character in its own story when its smugness is shaken by a writer of poison-pen letters. In a small town whose citizens spend their free time watching the shadows on other people's curtains, little escapes the grapevine; although Van der Valk continues to rely on Arlette for information, she herself is a major topic for discussion. The town both creates and shelters the very crime that must be investigated.

A DRESSING OF DIAMOND

The concern with class issues also appears in the Castang novels. *A Dressing of Diamond* (1974) concerns the revenge kidnapping of a child. The sections of the novel devoted to the child's experiences mainly re-

cord her confusion at the behavior of her peasant captors: She is puzzled by the dirt and chaos in which they live, but most of all, she is bewildered by their constant quarrelsomeness and their shouted threats. Brutality is something that bourgeois children rarely meet.

Other levels of social relationships also come under scrutiny in Freeling's work. In *Wolfnight* (1982), Castang must deal with the upper class and a right-wing political conspiracy. In *The King of the Rainy Country*, Van der Valk has to cope with the seductions offered both literally and figuratively by the very rich. Like Castang, he is acutely conscious of the vast distance that lies between the police officer and the aristocrat.

A CITY SOLITARY

One of Freeling's most subtle examinations of the ambiguities of social bonds occurs in *A City Solitary* (1985), a nonseries novel that explores the relationship between captive and captor. In it, a novelist and his faithless wife are taken hostage by an adolescent thug who has broken out of jail. They are joined by a young female lawyer who had expected to represent the young criminal in court but who has also stumbled into his power. What happens between predators and their victims? The novel examines their involuntary bonding as they manipulate one another while fleeing across the Continent.

Significantly, when Freeling's characters suffer real damage, it is done by members of the upper classes. At the end of *The King of the Rainy Country*, Van der Valk is seriously wounded by one such aristocrat, and in *A Long Silence* he is killed by a privileged madman. In *Wolfnight*, Castang's apartment is attacked and his wife is kidnapped by the upper-class members of a political conspiracy. The representatives of social order seem to have greater power to harm than the thugs and peasants can ever obtain.

FREELING'S DETECTIVES

Although Freeling assigns ranks and offices to his detectives and they have associates and make reports, he had little interest in the day-to-day grit of police work. When Van der Valk or Castang is compared with Ruth Rendell's Reginald Wexford or J. J. Marric's George Gideon, one realizes how little time Freeling's characters spend on writing reports or fruitless

interviewing. Instead, their work proceeds as a result of countless conferences, of conversations that have been planned to appear coincidental, even of unexpected bits of information. In this sense, Freeling's novels are not strictly police procedurals (Freeling himself has protested the various categories into which fiction, including crime fiction, is often thrust). As Van der Valk's death suggests, however, Freeling intended his work to be realistic. Accordingly, Van der Valk and Castang share the theory that any good police officer must occasionally take the law into his own hands if justice is to be done. Thus, in *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, Van der Valk pressures a murderer to confess by implying that he will use force if necessary. In *Wolfnight*, Castang kidnaps a prisoner from jail to use as a hostage in the hope of trading her for his wife, who is also being held hostage.

Van der Valk's murder is the strongest testimony to Freeling's sense of realism. In "Inspector Van der Valk," an essay written for Otto Penzler's *The Great Detectives* (1978), Freeling commented on the real police officer's vulnerability to violence, using that fact to defend his decision to kill his detective. He then went on to discuss the issue from the novelist's point of view, implying that he believed that he had developed the character as far as he could. The problem was accentuated by the fact that Freeling no longer lived in Holland and thus felt himself gradually losing touch with Van der Valk's proper setting.

It is interesting to compare Freeling's second detective with his first. Like Van der Valk, Castang dislikes bureaucracy, maintains a wry skepticism about what he is told, and spends time reflecting on his world and its problems. Also like Van der Valk, Castang enjoys attractive women but—most significantly—turns to his wife for intellectual as well as physical comfort. In addition, Arlette and Vera are not native to their societies and thus can see societal problems more acutely; both women are strong willed, emotional, and intelligent. Both are devoted to their husbands without being submissive. Nevertheless, Castang is more complex than Van der Valk; he is more given to theorizing and speculation, and the very nature of his job creates a greater variety in his experience. Similarly, Vera, with her Eastern-Bloc youth, injury, and life as an art-

ist, is a more complex character than Arlette. Even the setting seems more complex. Although Van der Valk sometimes left Holland, most of his stories emphasized Holland's insularity; part of the European community, it was nevertheless set apart and aloof. France may behave the same, but it still has many borders, and the Castang characters seem to cross them regularly.

Only Freeling's plots lean toward simplicity. He was not given to maps and timetables. Instead, he typically used elements of character to unlock the mystery. Using an omniscient point of view, he sometimes revealed the guilty person well before the detective could know his identity, for Freeling's interest lay in the personalities he created rather than in the puzzles.

STYLE CHANGES

Freeling's sacrifice of Van der Valk was made in response to his awareness of change, and some of the change is reflected in Freeling's own style. It became more complex and allusive than in his early novels. Freeling always relied heavily on omniscient narration, and he always used passages of interior monologue, but this element expanded in the post-Van der Valk novels, perhaps in Freeling's effort to break with some of his earlier patterns. The resulting style, as some reviewers noted, made more demands on its readers than did the earlier one, but it offered more rewards in its irony and its possibilities for characterization. This passage from *Wolfnight* occurs just after Castang has learned of his wife's kidnapping:

There was more he wanted to say but he was too disoriented. That word he found; a good word; but the simple words, the ones he wanted, eluded him. It was too much of a struggle.

Dreams? Did he dream, or better had he dreamt? Couldn't say, couldn't recall. Not that I am aware. This is my bed. This as far as can be ascertained is me.

Everything was now quite clear. He reached up and turned on the light. I am clear. I am fine. Slight headache; a couple of aspirins are indicated. What time is it?

Small struggle in disbelief of the hands of his watch. Midnight, not midday. Have slept eleven hours.

This evolution of style, particularly its choppiness, its fragments, and its shifting point of view, seems simply

one more indication of the increasing complexity of Freeling's vision. The number of works Freeling produced and the span of years covered by his writing career testify to the rightness of his insistence that he be allowed to go on changing with the rest of his world.

Ann D. Garbett

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR VAN DER VALK SERIES: *Love in Amsterdam*, 1962 (also known as *Death in Amsterdam*); *Because of the Cats*, 1963; *Gun Before Butter*, 1963 (also known as *Question of Loyalty*); *Double-Barrel*, 1964; *Criminal Conversation*, 1965; *The Dresden Green*, 1966; *The King of the Rainy Country*, 1966; *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, 1967; *This Is the Castle*, 1968; *Tsing-Boum*, 1969; *Over the High Side*, 1971 (also known as *The Lovely Ladies*); *A Long Silence*, 1972 (also known as *Auprès de Ma Blonde*); *Sand Castles*, 1989

HENRI CASTANG SERIES: *A Dressing of Diamond*, 1974; *What Are the Bugles Blowing For?*, 1975 (also known as *The Bugles Are Blowing*); *Lake Isle*, 1976 (also known as *Sabine*); *Gadget*, 1977; *The Night Lords*, 1978; *Castang's City*, 1980; *Wolfnight*, 1982; *The Back of the North Wind*, 1983; *No Part in Your Death*, 1984; *Cold Iron*, 1986; *Lady Macbeth*, 1988; *Not as Far as Velma*, 1989; *Those in Peril*, 1990; *Flanders Sky*, 1992 (also known as *The Pretty How Town*); *The Seacoast of Bohemia*, 1994; *You Know Who*, 1994; *A Dwarf Kingdom*, 1996

ARLETTE VAN DER VALK SERIES: *The Widow*, 1979; *One Damn Thing After Another*, 1981

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Valparaiso*, 1964; *A City Solitary*, 1985; *One More River*, 1998; *Some Day Tomorrow*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Kitchen Book*, 1970 (also known as *The Kitchen*); *Cook Book*, 1972; *Criminal Convictions: Errant Essays on Perpetrators of Literary License*, 1994; *The Village Book*, 2001

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- Benstock, Bernard, ed. *Art in Crime: Essays of Detective Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Includes an essay on Freeling and his contributions to the detective genre.
- Dove, George N. *The Police Procedural*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1982. Discusses the distinctive features of Freeling's police novels and their influence on the genre.
- Freeling, Nicolas. *The Village Book*. London: Arcadia, 2002. Biography of the Freeling family and history of the village in which they lived, written by Freeling himself. Provides invaluable background on Freeling's cultural heritage.
- Hausladen, Gary. *Places for Dead Bodies*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. This study of the settings of crime fiction includes a chapter discussing Freeling's representation of provincial France. Bibliographic references and index.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. "The Mysteries of Literature." *The New York Times Book Review*, October 2, 1994, p. 735. Oates uses this review of Freeling's collection of nonfictional essays on detective fiction, *Criminal Convictions*, to discuss the author's own work, as well as his critical views on the genre.
- Penzler, Otto, ed. *The Great Detectives*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Argues for Van der Valk's place among the pantheon of fiction's greatest detectives.
- Schloss, Carol. "The Van der Valk Novels of Nicolas Freeling: Going by the Book." In *Art in Crime Writing*, edited by Bernard Benstock. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Essay on Freeling's most famous detective-fiction series, exploring the author's particular craft of writing.

R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

Born: London, England; April 11, 1862

Died: Gravesend, Kent, England; September 28, 1943

Also wrote as Clifford Ashdown

Types of plot: Inverted; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dr. Thorndyke, 1907-1942

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. JOHN EVELYN THORNDYKE, a resident of 5A King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, London, is a barrister and expert in medical jurisprudence. He investigates cases as a consultant to the police or private figures. He relies primarily on scientific knowledge and analysis to solve cases and is a remarkably handsome, humorless man.

NATHANIEL POLTON, a domestic servant, inventor, and watchmaker, works wonders in Thorndyke's laboratory and workshop. An older man, he is also an excellent chef, preparing food in the laboratory (as 5A has no kitchen). Utterly devoted to Thorndyke, Polton grows through the years from servant to partner and adviser.

CHRISTOPHER JERVIS, a medical doctor, Thorndyke's associate and chronicler, is a man of average intelligence. Although he records the tiniest of details, he rarely understands their importance.

CONTRIBUTION

R. Austin Freeman is perhaps most significant as one of the inventors of the inverted detective story, in which the reader observes the crime being committed from the criminal's point of view and then shifts to that of the detective to watch the investigation and solution of the puzzle. These stories depend on the reader's interest in the process of detection, rather than on the desire to know "who done it."

Freeman's most important character, Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, was the first true scientific investigator, a realistic, utterly believable character whose solutions relied more on esoteric knowledge and labo-

ratory analysis than on intuition, psychology, or physical force. As opposed to those who study people, Thorndyke is interested only in things. Though all necessary clues are laid out before the reader, it would be a rare reader, indeed, who was sufficiently versed in Egyptology, chemistry, anatomy, or archaeology to make sense of all the evidence.

The Thorndyke stories, intended in part to educate the reader about criminology, are nevertheless filled with believable and attractive characters, love interests, interesting settings, and vivid descriptions of London fogs, dense woods, and seafaring vessels.

BIOGRAPHY

Richard Austin Freeman was born on April 11, 1862, in his parents' home in the West End of London. The son of a tailor, Freeman declined to follow his father's trade, and at the age of eighteen he became a medical student at Middlesex Hospital. In 1887, he qualified as a physician and surgeon. Earlier that same year, he had married Annie Elizabeth Edwards, and on completion of his studies he entered the Colonial Service, becoming assistant colonial surgeon at Accra on the Gold Coast. During his fourth year in Africa, he developed a case of blackwater fever and was sent home as an invalid. Freeman's adventures in Africa are recorded in his first published book, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (1898).

Little is known of the next ten years of Freeman's life. After a long period of convalescence, he eventually gave up medicine and turned to literature for his livelihood. Freeman's first works of fiction, two series of Romney Pringle adventures, were published in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1902-1903 under the pseudonym Clifford Ashdown and were written in collaboration with John James Pitcairn. In his later life, Freeman denied knowledge of these stories, and the name of his collaborator was unknown until after Freeman's death.

Freeman published his first Thorndyke novel, *The Red Thumb Mark*, in 1907. It was scarcely noticed, but the first series of Thorndyke short stories in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1908 was an immediate success. Most of

these stories were published as *John Thorndyke's Cases* in 1909.

By then, Freeman was in his late forties. He continued his writing, producing a total of twenty-nine Thorndyke volumes, and maintained his love of natural history and his curiosity about matters scientific for the remainder of his life. He maintained a home laboratory, where he conducted all the analyses used in his books. He suspended work for a short time in his seventies, when England declared war, but soon resumed writing in an air-raid shelter in his garden. Stricken with Parkinson's disease, Freeman died on September 28, 1943.

ANALYSIS

In his 1941 essay "The Art of the Detective Story," R. Austin Freeman describes the beginning of what would become his greatest contribution to mystery and detective fiction—the inverted tale:



Illustration from the 1902 edition of *The Adventures of Romney Pringle*, which R. Austin Freeman published under the pen name Clifford Ashdown.

Some years ago I devised, as an experiment, an inverted detective story in two parts. The first part was a minute and detailed description of a crime, setting forth the antecedents, motives, and all attendant circumstances. The reader had seen the crime committed, knew all about the criminal, and was in possession of all the facts. It would have seemed that there was nothing left to tell. But I calculated that the reader would be so occupied with the crime that he would overlook the evidence. And so it turned out. The second part, which described the investigation of the crime, had to most readers the effect of new matter. All the facts were known; but their evidential quality had not been recognized.

Thus it turned out in "The Case of Oscar Brodski," which became the first in a long series of inverted tales told by Freeman and others.

"THE CASE OF OSCAR BRODSKI"

Brodski's story is typical of the genre: In the first part of the story, "The Mechanism of Crime," the reader is introduced to Silas Hickler—a cheerful and gentle burglar, not too greedy, taking no extreme risks, modest in dress and manner. One evening, a man he recognizes as Oscar Brodski the diamond merchant stops at Hickler's house to ask directions. After a long internal debate, the usually cautious Hickler kills Brodski and steals the diamonds he is carrying. As best he can, the killer makes the death appear accidental by leaving the corpse on some nearby railroad tracks with its neck over the near rail, the man's broken spectacles and all the bits of broken glass scattered about, and the man's umbrella and bag lying close at hand.

It is not until Hickler has returned to his house, disposed of the murder weapon, and almost left for the train station again that he sees Brodski's hat lying on a chair where the dead man left it. Quickly, he hacks it to pieces and burns the remains and then hurries to the station, where he finds a large crowd of people talking about the tragedy of a man hit by a train. Among the crowd is a doctor, who agrees to help look into things. The first part of the story ends with Silas Hickler looking at the doctor: "Thinking with deep discomfort of Brodski's hat, he hoped that he had made no other oversight."

If Freeman's theory was wrong, and his experiment had not paid off, the story would be over for the reader

at this point. The killer's identity is known without a doubt, and any astute reader is sure that Hickler has made other oversights, so what else is there to learn? Luckily, Freeman was right, and watching the doctor—who turns out to be John Thorndyke—determine and prove the identity of the murderer is every bit as interesting as it would be if the killer's identity was not already known to the reader.

Much of the success of this inverted story is the result of the skills of its author. As the second part of the story, "The Mechanism of Detection," unfolds, bits of dialogue that Hickler overheard in the station are repeated, this time told by one of the speakers, and immediately the reader sees the possibilities inherent in going over the same ground from a different perspective.

Then another kind of fun begins: What did Hickler (and the reader) miss the first time through? In this case, at least one of the clues—the hat not quite fully destroyed—is expected, even by an unexperienced reader of mysteries. Before the reader can feel too smug about being ahead of Thorndyke on this one, however, the detective, with the aid of his friend Jervis and the ever-present portable laboratory, finds clues that even the sharpest reader will have overlooked: a fiber between the victim's teeth, identified as part of a cheap rug or curtain; more carpet fibers and some biscuit crumbs on the dead man's shoes; a tiny fragment of string dropped by the killer; and bits of broken spectacle glass that suggest by their size and shape that they were not dropped or run over but stepped on. The reader has seen the victim walk on the rug and drop biscuit crumbs, has seen the killer step on the glasses and gather up the pieces, and has seen him lose the bit of string. Yet—like Thorndyke's assistant Jervis—the reader misses the significance of these until Thorndyke shows the way.

At the conclusion of the story, Thorndyke speaks to Jervis in a way that sums up one of Freeman's primary reasons for writing the stories: "I hope it has enlarged your knowledge . . . and enabled you to form one or two useful corollaries." Throughout his life, Freeman was interested in medicolegal technology, and through his stories, he entered into the technical controversies of his day. He kept a complete laboratory in his home and al-

ways conducted experiments there before allowing Thorndyke to perform them in the tales. Freeman was proud of the fact that several times he was ahead of the police in finding ways to analyze such things as dust and bloodstains and in the preservation of footprints. In fact, the Thorndyke stories were cited in British texts on medical jurisprudence. Freeman enjoyed telling a good tale, but he wanted the reader—both the casual reader and the professional investigator—to leave the story with more knowledge than before.

The Thorndyke stories are also remarkable and important because they introduce, in their main character, the first true scientific detective. Unlike Sherlock Holmes, whose intuition enables him to make astonishing guesses as to the history and character of the person responsible for a footprint, based in part on his knowledge of psychology and the social habits of people, Thorndyke relies on physical evidence alone to solve the puzzle. With his portable laboratory in the green case that never leaves his side, Thorndyke can obtain the tiniest bits of evidence (seen through his portable microscope) and conduct a sophisticated chemical analysis.

It is the breadth and depth of his esoteric knowledge that sets Thorndyke above Jervis, the police, and the reader: He knows that jute fibers indicate a yarn of inferior quality, that it takes two hands to open a Norwegian knife, what a shriveled multipolar nerve corpuscle looks like, how to read Moabite and Phoenician characters, and how a flame should look when seen backward through spectacles. All the clues are laid out in front of the reader who is with Thorndyke when he measures the distance from the window to the bed or examines the photographs of the footprints; as Jervis writes down every minute observation, the reader has it also. Every conclusion Thorndyke makes is the result of his ability to apply his knowledge to what he observes, and if the reader is not able to make use of the same observations, then perhaps something will be learned from watching Thorndyke. Freeman is very firm in his essay "The Art of the Detective Story" that a proper detective story should have no false clues, and that all of the clues necessary should be presented to the reader. The proof of the detective's solution should be the most interesting part of the story.

Unlike Holmes, Thorndyke is not a brooding eccentric, but an entirely believable, normal man. He is also extremely handsome, a quality about which Freeman felt strongly:

His distinguished appearance is not merely a concession to my personal taste but is also a protest against the monsters of ugliness whom some detective writers have evolved. These are quite opposed to natural truth. In real life a first-class man of any kind usually tends to be a good-looking man.

Although handsome, intelligent, and wealthy, Thorndyke, no longer a young man (he ages through the first several books, but stops growing older once he reaches fifty), is married only to his work. That does not mean that the Thorndyke books are devoid of the love interest that was expected by readers in the first part of the twentieth century. In many of the novels, secondary characters are hopelessly in love, and in solving the crime, Thorndyke makes it possible for them to marry. Jervis himself becomes financially secure enough to marry his intended only when he is hired as Thorndyke's assistant. The love plots themselves are charmingly told, filled with believable and sympathetic characters, but they do not interfere with the mystery at hand, and at least one critic has suggested that the love stories could be extracted from the novels, leaving satisfactory mysteries intact.

If he is sympathetic to lovers young and old, Thorndyke wastes no sympathy on another class of individual—the blackmailer. He is ruthless in tracking them down when they are the prey and on more than one occasion lets a blackmailer's killer escape. It is no crime, Thorndyke maintains, for one to kill one's blackmailer if there is no other way to escape him.

“THE MOABITE CIPHER”

Besides characterization, Freeman's great strength as a writer lies in his ability to move his characters through the streets of London and across the moors in scenes that are full of life. The opening lines of “The Moabite Cipher,” demonstrates this skill:

A large and motley crowd lined the pavements of Oxford Street as Thorndyke and I made our way leisurely eastward. Floral decorations and dropping bunting announced one of those functions inaugurated from time

to time by a benevolent Government for the entertainment of fashionable loungers and the relief of distressed pickpockets. For a Russian Grand Duke, who had torn himself away, amidst valedictory explosions, from a loving if too demonstrative people, was to pass anon on his way to the Guildhall; and a British Prince, heroically indiscreet, was expected to occupy a seat in the ducal carriage.

This passage contains much that is typical of Freeman's style. Thorndyke is a precise man, accustomed to noting every detail because it might later prove significant, and this discipline of mind shows itself in the way Jervis and the other narrators tell a story. Thus, the two men are not simply strolling down a street in London, they are making their way “eastward” on “Oxford Street.” These characters move through a London that is real (as with his laboratory experiments, the reader could easily follow Thorndyke's footsteps through several of the stories), and Freeman is not sparing in his use of real streets and buildings, drawing on the local flavor of foggy streets in a London illuminated with gaslights.

The London described in the passage is gone. Similarly, Freeman's vocabulary is faintly old-fashioned. Words such as “motley,” “amidst” and “anon” sound quaint to modern readers and help take them back to the proper time and place.

Also apparent in this passage is the gentle irony of tone, demonstrated here in the idea of the government's sponsoring events “for the entertainment of fashionable loungers and the relief of distressed pickpockets.” Thorndyke himself is a rather humorless man, but he smiles rather often at the eccentricities and weaknesses of his fellow creatures.

Loungers and pickpockets are only some of the “large and motley crowd” inhabiting London—a crowd made up of colorful characters including Russian grand dukes, British princes, international jewel thieves, mysterious artists, collectors of ancient artifacts, secretive foreigners, and overdressed women who are no better than they should be. In a large crowd in a big city peopled with interesting figures, anything can happen—and in the Thorndyke stories, something interesting usually does.

Cynthia A. Bily

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROMNEY PRINGLE SERIES (AS ASHDOWN): *The Adventures of Romney Pringle*, 1902 (with John James Pitcairn); *The Further Adventures of Romney Pringle*, 1970 (with Pitcairn)

DR. THORNDYKE SERIES: 1907-1920 • *The Red Thumb Mark*, 1907; *John Thorndyke's Cases*, 1909 (also known as *Dr. Thorndyke's Cases*); *The Eye of Osiris*, 1911 (also known as *The Vanishing Man*); *The Mystery of 31, New Inn*, 1912; *The Singing Bone*, 1912; *A Silent Witness*, 1914; *The Great Portrait Mystery*, 1918

1921-1930 • *Helen Vardon's Confession*, 1922; *Dr. Thorndyke's Case Book*, 1923 (also known as *The Blue Scarab*); *The Cat's Eye*, 1923; *The Mystery of Angelina Frood*, 1924; *The Puzzle Lock*, 1925; *The Shadow of the Wolf*, 1925; *The D'Arblay Mystery*, 1926; *A Certain Dr. Thorndyke*, 1927; *The Magic Casket*, 1927; *As a Thief in the Night*, 1928; *Dr. Thorndyke Investigates*, 1930; *Mr. Pottermack's Oversight*, 1930

1931-1942 • *Pontifex, Son and Thorndyke*, 1931; *When Rogues Fall Out*, 1932 (also known as *Dr. Thorndyke's Discovery*); *Dr. Thorndyke Intervenes*, 1933; *For the Defence: Dr. Thorndyke*, 1934; *The Penrose Mystery*, 1936; *Felo De Se?*, 1937 (also known as *Death at the Inn*); *The Stoneware Monkey*, 1938; *Mr. Polton Explains*, 1940; *Dr. Thorndyke's Crime File*, 1941; *The Jacob Street Mystery*, 1942 (also known as *The Unconscious Witness*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Uttermost Farthing: A Savant's Vendetta*, 1914 (also known as *A Savant's Vendetta*); *The Exploits of Danby Croker: Being Extracts from a Somewhat Disreputable Autobiography*, 1916; *The Great Platinum Robbery*, 1933

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *From a Surgeon's Diary*, 1975 (as Ashdown; with John James Pitcairn); *The Queen's Treasure*, 1975 (as Ashdown; with Pitcairn); *The Dr. Thorndyke Omnibus: Thirty-eight of His Criminal Investigations*, 1993; *The Uncollected Mysteries of R. Austin Freeman*, 1998 (Tony Medaver and Douglas G. Greene, editors); *Freeman's Selected Short Stories*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Golden Pool: A Story of a Forgotten Mine*, 1905; *The Unwilling Adventurer*, 1913; *The Surprising Adventures of Mr. Shuttlebury Cobb*, 1927; *Flighty Phyllis*, 1928

NONFICTION: *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, 1898; *Social Decay and Regeneration*, 1921

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Donaldson, Norman. *Donaldson on Freeman: Being the Introductions and Afterwords from the R. Austin Freeman Omnibus Volumes*. Shelburne, Ont.: Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2000. Collects together Donaldson's commentaries on Freeman's novels, revealing the trajectory of the author's evolution, as well as the importance of his fiction.

_____. *In Search of Dr. Thorndyke: The Story of R. Austin Freeman's Great Scientific Investigator and His Creator*. Rev. ed. Shelburne, Ont.: Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 1998. Study of Freeman's most famous character and his inspirations in the author's life and experiences.

_____. "R. Austin Freeman: The Invention of Inversion." In *The Mystery Writer's Art*, edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1970. Focuses on Freeman's device of showing the murderer's activities before introducing the detective.

Galloway, Patricia. "Yngve's Depth Hypothesis and the Structure of Narrative: The Example of Detective Fiction." In *The Analysis of Meaning: Informatics 5*, edited by Maxine MacCafferty and Kathleen Gray. London: Aslib, 1979. Looks at Freeman's works as a case study to understand the particular structure of narrative deployed by detective fiction.

Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. A tightly focused study of the British detective genre.

Mayo, Oliver. *R. Austin Freeman: The Anthropologist at Large*. Hawthorndene, S.Aust.: Investigator Press, 1980. Study of Freeman's use of anthropology in his works. Bibliographic references and index.

ALAN FURST

Born: New York, New York; February 20, 1941

Types of plot: Espionage; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jean Casson, 1996-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JEAN CASSON is the only protagonist to appear more than once in Furst's World War II-era spy novels. He is a French film producer who initially epitomizes the pleasure-seeking abandon of interwar Paris but gradually becomes drawn into wartime intrigue and into committing himself to political action and a moral position. In *The World at Night* (1996), Casson is infatuated with the actress Citrine and is torn between this passion and his growing desire to help France resist the Nazis. In *Red Gold* (1999), Casson, a new recruit to the world of espionage, is chosen by the Resistance as a key contact person because many of his friends from his cinema days had become activists and fighters.

CONTRIBUTION

Although he did not attain large-scale success until he was fifty, Alan Furst became the most successful new writer of espionage fiction in the 1990's, a success that continued on a larger scale in the twenty-first century. Furst pioneered the genre of the atmospheric thriller, as important for its evocation of times and places gone by as for the excitement of its plot. His novels are steeped in the ambience of Europe before and during World War II. Furst writes historical fiction that happens to contain spying as much as he composes spy novels with a historical setting. Though Furst lived for many years in Paris and that city tends to be a motif in his fiction, he also sets much of his action in Eastern European countries less familiar to the readers of this genre.

Furst often features protagonists who are communists or working for the communists. His preoccupation with communism and his Eastern European settings can be seen as a product of the aftermath of the

collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989-1991; he is exploring this period from the perspective of the 1990's and after, now that it is no longer possible to see a powerful Soviet Union as a permanent outcome of World War II. Nonetheless, Furst's communists are three-dimensional characters, not cardboard ideologues, who fall in love, feel pain, and register the full range of psychological reactions. A master of historical detail, Furst also allows his characters to hold complex and deeply felt beliefs, which he may not necessarily share, but which reflect a particular time and place. In this way, Furst's novels attain a sense of the past that contributes to the atmosphere of his mysteries.

BIOGRAPHY

Alan Furst was born to Jewish American parents on the Upper West Side in New York City in 1941. He received a bachelor of arts degree in English from Oberlin College in Ohio in 1962 and a master of arts degree in English from Pennsylvania State University in 1967. Later, he took courses at the School for General Studies at Columbia University in New York, where he encountered the prominent anthropologist Margaret Mead, for whom he later briefly worked as an assistant. He worked as a freelance writer for magazines before moving to France in 1969 as a result of receiving a Fulbright Award to teach abroad. Once in France, he contributed a regular column to the *International Herald Tribune*. Later he moved back to the United States to work for the Arts Commission in Seattle, but he made frequent visits to Paris and soaked in the atmosphere of the city that was to become a cynosure for his major fiction.

While in France, Furst began to publish fiction. Although *Your Day in the Barrel* (1976) had the thriller-genre elements so central to Furst's later fiction, it was basically a comic mystery about a drug dealer named Roger Levin. The book was influenced by the exuberant, countercultural style of Tom Robbins, who provided a blurb on the novel's back cover. The book received appreciation only in Seattle, where Furst was then working. *The Paris Drop* (1980) and *The Carib-*

bean Account (1981) are suspense novels that concern drug dealing, although their plots are more conventional and their appeal more mass-market. *Shadow Trade* (1983) was Furst's initial foray into the genre of espionage, although unlike his later books, it had a more or less contemporary setting.

In the mid-1980's, Furst visited Eastern Europe while researching an article he had been commissioned to write for *Esquire Magazine*. *Night Soldiers* (1988) was inspired by this trip and marked the beginning of Furst's historical espionage novels. *Night Soldiers* and *Dark Star* (1991) were long and possessed considerable meditative passages. It was only with *The Polish Officer* (1995) that Furst fully mastered a stripped-down technique and an ability to convey historical information without disrupting the excitement of a suspenseful plot. This book was followed by *The World at Night* and *Red Gold*, Furst's only books sharing a protagonist, the French film producer Jean Casson. Furst was not tempted by the stability and marketing potential of a Jean Casson series, however, turning to stand-alone protagonists for his next three books. *Kingdom of Shadows* (2001) and *The Foreign Correspondent* (2006) concern Eastern European émigrés in prewar Paris and Rome, respectively, while *Dark Voyage* (2004) focused on a Dutch captain aboard a seemingly neutral freighter.

Though Furst lived in Paris at the beginning of his work on the historical espionage books, by the mid-1990's he had moved to Sag Harbor, New York, on the east end of Long Island. By 2002, he had become a prominent figure in the literary world, as evidenced by a major profile in *The New York Times* as well as by his writing the copy for an advertisement for Absolut vodka. Furst's two novels *Dark Voyage* and *The Foreign Correspondent* were given the space and depth of treatment in newspaper review sections usually reserved for major works of mainstream fiction and marked Furst's development from cult writer beloved by aficionados to a figure with an increasing popular readership.

ANALYSIS

Alan Furst's appeal has a good deal to do with his choice of setting. Though many spy novels have been

written about World War II, most emphasized action, military intelligence, or the technical and scientific details of weaponry. Furst's focus on psychology, atmosphere, and political relations between and within nation-states provides pleasures that are as intellectual as visceral.

Although inspired by Eric Ambler's spy novels of the 1930's and Graham Greene's "entertainments" focusing on Cold War machinations, Furst is writing from the viewpoint of a later time period and evokes rather than shares in the passionate left-wing political allegiance of the two British novelists. Another British novelist of the Greene-Ambler generation, Anthony Powell, exerted a profound influence on Furst's fiction. Powell's sense of social history, interest in ordinary life during wartime, and ability to entwine discursive background with quick, terse dialogue are features emulated by Furst's mature work. Interestingly, however, despite his admiration for these British writers and a general Britishness of tone noted by many reviewers in Furst's work, Britain seldom, if ever, appears as a setting in his fiction.

The first two historical espionage books written by Furst, *Night Soldiers* and *Dark Star*, show the author immersing himself in the background of his books while also trying to communicate a compelling story. These novels serve as groundwork for their more seamless and faster-paced successors, starting with *The Polish Officer*. By *Dark Voyage*, Furst's denouement involving a final chase through the Baltic Sea is as exciting as any action-thriller.

For most writers, historical information and description are background. For Furst, they are content, a substantial part of what the reader expects. He conducts massive research, from securing names and dates relevant to the settings of his stories to determining what cigars the characters would have smoked, what restaurants they might have eaten in, and what popular songs they might have heard.

Furst's protagonists are always male and are almost always single. As with the traditional espionage or hard-boiled detective novel protagonists, they are loyal ultimately only to themselves, although they may be enveloped in a network of business and ideological associations. Furst's protagonists differ, how-

ever, from those in the hard-boiled or traditional spy novel in that they are consciously intellectual and often cultured and have a keen sense of style. His protagonists are often active in the arts either as practitioners, like Jean Casson, or as aficionados like Jean Szara, the protagonist of *Dark Star*, whose name alludes to the Romanian Dadaist writer Tristan Tzara. Even Eric DeHaan, the Dutch sea captain who is the protagonist of *Dark Voyage*, is somebody who reads and reflects beyond his immediate circumstances. Furst's protagonists are more detached and disaffiliated at the start of the novel than at the end. Often, they find themselves engaged in a moral or ideological sense during the course of the novel, whether because of a romantic attachment, an acquired sense of mission, or a dormant sense of morality that is awakened by the dire, life-or-death circumstances into which they have been thrust. Because Furst's characters wake up to their existential situation rather than espousing a predetermined attitude, the novels often chronicle the philosophical growth of their protagonists.

Furst tells his stories almost exclusively from the point of view of his heroes; readers learn about the characters' world as they do, and readers feel themselves to be in the characters' shoes as they struggle to thread their way through a murky and perilous reality. Furst's protagonists often try to address their isolation through relationships with women; Furst does not write love scenes as smoothly as he writes passages of pursuit and flight, but the sexual element is a crucial one in his work. Though some of these relationships succeed better than others, these love stories provide a counterpoint to the pervasive presence of war and politics, but they also demonstrate that the World War II era was one in which the private could not remain untouched by the political.

Furst's heroes tend to be middle-aged, middle-class, reserved, and unsuccessful in love but sympathetic to and intrigued by women; they are intellectual though not literary, and while slow to commit themselves, Furst's heroes eventually come to care deeply about the activity of espionage, partially out of moral considerations but also out of love of the game. Though Furst's heroes encounter many perils, they always emerge alive at the end; however, Jean Casson

aside, his protagonists are not repeated from book to book. The protagonist's survival is not to ensure the next adventure but instead is an affirmation of personal integrity in a world that often seems ready to dismiss it. Furst may seem to emphasize political events and circumstances, but his novels forcefully convey the importance of unprepossessing people who are able to rise to the occasion at a time of crisis.

RED GOLD

The title of *Red Gold* refers to the funding of the communist resistance in Nazi-occupied France during World War II, the sources of which Germany is determined to find. Jean Casson, an apolitical man and former filmmaker, returns to France to pursue a woman with whom he is infatuated. Casson is recruited into the Resistance by a police officer who realizes that because Casson has a network of contacts in the film industry, he has unwittingly met a lot of communists. Casson's assignment to foil German attempts to ferret out the "red gold" allows Furst to demonstrate the way in which prewar glamour can be transmuted into grim wartime determination. *Red Gold* is Furst's only novel set fully in France, a setting his readers know better than the Eastern European countries he often explores. Furst's ability to evoke an original sense of atmosphere is all the more remarkable.

DARK STAR

In *Dark Star*, Jean Szara is a journalist for the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* who, despite his communist conviction, is not an ideologue. Therefore, it marks a change for him when he is asked by the NKVD, the Soviet spy agency, to monitor activity in Paris. Szara finds himself torn between what are, in his mind, competing goods: the communist ideological struggle and his growing awareness of his own Jewishness, which leads him to try to save the Jews of Europe from Nazism even though that is not within the mandate given him by his Soviet superiors. This novel, covering a wider span of time (1937-1940) than most of Furst's subsequent works, sets the tone for them by charting the growth of the protagonist's awareness of himself and his world.

THE POLISH OFFICER

Poland was quickly conquered in 1939 by the armed might of Germany and the perfidy of the Soviet Union,

but the Polish resistance, forced abroad, is just beginning the fight in *The Polish Officer*. Captain Alexander de Milja, who makes maps for a living, experiences the map of Europe in a visceral way to help underwrite the Polish resistance in exile as he tries to smuggle the Polish gold reserves out of the country via the one open border with Romania. This novel gives a good overview of the Eastern Front of the early years of World War II and shows de Milja as both an ardent patriot and a vulnerable human being subject to stress and temptation.

DARK VOYAGE

Dark Voyage explores diplomatic ambiguities of World War II, especially the importance of governments in exile and the potential of the few neutral countries, like Spain, to become sites of espionage and skullduggery. Dutch captain Eric DeHaan disguises his ship, the MV *Noordendaam*, as a Spanish freighter while plotting to aid the resistance to the Nazis who have occupied his country. Following an exciting itinerary that takes him and his ship from Tunisia in the Mediterranean to Estonia in the Baltic, DeHaan shows how paradoxically easy it is for a political mission, when disguised as an economic enterprise, to escape notice even in a world at war. *Dark Voyage* is arguably Furst's most gripping and most thoughtful work.

Margaret Boe Birns

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JEAN CASSON SERIES: *The World at Night*, 1996; *Red Gold*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Your Day in the Barrel*, 1976; *The Paris Drop*, 1980; *The Caribbean Account*, 1981; *Shadow Trade*, 1983; *Night Soldiers*, 1988; *Dark Star*, 1991; *The Polish Officer*, 1995; *Kingdom of Shadows*, 2001; *Blood of Victory*, 2002; *Dark Voyage*, 2004; *The Foreign Correspondent*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *One Smart Cookie: How a Housewife's Chocolate Chip Recipe Turned into a Multi-*

million-Dollar Business, The Story of Mrs. Field's Cookies, 1987

EDITED TEXT: *The Book of Spies: An Anthology of Literary Espionage*, 2003

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Anderson, Patrick. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Section on Furst praises his spy fiction, calling it compelling, and describes several novels, including *Kingdom of Shadows*.

Dunn, Adam. "Publishers Weekly Talks with Alan Furst." *Publishers Weekly* 249, no. 26 (July, 2002): 52. This revealing interview explores Furst's research methods, reading habits, and the marketing of his work.

Foreman, Jonathan. "Furst Among Equals." Review of *Dark Voyage*, by Alan Furst. *Weekly Standard* 10, no. 9 (November, 2004): 37-38. This review of *Dark Voyage* foregrounds the qualities that have made Furst's historical spy novels appealing to so many.

Gross, Ken. "Paris Noir." *The New York Times Magazine: Sophisticated Traveler*, June 4, 2006, 148-152. An examination of the fictional Paris created by Furst; important for the appreciation of Furst's techniques of establishing background and setting.

Schrag, Peter. "Graham Greene, Roll Over." *The Nation*, October 12, 2002, 31-34. This omnibus review of Furst's spy novels discusses the traits they share and analyzes their effect on the reader.

Taylor, Charles. "A Stylish Contradiction: Furst's Romantic Realism." *The New York Observer*, June 7, 2006, 20. This overview article valuably links the popularity of Furst's work to political concerns of the 1990's and the early twenty-first century, particularly the continuing debate over the significance of World War II.

JACQUES FUTRELLE

Born: Pike County, Georgia; April 9, 1875

Died: On the *Titanic*; April 15, 1912

Type of plot: Master sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Professor S. F. X. Van Dusen, 1905-1909

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PROFESSOR VAN DUSEN, otherwise known as the THINKING MACHINE, is a Sherlock Holmesian investigator who charges no fee for his services. His full title, Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen, Ph.D., LL.D., F.R.S., M.D. (and other unnamed honors), is indicative of his professorial background, his elitism, his scientific methodology, and his worship of logic. He is unmarried and relies on a reporter named Hutchinson Hatch to do his detailed research. Van Dusen delights in solving baffling cases and is fond of proving that “nothing is impossible” and “two plus two always equals four.”

CONTRIBUTION

Jacques Futrelle wrote seven novels and some fifty short stories. Clearly indebted to Edgar Allan Poe’s Monsieur Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Futrelle’s Professor Van Dusen nevertheless has his own distinctive features. Futrelle deliberately exaggerates the reasoning powers of his hero, for example, to promote an ambiguous result: One is never sure if the Thinking Machine incarnates an idol of the master sleuth or if the ultimate end is to ridicule over-indulgent logic. His language is at times clever, at times full of typical detective jargon, at times teeming with subtle humor. Other than Van Dusen, Futrelle’s characters are normal, ordinary people, but his solutions to criminal puzzles are always unique and often border on the bizarre. His inventiveness has attracted critical praise. Writing at a time when it was fashionable to emphasize quick action, incidents, and criminal situations, Futrelle preferred to carve out stories of ideas and analysis. He helped reverse the trend toward violence and raised the level of detective fiction by portraying intellectual, rather than physical, combat.

Aside from his eccentric detective and the clever solutions, Futrelle is cited for his variety of locked-room mysteries, which he developed to perfection, and a subtle satiric voice not always recognized. He extended the realm of Dupin and Holmes, but he sacrificed character to focus on illustrations of the power of logic. Some may argue that his range is limited, and it is true that his novels have lost some appeal over the years. Still, Futrelle’s early death ended what many saw as a developing genius.

BIOGRAPHY

Jacques Heath Futrelle was born to Wiley H. H. Futrelle and Linnie Bevill Futrelle of French Huguenot descent on April 9, 1875, in Pike County, Georgia. Recorded information about his early life is scant. Evidently he read widely in Poe, Doyle, and François-Eugène Vidocq and developed a love of logical detail. It is also clear that he had a considerable depth of knowledge in the sciences and criminology. He first worked for a newspaper in Richmond, Virginia, at the age of fifteen and briefly served as a theatrical manager while there (1902-1904). Later he moved to Boston to join the editorial staff of the *Boston American* newspaper (1904-1906). He married L. May Peel, also a writer, on July 17, 1895.

Futrelle gained prominence when the *Boston American* serialized his famous short story “The Problem of Cell Thirteen” from October 30 to November 5, 1905. The story was used to encourage readers to write in and suggest possible solutions, with prize money of one hundred dollars for the best possible answer. Most of the Thinking Machine stories appeared in this newspaper, but some, no one knows how many, are presumably lost among stacks of old papers tied in huge bundles at warehouses.

Futrelle began to attract attention as a freelance writer and published his first novel in 1906. Although he wrote both Westerns and detective stories successfully, by the time of his death he had become known internationally as a writer of light, lush romances and so-called Edwardian novels. Since that time, however,

his popularity as a writer of romantic fiction has waned. *The Diamond Master*, published in 1909, is generally considered his best novel, but the weight of criticism lies heavily in favor of his short stories.

For the remainder of his life he resided in Scituate, Massachusetts, until his heroic death April 15, 1912, aboard the *Titanic*, which was returning from England. Seven of his stories went down with him in the Atlantic Ocean. Always a gentleman and a devoted husband, Futrelle put his wife aboard a lifeboat as the *Titanic* was sinking but refused to take his place on the boat until others were taken care of first. Such courtesy cost him his life.

ANALYSIS

Of the seven novels and four short-story collections of Jacques Futrelle, two of the novels and almost all the short stories feature Professor Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen. Futrelle's first two works are among his best known: "The Problem of Cell Thirteen" and the novel *The Chase of the Golden Plate* (1906). Because the novel was written before the short story (despite their publication dates), the question of exactly what year the now-famous professor was introduced becomes problematic. Professor Van Dusen is a fifty-year-old, yellow-haired, five-foot, two-inch, 107-pound, slit-eyed "son of the son of the son of an eminent German scientist"; he is "the logical production of a house that had borne a distinguished name in the sciences for generations." Just recently he has held the chair of philosophy in a great university, and he has spent thirty-five years "devoted to logic, study, analysis of cause and effect, mental, material, and psychological." He is fond of repeating the phrases "two plus two equals four," "nothing is impossible," and "simple logic can reveal anything," and he boasts that one astute in logic can receive only one day of training in chess and beat the chess masters at their own game "by the force of inevitable logic." With the professor, Futrelle gave new meaning to Richard Lovelace's famous words: "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." Lovelace meant that the mind can leave the body behind in its flight. Futrelle's depiction of Van Dusen, however, suggests that the body can follow the mind in its flight.

The critic Howard Haycraft wisely warns all detective writers to "avoid the Locked Room puzzle; only a genius can invest it with novelty or interest today." Part of the reason for Haycraft's warning stems from the works of Futrelle, about half of which deal in some manner with a locked-room, -building, or -passage situation (a prison cell, two separate locked rooms in a hotel, a boarded-up antique house being renovated, a room in a boat at sea, a dentist's office, a strip of highway walled on both sides, an impregnable science lab, even the impossible escape of a fourteen-month-old baby from a house isolated in the snow). Most of the stories employ strange but logical means of escape (for example, an orangutan swings the baby through the trees, and two motorcycles with detachable seats and steering are made to look like the car that vanishes into the strip of highway). In the case of "The Problem of Cell Thirteen," the escape of Van Dusen from a maximum security prison with nothing but polished shoes, tooth powder, and twenty-five dollars was a sensational locked-room puzzle no reader of the *Boston American* solved. Such near-impossible escapes earned for Van Dusen the title the Thinking Machine and earned for Futrelle the title Master of the Locked Room, for few have set up the "closure" mystery any better.

"THE PROBLEM OF CELL THIRTEEN"

"The Problem of Cell Thirteen" (published in *The Thinking Machine*, 1907) sets the tone and the parameters for the rest of the Van Dusen series. Almost all the stories refer to Van Dusen as the Thinking Machine, almost all employ newspaper reporter Hutchinson Hatch as his sidekick, and most use Detective Mallory of the Supreme Police Intelligence of the Metropolitan District as the inferior but pleasant rival of Van Dusen.

THE CHASE OF THE GOLDEN PLATE

The structural pattern most of Futrelle's short stories were to follow is first seen in his novel *The Chase of the Golden Plate*. That Professor Van Dusen is not mentioned until the last third of the novel does not mean that he plays a secondary role, or that he was added to the story as an afterthought, as some critics have suggested. Typically, the Futrelle mystery story falls into three sections, as in this novel. In the first section the mystery is presented to the reader, either as

told to Van Dusen or through third-person narration. In the second section, Hutchinson Hatch usually appears to check out specific details, accumulate physical evidence, or, in some cases, dramatize to Van Dusen how baffling the situation is at that point of his investigation. Finally, in the third section, the Thinking Machine focuses his brain cells on the problem and in most cases solves the riddle without so much as leaving his armchair, all the while pointing out that the case was logically quite simple. The three steps used as a controlling device (matching the three parts of this novel), with Van Dusen brought in late in the third part, is a technique used throughout Futrelle's career.

Even though Futrelle left no body of critical material that outlines his fictional theory, or any commentary on the writing of other detective fiction that might be used as a gauge, one can surmise from his work a distinct approach involving four prominent elements: insistence on the superiority of logic to any insoluble features, a corresponding deemphasis of violence and incident, realism of detail, and subtle humor. "Two plus two equals four, not some time but all the time," Van Dusen argues in story after story. Here is a man whose supreme logic permits him in a story entitled "The Perfect Alibi" to solve the only murder case in which a criminal made absolutely no mistakes.

Why was Futrelle bent on creating plausible stories with insoluble problems, puzzles, locked rooms, and surprise conclusions—all of which required a special knowledge or insight rare among humans? Part of the answer lies in Futrelle's insistence on the imagination as an ingredient of supreme intellect. Indeed, the Thinking Machine relies as much on intuition and creativity as he does on deduction. In one story ("The Scarlet Thread"), Van Dusen insists that imagination is 50 percent of logic. In another story ("Kidnapped Baby Blake, Millionaire") he delivers a stern lecture on how the "imagination is the backbone of the scientific mind" and declares that "this imagination—really logic—leads to amazing possibilities." In his first novel, *The Chase of the Golden Plate*, Van Dusen reveals the solution with this advice: "All things must be imagined before they can be achieved; therefore imagination is one of the most vital parts of the scientific brains." Clearly, this is not too far removed from Poe's

ratiocination, in which the detective has the imaginative capability of emptying himself and replacing his being with the criminal mind.

A second reason for Futrelle's fascination with insoluble problems is his belief in the power of sheer force of will to overcome adversity. "Nothing is impossible," he repeats in virtually every story, usually as a heated reminder to Hatch. Like Poe's *Ligeia*, one can conquer anything, even death, by bringing to bear the power of the will over matter. Futrelle has embraced the philosophical position inherited from the Enlightenment that every problem is soluble if one persists and applies intense concentration. He uses his hero well to instill a faith in human logic to overcome all adversity. "The mind is master of all things," says Van Dusen.

REASON AND CRIME SOLVING

At a time when most of his colleagues were concerned with gruesome crimes and sensational murders, Futrelle was more concerned with the application of reason to any given phenomena, especially the apparently incongruent. The heart of Futrelle, like that of Doyle and Poe, lies in the ingenuity with which problems are concocted and then solved, rather than with elaborate chases, murder, or violent acts. Benedict Freedman has calculated that murder cases feature in 42.1 percent of Futrelle's stories compared with 60 percent of Poe's stories, and even in those stories in which murder is the crime, Futrelle's fascination is with the mental solution rather than the deed. This deemphasis of violence raises the level of analysis and intrigue of the usual police/detective story to new intellectual heights. What Futrelle gives the reader, then, is mental tension rather than physical action, and the focus of his stories is the ingenuity of Van Dusen in solving the unsolvable. Further, the systematic dependency on reason does not, as some surmise, amount to a game of matching wits with Professor Van Dusen. Futrelle, instead, seems to want to stretch the minds of his readers so that they can inculcate new dimensions to their thinking. Futrelle's plots demand close observation, dialectical reasoning, synthesis, objective detachment, rigor in logic, and purity of concentration—all of which Futrelle advocates as modes of problem solving and avenues to acute awareness.

Although Van Dusen has a laboratory in his home, he seldom uses it. He simply breaks the problem down into components, applies rigorous logic, and arrives at a solution by deduction. With the possible exception of Sherlock Holmes, he is the most intellectual of detectives.

It must be admitted that Futrelle has written some uneven works. His mystery novels—for example, *Elusive Isabel* (1909) and *Blind Man's Buff* (1914)—pale by comparison to his detective stories. It may well be that Futrelle, like Poe, could not sustain the dramatic tension in his longer works. He seems unable to construct the gradual, careful plots so necessary for mystery novels. It is also true that the later stories leaned more toward exotic events and sentimentality. Perhaps the early publication of his short stories in the newspapers required him to take a more disciplined approach. These serialized stories demanded an economy of style coupled with a certain intrigue, and the hypothetical problems posed in them proved so popular that he found it easy to repeat the pattern.

Futrelle is justly praised for his realistic detail. Although not a superb molder of character, he is a master at achieving accuracy of minute clues in a maze of hidden facts and obscurities. The clever manner in which Van Dusen uses drain pipes, rats, socks, shoe polish, linens, and human psychology to escape in "The Problem of Cell Thirteen" accounts for that story being one of the most anthologized of all detective stories.

HUMOR AND SATIRE

In all of his work Futrelle displays a subtle sense of humor. Only the shrewd *Baltimore Sun* critic H. L. Mencken seems to have fully grasped the fact that the satiric elements in Futrelle's style may well have indicated the direction his writing was headed before his death. If Mencken is correct in claiming that Futrelle's "true field was humor" and that "he had in him the making of a first rate satirist, a species of scrivener very rare among us," then why is it that so few recognize the talent? The answer can only be that Futrelle's tongue-in-cheek humor is too subtle for most readers.

The difficulty is in knowing if the apparent satire is intended as a deliberate spoof on the detective-fiction genre or simply pure entertainment. For example, it is

obvious enough that Van Dusen's size-eight hat emphasizes the housing for his oversized brain and that it is wittingly contrasted with Detective Mallory's small, size-six hat. When, however, in a moment of competition, the "Supreme Intellect" glares at "the Thinking Machine," how does one read those labels? Also, how does one interpret Professor Van Dusen's definition of "light reading" as a craving for "page after page of encyclopedic discussion on 'ologies' and 'isms' with lots of figures in 'em"? Even the professor's title—with its ridiculous laundry list of academic degrees—is charged with satire. When in one story ("The Lost Radium") a midget escapes from prison three times the first day by simply wriggling between the bars, one knows Futrelle has a sense of humor. Yet are such strokes intended to parody other detective stories? Is Futrelle laughing up his sleeve at any serious consideration of a supreme intellect or a thinking machine? It seems that the ambiguity in his humor is simply one more way Futrelle teaches reader alertness. There is logic in the humorous, and, conversely, there is frivolity in the serious, warns Futrelle.

In some ways Futrelle looks back to his literary predecessors Poe and Doyle, but he also anticipates the later developments in detective fiction. His unique approach, coupled with his creation of Van Dusen, makes Futrelle one of the best detective-fiction writers in American literature.

Ernest Pinson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PROFESSOR S. F. X. VAN DUSEN SERIES: *The Chase of the Golden Plate*, 1906; *The Thinking Machine*, 1907 (also known as *The Problem of Cell 13*); *The Thinking Machine on the Case*, 1908 (also known as *The Professor on the Case*); *Best Thinking Machine Detective Stories*, 1973; *Great Cases of the Thinking Machine*, 1976

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Simple Case of Susan*, 1908 (expanded as *Lieutenant What's-His-Name* by May Futrelle, 1915); *Elusive Isabel*, 1909 (also known as *The Lady in the Case*); *The Diamond Master*, 1909; *The High Hand*, 1911 (also known as *The Master Hand*); *My Lady's Garter*, 1912; *Blind Man's Buff*, 1914

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G

ÉMILE GABORIAU

Born: Saujon, France; November 9, 1832

Died: Paris, France; September 28, 1873

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Monsieur Lecoq, 1865-1869

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MONSIEUR LECOQ is a detective of the French Sûreté, who in the course of the series progresses from recent recruit to senior police official. His powers of logical reasoning (of which he is inordinately proud) are undeniable, but he is not infallible, and he often has to be rescued from despair when things do not go well.

PÈRE "TIRAUCLAIR" TABARET is a retired pawnbroker and an avid reader of police memoirs who enjoys using his talents to solve crime and who helps and counsels Lecoq. His role in the stories diminishes as Lecoq's increases.

CONTRIBUTION

Some writers claim that Émile Gaboriau was the author of the first detective novel. That is too simple, but he was certainly a pioneer in four respects. First, his novels fuse the short, tightly constructed, intellectually satisfying account of a mystery and its solution, practiced by Edgar Allan Poe, and the long, episodic, and sensational stories enjoyed by the French newspaper-reading public of the 1860's. Second, Gaboriau was the first to introduce convincing false trails for the reader (and the police) to follow, and he provided ingenious variations of this device in later novels. Third, and perhaps most important, Gaboriau rehabilitated the official detective in fiction: Lecoq differs from his predecessors in being neither an incompetent against whose efforts

those of a gifted amateur are contrasted nor a sinister agent of a repressive regime. Finally, Gaboriau gives authentic insights into judicial interrogations, police procedures, and scientific methods leading to the detection of crime. Despite the sensational episodes, gruesome scenes, and accounts of deductive reasoning and police activities, his novels reveal contemporary social conditions and attitudes and bear comparison with the work of the acknowledged masters of the realist and naturalist novels of the day.

BIOGRAPHY

Émile Gaboriau's grandfathers were lawyers, and his father was a district superintendent of the property registry who repeatedly moved with his family around the southern and central provinces of France in the largely unfulfilled hope of advancement. The young Gaboriau was not a gifted pupil at school, but he was a voracious reader. He briefly became a lawyer's clerk but always wanted to practice journalism and literature; after a short interlude in the cavalry, he was bought out and went to Paris. There, moving from address to address, he eked out a miserable existence by engaging in journalism of many kinds for numerous periodicals, writing poetry, and collaborating in theatrical ventures. Gradually, his circumstances improved, and he became a respected social and political commentator.

Gaboriau began also to write serialized stories to the popular taste, in many of which he made use of his own experiences and which eventually included detective stories. Lecoq first appeared in print in a moribund journal in 1865, but his adventures were soon transferred to much more successful journals, and the invention of this character made Gaboriau famous. Unfortunately, he had been plagued by illness since the 1860's and his new affluence was but little com-

pensation, save that he was able to abandon much of his purely journalistic work and concentrate on literature.

In 1870, Gaboriau was mobilized to fight in the Franco-Prussian War, and his letters and journal give a vivid account of the despair of a patriotic Frenchman, the incompetence of his superiors, and the misery of Paris during the siege that followed. Between 1861 and 1873, he published a score of works, including detective fiction, sensational historical novels, and collections of anecdotes. In 1873, ailing and exhausted, he married Amélie Rogelet, his nurse and intimate companion for more than a decade, and died two months later. After his death, his publisher issued in book form a number of other works that in his lifetime had appeared only as serials.

ANALYSIS

Émile Gaboriau's first seven novels were *romans-feuilletons* (newspaper serials), and in the accepted manner of such stories, they overflowed with surprises, reversals of fortune, recognitions, and threatened and actual violence. Each episode ended on a note of suspense, to ensure that the public would purchase the next issue, and the more horrific the violence, the more virginal the victim or intended victim, the better the public liked them. In *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1863, serial; 1866, book; *The Widow Lerouge*, 1873), Gaboriau introduced a detective theme, and four more stories featuring Lecoq appeared subsequently.

Some people do not recognize these works as detective fiction, regarding them as long-winded social and family histories in the grand manner of the nineteenth century novel. Gaboriau readily interpolates lengthy flashbacks, and the reader may complain that the sensational dominates at the expense of the relevant—and, moreover, that the author reveals information that he has concealed from his detective. Nevertheless, however tedious these episodes may be, however tenuous the link may seem to the reader interested only in the detective element, they do help to create and are integrated within the genealogical or social edifice that forms the background to Gaboriau's story—the background, moreover, in which a murder is committed, often to avoid some sort of scandal.

The crucial point is that Gaboriau's detective novels are structured around a crime and its detection. This marks another important difference between these works and other *romans-feuilletons*; whereas the latter sought to focus attention on the crime itself, with much gruesome and suspenseful buildup and as many horrific details as possible, Gaboriau concentrates on the process of detection after the crime has been committed.

THE WIDOW LEROUGE

In *The Widow Lerouge*, the main detective is Père Tabaret. Tabaret keeps his hobby a secret, fearing the disapproval of friends and neighbors; to explain his irregular hours, he allows them to believe that he indulges in various social vices. It is an interesting and significant comment on the stigma attached to police work that this "moral" activity should be concealed by something that even then would have been seen as immoral. Lecoq, a junior police officer, merely advises the examining magistrate, Daburon, to engage Tabaret to solve the murder of Madame Lerouge. Tabaret finds many clues missed by Lecoq's incompetent superior Gévrol, and his investigation occupies the major part of the novel. A complication is provided by Daburon's former romantic attachment to the mistress of the principal suspect, Commarin: Tabaret, initially convinced of Commarin's guilt, eventually realizes that another man is guilty, and despite Daburon's reluctance to acknowledge this, he finally proves his case.

THE EMERGENCE OF LECOQ

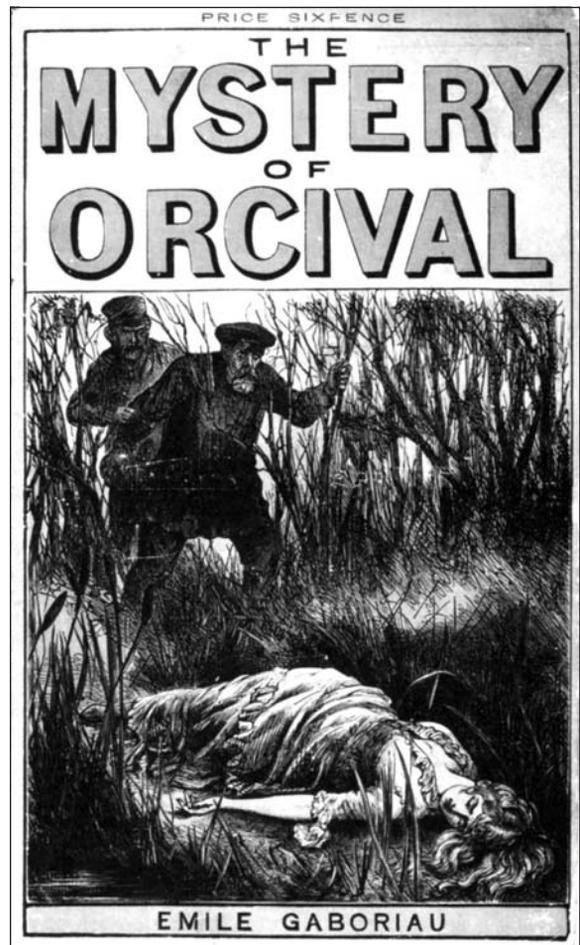
Yet it is Lecoq who emerges from the series as the dominant character, for Tabaret's role diminishes in the later works, and Gévrol disintegrates into a caricature of pompous and obstructive officialdom, a man whose stupidity is contrasted with Lecoq's genius. In an age when the police were often regarded (in literature as in life) as agents of repression, Gaboriau's decision to use an official detective as his hero was both bold and original. Hesitant at first (Tabaret is an amateur), Gaboriau finally brought Lecoq into prominence. In his determination to make him efficient and sympathetic, he gave him both human and superhuman qualities. Apart from his mastery of disguise (an ability he uses in his investigations and as a defense against criminals who have sworn to kill him), he is

adept at following a trail (young Gaboriau was an avid reader of James Fenimore Cooper), is an expert cryptographer, speaks fluent English, and has courage and intelligence. His mastery of logical deduction sometimes recalls Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin, but apart from the obvious difference that Dupin was an amateur and Lecoq is a professional, the former was an armchair detective whereas Gaboriau's hero is a practical police officer. Thus, Lecoq not only solves the mystery but also pursues the criminal. To his courage and intelligence, Lecoq adds the basic skills of scientific detection. He takes plaster casts of footprints, he uses photographic enlargements of material evidence and shows photographs of suspects to witnesses, and he calls for and uses the results of autopsies. There is evidence that Gaboriau read widely in works on forensic medicine, jurisprudence, and ballistics to authenticate his writing, and his detectives are experts in the characteristics of firearms and the effects of certain poisons. Less properly, perhaps, Lecoq always carries lock-picking tools and is a capable forger. Gaboriau also gives fascinating accounts of investigative procedures, of interrogations of suspects, and of cunning police devices (such as releasing a minor criminal in the hope that his indiscretions will unmask an accomplice or using various ruses to cause a suspect or a hostile witness to lower his guard).

At his most spectacular, Lecoq prefigures Sherlock Holmes in his love of surprising his companions by producing descriptions of suspects from what appears to be little or no evidence at all. In *The Widow Lerouge*, it is Tabaret who deduces that the criminal was a young man who entered Madame Lerouge's house before half past nine, that he was not expected by the victim (who nevertheless admitted him), and that he was of just above average height and well dressed, wearing a top hat, carrying an umbrella, and smoking a cigar in a holder. It is Lecoq himself, however, in *Monsieur Lecoq* (1869; English translation, 1879), who inspects the snow-covered wilderness around an inn in which three men have died and declares that two women have run across it, followed by a tall, middle-aged man, wearing a cloth cap and a light-brown overcoat—for good measure, Lecoq adds that he is probably married—who has later conversed with them. In both cases, the clues that

support these deductions are carefully explained. In *Le Crime d'Orcival* (1867; *The Mystery of Orcival*, 1871), in some ways a distant foreshadowing of Ellery Queen's *The Chinese Orange Mystery* (1934), Lecoq realizes that the criminal has deliberately falsified the clues and that he must therefore believe the opposite of what his observations appear to suggest.

Nevertheless, Lecoq has human traits. He is arrogant and has a sense of the dramatic. As a young man, dismissed by his employer for planning imaginary crimes, he joined the police force as the only possible alternative to a career as a master criminal. (In *The Widow Lerouge*, Gaboriau stated that Lecoq was a former criminal. This would not have surprised the French reading public, but he clearly regretted this lapse and went to some lengths to correct it in later



books.) He is easily downhearted. His feat of deduction outside the inn comes only after he has given up hope and is goaded by an ignorant companion. He is also fallible. He thoughtlessly leaves the scene of the crime unguarded, and in his absence the evidence is disturbed. Disguised as an Englishman, he forgets his assumed foreign accent in a moment of excitement and thus betrays himself. Later, having caused a suspect to be released, he trails him across Paris to a very grand house but fails to deduce that the suspect is the nobleman who owns the house.

In this last instance, one sees not only Lecoq's fallibility but also Gaboriau's attempt to solve an abiding problem of the early detective novel. In short, a detective story requires the construction of a puzzle and the exposition of its solution, and it is thus a form of intellectual game engaging the powers of reason of both writer and reader. A novel, on the other hand, engages the reader's emotions, and the process of characterization is paramount. Conscious of the disruptive effect of the interpolations that had slowed down the narrative of *The Widow Lerouge*, Gaboriau had been trying to overcome the problem ever since. *The Mystery of Orcival*, a shorter work, has shorter interpolations, which deflect the reader only briefly from the detective theme, and Lecoq's investigations seem to continue through and beyond them. This apparent solution was illusory, however, and the overriding impression of Gaboriau's next novel, *Le Dossier no. 113* (1867; *File No. 113*, 1875), throughout which Lecoq (by now a senior police officer) is disguised so that not even the reader knows his identity, is one of tediousness and irrelevance—despite exciting episodes and the not-inconsiderable achievement of laying a false trail that points persuasively to the cashier Bertomy instead of the real criminal. (Equally convincing false trails had pointed to Commarin in *The Widow Lerouge* and to Guespin in *The Mystery of Orcival*.) The next novel, *Les Esclaves de Paris* (1868; *The Slaves of Paris*, 1879), is an involved tale of blackmail, and Lecoq intervenes only late in the narrative to unravel the complicated situation.

MONSIEUR LECOQ

The trailing of the suspect across Paris to the nobleman's house forms an important episode of *Monsieur Lecoq*, the last of the series to appear. In some re-

spects, this novel shows Gaboriau at his best, though he has been criticized for reintroducing Lecoq as a junior police officer. It is worth glancing at the chronology of its composition: Gaboriau began it in 1864—that is, before *The Widow Lerouge*—but did not complete it until 1868. As a narrative, read not as the last but as the first of the series, it dovetails with the histories of the various reappearing characters; as a structure, it reveals the hand of a more mature craftsman of detective fiction than the author of the other Lecoq novels.

It is cast in two volumes. The first is a detailed account of Lecoq's inquiry into the crime—but, as has been noted, does not reach a satisfactory conclusion. The human background is contained in a second volume, the action of which begins fifty years earlier: An epilogue narrates the conclusion of Lecoq's investigation. In terms of the detective element, readers might complain of having to wade through an irrelevant second volume before Lecoq, reassured at the end of the first by Tabaret (who provides significant information about certain characters), confirms what he was unable to believe and solves the mystery. Because the second volume is also an engaging if somewhat breathlessly narrated sociohistorical document, the reader's interest is properly engaged on this alternate level.

The detective part of the novel is tightly constructed, and the characters are carefully drawn, from the old woman who keeps the inn to the incompetent and treacherous Gévrol. Lecoq's role is central, and Gaboriau makes frequent but brief authorial comments on his thoughts and actions, in a manner that readers of Georges Simenon will find familiar. Lecoq's powers of deduction are impressive, even when his conclusions are slightly inaccurate (for example, he inverts the social status of the women who fled from the inn). The strange behavior of the first examining magistrate, Escorval, provides a mystery in itself, as do the achievements of the ubiquitous accomplice who forestalls Lecoq's every move; the personality of the suspect, Mai, pervades the first volume, especially during his long and gripping interview, full of the cut and thrust of debate, with a second examining magistrate, Segmuller. Tabaret appears briefly, explains errors Lecoq has made, and provides

information he perhaps should have known. There are powerful, gruesome scenes, such as the description of the morgue, but these are always coldly realistic.

Gaboriau's style is at its most typical in *Monsieur Lecoq*. His sentences are short and punchy, and they often form paragraphs in themselves, similar to the style of reporting in certain newspapers. Gaboriau often uses exclamatory phrases, a characteristic that becomes intrusively repetitive in the later novels. The vocabulary is full of imagery, some conventional and some refreshingly original, and he habitually employs colloquial language in the narrative where more formality might be expected.

The freshness of Gaboriau's approach lies in the fact that although Lecoq observes, tests, and deduces like Poe's Dupin, he does so on a grander stage and at greater length. There are inconsistencies—characters possessing information they cannot have acquired, discrepancies in age and appearance—but the initially confusing chronology of Lecoq is explicable, and other faults are trivial and perhaps forgivable in a writer who wrote at such a furious rate. Gaboriau established the basic formula, and English writers such as Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle developed it.

OTHER WORKS

Gaboriau went as far as he could with Lecoq. His two remaining detective novels—one of which barely qualifies for the description—introduce other detectives. *La Corde au cou* (1871; *Within an Inch of His Life*, 1873), featuring Inspector Goudar, is an adventurous romp, but the short novel entitled *Le Petit Vieux des Batignolles* (1876; *The Little Old Man of Batignolles*, 1880), in spite of narrative inconsistencies, is full of exciting twists and turns. The murderer, assuming the cleverness of the police in interpreting clues, falsifies them to incriminate someone else. In the event, Inspector Méchiné and his colleague, ignorant of a crucial fact, arrest the right man for the wrong reasons. The popularity of Lecoq himself was maintained by a rather sensational novel entitled *La Vieillesse de Monsieur Lecoq* (1878; *The Old Age of Monsieur Lecoq*, 1880), which some readers consider part of the canon, although it was actually written by Gaboriau's disciple, Fortuné du Boisgobey.

William S. Brooks

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MONSIEUR LECOQ SERIES: *L'Affaire Lerouge*, 1863 (serial), 1866 (book; *The Widow Lerouge*, 1873); *Le Crime d'Orcival*, 1867 (*The Mystery of Orcival*, 1871); *Le Dossier no. 113*, 1867 (*File No. 113*, 1875); *Les Esclaves de Paris*, 1868 (*The Slaves of Paris*, 1879); *Monsieur Lecoq*, 1869 (English translation, 1879)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *La Corde au cou*, 1871 (*Within an Inch of His Life*, 1873; also as *In Peril of His Life* and *In Deadly Peril*); *Le Petit Vieux des Batignolles*, 1876 (*The Little Old Man of Batignolles*, 1880; also known as *A Thousand Francs Reward* and *A Beautiful Scourge*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Les Cotillons célèbres*, 1860; *Les Comédiennes adorées*, 1861; *Les Gens de bureau*, 1862 (*The Men of the Bureau*, 1880); *Les Mariages d'aventure*, 1862 (*Marriage at a Venture*, 1879); *La Vie infernale*, 1870 (*The Count's Secret*, 1881); *La Clique dorée*, 1871 (*The Clique of Gold*, 1874); *La Dégringolade*, 1872 (*The Downward Path*, 1880); *L'Argent des autres*, 1874 (*Other People's Money*, 1874); *La Capitaine Coutanceau*, 1875 (*Captain Coutanceau*, 1880); *Les Amours d'empoisonneuse*, 1881 (*The Marquise de Brinvilliers*, 1886); *Written in Cipher*, 1894

SHORT FICTION: *Ruses d'amour*, 1862

PLAYS: *L'Honneur du nom*, pr. 1869 (with others); *L'Affaire Lerouge*, pr. 1872 (with Hippolyte Hostein; adaptation of Gaboriau's novel)

NONFICTION: *L'Ancien Figaro: Études satiriques*, 1861; *Le Treizième Hussards*, 1861 (*The Thirteenth Hussars*, 1880)

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LUIZ ALFREDO GARCIA-ROZA

Born: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; January, 1936

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; psychological; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Espinosa, 1996-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR ESPINOSA is a middle-aged police investigator from the Peixoto District Precinct, in the Copacabana neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. Espinosa is divorced and has a son that he has not seen in years, who lives in Washington, D.C. Espinosa lives alone in a small apartment near his work and maintains an ever-growing library of used books, which he respects more than he does most of his fellow police officers. He considers himself to be one of the few honest detectives in a job where most have been co-opted by a system of payoffs. He accomplishes most of his crime solving outside the official judicial system. Espinosa lives a simple life, with only two passions: Italian food and good-looking women.

IRENE (her last name is never given), the one consistent woman in Inspector Espinosa's life, lives in São Paulo but travels to Rio de Janeiro on business. Espinosa often wonders about Irene's private life and speculates that she may have other lovers. Nonetheless, both he and Irene maintain separate lives, and neither wishes to marry. The relationship is one of mutual respect and admiration, rather than control.

WELBER is a young police officer who is the only person in the Peixoto District Precinct that his chief, Inspector Espinosa, trusts implicitly. Welber is logical, dedicated, intelligent, and honest. He is chosen when Espinosa needs somebody outside the judicial system to work with him in the streets of Copacabana and Rio de Janeiro. Welber lives a simple life in a neighborhood far from Copacabana and suffers a long daily commute to work. He repeatedly confirms his integrity, to the point of getting shot while protecting Espinosa.

CONTRIBUTION

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza began his writing career by publishing academic works while he was a profes-

sor of psychology at Brazil's Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. His experience as a scientist and psychiatrist is reflected in his mystery series centered on Inspector Espinosa, who investigates crime in the Copacabana section of Rio de Janeiro. In these novels, crimes are not always solved, but Garcia-Roza thoroughly examines the inspector's thoughts as he contemplates the psychological and philosophical issues that produce these often brutal crimes.

Through Espinosa's thoughts, Garcia-Roza comments on the modern Brazilian mind, with special emphasis on the psychological and legal interactions between the multiple levels of society to be found in Copacabana and Rio de Janeiro. Espinosa's calm, frank, and astute assessment of the reasons for the existence of corruption in the megalopolis where he lives provides a nonbiased explanation of the reality of the lives of those who are typically not mentioned in the daily news: the homeless children living on the streets of Rio, police who place their own welfare above that of their fellow citizens, and strong and independent women who function within a male culture.

BIOGRAPHY

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza was born in the Copacabana neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in January, 1936. He grew up at a time when Copacabana had no tall buildings and was mostly single houses. He witnessed his neighborhood make the immense change from a small, beachside community to a skyscraper-filled, world-famous resort, and he later made it the setting for his mystery novels. As the city changed around him, Garcia-Roza developed from a young and relatively innocent youth into a sophisticated scientist, Freudian psychoanalyst, and professor.

Garcia-Roza dedicated himself to the academic life at Brazil's Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He spent thirty-five years teaching philosophy and psychology, directing the preparation of undergraduate and postgraduate theses, and overseeing the postgraduate program of psychoanalytical theory. During his tenure there, Garcia-Roza wrote numerous nonfictional works that dealt primarily with psychological behaviorism. These works expand on Freudian theories of unconsciousness, interpretation of dreams, and

metapsychology (the underlying causes of noncognizant behavior). Later, this profound knowledge of human behavior would be evident in the philosophical and analytical musings of Inspector Espinosa, Garcia-Roza's main character in his mystery novels.

Although Garcia-Roza maintained a busy academic schedule, he still found time to read mystery novels. Among the works he read were those of his favorite authors, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Arthur Conan Doyle, who would later influence his own mystery fiction. The specific style of writing Garcia-Roza employs in the Inspector Espinosa series is unique, but the author does credit the great masters of mystery with providing examples of literary excellence that inspired him to develop his own distinctive works.

Garcia-Roza's first mystery novel, *O silêncio da chuva* (*The Silence of the Rain*, 2002), was published in 1997. It became an immediate best seller in Brazil. The work received the Nestlé Prize for Literature in 1997 (one of the highest literary awards available in Latin America) and the Jabuti Award for Latin American Literature. Shortly afterward, Garcia-Roza decided to leave his distinguished position at his university and to embrace mystery-fiction writing as his full-time career. The Espinosa series has been translated into English, Spanish, French, Greek, and other languages.

ANALYSIS

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza started the Inspector Espinosa series in 1997 with *The Silence of the Rain*. Inspector Espinosa lives a very Brazilian life in Copacabana. He knows his neighborhood well, and the streets, parks, beaches, and the characters he encounters in the novels are all based on well-known Carioca (Rio de Janeiro resident) lifestyles. Espinosa lives a solitary life among the crowds of tourists, business professionals, entrepreneurs, the homeless, and the criminals of Copacabana. The inspector goes about his life unnoticed by his neighbors. He lives in an honest manner, and to do so, he maintains a certain physical and psychological distance between himself and his community.

This individuality extends to his interactions with fellow law enforcement officials in his police district,

the Peixoto District. He is one of only two police officers in the series who are portrayed as honest and above coercion from those who would co-opt them. Garcia-Roza chose the name Espinosa because it was the name of a philosopher. This name was meant to project the image of a police officer who would ponder the evidence and situation rather than the stereotypical Latin crime investigator who would often rigidly stick to his first impressions of a crime in order to solve the case quickly (and often profit from this artificial resolution).

Throughout the series, Garcia-Roza presents the tropical climate and beach environment as an exotic backdrop for the fast-paced progression of life and crime in Rio de Janeiro. The heat of summer (in December), the winds that bring tropical rainstorms, and proximity to ocean beaches with their cooling breezes dictate where many of the clandestine meetings, stake-outs, and other events included in the crime-solving process take place. Like most residents of Copacabana, Inspector Espinosa lives in an apartment. Much of his life involves his experiences with the surrounding neighborhood. In Espinosa, Garcia-Roza creates a fallible man, one who can and does make mistakes as he develops a case. He is a simple but not simplistic man who calmly accepts his life as a divorced man. His home is a place of frozen dinners, oddly stacked literary works (one of his passions is used books), and a telephone answering machine. This "electronic secretary" is central to all of Garcia-Roza's mystery novels. Much of the action that takes place in the novels begins or ends with a message on the answering machine. The machine is so important in the works that it can be thought of as a crucial character.

Garcia-Roza presents the reader with strong female characters. They run the gamut from wealthy widows to artists to prostitutes. What they all have in common is their intelligence and strength in demanding circumstances. Inspector Espinosa reduces the personal distance he keeps from others only to indulge in one of his few social pleasures: having women in his life. Numerous women, both suspects and friends, appear during Espinosa's investigations. Most, such as Alba Antunes in *The Silence of the Rain*, appear in only one novel. However, Irene has an ongoing amorous but nonexclu-

sive relationship with Espinosa throughout the series.

Garcia-Roza provides Espinosa with one honest and trustworthy partner in the police unit, a Sherlock Holmes-like officer known simply as Welber. However, fellow police officers are often as corrupt as the criminal suspects. For this reason, and to avoid losing testimony from honest witnesses who would feel pressured to exaggerate their testimonies if they were to speak inside the district precinct, Espinosa often meets with witnesses in plazas, in parks, or on beaches. The witnesses are often told not to speak to other police, as this could corrupt the investigation. Garcia-Roza presents a strong criticism of the justice system as it operates in Rio de Janeiro. Interestingly, Espinosa is presented not as cynical but rather as pragmatic in the manner that he carries out investigations, given the realities of his position in the department.

Because of Garcia-Roza's background in psychology, it is not surprising that some of the novels deal with madness versus sanity in society. Just as Espinosa lives in a borderland between law and lawlessness, some of Garcia-Roza's characters occupy a space between insanity and normality. Readers often find themselves wondering if a suspect is conscious of his or her behavior. At times it becomes unclear as to who is the victim and who is the perpetrator, and who is the psychiatrist and who is the patient. By the time readers conclude the novels, it becomes apparent that the lines that separate good from evil, police from criminals, and sanity from madness have become blurred in the skewed realities of Copacabana.

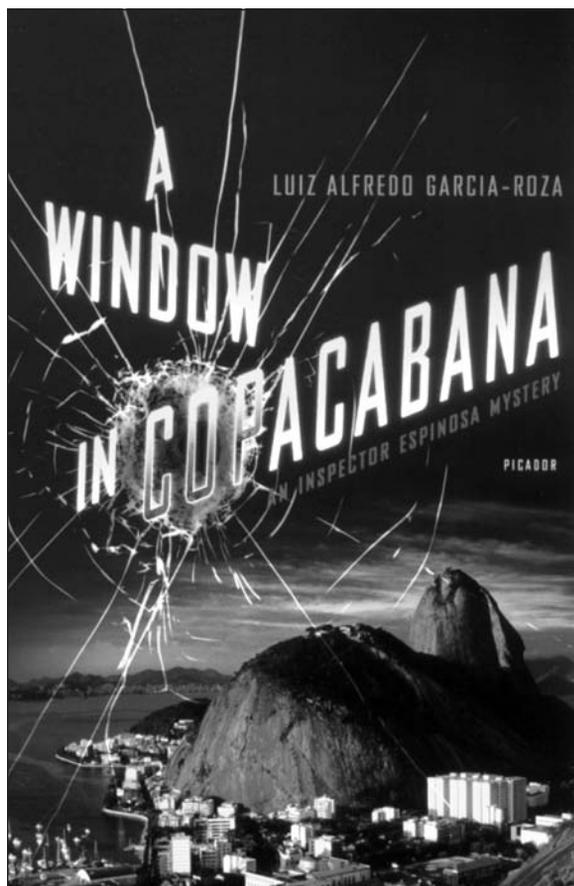
THE SILENCE OF THE RAIN

In *The Silence of the Rain*, when Ricardo Carvalho is found shot within his own automobile, a series of false assumptions leads Inspector Espinosa to repeatedly reevaluate the motives that he logically assumes have driven the suspects in the death. The reader is witness to more than the inspector is, but the evolving plot soon exposes how easily one can be led to psychological assumptions, especially when the reader is used to a North American system of judicial values.

In an example of a reversal of roles, a technique that Garcia-Roza employs in several of his novels, the distinction between murder and suicide, the blackmailer and the one being blackmailed, the police officer and

the criminal, and the victim and the perpetrator become muddled. The author presents a straightforward tale of intrigue without using confusing flashbacks or false leads. Instead, a seemingly unconnected series of events and violent actions are logically and seamlessly interwoven during the last short chapters of the novel.

The women in this mystery novel are all quite independent, and all become suspects. In one form or another, Inspector Espinosa is attracted to all of them. Bia, Ricardo Carvalho's middle-aged but still attractive widow, will not allow herself to be intimidated by pushy police officers. Alba Antunes, a fitness instructor, starts an affair with Espinosa but does not wish any long-term commitment. Rose, Ricardo Carvalho's secretary, outsmarts all of the antagonists who try to use her for financial gain. The final episode of the novel involves a woman who uses love to literally murder the person who was there to take her life.



A WINDOW IN COPACABANA

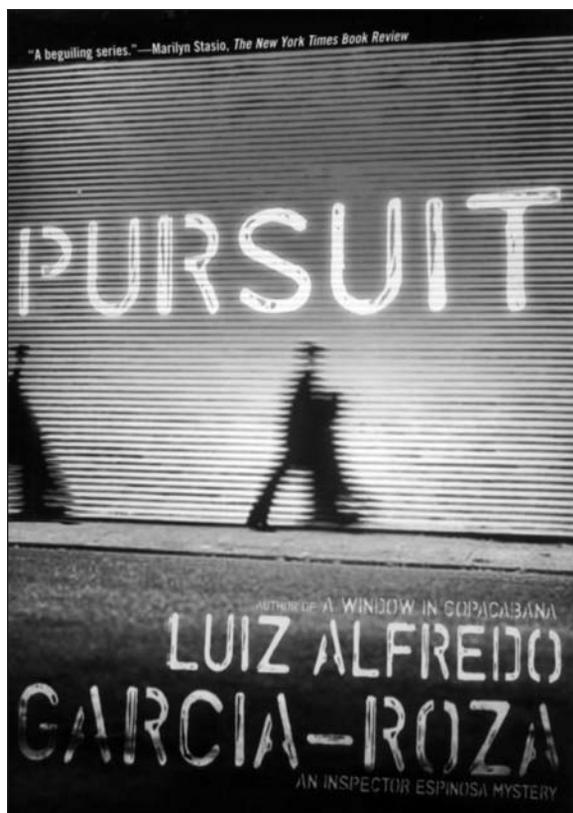
In *Uma janela em Copacabana* (2001; *A Window in Copacabana*, 2005), three police officers from the Peixoto precinct where Inspector Espinosa works are shot at point-blank range. The murders are obviously linked, but Espinosa has a problem. He suspects that the murders are linked in some manner to other police officers. Therefore, he has to choose only a few officers, led by his trusted colleague Welber, to investigate without revealing any results or suspicions to other police. In an example of the duality of life and psychology that Garcia-Roza often presents, all the murdered police officers have secret double lives: two addresses and two women. The investigation leads to evidence of widespread corruption within the police department.

The mistresses of the murdered police start to show up dead. The investigation finds collusion between organized crime and several police officers, but this actually starts to hinder the process of finding those responsible for the murders. Espinosa is correct that the perpetrators are within close proximity to him, but his mistaken psychological profile of the guilty allows the real culprit to manipulate the situation from the start.

Irene, Espinosa's girlfriend, is present in this work and functions as a sort of cross-examiner in that she allows the inspector to bounce ideas off of her. As usual, Garcia-Roza presents a world that is filled with female protagonists who all seem to be attractive to Espinosa. The author's brilliant manner of portraying the inspector as attempting to save the last mistress from the mob's assassins leaves the reader unprepared for what at first glance seems to be one last twist in the plot, but actually reveals the Achilles' heel of Espinosa's gender follies.

PURSUIT

In *O perseguido* (2003; *Pursuit*, 2006), Dr. Nesse, a psychiatrist in Copacabana, discovers that one of his daughters has disappeared with one of his patients. Inspector Espinosa is called in to find the daughter, but she returns on her own after admitting having had an affair with the patient. Months later, Espinosa is called again, this time by the doctor, who is being accused of harassing and intimidating a patient who was under his care in a psychiatric hospital, to the point of causing his death. This Garcia-Roza work blurs the line between



victim and perpetrator and between sanity and insanity.

Inspector Espinosa attempts to interpret the supposed murder of a man who cannot be proved to have existed. His witnesses at first are reluctant to reveal information and later are found murdered. The reader is left to try to ascertain just who is psychotic, the doctor, his family, or the missing “victim.” This is an offbeat critique of the psychiatric institutions and experts in Rio de Janeiro. Those who are presumed to be abnormal are found to be sane and also dead, while those who treat them are actually spiraling into paranoia.

Paul Siegrist

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR ESPINOSA SERIES: *O silêncio da chuva*, 1997 (*The Silence of the Rain*, 2002); *Achados*

e perdidos, 1998 (*December Heat*, 2003); *Vento sudoeste*, 1999 (*Southwesterly Wind*, 2004); *Uma janela em Copacabana*, 2001 (*A Window in Copacabana*, 2005); *O perseguido*, 2003 (*Pursuit*, 2006); *Berenice Procura*, 2005; *Espinosa sem saída*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Psicologia estrutural*, 1972; *Freud e o inconsciente*, 1984; *Acaso e repetição em psicanálise*, 1986; *O mal radical em Freud*, 1990; *Palavra e verdade na filosofia antiga e na*, 1990; *Introdução à metapsicologia freudiana*, 1991-1995 (3 volumes.)

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Garcia-Roza, Luis Alfredo. Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza. <http://www.garcia-roza.com/index.htm>. A useful source for general information on Garcia-Roza and on Copacabana and Rio de Janeiro (location of the mystery works).

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ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

Born: Malden, Massachusetts; July 17, 1889

Died: Temecula, California; March 11, 1970

Also wrote as Kyle Corning; A. A. Fair; Charles M. Green; Grant Holiday; Carleton Kendrake; Charles J. Kenny; Robert Parr; Dane Rigley; Arthur Mann Sellers; Charles M. Stanton; Les Tillray

Types of plot: Master sleuth; private investigator; hard-boiled; courtroom drama

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Perry Mason, 1933-1973

Doug Selby, D.A., 1937-1949

Bertha Cool and Donald Lam, 1939-1970

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PERRY MASON is a brilliant criminal lawyer who makes a specialty of defending accused murderers who seem to have all the evidence stacked against them but whom he frees and absolves by finding the real murderer, to the frequent astonishment of Lieutenant Tragg.

LIEUTENANT ARTHUR TRAGG is the tough police officer who arrests Mason's clients.

HAMILTON BURGER is the district attorney who opposes Mason in the courtroom and is the target of his legal arrows.

DELLA STREET is Mason's attractive and resourceful secretary who often becomes involved in Mason's cases by offering ideas and helping the defendants.

PAUL DRAKE is the owner of a detective agency that roots out information for the lawyer.

DOUG SELBY is the district attorney in a desert town in Southern California, where he brings criminals to justice.

A. B. CARR is the slick defense attorney who often crosses swords with Selby.

SHERIFF REX BRANDON does Selby's legwork and helps him figure out his cases.

SYLVIA MANNING, a reporter for the town paper, provides publicity when it is needed and also does investigative work.

BERTHA COOL, an overweight middle-aged detective, is fond of such expressions as "Fry me for an oyster!"

DONALD LAM, a slightly built, disbarred attorney, teams up with Cool and often supplies the solution to their cases and expert legal advice for the lawyers of their clients.

CONTRIBUTION

According to the 1988 edition of the *Guinness Book of World Records*, as of January 1, 1986, Erle Stanley Gardner's books had sold more than 319 million copies in thirty-seven languages. This sales total makes Gardner one of the most popular fiction writers of all time. The sheer number of volumes he produced is overwhelming; 141 of his books were in print at the time of his death, including 80 in his most popular series, the Perry Mason books (another 5 were published later), 46 mystery novels of other kinds, and 15 non-fictional volumes. This list is supplemented by hundreds of short stories and magazine articles. (His complete bibliography fills thirty quarto-sized pages, each of which contains three columns of small print.) Although Gardner constructed his mystery stories according to formulas, the success of which he proved over more than a decade of pulp magazine apprenticeship, they were never stereotyped or hackneyed because Gardner's sense of integrity did not allow him to repeat situations. His dedication to pleasing his audience, coupled with his extraordinarily fertile imagination, led him to turn out first-rate mystery novels at the rate of at least three a year for thirty years. Many of his books were made into films, radio plays, comic strips, and television shows, crowned by the top-rated television series *Perry Mason*, which ran for nine years (1957-1966) with Raymond Burr as the lawyer-detective and which was filmed with Gardner's assistance and supervision. Gardner's volume of output and reader popularity, along with the approval of both critics and peers, have ensured his prominent position in the annals of mystery and detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Erle Stanley Gardner was born to Grace Adelma Gardner and Charles Walter Gardner in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1889. The elder Gardner was an engineer who traveled wherever his work demanded, and he moved his family to the West Coast, first to Oregon when Erle was ten, and then to Oroville, California, in 1902. The young Gardner loved California, and though in adulthood he traveled extensively, he always made California his home base and that of his fictional characters.

Gardner displayed the independence, diligence, and imagination that were later to mark his career as a writer by becoming a lawyer at the age of twenty-one, not by attending law school but by reading and assisting an attorney and then passing the bar exam. He set up practice in Oxnard, Ventura County, northwest of Los Angeles, where he quickly gained a reputation as a shrewd and resourceful attorney who helped many clients out of seemingly impossible situations.

An outdoorsman (hunter, fisher, and archer), Gardner tried a number of other business ventures before turning to writing at the age of thirty-four, selling his first story to a pulp magazine in 1923. He was not a natural writer, but he learned quickly by studying successful writers and the comments of his editors. During the 1920's and 1930's, he turned out an enormous number of stories for the pulps and created a large array of characters before introducing his most successful character, lawyer-detective Perry Mason, and selling his first novel based on Mason in 1933, by which time he was working so rapidly (turning out a ten-thousand-word novelette every three days) that he had progressed past the typewriter to the dictating machine (he also employed a staff of secretaries, to whom he dictated as they worked in shifts). By 1938, his base was a ranch at Temecula, near Riverside, California; he had several other hideaways and often took what he called his "fiction factory" (himself, dictating machines, and secretarial staff) on the road to remote places in a caravan of trailers. A favorite retreat was Baja California, about which he wrote several travel books and to which his characters often scurry when in trouble.

After World War II, Gardner's fame slowed his output somewhat as his celebrity caused him to be-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Erle Stanley Gardner posing next to a stack of his own published books in 1950.

come involved in other causes, chief among them the Court of Last Resort (first associated with *Argosy* magazine, to which Gardner was a frequent contributor, and later a part of the American Polygraph Association), an organization that he formed with others to improve the quality of American justice, and the Perry Mason television show.

Gardner married Natalie Talbert in 1912, and they had a daughter, Natalie Grace Gardner, in 1913. The Gardners separated in 1935, although they remained friends and never divorced. Gardner supported his

wife until her death in 1968. That same year, Gardner married one of his longtime secretaries, Agnes Jean Bethell, who is considered the real-life model for Perry Mason's Della Street. In 1962, he received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award. Gardner died of cancer at his ranch in 1970.

ANALYSIS

A typical Erle Stanley Gardner story features interesting and engaging characters, fast action that is moved along primarily by dialogue, and a plot with more twists and turns than a bowl of Chinese noodles. Readers are given just enough information to keep them from being totally lost, and somewhere in the welter of material are placed a few details that, properly interpreted, will clear up the mystery and tie up all the loose ends.

Gardner did not come by this pattern or his writing skills by nature, but only after ten years of study and work at his craft. At first he thought that the way to make characters interesting was to make them bizarre, and his early pulp fiction introduces such unusual characters as Señor Lobo, a romantic revolutionist; Ed Jenkins, the phantom crook; El Paisano, a character who could see in the dark; Black Barr, a Western gun-fighter; and Speed Dash, a human-fly detective who could climb up the side of buildings to avoid locked doors. Gardner also created the more conventional detective figures Sidney Giff, Sam Moraine, Terry Clane, Sheriff Bill Eldon, and Gramps Wiggins, about each of whom he was to write complete novels later.

LESTER LEITH

Lester Leith is a character from this period who was one of Gardner's favorites and whose stories reveal typically Gardnerian twists. Leith is a detective who specializes in solving baffling cases of theft (particularly of jewels) merely by reading newspaper accounts of the crimes. Leith steals the missing property from the criminals, sells it, and donates the money he gets to charity, keeping a percentage as a commission that he uses to maintain himself in his luxurious lifestyle (which even includes employing a valet). The fact that the police are never able to pin any crimes on Leith himself is the more remarkable because his valet, Scuttle, is actually a police undercover agent

planted in Leith's home specifically to catch the detective in shady dealings. In the series devoted to this character, Gardner puts an extra spin on the pulp-fiction device of the crime-fighter with a secret identity. Usually, the character with a secret identity must remain outside the law because he has special powers that would create problems if he were revealed (for example, Superman) or must use special extralegal methods (the Green Hornet). In the Lester Leith series, Scuttle, the valet with the secret identity, is a crime-fighter who remains inside the legal system to catch a detective who is so clever that he stays outside the law. A further irony is that Leith, who has amazing intellectual ability, never figures out that he has a spy operating in his own household, a feature that amuses the thoughtful reader.

PERRY MASON

As Gardner's career progressed, he abandoned such colorful characters for the more ordinary and believable characters who people his three main series, beginning with Perry Mason, the lawyer who gets defendants out of situations in which they appear headed for the electric chair. With Perry Mason, Gardner returned to the legal ground that he knew best, sometimes using techniques that he had worked out in his own legal practice. For example, the Chinese merchants in Oxnard ran a lottery; Gardner, learning that the law was after them, had them change places with one another for a day while the police were buying lottery tickets from them. When the ticket purchasers tried to identify the sellers in court, Gardner showed that all the defendants had been misidentified and that the purchasers were naming the sellers by identifying them with the store at which the ticket was purchased rather than by identifying the actual person. The cases were thrown out, making Gardner a hero in the Chinese community; Gardner reciprocated by frequently using Chinese characters and Chinatown locations in his stories. The device of confusing identification by having a witness deal with a person who looked like or was dressed similarly to a defendant was a dodge that Perry Mason used again and again. Gardner was careful to keep Mason's activities scrupulously legal, and he often used real court decisions as a basis for his mystery plots. In the first Bertha Cool-Donald Lam

novel, *The Bigger They Come* (1939), Lam gets off the hook on a murder charge through a loophole in an extradition law. Although Mason gives some questionable legal advice early in his career, he becomes more circumspect as the series progresses, and in such later entries in the series as *The Case of the Beautiful Beggar* (1965), Mason reminds his client and the police of the changes in notification of rights for victims established in the Miranda case.

The fast pace of the Mason stories was ensured by dividing the detective activities between two characters. Paul Drake and his skilled team of operatives do the investigative work and find whatever information or evidence the lawyer needs, leaving Mason free to do the deductive work of solving the crime. Relegating the investigative work to a reported rather than dramatized element of the action also helps to cover up improbabilities; Drake's men are almost always able to find whatever Mason needs and rarely lose anyone they are following. Gardner was fascinated with this aspect of detective work, and many Mason stories are filled with minutiae on the technique of shadowing a person, particularly someone who knows that he or she is being followed. The fast action also helped Gardner's characters to gloss over whatever improbabilities existed in the stories.

BEWARE THE CURVES

In *Beware the Curves* (1956), Donald Lam knows that his client did not commit a murder and knows as well who actually committed the crime, but he lacks proof. He supplies his client's lawyer with the evidence needed to have the client convicted on the lesser charge of manslaughter and then points out that the statute of limitations on manslaughter is three years; because the crime was committed more than three years ago, the client is freed. Any competent district attorney would have thought of all this before the trial started, but Gardner's writing is so vivid that the reader is swept into the action and does not think of this point until later, if at all.

As if to be fair to the other side of the justice system, Gardner created the character of Doug Selby, a district attorney who approaches the detection of criminals from the prosecutorial side. Because the publishing market was being flooded with Erle Stanley

Gardner's volumes, Gardner's entry in the hard-boiled detective field, the Bertha Cool-Donald Lam series, was written and submitted under the pseudonym A. A. Fair, a ruse that fooled no one, because, even though the stories are racier than the Mason series, with Donald Lam often pursued by beautiful women, the novels usually end in a courtroom, with the author's legal expertise and bias clearly apparent.

THE CASE OF THE VELVET CLAWS

Gardner's clever use of details and penchant for plot turns are evident in the first Mason book, *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933), in which Mason uncovers evidence that seems certain to send his rather unpleasant client, who has earned the enmity of Della Street, to the electric chair. Mason finds the real murderer because he notices a puddle of water around an umbrella stand, placing one of the suspects at the murder site at a time earlier than when he had claimed to be there; thus, he catches the real murderer and reminds both Della Street and the reader that justice is for everyone, not only for likable people.

Besides the sheer entertainment and enjoyment he gives his readers, this emphasis on true justice may be Gardner's most lasting contribution to the mystery field. By making Mason, Selby, and the others not only crusaders but also fair and legally scrupulous investigators, he informs his readers of the requirements of justice and thereby of their obligations as citizens also to be fair and to judge others according to facts, rules, and logic rather than emotion and prejudice.

James Baird

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PERRY MASON SERIES: 1933-1940 • *The Case of the Velvet Claws*, 1933; *The Case of the Sulky Girl*, 1933; *The Case of the Lucky Legs*, 1934; *The Case of the Howling Dog*, 1934; *The Case of the Curious Bride*, 1934; *The Case of the Counterfeit Eye*, 1935; *The Case of the Caretaker's Cat*, 1935; *The Case of the Sleepwalker's Niece*, 1936; *The Case of the Stuttering Bishop*, 1936; *The Case of the Dangerous Dowager*, 1937; *The Case of the Lame Canary*, 1937; *The Case of the Substitute Face*, 1938; *The Case of the Shoplifter's Shoe*, 1938; *The Case of the Perjured Parrot*, 1939; *The Case of the Rolling Bones*, 1939;

The Case of the Baited Hook, 1940; *The Case of the Silent Partner*, 1940

1941-1950 • *The Case of the Haunted Husband*, 1941; *The Case of the Empty Tin*, 1941; *The Case of the Drowning Duck*, 1942; *The Case of the Careless Kitten*, 1942; *The Case of the Buried Clock*, 1943; *The Case of the Drowsy Mosquito*, 1943; *The Case of the Crooked Candle*, 1944; *The Case of the Black-Eyed Blonde*, 1944; *The Case of the Golddigger's Purse*, 1945; *The Case of the Half-Wakened Wife*, 1945; *The Case of the Borrowed Brunette*, 1946; *The Case of the Fan Dancer's Horse*, 1947; *The Case of the Lazy Lover*, 1947; *The Case of the Lonely Heiress*, 1948; *The Case of the Vagabond Virgin*, 1948; *The Case of the Dubious Bridegroom*, 1949; *The Case of the Cautious Coquette*, 1949; *The Case of the Negligent Nymph*, 1950; *The Case of the One-Eyed Witness*, 1950

1951-1960 • *The Case of the Fiery Fingers*, 1951; *The Case of the Angry Mourner*, 1951; *The Case of the Moth-Eaten Mink*, 1952; *The Case of the Grinning Gorilla*, 1952; *The Case of the Hesitant Hostess*, 1953; *The Case of the Green-Eyed Sister*, 1953; *The Case of the Fugitive Nurse*, 1954; *The Case of the Runaway Corpse*, 1954; *The Case of the Restless Redhead*, 1954; *The Case of the Glamorous Ghost*, 1955; *The Case of the Sun Bather's Diary*, 1955; *The Case of the Nervous Accomplice*, 1955; *The Case of the Terrified Typist*, 1956; *The Case of the Demure Defendant*, 1956; *The Case of the Gilded Lily*, 1956; *The Case of the Lucky Loser*, 1957; *The Case of the Screaming Woman*, 1957; *The Case of the Daring Decoy*, 1957; *The Case of the Long-Legged Models*, 1958; *The Case of the Foot-Loose Doll*, 1958; *The Case of the Calendar Girl*, 1958; *The Case of the Deadly Toy*, 1959; *The Case of the Mythical Monkeys*, 1959; *The Case of the Singing Skirt*, 1959; *The Case of the Waylaid Wolf*, 1960; *The Case of the Duplicate Daughter*, 1960; *The Case of the Shapely Shadow*, 1960

1961-1973 • *The Case of the Spurious Spinster*, 1961; *The Case of the Bigamous Spouse*, 1961; *The Case of the Reluctant Model*, 1962; *The Case of the Blonde Bonanza*, 1962; *The Case of the Ice-Cold Hands*, 1962; *The Case of the Mischievous Doll*, 1963; *The Case of the Stepdaughter's Secret*, 1963;

The Case of the Amorous Aunt, 1963; *The Case of the Daring Divorcée*, 1964; *The Case of the Phantom Fortune*, 1964; *The Case of the Horrified Heirs*, 1964; *The Case of the Troubled Trustee*, 1965; *The Case of the Beautiful Beggar*, 1965; *The Case of the Worried Waitress*, 1966; *The Case of the Queenly Contestant*, 1967; *The Case of the Careless Cupid*, 1968; *The Case of the Fabulous Fake*, 1969; *The Case of the Crimson Kiss*, 1971; *The Case of the Crying Swallow*, 1971; *The Case of the Fenced-In Woman*, 1972; *The Case of the Irate Witness*, 1972; *The Case of the Postponed Murder*, 1973

DOUG SELBY SERIES: *The D.A. Calls It Murder*, 1937; *The D.A. Holds a Candle*, 1938; *The D.A. Draws a Circle*, 1939; *The D.A. Goes to Trial*, 1940; *The D.A. Cooks a Goose*, 1942; *The D.A. Calls a Turn*, 1944; *The D.A. Breaks a Seal*, 1946; *The D.A. Takes a Chance*, 1948; *The D.A. Breaks an Egg*, 1949

BERTHA COOL AND DONALD LAM SERIES (AS FAIR): *The Bigger They Come*, 1939 (also known as *Lam to the Slaughter*); *Gold Comes in Bricks*, 1940; *Turn on the Heat*, 1940; *Spill the Jackpot!*, 1941; *Double or Quits*, 1941; *Bats Fly at Dusk*, 1942; *Owls Don't Blink*, 1942; *Cats Prowl at Night*, 1943; *Give 'Em the Ax*, 1944 (also known as *An Axe to Grind*); *Crows Can't Count*, 1946; *Fools Die on Friday*, 1947; *Bedrooms Have Windows*, 1949; *Top of the Heap*, 1952; *Some Women Won't Wait*, 1953; *Beware the Curves*, 1956; *Some Slips Don't Show*, 1957; *You Can Die Laughing*, 1957; *The Count of Nine*, 1958; *Pass the Gravy*, 1959; *Kept Women Can't Quit*, 1960; *Bachelors Get Lonely*, 1961; *Shills Can't Cash Chips*, 1961 (also known as *Stop at the Red Light*); *Try Anything Once*, 1962; *Fish or Cut Bait*, 1963; *Up for Grabs*, 1964; *Cut Thin to Win*, 1965; *Widows Wear Weeds*, 1966; *Traps Need Fresh Bait*, 1967; *All Grass Isn't Green*, 1970

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Clew of the Forgotten Murder*, 1935 (also known as *The Clue of the Forgotten Murder*); *This Is Murder*, 1935; *Murder up My Sleeve*, 1937; *The Case of the Turning Tide*, 1941; *The Case of the Smoking Chimney*, 1943; *The Case of the Backward Mule*, 1946; *Two Clues: The Clue of the Runaway Blonde and The Clue of the Hungry Horse*, 1947; *The Case of the Musical Cow*, 1950

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Over the Hump*, 1945; *The Case of the Murderer's Bride, and Other Stories*, 1969; *The Amazing Adventures of Lester Leith*, 1981

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Human Zero*, 1981; *Whispering Sands: Stories of Gold Fever and the Western Desert*, 1981; *Pay Dirt, and Other Whispering Sands Stories*, 1983

NONFICTION: *The Land of Shorter Shadows*, 1948; *The Court of Last Resort*, 1952; *Neighborhood Frontiers*, 1954; *The Case of the Boy Who Wrote "The Case of the Missing Clue" with Perry Mason*, 1959; *Hunting the Desert Whale*, 1960; *Hovering over Baja*, 1961; *The Hidden Heart of Baja*, 1962; *The Desert Is Yours*, 1963; *The World of Water: Exploring the Sacramento Delta*, 1964; *Hunting Lost Mines by Helicopter*, 1965; *Gypsy Days on the Delta*, 1967; *Off the Beaten Track in Baja*, 1967; *Mexico's Magic Square*, 1968; *Drifting down the Delta*, 1969; *Cops on Campus and Crime in the Streets*, 1970; *Host with the Big Hat*, 1970

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JOHN GARDNER

Born: Seaton Delaval, Northumberland, England;
November 20, 1926

Died: Basingstoke, England; August 3, 2007

Also wrote as Edmund McCoy

Types of plot: Comedy caper; espionage; master sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Boysie Oakes, 1964-1975
Derek Torry, 1969-1974
Professor Moriarty, 1974-1975
Herbie Kruger, 1979-1995
James Bond, 1981-1996
Sergeant Suzie Mountford, 2002-2005

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

BOYSIE OAKES, a parody of Ian Fleming's James Bond, is a lazy and lecherous espionage agent who hires others to do his killing for him. He is inept, forgetful, and afraid of airplanes.

DEREK TORRY, a Scotland Yard inspector of Italian descent, takes crime personally and reacts angrily to criminals. He suffers from religious crises of conscience. His conservative Roman Catholic beliefs often inhibit his efforts at romance and make him self-doubtful.

PROFESSOR MORIARTY, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is a leading antagonist of Sherlock Holmes who has the personality of an English university teacher. His efforts to bring all major European crime under control rarely result in confrontation with Holmes.

HERBIE KRUGER, a German-born British intelligence agent, considers himself a failure. He is devoted to Gustav Mahler's music and, like many Gardner characters, is thoroughly neurotic.

JAMES BOND, the famous Agent 007 created by Ian Fleming, has been revived by Gardner. The new Bond differs from the original in being interested in conservation. He is also more sophisticated and faces villains who are often not mere stock figures of evil.

SUZIE MOUNTFORD is a female detective who operates during World War II and has to fight her way

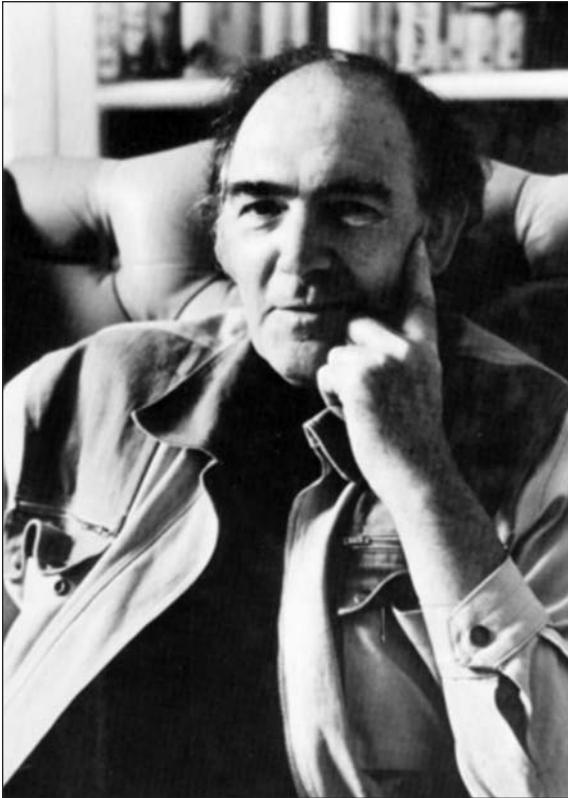
through male chauvinism in the police force as well as to sort out the mysteries of the working class.

CONTRIBUTION

John Gardner specialized in taking over characters created by other writers. By presenting characters such as James Bond and Dr. Moriarty in his own way, Gardner added an extra dimension to his novels: The original characters remain in the reader's mind, available for comparison with Gardner's versions. Gardner also pioneered the practice of including comic elements in the standard mystery, effectively creating a new genre. His work shows great attention to historical detail and more than a touch of the occult. Gardner's professionalism and ability to imitate other writers' styles helped him, particularly in his James Bond novels. However, his own stylistic sense was better than that of Ian Fleming, so his stories read somewhat differently. Nevertheless, he retained Fleming's readers and handed the series over to other writers after illness forced him to abandon it. His books have been translated into more than fourteen languages.

BIOGRAPHY

John Edmund Gardner (not to be confused with literary scholar John Champlin Gardner, Jr., 1933-1982) was born on November 20, 1926, in Seaton Delaval, Northumberland, England. He developed an interest in writing very early and at the age of nine told his father he wanted to be a writer. His progress toward that goal, however, was hardly direct. After wartime service in Britain's Royal Navy in the latter part of World War II and as a commando with the marines in 1946, he graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge University, in 1950. He decided to follow his father into the Anglican priesthood and was ordained in 1953. Meanwhile, in 1952, he married Margaret Mercer, with whom he had two children. Gardner developed doubts about whether he had followed the right calling and eventually left the priesthood in 1958. He then worked as a theater critic and art editor for a Stratford-on-Avon newspaper for six years.



John Gardner. (©1984 Richard Newton)

Gardner came to realize that he wanted to write books of his own rather than to remain a critic. After writing a nonfictional work discussing his alcoholism, he became a mystery novelist. He won popularity immediately with his Boysie Oakes series, but his career did not really blossom until 1981, when he was selected to continue the James Bond series, more than fourteen years after Ian Fleming died. At first, he contracted to write three books to bring Bond into the late twentieth century. However, his contract was repeatedly renewed because of the success of his books. He himself said that Bond was too much of a fantasy character for his liking, but his professionalism carried him through sixteen Bond novels, some of which were novelizations of screenplays.

While writing the Bond novels, Gardner moved to the United States and then to Ireland. However, the onset of cancer in 1995 and the death of his wife in 1997 brought him back to Great Britain. After major surgery, he survived the cancer, and after a gap of some

five years, resumed writing. He began a completely new series, set during World War II, with Suzie Mountford, a female police sergeant, as the series lead. He imagined her as a middle-class woman thrown into a world of crime and men by the demands of the war. The first novel of the series, *Bottled Spider*, was published in 2002. He continued to work hard until 2006, when a serious stroke stopped him from writing once again. He died on August 3, 2007, in Basingstoke, England.

ANALYSIS

Although adept at creating original characters, John Gardner devoted much of his career to mysteries that developed the characters of other detective writers. Ian Fleming's James Bond ranks foremost among those that Gardner used for his own purposes. Bond plays the principal role in two of Gardner's series, the first using the name Boysie Oakes and the second explicitly continuing the original Bond novels. Another character Gardner adopted is Dr. Moriarty, the greatest antagonist of Sherlock Holmes. Not all Gardner's work, however, was variations on themes by other writers. He also wrote a number of espionage novels—one trilogy in particular earned wide recognition because of its detailed picture of life in England during World War II.

Ian Fleming's James Bond novels appealed to audiences in the 1950's in part because of their ruthless but suave and sophisticated hero. Although Fleming took Bond very seriously, certain elements of his stories readily lent themselves to parody. Gardner made apt use of these elements in his Boysie Oakes series, beginning with *The Liquidator* (1964).

THE BOYSIE OAKES SERIES

In his first Boysie Oakes novel, Gardner paints an easily recognizable character. Oakes, also known as "L," works as a professional killer for the Department of Special Security. Unlike most members of his profession, he fears violence and hires others to do his killing for him. As if this were not enough, Oakes also cannot stand flying. In the Oakes series, which eventually numbered eight novels, the plot usually matches the principal character in absurdity. In *Understrike* (1965), Oakes—nervous, inept, and forgetful as always—goes

on a mission to observe the test of a Russian submarine. The Russians quickly catch on and send a duplicate of Oakes, an agent of their own, to substitute for the real Oakes. As usual, Gardner's hero somehow muddles through.

Many of the Oakes novels illustrate a feature that appears often in Gardner's work. He depicts sexual scenes very graphically. In the Oakes novels, this subject becomes an occasion for humor: Oakes overcomes his habitual indolence for extended exercises in lechery, often with Miss Chicory Triplethrust.

A COMPLETE STATE OF DEATH

Readers who viewed Gardner as a skilled parodist and comic mystery writer soon learned that his talents extended far beyond this rather minor genre. In *A Complete State of Death* (1969), he introduced Inspector Derek Torry of Scotland Yard. Unlike Oakes, Torry is a very serious character. To him, crime stands as a personal enemy, and he is consumed by his hatred of it. Interrogations often end with Torry losing his temper and slugging his suspects. He does this not because he is cruel but because he becomes too involved. Torry, a conservative Roman Catholic, also finds himself troubled by religious doubts. Some people see in Torry a reflection of Gardner himself. Gardner, however, denied that Torry mirrored his own problems and viewed with hostility attempts to read his novels as autobiography.

Although Gardner intended *A Complete State of Death* and his other Torry novel, *The Corner Men* (1974), as comments on criminal violence and its malevolent effects, the author found his taste for the bizarrely humorous difficult to abandon. In the former novel, for example, the plot centers on a school for aspiring criminals run by a character whose manner resembles that of an English university teacher. The aristocratic head of the school is, for all of his apparent good breeding, an agent of the Crime Syndicate who operates with ruthless efficiency.

THE RETURN OF MORIARTY

Gardner soon returned to novels featuring another writer's character. In *The Return of Moriarty* (1974), Gardner began a popular series that features the main antagonist of Sherlock Holmes. According to Gardner's series, Moriarty, like Holmes, survived their fa-

mous showdown at Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. Moriarty, portrayed as a professor, has returned to London in an effort to control all crime in Europe.

Although the Moriarty novels do not boast the fine character portrayal of the Torry stories, they make evident another key feature of Gardner's work: Gardner took great pains to depict accurately the background for his stories. He showed in his Moriarty series an impressive knowledge of Victorian England. He neglected almost nothing in his efforts toward realism: He knew Victorian criminal slang, for example, and informed the reader what diners in restaurants of the time were likely to order for dinner.

THE WEREWOLF TRACE

With *The Werewolf Trace* (1977), yet another one of Gardner's interests came into full view. He had a detailed knowledge of World War II, dating back to his own service in the Royal Navy. The horrors of Nazism and the fears that Adolf Hitler aroused among the British people form the backdrop to this novel.

Its characteristically unusual plot concerns a nine-year-old boy who may be a survivor of the last hours of the Third Reich. If so, it is likely that the boy is being groomed for the role of Werewolf, the British code name for the future leader of any attempt to revive the Nazi empire. Although from this description one might suspect that a farce is in the offing, Gardner in fact intended his novel to make serious points. These concern the bad effects of technology, the evils that result from unmanageable obsessions, and the need for privacy. *The Werewolf Trace* also illustrates Gardner's interest in the occult. The house in which the alleged future Führer lives has been visited by ghosts that have arisen from a mysterious killing of another little boy.

THE KRUGER TRILOGY

Gardner's occultism was not something that he placed in his stories to satisfy a whim. On the contrary, he artfully blended elements of the occult into his works to add to the feeling of mysterious terror. This use of the occult is a principal feature of *The Nostradamus Traitor* (1979), the first volume of a trilogy whose main character is a German-born British intelligence officer named Herbie Kruger.

Here the occult lies at the center of the novel. As the title suggests, the prophecies of Nostradamus, a

sixteenth century French astrologer, serve as the book's leitmotif. They enabled Gardner to tie together events in Great Britain and France in 1940/1941 with later developments in London in the 1970's. Although the connection between Nostradamus and the first Allied agent to penetrate German-occupied France might seem tenuous, in Gardner's skilled hands astrology evoked the eeriness of the Third Reich, through the interest of Hitler and Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels in that subject.

Herbie Kruger, the agent featured in *The Nostradamus Traitor*, was one of Gardner's favorite characters. Gardner carefully depicted his personality in *The Garden of Weapons* (1980), the second volume of the Kruger trilogy. Kruger is highly nervous, sexually impotent, and in his own eyes a failure. He comes out of his gloom only when listening to the music of his favorite composer, Gustav Mahler. In this novel, the plot, while skillfully woven, takes second billing to the depiction of Kruger. The story is about an espionage network set up in East Berlin that may have been infiltrated by a double agent. In the novel, Kruger recalls his troubled past as a child living in wartime Berlin.

The first two volumes of the trilogy, along with the final volume, *The Quiet Dogs* (1982), illustrate an aspect of Gardner's work that became increasingly prominent. He offered a detailed picture of the way an espionage agency works. The interplay between the "masters," the leaders of the intelligence agencies who manipulate men like chess pieces, and the agents, who carry out orders without knowing their real purposes, fascinated Gardner. One of his later novels, *The Secret Generations* (1985), made the mechanics of espionage its chief theme. This work traces a British and an American family, both of which have long-standing connections with the intelligence services of their country, through three generations of involvement in spying.

LICENSE RENEWED

Gardner did not become a real star among mystery writers until *License Renewed* (1981). He had been selected by Gildrose Publications, which held the copyright to the James Bond novels, to continue Ian Fleming's immensely popular series, and this was his first Bond novel. Gardner's novels in the Bond series won for him a wide audience and celebrity status. His

James Bond differs from Fleming's: Even though he was hired to continue the series, he produced no slavish imitation of the original 007. The new Bond is conscious of Earth's limited resources and carefully avoids using too much gasoline. Also, although Gardner was not writing a parody of Bond, a few Boiesie Oakes details appear from time to time. In *License Renewed*, a thirty-foot-long python removes the shoes of its victims before eating them, and the story's villains plan to seize an American defense command station by using ice cream to flood the soldiers guarding it.

Many critics did not like the new Bond; although Gardner had generally received good reviews from critics during his career, the Bond novels were an exception. Most of Gardner's critics contended that he had failed to capture the spirit of the true Bond. They found his style too arch and sophisticated, unsuited to the simplicity of Ian Fleming's original. When Gardner attempted to imitate Fleming's style, to some reviewers the result was awkward prose.

This criticism is somewhat surprising. Although Gardner had not concentrated on his style before the Bond series, it had almost always been considered accomplished and engaging. He had shown remarkable skill in the evocation of historical events, and his plotting was highly intricate. If, in the light of his previous success, the criticism of the Bond series surprised Gardner, it is unlikely that it disturbed him very much. Some critics did like the Bond books, and numerous readers did also. Without a doubt, the Bond series brought Gardner much commercial success.

TROUBLED MIDNIGHT

Troubled Midnight (2005), the fourth novel of the Suzie Mountford series, is set, as are all the books in the series, in wartime Great Britain. Shortly before Christmas, 1943, two badly battered bodies are found in a quiet town in southern England. Suzie is assigned the case under Detective Chief Superintendent Tommy Livermore, who is her secret lover. They are joined by an operative from Intelligence, because one of the victims has details of the forthcoming Normandy landings. Gardner thus combines police work with the kind of undercover plot with which he is most at home.

Bill Delaney

Updated by David Barratt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BOYSIE OAKES SERIES: *The Liquidator*, 1964; *Understrike*, 1965; *Amber Nine*, 1966; *Madrigal*, 1967; *Founder Member*, 1969; *Traitor's Exit*, 1970; *Air Apparent*, 1970 (also known as *The Airline Pirates*); *A Killer for a Song*, 1975

INSPECTOR DEREK TORRY SERIES: *A Complete State of Death*, 1969 (also known as *The Stone Killer*); *The Corner Men*, 1974

PROFESSOR MORIARTY SERIES: *The Return of Moriarty*, 1974 (also known as *Moriarty*); *The Revenge of Moriarty*, 1975

HERBIE KRUGER SERIES: *The Nostradamus Traitor*, 1979; *The Garden of Weapons*, 1980; *The Quiet Dogs*, 1982; *The Maestro*, 1993; *Confessor*, 1995

JAMES BOND SERIES: *License Renewed*, 1981; *For Special Services*, 1982; *Icebreaker*, 1983; *Role of Honor*, 1984; *Nobody Lives Forever*, 1986; *No Deals*, 1987; *Scorpius*, 1988; *Win, Lose, or Die*, 1989; *Licence to Kill*, 1989 (based on screenplay); *Brokenclaw*, 1990; *The Man from Barbarossa*, 1991; *Death Is Forever*, 1992; *Never Send Flowers*, 1993; *Seafire*, 1994; *Goldeneye*, 1995 (based on screenplay); *Cold Fall*, 1996

SERGEANT SUZIE MOUNTFORD SERIES: *Bottled Spider*, 2002; *The Streets of Town*, 2003; *Angels Dining at the Ritz*, 2004; *Troubled Midnight*, 2005

GENERATIONS TRILOGY: *The Secret Generations*, 1985; *The Secret Houses*, 1987; *The Secret Families*, 1989

NONSERIES NOVELS: *To Run a Little Faster*, 1976; *The Werewolf Trace*, 1977; *The Dancing Dodo*, 1978; *The Last Trump*, 1980 (also known as *Golgotha*); *Flamingo*, 1983; *Blood of the Fathers*, 1992 (as McCoy; also known as *Unknown Fears*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Censor*, 1970; *Every Night's a Bullfight*, 1971 (also known as *Every Night's a Festival* and *The Director*); *Day of Absolution*, 2000

SHORT FICTION: *Hideway*, 1968; *The Assassination File*, 1974

NONFICTION: *Spin the Bottle: The Autobiography of an Alcoholic*, 1963

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Bryant, Bobby. "James Bond 00-50: After Half a Century, Novels Are at a Crossroads." *Times Union*, September 14, 2003, p. J4. This discussion of the James Bond novels after Ian Fleming's death notes that the series was continued first by Kingsley Amis, then Gardner, and finally Raymond Benson (1997-2002). Gardner states that he feels the series should no longer be continued.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. This work contrasts fictional espionage with that in the real world. Although it does not discuss Gardner's work, it does discuss some of Fleming's and sheds light on Gardner's Bond novels.

Melton, Emily. Review of *Bottled Spider*, by John Gardner. *Booklist* 99, no. 2 (September 15, 2002): 209. Reviewer finds the first book in the Suzie Mountford series, which is about a serial killer, to be suspenseful and well paced and to provide a good sense of London in World War II.

Wright, David. Review of *Troubled Midnight*, by John Gardner. *Booklist* 102, no. 12 (February 15, 2006): 50. Review of the fourth entry in the Suzie Mountford series about the murders of an air-force colonel and his lover finds the work filled with period details. Compares the work to that of Helen MacInnes.

ANDREW GARVE

Paul Winterton

Born: Leicester, England; February 12, 1908

Died: Surrey, England; January 8, 2001

Also wrote as Roger Bax; Paul Somers; Paul Winterton

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; espionage; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector James, 1948-1951

Hugh Curtis, 1958-1961

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HUGH CURTIS, a young journalist, is the protagonist in several lighthearted novels under the Paul Somers pseudonym. In competition with a more experienced female reporter on a rival newspaper, he is engaged in some detective work, but his adventures are more noteworthy for their thrills and suspense than for the process of amassing and making deductions from clues.

CONTRIBUTION

In a long career, Andrew Garve produced more than forty books of mystery, detection, thrills, and romance. Difficult to categorize under one heading, he was known not only for his productivity but also for the variety of his themes and settings and his ingenious plots. It has been suggested that he never wrote the same book twice, and although he repeated some of his characters, he never developed the series pattern carried out by many of his fellow writers in this genre. Each of his stories appears to have developed naturally out of its context and the personalities of its characters.

Although Garve uses police characters involved in classic tales of detection, more frequently his hero is a dedicated amateur. The reader identifies with these likable protagonists, sharing in their initial bafflement and participating in their solution of the mystery. A number of Garve's novels were adapted for radio or television, both in the United States and Great Britain, and two were the basis for popular films. Garve died in January, 2001, in Surrey, England.

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Garve was born Paul Winterton in Leicester, England, on February 12, 1908. His father was a journalist and, for a time, a member of Parliament. Winterton was educated in a number of schools, including Purley County School in Surrey, before going to the London School of Economics. In 1928, he received a bachelor of science degree in political science and economics; soon after, he joined the staff of *The Economist*. After several years, he moved to the *News Chronicle*, a London daily. For thirteen years he served as reporter, editorial writer, and foreign correspondent, spending the years 1942-1945 in Moscow.

Winterton had first visited Russia following his graduation, spending the winter of 1928-1929 there. He recounted this experience in his first book, *A Student in Russia* (1931). Later, having been an eyewitness on the Soviet front during World War II, he wrote *Report on Russia* (1945) and *Inquest on an Ally* (1948), the latter a discussion of Soviet foreign policy. His book *Mending Minds: The Truth About Our Mental Hospitals* (1938) dealt with mental hospitals in England.

In 1938, Winterton wrote his first mystery story, *Death Beneath Jerusalem*, under the pseudonym Roger Bax. Well received, it launched his career as a writer of crime and mystery fiction. He found a ready public for his efforts in this field, and after the late 1940's he wrote only fiction. He first used the pseudonym Andrew Garve, under which most of his novels have been published, in 1950.

ANALYSIS

The distinguishing mark of Andrew Garve's fiction is its variety. Some of his novels are tales of high adventure with no crime and no real detection. Some are inverted mysteries, told in the first person by a narrator who turns out to be the criminal. Many involve police officers, but not all of these are police procedurals strictly speaking. While many of Garve's novels are not classic mysteries, he proved himself quite adept at

the genre. *Frame-Up* (1964), for example, which concerns an artist's murder and the work of the police in unraveling the crime, is a pure representative of the classic detective story, and has been praised by a number of critics as a flawless specimen of the grand old form. Most of his novels, however, include elements of several plot types, woven together in masterful fashion. With the exception of the short-lived Inspector James and Hugh Curtis series, each of his books stands alone, and even in the three Curtis books there is little carryover beyond the identity of the protagonist.

The settings of Garve's novels are quite as varied as his forms, ranging from London and provincial England to Russia, the Scilly Isles, Africa, Australia, France, the Baltic Sea, the West Indies, Palestine, and the Gulf of Finland. Some of these areas are well known to him through his travels, while in other cases he has relied at least in part on research. Whatever their source, his descriptions are always persuasive and evocative.

In addition to descriptions of exotic locales, Garve's novels often feature informative disquisitions on nautical lore, mountaineering, archaeology, finance, and other favorite topics. Garve is particularly fond of and knowledgeable about the sea, and many of his books reflect that lifelong attachment. In *The Sea Monks* (1963), vicious young thugs invade a lighthouse and are pitted against its keepers while a hurricane rages outside. *A Hero for Leanda* (1959) affords greater opportunity for the author to display his knowledge of sailing, with the introduction of a central character who wins his lady by virtue of his navigational expertise. Inland rivers and canals in England also provide settings for Garve novels. *The Narrow Search* (1957) is the story of a father who kidnaps his daughter from his estranged wife and the new man she has found. The couple's search through the waterways for the missing child is compellingly told, with the drama of the narrative complemented by the unusual setting.

THE RIDDLE OF SAMSON

Despite the variety of his settings and types of plot, Garve's fiction is strongly formulaic. His novel *The Riddle of Samson* (1954) provides an excellent intro-

duction to his work; it is typical not only of Garve's novels but also of the mystery and detective genre as a whole in its reliance on prefabricated materials.

Like many mystery novels, *The Riddle of Samson* offers readers a literary allusion in its title. Samson is one of the Scilly Isles, where the story is set; the "riddle" is the mystery to be solved in the course of the novel. Yet the title also alludes to the biblical Samson, who posed the Philistines a riddle so difficult that they could solve it only by coercing his new bride to pry the answer from him. In one sense, the allusion is pointless—as it turns out, there is no connection between the biblical story and the plot of the novel—but it nevertheless serves a function: The mystery novel is a kind of game, and part of the game is the contriving of allusive titles. The reader is immediately on familiar ground.

With his opening sentence Garve sets the tone of his tale: "The day I crossed to Scilly the islanders had just learned that for the first time in their history they were going to have to pay income tax." This is a textbook example of an effective narrative hook: The action is under way, the setting is established, and the reader's curiosity is aroused. The lightly humorous tone suggests that, while the narrative that follows may include crime and violent death, the overall mood of the book will not be somber.

By the second paragraph of the novel, Garve's first-person narrator has acquired an easy familiarity with the reader: "In case you don't know the Isles of Scilly—the 'Fortunate Isles,' as the guidebooks like to call them—they're a cluster of five inhabited islands . . ." What follows is virtually a guidebook summary—location, population, climate, principal products—supplemented a few pages later by a map. Not every reader finds such mini-lectures to his taste, but Garve is only one of many mystery writers who lightly flavor their books with information about all manner of things.

More such information is dispensed as the character of the narrator and protagonist is sketched. He is John Lavery, a twenty-nine-year-old bachelor and university lecturer with a passionate interest in archaeology. As the story begins, he is coming to the Scillies on vacation to do some digging on Samson; a friend is

scheduled to join him. While working on Samson he becomes acquainted with a beautiful young woman, Olivia Kendrick, whom he had noticed earlier in the company of her husband, Ronnie, an obnoxious, alcoholic journalist some years older than she. Missing the boat back to the main island, Olivia spends a (chaste) night with John in his tent on Samson. Learning of this, the jealous Ronnie later confronts Olivia and John near a cliff's edge. In a drunken rage, Ronnie strikes John, then staggers and falls to the waves and rocks below—apparently to his death, though his body cannot be found.

The question of what happened to Ronnie is the central "riddle" of Samson, though a secondary mystery is introduced later in the narrative. The police inspector who comes to the island speculates that John and Olivia conspired in the murder of Ronnie. John's friend George, when he arrives, makes a forceful case that Olivia and Ronnie were in league in a scheme to collect on a large insurance policy that he had recently taken out. John must free himself from suspicion; at the same time, he recognizes that he is in love with Olivia and must struggle against George's damning hypothesis.

As noted above, it is characteristic of Garve to combine in one novel elements of several genres or subgenres. *The Riddle of Samson* features some amateur detection of the classic variety—particularly in John and George's attempt to reconstruct the "crime" through pure ratiocination. The novel also makes substantial use of the conventions of romantic fiction of a type usually associated with female writers: John's immediate attraction to Olivia, his struggle against accepting what seems to be her guilt, their temporary estrangement and ultimate reconciliation—all this is straight from the paperback romance, with the usual gender roles reversed. In addition, *The Riddle of Samson*, like many of Garve's books, includes an exciting action sequence—this one set in an underwater cave. Such passages show Garve at his most convincing; they have a plausibility that the bits of detection and romance clearly lack.

Garve himself, no doubt, would be quick to acknowledge that much in *The Riddle of Samson* is implausible if judged by the canons of realism, yet he

might add that such criteria are irrelevant to a work that promises no more—and no less—than a deft recycling of familiar conventions.

Anne R. Vizzier

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR JAMES SERIES (AS BAX): *Blueprint for Murder*, 1948 (also known as *The Trouble with Murder*); *A Grave Case of Murder*, 1951

HUGH CURTIS SERIES (AS SOMERS): *Beginner's Luck*, 1958; *Operation Piracy*, 1958; *The Shivering Mountain*, 1959

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1938-1950 • *Death Beneath Jerusalem*, 1938 (as Bax); *Red Escapade*, 1940 (as Bax); *Disposing of Henry*, 1946 (as Bax); *Came the Dawn*, 1949 (as Bax; also known as *Two If by Sea*); *No Mask for Murder*, 1950 (also known as *Fontego's Folly*); *No Tears for Hilda*, 1950

1951-1960 • *A Press of Suspects*, 1951 (also known as *By-Line for Murder*); *Murder in Moscow*, 1951 (also known as *Murder Through the Looking Glass*); *A Hole in the Ground*, 1952; *Death and the Sky Above*, 1953; *The Cuckoo Line Affair*, 1953; *The Riddle of Samson*, 1954; *The End of the Track*, 1956; *The Megstone Plot*, 1956; *The Narrow Search*, 1957; *The Galloway Case*, 1958; *A Hero for Leanda*, 1959; *The Far Sands*, 1960; *The Golden Deed*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Broken Jigsaw*, 1961 (as Somers); *The House of Soldiers*, 1961; *Prisoner's Friend*, 1962; *The Sea Monks*, 1963; *Frame-Up*, 1964; *The Ashes of Loda*, 1965; *Murderer's Fen*, 1966 (also known as *Hide and Go Seek*); *A Very Quiet Place*, 1967; *The Long Short Cut*, 1968; *Boomerang*, 1969; *The Ascent of D-13*, 1969

1971-1978 • *The Late Bill Smith*, 1971; *The Case of Robert Quarry*, 1972; *The File on Lester*, 1974 (also known as *The Lester Affair*); *Home to Roost*, 1976; *Counterstroke*, 1978

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION (AS WINTERTON): *A Student in Russia*, 1931; *Russia—with Open Eyes*, 1937; *Mending Minds: The Truth About Our Mental Hospitals*, 1938; *Eye-Witness on the Soviet War-Front*, 1943; *Report on Russia*, 1945; *Inquest on an Ally*, 1948

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- Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Very useful overview of the history and parameters of the crime-fiction genre; helps place Garve's work within that genre.
- Steinbrunner, Chris, and Otto Penzler, eds. *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Garve's entry in this dictionary of mystery fiction, plays, and cinema includes details of both his literary works and their adaptations to other media.

JONATHAN GASH**John Grant**

Born: Bolton, Lancastershire, England; September 30, 1933

Also wrote as Graham Gaunt; John Grant; Jonathan Grant

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Lovejoy, 1977-

Dr. Clare Burtonall, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LOVEJOY (his full name is never given) is an antiques dealer in East Anglia who divides his time unequally between his love for antiques of all description and his love of women. Lovejoy has an unerring ability to recognize genuine antiques; nevertheless, he is usually broke. His charm lies in his fund of knowledge about the artifacts of history, his blithe amorality in matters of antiques dealing and romance, and his quick wit.

DR. CLARE BURTONALL is the investigator in a darker, more hard-boiled series that deals with medi-

cal themes and urban settings. She is a physician who joins forces with her lover, the head of an escort agency, to investigate crime.

CONTRIBUTION

Jonathan Gash's popularity as a writer of detective fiction rests primarily with the series of novels featuring the antiques dealer Lovejoy. Plots for the Lovejoy novels usually center on deception, fakery, theft, and murder in the antiques trade, but the particular appeal of the series lies in the charm of their narrator, Lovejoy, and his mine of information about antiques from every period and country. Moreover, he is always willing to interrupt the thread of his narrative to offer a brief lecture on antique dueling pistols or Elizabethan flea-and-louse boxes or how to recognize a genuine antique chair owned by the poet William Wordsworth. He is also informative about creating antique forgeries, probably because he has created so many of them himself. Lovejoy delivers all this information with an appealing combination of technical terminology and dealers' slang.

Lovejoy's attitude toward the wheeling and dealing of the antiques world is cheerfully amoral, as is his attitude toward the numerous women who find their way to his bed in the course of the series. Flippant, cynical, cowardly, defensive, and always in need of money, Lovejoy, the complete antihero, is willing to do almost anything to possess a valuable antique provided it sets off the bell in his midsection that is triggered by finding a genuine article. Nevertheless, he is possessed of a fondness for birds and children. The popularity of his novels led to the creation of a British television series during the 1980's and early 1990's, but television tamed the Lovejoy character and diluted his gamey vigor.

BIOGRAPHY

Jonathan Gash was born John Grant in Bolton, Lancastershire, England, on September 30, 1933. His parents were both mill workers. In 1955, he married Pamela Richard, a nurse. He was educated at the University of London, where he received two bachelor's degrees in 1958 and went on to the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians. He was licensed as a physician, became a member of the International College of Surgeons, and did further specialized study in pathology and tropical medicine. As a medical student, Gash supported himself by working in several of London's antiques markets, where he learned a great deal about antiques, including how to tell the forgeries from the genuine articles—the knowledge that became the core of the Lovejoy mysteries. Meanwhile, Gash's medical career flourished; he practiced medicine and pathology in London from 1958 to 1962 and clinical pathology in Germany from 1962 to 1965. After three years in the British army's medical corps, he moved to Hong Kong, where he headed the clinical pathology department at Queen Mary Hospital and taught on the medical faculty for the University of Hong Kong. He came to love the city and schooled himself in Chinese language and art—interests that crop up periodically in his detective fiction (each of the Lovejoy novels is dedicated to a Chinese god or ancient such as the god Wei Tuo, who protects “books against fire, pillaging, decay, and dishonest borrowers” according to Gash's dedication in *The Judas Pair*, 1977).

Gash began writing the Lovejoy novels as a way of finding some relief from his medical career, writing by hand on a commuter train as he traveled to and from work. His first Lovejoy novel, *The Judas Pair*, won the John Creasey Award for a first crime novel from the Crime Writers' Association. By the late 1980's, the series was so popular that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) offered him a contract to allow the network to use the Lovejoy novels as the basis for a television series. Busy with the demands of medicine, Gash signed the contract but later found himself unhappy with the television transformation of Lovejoy from the impoverished and amoral antiques dealer and womanizer into a much more respectable character. Nevertheless, the series, which starred Ian McShane, was very popular and ran more than eighty episodes, first on BBC and later in the United States on the Arts and Entertainment (A&E) television network.

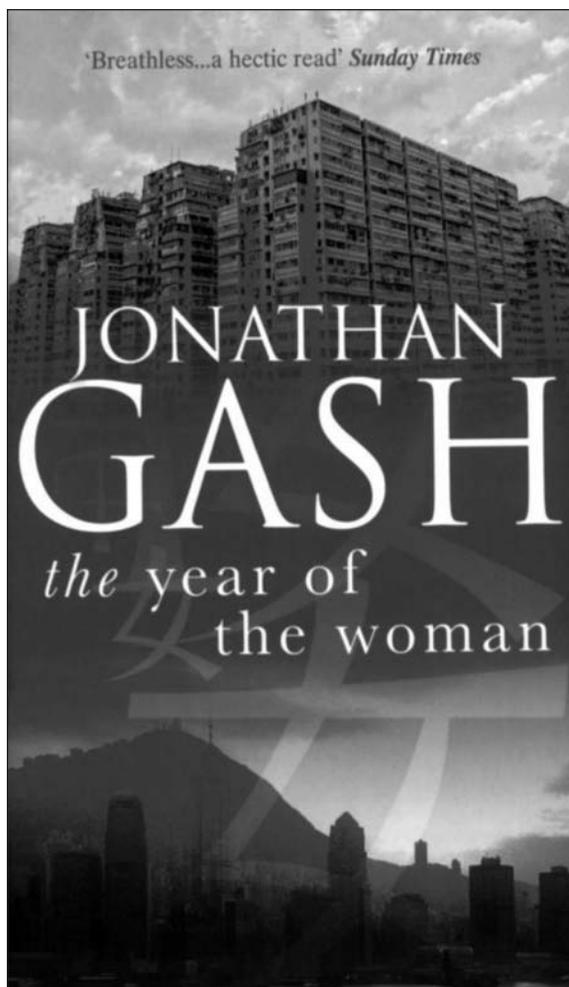
In addition to his mystery fiction, Gash has written other works. He wrote a trilogy of novels—*The Shores of Sealandings* (1991), *Storms at Sealandings* (1992), and *Mehala, Lady of Sealandings* (1993)—under the name Jonathan Grant. *The Year of the Woman* (2004) is set in Hong Kong just before the return of the Crown Colony to the People's Republic of China. In it, Gash indulges his love for the city and his passion for Chinese culture by using dialogues between the central character, a homeless squatter, and the ghost of her great-great-grandmother (she admits that she does not know exactly how many “greats” ago the ghost woman lived), who drills the woman on traditional Chinese beliefs and customs. Gash's fascination with language is also shown by his essay “The Trouble with Dialect,” which was published in the *Journal of the Lancashire Dialect Society* in September of 1989.

After his retirement from medicine, Gash introduced the Clare Burtonall series, which allows him to consider medical issues in his fiction. Gash lives with his wife in Colchester, Essex. He has negotiated with a British network for a new Lovejoy series, one in which he would have more control over the way Lovejoy is portrayed in order to capture the qualities—both positive and negative—with which he invested his most notable character.

ANALYSIS

Although plot may be a primary concern in most detective fiction, it is probably not the main appeal of Jonathan Gash's Lovejoy novels. Like other mystery writers, Gash introduces crimes, usually crimes involving the theft or forgery of valuable antiques. Those crimes then lead to one or more murders, and the murders are then solved by Lovejoy, often more by chance than by actual detective work on his part. Reviewers have often noted that Gash's plots are sometimes convoluted and even outlandish and that his solutions are less than believable. However, readers of the series are fans of the character of Lovejoy, a rogue hero given to lying, theft, forgery, and an insatiable fondness for any available women (married or not) with whom he can, in his words, "make smiles." This antihero is always out of money and in debt, lives in squalor (often without electricity when he has been too broke to pay the light bill), and dislikes the countryside. He drives a ridiculously ancient and unreliable car (like his Austin Ruby) when he has any car at all and abandons his lovers whenever he must choose between romance and an antique. Lovejoy has a satiric eye for society's shortcomings (but a complete blindness to his own faults).

With all his failings, however, Lovejoy has several very appealing qualities. One is his inerrant ability to recognize a true antique: That ability, which makes him a "divvie," sets off a chime in his midsection whenever he is near a true example of a Chippendale chair or a piece of genuine jade or a miner's brooch or any one of the myriad other items an antiques dealer might want to own. Beyond that, Lovejoy is vastly knowledgeable about antiques and history, and he never minds interrupting his narrative to offer the reader some amusing information about dealers' pricing codes or the ratio of fakes to genuine antiques (5:1 in East Anglia, he says) or the history of the art of enameling. Lovejoy's information extends to the criminal world as well, and he is equally informative about how to insert a lead cylinder into a chair leg to give it weight that would suggest that it is made of rare woods or how long the smell of linseed oil will linger and give away the true age of a forged painting. The key to Lovejoy's likability is his genuine love for the



beautiful things that human beings can create. That is why he prefers towns to the countryside and why he has a deep respect for even the smallest artifacts of the past (and a contempt for the mass-produced plastics of today). It is the cause of his satiric wit, which targets the social pretensions of some of his clients. Something of that same love informs his passion for women; all of them, he says, have some element of beauty in them, even Chemise, the ugly girlfriend of his old friend Tryer who runs a mobile sex museum. Lovejoy also likes babies and faithfully feeds the birds around his cottage. If Lovejoy is violent, he is also very funny.

Lovejoy's contradictory qualities are the cement of each of the novels in the series, but Gash also offers his readers a smorgasbord of other characters, such as

Tinker Dill, Lovejoy's scout who finds antiques for him. Perpetually unwashed and ragged, motivated only by his desire for a pound or two to spend on beer, Dill makes Lovejoy look almost respectable. Other notable characters appear in the ranks of antiques dealers, including the gay couple Cyril and Keyveen ("our town's most flamboyant flamers"), the former dressed like a cross between a drum major and a Hussar; and Three-Wheel Archie, who deals in engines and watches and rides a tricycle. Typical of Lovejoy is that he is generally accepting of others' foibles as long as they do not damage the antiques.

THE JUDAS PAIR

Gash's first Lovejoy novel, *The Judas Pair*, begins when Lovejoy's lovemaking is interrupted by a phone call from Tinker Dill. Responding to his premonition that some lucrative deal is in the offing, Lovejoy pushes his current girlfriend, Shiela, into the bathroom (in later novels he is a bit more gentle with women) and listens to Tinker's story about a buyer for some flintlock dueling pistols. When Lovejoy releases Shiela from the bath, he is puzzled at her anger at being thrown over for a buyer: "Women can be very insensitive to the real problems of existence," he says. The customer wants Lovejoy to find a special pair of pistols, the thirteenth pair that may (or may not) have been made by the famous eighteenth century pistol maker Durs Egg. Lovejoy tells the reader about this after several pages of amusing background on the history of such weapons, but from there on, he is focused on his search, during which Shiela is murdered. As he continues to search for the pistols as well as to find a way to avenge Shiela's death, Lovejoy is nearly a victim himself, caught in his own burning cottage. However, at the end he solves the several crimes his search has uncovered and both finds the pistols and manages to steal them for himself.

THE GRAIL TREE

The Grail Tree (1979), the third Lovejoy mystery, begins with Lovejoy's noting that "Antiques, women and survival are my only interests. It sounds simple, but you just try putting them in the right order." Like *The Judas Pair*, it opens with Lovejoy's lovemaking, this time, in a tent at a village fair, being interrupted by Tinker Dill who thinks he has found an antique sword.

Following the trail of the sword leads Lovejoy to the Reverend Henry Swan, who believes he has the Holy Grail in his possession. Though Lovejoy has his doubts, he likes the old man, and when Henry is murdered, Lovejoy is once again thrust into the investigation, this time with an assistant in training. As in the first novel, he works by happenstance and intuition and at the end is caught in serious violence from which he manages to escape as he begins an affair with his assistant, who has phoned her mother to reassure her with a lie about going to the Channel Isles. Lovejoy summarizes: "You can't beat a woman for trickery. I don't think they'll ever learn to be honest and fair-minded, like me."

Lovejoy's best investigations take place in his own East Anglia and London, the sources of his lively slang and powerful sense of place. When he ventures to the United States, some of his vigor seems to evaporate, but at home where he can mock the airs of would-be aristocrats and the errors of know-nothing dealers (and buyers) his divvie's bell seems to chime out of his own heart—his passion for passion, whether it creates love affairs or art.

Ann D. Garbett

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LOVEJOY SERIES: *The Judas Pair*, 1977; *Gold from Gemini*, 1978 (also known as *Gold by Gemini*, 1978); *The Grail Tree*, 1979; *Spend Game*, 1980; *The Vatican Rip*, 1981; *Firefly Gadroon*, 1982; *The Sleepers of Erin*, 1983; *The Gondola Scam*, 1984; *Pearlhanger*, 1985; *The Tartan Ringers*, 1986 (also known as *The Tartan Sell*, 1986); *Moonspender*, 1986; *Jade Woman*, 1989; *The Very Last Gambado*, 1989; *The Great California Game*, 1991; *The Lies of Fair Ladies*, 1992; *Paid and Loving Eyes*, 1993; *The Sin Within Her Smile*, 1993; *The Grace in Older Women*, 1995; *The Possessions of a Lady*, 1996; *The Rich and Profane*, 1998; *A Rag, a Bone, and a Hank of Hair*, 1999; *Every Last Cent*, 2001; *Ten Word Game*, 2003

DR. CLARE BURTONALL SERIES: *Different Women Dancing*, 1997; *Prey Dancing*, 1998; *Die Dancing*, 2000; *Bone Dancing*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Year of the Woman*, 2004

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Incomer*, 1981 (as Gaunt); *The Shores at Sealandings*, 1991 (as Jonathan Grant); *Storms at Sealandings*, 1992 (as Jonathan Grant); *Mehala, Lady of Sealandings*, 1992 (as Jonathan Grant)

PLAY: *Terminus*, 1978 (as John Grant)

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Fletcher, Connie. Review of *Ten Word Game*, by Jonathan Gash. *Booklist* 100, no. 8 (December 15, 2003): 729. A brief review of the novel, stressing the nonformulaic plot and the engaging character of Lovejoy.

Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. Gash talks about the limitations of the crime novel and why he decided to write other types of fiction as well.

_____, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. A useful reference for all detective fiction, but with particularly helpful entries on the arts and antiques milieu, conventions of the genre, and British regionalism.

Hubin, Allen J. "Patterns in Mystery Fiction: The Du-

rabable Series Character." In *The Mystery Story*, edited by John Ball. Del Mar, Calif.: Publisher's, 1976. A useful general discussion of publishers' requirements for series fiction. Includes a lengthy table of works categorized by character, type, country, and author.

Oleksin, Susan. *A Reader's Guide to the Classic British Mystery*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988. Offers brief plot synopses of some of Gash's earlier novels. Also includes maps and references to other writers with arts/antiques interests.

Ott, Bill. Review of *A Rag, A Bone, and a Hank of Hair*, by Jonathan Gash. *Booklist* 96, no. 12 (February 15, 2000): 1088. This brief review discusses the novel's plot and Lovejoy's personality, emphasizing how both mirror the pattern of the series.

Winks, Robin W., ed. *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980. Part of the Twentieth-Century Views series, this collection includes some classic discussions of the genre, including examinations of theme and formulas. See especially W. H. Auden's "The Guilty Vicarage," Edmund Wilson's "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" and John Cawelti's "The Study of Literary Formulas."

WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT

Born: Milwaukee, Wisconsin; March 9, 1910

Died: Place unknown; December 27, 1995

Also wrote as Will Duke; Dial Forest; Roney Scott

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Joe Puma, 1953-2003

Brock "the Rock" Callahan, 1955-1992

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOE PUMA is a private investigator based in Beverly Hills. He is a tough, hot-tempered Italian and a ladies' man who enjoys playing the field. He has a passionate

hatred of criminals but an equally passionate respect for professional honesty and integrity.

BROCK "THE ROCK" CALLAHAN is a private investigator and a former guard for the Los Angeles Rams. He is touchy about his sports past and can be brutish when his reputation as an honest and competent investigator is questioned. Underneath the hulking exterior is a sensitive and compassionate man.

CONTRIBUTION

William Campbell Gault was one of the few writers of detective fiction able to take various motifs from the different pulp magazine genres—sports, mystery, sci-

ence fiction—and blend them into a distinctive style of his own. Gault's fiction deals with themes of racial, ethnic, and social equality. His most successful fictional character, Brock "the Rock" Callahan, maintains a gruff, no-nonsense demeanor while championing the defenseless.

Gault's style is tough and fast-paced, true to its pulp-magazine genesis, yet he manages to evoke compassion for and understanding of all his characters. Through former football star Callahan, Gault elaborates on the sports credo of fair play, showing how it can be applied to the urban world of manipulators and murderers.

BIOGRAPHY

William Campbell Gault was born on March 9, 1910, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the second of three children of John Gault and Ella Hovde Gault. His father was a law school graduate but never practiced law, preferring to dabble in real estate. His mother sold cookware door-to-door and, with the family's savings, later purchased and managed the Blatz Hotel in Milwaukee.

Gault grew up in the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa, where he played some football in high school but reserved most of his enthusiasm for English studies. When he was eighteen, he was married to Julie Barry, and they later had a son, William Barry. In 1929, Gault briefly attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison. During the Depression, he worked as a sole cutter in a shoe factory before comanaging the Blatz Hotel with his mother.

Gault wrote short stories on the side and in 1936 won a fifty-dollar first prize in a short-story contest sponsored by the *Milwaukee Journal* and the McClure Syndicate. By 1939, he was supporting himself almost entirely from his writing. Eventually, he was divorced from his wife; he maintained custody of his son. In 1942, he married Virginia Kaprelian. The following year, he joined the army; he was assigned to the 166th Infantry and throughout most of his duty was stationed in Hawaii. After his discharge in 1945, Gault toured the West Coast and became enamored of Southern California. Having resumed his writing career, he moved his family (which now included a daughter, Shelly) to Pacific Palisades, a Los Angeles suburb, in 1949.

As the popularity of the pulp magazines declined in the late 1940's and early 1950's, Gault was forced to supplement his income by working for Douglas Aircraft in Long Beach and then later for the post office in Pacific Palisades. However, he continued to write: In a span of eighteen months, he wrote three novels, all published in 1952; *Thunder Road*, *Don't Cry for Me*, and *The Bloody Bokhara*. *Don't Cry for Me* won the Edgar Allan Poe Award of that year. Following the success of his first three books, Gault was once again able to write full time.

On the advice of fellow mystery writers Ross Macdonald and Michael Collins, both residents of Santa Barbara, Gault and his family moved to Santa Barbara in 1958. Gault continued to write mystery and juvenile sports novels; in the early 1980's, he served as president of the Private Eye Writers of America and was given that organization's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1984. He received a Shamus Award in 1983 for *The CANA Diversion* (1980). He was given a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention in 1991. Gault died in 1995, at the age of eighty-five, after completing a final short story. "An Ordinary Man" was published in *New Mystery Magazine*, a publication he helped found in 1990.

ANALYSIS

During the sixteen years in which William Campbell Gault produced more than three hundred short stories for the pulps, he developed a distinctive voice. Gault took to heart the advice of William Saroyan: "If you can't write well, write fast." Over a period of time, Gault learned to do both. At first, he wrote mainly for the sports pulps. To keep the stories coming and the plots fresh and varied, Gault ventured into other genres—mystery and science fiction—and then began combining genres. Later, he began to address themes of personal concern to him, particularly issues of ethnic and racial prejudice. One of Gault's first recurring characters, for example, was Sandy McKane, a private detective of Hawaiian descent. Other stories dealt with juvenile delinquency, with young, streetwise protagonists with questionable morals who in the end redeem themselves.

As Gault gained confidence as a novelist, he de-

cided to create a series character who would be a vehicle for these concerns. Brock “the Rock” Callahan emerged as one of the most distinctive and fully realized characters in detective fiction. He is a character with a strong moral code, one forged out of his well-documented past. He was born in Southern California and reared in Long Beach; his police officer father was killed by a hoodlum when Callahan was a boy. Callahan attended Stanford University on a football scholarship and was graduated near the top of his class. After college, he joined the army and was involved with the Office of Strategic Services for three years. Subsequently, he signed with the Los Angeles Rams and played guard for nearly a decade, earning awards and accolades for his outstanding achievements. When he retired from football, he chose to open a detective agency in Beverly Hills, believing that his reputation as a star athlete would attract clients and win him friends on the police force.

Callahan is very much aware of the question of his credibility, his ability to perform adequately as a private detective with no real formal investigative training:

Well, what had I brought to this trade? Three years in the O.S.S. and my memories of a cop father. Along with a nodding acquaintanceship with maybe fifty lads in the [Los Angeles Police] Department. That didn't make me any Philip Marlowe.

Work alone wouldn't do it, nor determination; I was a fraud in my chosen profession. So many are, but that didn't make me any more admirable.

What keeps Callahan dedicated to his new profession is his past. He grew up fatherless because of a hoodlum killer. He knows at first hand how crime can devastate the lives of the innocent. He also knows, through years of playing professional football, the importance of being treated equally and fairly, of being judged by one's actions and performance and not by one's social or ethnic background. Callahan feels compelled to apply the sports credo of fair play to his new profession. He wants to protect the lambs from the lions, to make sure that the innocents have a chance to survive despite the manipulators and murderers who pervert society's rules to their own advantage.

Callahan carries the aura of the sports world wher-

ever he goes. It defines him more than any other characteristic. He is linked to his sports past and is proud of it, although he never indulges in sentimental memories. The sports references are used to clarify a point or give a fuller dimension to a character or a situation. Many of Callahan's clients are sports heroes, former teammates, or friends of sports figures, yet rarely is the sport itself used as the central focus of the story, and macho posturing is avoided. Callahan is well aware of the reputation most sports figures have of being brainless hulks. It is almost an obsession with him to shatter the stereotype of the stupid jock; this concern fuels his desire to establish a reputation as a competent and intelligent detective.

Gault, through Callahan, challenges stereotypes, prejudices, and hastily formed judgments. Callahan has a gruff, aggressive manner that usually antagonizes the person he is confronting, whether it be an officer, a client, or a criminal. The tension created through these abrasive confrontations leads to deeper character revelations. Few of Gault's characters can be pigeonholed as true villains—even murderers are often portrayed with some sympathy.

Gault's characters tend to tangle first and to display mutual affection and admiration later. This pattern holds in Callahan's dealings with the police. It is used even more effectively in his relationship with Jan Bonnet. They meet in the first book of the series and immediately develop a prickly fondness for each other. Jan is a strong, independent businesswoman, hardly a lamb in need of protection. She owns and operates her own interior decorating business with a wealthy Beverly Hills clientele. Callahan, smitten by her intelligence, beauty, and no-nonsense approach to life, proposes marriage on several occasions. Jan refuses, however, spouting her disapproval of his profession and his lack of financial sense. She is infuriated by the fact that he is willing from time to time to take on a case free of charge.

DEAD HERO

Although Gault attempts to present Callahan and Jan as equals, a double standard exists: Callahan becomes sexually involved with various women throughout the series, yet it is implied that Jan remains faithful to him. This double standard is vividly illustrated in

Dead Hero (1963). Having learned of a friend's wife's infidelity, Callahan expresses outrage to Jan, who replies, "Men—you smug monsters. If a man is unfaithful, he's just a red-blooded live wire to the boys. But if a woman is, *she's* a tramp. To hell with men and their idiotic world." Callahan explains, "Men and women are different. . . . I mean a man is—emotionally constituted so adultery has less meaning for him; it doesn't degrade him as much as it can a woman."

Yet despite this deeply ingrained attitude, Callahan is open-minded enough to realize that his former teammate is too intolerant of the wife's adulterous behavior. "You know you're in love," Callahan reminds him. "You can't make a career out of being an outraged husband. . . . And remember you're a father as well as a husband. And before you were married you were an All-American blonde-chaser."

As a private detective, Callahan must examine an issue from every angle to get at the truth and solve the mystery. In so doing, Callahan, along with the reader, becomes more tolerant toward behavior that at first seemed repugnant and characters who at first seemed despicable. Callahan's nickname, the Rock, is used ironically. He is tough when he must be, but he is also one of the most tolerant and compassionate of all fictional private detectives.

COUNTY KILL

One of the best books of the series, one that expertly interweaves all Gault's favorite themes, is *County Kill* (1962). It begins with Callahan's accepting as a client a child, a twelve-year-old runaway who seeks help in finding his father, Skip Lund. Callahan finds Lund, who in turn hires the detective to investigate the murder of one of his business partners. Later, Callahan discovers Lund's business: drug smuggling. The drug dealers, however, prove to be the most noble characters of the story. They are smuggling heroin and distributing it to local addicts at low cost to keep the addicts from committing crimes to support their habit, to help rehabilitate them, and to prevent organized crime from infiltrating the area. Most of the addicts are poor Hispanics.

The strongest character in the book is Juanita Rico, the proprietress of a bar in the poor district of San Valdesto; she is the brains behind the drug operation.

Skip Lund, a man of humble beginnings who has married into a rich family, risks destroying his marriage to help oppressed members of his community. Callahan mixes and sympathizes with both rich and poor: He wants Lund to reunite with his wife so that their son will have a proper upbringing, but he also feels for Juanita Rico and her cause. Eventually, the murders are shown to have nothing to do with drug dealing or social inequality; they are motivated by matrimonial jealousy and infidelity.

THE CALLAHAN SERIES RESUMES

After the publication of *Dead Hero* in 1963; Gault stopped writing detective stories for seventeen years; in 1980, he resumed the Callahan series. In these later novels, Callahan and Jan are married, his financial problems having been solved by means of an inheritance. They both are retired and have moved to San Valdesto; after a taste of retirement, however, both become bored and resume their careers.

Because he is wealthy, Callahan can now afford to investigate cases without charging any fee and without bringing down Jan's wrath. Private investigation has become for him a hobby instead of a profession, and, as one critic put it, he has become "a relentlessly nice man." Even so, the writing remains tight and the stories well plotted, with compelling themes and well-realized characterizations.

THE CANA DIVERSION

In the first novel of the resumed series, *The CANA Diversion*, Callahan investigates the disappearance of a former Beverly Hills detective, Joe Puma, a character who had already appeared in his own long-established series. Puma is a tougher, more volatile character than Callahan, more rootless and less predictable. Like Callahan, he hates injustice. He is quick with the sarcastic remark but also quick to apologize. Puma claims to have only two weaknesses: women and food. Essentially, he is Callahan's spiritual twin. Both come off as tough and sarcastic to police, clients, and hoods, but later, as their professionalism and honesty become apparent, they earn admiration from all. In 2003, many of the older Joe Puma stories were collected in *The Marksman, and Other Stories*.

There is at times a poetic quality about Gault's writing. It springs from his quick pacing, his ability to

mix the essential qualities of a good detective story—tension, toughness, a bleary-eyed view of society, and a logically constructed murder plot—with a dignity that is genuine and heartfelt. It is a unique style—poetic pulp—and it makes Gault's contribution to the detective genre an important one.

James Kline

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOE PUMA SERIES: *Shakedown*, 1953 (as Scott); *End of a Call Girl*, 1958 (also known as *Don't Call Tonight*); *Night Lady*, 1958; *Sweet Wild Wench*, 1959; *The Sweet Blond Trap*, 1959; *The Wayward Widow*, 1959; *Million Dollar Tramp*, 1960; *The Hundred-Dollar Girl*, 1961; *Marksman, and Other Stories*, 2003

BROCK CALLAHAN SERIES: *Ring Around Rosa*, 1955 (also known as *Murder in the Raw*); *Day of the Ram*, 1956; *The Convertible Hearse*, 1957; *Come Die with Me*, 1959; *Vein of Violence*, 1961; *County Kill*, 1962; *Dead Hero*, 1963; *The CANA Diversion*, 1980; *The Bad Samaritan*, 1982; *Death in Donegal Bay*, 1984; *The Dead Seed*, 1985; *The Chicano War*, 1986; *Cat and Mouse*, 1988; *Dead Pigeon*, 1992

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Don't Cry for Me*, 1952; *The Bloody Bokhara*, 1952 (also known as *The Bloodstained Bokhara*); *Blood on the Boards*, 1953; *The Canvas Coffin*, 1953; *Run, Killer, Run*, 1954; *Fair Prey*, 1956; *Square in the Middle*, 1956; *Death Out of Focus*, 1959; *Man Alone*, 1994

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: 1952-1960 • *Thunder Road*, 1952; *Mr. Fullback*, 1953; *Gallant Colt*, 1954; *Mr. Quarterback*, 1955; *Speedway Challenge*, 1955; *Bruce Benedict, Halfback*, 1957; *Dim Thunder*, 1958; *Rough Road to Glory*, 1958; *Drag Strip*, 1959
1961-1970 • *Dirt Track Summer*, 1961; *Through*

the Line, 1961; *Road-Race Rookie*, 1962; *Two-Wheeled Thunder*, 1962; *Little Big Foot*, 1963; *Wheels of Fortune: Four Racing Stories*, 1963; *The Checkered Flag*, 1964; *The Karters*, 1965; *The Long Green*, 1965; *Sunday's Dust*, 1966; *Backfield Challenge*, 1967; *The Lonely Mound*, 1967; *The Oval Playground*, 1968; *Stubborn Sam*, 1969; *Quarterback Gamble*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The Last Lap*, 1972; *Trouble at Second*, 1973; *Gasoline Cowboy*, 1974; *Wild Willie, Wide Receiver*, 1974; *The Big Stick*, 1975; *Underground Skipper*, 1975; *Showboat in the Backcourt*, 1976; *Cut-Rate Quarterback*, 1977; *Thin Ice*, 1978; *Sunday Cycles*, 1979; *Super Bowl Bound*, 1980

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Landrum, Larry. *American Mystery and Detective Novels*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999. An important resource for understanding the development of the genre in the United States. Mentions of Gault are brief but instructive.

Locke, John, ed. *Pulp Fictioneers*. Silver Spring, Md.: Adventure House, 2004. A fascinating compilation of firsthand accounts of working and writing for the pulp-fiction industry in its heyday. Provides background for understanding Gault.

Steinbrunner, Chris, and Otto Penzler, eds. *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Given the period of Gault's greatest productivity as a writer, this old but reliable resource is still one of the best places to go for contextualizing his work.

ELIZABETH GEORGE

Susan Elizabeth George

Born: Warren, Ohio; February 26, 1949

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sir Thomas Lynley, Earl Asherton, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THOMAS LYNLEY, EARL ASHERTON, an inspector at New Scotland Yard, is a tall, blond, strikingly handsome detective. A distinguished graduate of elite schools, he was born into the aristocracy, is privately wealthy and heir to a large estate in Cornwall, but he is totally committed to his work. Like many other detective heroes of fiction, Lynley is a loner and has long been guilt ridden about events that occurred in his personal life.

BARBARA HAVERS, a detective sergeant at Scotland Yard, is skilled and dedicated, but her prickly personality and independent nature prevent her from getting along with her superior officers. In the first book of the series, Havers becomes Lynley's assistant, providing endless contrasts to him in background, appearance, temperament, and class. Uncomfortably conscious of her grammar-school education and working-class accent, she is argumentative and prone to disregard orders. She is defiantly unattractive and often unkempt, making little effort to disguise her slovenly lifestyle. She keeps private her problems at home with her sick parents.

SIMON ALLCOURT ST. JAMES left Scotland Yard to become the most sought after independent forensic scientist in Britain. A friend of Lynley's since childhood, he remains his close confidant and ally. Brilliant, modest, and extremely self-controlled, he is unwilling to blame Lynley for an early automobile accident that left him disabled. St. James, along with his wife, Deborah, are the central investigating figures in *A Place of Hiding* (2003).

DEBORAH COTTER is the daughter of St. James's butler, who serves as personal caretaker, all-around assistant, and friend. Because of her father's position,

Deborah grew up in St. James's home and became an exceptional photographer, often participating in his and Lynley's cases. Although a decade younger than St. James, she has always loved him. However, believing her feelings for St. James were not reciprocated, she became Thomas Lynley's lover before her declaration of love for his friend. Deborah and St. James marry in the first book in the series, but she is Lynley's betrothed in the later novel, *A Suitable Vengeance* (1991).

LADY HELEN CLYDE was briefly the fiancé of St. James and now works as his forensic assistant. A very self-reliant woman, Helen is the most humorous, adventurous, and daring of the four friends; she has been involved with many men, but she and Lynley marry when they discover their friendship is actually mutual love. She is pregnant with their first child, a son, when tragedy brings an end to the Lynley's marriage.

CONTRIBUTION

Elizabeth George became a major player in the crime writer's world with her first published novel, *A Great Deliverance* (1988). The book, nominated for the Edgar prize, won Agatha and Anthony awards and Le Grande Prix de Littérature Policière. Although not the first American crime writer to set her novels in the British Isles, George is the only one who so thoroughly captured the details of English life and culture that many British readers of the early novels believed her to be one of them. Knowledge of her nationality came about through interviews and an increasing number of reviews once George's books became best sellers.

In 1988 George began producing novels at the rate of one per year, honing her skills and evolving as a psychological writer. The development of major and minor characters and the changes in their lives as the series progressed have so touched readers that they have expressed strong, even angry opinions about the writer's treatment of these characters, particularly after the publication of *With No One as Witness* (2005).



Elizabeth George. (© Figge Photography)

The subplots in George's novels usually do not exist simply as red herrings. Ultimately, they emerge as significant connections to the main plot, revealing aspects of characters' past and present. Her subplots explore the English class system and the racial issues and problems that bubble beneath the surface of daily life in Britain.

According to literary critics, some of whom describe George as "doyenne" and "master," she not only carries the torch of earlier great female writers, such as Dorothy L. Sayers and P. D. James, but also has advanced the mystery genre to encompass the realities of modern existence.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth George was born Susan Elizabeth George in Warren, Ohio, and grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. Later, she lived in Orange County in Southern California. While a college student, she met and married Ira Toibin in 1971. Divorced after twenty-four years, she later married Tom McCabe, a retired firefighter. After tiring of the increasing population

density in California, they built a home on Whidbey Island, Washington. George has no children.

In preparation for each book, George spends a considerable amount of time in England. She prides herself on getting details right, yet points out that it is not possible to avoid some mistakes. Even though the writing of each novel generally takes about ten months, she estimates that from conception to publication generally takes about two and one half years.

As with most writers, George loved reading from a very early age, although she was not drawn to mysteries until she discovered English mystery novels. Her parents' enjoyment of literature led her to begin writing short stories at the age of seven. Impressed by her daughter's dedication, George's mother gave her a 1930's typewriter. While in high school, George first attempted writing a novel.

All of George's education took place in California, from St. Joseph's Grammar School in Silicon Valley to her first college years at Foothill Community College, followed by graduation from the University of California, Riverside. At the University of California, Berkeley, she took courses to add to her professional credentials, continuing with more classes at California State University, Fullerton, where she earned a degree in counseling/psychology, studies that would later serve her well in her novels. Needing further credentials to teach secondary school, George did more work at the University of California, Riverside. Among her many awards is an honorary degree from California State University, Fullerton.

George taught briefly at Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, California, but her liberal views and activism in union affairs led to her firing. Portraits in her home of leftist activist César Chávez and Mexican artist Frida Kahlo show a side of George that might surprise readers of her early fiction, with its upper-class British characters. Her later novels, however, sympathetically depict a bitter underclass of the poor and mixed-race inhabitants of Britain.

Although the California courts ordered the Mater Dei school to rehire George and others who had been let go, George was already teaching English at El Toro High, where she remained for thirteen years until *A Great Deliverance* was published. For a time after

George left high school teaching, she taught creative writing in several colleges in the United States, Canada, Scotland, and England.

George once said to a reviewer that writing gives her creative balance. To another, she confided that writing keeps her from feeling depressed. Her pleasure in writing, along with her joy in teaching, has led to her sharing her knowledge about the craft of writing with many others.

ANALYSIS

Elizabeth George's novels are clearly descendants of Golden Age and postwar mystery novels, just as these classic mysteries are evolved from those written by nineteenth century Romantic novelists. However, her novels are distinctly different from the classic mysteries. One example of how George's novels differ is in the nature of the crimes in all of her mysteries. They are violent and shocking, with solutions equally horrifying, yet unforced and logical.

George's Sir Thomas Lynley series has details that remind readers of its forebears in the realm of English mysteries. George likes to make literary allusions, sometimes general, as with her mention of Charles Dickens in a number of her mysteries, but sometimes specific. Early in *A Great Deliverance*, the first work in the series, Lynley hears church bells like those in Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors* (1934). George, an admirer of Sayers's work, created Sir Thomas Lynley, Earl Asherton, a figure with a background that is similar to that of Lord Peter Wimsey, Sayers's aristocratic detective hero. In many ways Lynley could have been a character from the Golden Age of British mystery fiction. Both Lynley and Wimsey are members of the upper class and have graduated from Eton and Oxford, where they earned first-class honors. Each has great wealth and worldly experience and has had multiple affairs with women. Each has a memorable mother and a brother who is a possible candidate for a crime. However, Lynley differs from Wimsey, who begins the series as somewhat of a clown, in having an introverted personality and a quick temper. Three-quarters of a century after the much loved and ever popular Golden Age of mystery writing, the detective novel has undergone many other changes. Whereas

the cheery Wimsey is an amateur detective, Lynley is a professional with all the rules and regulations that go with his work, and his psyche from the onset is that of a darkly unhappy man with personal demons.

George, like all superior novelists, with each novel improves her writing. She strengthens the maturing protagonists, shaping them into believable human beings and making their dialogue less trivial as their daily lives become more realistic. Her readers have appreciated the changes, becoming further engrossed in the events that affect the characters.

A GREAT DELIVERANCE

Elizabeth George's first novel, *A Great Deliverance*, is an impressive prize winner. The novel opens in London, but the scene soon shifts to the exquisite but desolate Yorkshire countryside, where Roberta Tey, a young farm woman, has confessed to the beheading of her father. Because of the lack of significant evidence, Roberta's confused mental state and incarceration in an asylum, and the refusal of her friends and neighbors to accept the possibility of her guilt, a difficult and complex investigation ensues. As Lynley and Havers search for the truth, many long-hidden secrets of the quiet, bucolic community are revealed. The final pages establish a pattern in George's novel: They seldom end happily.

In 2001 the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) broadcast a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) film version of *A Great Deliverance* in the United States.

WELL-SCHOOLED IN MURDER

The third Lynley mystery, *Well-Schooled in Murder* (1990), was also made into a film by the BBC and shown in the United States on PBS. The film has many disturbing details, but the book is even grimmer. Here, as in her introductory novel, George tears aside the curtain that hides aberrant behavior, violence, and sexual cruelty. Once more, the setting is an isolated community, but in this instance it is a private school for upper-class boys, along with a few token scholarship students. Although lip service is paid to the training and discipline of the students, breaking of the rules is common. Some faculty members have secrets that they are concerned will come to light, so bullies take advantage of their weakness and gain control over

other students. The administrators do not want to know about drugs, beatings, or sexual intimidation because their priority is maintaining endowments and enrollment. Lynley becomes involved through a friend's request when one of the scholarship boys goes missing. Betrayal, murders, and suicide follow.

A SUITABLE VENGEANCE

George's fourth mystery, *A Suitable Vengeance*, provides a valuable backdrop for a number of the Lynley stories. The novel reveals the history of the major protagonist, Detective Inspector Lynley, his alienation from his mother and younger brother, and his reluctance to visit the family estate in Cornwall, his birthplace. Although the introductory segments of the story are set in London, the crucial part of the novel takes place in Cornwall. George describes in full detail the magnificent Jacobean house, the outbuildings, dairy farms, agricultural areas, church, and stables that make up the grounds of the Asherton holdings, alongside the Atlantic ocean. Flying his own plane, Lynley brings his party of guests to his ancestral home for a celebration of his engagement to Deborah Cotter. The engagement is broken off as events unfold. Inasmuch as the first novel described Deborah's wedding to St. James, it is clear that George's concern is greater expansion of her characters' lives rather than creating a linear, chronological tale.

WITH NO ONE AS WITNESS

Written fourteen years after *A Suitable Vengeance*, *With No One as Witness* provides a pivotal change of direction in George's work. George turns her attention, in this and the novel that follows, to people and places in London that resemble the nineteenth century world of Dickens. Problem boys, some who have been in prison, mostly poor and uneducated, are required to attend a school ironically called Colossus. Many of the faculty have questionable credentials and little interest in the boys. The school is located not far from a ragtag, covered flea market frequented by characters who could have come from the unsettling paintings of fifteenth and sixteenth century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch. Both the school and the market as well as the shabby nearby neighborhoods are venues for thieves, pedophiles, pimps, and murderers. A serial killer of young boys, an ambitious police supervisor,

and an amoral reporter bring Lynley and Havers into an investigation that leads to unforeseen tragedy.

WHAT CAME BEFORE HE SHOT HER

What Came Before He Shot Her (2006) does not feature the investigative work of Lynley, although Havers appears briefly near the end of the book. This work is inextricably linked to *With No One as a Witness* because of the crime that occurred; yet, it can hardly be deemed a mystery. The reader knows what the end will be, and that knowledge makes the tragedy more grievous.

Most of the individuals in the story are of mixed race, poor, and generally uneducated. Many are children of immigrants, the colonial inheritors of Britain's empire, unwanted citizens. The story is set in a section of London so different from the familiar areas of George's fiction that it seems a totally unknown world. Many of the inhabitants living in the slums of North Kensington have never been to the areas of London familiar to much of the civilized world.

Drugs are sold and distributed by gangs and crime lords who control the streets. Rape is common. An ineffective and corrupt police force metes out its own form of justice, in a pitiless and crushing system. In the miasma of failure and doom that encloses the plot, the reader fears there is no hope for the three children who are central to the story. They are abandoned by their feckless grandmother on the doorstep of her daughter, their well-intentioned aunt. However, neither she nor a few kind members of the community can save the children from a fate that has been determined by earlier events.

As if in a Greek tragedy, the final segment of the novel is a recapitulation and enlargement of scenes from the previous novel: Deborah St. James and Helen Lynley arrive at the Lynley home after a shopping trip in preparation for the birth of the Lynley baby. There a fatal shooting occurs, and the preordained calamity plays out.

Helen S. Garson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SIR THOMAS LYNLEY, EARL ASHERTON SERIES:
A Great Deliverance, 1988; *Payment in Blood*, 1989; *Well-Schooled in Murder*, 1990; *A Suitable Vengeance*,

1991; *For the Sake of Elena*, 1992; *Missing Joseph*, 1993; *Playing for the Ashes*, 1995; *In the Presence of the Enemy*, 1996; *In Pursuit of the Proper Sinner*, 1999; *A Traitor to Memory*, 2001; *With No One as Witness*, 2005; *What Came Before He Shot Her*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Deception on His Mind*, 1997; *A Place of Hiding*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Evidence Exposed*, 1999; *I, Richard*, 2002

NONFICTION: *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*, 2004

EDITED TEXTS: *Crime from the Mind of a Woman*, 2002; *A Moment on the Edge: One Hundred Years of Crime Stories by Women*, 2004

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_____. "Plot Twist Murder on Author's Fans." Interview by Ben Fox. *Palm Beach Post*, April 11, 2005, Style section, p. 3. Lengthy interview with the novelist discussing her beginnings and recent reactions of readers to *With No One As Witness*.

_____. *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2004. George discusses her approach to writing fiction, which includes disciplining herself to sit and write.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay discussing the life and works of George.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an essay on George and her writing.

TESS GERRITSEN

Born: San Diego, California; June 12, 1953

Also wrote as Terry Gerritsen

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jane Rizzoli and Maura Isles, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DETECTIVE JANE RIZZOLI makes her first appearance in *The Surgeon* (2001). Assertive and even pugnacious, the thirty-three-year-old Rizzoli, who transferred to the Homicide Division some six months earlier from Vice and Narcotics, is beginning to make her mark as a persistent investigator. She has a fierce appearance, with brown hair and an unflinchingly direct gaze.

DR. MAURA ISLES, a new medical examiner recently arrived in Boston from California, appears in the second Rizzoli book. At first mutually wary, Rizzoli and Isles find themselves working closely together to solve a baffling sequence of apparently related murders. The subsequent novels in the series feature both women and trace the evolution of their teamwork from mutual respect toward true friendship as each woman learns more about the other's life and background.

CONTRIBUTION

Trained as a physician, Tess Gerritsen began writing fiction while on maternity leave from her medical practice. Her first novels, published in the 1980's, were suspense romances, most of them bearing the Harlequin imprint. More than a decade later, a chance conversation with a police officer about organ transplants and Russian mobsters led to the creation of *Harvest* (1996), first in a line of nonseries medical thrillers that readers and reviewers compared favorably to the work of writers such as Robin Cook, Michael Crichton, and Michael Palmer. Tess Gerritsen's fifth medical thriller, *The Surgeon*, was the first to feature Detective Jane Rizzoli, who, in *The Apprentice* (2002), would be joined by medical examiner Dr. Maura Isles, along with a cast of continuing secondary characters including Rizzoli's parents and brothers. As the Rizzoli and Isles series grew and developed, Gerritsen arguably broke new ground in crossover fiction, successfully blending the police procedural and the medical thriller, with trace elements of the romance novels with which her career began. *Gravity* (1999), the last of the nonseries medical thrillers, approaches science fiction, although Gerritsen was quick to remind readers that it was firmly based on solid science. Throughout the Rizzoli and Isles series, it is Jane Rizzoli who tends to dominate the action, separating Isles from such fictional medical examiners as Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta or Kathy Reichs's Temperance Brennan.

BIOGRAPHY

The writer and physician Tess Gerritsen was born Tess Tom on June 12, 1953, to Ernest Tom, a second-



Tess Gerritsen. (© Sigrid Estrada)

generation Chinese American restaurateur in San Diego, California, and his China-born wife, Ruby Tom. A 1975 graduate of Stanford University, where she majored in anthropology, Tess Tom attended medical school at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. She married fellow physician Jacob Gerritsen, a native of Hawaii, in 1977, and received her medical degree in 1979. Interested in writing since childhood but encouraged by her parents to choose a more lucrative profession, Tess Gerritsen began writing romantic suspense novels while on maternity leave from the practice of internal medicine in Hawaii.

In 1990, the Gerritsens and their two young sons moved to the American mainland, eventually settling in Camden, Maine, where Jacob established a private medical practice while Tess, basically retired from medicine, pursued her career as a writer, also enjoying

such hobbies as gardening and the Celtic fiddle. By 2003, Jacob Gerritsen had retired from active practice, enjoying his own hobby of sailing while serving as president of the Maine Medical Association. Tess Gerritsen, meanwhile, had teamed up with Michael Palmer to offer annual workshops for would-be novelists in the medical profession. In 2006, Gerritsen won the Nero Wolfe Award for *Vanish* (2005), which was also nominated for an Edgar Award.

ANALYSIS

By 1996, Tess Gerritsen had joined fellow physician-writers Robin Cook and Michael Palmer in the emerging field of the medical thriller, mining recent developments in medical and technological research in search of frightening possibilities for fictional development. The unprecedented success of *Harvest* created a ready audience for the three novels to follow, also featuring strong female physicians as principal characters. Like Cook's *Coma* (1977), *Harvest* deals with a black market in human organs; in *Harvest*, however, the mobsters are Russian and one of the American conspirators is quite literally in bed with the increasingly inquisitive young doctor who nearly loses her own life at the hands of her supposed lover, with her liver to be transplanted, as soon as she uncovers the conspiracy. Like Cook, Gerritsen seeks out and exploits the most frightening possibilities, from bioterrorism and mad cow disease to teen violence sparked by a meningitis epidemic.

With *The Surgeon*, at first glance merely the fifth of her medical thrillers, Gerritsen moved to merge medical thriller with police procedural as her focus shifted from prions and microbes to psychopaths and serial murderers. At first, the central character appears to be Dr. Catherine Cordell, a surgeon who has recently moved to Boston from Georgia in the aftermath of a brutal attempt on her life during which she shot and killed her assailant. As the novel begins, Dr. Cordell is less than pleased to be confronted by homicide detectives Thomas Moore and Jane Rizzoli, who are pursuing possible connections between a current spate of rape-murders in the Boston area and the attack in Georgia more than two years earlier. After all, she reasons, the man is dead and she can prove as much.

Rizzoli, however, proves to have the tenacity of a bulldog as she pursues leads that point to a copycat or perhaps a disciple of the dead killer.

Cordell falls slowly and cautiously in love with Detective Moore, whom she will eventually marry. Gerritsen, meanwhile, was laying the groundwork for a new fictional universe centered in Boston and featuring the mercurial Jane Rizzoli: "She wore grim dark suits that did not flatter her petite frame, and her hair was a careless mop of black curls. She was who she was, and either you accepted it or you could just go to hell." Gerritsen's subsequent novels would follow Rizzoli through a series of adventures and interactions with a variety of continuing characters. In *The Apprentice*, Dr. Ashford Tierney, the aging medical examiner featured in *The Surgeon*, has retired after choosing his own successor, a rather mysterious still-young woman by the name of Maura Isles. Within a year after assuming the position, Dr. Isles has become known to law enforcement and the press as the Queen of the Dead, owing not only to her line of work but also to her pale skin, black hair and dress, red lipstick, and calm demeanor. All that is known of her background at that point is that Tierney hired her away from a faculty position at Gerritsen's own alma mater, the University of California's San Francisco campus.

The Apprentice also marks the first appearance of Special Agent Gabriel Dean, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), who arouses Rizzoli's ire by invading her turf with an investigation in progress, claiming intersection with a case of his own. Another recurring character making a debut is Dr. Joyce O'Donnell, a forensic neuropsychiatrist who has grown rich and perhaps infamous as an expert witness for the defense of serial killers. Indeed, it is O'Donnell's bizarre fascination with her subjects that causes Rizzoli and Dean to start working as a team, instead of acting as adversaries.

As the Rizzoli and Isles series progresses and develops, readers learn that Isles has left not only her job but also her marriage to Victor Banks, a physician practicing with a worldwide charity known as One Earth. A strong mutual attraction reaching its peak at the end of *The Apprentice* leaves Rizzoli bearing FBI agent Dean's child, with a proposal and marriage to

follow. O' Donnell, meanwhile, will pursue her morbid fascination with serial killers until she herself is murdered, and Isles, still recovering from a brief reunion with Victor Banks, will find herself strongly, and repeatedly, attracted to a Roman Catholic priest named Daniel Brophy. Throughout the series, the lives and careers of Rizzoli and Isles continue to overlap and interact, providing two distinct viewpoints for Gerritsen's third-person narrative.

In several of the novels, Gerritsen inserts sections of first-person narrative, often in italics and most often to convey the inner musings of a perpetrator. Chilling in effect, such passages approach the inverted mystery model but are offset by the balanced narrative of the two female protagonists. In *Body Double* (2004), Isles, who knows only that she was adopted, finds herself examining the body of the twin from whom she was separated at birth, beginning an investigation that leads both Isles and Rizzoli down a twisted path of depravity, with their nemesis O'Donnell savoring each new discovery. Thereafter, Isles will have to live with the knowledge that she was born to the near-incestuous union of two murderers who happened to be first cousins. In *The Mephisto Club* (2006), Gerritsen carries the notion of the "bad seed" even further, tracing its origins back at least as far as the apocryphal Book of Enoch and its description of the Nephilim, "fallen angels who mated with human women." On balance, *The Sinner* (2003) and *Vanish* (2005) are the weakest of the Rizzoli and Isles novels: Overplotted to the point of implausibility, they serve mainly to help author and reader alike in "connecting the dots" that link both women's lives.

THE APPRENTICE

In *The Apprentice*, with Warren Hoyt, the serial killer known as the Surgeon, safely behind bars, Jane Rizzoli and her fellow detectives find themselves tracking an apparent copycat. Unlike Hoyt, however, who murdered women alone at home, the new perpetrator appears to target couples, binding the husbands and forcing them to watch the torture of their wives before killing the men. The wives have all vanished, leaving the husband's corpse as evidence that crimes have been committed. After consultation with forensic psychologist Lawrence Zucker, the police conclude

that Hoyt, although imprisoned, must somehow be involved. Rizzoli, still damaged emotionally and physically from her close brush with death at Hoyt's hands, refuses to let go of the case, even when encouraged to do so by her fellow detectives and by Gabriel Dean, an FBI agent with an agenda of his own that he is not about to reveal. Working closely with Isles, recently arrived to replace Dr. Tierney as medical examiner, Rizzoli delves deeper into the realm of psychopathology as, midway through the crime spree, Hoyt manages a brazen escape from prison by faking a ruptured appendix, leaving three medical personnel and a prison guard dead in his wake.

Hoyt, meanwhile, has kept up a correspondence with forensic neuropsychiatrist Joyce O'Donnell, who coaxes him into revealing his innermost musings and secrets. Unlike Rizzoli, Dean is well acquainted with O'Donnell, having witnessed her expert testimony several times from the other side of a courtroom. With Hoyt on the loose and apparently teamed up with his apprentice, Dean sets up a meeting in Washington, D.C., between Rizzoli and Dean's own apparent mentor and fellow former marine, Senator Conway. The federal agenda, it seems, stems from a suspicion that the second killer, nicknamed the Dominator, is a deep-cover rogue agent, perhaps military special forces, who honed his murderous skills during the conflict in Kosovo, where Dean first encountered samples of his handiwork. Before leaving Washington, Rizzoli spends the night with Gabriel Dean; on her return to Boston, she is met by a limousine that turns out to be the trap that Hoyt and his accomplice have set for all of his victims. Bound and gagged and stuffed into the trunk of the limo, Rizzoli has just enough time to snag her bonds on a protruding screw, free herself, and retrieve her gun from her overnight bag.

When the driver opens the trunk, Rizzoli blows his head away and then fires on Hoyt, who has come down the driveway to help his disciple. It is clear to both that her first shot, to his spinal cord, will leave him paralyzed for life, and after a brief hesitation, she decides not to finish him off. He remains, however, able to talk if not to walk, and to conduct interviews with his new friend, Dr. O'Donnell.

BODY DOUBLE

In *Body Double*, after returning from a conference in Paris, medical examiner Maura Isles is surprised to find her home surrounded by police—who are in turn surprised, believing that they have seen a ghost. Inside a car parked nearby lies the body of a woman who, in time, will turn out to be Isles's twin, from whom she was separated soon after birth. In *Body Double*, Gerritsen moves beyond serial killers to explore the nature of evil as Isles proceeds to search for her origins. The dead woman, it seems, had recently been on the run from her former employer and lover Dr. Charles Cassell, a rich and powerful pharmaceutical executive with high control needs. It is Jane Rizzoli, by this time extremely pregnant, who puts Isles in touch with Rick Ballard, a detective from the suburb of Newton who had been helping the woman evade her stalker. Like Isles, the woman now known as Anna Leoni had been a scientist, a microbiologist with Castle Pharmaceuticals.

As Rizzoli investigates Cassell, Isles heads for Maine, where Leoni had fled, not only to escape Cassell but also to search for clues as to her own origins. Joined by Ballard, who is still seeking the cause of Leoni's death, Isles finds herself helping local police identify skeletal remains found in the area. Approaching the truth from opposite directions, Rizzoli and Isles gradually uncover a criminal conspiracy stretching back decades, involving the abduction and murder of pregnant women, followed by the sale of their newborns to couples willing to pay exorbitant prices. The apparent mastermind, Amalthea Lank, now serving a life sentence for double homicide, turns out to be the birth mother of both Isles and Leoni, who may well have been the first babies sold. Lank is also a patient of O'Donnell, whom Isles is about to meet for the first time, against the advice of Rizzoli. O'Donnell alerts Isles to the possibility of an accomplice, presumably a man. "Insanity doesn't interest me. Evil does," says O'Donnell. Soon Isles must face the fact that she is descended from monsters, and that Lank's accomplices were first her father, now dead, and then her brother.

Leoni's murder, meanwhile, has nothing to do with her family and everything to do with Rick Ballard, who admits to having fallen in love with Leoni and now ap-

pears to be falling in love with her twin sister. The killer turns out to be Ballard's estranged wife, herself a police officer, "I killed you once," she tells Isles, after killing Rick Ballard. "Now I have to do it all over again." Before Carmen Ballard can squeeze off another shot, she is brought down by Rizzoli, who has followed her own leads to trace the killer's identity. It appears that Leoni, having pursued her own research with Ballard's help, had come to meet her sister, Isles.

THE MEPHISTO CLUB

The concept of human beasts and monsters, brought to the surface in *Body Double*, is further explored in *The Mephisto Club*, in which Gerritsen displays a continued interest and expertise in anthropology, her undergraduate academic major. At issue is the question of evil, as expressed across cultures by myth, legend, and religious practice. *The Mephisto Club* draws in part on the apocryphal Book of Enoch, an ancient text that describes creatures variously known as Nephilim, watchers or giants, hybrid monsters fathered by fallen angels with human mothers. At the center of the mystery is Montague Saul, a long-dead anthropologist whose surviving family members, if they can be found, may well hold the key to a grisly series of ritual murders that have drawn the attention of Jane Rizzoli, Maura Isles, and, perhaps inevitably, Joyce O'Donnell. It is through O'Donnell that Rizzoli and Isles learn of a clandestine society known as the Mephisto Club, which Rizzoli and Isles suspect of practicing witchcraft. Its founder and leader is Anthony Sansone, a history professor retired from Harvard and possessed of enormous wealth. He explains to a skeptical Isles that he is descended from Monsignore Antonino Sansone, a monstrous sixteenth century Italian priest, and a noblewoman whom the priest had tortured and executed as a heretic after delivering the baby that he himself had fathered. That child, known as Vittorio, was the patriarch of the current Sansone line, who have adopted as their motto "Deliver us from evil." As for the Mephisto Club, Rizzoli and Isles cannot decide whether they are on the side of the devil or that of the angels. Then the club members start falling victim to a killer who leaves cabalistic clues and inscriptions at the crime scenes, along with evidence of mutilation or dismemberment. O'Donnell

is among the first of the new victims, and the identification of a severed hand not far from Norwich in central New York sends Rizzoli and Isles westward in search of further evidence tying their first victim to her killer. By then, the two women are barely speaking, Rizzoli having correctly guessed that Isles has slept with Father Daniel Brophy. Rizzoli has recently learned of her own parents' impending divorce after nearly forty years of marriage: Her father is having an affair, and her mother has begun flirting with Vince Korsak, a recently retired detective whom Rizzoli has never really liked. By now, however, Rizzoli is happily married to Gabriel Dean and the mother of Regina, who seems to have inherited her mother's feisty temperament.

Arriving in upstate New York, Rizzoli and Isles find themselves dealing with another sort of inheritance: Some twelve years earlier, three members of the Saul family died within weeks of each other and two others disappeared, never to be seen again. The Sauls' daughter Lily and her cousin Dominic, Montague's son, were both adolescents at the time. Were one or both guilty of a crime in the supposed accidents and suicide twelve years before? Lily Saul, believing that she murdered Dominic after proving that he murdered her parents and brother, has kept a low profile ever since the deaths but has lately come to suspect that Dominic has come back to life and has been stalking her with murder and revenge in mind. Two of the murdered women, one in Boston and one in New York, were Lily's childhood friends. Anthony Sansone, meanwhile, manages to locate Lily in Italy, thanks to his contacts in Interpol. Back in Boston, Lily denies any knowledge of what became of her cousin; under Rizzoli's withering gaze, she eventually confesses to his murder, sending Rizzoli back to New York with Lily in tow, in search of the submerged car containing Dominic's body. The car, belonging to Lily's mother, is exactly where Lily remembered sinking it, but there is no body. Somehow, Dominic escaped and is now seeking his revenge. A final confrontation in the mountains of New Hampshire brings Lily, Rizzoli, Isles, and survivors of the Mephisto Club face to face with Dominic and his mother, who initiated him into the ancient rituals and later infiltrated the Mephisto

Club under an assumed name. As in *The Apprentice* and *Body Double*, Rizzoli brings the action to a swift, if melodramatic, conclusion with one lucky bullet.

David B. Parsell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JANE RIZZOLI AND MAURA ISLES SERIES: *The Surgeon*, 2001; *The Apprentice*, 2002; *The Sinner*, 2003; *Body Double*, 2004; *Vanish*, 2005; *The Mephisto Club*, 2006; *The Bone Garden*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Adventure's Mistress*, 1985; *Love's Masquerade*, 1986; *Call After Midnight*, 1987; *Never Say Die*, 1990; *Under the Knife*, 1990; *Whistle Blower*, 1992; *Three Complete Novels: "Presumed Guilty," "Whistleblower," "Never Say Die,"* 1992; *Presumed Guilty*, 1993; *Peggy Sue Got Murdered*, 1994; *In Their Footsteps*, 1994; *Thief of Hearts*, 1995; *Keeper of the Bride*, 1996; *Harvest*, 1996; *Life Support*, 1997; *Bloodstream*, 1998; *Gravity*, 1999; *Perfect Timing*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Heatware*, 1998 (with Barbara Delinsky and Linda Lael Miller); *Impulse: Three Complete Novels*, 1999 (with Delinsky and Linda Howard); *Something to Hide*, 1999 (with Lynn Erickson); *Take Five, Volume Four*, 2001 (with Mary Lynn Baxter and Annette Broadrick); *Unveiled*, 2002 (with Stella Cameron and Amanda Stevens); *Family Passions*, 2002 (with Delinsky and Jayne Ann Krentz); *Double Impact*, 2003 (with Debra Webb)

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WALTER B. GIBSON

Born: Germantown, Pennsylvania; September 12, 1897

Died: Kingston, New York; December 6, 1985

Also wrote as Andy Adams; Ishi Black; Harry Blackstone; Douglas Brown; C. B. Crowe; Wilber Gaston; Walter Brown Gibson; Maxwell Grant; Harry Herschfield; Maborushi Kineji; Rufus Perry; Howard Thurston

Type of plot: Master sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Shadow, 1931-1963

Norgil, 1937-1940

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE SHADOW is a mysterious figure in black, a master of illusion, whose keen mind is able to fathom the most deeply hidden secrets. A law unto himself, he heads an organization dedicated to fighting crime. His real identity is Kent Allard, flier-adventurer, but he most often appears as socialite Lamont Cranston.

NORGIL, whose real name is Loring, is a professional stage magician with a penchant for solving mysteries. Borrowing the public persona of the great figures of prestidigitation of the day, he uses his knowledge of their trade—misdirection and illusion—to find answers to problems he encounters during his performances.

CONTRIBUTION

Walter B. Gibson brought to the mystery novel a consistent sense of illusion. Misdirection is combined in a spiritual and symbolic way as well as in specific terms. Nothing is what it appears to be on the surface, and anyone can be revealed at the end as the guilty party. The greatest mystery of all, however, concerns the identity and origins of the detective himself. The mysterious cloaked avenger known as the Shadow has a dispassionate approach to crime fighting, which to him is much like an intellectual puzzle or a game of chess. Gibson works toward achieving an effect as he manipulates his audience. Each novel in the series is not merely another unit in a saga, interchangeable with its mates, but part of an evolving account of the career of the hero. The Shadow has become a symbol of what "mystery" itself should be and of that part of the story that is most fascinating because it is never solved. Even the revelations in the story "The Shadow Unmasks" did not spoil the ending.

BIOGRAPHY

Walter Brown Gibson was born on September 12, 1897, in Germantown, Pennsylvania, the son of Alfred Cornelius Gibson and May Whidden Gibson. His father was a manufacturer of gas fixtures. The name Maxwell Grant, under which Gibson created the Shadow writings, was derived from the names of two magic dealers whom he knew. Attracted to magic from childhood, Gibson published stories and puzzles at an

early age. Former President William Howard Taft praised a story for which Gibson won a literary prize, predicting that he would have a long literary career.

On being graduated from Colgate University in 1920, Gibson went to work for a Philadelphia newspaper. As a reporter, he learned to write quickly and succinctly. At the *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*, he created the first of many features for their syndicate, "After Dinner Tricks." Collaborating with noted stage magicians, Gibson produced books under their names, linking his name with those of Harry Houdini, Howard Thurston, and Harry Blackstone. His journalism and editorial experience (for Macfadden magazines) attracted publishers Street and Smith, who needed someone to write a new magazine, *The Shadow*, which they were planning. Eventually, Gibson would supply twenty-four novelettes each year.

Between 1931 and 1949, Gibson wrote 283 novelettes about the Shadow, one series about magician-detective Norgil, scripts for *Super-Magician Comics* and *Shadow Comics*, and several standard magic texts. After six years, a substitute writer was hired to supply additional Shadow material, but Gibson was the major contributor. When the magazine ceased publication, Gibson continued his career with articles for the true-crime magazines, a series of self-help books, new magic books, revisions of some of his earlier titles, comic books and newspaper strips, juvenile titles, and two novels about magician-detectives. On August 27, 1949, he married Pearl Litzka Raymond. Not the first marriage for either of them, it proved a lasting and significant collaboration. A professional magician, Litzka Gibson brought a stability and support to the somewhat nomadic life of her new husband. The majority of his books were published after their marriage. In his later years, Gibson lectured on magic and the Shadow, accepted two awards from the Academy of Magical Arts, and kept in contact with friends around the country. He died on December 6, 1985, in Kingston, New York.

ANALYSIS

Although Walter B. Gibson's the Shadow is a very unusual character, he is not a creature invented out of thin air and smoke but a combination of existing tradi-

tions within the mystery genre. The exotic atmosphere of Sax Rohmer, the avenging band of men created by Edgar Wallace, the gangsters from the early *Black Mask* school, newspaper headlines, and the hero with multiple identities (Fantomas, Frank L. Packard's Jimmie Dale, Johnston McCulley's Zorro) were all available for Gibson to draw on, even subconsciously. He once referred to the Shadow as a "benevolent Dracula." It was the idea of a shadowy avenger that was given substance by this consummate storyteller.

The Shadow series is not so much a series of unrelated mysteries with a recurring detective as it is a sequence of stories, none of which can stand completely alone without drawing the reader to its fellows, each of which contributes to an evolving story. The subject of that story is the detective, about whom there is as much mystery as can be unraveled in the plot. If the average detective story can be criticized for not having

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Walter B. Gibson's Shadow was the hero of not only a series of novels but also a long-running radio series and his own pulp magazine. (Courtesy, Condé Nast)

a solution as imaginative and spellbinding as the mystery itself, then the Shadow series avoids much of that criticism. It has been said of Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) that it is the "perfect" detective story, for, having been left unfinished, it presents no solution to spoil the mystery for the reader. With each novel in the Shadow series, the reader learns more about the mysterious avenger but not everything. New facets of the Shadow's personality are discovered without exhausting the possibilities for discovering more the next time. Even in the famous pulp magazine novelette "The Shadow Unmasks," where much is revealed, not all the questions are answered: The Shadow remains largely masked.

Despite his use of force and action, symbolized by his two .45 automatics, and his reputation as the first bringer of death in the pulp detective magazines, the Shadow is as analytical as any detective of the Golden Age, studying clues and weighing evidence before naming the guilty party. He is a law unto himself, sentencing as well as accusing, a characteristic he shares with Jimmie Dale and Wallace's Just Men; some may question his need for agents in his war on crime. In reality, the Shadow cannot be everywhere, although that is the illusion he wishes to create. Through his agents, Harry Vincent, Rutledge Mann, Burbank, Hawkeye, Moe Shrevnitz, Myra Reldon, Margo Lane, and others, he can appear to be omnipresent. They serve not only as his eyes and ears but also as "proxy-heroes" (Gibson's phrase), to whom the events of the plot happen, thus allowing the Shadow to remain offstage and even more mysterious.

What gives the stories their unique style and flavor is the continued use of motifs and references that have their basis in the lore of the stage magician. Most successful writers of detective novels tend to fill their works with information about fields that they find fascinating but seldom has there been a series that paid such loving attention to the skill of the illusionist. The Shadow possesses a bag of tricks to rival that of the Wizard of Oz. His escapes rival those of Houdini, he is a master of the trick powders that explode at the fingertips, and he can appear or vanish in smoke and flame.

The Shadow assumes several identities that allow

him to mix with suspects, different classes in society, and the police. His most ubiquitous identity is that of a wealthy globe-trotter named Lamont Cranston. (Gibson chose the name with care to suggest someone with society connections and named him for the financier Thomas Lamont and a Scottish theater owner, Baillie Cranston.) There is indeed a real Lamont Cranston, however, whose identity the Shadow merely assumes when appropriate. In "The Shadow Unmasks," the master of darkness is revealed to have a basic identity of his own beneath the assumed one of Cranston. This basic identity is a famous explorer and aviator named Kent Allard. In each instance, the other identity is someone the public recognizes so well that it is not identified with the persona of the Shadow.

The proxy-hero is not always someone close to the Shadow. Sometimes he (or she) is the unwilling victim of the criminal's schemes (like Paul Brent in "The Golden Master" or Marjorie Cragg in "Shiwan Khan Returns") with whom the reader is asked to identify. Gibson's plots resemble those found in classic Golden Age detective novels, with liberal additions of action and adventure. At their base is a solid mystery that is introduced in the first chapter: Who is the mysterious figure threatening the life of the heroine? What has happened to the famous jewels? Who is killing the wealthy businessmen in town? Why can the hero not remember what happened to him last week? The mystery is fairly clued and the solution fairly revealed. Often the villain and his gang are professional criminals, with the master villain equal in ability to the master of darkness.

Gibson uses all the skill of the professional illusionist to keep the reader wondering about the identity of the villain and his motive. Some of the mystification involves the Shadow's ability to blend into the shadows in his black cloak and slouch hat, seeming to be invisible. In other versions of the Shadow stories (radio or comic books), that is accomplished through hypnosis alone. In Gibson's stories, it is accomplished by the black art illusion that takes advantage of the fact that a dark object cannot be seen against a black background. The Shadow's true identity is known to no one in the series, not even his agents. The police suspect him of being a criminal at best or a myth at worst until Inspector Cardona comes to realize that there really is

a mysterious avenger known as the Shadow. It takes much longer for Commissioner Weston to come to that conclusion.

The stories are set all over the globe but primarily in New York City and the New Jersey countryside. A downtown club, the Cobalt Club, serves as a place where Lamont Cranston can hold conversations with the police commissioner, while a waterfront bar known as the Black Ship is the appropriate meeting place for gangland citizens. A few settings made familiar to the reader assist in keeping the stories credible by providing solid points of reference. Gibson explained his theories for detective fiction in several interviews toward the end of his life, but his earliest declaration in print was in an article in *Writer's Digest* in 1941. The Shadow, he explained, was in the crime-fighting game for his own amusement and thus the reader's entertainment. He enjoyed solving the problems of other characters and sorting out the major mystery that involved the main, or proxy, hero.

THE LIVING SHADOW

All the mystery-story elements peculiar to the Shadow series did not, however, arrive fully grown to Gibson at once. More than any other detective series, the Shadow stories evolved into their familiar pattern. Much of that pattern can be seen developing in the first three novelettes of the series, *The Living Shadow* (1931), *The Eyes of the Shadow* (1931), and *The Shadow Laughs!* (1931). The first is the story of Harry Vincent as he undertakes his first assignment for the Shadow. Until he met the Shadow, who saved him from a suicide attempt, his life seemed to have no purpose. Harry's story is that of all the Shadow's agents: They owe everything to the Shadow and never forget it. What will the Shadow do with an agent's life? The answer is that he will improve it, risk it, or perhaps lose it. In exchange for restoring Harry Vincent to life, the Shadow demands absolute obedience.

Harry does not solve the mystery of the Shadow, but he does succeed in discovering who killed Gregory Laidlow. There is a second plot concerning stolen jewels and criminal doings in Chinatown, a favorite setting in the series. Alternating between plots, both major and secondary, was a Gibson trademark.

THE EYES OF THE SHADOW AND THE SHADOW LAUGHS!

Not until the second novelette, *The Eyes of the Shadow*, does the reader meet Lamont Cranston and suspect that he and the Shadow share identities. When both are wounded, Cranston takes to his bed and the Shadow disappears, leaving the field to his agents. Having established Cranston as the Shadow's alter ego, Gibson pulled quite a different rabbit from his hat in the third novelette, *The Shadow Laughs!* Claude Fellows, one of the Shadow's own agents, thinks he has discovered that his master and Cranston are one and the same. He then has a conversation with Cranston in which the traveler claims to have been out of the country at the time of the events of *The Eyes of the Shadow*. Fellows's confusion is nothing compared with that of Cranston himself when he discovers his identical twin facing him. The reader learns that the Shadow is a distinct entity with an identity that remains unrevealed. Gibson was able to retain the essential secret of his mystery man for six years until revealing it in "The Shadow Unmasks." Wisely, he kept some of his cards up his sleeve, for the events in that story do not explain all the secrets.

NORGIL SERIES

In the late 1930's, Gibson wrote twenty-three short stories about his magician-detective, Norgil. Where the Shadow was a blending of mystery with magical additives, the Norgil stories place the emphasis on the magician's profession. Intended by their author to reflect the public lives of many of the great magicians of the golden age of magic, the episodes in Norgil's career take him into a position of solving "impossible crimes." Suave and mustached, Norgil is neither as flamboyantly exotic as the Shadow nor as fully developed as a character. The individual stories are like the events pictured on a circus poster, each designed to draw the crowd into the tent. Not as well known as the Shadow stories, the Norgil series is the unfinished sonata in Gibson's repertoire. Norgil emulates most of the great magicians of the golden age but was not allowed time to complete the cycle. (He never takes his show overseas like Houdini or Raymond.) The reader learns that Loring (Norgil's real last name) is an anagram for Norgil, but in an unwritten twenty-fourth

story, readers were to have been told that his full name was W. Bates Loring, which is an anagram for Walter B. Gibson. The author was a puzzlemaker to the end.

Gibson created a series of mystery novels that epitomized the very meaning of mystery and a character, the Shadow, who is better remembered than any of the individual adventures in which he appeared. The Shadow shares a rung on the ladder of popular culture with figures such as Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes.

J. Randolph Cox

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE SHADOW SERIES (AS GRANT): 1931-1933 • *The Living Shadow*, 1931; *The Eyes of the Shadow*, 1931; *The Shadow Laughs!*, 1931; *The Red Menace*, 1931; *Gangdom's Doom*, 1931; *The Death Tower*, 1932; *The Silent Seven*, 1932; *The Black Master*, 1932; *Mobsmen on the Spot*, 1932; *Hands in the Dark*, 1932; *Double Z*, 1932; *The Crime Cult*, 1932; *The Blackmail Ring*, 1932; *Hidden Death*, 1932; *Green Eyes*, 1932; *The Ghost Makers*, 1932; *The Five Chameleons*, 1932; *Dead Men Live*, 1932; *The Romanoff Jewels*, 1932; *Kings of Crime*, 1933; *Shadowed Millions*, 1933; *The Creeping Death*, 1933; *The Shadow's Shadow*, 1933; *Six Men of Evil*, 1933; *Fingers of Death*, 1933; *Murder Trail*, 1933; *The Silent Death*, 1933; *The Shadow's Justice*, 1933; *The Golden Grotto*, 1933; *The Death Giver*, 1933; *The Red Blot*, 1933; *The Ghost of the Manor*, 1933; *The Living Joss*, 1933; *The Silver Scourge*, 1933; *The Black Hush*, 1933; *The Isle of Doubt*, 1933; *The Grove of Doom*, 1933; *Master of Death*, 1933; *Road of Crime*, 1933; *The Death Triangle*, 1933; *The Killer*, 1933; *Mox*, 1933; *The Crime Clinic*, 1933; *Treasures of Death*, 1933

1934-1935 • *The Embassy Murders*, 1934; *The Wealth Seeker*, 1934; *The Black Falcon*, 1934; *Gray Fist*, 1934; *The Circle of Death*, 1934; *The Green Box*, 1934; *The Cobra*, 1934; *Crime Circus*, 1934; *Tower of Death*, 1934; *Death Clew*, 1934; *The Key*, 1934; *The Crime Crypt*, 1934; *Charg, Monster*, 1934; *Chain of Death*, 1934; *The Crime Master*, 1934; *Gypsy Vengeance*, 1934; *Spoils of the Shadow*, 1934; *The Garau-can Swindle*, 1934; *Murder Marsh*, 1934; *The Death Sleep*, 1934; *The Chinese Disks*, 1934; *Doom on the Hill*, 1934; *The Unseen Killer*, 1934; *Cyro*, 1934; *The*

Four Signets, 1935; *The Blue Sphinx*, 1935; *The Plot Master*, 1935; *The Dark Death*, 1935; *Crooks Go Straight*, 1935; *Bells of Doom*, 1935; *Lingo*, 1935; *The Triple Trail*, 1935; *The Golden Quest*, 1935; *The Third Skull*, 1935; *Murder Every Hour*, 1935; *The Condor*, 1935; *The Fate Joss*, 1935; *Atoms of Death*, 1935; *The Man from Scotland Yard*, 1935; *The Creeper*, 1935; *The Mardi Gras Mystery*, 1935; *The London Crimes*, 1935; *The Ribbon Clues*, 1935; *The House That Vanished*, 1935; *The Chinese Tapestry*, 1935; *The Python*, 1935; *Zemba*, 1935; *The Case of Congressman Coyd*, 1935

1936-1937 • *The Ghost Murders*, 1936; *Castle of Doom*, 1936; *Death Rides the Skyway*, 1936; *The North Woods Mystery*, 1936; *The Voodoo Master*, 1936; *The Third Shadow*, 1936; *The Salamanders*, 1936; *The Man from Shanghai*, 1936; *The Gray Ghost*, 1936; *The City of Doom*, 1936; *The Crime Oracle*, 1936; *Murder Town*, 1936; *The Yellow Door*, 1936; *The Broken Napoleons*, 1936; *The Sledge Hammer Crimes*, 1936; *Terror Island*, 1936; *The Golden Masks*, 1936; *Jimbaro Death*, 1936; *City of Crime*, 1936; *Death by Proxy*, 1936; *The Strange Disappearance of Joe Cardona*, 1936; *The Seven Drops of Blood*, 1936; *Intimidation, Inc.*, 1936; *Vengeance Is Mine*, 1937; *Loot of Death*, 1937; *Quetzal*, 1937; *Death Token*, 1937; *Murder House*, 1937; *Washington Crime*, 1937; *The Masked Headsman*, 1937; *Treasure Trail*, 1937; *Brothers of Doom*, 1937; *The Shadow's Rival*, 1937; *Crime, Insured*, 1937; *House of Silence*, 1937; *The Shadow Unmasks*, 1937; *The Yellow Band*, 1937; *Buried Evidence*, 1937; *The Radium Murders*, 1937; *The Keeper's Gold*, 1937; *Death Turrets*, 1937; *Teeth of the Dragon*, 1937; *The Sealed Box*, 1937; *Racket Town*, 1937

1938-1939 • *The Crystal Buddha*, 1938; *Hills of Death*, 1938; *The Murder Master*, 1938; *The Golden Pagoda*, 1938; *Face of Doom*, 1938; *Serpents of Siva*, 1938; *Cards of Death*, 1938; *The Hand*, 1938; *Voodoo Trail*, 1938; *The Racket's King*, 1938; *Murder for Sale*, 1938; *Death Jewels*, 1938; *The Green Hoods*, 1938; *Crime over Boston*, 1938; *The Dead Who Lived*, 1938; *Vanished Treasure*, 1938; *The Voice*, 1938; *Chicago Crime*, 1938; *Shadow over Alcatraz*, 1938; *Silver Skull*, 1939; *Crime Rides the Sea*, 1939; *Realm of Doom*, 1939; *The Lone Tiger*, 1939; *The Vin-*

indicator, 1939; *Death Ship*, 1939; *Battle of Greed*, 1939; *The Three Brothers*, 1939; *Smugglers of Death*, 1939; *City of Shadows*, 1939; *Death from Nowhere*, 1939; *Isle of Gold*, 1939; *Wizard of Crime*, 1939; *The Crime Ray*, 1939; *The Golden Master*, 1939; *Castle of Crime*, 1939; *The Masked Lady*, 1939; *Ships of Doom*, 1939; *City of Ghosts*, 1939; *Shiwan Kahn Returns*, 1939; *House of Shadows*, 1939

1940-1941 • *Death Premium*, 1940; *The Hooded Circle*, 1940; *The Getaway Ring*, 1940; *Voice of Death*, 1940; *The Invincible Shiwan Khan*, 1940; *The Veiled Prophet*, 1940; *The Spy Ring*, 1940; *Death in the Stars*, 1940; *Masters of Death*, 1940; *The Scent of Death*, 1940; "Q", 1940; *Gems of Doom*, 1940; *Crime at Seven Oaks*, 1940; *The Fifth Face*, 1940; *Crime Country*, 1940; *The Wasp*, 1940; *Crime over Miami*, 1940; *Xitli, God of Fire*, 1940; *The Shadow, the Hawk, and the Skull*, 1940; *The Shadow and the Voice of Murder*, 1940; *Forgotten Gold*, 1941; *The Wasp Returns*, 1941; *The Chinese Primrose*, 1941; *Mansion of Crime*, 1941; *The Time Master*, 1941; *The House on the Ledge*, 1941; *The League of Death*, 1941; *Crime Under Cover*, 1941; *The Thunder King*, 1941; *The Star of Delhi*, 1941; *The Blur*, 1941; *The Shadow Meets the Mask*, 1941; *The Devil-Master*, 1941; *Garden of Death*, 1941; *Dictator of Crime*, 1941; *The Blackmail King*, 1941; *Temple of Crime*, 1941; *Murder Mansion*, 1941; *Crime's Stronghold*, 1941

1942-1943 • *Alibi Trail*, 1942; *The Book of Death*, 1942; *Death Diamonds*, 1942; *Vengeance Bay*, 1942; *Formula for Crime*, 1942; *Room of Doom*, 1942; *The Jade Dragon*, 1942; *The Northdale Mystery*, 1942; *Twins of Crime*, 1942; *The Devil's Feud*, 1942; *Five Ivory Boxes*, 1942; *Death About Town*, 1942; *Legacy of Death*, 1942; *Judge Lawless*, 1942; *The Vampire Murders*, 1942; *Clue for Clue*, 1942; *Trail of Vengeance*, 1942; *The Murdering Ghost*, 1942; *The Hydra*, 1942; *The Money Master*, 1942; *The Shadow Annual*, 1942; *The Museum Murders*, 1943; *Death's Masquerade*, 1943; *The Devil Monsters*, 1943; *Wizard of Crime*, 1943; *The Black Dragon*, 1943; *The Robot Master*, 1943; *Murder Lake*, 1943; *Messenger of Death*, 1943; *House of Ghosts*, 1943; *King of the Black Market*, 1943; *The Muggers*, 1943; *Murder by Moonlight*, 1943; *The Shadow Annual*, 1943

1944-1945 • *The Crystal Skull*, 1944; *Syndicate of Death*, 1944; *The Toll of Death*, 1944; *Crime Caravan*, 1944; *The Freak Show Murders*, 1944; *Voodoo Death*, 1944; *Town of Hate*, 1944; *Death in the Crystal*, 1944; *The Chest of Chu-Chan*, 1944; *Fountain of Death*, 1944; *No Time for Murder*, 1944; *Guardians of Death*, 1945; *Marry Mrs. MacBeth*, 1945; *Five Keys to Crime*, 1945; *Death Has Gray Eyes*, 1945; *Tear-drops of Buddha*, 1945; *Three Stamps of Death*, 1945; *The Mask of Mephisto*, 1945; *Murder by Magic*, 1945; *The Taiwan Joss*, 1945; *A Quarter of Eight*, 1945; *The White Skulls*, 1945; *The Stars Promise Death*, 1945

1946-1949 • *The Banshee Murders*, 1946; *Crime Out of Mind*, 1946; *The Mother Goose Murders*, 1946; *Crime over Casco*, 1946; *The Curse of Thoth*, 1946; *Malmordo*, 1946; *The Shadow Annual*, 1947; *Jade Dragon*, 1949; *Dead Man's Chest*, 1949; *The Magical's Mystery*, 1949; *The Black Circle*, 1949; *The Whispering Eyes*, 1949

1963-1979 • *Return of the Shadow*, 1963; *The Weird Adventures of the Shadow*, 1966; *The Shadow Scrapbook*, 1979

NORGIL SERIES: *Norgil the Magician*, 1977; *Norgil: More Tales of Prestidigitaction*, 1979

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Blonde for Murder*, 1948; *Looks That Kill*, 1948; *Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone,"* 1963 (adapted by Gibson); *The Twilight Zone Revisited*, 1964 (adapted by Gibson); *Attic Revivals Presents Walter Gibson's Magicians*, 1982

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Sin of Harold Diddlebock*, 1947 (as Hershfield); *Anne Bonny, Pirate Queen: The True Saga of a Fabulous Female Buccaneer*, 1962 (as Brown)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Brazilian Gold Mine Mystery*, 1960 (as Adams); *Mystery of the Mexican Treasure*, 1961 (as Adams); *Mystery of the Ambush in India*, 1962 (as Adams); *Egyptian Scarab Mystery*, 1963 (as Adams); *The Brass Idol Mystery*, 1964 (ghostwritten for Helen Wells); *Monsters: Three Famous Spine-Tingling Tales*, 1965 (as Walter Brown Gibson); *Mystery of the Alpine Pass*, 1965 (as Adams); *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.: The Coin of El Diablo Affair*, 1965 (as Walter Brown Gibson)

NONFICTION: 1921-1930 • *After Dinner Tricks*, 1921; *Practical Card Tricks*, 1921; *200 Tricks You Can Do*, 1926; *Money Magic*, 1926; *Popular Card Tricks*, 1926; *Twenty New Practical Card Tricks*, 1926; *200 More Tricks You Can Do*, 1927; *Book of Magic*, 1927; *First Principles of Astrology*, 1927 (as Gaston); *Houdini's Book of Magic and Party Pastimes*, 1927 (as Walter Brown Gibson with Henry Houdini); *The Book of Secrets, Miracles Ancient and Modern, with Added Chapters on Easy Magic You Can Do*, 1927; *The Bunco Book*, 1927; *The Magic Square: Tells Your Past—Present—Future*, 1927; *The Science of Numerology: What Numbers Mean to You*, 1927; *The World's Best Book of Magic*, 1927; *Two Dozen Effective Practical Card Tricks*, 1927; *Fooling the World*, 1928; *Sixteen Master Card Mysteries*, 1928; *The Thurston Magic Lessons*, 1928; *Blackstone's Annual of Magic*, 1929; *Blackstone's Secrets of Magic*, 1929; *Blackstone's Tricks and Entertainments*, 1929; *My Life of Magic*, 1929 (ghostwritten for Howard Thurston); *Blackstone's Magic: A Book of Mystery*, 1930; *Brain Tests: Or, Your Brains, If Any*, 1930; *Facts About Brunettes and Blondes*, 1930 (ghostwritten for Alfred F. Seward); *Houdini's Escapes*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Blackstone's Modern Card Tricks*, 1932; *Houdini's Magic*, 1932; *Magic Made Easy: More than Two Hundred Mystifying Feats*, 1932; *Periodicity, the Absolute Law of the Universe*, 1932 (ghostwritten for A. F. Seward); *Magician's Manual*, 1933; *Inside the Medium's Cabinet*, 1935 (ghostwritten for Joseph Dunninger); *How to Make a Ghost Walk*, 1936 (ghostwritten for Dunninger); *The New Magician's Manual*, 1936

1941-1950 • *Complete Magic Show*, 1941; *What's on Your Mind?*, 1944 (ghostwritten for Dunninger); *Blackstone, World's Super Magician: Souvenir Program and Illustrated Trick Book*, 1945; *Secrets of Magic*, 1945; *Blackstone the Magic Detective Reveals Magic Tricks Everyone Can Do*, 1946; *The Dead Do Not Talk*, 1946 (ghostwritten for Julian J. Prostauer); *Blackstone's Tricks Anyone Can Do*, 1948; *Professional Magic for Amateurs*, 1948; *Magic Explained*, 1949

1951-1960 • *Houdini on Magic*, 1953; *Fun with Optical Illusions*, 1956; *Fun with Stunts, Tricks, and*

Skits, 1956; *Magic for Fun*, 1956; *The Book of the Presidents of the United States*, 1956; *The Key to Hypnotism*, 1956; *What's New in Magic?*, 1956; *How to Play Poker and Win*, 1957; *How to Play the Horses and Win*, 1957; *How to Play the Trotters and Win*, 1957; *How to Spot Card Sharps and Their Methods*, 1957; *How to Win at Pinochle and Other Games*, 1957; *How to Win with Racing Numerology*, 1957; *Secrets of My Million Dollar Memory*, 1957 (ghostwritten for Theodore Nadler); *Sidney H. Radner on Dice*, 1957 (ghostwritten for Sidney H. Radner); *How to Win at Roulette and Other Casino Games*, 1958 (ghostwritten for Radner); *The Key to Astronomy*, 1958; *The Key to Camplife*, 1958; *The Key to Judo and Jujitsu*, 1958 (as Black); *The Key to Space Travel*, 1958; *The Key to Yoga*, 1958; *The Key to Astrology*, 1959; *The Key to Better Bowling*, 1959 (as Perry); *The Key to Better Memory*, 1959 (ghostwritten for Andrew Abbott); *The Key to Character Reading*, 1959 (ghostwritten for Abbott); *The Key to Chess Simplified*, 1959 (ghostwritten for Roy Masters); *The Key to Knots and Splices*, 1959 (ghostwritten for Walter Glass)

1961-1965 • *Fell's Official Guide to Knots and How to Tie Them*, 1961; *Houdini's Fabulous Magic*, 1961 (with Morris N. Young); *Hypnotism Through the Ages*, 1961; *Judo: Attack and Defense*, 1961; *Radner on Bridge*, 1961 (ghostwritten for Radner); *Radner on Canasta, Including Samba, Bolivia, Calypso, and Other Games*, 1961 (ghostwritten for Radner); *Science and Mechanics Magic Handbook*, 1962 Edition, 1961 (ghostwritten for Abbott); *How to Develop an Exceptional Memory*, 1962 (ghostwritten for Morris N. Young); *Fell's Guide to Papercraft Tricks, Games, Puzzles*, 1963; *Hoyle's Simplified Guide to the Popular Card Games*, 1963; *Magic Made Simple*, 1963 (also known as *Junior Magic*); *Famous Lands and People Fun and Activity Book*, 1964; *Fifty States Fun and Activity Book*, 1964; *How to Win at Solitaire*, 1964; *Hoyle Card Games: Reference Crammer*, 1964; *Puzzles and Pastimes Fun and Activity Book*, 1964; *World Wide Fun and Activity Book*, 1964; *Year-Round Fun and Activity Book*, 1964; *How to Read Faster and Remember More*, 1965 (with Morris N. Young); *Psychic and Other ESP Party Games*, 1965 (ghostwritten

for David Hoy); *Space and Science Fun and Activity Book*, 1965; *The Fine Art of Murder*, 1965; *The Fine Art of Spying*, 1965

1966-1970 • *How to Bet the Harness Races*, 1966; *The Complete Illustrated Book of the Psychic Sciences*, 1966 (with Litzka R. Gibson); *The Fine Art of Robbery*, 1966; *The Fine Art of Swindling*, 1966; *The Key to Solitaire*, 1966 (as Douglas Brown); *The Master Magicians: Their Lives and Most Famous Tricks*, 1966; *Secrets of Magic, Ancient and Modern*, 1967 (also known as *Secrets of the Great Magicians*); *Winning the \$2 Bet*, 1967; *Magic with Science*, 1968; *The Key to Hoyle's Games*, 1968 (ghostwritten for Edmond Hoyle); *Dreams*, 1969; *Mystic and Occult Arts: A Guide to Their Use in Daily Living*, 1969 (with Litzka R. Gibson); *The Complete Illustrated Book of Card Magic*, 1969; *Family Games America Plays*, 1970; *Hypnotism*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The Magic of a Mighty Memory*, 1971 (with Chesley V. Young); *What Are the Odds?*, 1972; *The Complete Illustrated Book of Divination and Prophecy*, 1973 (with Litzka R. Gibson; also known as *The Encyclopedia of Prophecy*); *Witchcraft*, 1973; *Backgammon: The Way to Play and Win*, 1974; *Dunninger's Secrets*, 1974 (ghostwritten for Dunninger); *Fell's Guide to Winning Backgammon*, 1974 (also known as *How to Win at Backgammon*); *Hoyle's Modern Encyclopedia of Card Games*, 1974; *Pinochle Is the Name of the Game*, 1974; *Poker Is the Name of the Game*, 1974; *Mark Wilson Course in Magic*, 1975 (ghostwritten for Mark Wilson); *Card Magic Made Easy*, 1976; *Fell's Beginner's Guide to Magic*, 1976; *The Original Houdini Scrapbook*, 1976; *Walter Gibson's Encyclopedia of Magic and Conjuring*, 1976; *Kreskin's Mind Power Book*, 1977 (ghostwritten for Kreskin); *The Complete Illustrated Book*

of Close-Up Magic, 1980; *Walter Gibson's Big Book of Magic for All Ages*, 1980

EDITED TEXTS: *Houdini on Magic*, 1953; *The Fine Art of Murder*, 1965; *Rogue's Gallery: A Variety of Mystery Stories*, 1969; *The Original Houdini Scrapbook*, 1976; *The Shadow Scrapbook*, 1979

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- Hutchison, Don. *The Great Pulp Heroes*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Mosaic Press, 1996. The Shadow is compared with his equally famous codenizens of the pulps, including Doc Savage, Tarzan, and Zorro.
- Montgomery, George. *The Shadow Knew*. Clarence Center, N.Y.: Textile Bridge Press, 1989. Short pamphlet covering the biography and career of Walter B. Gibson and discussing his influence on Jack Kerouac.
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ANTHONY GILBERT

Lucy Beatrice Malleon

Born: London, England; February 15, 1899

Died: London, England; December 9, 1973

Also wrote as Lucy Egerton; Sylvia Denys Hooke; J. Kilmeny Keith; Anne Meredith

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Arthur Crook, 1936-1974

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

ARTHUR CROOK is Cockney in origin and a lawyer by training. Of indeterminate age, Crook remains unchanged throughout the series. He often functions as his own investigator, and his success arises from his quick wits and his encyclopedic knowledge of lower-class London. Rotund, slangy, reassuring, he arouses affection and trust in his clients.

CONTRIBUTION

In the Arthur Crook novels, Anthony Gilbert (Lucy Beatrice Malleon) develops a protagonist very different from the fashionable detective favored by her contemporaries. Tough and resourceful but lacking the elegance of Dorothy L. Sayers's or Ngaio Marsh's heroes, Crook has the earthy vitality of a Charles Dickens character, and he remains essentially himself, despite whatever complicated action swirls around him. The Crook novels move rapidly and present a vivid and recognizable picture of everyday London life. The characters, especially the minor ones, are sketched with quick, sure strokes, and they arouse the reader's sympathetic interest. Gilbert's plots are ingenious and complex; she avoids involvement with legal intricacies but presents clues fairly. Although the volume of her production makes uneven workmanship inevitable, the best of the Arthur Crook novels are entertaining, carefully crafted, and satisfying in their mixture of action and humor.

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Gilbert was one of four pseudonyms adopted by Lucy Beatrice Malleon, born in Upper

Norwood, a suburb of London, on February 15, 1899. Her father was a stockbroker, and she was educated at St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith. During World War I, Malleon's father lost his position, and although her mother urged her to train as a teacher, Malleon learned typing and shorthand so that she could earn an immediate income for the family. From the age of seventeen onward, she wrote verse and short pieces for *Punch* and various literary weeklies. During her early years as a secretary, she began to produce novels. In 1922, after attending a performance of John Willard's theatrical hit *The Cat and the Canary*, she tried her hand at detective fiction but had no success until her first Anthony Gilbert book, *The Tragedy at Freyne* (1927), was published.

During her long career, Malleon wrote approximately seventy detective novels under the pen name of Anthony Gilbert; those books after 1936 center on the unconventional lawyer-detective Arthur Crook. In 1934, however, Malleon began, under the pseudonym Anne Meredith, a series of inverted detective stories, in which the identity of the murderer is known from the outset. In 1940, she published her only nonfictional work, an autobiography entitled *Three-a-Penny*, under the Meredith name. She valued her privacy and for many years successfully concealed her identity as the writer of the Gilbert novels. She continued to write radio plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation and published two nondetective books under the additional pseudonyms of Lucy Egerton and J. Kilmeny Keith.

During World War II, Malleon employed her secretarial skills in posts with the Red Cross, the Ministry of Food, and the Coal Association. She never married, and she listed her recreations as reading, theatergoing, and travel. Until the end of her life, she remained a resident of London, extending her familiarity with those small details of metropolitan life that contribute to the liveliness and immediacy of her novels. She died in London on December 9, 1973.

ANALYSIS

Lucy Beatrice Malleson began her career with a traditional novel that failed to find a publisher, and she was equally unsuccessful with her first crime novel. Assuming that publishers retained a lingering prejudice against female authors of thrillers, she submitted her next manuscript as Anthony Gilbert. This book, *The Tragedy at Freyne*, received enthusiastic reviews and was favorably compared to E. C. Bentley's classic novel *Trent's Last Case* (1913, revised 1929).

Encouraged, Gilbert rapidly produced a spate of mystery novels—ten with Scott Egerton, an ambitious young politician, as detective, and two with a French sleuth, M. Dupuy. Although clearly apprentice work, they reveal Gilbert's talent for rapid action and complex plots. It was not until the appearance of Arthur Crook in *Murder by Experts* (1936), however, that Gilbert achieved a popular success.

All subsequent books by Anthony Gilbert center on Arthur Crook, a raffish and bibulous Cockney solicitor who is the antithesis of aristocratic intellectuals such as Lord Peter Wimsey and Roderick Alleyn. Most of the novels concern some unworldly individual, often a young woman, who becomes trapped in a tangle of events involving serious crime, usually murder. Crook begins with the proposition "My clients are always innocent," and he sets about proving his claim by hard work, a well-honed intuition, and an airy disregard for legal protocol. Optimistic and energetic, he functions more as honorary uncle and rescuer than as counsel for the defense.

In his view of crime, Crook is largely pragmatic, and he is not given to speculation on the psychology of wrongdoers. He supports the theory of the "invisible witness," that unobserved, ordinary person who has happened to notice a vital clue. He uses this insight to trace the actual murderer, believing that an innocent victim requires not merely acquittal but complete vindication as well. Pleased to be known as "The Criminals' Hope and the Judges' Despair," he never accepts as a client anyone he knows to be guilty as charged.

Crook's methods are as practical as his philosophy. Often, he acts as his own sleuth, but on occasion he employs assistants, both amateur and professional; chiefly he depends on his subordinate, Bill Parsons, a

former prisoner. His rough-and-ready methods inevitably lead his more conventional colleagues to consider him a disgrace to the profession.

Whatever his fellow lawyers may think of him, Crook shows exemplary devotion to his calling. A bachelor, he appears to have no living relatives and few interests outside his work. He does not write poetry, play cricket, or collect rare prints. His principal recreation is imbibing beer; much of his basic research involves listening and observing in some shabby London pub. His only other enthusiasm seems to be motoring; he drives a venerable but well-maintained Rolls Royce. Always dressed in a shiny brown suit of conspicuous inelegance, he addresses most women as "Sugar." His speech is a mixture of Cockney slang and odd quotations from the Bible and the works of William Shakespeare, Robert Browning, and other familiar poets.

NO DUST IN THE ATTIC

The widely reprinted *No Dust in the Attic* (1962) shows Gilbert at the top of her form. The heroine, Janice Grey, is appealing and resourceful. After a hasty marriage to charming Patrick Wylie, she discovers that he is a minor member of a gang of jewel thieves. In attempting to run away from him, she attracts the attention of the gang, which pursues her through several seedy London suburbs. Despite her best efforts, chance favors her adversaries, and Crook's special talents are required to save her and disprove a murder charge against her faithful suitor, Frank James, who has tried to follow her trail.

No Dust in the Attic effectively displays Gilbert's skill with minor characters. The reader meets a wide range of London types: a crusty pensioner who is nearly run down in a crosswalk; Miss Dina Plantagenet, a minor actress with expensive tastes and generous admirers; Edgar Barrett, a henpecked civil servant who finds Patrick Wylie's wallet; Mr. Proudie, the fussy and suspicious owner of an antique shop; and various denizens of disreputable London bars.

Gilbert's fast-paced and dovetailed plot structure are shown to advantage here. The analytical reader will notice that clues are fairly presented and the action is worked out according to a careful timetable. Crook's deductions, though as usual aided by luck, de-

rive from his observation of minor detail. Although he is, somewhat atypically, cooperating with the metropolitan police in the search for Janice, he plays a lone hand in his attempts to clear her suitor, who has been accused of murdering Miss Plantagenet, the owner of the car used to abduct Janice. After his reliable intuition tells him that Frank is innocent, Crook starts digging into the background of the deceased woman to find out who inherits her automobile. By a series of logical steps, he uncovers a vital clue that reveals the identity of the mastermind behind the gang.

Although Crook is not in the tradition of detective as superhuman intellect, he is shrewd and aware of the implications of trivial events. Near the end of *No Dust in the Attic*, he receives a phone call from a distraught young woman who says that she is Janice Grey and that she has just escaped from her attic room. Crook immediately asks her for the number on the telephone she is using. Her reply not only leads him to the house where Janice has been imprisoned but also furnishes him with a clue about her captors:

Janice Grey couldn't have done it, she didn't know my number, and, bein' forty miles out of London, it wouldn't have been in the local directory. And if you think a girl who's trying to make her getaway is goin' to stop and dial DIR to get my number.

The style of *No Dust in the Attic* shows Gilbert's particular virtues to good advantage. The narrative moves along rapidly, with relatively simple language and sentence structure, but the reader is rewarded with crisp, vivid descriptions and frequent flashes of humor. Early in the book, a censorious single woman witnesses Crook's first intervention in Janice's affairs:

A lady emerged coyly from what she always referred to as the smallest room. What she saw horrified her, a creature like an ape in trousers and the reddest head she'd ever beheld, clutching a girl who didn't seem to be putting up any resistance.

In other passages, Crook is compared to "a red grizzly bear" and "an orangutan." His own conversation is full of picturesque figures of speech, as when he envisions the embarrassment of Scotland Yard over Janice's kidnapping: "Not that they ain't all colours of a mandrill's

behind as it is." Gilbert's humor is sometimes sly and self-deprecating; for example, about the missing heroine, Crook reflects,

"She's like these lady writers," Crook complained. "So many monikers. Janice Grey, Jane Graham, Mrs. Patrick Wylie—and for all you and me know, she's calling herself something else by this time."

No Dust in the Attic concludes, not unexpectedly, with Crook's roundup of the criminals and a happy ending for Janice and Frank. Always the realist, Crook disclaims any idea of himself as "Justice holding the scales." Talking with Bill Parsons, he speculates on the fate of the principal villain:

You'll see, he'll have an alibi for the night Routh was killed. . . . If you can prove you weren't even there, even though you were the mind behind the machine—well, a nice crooked lawyer like Penrose could probably swing it.

In the Crook series, Gilbert created a new and immensely popular kind of detective, part music-hall Cockney and part protective father figure. She sustains the narrative with an intricate plot, a brisk, humorous style, and memorable portraits of ordinary people. Always in tune with her readers' interests, she leaves them with a sharply etched impression of that unlikely knight-errant, Arthur Crook, and a renewed faith in the triumph of a favorite British virtue, fair play.

Jeanne B. Elliott

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SCOTT EGERTON SERIES: *The Tragedy at Freyne*, 1927; *The Murder of Mrs. Davenport*, 1928; *Death at Four Corners*, 1929; *The Mystery of the Open Window*, 1929; *The Night of the Fog*, 1930; *The Case Against Andrew Fane*, 1931; *The Body on the Beam: A Detective Story*, 1932; *The Long Shadow*, 1932; *Death in Fancy Dress*, 1933; *The Musical Comedy Crime*, 1933; *An Old Lady Dies*, 1934; *The Man Who Was Too Clever*, 1935

M. DUPUY SERIES: *The Man in Button Boots*, 1934; *Courtier to Death*, 1936 (also known as *The Dover Train Mystery*)

ARTHUR CROOK SERIES: 1936-1940 • *Murder by*

Experts, 1936; *Murder Has No Tongue*, 1937; *The Man Who Wasn't There*, 1937; *Treason in My Breast*, 1938; *The Bell of Death*, 1939; *The Clock in the Hat Box*, 1939; *Dear Dead Woman*, 1940 (also known as *Death Takes a Redhead*)

1941-1950 • *The Vanishing Corpse*, 1941 (also known as *She Vanished at Dawn*); *The Woman in Red*, 1941 (also known as *The Mystery of the Woman in Red*); *Something Nasty in the Woodshed*, 1942 (also known as *Mystery in the Woodshed*); *The Case of the Tea-Cosy's Aunt*, 1942 (also known as *Death in the Blackout*); *The Mouse Who Wouldn't Play Ball*, 1943 (also known as *Thirty Days to Live*); *A Spy for Mr. Crook*, 1944; *He Came by Night*, 1944 (also known as *Death at the Door*); *The Scarlet Button*, 1944 (also known as *Murder Is Cheap*); *Don't Open the Door!*, 1945 (also known as *Death Lifts the Latch*); *The Black Stage*, 1945 (also known as *Murder Cheats the Bride*); *The Spinster's Secret*, 1946 (also known as *By Hook or by Crook*); *Death in the Wrong Room*, 1947; *Die in the Dark*, 1947 (also known as *The Missing Widow*); *Lift Up the Lid*, 1948 (also known as *The Innocent Bottle*); *Death Knocks Three Times*, 1949; *A Nice Cup of Tea*, 1950 (also known as *The Wrong Body*); *Murder Comes Home*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Lady-Killer*, 1951; *Miss Pinnegar Disappears*, 1952 (also known as *A Case for Mr. Crook*); *Footsteps Behind Me*, 1953 (also known as *Black Death* and *Dark Death*); *Snake in the Grass*, 1954 (also known as *Death Won't Wait*); *A Question of Murder*, 1955 (also known as *Is She Dead Too?*); *And Death Came Too*, 1956; *Riddle of a Lady*, 1956; *Give Death a Name*, 1957; *Death Against the Clock*, 1958; *Death Takes a Wife*, 1959 (also known as *Death Casts a Long Shadow*); *Third Crime Lucky*, 1959 (also known as *Prelude to Murder*); *Out for the Kill*, 1960

1961-1974 • *She Shall Die*, 1961 (also known as *After the Verdict*); *Uncertain Death*, 1961; *No Dust in the Attic*, 1962; *Up Goes the Donkey*, 1962; *Ring for a Noose*, 1963; *Knock, Knock, Who's There?*, 1964 (also known as *The Voice*); *The Fingerprint*, 1964; *Passenger to Nowhere*, 1965; *The Looking Glass Murder*, 1966; *The Visitor*, 1967; *Night Encounter*, 1968 (also known as *Murder Anonymous*); *Missing from Her Home*, 1969; *Death Wears a Mask*, 1970

(also known as *Mr. Crook Lifts the Mask*); *Tenant for the Tomb*, 1971; *Murder's a Waiting Game*, 1972; *A Nice Little Killing*, 1974

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Man Who Was London*, 1925 (as Keith); *Portrait of a Murderer*, 1933 (as Meredith); *The Coward*, 1934 (as Meredith); *The Gambler*, 1937 (as Meredith); *The Showman*, 1938 (as Meredith); *The Stranger*, 1939 (as Meredith); *The Adventurer*, 1940 (as Meredith)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Sword of Harlequin*, 1927 (as Keith); *Lady at Large*, 1936 (as Egerton); *There's Always Tomorrow*, 1941 (as Meredith); *The Family Man: A Victorian Novel*, 1942 (as Meredith); *Curtain, Mr. Greatheart*, 1943 (as Meredith); *The Beautiful Miss Burroughes*, 1945 (as Meredith); *The Rich Woman*, 1947 (as Meredith); *The Sisters*, 1949 (as Meredith); *The Draper of Edgumbe*, 1950 (as Meredith; also known as *The Unknown Path*); *A Fig for Virtue*, 1951 (as Meredith); *Call Back Yesterday*, 1952 (as Meredith); *The Innocent Bride*, 1954 (as Meredith); *The Day of the Miracle*, 1955 (as Meredith); *Impetuous Heart*, 1956 (as Meredith); *Christine*, 1957 (as Meredith); *A Man in the Family*, 1959 (as Meredith); *The Wise Child*, 1960 (as Meredith)

PLAY: *Mrs. Boot's Legacy: A Sketch for Three Female Characters*, pr. 1941

RADIO PLAYS: 1940-1950 • *A Cavalier in Love*, 1940; *Death at 6:30*, 1940; *The Plain Woman*, 1940; *Calling Mr. Brown*, 1941; *Footprints*, 1941; *He Came by Night*, 1941; *The Adventurer*, 1941; *The Bird of Passage*, 1941; *There's Always Tomorrow*, 1941; *Thirty Years Is a Long Time*, 1941; *A Bird in a Cage*, 1942; *Find the Lady*, 1942; *His Professional Conscience*, 1942; *The Home-Coming*, 1944; *Mystery Man of New York*, 1945; *Of Brides in Baths*, 1945; *Full Circle*, 1946; *Hard Luck Story*, 1947; *A Nice Cup of Tea*, 1948; *The Sympathetic Table*, 1948; *Profitable Death*, 1950

1951-1962 • *After the Verdict*, 1952; *Now You Can Sleep*, 1952; *My Guess Would Be Murder*, 1954; *I Love My Art with an "A,"* 1957; *Black Death*, 1960; *No One Will Ever Know*, 1960; *And Death Came Too*, 1962

NONFICTION: *Three-a-Penny*, 1940 (as Meredith; autobiography)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920's to the Present*.

Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Rare study that

treats both the American and the British versions of the hard-boiled detective, providing useful context for the rough-edged Arthur Crook character. Bibliographic references and index.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains chapters on early mystery and detective fiction and the hard-boiled mode, which help put Gilbert's novels in perspective.

Wakeman, John, ed. "Anthony Gilbert." In *World Authors, 1950-1970*. New York: Wilson, 1975. Gilbert is profiled in this massive list of the writers of the world and their accomplishments.

MICHAEL GILBERT

Born: Billingham, Lincolnshire, England; July 17, 1912

Died: Luddesdown, Kent, England; February 8, 2006

Types of plot: Espionage; police procedural; thriller; amateur sleuth; courtroom drama

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Hazlerigg, 1947-1983

Patrick Petrella, 1959-1993

Daniel Joseph Calder and Samuel Behrens, 1967-1982

William Mercer, 1972-1997

Luke Pagan, 1995-1998

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR HAZLERIGG brings to bear a Sherlock Holmes type of ratiocination to solve mysteries. Intelligent, individualistic, and tenacious, Hazlerigg weeds out the irrelevant detail so he can concentrate on key clues and personalities. He alternates between two techniques: staging a ruse (what he calls dropping a grenade) and weaving a net that allows the culprit to be firmly trapped. Hazlerigg has a red face, a heavy build, a well-worn tweed suit, and piercing eyes, the cold gray of the North Sea.

PATRICK PETRELLA, who deals with blackmail, ar-

son, theft, and murder while rising steadily from constable to detective chief inspector with the metropolitan police, is young, industrious, ambitious, and innovative. He spent his first eight years in Spain and attended the American University of Beirut. Though of Spanish descent, he is unquestionably English, except for his occasional "demon" of a temper. He is a churchgoer, and he marries and becomes a father during the series. He eventually rises to superintendent of the East London dockyards in *Roller-Coaster* (1993) but retires at the end to work on his father's farm.

DANIEL JOSEPH CALDER and SAMUEL BEHRENS, coldly ruthless middle-aged counterintelligence agents who, in a number of short stories, assisted by Calder's magnificent Persian deerhound, engage in espionage, assassination, and persuasion with quiet efficiency and admirable intelligence. They work for the "E" (External) Branch of the British Joint Services Standing Intelligence Committee and do those jobs so disreputable that none of the other departments will touch them. Neighbors in Kent, they lead deceptively quiet lives, puttering about at beekeeping, hunting, and playing chess. They value decisiveness and ingenuity, characteristics they continually demonstrate themselves. Their opponents often end up with a neat hole in the head or chest.

WILLIAM MERCER, the highly individualistic and sensual inspector of *The Body of a Girl* (1972), is a

born rebel and outsider who chose an honest living over a criminal one because of what he calls the “safety factor.” He is a stickler for procedure, requiring careful files with photographs and records of every scrap of evidence. He quits the force for a job in the Middle East but returns in several short stories.

LUKE PAGAN, whose gamekeeper father intended him to be a cleric, decides instead to enter the London Metropolitan Police at the age of eighteen. He is young and good looking, attractive to both men and women. Born in 1906 and growing to manhood during World War I, Pagan has an array of talents, including espionage skills and proficiency in several languages, particularly Russian. He rapidly rises from constable to detective to a member of the MO5 (a British Military Operations unit). When the war ends, he pursues a career in law.

CONTRIBUTION

Michael Gilbert’s career spanned more than half a century (his first book was actually written in 1930) and covered a wide range, including close to thirty novels, three or four hundred short stories (his favorite form), several stage plays, and many television and radio plays. Hence, as Gilbert himself said, it “is impossible in a brief space to make any useful summary” of his works. Gilbert was proud of treating “lightly and amusingly many subjects that would not have been touched thirty years ago.” He asked, “What is a writer to do if he is not allowed to entertain?”

Ellery Queen praised Gilbert as the “complete professional,” one who was “in complete control of his material,” whose plots originated from a compassionate knowledge of people and a “first-hand knowledge of law, war, and living, nourished by a fertile imagination that never fails him.” He called Gilbert’s writing droll, his wit dry, his characterizations credible. Anthony Boucher, critic for *The New York Times*, labeled Gilbert’s collection of spy stories *Game Without Rules* (1967) “short works of art,” in fact “the second best volume of spy short stories ever published,” outranked only by W. Somerset Maugham’s *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928). Others called Gilbert one of the finest of the post-World War II generation of detective writers. He had the disconcerting ability to mix the el-

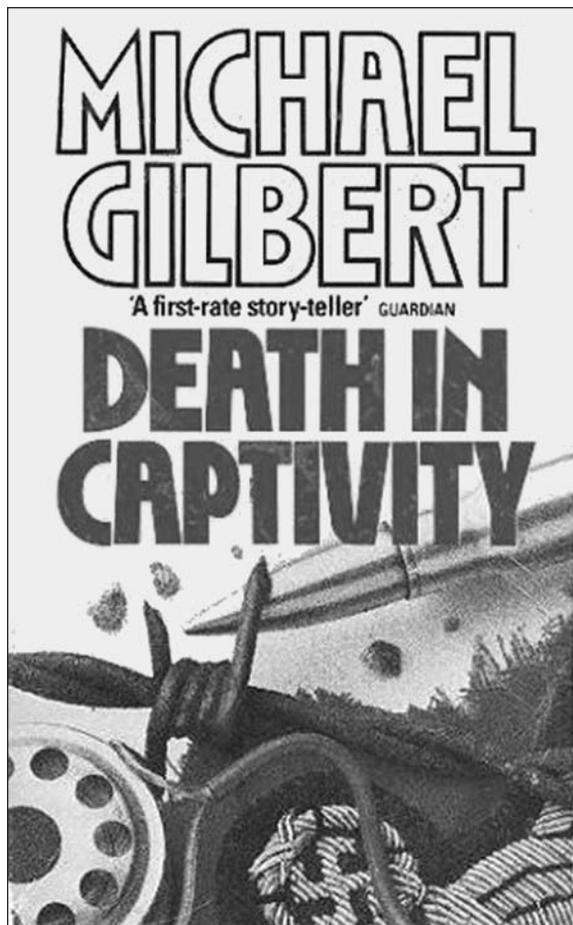
egant and the harsh, to charm with witty exchanges, and to shock with amoral realism. He wrote about the work of divisional detectives and police foot soldiers and the potential contributions of the general public, subjects that were largely neglected by other mystery and detective authors. He captured the resilience of the young, the suspicions of the old, the humanity of police officers, and the drama of the court.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Francis Gilbert was born in Billingham in Lincolnshire, England, the son of Bernard Samuel Gilbert and Berwyn Minna (née Cuthbert) Gilbert, both writers. He was educated at St. Peter’s School, Seaford, Sussex, and Blundell’s School. Influenced by his uncle, Sir Maurice Gwyer, lord chief justice of India, he decided on a legal career and taught at a preparatory school in Salisbury while studying law at the University of London, where he received an LL.B. with honors in 1937.

In 1939, Gilbert joined the Royal Horse Artillery. He served in North Africa and Europe (mainly Italy) from 1939 to 1945, was promoted to major, and received mentions in dispatches. Gilbert was captured in North Africa and imprisoned in Tunis and in Italy. His *Death in Captivity* (1952), a classic escape story involving a murder in an Italian prisoner-of-war camp, builds convincingly on these experiences, while *Sky High* (1955) treats a soldier’s postwar adjustment difficulties. *Death Has Deep Roots* (1951) and *The Night of the Twelfth* (1976) refer to “the hate and the fear, the hysteria and the exaggeration and the heroism” of the Occupation and to details such as “The Network of Eyes” used by the French Resistance to keep track of Gestapo officers and collaborators. The computer engineer protagonist of *The Long Journey Home* (1985) covers territory engraved in Gilbert’s mind from those wartime days, as he makes an arduous hike through Italy and France, pursued by mafiosi.

After the war, Gilbert worked as a solicitor (1947-1951), rising in 1952 to become a partner in the law firm of Trower, Still, and Kealing. He married Roberta Mary Marsden and had five daughters and two sons. He became a founding member of the British Crime Writers Association in 1953 and joined many other



professional organizations. He was fellow mystery writer Raymond Chandler's legal adviser at one time and drew up the latter's will. In 1960, he acted as legal adviser to the government of the Middle Eastern nation of Bahrain, an experience that provided the background for *The Ninety-Second Tiger* (1973), an adventure/romance about a mythical Middle Eastern kingdom whose rare mineral deposits make it the center of political conflict. In 1980, Gilbert was made a commander in the Order of the British Empire.

Gilbert retired from the legal profession in 1983, after some thirty-five years of service. For his writing, he received the Swedish Grand Master Award in 1981 and the Edgar Allan Poe Grand Master Award of the Mystery Writers of America in 1987. He also won the Life Achievement Anthony Award at the 1990 Bouchercon in London and in 1994 was awarded the

Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. In addition to crime novels, Gilbert wrote short stories, teleplays, dramas, and also edited a book of legal anecdotes. In 1998, he announced that *Over and Out* would be his final novel, although he intended to continue writing short stories. He died in Luddesdown, Kent, England, in February, 2006.

ANALYSIS

With skill, artistry, and care, Michael Gilbert wrote a wide range of works, from strict intellectual puzzles to novels of action and romance, from espionage and Geoffrey Household-type suspense to the police procedural, all set in a variety of finely delineated European and British locales. Varied, too, is his range of topics: archaeology and art (*The Etruscan Net*, 1969), academia in general and boarding schools in particular (*The Night of the Twelfth*), cricket (*The Crack in the Teacup*, 1966), the Church of England (*Close Quarters*, 1947), libraries (*Sky High*), and law (*Smallbone Deceased*, 1950, and *Death Has Deep Roots*). Gilbert's characters are well rounded, his authenticity of detail convincing, his sense of people and place compelling and engaging. His plots are complex but believable, substantially and plausibly developed. They involve numerous twists and turns that keep the reader guessing. In fact, Gilbert employs a chess analogy in several works to give a sense of the intricacy of the human game, from castling to checkmate, with the analogy carried out to its fullest in *The Final Throw* (1982), the story of a deadly game of attrition and loss in which pawns are sacrificed and last-chance risks are taken. His sometimes rapidly shifting points of view add to this intricacy.

Gilbert's works are all solid entertainment, with intricate plots, clever clues, and numerous suspects who are treated with humor, understatement, and, occasionally, a touch of the satiric. His heroes are usually rugged individualists with quick minds, sharp tongues, and resilient bodies. Many of his books build on his knowledge of the law and of the drama of the British legal system: They describe the internal workings of law firms and delineate courtroom style, legal techniques, and police, forensic, and court procedure. His protago-

nists, sometimes young solicitors with whom he clearly identifies, use that system to pursue justice and legal revenge.

SMALLBONE DECEASED AND DEATH HAS DEEP ROOTS

Set in a solicitor's office, where a corpse is discovered in a hermetically sealed deedbox, *Smallbone Deceased* allows the author to satirize gently the eccentric types associated with his own profession, while *Death Has Deep Roots* exploits its courtroom setting to find an alternate explanation to what seems like an open-and-shut case. One solicitor therein describes his strategy:

I happen to be old-fashioned enough to think that a woman in distress ought to be helped. Especially when she is a foreigner and about to be subjected to the savage and unpredictable caprices of the English judicial system. . . . We're going to fight a long, dirty black-guarding campaign in which we shall use every subterfuge that the law allows, and perhaps even a few that it doesn't—you can't be too particular when you're defending.

Smallbone Deceased begins with an elevated but boring, eulogistic tribute to the departed head of a law firm, punctuated by irreverent asides from his underlings, then focuses on how those assistants have the training to observe details that will later prove vital to preventing more murder. *Death Has Deep Roots* demonstrates how a skilled lawyer can use his knowledge of character, the few facts he has, and a team of assistants tracking down discrepancies at home and abroad to undercut the prosecution's case and at the end reveal truths that lay hidden for far too long. *Flash Point* (1974), in turn, demonstrates how politics affects law and justice, as the solicitor-hero seeks to reopen a case concerning a former union man now high up in government service and gets so caught up in the extremes of left and right that "justice" becomes very difficult to determine.

A Gilbert novel often depends on an amateur detective, such as Henry Bohun, a statistician, actuary, and solicitor, who is in the right place at the right time to have his imagination challenged by the puzzle of Trustee Smallbone's unexpected appearance in a

deedbox. Gilbert describes him as looking "like some mechanic with a bent for self-improvement, a student of Kant and Schopenhauer, who tended his lathe by day and sharpened his wits of an evening on dead dialecticians." People trust him and open up to him, and, while he cannot do what the police do so well (take statements, photographs, and fingerprints, and the like), he can get close to those immediately involved and pick up details and relationships to which the police would have no access. In *Death Has Deep Roots*, there are two amateurs working for the defense, one trying to prove the accused's claims about her lover, the other investigating the mysterious wartime events in France that bind several witnesses against the accused. In *The Empty House* (1978), a tall, thin, neophyte insurance investigator, Peter Maniciple, becomes entangled in the machinations of British, Israeli, and Palestinian agents to control secrets unraveled by a kindly geneticist who wants only to escape them all. Liz, a bass in a village church choir, investigates arson and theft in *Sky High*; an art-gallery owner and an expert on Etruscan art becomes tangled in a net of tomb robbing in *The Etruscan Net*, while Mr. Wetherall, the headmaster of a London high school in *The Night of the Twelfth*, wages a one-man war on black-market crime.

Gilbert's protagonists might use old resistance networks, boarding school companions, kindly innkeepers, or even a network of citizens to help gather information, trace a car, or escape pursuit. At other times they expose the ruthlessness of the bourgeoisie: the colonel who has no qualms about arranging an "accidental" death and the museum representative who condones the illegal origins of his purchase.

LUKE PAGAN SERIES

Gilbert embarked on historical fiction with the Luke Pagan series: *Ring of Terror* (1995), *Into Battle* (1997), *Over and Out*, all espionage novels set during World War I. Despite his name, Pagan is a by-the-book detective, but his partner Joe Narrabone, a likeable rogue, has no compunctions about breaking the letter of the law to preserve its spirit.

These historical novels demonstrate Gilbert's interest in the evolution of espionage tactics during the course of the twentieth century. While dramatizing a

search for three Russian revolutionaries who are terrorizing Edwardian London, robbing banks, burning buildings, forging documents, and manufacturing dynamite for an all-out war against the police, Gilbert documents the formation of the MO5 and the efforts that led, against Home Secretary Winston Churchill's desires, to arm the English police officers. *Into Battle* illustrates early attempts at code-breaking and brings Pagan into the battlefields of the Western Front. *Over and Out* uses a punning title to suggest the theme, in which Pagan, now a British Intelligence Corps operative, must defeat a Belgian traitor who lures demoralized British soldiers to desert and join the apparently unstoppable German army.

VIOLENCE AND ESPIONAGE

Gilbert's characters never shy away from violence. In "The Spoilers," a story of intimidation and blackmail, a young woman whose dog has been killed and mutilated turns a high-pressure steam hose on the perpetrators. In *Roller-Coaster*, the media gleefully pursue a racist cop who is known for harassment and assault of London's West Indians. In "Cross-Over," a dedicated young spy feels uncomfortable about making love to an enemy agent, and then, the next day, he shoots her dead to save himself and his associates. An older agent assures him, "In this job . . . there is neither right nor wrong. Only expediency." In "Trembling's Tours," a Russian agent is strangled, the cord tied so "deep into the flesh that only the ends could be seen dangling at the front like a parody of a necktie." Gilbert transmutes this image in *Smallbone Deceased*, where what looks at first glance "like an aerial view of the Grand Canyon," with "innumerable fissile crevices, . . . gulfs and gullies," is instead the "effect of picture-wire on the human neck. . . . Two hundred magnifications."

The bullet hole in the forehead, the stench of cyanide, the quiet drowning, the mutilated corpse—all must be taken in stride in a milieu of double agents, greed, and deception, for in Gilbert's world espionage and crime are both games "without rules." Calder and Behrens's interrogation methods result in corpses, and their retaliation for a soldier burned to death is to blow up his assassins. Gilbert has no illusions about the horrors of which people are capable in the name of an

ideal, a cause, a personal longing, a twisted obsession, or a whim. As one character describes another, "He had seen more brutality, more treachery, more fanaticism, more hatred than had any of his predecessors in war or in peace."

There is always a touch of the irreverent in Gilbert. *Close Quarters*, a locked-room mystery set around a cathedral, takes on a church community's misdeeds and provides an entertaining and mildly satiric look at the Church of England, its canons, its deans, and its vergers. *The Crack in the Teacup* denigrates minor league politics and local courts, *Fear to Tread* (1953) takes on the British train system, and *The Dust and the Heat* (1967) delves into the ruthlessness of the business world. In *The Body of a Girl*, an honest inspector must deal with malice all around him: "bent policemen, crooked garage owners, suspicious solicitors, dirty old men, and local roundheels." *Roller-Coaster*, a police procedural, shows Petrella and his men risibly chafing at the boredom of the procedures, pressures, and bureaucracy of police work, longing to get out into the streets and away from the papers in the in-box on their desks.

ALLUSIONS AND IRONIES

Gilbert's stories always include interesting historical and literary allusions or quotations, with satiric or ironic subtitles from Jonathan Swift, G. K. Chesterton, William Hazlitt, and others. The protagonist in *The Empty House* awakens from "a land of dreams" to "ignorant armies" clashing by night "on a darkling plain," and his friend who would sail away "like Ulysses . . . bored with Ithaca" is destroyed by those battles. In *The Night of the Twelfth*, student rehearsals of *Twelfth Night* form a backdrop for the terrors of the sadistic torturing and murder of three, nearly four, young boys; the novel ends with Feste's song—as if to say that in Gilbert as well as in William Shakespeare, art makes past violence and potential horrors tolerable by showing their defeat but that reality is neither as neat nor as just as an artistic presentation.

Ironies abound: Calder shoots an attractive spy dead, and her deerhound becomes his most beloved companion; young lovers, in the throes of ecstasy, reach out and touch the cold naked foot of a ten-year-old murder victim; the most attractive woman in the

story proves the most sadistic, the most warped; the key witnesses for the prosecution prove to be the real murderers; and a charming villain quotes Thucydides while chopping off a victim's fingers one by one. The stories may involve a debate (such as the one about inefficiency and freedom versus efficiency and a police state in "The Cat Cracker") or extended analogy (for example, a cricket match compared to warfare psychology or the "cracking" process of the petroleum industry likened to the "cracking" process of Nazi interrogators, both requiring just so much heat or force to achieve the effect without disintegrating the material in the process.

Gilbert's metaphorical language has won for him much praise. In *Death Has Deep Roots*, Sergeant Crabbe's sad realization that a competent past acquaintance is going to try to undercut the police case leads to the following comment: "He bestowed on McCann the look which a St. Bernard might have given if, after a long trek through the snow, he had found the traveler already frozen to death." Later, one Mousey Jones is described as "a small character who made a living by picking up the crumbs which lie round the wainscoting, and in the dark corners of that big living room of crime, the West End." The compulsive fascination of detection itself Gilbert sums up as "like trying to finish a crossword puzzle—in a train going headlong toward a crash."

Gilbert realistically and wittily captures the nuances of small talk, between equals and between those of different social rank, as when an older solicitor corrects a younger secretary for spelling errors:

It would appear . . . that you must imagine me to be a highly moral man. . . . But I'm afraid it won't do. . . . When I said, "This is a matter which will have to be conducted entirely by principals," I intended it to be understood that the work would be done by a partner in the firm concerned, not that it would be carried out according to ethical standards.

Gilbert also depicts the traded insults between friends of long acquaintance, the catty remarks between competing women, and the horseplay of men sharing adversity. In fact, Gilbert's sense of place derives more from a sense of personalities and their interrelations

than from actual physical description, though his descriptions of English coastal towns, rugged terrain, and courtroom antics are graphic indeed. He details the inner workings and the routines of offices and institutions, providing maps and timetables, and he convincingly describes cricket matches, drinking bouts, good-natured arguments, prison camps, and boarding schools.

ART VERSUS REALITY

Gilbert is quick to call attention to the differences between what would be expected in a traditional detective story and what happens in the reality of his. The defense lawyer in *Blood and Judgement* (1959) argues that real-life private detectives do not have the friends, the contacts, the finances or the luck of their fictive counterparts, while the one in *Death Has Deep Roots* expostulates irritably:

Dammit, . . . this isn't a detective story. The murderer doesn't *have* to be one of the principal characters. It might have been any old enemy of Thoseby's, who happened to choose that moment to finish him off.

The solicitor-detective in *The Crack in the Teacup*, in dealing with a corrupt local council, comes to realize that all the good people are not necessarily on the side of what he knows is right, while the one in *The Body of a Girl* must consider not only the motives of the local citizens but also those of the police.

Related to Gilbert's concern with art versus reality is his focus on surface illusions and hidden truths. In *The Ninety-second Tiger*, what worked in the actor-hero's films proves ludicrous in the face of reality, whose Byzantine twists are always unexpected. The official report in *After the Fine Weather* (1963) identifies the wrong man as assassin, and the only eyewitness is in peril as she struggles to establish the truth; in turn, the kindly old sea captain in *The Empty House* proves to be the center of an international storm. In *Death of a Favourite Girl* (1980), the darling of the television screen proves a spoiled and contrary blackmailer, while the dedicated police officer who demonstrates the investigative failures of his superior proves a devious murderer. Sometimes it takes an outsider to leap the barriers of more orthodox minds and solve the puzzle that has blocked detection. A would-be burglar

being held for the police helps a nightwatchman figure out a legal mystery; an actuary sees meaning in a sum that holds no meaning for others; a would-be suicide sees through a faked suicide the police have accepted as genuine. An orthodox mind-set prevents fascist guards from seeing an escape hatch. A simple turn of a kaleidoscope, a shift of the sands, or a change of perspective reveals enemy as heroic friend and trusted ally as deadly enemy. As the puzzle is solved, a shutter is lifted and reality exposed. Clearly, Gilbert's detective and espionage thrillers rise above the limits of their genre.

Gina Macdonald

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR HAZLERIGG SERIES: *Close Quarters*, 1947; *They Never Looked Inside*, 1948 (also known as *He Didn't Mind Danger*); *The Doors Open*, 1949; *Smallbone Deceased*, 1950; *Death Has Deep Roots*, 1951; *Fear to Tread*, 1953

PATRICK PETRELLA SERIES: *Blood and Judgment*, 1959; *Petrella at Q*, 1977; *Young Petrella*, 1988; *Roller-Coaster*, 1993

DANIEL JOSEPH CALDER AND SAMUEL BEHRENS SERIES: *Game Without Rules*, 1967; *Mr. Calder and Mr. Behrens*, 1982

WILLIAM MERCER SERIES: *The Body of a Girl*, 1972; *Death of a Favourite Girl*, 1980 (also known as *The Killing of Katie Steelstock*)

LUKE PAGAN SERIES: *Ring of Terror*, 1995; *Into Battle*, 1997; *Over and Out*, 1998

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death in Captivity*, 1952 (also known as *The Danger Within*); *Dr. Crippen*, 1953; *Sky High*, 1955 (also known as *The Country-House Burglar*); *Be Shot for Sixpence*, 1956; *The Claimant*, 1957; *After the Fine Weather*, 1963; *The Crack in the Teacup*, 1966; *The Dust and the Heat*, 1967 (also known as *Overdrive*); *The Etruscan Net*, 1969 (also known as *The Family Tomb*); *Sir Horace Rumbold*, 1973; *The Ninety-second Tiger*, 1973; *Flash Point*, 1974; *The Night of the Twelfth*, 1976; *The Law*, 1977; *The Empty House*, 1978; *The Final Throw*, 1982 (also known as *End-Game*); *The Black Seraphim*, 1984; *The Long Journey Home*, 1985;

Trouble, 1987; *Paint, Gold and Blood*, 1989; *The Queen Against Karl Mullen*, 1991

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Stay of Execution, and Other Stories of Legal Practice*, 1971; *Amateur in Violence*, 1973; *Anything for a Quiet Life, and Other New Mystery Stories*, 1990; *The Man Who Hated Banks, and Other Mysteries*, 1997; *The Mathematics of Murder: A Fearn and Bracknell Collection*, 2000; *The Curious Conspiracy, and Other Crimes*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *A Clean Kill*, pr. 1959; *The Bargain*, pr., pb. 1961; *The Shot in Question*, pr., pb. 1963; *Windfall*, pr., pb. 1963

RADIO PLAYS: *Death in Captivity*, 1952; *The Man Who Could Not Sleep*, 1955; *Crime Report*, 1956; *Doctor at Law*, 1956; *The Waterloo Table*, 1957; *You Must Take Things Easy*, 1958; *Stay of Execution*, 1965; *Game Without Rules*, 1968; *The Last Chapter*, 1970; *Black Light*, 1972; *Flash Point*, 1974; *Petrella*, 1976; *In the Nick of Time*, 1979; *The Last Tenant*, 1979; *The Oyster Catcher*, 1983

TELEPLAYS: *The Crime of the Century*, 1956; *Wideawake*, 1957; *Crime Report*, 1958; *Fair Game*, 1958; *The Body of a Girl*, 1958; *Blackmail Is So Difficult*, 1959; *Dangerous Ice*, 1959; *A Clean Kill*, 1961; *Scene of the Accident*, 1961; *The Men from Room Thirteen*, 1961; *The Betrayers*, 1962; *Trial Run*, 1963; *The Blackmailing of Mr. S*, 1964; *The Mind of the Enemy*, 1965; *Misleading Cases*, 1971 (with Christopher Bond); *Money to Burn*, 1974; *Where There's a Will*, 1975

NONFICTION: *The Law*, 1977; "Fraudsters": *Six Against the Law*, 1986; *The Oxford Book of Legal Anecdotes*, 1986 (reprinted with corrections)

EDITED TEXTS: *Best Detective Stories of Cyril Hare*, 1959; *Crime in Good Company: Essays on Criminals and Crime-Writing*, 1959; *The Oxford Book of Legal Anecdotes*, 1987; *Prep School: An Anthology*, 1991

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B. M. GILL

Barbara Margaret Trimble

Born: Holyhead, North Wales, Great Britain;
February 15, 1921

Also wrote as Margaret Blake

Types of plot: Master sleuth; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tom Maybridge, 1980-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR TOM MAYBRIDGE is married to Meg, an English expert in Restoration prose. They have one grown son, whose name is not given. Maybridge is described as "a benign-looking middle-aged man, short-legged and big-paunched . . .

more impressive when seated." He wears gold-rimmed glasses and has a steady, piercing gaze that he uses to unnerve suspects during interrogation. A gentle, caring man, he appears cold and impersonal, but in reality he gets too emotionally involved in his cases and sometimes permits his feelings to cloud his judgment.

CONTRIBUTION

Two of B. M. Gill's mystery novels, *Victims* (1980) and *Seminar for Murder* (1985), are tightly written police procedurals with high puzzle value and fairly conventional "whodunit" plots. *Death Drop* (1979) and *The Twelfth Juror* (1984) are psychological portraits of victims, criminals, bereaved families, and innocent

bystanders all trapped together by tragic events and emotional stresses beyond their control. *The Fifth Rapunzel* (1991) combines elements of both. *Nursery Crimes* (1986) is a sardonic analysis of a six-year-old murderess who wipes out pesky playmates and interfering adults with the cool aplomb of a baby Lizzie Borden.

Gill's greatest contribution to the mystery genre lies in her ability to button herself (and her readers) into the skins of her characters. Their deeds and psyches are not merely described but rendered as well. Gill makes her readers feel each emotion—from humor to horror—and think each thought along with the character. Gill's versatility in several genres and her emotional range are remarkable.

BIOGRAPHY

B. M. Gill was born Barbara Margaret Gill on February 15, 1921, the daughter of an Irish sea captain and his Welsh wife. Gill began writing at the age of eight, after her father encouraged the imaginative child to set down her stories about secret passages and mysterious doings. In accordance with her mixed parentage, the young Gill was educated at a convent school but attended a Presbyterian church on Sundays. This contradictory religious upbringing is reflected in *Nursery Crimes*, Gill's most comical, most chilling, and best-written novel.

After leaving school at the age of fifteen, Gill worked in the Trinity House Office in Holyhead, "learning about buoys, lighthouses and Elder Brethren." She worked there until her marriage at the age of twenty-one to a Mr. Trimble, whom she has not fully named or discussed in interviews. The marriage soon ended in divorce, leaving Barbara Margaret Trimble with a young son, Roger, to support. Casting about for a profession that would allow her to work at home, Gill trained as a chiropodist and set up a private practice for four years. She then retrained as a nursery school teacher and taught for fourteen years in a village school in Somerset.

While teaching, Gill began writing radio scripts and short stories for *Chambers Journal* and *John O'London*, two literary magazines. Using the pseudonym Margaret Blake, she also began writing romantic

suspense novels that were serialized in *Woman* and *Woman's Own*. Encouraged by the steady sale of her writing, Gill quit her teaching job, only to discover that because of rapid inflation she could not support herself by writing alone. She therefore returned to chiropody and worked in a public health clinic for six more years before retiring.

On retirement, Gill returned to her mother's native Anglesby in Wales, resumed her maiden name, and began writing detective stories. Her first novel, *Target Westminster* (1977), deals with a plot to blow up the House of Parliament. Her second book, *Death Drop*, revolves around a grieving father's attempt to discover the truth about his son's "accidental" death at a school outing; this work was reprinted in the United States and was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award. Gill's postretirement career as a mystery writer was well on its way. Her fourth book, *The Twelfth Juror*, won Great Britain's top crime award, the Gold Dagger, as well as a second Edgar nomination in the United States.

ANALYSIS

B. M. Gill's three novels featuring Detective Chief Inspector Tom Maybridge are *Victims* (published in the United States as *Suspect*), *Seminar for Murder*, and *The Fifth Rapunzel*. The first two are tightly written, well-paced police procedurals with a conventionally crafted whodunit denouement. *The Fifth Rapunzel*, the third in the series, was less well received but still fit within any description of a Maybridge novel. Gill's compassion for her characters, both innocent and guilty, and her insight into the emotional forces that drive them set her novels apart from typical police procedurals. The opening paragraph of *Victims* depicts the killer tenderly arranging Margaret McKendrick's corpse in a halo of dandelion leaves and admiring his victim's beauty and the glory of the clear August night. The book's closing line, "Paul accepted," depicts the victim's father as he learns to live with his bereavement and to appreciate the innocent pleasure of a golden autumnal morning. Between these two passages, between the night of the killer and the dawn of restored order, Gill takes her readers into some very dark recesses of the human mind. Some of the kindest

and gentlest of the characters prove to have twisted, cruel souls; some of the most loutish and brutal ones have tender, poetic hearts; some of the most noble and worthy ones die.

Gill's technique is to move her narrative in and out of the minds and lives of the various characters. The reader develops his own sympathies and suspicions as the plot unfolds. The killer is cleverly disguised amid the other characters, and his thoughts and feelings are probed as deeply and clearly as anyone else's. The reader learns to like him and identifies with his problems, so the final revelation produces not only pleasure but also an emotional pang.

Gill's greatest skill as a writer lies in her ability to keep her own personality concealed. She unfolds the varying aspects of her characters through their own thoughts and inner soliloquies, without an intrusive author's voice describing these people and directing the reader's judgment. Nevertheless, despite the absence of overt authorial didacticism, a strong moral message about personal and civic responsibility emerges.

The character of Tom Maybridge is not employed as a mask for the author. He is merely one of several police officers conducting the investigation into the multiple murders that suddenly plague City Hospital and this nameless English town. Maybridge himself has only a surname in *Victims* and was probably not originally intended to be a series character. When he reappears in *Seminar for Murder*, however, he has acquired a first name, a scholarly wife, and a more fleshed-out personality.

SEMINAR FOR MURDER

In *Seminar for Murder*, Maybridge accepts an invitation to lecture to a group of eminent mystery writers at the annual Golden Guillotine awards banquet. With his wife in America lecturing on Restoration prose, Maybridge feels compelled to demonstrate his own erudition in the field of police forensics. He is able to expose the methodological errors of virtually every member of the august literary assemblage. His pleasure in his own cleverness is considerably dampened, however, when the association's president is found dead in bed, a skewer through his throat and a note taped to the headboard: Fault This Murder, Detective Chief Inspector Maybridge, If You Can.

Maybridge finds the murder hard to fault, indeed, as one suspect is found murdered and others provide unshakable alibis. He feels humiliated and also guilty, believing that his caustic demolition of the writers' plots motivated Sir Godfrey Grant's murder. Nevertheless, he struggles valiantly with the case. Despite his best efforts, his emotional involvement in the case clouds his judgment so thoroughly that he does not really solve it until several months after the official investigation has ended. Even then, it is the killer's voluntary confession that forces Maybridge to acknowledge how far off the mark he has been.

DEATH DROP

Although the Maybridge novels are entertaining and far superior to most others of their genre, they are not Gill's best efforts. *Death Drop*, *The Twelfth Juror*, and especially *Nursery Crimes* are rare treats for the reader. Filled with violence, passion, twisted love, and noble intentions gone awry, they haunt the mind like Freudian dream images.

Death Drop, Gill's second novel and the first to be nominated for an Edgar Award, deals with a grieving father's attempt to discover the truth about his twelve-year-old son's death during a school outing. Young David Fleming has fallen down the hold of a ship at the Maritime Museum, and the headmaster and teaching staff of exclusive Marrison Grange all sympathize with John Fleming over the tragedy of his son's accident. Their main concern is to avoid a lawsuit stemming from negligence charges.

Fleming does not believe that his son died accidentally, however, and proving the school's negligence would be balm for his own guilty conscience. Fleming's secret concern is that David may have committed suicide. Ruth Fleming, David's mother, has recently died of cancer, and the child suffered a second bereavement when his father, preoccupied with his own grief and busy with his professional travels, placed him at Marrison Grange, a typical upper-class British boys' school with all the usual hazing and casual brutality that young boys in packs can inflict on one another. Was David unhappy enough in that environment to kill himself?

Although John Fleming is the main character, he is not the ruling consciousness throughout the book.

Again, Gill permits the reader to experience the doubt, guilt, sadness, joy, hope, pain, fear, and love felt by the various characters. All minds are probed; all thoughts and emotions are shared. Brannigan, the headmaster of Marristone Grange, is torn between his basic decency and love of truth and his need to protect the school. Jenny Renshaw, the young infirmary matron, and Thirza Crayshaw, Fleming's sophisticated lawyer, try to maintain their professional objectivity while falling in love with the handsome, troubled widower. Fleming himself is torn between his desire to avenge his son's death and his reluctant pity for David's unhappy killer, whose identity becomes clear fairly early in the book. While the murderer's identity is easy to guess, his motive remains obscure until the last few chapters. When it is finally revealed, the reader feels pain and pity for the sad, lost killer, whose special good and special curse has been his thwarted capacity to love.

THE TWELFTH JUROR

The Twelfth Juror is another study in twisted love and noble intentions gone awry. Robert Quinn, a middle-aged dropout from journalism and upper-class respectability, welcomes Frances, the troubled daughter of a murder victim, into his home, which is shared by a genial crew of street singers. The girl's father, television personality Edward Carne, is on trial for the murder of his wife. When Quinn finds himself selected as the twelfth juror at Edward Carne's trial, however, he must choose between his sympathy for the pathetic young girl and his duty toward the law. He decides to remain on the jury and to win acquittal for Edward Carne, whose innocence he alternately believes in and doubts. Her father's freedom will be Quinn's gift to Frances, his way of curing her alcoholism and her troubled mind. Basking smugly in the nobility of his motives, he succumbs to hubris in believing that he is above the law and that his reasoning ability and judgment are stronger and truer than those of the other eleven jurors combined. As inexorably as fate in a Greek tragedy, Quinn's well-intentioned arrogance leads to a bloody climax in which the guilty and innocent are destroyed together. Once again, Gill has presented a psychologically complex cast of characters who are motivated by misplaced love and frustra-

tion at their inability to find a gentler outlet for their passions.

NURSERY CRIMES

Nursery Crimes, Gill's finest novel, is the lethally humorous tale of Zanny Moncrief, a cherubic six-year-old murderess who coolly and efficiently dispatches anyone who thwarts her desires. The story is set during the days of the London Blitz, and Zanny's first victim is little Willie Morton, a slum evacuee whom she drowns when he teases her and tries to appropriate her toys. Clare and Graham Moncrief, Zanny's parents, fight hard to stifle their growing certainty that their beloved child is a cold-blooded killer. Willie's older sister, Dolly, has witnessed the murder, and Zanny must buy her silence with a toy perambulator. She intends to retrieve her treasure by shoving Dolly under a passing bread truck, but the wily slum child dodges at the last moment, and Evans, the kindly bread-truck driver, swerves into a wall and dies in a spectacularly flaming wreck.

The terrified Moncriefs, still determined to protect their erring child, send her and Dolly to the shelter of a convent school, in the hope that the restricted environment will limit Zanny's scope for homicide. Several years pass, the convent's population has not been decimated, and Zanny's parents breathe easier—until the fifteen-year-old girl develops an adolescent passion for Murphy, the convent gardener, who is in love with Bridget O'Hare, a physical education teacher. Soon Bridget's battered body is discovered at the foot of a rocky ocean cliff, and Murphy is convicted of her murder. In her attempt to clear Murphy's name without implicating herself, Zanny disposes of a troublesome judge and several hapless nuns. She finally even tries to confess, but the authorities dismiss her story as the hysterical babbling of an infatuated child. Only Dolly and her parents know the truth about Zanny, and they cannot bring themselves to reveal their knowledge. Dolly's silence is motivated by a healthy desire for self-preservation; the Moncriefs' silence stems from their guilty love. Regardless of their motives, those closest to Zanny become her accomplices as the body count climbs ever higher.

Zanny is no inexplicable genetic monster. She is the logical product of wartime England, in which entire

neighborhoods full of people vanish in a single moment of the Blitz. Graham Moncrief, Zanny's father, is a bomber pilot who makes German neighborhoods disappear in the same way. He is rewarded and called a hero for his deeds. Observing the values of the adults around her, Zanny learns to take what she wants, when she wants it, by any means available. Her first year at the convent does instill an inchoate sense of guilt and responsibility in the still-malleable child, and on the occasion of her first confession she tries to tell the priest what she has done. The kindly Father Donovan is certain that the blonde angel before him has been reading too many nasty comics; he laughs and tells her to say three Hail Marys. Analyzing the priest's reaction, the child quite logically concludes that her victims are now safe with Jesus, so murder cannot really be much of a sin at all. Thus shaped and encouraged by all the societal forces around her, Zanny is not a moral freak but a perfectly natural product of her upbringing. Gill's genius lies in making the reader accept this grotesque conclusion with an amused chuckle.

Beneath the entertainment offered by her books, however, Gill presents the reader with several disquieting themes and moral lessons. Sexuality is a potentially dangerous force and should not be ignored or unnaturally suppressed. It must be channeled into a loving, committed relationship. Compassion and love, too, can be dangerous when they are carelessly bestowed on the wrong people at the wrong time. Gill's presentation of these lessons is never didactic or obtrusive. She hides her authorial voice beneath her graceful prose and allows her characters and their deeds to speak for themselves.

Zohara Boyd

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TOM MAYBRIDGE SERIES: *Victims*, 1980 (also known as *Suspect*); *Seminar for Murder*, 1985; *The Fifth Rapunzel*, 1991

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Target Westminster*, 1977; *Death Drop*, 1979; *The Twelfth Juror*, 1984; *Nursery Crimes*, 1986; *Dying to Meet You*, 1988; *Time and Time Again*, 1989

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS BLAKE): *Stranger at the Door*, 1967; *Bright Sun, Dark Shadow*, 1968; *The Rare and the Lovely*, 1969; *The Elusive Exile*, 1971; *Courier to Danger*, 1973; *Flight from Fear*, 1973; *Apple of Discord*, 1975; *Walk Softly and Beware*, 1977

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- Talbert, Nancy Ellen. "B. M. Gill." In *Great Women Mystery Writers*, edited by Kathleen Gregory Klein. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. This valuable source places Gill in critical context with other women writing on similar themes.
- Virginia Quarterly Review*. Review of *Time and Time Again*, by B. M. Gill. 66, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): S97. Review of work in which Maeve Barclay has served time for injuring a police officer during a demonstration and her alienation from her former life draws her into crime. Reviewer praises the clarity of Gill's writing.

DOROTHY GILMAN

Born: New Brunswick, New Jersey; June 25, 1923

Also wrote as Dorothy Gilman Butters

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; comedy caper; espionage; private investigator; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Mrs. Pollifax, 1966-

Countess Karitska, 1975-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MRS. EMILY POLLIFAX, a suburban matron—widowed, preoccupied with civic responsibility, the garden club, and environmental concerns—becomes a part-time agent and courier for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). She is convinced that life need not be placid and monotonous for women in their sixties who wish to follow their dreams.

CONTRIBUTION

Dorothy Gilman's novels featuring the eccentric and charming Emily Pollifax appeal widely to young and old, having developed a considerable following since their introduction in 1966. The first novel in the series, *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* (1966), became a film starring Rosalind Russell under the title *Mrs. Pollifax—Spy* in 1971. A second adaptation, the Columbia Broadcasting Service television movie *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, was released in 1999 with Angela Lansbury cast as the aging sleuth.

Gilman has earned wide acclaim for the quality of her storytelling. Blending humor and intrigue, her works are rooted in the Cold War era and explore topics such as international espionage, life in iron-curtain countries, the emerging nations of the Third World, terrorism, political assassination, aid to endangered dissidents, and the role of double agents.

Despite their subject matter, Gilman's novels are not violent. Reviewers have commented on their wholesome and upbeat entertainment value. Evil is defeated. Good and Mrs. Pollifax prevail over very real danger. The direct quality of the prose makes the characters and the plots plausible. Mrs. Pollifax knows that

dedicated and determined individuals can make a difference and that the discovery of one's true self produces deep reservoirs of endurance and courage to meet the most unexpected challenges.

A prolific writer of fiction for young and adult readers, Gilman has contributed to numerous publications, including *On Creative Writing* (1964). Her short fiction has appeared in such magazines as *Redbook*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Writer*. Gilman received the Catholic Book Award for *A Nun in the Closet* (1975).

BIOGRAPHY

Dorothy Gilman was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, June 25, 1923. The daughter of a clergyman, she was reared in a parsonage. Early in her life, she felt a need to express herself in writing, creating a six-page magazine that she circulated among parishioners. Educated as an artist at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Gilman was awarded the William Emlen Cresson European Scholarship in 1944. During that period, however, she audited writing classes at the University of Pennsylvania whenever time permitted, and her love of writing was nurtured.

In 1944 Gilman married Edgar A. Butters, Jr., and became the mother of two sons. During the twenty-odd years of her marriage, she taught as an instructor in drawing at the Samuel Fleischer Art Memorial for a period but enjoyed her greatest success as a writer of juvenile fiction that examined a wide array of subjects. In 1965 she was divorced, and the next year she began writing novels for an adult audience. When her younger son left for college, she purchased an old house and acreage in Nova Scotia and embarked on a new kind of life, pursuing her own serenity and self-knowledge. Rewarding and refreshing, this experience became the subject of an autobiography in 1978. She has continued writing her Pollifax series and a newer series featuring the character Countess Karitska first introduced in *The Clairvoyant Countess* (1975).

ANALYSIS

Humor is a vital component of Dorothy Gilman's mystery fiction as well as her young-adult writing. For Gilman, humor is "a distortion or exaggeration of reality . . . that appeals to the sense of the ludicrous or the absurd." She admits that there are some things that cannot be treated humorously, that simply are not amusing. Gilman uses humor to avoid violence. Sometimes described as too gentle for the genre, her novels never contain clinical, detailed descriptions of murder, though some violent episodes do occur. In essence, Gilman finds humor an "escape from pain, a stepping back from the event to observe it and defend the self by turning the pain into something else." Despite its limitations, and the necessity of abandoning some efforts, Gilman's final advice is that "if one has an eye for the absurd, one should put that talent to work."

Gilman uses her considerable sense of humor to good effect in *A Nun in the Closet*, a novel noted as much for its humor as its plot. She places two cloistered nuns in the middle of a tangle of likable leftover people from the 1960's: members of the Mafia, a crooked sheriff, migrant workers, and a mysterious stranger found wounded in the bedroom closet of a deteriorating estate. Add a guru, drugs, and thousands of dollars in a suitcase, and one has all of the ingredients for a puzzle that Sister John, another of Gilman's strong, resourceful women, must resolve. The potential for humor in having two nuns leave a cloister after twenty years to enter a world they never knew, coping with experiences and language entirely alien to them, is limitless.

Gilman's sense of humor is obvious in her writing, and it is a part of her work that she has discussed in a brief article entitled "Humor in the Mystery Novel," published in *The Writer* in 1978. She states that writing humor is neither easy nor natural. Because she believes that novels are "constructed," the use of humor complicates the construction process. "Humor is 95 percent craft, and at least 50 percent of that is timing," Gilman says. It is an undertaking that is, at best, "laborious." Because humor cannot carry a novel without a story line that sustains it, the author may virtually write the story twice. Gilman is aware of the differences in quality of humor; it may be subtle or

broad, whimsical or black, satirical or witty. Her favorite devices are contrast, incongruity, distortion, or exaggeration, as when an elderly widow prevents a political assassination or nuns confront hired killers in the act of murder.

In all her work Gilman's style is simple, direct, and often dramatic, perhaps a result of her long apprenticeship in children's literature. The key to teaching children is often the use of clear, simple, and dramatic statement. Her books may be read quickly because her sentences follow one another in compact paragraphs that are built one on another.

Gilman began to develop her characters when she was very young, although she describes herself as lacking in insight and experience to bring them to completion. In a brief piece entitled "A Particular Bent," Gilman revealed that she had conceived the pattern for Mrs. Pollifax at the age of eighteen, when she created a character she called Miss Crispin. Miss Crispin, in turn, had grown from her experience as a child with the interesting and elderly women she had known in her father's church. She described them as "dowager types, feminists, matriarchs, soft little busybodies, and a few who were gently mad." Many of them were eccentric and "strikingly uninhibited and liberated for their time." They were, as Gilman says, her "babysitters," who brought her "little treasures" and who bought her magazine and told her stories. Gilman's characters spring from her own experience, informed and completed by long practice at the exacting craft of writing.

THE TIGHTROPE WALKER

One of Gilman's strengths is the tightly constructed plot, nowhere more satisfactorily achieved than in *The Tightrope Walker* (1979). In this book a young woman, Amelia Jones, who has experienced emotional problems and is searching for interior peace and self-knowledge, finds a clue to a possible murder that may have happened years earlier. In the best tradition of the amateur sleuth, Amelia unravels the tragedy step-by-step. At the end, the reader has no nagging questions or unanswered frustrations but a lucid account of the murder, the participants, and the motive. A final desperate effort of the murderer to silence Amelia makes for a thrilling conclusion in which all the loose ends are nicely tied. Not only has the heroine

solved the case, she has solved many of her own doubts and difficulties and found love as well.

A NEW KIND OF COUNTRY

In her autobiography *A New Kind of Country* (1978), Gilman shares with her readers her personal odyssey for self-knowledge and her discovery of another kind of life. Leaving behind her old life and habitat, she shook off all the nonessentials. On the stark but beautiful coastline of Nova Scotia, a landscape of lighthouses, sand, seaweed, and weathered cottages, she went through a period of self-testing as well as self-discovery. In searching out her neighbors—lobster fishermen and townspeople—she yielded years of seeking privacy to a new sense of community and belonging.

Despite the hard work of growing or gathering food, the simplicity of long walks along the beach and time apart from former distractions heightened an awareness of and sensitivity to the treasures of nature in Gilman. There was time for introspection and for reading, for contemplation of philosophy and new points of view. The book, simply written, is revealing of the author and her interests. It is also extremely useful for an overview of the author's work as many of her interests are reflected in her fiction.

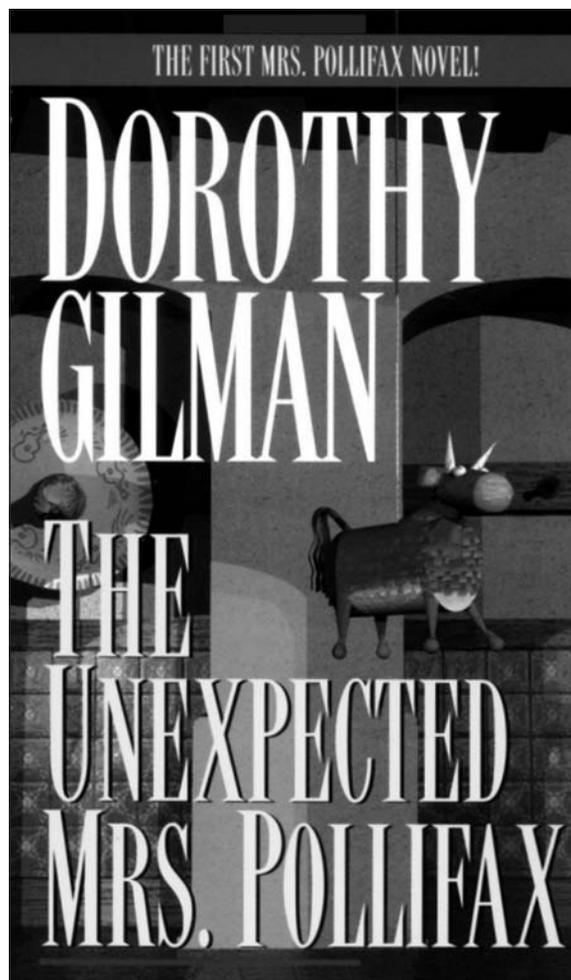
THE UNEXPECTED MRS. POLLIFAX

Gilman had already achieved success as an author of twelve books of juvenile literature when she produced her first volume of espionage mystery for adults. *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax* introduced Gilman's best-known heroine and established Mrs. Pollifax's career as a part-time agent for the CIA. Mrs. Pollifax is a very strong woman and very much her own person. Possessed of charm, a splendid sense of humor, sympathy for the human condition, and an ability to rise to unforeseen challenges, she is an entertaining character.

Mrs. Pollifax has had a full life. Now widowed, she has a grown son and daughter who live far away, and although good relations evidently exist, her children no longer need her vigilant attention. Her life could be pleasant and tranquil with her flowers, friends, and good works, but that is not enough. Because as a girl she had longed to be a spy, she offered her services to the CIA, which accepted her reluctantly but continues to give her assignments as a result of her impressive

successes. Although Mrs. Pollifax's activities cause her superiors some concern—she manages always to become involved in circumstances and with people beyond the scope of her specific objectives—her accomplishments are always remarkable.

White-haired, a grandmother, yet indefatigable, Mrs. Pollifax seems an unlikely figure to serve as a special agent. It is a tribute to the author that her role is made convincing. Her improbability becomes an asset to the organization she serves. No one is less likely to arouse suspicion than this amiable woman whose life is devoted to her clubs and to environmental concerns. Even her penchant for large hats of ornate design contributes to Mrs. Pollifax's success. On one courier mission, ten documents are hidden in such a hat and handily smuggled into a totalitarian country.



It seems inevitable that Mrs. Pollifax should be compared to Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple. Although both are older women whose lives and experience give scope to their analytical powers, they are quite different. Miss Marple rarely leaves her quiet village except for brief holidays. Mrs. Pollifax may be kidnapped in Mexico and land in an Albanian prison. She may find herself in a convalescent hospital in Switzerland, on safari in Africa, or on the Silk Road in China. Mrs. Pollifax is involved in official espionage activity, while Miss Marple is an amateur sleuth. Mrs. Pollifax is more active physically than Jane Marple. After her Albanian adventure, she studies the martial arts and earns a Brown Belt in karate.

MRS. POLLIFAX UNVEILED

In *Mrs. Pollifax Unveiled* (2000), the fourteenth installment of the adventures of Gilman's grandmotherly super spy, Mrs. Pollifax forsakes her garden club to recover Amanda Pym, a young American who foiled an airline hijacking and subsequently disappeared in Damascus, Syria.

Posing as the young woman's aunt, Mrs. Pollifax and her sometime colleague Farrell join forces to uncover Amanda's whereabouts, following the thinnest of clues and evading cohorts of unknown enemies along the way. When Farrell is captured and tortured, Mrs. Pollifax must carry on alone until she enlists the help of an American archeologist who proves to be unexpectedly resourceful.

The unlikeliest of field generals, Mrs. Pollifax manages her assets masterfully to extract Amanda from the sniper-training compound where she is being held. Getting the young woman, and herself, safely out of the desert, however, proves much more challenging. Gilman adds considerable depth to the mystery by including meticulous details about local Arab culture, political analysis, and even Babylonian verse.

KALEIDOSCOPE

In *Kaleidoscope* (2002), Gilman returns to her intrepid and mystically minded heroine Countess Karitska, who was first introduced in the 1975 novel *The Clairvoyant Countess*. The divinator-turned-detective overcame hostility and skepticism to become a valued consultant to her friend Detective Lieutenant Pruden in the earlier novel through her skill at psychometry—

acquiring knowledge of a person simply by touching an object connected to that person.

Kaleidoscope finds the countess once again teamed up with Trafton police detective Pruden and at the center of numerous mysteries to be solved. The numerous characters that fall under the countess's magical touch include the ruthless murderer of a young violinist, a Maine-based madman with apocalyptic ambitions, a young deaf girl wrongly accused, a socialite struggling against chronic apathy, and a timid young artist in search of confidence.

For Gilman, art follows life. Unattractive human traits of cruelty, greed, jealousy, and violence may exist in the world as in literature, but in her suspense stories they are balanced by humor, skill, self-mastery, tolerance, and decency.

Anne R. Vizzier

Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MRS. POLLIFAX SERIES: *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, 1966 (also known as *Mrs. Pollifax, Spy*); *The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax*, 1970; *The Elusive Mrs. Pollifax*, 1971; *A Palm for Mrs. Pollifax*, 1973; *Mrs. Pollifax on Safari*, 1977; *Mrs. Pollifax on the China Station*, 1983; *Mrs. Pollifax and the Hong Kong Buddha*, 1985; *Mrs. Pollifax and the Golden Triangle*, 1987; *Mrs. Pollifax and the Whirling Dervish*, 1990; *Mrs. Pollifax and the Second Thief*, 1993; *Mrs. Pollifax Pursued*, 1995; *Mrs. Pollifax and the Lion Killer*, 1996; *Mrs. Pollifax, Innocent Tourist*, 1997; *Mrs. Pollifax Unveiled*, 2000

COUNTESS KARITSKA SERIES: *The Clairvoyant Countess*, 1975; *Kaleidoscope*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Uncertain Voyage*, 1967; *A Nun in the Closet*, 1975; *The Tightrope Walker*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Incident at Badamya*, 1989; *Caravan*, 1992; *Thale's Folly*, 1999

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS BUTTERS): *Enchanted Caravan*, 1949; *Carnival Gypsy*, 1950; *Ragamuffin Alley*, 1951; *The Calico Year*, 1953; *Four-Party Line*, 1954; *Papa Dolphin's Table*, 1955; *Girl in Buckskin*, 1956; *Heartbreak Street*, 1958; *Witch's*

Silver, 1959; *Masquerade*, 1961; *Ten Leagues to Boston Town*, 1962; *The Bells of Freedom*, 1963

NONFICTION: *A New Kind of Country*, 1978

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_____. *A New Kind of Country*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978. Gilman's autobiography looks at her life from a new perspective, after moving to a small house in a lobstering village. Provides insights into her writing.

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WILLIAM GODWIN

Born: Wisbech, Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire, England; March 3, 1756

Died: London, England; April 7, 1836

Also wrote as Edward Baldwin

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Whereas the modern detective novel is based mainly on nineteenth century views of realism and individualist psychology, William Godwin's masterpiece and only work of detective fiction, *Things as They Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794; best known as *Caleb Williams*), looks back to eighteenth century forms of literature where problems of communication and of class structure are major themes. Mystery and detection per se are always secondary in Godwin's work to subjects such as the ineq-

uities of the English legal system, the relation between guilt and innocence, and the links between power and knowledge in the personal, legal, and political spheres.

Caleb Williams had a profound and direct political impact, and it continues to hold its place as one of the finest English novels. It provoked a storm of reaction when published and exerted a profound influence on the mystery writing of nineteenth century authors such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Dickens, and Edgar Allan Poe. It has been translated into French, German, Russian, and Polish.

BIOGRAPHY

William Godwin was born to a Dissenting minister, the seventh of thirteen children. He was reared according to strict Calvinist principles. Physically disadvantaged and intellectually precocious, Godwin began the



William Godwin. (National Portrait Gallery)

first of four trial ministries on graduation from London's famous Hoxton Academy. The sermons and personality of the aloof and cerebral Godwin invariably disaffected the small rural congregations to which he was assigned.

Furthermore, beginning around 1780, Godwin's faith in God was eroded by his reading of French philosophers such as Voltaire. Moving to London, Godwin soon involved himself both with the Whig Party and with the radicals. He breakfasted with the noted feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and with Thomas Paine, reading the latter's *The Rights of Man* (1791-1792) in manuscript. Paine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the events of the French Revolution all contributed to the thoughts expounded in Godwin's most famous theoretical work, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793), a book that made its author the best-known radical political philosopher of his day. Godwin's most famous novel, *Caleb Williams*, was undertaken as a case study of the principles outlined in

this theoretical work. A friend of Godwin, imprisoned in Newgate for sedition in an example of the kind of injustice Godwin was protesting, read the novel in one night. Godwin had the courage to defend his other radical friends with the pamphlet best known as *Cursory Strictures* (1794) when they came under the charge of high treason for their support of political reform. One of the pieces of evidence used against them was that they had read *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* without expressing condemnation. The radicals were acquitted.

Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft, who was already three months pregnant, in 1797. She died of septicemia shortly after childbirth. Godwin paid tribute to his brilliant and unconventional wife in *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1798). Their daughter, Mary, who caused Godwin much anguish when she eloped with his most fervent and most poetically talented admirer, Percy Bysshe Shelley, was later to follow in her father's footsteps; among other works, she wrote the celebrated gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818).

Since the early 1780's, Godwin had made a precarious living as a professional writer. His plays were either rejected or damned on production. Other than *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), his novels were not read with eagerness. More successful were his works of biography (*Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet*, 1803) and of history (*History of the Commonwealth of England*, 1824-1828). His main means of support was a publishing venture in children's literature, called The Juvenile Library, which he had begun with his second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont. This venture was never fully solvent, and the next two decades saw Godwin hounded by creditors until he declared bankruptcy in 1825.

Godwin was acquainted with all the great English Romantics, and he got along with some of them. He always despised Shelley—whose money he repeatedly used to stave off his creditors—for taking his daughter from him. In all, Godwin found only trouble and failure in his later years, until the English government gave its most famous critic a position as yeoman usher of the exchequer. In his last years, Godwin was an

avuncular presence, more fond of playing whist than of talking politics. He died of a fever on April 7, 1836.

ANALYSIS

Radical philosopher William Godwin wrote *Caleb Williams* to embody the principles described in his most well-known work, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*. Therefore, the work was not designed to display feats of detection but rather examine ideas such as guilt, innocence, and justice.

CALEB WILLIAMS

Like a blast of cold wind, the first words of Godwin's masterpiece *Caleb Williams* tear away the empty sentimentalism and inflated rhetoric that had clothed later eighteenth century English fiction. Caleb Williams curses the results of his being framed for a theft by his master, Falkland:

My life has for several years been a theatre of calamity. I have been a mark for the vigilance of tyranny, and I could not escape. My fairest prospects have been blasted. My enemy has shown himself inaccessible to intreaties and untired in persecution. My fame, as well as my happiness, has become his victim.

The gripping rhythm of the opening sentences is indicative of the novel's magnetic power, which still attracts and holds readers across the gulfs of culture and history. This passage begins the novel's intense focus on the mind of its protagonist and narrator. (Godwin had begun the novel in the third person, but realized that only a first-person account would do.) The passage also highlights the novel's existentialist theme: Calamity has forced Caleb to realize how ultimately alone he really is, how impervious others can be to his plight, and how impossible it is to express truth or guilt.

The brisk style of these sentences is soon superseded by others, however, as Godwin shifts from one genre to another—prompting one critic to entitle his study of the novel “A Question of Genres.” At times Caleb, in telling his story, assumes the role of preacher against injustice (here Godwin is aided by his own background in the ministry). At times Caleb gives objective descriptions of prisons and criminals, in a re-

portorial style reminiscent of *The Newgate Calendar* (1773). The first book of the novel, however, is characterized mostly by the balanced periods and brisk irony of the sentimental novel.

Thus the country gentleman Ferdinando Falkland, who secretly murders a rival squire who had humiliated him, is first described in the language of Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-1754) as a paragon of honor, wisdom, and virtue. He is also, like Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), acutely sensitive and benevolent. (A later Godwin novel, *Fleetwood*—published in 1805—was subtitled *The New Man of Feeling*.) Falkland's sentimentalism, however, while at first elevating him, turns to madness as he is led to hate his victim, Tyrrel, by brooding over Tyrrel's part in the death of his innocent ward Emily. This part of the plot is modeled after Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-1748). Falkland is finally provoked to secret murder after receiving a beating in public from Tyrrel. Suspected of the murder, Falkland acquits himself through eloquence and reference to his previously unblemished reputation.

Godwin's unique contribution, which has led to *Caleb Williams* being called—incorrectly—the first psychological novel, opens as Caleb, a poor boy whom Mr. Falkland has taken on as a secretary, begins to suspect his master of Tyrrel's murder and to search for proof of it. It is clear that Caleb's motivations in this search go far beyond idle curiosity. As the following passage indicates, Caleb is stimulated in his investigations not by a disinterested desire for justice, but by a peculiar attraction to Falkland and a Faustian love of knowledge as power:

“This is the murderer! . . . It is out! It is discovered! Guilty on my soul!” While I thus proceeded with hasty steps along the most secret paths of the garden, and from time to time gave vent to the tumult of my thoughts in involuntary exclamations, I felt as if my animal system had undergone a total revolution. My blood boiled within me. I was conscious to a kind of rapture for which I could not account. I was solemn, yet full of rapid emotion, burning with indignation and energy. In the very tempest and hurricane of the passions, I seemed to enjoy the most soul-ravishing calm. I cannot better express the then state of my mind, than by saying, I was never so perfectly alive as at that moment.

Falkland is portrayed as a maniac ravaged by the twin emotions of remorse and pride; one can see from this passage that the justice-seeker Caleb is no less unbalanced than the murderer Falkland.

Falkland finally confesses to the youth, cautioning him that he can only remain alive by never leaving his sphere of influence. The rest of the novel is devoted to a depiction of the strange law of gravity that never allows Caleb to escape Falkland's orbit, yet that also allows him close enough to be destroyed.

When Caleb first attempts to leave, Falkland has him imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of theft. After Caleb is condemned, Godwin has his hero describe the horrors of prison in a documentary style—complete with footnotes—derived from *The Newgate Calendar* and other examples of criminal biography. These passages are documentations of Godwin's claim, made in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, that punishment by the state was unnecessary, counterproductive, and usually unjust. The genre of criminal biography continues to dominate as Caleb escapes from prison and is housed by a gang of thieves, before he leaves them to assume a series of disguises as beggar, Irishman, Jew, and cripple.

In these descriptions, however, the novel's existential theme reemerges. Caleb's own personality has been crushed into oblivion by the might of his persecutor; all the figures he impersonates are marginal, despised by society. There are continual twists and turns as Caleb is rejected, abused, and pursued by the authorities and by Falkland's agent, Gines, to the point where several times he contemplates suicide—as one presumes that Falkland has also done. It is Caleb's double battle, with Falkland and with the nothingness to which Falkland would reduce him, which makes the novel so compelling, even horrifying, and which more than compensates for its generic and stylistic instabilities.

The astonishing depth of psychology in *Caleb Williams* is nowhere better demonstrated than in the series of reversals in the relationship between Falkland and Williams. Each is in turn accuser and accused, master and slave, hunter and hunted, aggressor and victim, police officer and criminal. These stunning reversals

occur so swiftly and are expressed with such vigor that they impart to the reader an almost physical shock. The reversals constitute a questioning of the possibility of distinguishing between innocence and guilt.

Thus it is fitting that at the end of the novel, when Caleb finally brings Falkland to trial, the latter "rose from his seat supported by the attendants, and—to my infinite astonishment—threw himself into my arms!" Falkland's innocent guilt touches Caleb's guilty innocence in a final embrace. The contagion of murder passes from one to the other; Falkland dies three days after confessing his crime, and Caleb is left to meditate that "I have been his murderer."

The remarkable relationship between Caleb and Falkland has been subjected to at least three allegorical readings: the political, the psychoanalytic, and the religious. In the opinion of P. N. Furbank, the novel is a "highly dramatized symbolical picture of Godwin himself in the act of writing *Political Justice*." According to this reading, Godwin believes that he (Caleb Williams) has accused the ancien régime (Falkland) unfairly and with excessive violence and that his rhetoric could end up causing more terror and murder than the established political system has caused. The year 1794 was the time of the Reign of Terror in France under Robespierre, who, like Godwin, ardently admired Rousseau; the year before, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette had gone to the guillotine. These murders caused many English supporters of the French Revolution to doubt the justice of their cause. Indeed, *Caleb Williams* is Godwin's farewell to radical writing. His next novel, *St. Leon*, is told from the point of view not of a working-class person such as Caleb, but of an aristocrat who, like Falkland, commits errors as a result of his absorption with questions of honor and glory.

The interpretation of Caleb's intense curiosity as a neurosis draws on Sigmund Freud's analysis of the Oedipus complex and of the love-hate relationships within families to explain the simultaneous love and mutual persecution between the protagonists. According to some, Caleb's opening of Falkland's trunk—whose contents remain a mystery—means coming into contact with his own unconscious, an event that naturally shatters his peace forever.

The religious reading of *Caleb Williams* draws on

the Calvinist conception of God to explain Falkland's simultaneous benevolence and terrorism. Caleb's curiosity and his contending with the divine realm are sinful and doomed to failure. This reading is justified by Falkland's own comparison of himself with God, by Godwin's Calvinist background, and by his mentioning religious tracts about murder and about religious persecution as sources for the novel. According to Godwin, in John Reynolds's *God's Revenge Against Murder and Adultery* (1621-1635, revised 1770), "the beam of the eye of Omniscience was represented as perpetually pursuing the guilty, and laying open his most hidden retreats to the light of day." Godwin's remark is interesting for several reasons. It is surprising that the atheist Godwin would consciously choose the relationship between human beings and God as a basis for that between Caleb and Falkland. Also, because Falkland rather than Caleb is represented as omniscient and all-powerful in the novel, the remark suggests that Caleb is the guilty party or, because no character in the novel completely escapes condemnation, the remark at least suggests that he is a guilty party.

The religious motif, however, contradicts Godwin's stated purpose (in a preface withdrawn from the first edition) of presenting through the fiction of *Caleb Williams* "a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism, by which man becomes the destroyer of man." The reader's inability to make a clear moral distinction between Caleb and Falkland counteracts the political message of the novel, which was uppermost in Godwin's conscious mind. Nevertheless, the pictures of prison life, of the robber's trade, and of the social inequality that allows Falkland to make his servant his legal victim, were not lost on eighteenth century English readers.

Another theme common to *Caleb Williams* and to the genre of detective and mystery fiction is the question of knowledge and legal proof. Its many juridical scenes confront two disparate forms of proof, one rational and the other emotional. Caleb is wrongly condemned by circumstantial and palpable proof, by inductive reasoning. Similarly, disguise and its detection proceed on the basis of the senses. On the other hand, Falkland acquits himself of his murder charge through an eloquence that strikes the hearts rather than

the minds of the jurors. Oddly, the climactic scene shows Caleb, who has not the slightest shred of evidence against Falkland, using rhetoric in a similar fashion, not to prove, but to move. (Indeed, Godwin realized this and ended the original manuscript with Falkland's acquittal and Caleb's imprisonment for malicious prosecution.) *Caleb Williams* would seem to be situated at a crisis point in legal epistemology, between a traditional belief in words, birth, and reputation and a newer methodology of empirical evidence. That Caleb opts for the former and thereby imitates his persecutor Falkland shows once again the interchangeability of the two.

Many of the themes of criminality and mystery that Godwin exploited in *Caleb Williams* are repeated in his later, rather pedestrian efforts. Like Caleb Williams, the title figure of *St. Leon* is falsely accused of a crime, the murder of an old man. The aristocrat Alton of *Cloudsley* (1830) bears a certain resemblance to Falkland. Although good at heart, he perpetrates the crime of kidnaping his brother's heir, so that he may inherit his title. Both Alton and St. Leon share Falkland's inordinate passion for reputation and esteem. The title figure of *Deloraine* (1833) kills his wife's former husband by mistake. Deloraine, like Caleb, flees and uses disguise in order to avoid justice. The reappearance of these themes, dispersed over various works, reminds the reader of their psychological importance for Godwin. Their concentration into the three hundred pages of *Caleb Williams* allowed it to become one of the most important, controversial, and influential of English crime novels.

Thomas Beebee

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *Things as They Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, 1794 (also known as *The Adventures of Caleb Williams: Or, Things as They Are*; best known as *Caleb Williams*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, 1799; *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling*, 1805; *Mandeville*, 1817; *Cloudesley*, 1830; *Deloraine*, 1833

NONFICTION: *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 1793; *Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794*, 1794 (best known as *Cursory Strictures*); *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet*, 1803; *Of Population*, 1820; *History of the Commonwealth of England, 1824-1828* (4 volumes); *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 1993 (7 volumes)

EDITED TEXT: *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 1798

MISCELLANEOUS: *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 1992 (8 volumes; Mark Philip, editor)

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JOE GORES

Born: Rochester, Minnesota; December 25, 1931

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dan Kearney & Associates (DKA) file, 1972-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAN KEARNEY heads his own investigative agency, Daniel Kearney & Associates (DKA), in San Francisco. A gruff, no-nonsense, middle-aged married man

with a chiseled jaw and bent nose, Kearney seldom shows his emotions at work, the result of a quarter-century of experience in repossession and collection work. He is capable of assuming subtle gradations of character—from tough to tender—as necessary to fit particular cases. Surreptitiously called the Great White Father by his associates, Kearney usually directs other operatives from the office and has dozens of valuable contacts throughout the city. Now and then he works in the field when his special talents in legal matters, leadership, or dissembling are required.

PATRICK MICHAEL “O. B.” O’BANNON is a freckled, red-haired, middle-aged man. He is also a dedicated imbiber, a condition that is sometimes problematic in his work. He set up DKA with Kearney in the 1960’s after both men had gained considerable experience in their profession. A slight, flush-faced, married man, O’Bannon is the agency’s best field agent, thanks to his innate ability to charm his way into a target’s confidence.

GISELE MARC is a smart and ambitious young woman whose emotions show on her face. She began as a secretary at the agency and worked her way up to office manager. She is responsible for assigning and coordinating various cases with the appropriate operatives. A sometime field agent as well, Marc is a tall, striking, blue-eyed single blond built like a fashion model.

BART HESLIP is an African American agency operative in his late twenties. A former world champion caliber middleweight boxer with broad shoulders on a sturdy, 158-pound frame, Heslip exudes quiet menace and easily slips into street jargon when prowling among less savory denizens of the city on tail jobs, infiltrations, and stakeouts. Heslip has a steady girlfriend, Corinne Jones, who hates the effect that the agency business has on her man.

LARRY BALLARD is young, idealistic, athletic, and good-looking in a rugged, masculine way. He was recruited to work at DKA by Heslip, his best friend. He pursues agency work with the innocence of a puppy and the tenacity of a bulldog as he—sometimes painfully—learns the tricks and techniques necessary to achieve his assignments. Ballard has an eye for the ladies but seems attracted more to physical attributes than compatibility, a defect in judgment that often costs him. He lives alone and makes terrific coffee.

CONTRIBUTION

Like fellow mystery writer and hard-boiled pioneer Dashiell Hammett, Joe Gores is one of a handful of authors who has actually worked as a private investigator. He worked for a dozen years during the 1950’s and 1960’s in San Francisco—the same city where Hammett worked—at agencies specializing in skip tracing, repossessions, and embezzlement and insur-

ance investigations. Gores immensely enjoyed detective work and from the beginning kept extensive case notes that he has mined for material ever since. His initial Dan Kearney & Associates (DKA) file short story, “The Mayfield Case,” appeared in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in 1967.

Gores’s work has received critical acclaim from his first novel, *A Time of Predators* (1969), which won an Edgar Award. He also received Edgar Awards for best short story for “Goodbye, Pops” and for best episode in a television series for “No Immunity for Murder.” Two other novels, *Come Morning* (1986) and *Thirty-two Cadillacs* (1992), were also nominated for Edgar Awards, and Gores has received the Japanese Maltese Falcon Award. However, he has experienced considerably more commercial success from script writing than from novel writing. Gores has served as secretary, vice president, president, and on the board of directors of the Mystery Writers of America.

The first DKA file novel, *Dead Skip*, was published in 1972. Expanding on the format of Hammett’s Continental Op stories, Gores follows the activities of many DKA detectives individually and collectively as they pursue subjects and the solutions to questions such as What really happened? Who did it? What punishment fits the crime? Gores’s nonseries novels likewise often revolve around similar investigative techniques as employed by goal-oriented amateurs and professionals seeking answers to specific questions.

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph Nicholas “Joe” Gores was born on December 25, 1931, in Rochester, Minnesota, the son of accountant Joseph Mattias Gores and Mildred Dorothy Duncanson Gores. Raised Catholic, Gores entered Notre Dame University intending to become a cartoonist. Caught up more with storytelling than art, he began writing short stories, collecting hundreds of rejection slips before he made a sale.

On graduation in 1953, Gores worked his way west, holding a variety of part-time jobs along the way: truck driver, construction worker, logger, carnival worker, and assistant motel manager. Arriving in California, he worked as an instructor at a gymnasium in Palo Alto before landing a job that would influence the rest of

his career: He became a private investigator at L. A. Walker & Company in San Francisco. He worked at the agency from 1955 to 1957 and took graduate-level classes. He also sold the first of many short stories, "Chain Gang," to *Manhunt* magazine in 1957. After a stint in the U. S. Army (1958-1959)—served at the Pentagon, writing biographies of American generals—Gores returned to L. A. Walker & Company before moving to a similar job with David Kikkert & Associates. He worked at that agency from 1959 to 1962, meanwhile earning a master's degree from Stanford University (1961). From 1963 to 1964, Gores taught at a boys' secondary school in Kenya, then returned to San Francisco and Kikkert (1965-1967). In 1968, by which time he had published more than twenty short stories, Gores became manager and auctioneer at San Francisco's Automobile Auction Company, where he remained until 1976, after which he turned full-time to writing. In 1976, he married Dori Jane Corfitzen, who bore the couple's two children, Timothy and Gillian.

Gores's first novel, *A Time of Predators*, appeared in 1969. The story of Curt Halstead, a Stanford sociology professor and former military commando who seeks revenge against a gang of thugs that raped his wife, the novel won the Edgar Award for best first novel. That same year, Gores's "Goodbye, Pops" won a second Edgar for best short story.

In 1972, Gores introduced the series for which he is best known—DKA file—with the publication of *Dead Skip*, which concerns the activities of a group of investigators, skip-tracers, and auto repo men who work for Dan Kearney & Associates. In addition to his regular complement of short stories, Gores produced a nonfictional work (*Marine Salvage*, 1971), another DKA novel (*Final Notice*, 1973), a short-story collection (*Honolulu, Port of Call: A Selection of South Sea Tales*, 1974), and two nonseries novels (*Interface*, 1974; *Hammett*, 1975) before being invited to write for television. He wrote the episode "No Immunity for Murder" (1975) for *Kojak* (1973-1978), which won for Gores his third Edgar Award.

Gores concentrated on lucrative television writing for the next fifteen years, contributing dozens of scripts to such mystery-action series as *Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988), *Mike Hammer* (1984-1987), *Remington*

Steele (1982-1987), *T. J. Hooker* (1982-1986), and *Columbo* (1968-2003). He also wrote screenplays, often adapting his own work. His 1975 novel *Hammett*, about real-life author Dashiell Hammett's fictional involvement in a mystery, became a film in 1982.

In the late 1980's, Gores returned to novel writing. He resurrected the DKA file series after a long hiatus with a new entry, *Thirty-two Cadillacs*. Gores released another collection of short stories (*Mostly Murder*, 1992) and began writing more DKA file and nonseries novels.

ANALYSIS

Joe Gores learned and refined his craft through the publication of dozens of crime-centered short stories over the course of a decade. These were written while he worked for private detective agencies and while he pursued a master's degree (1954-1961), first in creative writing and later in English literature, at Stanford University. His detective work enhanced his persistence and gave him a wealth of plot material based on close contact with a wide range of people during investigations. His education—though the university discouraged commercial work and disparaged genre writing by refusing Gores's proposed thesis exploring the works of Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald—provided the means to turn Gores's craft to art.

Gores was writing short stories when Simon & Schuster invited him to submit a novel. The award-winning result, *A Time of Predators*, lifted him to a new plateau of creativity and recognition, realized particularly in his DKA file novels, which are widely regarded as superior private eye procedurals.

An invitation to write for television not only gave Gores new insights into visual storytelling but also rewarded him financially better than novel writing alone could. The monies generated by his screenplays gave Gores the security and the leisure to carefully hone his later novels, both nonseries and DKA entries, into true gems of the genre.

The main difference between Gores's nonseries and series novels is the focus. The nonseries novels typically concern stories told from the perspective of characters outside or on the fringes of the law: a drug-

dealing (*Interface*) or retired (*Hammett*) private eye with a personal agenda, a shattered loner (*A Time of Predators* and *Dead Man*, 1993) seeking vengeance, or hunter and hunted (*Wolf Time*, 1989, and *Glass Tiger*, 2006) who circle each other in a battle of wits. The series novels present the point of view of upholders of the law, who must sometimes resort to bad deeds to achieve justice. Suspense and pursuit, deceit and betrayal are themes common to both. Stories are told crisply and economically and enhanced with apt similes to fix images and motifs in the reader's mind.

Despite Gores's abilities to convincingly spin a variety of crime-flavored tales, it is probable that he will always be most strongly identified with the DKA file novels. In each new entry to the series, plots are more complex, characters are more fully rounded, relationships are more finely drawn, and the reading experience is ultimately more satisfying.

The DKA novels illustrate particular Gores fortes: his intimate knowledge of San Francisco and environs, his keen eye in observing human behavior, his ear for realistic dialogue, and his sense of absurd humor—especially from *Thirty-two Cadillacs* onward—which helps lighten the otherwise bleak and violent world in which his protagonists operate. Unlike many authors of private investigator novels, Gores details with authority the everyday frustrations of the job—paperwork, dead-end leads, burnout, and legal maneuvering—that plague detectives as they move through the broad spectrum of society.

DEAD SKIP

The first DKA file novel, *Dead Skip*, is a classic in the private investigator procedural genre. Operative Bart Heslip lies in a coma after an early morning attack, and the rest of the detectives, led by Larry Ballard, must examine Heslip's current caseload to determine the cause of the crime and the culprit behind it. A straightforward race against the clock—in seventy-two hours, the facts of the case will be turned over to the authorities if a solution is not found—but with many detours to ratchet up the tension, *Dead Skip* includes an homage to Parker, the hard-boiled professional criminal character created by mystery writer Donald Westlake, writing as Richard Stark.

COME MORNING

Gores's terse suspense thriller *Come Morning*, his first novel after a long sojourn as a scriptwriter in Hollywood, concerns Runyon, who has spent eight years in San Quentin for the theft of two million dollars worth of diamonds that were never recovered and are, in fact, unrecoverable. Runyon's plans to go straight are disrupted by a succession of individuals, including a dogged insurance investigator; Runyon's former partners, who want their share of the loot; a beautiful would-be writer; and a mysterious stranger who picks off contenders for the jewels one by one in a fast-paced tale involving Gores's familiar themes of betrayal and murder.

CASES

Cases (1999) is a fictionalized account of Gores's 1950's post-college journey across the United States and his subsequent employment with a San Francisco private investigative agency. In the book, the agency is run by shady Edward "Drinker" Cope. Through his alter ego, Pierce "Dunc" Duncan, Gores relives and embellishes experiences encountered while hitchhiking, carousing, and working at a succession of odd jobs. As Dunc wends through Georgia, across Texas, and into Nevada on his way west, he is unjustly imprisoned as a vagrant, swept up into violent bar brawls, enmeshed in a scheme involving illegal immigrants, involved in a rigged prize fight, and entangled in a weird California religious cult in a series of sometimes implausible coincidences. Part memoir, part love story, part mystery, and wholly a paean to lost innocence, *Cases* is a sweeping—if fragmented—novel that in passing pays tribute to various film noir traditions encompassing prison films (*I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, 1932), organized crime films (*The Las Vegas Story*, 1952), and boxing films (*Body and Soul*, 1947). An interesting if not entirely successful experiment in extrapolating from memory, *Cases* nonetheless contains the usual Gores trademarks: suspenseful situations, well-drawn characters, and occasional lyrical passages.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DKA FILE SERIES: *Dead Skip*, 1972; *Final Notice*, 1973; *Gone, No Forwarding*, 1978; *Thirty-two*

Cadillacs, 1992; *Contract Null and Void*, 1996; *Cons, Scams, and Grifts*, 2001

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Time of Predators*, 1969; *Interface*, 1974; *Hammett*, 1975; *Come Morning*, 1986; *Wolf Time*, 1989; *Dead Man*, 1993; *Menaced Assassin*, 1994; *Cases*, 1999; *Glass Tiger*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Honolulu, Port of Call: A Selection of South Sea Tales*, 1974; *Mostly Murder*, 1992; *Speak of the Devil: Fourteen Tales of Crimes and Their Punishments*, 1999; *Stakeout on Page Street, and Other DKA Files*, 2000

TELEPLAYS: *Golden Gate Memorial*, 1978; *High Risk*, 1985 (with Brian Garfield)

NONFICTION: *Marine Salvage*, 1971

EDITED TEXT: *Tricks and Treats*, 1976 (with Bill Prozini)

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Accardi, Catherine A. "The Cool Gray City." *Mystery Readers Journal: San Francisco Mysteries* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1995). Accardi identifies noteworthy San Francisco mysteries, citing Gores's *Thirty-two Cadillacs* for its portrayal of the city in the 1990's and Hammett for his description of the city in 1928.

Garfield, Brian. "Joe Gores: A Private-Eye Novelist You Should Know." *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 2, 1986, p. 26. Profile of Gores on the publication of *Come Morning* looks at his personal history and his development as a writer.

Gores, Joe. "A Foggy Night." In *Discovering the Maltese Falcon and Sam Spade*, edited by Richard Layman. San Francisco: Vince Emery Productions, 2005. Reprint of an article that originally appeared in the November 4, 1975, issue of *City of San Francisco Magazine*. Employing the investigative techniques he used as a San Francisco detective, Gores

sifts through the text of *The Maltese Falcon* to reveal the real-life settings of the book, including Sam Spade's apartment, the Spade & Archer office building, and other locations.

_____. "It Was a Diamond, All Right." In *Lost Stories*, by Dashiell Hammett, edited by Vince Emery. San Francisco: Vince Emery Productions, 2005. Gores's introduction recaps the highlights of his life, focusing on his discovery of hard-boiled crime fiction, particularly the work of Dashiell Hammett, which inspired him to follow Hammett by becoming a private investigator and later a writer. Gores makes a compelling case for Hammett's influence, not only on the hard-boiled writers who followed him but also on many mainstream writers and on films and television as well.

Kenney, Peter. "Specialists in Skip-Tracing and Re-possessions." *Mystery Readers Journal* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1995). Kenney looks at private eye novels in San Francisco, including Gores's DKA files series.

McKimmey, James. "Joe Gores." *Writer's Digest* (August, 1988): 31-35. Brief overview of Gores's life and career that is particularly useful for Gores's pithy advice to aspiring writers—"Believe in yourself"—and for its demonstration of how he writes and edits, based on a succession of prose-tightening and tension-increasing revisions of the opening page of his novel *Interface*.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on the hard-boiled detective novel, which sheds light on Hammett's work and provides background for Gores's writings.

Schaal, Carol. "Mystery Writer Gores Shares Life Lessons." *Notre Dame Magazine* (Summer, 2000). Comments from Gores regarding what he has learned in the course of living and writing.

RON GOULART

Born: Berkeley, California; January 13, 1933

Also wrote as Victor Appleton; Chad Calhoun; Susan Claudia; Franklin W. Dixon; R. T. Edwards; Laura Lee Hope; Ian R. Jamieson; Josephine Kains; Jillian Kearny; Carolyn Keene; Howard Lee; Kenneth Robeson; Zeke Masters; Frank S. Shawn; Joseph Silva; Con Steffanson

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth; metaphysical and metafictional parody; horror; comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Easy, 1971-
Jack Summer, 1971-
Jake Conger, 1973-
Ben Jolson, 1973-
The Avenger, 1974-
Odd Jobs, 1975-
Terry Spring, 1978-
Groucho Marx, 1998-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN EASY, Goulart's only conventional detective character, is a Hollywood private investigator in his thirties. Tough of mind and body, he is usually involved in tracking missing women through exotic—and sometimes erotic—Southern California milieus. Easy strives to discern rationality amid the chaotic environs into which his cases take him.

JACK SUMMER, an amateur sleuth and intergalactic investigative reporter for *Mudrake Magazine*, is a handsome crusader in his thirties with remarkable intuition and considerable appeal for beautiful women. He solves everything from Jack the Ripper-type murders to intergalactic drug smuggling.

JAKE CONGER uses a number of “wild talents” (especially making himself invisible) to solve outrageously wacky cases for a shadowy government agency. Conger is resourceful, clever, and unbeatable.

BEN JOLSON uses his unusual ability to alter his shape to solve seemingly impossible cases of intergalactic wrongdoing for the universally famous Chame-

leon Corps, into which he was drafted against his will and which he serves only under duress.

THE AVENGER undertakes cases that involve vampires, demons, and other supernatural beings. The stories in which he appears are aimed primarily at a juvenile audience.

JAKE PACE and **HILDY PACE**, the husband and wife owners of a futuristic investigative agency known as *Odd Jobs, Inc.*, take on cases that have baffled all other private eyes or which other private eyes refuse to take. Jake and Hildy are confronted with cases ranging from a prolific creator of monsters to a cryogenically preserved Nazi scientist to an assassination ring specializing in heads of state.

TERRY SPRING is a young, idealistic, and exceedingly nosy female television reporter/detective. She could almost be said to be a female version of the Karl Kolchek character in the old *Nightstalker* television series. She is particularly attracted to unusual or macabre cases.

GROUCHO MARX, the pun-prone comedian-actor, is portrayed as a private detective in league with his friend, former crime reporter Frank Denby. Together they solve crimes in the late 1930's and early 1940's, often involving Hollywood personalities.

CONTRIBUTION

In the tradition of Anthony Boucher (with whom he once studied), Alfred Bester, Mack Reynolds, and Hal Clement, the prolific Ron Goulart successfully blends—and bends—the disparate mediums of mystery and detective fiction and science fiction. He is the only writer ever to win a Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award for what is arguably a science-fiction novel (*After Things Fell Apart*, 1970). Even his “conventional” mystery and detective fiction often requires the willing suspension of disbelief necessary for the enjoyment of science fiction. His stories are notable for iconoclastic satire, wry humor, and a perceptive and sometimes compassionate insight into the human condition. Goulart—who was nominated for a Nebula Award in 1966 for his short story “Calling

Dr. Clockwork”—except for perfecting the crossover story that combines elements from various traditions, has brought no major innovation to either the mystery and detective or the science-fiction field. Aficionados of both genres, however, can savor his distinctive fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Ronald Joseph Goulart was born to Joseph Silveria Goulart and Josephine (Macri) Goulart on January 13, 1933, in Berkeley, California. He studied writing with Anthony Boucher while still in high school. Boucher had an admittedly strong influence on Goulart's career, especially in his penchant for mixing the genres of mystery and detective and science fiction.

Goulart enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1951 and received a bachelor of arts in 1955. After college, he began a career as an advertising copywriter with the San Francisco firm of Guild, Bascom, and Bonfigli, where he worked in two separate stints (1955-1957 and 1958-1960). He moved to Los Angeles in 1961 to take a consulting copywriting job with Alan Alch, Inc., where he remained through 1963. He left the advertising field in that year to pursue writing full-time. Goulart married fellow writer Fran Sheridan in 1964, and two sons, Sean and Stefan, were eventually born to them. Goulart returned to advertising copywriting briefly from 1966 to 1968 with the San Francisco firm of Hoefer, Dieterich, and Brown. In 1968 he became a full-time freelance writer, and he has created an enormous volume of work that includes original novels in a variety of genres, novelizations of films, comics, television series, short-story collections, entries in existing series under house pseudonyms, collaborative fictional efforts, and a considerable body of nonfiction.

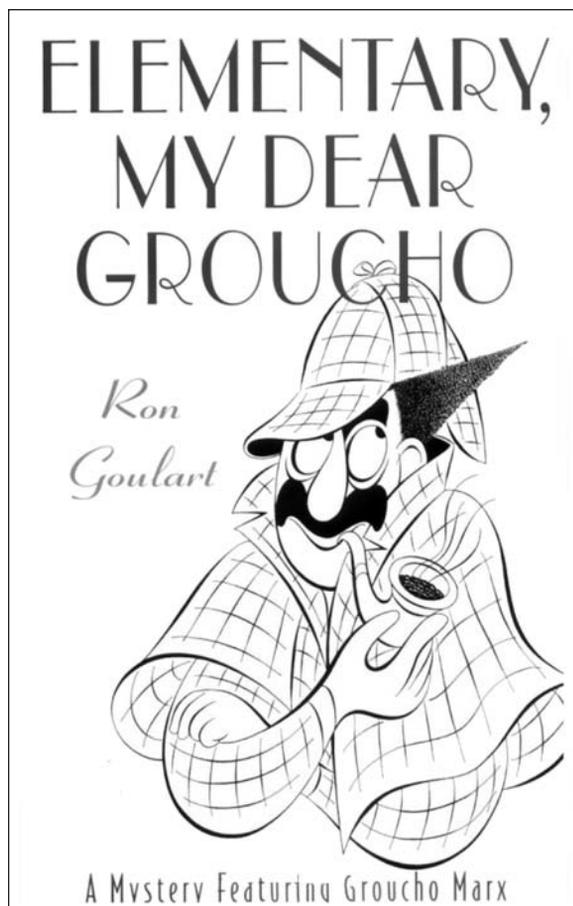
Goulart's first book-length effort was in the mystery and detective field, where he served as editor and author of an introduction to *The Hardboiled Dicks: An Anthology and Study of Pulp Detective Fiction* (1965). A second anthology, *Line Up Tough Guys* (1966) followed before the release of Goulart's first full-length fiction, *The Sword Swallower* (1968). A science-fiction novel that introduced a universe far from Earth, known as the Barnum System, where shape-shifters

called the Chameleon Corps operate, *The Sword Swallower* set the standard for the mystery-science-fiction hybrid that became Goulart's hallmark in a succession of Barnum System books, including *The Fire-Eater* (1970), *Shaggy Planet* (1973), *A Whiff of Madness* (1975) and *The Wicked Cyborg* (1978). In 1970, his best-selling *After Things Fell Apart* won the Edgar Award and helped establish his reputation in both mystery-detective and science-fiction genres.

Since the late 1960's, Goulart has produced a veritable avalanche of written work: some two hundred books and several hundred short stories that have been frequently anthologized. Much of his work involves the author's longtime fascination for comic books—critics, in fact, note that a great deal of his fiction, though usually action-packed and entertaining, is cartoonlike, with two-dimensional characters, overblown dialogue, and wildly improbable plots. Goulart has invented his own comic heroes (the Star Hawk series, with illustrations by Gil Kane), contributed to the comic creations of others (including Challengers of the Unknown, the Hulk, Captain America, Vampirella, the Phantom, and Flash Gordon), and written extensively about comics, cartoonists, and the pulps in nonfictional works (such as *The Adventurous Decade: Comic Strips in the Thirties*, 1975; *Ron Goulart's Great History of Comic Books*, 1986; *The Great Comic Book Artists*, 1986, and *Great American Comic Books*, 2001). In 1998 Goulart launched a new humorous historical mystery series, featuring comedian-actor Groucho Marx, with the publication of *Groucho Marx, Master Detective*.

ANALYSIS

Ron Goulart defies categorization as a writer. His published works range from original novels and short stories to novelizations of motion picture and television scripts, from novels based on comic-strip characters to nonfictional studies of pulp magazines and cartoons, and contributions in existing series from Tom Swift to the Bobbsey Twins. Much of his best work is in the mystery and detective or science-fiction genres or, more usually, a combination of the two. His fiction is invariably satiric. The irreverent humor in his best work is worthy of Mark Twain; in his worst work, the



The first novel in Goulart's Groucho Marx series, which has the legendary screen comedian acting as an amateur sleuth.

humor is unworthy of an inept standup comedian.

Goulart's characters, even main protagonists, are typically only superficially developed. All his stories unfold primarily through dialogue. He is a master at concocting startling opening sentences, which seize interest; this ability is perhaps a legacy of his career in advertising, where the emphasis is on capturing attention and drawing in the reader. The characters that cavort through his pages are outrageously bizarre parodies of familiar human types or well-known individuals. Even Goulart's "straight" mystery and detective works contain situations as fantastic as anything found in science fiction.

The fictional worlds created by Goulart are seemingly without direction or purpose. The characters in his mad universe are as unpredictable as the inmates of

any insane asylum. Goulart's heroes (or antiheroes) are constantly engaged in struggles to impress some sane pattern on societies undergoing constant random metamorphoses. They usually succeed but often in ways more disturbing to the reader than the worlds they describe. Running throughout most of his stories is Goulart's sometimes cruel and always impudent humor.

Most of Goulart's straight mystery and detective fiction is set in Southern California. The area's various arcane subcultures, as seen through Goulart's eyes, bear a striking resemblance to his description of the through-the-looking-glass worlds of the Barnum System, in which many of his science-fiction stories take place. Those earthly locales are the settings for stories and characters reminiscent of fairy chess, a game in which the players make up pieces (complete with moves) as the game progresses. Such characters and situations permeate Goulart's fiction. The Southern California of John Easy could be a planet in the Barnum System. In all of his works, Goulart holds up various unpleasant aspects of society and forces his readers to scrutinize them. The world as Goulart portrays it seems to be a cosmic practical joke perpetrated accidentally on the fall-guy human race by random chance. The crime, its solution, and the characters are not paramount in Goulart's fiction. Goulart is intent on amusing readers, making them laugh (he often uses several pages to set up obscure jokes or puns), yet at the same time making them think seriously about themselves and society. His stories are not tightly plotted, nor do they contain clues for the solution of clever puzzles. The characters are virtually never developed fully enough that the reader can identify with, or even like or dislike them. This is true even of recurring characters in Goulart's several series. His best mystery and detective fiction is written on many levels and is definitely not for readers who are interested only in unraveling the solutions to puzzling crimes.

AFTER THINGS FELL APART

Nowhere is Goulart's caustic wit more pronounced than in his acclaimed *After Things Fell Apart*. The hero is craggily handsome Jim Haley of the Private Inquiry Office (a privately funded investigative agency with the authority of an official government bureau). Haley

attempts to track down Lady Day, the leader of a mostly female organization bent on the assassination of prominent public figures in the San Francisco Enclave, one of many independent states formed after the (unexplained) collapse of the United States government at some indeterminate time in the future. As he homes in on Lady Day, Haley stoically encounters a procession of decidedly odd characters in places such as the Nixon Institute (administered by the Parker Brothers), a home for aging rock music stars; the G-Man Motel, owned and operated by former members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose customers must submit to foot-printing and interrogation before being assigned a room; and a town controlled by the amateur Mafia (no Italians allowed).

A WHIFF OF MADNESS

Jim Haley's infrequently encountered fellow agent, the bald and sexually insatiable La Penna, is interchangeable with Palma, the bald and sexually insatiable photographer-sidekick of *Mudrake Magazine's* Jack Summer in one of Goulart's science-fiction/detective series set in the Barnum System. In *A Whiff of Madness*, a typical novel of the Jack Summer series, Summer and Palma are dispatched to the planet Peregrine to investigate rumors that the king of one of the planet's warring nations is responsible for the serial murders of little old ladies. After Summer's arrival on Peregrine, he frequently sees the king on television telling his subjects, "I am not a murderer." Despite the king's assurances to the contrary, Summer and Palma (with the help of some sexy ladies and assorted screwball characters) manage to show that the king turns into a royal strangler when he sniffs an addictive gas that was developed to make ordinary soldiers into ruthless killing machines.

EVEN THE BUTLER WAS POOR

A nonseries comic crime caper novel, *Even the Butler Was Poor* (1990) revolves around beautiful auburn-haired Helen Joanne "H. J." Mavity, a painter of romance paperback covers. After a former boyfriend who owes her five thousand dollars drops dead at her feet in a shopping mall, she enlists the aid of former husband Ben Spanner, a gifted mimic, comic, and voiceover actor on radio and television commercials (who specializes in personifying inanimate objects,

such as a baby's bottom for diaper ads or an English muffin for a fish-and-chips account) in solving the meaning of the dead man's last words to her before expiring: "Ninety-nine clop clop." As usual, Goulart spends little time sketching in character details, preferring instead to plunge headlong into a wacky mystery incorporating a mutilated ventriloquist's dummy, damaging photographs, attempted blackmail, and murder—while adding a typical assortment of puns, elaborate jokes, and pokes at society's foibles.

Paul Madden

Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BARNUM SYSTEM SERIES: *The Sword Swallower*, 1968; *The Fire-Eater*, 1970; *Shaggy Planet*, 1973; *Spacehawk, Inc.*, 1974; *The Wicked Cyborg*, 1978; *Dr. Scofflaw*, 1979 (bound with Isidore Haiblum's *Outerworld*, published as *Binary Star No. 3*)

FRAGMENTED AMERICA SERIES: *After Things Fell Apart*, 1970; *Gadget Man*, 1971; *Hawkshaw*, 1972; *Crackpot*, 1977; *Brinkman*, 1981

JOHN EASY SERIES: *If Dying Was All*, 1971; *Too Sweet to Die*, 1972; *The Same Lie Twice*, 1973; *One Grave Too Many*, 1974

JACK SUMMER (BARNUM SYSTEM) SERIES: *Death Cell*, 1971; *Plunder*, 1972; *A Whiff of Madness*, 1976; *Galaxy Jane*, 1986

BEN JOLSON (BARNUM SYSTEM) SERIES: *The Tin Angel*, 1973; *Flux*, 1974

CLEOPATRA JONES SERIES (NOVELIZATION OF SCREENPLAYS BY MAX JULIEN AND SHELDON KELLER): *Cleopatra Jones*, 1973; *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold*, 1975

THE PHANTOM SERIES (AS SHAWN, WITH LEE FALK): *The Golden Circle*, 1973; *The Hydra Monster*, 1973; *The Mystery of the Sea Horse*, 1973; *The Veiled Lady*, 1973; *The Swamp Rats*, 1974; *The Goggle-Eyed Pirates*, 1974

JAKE CONGER SERIES: *A Talent for the Invisible*, 1973; *The Panchronicon Plot*, 1977; *Hello, Lemuria*, 1979

THE AVENGER SERIES (AS ROBESON): *The Man from Atlantis*, 1974; *Red Moon*, 1974; *The Purple Zombie*, 1974; *Dr. Time*, 1974; *The Nightwitch Devil*,

1974; *Black Chariots*, 1974; *The Cartoon Crimes*, 1974; *The Death Machine*, 1975; *The Blood Countess*, 1975; *The Glass Man*, 1975; *The Iron Skull*, 1975; *Demon Island*, 1975

VAMPIRELLA SERIES: *Bloodstalk*, 1975; *On Alien Wings*, 1975; *Deadwalk*, 1976; *Blood Wedding*, 1976; *Deathgame*, 1976; *Snakegod*, 1976; *Vampirella*, 1976

TERRY SPRING SERIES (AS KAINS): *The Curse of the Golden Skull*, 1978; *The Devil Mask Mystery*, 1978; *The Green Lama Mystery*, 1979; *The Whispering Cat Mystery*, 1979; *The Witch's Tower Mystery*, 1979; *The Laughing Dragon Mystery*, 1980

ODD JOBS SERIES: *Odd Jobs No. 101 and Other Future Crimes and Intrigues*, 1975; *Calling Dr. Patchwork*, 1978; *Hail Hibbler*, 1980; *Big Bang*, 1982; *Brainz, Inc.*, 1985

GROUCHO MARX SERIES: *Groucho Marx, Master Detective*, 1998; *Groucho Marx, Private Eye*, 1999; *Elementary, My Dear Groucho*, 1999; *Groucho Marx and the Broadway Murders*, 2001; *Groucho Marx, Secret Agent*, 2002; *Groucho Marx, King of the Jungle*, 2005

HARDY BOYS CASE FILES SERIES (AS DIXON): *Disaster for Hire*, 1989; *The Deadliest Dare*, 1989; *Castle Fear*, 1990

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Enormous Hourglass*, 1976; *Skyrocket Steele*, 1980; *Ghosting*, 1980; *Prize Meets Murder*, 1984 (as Edwards, with Otto Penzler and Edward Hoch); *A Graveyard of My Own*, 1985; *Suicide, Inc.*, 1985; *Even the Butler Was Poor*, 1990; *Murder on the Aisle*, 1996; *Murder for Dummies: A Christmas Story*, 1996; *The Hidden Princess*, 1982 (as Calhoun); *Triple "O" Seven*, 1985 (as Jamieson); *Now He Thinks He's Dead*, 1992

SHORT FICTION: *Clockwork's Pirates and Ghost Breaker*, 1971; *What's Become of Screwloose? and Other Inquiries*, 1971; *Adam and Eve on a Raft: Mystery Stories*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

FLASH GORDON SERIES (AS STEFFANSON, WITH ALEX RAYMOND): *The Space Circus*, 1969 (with Alex Raymond); *The Lion Men of Mongo*, 1974 (with Alex Raymond); *The Plague of Sound*, 1974; *The Time Trap of Ming XIII*, 1977

KUNG FU SERIES (AS LEE, BASED ON TELEVISION SERIES): *Chains*, 1973; *Superstition*, 1973; *Kung Fu*, 1974

GYPSY SERIES: *Quest of the Gypsy*, 1976; *Eye of the Vulture*, 1977

LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY SERIES (AS STEFFANSON, BASED ON TELEVISION SERIES): *Laverne and Shirley: Easy Money*, 1976; *Laverne and Shirley: Gold Rush*, 1976; *Laverne and Shirley: Teamwork*, 1976

STAR HAWKS SERIES (ILLUSTRATED BY GIL KANE): *Star Hawks*, 1979; *Star Hawks II*, 1979; *Star Hawks: Empire 99*, 1980; *Star Hawks: The Cyborg King*, 1981

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA SERIES (WITH GLEN A. LARSON): *Battlestar Galactica: Experiment in Terra*, 1983; *Battlestar Galactica: Greetings from Earth*, 1983; *Battlestar Galactica: The Long Patrol*, 1984

HARRY CHALLENGE SERIES: *The Prisoner of Blackwood Castle*, 1984; *The Curse of the Obelisk*, 1987

EX-CHAMELEON SERIES: *Daredevils, Ltd.*, 1987; *Starpirate's Brain*, 1987; *Everybody Comes to Cosmo's*, 1988

NOVELS: *Wildsmith*, 1972; *Superstition*, 1973; *The Hellhound Project*, 1975; *The Tremendous Adventures of Bernie Wine*, 1975; *When the Waker Sleeps*, 1975; *Nemo*, 1977; *The Emperor of the Last Days*, 1977; *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, 1977 (as Silva); *Challengers of the Unknown*, 1977; *Stalker from the Stars*, 1978 (as Silva, with Len Wein and Mary Wolfman, based on the Hulk comic strip); *Agent of Love*, 1979 (as Kearny); *Cowboy Heaven*, 1979; *Holocaust for Hire*, 1979 (as Silva, based on Captain America comic strip); *Love's Claimant*, 1981 (as Kearny); *The Robot in the Closet*, 1981; *High Card*, 1982 (as Masters); *Upside Downside*, 1982; *Loaded Dice*, 1982 (as Masters); *Texas Two-Step*, 1983 (as Masters); *Cashing In*, 1983 (as Masters); *Hellquad*, 1984; *TekWar*, 1989 (as Cardigan; ghostwritten for William Shatner); *The Tijuana Bible*, 1989; *The Complete Terry and the Pirates*, 1991 (with Milton Caniff and Rick Marschall)

EDITED TEXTS: *The Hardboiled Dicks: An Anthology and Study of Pulp Detective Fiction*, 1965; *Line Up Tough Guys*, 1966; *The Great British Detective*,

1982; *The Encyclopedia of American Comics from 1897 to the Present*, 1990

SHORT FICTION: *Broke Down Engine and Other Troubles with Machines*, 1971; *The Chameleon Corps and Other Shape Changers*, 1972; *Nutzenbolts and More Trouble with Machines*, 1975; *Skyrocket Steele Conquers the Universe, and Other Media Tales*, 1990

NONFICTION: *The Assault on Childhood*, 1969; *Cheap Thrills: An Informal History of the Pulp Magazines*, 1972 (also known as *An Informal History of the Pulp Magazines*, 1973); *An American Family*, 1973 (based on television documentary); *The Adventurous Decade: Comic Strips in the Thirties*, 1975; *The Dime Detectives*, 1982; *Focus on Jack Cole*, 1986; *Ron Goulart's Great History of Comic Books*, 1986; *The Great Comic Book Artists*, 1986; *The Wisemann Originals*, 1989; *Over Fifty Years of American Comic Books*, 1991; *The Comic Book Reader's Companion: An A-to-Z Guide to Everyone's Favorite Art Form*, 1993; *Masked Marvels and Jungle Queens: Great Comic Book Covers of the '40s*, 1993; *The Funnies: One Hundred Years of American Comic Strips*, 1995; *Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History*, 2000; *Great American Comic Books*, 2001; *Comic Book Encyclopedia: The Ultimate Guide to Characters, Graphic Novels, Writers, and Artists in the Comic Book Universe*, 2004; *Good Girl Art*, 2006

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, Thomas R. Review of *Odd Jobs No. 101 and Other Future Crimes and Intrigues*, by Ron Goulart. *Library Journal* 99, no. 19 (November 1, 1974): 2874. An unfavorable review of this collection of mostly detective stories set in the future or science-fiction stories written like detective stories. The reviewer found the tales “predictable, repetitive, and unredeemed by Goulart’s humor.”
- DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. Contains a brief entry on Ron Goulart, focusing on his work in the mystery genre, particularly Hollywood private eye John Easy.

Goulart, Ron. “Comic Book Noir.” In *The Big Book of Noir*, edited by Ed Gorman, Lee Server, and Martin H. Greenberg. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998. A good sample of Goulart’s expertise in the field of comic books, wherein he demonstrates that the medium of comics, influenced by European expressionist films and by pulp magazines—and led by such creations as Superman, Batman, and the Spirit—was a standard-bearer of noir sensibilities from the late 1930’s.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Elementary, My Dear Groucho*, by Ron Goulart. 67, no. 19 (October 1, 1999): 1526-1527. An unfavorable review of this Groucho series book in which comedian Groucho Marks and his pal, former crime reporter Frank Denby, investigate a crime. Panned for the portrayal of Groucho as unconvincing and one-dimensional, for an almost nonexistent plot, and painful jokes.

Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller, eds. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. Contains a Julie Smith review of Goulart’s *Ghosting*, a humorous murder mystery involving Barney Kains, a ghostwriter for a comic strip, “Poor Little Pearl.” Smith gives the book a positive recap, noting the information about the comics business, and recommending Goulart’s other comic crime novels, including *A Graveyard of My Own*, *Hawkshaw*, and the John Easy series, particularly *One Grave Too Many*.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Daredevils, Ltd.*, by Ron Goulart. 231, no. 20 (May 22, 1987): 70. A favorable review of *Daredevils, Ltd.*, cited for its humor and its inventive plot featuring shape-changing spies, robots, and wisecracking appliances.

_____. Review of *Groucho Marx, Private Eye*, by Ron Goulart. 246, no. 9 (March 1, 1999): 63. A favorable review of this Groucho series book, in which Goulart is complimented for capturing the “voice and social conscience” of the hero, for updating an old plot—the murder of a leading plastic surgeon and drug supplier to the stars—and for including celebrity cameos and fine period details.

BRUCE GRAEME**Graham Montague Jeffries****Born:** London, England; May 23, 1900**Died:** London, England; May 14, 1982**Also wrote as** Peter Bourne; David Graeme;
Roderic Hastings**Types of plot:** Police procedural; amateur sleuth; private investigator; inverted**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Blackshirt, 1923-1940

William Stevens and Pierre Allain, 1931-1943

Monsieur Blackshirt series, 1933-1938

Theodore I. Terhune, 1941-1951

Lord Blackshirt, 1941-1943

Auguste Jantry, 1946-1952

Robert Mather, 1970-1980

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

BLACKSHIRT, a man known to his daytime acquaintances as RICHARD VERRELL, a successful mystery writer with a wry wit, at night becomes a rogue garbed in black, roaming London and stealing whatever seems most worth having.

CONTRIBUTION

Bruce Graeme created not only conventionally moral protagonists—detectives, private investigators, and high-minded amateur sleuths—but also a lovable thief who leads police on many merry chases. The criminal Blackshirt is every bit as calculating, original, and clever as Detective Sergeant Robert Mather and amateur sleuth Theodore I. Terhune, other Graeme characters. Blackshirt, though a thoroughgoing wrongdoer, excites readers' sympathy because of his good-natured mode of operation. His exploits were followed avidly for five decades by mystery lovers in Great Britain and elsewhere, as the series was continued by Graeme's son, the prolific mystery writer Roderic Jeffries, who used the pen name Roderic Graeme for his Blackshirt books.

Graeme's tales tend to have a certain air of unreality about them, with their farcical situations and bi-

zarre characters. At times, too, his plots rely excessively on outrageous coincidence. Still, in the main, his English and Continental settings are convincingly portrayed, his characters are realistic, and his plots are plausible.

BIOGRAPHY

Bruce Graeme was born Graham Montague Jeffries in London on May 23, 1900, to parents of some means. He was schooled in private academies. When he was eighteen, Graeme saw action in World War I with the Queen's Westminster Rifles Regiment. When the war ended, his principal preoccupation became writing, and he adopted the nom de plume Bruce Graeme. In 1925, he was married to Lorna Louch, with whom he was to have a son and a daughter. (The son would follow Graeme's lead and take up writing mysteries under the pseudonym Roderic Graeme.) In the late 1920's, Graeme learned valuable lessons about crime as well as about writing when he worked as a reporter for the *Middlesex County Times* in Ealing, England. In 1919 and in the 1940's, he worked as a film producer.

Shortly after his marriage, Graeme published his first work, *La Belle Laurine* (1926). This mystery adventure was followed by more than one hundred mystery novels, a number of uncollected short stories, and several nonfictional works. Although far more appreciated in his native Great Britain than abroad, Graeme did publish a few American editions. He became a founding member of the Crime Writers' Association. He died in 1982, nine days before his eighty-second birthday.

ANALYSIS

Bruce Graeme's fertile imagination is reflected in the sheer volume of his literary output. His chief talent lay in creating tightly constructed plots with sufficient twists in them to keep readers' interest. On the whole, his methods were conservative rather than innovative, yet he succeeded in adding a personal touch to the

conventions of the mystery and detective genre.

Graeme's most notable departure from the methods of the ordinary crime novel is his use of a criminal as chief protagonist in place of a heroic professional or amateur detective. Blackshirt, the central character in many of Graeme's novels, is audacious, quick-witted, humorous, tenacious, and resourceful; in short, he possesses many of the qualities usually ascribed to people on the other side of the law. No wonder that over the years the British reading public became enamored of the Blackshirt and Son of Blackshirt (or Lord Blackshirt) series. Furthermore, beginning with *Monsieur Blackshirt* in 1933, Graeme chronicled the adventures of a seventeenth century Blackshirt ancestor; *The Vengeance of Monsieur Blackshirt* (1934), *The Sword of Monsieur Blackshirt* (1936), and *The Inn of Thirteen Swords* (1938) continue the saga of this character.

Blackshirt leads a double life reminiscent of characters in British novels of the Victorian and Edwardian eras such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). By day Graeme's character is Richard Verrell, the famed writer of mystery stories, and by night he is Blackshirt, the master criminal. The Blackshirt books are not the only ones in the Graeme canon to use the device of a double life. In *The Undetective* (1962), for example, the murderer proves to be a pleasant, methodical police detective named Edward Meredith. Despite the fact that the individual killed is a criminal, Meredith still is guilty of murder—and that secret is kept until the book's finale.

Graeme's stories are propelled by fast-paced dialogue and brisk narration. Often he achieves an almost breathless pace, demanding the reader's careful attention. Graeme's characters do not waste words: Time seems of the essence. They speak in bursts of clever dialogue and quick-witted, sometimes slangy retorts and quips. Seldom do they wax philosophical; indeed, the rapid pace of events prevents their doing so.

Graeme's ear for dialect and speech patterns is evidenced by the authenticity of his dialogue. His police detectives exchange banter in their characteristically world-weary and sarcastic manner, his gentlemen

characters' speech is articulate and witty, and common folk from working-class areas chatter in colorful, ragged, animated fashion; each type of person addresses others in accordance with his origins and social background.

THE UNDETECTIVE

Graeme's outstanding characteristic as a crime novelist may well be his sense of humor and his love of the bizarre. Few of his works lack humor, and most are infused with it. Frequently his characters are plunged into highly amusing dilemmas. For example, in *The Undetective*, a crime-fiction writer, Iain Wallace Carter, adopts the nom de plume John Ky Lowell to write a book about what he terms an "undetective," a police detective of memorable ineptitude. The novel succeeds far beyond the writer's greatest hopes, and the London police become incensed by the fact that John Ky Lowell has made them a laughingstock. When a murder occurs in Carter's neighborhood, his brother-in-law, Police Inspector Meredith, suggests to Carter that the mysterious author of the "undetective" tale is responsible and vows that he will hunt him down. Carter is amazed to find that for the first time in his life he is a murder suspect. Moreover, he cannot afford to tell the police of his innocence because that would mean revealing his identity as the author of the notorious novel that lampooned them. Somehow, Carter manages not only to keep his identity a secret from the police—a very difficult feat—but also to solve the mystery to his own satisfaction, thus exonerating John Ky Lowell.

If Graeme has a message to convey in his fiction, it is that many criminals are normal people who, when faced by adverse circumstances or an opportunity to better themselves substantially, choose to do illegal things. The line between some of Graeme's upright citizens and his criminals is a fine one indeed. One detects in his lawbreakers admirable qualities sometimes temporarily overshadowed by evil. His sympathy toward and fascination with such characters is a rare quality in a crime-fiction writer.

THE DEVIL WAS A WOMAN

Glimmerings of a social conscience can be discerned in novels such as *The Devil Was a Woman* (1966), in which wretched sections of London and their

sad denizens are portrayed in an often powerfully realistic way. Nevertheless, Graeme was not a social scientist or a reformer. He left those pursuits to others, concentrating instead on telling rollicking tales of adventure, intrigue, and mystery.

Graeme's ability to communicate the flavor of life in early twentieth century England springs from his capacity to capture speech patterns accurately, coupled with his skillful depiction of setting. In *The Devil Was a Woman*, for example, a character describes a down-at-the-heels hotel:

As I have already admitted, one does not expect *Ritz* accommodation for what the ill-named *Gardens Hotel* overcharged: it wouldn't be easy to find anywhere a more drab bedroom. The flowered wallpaper could well have been pasted on the walls sometime during the early years of King Edward VII's reign: its one chair was uncomfortable enough not to encourage guests to sit on it longer than necessary; the bed-linen had been "sides to middle'd"; the bedspread had faded to depressingly unrecognisable shades; and, worst of all, the view through the years'-grimaced lace window-curtains consisted of sooted walls, smoke-blackened chimney-pots, and basilisk-eyed windows.

Graeme's eye for revealing detail, exemplified by phrases such as "the years'-grimaced lace window-curtains," is as acute as that of novelist George Orwell. Unlike Orwell, however, Graeme does not depict slums so much to decry them—though he does do that—as to set a scene or establish a mood with them. Often, the settings of his books create mystery and intrigue by being off the beaten track, desolate, and forbidding. Graeme's slum buildings and grim, monotonous suburban row houses are appropriate to the characters who inhabit them: A dangerously askew house with sinister-appearing windows will almost always harbor dangerous or deranged characters, while tidy suburban bungalows in a middle-class area of London will house tidy, respectable, dull people. On occasion, however, Graeme will surprise his readers by upending this convention, giving murderers trappings of respectability. He captures the essence not only of London neighborhoods but also of such Continental locations as the Côte d'Azur and the Loire Valley.

Graeme occupies an important place among British—and international—crime writers. The prolific Graeme introduced to his reading public several noteworthy characters, including the memorable Blackshirt antiheroes. His fast-moving plots, his essentially humane view of characters, and his distinctive sense of humor make him a mystery writer to be remembered.

John D. Raymer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BLACKSHIRT SERIES: *Blackshirt*, 1925 (revised 1930); *The Return of Blackshirt*, 1927 (revised 1927); *Blackshirt Again*, 1929 (also known as *Adventures of Blackshirt*); *Alias Blackshirt*, 1932; *Blackshirt the Audacious*, 1935; *Blackshirt the Adventurer*, 1936; *Blackshirt Takes a Hand*, 1937; *Blackshirt, Counter-Spy*, 1938; *Blackshirt Interferes*, 1939; *Blackshirt Strikes Back*, 1940

SUPERINTENDENT WILLIAM STEVENS AND INSPECTOR PIERRE ALLAIN SERIES: *A Murder of Some Importance*, 1931; *The Imperfect Crime*, 1932; *Epilogue*, 1933; *An International Affair*, 1934; *Not Proven*, 1935; *Satan's Mistress*, 1935; *Mystery on the Queen Mary*, 1937; *The Man from Michigan*, 1938 (also known as *The Mystery of the Stolen Hats*); *Body Unknown*, 1939; *Poisoned Sleep*, 1939; *The Corporal Died in Bed, Being the Swan-Song of Pierre Allain*, 1940; *Encore Allain!*, 1941; *News Travels by Night*, 1943

MONSIEUR BLACKSHIRT SERIES (AS D. GRAEME): *Monsieur Blackshirt*, 1933; *The Vengeance of Monsieur Blackshirt*, 1934; *The Sword of Monsieur Blackshirt*, 1936; *The Inn of Thirteen Swords*, 1938

THEODORE I. TERHUNE SERIES: *Seven Clues in Search of a Crime*, 1941; *House with Crooked Walls*, 1942; *A Case for Solomon*, 1943; *Ten Trails to Tyburn*, 1944; *Work for the Hangman*, 1944; *And a Bottle of Rum*, 1949; *Dead Pigs at Hungry Farm*, 1951

LORD BLACKSHIRT SERIES: *Son of Blackshirt*, 1941; *Lord Blackshirt: The Son of Blackshirt Carries On*, 1942; *Calling Lord Blackshirt*, 1943

AUGUSTE JANTRY SERIES: *A Case of Books*, 1946; *Cherchez la Femme*, 1951; *Lady in Black*, 1952

DETECTIVE SERGEANT ROBERT MATHER SE-

RIES: *The Quiet Ones*, 1970; *Two and Two Make Five*, 1973; *The D Notice*, 1974; *The Snatch*, 1976; *Two-Faced*, 1977; *Double Trouble*, 1978; *Invitation to Mather*, 1979; *Mather Again*, 1979; *Mather Investigates*, 1980

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1926-1930 • *La Belle Laurine*, 1926 (revised as *Laurine*, 1935); *The Trail of the White Knight*, 1926; *Hate Ship*, 1928; *Trouble!*, 1929; *The Penance of Brother Alaric*, 1930; *Through the Eyes of the Judge*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Unsolved*, 1931; *Gigins Court*, 1932; *Impeached!*, 1933; *Public Enemy No. 1*, 1934 (also known as *John Jenkin*, *Public Enemy*); *Madame Spy*, 1935; *Cardyce for the Defence*, 1936; *Disappearance of Roger Tremayne*, 1937; *Racing Yacht Mystery*, 1938; *Thirteen in a Fog*, 1940

1941-1950 • *When the Bells Ring*, 1943 (with Anthony Armstrong); *The Coming of Carew*, 1945; *Without Malice*, 1946; *Black Saga*, 1947 (as Bourne; also known as *Drums of Destiny*); *No Clues for Dexter*, 1948; *Flames of Empire*, 1949 (as Bourne; also known as *Dupe of Destiny*); *Tigers Have Claws*, 1949

1951-1960 • *Ten Thousand Shall Die*, 1951 (as Bourne; also known as *The Golden Road*); *Gateway to Fortune*, 1952 (as Bourne); *Mr. Whimset Buys a Gun*, 1953; *Suspense*, 1953; *The Way Out*, 1954; *Twilight of the Dragon*, 1954 (as Bourne); *So Sharp the Razor*, 1955; *Just an Ordinary Case*, 1956; *When Gods Slept*, 1956 (as Bourne); *The Accidental Clue*, 1957; *Naked Tide*, 1958 (as Hastings); *The Court of Love*, 1958 (as Bourne); *The Long Night*, 1958; *Boomerang*, 1959; *Fog for a Killer*, 1960

1961-1975 • *Soldiers of Fortune*, 1962 (as Bourne); *The Undetective*, 1962; *Almost Without Murder*, 1963; *Holiday for a Spy*, 1963; *The Drums Beat Red*, 1963 (as D. Graeme); *Black Gold*, 1964 (as Bourne); *Always Expect the Unexpected*, 1965; *The Devil Was a Woman*, 1966; *Fall of the Eagle*, 1967 (as Bourne); *Much Ado About Something*, 1967; *Never Mix Business with Pleasure*, 1968; *Some Geese Lay Golden Eggs*, 1968;

Blind Date for a Private Eye, 1969; *The Lady Doth Protest*, 1971; *Tomorrow's Yesterday*, 1972; *And Bay the Moon*, 1975 (as Bourne)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *A Brief for O'Leary and Two Other Episodes in His Career*, 1947

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Danger in the Channel*, 1973

NONFICTION: *Passion, Murder, and Mystery*, 1928; *The Story of Buckingham Palace*, 1928 (revised 1970); *The Story of St. James's Palace*, 1929; *A Century of Buckingham Palace, 1837-1937*, 1937; *The Story of Windsor Castle*, 1937

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Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. This work, designed for students, looks at theoretical approaches to crime fiction and will help the reader understand Graeme's place in the genre over the years.

Hutchings, Peter J. *The Criminal Spectre in Law, Literature and Aesthetics: Incriminating Subjects*. New York: Routledge, 2001. A study of the representation of criminals in art, literature, and popular culture that provides perspective on Graeme's work. Bibliographic references and index.

Peach, Linden. *Masquerade, Crime, and Fiction: Criminal Deceptions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Extended study of the theme and portrayal of disguise and deception in mystery and detective fiction; provides perspective on Graeme's work.

Shibuk, Charles. Review of *Disappearance of Roger Tremayne*, by Bruce Graeme. *The Mystery FANcier* 1 (March, 1977): 41. Review of a Graeme book dealing with a man with amnesia that was the basis of the British film *Ten Days in Paris* (1939).

SUE GRAFTON

Born: Louisville, Kentucky; April 24, 1940

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kinsey Millhone, 1982-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

KINSEY MILLHONE is a private investigator and former police officer in her thirties who lives in Santa Teresa, a fictionalized version of Santa Barbara, California. Twice married and divorced, she is a self-reliant woman with no children and no pets, but she has many friends and the occasional man in her life.

HENRY PITTS is Kinsey's landlord, an attractive retired baker in his eighties who writes crossword puzzles. His numerous brothers and sisters, all in their eighties and nineties, also appear in the series.

ROSIE is a Hungarian woman in her sixties or seventies who runs a neighborhood restaurant-bar, where she serves bread made by Henry and Hungarian food. An opinionated but caring woman, she marries William, Henry's brother, in the course of the series.

CONTRIBUTION

When Sue Grafton created Kinsey Millhone, a wise-cracking, tough private investigator in 1982, she successfully recast the hard-boiled detective character type made famous by Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald as a woman. Kinsey's self-reliance, humor, and dedication to her job make her admirable, and her weakness for fast food, difficulty maintaining a relationship with a man, and missteps as she investigates cases make her a sympathetic and believable character. Grafton's success as a writer is due largely to the popularity of the Kinsey character, with whom women identify.

Grafton's novels have been translated into twenty-six languages, and more than ten million copies of her books are in print. Her mystery and detective fiction has earned many awards, beginning with the Mysterious Stranger Award from the Cloak and Clue Society for "A" *Is for Alibi* (1982). "B" *Is for Burglar* (1985) received Shamus and Anthony awards; "C" *Is for Corpse*

(1986) won an Anthony; "G" *Is for Gumshoe* (1990) earned Shamus and Anthony awards, and "K" *Is for Killer* (1994) won an Anthony. Grafton received the Maltese Falcon award for "F" *Is for Fugitive* (1989), the American Mystery Award for "H" *Is for Homicide* (1991) and "A Poem That Leaves No Time," and the Ridley Award for "O" *Is for Outlaw* (2001). Six of her Kinsey Millhone series novels won Doubleday Mystery Guild Awards. Her short story "The Parker Shotgun" received the Macavity and Anthony awards. She has served as president of the Mystery Writers of America (1994-1995) and of the Private Eye Writers of America (1989-1990) and been a member of the Writers Guild of America, West, and the Crime Writers' Association.

BIOGRAPHY

Sue Taylor Grafton was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on April 24, 1940, to Cornelius Warren "Chip" Grafton, an attorney, and Vivian (Harnsberger) Grafton, a former high school teacher. Her father published several mystery novels, and both parents were avid readers. Although her parents were alcoholics and her family was dysfunctional, Grafton says her childhood was happy as her parents gave her a great deal of freedom and intellectual stimulation.

Grafton's first attempts at writing were poems and articles for her high school newspaper. She began to write short stories at the age of eighteen and majored in English at the University of Louisville, graduating in 1961. While still in college, Grafton married, had a daughter, and was divorced while pregnant with a son. Her first daughter was raised by her father. Grafton studied creative writing through an extension course offered by the University of California at Los Angeles, and instructor Robert Kirsh, the book editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, encouraged her to try her hand at writing a novel. However, Grafton did not seriously consider a career as a writer. She married again, at the age of twenty-two, to Al Schmidt, with whom she would have another daughter. She worked at various jobs in the medical field: secretary, cashier, and admissions clerk.

The stability that Grafton sought through marriage did not make her happy, however, and she kept writing. She published several short stories; then her first novel, *Keziah Dane*, about a woman in Appalachia, was published in 1967. Her second novel, *The Lolly-Madonna War*, was published in 1969, and when she sold the film rights, Grafton left for Los Angeles with her son and younger daughter. She began writing screenplays and teleplays and doing secretarial work to support herself. She became involved in a bitter custody battle with her former husband, and in her anger, she began to imagine ways to kill him, including poisoning him with oleander. Rather than acting on these thoughts, she began writing "*A*" *Is for Alibi* (1982), the first novel in the Kinsey Millhone series.

During the five years it took to write her first mystery, Grafton met Stephen F. Humphrey, whom she married in 1978. She continued to write for television series and to adapt novels written by others for television films, sometimes collaborating with her husband. However, despite winning a Christopher Award for *Walking Through the Fire* (1979), Grafton became dissatisfied with Hollywood and the screenwriting process, which required her to work closely with others and be a team player.

Grafton turned to mystery writing, which she could do independently and which had been her father's choice of genre. She decided to use letters of the alphabet to link her series and created the Kinsey Millhone series. Reviewers were favorably impressed with "*A*" *Is for Alibi*, which earned the Mysterious Stranger Award. Her second book, "*B*" *Is for Burglar*, published three years later, won two prestigious mystery awards. Grafton soon became a best-selling, award-winning author, producing installments in a popular series projected out to "*Z*" *Is for*

Zero and possibly beyond. Grafton once half jokingly suggested that after reaching the letter Z, she could resume the series using numbers. Her sustained popularity attests to her ability to achieve her goal of keeping the series fresh by never telling the same story twice.

ANALYSIS

Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, along with Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski, is one of the first female private investigators created in the feminist version of the hard-boiled detective mold. These bold women are self-reliant loners who do not need to be rescued by men and do not simply stumble upon danger. They find it in the course of their work, which they diligently carry out in the pursuit of justice. Kinsey's life is frequently endangered as she discovers the identity of her killer. She is chased, beaten, and shot, but her bravery is demonstrated in the climax of the first novel of the series, "*A*" *Is for Alibi*. She hides in a trash bin as the killer approaches, and when he opens the lid with a butcher knife in his hand, she shoots him.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Sue Grafton. (AP/Wide World Photos)

The success of Grafton's series is due to her ability to create a sympathetic character in Kinsey Millhone, who is admirable for her quest for justice and order in a chaotic world and yet remains an ordinary woman, flawed and complex. Kinsey is a private investigator in Santa Teresa, a fictional version of Santa Barbara, California, which plays an important role in every book, but she travels to the Eastern Sierras in "*N*" *Is for Noose* (1998) and to Louisville, Kentucky, in "*L*" *Is for Lawless* (1995).

Kinsey, twice married and divorced with no children, is a homebody of sorts, feeling best when she is home alone in her small apartment, a converted garage owned by Henry Pitts, her octogenarian landlord, a retired baker who still likes to cook. She has a fondness for wine and high-calorie junk food, which she counters by jogging three miles on the beach every morning except Sunday (a habit Grafton shared until she started walking instead). Kinsey hates to cook and often eats at the tavern run by Rosie, a gruff Hungarian woman in her sixties or seventies, who usually dictates to Kinsey what she will eat.

As the series progresses, Grafton develops her characters, adding to both their present lives and revealing their pasts. Henry has a romance with Lila Sams in "*C*" *Is for Corpse*, and his brother William falls in love with and marries Rosie. Kinsey develops romantic relationships with Jonah Robb, a police officer whose marriage is off-again, on-again; Robert Dietz, a private eye in Carson Lake, Nevada; and handsome police officer Cheney Phillips, but none develop into a full-blown, lasting relationship. After staying in Dietz's condominium for a month in "*N*" *Is for Noose*, Kinsey says, "My general policy is to keep my distance, thus avoiding a lot of unruly emotion." Grafton gradually and sympathetically reveals the causes behind Kinsey's isolation and her inability to trust people, even her friends. After Kinsey leaves Dietz's condominium, she begins an investigation into an officer's death in Nota Lake in the Sierras. Feeling lonely in her isolated cabin, she says:

Times like this, I longed for a husband or a dog, but I never could decide which would be more trouble in the long run. At least husbands don't bark and tend to start off paper-trained.

Kinsey's sense of humor and her direct way of speaking—using slang and the occasional swear word—make this loner both more human and more endearing.

Grafton gradually reveals Kinsey's past: Her parents were killed in a car accident when she was five years old, and she was raised by her aunt Gin. The family disowned Kinsey's mother at the time of her marriage, and Grafton reveals that Kinsey has cousins in Lompoc in "*J*" *Is for Judgment* (1993). In "*O*" *Is for Outlaw*, the reader learns about Kinsey's first husband, Mickey Magruder, a police officer to whom she was married for nine months. Betrayal, isolation, and troubled family relations—particularly events in a family's history that create problems in the present—are themes that penetrate all the novels in the series.

Kinsey is thirty-two at the start of the series and ages only a few months with every book, so that most of the series takes place in the 1980's. This allows Kinsey to continue to live in a world without cell phones, computers, and Internet access, and her investigations use the telephone, face-to-face interviews, notebooks, surveillance, and index cards, which she uses to focus her thoughts. She types her reports on a manual Smith-Corona typewriter.

Grafton uses the first person for most of the series, speaking through Kinsey, although she alternates Kinsey's voice with that of a third-person narrator in "*S*" *Is for Silence* (2005). Most of the novels open with Kinsey describing how she got the case and include a self-introduction very similar to the one that opens the first book in the series: "My name is Kinsey Millhone. I'm a private investigator, licensed by the state of California. I'm thirty-two years old, twice divorced, no kids."

Grafton then moves on to the meat of Kinsey's investigation, in which Kinsey is sometimes assisted by Lieutenant Con Dolan of the Santa Teresa Police Department's Homicide Division or Lieutenant Jonah Robb, with whom she had an affair. Often, however, she works alone, partly because her job as a private investigator does not require her to follow police procedure. Kinsey is an inveterate snoop who performs a quick search of any room in which she is left alone. Although generally law-abiding, she carries a set of lock picks that she uses to break into rooms, often misrepresents herself, and in "*L*" *Is for Lawless*, she

steals a maid's uniform to gain access to a hotel room. Along with the story of the investigation, Grafton usually tells a side story, either a humorous one involving Henry and his siblings or tavern-owner Rosie, or one involving a separate investigation or another character, which she sometimes uses as a red herring. However, Grafton's mysteries are enjoyable more for their characterization and dialogue rather than as puzzle mysteries to be deciphered by the reader. The killer's identity is not revealed until Kinsey confronts the suspect, and sometimes she does not know who the murderer is until that person begins to pursue her. This leads to dramatic, violent climaxes that often feature a chase and end with a definitive act such as a shooting. Sometimes the killer ultimately faces justice in a court of law, as in "*Q*" *Is for Quarry* (2002), and sometimes the killer faces a swifter form of justice, as in "*O*" *Is for Outlaw*, in which the murderer is decapitated by the edge of a bucket of a tractor driven by the brother of one of the victims. Occasionally, as in "*I*" *Is for Innocent*, the killer gets away with murder.

Almost every novel ends with an epilogue, written as if Kinsey were submitting a final report, and signed "Respectfully submitted, Kinsey Millhone." In the epilogue, Grafton explains what happens after the final climactic scene, neatly tidying up any loose ends and bringing emotional closure, as in "*O*" *Is for Outlaw*, in which Kinsey describes bidding her former husband Mickey good-bye as he died in the hospital.

"A" IS FOR ALIBI

"*A*" *Is for Alibi*, the first novel in the series, is dominated by the theme of betrayal through multiple infidelities and lies. Nikki Fife, who was convicted eight years earlier of poisoning her husband, Laurence, with oleander and has just been released from prison, comes to Kinsey to find out who really killed her husband. The police suspect Nikki of killing Libby Glass, an accountant, who also died by oleander poisoning. Suspects include Gwen, Laurence's first wife; Charlotte Mercer, a judge's wife with whom Laurence had an affair; and Libby's former boyfriend, Lyle Abernathy. Kinsey becomes romantically involved with Charlie Scorsoni, Laurence's partner, then realizes she has not ruled him out as a suspect. She solves the murders when she looks at them from a different perspective.

"M" IS FOR MALICE

In "*M*" *Is for Malice*, the past demonstrates its power to reach out and hurt people. Tasha Howard, an estate lawyer and Kinsey's cousin, asks Kinsey to find Guy Malek, one of the heirs to the fortune left by Bader Malek. Kinsey finds the former drug addict, who had been missing for eighteen years, living in poverty in a small rural town. Guy has found religion and returns to his ancestral home for what he hopes will be a happy reunion with his brothers Donovan, Bennet, and Jack. However, Guy is found murdered in his bed. The solution to the mystery centers on valuable letters that were stolen, presumably by Guy, and hidden secrets in the family.

"O" IS FOR OUTLAW

"*O*" *Is for Outlaw* is the story of multiple betrayals, first of Kinsey by her first husband, Mickey Magruder, a police officer who asks her to lie and has an affair with another woman, and then of Mickey by Kinsey, who does not trust him when he says he did not beat a man and cause his death. A storage space scavenger sells Kinsey a box of personal items that she left with her first husband, and she decides to find out what has happened to him. When Mickey is shot and close to death, Kinsey investigates and finds that Mickey had discovered links between three men in Louisville and Vietnam that may have led to his shooting and comes perilously close to being killed herself.

"S" IS FOR SILENCE

In "*S*" *Is for Silence*, Kinsey undertakes a cold case when Daisy Sullivan asks her to look into the disappearance thirty-four years earlier of her mother, Violet, then a beautiful, sexy, young woman. It had long been rumored that Violet had run off with a lover or been killed by her husband. Key to the solution of this mystery is Violet's brand-new Chevrolet Bel Air, which disappeared along with her and which Kinsey helps locate. In this novel, the theme of betrayal is joined by one of abandonment, in particular of seven-year-old Daisy by her mother. Grafton departs from her usual first-person narrative style to alternate sections told by Kinsey with a third-person narrative describing events from a long-gone Fourth of July in the small California town of Serena Station.

Rowena Wildin Dehanke

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KINSEY MILLHONE SERIES: "A" *Is for Alibi*, 1982; "B" *Is for Burglar*, 1985; "C" *Is for Corpse*, 1986; "D" *Is for Deadbeat*, 1987; "E" *Is for Evidence*, 1988; "F" *Is for Fugitive*, 1989; "G" *Is for Gumshoe*, 1990; "H" *Is for Homicide*, 1991; "I" *Is for Innocent*, 1992; "J" *Is for Judgment*, 1993; "K" *Is for Killer*, 1994; "L" *Is for Lawless*, 1995; "M" *Is for Malice*, 1996; "N" *Is for Noose*, 1998; "O" *Is for Outlaw*, 1999; "P" *Is for Peril*, 2001; "Q" *Is for Quarry*, 2002; "R" *Is for Ricochet*, 2004; "S" *Is for Silence*, 2005; "T" *Is for Trespass*, 2007

SHORT FICTION: *Kinsey and Me*, 1992

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Keziah Dane*, 1967; *The Lolly-Madonna War*, 1969

SCREENPLAY: *Lolly-Madonna XXX*, 1973 (with Rodney Car-Smith)

TELEPLAYS: *Walking Through the Fire*, 1979 (adaptation of the book by Laurel Lee); *Sex and the Single Parent*, 1979 (adaptation of the book by Jane Adams); *Nurse*, 1980 (adaptation of the book by Peggy Anderson); *Mark, I Love You*, 1980 (adaptation of the book by Hal Painter); *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, 1982 (with Stephen F. Humphrey); *A Caribbean Mystery*, 1983 (with Humphrey; adaptation of the book by Agatha Christie); *A Killer in the Family*, 1983 (with Humphrey and Robert Aller); *Sparkling Cyanide*, 1983 (with Humphrey and Robert Malcolm Young; adaptation of the book by Agatha Christie); *Love on the Run*, 1985 (with Humphrey); *Tonight's the Night*, 1987 (with Humphrey)

EDITED TEXT: *Writing Mysteries: A Handbook*, 1992; *The Best American Mystery Stories, 1998*, 1998 (with Otto Penzler)

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Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, and her favorite contemporary writer, Elmore Leonard.

Grafton, Sue. Sue Grafton: Author of the Kinsey Millhone Mysteries. <http://www.sueGrafton.com>. The author's official Web site contains a biography, information on the series novels, links to interviews and reviews, photographs, and copies of some of the journals Grafton keeps as she develops a book.

_____. "Sue Grafton: Death and the Maiden." Interview by Jonathan Bing. *Publishers Weekly* 245, no. 16 (April 20, 1998): 40-41. Grafton discusses her childhood, her motivation to write the Kinsey Millhone series, and how she came to choose the alphabetized titles.

_____, ed. *Writing Mysteries: A Handbook*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 1992. A collection of essays on how to write a mystery, from start to finish, with an introduction by Grafton that provides insights into her own writing.

Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1996. In her interview, Grafton states that what interests her is the "psychology of homicide." However, she prefers to examine the killer from the outside, rather than writing from the murderer's point of view.

Kaufman, Natalie Hevener, and Carol McGinnis Kay. "G" *Is for Grafton: The World of Kinsey Millhone*. Rev. ed. New York: Owl Books, 2000. This book about the character Kinsey Millhone contains chapters on her biography, her personality, her relationships, her work history, the settings in which she finds herself, and her moral code as well as chapters on Grafton's writing style and her place in the genre.

Nicholls, Jane, and Bonnie Bell. "Banishing Old Ghosts." *People Weekly* 44, no. 18 (October 30, 1995): 115-116. Profile of Grafton looks at her childhood in Kentucky and her relationship with her parents and her attitude toward her home state.

Waxman, Sharon. "Mystery Writer in the Mirror: 'A' Is for Alter Ego—Like Her Heroine, Sue Grafton Values Her Freedom." *Washington Post*, November 1, 2001, p. C01. This feature article provides an examination of Grafton's personal history and of how she came to write the Kinsey Millhone series.

CAROLINE GRAHAM

Born: Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England; July 17, 1931

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chief Inspector Barnaby, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHIEF INSPECTOR BARNABY is a middle-aged, slightly obtuse detective who works on behalf of the Corston Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Occasionally short-tempered, he is described as being down to earth. A family man, he tells his wife about various crimes and the characters involved, but he often abandons dinner and leaves his daughter's performances when called to duty. Barnaby proves successful when thinking "outside the box."

SERGEANT TROY, a younger naïve detective, often believes that he has cracked the case before his boss Barnaby. He provides a contrast to Barnaby's conservatism with his speedy driving and overt displays of emotion. He often considers various aspects of interviews with witnesses or suspects unimportant and readily sighs when suspects offer more than the facts.

CONTRIBUTION

Caroline Graham began her writing career in 1971, primarily composing scripts for radio and television. Her first two novels, *Fire Dance* (1982) and *Envy of a Stranger* (1984), went virtually unnoticed, and she did not gain a measure of fame until her creation of Detective Chief Inspector Barnaby of Midsomer Worthy in *The Killings at Badger's Drift* (1987) on the advice of her publicist. The novels in the Barnaby series, which are about unthinkable crimes in small English villages, remind the reader of mysteries by writers such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, but through Graham's inclusion of video cameras, cell phones, and computers, she brings her stories into the modern era.

Graham's novels charm the reader with layers of wit and dark humor. She fills her works with a vocabulary that reveals her botanical and theater interests and

with alluring real-life characters ranging from blacksmith, to librarian, to lord of the manor. Her novels deal with village life and its inner workings, and using the picturesque village setting as a backdrop, she creates strange twists of plot that would seem to be more likely to occur in a larger city. Her characters often deceive others by having the appearance of wealth although their true financial circumstances are quite desperate. Graham takes the reader into the ugly, hidden reality of some of the villagers' lives. By highlighting the eccentricities of some of the villagers and their struggles with class, she has created an alluring setting for crimes that are shocking and ironic partly because of where they occur.

BIOGRAPHY

Caroline Graham was born in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England, on July 17, 1931, to Horace Frederick and Edith Mary Harris. Her mother died when she was six years old. Graham attended Nuneaton High School on a scholarship. She left school at the age of fourteen to work in a mill. She worked at a succession of similar jobs until she joined the Women's Royal Naval Service. During this time she met her husband, Mike, who was in the Royal Air Force. She won a place in drama school, and she performed in local repertory theaters as she and her husband moved from base to base. They divorced after thirteen years of marriage. Graham pursued acting in London, working odd jobs between acting roles. While employed at a marriage bureau, she met the father of her son, David. As a forty-year-old single mother, she made the risky decision to become a full-time writer.

Although Graham began to write short stories, she was able to publish only journalism pieces, not fiction. She abandoned journalism when she moved to Suffolk, subsisting on government assistance for the next six years. She began writing radio dramas while taking a course on the nineteenth century novel. Doing the analysis assignments led Graham to believe that she could write. Her first couple of books were not successful, so she turned to crime fiction. Her first novel

featuring Barnaby, *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, received a Macavity Award for the best first novel in 1989, was nominated for an Agatha Award in 1988, and was recognized by the Crime Writers' Association as one of the top hundred crime novels of all time.

Graham completed her second mystery novel, *Death of a Hollow Man* (1989) and returned to school, receiving a master of arts degree in theater studies in 1990. She continued to write installments in the Chief Inspector Barnaby series, which became the basis of a British television series, *Midsomer Murders*, that started in 1997.

ANALYSIS

Caroline Graham writes in the style of the classic English detective novel and has been compared to Agatha Christie and Colin Dexter. Her settings are typically English country manors, village churches, cozy cottages, and local theaters. However, the darkness of her murder plots, which are often shocking, keep her mysteries from being cozies. Graham deliberately contrasts the peacefulness of her settings, villages under the jurisdiction of the Corston CID, with the darkness of her plots.

Graham's series characters, Chief Inspector Barnaby and Sergeant Troy, who are introduced in *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, appear in all of her subsequent novels except for *Murder at Madingley Grange* (1990). In her Barnaby novels, she uses her knowledge of the human condition to play upon class struggles, often showing how people must sell their possessions or revert to criminal behavior to pay their debts. Her stories chronicle the human condition and how a person responds when love, money, and societal acceptance are missing. The primary characters—Barnaby, Troy, and Barnaby's family—remain constant although the victims and witnesses prove to be downright strange if not evil. The architecture of the homes and their surrounding gardens are treated with descriptions that are as thorough as her depictions of characters.

THE KILLINGS AT BADGER'S DRIFT

In *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, a well-liked, older never-married woman, Emily Simpson, turns up dead in her bungalow after witnessing a strange event in the woods, and a brother and sister connive their

way into the lives of members of a higher class while pretending to be less than amicable with each other.

Graham creates the idyllic setting of the village of Badger's Drift for her horrific plot, which begins with the elderly Emily Simpson searching for a rare orchid in the forest. It is during this expedition that she witnesses a mortifying event, one that she feels she cannot describe to anyone. Her watchfulness, however, does not go undetected, and she is murdered. Due to her age, however, no inquest is held. Her friend Lucy Bellringer doubts the coroner's ruling of death by heart attack and visits Chief Inspector Barnaby in an effort to open an inquest. Through his investigations into the death of Simpson and then another woman in the village, Barnaby discovers that the perpetrator is also responsible for a crime committed in the past.

In *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, Graham focuses on setting while juxtaposing the ideal against the eccentric. Her descriptive language portrays the possible suspects with emphasis on characterization and relationship dynamics. Graham is a master at describing village life, especially class struggle. She creates a microcosm filled with eccentrics, innocents, and misleading facades.

WRITTEN IN BLOOD

In *Written in Blood* (1994), when the village of Midsomer Worthy's Writers' Circle decides to invite an author for a guest appearance at its next meeting, only Gerald Hadleigh objects. Gerald, who will host the meeting, has many friends and admirers in the village despite being secretive about his past. Unwilling to explain his objection to author Max Jennings's visit, Gerald goes along with the invitation in the end, but he asks fellow member Rex St. John to make sure that he is not alone with Max. Rex does not ask why and fulfills his duty until he is tricked by Jennings, who "forgets" his gloves in Gerald's house. The next day Max has left town and Gerald is found bludgeoned to death. The reactions of the members of the Writers' Circle range from gleeful to remorseful. Barnaby and Troy interview each member, who in turn, reveals his or her own troubled past.

Once again, Graham creates detailed characters whose experiences have shaped their current personalities and behaviors. She reveals the various circum-

stances that result from her characters' double lives and does not shy away from topics like homosexuality or drug use. What begins as a warm English cozy mystery ends with a wild twist, as Graham provides a bizarre denouement.

A PLACE OF SAFETY

In *A Place of Safety* (1999), set in the peaceful English village of Ferne Basset, the former vicar, Lionel Lawrence, shelters Carlotta, a young runaway. His wife, Ann, accuses Carlotta of stealing her jewelry. The two get into a fight on the village's bridge, and Carlotta falls into the water and disappears. Charlie Leathers witnesses the entire scene, so he decides to blackmail Ann. Leathers then ends up dead and his dog badly beaten. Another blackmail letter appears after Leathers's death, and Anne decides to withdraw the money. Later she decides not to pay but is robbed of the money. Barnaby looks beyond the surface drama to discover the culprits responsible for the deaths and blackmail. In doing so, he uncovers secrets and relationships suppressed by those involved.

Graham's plot in *A Place of Safety* is very similar to that of *The Killings at Badger's Drift*. She begins with a character who witnesses an event that later causes the person to be killed. In addition, the primary characters are masters of deception, appearing to be someone other than who they are. Other shared features are the class struggle, here between Ann and Carlotta, and absence of love, which creates its own separate neurosis. Despite the similarity, *A Place of Safety* is a much more believable tale than *The Killings at Badger's Drift*.

Amy J. Arnold

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHIEF INSPECTOR BARNABY SERIES: *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, 1987; *Death of a Hollow Man*, 1989; *Death in Disguise*, 1992; *Written in Blood*, 1994; *Faithful unto Death*, 1996; *A Place of Safety*, 1999; *A Ghost in the Machine*, 2004

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Murder at Madingley Grange*, 1990

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Fire Dance*, 1982; *Envy of a Stranger*, 1984

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *BMX Star Rider*, 1985; *BMX'ers Battle It Out*, 1985

NONFICTION: *Camilla: The King's Mistress*, 1994

RADIO PLAYS: *High Spirits and Low Cunning*, 1971; *The Cotswold Connubials*, 1973; *The Sea Shell*, 1976; *Adonis in Dark Glasses*, 1975

SCREENPLAY: *The Common Lot*, 1977

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Fletcher, Janet, and R. E. K. Fletcher. Review of *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, by Caroline Graham. *Library Journal* 113, no. 1 (January 1, 1988): 102. A favorable review of Graham's award-winning first work in the Barnaby series that remarks on the contrast between Barnaby and Troy and the numerous colorful eccentric characters.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Entry on Graham looks at her works and life.

Melton, Emily. Review of *A Ghost in the Machine*, by Caroline Graham. *Booklist* 100, no. 22 (August, 2004): 1905. Reviewer states that this Barnaby series novel is what Agatha Christie, Stephen King, and Maeve Binchy might produce if they wrote a book together. The plot involves Mallory Lawson, whose aunt dies and leave him an inheritance and a house in the village of Forbes Abbot.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Although this work does not specifically deal with Graham, it describes the writers on whom her work is patterned and therefore sheds light on her works.

Stasio, Marilyn. "Crime." Review of *Faithful Until Death*, by Caroline Graham. *The New York Times Book Review*, September 13, 1998, 40. In this Barnaby series novel, Simone Hollingsworth, a newcomer to Fawcett Green, disappears. Her husband is a suspect until he also is killed. Reviewer notes the many odd-ball characters created by Graham.

WINSTON GRAHAM

Born: Victoria Park, Manchester, England; June 30, 1910

Died: Buxted, East Sussex, England; July 10, 2003

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Winston Graham is best known as the author of the Poldark saga, a series of historical novels about an eighteenth century Cornwall family. Seven of these books were dramatized for a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) series in the 1970's and were also shown in the United States on Masterpiece Theatre. In addition, from early in his career Graham wrote suspense novels, including *The Little Walls*, which the Crime Writers' Association of Great Britain named the best English mystery of 1955, and six others that have been made into films: *Take My Life* (1947), *Night Without Stars* (1950), *Fortune Is a Woman* (1953), *The Sleeping Partner* (1956), *Marnie* (1961), and *The Walking Stick* (1967).

Graham's thrillers usually have young women as protagonists-narrators, people whose personalities have been affected by traumatic childhood experiences or singular family relationships. Graham develops these complex central figures in depth; they are not at all the two-dimensional stereotypes that are common in suspense fiction. This thoroughness of characterization, combined with first-person narration and realistic milieus, inevitably leads the reader to empathize with the protagonists, even those who are amoral or involved in illegal activities. Graham is equally skillful at developing his plots, heightening tension through a series of quickly paced incidents that build to a suspenseful climax in which the hero or heroine's fate is on the line. Although this is formula writing, it is of the highest level, for within a standard framework Graham offers so much variety of character, plot, and setting that echoes of one book in another seem insignificant.

Marnie may be the most familiar of Graham's numerous suspense novel protagonists, primarily because of Alfred Hitchcock's film version of the 1961 novel in which she is the title character. For more than three decades, from Philip Turner in *The Little Walls* to David

Abden in *The Green Flash* (1986), Graham created fully realized characters, frequently loners, whose inner turmoil not only determines their personalities and actions but also transforms and sometimes destroys the lives of others. Graham was a master storyteller, but his primary contribution to the thriller genre was a series of psychologically credible portraits of men and women whose nightmares have been shared by legions of readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

For his contributions to literature, Graham was named a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1968 and was appointed to the Order of the British Empire in 1983.

BIOGRAPHY

Winston Mawdsley Graham was born in Victoria Park, Manchester, England, on June 30, 1910, to chemist Albert Henry Graham, and his wife, Anne Mawdsley Graham. Because their son frequently suffered from pneumonia and was a sickly child, the family moved to Cornwall when he was a boy. During the thirty years that he lived there, Winston learned the region's history and lore; he later used this knowledge as background for the Poldark novels that he began writing in the 1940's. When Albert Graham died in 1929, the family was left in reduced financial circumstances, but nineteen-year-old Winston was able to indulge his desire to write because his supportive mother had a small annuity and was willing to finance him while he was establishing his lifelong occupation.

Graham began his career with two rejection slips (the only ones he ever received), before placing short stories in periodicals such as *Windsor* magazine. By 1934 his first novel, *The House with the Stained-Glass Windows*, was published, and during the next decade, he turned out more than a dozen novels in a variety of genres, including thrillers, mysteries, crime novels, gothic romances, and historical novels for London publisher Ward, Lock. In the London blitz of World War II, Graham's copies of his early novels were destroyed, but the author was not particularly dismayed because, as he later admitted, the books were not espe-

cially noteworthy for the quality of the writing or for the remuneration he received for them. Over a period of sixty years, Graham would produce more than forty novels as well as a nonfictional study of the Spanish Armada, short stories, screenplays, television and radio scripts, and stage plays.

Graham's first Poldark book was *Ross Poldark: A Novel of Cornwall, 1783-1787* (1945), published in the United States as *The Renegade*. The BBC adapted the Poldark books for two television series—the first ran in the late 1970's-early 1980's, and the second began in the early 1990's. Additionally, six Graham suspense novels were made into films, with Graham coauthoring the script for *Take My Life* (1947) and writing the screenplay for his award-winning *Night Without Stars* (1951). He also wrote the scripts for a radio play, *Little Walls* (1956), and a television play, *Sleeping Partner* (1967), both based on his novels. Graham likewise wrote *Circumstantial Evidence*, a stage play, in 1979 and was involved in a six-part television serialization of *The Forgotten Story* (1983), which received a silver medal at the New York Film Festival. His books have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

He was married to Jean Mary Williamson in 1939 (she died in 1992), and they had two children: a son, Andrew, who became a don at Oxford University, and a daughter, Anne Graham Barteau. To avoid taxes, the Grahams lived in Cap Ferrat, southern France, during the 1950's and early 1960's, but they eventually returned to their converted farmhouse in Buxted, East Sussex.

Graham was chairman of the British Society of Authors from 1967 to 1969 and was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In 1983, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire. Graham's last published work was his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Private Man* (2003), before his death on July 10, 2003.

ANALYSIS

Winston Graham's most memorable suspense protagonists are women, particularly Marnie Elmer of *Marnie*, Deborah Dainton of *The Walking Stick*, and Norah Faulkner of *Woman in the Mirror* (1975), the plot of which recalls that of *The Walking Stick* and develops an even more highly concentrated mystery.

However, two characters are notable exceptions to the generalization: Philip Turner of *The Little Walls* and David Abden of *The Green Flash*.

THE GREEN FLASH

In *The Green Flash*, David Abden is an amoral loner haunted by a terrible childhood tragedy. His father, an alcoholic who fancied motor racing, died of a fall when David was eleven years old. The boy was suspected of having pushed his father during a struggle, though his mother (in love with another man) most likely had done the deed and shifted the blame to her son. At the age of twenty-four, while working for a cosmetics firm, David is attracted to an older woman, a Russian émigré who hires him to help run her perfume business, though she knows of his prison record for robbery. He eventually becomes the key person in Mme Shona's company and in her life; despite his continuing romantic involvement with her, however, he marries Erica, a wealthy fencer. Their marriage sours, however, and he kills her during a duel. In a kind of replay of his childhood crisis, David is absolved of responsibility for Erica's death. The past intrudes on his present even more when he succeeds to a Scottish baronetcy as a result of a cousin's death in a car crash and then falls in love with his cousin's widow, Alison. Lacking family pride or interest in his heritage, he turns his back on the inheritance and on Alison, returning at the end to an aging and ailing Mme Shona. The mother he never really had, she is the sole stabilizing force in his life.

Among Graham's previous thrillers, only *Angell, Pearl, and Little God* (1970) is longer than *The Green Flash*, but the earlier book is narrower in scope. *The Green Flash* covers many years and is a wide-ranging chronicle of an unpredictable life and a shady business world, in both of which David Abden seeks the best of everything. Its expansive plot introduces a wider range of characters and incidents than is the norm in earlier books, though the highly detailed portrait of the perfume-manufacturing industry is foreshadowed in *Marnie*, with its focus on a printing firm, and in *The Walking Stick*, with its art-auction milieu. Another distinguishing trait of *The Green Flash* is that though deaths and crimes occur early, the novel does not become a suspense novel until it is well under way. Fur-

ther, despite the intrigues that are present throughout and the dangers that impulsive David constantly courts, *The Green Flash* lacks the tension that is central to so many of the earlier suspense novels. Graham may well have set out to depart from his familiar formula, not intending to produce merely another suspense story, but rather aiming to write a straight novel. Indeed, *The Green Flash* is as much a memorable psychological study of mature love as it is a crime novel.

THE LITTLE WALLS

Though *The Little Walls* is one of Graham's early thrillers, it is one of the best in the genre, mainly because of Philip Turner, the thirty-year-old narrator whose attempts to answer questions surrounding his elder brother's apparent suicide lead him on an odyssey from England to the Netherlands and then to Italy. He is motivated by his love for the sibling he considered his mentor and an unwillingness to believe that Grevil killed himself (as their father had done years earlier). A physicist turned archaeologist, Grevil had been en route to England from an expedition in Java when his body was found in an Amsterdam canal. Lacking evidence of foul play, the authorities assume suicide, particularly since a "Dear John" letter was in his jacket pocket. Philip's only leads are the woman's name on that note and the knowledge that Grevil arrived in the Netherlands with a man named Jack Buckingham, since vanished, whom he had befriended in Indonesia. The English police suggest to Philip that he seek the aid of a shady, erstwhile undercover agent whose international contacts could prove useful. In company with this man and alone, Philip confronts emotional and physical trials during his quest, which also becomes a journey of self-discovery. Eventually, he attains the answers he sought, the revelation coming in the course of a climactic confrontation with the elusive Buckingham, who admits that he abandoned Grevil to murderers. Philip's odyssey ends with his respect for Grevil reinforced, and their father's suicide is placed in the proper perspective: simply a long-ago tragedy with no bearing on the present.

MARNIE

The protagonist-narrator of *Marnie* is a more typical Graham protagonist: a psychologically disturbed loner of ambivalent morality. Margaret "Marnie" Elmer

is twenty-three years old and has lied and robbed for years. Every few months she sheds an identity with a hot bath and a stiff drink and then departs for a new city and a different life. Two stable elements in this fragmented existence of aliases are visits to her mother in Torquay and to a horse in Cirencester, the only living things with whom she has formed lasting relationships. Marnie cannot fall in love, and sex repels her, but under duress she marries Mark Rutland, her employer. When Mark discovers that she has stolen the firm's payroll and has fled, he replaces the money, locates her, and insists on marriage, vowing not to betray her. Inevitably, Marnie's carefully obscured past returns to haunt her, and Mark increases the pressure on her to allow him to orchestrate a long-term resolution. A conflict in the family business complicates matters, however, and the novel concludes with a series of unexpected twists that place Marnie, once the quintessential loner, firmly under the control of others.

In a tale filled with irony, the most poignant example is that Marnie, who had devoted herself to hiding her personality and past from others, was doing precisely what her mother had done (without her daughter's knowledge) for years. Whereas Marnie rejected sex, however, her mother invited it, and then, in desperation, murdered an illegitimate son. Marnie's warped psyche, then, had been shaped by dimly recalled childhood experiences that she futilely attempted to change or expunge from memory. Thus she realizes that her mother (whom she had supported with her ill-gotten money) had been deceiving her for years and also had hidden the facts of her life. The ultimate irony, though, comes at the end of the novel, when the men whom she reluctantly had come to trust betray her.

Graham combines—more successfully than in any of his other suspense novels—a graphic psychological portrait with a compelling narrative in *Marnie*. In large measure, the tension of the unfolding plot is increased by the reader's developing empathy with the narrator. Marnie's consciousness is the distorted prism through which everything is revealed. She is a free spirit who nevertheless is trapped; a calculating victimizer who herself becomes a victim; and an attractive, personable, and intelligent woman who, sadly, is unable to

enjoy continuity and security. At the conclusion, however, while being deceived into a confrontation that may be her undoing, Marnie achieves a catharsis of sorts. In one sense, she is defeated; in a more important sense, however, she succeeds in overcoming a major obstacle to leading a normal life.

THE WALKING STICK

The Walking Stick also has a pretty young woman as its protagonist-narrator, and she too is a loner, an introvert whose personality has been determined in great measure by her childhood bout with polio. A cane has become the emblem of Deborah Dainton's physical impairment, distinguishing her from everyone else and making her as fragile as the antiques about which she is an expert (she works in the porcelain department of a fashionable London auction house). When she fi-

nally is won over by the approaches of Leigh Hartly, a struggling artist, Deborah finds herself drawn into a netherworld of deceit and crime. Having fallen in love despite the defenses she had constructed around herself, she agrees to participate in a daring robbery of the auction house, playing a central insider's role at critical stages of the complex intrigue. Deluded by love, she permits herself to be used by a calculating rogue and those in whose debt he labors.

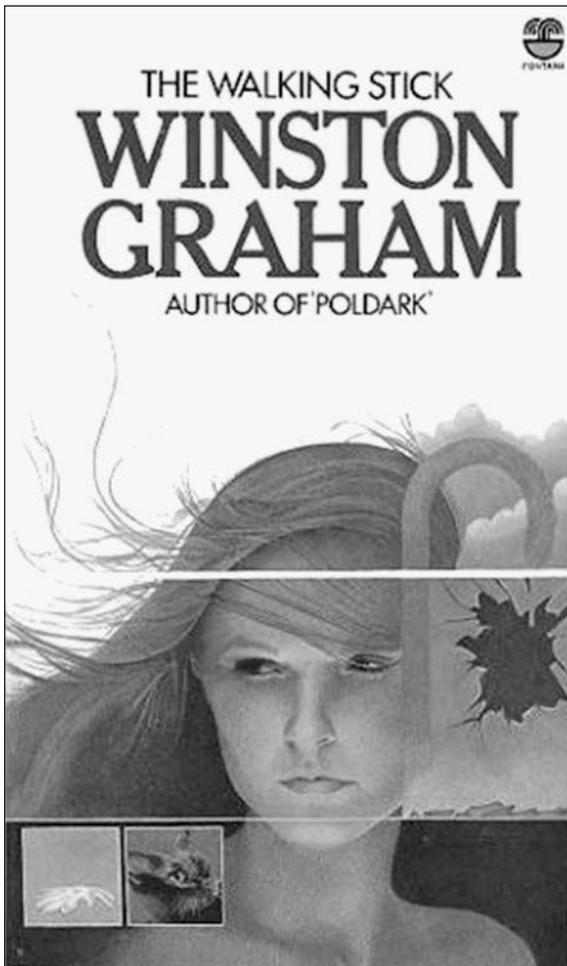
What Deborah learns after the Whittington robbery, however, is that she had been set up from the very start. The initial meeting with Leigh, the requests for dates, the developing romantic involvement—all had been part of the grand scheme for a million-dollar theft that could have succeeded only with her assistance.

The lameness that Deborah regards as distinguishing herself from others is for the most part overcome when she and Leigh are living together, for the psychological and emotional benefits of the relationship apparently improve her physical well-being. In the aftermath of the robbery and the subsequent revelation of Leigh's deceit, however, Deborah again seeks the support of her walking stick. Having experienced another way of life, without her cane, Deborah apparently cannot return to the former one. The work concludes with her plans for suicide and for betraying her accomplices to the police.

Gerald H. Strauss
Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The House with the Stained-Glass Windows*, 1934; *Into the Fog*, 1935; *The Riddle of John Rowe*, 1935; *Without Motive*, 1936; *The Dangerous Pawn*, 1937; *The Giant's Chair*, 1938; *Keys of Chance*, 1939; *Strangers Meeting*, 1939; *No Exit: An Adventure*, 1940; *Night Journey*, 1941 (revised 1966); *My Turn Next*, 1942; *The Merciless Ladies*, 1944 (revised 1979); *The Forgotten Story*, 1945 (also known as *The Wreck of the Gray Cat*, 1958); *Take My Life*, 1947; *Cordelia*, 1949; *Night Without Stars*, 1950; *Fortune Is a Woman*, 1953; *The Little Walls*, 1955; *The Sleeping Partner*, 1956; *Greek Fire*, 1957; *The Tumbled House*, 1959; *Marnie*, 1961; *The Grove of Eagles*, 1963; *After the Act*, 1965; *The Walking Stick*,



1967; *Angell, Pearl, and Little God*, 1970; *Woman in the Mirror*, 1975; *The Green Flash*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Ross Poldark: A Novel of Cornwall, 1783-1787*, 1945 (also known as *The Renegade: A Novel of Cornwall, 1783-1787*, 1951); *Demelza: A Novel of Cornwall, 1788-1790*, 1946; *Jeremy Poldark: A Novel of Cornwall, 1790-1791*, 1950 (also known as *Venture Once More: A Novel of Cornwall, 1790-1791*, 1954); *Warleggan: A Novel of Cornwall, 1792-1793*, 1953 (also known as *The Last Gamble: A Novel of Cornwall, 1792-1793*, 1955); *The Black Moon: A Novel of Cornwall, 1794-1795*, 1973; *The Four Swans: A Novel of Cornwall, 1795-1797*, 1976; *The Angry Tide: A Novel of Cornwall, 1798-1799*, 1977; *The Stranger from the Sea: A Novel of Cornwall, 1810-1811*, 1981; *The Miller's Dance: A Novel of Cornwall, 1812-1813*, 1982; *The Loving Cup: A Novel of Cornwall, 1813-1815*, 1984; *Cameo*, 1988; *The Twisted Sword: A Novel of Cornwall, 1815-1816*, 1990; *Stephanie*, 1992; *Tremor*, 1995; *The Ugly Sister*, 1998; *Bella Poldark: A Novel of Cornwall, 1818-1820*, 2002

SHORT FICTION: *The Japanese Girl, and Other Stories*, 1971

PLAYS: *Shadow Play*, pr. 1978; *Circumstantial Evidence*, pr. 1979

RADIO PLAY: *Little Walls*, 1956

SCREENPLAYS: *Take My Life*, 1947 (with Valerie Taylor and Margaret Kennedy); *Night Without Stars*, 1951

TELEPLAY: *Sleeping Partner*, 1967

NONFICTION: *The Spanish Armadas*, 1972; *Poldark's Cornwall*, 1983; *Memoirs of a Private Man*, 2003

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_____. "Criminals at Large." Review of *Night Jour-*

ney, by Winston Graham. *The New York Times Book Review* 73 (January 28, 1968): 41. The reviewer remarks on the author's "quietly understated" efforts in effectively telling a spy story set during World War II, which is compared with Hitchcock's early films.

_____. "Criminals at Large." Review of *The Walking Stick*, by Winston Graham. *The New York Times Book Review* 72 (July 16, 1967): 10. Boucher lauds the novel as the author's best suspense novel to date, citing the well-orchestrated plot concerning the sexual awakening of a highly intelligent girl with a withered leg, resulting in a masterful blend of suspense and psychology.

DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. A brief entry on Graham, paying particular attention to his mystery fiction, with a list of genre titles and dates.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Stephanie*, by Winston Graham. 240, no. 7 (February 15, 1993): 200. Calls the novel an "atmospheric suspense thriller" that revolves around a disabled World War II hero who refuses to believe that his twenty-one-year-old daughter has died accidentally. The plot ranges from England to India, presenting a number of interesting, complex characters and plot twists that constantly ratchet up the tension.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Tremor*, by Winston Graham. 242, no. 51 (December 18, 1995): 41. A highly favorable review of *Tremor*, a disaster thriller that centers on a real-life incident: the 1960 destruction by earthquake of Agadir, Morocco. The reviewer notes that Graham has crafted a "compelling drama of sacrifice, loss and redemption" through his crisp dialogue and clever plotting that involve a variety of people—French prostitutes, a British writer, an American lawyer and others—who are caught up in the tragedy.

Saturday Review. Review of *The Sleeping Partner*, by Winston Graham. 39, no. 50 (December 15, 1956): 34. A lukewarm review of *The Sleeping Partner*, called "an adequate thriller"—believable, but not particularly suspenseful.

ANN GRANGER**Patricia Ann Granger****Born:** Portsmouth, England; July 12, 1939**Also wrote as** Ann Hulme**Types of plot:** Amateur sleuth; cozy; police procedural**PRINCIPAL SERIES**Meredith Mitchell and Alan Markby, 1991-
Fran Varady, 1997-**PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS**

MEREDITH MITCHELL is a career foreign service officer, now based in London, who sees little hope of getting another assignment abroad. Her inquisitive mind and her need for action often lead her into amateur detecting, to the despair of Chief Inspector Alan Markby, who would prefer that she leave crime and criminals to the police. Over the course of the series, she becomes closer and closer to Markby, and eventually she agrees to relinquish her independence and marry him.

CHIEF INSPECTOR ALAN MARKBY, head of the Criminal Investigation Department unit in the small Cotswolds town of Bamford at the start of the series, later is promoted to the rank of superintendent, with responsibilities for a larger area. A tall, handsome man with fair hair and blue eyes, Markby is always noticed by women, but he is interested only in Meredith Mitchell. Although he resists her involvement in his cases, he admits that her skill in eliciting information from others complements his more guarded approach, which derives both from his temperament and his public school education. He also admires her incisive mind and likes to test his theories on her. Markby has no doubt that the two of them belong together.

FRAN VARADY is a young woman who was abandoned by her mother when she was just a child and whose other relatives have died, leaving her homeless at the age of sixteen. In London, she survives by taking low-paying jobs and sleeping wherever she can. Eventually, she hopes to become an actress. Meanwhile, her unflinching compassion for the street people around her propels her into becoming an amateur sleuth.

CONTRIBUTION

Ann Granger's best-known Mitchell and Markby series derives from the traditional cozy crime novel that was made popular in the 1920's by writers such as Agatha Christie. These early cozy mysteries were set in rural England in a society made up of a few ruling families who had lived in their country houses for generations; their dutiful, subservient servants; equally dependent cottagers; and the local farmers and townspeople, who were also well aware of the need for deference to those of a higher social class. As everyone had a role to play in this society, murder was a shocking aberration, and the purpose of the novel was to put things right as speedily as possible. Readers did not expect to find acts of violence and descriptions of bloody bodies in these mysteries; it was appalling enough that a murder had been committed in what was assumed to be an ideal society. However, as this society disappeared, the genre declined in popularity.

In the 1970's, some talented writers saw how the cozy mystery could be redefined and refocused, and revived the genre. Granger's popular Meredith Mitchell and Alan Markby series is among the best of the new cozies. In this series, Granger retains the village setting and many of the character types found in the traditional cozy, but she is uncompromisingly realistic about the changes that threaten to destroy English country life. Because of both its style and its substance, the Mitchell and Markby series is highly regarded by critics. Granger's works have been translated into French, German, Swedish, and Finnish.

BIOGRAPHY

Ann Granger was born Patricia Ann Granger on July 12, 1939, in Portsmouth, England. Her father, Eugene Granger, was a Royal Navy officer; her mother, Norah Granger, was a homemaker. As a child, Granger learned to love books and reading, as her mother would read to her for hours. When she was still a teenager, an English teacher encouraged her to read literary works by writers not often encountered by young readers,

such as the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevski.

Granger completed her education at Royal Holloway College, London University, where she specialized in modern languages. From 1960 to 1961, she worked in France as an English teacher. Granger then returned to London University, and in 1962, she received her bachelor of arts degree, with honors. After graduation, she went to work in the visa sections of British consulates and embassies in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. In 1966, she married John Hulme, a colleague in the foreign service, and accompanied him to Zambia and Germany. Both of their children, Timothy and Christopher, were born while the Hulmes were abroad. When the family returned to England and made their home in Bicester, Oxfordshire, Granger embarked on a new career as a writer.

Although Granger really wanted to write crime novels, she began her literary career with historical romances, publishing them as Ann Hulme. From 1981, when *Summer Heiress* appeared, until 1989, Mills & Boon published almost a dozen of these books, and several more were picked up by Worldwide. Granger's historical romances are now out of print. It was not until she produced her first mystery novel in 1991 that she began to achieve critical recognition, as well as the phenomenal popularity she eventually came to enjoy.

In her first crime novel, *Say It with Poison* (1991), Granger introduced Meredith Mitchell, who like the author is an experienced foreign service officer. Mitchell is presently based in London although she would like another posting abroad. While attending her goddaughter's wedding in the Cotswolds, she meets Chief Inspector Alan Markby. Thus begins a romance that develops throughout the series, eventually ending in marriage. However, Mitchell and Markby's romance is never allowed to overshadow the crimes they encounter. Granger keeps the focus of these novels on the village murders, which can be solved only by sleuths who have the remarkable gifts of psychological insight that Mitchell and Markby both possess, gifts that also account in large part for their continuing fascination with each other.

In 1997, Granger embarked on her Fran Varady series, set in the slums of contemporary London. Critics and readers admired the spunky heroine as well as the

colorful secondary characters whom Granger brought so vividly to life. In 2006, Granger published her first historical crime novel, *A Rare Interest in Corpses*, which is set in Victorian London. *The Companion*, which appeared the following year, featured the same setting and the same sleuths. Though Granger's remarkable abilities, particularly for characterization, drew readers to these two new ventures, the ongoing Mitchell and Markby series remains the best-known and the most popular.

ANALYSIS

Unlike the cozy mysteries of the Golden Age, Ann Granger's village stories have serious themes. One of the author's preoccupations is the loss of a sense of community in rural England. She points out that the cottages where the same families had lived for generations are now occupied by strangers from the city, to whom the village is no more than a pleasant weekend retreat. The newcomers are not inquisitive; they do not scrutinize their neighbors' doings and often do not even know their names. While this way of life enhances privacy, it weakens the community, for villagers no longer feel responsible for their neighbors or for the village as a whole. As a result, criminal activity is made much easier, and as Mitchell and Markby find over and over again, solving crimes becomes much more difficult.

Granger also fears that the natural beauty of the Cotswolds, where her series is set, will soon be lost forever. She admits that with farming less and less profitable, it is difficult for long-established farm families to hold onto their land. Granger is sympathetic toward the young men and women in her novels who remain on the land, working harder and harder, while they secretly resolve to sell out and leave as soon as their parents are dead. One of the recurring characters in the series is developer Dudley Newman. With her usual honesty, Granger does not show him as a villain but instead as a pleasant person who makes no secret of the fact that his goal in life is to make money. Unfortunately, Newman values the natural setting only as a backdrop for the houses he erects and as a further inducement for city dwellers to come to what they mistakenly believe will continue to be an unspoiled paradise.

Though the Mitchell and Markby books deal with serious issues, they are enlivened by the presence of colorful characters, by references to local history and persistent rural customs, and by frequent flashes of wit and humor, especially in the exchanges between the two principal characters. It is also to Granger's credit that even in a series with more than a dozen mysteries, she has managed to keep every book unique. Even the relationship between Mitchell and Markby is constantly changing; in one book, they seem closer to commitment, while in the next, it is clear that they are still dealing with serious problems. Moreover, Granger invents a totally different structure for each novel in the series, sometimes drawing brilliantly on past history and even juxtaposing crimes that are in fact separated by years.

COLD IN THE EARTH

The third mystery in the Mitchell and Markby series, *Cold in the Earth* (1992), focuses squarely on the problems of the present. When Mitchell leaves her home in London for the village of Bamford, where she has agreed to house-sit for Alan Markby's sister, she expects to have a pleasant holiday in the Cotswolds, an area she has always equated with peace, quiet, and natural beauty. She could not be more mistaken. A body is found at the site of one of the new developments that are springing up all over the Cotswolds. One of the suspects in the crime is the contractor, Dudley Newman; another is Alwyn Winthrop, one of the young farmers who wants to sell out to a developer and escape from the rural life he has come to loathe. Thus Granger bases her plot on the pervasive theme of change.

In time, the corpse is identified as a French undercover narcotics agent, and it becomes even clearer that the seemingly bucolic village is not immune from urban crime. Interestingly, even though this mystery is set in the present, Mitchell finds disturbing parallels in events that transpired in Bamford long ago. Thus she emphasizes the presence of the past, which is another recurring theme in the series.

A RESTLESS EVIL

In *A Restless Evil* (2002), an old crime takes on new life. Twenty-two years ago, a man dubbed the "Potato Man" by the media committed a series of rapes but was never caught, and Alan Markby has continued to be troubled by his failure in this case. Now, however,

Mitchell has finally agreed to share her life with him, so the pair are too busy house hunting and planning their future together to worry about much else. When a skeleton is found in Stovey Woods, where the rapist used to take his victims, Markby is forced to revisit the past. A few days later, a seemingly blameless woman is found murdered in the village church. Mitchell and Markby cannot believe that her death is connected to the rapes, but they soon find that they are mistaken.

Although this mystery ends with the punishment of the evildoers, it also concludes with redemption. After the skeletal remains are identified, Markby has the privilege of hearing a confession and then of lifting the burden of guilt that an innocent woman has carried for years. In her story one can see why Granger is so much admired for her use of psychology. Such insights make her characters more believable and her novels more profound.

Although in her Fran Varady mysteries and her Victorian crime novels Granger also creates interesting characters, places them in convincingly realistic settings, and proceeds with complex plots that lead eventually to the restoration of order, it is her Mitchell and Markby books that are most acclaimed by critics and most admired by the reading public. Her reinterpretation of the cozy genre has played no small part in the revival of the form.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MITCHELL AND MARKBY SERIES: *Say It with Poison*, 1991; *A Season for Murder*, 1991; *Cold in the Earth*, 1992; *Murder Among Us*, 1992; *Where Old Bones Lie*, 1993; *A Fine Place for Death*, 1994; *Flowers for His Funeral*, 1994; *Candle for a Corpse*, 1995; *A Word After Dying*, 1996; *A Touch of Mortality*, 1996; *Call the Dead Again*, 1998; *Beneath These Stones*, 1999; *Shades of Murder*, 2000; *A Restless Evil*, 2002; *That Way Murder Lies*, 2004

FRAN VARADY SERIES: *Asking for Trouble*, 1997; *Keeping Bad Company*, 1997; *Running Scared*, 1998; *Risking It All*, 2001; *Watching Out*, 2003; *Mixing with Murder*, 2005; *Rattling the Bones*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Rare Interest in Corpses*, 2006; *The Companion*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS HULME): *A Poor Relation*, 1979; *Summer Heiress*, 1981; *The Gamester*, 1982; *The Emperor's Dragoon*, 1983; *Daughter of Spain*, 1984; *A Woman of the Regiment*, 1985; *The Hungarian Adventures*, 1985; *The Garden of the Azure Dragon*, 1986; *The Unexpected American*, 1988; *The Flying Man*, 1988; *A Scandalous Bargain*, 1988; *Captain Harland's Marriage*, 1989; *False Fortune*, 1989; *Whisper in the Wind*, 1989

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Heising, Willetta L. *Detecting Women: A Reader's Guide and Checklist for Mystery Series Written by Women*. 3d ed. Dearborn, Mich.: Purple Moon Press, 2000. Brief entry on Granger differentiates between the author's two series and lists mysteries

written through 1999. An extensive index points out numerous other references to the author and her works.

Oleksiw, Susan. "Cozy Mystery." In *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, edited by Rosemary Herbert, Catherine Aird, John M. Reilly, and Susan Oleksiw. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Defines the genre and traces its history. Oleksiw's suggestion that the form has once again become popular as a way to explore issues of community is clearly applicable to Granger's mysteries.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Shades of Murder*, by Ann Granger. 248 (September 24, 2001): 72. This book exemplifies Granger's success in modernizing the traditional village mystery. Her handling of a double plot, involving two poisonings more than a century part, is superb.

Windrath, Helen, ed. *They Wrote the Book: Thirteen Women Mystery Writers Tell All*. Duluth, Minn.: Spinsters Ink, 2000. Essays by British and North American female mystery writers on subjects including setting, characterization, plotting, and research. One particularly illuminating essay discusses the use of women sleuths.

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

Born: Brooklyn, New York; November 11, 1846

Died: Buffalo, New York; April 11, 1935

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ebenezer Gryce, 1878-1917

Caleb Sweetwater, 1899-1910

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

EBENEZER GRyce, a detective working for the New York police force, is first described as middle-

aged, stolid, and portly; toward the end of his career he is depicted variously as about eighty or eighty-five years old. Gryce's methods combine discerning assessment of evidence and testimony with surprise tactics used to elicit essential information from reluctant suspects. Gryce feels ill at ease in dealing with those of a higher social station, and it is awkward and painful for him to confront well-born and attractive women. He rarely, if ever, looks anyone directly in the eyes.

MR. Q (for "Query"), who typically prefers carrying a calling card with a single question mark to using

his actual name, is a subordinate who is employed because of his extraordinary ability to uncover clues.

HORACE BYRD, another younger detective, is described as an attractive man with a cultivated bearing. Unlike Gryce, Byrd feels little discomfort in dealing with his social betters.

CALEB SWEETWATER assumes significant and demanding functions alongside Gryce in several novels before taking on major responsibilities in his own right. In some works he and Gryce contribute in roughly equal measure to the solution of cases where the younger man's mobility and growing expertise are complemented by his aging mentor's shrewdness. Sweetwater's projecting nose and receding chin leave an impression of outright ugliness that is offset mainly by his ready smile and his cheerful, modest demeanor. With respect to Gryce, Sweetwater never seems moved by rivalry; even in their next-to-last case together, Sweetwater is presented as one of Gryce's favorite protégés.

AMELIA BUTTERWORTH, a middle-aged single woman who is inquisitive and obstinately self-reliant, acts as an informal though rather effective adjutant for Gryce. She turns out to be particularly good at extracting clues from difficult locations; two important cases reach successful conclusions partly because of her tenacity and boldness in searching for evidence where Gryce would find it difficult to go. In spite of some occasional reservations Gryce may have about her suitability for such tasks, she probably does about as well as her male counterparts in the field of detection.

VIOLET STRANGE, who appears on her own in a collection of stories, is of a rather different stamp. Her existence is quite varied, as the demands of an active social calendar must be reconciled with the requirements of her work for a private-detective agency. She seems slight, a mere slip of a woman, whose contagious wit and sparkling eyes conceal a deep measure of self-possession and resourcefulness. While the inferences she elucidates from available evidence sometimes appear intuitive, along the way she is also shown as becoming learned in the ways of the world.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Anna Katharine Green was neither the first woman to publish crime fiction nor the first Ameri-

can to write a detective novel, her efforts were taken as distinctive advances in a genre that had only begun to emerge as a separate literary form. Many of the features with which mystery devotees were to become familiar were utilized in her works. With the wise and methodical detective as a pivotal figure, clues and evidence were adroitly dispersed about her narrative, and from a relatively small number of suspects, solutions that were startling and yet plausible were reached. Many of Green's novels concerned family crises, where secret marriages, scheming relatives, or missing persons added poignant notes of lurking intrigues; her works were constructed systematically, around factual questions, clearly differentiating themselves from the novels of the mid-Victorian period. Affinities with gothic fiction arose here and there, where Green suggested ghosts and strange footfalls, but these signs became explicable in all cases when crimes and other secrets were laid open. For some time early in her life, Green had written Romantic poetry, and the atmosphere and overtones associated with that genre probably impart some melodramatic qualities to her detective novels. While several influences seem to converge in her work, Green's crime fiction also promoted relatively new forms of evidence and reasoning.

Particular mention should be made of early reactions to Green's writings, which did much to preserve her reputation even after the vicissitudes of literary tastes seemed to turn against her works. After her first novel, *The Leavenworth Case: A Lawyer's Story* (1878), was published, under her own name, the Pennsylvania legislature debated whether its author actually could have been a woman. Later the novel was used at Yale University for the purpose of illustrating means by which circumstantial evidence could be misleading. Wilkie Collins acknowledged his admiration for the powers of imagination manifested in that work. Green's novels were steadily in demand throughout her lifetime; among the American and British statesmen who enjoyed her works were Woodrow Wilson and Stanley Baldwin. Although subsequently her renown declined as readers' preferences turned toward shorter works of a more straightforward style, specialists repeatedly have accorded Green a place of importance in the development of mystery fiction. For that

matter, special honorable citations of her efforts were made by leading characters in the fiction of John Dickson Carr and Agatha Christie. Green has also received attention as a female writer whose position in the field of detective fiction indicated the paths by which the genre could be enriched.

BIOGRAPHY

A major influence on Anna Katharine Green's literary career was her home situation. Anna, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 11, 1846, was the second daughter and fourth child of James Wilson Green and Catherine Ann Whitney Green, who died about three years after Anna's birth. Her father was an important attorney who practiced in New York and was involved in many criminal cases. During her early years, Anna Katharine Green learned enough about officers on the metropolitan police force to depict them as rather ordinary except for their expertise in handling investigations. There may also have been a real-life counterpart to the female detective Amelia Butterworth.

In the course of an education that was concluded with a baccalaureate degree from the Ripley Female College in Poultney, Vermont, Green became interested in Romantic poetry; indeed, at one time she had discussed such matters directly with Ralph Waldo Emerson and corresponded with him briefly. Some of her verse was published in leading journals of that day, but the tepid reception such efforts received caused her to pursue fiction. By her own account Green derived some inspiration from the police novels of Émile Gaboriau; evidently her father did not encourage her work on detective fiction, thinking it better for her to continue with her poetry. Although *The Leavenworth Case* was written in some secrecy, after it appeared it was widely acclaimed—and demand mounted for her subsequent detective novels. Although *The Defence of the Bride, and Other Poems* was published in 1882, and was followed five years later by *Risifi's Daughter* (pb. 1887), a drama in verse, the success of Green's mystery fiction already had set the die for the remainder of her literary work.

In 1884, Green wed Charles Rohlf, an actor seven years younger than she who later turned to the design

of iron stoves and furniture. Two sons and one daughter were born to them, and in time they made their home in Buffalo, New York. Green's work is often cataloged under her married name, and royalties from her writings provided most of the household's earnings. In addition to community and educational matters, the author concerned herself with international copyright legislation, possibly as a reflection of the success of her works abroad; during her lifetime, her works were translated into French, German, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish. Apart from a visit to Europe in 1890, however, much of her life was spent in or around her home. At times she granted requests for interviews, and on occasion she also discussed in print her theories on the fascination crime stories exercised over their readers. Indeed, sometimes local newspapers recalled the stages in Green's career that had brought her to the forefront of American mystery writers. For the most part, however, she did not seek public attention. Green lived to celebrate her fiftieth wedding anniversary, and about five and one-half months later she died in Buffalo on April 11, 1935.

ANALYSIS

Most considerations of Anna Katharine Green's literary achievements begin with an exposition of the salient and noteworthy features of *The Leavenworth Case*; indeed, this work has much in common with Green's later efforts, though she manifested rather more versatility and ingenuity elsewhere than some commentators have allowed. In any event, her most famous novel has generally been accorded special attention for its innovative qualities. For that matter, certain devices and techniques, when they were adopted by later writers, eventually became hackneyed, whereas at the outset of her career Green's approach to crime fiction was praised by many for its freshness and originality.

THE LEAVENWORTH CASE

The opening chapters pose the problem in its most direct yet enigmatic form. When Horatio Leavenworth, a wealthy retired merchant, is found shot to death in his mansion in New York, and the fatal bullet is traced to the dead man's pistol (which was left cleaned and reloaded at its usual place in an adjoining bedroom), certain individuals readily come under sus-

picion. Diagrams (which the author often supplied in her novels) suggest the path that the murderer may have taken; as no signs of surprise or struggle could be inferred from the victim's posture, it is presumed throughout that the guilty party was well known to him. The work is narrated by Everett Raymond, a junior partner in a law firm. Almost from the beginning Raymond consults with Ebenezer Gryce, who has been recommended for his ability to assess the relative importance of facts and statements.

Speculation mounts about the dead man's nieces. One of them, Mary Leavenworth, refuses to answer questions about a document that had been within her reach—and then privately admits that it exists no longer. The other, Eleanore, seems implicated by the discovery of a monogrammed handkerchief with gun soot on it, and a broken key to the library also is found in her possession. The contrast between the two leading female suspects, one blonde and one dark, is developed with a certain dramatic flair as it emerges that each of them is less than forthcoming on crucial points. In

keeping with the emphasis on empirical methods, new problems of proof arise at each turn of the plot. On the other hand, the narrator's subjective beliefs that character and bearing should mitigate the harsher suppositions circumstantial evidence has raised against the leading women add a further element of personal concern that seems justified by the outcome.

While the disappearance of Hannah Chester, a servant who may know more than the others about the fateful night, has some ominous overtones, other problems of motivation are considered when it becomes known that the final will of the deceased man did not favor one niece over the other so much as had been thought. The narrator is presented with evidence that Mary has been secretly married, to one Henry Clavering; fragments of an important letter, with bloodstains on them, and an inscription readily traced to her seem to cast further doubts on Mary's intentions. Trueman Harwell, an assistant the dead man had originally employed to prepare one of his books for publication, seems persuaded that Clavering was the guilty one.



Illustration from the first edition of The Leavenworth Case.

Careful research and a fair amount of footwork are required to trace the movements of leading characters; these are set down in a chronological table, and at intervals there are enumerated lists of major facts and questions outstanding.

Mr. Q, who is adept at disguises and can follow instructions from memory, scurries about to observe more closely the comings and goings at the Leavenworth mansion. When Hannah Chester is found dead with a packet of poison nearby and when a note ostensibly written by her is discovered, the mystery is thrown open once more. Yet it is resolved finally through the brooding intelligence of Mr. Gryce, who openly accuses Mary only as a stratagem to compel the original murderer to confess. Critics have objected that on one point the final reasoning seems awry. Gryce contends somewhat arbitrarily that it would be impossible for a woman to clean a pistol: Thus, from the very outset he had considered other possibilities.

OTHER GRYCE CASES

In his next case, *A Strange Disappearance* (1880), Gryce takes up the clues leading to a missing woman from a wealthy household of New York who has been abducted by bandits. Q, who narrates this work, at one point poses as a seedy French artist (he also climbs a tree to enter a house). *The Sword of Damocles: A Story of New York Life* (1881), one of the author's lengthier works, has Gryce brought in toward the end after securities have been taken from a bank vault.

HAND AND RING

The author regarded *Hand and Ring* (1883), one of the more popular of her early works, as her personal favorite among her novels. In that novel, Green introduced Caleb Sweetwater and Horace Byrd as two of Gryce's more prominent subordinates. The murder of a seemingly inoffensive woman in her own house and the discovery of a diamond ring that was detached from her finger lead to some odd and chilling scenes. One suspect, in despair, attempts to cut his own throat, while the initial conundrum cannot be resolved in the courtroom. It comes to light that Gryce, disguised as a humpbacked man, has gathered further evidence; eventually a secret marriage, involving one of the least likely characters, is disclosed as the basis for the crime.

Byrd makes another appearance in *Seven to Twelve*

(1887); he and Gryce work together in *A Matter of Millions* (1890), while Q is called back to aid his superior in *Behind Closed Doors* (1888). The limitations under which Gryce had to operate seemed to call for more active and astute participation by other detectives who were brought in to assist him. Although by the standards of his time Gryce is well versed in problems of scientific evidence—he can distinguish among grades of writing paper and the types of ash they produce when burned, and he is knowledgeable about ballistics and toxicology—he is far from all-knowing, and rarely are his cases closed without the services of his able assistants.

AMELIA BUTTERWORTH

The appearance of female detectives in Green's works helped to demonstrate the possibilities this form of characterization offered, the more so as at that time female protagonists typically were cast as victims or villains. Amelia Butterworth, from an aristocratic New England family, is on most counts a level-headed and forward sort; notwithstanding her awareness of her social position, she has few qualms about exploring old houses or peering into closets where major clues are to be found. In due course, Gryce's skepticism about her capacities as an investigator gives way to grudging respect when the inferences she draws yield essential insights. In *That Affair Next Door* (1897), her notions concerning what a woman of gentility would do with her hat and gloves are instrumental in solving a difficult case. Subsequently, her efforts to fathom the old family secrets of those in a mysterious neighborhood and her forthright ventures into finding clues in an old house produce information that Gryce, described as giving in to his advanced age, could scarcely have obtained himself.

Yet the old master is able to reason from the facts on hand to settle the problem of *Lost Man's Lane: A Second Episode in the Life of Amelia Butterworth* (1898) in a way that had not occurred to his female associate. In this work the complementary qualities of the two leading detectives seem to suggest that the author did not conceive of any particular type as unerring or indomitable. Caleb Sweetwater, who had acted in an auxiliary capacity earlier, becomes more prominent in some subsequent cases. Although he originally had

been portrayed as a vaguely comic figure, increasingly his acumen and critical faculties are displayed. In *Agatha Webb* (1899) he outwits another lawman to arrive at the solution to a curious puzzle.

THE CIRCULAR STUDY

A well-known work from the author's later career, *The Circular Study* (1900), presents a baffling maze of clues and suppositions that has the added attraction of showing three major detectives at work on an unusual crime. When a reclusive inventor who lived in a remote neighborhood is found dead, the evidence seems to point nowhere in particular. There are few signs of a struggle, but an enigmatic note, clenched between the dead man's teeth, a cross that was pulled down from his wall, and the cryptic utterances of a pet English starling that enunciates the names of women who cannot be identified at the outset seem to suggest that some controversy from the past lies behind this murder. A deaf and mute butler who was on the scene and an odd array of mechanical contrivances that the dead man had installed add further touches of uncanny gloom.

Some comic moments arise when Miss Butterworth, during her own investigation, leaves traces of her presence, which Gryce briefly and mistakenly considers as further evidence. Sweetwater assists in finding those involved in a tangled family saga from years past that had led eventually to the old man's death; an illustrative floor plan and an enumerated series of open questions (which later are marked answered) allow the reader to follow this venture in collaborative deduction. In *One of My Sons* (1901), Sweetwater utilizes Gryce's extensive expertise—described as the result of more than sixty years of such work. Both of them take part in *Initials Only* (1911), where a seemingly inexplicable murder is explained as the effect of an ice pellet that had killed and then melted away. Their final joint effort is recounted in *The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow* (1917). In his own right Sweetwater demonstrates the extent to which he grasps the old detective's methods for handling cases; in addition to settling the troubled matter of *The Woman in the Alcove* (1906), he could, very much like his mentor, employ a ruse to draw the truth from an obdurate and outwardly unlikely suspect, as demonstrated in *The House of the Whispering Pines* (1910).

THE GOLDEN SLIPPER AND OTHER PROBLEMS FOR VIOLET STRANGE

As an operative for a detective agency, Violet Strange in some respects resembled private investigators who had begun to appear elsewhere in mystery fiction. In the stories in *The Golden Slipper and Other Problems for Violet Strange* (1915), her work includes recovering some missing diamonds, determining the nature of a mysterious shooting, and locating a will that a somnambulant heiress unwittingly misplaced. All the while personal concerns also make their claims on Strange, though she is able to separate social matters from the more serious demands of her employment. (Although her handling of clues is partly intuitive and does not approach the level of scientific expertise manifested by the author's first detective, curiously enough one short novel, *The Doctor, His Wife, and the Clock*, 1895, which affords a rare glimpse of Mr. Gryce during his early years, resurfaced with a different leading character and in a slightly reworked form in the collection of works that feature Miss Strange.) Later, Strange's romantic inclinations toward a young man of Boston and her interest in her older sister's career as an opera singer become foremost in her thoughts, and her ventures as an investigator are brought to a close.

In many of Green's novels, particularly those that did not utilize a series format, she yielded to her penchant for breathless and rather high-flown sorts of imagery and description, possibly in keeping with her early ambitions as a poet and a dramatist; such efforts produced sentimental and melodramatic overtones that awkwardly tilted any balance that might have been struck between the narrative pace of crime fiction and the more leisurely development of love interests. Even her more carefully constructed offerings were burdened with a prolix and ponderous style that blunted the effects of some otherwise finely conceived tales. Moreover, her handling of dialogue was often undistinguished, as her characters often lapsed into patterns of discourse that resembled those of her narrators.

THE FORSAKEN INN AND MARKED "PERSONAL"

On the other hand, many of Green's novels presented problems that were original and intrinsically interesting. As with her series novels, some of her other

mystery works could not necessarily be solved unaided, in their entirety, by the reader. Often the trail of clues would lead to disclosures of past liaisons and intrigues that lay behind violent deeds. Indeed in *The Forsaken Inn* (1890), a full-fledged historical mystery dealing with events from the eighteenth century, a supposed curse is laid to rest partly through the perusal of manuscripts. Individuals with unusual scientific ideas or aptitudes appear in some works: for example, a deranged inventor who had created an odd electrodynamic machine in *Marked "Personal"* (1893).

THE FILIGREE BALL AND DARK HOLLOW

It would seem likely that the legal lore she learned early in life figured in some of Green's quasi-documentary narratives. *The Filigree Ball, Being a Full and True Account of the Solution of the Mystery Concerning the Jeffrey-Moore Affair* (1903) uses newspaper accounts the author composed to supplement more direct statements made on the part of leading characters; the discovery of a cunningly devised contrivance to strike a skull adds some macabre touches toward the end. One of the more highly rated of the author's later novels is *Dark Hollow* (1914), which concerns a celebrated crime and trial. The narrator of this novel gathers evidence from newspaper clippings and other materials to arrive at a new solution to a past case. Along the way, further evidence, such as a previously overlooked bit of steel in the stick the killer used, is uncovered, and some unsavory facts about a local judge are brought forth.

THE MAYOR'S WIFE AND THE STEP ON THE STAIR

Green was adept at devising puzzles where strange writings, which were sometimes disguised or found in fragments, eventually yielded crucial secrets. *The Mayor's Wife* (1907), which deals with a mysterious illness and a secret marriage, features some odd inscriptions that are deciphered in a way that takes the methods of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug" (1843) one step further. In this novel, and in other works, Green, while depicting fears of ghostly spirits among the more credulous characters, also produced natural explanations for strange emanations by introducing evidence found in secret chambers or hidden passages. Details of this sort enliven *The Step on the Stair*

(1923), Green's final fictional work, in which the origins of some curious apparitions are traced to a hiding place for vital documents in an old house.

Although in a certain sense the importance of Green's works can hardly be disregarded, her work occupies an unusual position in the mystery and detective genre. Among those familiar with early detective fiction, her novels have been recognized as innovative and significant. Yet her works have been criticized by newcomers to the genre—perhaps because of the widespread application of techniques she pioneered; for once clues, testimony, and deductive reasoning became standard features of mystery writing, her works were consigned to a lesser status. To be sure, there are many positive aspects of Green's oeuvre. It seems likely that many of her novels will continue to impress devotees of detective fiction.

J. R. Broadus

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

EBENEZER GRyce SERIES: *The Leavenworth Case: A Lawyer's Story*, 1878; *A Strange Disappearance*, 1880; *The Sword of Damocles: A Story of New York Life*, 1881; *Hand and Ring*, 1883; *Behind Closed Doors*, 1888; *A Matter of Millions*, 1890; *The Doctor, His Wife, and the Clock*, 1895; *That Affair Next Door*, 1897; *Lost Man's Lane: A Second Episode in the Life of Amelia Butterworth*, 1898; *The Circular Study*, 1900; *One of My Sons*, 1901; *Initials Only*, 1911; *The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow*, 1917

CALEB SWEETWATER SERIES: *Agatha Webb*, 1899; *The Woman in the Alcove*, 1906; *The House of the Whispering Pines*, 1910

NONSERIES NOVELS: *XYZ*, 1883; *The Mill Mystery*, 1886; *Seven to Twelve*, 1887; *The Forsaken Inn*, 1890; *Cynthia Wakeham's Money*, 1892; *Marked "Personal,"* 1893; *Miss Hurd: An Enigma*, 1894; *Doctor Izard*, 1895; *Three Women and a Mystery*, 1902; *The Filigree Ball, Being a Full and True Account of the Solution of the Mystery Concerning the Jeffrey-Moore Affair*, 1903; *The Amethyst Box*, 1905; *The Millionaire Baby*, 1905; *The Chief Legatee*, 1906 (also known as *A Woman of Mystery*); *The Mayor's Wife*, 1907; *Three Thousand Dollars*, 1910; *Dark Hollow*, 1914; *The Step on the Stair*, 1923

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Old Stone House, and Other Stories*, 1891; *A Difficult Problem, The Staircase at the Heart's Delight, and Other Stories*, 1900; *The House in the Mist*, 1905; *Masterpieces of Mystery*, 1913 (also known as *Room Number 3, and Other Detective Stories*); *The Golden Slipper, and Other Problems for Violet Strange*, 1915; *To the Minute, Scarlet and Black: Two Tales of Life's Perplexities*, 1916

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *Risifi's Daughter*, pb. 1887

POETRY: *The Defence of the Bride, and Other Poems*, 1882

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DuBose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Examines the life and work of Green, noting how the success of *The Leavenworth Case* launched her career. Discusses her in relation to other writers of the time.

Harkins, E. F. "Anna Katharine Green." In *Famous Authors (Women)*. Boston: L. C. Page, 1906. Green is profiled alongside other women who wrote books

that were famous at the turn of the twentieth century. Hayne, Barrie. "Anna Katharine Green." In *Ten Women of Mystery*, edited by Earl F. Bargainnier. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1981. Compares Green's work to that of nine of her fellow female mystery writers, including Mary Roberts Reinhart and Josephine Tey.

Huang, Jim, ed. *They Died In Vain: Overlooked, Underappreciated, and Forgotten Mystery Novels*. Carmel, Ind.: Crum Creek Press, 2002. Green is among the authors discussed in this book about mystery novels that never found the audience they deserved.

Maida, Patricia D. *Mother of Detective Fiction: The Life and Works of Anna Katharine Green*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989. Monograph delving into the biography and fiction of Green, written by a scholar but aimed at a popular audience. Bibliographic references and index.

Murch, A. E. "Women Writers of Detective Fiction in the Nineteenth Century." In *The Development of the Detective Novel*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1958. Emphasizes Green's role as both a trailblazing female author and a significant innovator of an emergent genre.

GRAHAM GREENE

Born: Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England; October 2, 1904

Died: Vevey, Switzerland; April 3, 1991

Types of plot: Espionage; inverted; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Graham Greene's place in the history of crime drama is one of considerable importance, for he added to the dimensions of the genre in several ways. He was much more than a writer of thrillers. It is not simply a matter of writing other kinds of fiction; it is a matter of his being one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth

century. The imposition of his formidable talent on his "entertainments" (as he chose to call them) gave to the thriller a respectability that it had not possessed before his work. Consistent with his ambition to give the action novel artistic texture was his interest in taking the obvious themes of the genre beyond patently oversimplified motivation. He used the realities of the modern political world as a basis for his plots and made the exploration of political issues an integral part of his novels. Questions of religion and ethics surface in his work as well. Indeed, Greene's sensitive interest in human conduct, particularly in people's enthusiasm for



Graham Greene. (© Amanda Saunders)

imposing pain on others even apart from motives of profit and power, affords his crime dramas a complexity that makes them difficult to classify.

It must be acknowledged, too, that Greene was chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the deromanticization of the espionage novel. Grubby, cheeseparing working conditions, disillusion, loneliness, betrayals by one's own side—all these gloomy trappings of the person on the fringes of normal life, conditions that were to become common motifs in post-World War II thrillers of writers such as Len Deighton and John le Carré, were in Greene's work from the beginning. If his original intentions for his entertainments were limited, Greene nevertheless showed that the stuff of popular, sensationalistic fiction could be turned into art.

BIOGRAPHY

Graham Greene was born to a modestly distinguished family on October 2, 1904, in Berkhamsted, England. His parents were Charles Henry Greene and Marion Raymond Greene. His father was the headmaster of a good, if not prestigious, school for boys, Berkhamsted School, and Greene was educated there.

Greene had some serious emotional difficulties as a

boy, caused in part by his awkward position as a student in a residential school where his father was in charge. He often experienced isolation and loneliness, feelings that would be common to protagonists of his novels. Bored by school and life, prone to depression, haunted by a sense of evil and religious insecurities, he was eventually obliged to enter psychoanalysis. This therapy was helpful to him, so that he was able to finish his education at Balliol College, Oxford University (between 1922 and 1925).

After he became engaged to a Roman Catholic, Vivien Dayrell-Browning, Greene decided to take instruction in Catholicism, in spite of his serious doubts about the existence of God. Searching for some meaning in the chaotic world of the 1920's, but wary of the mysteries of religion, he eventually converted to Roman Catholicism in 1926. He has been identified and discussed as a Roman Catholic novelist ever since, despite his protestations that he was, at best, a bad Catholic.

Greene worked first as a newspaperman in Nottingham; in 1926, he became a subeditor with *The Times* of London. His principal ambition, however, was to be a novelist, and he continued to work on his fiction. In 1927, he married; two children were born of that marriage. Between 1935 and 1939—years in which he steadily produced novels with limited success in the market—he served as film critic for *The Spectator*, establishing a reputation as one of the finest writers of cinema criticism. He became literary editor of the magazine in 1940.

During World War II, Greene served in the Foreign Office in intelligence; it was during this time that he gained the firsthand knowledge of the world of espionage that was to have a strong influence on his fiction. By the end of the war, his reputation had been established not only as a novelist but also as a versatile journalist. Several of his novels had been turned into films, and he had consolidated another line in his career: as a writer for motion pictures.

By the late 1940's, Greene was widely recognized as a major artist. He won several literary prizes for his novels, and his career was steadily productive. In the mid-1950's, he produced dramas with some success, and he occasionally revisited the stage afterward. In 1966 he was named in the New Year's Honour List in

Great Britain as a Companion of Honour. In 1976 he won the Grand Master Award of the Mystery Writers of America. His work was continually popular in film adaptations, and in the 1980's he had been well served in television versions of his work.

Greene carried on a sometimes-mischievous battle with American foreign policy in his writing and in his life, and he was often an honored guest of socialist countries throughout the world. He also had a strong affection for tropical countries, which are common settings for his novels. He died in Switzerland in 1991.

ANALYSIS

It is difficult to think narrowly of Graham Greene as a writer of thrillers, for his own idea of the medium, from the beginning of his career in the early 1930's, was highly complex. Despite the commercial success and critical recognition of his works, he was often self-deprecating, particularly when he wrote or spoke of his thrillers. He claimed to have written so many of them in the early stages of his career simply to make money and to establish a reputation as a writer that would allow him eventually to leave journalism (where he had a successful career as a columnist, a screen critic, and an editor) and become a full-time writer of fiction. Nevertheless, the early thrillers manifest, if somewhat awkwardly on occasion, his wide-ranging ambition for the form, which he polished over a career spanning more than fifty years. Indeed, many of Greene's thrillers have themes and tonalities in common with his supposedly more serious novels.

A GUN FOR SALE

His early thriller *A Gun for Sale: An Entertainment* (1936) is seemingly a simple tale of a hired killer who is on the run after murdering an old man in a European city and returning to England to collect his payoff. He knows nothing of the victim, nor much of the man who contracted his services, but he becomes determined to find the latter when he discovers that he has been paid in counterfeit money. The police pursue him for passing the bogus currency, as he looks for his employer. Eventually he finds the boss of the operation and kills him—and is, in turn, killed by the police.

The basic plot is that simple. It is what Greene added to it that makes the difference. The murdered

man turns out to have been a prominent politician with a strong reputation for social reform, and his death precipitates a crisis between two European countries that may lead to war. The man behind the assassination is an industrialist who will make a fortune out of armaments if war does occur. The fact that thousands will die is irrelevant; profit is the point of life. This modest flirting with politics and the profit motive of modern capitalist society foreshadowed a common element in Greene's work. Greene was a socialist; his sympathies were always with the common people, and his disdain for capitalism and its influence on human character was often woven into his novels. A recurring character is the manipulating boss who will kill for profit; sometimes he is a politician, and at times he is a fascist tyrant, as is the case in *The Honorary Consul* (1973). People in power in general—whether they simply are criminals, as in *A Gun for Sale* or *Brighton Rock* (1938), or whether they have political connections, as in *The Human Factor* (1978)—are likely to act viciously, even against their own, and often represent a kind of mean-spirited inhumanity that Greene despises. Greene's major characters, however tainted they may be themselves, are often in the hands of pusillanimous villains who far surpass their agents in human beastliness. Moreover, such conduct is often clearly connected with democracies badly derailed through commercial greed, when it is not connected with outright fascism in novels such as *The Human Factor*, *Our Man in Havana: An Entertainment* (1958), and *The Comedians* (1966).

Greene is often called a novelist of pity, and this aspect of his work is constant. In *A Gun for Sale*, the killer, Raven, is an unattractive runt with a harelip that he knows most people find disgusting. He is despised, and he despises, but the reader learns that his life has been a living hell. His father was executed, and while he was a child, his mother stabbed herself to death. He has no affection for anyone, and expects none for himself. Yet the novel explores the possibility of a different Raven, the one who might have been had someone taken an interest in him, and on occasion he shows capacity for more humane behavior.

BRIGHTON ROCK

This interest in the killer as a human being with a history, a psychological reason for his conduct, ap-

pears again with the character Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*; this time it is much richer and more complicated, and has added to it that very important theme of the Greene canon, the question of religion. Pinkie is, like Raven, a lethally dangerous man without hope for anything more than what he can lay hold of through crime. What is the nature of his relationship to God? How can God allow the squalor, the violence, the hopelessness of modern urban society, the self-interested manipulations of modern politics? If he exists at all (and that is questionable in Greene's world of meaningless animality), can he forgive humans for their terrible conduct, their cruelty to one another? The thrillers, like the novels, often embark on this melancholy investigation of not only social responsibility but also religious possibility.

THE HONORARY CONSUL

This interesting idea of the killer as a lost soul, so deeply in sin that he cannot be retrieved even by God, can take complicated turns in Greene's work. In *The Honorary Consul*, the lost soul is, in fact, a Roman Catholic priest, Leon Rivas, who has left the Church to lead a revolutionary group against the fascist regime in Paraguay. Legally, he is a criminal; religiously, he is in a state of sin. Much of the novel is taken up with a discussion not only of political right and wrong but also of the responsibility of God for allowing the inhumanity of fascism in supposedly enlightened late twentieth century countries such as Paraguay, where murder and torture are common tools of political power.

Such debates are often carried on by means of another character-type that recurs frequently in Greene's novels. In *A Gun for Sale*, Anne Crowder, a simple showgirl who gets involved by chance in Raven's attempt to elude the police, attempts to understand what makes Raven what he is. This suspension of judgment, this willingness to understand, this kindness in the face of seemingly unexplainable conduct, sees her through. It is not always to be so. Many of Greene's major characters are merely trying to get through life without emotional commitment, but their basic decency pulls them into the center of dangerous situations that they had not contemplated. Greene has admitted to a deep admiration for the work of Joseph Conrad, and his jaundiced view of the makeup of a spy or a terrorist can be

traced back to Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1910) and *The Secret Agent* (1907). The pessimism of Greene's protagonists can be seen in Conrad's most ironically titled work, *Victory* (1915), in which a character who had hitherto kept to himself, as he had been advised to do by his father, befriends a woman and falls in love with her reluctantly and innocently enough, but with consequences that are disastrous for both of them. Greene's novels often center on a man such as Eduardo Plarr of *The Honorary Consul*, a doctor who helps the poor as best he can yet shuns personal relationships. By chance he falls in love, helps a friend, attempts to rescue an innocent political hostage, and gets killed for involving himself with other human beings.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), the police officer Scobie ignores a seemingly innocent breach of wartime regulations, tries to console a young woman rescued from a torpedoed ship, and attempts to keep his neurotic wife happy though he no longer loves her—all innocent acts of pity. In combination, however, they lead to betrayal and murder—and to Scobie's suicide, despite his agony in offending God by causing his own death. Decency, pity, innocent concern for others are often likely to kill a character in Greene's inexorably, arbitrarily cruel world.

This confrontation of often-inept tenderness with a world that does not care is what has come to be suggested by "Greeneland," a word that has been coined to refer to the universe of Greene's novels. Modern thrillers are generally marked by stylistic eccentricity, and much of their readers' pleasure derives from the peculiarity of the dialogue and of the narrative. Indeed, it is almost an obligation for the writer of the thriller to fashion the story's language in a way that mirrors the moral and emotional characteristics of the protagonist. It can be as shallow as the style used by Ian Fleming or as rich and complex as those of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

For Greene, style may be said to go beyond any other thriller writer's ambition for it. In his work, style is clearly an aspect of meaning, and thus his writing is peculiarly muted, repressed, and consistently pessimistic in tone and image. Chocolate, for example, always seems to have connotations of death in a Greene

novel, an idea that would be surprising in any other context but seems perfectly appropriate in his work. “Seedy” is the word often used to describe Greene’s world. His characters—down-at-heel, reclusive, plain, and depressed—often seem unqualified to cope with trouble, but they tend to attract it, no matter how hard they try to avoid it.

To balance the discussion, it should be said that Greene, for all of his morbidity about life in general, is often a very amusing writer. Indeed, he has written what may very well be the most comical of mock-thrillers, *Our Man in Havana*, in which many of the conventions of the genre are quite charmingly turned upside down.

Charles Pullen

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1929-1940 • *The Man Within*, 1929; *The Name of Action*, 1930; *Rumour at Nightfall*, 1931; *Stamboul Train: An Entertainment*, 1932 (also known as *Orient Express: An Entertainment*, 1933); *It’s a Battlefield*, 1934; *England Made Me*, 1935; *A Gun for Sale: An Entertainment*, 1936 (also known as *This Gun for Hire: An Entertainment*); *Brighton Rock*, 1938; *The Confidential Agent*, 1939; *The Power and the Glory*, 1940 (reissued as *The Labyrinthine Ways*)

1941-1960 • *The Ministry of Fear: An Entertainment*, 1943; *The Heart of the Matter*, 1948; *The Third Man: An Entertainment*, 1950; *The Third Man and The Fallen Idol*, 1950; *The End of the Affair*, 1951; *Loser Takes All: An Entertainment*, 1955; *The Quiet American*, 1955; *Our Man in Havana: An Entertainment*, 1958

1961-1988 • *A Burnt-Out Case*, 1961; *The Comedians*, 1966; *The Honorary Consul*, 1973; *The Human Factor*, 1978; *Dr. Fischer of Geneva: Or, The Bomb Party*, 1980; *Monsignor Quixote*, 1982; *The Tenth Man*, 1985; *The Captain and the Enemy*, 1988

SHORT FICTION: *The Basement Room, and Other Stories*, 1935; *Nineteen Stories*, 1947 (revised 1954 as *Twenty-one Stories*); *A Sense of Reality*, 1963; *No Man’s Land*, 2004

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Travels with My Aunt*, 1969

SHORT FICTION: *The Bear Fell Free*, 1935; *Twenty-four Stories*, 1939 (with James Laver and Sylvia Townsend Warner); *A Visit to Morin*, 1959; *May We Borrow Your Husband? and Other Comedies of the Sexual Life*, 1967; *Collected Stories*, 1972; *How Father Quixote Became a Monsignor*, 1980

PLAYS: *The Heart of the Matter*, pr. 1950 (with Basil Dean; adaptation of his novel); *The Living Room*, pr., pb. 1953; *The Potting Shed*, pr., pb. 1957; *The Complaisant Lover*, pr., pb. 1959; *Carving a Statue*, pr., pb. 1964; *The Return of A. J. Raffles: An Edwardian Comedy in Three Acts Based Somewhat Loosely on E. W. Hornung’s Characters in “The Amateur Cracksman,”* pr., pb. 1975; *For Whom the Bell Chimes*, pr. 1980, pb. 1983; *Yes and No*, pr. 1980, pb. 1983; *The Collected Plays of Graham Greene*, pb. 1985

RADIO PLAY: *The Great Jowett*, 1939

SCREENPLAYS: *Twenty-one Days*, 1937; *The New Britain*, 1940; *Brighton Rock*, 1947 (adaptation of his novel; with Terence Rattigan); *The Fallen Idol*, 1948 (adaptation of his novel; with Lesley Storm and William Templeton); *The Third Man*, 1949 (adaptation of his novel; with Carol Reed); *The Stranger’s Hand*, 1954 (with Guy Elmes and Giorgino Bassani); *Loser Takes All*, 1956 (adaptation of his novel); *Saint Joan*, 1957 (adaptation of George Bernard Shaw’s play); *Our Man in Havana*, 1959 (adaptation of his novel); *The Comedians*, 1967 (adaptation of his novel)

TELEPLAY: *Alas, Poor Maling*, 1975

POETRY: *Babbling April: Poems*, 1925; *After Two Years*, 1949; *For Christmas*, 1950

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *The Little Train*, 1946; *The Little Fire Engine*, 1950 (also known as *The Little Red Fire Engine*, 1952); *The Little Horse Bus*, 1952; *The Little Steam Roller: A Story of Mystery and Detection*, 1953

NONFICTION: *Journey Without Maps: A Travel Book*, 1936; *The Lawless Roads: A Mexican Journal*, 1939 (reissued as *Another Mexico*); *British Dramatists*, 1942; *Why Do I Write? An Exchange of Views Between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett*, 1948; *The Lost Childhood, and Other Essays*, 1951; *Essais Catholiques*, 1953 (Marcelle Sibon, translator); *In Search of a Character: Two*

African Journals, 1961; *The Revenge: An Autobiographical Fragment*, 1963; *Victorian Detective Fiction*, 1966; *Collected Essays*, 1969; *A Sort of Life*, 1971; *The Pleasure Dome: The Collected Film Criticism, 1935-40, of Graham Greene*, 1972 (John Russell-Taylor, editor; also known as *The Pleasure-Dome: Graham Greene on Film, Collected Film Criticism, 1935-1940*); *Lord Rochester's Monkey: Being the Life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester*, 1974; *Ways of Escape*, 1980; *J'accuse: The Dark Side of Nice*, 1982; *Getting to Know the General: The Story of an Involvement*, 1984

EDITED TEXTS: *The Old School: Essays by Divers Hands*, 1934; *The Best of Saki*, 1950; *The Spy's Bedside Book: An Anthology*, 1957 (with Hugh Greene); *The Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford*, 1962, 1963 (4 volumes); *An Impossible Woman: The Memories of Dottoressa Moor of Capri*, 1975

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Portable Graham Greene*, 1973 (Philip Stout Ford, editor)

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De Vitis, A. A. *Graham Greene*. Rev. ed. Boston: Twayne, 1986. Most interesting in this volume are an overview of critical opinion about Greene, a chronology, and a chapter on the short stories. Supplemented by a thorough primary bibliography and an annotated bibliography of secondary sources.

Falk, Quentin. *Travels in Greenland: The Complete Cinema of Graham Greene*. 3d ed. New York: Trafalgar Square, 2000. A guide to Greene's association with film, as a screenwriter and as a reviewer, as well as the numerous adaptations of his novels to film.

Hill, William Thomas. *Graham Greene's Wanderers: The Search for Dwelling—Journeying and Wandering in the Novels of Graham Greene*. San Francisco: International Scholars, 1999. Examines the motif of the dwelling in Greene's fiction. Deals with the mother, the father, the nation, and the Church as the "ground" of dwelling.

Hoskins, Robert. *Graham Greene: An Approach to the Novels*. New York: Garland, 1999. An updated look at Greene's oeuvre. Includes bibliographical references and an index.

Malmet, Elliott. *The World Remade: Graham Greene and the Art of Detection*. New York: P. Lang, 1998. Focuses on Greene's genre fiction.

Sheldon, Michael. *Graham Greene: The Enemy Within*. New York: Random House, 1994. In this unauthorized biography, Sheldon takes a much more critical view of Greene's life, especially of his politics, than does Norman Sherry, the authorized biographer. A lively, opinionated narrative. Notes and bibliography included.

Sherry, Norman. *The Life of Graham Greene*. 3 vols. London: J. Cape, 1989-2004. The most comprehensive, most authoritative account of Greene's life yet published, written with complete access to his papers and the full cooperation of family, friends, and the novelist himself. Includes a generous collection of photographs, a bibliography, and an index.

West, W. J. *The Quest for Graham Greene*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Focuses on the more obscure aspects of Greene's life, including his adolescent nervous breakdown and his involvement with the British Secret Service.

STEPHEN GREENLEAF

Born: Washington, D.C.; July 17, 1942

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; courtroom drama

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Marshall Tanner, 1979-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN MARSHALL "MARSH" TANNER is a San Francisco-based private eye in his late forties. Formerly a defense attorney, Tanner was suspended because he publicly defied a corrupt judge. However, he retains his law license so that he can invoke attorney-client privilege and withhold sensitive information from the police. Although he is sometimes roughed up, Tanner is not particularly adept with his fists or with firearms. Rather, he is intelligent, perseverant, and adept at role-playing. His sympathies are always with the underdog, and he recoils from the rich, the powerful, and the self-important. He is also a depressive, an insomniac, a technophobe, and something of a loner. His private vices include scotch and sandwich cookies, and he enjoys jazz, modern art, and modern literature.

CHARLEY SLEET, a detective lieutenant in the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), is Tanner's best friend. A large man with a tough demeanor, Sleet shares Tanner's sympathies for the underdog and regularly (though without fanfare) donates time and fortune to help the homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, and others marginalized by society. Tanner has unofficially assisted Sleet on some police cases, and Sleet in turn makes available to Tanner confidential police information that helps investigations.

RUTHIE SPRING is a profane Texas cowgirl, former nurse, and widow of Tanner's mentor Harry Spring. After Harry's death in the initial novel of the series, Ruthie becomes a private investigator and often assists her good friend Tanner on his more logistically challenging cases.

PEGGY NETTLETON is Tanner's loyal and resourceful secretary. As the series progresses, she becomes a more prominent figure, one of Tanner's most trusted

confidantes. After both mistake their trust and friendship for sexual passion, in *Toll Call* (1987), Peggy quits her job and moves away from the Bay Area. Thereafter she makes only one more appearance in the series, as Tanner's client in a case that takes him to Seattle.

CONTRIBUTION

The John Marshall Tanner novels by Stephen Greenleaf have been frequently recognized as extending the California hard-boiled private eye tradition established by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald. Initially the influence of Chandler and particularly Macdonald was unmistakable. Gradually, however, Greenleaf developed his own style, Tanner became his own man, and several of the novels succeeded in transcending genre conventions to engage important social concerns of the 1980's and 1990's.

Like Greenleaf, Tanner is a former attorney, and most of his cases involve legal as well as ethical issues. There is usually a prominent lawyer among the chief suspects in each criminal case investigated by Tanner. Greenleaf's two nonseries novels also directly involve courtroom dramas. The protagonist of *The Ditto List* (1985) is a male divorce lawyer who represents only women. *Impact* (1989) concerns a personal injury trial after an airplane crash.

Greenleaf's plots are very well crafted, often involving multiple lines of action and different time frames as they delve into the colorfully messy lives of families across generational lines. He has even experimented with alternatives to murder as the moral and emotional catalyst for his mystery plots. In *Toll Call*, for example, the narrative centers around sexual harassment involving Tanner's secretary; when that situation is resolved, another dealing with kidnapping takes over as the focus of Tanner's detection. As always, these crimes have their genesis in some past trauma, and as Greenleaf once told an interviewer, his principal concern is "less on *who* done it than on *why* it was done." The result is characterization in remarkable depth.

BIOGRAPHY

Stephen Howell Greenleaf was born on July 17, 1942, in Washington, D.C., the son of Robert Wendell, a lawyer and business executive, and Patricia Howell Greenleaf. Shortly thereafter the family relocated to Centerville, Iowa. Greenleaf first became interested in detective novels in the fifth grade when he was sent home from school for sneaking a Perry Mason story into class. He received his bachelor's degree in history from Carleton College in Minnesota in 1964 and his law degree from Boalt Hall of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1967. In 1967-1969 Greenleaf served in the United States Army, including a year in Vietnam. He was married to Ann Garrison, an author of children's books, on July 20, 1968. The couple has a son, Aaron Howell.

Greenleaf was admitted to the bar of California in 1968 and served as a legal aid for Multnomah County in Portland, Oregon, in 1969-1970. The following year, he was an associate attorney at Thompson & Hubbard in Monterey, California. From 1972 to 1976 he was associate attorney at Sullivan, Jones & Archer in San Francisco, specializing in securities fraud, anti-trust, and business litigation. He became dissatisfied with his career in law and cast about for a new challenge, deciding eventually, at the age of thirty-four, on writing. His years as a lawyer on the West Coast gave him a feel for the setting he would use as home base in the Tanner series.

Greenleaf moved back to Iowa toward the end of the decade and served as an adjunct professor of trial advocacy at the University of Iowa. He wrote his first Tanner novel, *Grave Error* (1979), while waiting to take the Iowa bar exam and was also a participant in the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Lacking the benefit of an agent or any contact in publishing, Greenleaf saw his manuscript rejected by seven publishing houses before he managed to get the novel accepted by Dial Press. Over the next two decades, thirteen more novels in the Tanner series would appear, with middling sales despite mostly good reviews. Three of the final four volumes were nominated for major awards in the mystery field. The series concluded with *Ellipsis* (2000), by the end of which Tanner appears about to retire from his career as detective and to begin a new life with his

wife-to-be, Assistant District Attorney Jill Coppelia.

Hoping to attract a larger readership, Greenleaf moved outside the mystery genre by writing two non-series novels: *The Ditto List* and *Impact*, both of which involve courtroom dramas and were sold to Hollywood. After many years in Washington and Oregon, the Greenleafs settled in Northern California.

ANALYSIS

Stephen Greenleaf did not begin his writing career until the age of thirty-four, after two years in the military and nearly six as a practicing lawyer. Therefore he had a ready store of experience on which to draw as a writer. In particular, his career in the law and his family background—his father and both grandfathers had also been attorneys—created a strong awareness of the legal profession's demands and shortcomings as well as its strategic place in American society. In one way or another, this awareness informs every book he has written.

The title character of the Tanner series was named after John Marshall, the longest-serving chief justice in the history of the Supreme Court. Before becoming a private investigator, Tanner was a practicing attorney for some five years, until his suspension for contempt of court. He spent six months in jail rather than apologize to the corrupt judge, an experience that sensitized him to another side of the legal system and to its victims.

Greenleaf's knowledge of the law gives a particular edge to his engagement with social issues. Reviewers have often noted the remarkable acuity with which his novels have examined such themes as radical politics, the legal insanity defense, corporate chicanery, libel in works of fiction, surrogate motherhood, racism, the AIDS epidemic, repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse, police brutality and corruption, and the plight of illegal immigrant farmworkers. In Greenleaf's hands these issues invariably raise complex legal and ethical questions that are credibly made to serve as the impetus for plot developments by providing a variety of suspects, victims, alibis, hidden identities, and the rest of the apparatus needed for Tanner's investigations to progress. At the same time, by giving the issues concrete human embodiment, his novels

elicit compassion and understanding in a way that mere ratiocination or polemic could not.

As is often the case with hard-boiled noir fiction, setting assumes a large importance in the Tanner novels. Most are set in San Francisco and environs, making available the full range of material and tonal assets needed in a private eye series: extremes of privilege and deprivation, racial and cultural diversity and antagonism, cunning as well as brutal criminal activity, and a general atmosphere evocative of modern alienation and angst. The proximity of the swells of Nob Hill to the hells of the Tenderloin section and of nearby exotic locales like Monterey and Berkeley are reminders that the American dream remains elusive even in a place where its rewards are gaudily on display.

Tanner narrates the novels in the first person, and his voice, though not flashy, is a clear and effective instrument for interpreting his world. Well read, conversant with jazz, modern art, and professional sports, he is observant and attentive, especially to pretension and material excess, frequently the targets of his irony, and to suffering and deprivation, which elicit his empathy.

GRAVE ERROR

Greenleaf has admitted that when he began the series he hoped to “write about the Bay Area in the way Ross Macdonald wrote about Southern California.” This is especially evident in his first novel, *Grave Error*, in which crimes committed in the past provide a hidden link to present crimes and the effect of earlier traumas on later generations of a dysfunctional family become the motivational key to the case. What begins as a relatively simple investigation into what is possibly blackmail becomes a tangled web of theft, racism, incest, and multiple murder—with Tanner ultimately discovering the connections between all the strands, yet withholding crucial information that would bring needless pain to a member of the primary family involved. Like Macdonald’s *Lew Archer*, Tanner acts in accordance with a tacit code of honor. This case offers the first of a series of tests of that code, tests that challenge the meaning of honor and compel constant redefinition, if not subversion, of the code.

In one of his many suggestive asides, Tanner notes that the private eye’s job is “short on glamour and long on moral ambiguity.” For him the ambiguity is often a

product of conflict between the observer’s preferred professional stance of detachment and objectivity, and the humane desire to become involved and to help those in need. It is a conflict that Tanner never quite resolves to his satisfaction but one whose complexities make for illuminating, if sometimes troubling, insights.

FATAL OBSESSION

The fifth Tanner novel, *Fatal Obsession* (1983), is a departure in that it takes place not in San Francisco but in Chaldea, a small town in western Iowa, where Tanner was born and raised. There is more exposition about his early life than in any other novel in the series. Tanner, an all-state football star in high school, has three siblings, two of whom still reside in Chaldea. Their parents were killed in an auto accident when Tanner was just ten. The disposition of the family’s farmland provides the occasion for the siblings’ reunion, a situation that allows Greenleaf to explore the range of difficulties faced by small farmers.

The apparent suicide of Tanner’s nephew, a tormented Vietnam veteran, becomes the focus of Tanner’s investigation, during which he uncovers local manifestations of national problems such as the illicit drug trade, environmental plunder, investment scams, and the dissolution of the family, and becomes involved with the small town’s struggle for economic survival.

Tanner solves the puzzle of his nephew’s death only to feel disappointment in his own life, which had once seemed so full of promise. He reflects at the end:

I thought that my return to Chaldea might reveal something that would explain or even excuse some of the things I was and unfortunately was not. But it hadn’t done anything of the kind, of course. It had just reminded me that those days were worse than I remembered, not better, and that the search for excuses is endless and therefore worthless.

Like other titles in the series, including *Book Case* (1991), *Past Tense* (1997), and *Strawberry Sunday* (1999), *Fatal Obsession* is enjoyable as a novel, beyond its interest as a mystery.

BOOK CASE

In what may be Greenleaf’s finest novel, *Book Case*, Tanner is hired by a publisher friend to find the author of an anonymously submitted manuscript of a

novel called *Homage to Hammurabi*. This novel appears to be a potential blockbuster, dealing with a sex scandal at an exclusive private school. The more he looks into the case, the more Tanner becomes convinced that the supposedly fictional plot is based on fact and that the scandal, involving sexual abuse of a female student by a male teacher who subsequently lost his job and was sent to prison, had actually occurred at an elite preparatory school in a posh San Francisco suburb. Tanner believes the fired teacher may be the author of the manuscript, and he uncovers evidence that the charge was fraudulent and the prison sentence therefore a cruel miscarriage of justice.

As the former teacher, recently released from prison, has become a homeless vagrant, Tanner's search for him necessarily entails a descent into the seamiest part of San Francisco, known as the Tenderloin. This search provides a sharp contrast to the scenes in the suburban enclave where the school is located. Tanner's investigation ultimately discloses fundamental connections between these seemingly opposed worlds, in both of which greed, fear, addiction, and despair drive people to criminal behavior.

The convoluted story of both *Book Case* and *Homage to Hammurabi*, as one character observes, is "straight out of Kafka—nothing is as it seems; no one is unsullied; guilt and innocence are indeterminable." Tanner responds that it sounds more like something Ross Macdonald would write.

The complex plots, witty dialogue, convincingly drawn characters, and richly textured prose style have made the Tanner series one of the most distinguished in the genre and have helped elevate its literary stature. This estimate is supported by the predominantly enthusiastic reviews Greenleaf has received from the beginning, though his modest sales may offer a clue as to why he has stated that he will add no further volumes to Tanner's saga.

Ronald G. Walker

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN MARSHALL TANNER SERIES: *Grave Error*, 1979; *Death Bed*, 1980; *Child Proof*, 1981; *State's Evidence*, 1982; *Fatal Obsession*, 1983; *Beyond Blame*, 1986; *Toll Call*, 1987; *Book Case*, 1991; *Blood Type*,

1992; *Southern Cross*, 1993; *False Conception*, 1994; *Flesh Wounds*, 1996; *Past Tense*, 1997; *Strawberry Sunday*, 1999; *Ellipsis*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Ditto List*, 1985; *Impact*, 1989

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Greenleaf, Stephen. "Detective Novel Writing: The Hows and the Whys." *The Writer* 106, no. 12 (December, 1993): 11-14. The author explains his methods of writing detective novels and how Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer series influenced him.

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Lynskey, Ed. "Stephen Greenleaf: Creator of California's Next Great Private Eye." 2005. <http://www.mysteryfile.com>. An overview and summary of all fourteen Tanner novels, along with quotations from book reviews and a useful bibliography.

Murphy, Stephen M. "Stephen Greenleaf." *Their Word Is Law: Bestselling Lawyer-Novelist Talk About Their Craft*, edited by Stephen M. Murphy. New York: Berkeley Books, 2002. A collection of interviews. Greenleaf's interview, which took place in 1991, is an interesting mid-career look at how the author drew on his experience of the legal profession and how the series has matured over the years.

MARTHA GRIMES

Born: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; May 2, 1931

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth; psychological; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Richard Jury and Melrose Plant, 1981-

Emma Graham, 1996-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT RICHARD JURY of Scotland Yard rises from chief inspector to superintendent. Urbane, handsome, compassionate, he turns women's heads but remains unattached. He is helped by Melrose Plant and Sergeant Alfred Wiggins.

MELROSE PLANT, Jury's friend and an amateur sleuth, lives in the village of Long Piddleton in Northamptonshire. Single, well-educated, and rich, by birth he is Lord Ardry, but he has given up his titles.

EMMA GRAHAM is a twelve-year-old Maryland girl, based largely on her creator's adolescent self.

CONTRIBUTION

Martha Grimes's mysteries, despite their familiar British surroundings and English eccentrics, defy the usual categorization. Her plots partake of the best of many schools—amateur sleuth, police procedural, psychological study, private investigator—without succumbing to the limitations of any given type. This rare versatility is largely the result of two strategies: the pairing of a Scotland Yard detective with an aristocratic amateur sleuth and a sustained attention to atmosphere.

The two detectives—Detective Superintendent Richard Jury and Melrose Plant—are idealizations from different worlds, a slightly oddball team containing one man from the metropolis and one from the country. Grimes's control of the atmosphere in which these two operate has the mark of an exceptional talent. Not a single detail is without design. The novel titles drawn from pub names (her trademark), the poetic imagery, the alternation of delicious humor and somber apprehensions, and the rolling montage technique—all combine to produce Grimes's uniquely wrought mysteries.

BIOGRAPHY

Martha Grimes was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was reared in western Maryland, and worked and lived in Maryland; Washington, D.C.; and England. Her father died when she was a child, and her mother operated a summer resort near Deep Creek Lake, Maryland, to support the family, which included an older brother, Bill. After earning both her bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Maryland, Grimes went on to the University of Iowa, where she studied poetry. She taught English at Montgomery College in Takoma Park, Maryland, for fourteen years and also taught a seminar on detective fiction as a visiting professor at the Johns Hopkins University. She was married briefly.

After Grimes worked for some time on her poetry, she recognized that the suspense, drama, and death in her poems were strong indicators that her real strength as a writer would be detective fiction. There were several years of rejection slips before *The Man with the Load of Mischief* was published in 1981.

Grimes's fascination with England began during a romance with an English writer. She began taking annual extended visits, gathering material. Although the English setting is necessary to her work, she found the perspective she gained from living in the United States to be equally important. As much as she has been compared with Agatha Christie, Grimes's composition process is quite unlike that of Christie, who plotted her stories from the end backward. Grimes's work is expressionist in more than imagery alone; she determines "whodunit" only after most of the story is written. Grimes's talent has gained recognition, although she is still underrated. Her third novel, *The Anodyne Necklace*, won the Nero Wolfe Award for the best mystery of 1983.

ANALYSIS

Martha Grimes, poet and English professor, was sitting in Bethesda, Maryland, poring over a book on British pub names, when she was struck with a vision of her future: writing mysteries set in and around British pubs. Loving both British mysteries and England

itself, she saw the pub as the symbolic heart of British daily life and as the natural gathering place for the closed society so necessary to the classic detective story. On her frequent trips to England, she studied small villages and their pubs, absorbing the atmosphere and observing the people.

With the pubs go the eccentric characters of the English mystery tradition. At the start, Grimes had intended Melrose Plant to be the central figure in her series. Eccentric in having dispensed with his claims to nobility, he would be surrounded by other humorous characters, noteworthy for some quirk, talent, or obsession. His Aunt Agatha, for example, one of the most unswervingly obnoxious women in a mystery series, will never forgive her nephew for thwarting her pretensions to titled eminence. His butler Ruthven is as self-possessed as Jeeves and as accomplished in domestic feats as Bunter. In the village of Long Piddleton, Dick Scroggs is the inventive proprietor of the Jack and Hammer, where Marshall Trueblood, antiques dealer and flashy dresser, usually shares the drink of the day with the lovely, well-bred Vivian Rivington, or perhaps with the old char, Mrs. Withersby.

At some undetermined point, the character of Detective Superintendent Richard Jury was developed, and he was a different sort of detective from Plant. Jury became increasingly important, until each man had his own role. This development was something Grimes had to defend to her publisher, who finally agreed to the notion of a shared working relationship, a cooperative, fifty-fifty arrangement. Grimes argued that her books simply could not succeed if either man's role were diminished. When Jury is in London, another set of eccentrics comes on the scene. At Jury's flat, he is sandwiched between the headstrong Carole-Anne on the second floor and the fearful Mrs. Wassermann in the basement, both of whom long to see him married. On the job, Jury is complemented by his sidekick, the eternally sniffing Wiggins, his voluble and luxury-loving boss Racer, the winsome Fiona Clingmore, and the mischievous feline Cyril. However much Racer tries to make Jury's life miserable, it is clear that he is mere bluster. Like the milieu of the pub in Long Pidd (as Long Piddleton is known), the scene at the Yard is a comic one.

As important as the collection of engaging characters is the world created for them, and this world Grimes suggests with a wide range of British idioms, clear and concrete descriptions of interior as well as exterior settings (details of furniture, dress, dinnerware, the quality of daylight), and delicately rendered nuances of feeling in conversation. Music, too, underlines the shifting moods as the atmosphere alternates from light to dark. Yet as carefully observed and accurate as these details are, their cumulative effect is not what might be expected. The details are selected precisely for their power to convey the romantic illusion of the classic British mystery.

In 1983, Grimes wrote about the willing suspension of disbelief so enjoyed by the loyal readers of this sort of mystery. So keen was she on researching Scotland Yard that she even read several official reports of the commissioner to the queen, attempted unsuccessfully to interview former convicts, and, if one is to take her in earnest, visited the plate-glass and steel edifice on Victoria Street in the company of a man who claimed that he was being poisoned. Regardless of the absolute veracity of the account of that visit, Grimes herself was under no delusion about her purpose:

Although I wanted to *know* the red-tape details, I didn't want to *use* them. My sort of mystery is far more an exercise in deduction and an occasion to give free play to a dozen or so cranky types than it is a "true" account of how Scotland Yard operates.

The reader does not really want to know, Grimes concluded, about the level of police corruption in London or that the Yard is not really called in on complicated cases out in the provinces—"not even in the case of the Yorkshire Ripper." The reader wants the conventions that are the stuff of his dreams.

With the research accomplished, the next logical step is usually the plotting. However, Grimes typically would not know who the murderer was before Jury did. She could not outline the story in advance, she said. She did not even have a central murder in mind when she began writing. This unconscious method of composition is quite consistent with the expressionist style she chose and with her assertion that this kind of mystery was the stuff of dreams. While Grimes's con-

scious mind would be occupied selecting the details of atmosphere appropriate to the unthinkable deed, her unconscious would devise the motive and the means for a death—shockingly out of place, yet consistent with the mood.

Perhaps Grimes's greatest strength, given the doubling of detectives, the pairing of metropolis and village, and the two levels of story development, conscious and unconscious, is the montage effect she manipulates so dexterously. She brings her poetic talents to bear, accenting imagery, and she has a delicious sense of humor that she uses to relieve her more somber passages. This rapid alternation of mood, character, setting, and action is admirably suited to the two most important requirements of the detective plot, forward movement and diversion. Montage serves as camouflage.

THE FIVE BELLS AND BLADEBONE

The Five Bells and Bladebone (1987) is a particularly good example of this doubling, of contrasting moods, and of alternating perspectives. Its plot involves the classic problem of identity. The pub for which this book is named is located in London's East End, the Limehouse district. It is a place with a murderous reputation, which the story's opening sentences feelingly invoke:

What else could you think of but getting your throat slit?

Whitechapel, Shadwell, the Ratcliffe Highway: images of the bloody East End flashed like knives in and out of Sadie Diver's mind each time she heard the sound of footsteps behind her on the dark walk from Limehouse. She was still thinking of it as her heels clicked wetly on the fog-draped pavements of Wapping. Never caught him either, did they? So much for police.

These are the thoughts of Sadie Diver as she walks toward a life-or-death encounter on a slimy slipway along the Thames. No sooner has this abrupt and chilling immersion into suspense occurred than the scene is shifted to another character in another place: Tommy Diver, Sadie's romantic kid brother, is standing on the Thames dock downriver, anticipating a trip to see his sister the next day; then, as abruptly as be-

fore, the scene shifts to formal gardens and the perspective of a hungry white cat stalking a dark moving shadow, then licking a bloody paw.

Three dark views, three tangentially related fragments of action, make up the first chapter, lightened, in chapter 2, by yet another kaleidoscopic shift, this time to the Jack and Hammer in Long Pidd. Melrose Plant is waiting, crossword puzzle in hand, for his friend Richard Jury, who has two weeks' vacation and wants to spend it in the quiet countryside. Bedeviling Plant as he waits is Dick, the pub's proprietor, who is making improvements to the place with his hammer, and Aunt Agatha, who is limping about on a bandaged ankle and badgering her nephew about Jury's time of arrival. Plant begins entering words such as "dolt" and "nit" in his crossword as he struggles to retain his composure despite Agatha's abuse. When Vivian and Marshall arrive, things do not improve for the former earl. More four-letter words come to Melrose as he begins inventing answers to the questions shot his way. Jury's car has broken down, he tells them, writing in F-O-O-L, and he has met an old flame; they are having tea at the Woburn turnoff while the car is being fixed. Thus Grimes bedazzles her audience as she juggles time and tone, clues and characters.

Once Jury does arrive in Long Pidd, the two detectives discover the first body (Sadie Diver's is found later). Plant and Jury come upon the body of Simon Lean, the ne'er-do-well son-in-law of Lady Summerston of Watermeadows, whose body has been stuffed into a desk that had just been delivered to Marshall's shop. The teamwork begins, with Plant supplying local connections and perceptive consultation and Jury calling in London officials and conducting interviews.

Both men are romantic idealizations, each in his own way. Jury, for his part, can authorize certain police procedures, but he never seems to depend on technicians. According to Grimes, he moves too slowly, listens too patiently, is too affable to be taken as the real thing. He operates as a professional, but without the taint of hard-boiled realism. His deductions come to him, as often as not, through an imaginative synthesis. It is Plant who asks, soon after Lean's body is taken away by the police, "Was the killer trying to conceal or reveal?" The brainy Plant is, from an American

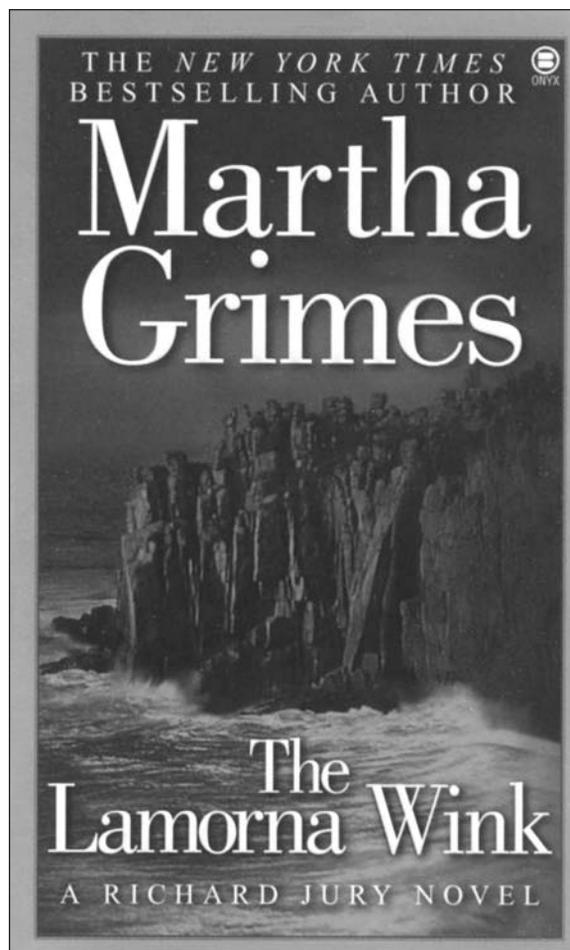
point of view at any rate, the ideal aristocrat—one who has withdrawn his allegiance from the aristocracy and simply takes life as it comes in the English village. When Jury realizes that Lean's wife, Hannah, and the dead Sadie are lookalikes, he brings his deductions to Plant for closer consideration.

The question of identity on which the plot turns becomes more and more ambiguous as images of water mount. The proper names alone seem to be clues—Watermeadows, Sadie Diver, Ruby Firth (one of Simon's lady friends), Roy Marsh (Ruby's jealous companion)—but the real clues waver like lights on water or evaporate like a mirage when approached. Grimes shows that legal proofs of identity are anything but certain. It is possible, as Jury says, to take someone's identity away from him, to wipe out a life. In the end, the reader wonders if one can ever know who anyone else really is.

THE LAMORNA WINK

The Lamorna Wink (1999) presents a departure for Grimes, granting the elegant and aristocratic Melrose Plant his first starring role in a series built primarily around Richard Jury. In this novel, with Jury away in Northern Ireland, Plant lands in the midst of a mystery while seeking solitude in Cornwall. Sleight of hand and deception color the tone of this story, and Grimes again fills her pages with exceptional characters. Plant embarks on his journey to Cornwall in high spirits, delighting in simple acts such as riding on a train. As he imagines dark mysterious pasts for his fellow passengers based on old films, the inescapable Aunt Agatha interrupts his reverie. Horrified to learn that Agatha is "coincidentally" traveling to Cornwall as well, Plant resigns himself to an altered holiday and amuses himself by ordering her a pot of poison at the Woodbine Tearoom in Bletchley village.

The order is taken by Johnny Wells, a jack-of-all-trades teenager working three jobs to pay his way through school. Johnny's fascination with magic helps fuel the undertone of trickery prevalent throughout the tale. The preternaturally mature youth quickly endears himself to Plant by offering to entertain Agatha for an afternoon. Plant wastes no time and immediately seeks out and rents a house in the village. Interest piqued by photos of the family renting the house, Plant soon



learns that the family's two children died in a tragic accident four years earlier. In the midst of this serious and reflective scene, Grimes's inimitable style shines through as she deftly weaves humor into Plant's search of the house. As he turns a corner expecting to see a portrait of a young and tragic heroine wandering in the mist, he comes face to face with a painting of . . . chickens. In the village, forced to choose between cafés called the Drowned Man and the Die Is Cast (the Poor Soul café didn't even make it into the running), Plant determines that Bletchley may be the first "village noir" of England.

Johnny's aunt Chris, part owner of the tearoom, disappears without a trace one evening soon after Plant's arrival. Eager to help his new friend, Plant calls on Divisional Commander Brian Macalvie of the

Devon and Cornwall constabulary, who is in the area investigating a mysterious homicide in the town of Lamorna Cove (home of the Lamorna Wink pub) a few miles away. This novel offers startling insights into Macalvie's character. Previously described as committed, driven, and extraordinarily demanding, with a cobalt gaze that "could strip you with a look," Macalvie unveils a past riddled with tragedy.

Morris Bletchley, an American millionaire who made his fortune with fast-food chicken restaurants, bought the country house of a hard-luck aristocrat and turned it into a high-class hospice, where he enjoys careening full-tilt through the hallways in a borrowed wheelchair. As the grandfather of the drowned children, Bletchley believes there is more to that accident than meets the eye. As it happens, Macalvie led the investigation of the drowning and shares Bletchley's opinion.

The story unfolds in typical Grimes style, meandering through the lives and thoughts of the characters, allowing glimpses here and there into the complexities of relationships. Her incomparable use of imagery and ability to capture a scene with a few well-chosen words remain her greatest strengths as a writer and set her apart from others in the mystery genre.

Also of note is the way in which Grimes can seamlessly change the feeling of a story from tragic to humorous. Those familiar with the series welcome the return of the Long Piddleton crowd as Vivian sets a date to marry her Venetian fiancé (again), unleashing a hilarious chain of events as her friends think of ways to stop the wedding. Jury's return in the eleventh hour allows readers to witness the engaging banter between him and Plant just before the answer is revealed, and the solution to the case exposes a dark side of the human spirit that will shock even the most jaded reader.

Grimes faced the wrath of disappointed Jury fans when she published *Hotel Paradise* (1996), introducing a twelve-year-old crime fighter named Emma Graham. Apart from a knack for tracking down serial killers, the heroine is a close self-portrait of the author at the same age. Despite resistance to Emma from readers, Grimes followed up her initial adventure with *Cold Flat Junction* (2001) and *Belle Ruin* (2005), which was warmly received by critics as a "tour de

force cobwebby mystery." Alarming readers further, Grimes arranged for the temporary "death" of Richard Jury in *The Blue Last* (2001), returning her to the best-seller lists after a decade. Jury himself returned two years later in *The Grave Maurice* (2003). Grimes continues to combine extensive research with excellent writing to produce an elegant, engaging mystery.

Rebecca R. Butler

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan,

Mickey Rubenstien, and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RICHARD JURY AND MELROSE PLANT SERIES:

The Man with the Load of Mischief, 1981; *The Old Fox Deceiv'd*, 1982; *The Anodyne Necklace*, 1983; *The Dirty Duck*, 1984; *Jerusalem Inn*, 1984; *The Deer Leap*, 1985; *Help the Poor Struggler*, 1985; *I Am the Only Running Footman*, 1986; *The Five Bells and Bladebone*, 1987; *The Old Silent*, 1988; *The Old Contemptibles*, 1991; *The Horse You Came in On*, 1993; *Rainbow's End*, 1995; *The Case Has Altered*, 1997; *The Stargazey*, 1998; *The Lamorna Wink*, 1999; *The Blue Last*, 2001; *The Grave Maurice*, 2003; *The Winds of Change*, 2004; *The Old Wine Shades*, 2006; *Dust*, 2007

EMMA GRAHAM SERIES: *Hotel Paradise*, 1996;

Cold Flat Junction, 2001; *Belle Ruin*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The End of the Pier*, 1992;

Biting the Moon, 1999; *Foul Matter*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *The Train Now Departing* and

When the Mousetrap Closes, 1997

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POETRY: *Send Bygraves*, 1989

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Citizen, April 9, 2006, p. C7. Grimes talks about writing a series and her series character Jury's age and lack of luck in love.

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Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay describing the life and works of Grimes.

Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Offers in-depth discussions of gender, puzzle cases, and the English influence on

American writers, such as Martha Grimes, in detective fiction.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an essay on Grimes that examines her life and works.

Strafford, Jay. "Emma Graham, Girl Detective, Returns." Review of *Belle Ruin*, by Martha Grimes. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 28, 2005, p. K3. In this Emma Graham series novel, Emma solves the mystery of the disappearance of the infant Fay Slade from a now abandoned resort hotel. Reviewer praises the believability of Grimes's characters.

JOHN GRISHAM

Born: Jonesboro, Arkansas; February 8, 1955

Type of plot: Courtroom drama

CONTRIBUTION

Although writing was not his first career, John Grisham has opened the genre of legal thriller to audiences who grew up watching *Perry Mason* (1957-1966) on television. He began writing his first novel, *A Time to Kill* (1989), while he was practicing law during the 1980's. It was this decade that filled the headlines with stories of greed and corruption in the legal profession. By writing about lawyers who were more like Harper Lee's Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), he managed to redeem the profession while offering a realistic view of the criminal world. He gained fame with his second book, *The Firm* (1991), about a naïve recent Harvard graduate who accepts an offer he cannot refuse from a corrupt Memphis law firm. Grisham attributes the success of his second book to an article in *Writer's Digest* which provided a formula for writing a suspense novel. The success of *The Firm* afforded Grisham the luxury of walking away from his practice to pursue writing full time.

After publishing *A Time to Kill*, Grisham wrote

best-selling legal thrillers at the rate of one per year until 2001, when he branched into other genres and formats. *A Painted House* (2001) is a fictionalized autobiography, and the novel *Skipping Christmas* (2001) is filled with humor. Both highlight the author's skill as a master storyteller. In 2003, Grisham wrote *Bleachers*, a fictionalized memoir about high school football and the issues surrounding returning to one's hometown. He also has written two screenplays and the nonfictional *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town* (2006). Despite being considered formulaic by the critics, Grisham's novels often occupy spots on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

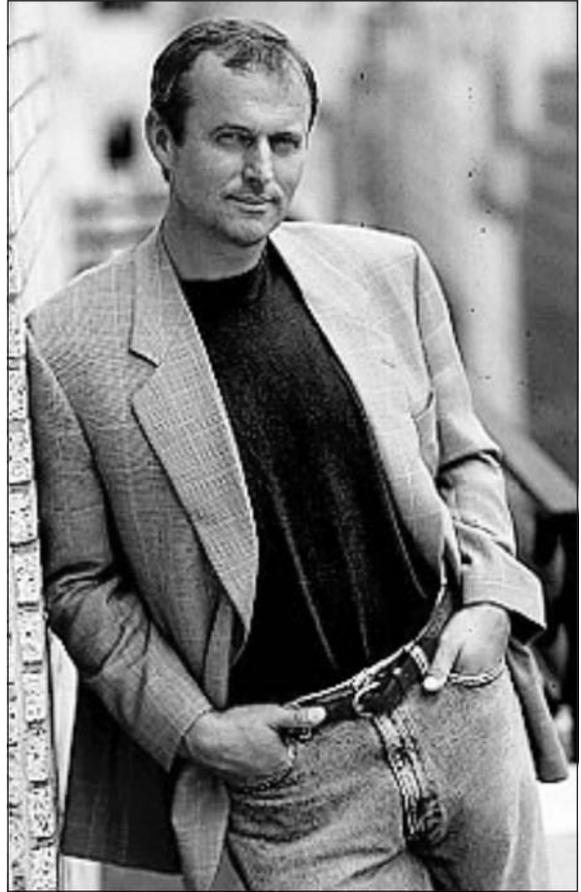
Grisham's novels are concerned with the underdog who, against all odds, takes on giant corporations, "big government," or terrorism and often wins. By including average people in his heroic plots, Grisham enables his massive readership to imagine themselves as characters in his novels. He also restores people's faith in their government by having the protagonist win despite the greatest of odds. The idea of the underdog taking on a massive corporation, the Mafia, or another antagonist of gigantic proportions is part of American culture and features in most of Grisham's works.

BIOGRAPHY

John Grisham was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on February 8, 1955, the son of an itinerant construction worker and a homemaker. The family moved often, finally settling in Southaven, Mississippi, when Grisham was twelve. After moving to each town, Grisham would obtain a public library card and rate the condition of the town's Little League field. He dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player, becoming so focused on athletics that he neglected his grades in English. His love of baseball would continue through college. He enrolled at Northwest Junior College in Sanitobia, Mississippi, then transferred to Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, where he continued to play baseball. When he realized that he was not destined for the major leagues, he transferred to Mississippi State.

At Mississippi State, Grisham majored in accounting with the intention of becoming a tax attorney. However, after his first tax-law class at the University of Mississippi, he decided that criminal law provided more interest and drama. After graduation in 1981, he returned to Southaven, opening up his own practice and marrying Renee Jones, a childhood friend. He ran a successful practice but felt unfulfilled. A change to practicing civil law brought no more personal satisfaction. Grisham won one of the largest settlements in DeSoto County history on behalf of a child who sustained extensive burns when a water heater exploded. An idealist, he pursued a political career on the platform of education reform, winning a position in the Mississippi House of Representatives in 1983. This, too, would be short-lived, as he discovered his inability to break through the bureaucracy of the state legislature to effect educational change. He resigned in 1990.

During Grisham's tenure in the House, he had continued to practice law in Southaven. While observing a trial, Grisham listened as an adolescent girl testified against her rapist. The life-changing experience influenced him to write *A Time to Kill*. "I never felt such emotion in my life," he said in an interview with *People* magazine. He began to obsess over what would have happened if the girl's father had shot the culprit and then was put on trial. "I had to write it down," he said. This developed into the nucleus of the plot, to which he



John Grisham. (Courtesy, Doubleday & Co.)

added the complexity of racial relations in the South. Grisham thought about the book for a while before actually writing it. He would rise at dawn to write an hour a day while working sixty to seventy hours a week. He did this for three years to finish the book.

Grisham's first book was rejected numerous times, then Jay Garon of New York agreed to represent him and made a deal with Wynwood Press for fifteen thousand dollars and five thousand copies. Grisham purchased a thousand copies for himself. Friends recalled how they received copies as gifts and how Grisham would sell the book at garden parties. Critics describe *A Time to Kill* as one of Grisham's best novels, and a first edition has reached the value of thirty-nine hundred dollars. With the success of *The Firm* as well as the novels that followed, interest in Grisham's first book grew, and it was reprinted.

Although Grisham does not regard himself as a bookworm, he does recall reading the works of John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, and Charles Dickens. He is now a best-selling author, and his books have been translated into thirty-one languages and have topped more than 60 million in print. Such success enabled Grisham and his wife, Renee, to found the Rebuild the Coast Fund Organization in September, 2005. The organization donated five million dollars to help the lives destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

ANALYSIS

John Grisham manages simultaneously to glorify and vilify the legal profession; rarely does legal counsel appear as a neutral third party. Grisham says he develops plots by taking a character, then getting them involved in some situation and back out again. What he omits from this description is that often the protagonist makes a sacrifice, as in *A Time to Kill*, *The Firm*, and *The Pelican Brief* (1992). The difference between *A Time to Kill* and his second and third novels is that in the latter two novels he has created an outside force that looms in the background rather than an internal threat. Typically the heroes or heroines are ordinary people who accomplish extraordinary feats or attorneys, either fresh out of law school or practicing in some small town. In *The Runaway Jury* (1996), a woman is suing a tobacco company over her husband's death. In *The Client* (1993), an eleven-year-old boy witnesses a suicide and knows the location where a murdered United States senator is buried. The child becomes the target of the Mafia and pursued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Grisham has been accused of not sufficiently developing his characters and focusing more on the surprising twists in his plots. *The Client* features more character development and complexity within his minor characters.

Grisham takes his readers on a journey into the legal system. In a sense, he opens up another world, taking readers behind the scenes, and glamorizes the courts and the law. Unlike many fantasy or science-fiction novels, however, his mysteries have plots that theoretically could happen. Grisham knows that what he writes is not high-brow literature but rather entertainment for the masses; however, he strives to im-

prove his writing with each new novel. "They have a certain flow and level of suspense so they can be read quickly. People get caught up in them," he told an interviewer from *Christianity Today*.

A TIME TO KILL

A Time to Kill, the first of Grisham's books and deemed by critics to be his best, was written over three years while Grisham served in the Mississippi House of Representatives and practiced law. Because he based it on a deeply moving personal experience, he put a great deal of effort into character development and setting description. In the novel, attorney Jake Brigand defends an African American Vietnam war veteran, Carl Lee, who killed the two white men accused of raping his ten-year-old daughter. It is a tale of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Although sales of the novel were initially slow, it became a best seller after the publication of *The Firm*.

Grisham's plot is superb in that every detail in the setting and characterization has purpose. Readers experience the pain of Carl Lee, whose "baby girl" has been raped by two rednecks. Grisham creates empathy between Jake and Carl by having the attorney state that he would want to kill anyone who raped and beat his daughter. The interconnectedness of the characters coupled with Grisham's extensive knowledge of the setting makes this one of his best novels.

THE RUNAWAY JURY

In *The Runaway Jury*, a woman whose husband died of lung cancer as a result of smoking brings suit against Big Tobacco, which hires jury consultants to investigate potential jurors to ensure a bias in its favor. Led by Rankin Fitch, the team of consultants breaks confidentiality laws to obtain financial and medical records that help them speculate on how the jurors will vote. Critics noted the timeliness of this publication as lawsuits and legislation against tobacco companies dominated the news in the years surrounding its release.

Grisham continues the intrigue by not revealing the true identities of jurors Nicholas Easter and his girlfriend, Marlee, until late in the novel. He uses the beginning chapters of the novel to educate the reader on the procedures involved in jury selection, then returns to the underdog-versus-big-corporation plot that he favors. He uses matter-of-fact dialogue to highlight how

lawyers can push the envelope in regard to jury selection in this novel, which was loosely based on real-life events.

THE BROKER

Grisham drew inspiration for *The Broker* (2005) from the international crime scene, particularly terrorism. In the novel, shortly after receiving a presidential pardon for treason, former Washington, D.C., lobbyist Joel Backman finds himself in Bologna, Italy, being supported by the same government that had incarcerated him. Suspecting that his new life is part of some larger Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plan, Backman attempts to contact his family but realizes that he is under constant surveillance. The CIA director has laid a mousetrap with the former lobbyist as bait to find out who Backman's true enemies are, and a complex game of cat and mouse begins. Grisham leads readers on a tour of Bologna and provides many details of Italian culture and language but does not quicken the pace of the plot until he is about half way through the story. Therefore, some critics found the book lacking in the action, suspense, and careful plotting that marks Grisham's other works.

Amy J. Arnold

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *A Time to Kill*, 1989; *The Firm*, 1991; *The Pelican Brief*, 1992; *The Client*, 1993; *The Chamber*, 1994; *The Rainmaker*, 1995; *The Runaway Jury*, 1996; *The Partner*, 1997; *The Street Lawyer*, 1998; *The Testament*, 1999; *The Brethren*, 2000; *The Summons*, 2002; *The King of Torts*, 2003; *The Last Juror*, 2004; *The Broker*, 2005; *Playing for Pizza*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Painted House*, 2001; *Skippping Christmas*, 2001; *Bleachers*, 2003

NONFICTION: *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*, 2006

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Hubbard, Kim, and David Hutchings. "Tales Out of Court." *People*, March 16, 1992, 43-44. This profile of Grisham looks at his childhood, his southern roots, and the incident that inspired him to write his first book. He speaks of his life values and family.

Norton, Will, Jr. "Why John Grisham Teaches Sunday School." *Christianity Today* 38, no. 11 (October 3, 1994): 14-15. Discusses the influence of Christianity on Grisham throughout his life.

Pringle, Mary Beth. *John Grisham: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997. Contains information on Grisham's life and works, including critiques of his novels through 1996. Also provides an in-depth look at the genre of legal thrillers.

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Zaleski, Jeff. "The Grisham Business." *Publishers Weekly* 245, no. 3 (January 19, 1998): 248-249. A profile of Grisham written after the publication of *The Street Lawyer* that focuses on the business generated by his novels and the motion pictures that have been made from them.

H

WILLIAM HAGGARD

Richard Henry Michael Clayton

Born: Croydon, Surrey, England; August 11, 1907

Died: Place unknown; October 27, 1993

Types of plot: Espionage; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Colonel Charles Russell, 1958-1985

Paul Martiny, 1972-1974

William Wilberforce Smith, 1982-1986

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

COLONEL CHARLES RUSSELL, a very English, elegant, and urbane military intelligence officer, is a *pukka sahib* who, after years of dedicated service to his country, serves as head of military security. He operates at the highest levels of political diplomacy, making carefully considered decisions in times of crisis. His decisions potentially determine the fate of nations, whose representatives, legal and otherwise, he plays off against each other. His goal is to preserve British interests through diplomacy. Russell is not always directly involved in the action, particularly in those novels set after his retirement, but his subtle mind is always at work behind the scenes.

MAJOR MORTIMER is Russell's all-around, eminently reliable associate.

PROFESSOR WASSERMAN, a brilliant, eccentric, witty, and irreverent Jewish nuclear scientist, a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, fills in the gaps when Russell's scientific knowledge is lacking and arranges a surprising revenge on the worst of his persecutors.

MARTIN DOMINY is a cautious and competent operative whom Russell tests out as his possible replacement.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE SMITH (to whom whole novels are later dedicated), a Harrow-educated black with the manners, accent, and values of an English

gentleman, is recruited as an operator and finally promoted to the board from which Russell retires (Smith enjoys jazz and marijuana, but he is tough and reliable).

PAUL MARTINY is a born insider, an established and landed gentleman turned "protector," partly to rebel against the traditions that tie him and partly to expose the ineptitude of pretentious and arrogant establishmentarians. While running a three-thousand-acre farm and participating in various humanitarian organizations to assist paroled convicts, Martiny secretly acts as financial adviser and mentor to top criminals, laundering money, setting up foreign accounts, and protecting their interests in a number of ways, from making sure a stolen political document is placed in safe hands to discharging a dangerous gambling debt.

CONTRIBUTION

Critic D. B. Hughes rightly credits William Haggard with "the renaissance of the spy-adventure tale." Haggard's suspense novels, with their political focus, their sense of realpolitik, yet their preoccupation with propriety and with correct behavior, fill the gap between earlier, romantic spy stories and the more modern, psychological ones. In fact, many critics define the Haggard novel as an erudite amalgam of the romanticism of a John Buchan and the chilling Cold War cynicism of a Len Deighton or a John le Carré. His works, tinged with satire, provide so realistic a portrait of characters and milieus that they seem like novels of manners—even romans à clef. One book had to be hastily revised on the eve of publication to disguise a biting description of a well-known extreme leftist, while another went behind the scenes in Parliament during the Six-Day War. *The Money Men* (1981) took on the scams of Dutch banking; the Martiny books, the

fiddles of bankers, doctors, nursing homes, and politicians. *The Power House* (1966) openly and contemptuously satirized a prime minister actually in office at the time of publication. The latter was among the first fictionalizations of the growing influence of the Arab world and of the antagonistic diplomatic atmosphere that would necessitate détente; as such it is a significant contribution to espionage fiction. Haggard was one of the very few to have ventured into the world of ministers of state; he was best at giving the reader a sense of the inherent prejudices that affect judgment: "You could never rely on parvenus," says one character, while another thinks, "If there was one thing he loathed it was upper-crust patronage." Haggard's works were published in Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, and the United States.

BIOGRAPHY

William Haggard was born Richard Henry Michael Clayton on August 11, 1907, in Croydon, Surrey, England. He was educated at Lancing College, Sussex, and received a bachelor's degree from Christ Church, Oxford University, in 1929. In 1936 he married Barbara Myfanwy Sant, with whom he had a son and a daughter. He served in the Indian Civil Service from 1931 to 1939 and eventually was appointed magistrate and sessions judge. During World War II he attended college in Quetta and was promoted to staff lieutenant in Indian Army Intelligence, at which rank he served between 1939 and 1945. In 1945 he was designated for ministry duty in Whitehall, an experience that provided the background for Colonel Charles Russell, Haggard's major series character. On receiving his master's degree from Oxford University in 1947, he joined the Board of Trade. In 1965 he was appointed controller of enemy property, a position he held for four years before retiring from government service and turning to a full-time writing career. "I've been a layabout ever since," he said, though in fact he wrote prolifically and traveled widely in Asia, South America, and Europe, particularly Italy. Haggard was a major constituent of the N.A.L./Signet Intelligence Group and a representative author of the Detective Book Club before his death in 1993.

ANALYSIS

A William Haggard novel is more likely to engage the English reader than the American in its portrait of the powers behind the powers, the hierarchy that remains as prime ministers and other such ephemeral authorities come and go. It is a top-level view of the behind-the-scenes machinations of national and multinational corporations and security agencies and the politics that inevitably affect them. Often these dealings involve major breakthroughs in science and industry, resulting in discoveries with potential military application.

In *The High Wire* (1963), for example, the plot centers on a major foreign power's attempt to acquire, by blackmail, kidnapping, torture, or even murder, the secret of a new weapon being developed by British industry, while in *The Antagonists* (1964) the United States and the Soviet Union, fearful of an apocalyptic military secret, struggle either to subvert or to eliminate a world-famous scientist residing in Great Britain. *The Arena* (1961) depends on a foreign power's struggle to take over a British company to have access to new British discoveries in radar, while *Slow Burner* (1958), *Venetian Blind* (1959), *Yesterday's Enemy* (1976), and *The Meritocrats* (1985) concern a security leak of restricted nuclear information. *The Unquiet Sleep* (1962) concerns the damaging effects of a new drug on government personnel, and *The Mischief-Makers* (1982) an Arab attempt to foment a rebellion among London blacks.

In each novel, Colonel Russell or his minions in British intelligence prove to have been on top of the situation from the beginning but must proceed cautiously, according to the unspoken rules for espionage and counterespionage, judging just how far to push the other side and when to count one's losses and yield to the inevitable. Instead of derring-do, there are quiet, understated discussions, analyses of data and potential actions of all parties, and finally active steps to resolve the issues and personalities in England's best interest, though these steps are often thwarted by, or prove unnecessary because of, the actions of private individuals. Always the situation is politically explosive, the personalities unpredictable, and the realities far more complex than a surface analysis indicates.

Most Haggard novels depend heavily on the character of Colonel Russell, a realist who feels more comfortable with established government—communist or not—than lack of government, who recognizes the necessity of sometimes making national concessions, and who in fact has “almost lost the habit of thinking in terms of countries or nations.” At times Russell feels more respect for a competent counterpart in the Soviet hierarchy than for some of his own country’s secretaries and ministers, especially those of the far Left. The description of his ruminations on an old friend sums up his conservative values:

To the idealists in their world of shadows he was simply another fascist dictator, to the hardline communist a contemptible turncoat. Russell considered him neither of these, indeed they were birds of a similar feather. Both had spent lives on the same tightrope, on the one side the furnace of total power, on the other the bog of wishful thinking. Man was a very dangerous animal and Russell cared little who ruled him in practice. The enemy was the absence of rule. . . . All one could do was to walk one’s tightrope, balancing by the light of *realpolitik*.

Russell recognizes Great Britain’s declining world status and its need to depend more heavily on strong allies (calling in Americans, for example, to assure the secrecy of a British discovery). He disapproves of liberals on principle and might admire, but never trust, a card-carrying communist. He respects Israeli intelligence for walking a tightrope between political expedience and war.

Russell is a professional, scornful of amateurs for the disgusting messes they often leave and of diplomats for their affectations and incompetence. He finds the agony column of the London *Times* the only sane and accurate reporting. What intrigues him most from the security files are not those classified “red” (suspects by history or association) or “green” (suspects by political sympathy) but those classified “yellow” (suspects by character), for they are the least predictable and hence potentially the most dangerous. Russell is attuned to the vulnerability and corruptibility of the most polished and successful of diplomats, businesspeople, and scientists, and it is his ability to put

himself in their place and anticipate their responses that makes him so effective at his job. Russell may be right wing in sympathies, but he deeply values the rights of citizens and fights to avoid invoking the Security Act, which would give him police-state powers. His response to breaches of security is to focus on human psychology and to try to outguess his opponent by placing himself in his shoes.

THE POISON PEOPLE

His office at the Security Executive is untidy, with silver trophies and excellent Persian rugs—items that spell “an intelligence shrewd but unfussy.” Russell is fascinated by the convolutions of other minds and other cultures (particularly the unpredictable twists of the Byzantine mind or the deep-seated wisdom of the Latin woman); he recognizes values bred in the blood that cannot be denied. In *The Poison People* (1978), for example, despite his distaste for a friend’s personal vendetta, he understands the man’s desire to punish the Delhi drug master whose heroin killed his son and acts decisively to aid him. Russell is worldly and frankly sexual, attracted to women of verve and independence.

The innocent and kindly are not always safe in Russell’s world and may in fact become the sacrificial lamb whose injury or death allows the enemy to be defeated. Russell may try to prevent such injury but is realistic when it happens. Nevertheless, in a typical Haggard novel, the mild-mannered, who seem incapable of tough decisions, at times prove tougher and more capable than those who judge them and dismiss them. The blackmailer reveals hidden scruples, the gentle man hidden strengths. The ruthless spy is willing to sacrifice himself for the information he wants, while the nonaggressive Jewish scientist unexpectedly sacrifices an entire company to revenge himself on an ex-Nazi industrialist. The notorious saboteur, subversionist, and assassin of *The Telemann Touch* (1958) proves charming, almost admirable. Moreover, both sides often prove unscrupulous, accept the maxim that “business is business,” and determine to cut their opponents’ throats, either figuratively or literally, if need be.

Haggard was careful not to name countries (he sometimes gives a fictitious name), but he makes the reader feel as if he is learning what happens behind the

headlines. His treatment of people and countries centers on two key judgmental words: “civilized” and “barbarian.” His merchants, bankers, brokers, and even Indian Brahmins pride themselves on being civilized (though they are not always so), although the term “barbarian” is reserved for those who break what each “civilized” man thinks are the unspoken rules of conduct, the gentleman’s code. Barbarians may earn one’s respect with their strengths, their sense of honor, and their intelligent maneuverings, but one can never really trust or understand them, for they do not think or act within one’s own framework of values and sensibilities. Colonel Russell may admire a noble barbarian for slaying a foe, but he will disapprove of his toying with said foe. Yet just when one has decided that a Whitehall view dominates, Haggard employs these terms to make the satiric point that, given changing circumstances, the seemingly civilized may prove barbaric and vice versa. A professional assassin denigrates his employer as barbaric and the English as incomprehensible, while a hoodlum’s spokesperson proves civilized. One may, in effect, cut the throat of a client or a company while at the same time following prescribed limits or even fulfilling the obligations of courtesy. Thus it is a quiet irony, a wry sense of the sardonic, that dominates.

Related to such judgments is a class division based on taste and lack of taste. In Haggard’s novels, a character may have a hyphenated name such as William Lampe-Lister or Lionel Lowe-Anderson but remain déclassé, a mere assistant manager or assistant under secretary whose lifestyle, attire, home, and pastimes mark him as limited. Frequently, such limitations are summed up by Haggard’s descriptions of property and possessions. A man who would consider armigerous jewelry more than a little vulgar would also recognize the absurdity of adding Gothic wings to transform an “original Georgian block” into “a Puseyite nightmare, hideous to observe and impossible to live in.” Haggard approves of men strong enough to break the rules in the name of good taste, civilization, and what is right, and for him what is right involves fighting to protect property and family and to prevent financial chaos and the destruction of a way of life.

THE OLD MASTERS AND VENETIAN BLIND

A sign of Haggard’s own taste is the understatement that dominates his canon. His characters suggest rather than spell out in detail, a quality for which his most recent works have been criticized but one that betrays a sense of a way of life and a point of view vital to Haggard’s conception of being English. After a drink or two, for example, a character will “particularize rather disturbingly” his contempt for the Chancery Bench. One of the highest compliments Colonel Russell pays a foreigner is “You talk almost like an Englishman,” by which he means the person is “realistic,” his comments “understated,” his behavior “deep-down tough.” A quiet young man in *The Old Masters* (1973), for example, wins Russell’s respect when he prepares to fight back: “They tried to burn me. Alive, as it happened. I didn’t like that.” On the other hand, the pretentious and high-handed receive short shrift, as does the secretary in *Slow Burner* who eventually succumbs to drink and jealousy. Occasionally there are philosophical statements, but in the main these exist to delineate character, as in the musings of Gervas Leat, a man who gambles his life and his love in *Venetian Blind*:

Life was a gamble, a crazy horse race. Smart Alecs picked their bets or thought they did: the wise man knew the Form Book for a trap. There wasn’t any form. No, she was blind, the goddess, blind and uncaring. Blind were they all. Man came from he knew not where; gambled a little or was gambled with; snuffed like a candle in the night. . . . judgement was futile.

Haggard was criticized for the open carnality of his characters, yet he sensitively captures the nuances of marital accord and discord, the signs and symbols of relationships. His novels always provide a realistic portrait of the two sexes and treat men and women as equals—in foolishness and in intelligence. The female soldier assigned to protect Russell in *The Old Masters* is a better bodyguard than most men, capable of quick and accurate decisions, impressive physical feats, and a realistic assessment of people and situations, while the huntress in *Venetian Blind* handles a weapon like a pro:

Margaret broke the gun, single-handed, the butt under her armpit. The spent cartridge, as the ejector threw it, she caught with her free hand. The live she pocketed.

Involuntarily Richard made a gesture of admiration.

“What’s the matter?”

“Not many men can do that.”

William Wilberforce Smith’s wife, Amanda, has “flair, intuition, instinct,” and, not subject “to arbitrary rules of male logic, . . . [can] see through brick walls with uncanny accuracy.” Even the spoiled and unfaithful wife in *Closed Circuit* (1960) is sufficiently self-aware to answer hypocrisy with shocking truths. Haggard often includes in his novels a love relationship gone wrong and counters it with a love of understanding, sexual attraction, and mutual respect. On the one hand, his women may be limited by their upbringing, frustrated, superficial, and utterly destructive; on the other hand, they may be politically knowledgeable, sharply intelligent, and a real challenge to a man’s intellect and emotions. One will act on a combination of instinct and reason to save a party, a firm, or a loved one, even at heavy cost to herself, while another will exact cruel revenge on those who have injured her or her beloved. Always the relationships and the motivations are complex, and always the women prove capable. In *Venetian Blind* a seemingly devoted stepdaughter coldly leads her stepfather toward incest to justify murdering him as revenge for her mother’s suicide, while in *The Old Masters* a devoted First Lady, widowed, marries a man she despises to stabilize her nation, then personally stabs him to death in front of witnesses when she confirms his responsibility for her husband’s death. Cynthia, in *The Arena*, outmaneuvers her much-loved husband in her manipulation of company block votes, but in doing so she effectively outwits herself, losing her husband while helping the family win a profit.

A Haggard plot is precision-engineered, with a suspense that grows more out of character than action. Suspenseful action—such as that of a stranded cable car dominated by a killer, a carnival ride headed for murder, or a speeding car set to explode—does occur, but it is rare. The narration is third-person limited omniscient, the language sardonic and controlled. Haggard himself described his works as “novels of suspense with a background of international politics” and admits that they are not always “entirely imaginary.”

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

COLONEL CHARLES RUSSELL SERIES: *Slow Burner*, 1958; *The Telemann Touch*, 1958; *Venetian Blind*, 1959; *Closed Circuit*, 1960; *The Arena*, 1961; *The Unquiet Sleep*, 1962; *The High Wire*, 1963; *The Antagonists*, 1964; *The Hard Sell*, 1965; *The Powder Barrel*, 1965; *The Power House*, 1966; *The Conspirators*, 1967; *A Cool Day for Killing*, 1968; *The Doubtful Disciple*, 1969; *The Hardliners*, 1970; *The Bitter Harvest*, 1971 (also known as *Too Many Enemies*); *The Old Masters*, 1973 (also known as *The Notch on the Knife*); *The Scorpion’s Tail*, 1975; *Yesterday’s Enemy*, 1976; *The Poison People*, 1978; *Visa to Limbo*, 1978; *The Median Line*, 1979; *The Money Men*, 1981; *The Heirloom*, 1983; *The Meritocrats*, 1985

PAUL MARTINY SERIES: *The Protectors*, 1972; *The Kinsmen*, 1974

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE SMITH SERIES: *The Mischief-Makers*, 1982; *The Need to Know*, 1984; *The Martello Tower*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *The Little Rug Book*, 1972

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Haggard, William. Interview. *Unicorn Mystery Book Club News* 1, no. 9 (1948): 12. A brief interview with Haggard providing insights into his creative process.

Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. This study of British and American spy fiction begins with three general chapters on the appeal, emotional effects, and narrative codes of the genre. Helps readers understand Haggard's works.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Cen-

tral Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies to actual intelligence agents. Although Haggard is not discussed directly, the comparisons can be made with his works.

Winks, Robin W. "Murder Without Blood: William Haggard." *The New Republic* 177 (July 30, 1977): 30-33. Discussion of Haggard's tone and style, emphasizing the representation of violence and its place in his narratives.

JAMES WILSON HALL

Born: Hopkinsville, Kentucky; 1947

Also wrote as James W. Hall

Types of plot: Thriller; amateur sleuth; psychological; hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Thorn, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THORN is a solidly built middle-aged man with sun-bleached hair, blue eyes, and the bronzed skin of someone who spends most of his time outdoors. A fisherman who composes poetry in his head and lives with a succession of casual lovers in a stilt house in Key Largo, Florida, Thorn supports himself, barely, by selling hand-tied bonefish flies and carved lures. A cantankerous, isolated hermit far behind the times, he has a tendency to become involved, as a reluctant amateur sleuth or loyal sidekick, in doggedly, often violently, thwarting various nefarious schemes.

"SUGAR" SUGARMAN is a former police officer who spent twenty years with the Monroe County Police Department and is a lifelong friend of Thorn. The product of a Scandinavian mother and a Jamaican father, the middle-aged but tall, handsome, and extremely fit Sugarman runs a private investigation firm that takes on a variety of cases and security-related jobs, and frequently calls on Thorn to assist him. Divorced because of the instability of his freelance employment, he is the father of young twin girls, Janey and Jackie.

CONTRIBUTION

Like John D. MacDonald, Carl Hiaasen, and Elmore Leonard, James Wilson Hall mines the creatively fertile—and increasingly bizarre—territory of South Florida for his crime stories. Like his colleagues, Hall often focuses on issues that affect his adopted state: pollution and the adverse effects of tourism and technology. Hall does not preach about the various evils but rather demonstrates their results by incorporating them as plot elements in his thrillers.

Hall's characters are diverse and fully rounded physically, emotionally, and psychologically. His series hero, Thorn, just wants to be left alone to fish and contemplate life but invariably gets dragged into complex situations that he wriggles out of by a combination of native intelligence, physical prowess, and determination. Unlike many other thriller writers, Hall is extremely adept at drawing sympathetic and authentic female characters that are just as capable (or just as foolish) as his male characters. Protagonists and antagonists are usually introspective, continually challenging their own motivations and reactions to events.

Dialogue throughout Hall's novels—obtuse, profane, and often humorous—is believable. Narration, depending on the circumstances, varies from blunt and fragmented to poetic; Hall waxes especially lyrical when describing the weather, the terrain, the native wildlife, and the many moods of the ocean.

Hall's novels have found a large, diverse readership and have appeared frequently on both domestic and

overseas best-seller lists. His books have been translated into a dozen languages, and several have been optioned for film. After receiving numerous critical accolades, Hall garnered the Shamus Award in 2002 for his Thorn novel *Blackwater Sound* (2001).

BIOGRAPHY

James Wilson Hall was born in 1947 in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, the son of a realtor. An avid, if indiscriminate, reader from an early age, Hall devoured everything from the Hardy Boys series to books by Ernest Hemingway. In high school he was an athlete, starring in basketball and tennis. During his senior year, he attended Riverside Military Academy, where he received an appointment to the Air Force Academy at graduation. He rejected the appointment to attend Florida Presbyterian University (later Eckard College), intending to become a minister, but later switched his major to literature. Hall, who as an undergraduate married his high school sweetheart, received a scholarship to the Breadloaf Writers' Conference between his junior and senior years in college.

Hall worked at a variety of jobs to help pay for his college education, including landscaper, lifeguard, yacht washer, go-cart mechanic, and ranch hand. Following graduation, Hall attended Johns Hopkins University, receiving his masters of fine arts in 1969. He received a doctorate from the University of Utah in 1973. Hall landed a position as teacher of literature and creative writing at Florida International University in Miami, where he has remained ever since, and is now a tenured professor. Hall's students have included such successful authors as Dennis Lehane, Barbara Parker, Vicki Hendricks, and Christine Kling.

Hall has contributed primarily poetry and occasional short stories to such publications as *Antioch Review*, *Georgia Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry*, and *Southern Poetry Review* since the 1960's. He published his first poetry collection, *The Lady from the Dark Green Hills: Poems*, in 1976. He followed with *The Mating Reflex* (1980), *Ham Operator: Poetry and Fiction* (1980), and *False Statements* (1986).

Hall's first novel, *Under Cover of Daylight* (1987), introduced his series character, Thorn, a professional fisherman and lure maker with a dark past who inevi-

tably becomes embroiled as a reluctant amateur sleuth in various cases, often of an environmental nature. Hall continued the series, producing nonseries crime novels as well, including *Bones of Coral* (1991), *Body Language* (1998), and *Forests of the Night* (2004). He has also published a collection of short stories, *Paper Products* (1990), contributed a chapter to the collaborative effort *Naked Came the Manatee* (1996), and released *Hot Damn! Alligators in the Casino, Nude Women in the Grass, How Seashells Changed the Course of History, and Other Dispatches from Paradise* (2002), a collection of humorous essays from his late 1990's stint as a columnist. Hall's crime fiction has frequently made the best-seller lists, and he has achieved a measure of critical acclaim as well, receiving a John D. MacDonald Award, a *San Francisco Review* Critic's Choice Award for *Gone Wild* (1995), a nomination for the Dashiell Hammett Prize for *Buzz Cut* (1996), and a Shamus Award for *Blackwater Sound*.

ANALYSIS

James Wilson Hall's early and acknowledged crime-writing influences—Ernest Hemingway, John D. MacDonald, Ross Macdonald, Carl Hiassen, and Elmore Leonard—are evident, particularly in his early work. From Hemingway, he borrowed a terse, lean, tough style. John D. MacDonald lent dark humor, a focus on South Florida, and a love for the environment. Ross Macdonald brought a lyrical quality and a concentration on the theme that the past can exert a profound effect on the present. Hiassen and Leonard added their talents in characterization, realistic dialogue, and unexpected plot turns.

It is to Hall's credit that he has taken the best aspects of these writers and made them uniquely his own. His larger-than-life characters stick in the memory primarily because they have been given a psychological dimension that adds considerable depth—a feature often lacking in the casts of plot-driven thrillers. Suspense heightens because major protagonists and antagonists, ticking time bombs of hidden psychoses, are unpredictable, out of step or out of touch with the rest of the world; the reader never knows when their pasts will catch up with them and cause an explo-

sion. Good or bad, his characters have some quality—guilt, lapsed memories, uncertainties, irrational fears, compassion for animals, a love of words—that makes them sympathetic, if flawed, and human.

A sense of place is key to Hall's work. South Florida—a modern ethnic melting pot with a fragile ecology subject to the depredations of greed, corruption, and attendant violence—is portrayed so sharply that it becomes a character in itself. These stories, which delve into pollution that imperils wildlife and human life alike, the adverse effect of millions of visitors on the environment, the treatment of ailing patients, or the negative results of technology, would not be the same if played out elsewhere.

Stylistically, Hall has, after echoing the techniques of other writers, found his own voice, a blend of the blunt and the beautiful. He usually writes in third person, past tense. Sentences are typically short, punchy, and full of slang and street language—except when they deal with nature, at which time they lengthen into picturesque, evocative description. Literary devices, such as similes and metaphors, are used sparingly but effectively. A patina of humor, sometimes dark and ironic, sometimes wistful and nostalgic, coats much of Hall's writing, giving an extra layer of meaning to his work.

BONES OF CORAL

The nonseries thriller *Bones of Coral* concerns Shaw Chandler, a longtime Miami paramedic who, called out from the firehouse one night, finds his father—a fugitive confessed murderer, whom he has not seen for twenty years—dead of a gunshot wound, a supposed suicide. Suspicious of the nature of his father's demise, Shaw takes a sabbatical from work to visit his mother Millie, an alcoholic dying of cancer in the Florida Keys. He reunites with Trula Montoya, his childhood sweetheart and a former soap opera star who suffers from a mild form of multiple sclerosis; she is one victim among many stricken with the disease, which several scientists have attributed to the illegal disposal of toxic substances in South Florida.

Based on actual research into a genuine environmental problem, *Bones of Coral* presents a fascinating cast of memorable, subtly shaded characters, including Trula's father, Richard Montoya, a former biolab sci-

ence officer who runs a facility for injured wildlife; former naval officer Douglas Barnes, an emotionless, iron-handed control freak who manages a waste recycling plant where one can dispose of anything, for a price; his retarded, physically imposing son, Dougie, who has no pain threshold, composes childish rhymes, and at his father's command eliminates people who pose impediments; and Dougie's girlfriend—and briefly wife—Elmira, a red-headed hooker, who will do anything her husband requests.

BUZZ CUT

Buzz Cut (1996), a Thorn series thriller with a subtext, features South Florida-based fisherman and flytier extraordinaire Thorn and his lifelong friend private eye "Sugar" Sugarman. In this instance, the subtext concerns relationships: Thorn's casual relationship with a live-in woman; Sugarman's estrangement from his mother, Lola Jack Sugarman Sampson, now married to a tycoon who owns a fleet of cruise ships; Lola's strained relationships with her two natural children, Sugarman and Butler Jack; and the longstanding enmity of Lola's absconded stepdaughter, Monica Sampson, toward her wealthy father.

The essential plotline, as befits a swift-paced read in which large numbers of people are placed in peril, concerns a scheme hatched by Butler Jack—a villain with a social conscience, who intends to use his ill-gotten gains to provide support for orphaned children worldwide—to extort millions from his stepfather. If Butler does not receive \$58 million, he will use remote-controlled or time-delayed devices hidden aboard a cruise liner to blow up the ship with thousands of people aboard. Sugarman, in charge of security for the ship, enlists Thorn's aid to stop the threat, an almost impossible task on such a large vessel containing so many places where something could be hidden.

Filled with colorful shipboard scenes of tourists frolicking and gorging themselves, poetic descriptions of the mood of the ocean and lingering sunsets, and hard-boiled depictions of extreme violence—because of the effects of Butler Jack's weapons of choice, a commando knife and a jury-rigged stun gun that delivers 400,000 volts—*Buzz Cut* chugs along like a runaway dreadnaught. The prose of the straightforward

narration, told from a variety of viewpoints, is choppy, laden with fragments, as though Hall abhorred compound sentences. The novel is spiced with etymological digressions from a killer with a photographic memory for words and peppered with slang, salty profanities, and a few apt similes. Characters are sketched, rather than fully drawn, but given depth through their internal observations and spoken insights. What most matters, however, is the plot. With all its entanglements juxtaposed against a barely plausible master plan devised by a semi-sympathetic madman, *Buzz Cut* delivers an entertaining read that, like popcorn, satisfies immediate hunger without ruining the appetite.

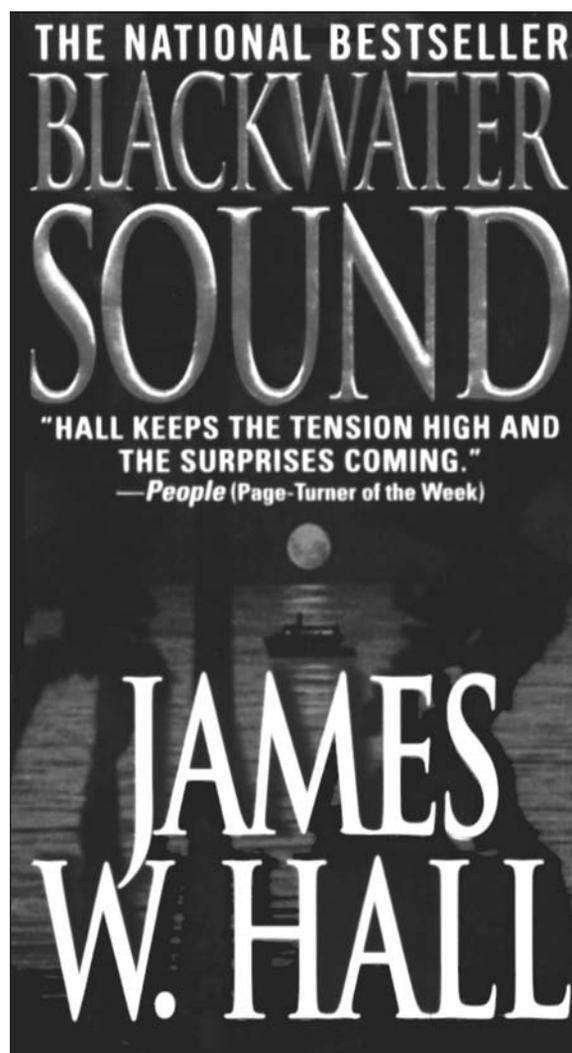
BODY LANGUAGE

The nonseries thriller *Body Language* explores the delayed effects of past bad deeds while examining the illogic of evil. The novel concerns Alexandra “Alex” Collins Rafferty, who at the age of eleven shot and killed seventeen-year-old Darnel Flint, the neighbor who raped her—a crime her father, Lawton, then a police officer, covered up. Nearly twenty years later, Alex is in a loveless marriage to Stan Rafferty, an armored-car driver who keeps a mistress and plans the perfect robbery so that he can run away with his lover. Alex cares for her aging father, who is in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, and maintains a platonic relationship with Jason Patterson, a stockbroker and black-belt karate instructor who has taught her martial arts and is infatuated with her. Alex works as a forensic photographer with the Miami Police Department in league with Homicide Lieutenant Dan Romano, a crusty, overweight, middle-aged officer; together they investigate the depredations of a serial killer called “the Bloody Rapist,” who rapes women, slashes their throats, and repositions the bodies in contorted shapes before leaving a trail of his own blood away from the scenes of the crimes.

A well-conceived, mature, and extremely suspenseful work that keeps the reader guessing, *Body Language* presents a number of separate threads that converge at the end. Alex’s relationship with her father is especially poignant, and Lawton’s struggles to remember past events, though sometimes played for humor, are particularly moving.

BLACKWATER SOUND

What would happen if all electronic devices—in computers, cell phones, automobiles, boats, and airplanes—suddenly stopped working? That is the main premise of Hall’s Shamus Award-winning novel. *Blackwater Sound* brings back Thorn and Sugarman, and as a bonus also reintroduces Alex Collins and her father, Lawton. Together, they collectively battle the evil Braswell family—father A. J., who is obsessed with tracking the gigantic marlin that pulled his favorite, genius son Andy into the ocean’s depths; ruthless, murderous daughter Morgan, who runs MicroDyne, a computer chip-coating company branching out into



high energy radio frequency (HERF) technology that has the capacity to fuse electronic circuits; and son Johnny, who has a thing for knives. A tense, exciting page-turner littered with bodies, the novel offers something for every fan of Hall's work: lush descriptions of tropical nights, suspenseful fishing scenes, sudden violence, crisp dialogue, and a full cast of quirky, psychologically bent characters.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THORN SERIES: *Under Cover of Daylight*, 1987; *Tropical Freeze*, 1989 (also known as *Squall Line*); *Mean High Tide*, 1994; *Gone Wild*, 1995; *Buzz Cut*, 1996; *Red Sky At Night*, 1997; *Blackwater Sound*, 2001; *Off the Chart*, 2003; *Magic City*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Bones of Coral*, 1991; *Hard Aground*, 1992; *Naked Came the Manatee*, 1996 (with others); *Body Language*, 1998; *The Putt at the End of the World*, 2000 (with others); *Rough Draft*, 2000; *Forests of the Night*, 2004

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Paper Products*, 1990

POETRY: *The Lady from the Dark Green Hills: Poems*, 1976; *The Mating Reflex*, 1980; *Ham Operator: Poetry and Fiction*, 1980; *False Statements*, 1986

NONFICTION: *Hot Damn! Alligators in the Casino, Nude Women in the Grass, How Seashells Changed the Course of History, and Other Dispatches from Paradise*, 2002

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riage, failing memory, and a failed robbery attempt against the main thrust of the plot, the identification and tracking of a serial rapist and murderer.

Hall, James Wilson. The Official Website of Bestselling Author James W. Hall. <http://www.jameswhall.com>. The author's own Web site contains a brief biography, frequently asked questions, author comments about why he wrote particular books, interviews, a family photo album, and other information.

_____. "PW Interview: James W. Hall: Serious South Florida Thrillers." Interview by Brewster Milton Robertson. *Publishers Weekly* 243, no. 28 (July 8, 1996): 62-63. This interview provides tidbits of biographical material and a brief publishing history of the author.

Ott, Bill. Review of *Buzz Cut*, by James Wilson Hall. *Booklist* 92, no. 16 (April 15, 1996): 1394. A favorable review of *Buzz Cut*, which notes the high-tech gadgetry; the introspection of the hero, Thorn; the amusing interplay among characters; and the black humor throughout the book.

_____. Review of *Rough Draft*, by James Wilson Hall. *Booklist* 96, no. 6 (November 15, 1999): 579-580. A mostly favorable review of *Rough Draft*, a tale of Hannah Keller, former Miami police officer turned writer, who is simultaneously trying to solve the murder of her parents, save her psychologically damaged son, and avoid a psycho hit man. The reviewer notes computer technology plays a major role in the novel, warns of an "overwhelming gore factor," and praises Hall as a thriller writer who creates believable female characters.

_____. Review of *Red Sky at Night*, by James Wilson Hall. *Publishers Weekly*. Review of *Red Sky at Night*, by James Wilson Hall. 244, no. 21 (May 26, 1997): 63. In this review, the anonymous critic deems the novel "awkward" and labels the villain "cartoonish" and "talky" in a tale involving the harvesting of dolphin endorphins for use on military veterans.

BRETT HALLIDAY

Davis Dresser

Born: Chicago, Illinois; July 31, 1904

Died: Montecito, California; February 4, 1977

Also wrote as Asa Baker; Matthew Blood; Kathryn Culver; Don Davis; Hal Debrett; Peter Field; Anthony Scott; Jerome Shard; Christopher Shayne; Peter Shelley; Elliot Storm; Anderson Wayne

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jerry Burke, 1938-1939

Mike Shayne, 1939-1977

Morgan Wayne, 1952-1954

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MIKE SHAYNE, a semi-hard-boiled private investigator, operates out of a Miami office. Widowed, the thirty-five-year-old redhead never seems to age. He prefers his brain and his fists to a gun. Shayne is “an ordinary guy like the reader himself,” his creator claims, and “his most important attribute is absolute personal honesty.”

CONTRIBUTION

Some seventy Mike Shayne novels, more than three hundred issues of *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* (always with a lead Shayne novella), and three annuals have appeared, all using the Brett Halliday pseudonym. It is impossible to determine how many of these stories Davis Dresser actually wrote, though it is believed that most books that appeared under the Halliday name after 1958 are the work of either Robert Terrall or Ryerson Johnson.

Brett Halliday broke from the hard-boiled cliché of the heavy-drinking, two-fisted, womanizing private investigator. Although Shayne consumes his share of cognac (usually Martell) and is not beyond violence (he “resolves” an early case by pushing the villain in front of a speeding car), the Miami-based private investigator more often than not uses his brainpower to solve the complicated, though fair-play plots that his

creator fashioned. Moreover, Shayne becomes a family man (though his wife dies in childbirth). Halliday is better known for his popularity (some sixty-five million to seventy-five million copies of his novels alone have been sold) than his style, which is basically straightforward, “nuts-and-bolts prose.” Although the creator of one of the most recognizable and longest-running detectives, Halliday was never accorded the honors of some of his peers. He was, however, one of the founders of the Mystery Writers of America.

BIOGRAPHY

Brett Halliday was born Davis Dresser in Chicago, Illinois, the son of Justus Dresser and Mary Dresser. Growing up in Texas, he ran away from home at the age of fourteen and enlisted in the army. Two years later his true age was discovered, and he was discharged. Traveling throughout the Southwest, he worked variously in construction, on oil fields, digging graves, and other such jobs. During the 1920's he attended college in Indiana, where he received a certificate in civil engineering. For a while he worked as an engineer and surveyor before finding himself down and out in Los Angeles—“hungry, jobless, and broke.”

In 1927 Halliday began to write, failing to win the Dodd, Mead Red Badge contest. Finding engineering work was difficult during the Depression, and he turned to the pulp magazines. Under various pseudonyms, he wrote romances, mysteries, and Westerns. For *Mum's the Word for Murder* (1938), his first mystery, he used the pen name Asa Baker. In 1939, after having been rejected twenty-two times, *Dividend on Death*, the first Mike Shayne detective novel, appeared under the Brett Halliday pseudonym. Although Shayne was not originally conceived of as a series, when Bill Sloane, Halliday's editor at Henry Holt, asked for a second book, Halliday turned out *The Private Practice of Michael Shayne* (1940), a book that later was sold to Hollywood.

Halliday was married three times. Interestingly, his wives—Helen McCloy, Kathleen Rollins, and Mary

Savage—were also writers. Under the pseudonym Hal Debrett, he wrote two mystery novels with Rollins. Halliday had one child, Chloe. In addition to his writing, Halliday was the editor of *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*. He also owned a publishing firm, Torquil and Company, whose books were distributed by Dodd, Mead and Company.

Halliday's travels through the Southwest formed the background for a distinguished group of crime tales that Ellery Queen called his "engineering stories." In this group are "Human Interest Stuff," which is frequently anthologized, and "Extradition," which won for Halliday second prize in an *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* contest.

Halliday lived the latter part of his life in Santa Barbara, California. He died in Montecito, California, on February 4, 1977, at the age of seventy-two.

ANALYSIS

The feature that most distinguishes the Mike Shayne series is the relationship between Brett Halliday and his creation. As one critic has stated, "the believability and durability of the Mike Shayne character is due in no small part to the incredibly dramatic circumstances surrounding his origins." In two published essays ("Michael Shayne as I Know Him" and "Michael Shayne"), Halliday claims that his hero is based on a real-life person named Mike, with whom he had a personal relationship, and that the novels are patterned on actual cases from the detective's files. Halliday asserts that his first meeting with "the rangy redhead" occurred on the Tampico waterfront during the writer's oil field days. Four years later, Halliday again ran into Mike in a New Orleans bar.

There are, however, interesting discrepancies between the two accounts. In "Michael Shayne as I Know Him," two thugs follow a woman into the bar, and Mike tells Halliday to "get out of town fast and forget [he'd] seen him." In "Michael Shayne," however, there is no woman, the two thugs are seemingly after the redhead, and Mike growls to Halliday, "Stay here." Furthermore, in the latter account Halliday writes, "They disappeared into the French Quarter, and I've never seen him again." In the former version, however, Mike suddenly appears at Halliday's log

cabin in Colorado years after the New Orleans encounter and discusses his "lucrative private detective practice in Miami." They proceed to meet off and on for the next few years, with Halliday serving as the detective's best man and comforting the redhead after the death of his wife.

What is fact and what is fiction? In some ways the answer does not matter, for, in either case, Halliday created a highly memorable character, one who has appeared in books, magazines, and films as well as on radio and television—even in comic books. In fact, Shayne has been called "the best and most enduring of the tough guy private eye school of mystery fiction." The tough-guy school (the word "tough" appears more than a dozen times in *Dividend on Death*), prominent in the 1930's and 1940's, was an outgrowth of the hard-boiled style typified by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett; its distinctive characteristics include the use of the private investigator as the central character, the whodunit plot featuring more deduction than violence, and the lack of personal and sociological insights.

Shayne is the prototypical tough guy private investigator. At the core of his being, Halliday stresses, the detective "not only does not lie to anyone else; what is more important, he does not lie to himself." His success is based on "his ability to drive straight forward to the heart of the matter without deviating one iota for obstacles or confusing side issues." Although he lives in a violent world, Shayne relies on his thought process. A recurring scene in the series is the private investigator sitting up late into the night ruminating on a case, while alternately drinking cognac and ice water. He has, as Halliday writes, "an absolutely logical mind." Even his sternest critics have noted that Shayne, unlike many of his mean-street contemporaries, has "an occasional brain wave" and performs "some legitimate detecting."

Little is revealed about Shayne's personal life. In fact, Halliday professes,

I know nothing whatever about Shayne's background. . . . I don't know where or when he was born, what sort of childhood and upbringing he had. It is my impression that he is not a college man, although he is well educated, has a good vocabulary, and is articulate on a variety of subjects.

For example, in *Dividend on Death* the only biographical information occurs when Shayne momentarily recalls “he was a freckled Irish lad kneeling by his mother’s side in a Catholic chapel.”

Appropriately, all ghostwriters for *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* were given a “bible” (a writer’s guide), “Mike Shayne of Miami,” that outlines the detective’s basic personality traits. It lists biographical data (starting only from the point of his wife’s death), his physical description (red hair, gray eyes, long legs), his mannerisms (rubbing the lobe of his left ear with his left thumb and forefinger, scraping his thumb across his stubble), his mentality (always truthful, fearless, sensitive, logical), his likes and dislikes (fighting and drinking cognac versus dirty fighting and drunks), his habits (wears pajamas, sits at rear tables in restaurants)—as well as his environment and friends. “Mike Shayne of Miami” concludes by suggesting that Shayne is “the supreme individualist, the

Renaissance Man in a Rip-off Age.” In other words, ghostwriters in the 1980’s dealt with essentially the same character and milieu that Shayne’s creator inaugurated in 1939 with *Dividend on Death*.

Typical of the tough-guy school, Shayne’s reflections reveal very little of himself, his background, or his deep, personal thoughts. The narrator often explains that the detective is lost in ratiocination, but the audience is rarely privy to the actual content of those thoughts. In *Dividend on Death*, for example, the narrator says at various times that “there was nothing in his face to show what he was thinking” and “he puffed lazily, thinking about the sleeping girl in his bedroom.” Furthermore, as the detective pushes ahead relentlessly, readers do not know the details of what the redhead is pondering: “Things were evidently coming to a head, but the pattern as he saw it didn’t make any sense,” and “there’s only one piece lacking in the whole puzzle.”

Shayne, as a member of the tough-guy school, is not a social observer in the Raymond Chandler-Ross Macdonald tradition. He does, however, make the obvious comments for someone in his profession. At the end of *A Taste for Violence* (1949), the redhead, after having exposed a corrupt labor leader, hopes his discovery “causes a stink that spreads across the state and throws the white light of suspicion on every other double-crossing labor leader who may be doing the same thing.” In *Dividend on Death*, Shayne notes, “I learned a hell of a long time ago in this business not to believe anybody or anything—not even what I see with my own eyes.” When Phyllis Brighton tries to seduce him, he observes, “You can’t turn things like this on and off, you know—like an electric switch.” In the entirety of *Dividend on Death* the only time Shayne makes what could be loosely construed as a social statement comes when the readers are told that the detective “had no downtown office and no regular staff. That sort of phony front he left to the punks with whom Miami is infested during the season.”

Another dominant trait of Mike Shayne should be noted: his acting on behalf of his view of justice over law. In a world of incompetent “John Laws”—such as Peter Painter, chief of Miami Beach’s detective bureau—and immoral criminals preying on defenseless

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Brett Halliday personally edited Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine, every issue of which featured a new Mike Shayne story.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

innocents, Shayne feels superior to legal technicalities. In the first Shayne novel, the detective destroys incriminating evidence. When he finds Phyllis Brighton (in a bloody nightgown) standing over her dead mother with a bloody knife in hand, he “knows” she has been set up. As a result, he takes the nightgown and knife from her and locks her in her room (leaving the key in the door) to provide her with an alibi. Later, Shayne finds Dr. Pedique, Phyllis’s physician, dead, and to help her he burns the doctor’s suicide note. His vigilante attitude is perhaps best shown in a scene in which Shayne, cooking sausage and eggs while cleaning the knife and nightgown, nonchalantly reflects “on the convenience of being able to destroy evidence while you prepared breakfast.” Moreover, Shayne thinks nothing of blackmailing—“call it anything you like”—Peter Painter into paying him double the reward to solve the Brighton case. Nor does his conscience suffer when he seduces an innocent nurse and

hires a thief to steal a painting by Raphael—both misdeeds to save his client.

Nailing down Shayne’s motivation—and, hence, Halliday’s themes—is difficult. More often than not, readers are left with the suspicion that the Miami-based sleuth acts not out of friendship or for the public good but in his own best interest. When Shayne, having been retained for five thousand dollars, arrives in Kentucky in *A Taste for Violence* to discover that his client has been murdered, his first words to Lucy Hamilton, his confidante and secretary, are, “I cashed his check for five grand in Miami. I wonder if it had time to clear through his bank?” At the end of *Dividend on Death*, Shayne broods, but not over the eight corpses he has seen, the girl whom he has casually seduced, or the ramifications of humankind’s inhumanity. Instead, he contemplates the profit-and-loss sheet in his hand showing \$24,200 on the plus side.

Another characteristic feature of the Shayne series is its fusion of classic detection with the violent story line of the hard-boiled tradition. Often borrowing motifs from the English cozy tradition, Halliday favors what one critic has called “a whodunit format with some honest-to-God detection going on.” No less a mystery critic than Anthony Boucher admired Halliday’s twists, puzzles, and labyrinthine plots. Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor noted “the plots are complicated but often adroitly worked out.” *The New York Times* praised one Halliday novel as an “agreeably old-fashioned whodunit of murder.” According to another critic, “The various switcheroos, who’s got which gun/body, whose side is he/she on gambits fly by so fast that one is almost forced to take notes to keep things straight.”

DIVIDEND ON DEATH

Dividend on Death sets the pace for the series. The plot centers on that gothic staple, the heiress framed for murder. Shayne discovers her in the familiar isolated family mansion complete with the usual cast of suspects—the phony doctor, the brutish chauffeur, the slim secretary, and the sexy nurse. Halliday even twists the locked-room convention when Shayne locks Phyllis Brighton, the innocent heiress, in her room to provide her with an alibi. Later, Shayne discovers the conventional buried chest, but this time it contains not

treasure, but a body. The final solution involves several crimes all occurring in the same time frame and place: an attempt to buy a smuggled painting, a plan involving a man's killing his brother and taking his place, and a mobster's complex ploy to steal the valuable painting by substituting one of his minions for a nurse.

As with most whodunits, *Dividend on Death* is flawed by coincidences, withheld information, and improbabilities. During the course of the novel, on the basis of which *The New York Times* described Halliday as "an inexpert storyteller," Shayne is hired by three separate clients for three seemingly separate cases. Unbeknown to the clients or to Shayne at first, the three cases are actually interrelated: All are tied to an attempt to grab the Brighton fortune. Moreover, throughout the novel the reader is told that Shayne talked to this character or that, but the reader never discovers the content of these conversations. Constantly, the narrator suggests that the detective has an idea or hunch but does not make the reader aware of the content. Shayne even makes some near-incredible leaps of intuition that help solve the crime. At one juncture he takes a quick look at a chauffeur and immediately realizes the man is a former convict and must have known one of the Brighton brothers, who was also in prison. Why does Shayne think all convicts are in the same prison?

Halliday, then, is a greater craftsman than artist, a writer remembered more for his voluminous output than for his innovations, more for the attractiveness of his central character than for the detective's originality.

Hal Charles

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JERRY BURKE SERIES (AS BAKER): *Mum's the Word for Murder*, 1938; *The Kissed Corpse*, 1939

MIKE SHAYNE SERIES: 1939-1945 • *Dividend on Death*, 1939; *The Private Practice of Michael Shayne*, 1940; *The Uncomplaining Corpses*, 1940; *Bodies Are Where You Find Them*, 1941; *Tickets for Death*, 1941; *The Corpse Came Calling*, 1942 (also known as *The Case of the Walking Corpse*); *Blood on the Black Market*, 1943 (revised as *Heads You Lose*,

1958); *Murder Wears a Mummer's Mask*, 1943 (also known as *In a Deadly Vein*); *Michael Shayne's Long Chance*, 1944; *Murder and the Married Virgin*, 1944; *Dead Man's Diary*, and *Dinner at Dupre's*, 1945; *Marked for Murder*, 1945; *Murder Is My Business*, 1945

1946-1950 • *Blood on Biscayne Bay*, 1946; *Counterfeit Wife*, 1947; *Blood on the Stars*, 1948 (also known as *Murder Is a Habit*); *Michael Shayne's Triple Mystery*, 1948 (contains *Dead Man's Diary*, *A Taste for Cognac*, and *Dinner at Dupre's*); *A Taste for Violence*, 1949; *Call for Michael Shayne*, 1949; *This Is It*, *Michael Shayne*, 1950

1951-1958 • *Framed in Blood*, 1951; *When Dorrinda Dances*, 1951; *What Really Happened*, 1952; *One Night with Nora*, 1953 (also known as *The Lady Came by Night*); *She Woke to Darkness*, 1954; *Death Has Three Lives*, 1955; *Stranger in Town*, 1955; *The Blonde Cried Murder*, 1956; *Shoot the Works*, 1957; *Weep for a Blonde*, 1957; *Murder and the Wanton Bride*, 1958

MORGAN WAYNE SERIES (AS BLOOD): *The Avenger*, 1952; *Death Is a Lovely Dame*, 1954

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS DEBRETT): *Before I Wake*, 1949; *A Lonely Way to Die*, 1950

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1934-1940 • *Mardi Gras Madness*, 1934 (as Scott); *Test of Virtue*, 1934 (as Scott); *Love Is a Masquerade*, 1935 (as Culver); *Ten Toes Up*, 1935 (as Scott); *Virgin's Holiday*, 1935 (as Scott); *Ladies of Chance*, 1936 (as Scott); *Stolen Sins*, 1936 (as Scott); *Let's Laugh at Love*, 1937 (as Dresser); *Million Dollar Madness*, 1937 (as Culver); *Too Smart for Love*, 1937 (as Culver); *Green Path to the Moon*, 1938 (as Culver); *Once to Every Woman*, 1938 (as Culver); *Romance for Julie*, 1938 (as Dresser); *Satan Rides the Night*, 1938 (as Scott); *Temptation*, 1938 (as Scott); *Girl Alone*, 1939 (as Culver); *Death on Treasure Trail*, 1940 (as Davis); *Death Rides the Pecos*, 1940 (as Dresser); *Return of the Rio Kid*, 1940 (as Davis); *The Hangman of Sleepy Valley*, 1940 (as Dresser; also known as *The Masked Riders of Sleepy Valley*)

1941-1953 • *Gunsmoke on the Mesa*, 1941 (as Dresser); *Lynch-Rope Law*, 1941 (as Dresser); *Rio*

Kid Justice, 1941 (as Davis); *Two-Gun Rio Kid*, 1941 (as Davis); *Charlie Dell*, 1952 (as Wayne; also known as *A Time to Remember*); *Murder on the Mesa*, 1953 (as Dresser)

EDITED TEXTS: *Twenty Great Tales of Murder*, 1951 (with Helen McCloy); *Dangerous Dames*, 1955; *Big Time Mysteries*, 1958; *Murder in Miami*, 1959; *Best Detective Stories of the Year (Sixteenth Annual Collection)*, 1961; *Best Detective Stories of the Year (Seventeenth Annual Collection)*, 1962

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Ruehlmann, William. *Saint with a Gun: The Unlawful American Private Eye*. New York: New York University Press, 1974. Scholarly study of American detective fiction in which private investigators are forced to break the law to achieve justice. Provides perspective on Halliday's character.

DONALD HAMILTON

Born: Uppsala, Sweden; March 24, 1916

Died: Ipswich, Massachusetts; November 20, 2006

Types of plot: Espionage; hard-boiled; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Matt Helm, 1960-1993

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MATT HELM is an American working for an unnamed bureau that specializes in doing the government's dirty work—principally counterespionage and assassination of enemy spies. Having learned his trade during World War II, Helm retired from active duty until his past forced him back into the business. When working, he is the consummate professional, unsentimental and utterly pragmatic.

MAC is Helm's no-nonsense boss and may even exceed Helm in lack of sentimentality. He has been known to suggest ending aircraft hijackings by shoot-

ing down the hijacked planes, figuring it would not take long for hijackers to get the message. Little else is revealed about him, not even his full name.

CONTRIBUTION

Donald Hamilton brought the toughness and realism of the Dashiell Hammett detective school to what might be termed spy novels. His series character, Matt Helm, is an outdoorsman, photographer, and writer living in New Mexico, rather like Hamilton himself at one time. As Hamilton picked up boating as a hobby in later years, so did Helm.

The Matt Helm series has done for the United States what Ian Fleming's James Bond books did for Great Britain—provide the public with a contemporary model of the life and work of a secret agent. Donald Hamilton created a shadowy world of deception and disillusion for his master counterspy, Matt Helm, feeding him a steady diet of treachery to fuel his air of skepticism, and

furnishing ample opportunities for him to display his bone-bruising toughness. Helm's introduction signaled the birth of a novel character in espionage fiction—the consummate professional who willingly subverts all sentimentality when it interferes with the greater good of the mission. At the time of his creation, Helm was a strong departure from the antihero, “amateur spy” protagonists then in vogue. One critic has described Hamilton as “the Hammett of espionage” for his role in reshaping the espionage novel.

Crime novelist Robert Skinner has cited Hamilton as a primary influence on his own work and said that Hamilton influenced Loren Estleman, Bill Crider, Ed Gorman, and James Sallis. Hamilton's early work featured main characters who are drawn into violent situations against their will and who must learn to cope in order to survive. Matt Helm appears to be a man out of his element in dangerous settings but is actually more durable and practical than any of his opponents, many of whom tend to underestimate him badly.

Matt Helm first appeared on the screen in 1966, with singer Dean Martin portraying him in *The Silencers*, the first of four adaptations of Hamilton stories. Performing in his trademark laidback fashion, Martin played Helm as a hedonistic playboy who must be dragged into government assignments. The films attempted to cash in on the popularity of the James Bond films but instead were perceived as parodies with more outlandish gimmicks, large numbers of sexy women, and dialogue laced with double-entendres. The films bore little resemblance to their source material, and Martin bore no resemblance at all to his literary namesake. Nevertheless, the films were popular and inspired a short-lived television series, with Anthony Franciosa as Helm, that departed even more radically from Hamilton's novels.

BIOGRAPHY

Donald Bengtsson Hamilton was born to Bengt L. K. Hamilton and Elise (Neovius) Hamilton on March 24, 1916, in Uppsala, Sweden, a small city about fifty miles north of Stockholm. The Hamilton name is common in that country, particularly among the minor nobility. In fact, had his family not moved to the United States when he was eight years old, he could have rightfully claimed the title Count Hamilton.

Hamilton's family prospered in America, where his physician father joined the medical faculty of Harvard College. Hamilton intended to follow his father's lead into medicine, but he changed instead to chemistry, receiving a bachelor of science degree in the subject from the University of Chicago in 1938. He married Kathleen Stick in 1941; they had four children: Hugo, Elise, Gordon, and Victoria.

Hamilton spent World War II doing research as a reserve officer in the Naval Engineering Experiment Station at Annapolis, Maryland. He left the navy in 1946 at the rank of lieutenant, deciding to indulge his passions for writing and photography. He quickly graduated from short stories to novels, at the same time writing nonfictional magazine articles on guns, hunting, photography, and boating—a sideline he still maintains. He lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a part of the country that provides the setting for much of his writing.

After nine mystery, espionage, and Western novels, he published *Death of a Citizen* in 1960. An editor liked the book but offered two recommendations: change the hero's first name (Hamilton had called him George) and consider making him a series character. Hamilton followed both pieces of advice, and the series continued with twenty-four more Matt Helm books after that first one. Two Helm books, *The Retaliators* (1976) and *The Terrorizers* (1977), were nominated for Edgar Allan Poe Awards for best paperback originals. Hamilton continued writing the series until 1993, and it eventually had twice as many titles as Fleming's Bond series. Hamilton died quietly, in his sleep, on November 20, 2006.

ANALYSIS

Donald Hamilton served a brief apprenticeship writing short stories after World War II and published his first novel, *Date with Darkness*, in 1947. Following those came a string of fast-paced Westerns and mysteries. He began his writing with hard-boiled mysteries that had elements of espionage. Two of them in particular contained the elements that would characterize his Matt Helm series. *Line of Fire* (1955) had what seems at first to be an assassin as its hero and is told in down-to-earth first person as the Helm books

would be. The other formative book is *Assignment: Murder* (1956), in which mathematician James Gregory, involved in a nuclear project, becomes a target of those who want the project stopped.

Line of Fire involves a different kind of hero, a man who is suicidal because of his emasculation in a hunting accident. An expert with guns (often the case with Hamilton's protagonists), he is strong-armed into faking an assassination attempt so that an aspiring political candidate can garner media attention and public sympathy. The job goes awry, plunging the hero into terrible danger before he manages to redeem himself. This intriguing early book demonstrates Hamilton's willingness to tinker with the popular image of heroes.

LINE OF FIRE

Some of the characteristics of the Matt Helm series that would start five years later are foreshadowed in *Line of Fire*, from assassination to good girl/bad girl dichotomies. The sardonic first-person narration that later characterized the Helm novels is on display here, as is the question of the morality of what the protagonist is doing and the use of a knife, like the one that Helm always carries.

The story opens with gunsmith and marksman Paul Nyquist zeroing in on a gubernatorial candidate, but he wounds the man instead of killing him. Only later do readers learn that this is exactly what Nyquist was supposed to do, having been coerced into the job by a man with whom he has a strange bond. Nyquist had been injured earlier in an accident while hunting with the man, a wound that has left him impotent. The man's girlfriend works hard to cure Nyquist of his affliction. Although Nyquist does not kill the candidate, he does kill a gangster who is with him when the gangster tries to kill a young woman who blunders onto the scene. After saving the woman, Nyquist vainly tries to keep her clear of the situation and finally ends up marrying her to protect her, although the relationship does grow from that point.

ASSIGNMENT: MURDER

Assignment: Murder (reissued in 1966 as the better-known *Assassins Have Starry Eyes*) edges even closer to the Helm prototype. The book tells the story of James Gregory, an atomic weapons research physicist who is shot on the opening day of the New Mexico

deer season. To save his life, Gregory shoots back and kills his assailant, then passes out.

All this happens by the novel's fifth page, establishing what would normally be considered a fast pace. Even before that flurry of action occurs, however, Hamilton managed to establish his lead character through his musings on why men camping alone live so spartanly, what attracts him to the wide-open West, why atomic research has become unpopular, why modern automobiles have become so ridiculously dandified, and why men hunt animals. During his recuperation and further adventures, Gregory's narration espouses more of his personal philosophy. Like Matt Helm, who appeared in Hamilton's next book, Gregory is fair but nonapologetic in advancing and defending his attitudes. Others can love him or hate him—it makes little difference to him—but they had better respect him.

A problem that surely vexed Hamilton in writing *Assignment: Murder* was how to explain his hero's considerable fighting skills. He established Gregory as a large man who has spent years hunting, a somewhat lame explanation. In *Death of a Citizen*, he introduced a character who comes by his fighting prowess more honestly. Matt Helm is introduced as a former member of a clandestine intelligence group (a thinly veiled Office of Strategic Services or OSS) during World War II. His particular specialty was assassinating important Nazis. When the war ended, he had settled down as a Western writer and photographer with a wife and three children. His fifteen years of peaceful retirement are shattered when Tina, a former partner in assassination, walks into a party he is attending. When he last knew her, she kept a paratrooper's knife hidden in her underwear and a poison pill in her hair. Remarkably, all this information is revealed without strain by the close of the book's first page.

In a plot twist anticipating the frequent duplicities found in the Helm series, Tina pretends to be still working for a peacetime version of the OSS. In truth, she has long since gone over to the Russians and now has orders to kill an important scientist who happens to be an acquaintance of Helm. The job would be easier with Helm's help. When other methods of gaining his assistance fail, she kidnaps his daughter. He must revert to his old ways, including killing Tina by tor-

ture, to save his child. His wife, an uncomprehending witness, can no longer bear to live with him. He is thus shed of his family and his inhibitions, permitting his old boss to recruit him again into the espionage business.

MATT HELM SERIES

Inevitably, Matt Helm is compared to Ian Fleming's secret-agent hero, James Bond, and Hamilton is accused of writing derivative books. Some comparisons are obvious. Both men are counterspies capable of violently dispatching their enemies without a moment's regret. Bond answers to "M"; Helm to Mac. Each ranges far in defending his nation's interests and has virtually unlimited resources to do so. Helping to fuel the argument, four Helm books were converted into films from 1966 to 1969, with Dean Martin starring as Helm, although they departed from Hamilton's theme of toughness to spoof the Bond films.

Despite these likenesses, the differences between the Bond series and Helm's are greater than the similarities. Bond is primarily an urban creature, most at home in some European gambling casino with a sophisticated woman on his arm. Helm is more comfortable beside a trout stream, in the wilderness between assignments. If he has feminine company, he must have first satisfied himself that she is not vamping him for some sinister motive. Moreover, Helm first saw print in 1960, before Bond's popularity became entrenched in the United States with the help of John F. Kennedy's widely reported interest and the first of the Bond films. Responding to the suggestion that he had copied the concept, Hamilton said that he had read only one Fleming novel. "I've deliberately avoided reading the James Bond novels for fear that I would unintentionally borrow something from him, or bend over too far backward to avoid any similarity."

If anything, Hamilton's series owes more to another English writer, John Buchan, than to Ian Fleming. Buchan wrote *The Thirty-nine Steps*, published in 1915, establishing a model for most thrillers. The recipe calls for a tough, physical hero, with something of a tainted past, who is set into motion in a protracted chase in a wilderness setting strewn with obstacles and is chased himself even as he pursues his target. The hero cannot call on the usual resources, such as the po-

lice or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), for that would be too easy. If the hero is involved with a woman (and he always is), she is physically attractive—although not to the point of incredibility—and the hero is unsure whether she is on his side. The entire mix is seasoned with a heavy dose of moral ambivalence.

The first few books in the series nail down Helm's character solidly; the ones since then merely repeat his philosophy, although this repetition never quite becomes tiresome. Fans become intimate with the six-foot, four-inch, two-hundred-pound warrior, a man with old-fashioned tastes for simple food, martinis, and women in skirts instead of slacks. A strong biographical parallel becomes obvious when Helm reveals that he has, like his creator, Swedish ancestry. Helm never tires of expressing his preference for honest trucks and foreign cars over Detroit iron. For example, in *Death of a Citizen*, Helm speaks of his personal vehicle:

The truck is a 1951 Chevy half-ton job, with a four-speed gearbox and a six-cylinder engine developing a little less than ninety horsepower, and it'll shove any of your three-hundred-horsepower passenger cars right off the road, backwards, from a standing start. It has no damn fins over the taillights, or sheet metal eyebrows over the headlights.

Helm is an expert rifleman and is skillful with a pistol. He handles edged weapons well, as might be expected from his Viking parentage, although he never engaged in a sword duel, unless the machete fight in *The Ambushers* (1963) is counted. He knows and uses tricks of hand-to-hand combat but thinks that fighting with the fists is foolish because a professional would never dream of fighting for sport—only to kill.

Above all, the key to the man and the series is that Helm is a professional. In his eyes, being a professional is less a matter of being paid for one's work than an attitude. Each book in the series reminds the reader that Helm despises amateurish weaknesses when they interfere with getting the job done. The banes of his life are the weak-kneed amateurs with whom he is forced to work and on whom he cannot rely. He husbands his respect for those rare individuals

who, like him, will not let mere sentiment stand in the way of the mission. Hamilton built his character around this central concept. He believed that too many antiheroes were turning up in espionage fiction, including his own. He was tired of people who became involved against their wills and fought against getting their hands dirty. He thought of Helm as “a refreshing change from the pacific citizens whom I’d been arranging to get reluctantly enmeshed in sinister spiderwebs of intrigue.”

Hamilton provides Helm with foils against which to demonstrate his mental toughness. Other government agents, most notably the FBI, turn up frequently in his plots. Usually, Helm finds these fellow agents to be obstacles, either because of their basic incompetence or their insistence on following the letter of the law. The older agents, like himself, are generally more reliable than the younger ones, and men more than women. Female professionals do exist, however, and Helm is quick to respect those he meets, regardless of whether they are on his side. One of the rare, lasting love interests he develops is found in *The Revengers* (1982), in which Helm meets a female journalist. She seems to become particularly dear to him after he learns of an incident in her past. She responded to being raped by two men by going back with some other, tougher men who held the rapists down while she castrated them with a pocket knife. To his way of thinking, that act qualified her as a pro.

To Helm, politics come and go; professionalism is forever. Nevertheless, his high regard for the way people do their jobs would not prevent him from killing them if necessary. Nor does vanity rule Helm. He is willing to take a physical beating and to be captured by the enemy camp if it will help accomplish the objective. Attractive women often make advances to him, but he is always wary, fearing that a woman who offers herself to him has a motive other than romance.

Helm answers only to a shadowy boss who goes by the code name “Mac.” Mac has much faith in Helm, and he gives his best agent considerable latitude. Over the course of the series, a number of notable villains surfaced. The most prominent of these tend to last two or three books before they are done in.

The typical plot opens with Helm (code-named

“Eric”) being called to action by Mac, usually by phone. Mac gives him brief and incomplete instructions, either because Mac is holding back fundamental information deliberately or because he has an incomplete grasp of the facts. Often, there is some doubt as to the loyalty of some key person. Helm is then turned loose to penetrate to the heart of the problem. Seldom does he merely react; he acts, causing something to happen. Often, by the novel’s climax he will have allowed himself to be captured by the enemy to discover the truth. Only after the mission is satisfied does he worry about preserving his life.

THE RAVAGERS

Published in 1964, *The Ravagers* is the eighth book in the Matt Helm series and serves as a model of Hamilton’s writing at its best. Opening with the words, “It was an acid job, and they’re never pleasant to come upon,” the novel makes the reader immediately aware that this book will pull no punches.

Helm is sent to find out why another agent has not checked in on schedule. He learns the answer: The agent has been murdered by a poison injection after his face was splashed with acid. Mac sends Helm to take over the dead agent’s mission. Helm is to follow the wife of an important scientist (perhaps because of Hamilton’s scientific background, scientists appear often in the series) as she crosses Canada with her daughter and a packet of stolen research material she is suspected of planning to deliver to the Russians. Nevertheless, the plot has a twist; Mac tells Helm that he is merely to give the appearance of an honest chase. In truth, the papers were doctored to mislead the Russians in their research. FBI agents are also involved and try in earnest to stop the delivery, but Helm does not trust them. According to Helm,

no cynical and experienced agent is going to be happy entrusting his life and mission to the irresponsible cretins working for some other department. Half the time we don’t even trust the people in our own outfit.

Helm poses as a private investigator when he meets the woman, although she assumes that he is an FBI agent. When a shoot-out occurs in a hotel room between the real FBI agent and a Russian agent, Helm despises his momentary weakness in not killing the American him-

self before an important Russian contact is shot. Mac also disapproves:

We were not assigned to this job to be nice to little girls, or to clumsy young operatives from other bureaus; quite the contrary. Being nice to people is not our business. If you simply have to be nice, Eric, I will refer you to a very pleasant gentleman who recruits for the Peace Corps.

Eventually, the woman turns out not to be a traitor—she switched worthless information for the doctored packet. The “daughter” with whom she is traveling, however, is a female Russian agent playing an adolescent. She is holding the woman’s real daughter hostage to ensure her cooperation. At the end, Helm thinks that he has failed because the bogus papers never made it into Russian hands. Then he learns that it did not matter. The whole operation was only a ploy to lure a Russian atomic submarine into coastal waters to make the pickup; when it does so, it is quietly destroyed in retaliation for the destruction of an American submarine. Even if Helm can keep up, the reader might understandably feel somewhat dizzy after all the plot switches.

Hamilton’s writing style, particularly for the first two-thirds of the series, is as direct, forceful, and hard-hitting as his hero. The first ten or twelve books are lean and fast paced. In the beginning, the books run about sixty thousand words, although the changing demands of the marketplace have driven the word count up to nearly twice that in the later novels. It is difficult to maintain the earlier, crackling level of suspense in the swollen scenes all too common in the later works.

Despite all the hard-nosed toughness of the Helm books, they are similar in many ways to mysteries. The books are written in the first person, and Hamilton plays scrupulously fair in letting readers discover the facts as soon as Helm does—and draw their own conclusions as to the final answer. The only elements of mystery fiction missing are locked rooms, secret messages, and amateurs who win.

THE MONA INTERCEPT

Although *The Mona Intercept* (1980) is Hamilton’s sole attempt to write a major blockbuster, it has all the elements of his other suspense thrillers: The Everyman who is dragged into events with which he must

cope or die, the dedicated and ruthless government agent, the “good” and “bad” woman, are all here, but the characteristics are spread across a much larger cast than usual. The central thrust of the novel is an attempt by a Cuban terrorist to hijack a vessel at sea, with various ramifications for world peace. Mystery genre expert Robert Winks, in his 1982 book *Modus Operandi*, terms the book “a possibly unwise experiment with substantially weightier fiction.”

The book’s story line moves well enough, but not as fast as it does in Hamilton’s slimmer novels. It probably did not live up to its author’s expectations, and he went back to doing what he did best: Matt Helm, who returned in *The Revengers* after a five-year absence and continued through eight additional novels.

Richard E. Givan
Updated by Paul Dellinger

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MATT HELM SERIES: 1960-1970 • *Death of a Citizen*, 1960; *The Wrecking Crew*, 1960; *The Removers*, 1961; *The Silencers*, 1962; *Murderers’ Row*, 1962; *The Ambushers*, 1963; *The Shadowers*, 1964; *The Ravagers*, 1964; *The Devastators*, 1965; *The Betrayers*, 1966; *The Menacers*, 1968; *The Interlopers*, 1969

1971-1980 • *The Poisoners*, 1971; *The Intriguers*, 1972; *The Intimidators*, 1974; *The Terminators*, 1975; *The Retaliators*, 1976; *The Terrorizers*, 1977

1981-1993 • *The Revengers*, 1982; *The Annihilators*, 1983; *The Infiltrators*, 1984; *The Detonators*, 1985; *The Vanishers*, 1986; *The Demolishers*, 1987; *The Frighteners*, 1989; *The Threateners*, 1992; *The Damagers*, 1993

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Date with Darkness*, 1947; *The Steel Mirror*, 1948; *Murder Twice Told*, 1950; *Night Walker*, 1954 (also known as *Rough Company*); *Line of Fire*, 1955; *Assignment: Murder*, 1956 (also known as *Assassins Have Starry Eyes*); *The Mona Intercept*, 1980

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Smoky Valley*, 1954; *Mad River*, 1956; *The Big Country*, 1958; *Texas Fever*, 1961; *The Two-Shoot Gun*, 1971 (also known as *The Man from Santa Clara*)

NONFICTION: *On Guns and Hunting*, 1970; *Cruises with Kathleen*, 1980

EDITED TEXT: *Iron Men and Silver Stars*, 1967

SCREENPLAY: *Five Steps to Danger*, 1957 (with Henry S. Kesler and Turnley Walker)

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Sennett, Frank. "The Death of Matt Helm?" *Booklist* 98, no. 17 (May 1, 2002): 1456-1458. Sennett looks at the history of the Matt Helm series and how Helm was perceived as a more rugged James Bond. It notes how Hamilton's work peaked in popularity in the 1960's and 1970's and faded in the following decades.

Winks, Robin. *Modus Operandi: An Excursion into Detective Fiction*. Boston: Godine, 1982. Personal defense of the mystery that argues detective fiction does not differ from more "respectable" literature and appeals to readers for the same reasons as other writing. Includes a discussion of Hamilton's writings.

_____. "The Sordid Truth: Donald Hamilton." *The New Republic* 173 (July 26, 1975): 21-24. A brief appreciation of Hamilton's Matt Helm series by one of the most distinguished critics in the mystery and detective genre.

DASHIELL HAMMETT

Born: St. Mary's County, Maryland; May 27, 1894

Died: New York, New York; January 10, 1961

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Continental Op, 1923-1946

Sam Spade, 1929-1932

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

The CONTINENTAL OP, so called because he is an operative for the Continental Detective Agency, is never given a name in any of the stories and novels he narrates. About thirty-five or forty years old, short and fat, the Continental Op is the quintessential hard-boiled detective, bound only by his private code of ethics, trust-

ing no one and resisting all emotional involvement.

SAM SPADE, a private investigator, is a taller and somewhat younger version of the Continental Op. His character is rendered more complex in *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930) by his romantic involvements with women in the case, but he is finally guided by the rigid code of the hard-boiled detective—which champions tough behavior at the expense of personal relationships.

CONTRIBUTION

Dashiell Hammett's fundamental contribution to the genre is the virtual creation of realistic detective fiction. Unlike the eccentric and colorful amateur detectives of the British school following in the tradition

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Dashiell Hammett. (AP/Wide World Photos)

of Sherlock Holmes, Hammett's distinctively American protagonists are professionals, working against professional criminals who commit realistic crimes for plausible motives. Raymond Chandler observed that Hammett "took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley" where it belonged.

Hammett established the hard-boiled school of characterization and perfected an almost entirely objective narrative style. Even his first-person narrators such as the Continental Op and Nick Charles (in *The Thin Man*, 1934) restrict themselves to the reporting of observed actions and circumstances, revealing their own thoughts and emotions only between the lines,

telling the reader no more than they reveal to other characters through dialogue. This style became fast, crisp, and idiomatic in Hammett's hands. In the third-person narratives, particularly in *The Glass Key* (1930), this technique is developed to the extent that the reader can do no more than speculate as to the protagonist's motives and feelings. Such a style is perfectly suited to the depiction of the hard-boiled detective, a man who pursues criminals ruthlessly and with professional detachment, using any means that come to hand, including violent and even criminal behavior. The detective is bound not by the law but by his own private code of ethics, which keeps him one step removed not only from the criminals but also from the corrupt political and social world of Hammett's fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Dashiell Hammett was born Samuel Dashiell Hammett on May 27, 1894, in St. Mary's County, Maryland, to Richard Hammett and Annie Bond

Hammett. The family moved first to Philadelphia and then to Baltimore, where Hammett attended public school and, in 1908, one semester at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. He left school at the age of thirteen and held several different jobs for short periods of time until 1915, when he became an operative for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, the turning point of his life and the event that provided him with the background for his realistic detective fiction. Hammett left the agency to join the army in 1918, reaching the rank of sergeant by the time of his discharge in 1919. He then returned to detective work, but hospitalization for pulmonary tuberculosis in 1920 interrupted his work

and eventually ended it in 1921, shortly after his marriage to Josephine Dolan, a nurse he had met at the hospital. They were to have two daughters, Mary, born in 1921, and Josephine, born in 1926.

Hammett began publishing short stories in *The Smart Set* in 1922 and published the first Continental Op story, "Arson Plus," in 1923 in *Black Mask*, the pulp magazine that would publish his first four novels in serial form. The appearance of the first two novels in book form in 1929 made him a successful writer, and the next two, following quickly on that success, made him internationally famous. During this time Hammett had moved away from his family (the move was made—at least ostensibly—on the advice of a doctor, to prevent his younger daughter's being exposed to his illness), and in 1930 he went to Hollywood as a screenwriter. It was then, at the height of his fame, that he met Lillian Hellman, with whom he had a close relationship until his death.

Hammett was almost finished as a creative writer, however, publishing only one more novel, *The Thin Man*, in 1934, and writing no fiction in the last twenty-eight years of his life, except a fifty-page fragment of a novel called "Tulip." Though he stopped writing, royalties from his previous books and from a series of sixteen popular films and three weekly radio shows based on his characters and stories, as well as occasional screenwriting, provided him with income and public exposure. Hammett taught courses in mystery writing at the Jefferson School of Social Science from 1946 to 1956.

The reasons that Hammett stopped writing will never be fully known, but his involvement in left-wing politics from the 1930's to the end of his life has often been cited as a factor. He was under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a suspected communist from the 1930's until his death, despite his volunteering for the army again and serving from 1942 until 1945. In 1946, he was elected president of the New York Civil Rights Congress, a position he held until the mid-1950's. Given the national temper at that time, any left-wing political involvement was dangerous, and in 1951 Hammett received a six-month sentence in federal prison for refusing to answer questions about the Civil Rights Congress bail fund. After

his release from prison, his books went out of print, his radio shows were taken off the air, and his income was attached by the Internal Revenue Service for alleged income-tax infractions. Hammett was also called to testify before Joseph McCarthy's Senate subcommittee in 1953 and before a New York State legislative committee in 1955, both times in connection with his presumed role as a communist and a subversive. He spent his remaining years in extremely poor health and in poverty, living with Hellman and other friends until his death on January 10, 1961. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

ANALYSIS

Before Dashiell Hammett laid the foundation of the modern realistic detective novel, virtually all detective fiction had been designed on the pattern established by Edgar Allan Poe in three short stories featuring the detective C. Auguste Dupin: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter." The basic ingredients of the formula were simple: a brilliant but eccentric amateur detective, his trusty but somewhat pedestrian companion and chronicler, an even more pedestrian police force, and an intricate and bizarre crime. The solution of the puzzle, generally set up as something of a game or contest to be played out between the author and the reader, was achieved through a complex series of logical deductions drawn by the scientific detective from an equally complex series of subtle clues. According to what came to be the rules of the genre, these clues were to be available to the sidekick, who was also the narrator, and through him to the reader, who would derive interest and pleasure from the attempt to beat the detective to the solution.

Such stories were structured with comparable simplicity and regularity: A client, as often as not a representative of the baffled police force, comes to the detective and outlines the unusual and inexplicable circumstances surrounding the crime; the detective and his companion investigate, turning up numerous confusing clues that the narrator gives to the reader but cannot explain; finally, the detective, having revealed the identity of the criminal, who is ideally the least likely suspect, explains to his companion, and thus to

the reader, the process of ratiocination that led him to the solution of the crime.

The canonical popular version of this classic tradition of the mystery as a puzzle to be tidily solved is Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, though purists have objected that essential information available to Holmes is frequently withheld from the reader to prevent his victory in the game. The success of the series paved the way for similar work by other British writers such as Agatha Christie, whose Hercule Poirot books are virtually perfect examples of this formula. Though this classic model was invented by the American Poe and practiced by many American mystery writers, its dominance among British writers has led to its being thought of as the English model, in opposition to a more realistic type of mystery being written around the 1920's by a small group of American writers.

Hammett proved to be the master of the new kind of detective story written in reaction against this classic model. As Raymond Chandler remarked in his seminal essay on the two schools, "The Simple Art of Murder," "Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical fish." Rather than serving as the vehicle for an intentionally bewildering set of clues and an often-implausible solution, the realistic story of detection shifted the emphases to characterization, action, and—especially—rapid-fire colloquial dialogue, a resource limited in the English model to the few highly artificial set speeches needed to provide background and clues and to lead to the detective's closing monologue revealing the solution. The essentials of the realistic model are found complete in Hammett's earliest work, almost from the first of his thirty-five Op stories, just as the entire classical formula was complete in Poe's first short stories. Though Hammett's contribution extends well beyond the codification of this model—his significance for literary study rests largely on his questioning and modifying of these conventions in his novels—a sketch of these essentials will clearly point up the contrast between the classical and the realistic mystery story.

Hammett's familiarity with the classical paradigm is established in the seventy-odd reviews of detective

novels he wrote for the *Saturday Review* and the *New York Evening Post* between 1927 and 1930, and his rejection of it is thorough. In fact, he specifically contrasted his notion of the detective with that of Doyle in describing Sam Spade (a description that is applicable to the Op as well):

For your private detective does not . . . want to be an erudite solver of riddles in the Sherlock Holmes manner; he wants to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent by-stander, or client.

Rather than a tall, thin, refined, and somewhat mysterious amateur such as Sherlock Holmes, who relies entirely on his powers of reasoning and deduction to clear up mysteries, Hammett's Continental Op is distinctly unglamorous and anti-intellectual. The Op is nearing forty, about five and a half feet tall, and weighing 190 pounds; he works as a modestly paid employee of the Continental Detective Agency, modeled loosely on the Pinkerton organization. Though certainly not stupid, the Op relies on routine police procedures and direct, often violent action to force criminals into the open, rather than on elaborate chains of deductive logic. The colorful and eccentric Sherlock Holmes (even his name is striking), with his violin, cocaine, and recondite scientific interests, is replaced by the anonymous and colorless Op, with no history, hobbies, or interests outside his work and no social life beyond an occasional poker game with police officers or other operatives. As he remarks in a 1925 short story, "The Gutting of Couffingnal," in his most extensive discussion of his ideas about his work,

Now I'm a detective because I happen to like the work. . . . I don't know anything else, don't enjoy anything else, don't want to know or enjoy anything else. . . . You think I'm a man and you're a woman. That's wrong. I'm a manhunter and you're something that has been running in front of me. There's nothing human about it. You might just as well expect a hound to play tiddly-winks with the fox he's caught.

RED HARVEST

In *Red Harvest* (1927-1928), the first of the novels featuring the Op, a character comments directly on the

disparity between the methods of the Op and those of his more refined and cerebral predecessors:

“So that’s the way you scientific detectives work. My God! for a fat, middle-aged, hard-boiled pig-headed guy you’ve got the vaguest way of doing things I ever heard of.”

“Plans are all right sometimes,” I said. “And sometimes just stirring things up is all right—if you’re tough enough to survive, and keep your eyes open so you’ll see what you want when it comes to the top.”

Hammett humorously underscored the difference in methods in a 1924 short story, “The Tenth Claw,” which parodies the classical detective plot with a set of nine bewildering clues, including a victim missing his left shoe and collar buttons, a mysterious list of names, and a bizarre murder weapon (the victim was beaten to death with a bloodstained typewriter). The solution, the “tenth claw,” is to ignore all nine of these confusing and, as it turns out, phony clues and use routine methods such as the surveillance of suspects to find the killer. The Op relies on methodical routine, long hours, and action to get results, not on inspiration and ratiocination. Rather than presenting a brilliant alternative to ineffectual police methods, the Op works closely with the police and often follows their standard procedures.

As the detective is different, so are the crimes and criminals. The world of the traditional mystery is one of security and regularity, disrupted by the aberrant event of the crime. Once the detective solves the crime through the application of reason, normalcy is restored. This worldview was clearly a comfortable one from the point of view of the turn-of-the-century British Empire. The world of the hard-boiled detective is one in which criminal behavior constitutes the norm, not the aberrance. There are usually several crimes and several criminals, and the society is not an orderly one temporarily disrupted but a deeply corrupt one that will not be redeemed or even much changed after the particular set of crimes being investigated is solved. One of the chapters in *Red Harvest* is titled “The Seventeenth Murder” (in serial publication it had been the nineteenth), and the string has by no means ended at that point. The criminals include a chief of police and a rich client of the Op, not only gangsters,

and the Op himself arranges a number of murders in playing off rival gangs against one another. Indeed, it is only at the very end that the reader, along with the Op himself, learns that he did not commit the seventeenth murder while drugged. At the novel’s close, most of the characters in the book are either dead or in prison. Rather than emphasize the solution of the crime—the murder that the Op is originally called in to investigate is solved quite early in the book—the novel emphasizes the corruption of the town of Personville and its corrupting effects on the people who enter it, including the detective himself. Many critics point to the critique of capitalist society of this early work as evidence of Hammett’s Marxist views.

THE MALTESE FALCON

Though he appeared only in *The Maltese Falcon* and a few short stories, Sam Spade has become Hammett’s most famous creation, largely because of Humphrey Bogart’s portrayal of him in John Huston’s faithful film version (the third made of the book). Hammett’s decision to shift to an entirely objective third-person narration for *The Maltese Falcon* removes even the few traces of interpretation and analysis provided by the Op and makes the analysis of the character of the detective himself the central concern of the reader. The question is not “who killed Miles Archer, Spade’s partner?” but “what kind of man is Sam Spade?” In fact, Archer’s death is unlikely to be of much concern to readers until they are reminded of it at the end, when Spade turns over to the police his lover, Brigid O’Shaughnessy, as the murderer. The reasoning behind Spade’s solution makes it fairly clear that he has known of her guilt from the start, before they became lovers, and leaves open the question of whether he has really fallen in love but is forced by his code to turn her in or whether he has been cold-bloodedly manipulating her all along. Spade’s delay in solving the case may also be interpreted variously: Is he crooked himself, hoping to gain money by aiding the thieves in the recovery of a priceless jeweled falcon, or is he merely playing along with them to further his investigation? After all, it is only after the falcon proves worthless that Spade reports the criminals. Spade was having an affair with his partner’s wife (he dislikes them both), and he frequently obstructs the police in-

vestigation up to the moment when he solves the case. Clearly, the mystery of the novel resides in character rather than plot.

THE GLASS KEY

Hammett's fourth novel, *The Glass Key*, does not even include a detective and is as much a psychological novel as a mystery. Again, it is the protagonist, this time Ned Beaumont, a gambler and adviser to mob leaders, whose character is rendered opaque by the rigorously objective camera-eye point of view, which describes details of gesture and expression but never reveals thought or motive directly.

THE THIN MAN

Hammett's last novel, *The Thin Man*, is a return to first-person narration, as Nick Charles, a retired detective, narrates the story of one last case. The novel is in many ways a significant departure from the earlier works, especially in its light comic tone, which helped

fit it for popular motion-picture adaptations in a series of "Thin Man" films (though in the book the Thin Man is actually the victim, not the detective). The centerpiece of the book is the relationship between Nick and his young wife, Nora, one of the few happy marriages in modern fiction, based largely on the relationship between Hammett and Lillian Hellman, to whom the book is dedicated.

Hammett's creation of the hard-boiled detective and the corrupt world in which he works provided the inspiration for his most noteworthy successors, Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald (whose detective, Lew Archer, is named for Sam Spade's partner), and helped make the tough, cynical private eye a key element of American mythology.

William Nelles

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CONTINENTAL OP SERIES: *\$106,000 Blood Money*, 1927 (also known as *Blood Money* and *The Big Knockover*); *Red Harvest*, 1927-1928 (serial; 1929, book); *The Dain Curse*, 1928-1929 (serial; 1929, book); *The Continental Op*, 1945; *The Return of the Continental Op*, 1945; *Dead Yellow Women*, 1946; *Hammett Homicides*, 1946

SAM SPADE SERIES: *The Maltese Falcon*, 1929-1930 (serial; 1930, book); *The Adventures of Sam Spade, and Other Stories*, 1945

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Glass Key*, 1930 (serial; 1931, book); *The Thin Man*, 1934; *Complete Novels*, 1999

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Secret Agent X-9*, 1934 (with Alex Raymond); *Nightmare Town*, 1948; *The Creeping Siamese*, 1950; *Woman in the Dark*, 1951; *A Man Named Thin, and Other Stories*, 1962; *The Big Knockover: Selected Stories and Short Novels*, 1966 (Lillian Hellman, editor); *Nightmare Town: Stories*, 1999 (Kirby McCauley, Martin H. Greenberg, and Ed Gorman, editors); *Crime Stories, and Other Writings*, 2001; *Lost Stories*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *City Streets*, 1931 (with Oliver H. P. Garrett and Max Marcin); *Mister Dynamite*, 1935 (with Doris Malloy and Harry Clork); *After the*



Thin Man, 1936 (with Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett); *Another Thin Man*, 1939 (with Goodrich and Hackett); *Watch on the Rhine*, 1943 (with Hellman)

NONFICTION: *The Battle of the Aleutians*, 1944 (with Robert Colodny); *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett, 1921-1960*, 2001 (Richard Layman with Julie M. Rivett, editors)

EDITED TEXT: *Creeps By Night*, 1931 (also known as *Modern Tales of Horror, The Red Brain, and Breakdown*)

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Hammett, Jo. *Dashiell Hammett: A Daughter Remembers*. Edited by Richard Layman, with Julie M. Rivett. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2001. A compelling memoir generously illustrated with photographs drawn from family archives.

Johnson, Diane. *Dashiell Hammett: A Life*. New York: Random House, 1983. The most comprehensive biography of Hammett, this book adds considerable information to the public record of Hammett's life but does not provide much critical analysis of the works. More than half the volume deals with the years after Hammett stopped publishing fiction and during which he devoted most of his time to leftist political activism.

Marling, William. *The American Roman Noir: Hammett, Cain, and Chandler*. Athens: University of

Georgia Press, 1995. An examination of the works of Hammett, Chandler, and James M. Cain by a reviewer. Marling sees their writings as a response to the events following 1927, which he describes as a pivotal year in terms of technology and economics.

Mellen, Joan. *Hellman and Hammett: The Legendary Passion of Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. Although primarily a biographical study, this scrupulously researched work provides insight into the backgrounds of Hammett's fiction. Includes very detailed notes and bibliography.

Metress, Christopher, ed. *The Critical Response to Dashiell Hammett*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. A generous compilation of reviews and general studies, with a comprehensive introduction, chronology, and bibliography.

Nyman, Jopi. *Hard-Boiled Fiction and Dark Romanticism*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. Studies the fiction of Hammett, James M. Cain, and Ernest Hemingway. Includes bibliographical references

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *Reading Early Hammett: A Critical Study of the Fiction Prior to the "Maltese Falcon."* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2004. An absorbing analysis of Hammett's earliest work, including magazine writing and essays on various topics, and particular focus on Hammett's Continental Op character.

Symons, Julian. *Dashiell Hammett*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985. A brief but substantive book by a leading English writer of crime fiction and criticism. Symons believes that Hammett created "A specifically American brand of crime story . . . that transcends the form and limits of [its] genre and can be compared with the best fiction produced in America between the two world wars." His considerations of the works support this judgment. Contains a useful select bibliography.

JOSEPH HANSEN

Born: Aberdeen, South Dakota; July 19, 1923

Died: Laguna Beach, California; November 24, 2004

Also wrote as Rose Brock; James Colton; James Coulton

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

David Brandstetter, 1970-1991

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DAVID BRANDSTETTER, a claims investigator for an insurance company in the Los Angeles area, is a middle-aged, tough, rather humorless hero. When he first appears, Brandstetter is a homosexual whose long-time partner has recently died. Otherwise a typical man, Brandstetter has a unique perspective on human motivation that helps him spot deception in voice, manner, and explanation.

CONTRIBUTION

Joseph Hansen's novels featuring David Brandstetter, the sympathetic and wary insurance claims investigator who happens to be gay, are unusual in a genre in which machismo is an essential element. Writing in the tradition of Ross Macdonald and Raymond Chandler, Hansen is clinical, unsentimental, and compelling. Over the years, Brandstetter finds a lover and learns more about himself. As Hansen moves his private investigator about, he provides a sense of the ordinariness of gay life. His intelligent and sensitive style draws readers to the plot and characters, stressing the universal characteristics of his hero's homosexual lifestyle. Although his novels fit into the Sam Spade-Philip Marlowe-Lew Archer mold—aging detective, sunny California, a society rife with corruption—Hansen provides fresh angles, third-person narrative, coolly realistic locales, and flawless dialogue to demonstrate the ways in which people juggle their morals to suit their needs. In the process, Hansen creates complex human experiences and enriches the mystery and detective genre.

Though Hansen was not the first to depict a gay detective—George Baxt preceded him by several years with novels featuring flamboyant black homosexual detective Pharoah Love—Hansen was recognized for his skillful and sensitive treatment of gays as human beings. Hansen's *Gravedigger* (1982) was nominated for the 1983 Shamus Award as best novel, and he received an Edgar nomination in 1984 for "The Anderson Boy" and a Shamus nomination in 1987 for "Merely Players." The Out/Look Foundation in 1991 honored Hansen for outstanding contributions to the lesbian and gay communities, and he won Lambda Literary Awards in 1992 for *Country of Old Men* (1991) and in 1994 for *Living Upstairs* (1993). He received the Private Eye Writers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992.

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph Hansen was born on July 19, 1923, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, the son of shoe shop operator Henry Harold Hansen and Alma Rosebrock Hansen. The Hansens moved often during the Great Depression, and Joseph's education was divided among public schools in Aberdeen, South Dakota; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Pasadena, California, as his family drifted from the Midwest to the West Coast in search of work. Hansen, who identified himself as a homosexual in his late teens, was more interested in writing for the school newspaper and acting in school plays than in languishing in classrooms and never attended college. Despite his sexual orientation, in 1943 he fell in love with and married lesbian Jane Bancroft, who in 1944 bore one daughter, Barbara Bancroft—who later underwent gender reassignment—during their marriage, which lasted more than fifty years (Jane died in 1994).

In 1944, Hansen received an encouraging option contract in 1944 from Houghton Mifflin Company on the basis of a few pages of a first novel. However, that novel was never published, nor were four other novels, several plays, and numerous short stories written during the 1940's. Hansen struggled to keep food on the

table while working in bookshops, as an assistant to the literary agent Stanley Rose, and for ten years as a billing clerk in a Hollywood film-processing plant.

Professional recognition came slowly, but by the late 1950's several of Hansen's poems had been published in mainstream magazines: *Saturday Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*. In 1962, he tried his hand at editing as well as at writing short stories for *One*, a small, pioneering magazine for homosexuals. When editorial difficulties arose, in 1965 he helped found a similar magazine, *Tangents*, which he edited until 1970. In 1969, he also produced a radio show, *Homosexuality Today*, on KPFK-FM in Los Angeles.

Beginning with his work at *One*, Hansen adopted the pseudonym James Colton and wrote several novels—including his first full-length work, *Lost on Twilight Road* (1964) and his first short-fiction collection, *The Corruptor, and Other Stories* (1968)—under that name between 1964 and 1971. Most were paperback originals, intended for sale in sex-oriented bookstores. In writing these books, Hansen honed his fiction-writing skills, discovered his writer's voice, and learned what he wanted to say. He intended to write honestly and unapologetically about homosexuality in a manner interesting and acceptable to all kinds of readers. Under the Colton pseudonym (later Coulton), Hansen published his first mystery, *Known Homosexual* (1968), a forerunner of the Brandstetter mysteries.

In 1969, Harper and Row contracted with Hansen to publish the first Dave Brandstetter mystery, *Fade-out*, which appeared in 1970. During his career, Hansen published more than forty books, including mystery novels, gothic novels (under the pseudonym Rose Brock), collections of poetry, and several collections of short stories. In addition, he taught fiction writing at the University of California, Los Angeles (1977-1986), and at the Beyond Baroque Foundation, Venice, California (1975-1976). In 1974, Hansen received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the following year he received a grant from the British Arts Council for a lecture tour of Northumberland.

In his later years, after ending the Brandstetter series, Hansen continued to write, concentrating on short stories primarily concerning his straight private eye and

horse ranch owner Hack Bohannon, for such collections as *Bohannon's Country: Mystery Stories* (1993) and *Bohannon's Women: Mystery Stories* (2002). He also began—with *Living Upstairs* (1993)—a series set in the 1940's and 1950's about young, aspiring gay writer Nathan Reed that was planned for twelve novels but ended after only three entries on the author's death. Hansen died November 24, 2004, at the age of eighty-one.

ANALYSIS

In the article "The Mystery Novel as Serious Business," Joseph Hansen sketched his ideas on a writer's responsibility and the serious purpose of the detective genre. In his view, the mystery novel, treated as serious business, has a unique capacity to work the "kind of magic" that any fine writer possesses. "A good and honest novel lets us experience for a brief while what it is like to be another human being, someone with a different background and a different set of problems," writes Hansen. The Brandstetter novels are, therefore, aimed at a general audience, not a gay audience. Hansen maintains that the mystery of death, in which lives unfold within the framework of a compelling story, will illuminate some aspect of the mystery of life.

Naturally, one aspect of human life that Hansen consistently demystifies is homosexuality. Brandstetter is ordinary but always human, with expectations, jealousies, and occasionally a lovers' quarrel, all carefully crafted by Hansen. A variety of homosexual and bisexual characters appear in the Brandstetter novels, none stereotyped or unbelievable. Gay subculture is encountered but never dominates. *Troublemaker* (1975) centers on the murder of an owner of a gay bar and *Early Graves* (1987) on the serial murders of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) victims, but the sexual preference of victims or their friends is never sensationalized. It is simply an aspect of their lives, although they or others may feel secretive or uncomfortable about it.

While demystifying homosexuality, Hansen renders human sexuality a complex phenomenon and the enterprise of categorizing individuals a risky business. The unhappiest people are those who hide or do not accept who they are. Sex or sexual preference is not portrayed

as the problem—the absence of self-acceptance is. In *A Smile in His Lifetime* (1981), a novel outside the Brandstetter series, the emotional landscape of Whit Miller is very bleak. Miller is a bisexual who is growing apart from his wife and toward a largely homosexual existence, something he has been struggling with since the day he was married. Gender confusion is an idea consistently raised by Hansen. Brandstetter frequently catches fleeting glimpses of a fleeing felon or someone who has struck him from behind that may have been a young man or may “have been a her.” It is always “too dark.”

In addition to demystifying homosexuality, Hansen draws parallels between the personal issues and love relationships of his detective and those of the characters he is investigating. In *Fadeout*, Brandstetter’s lover has just died of cancer. While investigating a murder, Brandstetter clears one young man of the crime, and the young man later becomes his new lover. One love fades out; another fades in. In *Death Claims* (1973), Brandstetter and the new lover are drifting apart. Each lays claim to the memory of a dead lover. Brandstetter investigates the death of a female bookseller who struggled to survive through skin graft surgery, nurtured by the love of a younger woman. Finding the murderer, he restores the young woman’s belief in herself and her strength to survive. Brandstetter and his lover bury the past and restore their relationship. Plot, theme, and title run parallel. *Troublemaker* involves a pair of interlopers. One tries to break up Brandstetter’s relationship with his lover, and another is the killer of a bar owner. Brandstetter locates the murderer, one of the victim’s associates, and the other interloper, saving his relationship.

Brandstetter is in the business of reconstructing people’s lives and discovering their meaning, both personal and social. Hansen, the writer, parallels the detective he created. He believes that the mystery novel “ought to look straight at the real world . . . concern itself with real problems that face real people.” *Early Graves*, the ninth Brandstetter novel, exemplifies this stand. It opens with Brandstetter returning home from a business trip to find an unknown dead man on his doorstep. The victim appears to be the latest casualty of a serial killer of young gay men who

are all dying of AIDS. Someone left the body for Brandstetter to find, and he wants to know why, a desire that leads him on a search through lives filled with grief, as families and lovers face the hard truth about AIDS. At the same time, Brandstetter is grieving about the premature end of his live-in relationship with Cecil Harris. Cecil, a young black reporter, in an act of misplaced pity, married an underage blind girl (in *The Little Dog Laughed*, 1986) to save her from her abusive, gold-digging mother. Eventually, the serial murderer meets an early grave—and Cecil’s marriage does also.

Many critics attribute Hansen’s success to the subtlety and sensitivity with which he confronts contemporary social issues through Brandstetter’s actions and opinions as the character ages. Critics point out that some social evil or problem—AIDS, political graft, secret military operations in Central America, toxic-waste dumping, religious fraud—often lies at the heart of Brandstetter’s cases. Through the fast-paced detective genre, Hansen can illustrate some aspect of human nature or societal ill without making shrill value judgments. Critics agree that *Skinflick* (1979) is more about the methods people use to rationalize unethical actions than about catching the murderer of a hypocritical religious fundamentalist. *Gravedigger* is a nonsensational treatment of evil in the form of a Charles Manson-type mass murderer. *Nightwork* (1984), which involves murder in the cover-up of illegal toxic-waste dumping, was written to expose a problem that, in Hansen’s words, “no one, not on any level of government, no one in the world, is effectively doing anything about.” In that novel, one villain is caught, but the real killer of untold numbers by slow poisoning remains at large. Questions remain unanswered, but the book’s message is that people must treat one another with respect and decency.

Hansen’s concern for how individuals treat their fellow humans is elaborated in several novels outside the Brandstetter series. In *Backtrack* (1982), a mystery featuring an eighteen-year-old protagonist who discovers aspects of his dead father’s life that lead him to await his own killer, Hansen shows what happens when parents do not care; it is a story that seeks to explain why children become runaways and has been called brilliant.

The Brandstetter mysteries are keenly linked through symbol, incident, and character so that they are best read in chronological order. In a real sense they form a single multivolume novel, one in which it is possible to learn much about being a gay male in the United States at the end of the twentieth century. At the same time, the series is a study of the social and political issues confronting American society in the same time period. The social consciousness of the Brandstetter novels increases with each succeeding volume.

Certain characters and Brandstetter activities serve to link each volume: Brandstetter's ninth stepmother, Amanda; Barker, the police chief; Leppard, the police detective; Romano, the restaurateur; Brandstetter's father in the early novels; Owens, his lifelong buddy; and various lovers who come and go. Settings of the novels are quite detailed, and that of Brandstetter's home in particular roots him and the story in a specific time and place. Brandstetter's habits—a glass of Glenlivet before dinner and longing for a good meal either cooked at home or at Romano's restaurant—are part of the Brandstetter formula. His character appears more interested in a good meal than good sex.

Like Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, Brandstetter is ever the questioner trying to make sense out of things that do not fit. When asked what he knows by the police or a friend, Brandstetter always replies, "I only ask questions." In *Skinflick*, when asked if he, the claims investigator, will not pay the insurance to the beneficiaries, Brandstetter replies, "I don't want to hold it back . . . but a couple of things are wrong and I have to find out why."

Hansen, like Macdonald, saw the writer as private investigator. In discussing fiction writing, he singled out Gertrude Stein as a writer to the last breath because of her dying words, a "final beautiful sentence": "Very well then—what is the question?" Hansen's Brandstetter asks not only who had reason to murder but also why, and then why they do what they do in everyday life. The answers to Brandstetter's questions reveal individuals' actions and motives, but Hansen refrained from having anyone answer bigger questions about graft, toxic-waste dumping, or AIDS; he confines his craft to meticulously describing things the way they are. The reader may leave a Hansen novel

outraged, cynical, or simply more knowledgeable. His stories are not mere social tracts but compelling tales that move one to sympathy, wonder, and amusement.

FADEOUT

With *Fadeout*, Hansen not only introduced Dave Brandstetter but also found his own voice within the mystery genre. Written in the Ross Macdonald style of hard-boiled Southern California detective fiction, it established Hansen as a mature mystery writer. In this action-filled novel, Hansen reveals people and their complex interests through what they do rather than what they say. With *Fadeout*, he fundamentally changed the way gays are portrayed in detective fiction. There are no pitiable gay blackmail victims or flighty dancer types, as in the work of Ngaio Marsh, for example, but a gay, macho detective hero. Thus Hansen succeeded in further humanizing the form he inherited from the classic hard-boiled writers.



According to Hansen, the writer of fiction has a responsibility to deal honestly with important aspects of contemporary life. He intended to portray a decent, tough-minded, caring kind of man who was contentedly homosexual and, in so doing, to contradict conventional social ideas about homosexuals. Thus, as Brandstetter is introduced in *Fadeout*, his twenty-year relationship with an interior decorator named Rod Fleming has just ended with Rod's death from cancer. In contrast, Brandstetter's father, Carl Brandstetter, has recently remarried for the ninth time. Just as the myth that gays do not have long-term, stable relationships is exploded, so is the social image of the middle-aged male homosexual as obsessed with seducing young men or boys. In Brandstetter's relationships with Anselmo, a young Latino in *Fadeout*, and Cecil Harris, a young black reporter in *The Man Everybody Was Afraid Of* (1978), the young men are the pursuers and seducers of the middle-aged investigator, not vice versa. Brandstetter yearns for, rather than actively searches for, a lover when he is without one.

A COUNTRY OF OLD MEN

A Country of Old Men is the insurance investigator's final bow. Retired from his profession, feeling his age, and living comfortably with young African American television journalist-producer Cecil Harris, Brandstetter—now the owner of a favorite restaurant that he patronized for thirty years—responds to a call from old friend Madge Dunston. While walking on the beach, she found a young abused boy who apparently was kidnapped after witnessing the murder of Howard "Cricket" Shales, a musician, former convict, and drug dealer who a woman named Rachel Klein may have shot.

In the course of his investigation, Brandstetter bumps into many old friends and acquaintances who figure in the story. Mystery writer Jack Helmers, whom Brandstetter has known from high school, is rumored to be working on a roman à clef novel depicting youthful shenanigans from fifty years ago that could be embarrassing to the now grown-up pranksters, such as Charlie Norton and Morse Campbell, who visit Brandstetter after long absences to pump him for information about the forthcoming book. A powerful political figure, Alejandro Hernandez, reappears in an

attempt to make a bargain with Brandstetter. The investigator seeks the assistance of longtime gay friend Ray Lollard, who has lived for years with another of Brandstetter's friends, Kovacs, an artist who is dying of AIDS. Amanda, the ninth wife of Brandstetter's father, and widow of record, stops by to announce she is remarrying, to actor Cliff Callahan. Los Angeles Police Department homicide lieutenant Jeff Leppard, with whom Brandstetter has crossed paths before, cooperates with the investigator in unraveling the events leading up to the murder.

Although the investigator, through his usual dogged persistence and thoroughness in examining every lead, does eventually expose the real killer and the motive behind the crime, *A Country of Old Men* is more than simply a complex, well-plotted mystery. It is also an examination of the different forms of abuse to which humans fall prey, a compassionate exploration of the inevitability of aging, and an affectionate swan song to a popular and unique character, Dave Brandstetter.

Kathleen O'Mara

Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVID BRANDSTETTER SERIES: *Fadeout*, 1970; *Death Claims*, 1973; *Troublemaker*, 1975; *The Man Everybody Was Afraid Of*, 1978; *Skinflick*, 1979; *Gravedigger*, 1982; *Nightwork*, 1984; *Brandstetter and Others*, 1984; *The Little Dog Laughed*, 1986; *Early Graves*, 1987; *Obedience*, 1988; *The Boy Who Was Buried This Morning*, 1990; *A Country of Old Men*, 1991; *The Complete Brandstetter*, 2006 (omnibus)

NATHAN REED SERIES: *Living Upstairs*, 1993; *Jack of Hearts*, 1995; *The Cutbank Path*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Known Homosexual*, 1968 (as Colton; also as Hansen as *Stranger to Himself*, 1977, and *Pretty Boy Dead*, 1984); *A Smile in His Lifetime*, 1981; *Backtrack*, 1982; *Job's Year*, 1983; *Steps Going Down*, 1985

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Dog, and Other Stories*, 1979; *Bohannon's Book: Five Mysteries*, 1988; *Bohannon's Country: Mystery Stories*, 1993; *Blood, Snow and Classic Cars: Mystery Stories*, 2001; *Bohannon's Women: Mystery Stories*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Lost on Twilight Road*, 1964 (as Colton); *Strange Marriage*, 1965 (as Colton); *Cocksure*, 1969 (as Colton); *Gard*, 1969 (as Coulton); *Hang-Up*, 1969 (as Colton); *Tarn House*, 1971 (as Brock); *The Outward Side*, 1971 (as Colton); *Todd*, 1971 (as Colton); *Longleaf*, 1974 (as Brock)

NONFICTION: *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution: The Trotskyist View*, 1978; *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building: The Debate on Guerilla Warfare in Latin America*, 1982; *A Few Doors West of Hope: The Life and Times of Dauntless Don Slater*, 1998

POETRY: *One Foot in the Boat*, 1977; *Ghosts: And Other Poems*, 1998

SHORT FICTION: *The Corrupter, and Other Stories*, 1968 (as Colton)

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Callendar, Newgate. "Criminals at Large." Review of *Death Claims*, by Joseph Hansen. *The New York Times Book Review*, January 21, 1973, p. 26. Praises Hansen—labeled of "the Ross Macdonald school"—for managing to avoid clichés while engaging the reader in the emotional problems of his gay hero and notes his smooth handling of crime elements and his plausible denouement.

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DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. Brief entries on Hansen and on his gay detective, Dave Brandstetter.

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_____. "PW Interviews: Joseph Hansen." Interview by Barbara A. Bannon. *Publishers Weekly* 227, no. 24 (December 17, 1982): 14-15. The interview includes biographical information, and Hansen comments on his writing techniques and working habits.

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Publishers Weekly. Review of *Brandstetter and Others*, by Joseph Hansen. 226, no. 20 (November 16, 1984): 55. Review of Hansen's short-story collection, which is praised for its well-crafted tales that focus primarily on murder and "twisted love"; it is noted that several of the stories appeared previously in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

Teachout, Terry. Review of *Gravedigger*, by Joseph Hansen. *The National Review* 34, no. 10 (May 28, 1982): 645-647. A highly favorable review that points out Hansen's particular strengths: few flashy similes, detached third-person narration, and a quiet, unassuming protagonist who happens to be

gay, death investigator Dave Brandstetter. Teachout considers Hansen a worthy successor to Ross Macdonald, though without that author's thoughtfulness or overall scope of story.

Zubro, Mark Richard. "The Gay and Lesbian Mystery." In *The Fine Art of Murder: The Mystery*

Reader's Indispensable Companion, edited by Ed Gorman, Martin H. Greenberg, and Larry Segriff with Jon L Breen. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993. Provides a few paragraphs about Hansen as a trendsetter for making Dave Brandstetter a real, three-dimensional character.

THOMAS W. HANSHAW

Born: Brooklyn, New York; 1857

Died: London, England; March 3, 1914

Also wrote as Dashing Charley; Old Cap Collier; H. O. Cooke; Old Cap Darrell; R. T. Emmett; Charlotte May Kingsley; A U.S. Detective

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hamilton Cleek, 1910-1925

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF HAMILTON CLEEK was born the true prince of the fictional Balkan kingdom of Maurvania, but at the opening of the stories about him, he has become the VANISHING CRACKSMAN, an associate of Margot, queen of the French Apaches. He is successful as a thief because of his "weird birthgift": He can make his face assume the features of other people. Consequently, he is called "the man of the forty faces." After falling in love, however, he reforms, putting his talents at the service of Scotland Yard.

AILSA LORNE is the incredibly pure woman with whom Cleek falls in love.

DOLLOPS is Cleek's Cockney servant and assistant, the inventor of an unusual method of stopping crooks: He lays gummed paper in their paths, and while they are extricating their feet from the mess, they are arrested by the detectives.

SUPERINTENDENT MAVERICK NARKOM represents Scotland Yard. He is continually asking Cleek for help in solving "riddles" and is continually astonished by Cleek's ability to find the solutions to them.

CONTRIBUTION

The saga of Hamilton Cleek in many ways summarizes the forms of popular literature of the era just before World War I. Thomas W. Hanshaw used elements of the crook story and the Balkan romance and combined them with tales featuring an infallible sleuth to produce some of the most extraordinary detective stories of the era. Hanshaw's inventiveness in plotting and his love of the bizarre and exotic influenced later writers, especially Ellery Queen and John Dickson Carr.

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas W. Hanshaw's writing life divides into two sections. Until the turn of the century, when at the age of about forty-three he moved from his native United States to England, he had made a living as a writer of melodramas for the stage and as a prolific author of dime and nickel novels. Beginning in the late 1870's, Hanshaw contributed sensational romances to the story paper *Young Men of America*, and some of these tales were reprinted in dime-novel format. According to dime-novel expert J. Randolph Cox, Hanshaw used many pseudonyms, some of which were house names, including Old Cap Collier, Dashing Charley, Old Cap Darrell, H. O. Cooke, Charlotte May Kingsley, R. T. Emmett, and a U.S. Detective. He may have been one of the many authors who wrote as Bertha M. Clay in a series of the most popular, though saccharine, romances of the era.

The second phase of his life began when he moved to England with his wife and daughter. Almost immediately, his first clothbound book, *The World's Finger:*

An Improbable Story (1901), was published, to be followed by other novels that emphasized mystery and detection, though Hanshew always tried to have something for everybody and therefore included romance, adventure, and an occasional anarchist. His stories also appeared in popular fiction magazines such as *Cassell's*, *The Red Magazine*, and *The Story-Teller*.

In 1910, when he was in his fifties, Hanshew hit his vein of gold with the publication of *The Man of the Forty Faces*, the first book about Hamilton Cleek. It was followed by more than fifty short stories and a series of Edison silent films, featuring Thomas Meighan as Cleek. Hanshew died in 1914, but his wife and daughter continued the series based at first on Hanshew's notes and retaining his name as author and later as coauthor with his wife, Mary E. Hanshew. The final two volumes of Cleek's adventures, published in the 1930's, were credited solely to his daughter, Hazel Phillips Hanshew.

ANALYSIS

The turn of the century was an extraordinary time in popular fiction, when stories of detectives, criminals, magicians, living mummies, space invaders, and romantic adventurers took the public's fancy in books and in magazines. Types of popular fiction were not always distinct, and some authors seem consciously to have made a determination about what sold, combining as many popular elements as possible into a single book. Richard Marsh, for example, realized that both detective stories and occult mysteries had large audiences, so in *The Beetle* (1897) he set an aristocratic detective to investigate the case of a man who literally turns himself into an insect.

THE WORLD'S FINGER

Thomas W. Hanshew's *The World's Finger*, accurately subtitled "An Improbable Story," brings together several elements from popular fiction of the period. Especially in its declamatory dialogue, it reveals Hanshew's training as a dime novelist in the United States, but he included a number of comments expressing the prejudices of his adopted country: "That's the worst of you Continental people," cries one of the characters, "you squeal and howl when the jig's up and you find yourselves in a corner."

The plot of *The World's Finger* reflects the vogue for the detective stories of Fergus Wright Hume. As in Hume's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) and *The Chinese Jar* (1893), the suspense is created by the competition between rival detectives. In *The World's Finger*, Scotland Yard superintendent Maverick Narkom, who plays the heavy through much of the book, opposes private detective George Yardley, who had resigned from the police because of his hatred of the overbearing Narkom. Narkom is in love with the heroine, who has accepted the proposal of a nobleman. When his rival is charged with murder, Narkom seizes the chance and promises to track down the real criminal in exchange for the heroine's hand in marriage. One of Narkom's nasty characteristics is that he is prejudiced against the aristocracy, for he has the features of an aristocrat but is of low birth. Hanshew, however, admired those of high birth and disliked those who spent their lives in "workshops [which] vomited their hordes of wage-workers out on the muddy pavement." The major exception was the Cockney, whom Hanshew found good for a bit of comedy.

Though the social positions in *The World's Finger* are backward-looking, the cleverness of Hanshew's plotting hints at what would come with the Golden Age two decades later. The book begins with the discovery of a corpse, from which lead the bare footprints of the murderer, but the footprints stop at a blank wall. A diamond shirt-link is also found, leading to the strange image of an upper-class murderer in evening dress but wearing no shoes or socks, a murderer who, moreover, can disappear when he reaches a wall. To make matters more mysterious, the body of one of the constables investigating the case is found, yet there seems to be no way for the murderer to have come and gone without being seen. These problems are solved quite quickly by an inventive explanation that would be used by later writers, especially Thomas Burke in "The Hands of Mr. Ottermole." More mysteries appear, however, some of them concerning inheritance. Hanshew mentions M. E. Braddon in the book, and it is clear that her sensational novels contributed this emphasis on family rights. When a bit more than one-third of the book has been told, the complexities have become so great that one of the characters laments,

“Upon my word it is the most mysterious affair of which I have ever heard. It doubles and twists and contradicts itself at every turn.” The detection at this stage is done by a young woman, and her deductions are far cleverer and more persuasive than those of the bemused men about her.

Had the book maintained this level, it would have become one of the classics of detective fiction, but it declines into problems involving identical twins, unnecessary kidnappings, ridiculous police procedure, and (the always popular, at least in 1901) Italian anarchists. Even with its flaws, however, *The World's Finger* was successful enough that Hanshaw followed with similar novels; the work also helps the modern reader understand Hanshaw's strengths and weaknesses. His willingness to toss almost anything into a plot makes his books marvelous examples of popular culture, but when his tales reach novel length, they form a gooey mishmash.

“THE AMETHYST PIN”

Hanshaw's major strength was in his plots, especially his imaginative openings with impossibilities. This skill was best displayed in his short stories. In 1905, for example, George Yardley reappeared in “The Amethyst Pin,” a detective story published in *The Monthly Story Magazine*. Once again, Hanshaw used his favorite elements—identical twins, snobbish social attitudes, and (replacing the mysterious Italians) a mysterious Russian. The plot is surprisingly tight, however, with a single focus—the question of identity—and some convincing detection. Using the short-story form, Hanshaw was able to make the highly improbable seem believable.

THE MAN OF THE FORTY FACES

According to a statement at the end of *The Man of the Forty Faces*, Hamilton Cleek appeared as a character in a stage play a year or two before he was first featured in book form. Hanshaw had written melodramas as a young man, and the period before World War I was a time of detective plays, especially *Sherlock Holmes* (1899), by William Gillette and Arthur Conan Doyle. Certainly the Cleek of the books resembles the stage version of Holmes, with his dramatic revelations and his pouncing on the criminals, handcuffs ready. Hanshaw followed with a series of short stories,

twelve of which were collected in 1910 as *The Man of the Forty Faces*.

A brief summary of how Hamilton Cleek puts his services to the use of Scotland Yard will indicate the flavor of the Cleek stories, especially in Hanshaw's eclectic borrowing of elements from various forms of popular fiction. After a brief opening scene, *The Man of the Forty Faces* introduces a challenge from the Vanishing Cracksman to Superintendent Maverick Narkom of Scotland Yard. (Narkom has lost the hatred of aristocrats that he had in *The World's Finger*; he has also lost what little intelligence he demonstrated in the book.) The Cracksman announces that he will steal diamonds from Sir Horace Wyvern's wedding party no matter what steps the police take to stop him. He succeeds, but instead of disappearing with the booty he agrees to return it in exchange for an interview with Narkom and Sir Horace. At this meeting, the Cracksman explains that he has become a thief because of his birthgift: “His features seemed to writhe and knot and assume in as many moments a dozen different aspects.” One glance at Sir Horace's niece, Ailsa Lorne, however, has persuaded him to offer his intelligence and ability at disguise to Scotland Yard. In prose reminiscent of his days writing dime-novel romances as Charlotte May Kingsley, Hanshaw has Cleek explain that “I'm tired of wallowing in the mire. A woman's eyes have lit the way to heaven for me. I want to climb up to her, to win her, to be worthy of her, and to stand beside her in the light.” He then asks Sir Horace, an expert on brain diseases (whose methods prove to be phrenology), to examine his skull. Sir Horace announces that his cranium shows that he must remain a thief. The Cracksman refuses to accept that fate and promises to become a detective, helping Scotland Yard with its riddles. Narkom agrees.

The Cracksman refuses to reveal his true name; he is only “The Man Who Calls Himself Hamilton Cleek.” He does, however, admit that he had been a thief in France, associated with Margot, queen of the French Apaches. In most of the Cleek books, Margot and her henchmen try to capture Cleek and make him return to his life of crime. In addition, a mysterious group of men from the Balkan kingdom of Maura-
vania, led by Count Irma, also threaten Cleek. Eventu-

ally, Hanshew reveals that Cleek is in reality the true prince of Mauravania, and his subjects want him and his multitude of faces back home.

Hanshew decided that Cleek should begin his career as a cracksman because of the success of gentleman burglars in such books as E. W. Hornung's *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899), Guy Boothby's *A Prince of Swindlers* (1900), and Barry Pain's *The Memoirs of Constantine Dix* (1905). Hanshew's innovation was to turn the thief into a detective, something that had been hinted at but not yet fully developed in Maurice Leblanc's stories of Arsène Lupin. Cleek as a detective is based directly on Sherlock Holmes. In reaction to Holmes's eccentricity, many authors of the period described their fictional sleuths as ordinary in appearance. Arthur Morrison's Martin Hewitt, M. McDonnell Bodkin's Paul Beck, Baroness Orczy's Old Man in the Corner, and C. L. Pirkis's Loveday Brooke are the sort that no one would look at twice. Such restraint was not for Hanshew. Cleek, like Holmes, is vivid because of his quirks. Cleek loves flowers, he peppers his talk with music-hall jokes, and when he notices a clue overlooked by Narkom, a queer, one-sided smile appears on his face.

Cleek's Mauravian origins are yet another borrowing. With the publication of Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and George Barr McCutcheon's *Graustark* (1901), romances set in nonexistent Balkan principalities had become very popular. In these novels, manly Britishers or Americans with plenty of derring-do solve difficulties—generally concerning succession to the throne—in old-fashioned kingdoms. In the Cleek stories, the formula is inverted. Because he has all the characteristics of a manly Britisher, Cleek refuses to return with Count Irma and instead makes a life in Great Britain, where Ailsa Lorne awaits.

This extraordinary combination of cracksman-detective-Balkan prince solves cases that are often improbable but always ingenious. When Narkom asks Cleek to investigate a riddle, the reader can be certain that it is no ordinary problem. In Cleek's world, corpses are constantly found in locked rooms with no way for the murderer to have entered or exited, or so it seems until Cleek presents an extraordinary explanation. Only Cleek can discover how a man turned a

somersault and disappeared into thin air. Only Cleek can solve the riddle of the corpse with nine fingers. Only Cleek can determine how valuable papers vanished from a locked room that was sheathed with steel plates. Cleek alone knows, almost at a glance, how an Asian idol can dispense death to anyone who dares stay overnight with it.

Many of Cleek's cases have solutions that are as imaginative and bizarre as the seeming impossibility with which they begin. Almost any object in a Cleek case can hide poison: a soda siphon, a boomerang, a notebook, an alcohol lamp, and even the wings of a moth. Murderers are as much masters of disguise as Cleek himself, though they lack his "weird birthgift." One criminal, who happens to be a midget, disguises himself as a baby; another works a locked-room trick by making witnesses believe that he is a piece of statuary. Cleek resolves riddles by showing how a murderer can descend through a skylight on a balloon and how jewels can impossibly disappear by being secreted in the pouch of a kangaroo.

Even though few writers would have dared imitate Hanshew's cheerfully improbable solutions, John Dickson Carr, Ellery Queen, and others read the Cleek saga during their formative years and learned much from Hanshew's ingenious plots. Carr wrote to Queen that "if you told me a new Cleek story had been discovered, I would rather read that story than any discovery except a new story about Father Brown." Like Hanshew, Carr and Queen often began their cases with a seemingly inexplicable situation and then explained everything through a brilliant detective. Hanshew is seldom read anymore, and his sleuths seem unalterably part of another era, but *The Man of the Forty Faces* was one of the most important influences on the Golden Age detective story of the 1920's and the 1930's.

Douglas G. Greene

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HAMILTON CLEEK SERIES: *The Man of the Forty Faces*, 1910 (also known as *Cleek, the Master Detective*; revised as *Cleek, the Man of the Forty Faces*, 1913); *Cleek of Scotland Yard*, 1914; *The Riddle of the Night*, 1915 (with Mary E. Hanshew and Hazel Phillips Hanshew); *Cleek's Greatest Riddles*, 1916

(with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew; also known as *Cleek's Government Cases*); *The Riddle of the Purple Emperor*, 1918 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew); *The Mystery of the Frozen Flames*, 1920 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew; also known as *The Riddle of the Frozen Flames*); *The Riddle of the Mysterious Light*, 1921 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew); *The House of Discord*, 1922 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew; also known as *The Riddle of the Spinning Wheel*); *The Amber Junk*, 1924 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew; also known as *The Riddle of the Amber Junk*); *The House of the Seven Keys*, 1925 (with M. Hanshew and H. Phillips Hanshew)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Beautiful but Dangerous: Or, The Heir of Shadowdene*, 1891; *The World's Finger: An Improbable Story*, 1901 (also known as *The Hoxton Mystery*); *The Mallison Mystery*, 1903; *The Great Ruby*, 1905; *The Shadow of a Dead Man*, 1906; *Fate and the Man*, 1910

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Young Mrs. Charnleigh*, 1883; *Leonie: Or, The Sweet Street Singer of New York*, 1884; *A Wedded Widow: Or, The Love That Lived*, 1887; *Arrol's Engagement*, 1903 (as Kingsley)

PLAYS: *Oath Bound: Or, Faithful unto Death*, pb. c. 1870; *The Forty-Niners: Or, The Pioneer's Daugh-*

ter, pb. 1879; *Will o' the Wisp: Or, The Shot in the Dark*, pb. 1884

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CYRIL HARE

Alfred Alexander Gordon Clark

Born: Mickleham, Surrey, England; September 4, 1900

Died: Dorking, Surrey, England; August 25, 1958

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Mallett, 1937-1958

Francis Pettigrew, 1942-1958

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR MALLET of Scotland Yard, who appears in six of Hare's nine books, is mentioned in a seventh, and features in a small number of short stories, is a large man with a prodigious memory, the ability to appear as if from nowhere, and a great fondness for food.

FRANCIS PETTIGREW, who appears in five books

(three of them with Mallett), is a middle-aged, moderately successful lawyer who barely makes a living and is drawn reluctantly into amateur investigation. Pettigrew gradually supplants Mallett, though Mallett—by now retired—reappears (with Pettigrew) in Hare's last book.

CONTRIBUTION

The best of Cyril Hare's work in the detective genre is marked by closely observed characterization and a constant striving for verisimilitude. His characters are more fully rounded and more varied than many of those in the purely puzzle-based detective stories produced by the majority of his immediate British precursors; in particular, he offers accurate, vivid, and well-characterized portrayals of certain social groups. He is notable for his use of conversation, which is lively, contributes to plot and characterization rather than merely padding out an episode, and reproduces the vocabulary and manner of speech of different social classes; for the fine quality of his writing; for his often subtle humor; and, notwithstanding his concentration on characterization and authentic atmosphere, for the novelty of his puzzles, their careful and convincing construction, and their genuine surprise endings. Without directing the genre along any fresh and innovative paths, Hare enriched the body of well-written and enduring detective fiction that emerged in Great Britain during the period from just before to just after World War II.

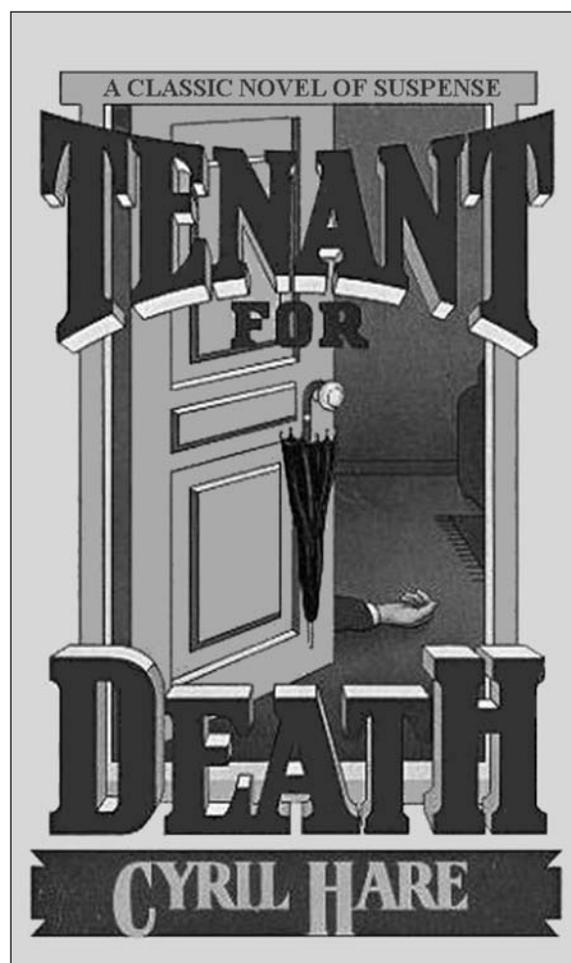
BIOGRAPHY

Cyril Hare, born as Alfred Alexander Gordon Clark, was educated at a British public school, where he claimed to have been starved of food and crammed full of learning. Thence he went to New College, Oxford, where he gained first-class honors in history. He was always destined for the law, however, and he was called to the bar in 1924 and practiced, mostly in the criminal courts, as a member of the chambers of Roland Oliver, one of the most prestigious firms of London lawyers.

In 1933, he married Mary Barbara Lawrence, and the couple had one son and two daughters. For some time, he had contributed lightweight, humorous mate-

rial to *Punch* and other magazines; a few years after his marriage, he began writing detective fiction under the pseudonym Cyril Hare, derived from his home address (Cyril Mansions) and his practice address (Hare Court). He continued to do so for the rest of his life, often making use of material drawn from his own experience both within and outside the legal profession. At the start of World War II, he undertook a tour as a judge's marshal, from which came *Tragedy at Law* (1942). Later, after a brief spell in the ministry of economic warfare (which helped him to write *With a Bare Bodkin*, 1946), he spent nearly five years as a temporary official in the public prosecutions department.

He returned to private practice in 1945, and in 1950, he was appointed a county court judge in his native Surrey, where he was concerned with civil rather



than criminal proceedings. He was a supporter of amateur music making (this is reflected in *When the Wind Blows*, 1947) and was always much in demand as a public speaker. In the last years of his life, his other commitments limited his time for writing fiction, and his last works declined in quality.

ANALYSIS

Cyril Hare's first two novels are solid, workmanlike detective stories. Well plotted and convincingly structured, they are typical of British detective fiction in the late 1930's but are not remarkable for any innovations.

TENANT FOR DEATH

The first, the rather ordinary *Tenant for Death* (1937), introduces Hare's first series detective, the burly Scotland Yard man Inspector Mallett. Mallett has a lively intelligence, but he is no supersleuth and sometimes admits to being baffled. Yet unlike some of his near contemporaries, such as Anthony Berkeley's Roger Sheringham and Nicholas Blake's Nigel Strangeways, he does not confidently assert mistaken conclusions only to have them subsequently disproved. Hare took some pains over the characterization of his detective, and in *Tenant for Death* and his next two novels, *Death Is No Sportsman* (1938) and *Suicide Excepted* (1939), there are numerous references to Mallett's enormous appetite, his extensive knowledge of food, his excellent memory, and his ability to appear suddenly and unexpectedly before someone.

DEATH IS NO SPORTSMAN

It was *Death Is No Sportsman* that, despite its conventional format (including the murder of a thoroughly unpopular man; a larger-than-usual role for the official detective; and a limited group of suspects, the least likely of whom turns out to be the criminal), first showed Hare's talent for creating a microcosm of society (in this case, a weekend fishing club) with accuracy, loving care, and gentle mockery of the characters' human weaknesses and idiosyncrasies. There is also an ending that surprises, inasmuch as both detective and reader are cunningly persuaded to be skeptical of all evidence save the false. On the other hand, once the falseness of the evidence in question is perceived, only one person can possibly be guilty: Indeed, because the evidence rests on the unsupported word of

one person (the murderer, in fact), the alert reader may well penetrate the mystery before Hare intended. That may constitute a structural weakness, one found in much of Hare's later work, which, if it should be anticipated by his regular readers, may dilute some of their enjoyment.

Although in this respect the influence of the ingenious but dull Freeman Wills Crofts is perceptible, there is more to Hare's novels than the mere construction and demolition of a seemingly unbreakable alibi. Although *Suicide Excepted* and *Tragedy at Law* are notable for their inclusion of perhaps the most unlikely murderers in Hare's work—though not necessarily the best surprise endings—they also constitute two of the five major novels that he produced in the period between 1939 and 1951.

TRAGEDY AT LAW

Many of Hare's stories feature some technicality of civil or criminal law that would not be immediately obvious to the layman. In *Suicide Excepted*, a clause in an insurance policy causes three amateur detectives to seek to overturn the verdict of a coroner's jury, though the underlying reason still comes as a surprise. *Tragedy at Law* involves a little-known legal technicality relating to the timing of civil proceedings. What is most striking about the five principal novels, however, is the feeling of tremendous human warmth they generate, their constant demonstration of Hare's ability to provide deft, well-observed, authentic, and affectionate portraits, laced with inoffensive humor, of particular professional and social milieus—a bereaved family coping with the gathered relatives and the legal complexities arising from the dead man's estate, a county court judge and his entourage on circuit, government officials conducting their business, a local musical society with its triumphs and petty musical jealousies, and a dying peer's house party and his butler's struggles to keep up standards despite the restrictions imposed by an unsympathetic, egalitarian postwar society.

In many of these novels, Hare drew on his personal experience—of the wartime civil service, amateur music associations in his home county, and the law and its workings. In an article published shortly after his death, he told of an incident involving the head of the

chambers in which, as a young man, he had first practiced law. On learning that Hare was convinced that a prisoner he was defending had been wrongly accused, his principal remarked skeptically, "On the whole, it is sometimes not a bad thing for a young man to believe in his client's innocence." Readers of *Tragedy at Law* will recognize that as a remark made by "a sarcastic senior" to Pettigrew when Pettigrew was a young man. One can only wonder how many other similar comments and situations found their way into his writing, which also shows the precision of expression and accuracy of effect that one might well expect of a lawyer pleading his case or a judge summing up the evidence.

In *Tragedy at Law*, Mallett deduces the solution to a curious series of mysterious events, but he cannot explain the underlying motive or prevent a murder that occurs very late in the story. It is another character, Francis Pettigrew, who provides the final piece of information and precipitates the denouement. After the introduction of Pettigrew, whom Hare obviously regarded with some affection, Mallett's role gradually diminished, and Hare came to prefer writing about the activities of his modest, barely successful, benevolent lawyer. The best of the Pettigrew novels is the third, *When the Wind Blows*.

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

When the Wind Blows depends on an esoteric fact about matrimonial law; it also includes some of Hare's delightful cultural cross-references—in this case, the reader will be helped toward the solution of the mystery by familiarity with Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849-1850) and especially by knowledge of a peculiarity of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Prague* Symphony (though it must be conceded that the peculiarity is fairly well known among the musically literate and that the reader's realization of it and its inevitable consequence too early in the narrative is enough to destroy the puzzle).

Pettigrew, whose earlier disappointment in love is chronicled as part of the background to *Tragedy at Law*, is now happily married to a woman much younger than himself; her fortune enables him to worry less about his own financial position, to be happy despite his relative lack of professional success, and to concentrate instead on living a pleasant life. As ever, he is

a reluctant participant in events; just as he is pressed into participating in the musical life of the local community, so he finds himself drawn into investigating a murder the solution of which is of no interest to him whatever. It is in this novel, incidentally, that Mallett is only briefly mentioned and does not appear: The official investigation is carried out by the carefully portrayed and initially unsympathetic Inspector Trimble, a character who in fact comes to life even more convincingly than the nearly ubiquitous and ultimately caricatural Mallett. Hare's delightful sense of humor may be seen here in the portrait of the gruff orchestral conductor Clayton Evans; the almost hilarious misadventures of Judge William Barber in *Tragedy at Law* provide another example.

AN ENGLISH MURDER

Tragedy at Law was Hare's own favorite novel, an opinion that is shared by many of his readers; nevertheless, his masterpiece is perhaps the single novel in which he included neither Pettigrew nor Mallett, *An English Murder* (1951). It is Christmas. The dying Lord Warbeck has convened one last festive gathering of family and friends. These consist of his son, Robert, a dislikable neofascist; his cousin, Sir Julius, chancellor of the exchequer in the postwar socialist government; Mrs. Carstairs, the ambitious wife of the man who stands next in succession to the chancellorship; and Lady Camilla Prendergast, whose matrimonial hopes once extended to Robert and who is making one last attempt to discover his intentions toward her. To these are added Dr. Wenceslaus Bottwink, a historian of Middle-European, Jewish extraction, who has suffered greatly at the hands of prewar fascist regimes; Briggs, the butler, and his daughter Susan; and Sir Julius's bodyguard, Detective Sergeant Rogers.

The title, *An English Murder*, is justified in a number of ways. The setting, traditional in British detective fiction, is a country house conveniently cut off by snow. The Englishness is explicitly underlined, however, by Dr. Bottwink, whose amused observation emphasizes the illogicality and unlikelihood of the relationships between social classes, the speech patterns, and the quaint customs stocially maintained even when murder occurs. Moreover, Bottwink's gentle amusement is evidently shared by Hare himself. By

the time the unpleasant Robert is poisoned, all but one of the guests, as well as Briggs and Susan, have a substantial motive. Consequently, this is probably the only detective story of quality in which the butler cannot be ruled out as a serious and genuine suspect: By this device, Hare pokes gentle fun at the British joke about detective fiction—"the butler did it."

Hare often provides the reader with a clue to the mystery by means of a reference to a book. In *An English Murder*, the clue is Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*, a biography of British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger; once again, when the technicality on which the plot turns is appreciated, there can be only one criminal, though Dr. Bottwink experiences a shudder of apprehension when, for a time, it appears that his diagnosis must be wrong. It is not to reveal too much to say that the final justification for the title is that the motive could have existed, as the pedantic but sympathetic Bottwink himself remarks, nowhere but in England, or, more properly, Great Britain. A decade and a half later, the peculiarity of the British constitution that, according to Bottwink, had needed correction since at least 1789, would at last be amended; however gentle its thesis, *An English Murder* is one of the more eloquent and pleasurable fictional protests to appear in the postwar period.

Lord Warbeck's ancestral home is in the imaginary region of southern England used in most of Hare's work. An impression of unity of place is thus afforded to the whole body of his novels, though in *An English Murder* the supporting references—to the fictional county of Markshire and the flooding of the fictional River Didder, for example—are fewer. Initially, the atmosphere is more conspicuously one of political dispute. The characters are well drawn, from the obnoxious Robert with his juvenile expressions of hatred for Jews and socialists to the respectful Briggs; from the urbane but ailing Lord Warbeck to the boring Mrs. Carstairs; from the polite and well-bred Lady Camilla to the pert Susan; from the consummate politician Sir Julius to the self-effacing Bottwink, constantly claiming that his knowledge of England is imperfect but just as constantly showing remarkable powers of insight into his companions' behavior. There are well-judged episodes indicative of social stratification, such as the

worried Briggs's dilemmas over the proper company (guests or staff?) in which Bottwink and Rogers should take their meals, and there is at least a hint that the worst sin that a guest can possibly commit is to take a tray of tea upstairs to another guest, thus usurping one of the rightful duties of the butler. At the behest of Sir Julius, Rogers investigates the crime; the stolid bodyguard is forced to admit defeat, however, and he would simply have handed his dossier over to the local police when the thaw came had not Dr. Bottwink, supplementing his powers of observation with his knowledge of history and the British constitution, presented him with the solution.

HE SHOULD HAVE DIED HEREAFTER

The technique and relative lack of inspiration of his last two novels show Hare's declining powers. *He Should Have Died Hereafter* (1958) echoes his genius in, for example, the deft portrayal of a country hunting fraternity and a deeply mistrustful village community. Despite the usual reliance on a technicality (a little-known area of the law of succession), despite the references to other books and the flashes of dry humor, despite even the presence of Pettigrew and his young and sympathetic wife, however, this relatively obvious—and, in the end, explicit—reworking of Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" is unfortunately a rather predictable, ill-structured, and disappointing swan song.

William S. Brooks

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR MALLETT SERIES: *Tenant for Death*, 1937; *Death Is No Sportsman*, 1938; *Suicide Excepted*, 1939

FRANCIS PETTIGREW SERIES: *When the Wind Blows*, 1947 (also known as *The Wind Blows Death*); *That Yew Tree's Shade*, 1954 (also known as *Death Walks the Woods*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Tragedy at Law*, 1942; *With a Bare Bodkin*, 1946; *An English Murder*, 1951 (also known as *The Christmas Murder*); *He Should Have Died Hereafter*, 1958 (also known as *Untimely Death*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Best Detective Stories of Cyril Hare*, 1959 (also known as *Death Among Friends, and Other Detective Stories*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *The House of Warbeck*, 1955

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Magic Bottle*, 1946

EDITED TEXTS: *Roscoe's Criminal Evidence*, 1952 (by Henry Roscoe; with Alan Garfitt); *Leith Hill Musical Festival, 1905-1955: A Record of Fifty Years of Music-Making in Surrey*, 1955

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Bennett, Reynold. "Cyril Hare: The Male Agatha Christie." *The Poisoned Pen* 5 (May/June, 1983):

23-25. Compares Hare to Christie both in terms of the tone and quality of their work and in terms of their relation to British World War II-era culture.

Gilbert, Michael. Introduction to *Best Detective Stories of Cyril Hare*. London: Faber, 1959. Fellow mystery author Gilbert selected and edited the Hare stories collected in this anthology. His introduction provides insight into Hare's writing.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Comprehensive overview of the development of crime fiction in the twentieth century helps contextualize the nature and importance of Hare's distinctive contributions.

Shibuk, Charles. "Cyril Hare." *The Armchair Detective* 3 (October, 1969): 28-30. Brief profile and overview of Hare's career, geared toward the intellectually curious fan of the genre.

THOMAS HARRIS

Born: Jackson, Tennessee; 1940

Types of plot: Master sleuth; police procedural; psychological; horror; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hannibal Lecter, 1981-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HANNIBAL LECTER, a brilliant psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer, plays a minor but key role in the first two books of the series and dominates the third and fourth. Lecter combines elements of Sherlock Holmes and Holmes's nemesis Dr. Moriarty. In the beginning of the series, Lecter, who is imprisoned, advises Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) instructor Will Graham and then FBI trainee Clarice Starling on their cases; he also secretly advises another killer to exterminate Graham's whole family and provides the murderer with the necessary information. Lecter's brilliance and remorseless intensity are directed against many adversaries with whom the readers can-

not sympathize, reducing revulsion at Lecter's actions. Lecter is cultured, dryly humorous, and without conscience.

JACK CRAWFORD, an FBI official, connects the books and represents the law-and-order perspective that guides them. He is a mentor to the protagonists; he regrets putting them in danger, physical or psychological, but is realistic and even manipulative. In *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), he is section chief of the behavioral science unit; his exact title is unclear in *Red Dragon* (1981).

CONTRIBUTION

Thomas Harris excels in three areas: psychological insight into his characters, details of crime and crime detection (including suspect profiling), and a style that is accessible yet finely crafted and impressive in its thematic and original imagery. Because of this combination, his books are not only exceedingly popular but also more widely respected than many in the detective and mystery genres.

Serial killers appeared in fiction before Harris's novels, but as David Sexton notes, before *Red Dragon*, "none had been so closely modeled about what was known" about real serial killers. Harris studied the work of Robert Ressler, who originated criminal profiling, and John Douglas; both worked in the FBI's behavioral science unit, which Harris visited as early as 1978. The portrait of the FBI and profiling in Harris's books is so positive that many critics believe Harris even affected popular ideas concerning real serial killers, the menace they present, and the best methods for apprehending them.

Certainly, many crime novels concerning serial killers would not have been written, or at least not have taken the shape they have, without Harris's novels. In addition, the film of *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) transformed serial-killer films, providing new realism and depth of characterization instead of the nearly supernatural villains and endless interchangeable victims of the slasher films. Ironically, Harris's most famous creation, Hannibal Lecter, is not a realistic serial killer but a popular-culture icon who has been compared to Dracula and Mr. Hyde.

BIOGRAPHY

Little has been published about Thomas Harris's life, which he carefully keeps private. Even the month and day of his birth do not appear in any published accounts. However, he is no hermit. Those who know him—including his mother, with whom he is close—say that Harris is a southern gentleman, a good friend, and a gourmet cook.

Born to William Harris and Polly Harris, Thomas Harris is an only child, raised primarily in Rich, Mississippi, near his birthplace, Jackson, Tennessee. As an adolescent, Harris was bookish and probably unhappy; he read constantly. After attending Clarksdale High School and Cleveland High School, Harris left Mississippi for Baylor College in Waco, Texas.

While earning his bachelor's degree in English from 1961 to 1964, Harris began writing professionally. He covered crime stories for the *Waco Herald-Tribune* and was eventually hired as a full-time reporter. One assignment took him to Mexico to investigate a child-prostitution ring. He also began having pieces published in the

magazines *True* and *Argosy*. No sources have tracked down those pieces or even established whether they were short stories or true-crime reports. Given the histories of the magazines, the latter is likelier. At Baylor, Harris married a fellow student, Harriet; they had one daughter, Anne, and were divorced by 1964. After graduation, Harris traveled in Europe. He moved to New York City in 1968 to work for Associated Press as a reporter, covering crime, and then editor.

In 1973 Harris and coworkers Sam Maull and Dick Riley conceived the novel that would become *Black Sunday* (1975), inspired by acts of terrorism committed in 1972 at the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv by the Japanese Red Army, supported by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and at the Munich Olympics by the Black September Organization. All three researched and began writing; the advance was split three ways. However, Harris made financial arrangements with his cowriters and continued the project alone. The novel received mixed reviews but became a best seller. A film of the novel, directed by John Frankenheimer and featuring Bruce Dern as a terrorist, appeared in 1977. Encouraged by the book's reception, Harris left the Associated Press in 1974 to write novels full time.

When Harris's father was dying in the mid-1980's, Harris returned to Mississippi for eighteen months. He connects *Red Dragon*, dedicated to his father, to that time. When Putnam published the novel in 1981, Harris lived in Italy. This novel was filmed in 1986 as *Manhunter*, directed by Michael Mann and featuring William Petersen, later of the television show *CSI* (began in 2000), as Will Graham. The film was financially unsuccessful but garnered a loyal following for Harris.

Harris works slowly and carefully. His third novel, *The Silence of the Lambs*, sold well and garnered positive reviews from major periodicals; in 1989 it won the Anthony Award (from the World Mystery Convention), World Fantasy Award (World Fantasy Convention), and Stoker Award (Horror Writers' Association of America) for the year's best novel. The film adaptation fully established the reputation of an already popular writer: Released by Orion Pictures in 1991, it earned \$272.7 million and saved the company from bankruptcy. Also,

it was only the third film to win five major Academy Awards: best director (Jonathan Demme), best actress (Jodie Foster), best actor (Anthony Hopkins), best adapted screenplay (Ted Tally), and best picture.

Harris reportedly did not want to write another book featuring Hannibal Lecter, but Delacorte published *Hannibal* in 1999. Despite mixed-to-negative reviews, it became a best seller and was nominated as best novel for the 2000 Bram Stoker Awards. In 2001 the film, directed by Ridley Scott and starring Anthony Hopkins, earned \$351.7 million worldwide and set a record for opening receipts for an R-rated film. Harris allowed the screenplay to change the book's ending; still, many critics found the result too gruesome and morally upsetting, and Jodie Foster declined the role of Clarice Starling, which went to Julianne Moore. Brett Ratner directed a new film based on *Red Dragon*, released in 2002 under that name, featuring Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter.

In 2004, Harris signed a contract with Bantam to write two books for an eight-figure sum. The first, *Hannibal Rising*, was released in December, 2006, when production had already begun on the 2007 film, directed by Peter Webber and starring Gaspard Ulliel as young Hannibal.

ANALYSIS

Thomas Harris's first three novels—*Black Sunday*, *Red Dragon*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*—share many characteristics with each other and with standard thrillers or crime novels; however, *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*, although they still contain some traditional elements of the genre, are shaped by having a charming sociopathic cannibal as the protagonist. Harris's second and third books have strong elements of police procedurals, featuring fingerprinting (including off a corpse's eyeball), an autopsy, and serotyping.

In the first three novels, the protagonist is a government agent, motivated by human concern and duty to ferociously uphold the law, although the agent is still an outsider. *Black Sunday* features Major David Kabakov of Mossad, the Israeli secret service, who tracks the Palestinian terrorists to the United States, where he alienates American law enforcers because of not only his insightfulness but also his ruthlessness. *Red*

Dragon features Will Graham, a peacefully retired FBI agent called back into reluctant temporary service to stop a serial killer. *The Silence of the Lambs* features Clarice Starling, a student at the FBI Academy who becomes central to stopping another serial killer. Graham and Kabakov embrace their ability to stop murder but grapple painfully with the costs to themselves and others. Starling is a woman in a man's world, angry but not yet melancholy as Graham and Kabakov are—perhaps one reason the book was more successful.

However, while the perspectives and values of law enforcement agencies are firmly upheld in these novels, the criminal antagonists are drawn convincingly and with sympathy. All their crimes are portrayed as the result of their having been hurt, though also of how they have chosen to react to those hurts. *Black Sunday* really has two antagonists: Michael Lander, an American veteran and prisoner of war during the Vietnam War, and Dahlia Iyad, part Mata Hari and part an early example of Harris's strong female characters. Francis Dolarhyde in *Red Dragon* compels both compassion and revulsion, as he struggles with his last chance to love a living woman instead of having sex only with the dead. Jame Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs* is pitiful but less well developed. This is partly because, as the novel says, he is defined by "a sort of total lack that he wants to fill" and treats others like things. It is also because Hannibal Lecter overshadows him.

In the first two Lecter novels, Harris portrays Lecter as an unsympathetic character and discourages readers' empathy. In response to Starling's questions, Lecter himself says, "Nothing happened to me, Officer Starling. *I* happened. You can't reduce me to a set of influences. . . . You've got everybody in moral dignity pants—nothing is ever anybody's fault." In *Hannibal*, this changes. *Hannibal* shows Starling cut free from the FBI after a scandal and the death of Jack Crawford. Soon, she no longer provides the legal perspective that condemns Lecter as a monster. Moreover, Lecter is surrounded by worse monsters, including Mason Verger, a rich sexual deviant who literally drinks the tears of children in his martini. The major law officer, Police Commissioner Rinaldo Pazzi, of Florence, Italy, decides to take Verger's bribe and deliver Lecter to the rich man for his private vengeance

but is killed by Lecter. In a complete reversal for Harris, this police officer compels both compassion for his situation and revulsion at his choices.

Moreover, in *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*, Harris reveals why Hannibal Lecter became a serial killer: The privileged son of Eastern European nobility, the young Lecter endured the horrors of World War II's Eastern Front, including the cannibalization of his younger sister Mischa by opportunistic soldiers. *Hannibal Rising* actually contradicts earlier descriptions of Lecter's childhood: For example, *Red Dragon* mentions his childhood cruelty to animals, while in *Hannibal Rising* this is absent, and he is almost saccharinely sweet to his old horse.

Interestingly, although *Hannibal Rising* follows the general approach of the first novel in the series and gives Lecter unlikable characters to kill, it also reintroduces the legal perspective of the earlier books. Inspector Pascal Popil is willing to work with young Lecter, partly out of love for his literally fabulous stepmother Lady Murasaki and partly because the war has left him with a less stable sense of morality, but he sees Lecter as Crawford, Graham, and Starling do, as a monster.

BLACK SUNDAY

When *Black Sunday* was published in 1974, many found the idea of a major terrorist attack on United States soil too unbelievable. Even David Sexton's *The Strange World of Thomas Harris* (2001) says the novel is "of its time and no more" and not truly frightening. However, after September 11, 2001, the novel's premise became more plausible and chilling. In *Black Sunday*, an insane American joins with terrorists to explode the Aldrich blimp, which films the Super Bowl, to kill everyone present, including the United States president. The novel also shows American ambivalence about the Vietnam War and fears about the mental state of the returning veterans.

RED DRAGON

Red Dragon portrays Harris's best criminal, Frances Dolarhyde, a man who thinks of himself as deformed (despite corrective surgery) and finds families to kill by the home movies they send to be processed at the lab where he works. The novel introduces Harris's theme of metamorphosis, as Dolarhyde wants the killings to bring about his Becoming, a transmutation into

the superhuman Red Dragon, named for the watercolor by William Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun*. When Dolarhyde meets and begins to love a strong, independent blind woman, Reba McClane, he has to struggle with his alter ego not to kill her.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

While the details of FBI procedure are sketchy in *Red Dragon*, they are copious and realistic in *The Silence of the Lambs*, from scenes at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, to depictions of the agency's work with local police departments. Though Harris is accused of painting too positive a picture of the FBI, he does depict the bureau's sexism and rigid yet politically opportunistic hierarchy. Serial killer Jame Gumb, who kills obese women to make a suit of their skins, is partially based on Ed Gein, an actual murderer in Wisconsin. Gumb's character has raised complaints from activists representing transgendered people, though the book establishes that Gumb is not a true transgendered person. Still, Gumb's wishes, and his raising of death's head hawkmoths, continue Harris's theme of transformation. Moreover, Gumb's plan and the efforts of protagonist Clarice Starling to fit into the male-oriented FBI develop themes of gender in the book.

HANNIBAL AND HANNIBAL RISING

Many readers have found *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* disappointing, though these books have enthusiastic fans. Some of those fans see the end of *Hannibal*, in which Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter live together as lovers, as a tale in which Beauty tames the Beast. However, the Beast has already fed Beauty the brains of a member of the Department of Justice, which, partly still influenced by Lecter's drugs and hypnotism, Starling enjoyed. In many ways, *Hannibal* undermines all the values supported in *The Silence of the Lambs*: the FBI, law, and mercy rather than murder. The book also is highly elitist, inviting readers to identify with Lecter's wealth and taste and withhold their condemnation as he kills and eats "free-range rude." *Hannibal Rising* is equally elitist, especially concerning Lecter's life in Paris. More successfully, it shows the growth of Lecter's macabre interests through medicine as well as murder.

Bernadette Lynn Bosky

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HANNIBAL LECTER SERIES: *Red Dragon*, 1981; *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1988; *Hannibal*, 1999; *Hannibal Rising*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Black Sunday*, 1975

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Lambs, and *Hannibal*." *Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 5 (August, 2005): 819-833. Discusses the sense of betrayal and the outrage that readers felt over the ending of *Hannibal* and the transformation of Starling.

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CAROLYN HART

Born: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; August 25, 1936

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Death on Demand, 1987-

Henrie O, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ANNIE LAURANCE DARLING is the owner of Death on Demand, a mystery bookstore on the South Carolina island of Broward's Rock. She investigates whatever mysteries come her way. During the early part

of the series, she marries Max Darling.

MAX DARLING is a wealthy young man with a penchant for amateur detective work. He has created Confidential Commissions, which investigates problems brought to it.

LAUREL DARLING is Max's attractive, eccentric mother, who interferes with a New Age flair, sometimes to the benefit of the investigation and sometimes otherwise.

HENNY BRAWLEY is Annie's best customer and good friend, an elderly woman who takes action in investigations and sometimes gets herself into trouble.

HENRIETTA O'DWYER "HENRIE O" COLLINS is a widowed, retired journalist who investigates present and past deaths, including the long-ago death of her husband.

CONTRIBUTION

The novels in both of Carolyn Hart's series fall in the cozy genre. Hart uses the methods of Golden Age mystery writers such as Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, and Margery Allingham to provide quickly sketched but interesting characters and a variety of viable suspects. Plots are fairly straightforward, and there is an element of romance, especially in the earlier *Death on Demand* novels that include the courtship and marriage of two amateur sleuths.

The *Death on Demand* mysteries are unusual for their self-referentiality. Set in Annie Laurance Darling's mystery bookstore, they constantly evoke parallels with the books sold there. Many of them begin and end with the interesting device of a contest, in which five paintings represent five murder mysteries and the first to guess the references of the paintings wins the prize. This framing device contributes to the "cozy" atmosphere of these novels in that the reader guesses along with the characters in the novel, and the identities are revealed only after the "real" murderer is discovered.

The *Henrie O* novels tend to be a little more serious but still reader-friendly and direct. They present an older woman, Henrietta O'Dwyer "Henrie O" Collins, as the astute detective, as Christie's *Miss Marple* novels did, and they assign to her a competence and confidence reassuring to older readers. Hart has said her intent in writing the *Henrie O* novels is to create a positive image of older women that encourages people to value them and treat them with respect.

Hart received an Anthony Award in 1990 for *Honeymoon with Murder* (1988); Agatha Awards in 1988 for *Something Wicked* (1988), in 1993 for *Dead Man's Island* (1993), and in 2003 for *Letter from Home*; and Macavity Awards in 1990 for *A Little Class on Murder* (1989) and in 1993 for "Henrie O's Holiday." She also was given a lifetime achievement award from the Oklahoma Center for the Book.

BIOGRAPHY

Carolyn Hart was born Carolyn Gimpel on August 25, 1936, in Oklahoma City. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1956, the same year that she married Philip Donnell Hart. The couple would later have two children. Growing up in Oklahoma in wartime convinced Hart of the immense importance of newspapers and spurred her ambition to be a journalist. She was a reporter for the *Norman Transcript* and an editor of another journal before she became a freelance writer in 1961. She taught at the University of Oklahoma School of Journalism and Mass Communications from 1982 to 1985. Although she ultimately became a mystery writer, her enthusiasm for journalism has not waned, and this interest led to her award-winning novel *Letter from Home* (2003), which, she said, was her book about home and about journalism as well.

Hart has been active in crime writers' associations;



Carolyn Hart. (Library of Congress)

she was president of Sisters in Crime and national director of Mystery Writers of America, and she belongs to many similar organizations. Hart has written more than thirty mysteries and has received Agatha, Anthony, and Macavity awards.

ANALYSIS

Carolyn Hart unfailingly provides cozy, reader-friendly mysteries that project underlying values with wide appeal. The stories imply that most people are basically good and desire community, that love is the power behind positive action, and that evil flourishes in the absence of love. This perspective may seem simplistic, but the strong characterization and detailed setting Hart provides give life to the novels. Many current female mystery writers present a wounded heroine who is trying to come to terms with her own trauma while helping others. Annie Darling is whole; Henrie O has been wounded, but her grief is in the past and has made her more compassionate.

The presence of the gothic, sometimes hovering in the margins, sometimes organic to Hart's novels, implies that there are some things that cannot, and should not, be explained. Her works have a southern feel to them, containing the sense of fatality and inescapability that surfaces in southern thought and a reliance on women's intuition. Her work, like much writing with a gothic slant, has an implied metaphysical or spiritual dimension, in which supernatural events may suggest a perspective beyond that of humans. Although her novels would certainly not be called religious, their sense of poetic justice contributes to the suggestion of spirituality.

Readers find Hart's novels are addictive for a number of reasons: the sensitive and generous main characters, the sense of escape they get on visiting Broward's Island or Hart's other settings, the multiple allusions to other detective novels, and the direct and indirect comments on the genre. Some readers may find the references to other mysteries and the genre annoying, but Hart's fans delight in it, and it helps differentiate her work.

One of Hart's strengths is that she leaves herself open for changes in direction; therefore, her novels are not predictable, except for the series conventions such

as the mystery chat and the recurrent contests in the Death on Demand series. Hart is one of the heirs of the Agatha Christie tradition, but she possesses a flexible frame of vision. She has also written some nonseries novels, mystery and otherwise, and novels for children.

WHITE ELEPHANT DEAD

White Elephant Dead (1999) is a typical Death on Demand mystery, set like the others on Broward's Rock, a fictional sea island community off the South Carolina coast. Katherine Girard is murdered while apparently collecting donations for a White Elephant sale; however, it soon becomes clear that she was visiting the houses of the wealthy for blackmail purposes. Henny Brawley, bookstore owner Annie Darling's friend, was injured at the time of the murder, and the dull-witted but arrogant police chief suspects her of the murder. Annie and her husband, Max, follow a trail of puzzling clues to find the real killer. The plot involves revealing the secrets of those on Katherine's blackmail list to determine who had the strongest motivation to kill her.

White Elephant Dead has the appeal and the limitations of the typical cozy. The characters found in many of the Death on Demand novels are present, including Laurel, Annie's mother-in-law and New Age devotee; the self-centered murder mystery writer Emmy; and Henny Brawley, the ultimate mystery fan. The setting of the Death on Demand bookstore lends itself to many comparisons between the current action and events in well-known mystery novels; these comparisons are so numerous that occasional mystery readers less familiar with these works may find them confusing and distracting. However, the attractiveness, generosity, and friendliness of the main characters makes the novel an easy and pleasant read.

RESORT TO MURDER

Resort to Murder (2001), a Henrie O mystery, is set in Bermuda. Henrie O is invited to attend the wedding of her former son-in-law, Lloyd Drake, and Connor Bailey, a beautiful, flirtatious widow, in Bermuda. The resort, however, appears to be haunted: Strange lights appear from a tower from which the resort manager's husband fell to his death the previous year. Henrie O and most of the other members of the party think the haunting is a prank, but a murder soon illustrates how

serious the situation is. Although Henrie O is recovering from pneumonia, she is able to follow the clues and unravel the mystery, though not before a second murder takes place.

Although the novel might be thought of as “murder lite,” it is enjoyable reading. Hart is particularly good at describing the natural beauty of the island, and the lush background adds to the romance of this novel. Hart also lets Henrie O act like the elderly, recently ill woman that she is; she does not behave like an athletic college student.

LETTER FROM HOME

In *Letter from Home*, a nonseries mystery novel, Gretchen “G. G.” Gilman, a well-known journalist, receives a letter from Barbara, a childhood friend living in the small Oklahoma town where Gretchen grew up. She heeds the plea to come back, and when she does, the past she had nearly forgotten explodes in her face, and she is forced to remember.

During World War II, thirteen-year-old Gretchen was able to get a reporting job with a newspaper, as many men were off at war. She covered local issues with an expertise beyond her years. Then Faye, the mother of her friend Barbara, was murdered, and rumors spread about Faye’s misbehavior. Barbara’s father, Clyde, was accused of the murder, and Gretchen determined to get at the truth. The resulting tragedy was one of the events that drove the young reporter away from her hometown. Now an elderly woman, Gretchen goes back home to learn the truth. The truth is painful, but Barbara wants her old friend Gretchen to find it.

This story is richly atmospheric in its evocation of small-town America in the 1940’s. The specifics of that life are portrayed precisely and lovingly. Hart’s nonseries novels tend to be detailed and even poetic, and this one is no exception.

DEATH OF THE PARTY

Death of the Party (2005), the sixteenth Death on Demand mystery, has an intriguing setting. The novel begins with the preoccupations of a number of friends and relatives of Jeremiah Addison, a media mogul who owned a private island and died from a fall during a party held on his estate, Golden Silk. His daughter-in-law knew at the time that it was murder but had her

reasons for not sharing her knowledge with the police. Now, a year later, she wants justice—and wants Max Darling, who runs Confidential Commissions, to find out who killed Jeremiah. Max and his wife, Annie, go to the island, and they investigate any possible motives that the attendees could have had for killing the magnate, then follow the chain of evidence toward a conclusion. The murderer begins to take various steps in an attempt to remain undetected, and the suspense builds to a satisfying climax.

Hart likes to use islands as her settings; however, after so many books, Broward’s Rock has become so familiar to her readers that some of the atmosphere has been lost. Taking the action to a private island—and at one point marooning the party on it—in *Death of the Party* renews the feeling of island life.

Janet McCann

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HENRIE O SERIES: *Dead Man’s Island*, 1993; *Scandal in Fair Haven*, 1994; *Death in Lovers’ Lane*, 1997; *Death in Paradise*, 1998; *Death on the River Walk*, 1999; *Resort to Murder*, 2001; *Set Sail for Murder*, 2007

DEATH ON DEMAND SERIES: *Death on Demand*, 1987; *Design for Murder*, 1988; *Something Wicked*, 1988; *Honeymoon with Murder*, 1988; *A Little Class on Murder*, 1989; *Deadly Valentine*, 1990; *The Christie Caper*, 1991; *Southern Ghost*, 1992; *Mint Julep Murder*, 1995; *Yankee Doodle Dead*, 1998; *White Elephant Dead*, 1999; *Sugarplum Dead*, 2000; *April Fool Dead*, 2002; *Engaged to Die*, 2003; *Murder Walks the Plank*, 2004; *Death of the Party*, 2005; *Dead Days of Summer*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Flee from the Past*, 1975; *A Settling of Accounts*, 1976; *Escape from Paris*, 1982; *The Rich Die Young*, 1983; *Death by Surprise*, 1983; *Castle Rock*, 1983; *Skulduggery*, 1984; *The Devereux Legacy*, 1986; *Brave Hearts*, 1987; *Letter from Home*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *Crime on Her Mind*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *The Secret of the Cellars*, 1964; *Dangerous Summer*, 1968; *No Easy*

Answers, 1970; *Rendezvous in Veracruz*, 1972; *Danger, High Explosives!*, 1972

NONFICTION: *The Sooner Story, 1890-1980*, 1980 (with Charles F. Long)

EDITED TEXTS: *Love & Death*, 2001; *Malice Domestic Four: An Anthology of Original Traditional Mystery Stories*, 1995; *Crimes of the Heart*, 1995

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Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,

2007. Contains a brief essay on Hart that looks at her works and life.

McDonnell, Brandy. "Busy Author Extols Virtues of Book Fest." *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, May 18, 2007, p. 1. Profile written in conjunction with Hart's leading a workshop for aspiring writers notes her support of these events and her career, which includes plans for a new series set in the fictional Oklahoma town of Adelaide.

Nichols, Max. "Mystery Writer Succeeds After Early Struggles." *Journal Record*, May 20, 2002, p. 1. Nichols looks at Hart's career, which stalled after she published two mysteries and then took off after her publication of *Death and Demand*. Describes her early life, her relationship with her husband, and her writing habits.

Wall, Judith. "Hart of the Mystery." *Sooner Magazine* (Winter, 2007). The University of Oklahoma magazines profiles Hart, one of its graduates. The reviewer notes Hart's struggles, which paid off with a series of award-winning books.

SIMON HARVESTER

Henry St. John Clair Rumbold-Gibbs

Born: Salisbury, Wiltshire, England; June 28, 1910

Died: Place unknown; April, 1975

Also wrote as Henry Gibbs; John Saxon

Type of plot: Espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Roger Fleming, 1942-1951

Malcolm Kenton, 1955-1957

Dorian Silk, 1956-1976

Heron Murmur, 1960-1962

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DORIAN SILK is a British spy with an unlimited knowledge of languages and local customs of the exotic corners of the world to which he is sent. Sardonic, a hater of cities and bureaucracy, Silk is deeply motivated by the Protestant work ethic but often has trou-

ble completing his missions because so many of the women who are involved in international espionage find him irresistibly attractive and refuse to leave him alone.

CONTRIBUTION

Simon Harvester's espionage novels have been praised for their authenticity and for their ability to offer readers both an adventure and an education. Based on his travels in Third World countries and on his considerable insight into world politics, Harvester's novels are characterized by an underlying anticommunist philosophy. Dorian Silk, introduced in *Dragon Road* (1956) and featured in thirteen "Road" novels, represents Harvester at his best. The Dorian Silk novels have been called "the truest portrait of a secret service agent."

BIOGRAPHY

Simon Harvester was born Henry St. John Clair Rumbold-Gibbs on June 28, 1910, in Salisbury, Wiltshire, England. Following graduation from Marlborough College, Wiltshire, Harvester studied painting in London, Paris, and Venice. He was married three times and had one son, from his first marriage.

Harvester's career included work as an industrial reporter, film critic, publisher's reader, foreign and war correspondent, chicken farmer, and political analyst. He also served in the Royal Corps of Signals and the Royal Intelligence Corps of the British Army. By the close of World War II, Harvester had visited nearly every Third World country, using his knowledge of many languages (English, French, German, Afrikaans, Arabic, Hindustani, and various dialects) to gather background information for his novels. In 1950, he received the Anisfield-Wolf Award (for improving racial understanding) for *Twilight in South Africa* (1950). Harvester died in April, 1975.

ANALYSIS

Simon Harvester began his writing career during World War II, after being given a medical discharge from the British army. His first espionage novel, *Let Them Prey* (1942), was followed by some forty more, with his last work, *Siberian Road*, being published in 1976, the year following his death. These novels, in particular those published following World War II, are based for the most part on Harvester's own travels and the conclusions he drew as a result of those travels. Often fictionalizations of actual events in international politics, Harvester's novels have been praised for their authenticity and for the education they offer.

Yet the educational value of Harvester's novels is limited, largely because most of the information they contain is dated. In addition, the account of most of the events described in the novels is colored by Harvester's unswerving anticommunist philosophy, a philosophy to which he gave full voice in his nonfictional works, which were published under the name Henry Gibbs. In his nonfiction, Harvester analyzed the political situation in Africa and other emerging nations, giving close attention to Russian influence in these areas. Most of these works, like his award-winning study of

South Africa, warn of Russian intrigues.

Harvester's concern over the spread of communism in the Third World is clearly reflected in his fiction, particularly in his efforts to make his novels as true to life as possible. The authenticity of the novels' settings, the topicality of their themes, their frequent reference to the myopia of free world governments, and their sometimes tiresome monologues about the Russian threat to democracy suggest that Harvester intended his fiction to be taken seriously. As a result, Harvester's espionage novels may be read simply as exciting adventures in international espionage or they may be studied as examples of post-World War II anti-communist literature.

Harvester's commitment to realism is also reflected in the care that he took to make his agents as authentic as possible. In creating his spies, Harvester appears to have been inspired by the writings of serious students of espionage, such as Allen Dulles, from whose book *The Craft of Intelligence* (1963) Harvester quotes in an epigraph in *Assassins Road* (1965):

There is in the intelligence officer . . . a certain "front-line" mentality, a "first-line-of-defence" mentality. His awareness is sharpened because in his daily work he is almost continually confronted with evidence of the enemy in action. If the sense of adventure plays some role here, as it surely does, it is adventure with a large measure of concern for the public safety.

Harvester's greatest spy, Dorian Silk, is this kind of intelligence officer. Featured in thirteen "Road" novels, Silk is a professional agent's agent. Far from being a James Bond kind of spy, he is convincingly human, neither a soldier of fortune nor a devil-may-care freelancer. If adventure is involved in a Silk story—and it almost always is—there is also, underlying whatever is happening and never far from Silk's mind, "a large measure of concern for the public safety."

The authenticity so evident in Harvester's settings and his characterization of men is strangely absent in the women featured in his stories. Whether this was a concession to what he believed readers of espionage novels wanted or reflective of his own bias, Harvester was apparently unable to escape from a rather jaded, lurid portrayal of the female protagonists in his novels.

Throughout the novels, Harvester's male protagonists are hindered in their fight against the heinous designs of communism by beautiful women whose only goal in life is to sacrifice their bodies to some spy.

MOSCOW ROAD

In *Moscow Road* (1970), for example, Dorian Silk's important mission to Moscow is sidetracked by an unexpected encounter with Russian agent Irena Gerina. Silk had last seen Irena in Yemen four years before—just after he had killed her husband—and her last words had been a promise to hunt him down and shoot him like a dog. Beautiful in her wrath but even more beautiful now, Irena surprises Silk by informing him that during the intervening four years she has been waiting, not to shoot him, but to let him know that she is his. Calling herself an archetypal primitive woman, Irena Gerina compares herself to the women in Greek tragedies, women who fall in love with the soldiers who kill their husbands and ravish them in the process. Forgoing any resort to euphemisms, Irena simply murmurs, "I want to go to bed with you."

ASSASSINS ROAD

Although Harvester's female characters never seem to stray from this weary stereotype, their language is not always as blunt as Irena Gerina's. In *Assassins Road*, for example, Harvester achieves an almost Song of Songs quality in Nofret Gohar's appeal to Silk:

"Man, must I die of thirst for the wine of thy love to relieve me?" she murmured huskily. "Must thou torment me? O man, since we parted my body has been a desert burnt by merciless heat awaiting thy presence to give it freshness and meaning. Thou hast obsessed my senses. Thy vigour and strength torment me. I think of thee every minute. I crave to be the instrument under thy hands. Must thou deny us the solace of our passion? I await thee. Must time mock our failure to fill these hours? Thy need is my delight. O lion, thou would find me thy true mate."

Aside from his portrayal of women, Harvester's novels are wholly realistic. His descriptions of cities, villages, and local topography demonstrate a careful attention to detail. Perhaps reflecting his early training as a portrait painter, Harvester's descriptions provide

authentic physical and geographic details while evoking subtly the mood of the place described. In *Assassins Road*, for example, Harvester begins his story with an excellent thumbnail sketch of Jerusalem that also sets the mood for what follows. The opening sentence, "This is a city," when read along with the description, recalls *Moby Dick*'s famous "Call me Ishmael." Also in *Assassins Road*, Harvester writes,

Some people say you can guess something or know it or imagine it but you cannot "sense" it. That is wrong here. You sense the essential difference of these men. . . . What differentiates these men from others is their eyes. You sense that they believe they live on the verge of some gigantic manifestation of divine intervention. Among the young and middle aged the eyes are hot and brooding; among the old they are contemplative and brooding. You sense that they believe themselves animated by realities unfelt by men elsewhere, as if each one regarded himself as a part of legend.

This attention to detail and the ability to work this detail into authentic descriptions serve Harvester well as he establishes a mood for his stories. Once the story becomes more involved, however, Harvester is not at all selective about the details. His novels suffer as a result, as is evident in the following passage from *Zion Road* (1968):

According to a cheap pock-marked alarm-clock wedged amid a litter of filthy chipped crockery, each item of which had either a coagulated brown tidemark or a bile-coloured puddle covered by greyish scum, surrounded by makeshift ashtrays overflowing like multiplying bacteria that spread like contagion over an ancient kitchen table, it was nearly quarter to eight when they were taken into the small ground-floor room occupied by Kabak and a man who sat fidgeting at a radio.

The two similes contained in this sample ("overflowing like multiplying bacteria" and "spread like contagion") are also characteristic of the style of Harvester, who was seldom satisfied with a description that did not contain the word "like":

A second pistol hit him on the left side of the head. . . . tinsel streamers whizzed around like comets and plunged into his head. Something hit his head again. . . . The tinsel glowed like molten silver. . . . He tried to

stiffen his knees. . . . Instead they seemed to burst like little paper bags full of water. Something hit his face or his face hit it. Out of a black void a roar like a giant wind rushed into him.

In spite of this tendency to overwrite, Harvester involves the reader in the excitement of his stories. The intensity of his feeling about the threat of communism and the effort he put into giving his stories authenticity make them eminently readable—although the reader who attempts several of Harvester's novels in succession will find that scenes and conversations begin to sound familiar. This is not surprising, given the fact that Harvester produced an average of more than two books each year from 1942 until 1975. Even so, the reader who takes Harvester in limited doses, who can skim through some overblown prose and wink at his characterization of women, will find that, among the writers of espionage fiction, Harvester stands out as one of the genre's master storytellers.

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROGER FLEMING SERIES: *Let Them Prey*, 1942; *Epitaphs for Lemmings*, 1943; *Maybe a Trumpet*, 1945; *A Breastplate for Aaron*, 1949; *Sheep May Safely Graze*, 1950; *Obols for Charon*, 1951; *The Vessel May Carry Explosives*, 1951

MALCOLM KENTON SERIES: *The Bamboo Screen*, 1955; *The Paradise Men*, 1956; *The Copper Butterfly*, 1957; *The Golden Fear*, 1957

DORIAN SILK SERIES: *Dragon Road*, 1956; *Unsung Road*, 1960; *Red Road*, 1963; *Silk Road*, 1963; *Assassins Road*, 1965; *Treacherous Road*, 1966; *Battle Road*, 1967; *Zion Road*, 1968; *Nameless Road*, 1969; *Moscow Road*, 1970; *Sahara Road*, 1972; *Forgotten Road*, 1974; *Siberian Road*, 1976

HERON MURMUR SERIES: *The Chinese Hammer*, 1960; *Troika*, 1962 (also known as *The Flying Horse*)

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS GIBBS): *A Lantern for Diogenes*, 1946; *Whatsoever Things Are True*, 1947; *The Sequins Lost Their Lustre*, 1948; *Good Men and True*, 1949; *Witch Hunt*, 1951; *Cat's Cradle*, 1952; *Traitor's Gate*, 1952; *Arrival in Suspicion*, 1953; *Lucifer at Sunset*, 1953; *Spiders' Web*, 1953; *Delay in*

Danger, 1954; *Tiger in the North*, 1955; *The Yesterday Walkers*, 1958; *An Hour Before Zero*, 1959; *The Moonstone Jungle*, 1961; *Flight in Darkness*, 1964; *Shadows in a Hidden Land*, 1966; *A Corner of the Playground*, 1973

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS GIBBS): *At a Farthing's Rate*, 1943; *From All Blindness*, 1944; *Not to the Swift*, 1944; *Blue Days and Fair*, 1946; *Know Then Thyself*, 1947; *Man About Town*, 1948 (with Cyril Campion); *Pawns in Ice*, 1948; *Ten-Thirty Sharp*, 1949; *Withered Garland*, 1950; *Taps, Colonel Roberts*, 1951; *Cream and Cider*, 1952; *Disputed Barricade*, 1952; *The Six-Mile Face*, 1952; *Cape of Shadows*, 1954; *The Splendour and the Dust*, 1955; *The Winds of Time*, 1956; *Thunder at Dawn*, 1957; *The Tumult and the Shouting*, 1958; *The Bamboo Prison*, 1961; *The Crimson Gate*, 1963; *The Mortal Fire*, 1963

NONFICTION (AS GIBBS): *Affectionately Yours, Fanny: Fanny Kemble and the Theatre*, 1947; *Theatre Tapestry*, 1949; *Twilight in South Africa*, 1950; *Crescent in Shadow*, 1952; *Italy on Borrowed Time*, 1953; *Africa on a Tightrope*, 1954; *Background to Bitterness: The Story of South Africa, 1652-1954*, 1954; *The Masks of Spain*, 1955; *The Hills of India*, 1961

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Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. This study of British and American spy fiction begins with three general chapters on the appeal, emotional effects, and narrative codes of the genre, thus helping readers understand Harvester's novels.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies to actual intelligence agents with the intent of demonstrating that truth is stranger than fiction. Although

Harvester is not directly discussed, the work helps place his fiction within the genre.

McCormick, Donald, and Katy Fletcher. *Spy Fiction: A Connoisseur's Guide*. New York: Facts on File, 1990. Includes an entry on Harvester, comparing him to his contemporaries, precursors, and followers.

Smith, Myron J., Jr., and Terry White. *Cloak and Dagger Fiction: An Annotated Guide to Spy Thrillers*. 3d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995. Detailed annotated bibliography of spy fiction comments on Harvester's works and career.

JOHN HARVEY

Born: London, England; December 21, 1938

Also wrote as Jon Barton; William S. Brady; L. J. Coburn; J. B. Dancer (joint pseudonym with Angus Wells); Jon Hart; Jon B. Harvey; William M. James; Terry Lennox; John J. McLaglen; James Mann (joint pseudonym with Laurence James); Thom Ryder; J. D. Sandon; Michael Syson

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; hard-boiled; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Scott Mitchell, 1976-
Charlie Resnick, 1989-
Frank Elder, 2004-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SCOTT MITCHELL is England's toughest—and best—private eye. At core, he is kindhearted, but he usually does not have the opportunity to show his softer side as he becomes swept up in a series of ultraviolent cases.

CHARLIE RESNICK is a detective inspector with the Nottingham Criminal Investigative Division in the East Midlands of England. A large, bulky, rumpled man of Polish heritage in his forties, he has been a police officer since the mid-1970's. An avid jazz fan, he lives in a large house with four cats named after musicians (Dizzy, Miles, Pepper, and Bud). A compassionate man, Resnick broods over past cases, particularly those in which someone died. Formerly married to an unfaithful wife, Elaine, he has relationships with sev-

eral women before taking up with high school teacher Hannah Campbell.

HANNAH CAMPBELL, an attractive high school English teacher in her mid-thirties, has blond hair with red highlights. She began an affair with Resnick during the course of an investigation involving one of her students. Their relationship is a loving one, though not always smooth because several of her past relationships have colored her attitude toward men. In addition, she is not a cat lover.

FRANK ELDER, in his early fifties, has been a police officer since he was twenty. He worked his way up the ladder from uniformed officer in Leeds and Huddersfield to detective in Lincolnshire, and eventually to detective inspector in West London and in the Nottinghamshire Major Crime Unit. Discouraged by law enforcement's failure to make inroads against rampant crime, he retired on a pension. Elder, however, continues to investigate cases informally, sometimes acting as a consultant to the police. Separated from his wife, Joanne, because of her infidelity, he has a teenage daughter, Katherine, called Kate.

CONTRIBUTION

A prolific writer since the mid-1970's, John Harvey has written—in his own name and under a number of pseudonyms—in a wide variety of subgenres, including motorcycle adventure stories, Westerns, war stories, private eye novels, police procedurals, amateur sleuth novels, and thrillers. In addition to novels, he has written poetry, short stories, books for juveniles, and novelizations of films and television shows. He also has writ-

ten for television and radio. Probably the best known of Harvey's many creations is Charlie Resnick, the competent, unambitious detective inspector who is the central character in a series of well-regarded police procedurals and a number of short stories.

Harvey has received considerable commercial and critical success during his lengthy career. His first Resnick series novel, *Lonely Hearts* (1989), was short-listed for the Gold Dagger Award by the Crime Writers' Association (CWA) and was named one of the one hundred most notable crime novels of the twentieth century by the *Times* of London, and his adaptation of the novel for television earned a bronze medal for best screenplay at the 1992 New York Festival. Often nominated for other CWA awards, Harvey has won the Sherlock Award for the best British detective novel for *Last Rites* (1998), the Sony Radio Drama Silver Award for his adaptation of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1999), and the Grand Prix du Roman Noir for *Cold Light* (1994). Harvey's first entry in a crime series featuring retired detective Frank Elder, *Flesh and Blood* (2004), won the CWA's Silver Dagger Award for fiction and the American Barry Award as best British crime novel of the year. In 2007, Harvey won the Prix du Polar Européen for *Ash and Bone* (2005). The same year he was honored with the CWA's Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for sustained excellence in crime writing.

BIOGRAPHY

John Barton Harvey was born December 21, 1938, in London and spent much of his childhood in Nottingham. He attended Goldsmith's College at the University of London, where he earned a teaching certificate in 1963. He married and fathered twins Tom and Leanne, before he was divorced in the mid-1970's. Between 1963 and 1974, Harvey taught English and drama at a succession of secondary schools in London, Derbyshire, Andover, Hampshire, and Hertfordshire. From 1970 to 1974 he also studied at Hatfield Polytechnic, earning a bachelor's degree in English.

From the early 1970's onward, Harvey contributed short stories to various periodicals and in 1975 wrote his first novels—*Avenging Angel* and *Angel Alone*—a pair of violent motorcycle epics under the pseudonym

Thom Ryder. This work apparently unlocked the floodgates of his creativity, and over the next decade Harvey poured out a veritable torrent of novels, mostly under a variety of pseudonyms, including dozens of Westerns in numerous series, such as the Hawk, Peacemaker, and Gringos series. Under his own name, Harvey also produced a hard-boiled private eye series featuring Scott Mitchell (beginning with *Amphetamines and Pearls*, 1976), wrote novelizations of films and television shows, and turned out books for juveniles (such as *What About It, Sharon?* 1979), television scripts, and occasional poetry chapbooks (*Providence*, 1978).

For more than twenty years (1977-1999), Harvey was editor and publisher of Nottingham's *Slow Dancer* Press, supporting the work of underpublished writers, and he edited *Slow Dancer* magazine from 1977 to 1993. In the meantime, he returned to education, earning a master's degree with a specialty in American studies in 1979 at the University of Nottingham, where he served as part-time instructor in film and literature from 1979 to 1986.

Since 1989, when *Lonely Hearts*, the first in his acclaimed Charlie Resnick series of police procedurals was published, Harvey has achieved considerable recognition under his own name as a writer of fiction. He is also renowned as a film and book reviewer for the *Nottingham News*, *Trader*, and *Time Out*; as a poet (with such volumes as *Ghosts of a Chance* and *Territory*, both 1992); as a teacher-tutor with the Arvon Foundation and with the Squaw Valley Community of Writers' Fiction Workshop (1995); and as a television and radio scriptwriter. His award-winning Frank Elder crime novels (*Flesh and Blood*, *Ash and Bone*, and *Darkness and Light*, 2006) have stirred interest among a new generation of readers for his earlier work.

Harvey became a father again in 1998, with the birth of a daughter, Molly Ernestine Bolling, to his partner Sarah. After living in London and in Cornwall—where his Frank Elder novels are set—Harvey and his family moved back to Nottingham in 2004.

ANALYSIS

John Harvey learned the writing craft well while writing dozens of novels, primarily Westerns, between

the mid-1970's and mid-1980's. His acquired skills have been particularly evident since 1989, when he published *Lonely Hearts*, the initial entry in the Charlie Resnick series of police procedurals. It is to Harvey's credit that he makes it seem easy to bring together various elements of storytelling—characterization, dialogue, setting, voice, plotting, and pacing—to create a coherent whole. He produces novels whose overall effect is synergistic: works that result in much greater effect than the sum of their parts. Harvey's unflinchingly hard-boiled, naturalistic Resnick novels are not so much read as they are experienced; they are masterful examples of what Samuel Coleridge meant when he wrote of the writers' goal to create a "willing suspension of disbelief." Harvey accomplishes this effect through stylistically simple, straightforward, reportorial writing that does not clamor for attention.

Resnick and the other characters who stalk the pages of Harvey's novels are first and foremost authentic and believable. Each of the players has unique qualities: small quirks, flaws, habits, interests, prejudices, and beliefs that bring them to life as individuals. They speak as real people do—in non sequiturs, with profanity, in darkly humorous asides and insults, in lies and half-truths designed to save face or hide exposure—stuttering and fumbling in their attempts to express the inexpressible. Charlie Resnick in particular is a brilliant creation, a police officer who feels sympathy and compassion for both those who abide by the law and those who break it, because he knows that life is hard and filled with temptations to which anyone can succumb and that existence does not consist merely of black-and-white absolutes but rather a succession of grays.

Told in third person from various viewpoints, central of which is Resnick's, the plots are almost mundane because they deal with ordinary—though frequently horrific—crimes. These are often the result of dysfunctional families in which abused children grow up to become abusers. Other interrelated themes concern the huge gap between the haves and the have-nots, or the animosity among natives and aliens in British society. Whatever their root causes, conflicts suddenly and inevitably spin out of control with violent consequences for perpetrator and victim alike. Resnick's modern,

technologically advanced world is one of isolation, despair, uncertainty, and confusion, which the author has keenly observed and deftly drawn.

The language of Harvey's novels is deceptively simple, with few similes, metaphors, or other literary devices cluttering a narrative propelled by a common, everyday vocabulary. Dialogue, reproducing the speech patterns and regional inflections of different classes of citizens, carries the heaviest burden, advancing plot, shading character, and establishing atmosphere. Suspense comes through the presentation of a variety of disparate perspectives that slowly coalesce, as characters are placed in jeopardy, suspects are eliminated, motives come to light, and clues are revealed. Harvey's Resnick novels, which routinely receive stellar reviews, have been called, with good reason, a series that transcends genre.

EASY MEAT

The eighth novel in the Resnick series, *Easy Meat* (1996), centers on the activities of the Snape family, a group of dysfunctional people. Matriarch Norma Snape is the slovenly mother of three children—Nicky, Sheena, and Shane—over whom she has little control. Sixteen-year-old Sheena hangs out with a pack of wild, violent, drugged-out girls, and it will be only a matter of time until she gets into serious trouble. Shane, eighteen, is a lazy lout who spends most of his days watching television or palling around with a bunch of racists who delight in mischief, particularly in beating up Irishmen and homosexuals. Fifteen-year-old Nicky specializes in burglary—during the course of a break-in, he beats an elderly couple senseless, a crime that draws the attention of detective inspector Charlie Resnick and his crew. Charlie is attracted to Hannah Campbell, one of Nicky's teachers, and they become lovers.

Forensic evidence uncovered by those under Resnick's command leads to the capture of Nicky, and the juvenile is placed in detention while awaiting trial, where he promptly dies by hanging, apparently a suicide. Bill Alston, a police officer nearing retirement, is assigned to lead the investigation into Nicky's death and shortly afterward is beaten to death while walking his dogs.

A fascinating study of urban violence, with the un-

derlying theme of the debate regarding nature-versus-nurture theories of human behavior, *Easy Meat* presents a complex plot revolving around mindless prejudice, while providing glimpses at British police procedures and office politics that hamper investigations. Characters are exceedingly well drawn and speak in natural, slangy, profane voices that make them come alive. The lean, atmospheric narration, in which not a word is wasted, evokes a unique setting. Harvey nonjudgmentally explores the tangled relationships among the assorted cast in the course of demonstrating that there is a fine line between good and the evil in society.

IN A TRUE LIGHT

In the nonseries novel *In a True Light* (2001), minor artist Sloane is sixty years old and just released from a British prison following a two-year sentence for forging paintings at the instigation of London gallery owner Robert Parsons. Picking up the pieces of his life, Sloane returns to the studio he set up before his incarceration, where he finds a letter from a long-ago lover, Jane Graham, a well-known abstract painter living in Italy. She has leukemia and wants to see Sloane before she dies. Sloane travels to Italy, where Jane informs him that their liaison in New York City in the late 1950's resulted in the birth of a daughter, Connie. On her deathbed, Jane extracts a promise from Sloane that he will attempt to find Connie, now in her early forties and residing somewhere in New York.

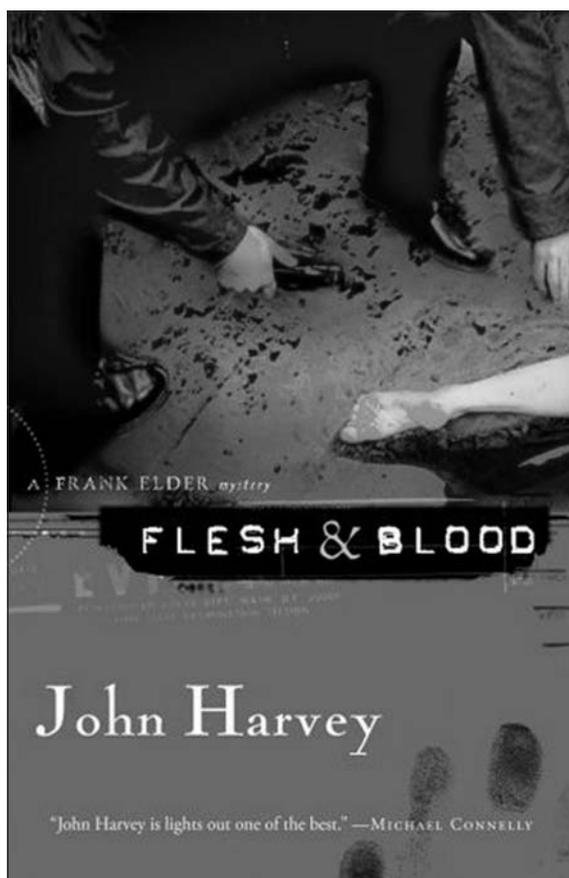
Sloane travels to the United States and, playing detective, follows Connie's trail. He manages to track her down and discovers that his daughter, long dependent on drugs and alcohol, has become a lounge singer. She is in the clutches of her manager-lover, Vincent Delaney, a money launderer with ties to the mob. Delaney has a history of violence toward women and is under surreptitious observation by New York detectives Catherine Vargas and John Cherry as a suspect in the murder of nightclub singer Diane Stewart. It is up to Sloane, working in reluctant concert with the police, to rescue Connie and put an end to Delaney's vicious ways.

A study of various characters in conflict with one another and with themselves, *In a True Light* contains the hallmarks of Harvey's other crime fiction. Charac-

ters are believable, dialogue rings true, and settings—which range from London to rural Italy and from Phoenix, Arizona, to New York City—are economically described. Though a crime story, the novel is not quite as dark or as introspective as Harvey's series work. As in much of the author's fiction, a musical thread runs through the narration, reflecting Harvey's longstanding interest in jazz.

FLESH AND BLOOD

The first in a trilogy, *Flesh and Blood* features retired detective inspector Frank Elder, a tall, thin man in his fifties who lives by himself in a cottage in Cornwall, where he is haunted by dreams of former cases. He becomes involved on a freelance-consultant basis in the long-ago disappearance of Susan Blacklock, occasioned by the release from prison of Shane Donald, after serving thirteen years. Donald, who in league with the still-incarcerated Alan McKeirnan,



raped, tortured, and killed a teenage girl, may have been involved with several other girls who vanished. A suspenseful, semiprofessional procedural tale offering all the innate qualities of the author's earlier series, *Flesh and Blood* includes a Charlie Resnick cameo.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SCOTT MITCHELL SERIES: *Amphetamines and Pearls*, 1976; *The Geranium Kiss*, 1976; *Junkyard Angel*, 1977; *Neon Madman*, 1977

CHARLIE RESNICK SERIES: *Lonely Hearts*, 1989; *Rough Treatment*, 1990; *Cutting Edge*, 1991; *Off Minor*, 1992; *Wasted Years*, 1993; *Cold Light*, 1994; *Living Proof*, 1995; *Easy Meat*, 1996; *Still Waters*, 1997; *Last Rites*, 1998; *Now's the Time: The Complete Resnick Short Stories*, 1999

FRANK ELDER SERIES: *Flesh and Blood*, 2004; *Ash and Bone*, 2005; *Darkness and Light*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Frame*, 1979; *Blind*, 1981; *Endgame*, 1982 (as Mann); *Dancer Draws a Wild Card*, 1985 (as Lennox); *In a True Light*, 2001; *Gone to Ground*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS MCLAGLEN): *River of Blood*, 1976; *Shadow of Vultures*, 1977; *Death in Gold*, 1977; *Cross-Draw*, 1978; *Vigilante!* 1979; *Sun Dance*, 1980; *Billy the Kid*, 1980; *Till Death . . .*, 1980; *Dying Ways*, 1982; *Hearts of Gold*, 1982; *Wild Blood*, 1983

NOVELS (AS HART): *Black Blood*, 1977; *High Slaughter*, 1977; *Triangle of Death*, 1977; *Guerilla Attack*, 1977; *Death Raid*, 1978

NOVELS (AS JAMES): *Blood Rising*, 1979; *Blood Brother*, 1980; *Death Dragon*, 1981; *Death Ride*, 1983; *The Hanging*, 1983

NOVELS (AS SANDON): *Cannons in the Rain*, 1979; *Border Affair*, 1979; *Mazatlan*, 1980; *Wheels of Thunder*, 1981; *Durango*, 1982

NOVELS (AS BRADY): *Blood Money*, 1979; *Killing Time*, 1980; *Blood Kin*, 1980; *Desperadoes*, 1981; *Whiplash*, 1981; *Dead Man's Hand*, 1981; *Sierra Gold*, 1982; *Death and Jack Shade*, 1982; *Border War*, 1983; *Killer!* 1983; *War Party*, 1983

NOVELS (AS JOHN B. HARVEY): *Cherokee Outlet*, 1980; *Blood Trail*, 1980; *Tago*, 1980; *The Silver Lie*, 1980; *Blood on the Border*, 1981; *Ride the Wide Country*, 1981; *Arkansas Breakout*, 1982; *John Wesley Hardin*, 1982; *California Bloodlines*, 1983; *The Skinning Place*, 1983 (also known as *The Fatal Frontier*, 1997)

NOVELS: *Avenging Angel*, 1975 (as Ryder); *Angel Alone*, 1975 (as Ryder); *Kill Hitler!*, 1976 (as Barton); *Forest of Death*, 1977 (as Barton); *Lightning Strikes*, 1977 (as Barton); *The Raiders*, 1977 (as Coburn); *Evil Breed*, 1977 (as Dancer); *Bloody Shiloh*, 1978 (as Coburn); *Judgment Day*, 1978 (as Dancer); *The Hanged Man*, 1979 (as Dancer)

POETRY: *Provence*, 1978; *The Old Postcard Trick*, 1985; *The Downeast Poems*, 1989; *Sometimes Other Than Now*, 1989 (with Sue Dymoke); *Ghosts of a Chance*, 1992; *Territory*, 1992; *Bluer than This*, 1998

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *What About It, Sharon?* 1979; *Reel Love*, 1982; *Sundae Date*, 1983; *Whose Game Are You Playing?* 1983; *Footwork*, 1984; *Last Summer, First Love*, 1986; *Wild Love*, 1986; *Daylight Robbery!*, 1987; *Hot Property!*, 1987; *Kidnap!*, 1987; *Downeast to Danger*, 1988; *Runner!*, 1988; *Terror Trap!*, 1988

EDITED TEXTS: *Blue Lightning*, 1998; *Men from Boys*, 2003

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Drew, Bernard A., Martin H. Greenburg, and Charles G. Waugh, eds. *Western Series and Sequels: A Reference Guide*. New York: Garland, 1986. This guide lists each of the Western series—published both in the United Kingdom and the United States—that Harvey wrote before beginning his popular Charlie Resnick detective series, giving interesting details about the characters who populated the books and naming other known authors who wrote for the series under pseudonyms.

Harvey, John. Mellotone: John Harvey—Charlie Resnick, Slow Dancer. <http://www.mellotone.co.uk>. The author's Web site contains sections detailing with his Resnick series and other fiction and his scripts and poetry, as well as biographic information including his long stint with Slow Dancer

Press, late-breaking news, and Harvey's musical interests. Profusely illustrated with many photographs and excerpts from Harvey's work, the site also contains archived editions of a newsletter that gives updates on Harvey and his best-known character, Charlie Resnick.

Sadler, Geoff. *Twentieth-Century Western Writers*. Chicago: St. James Press, 1991. A fairly lengthy article under Harvey's name, listing the Western series for which he wrote, including biographic details, author comments, and brief critical remarks about his contributions to each series that provide insight into his later crime novels.

Stasio, Marilyn. "Crime." Review of *Cutting Edge*, by

John Harvey. *The New York Times Book Review*, July 7, 1991, p. 19. A favorable review of *Cutting Edge*, in which the reviewer notes the detective hero's compassion and intelligence in seeking to understand why people do violence to their fellow humans and author Harvey's ability to create characters with a full range of psychological issues.

_____. "Crime." Review of *Flesh and Blood*, by John Harvey. *The New York Times Book Review*, July 25, 2004, p. 19. A favorable review of *Flesh and Blood*, in which the reviewer calls particular attention to the author's skill in bringing compassion and understanding toward ordinary people—including murderers.

JEREMIAH HEALY

Born: Teaneck, New Jersey; May 15, 1948

Also wrote as Terry Devane

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Francis Cuddy, 1984-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JOHN FRANCIS CUDDY, a native of South Boston, graduated from Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, and served with the Military Police in Vietnam in the late 1960's, mustering out with the rank of captain. After returning to Boston, he tried a year of law school, married Elizabeth Mary ("Beth") Devlin and went to work as a private investigator for the Empire Insurance Company, only to lose his wife to cancer and his job not long thereafter because of his personal code of ethics. Self-employed as an investigator, Cuddy tends to specialize in cases that fall into gray areas of the law. A fitness enthusiast, he is not above resorting to violence, yet frequently visits his wife's grave, bearing flowers, to confer with her about his ongoing cases.

CONTRIBUTION

During the 1970's, with the mystery novels of Robert B. Parker and William G. Tapply, Boston emerged as a fertile territory for the growth and development of detective fiction. Jeremiah Healy, who settled in Boston around that time after receiving a law degree from Harvard University, combined keen powers of observation and a strong sense of place to create novels that might be seen as the East Coast counterpart to the San Francisco-based mysteries of Stephen Greenleaf, featuring John Marshall "Marsh" Tanner. Like Tanner, Healy's John Cuddy is a hard-boiled loner and bears the emotional scars of the Vietnam War. Significantly, both Tanner and Cuddy managed to hold their own against such emerging feminine competition as Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone and Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski. These four writers, along with a handful of others, may be seen as the 1980's generation in mystery and detective fiction, producing novels that are often grimly realistic while remaining idealistic and that contain a strong element of social observation and criticism.

To an even greater degree than Greenleaf, Healy excels at the creation of colorful, memorable secondary characters, from athletic trainers and journalists to prostitutes and gangsters. Rather early in the series, he pro-

vided Cuddy with a secondary love interest, Assistant District Attorney Nancy Meagher (pronounced “Mah-har”), who like Cuddy is a native of South Boston. As the series progresses, Meagher often acts as a foil for Cuddy, either questioning his judgment or causing him to avoid conflicts of interest between them.

BIOGRAPHY

Jeremiah Francis Healy III was born May 15, 1948, in the New York City suburb of Teaneck, New Jersey. After graduating from Rutgers, he attended law school at Harvard, receiving the Juris Doctor degree in 1973. He then served six years in the U.S. Army Reserve. Like his fictional character Cuddy, Healy rose to the rank of captain of the military police; unlike Cuddy, however, he was never sent overseas. After five years with a Boston law firm, Healy spent eighteen years as a professor at the New England School of Law in Boston, an institution founded to promote the legal education and training of women. Married in 1978 to Bonnie M. Tisler, he left teaching in 1995 to become a full-time writer, dividing his time among Boston, south Florida, and a lakeside house in Maine. Over the years, he has lectured extensively on the art and craft of mystery writing and has served on a number of professional organizations for mystery writers.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, Healy began to experiment with other fictional forms, initially with short stories featuring John Cuddy and a legal thriller, *The Stalking of Sheilah Quinn* (1998), followed by *Turnabout* (2001), a mystery narrated from the perpetrator’s point of view. In 2001, he launched a new series of legal thrillers under the gender-neutral pseudonym of Terry Devane, featuring the young attorney Mairead (pronounced “Muh-RAID”) O’Clare, her boss Sheldon Gold, and private investigator Pontifco Murizzi, a former police detective. Like the Cuddy mysteries, the O’Clare thrillers are set in Boston, with a strong sense of place; however, they are told from a variety of viewpoints, including that of an omniscient narrator. In 2004, Healy was successfully treated for prostate cancer, an experience recalled at some length in an essay posted on his Web site for the edification of potential future patients.

ANALYSIS

By his own account, Jeremiah Healy first became interested in crime fiction while in high school, but he did not attempt his first novel until he was well into his thirties, having practiced law for five years before becoming a law professor. By that time, he was extremely well versed in the mystery tradition and familiar as well with twists and turns in the law. From the start, his novels have been notable for their intertextuality, with frequent, often tongue-in-cheek allusions to the work of other mystery writers and shared thematic issues. Healy’s concern with troubled youth whose problems are frequently compounded by parental affluence recalls the later work of Ross Macdonald, as does his penchant for social criticism bordering on satire, with a focus on current events and sensitive political issues such as child pornography, spousal abuse, and assisted suicide.

John Cuddy’s career as a private investigator gets off to a running start in *Blunt Darts* (1984) when barely two months after his wife’s death, he refuses to sign off on an insurance claim that he knows to be fraudulent and is terminated by Empire Insurance after eight years of service including a recent promotion. After consulting a lawyer, Cuddy chooses unemployment compensation over filing a wrongful-termination lawsuit and strikes out on his own, having acquired a private investigator license as part of his job with Empire. Healy thus establishes the guidelines and framework for the entire Cuddy series: Cuddy is a man of strong convictions who does not suffer fools gladly. The dialogue is tart and crisp in the hard-boiled tradition of Raymond Chandler or Dashiehl Hammett. Cuddy is a man of few words, all of which hit their mark. As an investigator, he is persistent to the point of impertinence, frequently making enemies with whom he will later clash in some form of physical combat. Trained in several martial arts as well as conventional boxing, Cuddy frequently provokes potential bullies into attacking him to humiliate them with his superior force and skill, a tendency that does not sit well with his friend Nancy Meagher. Intensely loyal, Cuddy will vow to avenge a client or witness who has been killed in the course of his investigation, even when the case itself has apparently collapsed. As a rule, Cuddy’s

cases end with violent confrontations, not infrequently featuring such bizarre weapons as crossbows and spearguns.

To counteract the effects of advancing age, Cuddy takes on a series of physical challenges that come to form an integral part of the plot in certain novels. At the start of *Rescue* (1995), for example, both he and Meagher take up scuba diving, their training described in such detail as to constitute a brief how-to manual. In *Right to Die* (1991), Cuddy, who is around the age of forty and beginning to feel it, trains to run the Boston Marathon for the first time, much to Meagher's disapproval. Cuddy's account of the training, conducted with the help of an acquaintance known only as Bo, a former coach who is now among Boston's homeless, competes for the reader's attention with the central plot of the novel. Bo, meanwhile, is only one of several dozen colorful, if enigmatic, characters who populate the Cuddy novels, adding mainstream dimensions to the traditional mystery genre.

From the start of the Cuddy series, Healy took great pains to showcase his adopted city, taking his readers on extended tours of Boston's nooks and crannies, including the notorious Big Dig highway project. As the series progresses, Cuddy's cases lead him increasingly afield in search of background or evidence, to locations described with great attention to detail, including the inhabitants. Healy's readers thus get detailed guided tours of such far-flung locales as the Maine woods, the Florida Keys, and Big Sky country. Cuddy's trips also allow Healy to make incisive observations about such phenomena as air travel and suburban development.

Like most fictional private detectives, Cuddy is frequently at odds with the local police, either at home or on the road. In Boston, he has managed a reasonable working relationship, perhaps even a grudging friendship, with Detective Lieutenant Robert Murphy, a physically imposing African American, who owes his post to a bigoted superior who thought he was promoting an Irishman. To be avoided is Murphy's female colleague, Bonnie Cross, a white woman whose demeanor more closely matches her last name than her first. Once out of Boston, Cuddy is very much on his own, frequently detained by the authorities and often

suspected of the very crimes he is attempting to investigate.

In *Blunt Darts*, the supposed victim of an abduction turns out to be the perpetrator of the multiple murders eventually committed, and Cuddy becomes the most likely suspect in the eyes of the police. In *Shallow Graves* (1992) and *Invasion of Privacy* (1996), he finds himself working in uneasy concert with a mid-level mobster, Primo Zuppone, with whom he shares an interest in New Age music and progressive jazz.

An occasionally heavy drinker, Cuddy is notable among fictional detectives for his frequent and sometimes tearful visits to the grave of his wife, Beth, who died of a brain tumor at the age of thirty. At the start of the series, with his grief still fresh, Cuddy appears to be merely unburdening himself about the pressures of work, but as the series progresses, his visits take on the shape of real conversations, with feedback from Beth that may cause Cuddy to take a fresh look at the evidence at hand. Also memorable is Cuddy's evolving relationship with Nancy Meagher's cat Renfield, named for the Englishman in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) who devours small animals. At the start of *Shallow Graves*, Cuddy drops Renfield a foot or two onto the floor, provoking a severe reaction that makes Meagher suspect Cuddy of handling the cat too roughly. Over the days and weeks to come, it develops that the cat, by then nearly a year old, suffers from a congenital deformity requiring surgery to break and reset his hind legs.

As it happens, Meagher is away on business when Renfield is released from surgery, and it falls to Cuddy to pick him up and look after him until her return. Over the next several volumes, Cuddy frequently (and ruefully) recalls a veterinarian's comment that the cat has imprinted on him, that he has in fact become the cat's best friend, like it or not. In any case, Meagher's furry companion remains a fixture in the Cuddy series.

From the start, the Cuddy novels have seemingly dared the reader to solve the mystery at hand, with a multiplicity of misleading clues and with criminals' motives that may remain implausible to the reader even when fully explained by Cuddy in the final pages. Not infrequently, the perpetrator appears to be certifiably insane, defying all efforts on the part of Cuddy—or the

reader—to follow a logical trail of deduction. For Healy, at least in the Cuddy series, the art of deduction is less important than is exposition and exploration of those social problems or issues that might, or might not, have caused a particular crime to take place, along with the simple pleasure of telling a good story.

SHALLOW GRAVES

In *Shallow Graves*, shortly after running the Boston Marathon, an event described in detail in *Right to Die*, Cuddy is hired by his former employer, Empire Insurance, to investigate a claim filed by a modeling agency in the mysterious death of Mau Tim Dani, a young Amerasian model. Having left Empire on less than the best of terms, he is reluctant to take the case, all the more so when he learns that the case was assigned to Detective Lieutenant Robert Holt, with whom he has tangled in the past. Holt, for his part, is not about to tell Cuddy that Mau Tim Dani was the granddaughter of mob boss Tommy the Temper Danucci, born to the Vietnamese wife of his son Joseph. Cuddy, however, takes on the case as a favor to Harry Mullen, a former subordinate subsequently promoted into his old job. Before long, Cuddy is caught in a squeeze play among the mob, the police, and the top management at Empire, forging an uneasy alliance with mob enforcer Primo Zuppone as he proceeds in search of Mau Tim Dani's killer. There is no shortage of suspects, from the modeling agents to former boyfriends and drug dealers, not to mention other mobsters. Cuddy, meanwhile, cannot help but wonder why he is being set up and by whom.

RESCUE

In *Rescue*, Cuddy takes on a case with no client in his search for a young boy known only as Eddie Straw because of the strawberry birthmark on his right forehead and cheek. Days earlier, Cuddy had stopped to change a flat tire for a couple of young apparent runaways, teenage Melinda and ten-year-old Eddie. When Melinda turns up dead not long thereafter, Cuddy, haunted by memories of dead soldiers in Vietnam, becomes nearly obsessed with finding Eddie. After locking horns as usual with the local police, Cuddy follows a murky, treacherous trail into New Hampshire, then as far south as the Florida Keys, tracking the murderous religious zealots to whom Eddie has been turned over by his own parents, who mistook his

birthmark for the mark of Cain and believe that he is ripe for exorcism. Traveling under the name of John Francis, having already killed one man in self-defense back in New Hampshire, Cuddy attempts to infiltrate the Church of the Lord Vigilant, where he believes Eddie to be held captive. His Florida venture is facilitated by Miami attorney Justo Vega, a former fellow military police officer in Vietnam. Cuddy also makes the acquaintance of retired Marine Colonel Howard Greenspan and his wife, Doris. In time, Greenspan, mortally ill with cancer, will give his life helping Cuddy in a daring underwater midnight raid on the church compound, and Doris Greenspan will volunteer to explore her options for adopting the newly freed Eddie rather than returning him to the parents who banished him. *Rescue* is also notable for Cuddy's visit, en route to Florida, to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

SPIRAL

The thirteenth volume in the Cuddy series, *Spiral* is longer and more intricately plotted than *Rescue* and more than twice as long as *Blunt Darts*. The action begins with a rude shock, the sudden death of Nancy Meagher in a plane crash en route to San Francisco. Initial plans called for Cuddy to make the trip with her but a prior work commitment kept him in Boston. Only after liftoff did Cuddy retrieve a voice message that the job had been canceled; in short, he could and probably should have been on that flight himself. Working through his grief at the grave of his wife, Beth, he is startled when Beth "tells" him that he has been spared for a reason. Not long thereafter, he is summoned back to Florida by Justo Vega, the Miami attorney and former army buddy initially featured in *Rescue*. Their former commanding officer in Vietnam, retired Colonel Nicolas Helides, wants Cuddy's help in a matter that cannot be discussed over the telephone. Arriving at the colonel's estate in Fort Lauderdale, Cuddy finds his former boss, now over seventy, considerably weakened by a stroke and surrounded by an entourage of servants, bodyguards, and a flirtatious second wife. His mission for Cuddy at first seems simple, to find out who murdered the colonel's barely adolescent granddaughter, whose body was found in a swimming pool on the premises. Born Veronica Helides, the child was better

known as Very Held, a pseudonym chosen for her role as lead singer in the revival of Spiral, a rock band originally formed by her father Spi (short for Spiro) in the 1960's. A portrait soon emerges of a spoiled, difficult, and precocious child, indulged by her father to suit his own ambitions, already familiar with drugs and sex and well aware of her seductive charms, as revealed in videotaped performances.

As in *Shallow Graves*, which likewise deals with the death of a young woman rushed into adulthood, there is no shortage of viable suspects, and more bodies are found as Cuddy and Justo Vega move closer to the truth. Returning to Boston at the close of the case, Cuddy learns from Meagher's landlord that he and his family can no longer keep Renfield because of his mother's cat allergies. In a final scene, Cuddy agrees to keep Renfield, as they face an uncertain future together. Healy has told interviewers that it was time to arrange either a wedding or a funeral involving Nancy Meagher and that what he chose was best for Cuddy.

David B. Parsell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN FRANCIS CUDDY SERIES: *Blunt Darts*, 1984; *The Staked Goat*, 1986; *So Like Sleep*, 1987; *Swan Dive*, 1988; *Yesterday's News*, 1989; *Right to Die*, 1991; *Shallow Graves*, 1992; *Foursome*, 1993; *Act of God*, 1994; *Rescue*, 1995; *Invasion of Privacy*, 1996; *The Only Good Lawyer*, 1998; *Spiral*, 1999; *Cuddy Plus One*, 2003

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Stalking of Sheilah Quinn*, 1998; *Turnabout*, 2001; *Uncommon Justice*, 2001 (as Devane); *Juror Number Eleven*, 2002 (as Devane); *A Stain upon the Robe*, 2003 (as Devane)

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O. HENRY

William Sydney Porter

Born: Greensboro, North Carolina; September 11, 1862

Died: New York, New York; June 5, 1910

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; police procedural; private investigator

CONTRIBUTION

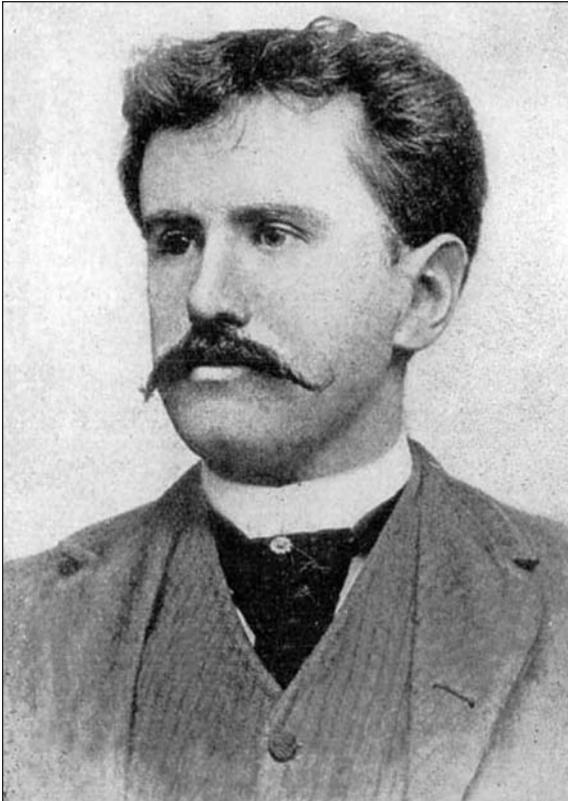
According to Dorothy L. Sayers, surprise is a hallmark of mystery and detective fiction and the setting forth of riddles to be solved is the chief business of an author in the genre. In this sense, almost all the nearly three hundred stories that O. Henry wrote might broadly be labeled “mysteries,” though there is also a narrower selection (several per volume of short stories, and nearly all of *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904, and *The Gentle Grafter*, 1908) that are more obviously of this mode. O. Henry is a minor classic of American literature; he fares best when judged on the whole of his artistic accomplishment rather than on the merits of individual stories. Like Edgar Allan Poe’s tales, O. Henry’s are brief and immediate; like Guy de Maupassant’s, they end suddenly and surprisingly. O. Henry’s unique contribution to the mystery and detective genre is the whiplash ending within the context of a vivid and varied depiction of American life and manners.

BIOGRAPHY

Although O. Henry was born in a small town, he was to feel most comfortable personally and professionally in New York City, observing and chronicling the little lives of little people. He was a private and gentle man in his life and in his writing, and he harbored a humiliating secret. Although his work cannot be called “autobiographical” without a considerable amount of qualification, his writing certainly was based on his own experiences and observations. His production coincides with the four main stages of his life: childhood in North Carolina; youth in Texas; adulthood in New Orleans, Honduras, and the federal penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio; and maturity in New York City.

Christened William Sidney Porter (he changed the spelling of his middle name to “Sydney” in 1898), O. Henry had a peaceful childhood in North Carolina. The early death of his mother at the age of thirty from tuberculosis meant that O. Henry’s nurture and tutelage after the age of three were provided by his paternal aunt Evelina. Long walks with friends and much reading offset boredom as he clerked in his uncle’s drugstore, and his becoming licensed as a practicing pharmacist would serve him well later. He was scarcely twenty when a Greensboro physician and his wife, concerned about Porter’s delicate health, brought him south with them to the Rio Grande. For nearly two years on a sheep ranch in La Salle County in southwest Texas, Porter learned to rope and ride, went on weekly mail runs, played the guitar, sketched, and read almost everything in the ranch library. His discomfort with the raw frontier, with its frequent shootings and lootings, prompted his move to the more urban Austin. He married Athol Estes after a whirlwind courtship and then worked first as a draftsman at the Texas Land Office and next as a bank teller. He fathered a son, who died; a daughter, Margaret, lived. He also began publishing a humorous weekly, *The Rolling Stone*, which lasted a year, and later wrote features for the *Houston Post*, continuing his hobby of sketching and illustration. The first use of his most popular pen name, O. Henry, appeared in 1886.

Although bank practices in Texas in the 1890’s were notoriously loose, O. Henry was nevertheless indicted by a grand jury for embezzlement of funds while serving as a teller. When he fled first to New Orleans and then to Honduras, his guilt seemed evident, though he maintained his innocence. In 1898, after the death of his wife, he was sentenced to five years at the federal penitentiary at Columbus, ultimately serving only three years and three months before being released for good behavior. Letters written in prison express his desperation and humiliation at serving time, though he enjoyed work in the prison hospital as a drug clerk and outside the prison as a private secretary.



O. Henry. (Courtesy, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library)

An often-quoted line from his first authorized biographer, C. Alphonso Smith, asserts, "If ever in American literature the place and the man met, they met when O. Henry strolled for the first time along the streets of New York." O. Henry saturated himself with the atmosphere of the city. He gained inspiration for his stories by strolling in the rough Hell's Kitchen section or on Broadway and along the byways of Manhattan, and by haunting especially restaurants of all varieties. In 1903-1904 alone, he published more than one hundred stories in the New York *Sunday World*. His extravagance, generosity, and the steady drinking, which led to his death at forty-eight, required a steady income, which meant that he lived his life attached to publication deadlines. Normal family life (with his daughter and the childhood sweetheart who became his second wife, Sara Lindsay Coleman) was sacrificed to furious writing activity.

Practically all of his short stories and sketches first appeared in periodicals; before his death, nine vol-

umes in book form were published, and after his death eight more volumes appeared. In the last year of his life, he tried his hand as a playwright and a novelist but without much success.

ANALYSIS

O. Henry's involvement in the mystery and detective genre was almost accidental. He did write a few mysteries, some detective stories, some narratives about con artists, but all served his larger purpose of experimenting with the surprise ending. His intermittent writing in the genre produced no definite theory of mystery or detective fiction and seldom a consistent hero. The common ground for the whole of his fiction seems to be the theme of appearance and reality: Things are not what they seem, and they do not turn out as one might expect. It is not necessarily that the author gives false leads; he simply might not tell the whole story or give all the evidence at once.

In some of his stories, O. Henry stretches the notion of things not being what they appear by turning traditional expectations of the mystery and detective genre upside down and writing spoofs. He satirizes François-Eugène Vidocq, the French criminal who started the first modern detective agency and whose reputation as a master of disguise had an immense influence on writers of crime fiction. One of O. Henry's satires, entitled "Tictocq" (*Rolling Stones*, 1912), has its eponymous detective investigate a stolen pair of socks that turns out not to be missing after all. In "Tracked to Doom" (*Rolling Stones*), Tictocq and murderer Gray Wolf are disguised as each other, and despite Tictocq's witnessing a murder and Gray Wolf's confessing to it, the murderer is not discovered. Three humorous parodies of Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional detective Sherlock Holmes are "The Sleuths" (*Sixes and Sevens*, 1911), "The Adventures of Shamrock Jolnes" (*Sixes and Sevens*), and "The Detective Detector" (*Waifs and Strays*, 1917); these stories present the detective as compulsively tedious and illogical, wrongheadedly instructing sidekick Whatsup on the fine points of investigation. Another crime story, "Tommy's Burglar" (*Whirligigs*, 1910), is in fact a contrived but delightful spoof on crime stories in general, showing a criminal following the orders of an eight-year-old and repenting before he really completes the

crime. They are detective mysteries with an absurd twist.

CABBAGES AND KINGS

Cabbages and Kings was O. Henry's first published collection of stories, and it is also the volume that most consistently contains a common hero, Frank Goodwin. The book is based on O. Henry's experiences in Honduras and is set in South America—fictive Coralio, Anchuria—and also briefly in New Orleans and New York City. In this work some important character types and techniques begin to appear. There are detectives, grafters and schemers who have a change of heart, a starving artist, a deposed president, a disguised hero (the president's son), beautiful women, and a likable drunkard who commits blackmail. There are mysteries and clues that are dropped one by one and a convoluted plot with a generous dose of political revolution and intrigue. The volume opens with a proem introducing the main characters and closes with three separate "scenes," which present solutions to the mysteries.

The title of the book is borrowed from Lewis Carroll's well-known ballad in which the Walrus instructs the oysters to listen to his tale of many things—shoes, ships, sealing wax, cabbages, and kings. O. Henry gives his reader "many things" in the book—prose, rhymes, theatrical contrivances, stories that are cycles or tangents, and parallel intrigues. Some of the stories directly carry forward the main plot, but others seem almost independent of it. These interpolated stories carry the mystery along in the sense that they are red herrings, leading the reader onto false paths and delaying the solution.

O. Henry sets the stage for the pseudonovel by evaluating his intention:

So, there is a little tale to tell of many things. Perhaps to the promiscuous ear of the Walrus it shall come with most avail; for in it there are indeed shoes and ships and sealing-wax and cabbage-palms and presidents instead of kings. Add to these a little love and counterplotting, and scatter everywhere throughout the maze a trail of tropical dollars—dollars warmed no more by the torrid sun than by the hot palms of the scouts of Fortune—and, after all, here seems to be Life, itself, with talk enough to weary the most garrulous of Walruses.

The book is a loose sort of novel that revolves around a complicated and ingenious plot—the theft by the book's hero of what seems to be Anchuria's national treasury and the mistaken identities of the Anchurian president and a fugitive American insurance company president who embezzles funds. The main mystery is rooted in a mistake; it is not the Anchurian president who shoots himself when it becomes apparent that he will lose the money he has stolen but the insurance company president.

The deception in the book extends to its tone. Early in the story, O. Henry calls Coralio an "Eden" and writes poetically about a sunset:

The mountains reached up their bulky shoulders to receive the level gallop of Apollo's homing steeds, the day died in the lagoons and in the shadowed banana groves and in the mangrove swamps, where the great blue crabs were beginning to crawl to land for their nightly ramble. And it died, at last, on the highest peaks. Then the brief twilight, ephemeral as the flight of a moth, came and went; the Southern Cross peeped with its topmost eye above a row of palms, and the fireflies heralded with their torches the approach of soft-footed night.

Later, O. Henry debases Coralio as a "monkey town":

Dinky little mud houses; grass over your shoe tops in the streets; ladies in low-neck-and-short-sleeves walking around smoking cigars; tree frogs rattling like a hose cart going to a ten blow; big mountains dropping gravel in the back yard; and the sea licking the paint off in front—no, sir—a man had better be in God's country living on free lunch than there.

The purposeful inconsistency in tone emphasizes the distinction between appearance and reality that is so central to all O. Henry's mysteries.

THE GENTLE GRAFTER

The Gentle Grafter is the next nearest thing in O. Henry's writings to an extended and unified work in the mystery and detective genre. The book includes fourteen stories that are all con games of one sort or another. Biographers believe that O. Henry picked up the plots for these stories in the prison hospital while doing his rounds of visits to sick or wounded inmates. One relatively well-rounded character, Jeff Peters,

dominates all but three stories in the volume. Only two other short stories use this character—"Cupid à la Carte," in *Heart of the West* (1907), and a story that O. Henry thought was the best of his Jeff Peters stories, "The Atavism of John Tom Little Bear," published in *Rolling Stones*.

The stories in *The Gentle Grafter* add an unusual ingredient to mystery and detective fiction; they are tall tales, picaresque fiction, and are told, in the fashion of American humor, as oral tales. Roughly half of them are set in the South. They feature amusing dialogue, with puns, colloquial speech, and academic buffoonery from a rogue who is very much in the tradition of Lazarillo de Tormes and Robin Hood. His sidekick, Andy Tucker, shares in the petty grafting ruses, whether hawking "Resurrection Bitters" or conspiring with a third swindler, a resort owner, to dupe a group of schoolteachers into believing that they are in the company of the explorer Admiral Peary and the duke of Marlborough. In "Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet," the reader is led to believe that Peters will fall into a trap. The author, however, has simply tricked the audience by presenting dialogue without interpreting it. At the end, the disguises are lifted and Peters goes scot-free.

O. Henry writes about street fakers and small-town swindlers in a melodramatic way to achieve humor. A serious point behind the humor might be his observation that there really was not much difference between inmates in the penitentiary and the robber baron financiers of New York City to whom he referred as "caliphs." "The Man Higher Up," like many of O. Henry's stories, suggests that the line between wealth and crime is a thin one indeed. Swindling is profitable.

Although the criminals in *The Gentle Grafter* are nonviolent, O. Henry also memorialized street fighters such as the Stovepipe Gang in "Vanity and Some Sables." After O. Henry called on real-life safecracker Jimmy Connors in the hospital of the Ohio penitentiary, he portrayed the criminal as Jimmy Valentine in "A Retrieved Reformation" (*Roads of Destiny*, 1909). The Valentine story was later made into a play and even became a popular song. A vogue for "crook plays" soon developed on Broadway, for which O. Henry was in part responsible.

Some of O. Henry's mystery and detective fiction circumvents any horror or terror behind death. The deaths occur almost incidentally, with the brutality played down as in "The Detective Detector" (*Waifs and Strays*), in which New York criminal Avery Knight shoots a man in the back merely to prove a point. If the murders are not consistently bloodless in O. Henry's fiction, they tend often to be devices of plot, moving the action along to something more important. The surprise or coincidence that evolves is often given more prominence than the crime itself. A torn concert ticket in "In Mezzotint" (*O. Henry Encore*, 1936) becomes more significant than a suicide. An overcoat button solves a mystery in "A Municipal Report" (*Strictly Business*, 1910), while a murder happens offstage. In "Bexar Scrip No. 2692" (*Rolling Stones*), clues do not solve a murder or even reveal that one has occurred, and the shrewd land agent who is guilty dies without incurring suspicion.

THE TRIMMED LAMP

In "The Guilty Party" (*The Trimmed Lamp*, 1907), a murder and a suicide take place within a dream, and the case is "tried" in the next world. The real villain of the story is a father who refused to play checkers with his daughter, thus consigning her to the street to become a criminal, and behind that individual villain is the larger villain eminently more culpable for O. Henry: social injustice. "Elsie in New York" (*The Trimmed Lamp*) shows an innocent country girl struggling against impossible odds to land an honest job; she is discouraged at every turn by false moralists, ironically becoming a prostitute because that is the path of least resistance. In a rare example of direct social satire, O. Henry ends the story by emphasizing the injustice:

Lost, Your Excellency. Lost, Associations, and Societies. Lost, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Lost, Reformers and Lawmakers, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts, but with the reverence of money in your souls. And lost thus around us every day.

Emphasis is usually on the wrong people being judged or on the right people being misjudged. People are easily fooled by confidence men. Appearances are de-

ceiving, and when appearances are all one has to act on, the wrong conclusions happen, and only the reader who sees through the eye of the omniscient narrator or hears the tale told knows that they are wrong.

O. Henry's brand of mystery focuses on events rather than on psychological motivation. He treats his characters like puppets, allowing them to do nothing that might give away the secret until the end. He structures his tales along the lines of a riddle or an error, a pun or a coincidence, that becomes sharply and suddenly significant. His endings are strongly accentuated, and the whole plot points toward them. It is not his habit to provide analysis, reflection, extended resolution, or denouement following the story's climax.

O. Henry granted only one interview about his work during his lifetime—to George MacAdam of *The New York Times Book Review and Magazine*; it first appeared in the April 4, 1909, issue, but it was not published in full until twelve years after his death. In it, he revealed his secret of writing short stories: "Rule 1: Write stories that please yourself. There is no Rule 2." His technique further included writing something out quickly, even though he was not always sure from the outset exactly where it was going, thus letting the story evolve out of its own momentum. He told MacAdam that he would then send the story off unrevised and hardly recognize it when it was published. When a period of inactivity would plague him, O. Henry would let life act as a stimulus for a piece of fiction by mingling with the humanity that was his inspiration—getting out among crowds or striking up a conversation with someone.

O. Henry's stories are very much like a game or puzzle—perhaps the reader is fooled, perhaps one of the characters is. The emphasis is often on discovering the identity of a sought-after person. Sometimes, O. Henry's intrusive narrator parodies the process. In "A Night in New Arabia" (*Strictly Business*), for example, he blurts out a prediction that comes as a surprise: "I know as well as you do that Thomas is going to be the heir." O. Henry almost cavalierly tosses off to the reader a hint that is a legitimate clue if taken seriously. He uses half of a silver dime to solve a question of identity in "No Story" (*Options*, 1909), money secretly spent to give rise to a marriage proposal in

"Mammon and the Archer" (*The Four Million*, 1906), a mole by the left eyebrow to identify a suicide victim whose lover will never find her in "The Furnished Room" (*The Four Million*). In "The Caballero's Way" (*Heart of the West*), a forged letter and a girl in her own clothes mistakenly taken for a disguised man lead the caballero to murder his beloved rather than his rival.

If O. Henry learned from his grandfather to be continually vigilant for "what's around the corner," as biographers commonly assert, he used that perspective well in his mystery and detective fiction, glancing sideways at the genre through rose-colored glasses until what he wrote appeared to be almost a cartoon that he himself skillfully drew.

Jill B. Gidmark

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904; *The Gentle Grafter*, 1908

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Four Million*, 1906; *Heart of the West*, 1907; *The Trimmed Lamp*, 1907; *The Voice of the City*, 1908; *Options*, 1909; *Roads of Destiny*, 1909; *Let Me Feel Your Pulse*, 1910; *Strictly Business*, 1910; *The Two Women*, 1910; *Whirligigs*, 1910; *Sixes and Sevens*, 1911; *Rolling Stones*, 1912; *Waifs and Strays*, 1917; *Postscripts*, 1923; *O. Henry Encore*, 1936; *Tales of O. Henry*, 1969; *The Voice of the City, and Other Stories: A Selection*, 1991; *The Best of O. Henry*, 1992; *Collected Stories: Revised and Expanded*, 1993; *Heart of the West*, 1993; *Selected Stories*, 1993; *The Best Short Stories of O. Henry*, 1994; *One Hundred Selected Stories*, 1995

PLAY: *Lo*, pr. 1909 (with Franklin P. Adams)

NONFICTION: *Letters to Lithopolis*, 1922; *The Second Edition of Letters to Lithopolis from O. Henry to Mabel Wagnalls*, 1999 (with Mabel Wagnalls)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Rolling Stones*, 1912; *O. Henry-ana*, 1920

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JOAN HESS

Born: Fayetteville, Arkansas; January 6, 1949

Also wrote as Joan Hadley

Types of plot: Cozy; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Claire Malloy, 1986-

Theodore Bloomer, 1986-

Arly Hanks, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CLAIRE MALLOY OWNS a bookstore in Farberville, Arkansas. When the series begins, she is thirty-eight

years old; her daughter, Caron, is fourteen. Both have copper-colored hair, green eyes, and freckles; both are highly intelligent, verbal, and witty. In the course of her work, Claire is drawn into situations where crimes occur. She envisions herself as a modern, logical version of Nancy Drew or Agatha Christie's Jane Marple, but she is impulsive, often exposing herself to danger.

THEODORE BLOOMER is a tall, balding sixty-one-year-old retired florist with a background in intelligence work. Whatever his strengths, he cannot withstand his domineering sister, Nadine Caldicott, when she orders him to rescue or chaperon her daughter

Dorrie, a college student. Bloomer's quiet, logical approach to crimes in different cultures allows him to protect the young woman.

AERIAL "ARLY" HANKS is police chief of Maggody, Arkansas. Raised there, she has gone away to college, married, lived a luxurious life in New York, and divorced her unfaithful husband. She returns to Maggody, where her lack of interest in her appearance and in finding another husband are the despair of her mother. Arly's education and New York life allow her realistically to assess Maggody and its eccentric inhabitants, but her sympathies lie with these people, their hopeless dreams, and their muddled efforts simply to survive.

CONTRIBUTION

The Arly Hanks novels are Joan Hess's finest achievement, blending wit, crime, character development, deft plotting, and social satire. In both the Hanks and Claire Malloy series, Hess is ruthless toward predators, whether creative, sexual, religious, or medical, but her satiric approach to everyday life is otherwise gentle. In "A Tribute to Joan Hess," M. D. Lake compares her approach to that of P. G. Wodehouse; they share common qualities in their visions of the absurdities of life. In the Hanks series, Hess is perhaps closer to Charles Dickens in her ability to create a community of odd people performing improbable actions made believable for the moment by the warmth and compassion with which most of the characters are developed. Hess accomplishes this through shifts in points of view. Although most events are seen through Arly's eyes, many other characters narrate sections, revealing their views and often proving themselves intelligent, resourceful, and imaginative. They sometime rise to heroism. A single point of view dominates the Malloy novels, but the relationship and conflicts between mother and daughter add a realistic note often absent from depictions of female sleuths, while Claire's warmth and sympathy for other women allow development of many believable characters. The Theodore Bloomer novels are workmanlike. In the hands of a lesser writer, they would be noteworthy, but readers expect more of Hess, and the Bloomer novels have been less successful than the others.

BIOGRAPHY

Joan Hess was born Joan Edmiston on January 6, 1949, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, the daughter of Jack D. Edmiston, a grocer, and Helen Tidwell Edmiston, a building contractor. She received a bachelor's degree in art from the University of Alabama in 1971 and a master's degree in education in 1974 from Long Island University. She returned to Fayetteville, married Jeremy Hess in 1973, and was divorced in 1986. She is the mother of two children. Hess was teaching preschool art and raising her children when she and a friend began to write romances, hoping to make money. The romances were not published, but Hess learned that she enjoyed the creative process. At her agent's insistence, she turned to mysteries, which she had been reading since childhood.

Hess wrote *Strangled Prose* (1986), her first Claire Malloy novel, very quickly. Her agent was nervous that too many novels, published too quickly, would hurt sales, so she published her two Theodore Bloomer novels under the name Joan Hadley. Returning to her own name, she began the Hanks series.

Besides her mysteries, Hess has written two young-adult novels, *Future Tense* (1987) and *Red Rover, Red Rover* (1988). She has contributed columns, articles, and stories to *Mystery Scene*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and *Clues*. Her short stories have appeared in a number of anthologies including *Malice Domestic*, *Sisters in Crime*, and *Cat Crimes*, and she has edited a number of collections, including *Funny Bones* (1997), *The Year's Twenty-five Finest Crime and Mystery Stories: Sixth Annual Edition* with Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg (1997; reprinted 1999 as *Crime After Crime*), and *Malice Domestic 9* (2000). In 1995, she published *To Kill a Husband: A Mystery Jigsaw Puzzle Thriller*; the reader is instructed to read the book and then to assemble the thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle to discover the mystery's solution.

Strangled Prose was nominated for an Anthony Award and was selected best first novel in a poll of *Drood Review* readers. *Mischief in Maggody* (1988) was nominated for an Agatha Award. *A Diet to Die For* won the American Mystery Award for best traditional novel of 1989. In 1993, *O Little Town of Maggody* was

nominated for both Agatha and Anthony awards. Her short story, "Too Much to Bare," received both Agatha and McCavity awards in 1991; "The Last to Know," was nominated for both awards in 1993. In 1995, *Miracles in Maggody* was nominated for the Agatha Award.

ANALYSIS

Joan Hess is the fifth generation of her family to live in Fayetteville, Arkansas, on which the town of Farberville in the Claire Malloy series is loosely based. She possesses a strong sense of community, which is one of the dominant themes in her novels. In the Malloy novels, however, the community is one of women, especially of the vulnerable and the old, who exist within the larger community but are not fully understood by that community or protected by it. In the Theodore Bloomer novels, the communities are outside the United States and must be understood by Bloomer if the crimes are to be solved. Maggody is an isolated community, frequently invaded by a variety of human predators.

CLAIRE MALLOY SERIES

In Claire Malloy, Hess has created a complex and believable amateur sleuth. Claire, first-person narrator of the novels, is a widow. Her husband taught at Farber College. Unknown to his wife, he was among the professors who seduced female students and coerced them into having sex. While driving on an icy road to a nearby motel with a female student, his vehicle was rammed by a chicken truck and he died amid bloody feathers. The student survived and her father kept her name out of the news and police reports. Left on her own, Claire has worked hard to establish a business. Her Book Depot brings in an adequate income. She has protected Caron, her daughter, from the circumstances of her father's death. Caron envies the luxuries possessed by her wealthier peers and sometimes launches imaginative money-raising schemes. In their impulsiveness, their imagination, and their independence, mother and daughter are more alike than either wants to admit.

STRANGLER PROSE

In *Strangled Prose*, Mildred Twiller, who writes romance novels under the name Azalea Twilight, talks Claire Malloy into hosting an autograph party on publi-

cation of her new book, *Professor of Passion*. Claire is reluctant, but she feels sympathy for Mildred, whose husband is one of the campus's more active womanizers. Once Claire gives her word, she will not break it, even though she mildly sympathizes with members of the Farber Women's Organization (FWO), who threaten to hold a violent protest against the sexism of the romance genre. Instead, at the reception, one FWO member reads select passages from *Professor of Passion*. The novel exposes the sexual antics of Farber College male professors and contains a barely disguised account of the death of Claire's husband. Claire, embarrassed, flees and becomes a suspect when Mildred is murdered. Farberville police lieutenant Peter Rosen investigates. He becomes a series character and romantically interested in Claire, but Claire, independent and understandably made wary by the betrayals of her marriage, resists commitment.

Other women, vulnerable like Mildred, often lure Claire into investigations. In *Dear Miss Demeanor* (1987), Caron and her friend Inez Brandon (later Inez Thornton), insist that Miss Emily Parchester, a dithery, ladylike veteran high school teacher, be exonerated when Parchester is accused of embezzlement by a high-handed and unpleasant male principal. When the principal is murdered, Parchester is a logical suspect. In *Roll Over and Play Dead* (1991), Claire is pet-sitting Parchester's bassets when they are stolen, and she tries to find them. In *Busy Bodies* (1995), Miss Parchester invites Claire to tea. Claire discovers that Parchester's quiet neighborhood is being wildly disrupted by a performance artist whose displays feature noise, coffins, and near nudity, ending in murder. In *Tickled to Death* (1994) Claire's best friend, Luanne Bradshaw, becomes infatuated with a man who may have killed his former wives. In *A Really Cute Corpse*, Claire reluctantly takes over the Miss Thurberfest beauty contest, despite her feminist misgivings, when Luanne is injured. In *Poisoned Pins* (1993) and *A Diet to Die For*, vulnerable women are exploited in a very odd sorority house and an equally odd diet center.

THE NIGHT-BLOOMING CEREUS AND THE DEADLY ACKEE

As a result of a 1985 trip to Israel with an extended family of in-laws, Hess wrote *The Night-Blooming*

Cereus (1986), the first of two works featuring Theodore Bloomer and his self-obsessed, spoiled niece, Dorrie Caldicott. To the horror of her wealthy parents, Dorrie is living on a kibbutz; Bloomer is sent to retrieve her. In Israel, he finds that Dorrie inexplicably refuses to leave until her college roommate returns with her, and the roommate, from a less privileged background, has resolved to stay there permanently. In the second novel, *The Deadly Ackee* (1988), Bloomer is coerced by his sister and niece into chaperoning a college-break trip to Jamaica. Murders follow. The novels are well-constructed, and comedy is provided by a larger-than-life intelligence agent. Bloomer, however, must necessarily view both the kibbutz and the Jamaican community of *The Night-Blooming Cereus* as an outsider. Third-person narration adds further distance between the reader and the communities, and few members of the community come to life as they do in the other series.

ARLY HANKS SERIES

Maggody is an Ozarks town, its streets lined with closed shops. The building of highways and shopping centers outside the town's boundaries have devastated it. About 755 people remain. For most, full-time employment means working for minimum wage at the poultry plant in nearby Starley City. Arly Hanks has returned to Maggody, embittered and weary, after college and divorce, although she matures and changes as wounds heal and the series progresses. The only qualified applicant, she has become Maggody's chief of police. Her mother, Ruby Bee Hanks, owns Ruby Bee's Bar and Grill and Flamingo Motel; a motherly figure, she is nonetheless a successful bouncer when necessary. Ruby Bee's best friend, Estelle Oppers, once a lounge singer in Little Rock, now operates Estelle's Hair Fantasies. Her own monumental red beehive hairdo is a reminder of decades long past. The two, both curious, involve themselves in Arly's investigations.

Much of the area's population is made up of inbred Buchanons. In Maggody's terms, the most successful of these are Mayor Jim Bob Buchanon, owner of the Kwik-Stoppe Shoppe, later Jim Bob Buchanon's Supersaver Buy 4 Less. Obsessed with sex, he is married to the overly pious Barbara Ann Buchanon, who

stresses purity, cleanliness, and traditional values. Known as Mrs. Jim Bob, she is president of the Missionary Society of the Voice of the Almighty Lord Assembly Hall. There she joins forces with the mail-order minister, Brother Verber, whose alcoholic battle against sin requires purchase of pornographic magazines and other research materials. The most cunning Buchanons live on Cotter Ridge, which towers over the town. There, Robin Buchanon sells ginseng and sex to support her large brood of feral children. She has been, in her own way, a conscientious mother. Somewhere on the ridge, Roz Buchanon has a still, producing moonshine, and he is devoted to his sow Margie, but he sometimes conducts rescue missions. Least intelligent are obese Dahlia O'Neill Buchanon and her husband, Kevin, but even they fully understand the duties of matrimony and parenthood and will risk their lives for each other.

Residents make trouble for themselves, as in the first book, *Malice in Maggody* (1987), when Jim Bob and his cronies try to keep an agent from the Environmental Protection Agency from approving a sewage treatment plant that they think will ruin their fishing. Most of Maggody's woes, however are caused by outsiders. The villains who come to Maggody are not successful evildoers; if they were, they would not need a town like Maggody. Their bungling creates the crimes and often adds to the comedy. In *The Maggody Militia* (1997), self-appointed General Sterling Pitts and his survivalists intend to perform paintball maneuvers at the beginning of hunting season, when anything that moves becomes a target. In *Martians in Maggody* (1994), odd geometric designs appear in Roz Buchanon's pasture. Media descend, as do two professors, and Dahlia Buchanon becomes convinced that she has been kidnapped and impregnated by aliens. In *Mortal Remains in Maggody* (1991) pornographic filmmakers arrive, and Dahlia is convinced she has a future in Hollywood. Televangelist and faith healer Malachi Hope intends to establish a permanent theme park in Maggody in *Miracles in Maggody*, while a native son, turned country music star, returns in *O Little Town of Maggody* because his publicists believe a well-publicized country Christmas can cancel out reports of his erratic behavior. In *Malpractice in Mag-*

gody (2006), a questionable therapist attempts to set up a treatment center for just this type of celebrity. In each case, murder follows. Arly, working with other area law enforcement officers—sometimes lazy, stupid, or corrupt—must solve the crime while helping her fellow townspeople out of the messes they have made.

Betty Richardson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CLAIRE MALLOY SERIES: *Strangled Prose*, 1986; *Murder at the Murder at the Mimosa Inn*, 1986; *Dear Miss Demeanor*, 1987; *A Really Cute Corpse*, 1988; *A Diet to Die For*, 1989; *Roll Over and Play Dead*, 1991; *Death by the Light of the Moon*, 1992; *Poisoned Pins*, 1993; *Tickled to Death*, 1994; *Busy Bodies*, 1995; *Closely Akin to Murder*, 1996; *A Holly, Jolly Murder*, 1997; *A Conventional Corpse*, 2000; *Out on a Limb*, 2002; *The Goodbye Body*, 2005; *Damsels in Distress*, 2007

THEODORE BLOOMER SERIES (AS HADLEY): *The Night-Blooming Cereus*, 1986; *The Deadly Ackee*, 1988

ARLY HANKS SERIES: *Malice in Maggody*, 1987; *Mischief in Maggody*, 1988; *Much Ado in Maggody*, 1989; *Madness in Maggody*, 1991; *Mortal Remains in Maggody*, 1991; *Maggody in Manhattan*, 1992; *O Little Town of Maggody*, 1993; *Martians in Maggody*, 1994; *Miracles in Maggody*, 1995; *The Maggody Militia*, 1997; *Misery Loves Maggody*, 1998; *Murder @Maggody.com*, 2000; *Maggody and the Moonbeams*, 2001; *Muletrain to Maggody*, 2004; *Malpractice in Maggody*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Future Tense*, 1987; *Red Rover, Red Rover*, 1988

SHORT FICTION: *Death of a Romance Writer, and*

Other Stories, 2002; *Big Foot Stole My Wife!*, and *Other Stories*, 2003; *The Deadly Ackee, and Other Stories of Crime and Catastrophe*, 2003

EDITED TEXTS: *Funny Bones*, 1997; *The Year's Twenty-five Finest Crime and Mystery Stories: Sixth Annual Edition*, 1997 (with Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg; also known as *Crime After Crime*); *Malice Domestic Nine*, 2000

MISCELLANEOUS: *To Kill a Husband: A Mystery Jigsaw Puzzle Thriller*, 1995 (book and jigsaw puzzle)

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"A Tribute to Joan Hess." *Mystery Scene* no. 75 (June, 2002): 14-19. Writers contributing to this article on Hess are Deborah Adams, Dorothy Cannell, Harlan Coben, Parnell Hall, Charlaine Harris, Carolyn Hart, Dean James, M. D. Lake, Margaret Maron, Val McDermid, Elizabeth Peters, and Daniel Stashower.

GEORGETTE HEYER

Born: London, England; August 16, 1902

Died: London, England; July 4, 1974

Also wrote as Stella Martin

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; private investigator; thriller; cozy; comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Superintendent Hannasyde and Sergeant Hemingway, 1935-1953

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SUPERINTENDENT HANNASYDE and SERGEANT HEMINGWAY are both adept at dealing with “country house and village” murders, where the suspects are likely to belong to the privileged classes. Hemingway gradually replaces Hannasyde as the chief inspector, and he is assisted by a series of young men who act as foils for Hemingway’s cleverness.

CONTRIBUTION

Georgette Heyer’s twelve detective novels are variations of the English country-house mystery. Like her extremely popular historical romances set in the Regency period, her mysteries are witty comedies of manners. Her characters, whether they live in villages, suburban communities, or on London estates, are well-bred and affluent. Heyer has been compared to Jane Austen because, in the world she skillfully creates, manners are morals. Pretension of any kind is ruthlessly exposed. Young women who seek to marry well for mercenary reasons do not succeed in the matrimonial game, but attractive heroines always make a suitable alliance. Although the crimes are solved at the conclusion of her novels, the detection of the murderer is only slightly more important than the resolution of the romantic action, which nearly always results in marriage.

Her mysteries are painstakingly plotted, but suspense is less important than wit in a Heyer mystery. For this reason, her books can be read and reread without a loss of interest. Both violence and passion are suppressed. Maiden aunts and stately dowagers tend to

be pleased when a murder occurs because it may give their young relatives something with which to amuse themselves other than tennis, as in *Detection Unlimited* (1953). Few writers are fortunate enough to have Heyer’s unerring ear for dialogue and sense of the ridiculous. In *No Wind of Blame* (1939), when an unscrupulous gigolo, whose unpronounceable name leads everyone to call him Prince, pursues his impressionable hostess, his romantic overtures are undercut by a dog who also answers to the name Prince. Many of Heyer’s mysteries are still in print. Like her romances, they are masterpieces of satire and good humor.

BIOGRAPHY

Georgette Heyer, born on August 16, 1902, was the oldest of the three children of George Heyer and Sylvia Watkins. Like the heroine of *Helen* (1928), one of her early novels, Heyer had a close relationship with her father, after whom she was also named. She received her education at various day schools and later attended The Study, a girls’ school in Wimbledon. She did not attend a university.

In her teens, she became close friends with Joanna Cannan, the daughter of a member of the Oxford University Press, and Carola Oman, the daughter of Sir Charles Oman, a historian. All three women became novelists and published their works under their maiden names. Heyer’s first book, *The Black Moth* (1921), was published when she was nineteen.

In 1920, she met George Ronald Rougier while their families were spending Christmas at the Bushey Park Hotel. Rougier had wanted to become a barrister, but family pressure prompted him to attend the Royal School of Mines and become an engineer. Heyer became engaged to Rougier in April of 1925, and they were married two months after her father’s death on August 18, 1925. After their marriage, Rougier went prospecting in the Caucasus while Heyer remained in London. She accompanied her husband on his next assignments to Tanganyika and Macedonia. In 1926, Heyer’s first popular success occurred with the publi-

cation of *These Old Shades*, which sold 190,000 copies without the assistance of advertising or reviews. In 1932, at the time that *Footsteps in the Dark* appeared, her son Richard George Rougier was born.

During the Depression, Ronald opened a sports shop, but with his wife's encouragement he also studied to become a barrister. The income from Heyer's books contributed to the support for the family, and she began to write a detective story and a historical romance every year. Rougier, the first reader of her books, also assisted Heyer in plotting her detective stories. Although Heyer's books were consistently popular, at the time of her death, on July 4, 1974, she had not yet received the critical appreciation that her work merits.

ANALYSIS

During the 1930's, the mystery novel became increasingly respectable. Agatha Christie was already well known, and Margery Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Ngaio Marsh were establishing themselves in the genre. Georgette Heyer joined this group of talented female writers with *Footsteps in the Dark*, which appeared the same year as *Devil's Cub* (1932), one of her popular Regency romances.

FOOTSTEPS IN THE DARK

This experiment in what she called the thriller concerns a haunted house that later proves to be the headquarters for a gang of forgers who are trying to frighten the new owners into moving away. Although not without merit, *Footsteps in the Dark* served as an apprentice novel for Heyer. Her next two mysteries, *Why Shoot a Butler?* (1933) and *The Unfinished Clue* (1934), show that she had mastered the craft.

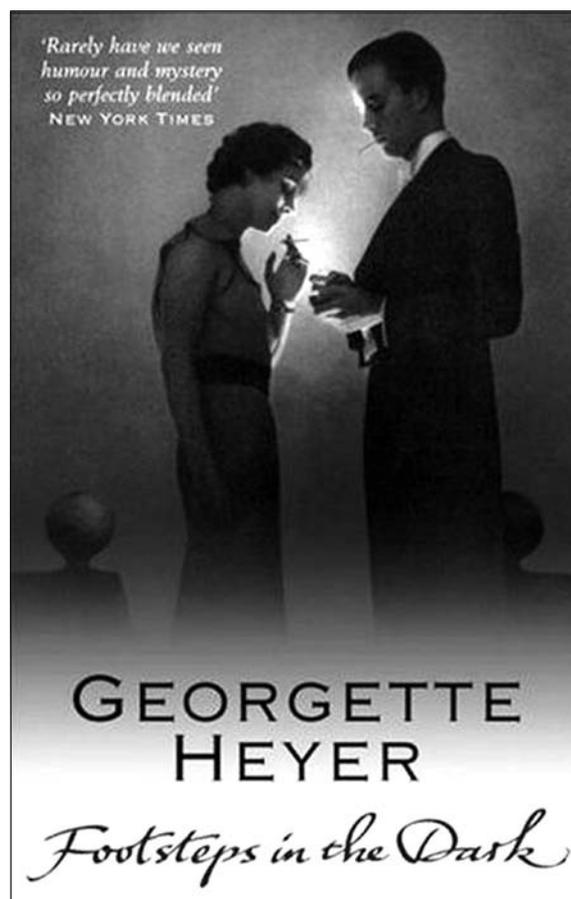
THE UNFINISHED CLUE

Both these novels are related to the country-house mystery, which was to become Heyer's most successful and characteristic genre. Whether the setting is a small English village or an affluent suburb, the interest in a Heyer novel is generated by the characters and their witty dialogue. *The Unfinished Clue* contains a marvelous character, Lola de Silva, who is an exotic dancer and the highly unacceptable fiancée of Geoffrey Billington-Smith. Lola deplores the lack of absinthe for her cocktails and insists that a painting of a

dead hare be removed from the dining room because it will make it impossible for her to eat. After carefully explaining to the detectives her motives and opportunities for killing Geoffrey's father, she acknowledges: "I did not stab the General, because I did not think of it, and besides, in England I find it does not make one popular to kill people."

DEATH IN THE STOCKS

Death in the Stocks (1935) introduced the two detectives Superintendent Hannasyde and Sergeant Hemingway, who were to figure in a number of Heyer's mysteries. *Death in the Stocks* was reviewed by both *The Times* of London and *The Times Literary Supplement*, and it was also dramatized, although unsuccessfully. The adaptation must have been inept, for the dialogue in *Death in the Stocks* is especially successful. Giles Carrington, the Verekers' cousin and solicitor, solves the murder and also wins the hand of Antonia



Vereker, his distant cousin and the murder victim's half sister. Violet Williams, a beautiful but empty-headed gold digger, is engaged to Kenneth Vereker, the victim's half brother and heir. Antonia accuses Violet of not caring if something is good to look at "as long as it reeks of money." In the well-bred world of the Verekers, Violet's lack of taste is emblematic of her mercenary values.

When Kenneth Vereker is cleared of having committed the murder, Hannasyde says that they will have to release him:

"Let him go?" said Hemingway. "You'll have a job to make him go. The last I saw of him he was asking what they'd charge for board-residence till he's finished a set of the most shocking pictures you ever laid eyes on. *Portraits of the Police*, he calls them. Libels, I call them."

The murderer proves to be Violet, whom Kenneth's relatives and the reader are relieved to have removed from the picture, and marriages supply the final denouement.

NO WIND OF BLAME

Heyer described her novels as a collaborative enterprise with her husband. He devised the plots in terms of figures identified very abstractly as A, B, and C. She then supplied the characterizations:

I do these things with the assistance—and ONLY the assistance of G. R. Rougier. . . . [He] still dines out on his version of what happened over *No Wind of Blame*, which was a highly technical shooting mystery. . . . I DID know, broadly speaking, how the murder was committed, but I didn't clutter up my mind with the incomprehensible details. Ronald swears that he came home one evening when I was at work on the final, explanatory chapter and that I said to him: "If you're not too busy, could you tell me just how this murder was committed?"

The way in which her mystery novels were constructed may explain why Heyer's detective fiction never became as popular as that of Christie and Sayers. The witty dialogue and amusing incidents, rather than the suspense of the plot, generate the interest in Heyer's novels.

The title of *No Wind of Blame* is borrowed from

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602), but the tone is vintage Heyer. It is not surprising that Ronald Rougier had to explain to his wife how the murder was committed. It requires all the ingenuity of the police to work out the complex details of the shooting. The story begins with the arrival of Prince Alexis Varashevili, a phony gigolo, who is only too willing to make up to his hostess Ermytrude Carter both before and after her husband, Wally Carter, has been murdered.

Ermytrude is a former chorus girl who dyes her hair and overdoes her makeup; her large fortune was inherited from Geoffrey Fanshawe, her first husband. In spite of her vulgarity, Ermytrude is kindhearted; she has ungrudgingly provided a home for Mary Cliffe, Wally's cousin and ward. At the end of the novel, she insists on sheltering the offspring of her husband's murderer, even though the awkwardness of assisting them is pointed out to her.

Ermytrude's daughter, Vicky Fanshawe, seems to have inherited her father's intelligence. Pretty, but not at all empty-headed, Vicky eases the atmosphere of the country house party turned into a murder case by dramatizing herself in roles, complete with appropriate costumes. Her roles range from the ingenue to the brazen hussy to Lady Jane Grey on her way to the block. Vicky blocks the prince's pursuit of her mother and promotes the suit of Robert Steel, who is strong, silent, and sincere. Both Vicky and Mary find suitable mates, and it is clear that Ermytrude will soon wed Steel.

The detectives in Heyer's mysteries function intellectually to explain the murder. In *No Wind of Blame*, Hemingway explains to one of his many subordinates the way a police officer should go about his work and the secrets of his success in detecting criminals:

"The secret of being a highly efficient officer," said Hemingway, fixing him with a quelling look, "is on the one hand never to expect anything, and on the other never to be surprised at anything either. You remember that, my lad, and you may do as well as I have."

A dabbler in psychology, Hemingway gets along well with the gentry whom he has to interview. His ingenuity is complemented by his common sense. He dislikes

socialists, young women wearing vermillion nail polish, and men who overly decorate their apartments, but these prejudices do not interfere with his solutions to the crimes.

THEY FOUND HIM DEAD

Two of Heyer's most successful works, *They Found Him Dead* (1937) and *Duplicate Death* (1951), involve the Harte family. Lady Harte has extraordinary energy, which she expends on expeditions into the Congo, running for Parliament, and overseeing the lives of her two sons. James Kane, her eldest son by her deceased first husband, is at first the suspect and then the victim of several unsuccessful murder attempts in *They Found Him Dead*. Timothy Harte is the product of Lady Harte's second marriage with Sir Adrian. To protect his stepbrother from being murdered in his sleep, the youthful Timothy constructs a series of alarms that he attaches to the doorknob. Sir Adrian, who is as vague and urbane as his wife is energetic, naturally sets off the alarm while looking for a book.

When his stepson's fiancée tells Sir Adrian that he can afford to be calm, because Jim is neither his fiancé nor his own son, Sir Adrian replies: "Certainly not in the least like my fiance. And, I am happy to say, not much like my own son either. Though I have no doubt that Timothy will improve as he grows older." It comes as no surprise to the reader that Sir Adrian has already figured out the identity of the murderer before the police reveal it.

DUPLICATE DEATH

In *Duplicate Death*, Timothy, grown up and a solicitor, has fallen in love with Beulah Birtley, a sullen young woman, who Lady Harte fears is an adventuress. Beulah is employed as a secretary by the sinister Mrs. Haddington, whose blond-haired daughter Cynthia is as pretty as she is vacuous and self-centered. James Kane comes to town to inspect Beulah Birtley and arrives just in time for, first, the murder of Dan Seaton-Carew during a game of duplicate bridge and, second, the murder of Mrs. Haddington in a manner that duplicates the first. It turns out that Beulah was framed for forgery and has spent time in prison, a fact that engages Lady Harte's sympathies and wins her support of the marriage.

In *Duplicate Death*, in a rare moment of self-revelation and with impeccable wit, Heyer describes Timothy's reaction to being asked about one of his mother's books, a book that he has not read:

Timothy, who shared with his half-brother, Mr. James Kane, an ineradicable conviction that the Second World War had been inaugurated by providence to put an end to their beloved but very trying parent's passion for exploring remote quarters of the globe, bowed, and murmured one of the conventional acknowledgements with which the more astute relatives of an author take care to equip themselves.

Mysteries are more acceptable to critics than romances, so it is not surprising that Heyer's detective fiction has received more critical attention than her Regency romances. For Heyer, however, detective fiction was less profitable; her last detective novel was written in 1953, twenty-one years before her death in 1974. With her twelve books in the mystery and detective genre, she contributed substantially to the tradition of the English country-house mystery, producing a unique blend of humor and crime.

Jean R. Brink

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SUPERINTENDENT HANNASYDE AND SERGEANT HEMINGWAY SERIES: *Death in the Stocks*, 1935 (also known as *Merely Murder*); *Behold Here's Poison!*, 1936; *They Found Him Dead*, 1937; *A Blunt Instrument*, 1938; *No Wind of Blame*, 1939; *Envious Casca*, 1941; *Duplicate Death*, 1951; *Detection Unlimited*, 1953

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Footsteps in the Dark*, 1932; *Why Shoot a Butler?*, 1933; *The Unfinished Clue*, 1934; *Penhallow*, 1942

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1921-1930 • *The Black Moth*, 1921; *Instead of the Thorn*, 1923; *Powder and Patch*, 1923 (also known as *The Transformation of Philip Jettan*); *The Great Roxhythe*, 1923; *Simon the Coldheart*, 1925; *These Old Shades*, 1926; *Helen*, 1928; *The Masqueraders*, 1928; *Beauvallet*, 1929; *Pastel*, 1929; *Barren Corn*, 1930

1931-1940 • *The Conqueror*, 1931; *Devil's Cub*, 1932; *The Convenient Marriage*, 1934; *Regency Buck*, 1935; *The Talisman Ring*, 1936; *An Infamous Army*, 1937; *Royal Escape*, 1938; *The Corinthian*, 1940; *The Spanish Bride*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Beau Wyndham*, 1941; *Faro's Daughter*, 1941; *Friday's Child*, 1944; *The Reluctant Widow*, 1946; *The Foundling*, 1948; *Arabella*, 1949; *The Grand Sophy*, 1950

1951-1960 • *The Quiet Gentleman*, 1951; *Cotillion*, 1953; *The Toll-Gate*, 1954; *Bath Tangle*, 1955; *Sprig Muslin*, 1956; *April Lady*, 1957; *Sylvester: Or, The Wicked Uncle*, 1957; *Venetia*, 1958; *The Unknown Ajax*, 1959

1961-1975 • *A Civil Contract*, 1961; *The None-such*, 1962; *False Colours*, 1963; *Frederica*, 1965; *Black Sheep*, 1966; *Cousin Kate*, 1968; *Charity Girl*, 1970; *Lady of Quality*, 1972; *My Lord John*, 1975

SHORT FICTION: *Pistols for Two, and Other Stories*, 1960

RADIO PLAY: *The Toll-Gate*, 1974

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Hodge, Jane Aiken. *The Private World of Georgette Heyer*. London: Bodley Head, 1984. Covers Heyer's romantic and historical fiction, as well as her mystery stories.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay on Heyer's life and works.

Kloester, Jennifer. *Georgette Heyer's Regency World*. London: William Heinemann, 2005. While focused on Heyer's historical fiction, this study provides many insights into the role and importance of setting in her work.

CARL HIAASEN

Born: Fort Lauderdale, Florida; March 12, 1953

Types of plot: Comedy caper; amateur sleuth; private investigator

CONTRIBUTION

Carl Hiaasen is noted for creating a distinctive landscape filled with Florida's social, political, and environmental issues and ills. His fictional world is populated by an array of bizarre cliché-flouting characters, from reporters who become reluctant investigators to ludicrously grotesque villains and environmen-

tal avengers such as a former governor and ecological fanatic turned Everglades hermit. Within his world Hiaasen creates wildly absurdist situations laced with his own particular humor while reflecting a strong environmental consciousness. His years as an investigative reporter and columnist for the *Miami Herald* have given him a keen insight into Florida's ills, which he attacks in his novels. His investigative reporting has won many significant awards and finalist status for the Pulitzer Prize on two occasions, and his novels, which combine sociopolitical satire, black humor, broad

slapstick, and environmental criticism, have achieved both a critical and popular following and appear in bookstores nationwide. His distinctive style, themes, and satiric wit, which he uses to call attention to corporate greed, government corruption, and the destruction of his beloved Florida wilderness, offer a black-comedy world not yet rivaled by other authors of crime and detective fiction. Like Elmore Leonard, Hiaasen has taken crime fiction into the mainstream by subverting old formulas with matters of social and environmental importance. His place in the canon of contemporary authors seems assured.

BIOGRAPHY

The son of a lawyer and a teacher, Carl Hiaasen was born and raised in south Florida. Having received his first typewriter at an early age, he forged a satirical voice by publishing an underground newsletter in high school. Hiaasen married Connie Lyford in 1970, attended Emory University, where he submitted satiric pieces to the school newspaper, and then transferred to the University of Florida, graduating with a journalism degree in 1974. After beginning his writing career at *Cocoa Today* (now *Florida Today*), he joined the *Miami Herald* in 1976 and gained recognition as an investigative reporter. As a reporter, he has focused on developments and projects that threaten Florida's ecology and natural beauty for the sake of profit. He became a Pulitzer Prize finalist for a series on doctors committing malpractice in 1980 and for a series on drug smuggling in 1981. Since 1985 Hiaasen has been writing a weekly column that has been known to irritate regional developers and bureaucrats, who blame him for discouraging tourism. For his journalism and commentary advocating the preservation of Florida's ecology, Hiaasen received the Damon Runyon Award from the Denver Press Club in 2003-2004, the Newspaper Guild's Heywood Broun Award, and honors from the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors.

Hiaasen began writing fiction in 1981, when he and William D. Montalbano (a former *Miami Herald* editor) collaborated to write three novels drawing on their experience as reporters and relying on detective and adventure fiction formulas. In 1986 the author ventured out on his own with *Tourist Season* and has con-

tinued to write mystery and detective fiction as well as novels for young adults and nonfiction. His novels reflect his offbeat imagination and satirical comic sense and are infused with social and political awareness, often centering on south Florida environmental concerns. Beginning in 1987, his fiction became more socially pointed and comical: He wrote, for example, of corruption in the fishing world (*Double Whammy*, 1987); corrupt plastic surgeons and feckless lawyers (*Skin Tight*, 1989); dishonest, ecology-destroying landowners (*Native Tongue*, 1991), and greed and iniquity in the wake of a devastating hurricane (*Stormy Weather*, 1995). Deviating from his normal mode in 1996, he joined with twelve other authors to write *Naked Came the Manatee*, an absurdly fast-paced mystery originally published in serial form in the *Miami Herald's* magazine section, which brought together noted characters associated with each author.

In 1998 Hiaasen focused on the Walt Disney Company, describing with wild humor the company's international aspirations in the nonfictional *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World*. In 1999, *Kick Ass:*



Carl Hiaasen. (Elena Seibert)

Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen appeared, followed by *Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen* in 2001.

After *Sick Puppy* (2000) and *Basket Case* (2002), two more novels featuring the Hiaasen's distinctive humor and convoluted crime situations, he wrote his first novel for the young-adult market, *Hoot* (2002). It won the Newberry Honor for excellence in children's literature. The story deals with the danger facing burrowing owls owing to greedy land developers. A second young-adult novel, *Flush* (2005), dealt with illegal sewage dumping off the Florida coast. The author's 2006 comic caper, *Nature Girl*, introduced within his socially conscious agenda such zany characters as a bipolar heroine intent on improving the world, a hapless telemarketer, and a Seminole failed alligator wrestler.

Hiaasen was divorced from his first wife in 1996; his son from that marriage is a newspaper reporter. He married Fenia Clizer in 1999 and settled with her and their son in the Florida Keys. Hiaasen's fiction mirrors his passion as an environmentally concerned Floridian and journalist.

ANALYSIS

As an investigative reporter for the *Miami Herald*, Carl Hiaasen focused on the corruption in the business world and in politics that negatively affected the Florida environment. The issues and the people that served as fodder for his columns are fictionalized in his novels, forming the basis for outlandish characters and situations. The novels that Hiaasen coauthored with fellow journalist William B. Montalbano are conventional works of detective and action fiction encompassing such subjects as the cocaine trade, smuggling, and murder on foreign soil. These novels do not have the characteristics that make Hiaasen's later work noteworthy. Hiaasen introduced his distinctive style and themes in his first solo novel, *Tourist Season*. Claiming that Florida produces stories and people as bizarre as those in his novels, Hiaasen created a distinctive genre of comedy mysteries, also described as environmental thrillers, which hold a world of out-sized ecology-destroying crooks and promoters, greedy businessmen, corrupt politicians, obtuse tour-

ists, confused retirees, hard-luck rednecks, and crazed ecoteurs. The writer views this world with a sardonic eye and a wildly absurdist wit that stings any who by thought or deed threaten the environment in south Florida or who in any way deceive their fellow citizens.

Hiaasen protagonists who stand against crooked schemers include journalists who have become amateur detectives, former state investigators turned fishermen, a private investigator, and occasionally a woman. Usually central characters, after dealing with absurdly outlandish complications, are successful in preventing bad guys from achieving their unlawful, often antienvironmental ends, and they frequently contribute to such villains meeting an outrageously funny demise, such as a hit man impaled on a stuffed swordfish.

TOURIST SEASON

Hiaasen's first solo novel, *Tourist Season*, allowed him to give full rein to his offbeat humor and imagination. A group of fanatic but inept activists want to rid Florida of all perceived problems by terrorizing its tourists and developers. Tourists are kidnapped, thrown into a pool, and awarded freedom if they can swim across it without being eaten by the resident alligator—but none make it. A local politician's body is discovered in a suitcase with a toy alligator in his throat, and an Orange Bowl Queen is kidnapped during a game by one of the terrorists who is a former Miami Dolphins football star. The leader of the militant environmentalists is Skip Wiley, a former columnist for the *Miami Herald* whose lawless, militant measures probably represent many of Hiaasen's own fantasies. Protagonist Brian Keyes, a reporter turned private investigator, eventually solves the mystery, saves the Orange Bowl Queen, and confronts the ecoterrorist leader before the latter is blown up on an island rezoned for dynamiting. The last act of the wounded leader before the island explodes is to climb a tree to put a nested eagle to flight.

DOUBLE WHAMMY

The comic mystery *Double Whammy* combines Florida landscape overdevelopment with a story of rigged big-money bass-fishing tournaments. Protagonist R. J. Decker, a news photographer turned private detective, is hired to investigate wrongdoing on the

bass-fishing circuit. Decker enlists the help of a deranged hermit named Clinton "Skink" Tyree, a former Florida governor whose idealism caused him to vacate his office when the surrounding corruption became unbearable and to flee into the swamp where he ate roadkill and became a prankster-ecoterrorist. Skink is a wildly bizarre figure who appears in three other Hiaasen novels (*Sick Puppy*, *Native Tongue*, and *Stormy Weather*) but becomes more of a teacher-helper than avenger. In *Double Whammy*, Decker and Skink discover nefarious connections among bass-fishing tournaments, television shows, an outdoor Christian network, and an evangelist real-estate developer who has built his newest lake-and-town project on a polluted landfill that will not sustain aquatic life. The novel also includes a macabre murderer who threatens victims by carrying a pit bull's severed head locked onto his arm. Critical comments praise the writing style and macabre-funny aspects of the plot, and a sports magazine has commended Hiaasen's comprehensive knowledge of the cheating schemes plaguing fishing tournaments as well as the political corruption depriving Florida of much of its wetlands.

NATIVE TONGUE

Hiaasen, for the source of his plot in *Native Tongue*, again turns to such south Florida issues as multiple theme parks, endangered species, and overdevelopment. The hero, Joe Winder, is a burned-out newspaperman reduced to being a public relations hack for a Walt Disney World Resort-like theme park in the Florida Keys. The park is owned by a mobster in the federal Witness Protection Program who wants to further develop Key Largo by bulldozing land and erecting condominiums and golf courses. However, his plans fall apart when two endangered mango voles, part of a popular park exhibit, disappear and Winder and former governor Skink conspire to thwart his plans. The intrigue culminates in the park's burning down and the landscape's being temporarily undisturbed. The ruthless developer is ultimately killed by a hit man as a result of his past organized-crime connections. However, the novel's most outlandish villain is a chief of security so reliant on steroids that he drags an intravenous infusion set along with him. Although he menaces Winder, he meets a perverse fate by drown-

ing in a water tank while being sodomized by the park's performing dolphin. Most reviewers found the novel inventive, satirically rich, and convincing in conveying an environmental message.

STRIP TEASE

The first Hiaasen novel to make the best-seller list, *Strip Tease*, is perhaps the best known owing to its adaptation as a motion picture in 1996 with Demi Moore and Burt Reynolds. However, more significant, it marks Hiaasen's first woman protagonist. Erin Grant is a well-realized and sympathetic character who dances at a topless club to make enough money to gain custody of her child from her former husband, a petty thief specializing in stolen wheelchairs. When an unbalanced politician develops an unhealthy attraction to Erin, he sets in motion a chain of events that end in murder. The novel encompasses corrupt politicians controlled by ruthless sugar-industry magnates with Cuban interests and touches on custody battles and feminist concerns about women forced to strip to earn a living. The villains are less comic than in preceding novels, yet blackly humorous elements are not lacking. Among them are a widely known congressman slathered head to foot in Vaseline, death by a golf club, and the mad search for a snake to replace the deceased prop of one stripper. The novel, superior to its screen adaptation, is an effective indictment of the powerful sugar lobby wrapped in a black comedy about upscale strip clubs.

SKINNY DIP

In this screwball Florida escapade treating anti-environmental crooks, villain Chaz Perrone, an inept, shady marine scientist hopes to make a fast buck by doctoring water samples so that a ruthless agribusiness tycoon can continue to illegally dump fertilizer into the endangered Everglades. When Perrone suspects that his wife, Joey, has learned about his scam, he pushes her overboard from a cruise liner in the Atlantic. However, unbeknown to him, his wife survives the fall by clinging to a bale of Jamaican pot and is pulled from the ocean by Mick Stranahan, a retired investigator for the Florida State Attorney's Office who is now a loner fisherman in a waterfront bungalow. Mick, making a second appearance as a Hiaasen protagonist (the first was in *Skin Tight*), persuades Joey not to immediately report

her husband's crime to the police, but instead to play dead and with Mick's help to bedevil Perrone until he incriminates himself and gives away his scam. Joey proceeds to taunt and haunt her homicidal husband, whose nerves become so frayed that his work suffers. His erratic behavior causes his cohorts in pollution to grow uneasy. Meanwhile Mick finds that despite six failed marriages and island solitude, he is still capable of romance. Mick and Joey, as a team, survive and overcome attacks from the villains, exact revenge on Perrone, and affectionately find each other. The story is an engaging, amusing, and satirical romp with ever-present Hiaasen environmental themes. More than a few critics have noted that the novel marks the author at the top of his comic form and brings back an appealing protagonist who may well appear again. The novel has been considered for screenplay adaptation.

Christian H. Moe

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Powder Burn*, 1981 (with William D. Montalbano); *Trap Line*, 1982 (with Montalbano); *A Death in China*, 1984 (with Montalbano); *Tourist Season*, 1986; *Double Whammy*, 1987; *Skin Tight*, 1989; *Native Tongue*, 1991; *Strip Tease*, 1993; *Stormy Weather*, 1995; *Lucky You*, 1997; *Sick Puppy*, 2000; *Basket Case*, 2002; *Skinny Dip*, 2004; *Nature Girl*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Naked Came the Manatee*, 1996 (with others); *Tart of Darkness* (2003, *Sports Illustrated*)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Hoot*, 2002; *Flush*, 2005

NONFICTION: *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World*, 1998; *Kick Ass: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen*, 1999; *Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen*, 2001

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"Carl Hiaasen." *Current Biography Yearbook 1997*, edited by Elizabeth A. Schick. New York: Wilson, 1997. Well-detailed account of relationship between the author's career as an investigative journalist and the dominant themes of his fiction.

Grunwald, Michael. "Swamp Things." *The New Republic*, November 15, 2004, 33-37. Discusses the novel *Skinny Dip* and its author's environmental concerns with the south Florida ecosystem.

Hiaasen, Carl. Carl Hiaasen Official Web Site. <http://www.carlhiaasen.com>. The author's Web site offers information on the author's life as well as his novels, a bibliography, and interviews with Hiaasen that are of particular interest.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Chapter examines the use of crime fiction as a sociopolitical critique, including the destruction of the Florida environment. Contains a discussion of Hiaasen's *Stormy Weather*.

Nyberg, Ramesh. "Murder, Mayhem and Mirth: An Interview with Carl Hiaasen." *Writer's Digest* 75 (January, 1995): 38-40. Interviewer lucidly identifies Hiaasen's use of humor, satire, and his personal value system in his works, as he draws the author out about the origin and characters of several novels.

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

Born: Fort Worth, Texas; January 19, 1921

Died: Locarno, Switzerland; February 4, 1995

Also wrote as Claire Morgan

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tom Ripley, 1955-1993

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

TOM RIPLEY, a New Yorker, became an American expatriate at the age of twenty-six. Once married to the spoiled Heloise Plisson, he was also a fringe member of French high society at one time. In his small chateau in a village outside Paris, he leads an apparently quiet life, yet has committed several murders and managed narrow escapes from the law and those dear to his victims. Occasionally sensitive and generally witty and charming, Ripley is a bold psychopath.

CONTRIBUTION

Patricia Highsmith's novels and short stories have been considered by critics to be among the very best work in modern crime fiction. Her highly original suspense novels, closer to the tradition of Fyodor Dostoevski than to the Golden Age of mysteries, are noted for the intriguing portrayal of characters who inadvertently become involved in crime, perhaps imagining committing a crime or carrying the guilt for a crime that goes undetected. Acute psychological studies of such antiheroes, together with complex plot structure, precise prose, and suspenseful development of unease within a finely drawn context, characterize her work. Highsmith's focus on crimes committed by ordinary people in moments of malaise suggests that the lines between good and evil, guilty and innocent, and sanity and insanity are indeed problematic.

BIOGRAPHY

Patricia Highsmith was born on January 19, 1921, in Fort Worth, Texas, the daughter of Jay Bernard Plangman and Mary Coates Plangman, later Highsmith. By the time she was born, her mother had left her father

and started a relationship with a man who would become her stepfather, Stanley Highsmith, an illustrator for telephone directory advertisements. Her mother, also a commercial artist, was quite talented. Highsmith was reared by her beloved grandparents until the age of six, when she joined her mother in New York City. Highsmith recalled her childhood years with her mother and stepfather as a kind of hell, in part because of their ever-increasing arguments. She never had a close relationship with her mother.

While attending Julia Richman High School, Highsmith was the editor of the school newspaper and went on to receive a bachelor's degree from Barnard College in 1942. She began writing at seventeen and published her first short story, "The Heroine," in *Harper's Bazaar*. To a remarkable degree, Highsmith's first stories set the pattern for her career. Her first novel, *Strangers on a Train* (1950), was made into a film by Alfred Hitchcock. In the late 1940's, she was also in-



Patricia Highsmith. (© Hope Curtis)

volved in political activism, not unlike the female protagonist of her novel *Edith's Diary* (1977). Her popular novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) was nominated for the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1956 and received the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière in 1957. In 1964, *The Two Faces of January* received the Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger Award for the best foreign crime novel of the year. Although Highsmith was highly lauded in her native country, Europeans took her work even more seriously, as evidenced by a greater number of interviews and critical studies as well as by sales figures.

After 1963, Highsmith lived in Europe. Although she was engaged to be married at one time, she was a lesbian and preferred to live alone most of her adult life. She enjoyed cats, gardening, carpentry, and travel and resided in many European countries. Highsmith painted, sculpted, daydreamed, and above all wrote: She tried to write eight pages daily, and her prose bears witness to a fine craftsmanship. She died in Switzerland in 1995.

ANALYSIS

Patricia Highsmith's novel *Strangers on a Train* demonstrates her ingenious opening gambits (two strangers agree to murder each other's logical victim, thus allowing for alibis while avoiding all suspicion), her depiction of the double, and the play with and against the strictures of crime fiction. Carefully developed suspense leads not to the detection or punishment of the criminal but to an odyssey through the minds of the perpetrators of violence.

Within the bounds of the suspense thriller genre, as Anthony Channell Hilfer observes, Highsmith capitalizes on various features: the psychological dimensions of a hero whose morality tends toward the unconventional and the absence of the central detective figure. She builds suspense in *Strangers on a Train*, as in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and other novels in the Ripley series, by the vacillation in the characters' minds that may or may not lead them into murder and the fear or danger of exposure for criminal acts. A counterpoint between the thoughts and deeds of a seemingly ordinary person and one who invents his own rules, or

"morality," creates a riveting psychological tension that focuses the works.

The reader is thus thrilled and intrigued, waiting to see what will happen next while experiencing a precarious excitement in a world not exempt from violence, nerve-racking police visits, and corpses. Nevertheless, the genre's array of devices is handled adroitly by Highsmith, who can make of improbable situations a believable and illuminating relationship between characters and their social milieu. Her originality resides, to some extent, in her refusal to tie up ends into a comforting package for the reader. Unexpected endings provide a twist of sorts, but the reader is prepared for them because of the gradual buildup of motifs in contrast to sensational devices used by less skillful writers. The presence of suicide, doubt, or anxiety rather than neat resolutions marks her novels from beginning to end.

Highsmith's most daring departure from the crime-fiction genre is the total evasion of conventional morality intrinsic in even the hard-boiled detective stories. She indicates one reason that she rejects "boring" expectations of justice: "The public wants to see the law triumph, or at least the general public does, though at the same time the public likes brutality. The brutality must be on the right side however."

The intense engagement of readers in the novels' psychic process is especially noteworthy in Highsmith. Her readers feel anxiety and confusion not unlike that of the characters. For example, the moral dilemmas experienced by Bernard Tufts in *Ripley Under Ground* (1970) or Howard Ingham of *The Tremor of Forgery* (1969) are placed squarely on the reader. One is drawn inside the skin of one or two characters who in turn obsessively observe one or two others. This compulsive spying within the novel has its counterpart in the reader's voyeuristic role. Readers' discomfort also stems from the narrator's abstention from explicit moral judgment, effected both by the apparently logical, impartial presentation of events told from the interior view of one or two protagonists and by the fact that criminals are not apprehended (their apprehension would restore order). Furthermore, most readers would find it difficult, indeed morally repulsive, to identify with psychopaths such as Charles Bruno of

Strangers on a Train or Ripley. Nevertheless, Ripley at least has enough charm, verve, and plausibility to awaken fascination and abhorrence simultaneously. The reader's unease is a mirror of the process in the interior world: Guy Haines reacts to Bruno in *Strangers on a Train* and Jonathan Trevanny to Ripley in *Ripley's Game* (1974) with a similar love/hate, as both Guy and Jonathan are insidiously induced into acts they would not ordinarily contemplate.

The uncanny relationship between pairs (of men, usually) is a recurrent theme that Highsmith discusses in her book *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* (1966): Her recurrent pattern "is the relationship between two men, usually quite different in make-up, sometimes obviously the good and the evil, sometimes merely ill-matched friends." Acknowledging the necessity of sympathy for criminals, because she writes about them, Highsmith finds them "dramatically interesting, because for a time at least they are active, free in spirit, and they do not knuckle down to anyone." Ripley, with his bravado and creative imagination, is a perfect example of the criminal-as-hero who can be liked by the reader. His ability to influence others, as well as his willingness to take great risks to fashion his own life and identity, make him in some sense "heroic." Bruno of *Strangers on a Train* is of a somewhat different ilk, as his creator points out: "I think it is also possible to make a hero-psychopath one hundred percent sick and revolting, and still make him fascinating for his blackness and all-around depravity." Bruno's evil character is necessarily offset by the good character of Guy, who thus provides the reader with a likable hero. Other Highsmith characters, such as Howard Ingham of *The Tremor of Forgery*, are less attractive to readers because of their indecisiveness, but few are as repulsive as the obnoxious Ralph Linderman of *Found in the Street* (1986) or Kenneth Rowajinski of *A Dog's Ransom* (1972).

Highsmith's male characters are rather a sorry lot—hopeless, weak, suicidal, or psychopathic—while the women depicted are usually vivid and secondary. Her male protagonists are nevertheless compelling, probably because they are more true to life than readers may like to admit—perhaps also because of the intensity of their depiction, a point stressed by

the author herself and the critic and novelist Julian Symons.

Like her audacious creature Ripley, Highsmith pushes things to the limit, not only problems of reader identification but also plot plausibility. She has a predilection for unusual plots that "stretch the reader's credulity." If the plot idea is not entirely original, she finds a new twist. To make the corpse-in-rug theme amusing (in *The Story-Teller*, 1965), she decides to have no corpse in it at all:

In this case, the person carrying the carpet would have to be suspected of murder, would have to be seen carrying the carpet (perhaps in a furtive manner), would have to be a bit of a joker.

To this renovated device, she adds the idea of a writer-hero who confuses the line between reality and fiction, thus exploring the everyday schizophrenia that she believes all people possess to some degree.

Although Highsmith stated that entertainment was an explicit goal and moral lessons have no place in art, her desire to explore human behavior and morality are demonstrated by the precise social milieu and character development in her work. Part of her success can be attributed to the accurate conveyance of emotions and "felt experiences." Murder, as she says, "is often an extension of anger, an extension to the point of insanity or temporary insanity." Furthermore, Highsmith was interested in the interplay between social issues and psychological factors, as demonstrated by her depiction of the deleterious effects of incarceration on an individual in *The Glass Cell* (1964) and the degraded position of women in society in *Edith's Diary*. The characters who reflect a standard morality gone awry—Ralph and his old-fashioned views in *Found in the Street* or OWL and his patriotic fervor in *The Tremor of Forgery*—are often depicted quite negatively. Social criticism, though, is less important to Highsmith's work than the exploration of human psychology.

Although violence, aggression, anxiety, guilt, and the interplay between the hunter and hunted are essential to her novels, Highsmith was a master at conveying a range of emotions, sensations, and moods. She recorded minutely her characters' physical appear-

ance, dress, and surroundings along with their musings and actions; in her view, “The setting and the people must be seen clearly as a photograph.”

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

The stylistic arrangement of words on a page, intrinsic to narration, is particularly important in the rhythm and mood set from the beginning of any Highsmith novel. Highsmith said that she prefers a beginning sentence “in which something moves and gives action,” for example, the opening words of *Strangers on a Train*: “The train tore along with an angry, irregular rhythm.” Very quickly, she sets up the initial situation of the novel: Guy, as restless as the train, wants to divorce his wife, Miriam, but fears that she may refuse. Thus, the reader understands his mood, appearance, and problem within the first page. Guy’s vulnerability and initial outflow of conversation with the manipulative Charles Bruno prove to be his undoing. Their ensuing relationship fulfills Bruno’s plan that Guy murder Bruno’s hated father in exchange for the murder of Guy’s wife.

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY

The opening paragraph of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a fine example of the economical use of language:

Tom glanced behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage, heading his way. Tom walked faster. There was no doubt that the man was after him. Tom had noticed him five minutes ago, eyeing him carefully from a table, as if he weren’t *quite* sure, but almost. He had looked sure enough for Tom to down his drink in a hurry, pay and get out.

The sentences are brief and direct and immediately create a mood of apprehension. The dramatic, “frenetic” prose as Highsmith described it, is in perfect consonance with Ripley’s character, the rapid action of the plot, and the underlying Kafkaesque tone. Very soon, readers realize that Ripley is afraid of being arrested, a fear underlined subtly throughout the series even though he is never caught. His choice to live on the edge, perfectly established in the beginning, has a rhythmic counterpoint in Ripley’s humor and élan that come into play later.

RIPLEY UNDER GROUND

As the Ripley series develops, there is an escalation in crime, and Ripley’s initial (faint) qualms give way

to a totally psychopathic personality. At the same time, by the second book in the series, *Ripley Under Ground*, he is very suave and aesthetically discerning. The ambience of life in Villeperce, the town outside Paris where Ripley resides, complete with small château and wealthy wife, Héloïse, faithful and circumspect housekeeper, Madame Annette, and the local shops and neighbors are recorded thoroughly. The precise sensory descriptions in all of Highsmith’s novels reveal her familiarity with the geographic locations she evokes.

THE BOY WHO FOLLOWED RIPLEY

Highsmith also conveys meticulously Ripley’s sometimes endearing and more often horrifying traits. For example, he is very fond of language and wordplay and often looks up French words in the dictionary. His taste in music, finely delineated, has a theatrical function that weaves through the entire series. In the fourth of the Ripley series, *The Boy Who Followed Ripley* (1980), Tom enjoys the good humor of a Berlin bar:

It gave Tom a lift, as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* overture always gave him a lift before he went into battle. Fantasy! Courage was all imaginary, anyway, a matter of a mental state. A sense of reality did not help when one was faced with a gun barrel or a knife.

He buys presents for Héloïse at the most improbable moments (right after successfully accomplishing a murder, for example).

In contrast to Highsmith’s often depressed or anxious characters, Ripley’s humor is highlighted: As he sees advertisements for inflatable dolls in the newspaper, he muses,

How did one blow them up, Tom wondered. It would take all the breath out of a man to do it, and what would a man’s housekeeper or his friends say, if they saw a bicycle pump and no bicycle in his apartment? Funnier, Tom thought, if a man just took the doll along to his garage with his car, and asked the attendant to blow her up for him. And if the man’s housekeeper found the doll in bed and thought it was a corpse? Or opened a closet door and a doll fell out on her?

The reader might surmise that Highsmith pokes fun at and lauds her own craft simultaneously. With Ripley, Highsmith has created a character who is so inventive

that he seems to write himself. Ripley is one of those rare “persons” who does not feel enough guilt to “let it seriously trouble him” no matter how many murders he commits.

THE TREMOR OF FORGERY

Other Highsmith novels, such as her favorite, *The Tremor of Forgery*, deal with less dramatic characters and plots. Although this novel portrays Ingham’s fascinating experience in Tunisia, the pace is deliberately slower and the implications of Ingham’s moral judgments are probed in a subtle way quite different from that of the Ripley series. The vertigo of Ingham’s Tunisia, as he attempts to grasp the meaning of love, morality, and his own emotions, is reminiscent of the work of Henry James, E. M. Forster, and André Gide rather than a typical suspense novel. Indeed, Howard Ingham never discovers whether he inadvertently killed an unknown intruder one evening, an incident that carries a symbolic significance throughout most of the novel (and one that remains an open question at the end for the reader as well). The novel ends with the same sense of slow expectation with which it commenced, perfectly in tune with Ingham’s doubts. Readers are even more engaged in the puzzling world of this novel than in that of the Ripley novels, simply because the latter are more resolved, more pat perhaps. In her fiction, Highsmith conjures up a variety of worlds in their interior and exterior facets, with a style that transcends simple categorization and delights her uneasy readers.

During her lifetime, several of Highsmith’s works were the basis for screen adaptations, including Alfred Hitchcock’s masterful rendering of *Strangers on a Train* in 1951 (another remake, *Once You Kiss a Stranger*, was released in 1969) and René Clement’s stunning *Purple Moon* (from *The Talented Mr. Ripley*) in 1960 starring Alain Delon. While both the Hitchcock and Clement films were cinematic classics, Highsmith later revised her thinking on granting film rights to her books. She disliked the tampering usually dictated by Hollywood, the omissions and additions to curry favor or in pursuit of maximum appeal—so she insisted on a contract clause that her books not be mentioned as the basis for a film unless she expressly gave her approval to do so. Such a clause, while legally difficult to en-

force, did not give all directors pause as evidenced by the number of her books optioned for films.

At the end of the twentieth century, scores of filmgoers were given a new taste of Highsmith, with a stunning version of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* from Academy Award-winning director Anthony Minghella. Starring Matt Damon as Ripley, the film was both a critical and box office success, replete with Oscar nominations. Although Minghella was not completely faithful to Highsmith’s 1955 masterpiece, he believed that she would have appreciated the finished product had she lived to see it. “If I were to please anyone with this adaptation,” Minghella noted in a press release, “I would have liked it to have been her.”

Marie Murphy

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and
Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TOM RIPLEY SERIES: *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, 1955; *Ripley Under Ground*, 1970; *Ripley’s Game*, 1974; *The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, 1980; *The Mysterious Mr. Ripley*, 1985 (contains *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Ripley Under Ground*, and *Ripley’s Game*); *Ripley Under Water*, 1991

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Strangers on a Train*, 1950; *The Blunderer*, 1954 (also known as *Lament for a Lover*, 1956); *Deep Water*, 1957; *A Game for the Living*, 1958; *This Sweet Sickness*, 1960; *The Cry of the Owl*, 1962; *The Two Faces of January*, 1964; *The Glass Cell*, 1964; *The Story-Teller*, 1965 (also known as *A Suspension of Mercy*, 2001); *Those Who Walk Away*, 1967; *The Tremor of Forgery*, 1969; *A Dog’s Ransom*, 1972; *Edith’s Diary*, 1977; *People Who Knock on the Door*, 1983; *Found in the Street*, 1986

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Snail-Watcher, and Other Stories*, 1970 (also known as *Eleven*); *Kleine Geschichten für Weiberfeinde*, 1974 (*Little Tales of Misogyny*, 1977); *The Animal-Lover’s Book of Beastly Murder*, 1975; *Slowly, Slowly in the Wind*, 1979; *The Black House*, 1981; *Mermaids on the Golf Course, and Other Stories*, 1985; *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*, 1987; *The Selected Stories of Patricia Highsmith*, 2001; *Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories of Patricia Highsmith*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Price of Salt*, 1952 (as Morgan; also known as *Carol*); *Small g: A Summer Idyll*, 1995

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Miranda the Panda Is on the Veranda*, 1958 (with Doris Sanders)

NONFICTION: *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, 1966

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Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Highsmith's works and life experiences are compared to those of Margery Allingham and Dorothy L. Sayers, among others. Bibliographic references and index.

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Meaker, Marijane. *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's, a Memoir*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003. A portrait of Highsmith written by a woman who had a relationship with her.

Summers, Claude J., ed. *Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*. New York: H. Holt, 1995. Includes an excellent essay by Gina Macdonald on Highsmith's life work to the time of her death in 1995.

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Wilson, Andrew. *Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004. This biography of Highsmith examines the author's troubled life and devotion to her work. A rare source of biographical information.

REGINALD HILL

Born: Hartlepool, England; April 3, 1936

Also wrote as Reginald Charles Hill; Dick Morland; Patrick Ruell; Charles Underhill

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Andrew Dalziel and Peter Pascoe, 1970-
Joe Sixsmith, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ANDREW DALZIEL is detective superintendent of the Yorkshire police, a flamboyantly larger-than-life figure whose girth, garrulousness, and proudly old-fashioned investigative techniques mask his exceptional physical prowess, acute intelligence, and surprising grasp of contemporary social and cultural realities.

DETECTIVE PETER PASCOE is Dalziel's younger, more sensitive crime-fighting partner. As introspective and as mild-mannered as Dalziel can be overbearing, Pascoe uses less bluff and brute force, relying instead on psychological insight. His is the character who grows the most from novel to novel. As the series goes on, Pascoe and his wife, Ellie, become as much a focus as the criminal investigations.

JOE SIXSMITH is a laid-off lathe operator who becomes a private investigator to pay the bills. As a working-class black man in the gritty town of Luton, Joe inhabits a role that allows for a more direct examination of issues of race and class than in the Dalziel and Pascoe books.

CONTRIBUTION

Reginald Hill introduced Andy Dalziel and Peter Pascoe in *A Clubbable Woman* (1970), and followed this work with *An Advancement of Learning* (1971). Such titles indicated early on the wordplay and double entendres that would become staples of the series: The victim in the first novel is not just "clubby" but bludgeoned to death, and the second novel's title as well as its chapter epigrams come from the writings of Sir Francis Bacon. Hill has been praised for his precise

characterization, from the ample use of Yorkshire dialect and manners to the deployment of various points of view in the narration, voice-over techniques, interior monologues, and fragments of letters and diaries. In the later novels, Hill has been given to ingenious plots that function on several levels other than the investigation of the central crime. He has said he does not consider his books police procedurals per se but simply good stories.

BIOGRAPHY

Reginald Hill was born in 1936 in Hartlepool in northeast England, where his father played soccer for the local professional team. When Hill was three years old the family moved to Cumbria. He grew up there, went on to attend Oxford University, and became a teacher for several years in Yorkshire, the setting for his acclaimed Andrew Dalziel and Peter Pascoe crime novels. Hill has said that, like most children, he was fond of stories but decided to become a writer when he discovered—at the age of seven—that one could be paid "for making things up." His first novel, *A Clubbable Woman*, was published in 1970, and introduced the mid-Yorkshire police duo of Andrew "Fat Andy" Dalziel and Peter Pascoe, who have gone on to be featured in more than twenty novels and in a popular British television series. In addition, Hill has written a series of mysteries featuring the private detective Joe Sixsmith as well as several thrillers under the pseudonym Patrick Ruell. In 1990 Hill was awarded the Gold Dagger for *Bones and Silence* (1990), and in 1995 the British Crime Writers' Association honored him with its Cartier Diamond Dagger for his lifetime contribution to the genre. The Dalziel and Pascoe mystery *Good Morning, Midnight* (2004) received the 2004 People's Choice Award from the Mystery Thriller Book Club.

ANALYSIS

Though Reginald Hill is the author of more than forty books in many genres, he is known first and foremost as the creator of Yorkshire detective superinten-

dent Andrew Dalziel and Chief Inspector Peter Pascoe, who together have been solving crimes since *A Clubbable Woman* was published in 1970. That novel introduced readers to Dalziel (pronounced “Dee-ell”), sometimes referred to behind his back as Fat Andy and by other even less flattering nicknames by friend and foe alike. Coarse, corpulent, given to glaringly impolite remarks about race, class, and gender, Dalziel nonetheless confounds both criminal and law enforcement minds with his almost clairvoyant perception of human motivation. He also possesses a physical prowess that belies his considerable girth. More than one reviewer has applied the term “Falstaffian” to the superintendent: He can outdrink his staff even as he out-thinks them, out-joking and outfoxing his adversaries as well as his allies.

This is not to say Dalziel requires no help. Peter Pascoe begins the series as a fresh recruit, a university-educated representative of a kinder, gentler police mind-set that the old-fashioned Dalziel openly scorns. Much of the humor and human interest in Hill’s writing develops from this tension between personalities and philosophies. With each successive case, it becomes increasingly clear that Dalziel’s blunt force needs Pascoe’s nuances to solve modern-day crimes. Their partnership thus grows from an initial wariness (even distaste) through a mutual grudging respect to a shared affection and reliance on each other’s strengths.

Ellie Pascoe, Peter’s wife, begins the series as a foil to both men. An academic who disapproves of Dalziel’s excesses, she also proves to Peter that he is often less enlightened—and more Dalziel-like—than he would care to admit. In later books, Ellie takes on more and more importance as a character: In *Arms and the Women* (1999), for example, it is Ellie’s situation that provides the main plot and her voice that controls much of the narrative. Peter and Ellie’s courtship (college sweethearts years before, they are reacquainted in *An Advancement of Learning*) and the progress of their married relationship into parenthood over the course of many novels is just one of several story lines Hill maintains from book to book.

Hill allows other recurring characters to develop as well, personalities who collectively become a rich and varied supporting cast rather than merely a set of ste-

reotypes. These finely drawn roles include Sergeant Edgar “Wiely” Wiely, whose chiseled features are repeatedly mocked by Dalziel even as the superintendent counts on Wiely’s nearly photographic memory. Through the early novels Wiely keeps his homosexuality closely closeted to preserve his police career ambitions, but as he comes out, he gives the stories added depth and human interest. Another character, Detective Shirley Novello, similarly has to navigate a career environment traditionally hostile to her presence. One of Hill’s many accomplishments is that such roles never seem gratuitous; each character is given a fair share of the plot—investigative and personal—without the author’s using them as spokespersons for a cause or social issue.

Indeed, the intricate weave of private life with professional life is one of the most pronounced features of the Dalziel and Pascoe mysteries. In *The Wood Beyond* (1996), the crime plot is paralleled by and then intersects with Pascoe’s family history; in *Good Morning, Midnight*, Dalziel’s past implicates him in a questionable suicide case that Pascoe must investigate. Often cited as Hill’s main accomplishment is the sheer vitality of his writing, credited with “raising the British mystery to new heights,” as *The New York Times* has said. In the words of Donna Leon of *The Sunday Times* (London), Hill’s gifts include a “formidable intelligence, quick humor, compassion, and a prose style that blends elegance and grace.” The intelligence is easily perceived in the range and intricacy of Hill’s storytelling: A tragic but seemingly isolated incident often has implications and motives far beyond its Yorkshire locale, and the plot often crosses continents, even generations. No crime seems minor in Hill’s world, where investment swindlers cross paths with pornographers and where old family scandals merge with contemporary drug trafficking or international arms deals.

Grim as these elements may be, Hill maintains a quick humor. The dialogue is rife with puns and the arch remark; Dalziel’s sarcasm or Ellie’s playful skewering of Peter’s ego would be enough to delight and amuse even those readers who fail to catch the witty allusions (usually unattributed, much less explained) to William Shakespeare, John Keats, or Homer. In some

novels, however, the erudition is on display from the start. Not only does Hill favor epigraphs from a wide variety of classic authors to open sections or chapters, but he also uses such sources to frame the entire story. *Arms and the Women*, for example, obviously calls to mind George Bernard Shaw's famous play *Arms and the Man* (pr. 1894, pb. 1898). *The Wood Beyond* borrows its title from the opening of Dante's *La divina commedia* (c. 1320; *The Divine Comedy*, 1802), and Pascoe must in the course of the novel descend through the darker circles of his own family's past. Similarly, *Good Morning, Midnight* begins with the Emily Dickinson poem of the same name. *Dialogues of the Dead* (2001) provides no fewer than three alternative titles (one of them a spurious reference to a board game), an entry from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a stanza from the nineteenth century poet Heinrich Heine, and a passage from Thomas Lovell Beddoes before the opening chapter. Such devices contribute to the overall appeal of Hill's work and prepare the reader for the multiple layers of plot and the variety of narrators given full voice by the time Dalziel can declare the case closed and his single-malt scotch open.

THE WOOD BEYOND

The Wood Beyond, the fourteenth in the Dalziel and Pascoe series, is widely regarded as having secured Hill's reputation as Britain's finest living mystery novelist. Just as the series has fully developed the endlessly surprising persona of Andrew Dalziel, Hill devotes the bulk of this installment to Peter Pascoe, whose sleuthing discovers a great-grandfather executed for cowardice during World War I. Whether this or the discovery of a human skeleton on the grounds of an animal research clinic is the main story line is hard to say. Dalziel, meanwhile, becomes romantically involved with a woman who happens to be a suspect in yet another case. In its complexities of plot and depth of feeling, *The Wood Beyond* marks a turning point in Hill's career.

ARMS AND THE WOMEN

Just two novels later, Hill turns to Ellie Pascoe to provide the focus. In the intervening novel, the Pascoes very nearly lost their daughter, and at the outset of *Arms and the Women*, Ellie is the victim of an attempted kidnapping. Sent away for safekeeping as

well as for recuperation, she unwittingly becomes ensnared in a web of plots involving the Irish Republican Army, Colombian drug dealers, and unnamed government agents. As the tension mounts, Hill releases it with wildly comic passages from Ellie's novel in progress, an updating of Homer's *Odyssey* (c. 725 B.C.E.; English translation, 1614), in which, despite Ellie's best intentions, the hero winds up looking, acting, and sounding maddeningly like her husband's boss, Fat Andy.

DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD

Dialogues of the Dead, Hill's tour de force, begins a kind of series-within-the-series, as this novel and the next two, *Death's Jest-Book* (2002) and *Good Morning, Midnight*, form a trilogy bound by the same set of crimes and a continued plot. What begins as a pair of seemingly unrelated accidental deaths evolves into a gruesome case of serial murders, apparently perpetrated by the Wordman, an anonymous writer of "dialogues" sent to a local newspaper as part of a short-story competition. The Wordman's letters, as well as the interpolated interior monologues of the murderer, drop intriguing clues along the way, and from the novel's baffling "paranomania" (obsession with wordplay) to its disturbing epilogue, *Dialogues of the Dead* is vintage Hill.

BORN GUILTY

Born Guilty (1995), the second Joe Sixsmith novel, begins with the middle-aged Joe trying to elude his meddling aunt and her matchmaking efforts. When Joe comes upon a boy's corpse in a cardboard box, he must elude even more determined characters, including abusive police officers, drug addicts and dealers, and various others whose interest in Joe may or may not be wholesome. This work is briefer and grittier than the Dalziel and Pascoe novels tend to be and a bit less complex in its plotting but no less gripping in its emotional content and just as appealing in its characterization.

THE STRANGER HOUSE

In *The Stranger House* (2005), a nonseries mystery, Hill employs a number of the features that have made his Dalziel and Pascoe series so effective: a pair of seemingly mismatched protagonists, an intricate plot involving overlapping personal and family histories, the eccentricities of village England, and multiple narra-

tors. The Stranger House, the local inn in the village of Illthwaite, gives the novel its name and also—typically for Hill—provides an overall metaphor for the diverse backgrounds ultimately linking the main characters' families or "houses." Though neither main character is a detective (one is a mathematician, the other a former novice priest turned historian), together they ferret out the clues to their respective mysteries, going back decades in one case and centuries in the other.

James Scruton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DALZIEL AND PASCOE SERIES: *A Clubbable Woman*, 1970; *An Advancement of Learning*, 1971; *Ruling Passion*, 1973; *An April Shroud*, 1975; *A Pinch of Snuff*, 1978; *Pascoe's Ghost, and Other Brief Chronicles of Crime*, 1979; *A Killing Kindness*, 1980; *Deadheads*, 1983; *Exit Lines*, 1984; *Child's Play*, 1987; *Under World*, 1988; *One Small Step*, 1990; *Bones and Silence*, 1990; *Recalled to Life*, 1992; *The Only Game*, 1993; *Pictures of Perfection*, 1994; *The Wood Beyond*, 1996; *On Beulah Height*, 1998; *Arms and the Women*, 1999; *Dialogues of the Dead*, 2001; *Death's Jest-Book*, 2002; *Good Morning, Midnight*, 2004; *Death Comes for the Fat Man*, 2007

JOE SIXSMITH SERIES: *Blood Sympathy*, 1993; *Born Guilty*, 1995; *Killing the Lawyers*, 1997; *Singing the Sadness*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Fell of Dark*, 1971; *Asking for the Moon*, 1994; *The Castle of the Demon*, 1971 (as Ruell); *A Fairly Dangerous Thing*, 1972; *Red Christmas*, 1972; *A Very Good Hater*, 1974; *Death Takes the Low Road*, 1974; *Urn Burial*, 1975 (as Ruell); *Another Death in Venice*, 1976; *The Spy's Wife*, 1980; *Who Guards a Prince?*, 1982; *Traitor's Blood*, 1983; *Death of a Dormouse*, 1987 (as Ruell); *The Long Kill*, 1988 (as Ruell); *Dream of Darkness*, 1989; *The Only Game*, 1991; *The Four Clubs*, 1997; *The Stranger House*, 2005

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *There Are No Ghosts in the Soviet Union*, 1988

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Heart Clock*, 1973 (as Morland); *Albion! Albion!*, 1974 (as Morland; also known as *Sin-*

gleton's Law); *Captain Fantom*, 1978; *The Forging of Fantom*, 1979

TELEPLAY: *An Affair of Honor*, 1972

RADIO PLAY: *Ordinary Levels*, 1982

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Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. Hill talks about his preference for character over plot and describes his childhood shyness.

Hill, Reginald. "The Plot's the Thing." *Writer* 108, no. 11 (November, 1995): 11. Hill discusses the importance of plot, saying its touchstones are pace, point of view, and continuity. Sheds light on his works. This issue of *Writer* also contains an interview with Hill that looks at writing mysteries.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Death Comes for the Fat Man*, by Reginald Hill. 75, no. 2 (January 15, 2007): 53. Favorable review of a Dalziel and Pascoe novel in which Fat Andy Dalziel lies in a coma for much of the work.

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. This general work features chapters on private investigators, thrillers, and postwar British crime fiction. Add perspective to Hill's work.

Richards, Huw. "College Drop-out Loves Life of Crime." *Times Educational Supplement*, September 20, 2001, p. 34. Discusses how Hill gave up teaching to become a full-time writer and examines the Dalziel and Pascoe television series.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York, Routledge, 2005. Contains chapters on police procedurals, thrillers, and detectives.

The Yorkshire Post. "A Fresh Chapter Opens in a Life of Crime." March 22, 2007, p. 1. Contains a discussion of Hill's series and the popular British television series that it spawned as well as details of Hill's personal life.

TONY HILLERMAN

Born: Sacred Heart, Oklahoma; May 27, 1925

Types of plot: Psychological; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Joe Leaphorn, 1970-

Leaphorn and Chee, 1980-

Jim Chee, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOE LEAPHORN is a lieutenant of the Navajo Tribal Police. When Leaphorn makes his appearance in *The Blessing Way* (1970), he is in his early thirties; the middle-aged Leaphorn of *A Thief of Time* (1988) is widowed and has become a minor legend among his peers in law enforcement. Leaphorn is a graduate of the University of Arizona, but it is his Navajo way of thinking that gives him the unique ability to see a pattern in the apparent randomness of violent crime.

JIM CHEE, sergeant of the Navajo Tribal Police, is in his early to middle thirties, unmarried and studying to be a Navajo singer, or shaman. Despite his college degree and sophistication, he is deeply committed to the traditions of his people.

CONTRIBUTION

Tony Hillerman's seven novels set among the Indians of the American Southwest are an anomaly in detective fiction, yet his work embraces many of the characteristics of this genre. Hillerman tells a thinking person's detective story. Indeed, his protagonists Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police are part of the problem-solving approach to crime that stretches back to Sherlock Holmes, whose powers of ratiocination enabled him to find the solution to the most intricate of crimes with a minimum of violence. Their powers of analysis, however, must be applied not only to the people who follow the Navajo way but also to the white society that surrounds their world. Leaphorn and Chee must enter into the white world and relate it to the Navajo way of thinking. Hillerman depicts their encounters with the clutter and alienation of urban life in a poignant prose that is tinged with

sadness, but it is when he is exploring the physical and mythic landscapes of the Navajo people that his writing becomes truly poetic. It is this duality of viewpoint, which sheds light on both cultures and manages to emphasize the essential humanity of both peoples, that is Tony Hillerman's major achievement.

BIOGRAPHY

Tony Hillerman was born Anthony Grave Hillerman on May 27, 1925, in Sacred Heart, Oklahoma, where he grew up on a farm in "worn-out cotton country." He played cowboys and Indians with the children of the neighboring farmers, many of whom were Blackfeet, Pottawatomies, and Seminoles whom the white kids had to bribe to be Indians "because they wanted to be cowboys, too." His father, August Alfred Hillerman, and his mother, Lucy Grove Hillerman, were evidently more concerned about his education than they were about maintaining the prejudices of the day, for they decided that their son would receive his grade-school education at St. Mary's Academy, a Catholic boarding school for Indian girls in the tiny town of Sacred Heart. August Hillerman was sensitive about being a German during Adolf Hitler's rise to power. He made it a point to tell his family that "people are basically alike. Once you know that then you start to find out the differences." This respect for individuals and their differences infuses Hillerman's work.

In 1943, World War II interrupted Hillerman's studies at the University of Oklahoma. He served in Germany, receiving the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and the Purple Heart. He came home with a patch over one eye and weak vision in the other, which caused him to drop his studies in chemistry and take up journalism, a profession less demanding on his eyes. In 1948, he took his degree in journalism, married Marie Unzner, and became a crime reporter for a newspaper in Borger, Texas. Evidently, he made the right choice of profession. Following the crime-reporter position, his career as a journalist took him through a series of jobs that led to his becoming the editor for *The New Mexican* in Santa Fe, New Mexico. By his mid-thirties,

he was the editor of an influential newspaper located in the capital of New Mexico.

All the while Hillerman had been harboring a desire to tell stories, but it was risky business for a family man with six children to quit a good job to become a writer of fiction. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of his wife, he took a part-time job as an assistant to the president of the University of New Mexico, where he studied literature. In 1966, he earned his masters of arts in literature and joined the department of journalism, where he taught until he retired in 1985 to devote more time to writing.

The publication of his first novel, *The Blessing Way*, met with immediate critical success. His third novel, *Dance Hall of the Dead* (1973), won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He later received the same body's Grand Master Award, as well as the Center for American Indians Ambassador Award and the Navajo Tribe's Special Friend Award—officially inducting him as a “friend of the Dinee”—the Navajo people. Commercial success



Tony Hillerman. (Courtesy, University of New Mexico)

followed critical acclaim, giving Hillerman time to devote to his family and work.

ANALYSIS

Tony Hillerman is a storyteller with a knack for the intricate plot that baffles the reader but yields to the intellect of his protagonists. Inevitably, his novels begin with a crime unnerving in its violence and sense of horror. In *The Blessing Way*, a young Navajo, Luis Horseman, is hiding deep within the vastness of the Navajo Reservation. He needs to avoid the “Blue Policeman,” but he is nervous, for he is hiding in Many Ruins Canyon, haunted by the ghosts of the Anasazi, who linger about the “Houses of the Enemy Dead.” The tone is one of lonely foreboding; it is at this point that Horseman “saw the Navajo Wolf”:

He had heard nothing. But the man was standing not fifty feet away, watching him silently. He was a big man with his wolf skin draped across his shoulders. The forepaws hung limply down the front of his black shirt and the empty skull of the beast was pushed back on his forehead, its snout pointing upward.

The Wolf looked at Horseman. And then he smiled.

“I won’t tell,” Horseman said. His voice was loud, rising almost to a scream. And then he turned and ran, ran frantically down the dry wash. . . . And behind him he heard the Wolf laughing.

Thus the first chapter of *The Blessing Way* ends with questions dangling against a backdrop of menace and terror, a pattern made familiar in Hillerman’s following works. Later in the novel, Horseman’s body is discovered, “the dead eyes bulging and the lips drawn back in naked terror.” Hillerman’s protagonist, Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn, must enter into this world of witchcraft and violence and unravel the puzzle of Horseman’s murder. This is a task for which he is ideally suited:

Leaphorn never counted on luck. Instead he expected order—the natural sequence of behavior, the cause producing the natural effect, the human behaving in the way it was natural for him to behave. He counted on that and upon his own ability to sort out the chaos of observed facts and find in them this natural order. Leaphorn knew from experience that he was unusually adept at this.

In this novel, as in the others of the Leaphorn series, Leaphorn uses his intellect and the knowledge of his people to undo the machinations of criminals whose spiritual deformities bring violence and terror. Thus on one hand, Hillerman works well within the tradition of the ratiocinative detective story. Leaphorn is a Navajo Sherlock Holmes, a coolly logical mind engaged in the solution of a crime committed in most unusual circumstances. The particular genius of Hillerman's work is the result of the unique perspective that his Navajo detectives bring to their work.

Both Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee must thread their way between cultures, retaining their psychological and spiritual balance as they move between the frenzied complexities of urban white society and the mythic world of the Navajo people, the Dinee. Leaphorn, who is the protagonist of *The Blessing Way*, *Dance Hall of the Dead*, and *Listening Woman* (1978), is sustained by his beloved wife, Emma, his intellectual curiosity, and his faith in the connectedness of things. However, his ability to see the pattern in events causes him "a faint subconscious uneasiness," for it sets him apart from the norm. Intellectual detachment and objectivity enable him to pierce the curtain of appearances and to understand the underlying reality, but he pays a price for his powers. He sees a darkened vision of the human condition, and he is cut off from the traditions of his people, the Navajo way, which provides the sense of belonging and participation necessary to sustain his faith in life.

Indeed, *Listening Woman*, the third novel of the Leaphorn series, closes with the entombment of ritual sand paintings preserved to save the Dinee from extinction. It is a bleak vision. Although the crime has been solved and the criminals killed or apprehended, Leaphorn is left stranded on a spiritual moonscape in isolated self-exile. Therefore, it is not surprising that in *People of Darkness* (1980), Hillerman's fourth novel set among the Navajo, he chooses to introduce the younger and brasher Jim Chee, who consciously wrestles with the problems that Leaphorn observes.

THE GHOSTWAY

In *The Ghostway* (1984), the sixth of Hillerman's Navajo novels, Chee's internal struggles for identity provide the means for exploring Navajo culture and

white civilization, at least as it is typified by urban Los Angeles. Hillerman sets the tone of this novel through the words of an old Navajo, Joseph Joe, who witnesses a shootout and murder in the parking lot of a reservation laundromat and reflects, "The driver was Navajo, but this was white man's business." This parking lot murder, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) involvement, and a runaway Navajo girl lead Chee into the grimy world of greater Los Angeles, where he is confronted with the realities of leaving the reservation and the Navajo way. There are no easy choices for Chee, and Hillerman gives him no pat answers.

Chee is a person moving in two directions. He believes deeply in his people and in the Navajo concept of *hozro*, to walk in beauty, to achieve harmony with one's surroundings. Moreover, because he comes from a family famous for its singers (medicine men), he is acutely aware that the Dinee are losing their culture, that not enough young Navajo are learning the rituals of curing and blessing necessary to preserve the Navajo way. Chee's uncle, Frank Sam Nakai, is teaching Chee to be a singer, a part of the living oral tradition of the Dinee.

Chee finds himself torn by his love for an Anglo schoolteacher, Mary Landon, who cherishes Chee but who is appalled by the thought of rearing their children in the isolation of a reservation larger than the combined states of New England. This predictable dilemma is made plausible by Chee's sophistication, for Jim Chee is

an alumnus of the University of New Mexico, a subscriber to *Esquire* and *Newsweek*, an officer of the Navajo Tribal Police, lover of Mary Landon, holder of a Farmington Public Library card, student of anthropology and sociology, "with distinction" graduate of the FBI Academy, holder of Social Security card 441-28-7272.

Mary Landon wants Chee to join the FBI, but for Chee this means ceasing to be a Navajo, leaving the sacred land of the Navajo bounded by the four holy mountains, and giving up any hope of being a restorer of harmony to his people. When Chee pursues the runaway Margaret Billy Sosi into Los Angeles, he has to confront his choices and himself.

Hillerman uses Chee's odyssey in Los Angeles to provide disturbing insights into urban life. Chee encounters children who are prostitutes and old people who have been abandoned to the ministrations of callous caretakers in convalescent homes. In one of the most telling scenes in the novel, Chee questions a resident of the Silver Threads Rest Home. A stroke victim, Mr. Berger has been an overlooked observer of events Chee needs to understand. Chee is aware that despite Berger's stroke and speech impediment, his mind is alert. Chee and Berger engage in a pantomime of the hands in order to relate what Berger has witnessed. Such a scene is dangerous for a novelist, for it hangs between the bathetic and the ludicrous, yet Hillerman handles it with a detached clarity that gives it a memorable poignance.

The balanced and compassionate Chee is counterpoised by Vaggan, a frighteningly efficient professional killer who lives in spartan isolation, carefully preparing for the holocaust he is sure will come. He frequently makes racist speculations on the nature of those who will survive:

This one would never survive, and should never survive. When the missiles came, he would be one of the creeping, crawling multitude of weaklings purged from the living.

Vaggan is convinced that he will be one of the survivors because he is a predator. He would be nothing more than a stock figure of evil if he were not a reflection of easily recognized social illnesses. Moreover, Hillerman gives him a family background that is as sterile and loveless as Vaggan himself. Vaggan shares much with Hillerman's other villains; he is motivated by money, completely alienated from other human beings, and devoid of compassion and sympathy.

Chee is aware that he is not Vaggan's equal in matters of personal combat, yet he twice finds himself confronting Vaggan. Nevertheless, Chee prevails, for he is saved by Margaret Sosi, the young woman he set out to protect, who is a part of the great Navajo family. There is no one to save Vaggan, and he perishes at the hands of the person he sought to destroy.

In *The Ghostway*, Hillerman develops the central themes of his work. For Hillerman, the sources of evil

are alienation and greed, a truism that applies to both Anglo and Navajo societies. According to Navajo mythology, when First Man and First Woman emerged from the flooding waters of the Fourth World, "they forgot witchcraft and so they sent Diving Heron back for it. They told him to bring out 'the way to get rich' so the Holy People wouldn't know what he was getting." Thus Navajo who practice witchcraft prey on others for personal gain; they no longer have harmony or walk in beauty. Cut off from the Navajo way, witches are, however, powerful and hard to kill. The only effective way to kill a witch is to turn the evil around, to turn it back on the witch with the help of a singer, one who walks in beauty. Jim Chee struggles to be such a person. Mary Landon knows that Chee would cease to be a Navajo living away from the holy land of the Dinee, that he would no longer walk in beauty among his people or follow the calling of his uncle, Frank Sam Nakai. She saves Chee from the consequences of his decision by choosing to remove herself from Chee's life. The novel closes with Chee's resumption of his efforts to become a Navajo medicine man, restorer of *hozro* to the Dinee.

CHEE AND LEAPHORN SERIES

After *A Thief of Time*, Hillerman merged his two series into one, bringing Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn together—although they continued to follow their own separate trails. *Talking God* (1989) moves the detectives from the open spaces of the Southwest and the interconnected community of the reservation to the urban claustrophobia and indifference of Washington, D.C. The introduction of elements alien to the series' previous volumes—such as noirish politico-bad guys—displeased some critics, but the displacement, in much the way Chee's Los Angeles time does in *The Ghostway*, serves to underline the essential qualities which make Hillerman's detectives unique.

With *Coyote Waits* (1990) Hillerman returned to the reservation, with Jim Chee. The cases in both *Coyote Waits* and *Sacred Clowns* (1993) are tied up in Native American myth, through coyote, the trickster, and witchcraft, and with religious/cultural practice, through the *koshare*—the sacred clown of the kachina dance.

While each of Hillerman's novels is a separate and well-crafted mystery, there is an underlying spiritual pattern to his work that reveals itself in the Navajo my-

thology. Both Leaphorn and Chee look into the face of evil and are not dismayed. Both suffer sorrow and loss. In *A Thief of Time*, Leaphorn loses his beloved Emma, bringing him close to despair. To those who are familiar with Hillerman's work, however, it is no surprise to find that this novel closes with the logical Leaphorn turning to the mystical Chee to help him restore his inner harmony by performing the ceremony of the Blessing Way.

The overall length of Hillerman's series is an achievement in itself. With the publication of *Shape Shifter* in 2006, Leaphorn and Chee had been working together on and off for thirty-six years. Late in the series, a greater emphasis on the personal lives of its characters began, in some critics's estimation, to weigh down the plots. After such a long relationship with readers, a geriatric Leaphorn and love-struck (up, down, and sideways) Chee may have earned the sympathetic indulgence of fans. The elevation of minor sidekick Bernie Manuelito to central character (and romantic interest of Chee) in *The Sinister Pig* (2003) infused the series with new energy when, mystery-wise, it seemed to flag.

Like most successful mysteries, Hillerman's stories may follow a pattern, but they are never formulaic. Chee and Leaphorn's lives continue, and they, as well as other characters peopling the books, are quite believably complex. In *The Fallen Man* (1996), Leaphorn has retired to become a private detective, and though still mourning his wife's loss, he is looking at a possible new relationship. Chee takes over Leaphorn's old job and works through a relationship with Janet Pete, which spans six books and is difficult, engaging, and painfully real. When Sergeant Jim Chee goes to meet the retired Lieutenant Leaphorn in *Hunting Badger* (1999), he nearly overlooks the "stocky old duffer" sitting in a corner. It is for these reasons, as much as for unpredictable plots, an unflinching integrity in portraying the Southwest landscape and the Native American relationship to it, and his clear, evocative prose, that Hillerman's novels are so successful and well-respected.

David Sundstrand

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan, Jessica Reisman,
and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOE LEAPHORN SERIES: *The Blessing Way*, 1970; *Dance Hall of the Dead*, 1973; *Listening Woman*, 1978

JOE LEAPHORN AND JIM CHEE SERIES: *People of Darkness*, 1980; *The Dark Wind*, 1982; *The Ghostway*, 1984; *A Thief of Time*, 1988; *Talking God*, 1989; *Sacred Clowns*, 1993; *The Fallen Man*, 1996; *The First Eagle*, 1998; *Hunting Badger*, 1999; *The Wailing Wind*, 2002; *The Sinister Pig*, 2003; *Skeleton Man*, 2004; *The Shape Shifter*, 2006

JIM CHEE SERIES: *Skinwalkers*, 1986; *Coyote Waits*, 1990

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Fly on the Wall*, 1971; *Finding Moon*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Boy Who Made Dragonfly: A Zuni Myth*, 1972; *Buster Mesquite's Cowboy Band*, 2001

NONFICTION: *The Great Taos Bank Robbery and Other Indian Country Affairs*, 1973 (also known as *The Great Taos Bank Robbery and Other True Stories of the Southwest*, 2001); *New Mexico*, 1974 (photographs by David Muench); *Rio Grande*, 1975 (photographs by Robert Reynolds); *Indian Country: America's Sacred Land*, 1987 (photographs by Bela Kalman); *Hillerman Country: A Journey Through the Southwest with Tony Hillerman*, 1991 (photographs by Barney Hillerman); *Talking Mysteries: A Conversation with Tony Hillerman*, 1991 (with Ernie Bulow); *New Mexico, Rio Grande, and Other Essays*, 1992 (photographs by Muench and Reynolds); *Seldom Disappointed: A Memoir*, 2001

EDITED TEXTS: *The Spell of New Mexico*, 1976; *The Best of the West: An Anthology of Classic Writing from the American West*, 1991; *The Mysterious West*, 1994; *The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories*, 1996 (with Rosemary Herbert); *The Best American Mystery Stories of the Century*, 2000; *A New Omnibus of Crime*, 2005 (with Herbert)

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Coale, Samuel Chase. *The Mystery of Mysteries: Cultural Differences and Designs*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 2000. A study of the mysteries of Amanda Cross, Tony Hillerman, James Lee Burke, and Walter Mosely, showing how these writers use the mystery genre to introduce the concerns of minorities into fiction.

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Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment:*

Interviews with Mystery Writers. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. Interview with Hillerman focuses on his life and how he came to write, including his relationship with the Navajo.

Hillerman, Tony. *Seldom Disappointed: A Memoir*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. Hillerman recollects his early life, including his service as an infantryman during World War II, his education, and his career as a journalist.

Reilly, John M. *Tony Hillerman: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. After chapters on Hillerman's life and his place in the detective genre, Reilly covers the Leaphorn and Chee series book by book through *Finding Moon*.

Sobol, John. *Tony Hillerman: A Public Life*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1994. A popular biography. Dated, but full of information and enjoyable to read.

Templeton, Wayne. "Xojo and Homicide: The Post-colonial Murder Mysteries of Tony Hillerman." In *Multicultural Detective Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1998. In compiling a critical work on the role of ethnic culture in detective fiction, the novels of Tony Hillerman cannot be overlooked, though Hillerman does not himself belong to the culture about which he writes. This is a scholarly discussion.

CHESTER HIMES

Born: Jefferson City, Missouri; July 29, 1909

Died: Moraira, Spain; November 12, 1984

Type of plot: Hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Harlem Domestic, 1957-1983

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

COFFIN ED JOHNSON and GRAVE DIGGER JONES are famous detectives who are also husbands, fathers, and former residents of Harlem. They have their own personal interpretation of law enforcement and are highly respected, even feared. Possessing the usual traits of

hard-boiled heroism (fearlessness, physical stamina, mental acuity, and a sense of fair play), they are characterized by the quickness and severity of their anger when protecting the "good colored people of Harlem" and are distinguished by their revolvers that "can kill a rock."

CONTRIBUTION

In his novels featuring Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson, Chester Himes not only gave American literature its first team of African American detectives but also impressively imposed on it a unique and memorable image of the social, cultural, racial, political, and

economic dynamics of Harlem at the midpoint of the twentieth century. In a style that reveals an ever-increasing control of generic conventions (ending at the threshold of parody), Himes's work gradually moves away from the tradition of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler to make a trenchant commentary on the nature of American society as viewed through the joys and fears of black Americans. Mixing grotesque violence, comic exaggeration, and absurdity (what he later chose to identify as the quintessential element of American life) in a fast-paced, highly cinematic narrative, Himes created a distinctive brand of regionalism in the detective genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Chester Bomar Himes was born on July 29, 1909, in Jefferson City, Missouri, the youngest of three sons born to Estelle Charlotte Bomar and Joseph Sandy Himes, a professor of blacksmithing and wheelwrighting and head of the Mechanical Arts Department at Lincoln University. In 1921 Himes's father obtained a position at Normal College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Chester and his brother Joe were enrolled in first-year studies there

(with classmates ten years their senior). In the same year Joe was permanently blinded while conducting a chemistry demonstration he and Chester had prepared. The local hospital's refusal to admit and treat his brother (presumably because of racial prejudice)—one of several such incidents experienced in his youth—made a lasting impression on Chester and contributed to his often-cited "quality of hurt" (the title of the first volume of his autobiography).

In the next two years Himes attended high schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and Cleveland, Ohio, experiencing the loneliness, isolation, and violence frequently accorded the outsider in adolescence (in schoolyard battles he received chipped teeth, lacerations to the head and a broken shoulder that never healed properly). Himes was graduated, nevertheless, from Cleveland's Glenville High School in January, 1926. Preparing to attend Ohio State University in the fall, he took a job as a busboy in a local hotel. Injured by a fall down an elevator shaft, Himes was awarded a monthly disability pension that allowed him to enter the university directly.

Early enthusiasm for collegiate life turned quickly to personal depression and alienation, undermining Himes's academic fervor and success. This discontent led to his flirtation with illicit lifestyles and his subsequent expulsion from the university. Returning to Cleveland, Himes was swept into the dangers and excitement of underworld activities that, as he noted in his autobiography, exposed him to many of the strange characters who populate his detective series.

After two suspended sentences for burglary and fraud (because of the personal appeals of his parents for leniency), Himes was arrested in September, 1928, charged with armed robbery, and sentenced to twenty to twenty-five years of hard labor at Ohio State Penitentiary. His serious writing began in prison. By the time he was paroled to his mother in 1936, Himes's stories about the frustrations and contradictions of prison life had appeared in *Esquire* and numerous African American newspapers and magazines. In 1937, Himes married Jean Johnson, his sweetheart before imprisonment. Finding employment first as a laborer, then as a research assistant in the Cleveland Public Library, Himes was finally employed by the Ohio State Writers' Project



Chester Himes. (Library of Congress)

to work on a history of Cleveland. With the start of World War II, Himes moved to Los Angeles, California. His first two novels, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and *Lonely Crusade* (1947), were based on these experiences. Following trips to New York, back to Los Angeles, and then to New York, where his third novel, *Cast the First Stone* (1952), was published, Himes and Jean were divorced, and he left for Europe in 1953, sensing the possibility of a new beginning.

Between 1953 and 1957, Himes lived in Paris, London, and Majorca while finishing work on *The Third Generation* (1954) and *The Primitive* (1955). Following the international success of his Harlem Domestic series, Himes moved permanently to Spain in 1969 and, with the exception of brief trips to the United States and other parts of Europe, lived there with his second wife, Lesley Packard, until his death on November 12, 1984.

ANALYSIS

Chester Himes began his Harlem Domestic series with the publication of *For Love of Imabelle* (1957), following a suggestion by his French publisher, Marcel Duhamel, to contribute to the popular *Série noire*. Written in less than two weeks, while he was “living in a little crummy hotel in Paris” under very strained emotional and economic circumstances, the novel, when translated and published in Paris in 1958, was awarded a French literary prize, the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. Rescued from economic dependency and the obscurity of exile, Himes wrote the next four volumes in the series—*Il pluet des coups durs* (1958; *The Real Cool Killers*, 1959), *Couché dans le pain* (1959; *The Crazy Kill*, 1959), *Tout pour plaire* (1959; *The Big Gold Dream*, 1960), *Imbroglia negro* (1960; *All Shot Up*, 1960)—all within the next two years. Each successive volume represents a significant expansion and development of essential aspects of Himes’s evolving artistic and ideological vision.

Inspired by two detectives Himes met in Los Angeles in the 1940’s, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson are serious and, as their nicknames imply, deadly enforcers of social order and justice. Maintaining balance through a carefully organized network of spies disguised as junkies, drunks, and even nuns soliciting alms for the poor at the most unusual times and

places, Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are aggressive, fearless, and genuinely concerned with the community’s welfare and improvement. They wage a relentless, unorthodox, and often-personal battle against Harlem’s criminal elements. Fiercely loyal to each other, they are forced to be “tough” and mutually protective: They operate in an arena where most people consider police officers public enemies. Honest, dedicated to their profession, and motivated largely by a moral conscience—tinged with a certain amount of cynicism—they possess a code of ethics comparable (although not identical) to those of the Hammett/Chandler heroes.

Only in the first book of the series is there any implication of venality or dishonesty:

They took their tribute, like all real cops, from the established underworld catering to the essential needs of the people—gamekeepers, madams, streetwalkers, numbers writers, numbers bankers. But they were rough on purse snatchers, muggers, burglars, con men, and all strangers working any racket.

Except for this brief reference—explained perhaps by the fact that Himes had not fully developed their characters, a possibility suggested by their absence in almost the first half of the novel—all the subsequent narratives are explicit in emphasizing their honesty and integrity as detectives.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are often brutal in their search for the guilty; this aspect of their characters, however, is directly related to the principal issues of the series and to Himes’s vision of the essence of American life: violence. In a discussion of his perception of the detective genre with the novelist John A. Williams, Himes shed some light on the reasons for the pervasive presence of often-hideous forms of physical violence in his works:

It’s just plain and simple violence in narrative form, you know. ‘Cause no one, *no one*, writes about violence the way that Americans do. As a matter of fact, for the simple reason that no one understands violence or experiences violence like the American civilians do. . . . American violence is public life, it’s a public way of life, it became a form, a detective story form.

Indeed, more than one critic has attacked Himes’s novels on the basis of gratuitous physical violence. When

practiced by Grave Digger and Coffin Ed, however, brutal outbursts are, more often than not, justifiable: Caught between the dangers inherent in their quest for a better community and the long arm of the white institution that supposedly protects them, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson are forced to be coldly effective through the only means at their disposal. Certainly their role as black representatives of the white power structure defines the very tenuous nature of their relationship to the Harlem community and accounts for most of the novels' uncertainties and much of their suspense.

On another level, however, the excessive physical violence in Himes's novels is related to another aspect of the author's artistic and ideological perspectives—namely, the concern for place, real and imaginary. Harlem represents the center and circumference of the African American experience: It is the symbolic microcosm and the historical matrix of Himes's America. Isolated, besieged by the outside world and turning inward on itself, Harlem is, on one hand, a symbol of disorder, chaos, confusion, and self-perpetuating pain and, on the other, an emblem of cultural and historical achievement. The duality and contradiction of its identity is the source of the tension that animates Himes's plots and propels them toward their often-incredible resolutions. At the core of Harlem's reality, moreover, is violence—physical and psychological.

In a speech delivered in 1948 and subsequently published as "The Dilemma of the Negro Novelist in the U.S." in *Beyond the Angry Black* (1966), a compilation edited by John A. Williams, Himes noted: "The question the Negro writer must answer is: How does the fear he feels as a Negro in white American society affect his, the Negro personality?" Not until this question is addressed by the writer, Himes went on to say, can there be the slightest understanding of any aspect of black life in the United States: crime, marital relations, spiritual or economic aspirations—all will be beyond understanding until the dynamics of this fear have been exposed behind the walls of the ghetto, "until others have experienced with us to the same extent the impact of fear upon our personalities." It is this conception of fear and its psychological corollary, rage, that sustains Himes's detective stories and links them ideologically to his earlier, nonmystery fiction.

(It is significant that the first novel in the series, *For Love of Imabelle*, was published in the United States as *A Rage in Harlem*.)

THE CRAZY KILL

The connection between the image of Harlem and the violence that derives from fear is particularly apparent in *The Crazy Kill*. The Harlem of this novel is a place, in the words of Coffin Ed, "where anything can happen," and from the narrative's bizarre opening incident to the very last, that sense of the incredibly plausible pervades. When the theft of a bag of money from a grocery store attracts the attention of Reverend Short, Mamie Pullen's minister and a participant at the wake held across the street for Mamie's husband, the notorious gambler Big Joe Pullen, the storefront preacher leans too far out of a bedroom window under the influence of his favorite concoction, opium and brandy, and falls out. He lands, miraculously, in a basket of bread outside the bakery beneath. He picks himself up and returns to the wake, where he experiences one of his habitual "visions." When Mamie later accompanies Reverend Short to the window as he explains the circumstances of his fall, she looks down and sees the body of Valentine Haines, a young hood who has been living with Sister Dulcy and her husband Johnny "Fishtail" Perry, Big Joe's godson. The earlier vision has become reality: a dead man with a hunting knife in his heart.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are summoned to discover who murdered Val and, with Detective Sergeant Brody, an Irishman, begin questioning all possible suspects. Perhaps it was Johnny, whose temper is as infamous as his gambling prowess. Perhaps it was Charlie Chink, whose girlfriend, Doll Baby, appeared to be the recent target of Val's affections. Still, why the exotic hunting knife? Why the basket of bread? What conspiracy of silence connects Reverend Short, Johnny's girl Sister Dulcy, and Mamie Pullen, forcing Johnny to travel to Chicago before returning to Harlem and murdering Charlie Chink?

After the initial several hours of questioning, Sergeant Brody, despite his years of experience, is too dumbfounded to explain the web of illogical complications in this case. Grave Digger tells him, in a statement that recurs throughout the novel and the entire

series, epitomizing Himes's vision of the city: "This is Harlem. . . ain't no other place like it in the world. You've got to start from scratch here, because these folks in Harlem do things for reasons nobody else in the world would think of."

The plot unravels through a series of mysterious events, including scenes of rage and violence that are the physical consequences of emotional brutalization. Johnny wakes up to find Charlie Chink wandering around nude in his apartment and shoots him six times, stomps his bloody body until Chink's teeth are "stuck in his calloused heel," and then leans over and clubs Chink's head "into a bloody pulp with his pistol butt." These explosions, Himes's work suggests, derive from the most sublimated forms of frustration and hatred; the same forces can be seen in the degree of murderous intent that accompanies Coffin Ed's frequent loss of equilibrium. The repeated examples of "murderous rage" and the number of characters in the series whose faces are cut or whose bodies are maimed are related to this vision of Harlem as a dehumanizing prisonlike world. Even the apparently comic purposes of character description tend to underscore this perspective (Reverend Short, for example, is introduced as having a "mouth shaped like that of a catfish" and eyes that "protrude behind his gold-rimmed spectacles like a bug's under a microscope").

Himes's evocation of a sense of place, however, is not limited to bizarre scenes of physical violence and rage. Beyond the scores of defiant men who are reminders of the repressed nature of manhood in the inner cities, the author gives abundant images of Harlem's social life (rent parties, fish fries, and wakes), its cultural past (Duke Ellington, Billy Eckstein, the Apollo Theatre), its economic and political hierarchies (civil servants, politicians, underworld celebrities), and its peculiar lifestyles and institutions (street gangs, professional gamblers, numbers runners, the homosexual subculture, the heroin trade, evangelist's churches, and soapbox orators). All of this is done with the aplomb of a tour guide whose knowledge of the terrain is complete and whose understanding of the cultural codes of behavior permits explanation to the uninitiated.

A bittersweet, tragicomic tone alternating with an

almost Rabelaisian exuberance characterizes Himes's descriptions of the sights, rhythms, and sounds of life in Harlem. Even the diverse enticements and rich peculiarities of African American cooking are a part of Harlem's atmosphere, and the smells and tastes are frequently explored as Himes moves his two detectives through the many greasy spoons that line their beat (at one point in *The Crazy Kill* the author duplicates an entire restaurant menu, from entrees to beverages, from "alligator tail and rice" to "sassafrasroot tea").

Humor (if not parody) is reflected in the many unusual names of Himes's characters: Sassafras, Susie Q., Charlie Chink Dawson, H. Exodus Clay, Pigmeat, and Fishtail Perry; it is also reflected in the many instances of gullibility motivated by greed that account for the numerous scams, stings, and swindles that occur.

Himes accomplishes all of this with a remarkable economy of dialogue and language, an astute manipulation of temporal sequence, and a pattern of plots distinguished by a marvelous blend of fantasy and realism: a sense of the magically real that lurks beneath the surface of the commonplace. "Is he crazy or just acting?" asks Sergeant Brody about Reverend Short's vision. "Maybe both," Grave Digger answers.

LATER SERIES NOVELS

The last three novels in the series—*Ne nous énermons pas!* (1961; *The Heat's On*, 1966; also known as *Come Back Charleston Blue*, 1974), *Retour en Afrique* (1964; *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, 1965), *Blind Man with a Pistol* (1969; also known as *Hot Day, Hot Night*, 1970)—continue the character types, stylistic devices, and thematic concerns of the earlier novels. Each one represents a deepening of Himes's artistic control over his material; each one further enhanced his reputation in the genre and increased his notoriety and popularity among the American public. The first two of these were adapted for the screen—*Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1969) and *Come Back Charleston Blue* (1972)—and the third, reissued in the United States as *Hot Day, Hot Night* (1970), was received as the "apotheosis" of Himes's detective novels. Its author was described (on the jacket cover) as "the best black American novelist writing today."

Roland E. Bush

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HARLEM DOMESTIC SERIES: *For Love of Imabelle*, 1957 (revised as *A Rage in Harlem*, 1965); *Il pluet des coups durs*, 1958 (*The Real Cool Killers*, 1959); *Couché dans le pain*, 1959 (*The Crazy Kill*, 1959); *Tout pour plaire*, 1959 (*The Big Gold Dream*, 1960); *Imbroglia negro*, 1960 (*All Shot Up*, 1960); *Ne nous énervons pas!*, 1961 (*The Heat's On*, 1966; also known as *Come Back Charleston Blue*, 1974); *Retour en Afrique*, 1964 (*Cotton Comes to Harlem*, 1965); *Blind Man with a Pistol*, 1969 (also known as *Hot Day, Hot Night*, 1970); *Plan B*, 1983

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Dare-dare*, 1959 (*Run Man Run*, 1966); *Une affaire de viol*, 1963 (*A Case of Rape*, 1980)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, 1945; *Lonely Crusade*, 1947; *Cast the First Stone*, 1952 (unexpurgated edition pb. as *Yesterday Will Make You Cry*, 1998); *The Third Generation*, 1954; *The Primitive*, 1955 (unexpurgated edition pb. as *The End of a Primitive*, 1997); *Pinktoes*, 1961

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MISCELLANEOUS: *Black on Black: "Baby Sister" and Selected Writings*, 1973

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Sallis, James. *Chester Himes: A Life*. New York: Walker, 2001. Comprehensive study of Himes's life and biographical reading of his work.

Silet, Charles L. P., ed. *The Critical Response to Chester Himes*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999. Compilation of essays reading Himes through the lens of various schools of literary criticism. Includes bibliographical references and an index.

Skinner, Robert E. *Two Guns from Harlem: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989. Skinner's study of Himes's crime writing presents a comprehensive examination of his crime novels.

ROLANDO HINOJOSA

Born: Mercedes, Texas; January 21, 1929

Also wrote as Rolando Hinojosa-Smith

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rafe Buenrostro, 1985-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

RAFE BUENROSTRO is chief inspector on the Belken County homicide squad. He was orphaned as a child, and when the series starts, he is a Korean War veteran with a law degree. Rafe became a widower at the age of nineteen when his wife drowned during an Easter family picnic on the bank of the Rio Grande. Later in the series, he marries Sammie Jo Perkins.

CONTRIBUTION

Rolando Hinojosa is the highly regarded American author of the Klail City Death Trip series. Written in Spanish and English, this series emphasizes the consolations of close family or community bonds in a troublesome world that eludes human understanding. Hinojosa highlights the mysteries of life by fashioning a collage of multiple narrative viewpoints, different cultural identities, various generational time periods, and miscellaneous anecdotal stories that are variously comic and serious. He also experiments with dissimilar types or genres of writing, including police procedurals.

Two of the novels in the Klail City Death Trip series, *Partners in Crime* (1985) and *Ask a Policeman* (1998), are detective novels. These novels are noteworthy for how they depart from what readers might commonly expect from such works. Instead of sharply individualistic characters dramatically applying exceptional capabilities, Hinojosa's police officers are thoroughly human. They tend to approach a case casually, and often they acknowledge the tedium of following routine procedures. They succeed because of or in spite of their human foibles, but equally often they benefit from or are set back by pure luck.

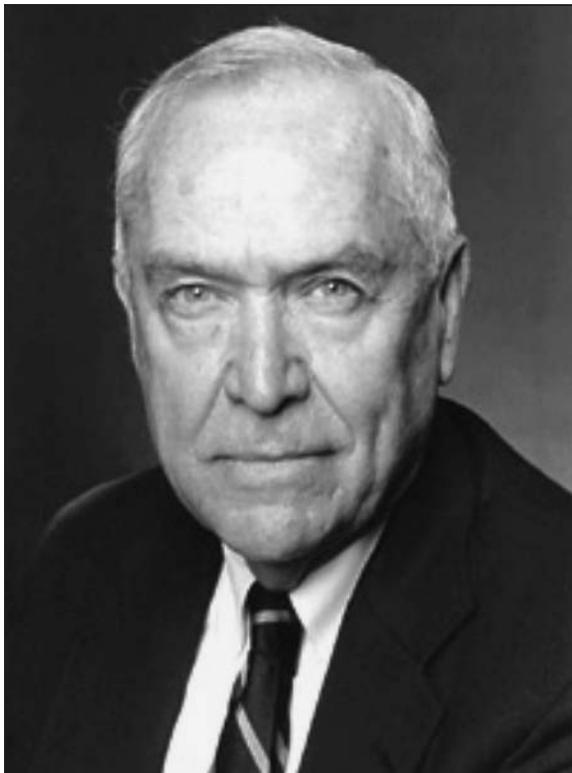
Hinojosa revised the crime novel formula by

stressing that societal well-being is maintained less by the heroic actions of extraordinary individuals than by basic forms of everyday cooperation, especially supportive familial interactions. His detectives prevail precisely because they are ordinary people of diverse backgrounds and experiences who have learned how to work well together.

Hinojosa's career as a novelist has been remarkable. His interest in fiction was stirred when, at the age of fifteen, he was awarded an honorable mention in a creative writing contest. His first published book, *Estampas del Valle y otras Obras/Sketches of the Valley, and Other Works* (1973; English revision, *The Valley*, 1983), was awarded the Premio Quinto Sol prize for best novel. His second book, *Klail City y sus alrededores* (1976; *Klail City: A Novel*, 1987), received the Casa de las Américas award for best Spanish American novel. In 1982 the Southwest Conference on Latin American Studies selected Hinojosa for the Best Writing in Humanities prize, and in 1998 the University of Illinois honored him with an Alumni Achievement Award. He has also received the Lon Tinkle Lifetime Achievement Award (1998), and in 2006 he was installed in the Texas Literary Hall of Fame.

BIOGRAPHY

Rolando Hinojosa, one of five children of Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa and Carrie Effie Smith, was born in the lower Rio Grande Valley town of Mercedes, Texas, on January 21, 1929. His self-educated father earned a living as a rice farmer and then as a horse salesman. During the early years of the Great Depression, Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa would leave his family in Mercedes, where his wife taught elementary school, and cross the nearby Mexican border to work weekdays as a gambler in the communities of Río Rico, Matamoros, and Reynosa. Recalling this time in his life, Hinojosa has half-seriously remarked that he did not know his father until he was four years old, when his father came home to stay. Then Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa joined the three-man Mercedes police force, a fact recalled in the dedication of *Ask a Policeman*.



Rolando Hinojosa. (Courtesy, University of Texas at Austin)

Until he was in junior high school, Hinojosa primarily spoke and read Spanish. During the late 1940's he served two years in the army, and then as a second lieutenant platoon leader in a reconnaissance regiment, he saw military duty in Korea during 1950-1951. In 1953 Hinojosa earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish at the University of Texas at Austin. After graduating, he taught at Brownsville High School (1954-1956; 1961-1962). He also has worked as a civil servant for the Social Security Administration, an office manager for a clothing firm, and a data processor. In 1963 he married Patricia Louise Sorensen, who died in 1999.

Hinojosa earned a master's degree from New Mexico Highlands University in 1962 and completed a doctorate in English at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana in 1969. After two years as an assistant professor at Trinity University (1968-1970), his academic career developed rapidly. At Texas A&I University (now Texas A&M University) in Kingsville, he was appointed associate professor and chair

of modern languages (1970-1974), professor of English and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1974-1976), and then vice president of academic affairs (1976-1977). From 1977 to 1981 he held a professorial appointment in English and Chicano studies at the University of Minnesota but then returned to his undergraduate alma mater, the University of Texas, where he served as the director of the Texas Center for Writers (1984-1993) and became the Ellen Clayton Garwood Professor in creative writing.

ANALYSIS

Partners in Crime and *Ask a Policeman*, Rolando Hinojosa's two police procedurals, are set in Belken County, a fictional locale in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Both of these novels feature characters, particularly cousins Rafe Buenrostro and Jehu Malacara, who are introduced and developed throughout the diverse range of books included in Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip series. Therefore, these police procedurals are best understood in relation to the other works in this series. Although Hinojosa's other works do not qualify as detective fiction, their challenging fragmented narrative collage of memories and documents requires that the reader act like a detective while searching for insight into each character's behavior and experience.

The Spanish word for narrative or report is *relación*, which in *The Valley* Hinojosa also notes is a south Texas Latino term for "treasure." Hinojosa views his narrative collages as treasure troves not only of Mexican American oral culture but also of more general insights into the human condition. Because life's mysteries resist easy detection, Hinojosa's narratives do not yield their treasure easily. His view of life's essential mysteriousness explains his attraction to the police procedural, in which detectives try to extract truth out of random clues that might or might not be pertinent.

To represent this welter of life-clues, Hinojosa's narrative manner mimics everyday small talk. In *Ask a Policeman*, one of Rafe Buenrostro's colleagues describes small talk as a Rio Grande Valley custom of combining Old South gentility and Mexican graciousness. Hinojosa honors this custom in his writings. As

the narrator in *Partners in Crime* further explains, civility in storytelling requires that both relaters and listeners take their time, otherwise the story being told will not reveal its treasure because it has not been true to life.

Hinojosa's true-to-life stories highlight the unpredictable and inexplicable role of fate (luck, chance, coincidence, accident) in human lives. Hinojosa's acute sensitivity to fate is aptly summarized in the title of one his short stories: "Sometimes It Just Happens That Way; That's All." The narrator in *Partners in Crime* expresses this same point of view when observing that people might not deserve the sudden intrusion of violence into their lives, but it occurs anyway. Similar to the point of view in Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* (pr. 1635; *Life Is a Dream*, 1830), which Hinojosa can quote from memory, an incomprehensible irrationality determines what happens in *Partners in Crime* and *Ask a Policeman*.

Hinojosa's homicide detectives must contend with caprice, especially good or bad luck, as life's principal disconcerting element. They find, for example, that clues—such as someone's use of Junior after his name or the absence of children from a school photograph—mean nothing. They find that juries are utterly unpredictable regardless of how open-and-shut a case might seem to be. They find that their own methods are basically haphazard and often lead to unexpected solutions. Hinojosa's detectives sift through countless cues and miscues to reveal some specific truth, but a larger underlying mystery eludes them. They have no explanation for the craziness of either criminals' behavior or, more generally, life's coincidences and accidents.

Unpredictability also defines the detectives' personal lives. To the surprise of his friends, for example, Rafe Buenrostro completes a law degree only to become a county patrol officer. Also, after the death of his wife, Captain Culley Donovan discovers that she had saved boxed wedding presents rather than use these gifts even when they were needed.

Hinojosa's attentiveness to the role of unfathomable fate results in a tinge of humorous absurdity in his books. In both crime novels the detecting reader is clued to the author's view of life's mysterious nonsensicalness by two specific references to Lord Ronald's

horse riding off madly in all directions. This strange and literally impossible image alludes to a story in Stephen Leacock's *Nonsense Novels* (1911). In Leacock's outlandishly comical book, social and narrative conventions are intentionally drawn to the reader's attention only to be flagrantly disregarded. The narrative result is a humorous impression of the absurdity of human behavior, a perception Hinojosa (whose first name can be reassembled to spell "Ronald") shares with Leacock.

Whereas Leacock creates mere caricatures, Hinojosa creates realistic human characters. Although Hinojosa's detectives live in a perplexing world where unpredictable, uncontrollable, unintelligible incidents "just happen," the members of the homicide squad are not dehumanized by fate. It is significant, too, that they are also not overly individualized. They do not bring extraordinary or unique talents to their tasks. Instead, Hinojosa portrays average people dealing with everyday events. His detectives are studies in common human dignity exerting itself against the odds in a difficult world.

Appropriately, Hinojosa's crime novels do not emphasize one detective over another. He provides a panoply of their thoughts about each case, about one another as colleagues and even about each squad member's home life. Hinojosa's detectives specifically remind themselves that they are a team, a unit. They are productively self-aware of and comfortable with their collective identity as a group, and this family-like solidarity is crucial to their success as a squad. Hinojosa intends for the reader to value his thoroughly human detectives as more genuine partners than the so-called partners in crime they pursue.

PARTNERS IN CRIME

Set in October, 1972, *Partners in Crime* features a triple murder, including the machine-gun slaying of Belken County district attorney Ambrose Gustave Elder. Elder has no premonition that four hours after a breakfast conversation with his wife, he will impulsively punch Harvey Bollinger in his office, an unlucky, capricious incident leading to both his death and many other murders. In the wrong place at the wrong time, Elder loses his life by sheer bad luck. As Rafe and his colleagues search for the Mexican hit

men and their motive (cocaine smuggling), they sift through countless details, most of which are false leads. They must also deal with a puzzling charitable arrangement with a retired teacher, whose assignment involves peculiar routine visits to bus-station lockers. Rafe later finds that Lisandro Solís, the head of the Mexican law-enforcement agency, is behind both the killings and drug smuggling. Solís escapes persecution but reappears in *Ask a Policeman*.

ASK A POLICEMAN

Although *Ask a Policeman* is a sequel to *Partners in Crime*, it is faster-paced, more violent, and darker in viewpoint. In this grim story, a drug-trafficking rancher has his brother freed from police custody only to have him murdered by twins who do not know they have killed their own father. As in the earlier novel, luck influences the course of events. However, in this book Hinojosa's typical faint sardonic response to life's underlying absurdity is overshadowed by a bleaker sense of an increasingly pervasive insanity that is leading to an evermore violent world.

The departure of Hinojosa's detectives from the hero paradigm parallels the downgrading of Greek legendary figures to ordinariness in the tragedies of Euripides. It is apt that in *Ask a Policeman* Rafe reads these classical plays. Rafe's heroism lies in an ordinary inward courage to pursue truth and justice in a tragic Euripidean world of baffling irrationality and injustice.

The extent of human hope in such a dark world is suggested by the poignant last sentence of *Ask a Policeman*. Having completed his dangerous mission, Rafe returns home at 12:30 A.M. and sees his bedroom light burning. The image implies that his loving wife has anxiously waited for him, but the bedroom-light image has also been anticipated by an earlier allusion to Ernest Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," a story of lonely men without families. In *Ask a Policeman*, the small window of light surrounded by night's immense darkness intimates the narrow limits of hope in a tragic Euripidean world. However, that light-filled window also indicates that, even more than the family-like bond formed with his fellow detectives, Rafe's home life with his wife is his sustaining refuge from a taxing world where uncontrollable events "just happen."

William J. Scheick

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RAFE BUENROSTRO SERIES: *Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery*, 1985; *Ask a Policeman*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Estampas del Valle y otras Obras/ Sketches of the Valley, and Other Works*, 1973 (English revision, *The Valley*, 1983); *Klail City y sus alrededores*, 1976 (*Klail City: A Novel*, 1987); *Mi querido Rafe*, 1981 (*Dear Rafe*, 1985); *Rites and Witnesses*, 1982; *Claros varones de Belken*, 1986 (*Fair Gentlemen of Belken County*, 1986); *Becky and Her Friends*, 1990; *The Useless Servants*, 1993; *We Happy Few*, 2006

POETRY: *Korean Love Songs*, 1978

EDITED TEXT: *Tomás Rivera, 1935-1984: The Man and His Work*, 1988 (with Gary D. Keller and Vernon E. Lattin)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Generaciones, Notas, y Brechas/ Generations, Notes, and Trails*, 1978; *Agricultural Workers of the Rio Grande and Rio Bravo Valleys*, 1984

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EDWARD D. HOCH

Born: Rochester, New York; February 22, 1930

Also wrote as Irwin Booth; Anthony Circus; Stephen Dentinger; Lisa Drake; R. T. Edwards; Pat McMahon; R. E. Porter; Matthew Prize; Ellery Queen; R. L. Stevens; Mr. X

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage; police procedural; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Simon Ark, 1955-
 Captain Leopold, 1962-
 C. Jeffrey Rand, 1965-
 Nick Velvet, 1966-
 Carl Crader and Earl Jazine, 1969-
 Matthew Prize, 1984-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SIMON ARK, who may be two thousand years old, is based on the legend of the Wandering Jew. He is tall, heavyset, "with an expression that was at times saintly." He spends his life seeking evil, and consequently he investigates crimes that seem to involve black magic and other occult phenomena.

CAPTAIN JULES LEOPOLD is head of the homicide department in a large Connecticut city called Monroe. Though born in 1921, Leopold ceases aging toward the middle of the series. In the early stories, he is a

widower and something of a loner; later he remarries.

C. JEFFREY RAND is a British secret service agent. He is slender and handsome, with brown hair. In his first cases, he is a cryptanalyst and head of the Department of Concealed Communications. After he retires, he is frequently called back to resolve espionage problems. Rand was born in 1926 but like most of Hoch's series characters he stops aging.

NICK VELVET is a professional thief who steals only things that seem to be valueless, charging his clients twenty thousand to thirty thousand dollars for the service. Born Nicholas Velveta in 1932 in Greenwich Village, he reaches perpetual middle age after about thirty stories in the series. He is just taller than six feet, with dark hair and slightly Italian features.

CARL CRADER is a "Computer Cop," an investigator for the twenty-first century Computer Investigation Bureau. He and his assistant, **EARL JAZINE**, are in charge of cases that involve tampering with the computers that run almost everything in their science-fictional world.

MATTHEW PRIZE, who was a licensed private eye for almost six years in Los Angeles, has become "Associate Professor of Criminology at Cal State, San Amaro Campus." He reads Ross Macdonald's novels and feels "very guilty for being kind of a smartass myself."

CONTRIBUTION

Edward D. Hoch is the most important post-World War II writer of mystery and detective short stories. In recent years, because of the disappearance of many short-story markets—whether pulp magazines such as *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective* or slick publications such as *Collier's* and *American Magazine* and their British equivalents—most mystery writers have concentrated on novels. Hoch, however, is a professional short-story writer, with more than 750 stories to his credit. For more than fifteen years his stories appeared in every issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and it is a rare anthology that does not include at least one of his tales. Within the limits of the short story Hoch is versatile, trying almost every form and approach, but most of his stories emphasize fair-play clueing and detection. Many of his plot elements are innovative, including combining detection with science fiction and fantasy, but he shares with the Golden Age writers of the 1920's and the 1930's the belief that the puzzle is the fundamental element of the detective story.

BIOGRAPHY

Edward Dentinger Hoch was born on February 22, 1930, in Rochester, New York, the son of Earl G. Hoch and Alice Dentinger Hoch. He tried his hand at writing detective stories during high school and during his two years (1947-1949) at the University of Rochester. (Later, he revised a tale done for a college composition class, and it was published as "The Chippy" in 1956.) He worked for the Rochester Public Library as a researcher from 1949 until November, 1950, when he received his draft notice. He quickly enlisted in the United States Army and spent the next two years stationed at various forts, serving as a member of the military police in 1950 and 1951. While in the army, he continued to write short stories. He received an honorable mention for a story plot he submitted to a cover contest run by *The Mysterious Traveler Magazine* in 1952, but he could not break into print.

After leaving the army, Hoch looked for a job in the writing or editorial side of a publishing house, eventually landing a position working on "adjustments" for Pocket Books in New York City. Instead of doing creative work, however, he spent his time check-

ing on the accuracy of shipments and accounts. After a year of that, and a raise of only three dollars a week, he returned to Rochester in January, 1954, where he landed work in copywriting and public relations at the Hutchins Advertising Company. He married Patricia McMahon on June 5, 1957.

While still working in advertising, Hoch began to find publishers for his stories. The first to appear in print was "The Village of the Dead," published in the December, 1955, issue of *Famous Detective*, one of the last of the pulp magazines. It features a psychic sleuth, Simon Ark, the first of Hoch's many series detectives. Twenty-two of his stories were published during 1956 and 1957. In 1968, having won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for "The Oblong Room" and with a contract for the novel that would become *The Shattered Raven* (1969), Hoch decided to devote himself full time to writing.

Hoch became even more prolific as a short-story writer—publishing a story in every issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* from 1973 to 1981. He also became one of the best-known anthology editors in the field, choosing the stories for the annual *Best Detective Stories of the Year* and its successor, *The Year's Best Mystery and Suspense Stories*. Under the pseudonym R. E. Porter, he wrote a column for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and in 1982 served as president of the Mystery Writers of America. That year he also honored Rochester Public Library, his first employer, by joining its board of trustees. In 1998 Hoch received an Anthony Award for his short story "One Bag of Coconuts." In 1999 he received the Short Mystery Fiction Society's Golden Derringer Award and, in 2000, *The Eye*, granted by the Private Eye Writers of America—both for lifetime achievement. In 2001, he received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award and an Anthony Award for "The Problem of the Potting Shed" from the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention. In 2005 Hoch received a Barry Award for "The War in Wonderland."

ANALYSIS

Edward D. Hoch writes short stories because he is interested in ideas rather than elaboration of plot or

character. “Though I can write a short story in a week or two,” he explains, “a novel takes me two or three months. With the few I’ve attempted, I find myself losing interest about halfway through, anxious to get on to the next idea.” Three of his novels, however, are quite accomplished. *The Shattered Raven*, which takes place at the Mystery Writers of America’s annual meeting, maintains the puzzlement throughout and gives a good account of what the publisher called with notable hyperbole “the glamorous world of the great mystery fictioneers.”

THE TRANSVECTION MACHINE

His second novel, *The Transvection Machine* (1971), is a cross-genre work—something very difficult to market successfully because booksellers dislike having to decide where to shelve a book. In *The Transvection Machine*, a detective novel that takes place in the twenty-first century, the puzzle is well handled, and Hoch carefully leads readers to be sympathetic both with sleuths Carl Crader and Earl Jazine, the Computer Cops, and with the rebels who oppose their computerized society.

THE BLUE MOVIE MURDERS

The Blue Movie Murders (1972) is less daring, but it is a well-written, fairly clued, fast-paced novel with a well-masked least-likely murderer. It is one of many paperback originals that were published under the name Ellery Queen, but were in fact contracted out to various authors. Manfred B. Lee, who with his cousin, Frederic Dannay, had written novels and short stories as Ellery Queen, authorized the use of the Queen name on paperbacks. Lee would approve a plot outline submitted by an author hired by his agents and then edit the final typescript. *The Blue Movie Murders* is the final paperback original to use the Queen name, for Lee died only a few hours after accepting Hoch’s outline. Dannay did the final editing. It is part of the Trouble Shooter series that was begun by other writers, and it featured Mike McCall, “Assistant to the Governor for Special Affairs.” The series emphasized modern issues, and Hoch dealt sensitively with people involved in the pornographic film industry.

Hoch’s other novels, however, do not work so well. *The Fellowship of the Hand* (1973) and *The Frankenstein Factory* (1975), both of which continue the Com-

puter Cops’ investigations, lose narrative drive about halfway through.

THE MATTHEW PRIZE SERIES

In 1984 and 1985, Hoch supplied the plot for three contest novels that were produced in response to the popularity of Thomas Chastain’s *Who Killed the Robins Family? And Where and When and How Did They Die?* (1983). Each ends just as the detective announces that he or she has solved the crime. Reader could submit their own solutions to the publisher, along with fifty cents, and the winner received fifteen thousand dollars. (The third book, which was published only in Great Britain, had a much smaller prize of one thousand pounds.) *Prize Meets Murder* (1984), the first in the series, was misleadingly attributed to R. T. Edwards with Otto Penzler—Penzler, whose name is included on all three contest books did none of the writing, though he did market the series. R. T. Edwards was in fact Edward D. Hoch, who devised the plot, and Ron Goulart, who wrote the text. The result is an entertaining, though forgettable, book, which moves along swiftly until the frustrating nonconclusion. (The frustration continued when readers sent to the publisher for the solution, which was not written up as a dramatic final chapter but rather as a list of clues and their interpretation.) Hoch’s collaborator on the two later contest novels, *Medical Center Murders* (1984) by Lisa Drake and *This Prize Is Dangerous* (1985) by Matthew Prize, has not been revealed. Neither book sold as well as the first in the series.

THE SHORT STORIES

Yet however one evaluates Hoch’s novels, his major contributions to the mystery and detective genre are his short stories. He has created more than twenty series characters; only those who have appeared in Hoch’s books are listed at the beginning of this article. Others include investigators for Interpol (Sebastian Blue and Laura Charme), a Gypsy (Michael Vlado), a police officer (Nancy Trentino), a priest (Father David Noone), a female bodyguard (Libby Knowles), a New England physician (Dr. Sam Hawthorne), a con man (Ulysses S. Bird), and a Western gunslinger (Ben Snow). His sleuths specialize in different sorts of cases: hard-boiled investigations (Al Darlan), occult crimes (Professor Dark), espionage (Harry Ponder and

Charles Spacer), and school crimes (Paul Tower, the Lollypop Cop).

Despite their great variety in plot and detective, most of Hoch's stories have certain elements that make their authorship immediately recognizable. His writing style has been called "deceptively simple," in that the manner of telling never interferes with what is to Hoch the primary emphasis of a short work of fiction—the tale itself. Hoch does not want the narrative style to make the reader aware of the writer's personality, and thus he seldom includes unusual words, extended metaphors, or obscure examples based on his wide reading. Except for some of his earliest apprentice stories, he does not emphasize atmosphere for its own sake; nor does he load the text with action-filled but ultimately meaningless adjectives in the manner of many of the earlier pulp writers.

Hoch's wording is economical and precise. Witness the opening of his "The People of the Peacock": "The man who called himself Tony Wilder had traveled three days by camel to reach the valley oasis not far from where the Euphrates River crossed the arid border between Syria and Iraq." In a single sentence, the reader is introduced to a character, a setting, and the beginning of a situation. With the phrase "who called himself," Hoch already suggests the mystery, and the story will indeed revolve around a question of identity. In the middle of the story, Hoch leads the reader to think that the problem is to identify a spy named Venice, when in fact he has already hinted that the puzzle involves Wilder. To take another example, "Murder of a Gypsy King" begins, "On the long, lonely highway into Bucharest that sunny August afternoon, Jennifer Beatty suddenly changed her mind." Again, Hoch tells the reader who, when, where, and suggests a mystery.

Hoch often uses the first sentence in a story to make the reader ask "why." Sometimes, as in "Captain Leopold and the Murderer's Son," the story begins simply: "Leopold would always remember it as the case he didn't solve." At other times—for example, in "In Some Secret Place"—the unadorned language of the opening is surprisingly full of nuances: "I was almost too young to remember it, and certainly too young to understand it all, but that July weekend of

Uncle Ben's funeral has stayed with me through all these years." The reader realizes that the story occurred years ago, when the narrator was young and when a "July weekend" implied long, lazy summer days. The sentence also suggests questions: What happened so long ago that the narrator was "almost too young" to recall and definitely "too young to understand"? Whatever it was had something to do with a funeral and therefore death, and the events were so important that they have "stayed with me through all these years." Few other authors could have said so much, so succinctly, and led readers to want to know more.

Though accepting the modern dictum that one's language should be simple and direct, Hoch in his plotting is a neo-Romantic. Rarely are his stories based on the naturalistic analysis of what has gone wrong with society; instead, the major plot element usually involves the bizarre and the exotic. In this respect, he is a descendant of the first writer of detective novels, Wilkie Collins, whose mysteries featured a seemingly murderous room, a jewel stolen from the head of an Asian idol, and the apparently ghostly manifestations of a young woman dressed in white. In short, ordinary events do not hold much interest for Hoch or for his protagonists. The idea behind the Nick Velvet stories was to explain why anyone would pay Velvet twenty thousand dollars or more to steal worthless items, and Hoch finds all sorts of unexpected things for Velvet to take: the water from a swimming pool, a baseball team, all the tickets to a play, a birthday cake, a penny, a merry-go-round horse, a matador's cape, among other things. On one occasion, he is hired to steal the contents of an empty room; on another he goes after a lake monster.

HOCH'S SLEUTHS AND SPYS

Simon Ark, Hoch's first detective, investigates a witch living on Park Avenue, the death of a woman whose body bursts into flames, a religious cult whose followers attach themselves to crosses, a bullet that kills a person centuries after it was fired, a modern unicorn, a living mermaid, a mummy that washes ashore in Brazil, and a man who is murdered while alone in a revolving door. Sam Hawthorne, a New England country doctor of the 1920's and the 1930's,

specializes in impossible crimes. In his first case, he discovers how a carriage disappeared from within a covered bridge, and in later adventures he explains how a boy vanished from an ordinary swing in full view and solves many locked-room murders. Indeed, by the 1970's, Hoch had staked out a position as the successor to John Dickson Carr in mastery of so-called miracle crimes—murders, robberies, and disappearances that seem to have no rational explanation but that, at the conclusion of the story, are shown to have been committed by humans for human motives and by natural means. One of Hoch's most extraordinary plots, for example, involves a man who leaps from a window and then disappears until hours later, when his body hits the pavement. Even Captain Leopold, hero of Hoch's series of police procedurals, cannot avoid bizarre cases. When a child disappears from a Ferris-wheel car, and when an automobile is driven by a dead man, Leopold investigates. In one story, he is the sole suspect in the locked-room murder of his former wife, and in another he combats a super-criminal reminiscent of Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty.

Hoch's espionage agents are also experts at unusual crimes. Harry Ponder is faced with the problem of the ambassador who is shot within a locked automobile. Jeffrey Rand, who supposedly handles only decoding messages—certainly a safe, perhaps even a dull occupation—has to unravel mysteries involving a spy who has committed suicide while holding a playing card in his hand, a woman who travels on airplanes with a coffin, and an unidentified British agent who has suddenly started sending coded messages.

No matter whether they begin as thieves, cryptanalysts, gunfighters, or Gypsy chiefs, Hoch's protagonists almost always become detectives. As Hoch explains about Nick Velvet, "he is often called upon to solve a mystery in order to accomplish his mission or clear himself." Most of Hoch's stories are fair-play puzzles; he challenges the reader to foresee the solution before the detective explains. Frequently there is enough mystery in a single Hoch short story to fill a novel. Each of these mysteries is completely clued, and each resolved in a story of about sixty-five hundred words. Hoch is so prolific and so versatile that

exceptions can be found to every generalization about his work, except one: His plots are always ingenious.

Douglas G. Greene
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SIMON ARK SERIES: *The Judges of Hades, and Other Simon Ark Stories*, 1971; *City of Brass, and Other Simon Ark Stories*, 1971; *The Quests of Simon Ark*, 1984

CAPTAIN LEOPOLD SERIES: *Leopold's Way*, 1985

C. JEFFREY RAND SERIES: *The Spy and the Thief*, 1971

NICK VELVET SERIES: *The Theft of the Persian Slipper*, 1978; *The Thefts of Nick Velvet*, 1978; *The Velvet Touch*, 2000

CARL CRADER AND EARL JAZINE SERIES: *The Transvection Machine*, 1971; *The Fellowship of the Hand*, 1973; *The Frankenstein Factory*, 1975

MATTHEW PRIZE SERIES: *Prize Meets Murder*, 1984 (as Edwards); *Medical Center Murders*, 1984 (as Drake); *This Prize Is Dangerous*, 1985 (as Prize)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Shattered Raven*, 1969; *The Blue Movie Murders*, 1972 (as Ellery Queen; edited and supervised by Frederic Dannay)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Tales of Espionage*, 1989 (15 stories by Hoch and 16 by other writers, Eleanor Sullivan and Chris Dorbandt, editors); *The Spy Who Read Latin, and Other Stories*, 1990; *The People of the Peacock*, 1991; *The Night, My Friend: Stories of Crime and Suspense*, 1992; *Diagnosis: Impossible—The Problems of Dr. Sam Hawthorne*, 1996; *The Ripper of Storyville, and Other Ben Snow Tales*, 1997; *The Night People, and Other Stories*, 2001; *The Old Spies Club, and Other Intrigues of Rand*, 2001; *The Iron Angel, and Other Tales of the Gypsy Sleuth*, 2003

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Monkey's Clue, and the Stolen Sapphire*, 1978

EDITED TEXTS: *Dear Dead Days*, 1972; *Best Detective Stories of the Year*, 1976-1981; *All but Impossible! An Anthology of Locked Room and Impossible Crime Stories*, 1981; *The Year's Best Mystery and*

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RUPERT HOLMES

Born: Northwich, Cheshire, England; February 24, 1947

Types of plot: Historical; amateur sleuth

CONTRIBUTION

Rupert Holmes has contributed to mystery and detective fiction in a variety of ways, and almost everything he has touched has turned to gold (or platinum). Beginning in his late teens, Holmes, like other singer-songwriters of his era, such as Jimmy Buffet, Don McLean, Al Stewart, and the late Warren Zevon, composed songs that told stories often of a dark and dangerous nature, perhaps best exemplified by his 1971 opus, “Timothy,” which described possible cannibalism in a collapsed mine. During more than a decade as a performer whose works were often performed by other recording artists—including Barbra Streisand, Gene Pitney, the Platters, and the Drifters—Holmes found success with such hits as “Escape (The Piña Colada Song)” and “Him.” His songs and arrangements have been featured on many film soundtracks, including *A Star Is Born* (1976), *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1998), *Shrek* (2001), and *The Sweetest Thing* (2002) and on television series like *The Shield* (beginning in 2002) and *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005).

In the 1980’s, Holmes began to write plays and scores. His first effort, a musical called *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (pr. 1985), adapted from Charles Dickens’s novel of the same name, took five Tony Awards and an Edgar Award, probably because of Holmes’s innovative staging. Others of his plays have also met with critical acclaim: *Accomplice: A Comedy Thriller* (pr. 1990) won an Edgar; the suspenseful *Solitary Confinement* (pr. 1992) set box-office records at the Kennedy Center; his serial-killer play *Thumbs* (pr. 2000) set similar records at the Helen Hayes Theater; and *Curtains* (pr. 2007) has also proved popular. Other nonmystery Holmes plays, including the nostalgic *Say Goodnight, Gracie* (pr. 2002) and the musical adaptation of *Marty* (pr. 2002), have likewise been well reviewed.

Television has also benefited from Holmes’s talents. Though not a mystery—but sometimes incorpo-

rating mysterious elements—*Remember WENN* (1996-1998), the American Movie Classics series that Holmes created and wrote in the 1990’s, won Cable ACE awards for editing (1996) and costume design (1997) and captured an Emmy Award (1996) among its five nominations.

Holmes’s first mystery novel, *Where the Truth Lies* (2003), was nominated for a Nero Wolfe Award as best American crime novel and was made into a major motion picture. His second mystery novel, *Swing* (2005), was well reviewed and incorporates a CD of songs composed by the author; the title song is performed by Melissa Manchester.

BIOGRAPHY

Rupert Holmes was born on February 24, 1947, in Northwich, Cheshire, England, the first of two sons born to clarinetist, conductor, and later high school music teacher Leonard Eliot Goldstein—at the time leader of an Army infantry band—and his British war bride Gwendolen Mary Pynn Goldstein. In 1950 the family came to the United States, where Rupert grew up in the New York City suburb of Nanuet. As a youth, he was an avid reader and at the age of nine was determined to become a mystery writer. He was an eager listener to such radio dramas such as *Suspense* (1942-1962), *Have Gun—Will Travel* (1958-1960), and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* (1949-1962). Holmes, who learned to play more than a dozen musical instruments, joined his first rock band, the Nomads, as a teenager. In his senior year, he wrote his first one-act play, “Countdown for George.”

Following graduation from Nyack High School, Holmes attended the Crouse College of Music at Syracuse University for a year before transferring to the Manhattan School of Music. Holmes soon dropped out to work on Tin Pan Alley, acting in a variety of capacities, including studio and session musician, backup vocalist, producer, arranger, and songwriter. Holmes in 1969 married a childhood sweetheart, now attorney Elizabeth “Liza” Wood Dreifuss, and the couple produced three children, Wendy, Nick, and Tim.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Rupert Holmes (right) with composer John Kander (center) and Debra Monk, one of the stars of his 2007 Broadway musical Curtains, a comic-mystery story about the murder of a Broadway star in 1959. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Holmes composed and arranged songs for a number of groups and individuals, such as the Cuff Links, the Buoys, Gene Pitney, the Platters, the Drifters, and the Partridge Family, and in 1971 penned a major hit with “Timothy.” In the early 1970’s, while his younger brother Richard was training to become an operatic baritone, Holmes embarked on his own singing career, releasing his first album, *Widescreen*, in 1974. The music gained considerable acclaim for the author’s lush orchestrations of his clever, witty narrative songs and attracted the attention of Barbra Streisand, who recorded some of his songs and engaged the songwriter to produce several of her albums. During a decade of recording—he cut his last album in 1994—Holmes released such critical successes as *Singles* (1976), *Pur-*

suit of Happiness (1979), *Partners in Crime* (1979), and *Full Circle* (1981). His “Escape (The Piña Colada Song)” was a major hit in 1979-1980. Other recording artists, including Dolly Parton, Barry Manilow, and Britney Spears have covered his tunes.

Turning to theatrical composition in the 1980’s, Holmes scored a major success with his first effort in 1985, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, a multiple Tony Award winner. At the same time, the Holmes family suffered a personal tragedy: Their ten-year-old daughter Wendy died suddenly of an undiagnosed brain tumor. Traumatized by the loss, Holmes was for a time unable to compose music. He later returned to work with a string of successful plays—*Accomplice*; *Solitary Confinement*; *Say Goodnight, Gracie*; *Thumbs*; and

Marty—and in the late 1990's created and wrote the Emmy Award-winning television series *Remember WENN*.

In 2003, Holmes published the first of his well-received historical mystery novels, *Where the Truth Lies*, which was shortly afterward made into a motion picture. He then published the novel *Swing*.

ANALYSIS

Since the beginning of his career, Rupert Holmes has been a quick study. He has shown amazing versatility, demonstrating time and again his ability to learn a new art and to master it quickly. This craft started early when, during his college years, he worked in New York City's Tin Pan Alley, performing a variety of tasks including musical session work, writing and arranging songs and jingles, backup singing, and producing recordings. By the age of twenty-four, he had gained a reputation as a writer of songs that told stories in narrative fashion, including the 1971 the Buoy's hit, "Timothy." During the 1970's, Holmes became a recording artist in his own right, compiling a number of albums featuring original tunes frequently covered by other singers. His pop singing career reached its apex late in the decade with the smash "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)," which made it into both domestic and worldwide charts in 1979 and 1980, although it did not win a Grammy, an award that has thus far eluded the writer. Many of Holmes's clever lyrics, frequently featuring criminal acts, as well as his well-written short stories, appeared in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*.

In the 1980's, Holmes, long a fan of written and broadcast mystery fiction and a lover of historical subjects, became a playwright, turning Charles Dickens's unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), into a musical that garnered five 1986 Tony Awards, including three—best book, best music, and best lyrics—given to Holmes, and picked up an Edgar Award as well, for best play. Much of the success of the play rested on Holmes's innovation of stopping the action at the very point where Dickens had left off, so the audience could vote on which character they thought committed the murder; Holmes wrote lines for all the possible suspects, giving the play a number of alternative endings. The au-

thor followed that success with a play, *Accomplice*, a parody of a traditional Golden Age mystery, which won an Edgar Award. Other Holmes plays include the mystery-thriller *Solitary Confinement*, which features a man trapped in a building with an assassin hired to kill him, and *Thumbs*, a drama that brings a spouse-murderer and a serial killer into conflict. During the 1990's, Holmes began to work in television, writing all fifty-six episodes—and all of the incidental music—for the American Movie Channel's first original series, *Remember WENN*, an Emmy Award-winning comedy-drama Holmes created, set in 1939 at a Pittsburgh radio station.

In the twenty-first century, Holmes added novel writing to his repertoire: *Where the Truth Lies* (2003) and *Swing* (2005) combine the author's primary interests, mystery, history and music. Both novels demonstrate the author's considerable writing skills, particularly his ability to juggle many plot points, his eye for telling detail, his ear for realistic dialogue, his creation of large casts of believable characters, and his predilection for mixing humor and drama. In his two novels, Holmes has shown a remarkable talent for matching the style of his writing to the period in which it is placed: *Where the Truth Lies*, set in the mid-1970's, features breezy, self-conscious, and sometimes satirical, cynical language, whereas the writing in *Swing*, a story revolving around events in San Francisco in 1940, is more straightforward, harder-edged, and crisper. Neither book displays an excess of literary pyrotechnics, and each, though nothing alike in tone or purpose, provides an entertaining read.

WHERE THE TRUTH LIES

Holmes's first novel is as much a character study as it is a mystery. A multilayered work, the novel is really a story within a story within a story. It is written in the present about events that transpired in the mid-1970's, which involve something that happened in the late 1950's. The bulk of the story unfolds in 1976 and consists of narrative, letters, and excerpts from memoirs.

Narrated in first person by a brash, cynical twenty-six-year-old woman, K. O'Connor, *Where the Truth Lies* concerns a publishing project in which O'Connor, an up-and-coming celebrity interviewer, is ostensibly assigned to write an objective tell-all biography. The subject is singer Vince Collins, half of a successful act,

who broke up with partner comedian Lanny Morris in the late 1950's. The partnership loosely resembles the careers of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. In the course of firsthand research that takes her coast-to-coast, O'Connor learns that at the time of the breakup, Collins and Morris were implicated but never charged in the death of a beautiful young red-haired woman named Maureen O'Flaherty. While O'Connor conducts her investigation in an attempt to discover the truth of the matter (or at least provide something sensational for her book), she violates many tenets of the investigative reporter's code. She lies shamelessly to anyone and everyone. She passes herself off as her best friend, complicating both of their lives. She makes promises she has no intention of keeping. She destroys any remaining traces of objectivity—O'Connor has no qualms about plying her sexuality to elicit answers—by becoming romantically involved with both Collins and Morris. In the process of writing about the two men who served as the object of her attention, she becomes as much a central character as they do, a not unexpected eventuality given O'Connor's habit of thrusting herself prominently into the stories that bear her byline.

An acerbic, satiric peek at the attitudes and moralities of the era in which the story is set, *Where the Truth Lies* begins slowly but compensates for its languid early pace with fascinating vignettes and insider glimpses into the worlds of publishing and entertainment and the lifestyles of the rich and famous. The mysterious element, mostly ignored in favor of comedic, film nostalgia-related, and erotic sequences during the opening third of the novel (as a result of which the reader will never again view Disneyland as an innocent playground), begins to slowly assert itself, and the narrative gains momentum. O'Connor, like a bumbling amateur sleuth-in-training, manages to divorce herself from her feelings, to separate genuine clues from red herrings, to weigh contradictory accounts of events from a variety of sources, and to home in on the most logical explanation for both the death of Maureen and for the breakup of a successful showbiz act. At the end of her search, O'Connor reveals a classic locked-room puzzle, the answer to which is key in disclosing the real crime, and the real murderer.

SWING

Holmes's second novel, *Swing*, combines history, mystery, and music into a satisfying, atmospheric, and innovative noir-flavored whole. Set in 1940 on Treasure Island during the San Francisco Golden Gate Exposition World's Fair, *Swing* features the world-weary first-person narrative of thirty-eight-year-old Ray Sherwood, a longtime jazz saxophonist and music arranger touring with Jack Donovan and His Orchestra of Note, which are booked at the Terrace Lounge of the Claremont Hotel. Ray, divorced from his wife following the tragic death of their child, is contacted by an attractive Berkeley coed who proposes that he score her contest-winning composition, "Swing Around the Sun." Ray accepts the offer only to be propelled into a complex murder mystery-thriller involving Jews escaping from occupied France, impersonations, secret codes, enemy agents, and other assorted malfeasance.

Swing has much going for it. Holmes's extensive musical background is used to full advantage throughout—a CD of the tunes mentioned in the novel, with words and music by the author, plus full lyrics that help provide clues to the mystery—were packaged with the book. The novel is laden with evocative period details of a former age, the now-vanished Exposition and the special appeal of San Francisco, aided and abetted with maps, photographs, luggage stickers, and postcards of the era introducing each chapter. The convoluted story, underscored with the uncertainty of a nation currently at peace but troubled by the war in Europe and the lurking menace of Japan, captures well the conflicted emotions of the time. The action, except for a couple of coincidences that strain credulity and several incidents that happen offstage that might have been better dramatized rather than summarized, is for the most part believable; there are a plethora of unexpected plot twists that continually ratchet up the level of suspense. The voices of the characters, including some truly nasty villains, are authentic and unique. The concluding chapter, which resolves a few dangling threads and provides a happy Hollywood ending, somewhat undercuts the downbeat mood of the bulk of the novel but does not seriously detract from what is, for a relatively new novelist, a major accomplishment.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Where the Truth Lies*, 2003; *Swing*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, pr. 1985; *Twelfth Night*, pr. 1986; *Accomplice: A Comedy Thriller*, pr. 1990; *Solitary Confinement*, pr. 1992; *Goosebumps*, pr. 1998; *Thumbs*, pr. 2002; *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, pr. 2002; *Marty*, pr. 2002; *Swango*, pr. 2003; *Curtains*, pr. 2007

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Henry, William A., III. "Detective Kit." Review of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, by Rupert Holmes. *Time*, December 16, 1985, 83. A highly positive review of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, noting Holmes's innovation of stopping the musical in midstream to allow the audience to vote on which character they believe to be the murderer, and praising the show tunes "Perfect Strangers" and "Don't Quit While You're Ahead."

Holmes, Rupert. "Murder, With Music." Interview by Bridget Kinsella. *Publishers Weekly* 250, no. 22 (June 2, 2003): 33-34. An interview with Holmes, in which he reveals that K. O'Connor, the protagonist of *Where the Truth Lies*, was inspired by Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), wherein the first name of the heroine, the second Mrs. DeWinter, is never revealed. This issue of *Time* also contains a favorable review of Holmes's first novel, in which the reviewer notes the wealth of period detail.

_____. Rupert Holmes Website and Resource Center. <http://www.rupertholmes.com>. The author's

personal Web site contains considerable information about his life and work, including extensive biographical data, interviews, and many photos of Holmes at various stages of his career.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Where the Truth Lies*, by Rupert Holmes. 71, no. 10 (May 15, 2003): 702. A starred review of *Where the Truth Lies*, which is called a "slickly funny showbiz romp with lots of great scenery."

Salamon, Julie. "Back to a World Where Mystery and Music Go Hand in Hand." Review of *Swing*, by Rupert Holmes. *The New York Times*, March 19, 2005, p. B11. Reviewer looks at Holmes's background and the effect that the death of his daughter, Wendy, had on his career. Examines how music affects his work, particularly this novel, for which he wrote a number of songs.

"Short Takes." *Time*, November 23, 1992, 81. Among other items, the article contains a brief, unfavorable review of *Solitary Confinement*, panned for its "lumpishly predictable plot" and its lifeless characters, who are compared to "pawns on a chessboard."

Stroup, Kate. "A Ham for All Seasons." Review of *Where the Truth Lies*, by Rupert Holmes. *Newsweek* 142, no. 3 (July 21, 2003): 58. Stroup notes Holmes's desire to change directions, as his pop hit "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" has dominated his image. "I realized long ago that my tombstone will be in the shape of a giant pineapple," Holmes said. "Sometimes I feel like the rest of my work is penance for that one sin." Stroup found the descriptions of the devastated family to be the best part of the entertaining book.

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AND
DETECTIVE FICTION**

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AUTHORS

LEONARD HOLTON

Leonard Wibberley

Born: Dublin, Ireland; April 9, 1915

Died: Santa Monica, California; November 22, 1983

Also wrote as Patrick O'Connor; Christopher Webb;
Leonard Wibberley

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Father Joseph Bredder, 1959-1977

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

FATHER JOSEPH BREDDER, the chaplain for the Los Angeles Convent of the Holy Innocents and a former marine sergeant and boxer, solves cases based on his analysis of spiritual clues. He has a number of friends and associates who appear in the series and assist him.

LIEUTENANT MINARDI of the Los Angeles police, a widower, and his daughter, Barbara Minardi, whose development from childhood through marriage is detailed throughout the books, are the most important of Bredder's associates.

CONTRIBUTION

Despite the fame of G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown short stories, few full-length novels featuring clerical sleuths had appeared before 1959, the year of publication of Leonard Holton's first Father Bredder mystery. Since then, other series have made clergyman-detectives an important part of the mystery scene. Holton's series is well plotted, and the interplay between Lieutenant Minardi with his procedural approach and Father Bredder with his moral and deductive approach lends plausibility, interest, and humor to the tales. The large number of recurring characters adds much to the series as the reader becomes familiar with Father Bredder's world.

BIOGRAPHY

Leonard Holton, a pen name for Leonard Wibberley, was born in Dublin, Ireland, on April 9, 1915. He was educated at various Irish and English schools. Holton was a journalist throughout his life, beginning

in London, between 1931 and 1936, and then in Trinidad, where he was also an oil-field worker and a member of the Trinidad Artillery Volunteers. In 1943 he began work as an editor for the Associated Press in New York, and the following year he became New York chief for the *London Evening News*. In 1947 he began work in California, where he worked as an editor, a reporter, and a columnist for various papers for the rest of his life. In 1948 he married Katherine Hazel Holton, whose surname he adopted as a pen name. They had two daughters and four sons.

Holton wrote more books for children than for adults. His wide-ranging interests are reflected in his fiction. Many of his children's books, for example, have to do with car racing, history, and sailing; the last two areas are also important for his mystery series. His most famous single work is his entertaining novel *The Mouse That Roared* (1955), with its somewhat less successful sequels, including *The Mouse on the Moon* (1962). *The Mouse That Roared* became the famous film of 1959 starring Peter Sellers; *The Mouse on the Moon*, starring Margaret Rutherford, was made in 1963.

Holton died on November 22, 1983. His manuscripts are housed at the University of Southern California.

ANALYSIS

Leonard Holton's eleven crime novels star Father Joseph Bredder, a saintly Franciscan who humanely and humorously attends to his clerical duties for a convent with its attached church and school while solving crimes involving those he knows or with whom he comes into contact during the course of his duties or hobbies. Father Bredder's faith and character are vital to the series. His commitment to God is frequently emphasized by references to the founder of his order and to Saint Paul; both are emblematic of Father Bredder's compassion, love, and understanding. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is mirrored in Father Bredder's own sudden conversion when, as a marine sergeant, he witnessed Japanese soldiers dying

in flames, an incident referred to throughout the series. His faith leads him to solve crimes for much the same reason that motivates G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown: a vocation to tend to the spiritual needs of the criminal. Nevertheless, only in this way and in his use of religion-based information—what Father Bredder calls “spiritual fingerprints”—does he much resemble Father Brown. Holton's disclaimer of any further influence, made in his 1978 essay, “Father Bredder,” is no doubt accurate.

Whereas Chesterton stressed Father Brown's ordinariness, Holton presents Bredder as extraordinary. The reader's prejudices are assaulted by the focus on a marine, in a job known for violence, as a priest, even though violence is precisely the reason for his conversion. To emphasize this unusual personality, Holton makes his character a successful prizefighter as well, one whose ability is highlighted in *Flowers by Request* (1964) when the bishop gives him permission to fight an exhibition match that will raise money for repairs to the church organ. Depicted throughout the series are Father Bredder's friendships with members of the seedier elements of the Los Angeles streets: the hotel keeper, Mrs. Cha; a fence known as “the Senator”; a broken-down boxer, Cagey Williams; and others who aid Father Bredder and, because of their aid, vindicate his faith in humanity.

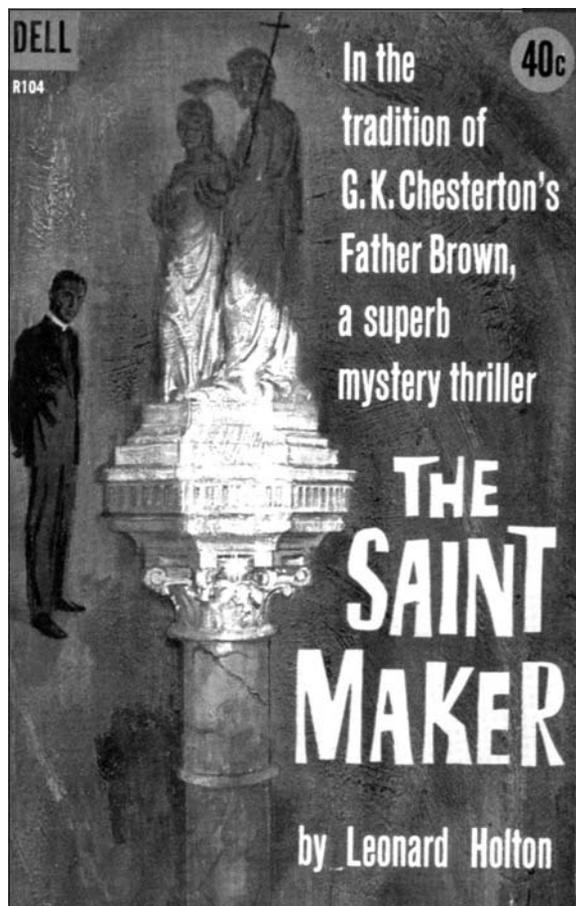
These street figures are aspects of a major strength of the novels. Far more than many authors of detective series, Holton creates an elaborate society around his detective and so can draw on the people in the convent and its church and school, the inner-city people from Father Bredder's earlier assignment, his former marine friends, and the police. The police play a key role in the series, in the person of Lieutenant Minardi, Father Bredder's closest friend. (Even in the one novel not set in Los Angeles, *Deliver Us from Wolves*, 1963, which is set in Portugal, Minardi appears at the opening and conclusion and, by mail, solves the main part of the police work.) The lieutenant always solves the cases on a police level, while Father Bredder probes the underlying spiritual puzzles. Unlike Father Brown and some other sleuths of crime fiction, Father Bredder has no objection to civil penalties for crime and is therefore fully willing to help and be helped by his friend. Another po-

lice officer who often appears in the novels is Minardi's superior, Captain “Normal” Redmond, whose WASP blandness is humorously compared with Minardi's emotionalism and Bredder's spirituality, the captain by temperament understanding nothing of the priest. The final novel of the series, *A Corner of Paradise* (1977), introduces another delightful character, the Jewish Sergeant Rosenman, who complements the Italian Minardi and the WASP Redmond. These police officers—primarily Minardi—provide much of the stories' plausibility. In their routines, their ability to collect information, and their respect for law, they assist Father Bredder as he makes sense of what he considers the more important aspects of the cases.

Characters from the convent make up another group in Father Bredder's world. The personality of the Reverend Mother Therese forms a contrast to that of Father Bredder, for she is remote, reserved, and conservative, or she seems so to him, although she frequently assists him in surprising ways. His housekeeper is Mrs. Winters, another church conservative, whose name in *A Corner of Paradise* is inexplicably changed to Mrs. Wentworth, the name of the murdered wife in *A Pact with Satan* (1960). His assistant priest is the scholarly Englishman Father Armstrong, who makes Father Bredder feel intellectually inferior. Attending the convent school is Lieutenant Minardi's daughter, Barbara, who is twelve years old in *A Pact with Satan* and ages to twenty by 1977, in *A Corner of Paradise*.

Barbara generally plays a role in events that run parallel to the main mysteries, although she nearly is a victim herself in *The Saint Maker* (1959) and is not mentioned in *The Devil to Play* (1974). Her marriage to a black playwright occasions one of the cases of prejudice in *A Corner of Paradise*, and she is briefly a suspect herself when her roommate at a college summer session is murdered in *The Mirror of Hell* (1972).

Other series characters come from the street life of Los Angeles, friends from Father Bredder's previous inner-city ministry. Most often used is Mis-Cha, the Shintoist proprietor of the Melrose Hotel who somehow becomes Mrs. Askuzi of the Tokyo Hotel and in most of the novels appears as Mrs. Cha, a Buddhist, of



the Western Hotel. Such inconsistencies are frequent in the series. For example, Jimmy Hughes, “the Senator,” a diamond expert and fence, is shot and killed as he talks to Father Bredder in *Flowers by Request*, but he is alive and running his business in *The Devil to Play*, published nine years later. Cagey Williams, the punch-drunk former boxer, is also in most of the series as he moves from street bum to boxing instructor and then, without explanation, to manager of the boxing gymnasium. Other inner-city characters include Soldier Sam and his café, former oil millionaire Texas Mary, and Tino Soldano, an amusing former juvenile delinquent who makes more money as a speaker on crime than he could from crime itself. This motley crew appears in full array in *Flowers by Request*: Father Bredder enlists them as singers for the Grüber Mass with which the book ends.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS AND A TOUCH OF JONAH

Holton’s plots are all of the puzzle variety, with fair play the general rule. The spiritual fingerprints are generally not difficult for the reader to pick up, despite Lieutenant Minardi’s constant puzzlement. A misuse of music and books in *Out of the Depths* (1966), for example, provides Father Bredder with spiritual clues. As the music and books show no patterns of selection, the music being in mixed keys, he deduces that they are used as ciphers. A similar type of clue is employed in *A Touch of Jonah* (1968), where a wrong screw shows Father Bredder (though no one else) that a murderer has been at work. Such misuse of material objects is a recurring theme in the Holton series, combining theology with the needs of the detective story. Several other plot devices recur in the novels. As what could be called variants on the plot of Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *A Corner of Paradise*, *Deliver Us from Wolves*, and *Secret of the Doubting Saint* (1961) all feature crimes having to do with fabulous jewels. At the end of each of these novels, Father Bredder finds the jewels and surprises those around him. A variant on this pattern has him find a large heroin stash in *The Devil to Play* and a film of scientific equations in *Out of the Depths*—both things of great monetary value, like the jewels, that have led to murder.

Also characteristic of Holton’s plotting are the double (or apparently double) plots involving seemingly unrelated deaths. In some novels Father Bredder remembers ancient crimes that he believes shed light on the modern ones: *Deliver Us from Wolves* has a sixteenth century death by illness of a nobleman, *A Pact with Satan* cites eighteenth century deaths from spontaneous combustion, and *Flowers by Request* recalls the death in 1100 of William the Conqueror’s son, William Rufus. The ancient crime most tightly woven into a modern crime is in *Deliver Us from Wolves*, for the two involve the same family and motive (the ruby). Other novels mention apparently unrelated modern crimes or accidents that only Father Bredder perceives as relevant: *A Problem in Angels* (1970) and *Out of the Depths* are especially clear examples. Although Father Bredder frequently claims that he is using spiritual fingerprints to guide him, the clues are often concrete: for

example, an old book in *Flowers by Request* and a journal in *Deliver Us from Wolves*.

RELIGION AND DETECTION

Religious themes, images, and allusions form an important undercurrent in the Father Bredder novels, though they are handled with subtlety, never clumsily. The title of *Out of the Depths* is a reference to the biblical psalm often called *De profundis*. Father Bredder opens the story by pulling a corpse out of the water; Father Bredder himself is almost murdered twice by drowning, and diving scenes and divers permeate the novel. The most specifically theological plot is that of *The Saint Maker*, in which the guilty character, the murderer of her husband and niece and would-be murderer of her niece's baby and of Barbara Minardi, has the dementedly virtuous motive of making saints by killing people she has judged to be in a state of grace. The title of *Secret of the Doubting Saint* makes reference to the skepticism of the Apostle Thomas, but the motive, the gigantic diamond, and the method of its detection, which is doubt, do not depend on theology per se. Other themes in the series are linked to theology, although rarely in any technical way. Father Bredder often sees the hand of the devil in events, notably in *A Pact with Satan*, in which a wife's virtue so disturbs a not-so-virtuous husband that, in guilt, he murders her so that he can continue his evil unreproached. This story is a good example of Lieutenant Minardi's solving a case but not understanding it; it is Father Bredder who shows him the Satan connection. Holton steers clear of technical theological explanations; nevertheless, religion informs all Father Bredder's activities and thoughts and adds depth and interest to the series.

In his essay on Father Bredder, Holton mentions the trouble he had in finding a publisher for the series and leads the reader to believe that he was probably disappointed in sales, even though the series was reprinted in paperback and picked up by book clubs. There was even a brief television series, *Sarge*, based on Father Bredder's Vietnam experiences. In terms of sales, however, clerical mysteries only came into their own in the 1970's and 1980's, especially with the Rabbi Small and Father Koesler mysteries by Harry Kemelman and William X. Kienzle, respectively.

Holton and mystery writer Jack Webb, with his Father Shanley-Sammy Golden series, had been among the few writers of clerical-sleuth tales in the 1950's and 1960's. In the 1970's, when the final Father Bredder stories were appearing, Charles Merrill Smith began his Reverend Randolph series (1974), Ralph McInerny his Father Dowling series (1977), and Kienzle his Father Koesler series (1979). In the 1980's further clerical series began, two with nuns, authored by McInerny and Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, beginning in 1986 and 1984, respectively.

The appeal of these clerical sleuths draws attention to the nature of popular fiction. Readers of popular fiction demand a high degree of predictability; this is especially true of the mystery genre. Fiction written according to formula is both reassuring and undemanding. At the same time, to avert boredom, a degree of innovation is required, though always within the bounds of the formula. In short, mystery writers are always looking for a new gimmick. In creating Father Bredder, Leonard Holton made use of two gimmicks: the incongruity of a detective-priest (especially in the heyday of Mickey Spillane) and the reverse twist that this priest just happens to be a former marine sergeant and boxer. Father Bredder is indeed a perfect example of one type of hero in popular fiction.

Stephen J. Curry

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FATHER JOSEPH BREDDER SERIES: *The Saint Maker*, 1959; *A Pact with Satan*, 1960; *Secret of the Doubting Saint*, 1961; *Deliver Us from Wolves*, 1963; *Flowers by Request*, 1964; *Out of the Depths*, 1966; *A Touch of Jonah*, 1968; *A Problem in Angels*, 1970; *The Mirror of Hell*, 1972; *The Devil to Play*, 1974; *A Corner of Paradise*, 1977

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS WIBBERLEY): *Mrs. Searwood's Secret Weapon*, 1954; *The Mouse That Roared*, 1955 (also known as *The Wrath of Grapes*); *McGillicuddy McGotham*, 1956; *Take Me to Your President*, 1957; *Beware of the Mouse*, 1958; *The Quest for Excalibur*, 1959; *The Hands of Cormac Joyce*, 1960; *Stranger at Killknock*, 1961; *The Mouse on the Moon*, 1962;

A Feast of Freedom, 1964; *The Island of the Angels*, 1965; *The Centurion*, 1966; *The Road from Toomi*, 1967; *Adventures of an Elephant Boy*, 1968; *The Mouse on Wall Street*, 1969; *Meeting with a Great Beast*, 1971; *The Testament of Theophilus*, 1973 (also known as *Merchant of Rome*); *The Last Stand of Father Felix*, 1974; *1776—and All That*, 1975; *One in Four*, 1976; *Homeward to Ithaca*, 1978; *The Mouse That Saved the West*, 1981

PLAYS (AS WIBBERLEY): *The Vicar of Wakefield*, pr. 1967; *The Heavenly Quarterback*, pb. 1967; *Gift of a Star*, pb. 1969; *Black Jack Rides Again*, pb. 1971; *1776—and All That*, pr. 1973; *Once, in a Garden*, pb. 1975; *Encounter near Venus*, pr. 1978

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: 1947-1960 • *The Lost Harpooner*, 1947 (as O'Connor); *The King's Beard*, 1952 (as Wibberley); *The Coronation Book: The Dramatic Story in History and Legend*, 1953 (as Wibberley); *The Secret of the Hawk*, 1953 (as Wibberley); *Deadmen's Cave*, 1954 (as Wibberley); *Flight of the Peacock*, 1954 (as O'Connor); *The Epics of Everest*, 1954 (as Wibberley); *The Society of Foxes*, 1954 (as O'Connor); *The Watermelon Mystery*, 1955 (as O'Connor); *The Wound of Peter Wayne*, 1955 (as Wibberley); *Gunpowder for Washington*, 1956 (as O'Connor); *The Black Tiger*, 1956 (as O'Connor); *The Life of Winston Churchill*, 1956 (revised 1965; as Wibberley); *John Barry, Father of the Navy*, 1957 (as Wibberley); *Kevin O'Connor and the Light Brigade*, 1957 (as Wibberley); *Mexican Road Race*, 1957 (as O'Connor); *Black Tiger at Le Mans*, 1958 (as O'Connor); *Matt Tyler's Chronicle*, 1958 (as Webb); *Wes Powell, Conqueror of the Grand Canyon*, 1958 (as Wibberley); *The Five-Dollar Watch Mystery*, 1959 (as O'Connor); *John Treegate's Musket*, 1959 (as Wibberley); *Black Tiger at Bonneville*, 1960 (as O'Connor); *Mark Toyman's Inheritance*, 1960 (as Webb); *Peter Treegate's War*, 1960 (as Wibberley)

1961-1970 • *Sea Captain from Salem*, 1961 (as Wibberley); *The Time of the Lamb*, 1961 (as Wibberley); *Treasure at Twenty Fathoms*, 1961 (as O'Connor); *Zebulon Pike, Soldier and Explorer*, 1961 (as Wibberley); *Black Tiger at Indianapolis*, 1962 (as O'Connor); *The Ballad of the Pilgrim Cat*, 1962 (as Wibberley); *The River of Pee Dee Jack*, 1962 (as

Webb); *Treegate's Raiders*, 1962 (as Wibberley); *The Quest of the Otter*, 1963 (as Webb); *The Shepherd's Reward*, 1963 (as Wibberley); *The Raising of the Dubhe*, 1964 (as O'Connor); *Seawind from Hawaii*, 1965 (as O'Connor); *The "Ann and Hope" Mutiny*, 1966 (as Webb); *Encounter near Venus*, 1967 (as Wibberley); *South Swell*, 1967 (as O'Connor); *Attar of the Ice Valley*, 1968 (as Wibberley); *Man of Liberty: A Life of Thomas Jefferson*, 1968 (as Wibberley); *Beyond Hawaii*, 1969 (as O'Connor); *Eusebius, the Phoenician*, 1969 (as Webb); *A Car Called Camellia*, 1970 (as O'Connor); *Journey to Untor*, 1970 (as Wibberley)

1971-1980 • *Leopard's Prey*, 1971 (as Wibberley); *Flint's Island*, 1972 (as Wibberley); *Red Pawns*, 1973 (as Wibberley); *Guarneri: Story of a Genius*, 1974 (as Wibberley); *The Last Battle*, 1976 (as Wibberley); *Little League Family*, 1978 (as Wibberley); *Perilous Gold*, 1978 (as Wibberley); *The Crime of Martin Coverly*, 1980 (as Wibberley)

NONFICTION (AS WIBBERLEY): *The Trouble with the Irish (or the English, Depending on Your Point of View)*, 1956; *The Coming of the Green*, 1958; *No Garlic in the Soup*, 1959; *The Land That Isn't There: An Irish Adventure*, 1960; *Yesterday's Land: A Baja California Adventure*, 1961; *Ventures into the Deep: The Thrill of Scuba Diving*, 1962; *Ah Julian! A Memoir of Julian Brodetsky*, 1963; *Fiji: Islands of the Dawn*, 1964; *Toward a Distant Island: A Sailor's Odyssey*, 1966; *Something to Read*, 1967; *Hound of the Sea*, 1969; *Voyage by Bus*, 1971; *The Shannon Sailors: A Voyage to the Heart of Ireland*, 1972; *The Good-Natured Man: A Portrait of Oliver Goldsmith*, 1979

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E. W. HORNUNG

Born: Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, England; June 7, 1866

Died: Saint Jean-de-Luz, France; March 22, 1921

Type of plot: Inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

A. J. Raffles, 1899-1909

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

A. J. RAFFLES, an amateur cricketer and thief. A gentleman with a public school background, Raffles turns to burglary partly for the money but mainly for the adventure. Although a criminal, he adheres to a sporting code of ethics and eventually dies a hero in the Boer War; his is the character of the villain-hero.

HARRY "BUNNY" MANDERS, a writer and thief, is the first-person chronicler of the Raffles adventures. Converted to crime by Raffles and occasionally conscience-stricken, Bunny nevertheless remains Raffles's hero-worshipping partner throughout a series of burglaries and adventures.

CONTRIBUTION

Having borrowed from Arthur Conan Doyle the basic framework of a highly intelligent hero and an admiring disciple who records his deeds, E. W. Hornung inverted the Holmes stories: As a modern alternative to master detective Sherlock Holmes, he offered A. J. Raffles, master thief. In the Raffles tales, Hornung creates an uncommon blend of detective and adventure fiction; while Bunny's ignorance of the finer points of Raffles's criminal plans allows some scope for a

reader's detective abilities, the stories' main interest lies in the thieves' exploits outside the law. The element of danger (and snobbery) in these adventures in society crime inspired much English thriller fiction of the 1930's; Raffles initiates a tradition of gentleman outlaws that includes Leslie Charteris's the Saint, John Creasey's the Toff, and his own reincarnation in Barry Perowne's series. Hornung, however, was writing moral as well as adventure stories, a dimension apparent in Bunny's alternating devotion to and revulsion for Raffles. Although the Raffles stories are protothrillers, they are also a serious literary record of public-school boys gone half-wrong and of their fluctuating friendship.

BIOGRAPHY

Ernest William Hornung was born in Middlesbrough, an English manufacturing town, on June 7, 1866, the youngest son of John Peter Hornung, a solicitor. He was educated at Uppingham; there, he learned to play cricket, which remained a lifelong interest. An asthmatic, he emigrated to Australia for his health in 1884 and spent two years there as a tutor. Returning to London in 1886, Hornung became (like Bunny) a journalist and magazine writer; his first novel was published in 1890. In 1893, he married Arthur Conan Doyle's sister, Constance, at Doyle's home and settled near him in Sussex; Hornung's dedication of the first Raffles collection, "To A. C. D. This Form of Flattery," acknowledges Doyle's influence on his work. To his great pleasure, in 1907, Hornung was elected to the Marylebone Cricket Club, the sport's governing body.

In the years between 1890 and 1914, Hornung wrote numerous articles for journals such as *Cornhill Magazine* and published at least twenty-three novels and several collections of short stories. This body of work ranged from romances and adventure stories—including the bushranger novels drawn from his Australian experiences—to the novels such as *Fathers of Men* (1912) that were considered more serious literature. Although Hornung is best known for his Raffles stories, he also experimented with detective fiction: *The Crime Doctor* (1914) follows the career of John Dollar, a physician who not only solves crimes but also runs a sanatorium for potential and reformed criminals.

Despite the fact that Hornung suffered from asthma, at the beginning of World War I he volunteered for service. After two years with an anti-aircraft unit, he was sent in 1916 to France to establish a YMCA library and rest hut for soldiers; he distinguished himself at the siege of Arras, leaving the front only after his library had been captured. His experiences in France and his grief over the loss of his only child, a son killed at Ypres, emerge in the poetry and memoirs published from 1917 to 1919. His already delicate health further weakened by military service, Hornung settled in Saint-Jean-de-Luz after the war; he died there on March 22, 1921.

ANALYSIS

With twenty-six stories and a novel, E. W. Hornung created a character whose name has entered the language as the synonym for a daring and successful thief. In “To Catch a Thief,” for example, Raffles steals another burglar’s plunder after discovering it hidden in a pair of Indian clubs, while in “The Raffles Relics” he steals an exhibit of his own burglary tools from Scotland Yard. In this sportsman-adventurer-thief, Hornung presents a complex villain-hero.

Although Raffles is a criminal, Hornung goes to some lengths to establish his admirable qualities; thus, he emerges as something of a hero. The title of the first collection of stories, *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899), makes an important point: Because he is an amateur thief, Raffles’s crimes seem less sordid than those of a “professor” or East End professional criminal. In addition, he is an amateur athlete, a gentleman cricketer

who turns to burglary, he insists, only because he is chronically in need of money. That is, playing cricket as a professional (like stealing as an East End “professor”) would be considered declassé. In contrast, he plays as a gentleman amateur, for love of the game rather than for money; thus, he is forced into crime. Along with establishing him as an amateur and a gentleman, Raffles’s cricket has a third function: Like his amateur cracksman standing, it is intended to undercut the seriousness of his crimes. Both Raffles and Bunny tend to refer to burglary in cricketing rather than criminal terms: Waiting to burgle a house is like waiting nervously to enter a match; suffering a series of unrewarding burglaries is “playing a deuced slow game.” The word “sport” is frequently used to suggest that crime, at least as Raffles and Bunny play it, is, like cricket, simply an exciting game. This important point is further reinforced through the sportsman’s code that Raffles translates into an ethics of crime. Although he is not averse to breaking the law, he does eschew some activities; using drugged whiskey is “not a very sporting game,” for example, while committing murder is “not the game at all.” This code functions to redeem or at least palliate his crimes, because it acts as a measure less of right and wrong than of style; Raffles’s adherence to his own code papers over the criminality of his thefts by making them seem merely an aspect of his insouciant style.

“GENTLEMEN AND PLAYERS”

The story “Gentlemen and Players” illustrates all the aspects of Raffles’s character that are intended to ease the reader into accepting the criminal as a hero. The title refers to the distinction made at the time between Gentleman (amateur) and Player (professional) cricketers, a distinction very important to Raffles. As a gentleman, he is ordinarily loath to abuse his position as guest by stealing from his host’s home, but he is insulted that Lord Amersteth invites him to Milchester Abbey only to play cricket; his anger at “being asked about for my cricket as though I were a pro” shows the importance he attaches to his amateur athlete status. The equal importance of his amateur cracksman status appears in the distinction Raffles makes between himself as a “Gentleman” thief and Crawshay, a competing East End “Player” thief; both men are interested in a valuable

necklace belonging to Lady Melrose, like Raffles a houseguest of Lord Amersteth. His determination to steal the necklace and thereby “score off” both Crawshay, the professional thief, and Mackenzie, the professional detective, displays his pride as an amateur cracksman, while at the same time, it illustrates the analogy Raffles often draws between burglary and cricket: To “score off them both at once” would be “a great game.” Along with this sporting rationale for stealing the necklace, Raffles offers several other reasons meant to excuse the crime: Not only are both he and Bunny hard up again, but “these people deserve it, and can afford it.” Finally, the burglary itself, like his admirable cricket, exhibits Raffles’s daring and skill; as Bunny remarks, both require a “combination of resource and cunning, of patience and precision, of headwork and handiwork.” The manner of the theft—while the professional thieves succeed in stealing Lady Melrose’s jewel case, Raffles has already emptied the case of the necklace while its owner slept—is intended to impress the reader with Raffles’s daredevil style.

Another aspect of Raffles’s style, apparent in “Gentlemen and Players” as well as in the other stories, is his racy conversation. Raffles’s slang (which establishes him as a knowing insider), his self-assured wit, and his gift for casuistry all help to convert the reader to his own view of his crimes.

By presenting Raffles as an amateur criminal, true sportsman, and witty speaker, Hornung created a figure with great reader appeal. Furthermore, the stories are told from Bunny’s point of view, another technique that Hornung uses to draw the reader into Bunny’s view of Raffles. Bunny’s inability to stay on the right side of the law, however, seems to bear out Doyle’s fear that these stories of a criminal-hero might be “dangerous in their suggestion.” Thus, Bunny becomes as important a figure in these adventures as Raffles himself: As narrator, partner in crime, and devoted friend, he as well as Raffles is Hornung’s exercise in the creation of a multifaceted character.

“THE IDES OF MARCH”

In the first Raffles story, “The Ides of March,” Hornung carefully establishes the origin of the complex relationship between these two men, and with it Raffles’s fascination for Bunny. Their initial relation—the

story begins with Bunny’s memory of fagging for Raffles at school—foreshadows the later partnership and friendship, in which Raffles is the “irresistible” and “masterful” leader with Bunny the “incomparably weaker” follower. Bunny, who remembers with admiration Raffles’s kindness and daring, turns to him after spending his own inheritance and passing several bad checks; Raffles promises his help but instead tricks Bunny into partnership in a burglary. It is clear to the reader that Raffles is not the friend he seems; even Bunny notices his “fiendish cleverness” in subtly persuading him to make their partnership permanent. To this suggestion of a satanic temptation are added allusions to magic: Bunny is “spellbound and entranced” during the burglary, so that “a fascination for [Raffles’s] career gradually wove itself into my fascination for the man.” Although Bunny realizes the criminality of his new career, he seems unable to free himself from Raffles’s spell. In fact, in “The Gift of the Emperor,” the final story of the first collection, Bunny earns an eighteen-month prison sentence for his loyalty to Raffles; by the time of the second set of stories, *The Black Mask* (1901), he himself states that he and Raffles are no longer amateur cracksmen but rather “professionals of the deadliest dye.”

THE BLACK MASK

This shift to professional crime follows logically from Hornung’s clear portrayal of Raffles’s less admirable side and its effect on Bunny; it is, however, not a complete shift. Hornung often redeems Raffles by presenting him as a patriot: In “A Jubilee Present,” he steals a gold cup from the British Museum only to send it anonymously to Queen Victoria, “infinitely the finest monarch the world has ever seen”; “The Knees of the Gods,” the final story of *The Black Mask*, concerns Raffles’s discovery of a military spy and concludes with his heroic death in the Boer War. On the other hand, many stories in this collection show a less sporting Raffles; in “The Last Laugh” and “To Catch a Thief,” for example, he is responsible for two murders and one more or less accidental death.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

Bunny, too, has become increasingly unscrupulous; in “The Spoils of Sacrilege,” a story from the final collection, *A Thief in the Night* (1905), he goes so

far as to burgle his ancestral home. It might seem that the once-admirable Raffles would no longer be Bunny's hero, and in the prefatory note to *A Thief in the Night*, Bunny admits that the previous stories have "dwelt unduly on the redeeming side." Although some of these later stories, particularly "Out of Paradise," show Bunny attempting to portray Raffles at his worst, the final story again redeems his hero; "The Last Word" is a letter from Bunny's former fiancée, who broke her engagement in "Out of Paradise" as a result of Raffles's treachery, revealing that Raffles had later attempted to reunite them and asking Bunny to visit her. This promise of romance, seemingly out of character in a series of adventure tales, is actually a fitting conclusion to the Raffles stories, because it emphasizes the good-friend aspect always present but sometimes shrouded by his villainy.

THE CRIME DOCTOR

Overall, the character of Raffles poses for the reader a question Hornung asked in an earlier story:



One of Frederic Dorr Steele's illustrations for the 1914 edition of E. W. Hornung's *The Crime Doctor*.

"Why desire to be all one thing or all the other, like our forefathers on the stage or in the old-fashioned fiction?" The complexity suggested here continues in Hornung's last two mystery novels, *Mr. Justice Raffles* (1909) and *The Crime Doctor*. In the former, Raffles reminds Bunny that he is indeed a villain; this very recognition indicates, however, that his moral sense is more developed than that of his disciple. *The Crime Doctor* has as its hero a detective rather than a criminal, but John Dollar is more interested in preventing than in solving crime; like a novelist he admired, the darkly realistic George Gissing, Hornung is here concerned with the difficult social and financial position of England's new and growing educated class. In all of his mysteries, Hornung is clearly moving toward a more complex art than that of "old-fashioned fiction."

The Raffles stories were widely read in early twentieth century England, in part because a criminal with standards must have seemed significantly more admirable than the high-stakes gamblers surrounding the prince of Wales and in part as a relief from the horrors of the Boer War. Several films, beginning with a 1905 silent and reaching their high-water mark with the 1939 *Raffles*, testify to the character's continuing hold on the popular imagination; starring such romantic leading men as John Barrymore and David Niven, these films emphasize not only Raffles's daredevil charm but also his Robin Hood-like chivalry. Although accurate as far as it goes and interesting testimony to the power of one aspect of the stories, this film version of Raffles is significantly less complex than the Hornung's three-dimensional Raffles. His second creation, the reluctant thief Bunny, is equally engrossing. Like Holmes's Watson, Bunny serves as the foil to a unique character, as a less outré sidekick whose qualities are more accessible to the reader. Nevertheless, Bunny is in his way as complex as Raffles: sometimes plucky and sometimes a rabbit (hence his nickname), fascinated by his friend yet hampered by scruples. By witnessing Bunny's struggles of conscience, the reader is led to share his ambivalent admiration for Raffles.

Johanna M. Smith

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RAFFLES SERIES: *The Amateur Cracksman*, 1899 (also known as *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman*); *The Black Mask*, 1901 (also known as *Raffles: Further Adventures of the Amateur Cracksman*); *A Thief in the Night*, 1905; *Mr. Justice Raffles*, 1909

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The Crime Doctor*, 1914

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Old Offenders and a Few Old Scores*, 1923

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Bride from the Bush*, 1890; *Tiny Luttrell*, 1893; *The Boss of Taroomba*, 1894; *The Unbidden Guest*, 1894; *Irralie's Bushranger*, 1896; *The Rogue's March*, 1896; *My Lord Duke*, 1897; *Young Blood*, 1898; *Dead Men Tell No Tales*, 1899; *Peccavi*, 1900; *The Belle of Toorak*, 1900 (also known as *The Shadow of a Man*); *At Large*, 1902; *The Shadow of the Rope*, 1902; *Denis Dent*, 1903; *No Hero*, 1903; *Stingaree*, 1905; *The Camera Fiend*, 1911; *Fathers of Men*, 1912; *The Thousandth Woman*, 1913; *Witching Hill*, 1913

SHORT FICTION: *Under Two Skies*, 1892; *Some Persons Unknown*, 1898

PLAYS: *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman*, pr. 1903 (with Eugene W. Presbrey); *Stingaree, the Bushranger*, pr. 1908; *A Visit from Raffles*, pr. 1909 (with Charles Sansom)

POETRY: *The Ballad of Ensign Joy*, 1917; *Wooden Crosses*, 1918; *The Young Guard*, 1919

NONFICTION: *Trusty and Well Beloved: The Little Record of Arthur Oscar Hornung*, 1915; *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front*, 1919

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Watson, Colin. *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience*. 1971. Reprint. New York: Mysterious, 1990. A reception-based study of the crime genre, focusing on the attitudes of mystery readers and the methods employed by fiction to cater to and reinforce those attitudes.

GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

Born: Bristol, Gloucestershire, England; November 30, 1900

Died: Banbury, Oxfordshire, England; October 4, 1988

Type of plot: Thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Several of Geoffrey Household's thriller novels have earned critical acclaim as classic examples of this difficult genre. He sustained a specialized literary tradition identified for a generation after 1900 with such works as Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) and John Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915) and *Greenmantle* (1916). Though Household by experience was a worldly man, the tone of his thrillers is chivalric. His heroes adhere to (or are notable for their deviations from) aristocratic codes of conduct with roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: personal honor, "playing the game," respect for or empathy with one's opponents, individualism, "fair play," a rather quixotic personal bravery, and a keen appreciation, particularly in moments of danger, of people's reliance on nature. Avoiding the hard-boiled or socially commonplace characters favored by many authors of his day, Household modernized the nineteenth century's traditional tales of highly intelligent, educated, and cultivated individualists who became enmeshed in, and successfully met, deadly challenges.

BIOGRAPHY

Geoffrey Edward West Household was born Edward West on November 30, 1900, in Bristol, England, into an upper-middle-class family. His father, Horace West, was a prominent lawyer; his mother, Beatrice Noton, encouraged his interests in classical literature. During the war years, from 1914 to 1919, Geoffrey attended Bristol's famed Clifton College, from which he moved on to Oxford's Magdalen College. In 1922, he emerged from Magdalen with first-class honors in English literature.

He did not undertake full-time writing, however, until the mid-1930's. A friend who happened to be the

son of the manager of the huge Anglo-Austrian, Romanian, and Greek financial consortium known as the Bank of Romania helped land him a post as an assistant confidential secretary. He subsequently spent four of what he described as delightful years learning Romanian and French and enjoying Romanian culture. In 1926, he took a post with the European branch of the United Fruit Company marketing bananas in Spain. In the process, he not only became fluent in Spanish but also found a setting for his children's story *The Spanish Cave* (1936)—or *The Terror of Villadonga* as it was first published—and for numerous other tales.

From Spain, Household (with his first wife, Elisaveta Kopelanoff, to whom he was married from 1930 to 1939) came to the United States with the intention of supporting his family by writing. The Great Depression, however, thwarted these plans, and he took a job as a junior editor for a children's encyclopedia, occasionally writing children's radio plays for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Eventually, Household returned to business. Representing manufacturers of printers' inks, he traveled extensively in the United States, Central and South America, and the Mideast. These travels further deepened his cosmopolitanism, enabling him later to embellish his writings with a colorful sense—and a wide range—of persons and places.

During the mid-1930's, Household developed what proved a lifetime association with the Boston publishing firm of Atlantic, Little, Brown. Before the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, they had published his picaresque novel *The Third Hour* (1937); *Rogue Male* came out two years later.

In 1939, Household joined British Intelligence, serving with distinction until 1945. His postings to the Balkans, Greece, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq were dangerous and challenging ones. His successes earned for him the rank of lieutenant colonel and numerous decorations. In these years, too, he acquired a firsthand feel for the critical confrontations that were to be a hallmark of his best stories.

In 1942, during the course of these adventures, he

married his second wife, Ilona Zsoldos-Gutmán, with whom he had three children. After the end of the war, he turned to his writing, until his virtual retirement in 1977 to his home near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, England. He died in Banbury in 1988.

ANALYSIS

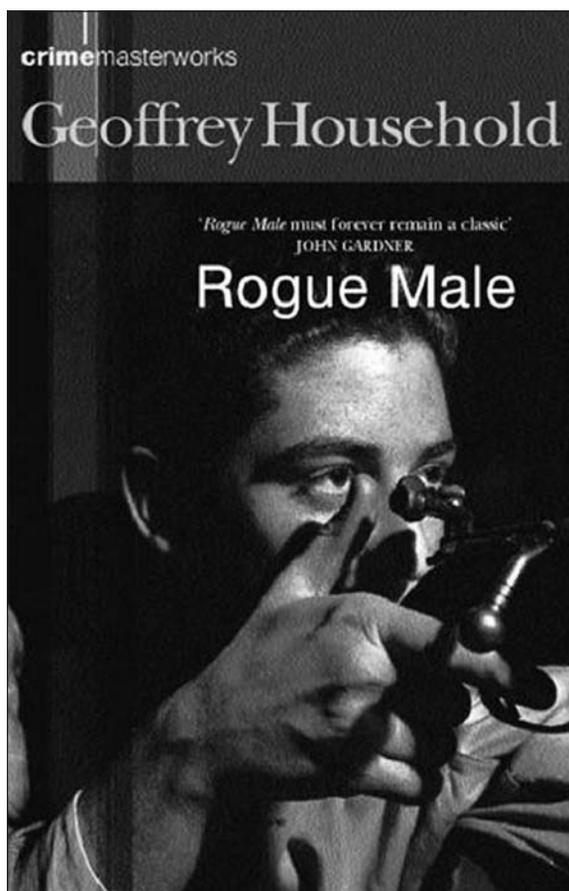
In his classic thriller *Rogue Male*, Geoffrey Household unwittingly provides one important key to the appreciation of his writings. “I am not content with myself,” his then-nameless hero proclaims. “With his pencil and exercise-book I hope to find some clarity. I create a second self, a man of the past by whom the man of the present may be measured.”

The quest for that clarity and for better gauges of “the man of the present” preoccupied Household in his stories. His education and maturation came during the devastations and disillusionments born of World War I and the profound economic, political, and social tumults of the years between the great wars: worldwide economic depression; the eruptions of Soviet communism, of fascism, and of National Socialism; widespread criticism of established capitalist practices and values in Great Britain and in the United States; the acceptance, superficially at least, of new personal mores; rejection of liberal individualism in favor of mass movements of one complexion or another; and the waning of traditional religions as a source of solace for many individuals in industrialized nations. Such transforming forces were the stuff of Household’s characters’ discourse in several novels (for example, *The Third Hour*), and in none of them are they absent from the background.

Although he was a cosmopolite, a man whose writings attest his wide tolerance, Household consistently projected values that harked back to those of Great Britain’s upper and middle classes during most of the nineteenth century. His eschewal of greed as an acceptable source of private motivation, however, prompted him to strip these classic liberal values as nearly as he could to their noble or aristocratic common denominators, particularly as they continued to be accented in England’s elite schools, colleges, and universities.

ROGUE MALE

These denominators, refined from the nineteenth century’s perceptions of Greco-Roman civilization, furnished a code of personal conduct that was chivalric. Nobility—which had little to do with one’s station or rank in life—was the central concept of this code. Not always easily definable—for example, as it applied to complex issues in love and war—the concept for Household certainly embodied the Englishman’s sense of fair play. It demanded “playing the game” in spite of the incompetence of one’s leadership, the failure of one’s friends, the deceptions and treacheries of one’s enemies, or the preponderance of unfavorable odds. It was undeniably quixotic, as exemplified by the hero of *Rogue Male* as he attempts a sportsman’s stalk and possibly the assassination of a dictator and then tries to survive against “all the cunning and loyalty of a first-class power” when its minions seek to



kill him. Again, it is exemplified by Charles Dennim, hero of *Watcher in the Shadows* (1960), figuratively tethering himself like live bait for a tiger to foil a killer from his concentration-camp past, and by Claudio Howard-Wolferstan, seeking through half a dozen disguises to evade a misguided pursuit by Scotland Yard, his compatriots, and the Russians.

These chivalric elements clearly reflect Household's profoundly optimistic convictions, which he unhesitatingly expounds through his protagonists. "I myself," exclaims Howard-Wolferstan, "consider this earth upon which we are privileged to carry out our duties a most pleasurable dwelling place." He adds,

Let that be my assurance to those who flatter my colleagues and myself by supposing that we are not only able but resigned to effect destruction which the infinite dangers of a hostile cosmos have, since the birth of the planet, been inadequate to accomplish.

Though under deadly provocation, though physically or psychologically trapped, Household's principals cheat their expected fate by consciously reducing themselves to intelligent animality and then making shrewd use of nature's aid. Like an experienced naturalist, Household placed a high premium on people's nature-given powers of observation. Flights of birds repeatedly warn one hero of an enemy's presence. Angles of vision, light and shadow, minute changes in local flora and fauna, and natural camouflages all serve Household's desperate champions. One ingenious hero makes use of a dead cat's gut to string a primitive bow while trapped underground in his last refuge.

Rigorously clinging to their concepts of honor, playing the game against formidable odds, Household's principal characters differ markedly from their hard-boiled, cynical, often seedy counterparts, developed by a number of other thriller writers—Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, for example—in his generation. Household's figures are better educated, better advantaged, and more civilized in the face of crisis. They are men driven to extremes, but they are individual versions of Man Thinking. They are able by their own intellect—not by tediously following police procedures, by knowing the streets, by pumping snitches, by mastery of martial arts, or by excellence as marksmen—to pene-

trate the minds of their enemies and engage—somewhat like the great Sherlock Holmes—in deadly chess with them. They are more rational than reflexive, more intelligent than vulgarly tough.

Without being didactic or sententious, Household effectively transports his optimistic, liberal nineteenth century individualism—strengthened by his cosmopolitanism and enriched by his personal adventures—into the twentieth century. Though he wrote crisply and the threat of violence is ever present, his stories develop rather than explode on the reader. In the midst of a society that is fascinated by violence, Household handled plots of danger and suspense with the gentlemanly aplomb of a more genteel tradition—but, at his best, not less adventurously than his peers.

Clifton K. Yearley

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RAYMOND INGELRAM SERIES: *Rogue Male*, 1939 (also known as *Man Hunt*); *Rogue Justice*, 1982

ROGER TAINE SERIES: *A Rough Shoot*, 1951; *A Time to Kill*, 1951

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Third Hour*, 1937; *Arabesque*, 1948; *The High Place*, 1950; *Fellow Passenger*, 1955 (also known as *Hang the Man High*); *Watcher in the Shadows*, 1960; *Thing to Love*, 1963; *Olura*, 1965; *The Courtesy of Death*, 1967; *Dance of the Dwarfs*, 1968; *Doom's Caravan*, 1971; *The Three Sentinels*, 1972; *The Lives and Times of Bernardo Brown*, 1973; *Red Anger*, 1975; *Hostage—London: The Diary of Julian Despard*, 1977; *The Last Two Weeks of Georges Rivac*, 1978; *The Sending*, 1980; *Summon the Bright Water*, 1981; *Arrows of Desire*, 1985; *The Days of Your Fathers*, 1987

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Salvation of Pisco Gabar, and Other Stories*, 1938 (revised 1940); *Tales of Adventurers*, 1952; *The Brides of Solomon, and Other Stories*, 1958; *Sabres on the Sand, and Other Stories*, 1966; *Capricorn and Cancer*, 1981

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *The Cats to Come*, 1975; *The Europe That Was*, 1979

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Spanish Cave*, 1936 (also known as *The Terror of Villadonga*); *The*

Exploits of Xenophon, 1955 (also known as *Xenophon's Adventure*); *Prisoner of the Indies*, 1967; *Escape into Daylight*, 1976

NONFICTION: *Against the Wind*, 1958

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Household, Geoffrey. *Against the Wind*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1958. Household's autobiography provides crucial insight into his life and work.

Kunitz, Stanley, and Howard Haycraft, eds. "Geoffrey Household." In *Twentieth Century Authors*. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1942. Household is one of 1,850 authors profiled in this massive work.

"Novelist Geoffrey Household." *Newsday*, October 7, 1988, p. 41. Obituary of Household sums up his life and career. Notes the popularity of *Rogue Male*.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981. Scholarly study of British espionage thrillers geared toward the nonscholar and written by a major critic in the academic study of mystery and detective fiction. Places Household's novels in perspective.

RICHARD HULL

Richard Henry Sampson

Born: London, England; September 6, 1896

Died: London, England; 1973

Type of plot: Inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Richard Hull's mysteries have won acclaim for their "acid bite," their originality, their brilliant viciousness, and their credible exposure of the human capacity for self-delusion. They are marked by resoundingly unpleasant characters who are totally self-convinced, egotistical, and amoral, yet fascinating. They bring a sense of fun and amusement to the mystery story, mingling the comic and satiric with the gruesome, thereby adding an extra dimension to the traditions of the genre. Hull enjoys breaking formulas and reversing expectations time and again within a single work, and his clever and effective use of the inverted pattern with a final narrative twist assures that anyone who has read only the first half of one of his novels will seldom be able to predict the second half.

In fact, the pattern Hull developed provides a highly successful model for imitators. Isaac Anderson of *The New York Times* calls Hull's books "subtle, skillful and unusual," while Will Cuppy calls for more mysteries by authors such as Hull, who writes with "the same kind of brains needed in other books—murderous fun of a high order."

BIOGRAPHY

Born Richard Henry Sampson in London in 1896, Richard Hull was the son of Nina Hull and S. A. Sampson. He attended Rugby College; though awarded a scholarship in mathematics on completing his studies there, he failed to enter Trinity College at Cambridge University because of the outbreak of World War I. He entered the army on his eighteenth birthday and received a commission. He served with an infantry battalion and the machine gun corps and spent three years in France. After the war, he remained on the active list of his original army battalion until

1929, when he formally retired. During that time, however, he joined a firm of chartered accountants, with whom he worked for several years. Although he passed his qualifying examinations in accounting, he was unsuccessful in establishing a private practice and turned to writing instead. He wrote his first and most famous novel, *The Murder of My Aunt*, in 1934, and thereafter published a book a year until 1941, when he began to release his work at a slower pace. He published fifteen novels in all, with the last appearing in 1953. When Hull wrote of himself, he relied on the third person, as in his letters to mystery critic and historian Howard Haycraft.

On September 1, 1939, Hull was recalled to service but was released as a major in July, 1940, because of his age. He next worked in the Admiralty as a chartered accountant, investigating costs of government contracts, until the mid-1950's. A lifelong bachelor, he lived in his London club until his death in 1973.

ANALYSIS

Richard Hull claims that his mysteries are imitative of the crime novels of Anthony Berkeley, particularly of *Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime* (1931). They are indeed so in their reliance on a first-person narrator, their focus on the motives and mind of the murderer (the most villainous of whom shares the author's name), and their deadly wit. In many ways, however, his work has much more in common with the novels of Jim Thompson or Patricia Highsmith, though his is a British version of these writers' special brand of nastiness. At their best, Hull's works are unique. They draw the reader into their own amoral world of plots and counterplots, utilizing an intimate diary-confessional form whereby the villain talks directly and intimately to the reader, making the unreasonable sound reasonable and the murderous seem necessary.

The variation of point of view within the novels is skillfully handled. Hull excels at having his narrator report one person's story or reactions and then present the totally opposite position of another, giving the reader a strong sense of the self-delusions by which humans exist and of the difficulty of determining truth as events are filtered through a number of complex,

conniving minds. *The Murder of My Aunt* is a tour de force at reversing perspectives, with the bulk of the novel from the point of view of the murderous nephew and the final chapter from the point of view of the aunt, the intended victim. *My Own Murderer* (1940) repeatedly provides multiple interpretations of the same action, interpretations that reveal the prejudices, obsessions, and values or lack of values of the various characters involved. Hull continually plays with the reader's perceptions, a fact that is evident from his titles. Several of the titles seem clear in their intent as one begins the work but take on a different meaning and texture as one concludes the book and realizes that the pronoun or the possessive has a second sense that fits the situation far more aptly than the more common meaning. Only in *The Ghost It Was* (1936) does Hull vary his narrative form, relying uncharacteristically and not so successfully on a third-person narrative.

In Hull's novels, there is no focus on clues, suspicions, or police procedures. When a police inspector or an amateur detective does appear, he is a peripheral figure, described in greatest detail only in the final chapter or chapters. He guesses about character and motive; although the narrator thinks that he understands far more fully than the detective possibly could, the irony of the ending is that the narrator (and the reader, who has shared his perceptions), is shown to have been partially, if not totally, wrong all along. Typical of Hull's distinctive manner is *The Ghost It Was*, wherein the detective enters the case solely to clear a ghost of a murder charge, and in an unexpected switch, the butler is a legitimate suspect. In most Hull mysteries there are no interviews of witnesses, and often there is no traditional suspense, in that the reader knows from the beginning who committed the first murder or who is attempting murder and why. There are often multiple murders, but each one is committed by a different murderer, with the motives for the second or third murder growing out of and interlocked with the first. The pleasure comes from the mental vagaries of the narrator, from his rational irrationality, from his self-revelations and prejudices, and ultimately from a final twist in which perspectives are reversed and the best-laid plans go awry.

Hull explores the total absence of guilt in his char-

acters, who are highly individualistic and with pretensions to education, artistic sensibilities, or wisdom above their fellows, but who have all failed in the real world in some way: financially, socially, or morally. For them, others are but insects to be crushed, and those who would disapprove are maudlin sentimentalists. Hull's narrator, however, nevertheless appeals to the reader's sympathies, explaining the reasons for his unrest, distrust, or distress to show himself in the best light: as a person put on, taken advantage of, or abused in some way by others, who, as a result, seem from his jaundiced perspective to deserve death. Typical is the narrator of *My Own Murderer*: When a friend in need, though uninvited, thanks him for an egg, he informs the reader, "It was preposterous. I hadn't let him have it. He'd taken it as if it was Czecho-Slovakia, and nothing short of violence, which anyhow was impracticable, could have saved it." Later he confides,

When Mrs. Kilner had been explaining, apparently extremely inaccurately, her desire to humiliate Alan Renwick, to have him in her power and then make him feel it, to make him crawl to her and eat humble pie, I had understood exactly what she meant. I had never had the chance to do that to any human being and I should particularly enjoy doing it to Alan, although from many angles I quite liked him.

Still later, he admits that he would have dearly liked to have been Alan's dentist, "only that dentists in the end relieve pain."

Such characters tamper with car brakes, start fires, experiment with garden poisons, put morphine in drinks, and send friends or relatives to painful deaths without a second thought, indeed with resentment at the trouble the person is causing them, and with regret that they cannot be disposed of more simply. Almost always their goal is financial gain. Moreover, they gloat over their own cleverness in checking out and planning the details of their atrocities, and ignore the possibility of injury to innocent bystanders. Hull's characters are locked together in a strange mixture of like and dislike; at their most kindly they may be most dangerous, and at their most peevish they may be most charming. Ironically, however, convinced of their inherent superiority, his narrators are blind to their own

limitations and weaknesses and cannot see major errors of judgment and action that damn them. In fact, when the view is reversed, the reader finds that others see through these narrators most easily, readily predict their future acts or unravel their past deeds, and know them for the scoundrels they are. Because part of the reader's pleasure comes from sharing the speaker's prejudices and plans (the reader is addressed so intimately), ultimately one must also share his guilt and both bemoan and enjoy his comeuppance, if there is one.

THE MURDER OF MY AUNT

The Murder of My Aunt sets the pattern for Hull's later works. His main narrator, a worthless layabout nephew who is sponging off the rich old aunt who has reared him, is fat, blond, homosexual, and spoiled, as are most of Hull's villains. He reads pornographic French novels, consumes sweets, is excessively precise about grammatical constructions, and dismisses most of what his aunt and her friends enjoy as rather crude and uncivilized, particularly if it involves physical labor or dirt. His lifetime has clearly been spent avoiding the lessons of British integrity, industry, and responsibility that his concerned aunt has endeavored to instill in him. When she, in their game of attack and avoid, pushes him a little too far (he must walk to town for his mail), he decides on deliberate and cold-blooded murder to free himself from her judgments and control and to gain for himself the money and estate on which he depends. He acts alone, except for his beloved Pekingese dog, which he calls the only friend he has in the world, but which he would cheerfully sacrifice to further his own interests. His diary reports step-by-step his leisurely plans, their execution and results, and the thousand fears and anxieties to which they make him prey, until the final twist at the end when both the narrator and the perspective shift, revealing the importance of point of view in interpreting reports.

MY OWN MURDERER

The works that followed *The Murder of My Aunt* explore the possibilities inherent in the inverted form. In *My Own Murderer*, an unscrupulous lawyer describes an elaborate conspiracy whereby he hopes to rewrite the will of and then murder a confessed mur-

derer, making it first look like a contrived suicide to mislead the police and then like a genuine accident. When pawns in his game of death react unexpectedly, he is quite willing for an unwitting substitute to take his place and bear his death penalty. At the close of the work, he addresses the reader as the author of his own published confession. The confessor's name? Richard Henry Sampson.

OTHER WORKS

In a similar vein, *A Matter of Nerves* (1950) claims to be the diary of a murderer, reporting his method, his performance of the deed, and the aftermath, but keeping his identity a secret. Hull varies the point of view in *Excellent Intentions* (1938) by telling the story through a series of courtroom scenes and by inverting the psychology as well as the narration as the judge realizes the selfless motives of the murderer and the worthlessness of the victim. In *Murder Isn't Easy* (1936), the variation is based on the story of the murder of a company director being told from the different viewpoints of those most closely involved. *The Murderers of Monty* (1937) begins with an elaborate practical joke, a company formed to "murder" Monty, but one that backfires when a real murder results. *Keep It Quiet* (1935) also involves a not-so-funny joke that gets out of hand (the wife of a club chef placing perchloride of mercury in a bottle labeled "vanilla") and ends with blackmail as the club secretary tries to hide the disastrous results of her act: poison on the club's dinner table and double death thereby. The other works in Hull's canon are weaker in execution and lack the humor and originality of earlier works, though *Last First* (1947) attempts to surprise in the Hull tradition by placing its final chapter first.

SETTING AND TONE

Hull's settings are highly detailed and concrete and often depend on ironic contrast: a peaceful rural scene that hides mayhem, a sinister setting in which plans go awry and tragicomic bumbling ensues. The interaction of English villagers, their peevish and pranks and gossip good humor, details of gardening and mechanics, the daily activities of a small advertising agency, and the various methods for manipulating and changing legal documents are all presented with convincing verisimilitude. The description of the police interrogating

witnesses in *Invitation to an Inquest* (1950) is particularly nasty.

There is a tragicomic tone to Hull's stories, with the quips and pranks witty in a British tradition. Burke Hare, in his introduction to the 1979 edition of *The Murder of My Aunt*, calls Hull "a true comic novelist." Indeed, the comic dominates: comic description, comic action, comic wordplay. The guide to Welsh pronunciation that opens *The Murder of My Aunt* is both learned and hilarious, and speeches like the following are typical:

I rather welcome seeing a little sentiment in you, Edward. In some ways you are a little hard; but you mustn't make a fool of yourself about So-so. Now, don't jump up like that and fly into a pet, just listen reasonably. No dog in this house ever has a tombstone. It was bad enough your making Evans dig up the garden for him; still worse when you made a sort of coffin and even conducted some kind of a burial service over him, from what I hear. That was bad enough, but I refuse absolutely to have a tombstone in the potatoes, and I absolutely and entirely refuse to have an epitaph beginning . . . "To darling So-so, his master's only joy. A victim of speed."

Usually the comedy results from witty repartee as characters with values alien to each other clash, from a character's blindness to his own absurdity (one trying to burn up his aunt and her home secretly, but ostentatiously carrying away a carload of personal valuables, clothes, hats, and favorite books), from objects that reveal personality, from unexpectedly juxtaposed details, or from acts that are taken to the extreme (reading through all the poisons in the encyclopedia in an effort to select the best one; pulling up various garden plants, hoping for a poisonous one, then rerooting them haphazardly and expecting no one to notice). Sometimes it results from the narrator's genuine distress at the behavior of friends or acquaintances, as when one irritatedly notes, "One does not expect one's friends to drop in in the middle of the night and mention casually after an hour or two's delay that they have committed murder that evening." Often the humor results from contrasting versions of the same story, as each character tries to hide his own feelings and motives and to blame others or obscure relationships.

A good Hull mystery, then, depends on a charming but unscrupulous narrator who amuses and provokes and makes murder seem the most natural and inevitable of acts. These well-written stories blend humor and erudition with unpredictable and fascinating plots to make the most gruesome of deeds somehow a pleasure to be savored, like a fine wine.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Murder of My Aunt*, 1934; *Keep It Quiet*, 1935; *Murder Isn't Easy*, 1936; *The Ghost It Was*, 1936; *The Murderers of Monty*, 1937; *Excellent Intentions*, 1938 (also known as *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*); *And Death Came Too*, 1939; *My Own Murderer*, 1940; *The Unfortunate Murderer*, 1941; *Left-Handed Death*, 1946; *Last First*, 1947; *Until She Was Dead*, 1949; *A Matter of Nerves*, 1950; *Invitation to an Inquest*, 1950; *The Martineau Murders*, 1953

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more diverse in tone and narrative technique in the twentieth century. Provides perspective on Hull's works.

Morley, Christopher. Introduction to *Murder with a Difference: Three Unusual Crime Novels*. New York: Random House, 1946. Discusses Hull's *The Murder of My Aunt*, which is reprinted here alongside novels by Gerald Heard and Patrick Hamilton.

Peach, Linden. *Masquerade, Crime, and Fiction: Criminal Deceptions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Extended study of the theme and portrayal of disguise and deception in mystery and detective fiction. Sheds light on Hull's novels.

Shibuk, Charles. Review of *Last First* in *The Armchair Detective* 8 (February, 1975): 140. Review looks at Hull's novel and analyzes its ability to stand the test of time.

_____. Review of *The Murder of My Aunt* in *The Armchair Detective* 8 (Summer, 1980): 250. Another retrospective review examines Hull's reception and contrasts it with his present reputation.

Slide, Anthony. *Lost Gay Novels: A Reference Guide to Fifty Works from the First Half of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2003. Contains a chapter analyzing *The Murder of My Aunt* with reference to its inclusion of gay characters.

ELSPETH HUXLEY

Born: London, England; July 23, 1907

Died: Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England; January 10, 1997

Types of plot: Police procedural; comedy caper; inverted; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Superintendent Vachell, 1937-1939

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

SUPERINTENDENT VACHELL is a Canadian police officer who has become head of the British Criminal

Investigation Department in the imaginary African colony of Chania. His Canadianness is actually more nominal than real, something like the Belgian nature of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, and is a device that allows him to be an outsider with a sense of detachment. He frequently gets into trouble with his superiors for his unorthodox ways, among them the abduction of a neighboring colonial governor, and he complains that the officials he has to interrogate do not treat him with respect. He often criticizes himself for errors in his investigations and frequently gets injured; in the course of the series he is beaten up by suspects,

gored by a wounded buffalo, caught in the middle of a fire, pushed over a cliff in a car, shot at, and made to crash in an airplane. At the end of the series, he says that he is tired of police work and wants to quit.

CONTRIBUTION

What distinguishes Elspeth Huxley's crime novels is their focus on Africa, specifically on the British colonial experience in Africa. All but one of the novels is set in colonial Africa, and the one that is not features a character from Africa who keeps remembering his past and whose actions are motivated by what happened to him there. According to Huxley, her decision to write from the British point of view about Africa harmed her popularity because the intellectual fashion was to criticize British colonialism and express sympathy with native Africans. Nevertheless, her mysteries were generally praised, though her most popular work was not a mystery but her memoir of her childhood in Africa, *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood* (1959).

BIOGRAPHY

Elspeth Huxley was born Elspeth Josceline Grant in London in 1907. Her mother, Eleanor Lilian Grosvenor, was related to dukes and earls, and her father, Josceline Charles Henry Grant, also had connections to the British upper classes, but they had fallen on hard times and decided to move to British East Africa in 1912 to start a coffee plantation. Left behind for a year with a family friend in England, the six-year-old Elspeth joined her parents in Africa at the end of 1913. During World War I, Elspeth and her mother went back to England while her father fought in France, but Elspeth returned to Africa in 1920, to her parents' farm at Thika in what had just become known as Kenya.

In 1924 Elspeth returned to England to study agriculture at Reading University, after which she spent a year studying at Cornell University in upstate New York. After her return to England in 1928, she used her experience writing articles for the local press in Kenya to find work as a press officer for a marketing board. She met Gervas Huxley, a cousin of the writer Aldous Huxley, and they married in 1931, by which time Elspeth, now Elspeth Josceline Grant Huxley,

had embarked on a career as a freelance journalist, specializing in articles on agricultural topics.

In 1933 Huxley was commissioned to write a biography of a leading white settler in Kenya, Lord Delamere, and it was published in 1935 as *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*. Work on this book required her to revisit Kenya, and during the rest of her life she made frequent visits there, both for research and to see her parents. Criticized for writing solely from the point of view of the white settlers in her first book, Huxley decided to write a novel focusing on black African characters: *Red Strangers* appeared in 1939 to much acclaim. While working on *Red Strangers*, Huxley tried her hand at mystery writing, producing the three volumes of her Superintendent Vachell series between 1937 and 1939. Huxley later said that mysteries were her favorite sort of book to write, but she grew tired of the Vachell series and turned to more literary fiction and to nonfiction about life in Kenya in the following two decades, including *The Flame Trees of Thika* and its sequel, *On the Edge of the Rift: Memories of Kenya* (1962). She also pursued an active career in journalism and broadcasting.

In 1959 Huxley was appointed to the government's Monckton Commission, which was investigating the future of the federated British territories of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (later to become Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi). Her work on this commission earned her a Commander of the British Empire (the British honor of Commander of the Order of the British Empire) and also resulted in a comic mystery story, *The Merry Hippo* (1963). She had earlier returned to genre writing with *The Red Rock Wilderness* (1957), an adventure story about the search for a missing scientist in French Equatorial Africa. In 1964, Huxley published her last crime novel, *A Man from Nowhere*, a psychological study of a white settler from somewhere in Africa who has come to England to commit a revenge killing.

In later years, Huxley, saying that she and Africa needed to take a break from each other, turned to other subjects, producing a book on Australia, another on immigrants in England, a book on nature conservation and factory farming (*Brave New Victuals: An Inquiry into Modern Food Production*, 1965), and a series of

biographies. She was at her best, however, writing about Africa, and won praise when she returned to that subject in her nostalgic study of colonial Kenya, *Out in the Midday Sun: My Kenya* (1985). In her final years Huxley turned once more to mystery fiction, beginning a novel set in an English village and tentatively titled “The Black Prince Murders.” However, she died before completing it.

ANALYSIS

The books in the Elspeth Huxley’s Superintendent Vachell series are generally regarded as skillful examples of mysteries from the Golden Age, illustrating the subgenres of the locked room mystery, the country house mystery, and the expedition or safari mystery. In all of them, much in the manner of Agatha Christie, Huxley gathers together a group of suspects and has her foreign detective explore their motives before revealing the identity of the murderer.

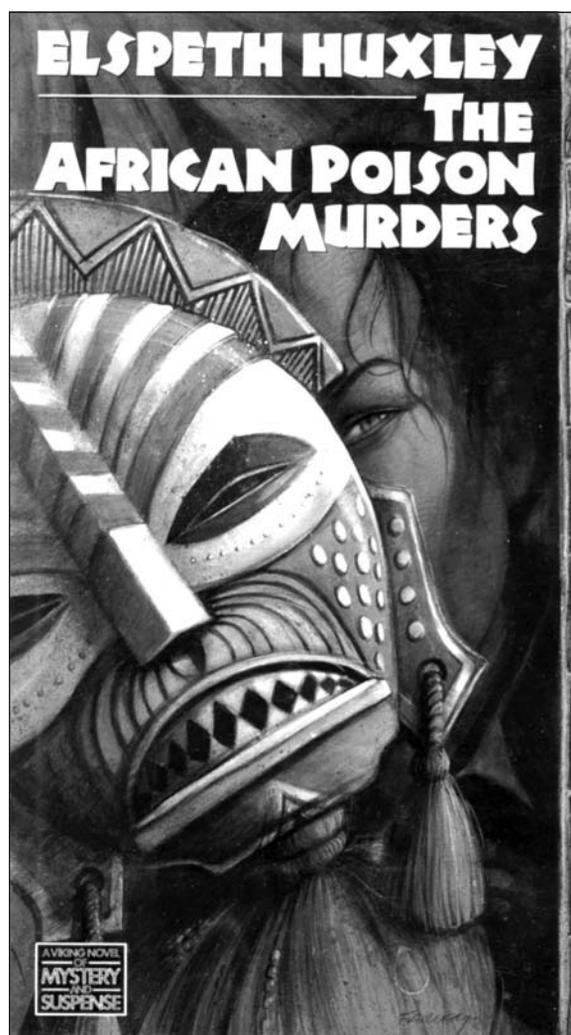
The books contain many twists and turns of plot, some more plausible than others, and more violence and blood than in the classic Christie mysteries, especially in *Death of an Aryan* (1939). There is conventional attention paid to timetables and the physical layout of the scene of the crime, and in *Murder on Safari* (1938) Huxley introduces the unusual technique of using footnotes at the end of the novel to refer readers back to passages earlier in the book containing clues to the solution.

The three series books maintain a certain detachment, in part through the use of an outsider as the detective and central figure, and in part through a certain lightness of tone, especially in the first two books. This lightness and detachment become comic in Huxley’s fourth and final completed mystery, *The Merry Hippo*, but detachment and comedy vanish in her grim psychological crime story, *A Man from Nowhere*.

Huxley’s detachment seems to reflect her point of view on things African. She presents Africans, white settlers, tourists, administrators, the press, and British politicians, and invites readers to find them all absurd in their own way. Fears of an African uprising turn out to be spectacularly absurd in the first Vachell book, when the true nature of the Africans’ secret society is revealed. Huxley seems ready to laugh at everyone, in-

cluding the Nazis, an unfortunate misjudgment most notable when she has some characters in *Death of an Aryan* make jokes about imaginary poison gas piped in from Germany. Admittedly, the poison gas jokes were written before the horrors of the actual poison gas used by the Nazis became known. Similarly, the lighthearted dismissal of African uprisings was written long before the serious Mau Mau uprisings in Kenya began in the 1950’s, terrifying the white settlers, Huxley’s own mother included.

The fact that serious uprisings did occur and that the process of decolonization caused hardship to many



Elspeth Huxley’s *Death of an Aryan* was published in the United States as *The African Poison Murders*. (ArKent Archive)

white settlers may explain the grim tone of Huxley's last crime novel, which replaces detachment with what seems like identification with the vengeful Dick Herron and his cause, if not with his vengeful methods. It is true, however, that just a year earlier Huxley was more detached and comic than ever, in *The Merry Hippo*, but that book is notable for representing virtually all parties to developments in Africa except the white settlers. When dealing with visiting British politicians, the press, and African leaders Huxley could still laugh and satirize, but the plight of individual white settlers seems to have made her more serious.

Even while laughing and constructing a murder mystery, Huxley could still be serious, and it is the distinguishing mark of her crime writing that it contains serious undercurrents about Africa, especially concerning the clash of British and African ways of life there. In her mysteries, she portrays the complexities resulting from the British intrusion into Africa, noting how African ways seem foolish to the British but that British ways may be equally foolish. Above all she notes the difficulties created by the British presence, the pressures put on native society, resulting in impossible dilemmas, displacement, corruption, and absurd attempts to imitate European ways. She even notes similarities between British and African attitudes, similarities that do not, however, mean the two cultures can easily work together. Beneath the laughter, therefore, may lurk a certain pessimism, just as, in one of her striking images in her comic *The Merry Hippo*, a vicious crocodile lurks beneath the placid surface of a pond, slowly killing all the frogs in it. In the end, as was suggested by critic Richard Smyer, perhaps Huxley found the mystery form too constraining as a vehicle for her serious thoughts, which may explain why she turned away from mystery writing and concentrated on writing nonfiction and literary fiction about the situation in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

MURDER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE

In the first Vachell mystery, *Murder at Government House* (1937), Huxley tries her best to make her detective, Superintendent Vachell, seem Canadian, referring to Alberta, Montreal, and the Arctic, but mainly succeeds in having him sound like a caricature of an American private investigator, talking of "suckers"

and "dames" and of suspects who tell him "plenty." She is more successful at constructing a locked-room puzzle in which it at first seems impossible for the murderer to have escaped from the scene of the crime.

It is for its exploration of African themes, though, that this novel has value, for instance in its discussion of the British attempt to suppress African witch hunting and the resulting difficulties this causes for African leaders who try to be loyal to their British rulers while at the same time maintaining the support of traditional tribal elders. Huxley even allows a character to suggest that the African witch hunting is an effective means of social control, little different from the methods of Scotland Yard, and she mocks the British administrator who thinks he can eliminate the African interest in witchcraft by introducing British sports.

In an interesting image, zebras and gazelles graze near an airport, indicating that perhaps the British and their modern technology can coexist with traditional Africa, though other parts of the book suggest otherwise.

The most astonishing part of this novel is the scene in which the British anthropologist, Olivia Brandeis, on a mission from Vachell to see if the Africans might have been involved in the murder he is investigating, stumbles across a meeting of the League of the Plaindweller. This is a African secret society whose very name strikes terror into the hearts of everyone who hears it, but what Olivia sees is a group of African men dressed up in European clothes, some of them in European women's clothes, imitating an English dinner party. Olivia feels she has stumbled onto an absurd but nightmarish scene out of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and Huxley's point seems to be that the presence of the British conjures up these absurd imitations among the Africans.

A MAN FROM NOWHERE

In *A Man from Nowhere*, a departure from Huxley's usual detective fiction, the author takes us into the mind of Dick Herron, whose wife and brother have died horribly in Africa, and who has come to take revenge for this and for the loss of his farm on the person he holds responsible: Peter Buckle, a British government minister. It is interesting that he aims his anger at the British politician rather than at the African

gang who killed his brother and drove his wife to suicide and which is now being granted power by the British. For Herron, the fault lies in England, not in Africa; he loves Africa, its landscapes, its climate, and its raw truth. England he derides as a tiny land of compromise, politeness, mists, and ambiguity that mask the same sort of cruelty that is more honestly expressed in Africa.

In effect, this novel is the cry of the displaced white settler wanting his Africa back, the Africa where whites were in charge and the Africans were obedient servants, an Africa that has been taken away less by the Africans than by liberal white politicians in England. Herron comes across as deranged, and Huxley, who in her later nonfiction writes of how it was necessary for the British to leave Africa, does not seem to be endorsing his criminal aims, and yet she does seem to sympathize with his plight.

Huxley also seems to sympathize with the view expressed in the novel that things are not as good as they once were. Oak beams and honest workers have given way to strikes and gambling; everything costs so much more than it used to; people have more money but are less happy; responsibility seems to be a thing of the past; and even the village fair is a pale imitation of its former self. When the villagers try to enact a naval scene from ancient Greece, their boats begin to leak. It is a sinking world that Huxley portrays in this pessimistic tale.

Sheldon Goldfarb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SUPERINTENDENT VACHELL SERIES: *Murder at Government House*, 1937; *Murder on Safari*, 1938; *Death of an Aryan*, 1939 (also known as *The African Poison Murders*, 1939)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Red Rock Wilderness*, 1957; *The Merry Hippo*, 1963 (also known as *The Incident at the Merry Hippo*, 1964); *A Man from Nowhere*, 1964

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Red Strangers*, 1939; *The Walled City*, 1948; *A Thing to Love*, 1954

NONFICTION: 1935-1950 • *White Man's Country:*

Lord Delamare and the Making of Kenya, 1935; *East Africa*, 1941; *Atlantic Ordeal: The Story of Mary Cornish*, 1942; *Brave Deeds of the War*, 1943; *Race and Politics in Kenya: A Correspondence Between Elspeth Huxley and Margery Perham*, 1944; *Colonies: A Reader's Guide*, 1947; *The Sorcerer's Apprentice: A Journey Through East Africa*, 1948; *African Dilemmas*, 1948; *Settlers of Kenya*, 1948

1951-1960 • *Kenya Today*, 1954; *Four Guineas: A Journey Through West Africa*, 1954; *What Are Trustee Nations?*, 1955; *No Easy Way: A History of the Kenya Farmers' Association and Unga Limited*, 1957; *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood*, 1959; *A New Earth: An Experiment in Colonialism*, 1960

1961-1970 • *On the Edge of the Rift: Memories of Kenya*, 1962 (also known as *The Mottled Lizard*); *Forks and Hope: An African Notebook*, 1964 (also known as *With Forks and Hope*); *Back Streets New Worlds: A Look at Immigrants in Britain*, 1964; *Suki: A Little Tiger*, 1964; *Brave New Victuals: An Inquiry into Modern Food Production*, 1965; *Their Shining Eldorado: A Journey Through Australia*, 1967; *Love Among the Daughters: Memories of the Twenties in England and America*, 1968

1971-1980 • *The Challenge of Africa*, 1971; *Livingstone and His African Journeys*, 1974; *Flourish Nightingale*, 1975; *Gallipot Eyes: A Wiltshire Diary*, 1976; *Scott of the Antarctic*, 1977

1981-1993 • *Whipsnade: Captive Breeding for Survival*, 1981; *The Prince Buys the Manor: An Extravaganza*, 1982; *Last Days in Eden*, 1984 (with Hugo van Lawick); *Out in the Midday Sun: My Kenya*, 1985; *Peter Scott: Painter and Naturalist*, 1993

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Dawkins, Richard. "Out of the Soul of Africa: Readings." *Financial Times*, May 9, 1998, p. 05. Dawkins, an admirer of Huxley, discusses her work *Red Strangers* and her attitude toward Africa.

- Huxley, Elspeth. *Out in the Midday Sun: My Kenya*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1985. Describes Huxley's time in Africa when she returned there in 1933 as an adult. Sheds light on her thoughts and attitudes.
- Lassner, Phyllis. "Red Strangers: Elspeth Huxley's Africa." In *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004. Disagrees with those who see Huxley's writings as colonialist or racist. Sees them as complex explorations of the British experience in Africa. Includes section on the three Vachell mysteries and also discusses *A Man from Nowhere*.
- Nicholls, C. S. *Elspeth Huxley: A Biography*. London: HarperCollins, 2002. Full account of Huxley's life and career, showing how important Africa, especially Kenya, was to her. Includes photographs, maps, genealogies, an index, and a bibliography.
- Russell, Sharon A. "Elspeth Huxley's Africa: Mystery and Memory." In *Mysteries of Africa*, edited by Eugene Schleh. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1991. Emphasizes the importance of African settings in Huxley's mysteries as well as in her other writings. Also discusses the themes of modernization and the role of the past in her works.

I

MICHAEL INNES

John Innes Mackintosh Stewart

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; September 30, 1906

Died: Surrey, England; November 12, 1994

Also wrote as J. I. M. Stewart

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth; inverted; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Appleby, 1936-1987

Charles Honeybath, 1974-1983

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SIR JOHN APPLEBY first appears as a young police officer and eventually retires from the position of commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Scotland Yard. Erudite, he is fond of literary allusions. Seemingly staid, he has an unconventional side, as is demonstrated by his marriage to Judith Raven, a sculptor from an unorthodox literary family.

JUDITH RAVEN APPLEBY first appears in *Appleby's End* (1945), when a chance encounter brings John Appleby to Appleby's End and Long Dream, the Ravens' ancestral home. Marriage to Judith, who acts as an amateur sleuth in her own right in *A Connoisseur's Case* (1962), provides John Appleby with an entrée to the English country homes that provide the settings for so many of Innes's mysteries.

CHARLES HONEYBATH is an aging member of the Royal Academy of the Arts whose forays into portrait painting for the aristocracy occasion the need for amateur sleuthing. Highly opinionated on the subjects of art and architecture, he may serve as a charmingly eccentric alter ego for Innes himself.

CONTRIBUTION

Michael Innes's major contribution to English mystery fiction was his wonderfully tongue-in-cheek

propensity for turns of phrase that prove more intriguing and delightful than his contrivances of plot. The observations of his two principal sleuths, Sir John Appleby and Charles Honeybath, offer Jamesian dialogue, extraordinary erudition, and a gently critical portrait of the English upper class. Innes's brand of country-house skulduggery revealed his predilection for the intellectual with the sheer joy of excess. Although Innes's mysteries incorporate elements of many subgenres, including the police procedural, amateur detection, the thriller, and the inverted mystery, they were designed first and foremost for readers who have a greater appreciation for a tour de force of words replete with scores of literary allusions than for exciting twists and turns in the action.

In a career that spanned more than a half century, Innes constantly sought to expand the boundaries of detective fiction for his readers.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Innes was born John Innes Mackintosh Stewart in Edinburgh, Scotland, on September 30, 1906, the son of a professor. Educated at Edinburgh Academy and Oriel College, Oxford University, the young Innes read literature, receiving first-class honors at his graduation in 1928 and winning the Matthew Arnold Memorial Prize in 1929. After spending a year abroad in Vienna, Innes received his first assignment for publication, the Nonesuch Press edition of John Florio's translations of Montaigne's essays, as well as an invitation to join Leeds University, Yorkshire, as a lecturer in English. He married a young medical student, Margaret Hardwick, in 1932; they had five children. In 1935, the twenty-nine-year-old Innes left Leeds to become jury professor of English at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. During the decade of his tenure there,

he began to write the mysteries for which he is famous under the name Michael Innes.

On his return to the British Isles in 1946, Innes taught at Queen's University, Belfast, until, in 1949, he became a fellow of Christ Church, Oxford. It was at this time that he began publishing nonmystery short stories and novels as J. I. M. Stewart, his real name. His academic achievements, including critical studies of Thomas Love Peacock, Thomas Hardy, and William Shakespeare as well as biographies of Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, generated additional honors, including an appointment as the Walker-Ames professor at the University of Washington in 1961 and an honorary doctorate from the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton in 1962. Innes died in Surrey, England, in 1994.

ANALYSIS

Long after he had begun to enjoy fame as the mystery writer Michael Innes, an amused J. I. M. Stewart observed that it was an early English instructor's intentionally disparaging remark that led him to try his hand at detective fiction. As a young man, he had been castigated for having the sort of imagination associated with popular rather than serious novelists. *Death at the President's Lodging* (1936), renamed *Seven Suspects* in 1937 so as not to confuse an American audience, was written to amuse rather than to edify during Innes's long voyage from England to Australia, where he was to spend a decade teaching students about the "important" works of literature as jury professor of English at the University of Adelaide. The rapidity with which Innes put together a whodunit replete with the Jamesian characterization, genteel setting, and literary allusions for which he continues to be known offered early promise of an extraordinarily prolific and often-distinguished career.

DEATH AT THE PRESIDENT'S LODGING

Even a casual glance at *Death at the President's Lodging* suggests that it is not surprising that the work was published under the pseudonym Michael Innes. More than a traditional police procedural, this first novel is characterized by its humorous and often gently critical look at a variety of academic types. Those unable to appreciate adventure fiction by those

of some popular reputation (as a student, Innes had been condemned for being too much like his favorite Kipling) would likely have looked askance at an academic who publicly made use of his position to satirize both his vocation and his colleagues. Sometimes criticized for its cumbersome mechanics (the plot hinges on the comings and goings of an eccentric group of dons through a minutely described academic quadrangle), *Death at the President's Lodging* makes clear from the outset that Innes is primarily concerned with exploring the possibilities inherent in language itself. The novel introduces John Appleby, a Scotland Yard police officer who matures, ages, and rises in consequence along with his creator and who may be presumed to act as a voice for Innes/Stewart. Quiet and unassuming, possessing not a hint of the flamboyant, Appleby charms the well-read reader with his erudition. He in fact injects a new kind of mystery into a time-honored format. To enjoy a typical Innes mystery, a reader must be able to recognize quotations from a variety of literary sources, discover irony in the use of place names, surnames, and titles, and find pleasurable a slow pace and formalities of vocabulary and phrasing evocative of the nineteenth century. Published in its final form in 1937, as Great Britain was once again on the brink of war, *Death at the President's Lodging*, as is true of most of Innes's subsequent efforts, casts an amused eye on the narrow concerns of a select group, one that manages to remain untroubled by world turmoil.

As Innes himself acknowledged in a piece written in 1964 for *Esquire*, his thrillers are less topical and more understated than typical examples of the genre; indeed, they are "of the quiet Missing Masterpiece order: very British, very restrained." Designed as entertainments, they purposefully limit a reader's attachment to any one character and scrupulously avoid dealing directly with specific and pressing social or political concerns. Mysteries, Innes holds, are not the place to explore complex motivations and make readers aware of deep psychological truths. They ought not aim at facilitating the formation of new values or prompting the rejection of old ones. Rather, they should be a source of intellectual exercise that can be enjoyed as a process and not as a means to an end.

Thus, *Operation Pax* (1951), praised highly for its thrillerlike characteristics, works, not because its underlying concerns are so clearly inspired by the growing nuclear menace in an increasingly divided world but because of its ability to engage an audience despite its continual lack of verisimilitude. Innes uses modern problems as a point of departure for his flights of pure fancy, not as a means to offer social or political comment. It does not matter that Innes offers no explanation for those key parts of the action that inevitably strain a reader's credulity. He does not want his admirers to develop a new worldview, but to take pleasure in wordplay, allusions, and skillful incorporation of elements of several fiction genres.

HAMLET, REVENGE!

Ultimately, the subject matter of *Operation Pax* and that of *The Man from the Sea* (1955) prove the exception rather than the rule. Innes's detective fiction generally revolves around academics in general and the humanities in particular. In *Hamlet, Revenge!* (1937), the murder takes place onstage in the midst of a performance of the play most central to Innes's own academic interests and training. The novel thus makes full use of the literary games that are in Innes's work, making them more central to an audience's enjoyment than the unraveling of the plot. Just as this novel's play-within-a-play invites the careful attention to language and the literary allusions that mark Innes's style, so do the later mystery novels that center on characters who write.

APPLEBY'S ANSWER

Appleby's End, *The New Sonia Wayward* (1960), and *Appleby's Answer* (1973) all feature central characters who, like Innes himself, write popular fiction. Priscilla Pringle, Sonia Wayward-cum-Colonel Folliot Petticare, and Ranulph Raven are every bit as idiosyncratic in their practice of the craft of writing as are the mad eccentrics who people those novels set in the surroundings most familiar to Innes: the university. Less self-indulgent than self-effacing, Innes's mysteries poke gentle fun at those, like himself, who are given to intellectual circumlocution. These are not mysteries that depend on heart-stopping action. In fact, in many of Innes's stories the mystery, murder, or theft on which everything ought to hinge is almost beside the point. For example, in *Appleby's Answer*, Miss

Pringle's suspicions regarding Colonel Bulkington can never really be justified, for however villainous this would-be evildoer would like to become, he never quite achieves his aims. The petty blackmailer instead manages, just in the nick of time, to fall down a conveniently placed well before Innes has to provide his reader with a real plot. Important to note here is that Miss Pringle—perhaps an alter ego for Innes—has the same sort of overactive imagination that characterizes the melodramatic Catherine Morland in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Innes's style demands that such associations be made. His work is very genteel, very polite, very nineteenth century. The fact that Innes's academic pursuits involve the careful exegesis of Thomas Hardy, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad, among others, sheds light on the origins and development of his own literary style. In Innes's mysteries are combined the elliptical introspection inherent in a Jamesian character's speech, the intellectual precision of a Conradian description, and the amazing coincidences that mark any one of Hardy's plots. It is this playful application of scholarly knowledge and verbal virtuosity to a genre that pedants consider unworthy of their attention that ultimately makes Innes's huge body of detective fiction unique.

COMPONENTS OF INNES'S STYLE

In his creation of recurring characters—the peculiarly endearing John Appleby and the aging portrait painter Charles Honeybath—Innes has left an indelible imprint on the art of mystery writing. Their turns of phrase, their observations about art, architecture, and literature, evoke for readers—somewhat critically as well as somewhat wistfully—the manners, mores, and traditions to which academics cling. The world that provides the humble detective of *Death at the President's Lodging* with a knighthood, high office, and a comfortable retirement at Long Dream Manor is one in which the harsher realities of modern life scarcely ever intrude.

The world that Sir John chooses to investigate is peopled by delightfully peculiar remnants of the English aristocracy and their moneyed would-be usurpers. In this world, murder can be made fun; in this world, where, to quote Innes, “death is a parlor game,” bits of novelistic business need never be logical. Rather, they must recall and embellish an idea thought

to have been “done to death” elsewhere. It is with some pride as well as with tongue in cheek that Innes, speaking of his theories of detective fiction, explains how his use of triplets in *A Private View* (1952) improves on the plots written around long-lost evil twins.

Innes’s pieces of detection sometimes prove to contain no mystery at all. The surprise in the early *There Came Both Mist and Snow* (1940) is that no one “dunit”; this novel not only plays on William Shakespeare’s comedy but also inverts the plot device of Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). In *Carson’s Conspiracy* (1984), the extraordinary turn of events is that the imaginary son is not imaginary at all (or is he?), suggesting shades of Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962). Such virtuosity has won for Innes a worldwide following among readers of mystery and detective fiction.

Jane Rosenbaum

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN APPLEBY SERIES: 1936-1950 • *Death at the President’s Lodging*, 1936 (also known as *Seven Suspects*); *Hamlet, Revenge!*, 1937; *Lament for a Maker*, 1938; *Stop Press*, 1939 (also known as *The Spider Strikes*); *The Secret Vanguard*, 1940; *There Came Both Mist and Snow*, 1940 (also known as *A Comedy of Terrors*); *Appleby on Ararat*, 1941; *The Daffodil Affair*, 1942; *The Weight of the Evidence*, 1943; *Appleby’s End*, 1945; *A Night of Errors*, 1947

1951-1960 • *Operation Pax*, 1951 (also known as *The Paper Thunderbolt*); *A Private View*, 1952 (also known as *One-Man Show* and *Murder Is an Art*); *Christmas at Candleshoe*, 1953 (also known as *Candleshoe*); *Appleby Plays Chicken*, 1956 (also known as *Death on a Quiet Day*); *The Long Farewell*, 1958; *Hare Sitting Up*, 1959

1961-1970 • *Silence Observed*, 1961; *A Connoisseur’s Case*, 1962 (also known as *The Crabtree Affair*); *The Bloody Wood*, 1966; *Appleby at Allington*, 1968 (also known as *Death by Water*); *A Family Affair*, 1969 (also known as *Picture of Guilt*); *Death at the Chase*, 1970

1971-1986 • *An Awkward Lie*, 1971; *The Open House*, 1972; *Appleby’s Answer*, 1973; *Appleby’s Other Story*, 1974; *The “Gay Phoenix,”* 1976; *The Ampersand*

Papers, 1978; *Sheiks and Adders*, 1982; *Carson’s Conspiracy*, 1984; *Appleby and the Ospreys*, 1986

CHARLES HONEYBATH SERIES: *The Mysterious Commission*, 1974; *Honeybath’s Haven*, 1977; *Lord Mullion’s Secret*, 1981; *Appleby and Honeybath*, 1983

NONSERIES NOVELS: *From London Far*, 1946 (also known as *The Unsuspected Chasm*); *What Happened at Hazelwood?*, 1946; *The Journeying Boy*, 1949 (also known as *The Case of the Journeying Boy*); *The Man from the Sea*, 1955 (also known as *Death by Moonlight*); *Old Hall, New Hall*, 1956 (also known as *A Question of Queens*); *The New Sonia Wayward*, 1960 (also known as *The Case of Sonia Wayward*); *Money from Holme*, 1965; *A Change of Heir*, 1966; *Going It Alone*, 1980

SHORT FICTION: *Appleby Talking: Twenty-three Detective Stories*, 1954 (also known as *Dead Man’s Shoes*); *Appleby Talks Again: Eighteen Detective Stories*, 1956; *Appleby Intervenes: Three Tales from Scotland Yard*, 1965; *The Appleby File: Detective Stories*, 1975

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS J. I. M. STEWART): *Mark Lambert’s Supper*, 1954; *The Guardians*, 1955; *A Use of Riches*, 1957; *The Man Who Won the Pools*, 1961; *The Last Tresilians*, 1963; *An Acre of Grass*, 1965; *The Aylwins*, 1966; *Vanderlyn’s Kingdom*, 1967; *Avery’s Mission*, 1971; *A Palace of Art*, 1972; *Mungo’s Dream*, 1973; *The Gaudy*, 1974; *Young Pattullo*, 1975; *A Memorial Service*, 1976; *The Madonna of the Astrolabe*, 1977; *Full Term*, 1978; *Andrew and Tobias*, 1980; *A Villa in France*, 1982; *An Open Prison*, 1984; *The Naylor’s*, 1985

SHORT FICTION (AS J. I. M. STEWART): *Three Tales of Hamlet*, 1950 (with Rayner Heppenstall); *The Man Who Wrote Detective Stories, and Other Stories*, 1959; *Cucumber Sandwiches, and Other Stories*, 1969; *Our England Is a Garden, and Other Stories*, 1979; *The Bridge at Arta, and Other Stories*, 1981; *My Aunt Christina, and Other Stories*, 1983; *Parlour Four, and Other Stories*, 1986

RADIO PLAY: *Strange Intelligence*, 1947

NONFICTION (AS J. I. M. STEWART): *Educating the Emotions*, 1944; *Character and Motive in Shakespeare:*

Some Recent Appraisals Examined, 1949; *James Joyce*, 1957 (revised 1960); *Eight Modern Writers*, 1963; *Thomas Love Peacock*, 1963; *Rudyard Kipling*, 1966; *Joseph Conrad*, 1968; *Shakespeare's Lofty Scene*, 1971; *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography*, 1971

EDITED TEXTS (AS J. I. M. STEWART): *Montaigne's Essays: John Florio's Translation*, 1931; *The Moonstone*, 1966 (by Wilkie Collins); *Vanity Fair*, 1968 (by William Makepeace Thackeray)

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Jacobs, David L. "Photo Detection: The Image as Evidence." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 1 (Fall/Winter, 1980): 18-32. Examines Innes's representation of photography and its importance to his work.

"Michael Innes." In *Modern Mystery Writers*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1995. Critical, scholarly examination of Innes's work and its place in the mystery-fiction canon. Bibliographic references.

Panek, LeRoy. "The Novels of Michael Innes." *The Armchair Detective* 16 (Spring, 1983): 116-130. Useful overview of Innes's work, written for fans of the genre.

Penzler, Otto, ed. *The Great Detectives*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Argues for John Appleby's inclusion in the pantheon of literature's great detectives.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Sheds light on Innes's works.

Rzepka, Charles J. *Detective Fiction*. Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2005. This important entry in the cultural studies of police and detective fiction looks at the genre both as revealing of and influencing the cultures that produce it. Provides perspective on Innes's work. Bibliographic references and index.

Symons, Julian. "The Golden Age: The Thirties." In *Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972. Places Innes in a lineage of crime-fiction writers, focusing on his role in the evolution of the genre in the 1930's.

J

W. W. JACOBS

Born: Wapping, England; September 8, 1863

Died: London, England; September 1, 1943

Type of plot: Thriller

CONTRIBUTION

W. W. Jacobs, at one time an extremely popular writer of short fiction, is remembered for only one tale, "The Monkey's Paw." His other stories and novels are entirely forgotten. Even the book in which "The Monkey's Paw" appeared, *The Lady of the Barge, and Other Tales* (1902), has long been out of print.

No one questions Jacobs's literary talent: His mystery and supernatural tales are brilliantly written. His stories of life on the docks and the waterways of England, despite some dated dialogue, remain witty and clever yarns. Even his dockside characters, Ginger Dick, Henry Walker, and Bob Pretty, are still attractive and enjoyable. Yet literary fashion has passed them by.

Jacobs was a master of the economical style. He never offers more than is necessary about the characters involved. V. S. Pritchett once called him "one of the supreme craftsmen of the short story." This high praise is deserved; unfortunately, to the interested reader only "The Monkey's Paw" is available for judgment. Nevertheless, in such a story as "The Interruption," a tale of a hidden crime, his mastery of plot is clear; no time is wasted. Jacobs added quality to the telling of the mystery story and sharply defined the "well-made tale" from the hastily written pulp story.

BIOGRAPHY

William Wymark Jacobs was born in Wapping, near London, on September 8, 1863. His father, William Gage Jacobs, was employed as a wharf manager on the docks at Wapping. His mother was Sophia Wymark. Young Jacobs spent his youth playing around the docks of Wapping, meeting many of the kinds of

characters who would later appear in his dockside stories. The only respite from this somewhat wild existence was his holidays in Sevenoaks and East Anglia. He lived the life of a poor boy.

After attending Kirkbeck College, Jacobs entered the civil service in 1879 as a clerk. He was promoted in 1883 to the savings bank section, where he remained until 1899. While serving as a clerk, he began submitting sketches and occasional pieces to magazines. His opportunity came when *The Strand Magazine* accepted one of his stories in 1895. One year later, his first book, a collection of humorous sea tales entitled *Many Car-goes*, appeared, and thereafter he was able to issue nearly a book a year until 1914, when his production slowed. His first novel, *A Master of Craft*, appeared in 1900. His most famous work, "The Monkey's Paw," garnered considerable attention when it first appeared in 1902. A dramatic adaptation, a one-act play produced a few years later by Louis Napoleon Parker, also was received well. Nevertheless, by 1914 Jacobs began to weary of his creations, much as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had reacted against his Sherlock Holmes series. Jacobs's later books show signs of strain.

A slightly built man, pale in complexion, and retiring, Jacobs was no literary lion. He avoided publicity, keeping to a small circle of friends, including the illustrator of many of his books, E. W. Kemble. Though for a time a most successful writer of stories, he never put on airs. Jacobs died on September 1, 1943.

ANALYSIS

The few stories of W. W. Jacobs that can still be discovered in tattered anthologies are so well written that it is a mystery why his stories, aside from "The Monkey's Paw," have been ignored. Those that deal chiefly with crime and the supernatural are written with great control and a polished élan; they belong

to the “gilt-edged classics.” Unfortunately, Jacobs became associated with yarns about the dockside, with jolly longshoremen and nagging captains’ wives. He was best known during his heyday as a humorist. Indeed, Pritchett in his essay “W. W. Jacobs” classes him chiefly as a wit. Nevertheless, Pritchett also gives him credit as a storyteller, calling Jacobs’s plots superior to those “of a writer like O. Henry.”

In “The Monkey’s Paw” as well as in the little-known thriller “The Well,” Jacobs raises a genuine chill by underplaying the threat that lies ahead. In his crime stories, such as “The Interruption,” the plot twist always lies just around the corner, and the guilty, as well as the innocent at times, are brought low.

“THE INTERRUPTION”

Writing for *The Strand Magazine* was good training for Jacobs. There he honed his skill at alternating sophistication with popular style. His tales show careful plotting, a flair for dialogue, and a sly viewpoint. In “The Interruption,” which appeared in *Sea Whispers* (1926), Jacobs is at his best. Spencer Goddard is a man who, as the story opens, has just lost his wife. He is not grief stricken but relieved: “At the age of thirty-eight he had turned over a fresh page. Life, free and unencumbered, was before him.” His mood is largely the result of his having inherited a considerable amount of money from his wife.

The first doubt is planted when the maid Hannah becomes overattentive to Goddard’s comfort. She hints that she shares his “secret,” remarking, “there’s few husbands that would have done what you did.”

Then, step-by-step it is revealed that Goddard poisoned his wife. Hannah, who is in on the secret, begins making more and more demands: She wants complete control of the household and asks for a high wage—until Goddard decides that it is time to get rid of her. The reader now awaits the final twist of the plot, as Goddard tries to implicate Hannah, arranging matters to look as if she has been trying to poison him.

Delay was dangerous and foolish. He had thought out every move in that contest of wits which was to remove the shadow of the rope from his own neck and place it about the neck of the woman. There was a little risk, but the stake was a high one.

This sample of Jacobs’s prose displays his technique at its swiftest and most effective. The monosyllables perfectly fit the cool and deliberate thinking of the murderer about to commit another homicide.

Goddard’s plot is foiled, but not by any discovery. Instead, he is frightened by the apparition of his dead wife, which drives him out into the rainy night. As a result of his terrorized wanderings, he catches a fatal chill. This story belongs in any comprehensive anthology of suspense tales, but its last appearance was in the *Third Omnibus of Crime*, published in 1935.

“THE MONKEY’S PAW”

Dear to the heart of Jacobs was the story with the surprise ending—perhaps the reason that Pritchett compared his plots to those of O. Henry. In “The Monkey’s Paw,” the ending is cleverly built up over a number of pages, until the tension is almost unbearable. The reader is first introduced to the White family, father, mother, and son, in their cozy parlor. Outside, a cold and stormy night is ever present. The Whites live in a distant suburb, in a boglike environment.

Sergeant-Major Morris comes to visit. He shows them the monkey’s paw, a mummified thing of magical properties. Jacobs carefully and slowly builds on these powers. The paw’s owner, the soldier says, has three wishes.

“And did you really have the three wishes granted?” asked Mrs. White.

“I did,” said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

“And has anybody else wished?” inquired the old lady.

“The first man had three wishes, yes,” was the reply. “I don’t know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That’s how I got the paw.”

This excerpt shows the economy of Jacobs’s plot development. In a few lines of conversation the ominous threat of the paw is presented, without any elaborate description.

The skill with which the surprise ending is created in “The Monkey’s Paw” has never been imitated. This story is a unique example of complexity within simplicity.

“THE WELL”

Jacobs's other stories took somewhat longer to develop, and one notices in certain of these tales an overextension of effort. In “The Well,” a murder story with a supernatural twist, the presence of the murderer's beloved in the story, originally meant as a catalyst to the denouement, lingers on beyond any use for plot development. Nevertheless, the horror of the ending is sufficient to overcome this flaw.

Jacobs is a representative of the well-made-story school, which flourished in England during the early 1900's. Its members also included Saki and M. R. James. These were writers who could grip the reader from the first sentence to the last, whether in a ghost story or a murder narrative. Although Jacobs's work has fallen by the wayside—unjustly, it must be said—Saki's still lives on in anthologies, and James's ghost stories can be found in every supernatural anthology. Jacobs is a writer waiting to be rediscovered; more than a master of the horror story, he is also a fine mystery writer with a keen sense of suspense.

Philip M. Brantingham

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *The Lady of the Barge, and Other Tales*, 1902; *Sea Whispers*, 1926

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Master of Craft*, 1900; *At Sunwich Port*, 1902; *Dialstone Lane*, 1904; *Salthaven*, 1908; *The Castaways*, 1916

SHORT FICTION: *Many Cargoes*, 1896; *The Brown Man's Servant*, 1897; *The Skipper's Wooing*, 1897; *Sea Urchins*, 1898 (also known as *More Cargoes*); *Light Freights*, 1901; *Odd Craft*, 1903; *Captains All*, 1905; *Short Cruises*, 1907; *Sailors' Knots*, 1909; *Ship's Company*, 1911; *Night Watches*, 1914; *Deep Waters*, 1919; *Snug Harbor*, 1931, 1942; *The Night-Watchman and Other Longshoremen*, 1932; *Cargoes*, 1965; *Selected Short Stories of W. W. Jacobs*, 1975; “*The Monkey's Paw*” and “*Jerry Bundler*,” 1997

PLAYS: *Beauty and the Barge*, pb. 1904 (with Louis Napoleon Parker); *The Ghost of Jerry Bundler*, pb. 1908 (with Charles Rock); *In the Library*, pb.

1912 (with Herbert C. Sergent); *A Love Passage*, pb. 1913 (with Philip E. Hubbard); *Keeping Up with Appearances*, pb. 1919; *Establishing Relations*, pb. 1925; *Master Mariners*, pb. 1930; *Matrimonial Openings*, pb. 1931; *Dixon's Return*, pb. 1932; *Double Dealing*, pb. 1935

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Chesterton, G. K. “W. W. Jacobs.” In *A Handful of Authors: Essays on Books and Writers*, edited by Dorothy Collins. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953. Compares Jacobs's humor to that of Charles Dickens and his farce to that of Aristophanes. Other contemporary humorists are found to be witty but without mirth. Jacobs finds jokes in “funny looking people” and their eccentricities. His stories mimic sailors' insults and the real speech of the British working class.

Cloy, John D. *Pensive Jester: The Literary Career of W. W. Jacobs*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1996. Extensive study of Jacobs's professional ups and downs as a writer. Includes bibliographical references and index.

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Priestley, J. B. “Mr. W. W. Jacobs.” In *Figures in*

Modern Literature. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1924. Praises Jacobs's careful plotting, comic dialogue, and memorable characterizations, which are portrayed as models for aspiring short-story writers.

Pritchett, V. S. "W. W. Jacobs." In *Books in General*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953. Argues that Jacobs's depiction of a "world at its moment of ripeness and decline" makes him a "supreme craftsman of the short story."

BILL JAMES

James Tucker

Born: Cardiff, Wales; August 15, 1929

Also wrote as David Craig; Judith Jones; James Tucker

Types of plot: Police procedural; hard-boiled; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Colin Harpur and Desmond Iles, 1985-
Simon Abelard, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

COLIN HARPUR is a detective chief superintendent in an unnamed British seaport. He has an affair with the wife of another detective, Desmond Iles, and his own wife is murdered, leaving him to raise two precocious daughters. His much younger, student girlfriend, Denise, occasionally stays with him, to the delight of Harpur's daughters. Despite being large and loutish, resembling a boxer, Harpur possesses the wit and irony Iles lacks and performs his investigative tasks more ably.

DESMOND ILES, assistant chief constable, is Harpur's boss and adversary, constantly bringing up Colin's affair with his wife, to whom he reconciled. A debonair ladies' man, Iles is drawn to much younger women, including Harpur's teenage daughters. To maintain some degree of peace in his city, Iles arranges for an understanding between the rival criminal gangs who control the local drug trade. Because of Chief Mark Lane's weak, ineffectual leadership, Iles essentially runs the department. Supremely confident, Iles is quick to pounce on the failings of his subordinates, while confessing his need to be loved by everyone.

CONTRIBUTION

Bill James is best known for his long-running Colin Harpur and Desmond Iles series. These books are unusual because they pay almost as much attention to the criminals as to the police, with both good and bad guys sharing characteristics, including a belief in self-improvement through higher education. James has said that he is equally interested in both sides of the law and that his novels are about the impossibility of controlling crime through conventional methods. He has cited George V. Higgins as the main influence on his work, calling *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1972) the greatest crime novel ever. Both writers share an interest in gritty urban settings and realistic, though playful dialogue.

The Harpur and Iles books are essentially exercises in mood and style, with James's dialogue a distinctive blend of that of Raymond Chandler, Elmore Leonard, David Mamet, and especially Harold Pinter. His characters develop an almost-music-hall-like patter reminiscent of early Pinter plays. Although many prominent mystery and detective writers are highly productive, James is one of the few to have increased productivity and improved quality after turning fifty.

BIOGRAPHY

Bill James was born James Tucker in Cardiff, Wales, on August 15, 1929, to William Arthur Tucker and Violet Irene Bushen Tucker. He grew up in Cardiff's Grangetown section, and his father's relatives lived in the dockland area known as Clarence Bridge. William Tucker worked on a sand dredger, traveling in and out of Cardiff, and his son spent his holidays

aboard. Later, as a journalist, James used Clarence Bridge as an occasional pseudonym, and many of his novels are set in Cardiff docks. James graduated from the University of Wales (then University College, Cardiff) in 1951 and was a flying officer in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1953. He married Marian Craig on July 17, 1954. Their children are Patrick, Catherine, Guy, and David.

Young James knew he wanted to be a writer, and when he saw in a career guidance book that the minimum weekly wage for London reporters was nine guineas (fifty cents), a lavish salary at the time, he decided to become a journalist. He was a reporter for Cardiff's *Western Mail* in 1954-1956 and for London's *Daily Mirror* in 1956-1958. James has said that the terse, tabloid style of the *Daily Mirror* was a major influence on his fiction.

James returned to South Wales in 1958 and worked as a freelance journalist, contributing to such publications as *New Society*, *Punch*, *The Spectator*, and *The Sunday Times*. In addition to articles and fiction, James wrote radio plays and radio and television documentaries. He was a part-time tutor at the University of Wales beginning in 1968. He received a master's degree in English from that institution in 1974, and his thesis was published as *The Novels of Anthony Powell* (1976). The influence of the author of *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1951-1975) can be seen in James's use of irony and in his creation of characters who continue throughout a series of novels.

James began his fiction-writing career by trying literary fiction, works that he has said are best forgotten, moved to espionage novels when the works of John le Carré and Len Deighton became popular during the 1960's, and turned to crime in the 1970's, writing under his own name and the pseudonym David Craig, from his wife's maiden name and the name of his youngest son. He revived the name of Craig in the 1990's for novels set on the Cardiff docks and returned to espionage with the Simon Abelard series beginning with *Split* (2001), featuring a black intelligence agent. James also had two series featuring women, police officer Sally Bithron, writing as Craig, and private investigator Kerry Lake, writing as Judith Jones.

ANALYSIS

Bill James's Colin Harpur and Desmond Iles series is remarkable for leaving so many loose ends dangling at the conclusion of each novel. Part of James's approach is that he is writing not only individual books but also one giant novel in which the events in one book have ramifications in a later work. In some cases, the two protagonists, Harpur and Iles, receive equal attention. In others, one is more prominent than the other. In some, the villains overshadow the veteran police officers, though James does not glamorize or romanticize criminals. No matter how well dressed or how many adult education courses they complete, they remain ruthless thugs.

According to James, he does not strive for realism, preferring to create a stylized universe with some realistic touches. This approach makes the often unusual events facing his police have a dreamlike logic. In addition to the setting, the time is also vague, with none of the characters ever getting any older. All the events seem to be occurring in an eternal present.

Throughout the Harpur and Iles series, James favors the down-to-earth Harpur over the rather pompous Iles. However, the assistant chief constable is never a caricature, the target of easy irony. Charming and smart, though not as smart as he likes to think, Iles is a fully realized creation. He and Harpur, the Everyman, together represent a single complex and flawed personality. Both make mistakes. Each is aware of at least some of his flaws. They have a superficial resemblance to Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse and Sergeant Lewis and to Reginald Hill's Dalziel and Pascoe, especially the adversarial relationship of the latter.

The best crime fiction, as with Chandler, Leonard, Ross Macdonald, Ruth Rendell, Adrian McKinty, and many others, is highly literary. James's novels stand out for downplaying many genre conventions, especially the significance of plot. Although each Harpur and Iles book has a basic premise, James uses it merely as a starting point to delve more deeply into character and mood. Not only are some crimes not fully resolved, but also the police often carry on the most perfunctory of investigations. "Villains will be villains" seems to be the police officers' philosophy, and as long as the criminals kill each other and not the

general populace, everything is under control. Though James has been called the darkest, least optimistic of British crime writers, he is sympathetic to but amused by the variety of human foibles adrift in his corrupt milieu. He has also been termed grimly jocular.

James loves giving colorful names to his criminals. Minor thugs are known as Sashsaying Vernon and Mildly Sedated. One ironically called Tenderness Mellick is especially vicious. Panicking Ralph Ember remains a crime boss despite his well-known tendency to become easily flustered. Cohorts even call him Panicking to his face.

Central to James's style are allusions to popular culture, especially films. Panicking Ralph Ember frequently mentions his resemblance to the young Charlton Heston. After a season of French films, Iles has his hair cut in the manner of Jean Gabin. Such references underscore how both police officers and criminals are constantly aware of role-playing.

Some of James's touches sneak up on readers. Not only are the Harpur and Iles tales full of young women, but also everyone, both police officers and criminals, seem to have daughters instead of sons. Each is paternalistic yet lecherous toward the daughters of others.

Although some crime writers excel at descriptive passages and are weak on dialogue, or vice versa, James is a master at both. Each entry in the series offers several tour-de-force segments as well as hilarious speeches by both the police and the criminals. Many conversations between Harpur and Iles feature a series of short, cryptic statements like those made by characters in a Pinter play. At other times, the pair will talk lengthily at cross-purposes, with the statements of each having little to do with what the other is saying. Two criminals even get into a semantic debate over the different meanings of *apparent*.

Although the unspecified urban locale of the Harpur and Iles series resembles Cardiff, the docklands of the writer's hometown are the specific setting of the series about police officers Dave Brade and Glyndwr Jenkins, begun with *The Tattooed Detective* (1998). The Brade and Jenkins books deal with how such matters as urban redevelopment and organized crime intersect, again with a thin line between the upholders of the law and those who break it. James resurrected his David Craig

pseudonym for this series, cited as one of the highlights of the Welsh noir developing in the 1990's.

Beginning with *Hear Me Talking to You* (2005), the Sally Bithron novels are another Cardiff police officer series. Both Sally and Assistant Chief Constable Esther Davidson use their work to escape from domestic woes. In both the Bithron and Brade and Jenkins books, London criminal gangs try to overpower the Cardiff criminal world. In *Split*, the first Simon Abelard novel, a British spy bored after the collapse of European communism becomes a drug dealer. The second Abelard book, *A Man's Enemies* (2004), focuses on the infighting within British intelligence caused by former officers' memoirs. Because Abelard is of mixed race—the product of a Welsh mother and a Jamaican father—he is constantly uncertain of his status within the intelligence community.

James is best known for his Harpur and Iles novels. Although this series has had a greater impact than his other fiction has, its success gives him the freedom to try other characters and settings.

PAY DAYS

In *Pay Days* (2001), James draws a parallel between the rivalry of Harpur and Iles and that of criminal bosses Ralph Ember and Mansel Shale. These villains ostensibly cooperate with each other, though both secretly plot each other's downfall. As Ember and Shale conspire to cover up the murder of a drug dealer and the police pursue the truth about the case, more killings result.

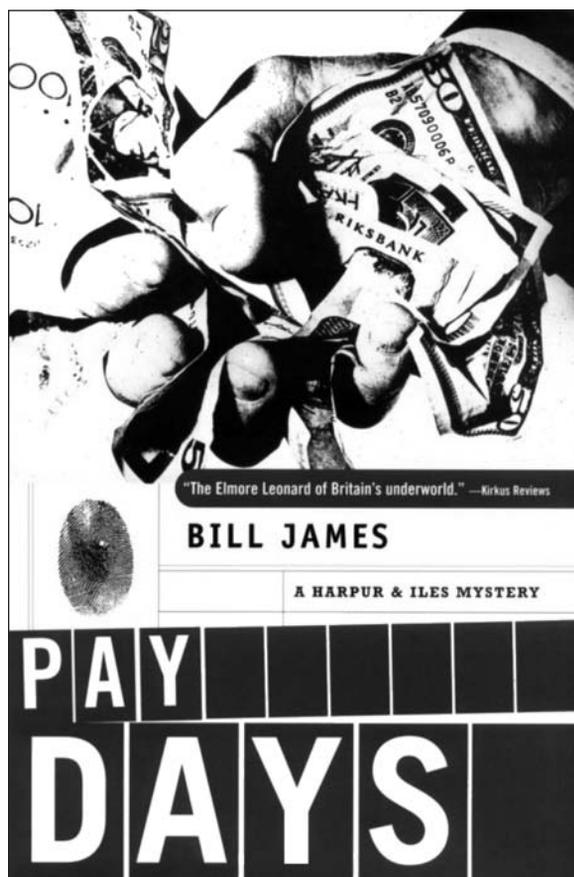
Pay Days is full of distinctive James touches. Harpur's daughters question his professional ethics. Shale thinks quoting from the film *The Godfather* (1972) makes him seem more worldly and threatening. Aspiring to respectability, Ember becomes involved in environmental causes and protests when his daughters' exclusive private school drops Latin and Greek. A politician blames the fiction of Martin Amis and the films of Quentin Tarantino for the moral confusion of the educated class.

THE GIRL WITH THE LONG BACK

In *The Girl with the Long Back* (2003), to protect Louise Machin, an undercover female officer who has infiltrated drug lord Ferdy Dubal's gang, Harpur and his primary informant, Jack Lamb, kill two of Ferdy's

enforcers. As is typical of James's indirect approach to narrative, these killings occur offstage. Harpur does not have to work hard to cover up his crime because no one, including Ferdie, cares too much about two more dead villains. Harpur must, however, keep Iles from discovering too much because the undercover operation was conducted without the approval of the assistant chief constable.

Then Wayne Rideout, Iles's main informant, is murdered, and the assistant chief constable becomes obsessed with Fay-Alice Rideout, the victim's beautiful daughter, whose education, first at an exclusive school and then at Oxford, is underwritten by the police. The much smarter Fay-Alice seems to enjoy encouraging Iles's attention, while not taking him that seriously. Toward the end of the novel, the focus shifts from Harpur, Iles, Louise, and Fay-Alice to the bubbling rivalry among the gangs. Just as Iles desires, the criminals settle scores by killing one another.



SPLIT

The title, *Split*, is a metaphor for Simon Abelard's ethnic, professional, and emotional status. Uncomfortable as a spy because he can never be sure whether his superiors see him as a token black, Abelard finds his usual duties suspended while he attempts to locate Julian Bowling, a colleague who has gone missing with at least nine million dollars in drug money.

As Abelard tracks Bowling to France, he discovers he is suspected of being in league with the fugitive. After falling for Lucy, Bowling's bisexual girlfriend, Abelard begins to wonder whether he is a spy, an officer, or a criminal. Matters are further complicated by the actions of his immediate superior, Verdun Cadwallader, a fellow Welshman. Though the Abelard titles have more straightforward narratives than the Harpur and Iles series, James still provides his offbeat humor, especially with Cadwallader's cocky viciousness and Abelard's eccentric mother.

Michael Adams

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROY RICKMAN SERIES (AS CRAIG): *The Alias Man*, 1968; *Message Ends*, 1969; *Contact Lost*, 1970

STEPHEN BELLECROIX AND SHEILA ROATH SERIES (AS CRAIG): *Young Men May Die*, 1970; *A Walk at Night*, 1971

COLIN HARPUR AND DESMOND ILES SERIES: *You'd Better Believe It*, 1985; *The Lolita Man*, 1986; *Halo Parade*, 1987; *Protection*, 1988; *Come Clean*, 1989; *Take*, 1990; *Club*, 1991; *Astride a Grave*, 1991; *Gospel*, 1992; *Roses, Roses*, 1993; *In Good Hands*, 1994; *The Detective Is Dead*, 1995; *Top Banana*, 1996; *Panicking Ralph*, 1997; *Lovely Mover*, 1998; *Eton Crop*, 1999; *Kill Me*, 2000; *Pay Days*, 2001; *Naked at the Window*, 2002; *The Girl with the Long Back*, 2003; *Easy Streets*, 2004; *Wolves of Memory*, 2005; *Girls*, 2006; *The Sixth Man, and Other Stories*, 2006

DAVE BRADE AND GLYNDWR JENKINS SERIES (AS CRAIG): *The Tattooed Detective*, 1998; *Torch*, 1999; *Bay City*, 2000

KERRY LAKE SERIES (AS JONES): *Baby Talk*, 1998; *After Melissa*, 1999

SIMON ABELARD SERIES: *Split*, 2001; *A Man's Enemies*, 2004

SALLY BITHRON SERIES (AS CRAIG): *Hear Me Talking to You*, 2005; *Tip Top*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS TUCKER): *Equal Partners*, 1960; *The Right-Hand Man*, 1961; *Burster*, 1966; *Blaze of Riot*, 1979; *The King's Friends*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS CRAIG): *Up from the Grave*, 1971; *Double Take*, 1972; *Bolthole*, 1973; *Knifeman*, 1973; *Whose Little Girl Are You?*, 1974; *A Dead Liberty*, 1974; *The Albion Case*, 1975; *Faith, Hope, and Death*, 1976

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Forget It*, 1995; *The Last Enemy*, 1997; *Double Jeopardy*, 2002; *Middleman*, 2003; *Between Lives*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *The Novels of Anthony Powell*, 1976

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Powell's Nick Jenkins and his nemesis Widmerpool is the model for James's antiheroes.

James, Bill. Interview by Anthony Brockway. <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/elizabeth.ercocklly/bill.htm>. Excellent interview in which James discusses his Cardiff upbringing, his journalism career, his attitude toward crime fiction, and his literary influences.

Lenzer, Steve. "Crime and Punishment." Review of *Naked at the Window*, by Bill James. *The Weekly Standard* 8, no. 41 (June 30, 2003): 31. Lengthy review examines not only the individual work but also James's Harpur and Iles series, noting that the novels differ from the traditional detective novel in that many lack neat endings.

Pederson, Jay P., and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf. *St. James Guide to Crime & Mystery Writers*, 4th ed. Detroit: St. James Press, 1996. A short overview of James's work, including a brief interview.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains chapters on police procedurals and hard-boiled detective fiction, including variants on these subgenres, which gives a context for understanding James's unusual approach.

P. D. JAMES

Phyllis Dorothy James

Born: Oxford, England; August 3, 1920

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Adam Dalgliesh, 1962-
Cordelia Gray, 1972-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ADAM DALGLIESH, a Scotland Yard inspector, eventually commander, is a widower. He is a sensitive and cerebral man and a poet of some reputation. His wife and son died during childbirth. As a police officer, Dalgliesh enforces society's rules, giving himself

a purpose for living and some brief respite from his feelings of loss and devastation.

CORDELIA GRAY, an optimistic, outgoing, and good-natured young woman (temperamentally, the exact opposite of Dalgliesh), unexpectedly falls heir to a detective agency and, thereby, discovers her vocation. Occasionally, she becomes the protagonist of a novel and Dalgliesh assumes a supporting role; a friendly rivalry exists between them.

CONTRIBUTION

P. D. James's novels are intricately plotted, as successful novels of detection must be. Through her use

of extremely well-delineated characters and a wealth of minute and accurate details, however, she never allows her plot to distort the other aspects of her novel. In this meticulous attention to detail, James writes in the tradition of Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, and the nineteenth century realists. She is the acknowledged master of characterization among contemporary mystery writers. She also creates a very powerful sense of place. Because the characterizations and setting of a James novel are so fully explored, it tends to be considerably longer than the ordinary murder mystery. This fact, along with Dalglish's increasingly distant presence in the midst of so many other deeply nuanced and compelling characters, accounts for what little adverse criticism her work has received. Some critics have suggested that the detail is so profuse that the general reader may eventually grow impatient—that the pace of the narrative is too leisurely. These objections from a few contemporary critics further attest to James's affinity with the novelists of the nineteenth century. Quite a few of her novels have been adapted for television, with as much fidelity to the depth and psychological complexity of the original works as possible.

BIOGRAPHY

Phyllis Dorothy James was born in Oxford, England, on August 3, 1920. She attended Cambridge High School for Girls from 1931 until her graduation in 1937. Prior to World War II, she served for a time as assistant stage manager at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge. She worked during the war as a Red Cross nurse and also at the Ministry of Food. She married Ernest C. B. White, a medical

practitioner, on August 8, 1941, and was widowed in 1964. She has two daughters.

In 1949, James commenced a long career in the civil service. She was a principal administrative assistant with the North West Regional Hospital Board, London, until 1968, when she became a senior civil servant in the Home Office. From 1972 until her retirement in 1979, she served in the crime department. James is a Fellow of the Institute of Hospital Administrators. Although writing has been her full-time occupation since 1979, she has also served as a London magistrate.



P. D. James. (Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

James's first novel, *Cover Her Face*, did not appear until 1962, at which time the author was past forty years of age. Nevertheless, she quickly attained recognition as a major crime novelist. *A Mind to Murder* appeared in 1963, and with the publication of *Unnatural Causes* in 1967 came that year's prize from the Crime Writers' Association. James denies that her decision to write under her maiden name preceded by initials only was an attempt to disguise her identity as a woman. Clearly, she was aware of the sexual ambiguity of the name P. D. James, but she points out, quite correctly, that detective fiction is a field in which women, writing under their own names, have long excelled. Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers—two writers to whom James is often compared—are masters of the genre. On reaching the age of seventy-seven, James added a work to the memoir field, much to the delight of her readers.

ANALYSIS

Cover Her Face is the exception that proves the rule—the rule being, in this case, that P. D. James eschews the country weekend murders of her predecessors, with their leisure-class suspects who have little more to do than chat with the visiting sleuth and look guilty. *Cover Her Face* is set in a country house where a servant is murdered. The suspects are the inhabitants of the house and their guests from the city, who are attending an annual fete on the grounds. A detective from the outside, Adam Dalgliesh of Scotland Yard, is called in to sort through the clues and solve the crime. This superficial description of the novel makes it sound very much like many an Agatha Christie story, and in her first book James may have felt more comfortable treading familiar literary ground. James has said, however, that comparisons of her to Christie are basically unwarranted. She likens herself more to Dorothy L. Sayers in the light of her greater interest in personality and motivation than in the crime puzzle itself.

James was from the very beginning a writer of great restraint. She almost never allows herself the luxury of self-indulgence. The old saw that first novels are largely autobiographical seems to apply to *Cover Her Face* in one detail only. The master of the house is bedfast, and his wife, daughter, and an old house-

keeper have for a long time attended him lovingly and selflessly. James's own husband was an invalid for many years before his death. After *Cover Her Face*, James turned to another kind of setting for her novels.

A MIND TO MURDER

As a result of her employment James had extensive contact with physicians, nurses, civil servants, police officials, and magistrates. A murder mystery ordinarily requires a closed society that limits the number of suspects, but James uses her experience to devise settings in the active world, where men and women are busily pursuing their vocations. The setting for *A Mind to Murder*, for example, is a London psychiatric clinic. The administrative officer of the Steen Clinic is murdered in the basement record room in an appropriately bizarre manner (bludgeoned, then stabbed through the heart with a chisel) and in death she clutches to her breast a heavy wood-carved fetish from the therapy room. Yet quite apart from Dalgliesh's unraveling of the murder mystery, the reader enjoys the intricacies of the clinic's internal politics that underlie the plot throughout. The psychotherapists are devotees variously of psychoanalysis, electroshock treatments, and art therapy and have been conducting a cold war against one another for years. The staff psychologist, social worker, nurses, medical secretaries, and custodians have ambitions, intrigues, and grudges of their own. As a longtime civil servant herself, James knows that no matter how exotic someone's death, one question immediately excites the deceased's colleagues: Who will fill the vacant job?

ADAM DALGLIESH

Although it is an early work, *A Mind to Murder* features a surprise ending so cleverly conceived that it does not seem at all like a cheap device. In the novels that have followed, James has shown an increasing mastery of the labyrinthine murder-and-detection plot. This mastery affords the principal pleasure to one large group of her readers. A second group of readers most admires the subtlety and psychological validity of her characterizations. Critics have often remarked that James, more than almost any other modern mystery writer, has succeeded in overcoming the limitations of the genre. In addition, she has created one of the more memorable progeny of Sherlock Holmes.

Like Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and Christie's Hercule Poirot, Adam Dalgliesh is a sleuth whose personality is at least as interesting as his skill in detection. The deaths of his wife and son have left him bereft of hope and intensely aware of the fragility of people's control over their own lives. Only the rules that humankind has painstakingly fashioned over the centuries can ward off degeneration and annihilation. Those who murder contribute to the world's disorder and hasten the ultimate collapse of civilization. Dalgliesh will catch them and see that they are punished.

Dalgliesh leads a lonely but not a celibate life. He is romantically involved for a time with Deborah Riscoe, a character who appears in *Cover Her Face* and *A Mind to Murder*. Deborah is succeeded by other lovers, but James treats Dalgliesh's amours obliquely. She has said that she agrees with Sayers's position on such matters: A hero's love affairs are no more the author's business than anyone else's. At any rate, Dalgliesh's demanding nature, his self-sufficiency and icy reserve are as hard on the women in his life as on his associates in the department.

Dalgliesh is a discerning judge of character, and he knows that motivation flows from character. In fact, it is James's treatment of motivation that sets her work apart from most mystery fiction. Her killers are often the emotionally maimed who, nevertheless, manage to function with an apparent normality. Beneath this facade, dark secrets torment the soul. James's novels seem to suggest that danger is never far away in the most mundane setting, especially the workplace. Apart from her Byronic hero, she avoids all gothic devices, choosing instead to create a growing sense of menace just below the surface of everyday life. James's murderers sometimes kill for gain, but more often they kill to avoid exposure of some sort.

SHROUD FOR A NIGHTINGALE

Shroud for a Nightingale (1971), judged James's best novel by some critics, is set in a nursing hospital near London. The student nurses and most of the staff are in permanent residence there. In this closed society, attachments—sexual and otherwise—are formed, rivalries develop, and resentments grow. When a student nurse is murdered during a teaching demonstration, Dalgliesh arrives to investigate. In the course of

his investigation, he discovers that the murdered girl was a petty blackmailer, that a second student nurse (murdered soon after his arrival) was pregnant though unmarried and had engaged in an affair with a middle-aged surgeon, and that one member of the senior staff is committing adultery with the hospital pharmacist and another is homosexually attracted to one of her charges. At the root of the murders, however, is the darkest secret of all, a terrible sin that a rather sympathetic character has been attempting to both hide and expiate for more than thirty years. The murder weapon is poison, which serves also as a metaphor for the fear and suspicion that rapidly spreads through the insular world of the hospital.

AN UNSUITABLE JOB FOR A WOMAN

In *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972), James introduces her second recurring protagonist. Cordelia Gray's "unsuitable job" is that of private detective. Again, James avoids the formulized characterization. Gender is the most obvious but least interesting difference between Dalgliesh and Gray. Dalgliesh is brooding and introspective; Gray's sunny nature is the direct antithesis, despite her unfortunate background (she was brought up in a series of foster homes). She is a truth seeker and, like William Shakespeare's Cordelia, a truth teller. Dalgliesh and Gray are alike in their cleverness and competence. Their paths occasionally cross, and a friendly rivalry exists between them. Naturally, some readers have hoped that romance will blossom for the two detectives. James addressed this matter in a 1977 essay, "Ought Adam to Marry Cordelia?" She concludes that such a marriage, arranged in fictional heaven by a godlike author, would be too cheap a trick.

THE BLACK TOWER

The Black Tower (1975) is another narrative set in a health care facility. This time, it is an isolated nursing home, the Grange, located near sheer cliffs above the sea. The black tower is an incongruous edifice built near the cliffs by a former owner of the estate that the nursing home now occupies. The tower, like Nightingale House in *Shroud for a Nightingale*, is a symbol for the palpable evil that inhabits the place. James clearly believes in evil as an entity, not merely as an unfortunate misbalance of social forces. One of the

five murder victims is a priest, killed just after he has heard confession. James examines each of the residents and staff members of the Grange and the phobias and compulsions they take such pains to disguise. Dalgliesh identifies the vicious killer but almost loses his life in the process.

DEATH OF AN EXPERT WITNESS

In *Death of an Expert Witness* (1977), James's seventh novel, Dalgliesh again probes the secrets of a small group of coworkers and their families. The setting this time is a laboratory that conducts forensic examinations. As James used her nineteen years of experience as a hospital administrative assistant to render the setting of *Shroud for a Nightingale* totally convincing, she uses her seven years of work in the crime department of the Home Office to the same effect in *Death of an Expert Witness*.

The laboratory in which the expert witness is killed serves as a focal point for a fascinating cast of characters. Ironically, a physiologist is murdered while he is examining physical evidence from another murder (which is not a part of Dalgliesh's investigation). The dead man leaves behind a rather vacant, superannuated father, who lived in the house with him. The principal suspect is a high-strung laboratory assistant, whom the deceased bullied and gave an unsatisfactory performance rating. The new director of the laboratory has an attractive but cruel and wanton sister, with whom he has a relationship that is at least latently incestuous. In addition, Dalgliesh investigates a lesbian couple (one of whom becomes the novel's second murder victim); a melancholy physician who performs autopsies for the police and whose unpleasant wife has just left him; the physician's two curious children (the elder girl being very curious indeed); a middle-aged babysitter who is a closet tippler; and a crooked police officer who is taking advantage of a love-starved young woman of the town. In spinning out her complex narrative, James draws on her intimate knowledge of police procedure, evidential requirements in the law, and criminal behavior.

A TASTE FOR DEATH

Nine years passed before Commander Adam Dalgliesh returned in *A Taste for Death* (1986). In this novel, Dalgliesh heads a newly formed squad charged

with investigating politically sensitive crimes; he is assisted by the aristocratic Chief Inspector John Massingham and a new recruit, Kate Miskin. Kate is bright, resourceful, and ambitious. Like Cordelia Gray, she has overcome an unpromising background: She is the illegitimate child of a mother who died shortly after her birth and a father she has never known. The title of the novel is evocative—it is not only the psychopathic killer who has a taste for death, but also Dalgliesh and his subordinates, the principal murder victim himself, and, surprisingly, a shabby High Church Anglican priest, reminiscent of one of Graham Greene's failed clerics.

When Sir Paul Berowne, a Tory minister, is found murdered along with a tramp in the vestry of St. Matthew's Church in London, Dalgliesh is put in charge of the investigation. These murders seem linked to the deaths of two young women previously associated with the Berowne household. The long novel (more than 450 pages) contains the usual array of suspects, hampering the investigation with their evasions and outright lies, but, in typical James fashion, each is portrayed in three dimensions. The case develops an additional psychological complication when Dalgliesh identifies with a murder victim for the first time in his career and a metaphysical complication when he discovers that Berowne recently underwent a profound religious experience at St. Matthew's, one reportedly entailing stigmata. Perhaps the best examples of James's method of characterization are the elderly never-married woman and the ten-year-old boy of the streets who discover the bodies in chapter 1. In the hands of most other crime writers, these characters would have been mere plot devices, but James gives them a reality that reminds the reader how deeply a murder affects everyone associated with it in any way.

DEVICES AND DESIRES

Devices and Desires (1989) finds Dalgliesh on vacation in a fictional seacoast town in Norfolk, England. James reports that this story started—as most of her work does—with setting, in this case the juxtaposition of a huge nuclear power plant with the seemingly centuries-unchanged view of the North Sea from a Suffolk shore. Here, with the reactor towering over daily life and concerns, Dalgliesh, set somewhat at a

remove by being out of his jurisdiction, is surrounded by a typically P. D. Jamesian set of fully realized, difficult characters—all suspects in a grisly set of murders when the murderer turns up murdered.

ORIGINAL SIN

Though Cordelia Gray has not been in evidence since *The Skull Beneath the Skin* (1982), Kate Miskin appears—indeed, more than Dalgliesh—in both *Original Sin* (1994) and *A Certain Justice* (1997). Set at an ailing literary press, *Original Sin* is densely woven with engaging characters and intricate patterns of relationship—a fact that is pleasing to some readers, frustrating to others, for whom the lack of a central focus, that is, the more constant presence of the detective generally expected in the genre, is disorienting. It is in this particular that James most stretches the bounds of mystery. Her detectives are certainly present, but only as another thread in the whole cloth.

A CERTAIN JUSTICE

This same method met with little in the way of criticism in *A Certain Justice*. Though, again, neither Commander Dalgliesh or Inspector Kate Miskin provide a “central focus,” the sustained power and depth of the novel’s unfolding depiction of potent themes—passion, neglect, ambition, morality and the law—provides far more. Indeed, *Original Sin* has ties, thematically and formally, to James’s *Innocent Blood* (1980), which, while concerned with murder and vengeance, is not a detective story.

INNOCENT BLOOD

Innocent Blood is a novel unlike any of James’s others. Although it tells a tale of murder and vengeance, it is not a detective story. It is in the tradition of Fyodor Dostoevski’s *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912)—serious novels, each featuring a murder as the focal point for the characters’s spiritual and psychological conflicts. In form, *Innocent Blood* resembles yet another classic Russian novel, Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877; English translation, 1886). It features dual protagonists (such as Anna and Levin in Tolstoy’s narrative) who proceed through the novel along separate paths. They finally meet at the melodramatic (uncharacteristically so) climax.

THE CHILDREN OF MEN

Though it contains a horrible murder and a desperate chase, *The Children of Men* (1992) is not a detective story either, but James’s first foray into science fiction. A near-future story set in the England of 2021, it postulates a world in which male fertility has entirely failed since the last child was born in 1995. Society has devolved to a chaotic barbarity. The old are encouraged to commit mass suicide, while the young are licensed to violent behavior. Hope appears in the form of the pregnancy of a member of the dissident underground, who is soon on the run from the dictatorial powers that be. Perhaps the least successful of her books, *The Children of Men* is nevertheless rewarding for the fully realized future world that James depicts and was the basis for the film *Children of Men* in 2006.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The relationship between Dalgliesh and Miskin never evolved into the romantic partnership many readers hoped for. In a plot twist that dates *The Lighthouse* (2005) as surely as its copyright, SARS intervenes. Dalgliesh is stricken with the virus and sidelined from the investigation as Miskin takes over. The convalescing detective does indeed reconcile himself to marriage, but to Emma Lavenham, a recurring character who first appeared in *Death in Holy Orders* (2001). Many critics and readers speculated that the apparent resolution of the series’ running subplots signaled the end of the Dalgliesh books, though the author’s creative powers at age eighty-five seemed undiminished.

Though James is known principally as a novelist, she is also a short-story writer and a playwright. Her short works, though scant in number, have found a wide audience through publication in such popular periodicals as *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*. Critics generally agree that James requires the novel form to show her literary strengths to best advantage. For example, “The Victim,” though a fine short story, is still primarily of interest as the microcosmic precursor of *Innocent Blood*. James’s sole play, *A Private Treason*, was first produced in London on March 12, 1985.

Some critics have purported to detect a slight anti-feminist bias in James’s work. This impression probably derives from the fact that James is one of the more

conservative practitioners of an essentially conservative genre. The action of all her novels proceeds from that most extreme form of antisocial behavior, murder. Murders are committed by human beings, and James's manner of probing their personalities is more like that of another James, Henry James, than like that of her fellow crime writers. Dalglish muses in *A Taste for Death* that he has learned, like most people, to accept and carry his load of guilt through life. The murderers that he so relentlessly pursues have not.

Patrick Adcock

*Updated by Fiona Kelleghan, Jessica Reisman,
and Janet Alice Long*

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ADAM DALGLIESH SERIES: *Cover Her Face*, 1962; *A Mind to Murder*, 1963; *Unnatural Causes*, 1967; *Shroud for a Nightingale*, 1971; *The Black Tower*, 1975; *Death of an Expert Witness*, 1977; *A Taste for Death*, 1986; *Devices and Desires*, 1989; *Original Sin*, 1994; *A Certain Justice*, 1997; *Death in Holy Orders*, 2001; *The Murder Room*, 2003; *The Lighthouse*, 2005

CORDELIA GRAY SERIES: *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, 1972; *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Innocent Blood*, 1980; *The Children of Men*, 1992

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *A Private Treason*, pr. 1985

NONFICTION: *The Maul and the Pear Tree: The Ratcliff Highway Murders, 1811*, 1971 (with T. A. Critchley); *Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography*, 2000

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Gidez, Richard B. *P. D. James*. Boston: Twayne, 1986. An entry in Twayne's English Authors series. Chapter 1 examines James's place within the tradition of

the English mystery novel. Chapters 2 through 10 discuss in chronological order her first nine novels. Chapter 11 is devoted to her handful of short stories, and chapter 12 summarizes her work through *The Skull Beneath the Skin*.

Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. Interview discusses her writing style and habits, the nature of detective fiction, and her personal life.

James, P. D. *Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. At the age of seventy-seven, James was not willing to sum up her life; presumably there will be much more to tell. She did, however, take up the task (for publication) of maintaining a diary for one year. The reader is privy to James's opinions and reactions to the social and political events of that year, which she details between meditations on the writing process and recollections of her past.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. In addition to the valuable biographical essay on James, references to her throughout this substantial volume reflect her influence on the genre.

Porter, Dennis. "Detection and Ethics: The Case of P. D. James." In *The Sleuth and the Scholar: Origins, Evolution, and Current Trends in Detective Fiction*, edited by Barbara A. Rader and Howard G. Zettler. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988. Pages 11 through 18 are devoted to Porter's essay on James, a writer for whom moral principles are an integral part of the crime and detection story. Porter concentrates on *Death of an Expert Witness*, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, and *Innocent Blood*. Robin W. Wink, who has written elsewhere on James, contributes a foreword to the book.

Priestman, Martin. "P. D. James and the Distinguished Thing." In *On Modern British Fiction*. New York: Oxford, 2002. A lengthy essay devoted to James and her place in the broader context of British literature. This is a piece of literary criticism that argues that James's undoubted skill as an author is circumscribed by her choice of genre.

Random House. The Official Website of P. D. James.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pdjames/index.html>. The official Web site, hosted and maintained by her publisher. A flashy site that offers a very brief biography and a catalog of her books available through Random House. The brief book descriptions are somewhat helpful.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. This study focuses on the most prominent British women mystery writers, including P. D.

James. Contains an interview with James.

Siebenheller, Norma. *P. D. James*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981. The first four chapters discuss the eight novels, grouped by decades, that James had produced through 1980. Chapter 5 discusses the detective protagonists Adam Dalgliesh and Cordelia Gray. Chapter 6 takes up the major themes of the novels; chapter 7, the major characters other than the two detectives. The final chapter deals with the James "style," in the sense of both her craftsmanship and her elegance.

J. A. JANCE

Judith Ann Jance

Born: Watertown, South Dakota; October 27, 1944

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

J. P. Beaumont, 1985-

Joanna Brady, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

J. P. BEAUMONT's full name is Jonas Piedmont Beaumont, but he is called Beau or J. P. for what he considers to be obvious reasons. He is six foot, two inches tall, weighs 185 pounds, and although not handsome, attracts women. He walks whenever possible, wears his hair in a crewcut, and is an alcoholic. He defines himself by his work: a homicide detective for the Seattle Police Department and, later, a special investigator with the Washington Attorney General's Special Homicide Investigation Team. He is good at his job and has good instincts, but because he puts his job and his drinking ahead of his family, he becomes divorced. He remarries but becomes a widower on his wedding day. After he stops drinking, he pays more attention to his family and friends.

JOANNA BRADY is the petite, red-haired sheriff of Cochise County, Arizona. Her deceased father, D. H. Lathrop, was a Cochise County sheriff, and her husband, Andy, is a deputy sheriff and a candidate for sher-

iff when he is murdered. After solving her husband's death, Joanna is asked to run for sheriff and wins the election. While attending the Arizona Police Officers Academy in Phoenix, she meets Butch Dixon. Joanna and Butch marry, and he becomes a househusband while writing his novel. Family and friends are important to Joanna; however, sometimes she is torn between them and her obligations as sheriff.

CONTRIBUTION

Judith Ann Jance published her first book as J. A. Jance because her publisher believed readers would not accept a book featuring a male homicide detective that had been written by a woman. The success of Jance's J. P. Beaumont novels has proven that a woman can create a believable male character. She has also shown that a female law enforcement officer can be popular with the reading public by her Joanna Brady series. Jance's characters are true to their gender for the most part, acting in typically male or female ways. J. P. Beaumont, for example, is a typical man who is good at his job, attracts women, gradually accepts technology, and learns to have a life away from his job. Joanna Brady remains feminine despite being in a male-dominated profession. Even though she was a tomboy growing up, she sees no reason why she cannot be feminine and be sheriff. Joanna gets dirty and

sweaty while doing her job, but she will not smoke a cigar and drink beer with the guys.

Jance has made her characters believable by not making them perfect, allowing readers to relate to J. P. Beaumont and Joanna Brady. While that is one of the reasons J. A. Jance is so popular, another is that she creates a good story. She starts with a corpse and continues with the investigation into what caused the death and the discovery of the murderer. Starting with a murder rather than building up to one may seem backward, but Jance is a master at this type of organization. She is a *New York Times* best-selling mystery writer, has published more than thirty books, and has sold more than eleven million copies worldwide.

BIOGRAPHY

Judith Ann Jance was born in Watertown, South Dakota, on October 27, 1944, the third child of a large



J. A. Jance. (Library of Congress)

family. Because she was four years younger than the second child and four years older than the fourth, she was left alone for much of her childhood, making her an avid reader and a good student. In second grade, she read L. Frank Baum's *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz* (1908) and knew she wanted to be a writer.

Raised in Bisbee, Arizona, Jance graduated from Bisbee High School in 1962. She attended the University of Arizona on an academic scholarship and became the first member of her family to attend a four-year college. She graduated in 1966 with a degree in English and secondary education, received her masters in education in library science in 1970, taught high school English at Pueblo High School in Tucson for two years, and was a librarian for five years at Indian Oasis School District in Sells, Arizona.

Jance had wanted to be a writer since she was in the second grade but became frustrated when University of Arizona officials told her that she could not enroll in the creative writing program because she was a woman. She married a man who was enrolled in the program, Jerry Jance, in 1967; however, he never published anything. Jance has stated that he imitated Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner by "drinking too much and writing too little." When an editor in New York expressed interest in a children's story that Jance had written, her husband told her he was the only writer in their family, and Jance let the matter drop.

While Jance was married, she secretly wrote poetry about the deterioration of her marriage to an alcoholic and her unintentional denial and codependence. The poems chronicle the defeat of a woman whose love was destroyed but found the strength and will to go on with her life. *After the Fire* (1984) was republished in 2004 with annotations by Jance about where she was and her feelings at the time she wrote each poem.

After Jance was divorced, she wrote between four and seven in the morning, then got her children up and ready for school and went to work selling insurance. The first fiction she wrote was never published. It was twelve hundred pages long, and although it was mostly nonfictional, editors who reviewed the manuscript found the parts that Jance had based on real events were not believable although the truly fictional parts were. It was then that her agent suggested she try

writing pure fiction. Her first published novel, *Until Proven Guilty* (1985), is the first in the J. P. Beaumont series.

Jance met her second husband, William Schlib, at a retreat for people who had lost a spouse; she was doing a reading from *After the Fire* and he was an attendee. At the beginning of their marriage, Schlib supported her and their five children, but as Jance's writing took off, she provided the support, and her husband retired at the age of fifty-four.

ANALYSIS

When J. A. Jance was beginning to write, she was advised to write about what she knew. Although she did not know a lot about police procedures, she was very familiar with alcoholism because of her first husband. She used this knowledge to shape the character of J. P. Beaumont, who is told he will die if he does not stop drinking in *Dismissed with Prejudice* (1989) and enters an alcohol rehabilitation ranch in Arizona in *Minor in Possession* (1990). The remaining novels have him attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and continually struggling to remain sober.

Jance's experiences as a single parent are reflected in the character Joanna Brady. Although Joanna loses her husband, Andy, when he is murdered in *Desert Heat* (1993) and Jance divorced her husband who then died of chronic alcoholism, both women become single mothers. Each has to learn to go on with her life, which includes combining home and work. Joanna is the office manager in an insurance agency, and Jance sold insurance. Jance remarries, as does Joanna in *Devil's Claw* (2000). Jance and her character obviously do not share every trait, but Joanna does reflect a lot of Jance's experiences.

Jance sets her works in Arizona and Washington, the two states in which she has lived most of her life. Places, highways, and geographical elements from both places appear in her stories. In addition, she adds Native American tales from the Tohono O'odham to her writing. This creates realism in Jance's stories by allowing people who live in or have visited these locations to picture her settings in their minds. For people who have not been to these locations, Jance paints a picture with her words.

The strongest quality in Jance's writing is her characterization. Her characters are first and foremost people and then law enforcement officers. The physical and emotional hurt they receive in one book carries over into the next book or books. Just as real people do not get over being hurt in a short period of time, neither do Jance's characters.

A tool that Jance uses successfully is dialogue. She feels that if a character talks too long, it is not realistic. People do not talk for long periods of time unless they are giving speeches; therefore, her characters do not. Also, people do not always talk in complete sentences, so her characters do not. Jance's characters are ordinary people, and her ability to have them speak naturally makes them more realistic.

Jance does research when writing her novels. She talks with professionals in specialty fields (law enforcement and medical); she learns about places in her novels (a specific era of Seattle); and when she hears of a good program (the Teddy Bear Patrol in which members of the police force, emergency medical technicians, and firefighters keep teddy bears with them to give to traumatized children), she includes it in her novels. Jance uses her popularity to benefit charity. Jance's son-in-law was treated for malignant melanoma, and in 2001, her daughter started Cancer Fighting Flamingoes to raise money for Relay for Life. Jance joined in with an entire tour dedicated to the Flamingo funding. This kind of effort is seen in the character J. P. Beaumont, when he helps Ron Peters get his daughters from his former wife who is living in a cult, and in the character Joanna Brady when she adopts a dog from the animal shelter.

UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

Until Proven Guilty is Jance's first novel and the first to feature Homicide Detective J. P. Beaumont. Beau is investigating the murder of a little girl who was a member of the Faith Tabernacle. Children in this church are punished and beaten for not following instructions or the rules of the church, and when Beau meets the reverend, Beau thinks he has his murderer. At the girl's funeral, Beau meets Anne Corley, a beautiful woman dressed in red who places a rose on the little girl's coffin. After a short courtship, Beau and Anne marry; however, he soon realizes she hides a

dark side. On the day of their wedding, Anne maneuvers Beau into a position in which he has to kill her in self-defense. As the Beaumont series continues, the reader finds this is one of those hurts that Jance carries on into the later novels of the series.

Until Proven Guilty provides the foundation for the character of J. P. Beaumont and other characters who continue throughout the series, such as Ron Peters and Ralph Ames. It also gives a reason why Beau does not have lasting relationship with women, even though he becomes involved with them.

DESERT HEAT

Joanna Brady makes her debut in *Desert Heat*. Joanna is waiting for her husband, Andy (a deputy sheriff who is running for sheriff), to come home so they can go out for their tenth wedding anniversary. Joanna's mother, Eleanor, has come to stay the night and babysit her granddaughter, Jenny. As it gets later and later and Andy still has not come home, Joanna goes looking for him. She has not gone far when she sees his vehicle in a ditch and Andy lying on the ground bleeding to death. He has been shot and left to die. After Joanna solves Andy's death and finds corruption in the sheriff's office, people ask her to run for sheriff, and she does.

As with the Beaumont series, some characters in the first Brady novel appear in subsequent novels. Among these characters are Eleanor Lathrop, Jenny Brady, Angie Kellogg, Dick Volland, Marianne Maculyea, Jeff Daniels, and Milo Davis. For better or worse, these people are part of Joanna's life.

When Joanna wins the election and becomes sheriff of Cochise County in the next novel, *Tombstone Courage* (1994), she becomes a woman in a predominantly male occupation. She has to show everyone in her office and in other law enforcement agencies that she can do the job. Handling a new job and the people who go along with it, adjusting to life without her husband, and trying to form a new normal life with her daughter are formidable undertakings for anyone. Jance shows how Joanna succeeds but not without encountering rough spots along the way. Life is not smooth, and Jance does not make it smooth for Joanna.

Linda K. Adkins

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

J. P. BEAUMONT SERIES: *Until Proven Guilty*, 1985; *Injustice for All*, 1986; *Trial by Fury*, 1986; *Taking the Fifth*, 1987; *Improbable Cause*, 1988; *A More Perfect Union*, 1988; *Dismissed with Prejudice*, 1989; *Minor in Possession*, 1990; *Payment in Kind*, 1991; *Without Due Process*, 1992; *Failure to Appear*, 1993; *Lying in Wait*, 1994; *Name Withheld*, 1996; *Breach of Duty*, 1999; *Birds of Prey*, 2001; *Partner in Crime*, 2002; *Long Time Gone*, 2005; *Justice Denied*, 2007

JOANNA BRADY SERIES: *Desert Heat*, 1993; *Tombstone Courage*, 1994; *Shoot/Don't Shoot*, 1995; *Dead to Rights*, 1996; *Skeleton Canyon*, 1997; *Rattlesnake Crossing*, 1998; *Outlaw Mountain*, 1999; *Devil's Claw*, 2000; *Paradise Lost*, 2001; *Partner in Crime*, 2002; *Exit Wounds*, 2003; *Dead Wrong*, 2006

BRANDON WALKER SERIES: *Hour of the Hunter*, 1990; *Kiss of the Bees*, 2001; *Day of the Dead*, 2005

ALI REYNOLDS SERIES: *Edge of Evil*, 2006; *Web of Evil*, 2007

POETRY: *After the Fire*, 1984 (revised 2004)

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Goldberg, Rylla. "Interview with J. A. Jance." In *Deadly Women: The Woman Mystery Reader's Indispensable Companion*, edited by Jan Grape, Dean James, and Ellen Nehr. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998. Jance responds to questions about various topics including the business side of producing books; the place of technology in her writing; the management of writing, family, and social schedules; and the authors she reads.

Jance, J. A. "Best-selling Suspense Novelist Keeps Busy Writing, Promoting." Interview by Jessica Agi. *Anchorage Daily News*, September 4, 2006, p. D1. In this interview on the release of *Dead Wrong*, Jance discusses her motivations for writing and stresses the importance of working at producing a novel.

_____. J. A. Jance's Web Site. <http://www.jajance>

.com. Jance's Web site gives valuable information about herself and her books. She gives personal comments on each of her novels.

_____. "PW Talks with J. A. Jance: Strangers on a Train." Interview by Louise Jones. *Publishers Weekly* 252, no. 25 (June 20, 2005): 61. This is an interview with Jance on the twentieth anniversary of the Beaumont series and the release of *Long Time Gone*.

Kinsella, Bridget. "Jance Promotes Book, Cancer Research." *Publishers Weekly* 252, no. 31 (August 8,

2005): 19. This article discusses the charity work Jance does on her tours.

Rye, Marilyn. "Changing Gender Conventions and the Detective Formula: J. A. Jance's Beaumont and Brady Series." *Journal of Popular Culture* 37, no. 1 (August, 2003): 105-119. In an understandable manner, Rye discusses the implications of gender by a female author writing a series about a man in police work and another series with a woman in police work.

VELDA JOHNSTON

Born: California; 1911

Died: Place unknown; 1997

Also wrote as Veronica Jason

Types of plot: Cozy; amateur sleuth

CONTRIBUTION

For readers, particularly young women, Velda Johnston provides easy-to-read novels with interesting, carefully planned plots. The mystery in each novel is presented early, and progress toward the solution is logical and evenly paced. Beyond the sheer entertainment of her fiction, however, Johnston, who clearly enjoys the process of writing, seems to have a message for young readers. She provides examples in her novels of young women who seek happiness and fulfillment in a more assertive, independent manner than have the women of the previous generation. The mother or the aunt who reared the heroine has often been abandoned or widowed and left in financial straits by the man on whom she depended. Although often dismissed early in the story, the maternal character's life stands in vivid contrast to that of the heroine. The motif of the independent young woman is consistent throughout Johnston's work, and those who read two or more of her novels are unlikely to miss it. From the publication of her first novel in 1967 through the late 1980's, Johnston pro-

duced one or two novels per year, presenting in each a mystery to test the heroine's intelligence and eagerness to solve problems.

BIOGRAPHY

Velda Johnston was reared and educated in California. She obtained a degree in English at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Having sold her first story while still in high school, she anticipated immediate financial independence as a writer. "I looked forward to being able to support myself and my mother by dashing off a short story occasionally after school," Johnston has said. "But I was in my third year at UCLA before I was able to sell my second story. It was really very rough getting started." Eventually, she was able to publish not only romantic suspense novels but also nonfictional articles on subjects ranging from the artificial heart to migrant workers in New Jersey.

Even as a child, Johnston enjoyed reading mysteries. Inspiration for her own writing came from the English writer Mary Stewart, whose romantic suspense novels she admired very much. "I've always loved history, especially English history," said Johnston. Johnston has explained that for her, mysteries are, in a way, easier to write than other types of fiction:

In a mystery, you don't have to depend just on character. You can offer the reader a double pleasure—interesting characters and the puzzle as well. What I like to stress in my novels, which are often read by young women, are education, using one's intelligence, and having courage—not just sitting around waiting for Mr. Right.

ANALYSIS

Velda Johnston's stories are almost always told in the first person by a young career woman who relies on her own resources in solving a mystery that in some way threatens her plans for marriage or brings a temporary halt to a romantic relationship. Often, the young woman was orphaned at an early age or became separated from one parent, usually the father. Reared with few if any siblings by adoptive parents, a single mother, or an aging female relative, the heroine is, by the age of twenty-seven or so, left without the emotional or financial support of family. Forced into an independent lifestyle, the heroine becomes involved in intrigue involving either her own unknown background or that of others. While sex is not prominent in the novels, there is always a man, very important to the heroine, who may or may not participate in solving the mystery. One romantic relationship is often terminated soon after the mystery presents itself, but by the novel's end marriage is imminent between the heroine and a man who has proved himself worthy by protecting her from physical danger.

All the young women in Johnston's novels are subject to real human emotions; they are not immune to feelings of doubt, fear, exhaustion, and the like. They are all women of character who serve as good examples for young women readers. In addition, these characters are engaged in a variety of professions. They travel, in many cases alone and always without hesitation, to any setting that might be required to solve the problem that faces them.

Johnston's own extensive travels served her well in her writings. She used knowledge gained from her foreign travels in novels such as *Deveron Hall* (1976), which takes place in Scotland, and *Masquerade in Venice* (1973) and *The Etruscan Smile* (1977), both set in Italy. She did not limit her heroines to one locale in

novels that take place in the United States. Although many heroines are based in the New York area, they may end up in Nevada or New Mexico. Johnston used settings in California, Maine, Cape Cod, and Florida, among others. History was important to Johnston. The siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War forms the backdrop for *The House on the Left Bank* (1975). This novel's protagonist, Martha Hathaway, seeks to create for herself a life different from that of her mother, who is the mistress of a French aristocrat. Johnston effectively uses the mystery story to provide fictional role models for young women. Her heroines are women who, in spite of inner struggle, meet the intellectual challenges and the tests of character presented when their lives are interrupted by a personal crisis.

THE PEOPLE FROM THE SEA

In *The People from the Sea* (1979), Diana Garson, alone and with few prospects, very much wants marriage and a family. She becomes involved, platonically at first, with a neighbor in her Manhattan brownstone. When Diana, an editor of children's books, suffers a mild nervous breakdown, the neighbor, David Corway, persuades her to rent a house in the Hamptons so that she can recuperate near the sea, away from the city's hectic pace.

The house Diana rents was once owned and occupied by the wealthy Woodhull family, three members of which had died in a tragic boat accident some twenty-five years earlier. Diana cannot explain why she sees and speaks with the dead victims, whose photographs she has found in the attic of the house. The Woodhulls become Diana's family, and her obsession with them drives a wedge between her and David. Diana is determined to solve the mystery surrounding the deaths of the Woodhulls—and thereby confirm her sanity—before she will consent to marry David. Her persistence and courage pay off, and the murderer of the Woodhull family is pressured into revealing herself.

THE OTHER KAREN

Catherine Mayhew, heroine of *The Other Karen* (1983), seeks to expose the murderers of a wealthy elderly woman whose closest relative and heir, her granddaughter Karen, left home as a young girl. Catherine, an aspiring New York actress, is hired by the woman's

greedy relatives to impersonate Karen, assuring her that by so doing she will be performing a worthy service: making the old woman's final days happy. While succeeding in the deception, Catherine soon discovers, with the help of Karen's former boyfriend, that the relatives have had other motives in hiring her. When the elderly woman dies, Catherine and Karen's friend travel throughout the United States, following lead after lead, in search of the real Karen. Catherine exemplifies the intelligent, courageous young woman whose character will not allow her to retreat when a serious injustice has occurred.

THE STONE MAIDEN

The Stone Maiden (1980) features Katherine Derwith, who, having been abandoned and then adopted as an infant, is determined to learn the identity of her natural parents. She feels compelled to do so before proceeding with her plans for marriage to a young man whose wealth and social position might be compromised by her true origin. Her quest soon brings an end to the relationship, but Katherine pursues all available possibilities, and in the end she finds love with a man whose father, like hers, played a role in a secret project involving Nazi officers during World War II. Katherine's determination to solve the mystery, in spite of the physical danger and the potential termination of her marriage plans, is typical of the integrity exhibited by Johnston's heroines.

VOICES IN THE NIGHT

Carla Baron, in *Voices in the Night* (1984), is a young widow who lives in Manhattan, where she is an editor of children's books. She is awakened in the night by telephone calls in which the voice of Neil, her dead husband, asks her to come back to him. Carla returns to the Arizona setting where she and her late husband and both their families had made their homes. On her own initiative and without assistance, she finds her husband alive and well in a village in Mexico, but because he knows nothing of the telephone calls that brought her there, she continues to search for the source of the calls and the motive behind them. For a while, she suspects her cousin Mahlon, just released from jail, may be the culprit, but that guess, so similar to those of other Johnston heroines who suspect the wrong person, proves false. Meanwhile, Mike Trent,

to whom she is engaged, arrives from New York to help her. Without his knowledge she returns to the spot where her husband ostensibly drowned, but when she sees him, she concludes that he was responsible for the mysterious phone calls and flees in panic. She loses him in a subsequent car chase and goes to see her sister Jennifer. To her surprise, Jennifer confesses that she was jealous of Carla and had made the phone calls. She now plans to kill Carla at the site of Neil's drowning and to stage it as a suicide. Before she can accomplish her design, Mike returns and, after forcing Carla's car off the road, overpowers Jennifer, who runs away. After Jennifer commits suicide, Carla and Mike return to New York.

SHADOW BEHIND THE CURTAIN

In *Shadow Behind the Curtain* (1985), Deborah Channing's life changes after the deaths of her wealthy stepfather and, only a short time later, her mother. She discovers that she has very little money and also finds that her father, of whom she has only faint memories, has been in prison for more than twenty years, having been convicted of the murder of a child. After she tells her fiancé about her father, he breaks their engagement. She then travels to New Mexico, and after one interview with her father, she is convinced of his innocence and proceeds to attempt to find the real murderer. When the townspeople she interviews, including the sheriff, reveal their belief in her father's innocence, she pushes her investigation further. There are, of course, some suspects who might be a murderer, and she even visits Beersheba, a religious colony, but the real murderer is someone who seemed above suspicion. Lawrence Gainsworth, a wealthy man in the town, has been sending Deborah's father books and being supportive, but his friendship and generosity turn out to be motivated by guilt. His daughter, Rachel, is a disturbed young woman whose paintings reveal a dual personality, and when Deborah visits her, Rachel attacks her. Ben Farrel, the sheriff, arrives just in time to save Deborah. In true romance fashion, he promises to look her up in New York. Once again, the intrepid heroine is rescued by a man.

THE HOUSE ON BOSTWICK SQUARE

In *The House on Bostwick Square* (1987), Laura Parrington, the destitute widow of Richard Parrington,

exiled by his family to America, travels to London with her daughter Lily to stay with her husband's family. Her aim is to discover why Richard was sent to America and supported there. There are several formidable obstacles in her past, among them the entire Parrington family, who are unwilling to even discuss him. At one point Clive, Richard's older stepbrother, even offers her fifty thousand pounds to return to the United States. His offer is partly motivated by the fact that he has fallen in love with her, but a marriage would bring too much pain to the family. Cornelia Slate, Lady Parrington's companion, is also an adversary because she is in love with Clive and wants to see a potential rival out of the way. After Laura is injured while in the family park, she is treated by the handsome Dr. Malverne, who introduces her to charity work with destitute women who desire to learn sewing, one of Laura's talents. Through her work, Laura meets Belle Mulroney, a singer with whom Richard had an affair and a daughter. Unfortunately, Belle is unable to answer Laura's questions about Richard's exile.

Aggie Thompson, whom Laura had seen at the family park, knows the truth about Richard but wants money. Before Laura can get the money to her, Lily becomes sick, and the women in the household move to the family estate at Walmsley, where the answer is disclosed. After giving Laura poison, Lady Parrington, who had become very fond of Lily, tells Laura that Lily's sickness was caused by poison meant for her. She further reveals that Richard, who had inherited psychological problems from his father, who was hanged for killing a woman, had killed Aggie Thompson's daughter. Clive and a pharmacist fortunately arrive in time to save Laura, and Lady Parrington is hospitalized.

Laura's role in the denouement may seem passive, but she is also intrepid, teaching sewing classes at night in a dangerous part of town, and her determination to work, foreign to the aristocratic notions of the Parringtons, marks her as an individual. She is also politically active, supporting women's issues and "the New Women," as Sir Joseph Parrington describes them. This historical romance has a decidedly political bent as Johnston details the problems women have with occupational hazards such as "phossy-jaw," a common debilitating ailment caused by poor working conditions.

Paula Lannert

Updated by Thomas L. Erskine

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1967-1975 • *Along a Dark Path*, 1967; *A Howling in the Woods*, 1968; *House Above Holly-wood*, 1968; *I Came to the Castle*, 1969 (also known as *Castle Perilous*); *The Light in the Swamp*, 1970; *The Phantom Cottage*, 1970; *The Face in the Shadows*, 1971; *The People on the Hill*, 1971 (also known as *Circle of Evil*); *The Late Mrs. Fonsell*, 1972; *The Mourning Trees*, 1972; *Masquerade in Venice*, 1973; *The White Pavilion*, 1973; *I Came to the Highlands*, 1974; *A Room with Dark Mirrors*, 1975; *The House on the Left Bank*, 1975

1976-1980 • *Deveron Hall*, 1976; *The Frenchman*, 1976; *The Etruscan Smile*, 1977; *Never Call It Love*, 1978 (as Jason); *The House Before Midnight*, 1978; *The People from the Sea*, 1979; *The Silver Dolphin*, 1979; *A Presence in an Empty Room*, 1980; *The Stone Maiden*, 1980

1981-2001 • *So Wild a Heart*, 1981 (as Jason); *The Fateful Summer*, 1981; *Wild Winds of Love*, 1982 (as Jason); *The Other Karen*, 1983; *Voices in the Night*, 1984; *Shadow Behind the Curtain*, 1985; *The Crystal Cat*, 1985; *Fatal Affair*, 1986; *The Girl on the Beach*, 1987; *The House on Bostwick Square*, 1987; *The Man at Windemere*, 1988; *Flight to Yesterday*, 1990; *The Underground Stream*, 1991; *House of Illusion*, 2001

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The Armchair Detective. Review of *The Crystal Cat*, by Velda Johnston. 19 (Fall, 1986): 360. Summary of the plot plus comments on the relationship between Johnston and other writers in the genre.

Dunn, Kathryn. Review of *Fatal Affair*, by Velda Johnston. *School Library Journal* 33 (November, 1986): 113. Reviewer feels that Guy, the male lead, is presented ambiguously, suggesting he may be the villain. That ambiguity is a staple in Johnston's work.

Henderson, Leslie. *Twentieth-Century Romance and Historical Writers*. 2d ed. Detroit: St. James Press, 1996. Stresses the middle-class backgrounds of the Johnston heroines and notes that they often have

recently experienced tragedy or mishaps that initiate the action.

Levine, Susan. Review of *The Shadow Behind the Curtain*, by Velda Johnston. *School Library Journal* 31 (May, 1985): 114. Sympathetic summary of the novel with some reservations about Deborah's "mousiness," ignoring Deborah's visiting hostile territory, getting shot at, and staying alone in a house and experiencing a break-in.

Smothers, Joyce. Review of *Never Call It Love*, by Veronica Jason. *Library Journal*, 103 (December 1,

1978): 245. Positive review of the work, which calls it a "sweet savage swashbuckler" that is "slightly sadomasochistic."

Wilson Library Bulletin. Review of *Shadow Behind the Curtain*, by Velda Johnston. 59 (May, 1985): 613. Reviewer believes the theme of the book has been done better by P. D. James and finds very little "detecting" in the novel, which is described as possessing "passable romantic suspense."

K

STUART M. KAMINSKY

Born: Chicago, Illinois; September 29, 1934

Types of plot: Private investigator; police procedural;
cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Toby Peters, 1977-

Inspector Rostnikov, 1981-

Abe Lieberman, 1992-

Lew Fonesca, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

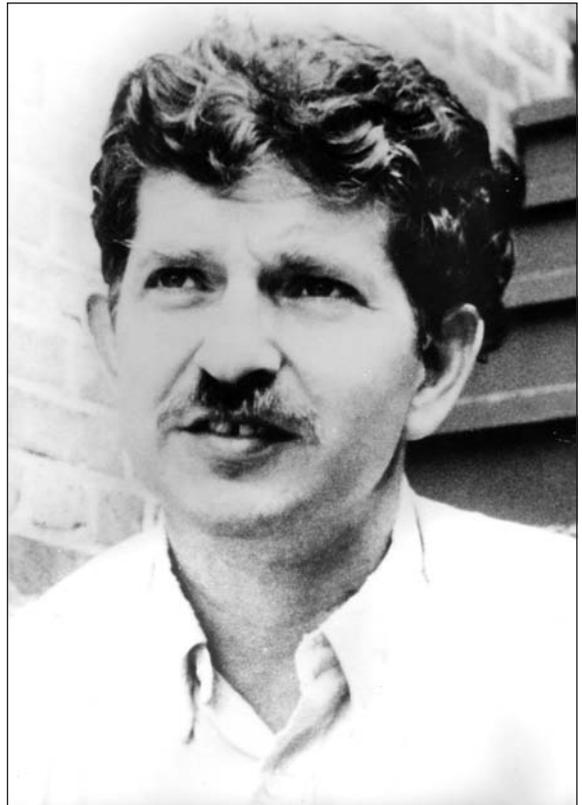
TOBY PETERS, whose real name is Pevsner, is a former security officer for Warner Bros. Studio. Fired for roughing up a Western star in self-defense, Toby survives by becoming a cut-rate private eye and begins working for various film stars of the 1940's or their studios. Toby's living and office conditions are not the best, but he manages. He is Jewish, but he has changed his name and does not admit to being Jewish, which upsets his brother. Although Toby can talk and act like a tough guy, he has a sense of the ridiculous that breaks through and frequently turns what could be a serious situation into a comical one.

INSPECTOR PORFIRY PETROVICH ROSTNIKOV, a Russian in his fifties, was created as a tribute to the detective in Fyodor Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886). Rostnikov is not Jewish, but his wife is, and he exhibits a kind of Jewish sensibility. He is a basically decent man who genuinely cares about other people, but because of political pressures and influences, he must tread carefully. Because he does not always follow procedure, he is regarded with suspicion by his superiors and the KGB. Rostnikov limps because of a war wound, and his outlook is frequently bleak.

ABE LIEBERMAN is a crotchety but shrewd Chicago police detective in his sixties. His stories, rich in cyni-

cism, are also rich in Jewish tradition and culture. Lieberman is deeply concerned with God's justice as based on the Talmud, and his culture is sometimes brought to the forefront by his interactions with his Irish Catholic partner. Lieberman is a deeply moral man who prefers to try to work things out without using his gun. Life is frequently difficult for Lieberman, and he feels a sense of frustration that he cannot change some familial relationships.

LEW FONESCA is a depressed widower whose wife was killed in a senseless automobile accident. He tries



Stuart M. Kaminsky. (Carol Slingo/Courtesy, Charles Scribner's Sons)

to do things for other people to make himself happier. Lew is Italian, but he is surrounded by Jewish characters and has a kind of Jewish sense of guilt. He lives in Sarasota, Florida, not because he chose it, but because that is where his car died. He makes a meager living working as a process server and a cut-rate private eye. His therapist wants him to lose his guilt and begin living rather than existing, but Lew continues to plod through life and all the curves that it tosses him.

CONTRIBUTION

Like his detective characters, Stuart M. Kaminsky is a modest and somewhat unassuming person who is capable of turning his sense of humor on himself and his work. His novel settings include the East Coast, Midwest, West Coast, and Russia. Since 1977, he has kept his reading audience engrossed in and entertained by his fictional homicides, which include hilarity at various junctures. Kaminsky has made being a Jewish writer who writes about Jewish detectives and Jewish culture acceptable. In his works, he explores the Jewish faith and its morality and uses the contrast between social and moral justice to make philosophical points about issues. His Jewishness has endeared him to many others in the American Jewish community largely because of the dialogues he opens and the sympathetic way in which he presents Jewish characters to a Gentile audience.

Kaminsky has often been nominated for various mystery awards, and in 1989 he received an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for *A Cold Red Sunrise* (1988). In 2006, the same organization named him Grand Master in recognition of a lifetime of achievement. Kaminsky's works include more than sixty books plus screenplays, textbooks on film and television writing, and a number of biographies of film stars. With all of these accomplishments, Kaminsky does have one unrealized ambition: Although he has received good reviews, respect, and awards, and his works have always sold well, he has never had a book on a best-seller list. He hopes that having been named Grand Master will help him achieve this goal. He has been called a writer's writer and an excessively nice guy.

One reason that Kaminsky is so successful is be-

cause he has broadened the definition of mystery. He feels that there is a mystery in every good novel in that there is always some question that the main character must answer. When he wrote the first Toby Peters book, *Bullet for a Star* (1977), he altered the format of the classic, hard-boiled detective novel by using a lighthearted approach that earned him a special place in the pantheon of mystery writers.

BIOGRAPHY

Stuart Melvin Kaminsky was born in Chicago in 1934 to Leo Kaminsky and Dorothy Kaminsky. His grandfathers were émigrés to the United States; one was originally from Lithuania and the other, from the Ukraine. The Lithuanian grandfather was a businessman who became a successful junk man in Chicago. One grandfather was an Orthodox Jew and the other, a communist.

After Kaminsky graduated from Marshall High School, his father opened a grocery store on the north side of Chicago, and the family moved to Albany Park. It was during his childhood that Kaminsky first became interested in writing when he read a children's mystery series published by Whitman Publishers. The books featured movie stars who solved crimes as themselves. That series, very popular in the 1930's and 1940's, probably provided Kaminsky with the inspiration for his Toby Peters series. In the Peters books, Toby solves cases for studios and famous stars of the 1940's. The Whitman books may also account for Kaminsky's lifelong interest in American film.

Kaminsky has a bachelor of science degree in journalism and an master of arts degree in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a doctorate in speech from Northwestern University. He taught at Northwestern from 1973 until 1989, serving as both professor and chair of the film division. During that time, in addition to his own writing, he helped Sara Paretsky, then a student in one of his classes, become a professional writer. From his 1957 marriage to Merle Gordon, he is father to three children: Peter, Toby, and Lucy. Kaminsky and his second wife, Enid Perll, have a daughter, Natasha.

Kaminsky moved to Sarasota to accept a job as founding director of the Graduate Conservatory in Film

and Television for Florida State University. When the conservatory left Sarasota and moved to Tallahassee in 1994, Kaminsky decided to retire from academia and devote his time to writing.

ANALYSIS

Stuart M. Kaminsky does research for his books in many ways: He has done ride-alongs with the police in Chicago, Moscow, and other cities; he gets information from his police contacts in Chicago and Russia; and he makes wide use of the Internet, magazines, and newspapers. All this research is one reason that so many people admire his knowledge of police procedure.

Although Kaminsky's first mystery novel was published in 1977, it was set in 1940, within the same time period as that of the mysteries that he enjoyed reading as a youngster. The Toby Peters series, his first and longest, is definitely inspired by his early reading, but he has adapted the concept of the Whitman books for adults. One of the strongest points about the Peters novels is the atmosphere of their time period. Were it not for the occasional strange twists in the plot, these books could be prime examples of film noir in manuscript form. Kaminsky's novels are well plotted and the clues are presented fairly; however, there are still surprises waiting in their resolutions. In addition, the seeds of concerns to come are planted within the first novel of the series in that Toby is preoccupied by thoughts of what it means to be Jewish, although he would deny this preoccupation. The beatings that Toby takes are physically hard on him, but they may do him a great deal of psychological good because he feels that he deserves them. Physical punishment assuages his guilt.

MURDER ON THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Kaminsky's second Toby Peters title, *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road* (1977), was the one that called attention to his series. He based the novel on *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), one of the most popular films of all time and one of his favorites. In this novel, Toby must solve the murder of an actor who played a Munchkin on the set, a year after the film was released. Characters range from historical film stars and directors to fictional characters. Kaminsky captures young Judy

Garland on paper as perfectly as she was ever captured on film, even down to the "sob" in her voice. His sympathy for his leading characters is obvious in this work.

A COLD RED SUNRISE

A Cold Red Sunrise (1988), the fifth novel in the Inspector Porfiry Petrovich Rostnikov series, won both an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America and the French Prix du Roman d'Aventure for best mystery novel. In *A Cold Red Sunrise*, Rostnikov travels to the Siberian village of Tumsk to investigate the death of Commissar Ilya Rutkin, who died while looking into the death of Karla, the daughter of dissident Lev Samsonov. The suspects are numerous and the plot undergoes many twists and turns. However, Rostnikov is a man with a conscience and strength of character. He demonstrates these traits in his finely balanced life and career by figuring out ways to administer justice based on real justice and not on party politics.

The Rostnikov books are much more mature than the early Toby Peters books and the solutions are frequently ingenious. As with the majority of well-written series, it is not necessary to read the works in order, but it is helpful because each character has a history that cannot be summarized completely in each volume. For example, those who read the series from the start know that Rostnikov is the indirect victim of anti-Semitism because his wife is Jewish and that his son, who is in the Russian Army, is sent to troubled areas and kept there in an effort to force Rostnikov to toe the party line. Despite all this, Rostnikov manages to keep his self-respect and achieve personal satisfaction by using morality rather than relying on procedure.

NOT QUITE KOSHER

Not Quite Kosher (2002), the seventh novel in the Abe Lieberman series, contains a bit of Jewish stereotyping. Lieberman, white haired and in his sixties, with a face a little like a sad hound dog, carries around his load of Jewish guilt at all times. A police detective, Lieberman is fully aware of what the police do and how they work, although Kaminsky occasionally either exaggerates, ignores, or slightly misrepresents police procedure. Lieberman operates in Chicago, Kaminsky's birthplace, and the city's sounds, sights, and atmosphere

form the backdrop for this series. In what is possibly Kaminsky's most philosophical series, Lieberman and his partner, Detective Hanrahan, frequently take the opportunity to express their philosophical beliefs and discuss what constitutes "evil." These discussions are often deep and thought provoking. In *Not Quite Kosher*, Lieberman must solve two murders and deal with his partner's marriage, his grandson's bar mitzvah, his synagogue's fund-raising committee, his high cholesterol, and a roof that needs repair. Somehow, Lieberman perseveres and manages to overcome, and that is Kaminsky's tribute to the human spirit.

LEW FONESCA SERIES

Set in Sarasota, Kaminsky's home, the Lew Fonesca series focuses on the life of Lew, a former Chicagoan who is working as a process server and sometimes turns private eye to help others. Lew is severely depressed about the death of his wife, a prosecutor, who was killed by a hit-and-run driver. In *Always Say Goodbye* (2006), Lew attempts to track down the man who killed her, an action suggested in earlier novels in the series. This series has not quite found itself, but no doubt Kaminsky will continue working on it and the other series. To keep his series new and fresh, he puts them away for years at a time when he senses that they are about to go stale.

H. Alan Pickrell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TOBY PETERS SERIES: *Bullet for a Star*, 1977; *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road*, 1977; *You Bet Your Life*, 1978; *The Howard Hughes Affair*, 1979; *Never Cross a Vampire*, 1980; *High Midnight*, 1981; *Catch a Falling Clown*, 1981; *He Done Her Wrong*, 1983; *The Fala Factor*, 1984; *Down for the Count*, 1985; *The Man Who Shot Lewis Vance*, 1986; *Smart Moves*, 1986; *Think Fast, Mr. Peters*, 1987; *Buried Caesars*, 1989; *Poor Butterfly*, 1990; *The Melting Clock*, 1991; *The Devil Met a Lady*, 1993; *Tomorrow Is Another Day*, 1995; *Dancing in the Dark*, 1996; *A Fatal Glass of Beer*, 1997; *A Few Minutes Past Midnight*, 2001; *To Catch a Spy*, 2002; *Mildred Pierced*, 2003; *Now You See It*, 2004

INSPECTOR PORFIRY PETROVICH ROSTNIKOV SERIES: *Rostnikov's Corpse*, 1981 (also known as

Death of a Dissident); *Black Knight in Red Square*, 1984; *Red Chameleon*, 1985; *A Fine Red Rain*, 1987; *A Cold Red Sunrise*, 1988; *Rostnikov's Vacation*, 1991; *The Man Who Walked Like a Bear*, 1990; *Death of a Russian Priest*, 1992; *Hard Currency*, 1995; *Blood and Rubles*, 1996; *Tarnished Icons*, 1997; *The Dog Who Bit a Policeman*, 1998; *Fall of a Cosmonaut*, 2000; *Murder on the Trans-Siberian Express*, 2001

ABE LIEBERMAN SERIES: *Lieberman's Folly*, 1991; *Lieberman's Choice*, 1993; *Lieberman's Day*, 1994; *Lieberman's Thief*, 1995; *Lieberman's Law*, 1996; *The Big Silence*, 2000; *Not Quite Kosher*, 2002; *The Last Dark Place*, 2004; *Terror Town*, 2006; *The Dead Don't Lie*, 2007

LEW FONESCA SERIES: *Vengeance*, 1999; *Retribution*, 2001; *Midnight Pass*, 2003; *Denial*, 2005; *Always Say Goodbye*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *When the Dark Man Calls*, 1983; *Exercise in Terror*, 1985; *The Green Bottle*, 1996; *Devil on My Doorstep*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Hidden, and Other Stories*, 1999

PLAY: *Here Comes the Interesting Part*, pr. 1968

SCREENPLAYS: *Last Minute Marriage*, 1974 (with Steve Fagin); *A Black and White Film in Sound and Color*, 1976; *Once Upon a Time in America*, 1984 (with others)

NONFICTION: *Clint Eastwood*, 1974; *American Film Genres: Approaches to a Critical Theory of Popular Film*, 1974; *Don Siegel, Director*, 1974; *John Huston: Maker of Magic*, 1978; *Coop: The Life and Legend of Gary Cooper*, 1980; *Basic Filmmaking*, 1981 (with Dana Hogdgon); *American Television Genres*, 1984; *Writing for Television*, 1988 (with Mark Walker); *Behind the Mystery: Top Mystery Writers Interviewed*, 2005

EDITED TEXTS: *Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism*, 1975 (with Joseph F. Hill); *Mystery in the Sunshine State: Florida Short Stories*, 1999; *Mystery Writers of America Presents Show Business Is Murder*, 2004

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- Browne, Ray B. "The Ethnic Detective: Arthur W. Upfield, Tony Hillerman, and Beyond." In vol. 2 of *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks and Maureen Carrigan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998. An extensive entry concerning the unique challenges and problems of ethnic detective fiction that mentions Kaminsky and his characters by name, but is more of a general, but very useful, introduction to the concept.
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- Murphy, Bruce. *Encyclopedia of Murder and Mystery*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 1999. Includes positive evaluations of Kaminsky and all his characters as well as explanations for and definitions of his detective genres.
- Rife, Susan. "Mr. Mystery: Stuart Kaminsky Recently Was Honored as a Grand Master by Mystery Writers of America." *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, August 30, 2006, p. E1. This profile of Kaminsky on the occasion of his being named Grand Master looks at his present life in Sarasota and his life as a writer.
- "Stuart Kaminsky: *A Cold Red Sunrise*." In *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook 1989*, edited by Roger Matus. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1989. A literary critique of *A Cold Red Sunrise*, part of the Inspector Rostnikov series.

H. R. F. KEATING**Henry Reymond Fitzwalter Keating**

Born: St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex (now in East Sussex), England; October 31, 1926

Also wrote as Evelyn Hervey

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth; historical; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Ghote, 1964-

Harriet Unwin, 1983-

Inspector Harriet Martens, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GANESH GHOTE is an inspector on the police force of Bombay, India. The son of a schoolmaster, he ap-

pears to be in his thirties at the beginning of the series. He resides in a "neat new house in Government Quarters" with his wife, Protima, and son, Ved (five years old at the beginning of the series and the apple of his eye). By dint of hard work, determination, and good luck, he prevails against the forces of evil.

HARRIET UNWIN is a young governess in Victorian London—1870 at the start of the series. She grew up in an orphan asylum with Mary Vilkins, who appears as her best friend throughout the series. She becomes a sleuth to clear herself when she comes under suspicion of murder and thereafter uses her talents to help her friends.

DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR HARRIET MARTENS,

who is nicknamed “the hard detective” for the nonsense persona she must adopt to survive in the male-dominated environment of British law enforcement, must constantly prove her mettle in both her professional and personal lives.

CONTRIBUTION

H. R. F. Keating’s Inspector Ghote novels form his greatest contribution to detective fiction. They are fascinating because of their exotic background, being mostly set in Bombay (Mumbai) or other parts of India; because of their willingness to deal with social issues; and because of the character of Ghote himself. The reader sympathizes with the inspector as he tries to use his rather ordinary talents to cope with the problems his superiors call on him to solve. He must strive hard to preserve his own dignity and integrity and at the same time to meet the outrageous demands made on him by his superiors. Keating’s readers identify with him, suffer with him, and feel triumphant when he succeeds.

Keating has also written a number of other crime novels, including the Harriet Unwin series he published under the pseudonym of Evelyn Hervey. He is a great connoisseur of the genre, as revealed by his many reviews of crime novels for *The Times of London* and the excellent critical works on the subject he has written and edited.

Keating often has been recognized for his work in the genre: among other honors he has won the Crime Writers’ Association’s Gold Dagger Award and the Mystery Writers of America’s Edgar Allan Poe Award for *The Perfect Murder* (1964), a second Edgar Award for his nonfictional study *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His World* (1979), a second Gold Dagger Award for *The Murder of the Maharajah* (1980), and the Crime Writers’ Association’s Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement in 1996. He was given a Malic Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2005.

BIOGRAPHY

Henry Reymond Fitzwalter Keating was born on October 31, 1926, in St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, England, the son of schoolmaster John Hervey Keating and Muriel Marguerita Clews Keating. He attended Merchant Taylor’s School in London from 1940 to

1944, after which he served in the British army from 1945 until 1948, rising to the rank of acting lance corporal. Subsequently, he attended Trinity College, Dublin, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in 1952. He married actress Sheila Mary Mitchell in 1952, and the couple has three sons, Simon, Piers, and Hugo, and one daughter, Bryony. Following graduation from college, Keating worked as a subeditor on a Wiltshire newspaper, the *Evening Advertiser*, for three years (1952-1955). Afterward, he moved to London, where he worked for the *Daily Telegraph* (1955-1957) and *The Times* (1958-1960).

Keating’s first mystery novel, *Death and the Visiting Firemen*, appeared in 1959 and his second, *Zen There Was Murder*, in 1960. The first Inspector Ghote novel, *The Perfect Murder* (1964), brought him great acclaim, including the Gold Dagger Award and the Edgar Allan Poe Award. Since he began writing fiction, Keating has been extremely prolific, publishing an Inspector Ghote novel almost every year. With the beginning of the twenty-first century, Keating turned away from his most popular creation to begin a new series featuring Detective Chief Inspector Harriet Martens. Since her debut in *The Hard Detective* (2000), the Martens character has appeared on an almost annual basis.

Keating has also written a number of other novels—including a historical mystery series under the pseudonym Evelyn Hervey—as well as short stories, radio plays, a screenplay, and several full-length nonfictional works, most of which deal with crime and mystery fiction, including *Murder Must Appetize* (1975), *Great Crimes* (1982), *Writing Crime Fiction* (1986), and *Crime and Mystery: The One Hundred Best Books* (1987). Keating, who has edited a number of books, has contributed articles to such publications as *Dictionary of National Biography*, *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, *Great Detective Stories*, and *Top Crime*. His short stories have appeared in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* and *Blackwood’s* and have been frequently anthologized.

The crime-book reviewer for *The Times* of London from 1967 to 1983, Keating has received the plaudits of his peers both for his fiction and for his critical works on the detective story. He garnered the 1970

short-story prize from *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, has collected two Edgar Awards, two Gold Dagger Awards, and the Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement. A longtime member of the Crime Writers Association (chair, 1970-1971), Keating also belongs to the Society of Authors (chair, 1982-1984) and the Detection Club (president, 1985).

ANALYSIS

Apart from native words that are frequent and unavoidable in describing his milieu, Inspector Ghote's Indian English differs from standard English in the use of progressive verb forms where simple present or past tenses would normally be used. "Yes, sir, I am very well knowing," and "Yes, Sheriff Sahib, I am very well understanding," Ghote typically says. The investigator also often omits articles ("a," "the"), and in general there is an old-fashioned formality and stiffness about Ghote's English. Similarly, American and other foreign characters in H. R. F. Keating's books speak quaintly.

Keating walks a narrow line in his depiction of Ghote's professional naïveté and his depiction of Indian conditions in general. He often strikes a humorous note but without malice. It is difficult to depict conditions of ignorance and corruption without being contemptuous or patronizing, but Keating manages it. The inclusion of the Swedish criminologist in the first volume was a masterstroke, as he is portrayed as being more naïve than Ghote in many ways, and this helps to remove racial overtones from the satire.

In the first novel of the series, Ghote faces the odds he must battle again and again in different circumstances throughout the series. Rich and powerful men can do as they wish, and they ride roughshod over those who are less fortunate. The bureaucrats in the police department kowtow to the rich and powerful, and they expect their subordinates to do so as well. These chiefs issue confused and arbitrary orders that are all but impossible to carry out. The small man who tries to do his best must live in constant fear of reprisals if he dares to stand up against them and risks demotion or dismissal if he is not successful at impossible tasks he is assigned. Although Ghote is often quaking with fear, he maintains his integrity.

Keating is skillful at describing the rich and power-

ful and exposing their weaknesses and vanities. The minister of police in *The Perfect Murder* rules his little empire with an iron hand but is an arrant philanderer behind the scenes. Although Lala Varde was the person who reported the crime, he is very uncooperative toward Ghote, treating him in a most disdainful and contemptuous manner, refusing to answer any questions and putting obstacles in his path when he attempts to question other members of the household. Varde frequently threatens to have Ghote demoted for insolence. The maharajah in *The Murder of the Maharajah* has two wives and a number of concubines, cheats at chess, and plays cruel practical jokes on his subjects and guests. The swami in *Go West, Inspector Ghote* (1981) is almost too horrendously credible as the guru who presides over a cult. The sheriff in *The Sheriff of Bombay* (1984), although a popular figure and a cricketer of note, frequents the brothels in a run-down section of the city. "His Excellency" Surinder Mehta in *The Body in the Billiard Room* (1987), who sets great store by the methods of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, tries to tell Ghote how to conduct his investigation and is unable to bear the ignominy of being beaten at golf by him.

Keating does not spare his compatriots. The resident adviser in *The Murder of the Maharajah* is as irrational and inconsiderate in his commands to his underlings as are Ghote's superiors. The rock singer, Johnny Bull, in *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock* (1968), manifests his own type of arrogance and unconscionable behavior.

Often Ghote suffers embarrassments and indignities in the course of his inquiries. In *The Perfect Murder*, for example, while in pursuit of a suspect, he is hit over the head by the proprietor of a stall containing scent bottles, and he knocks over the stall. In *Inspector Ghote's Good Crusade* (1966), he trips and falls on his face while running after a small boy. On none of his cases does he suffer more indignities than he does in *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock*, which takes place in London. He is manhandled by a moronic thug and saved by a smug constable, who sends him home on a bus; he is snubbed by a Scotland Yard inspector when he thinks that he is giving him valuable information; he is harassed by children, soaked to the skin, and uri-

nated on by a dog while keeping watch on suspicious premises; and he comes down with a cold just when he must read a speech to an assemblage of international dignitaries.

As the series continues, Ghote's personal life comes into the foreground. In a burst of misplaced generosity he squanders five hundred rupees he had been saving to buy his wife a refrigerator in *Inspector Ghote's Good Crusade*. When he goes to London in *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock*, relatives of his Bengali wife besiege him to help them locate a missing girl. In *Bats Fly Up for Inspector Ghote* (1974), he becomes extremely jealous of a well-to-do neighbor whom his wife is constantly praising. In *The Sheriff of Bombay*, his wife, Protima, is upset when she finds reading material that their son Ved, now thirteen, has hidden away. In *Under a Monsoon Cloud* (1986), he faces a moral dilemma when it appears that he must either perjure himself or tell the truth and face dismissal from the force.

Ghote's exploits are not limited to Bombay. In *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock*, he is sent to England to substitute for a high-ranking official at an international drug-enforcement conference. In *Inspector Ghote Goes by Train* (1971), he must bring back a prisoner from Calcutta, while in *Inspector Ghote Draws a Line* (1979) he is sent to a remote corner of India to protect a judge whose life has been threatened. In *Go West, Inspector Ghote*, he travels to California to rescue a girl who has come under the sway of a swami. In *The Body in the Billiard Room*, he goes on a special assignment to the hill station of Ootacamund in the mountains of southern India, where he resides at what was once a British officers' club, a remnant of British rule. Especially in the novels where Ghote travels to England and America, Keating is able to work the exotic setting in reverse. Here, readers are interested in the effect on Ghote of a setting more familiar to them than to him.

THE PERFECT MURDER

Keating hit his stride in 1964 with *The Perfect Murder*, the first of the Inspector Ghote series. All the elements that characterize the series are already present in this first volume. Ghote is a scrupulously honest, persistent, and hardworking inspector on the Bombay

police force. Although he is never clearly described, he appears to be small and not particularly prepossessing. He is hampered by the corruption, sloth, and incompetence of his colleagues and subordinates and is constantly hectored by his superiors, so that he must stand in constant fear of unjust demotion or dismissal.

Ghote is devoted to the scientific practice of criminology as laid down in a textbook titled *Criminal Investigation*, adapted from the German of Dr. Hans Gross (a book that he discovered in a bazaar). He has perused Gross's work so thoroughly that he knows many of its precepts by heart and is constantly quoting them. He frequently makes mistakes and is often placed in situations beyond his knowledge or abilities, but he sticks doggedly to his job and in the end succeeds—often, it must be admitted, because of good luck more than anything else.

This first novel of the series has an ambiguous title: Ghote is assigned to investigate the murder of the Parsi secretary, named Perfect, a rich businessman. To complicate his lot further, a Swedish criminologist from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Axel Svensson, who is investigating crime detection in developing countries, accompanies Ghote. Svensson's enthusiasm and ardent desire to learn everything there is to know about India cause Ghote great annoyance and embarrassment, particularly when the Swede is willing to believe that supernatural events can take place in the mysterious East.

When Ghote arrives on the scene of the supposed murder, he finds that the Parsi is still alive, though hovering on the brink of death. Throughout the novel Ghote lives in fear that the man will die, in which case Ghote will be under greater pressure to find the culprit. He meets only hostility from the members of the household of Perfect's employer. As this inquiry is progressing, he is informed that he is to give highest priority to another case, this one involving the theft of one rupee, worth at the time about twenty cents, from the drawer of the desk of the minister of police. Ex-postulating in vain, Ghote must hurry to the scene of the crime. Throughout the rest of the novel, he darts back and forth between the two cases, with the faithful Swede always in tow. When he finally gets home after a long night and day on duty, expecting to find solace,

his scolding wife is annoyed because he has stayed away so long. She has even coached their son, so that he is cold toward his father the next morning.

The rest of the novel is packed with action, some of it exciting, much of it hilarious. When Ghote finds that the only suspect in the rupee theft, a Goan, has disappeared, he sets out to find him in the crowded Goan district of Bombay, the eager Swede on his heels. Through good luck they locate him, but when they are unable to find the money or get him to confess, they leave in disgust. The next day, however, Ghote is commanded to arrest him, and this time they find him watching a trained white bull that tells fortunes. At the urging of the credulous Swede, the bull confirms that the Goan is a thief, and he confesses in terror that he has stolen other things from the minister but denies having stolen the rupee.

At the scene of the assault on Perfect, Ghote has trouble trying to interview the businessman's daughter-in-law. When she refuses to come forward, he is forced to search the women's quarters and eventually finds her hiding in a chest. He becomes convinced that the younger son is the culprit, but when Ghote tries to arrest him, the father helps the boy escape and leads Ghote and Svensson on a merry chase through the crowded bazaars of Bombay.

The search and chase scenes allow Keating the opportunity to include vivid descriptions of Bombay. This achievement is remarkable, considering that Keating visited India only after he had been writing Ghote novels for ten years. He derived his knowledge, he says, from reading about India and viewing films and television broadcasts. He is also a master at simulating the variety of English spoken in India.

THE MURDER OF THE MAHARAJAH

The Murder of the Maharajah is generally classified with the Inspector Ghote novels, although the action takes place in 1930 when India was still under British rule and thus before Inspector Ghote's time. In fact, Julian Symons has maintained that it "shows what Keating can do when free of Ghote." The work is linked with the Inspector Ghote novels, however, in an odd fashion, which is not revealed until the last page of the book.

Keating's plots are varied and generally well structured, although, as is only natural in such a prolific

output, some are more successful than others. Sometimes the exotic setting and the picturesque characters come close to eclipsing the plot.

Keating has stated that he uses crime fiction to say what he has to say, and that he believes that the crime novel is "every bit as useful as the straight novel . . . for saying things about the human condition." The theme that remains constant throughout the Inspector Ghote novels is that only occasionally can honest devotion to duty and compassion prevail against the arrogance of the rich and powerful, the corruption in all quarters of life, the imperfection of humankind.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

The Inspector Ghote series novel *Breaking and Entering* (2000) reintroduces a major character from the debut entry: UNESCO crime investigator Axel Svensson. Now a widower, Svensson has returned to Bombay, to relieve the depression caused by the long Swedish winter and the recent death of his wife. Riding on a tourist bus, Svensson manages to spot Ghote among the teeming masses in the city of thirteen million and immediately attaches himself like a limpet to the harried Indian inspector. Though he longs to be investigating the murder of millionaire Anil Ajmani, Ghote has been assigned a more pedestrian task: tracking down a cat burglar the press calls Yashwant (after a climbing lizard from Indian mythology), who specializes in stealthily scaling high-rise apartments where wealthy Indians sleep to steal single items of valuable jewelry. Patiently, the unimaginative but persistent detective—often accompanied by the large, inquisitive Swede who is unable to properly pronounce Indian names but often makes observations valuable to the investigation—questions a string of suspects. Eventually, Ghote stumbles on the jewel thief: a member of the powerful upper class who robbed for excitement but who would not be prosecuted for the crimes. The thief agrees to return the stolen jewelry, and having unsuccessfully cased the Ajmani residence, unwittingly supplies a clue to the rich man's murder. Ghote thus solves two of the Crime Branch's major cases, and by the end of the novel, it appears the detective will at last receive a long-awaited promotion.

Henry Kratz

Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR GHOTE SERIES: *The Perfect Murder*, 1964; *Inspector Ghote's Good Crusade*, 1966; *Inspector Ghote Caught in Meshes*, 1967; *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock*, 1968; *Inspector Ghote Plays a Joker*, 1969; *Inspector Ghote Breaks an Egg*, 1970; *Inspector Ghote Goes by Train*, 1971; *Inspector Ghote Trusts the Heart*, 1972; *Bats Fly Up for Inspector Ghote*, 1974; *Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote*, 1976; *Inspector Ghote Draws a Line*, 1979; *The Murder of the Maharajah*, 1980; *Go West, Inspector Ghote*, 1981; *The Sheriff of Bombay*, 1984; *Under a Monsoon Cloud*, 1986; *The Body in the Billiard Room*, 1987; *Dead on Time*, 1989; *The Iciest Sin*, 1990; *Cheating Death*, 1992; *Doing Wrong*, 1994; *Asking Questions*, 1996; *Bribery, Corruption Also*, 1999; *Breaking and Entering*, 2000

HARRIET UNWIN SERIES: *The Governess*, 1983; *The Man of Gold*, 1985; *Into the Valley of Death*, 1986

HARRIET MARTENS SERIES: *The Hard Detective*, 2000; *A Detective in Love*, 2001; *A Detective Under Fire*, 2002; *The Dreaming Detective*, 2003; *A Detective at Death's Door*, 2004; *One Man and His Bomb*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death and the Visiting Firemen*, 1959; *Zen There Was Murder*, 1960; *A Rush on the Ultimate*, 1961; *The Dog It Was That Died*, 1962; *Death of a Fat God*, 1963; *Is Skin-Deep, Is Fatal*, 1965; *A Remarkable Case of Burglary*, 1975; *The Lucky Alphonse*, 1982; *The Rich Detective*, 1993; *The Good Detective*, 1995; *The Bad Detective*, 1996; *The Soft Detective*, 1997; *Jack, the Lady Killer*, 1999

SHORT FICTION: *Mrs. Craggs: Crimes Cleared Up*, 1985; *In Kensington Gardens Once . . .*, 1997

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Strong Man*, 1971; *The Underside*, 1974; *A Long Walk to Wimbledon*, 1978

SCREENPLAY: *The Perfect Murder*, 1990 (with Zafar Hai)

RADIO PLAYS: *The Dog It Was That Died*, 1971; *The Affair at No. 35*, 1972; *Inspector Ghote and the All-Bad Man*, 1972; *Inspector Ghote Makes a Journey*, 1973; *Inspector Ghote and the River Man*, 1974

NONFICTION: *Understanding Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to "The Phenomenon of Man,"* 1969 (with Maurice Keating); *Murder Must Appetize*, 1975; *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His World*, 1979; *Great Crimes*, 1982; *Crime and Mystery: The One Hundred Best Books*, 1987; *Writing Crime Fiction*, 1987

EDITED TEXTS: *Blood on My Mind*, 1972; *Agatha Christie: First Lady of Crime*, 1977; *Crime Writers: Reflections on Crime Fiction*, 1978; *Whodunit? A Guide to Crime, Suspense, and Crime Fiction*, 1982; *The Best of Father Brown*, 1987; *The Man Who . . .*, 1992

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HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

Born: Chicago, Illinois; November 3, 1890

Died: Chicago, Illinois; January 22, 1967

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tuddleton Trotter, 1931-1947

Angus MacWhorter, 1941-1953

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

TUDDLETON TROTTER is an aged, unkempt, scruffy figure whose wisdom and insights into human motivations and psychology mark him as more than a mere detective. Socrates-like, contemptuous of society's exterior values, yet kind and compassionate, he merits the epithet "universal genius." His one passion is cats; a patron of the homeless felines, he loves them deeply and unconditionally.

ANGUS MACWHORTER, the proprietor of MacWhorter's Mammoth Motorized Shows, the Biggest Little Circus on Earth. A rumbled antihero detective,

he travels with his circus, unruffled by the crazy events that swirl about him. When an event of mysterious dimension occurs, however, he is able, through his "inspired lunacy," to unravel it.

CONTRIBUTION

Harry Stephen Keeler wrote more than seventy novels throughout his career and met with success in several countries, including Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, and the United States. His principal contribution to the mystery and detective genre is his bizarre "webwork novel," in which outlandish, melodramatic plots, subplots, and sub-subplots are piled atop one another. These intricate "webbings" grow into a dizzying pyramid of coincidences and interlocking connections—a plot that threatens to topple but that Keeler skillfully resolves. Keeler's mastery of plot has elicited awe and admiration from his loyal admirers. He is also known for his uncanny ability to mix humor and horror to stunning effect.

BIOGRAPHY

Harry Stephen Keeler was born in Chicago on November 3, 1890. While Keeler was still in his infancy, his father died. His mother soon remarried, this time to an unstable and irresponsible adventurer who gambled away her husband's legacy and soon afterward committed suicide. To provide for herself and her son, his mother began to operate an old-fashioned boarding-house that catered to a theatrical clientele. After her third marriage—to a husband who died within three years—the family was compelled to live on a meager income.

Young Harry pitched in to help his mother by shoveling snow and delivering an early-morning newspaper. An indifferent student, he boasted later that while grammar and rhetoric were being taught in his high school, he was playing hooky and fishing in Lake Michigan. In 1912, however, he obtained a degree in electrical engineering from Armour (later Illinois) Institute of Technology.

Employed as an electrician in a south Chicago steel mill, Keeler began writing short stories on the side. He sold his first crime story, "Victim No. 5," to *Young's Magazine* in 1914 for ten dollars. Keeler spent the next decade writing and selling dozens of his novellas and short stories to various detective pulp magazines.

In 1919, he was married to short-story writer Hazel Goodwin, who later became a crime writer herself and—especially in his later years—her husband's collaborator. Also in 1919, Keeler became an editor for *Ten-Story Book*, a position he held until 1940. The next breakthrough in his career was his selling his first book-length thriller to a British publisher. He continued to write novels for American, Spanish, British, and Portuguese audiences until his American publisher in 1957 refused to issue any more of his books. Unwilling to compromise his controversial style and content, Keeler turned to publishers abroad. His English editor also decided to stop issuing his books. In this final years, only Spanish and Portuguese publishers accepted his manuscripts.

In 1960, Hazel died. Keeler grieved so intensely over her death that he was unable to continue writing. It was not until his marriage to his former secretary, Thelma Rinoldo, in 1963 that he returned to the type-

writer. By now, his only audience was in Spain and Portugal, and finally his manuscripts were rejected even there. He died in 1967, convinced that his name and novels would someday be revived and that they would receive the adulation that he thought they deserved.

ANALYSIS

As Francis Nevins, his biographer, has chronicled, Harry Stephen Keeler began his writing career as early as 1910. His first efforts were conventional stories, one of which he sold, but after his success with his first crime story, "Victim No. 5," he began to write crime pieces almost exclusively. Nevins speculates that Keeler's tendency toward reflection and solitude were motivated by the disasters of his early life, and that this penchant led him to writing.

Typical of Keeler's early phase (1914-1924) is the outlandish plotting of "Victim No. 5." The story revolves around a certain Ivan Kossakoff, a professional strangler of women, whose punishment is to die by being crushed to death by his pet boa constrictor. Already in these early tales, certain features of what became a characteristically flamboyant, overdrawn, and bizarre content and style were beginning to emerge: the propensity for freaky, unbelievable characters; the penchant for absurdly incongruous plots and situations; a stringing together of metaphors and similes to create startlingly surreal images; and the use of preposterous surnames, on which Keeler puns almost adolescently—all done in a formal, Victorian, deadpan style, with dialogue reminiscent of penny Victorian novels.

THE VOICE OF THE SEVEN SPARROWS

In 1924, Keeler's literary career took a new turn: Hutchinson, a British publisher, brought out his first novel, *The Voice of the Seven Sparrows*. In this typically wild, unconventional novel, two rival Chicago newsmen are searching for a publisher's vanished daughter. Along the way, they encounter a Chinese millionaire who bets that he can walk across South America and a suitor who writes thousands of postcards in an attempt to find his lost lady.

THE SPECTACLES OF MR. CAGLIOSTRO

In another novel of this period, *The Spectacles of Mr. Cagliostro* (1926), a young innocent, Jerome Mid-

dleton, heir to a patent medicine fortune, is directed by his dead father to wear a pair of spectacles for a whole year before he can receive his inheritance. Thrown into an insane asylum by a rival for the legacy, Middleton finds the inmates saner than so-called normal people. The apparently “sane” doctor who ministers to the inmates is a mad clown appropriately named Herr Doctor Meister Professor von Zero.

SING SING NIGHTS AND THIEVES’ NIGHTS

In *Sing Sing Nights* (1928) three authors are about to be electrocuted for murder. The governor hands them a pardon for one, and only one, of the three; they are to decide among themselves who is to benefit from it. The authors agree to give the pardon to the one who can produce the best story, to be judged by one of their prison guards. *Thieves’ Nights* (1929), another novel of this period, concerns Ward Sharlow, who is engaged to impersonate a missing heir and in doing so runs into the typical ménage of oddball and “kooky” characters.

These novels of the 1920’s incorporate what had become typical Keeler motifs: the innocent protagonist cast into a den of malicious characters; the interruption of the main plot by ancillary characters with tales of their own—often to the effect that the main plot is overshadowed by these digressions (the “Arabian nights” technique); the usual grotesqueries, in both character and situation; and bitter social criticism denouncing all sorts of ills, from maltreatment of those who are different to the corruption of the judicial system.

THE AMAZING WEB

In the 1930’s, Keeler began to write what Nevins calls the “Keelerganzias,” novels of elephantine proportion, running to hundreds of pages and dozens of plots. The best example of these is *The Amazing Web* (1929), which many critics consider to be Keeler’s masterpiece. In this blockbuster, the “webwork” lacing of plot and subplot—the intricate interweaving of apparently coincidental but ultimately interrelated events—is at its peak. The multilayered plot centers on a young lawyer named David Crosby and the doings of his many clients. The first of these is Lindell Trent, a young woman on trial for stealing a diamond ring; Crosby falls in love with her while pleading her case. Unfortunately, because of his weak defense, she is

convicted and sent to prison. Later, she is cleared by the deathbed confession of the true culprit. Crosby hurries to the prison with this news, only to discover that she has already been freed and is on her way to Australia. While en route to Australia, however, Lindell jumps ship. Arriving on an atoll in the South Pacific, she places a note in a bottle giving her exact location and throws it out to sea. Crosby hears of this note and is determined to find her.

Meanwhile, Crosby is involved with another client, millionaire playboy Archibald Chalmers, who is accused of murdering his friend Rupert Van Slyke. Promised a yacht if successful, Crosby manages to sway the jurors; the trial ends in a hung jury. In the meantime, Al Lipke places an advertisement in the newspaper; he is looking for twelve hundred men with suitcases who are available for an hour’s work. A jewel thief and a social secretary named Annie Wentworth, who later is revealed to be Lindell, also appear in this intricately plotted novel. The bottle in the Pacific turns out to be a hoax, Chalmers is freed, and Lindell and Crosby are blissfully wed.

Characterization is papier-mâché and pasteboard.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

In Harry Stephen Keeler’s 1930 novel The Green Jade Hand, detective Simon Grundt, formerly of the Lincoln School for the Feeble-Minded, investigates a case involving a rare-book dealer.

Despite her adventures, Lindell is a Victorian heroine, pure and unsullied and worshiped unconditionally by Crosby. Chalmers and Van Slyke are one-dimensional stereotypes. One memorable character is Isadore Katzenberger, a Yiddish comic figure who appears as a witness in a minor scene. His dialect is so contrived that its presence enlivens the novel. Yet the imaginative leaps are so great, the humor so marked, that the reader feels he is in the presence of the Marx Brothers or the slapstick of Mack Sennett. This may well be the benchmark of Keeler's talent: his nutty and improbable technique that makes his audience roar with laughter.

THE MATILDA HUNTER MURDER

In 1931, Keeler introduced Tuddleton Trotter in *The Matilda Hunter Murder*. Although Trotter is often thought of as a recurring figure in the Keeler canon, he actually appears in only two of the novels: the word-packed "webwork" narrative *The Matilda Hunter Murder* and one of the last "Spanish novels," *The Case of the Barking Clock* (1947). Nevertheless, Trotter remains one of Keeler's most memorable creations.

The Matilda Hunter Murder concerns another Keeler innocent with love and money problems, Jeremy Evans. He follows his love into a web of intrigue involving a lethal Z-ray machine; several dead bodies, including that of an inventor; a platinum brick; espionage; arson; and numerous other villainies. This high melodrama is tempered by the occasional appearances of Yiddish, blackface, and Germanic dialecticians whose hilarious accents delight the reader. Despite the complexity of this coil of events, however, Trotter rights all ills and solves all crimes with ease and justice. As does *The Amazing Web*, *The Matilda Hunter Murder* uses all the stylistic devices that have become Keeler hallmarks, including his use of outlandish surnames; his almost surreal images; and his neologisms, spoonerisms, puns, and fantastic diction. Yet with his excesses, Keeler is burlesquing conventional detective fiction, as the reader eventually realizes.

THE VANISHING GOLD TRUCK

The other series protagonist of Keeler's repertory is Angus MacWhorter, the owner of the Biggest Little Circus on Earth. He first appears in *The Vanishing Gold Truck* (1941). A tall, outlandishly attired figure, he spends most of his time trying to avoid having his

beloved circus snatched away by grotesque scoundrels. *The Vanishing Gold Truck* records his adventures as he travels through the American Bible Belt, where a series of religious "crazies" are intent on banning or acquiring his "pagan" circus.

THE CIRCUS STEALERS AND THE CASE OF THE CRAZY CORPSE

In *The Circus Stealers* (1956), the MacWhorter circus continues through the Bible Belt, following Old Twistibus, a winding road that leads through swamps, "dead man's" lands, and towns dominated by crazed religious preachers. *The Case of the Crazy Corpse* (1953), another MacWhorter novel, turns on still another attempt to wrest his circus away from him; it involves a nude corpse that is revealed to be made up of two halves: one Asian, the other black.

KEELER'S LATER NOVELS

In his last novels, Keeler's manner and content became more, rather than less, bizarre as he was writing solely for his Spanish and Portuguese audiences. He also continued to write his gargantuan works, such as *The Case of the Jeweled Ragpicker* (1948), from which he finally culled four separate novels. Francis M. Nevins has observed that his last works were the wildest of the utterly wild repertory of the old maestro.

Critics have found it difficult to categorize Keeler's brand of mystery fiction or to assess it in the context of the genre—partly because his reputation has dimmed so rapidly that some of his novels are hard to obtain. Nevins, responding to Keeler's unique zaniness, has called him "the sublime nutty genius of crime fiction" and a man "so far ahead of his time we have still not caught up with him." Although not all critics might take as unqualified a stand, most agree that Keeler's *The Amazing Web* is an amazing tour de force, a "great murder mystery," which, as Will Culp put it, "has to be read to be believed."

It cannot be said with any finality that Keeler's style, his *personae*, or his plotting in any manner influenced the detective writers who followed him. Nor can it be said that his antiheroic major characters in some way foretold such rumbled and comic figures as Inspector Jacques Clouseau (protagonist of *The Pink Panther*, 1964). Nevertheless, like such anticonventional figures as Ken Kesey's Randle Patrick Mc-

Murphy, Keeler's disheveled characters are part of the American literary tradition of the outsider who criticizes society's flaws and ills.

Albert J. Montesi

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TUDDLETON TROTTER SERIES: *The Matilda Hunter Murder*, 1931 (also known as *The Black Satchel*); *The Case of the Barking Clock*, 1947

ANGUS MACWHORTER SERIES: *The Vanishing Gold Truck*, 1941; *The Case of the Jeweled Ragpicker*, 1948 (also known as *The Ace of Spades Murder*); *Stand By: London Calling*, 1953 (with Hazel Goodwin Keeler); *The Case of the Crazy Corpse*, 1953; *The Circus Stealers*, 1956

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1924-1930 • *The Voice of the Seven Sparrows*, 1924; *Find the Clock*, 1925; *The Spectacles of Mr. Cagliostro*, 1926 (also known as *The Blue Spectacles*); *Sing Sing Nights*, 1928; *The Amazing Web*, 1929; *The Fourth King*, 1929; *Thieves' Nights*, 1929; *The Green Jade Hand*, 1930; *The Riddle of the Yellow Zuri*, 1930 (also known as *The Tiger Snake*)

1931-1940 • *The Box from Japan*, 1932; *Behind That Mask*, 1933 (revised as *Behind That Mask*, 1938, and *Finger! Finger!*, 1938); *The Face of the Man from Saturn*, 1933 (also known as *The Crilly Court Mystery*); *The Washington Square Enigma*, 1933 (also known as *Under Twelve Stars*); *Ten Hours*, 1934; *The Mystery of the Fiddling Cracksman*, 1934; *The Riddle of the Traveling Skull*, 1934; *The Five Silver Buddhas*, 1935; *The Marceau Case*, 1936; *X. Jones of Scotland Yard*, 1936 (also known as *X. Jones*); *The Mysterious Mr. I.*, 1937 (revised as *The Mysterious Mr. I. and the Chameleon*, 1938-1939); *The Wonderful Scheme of Mr. Christopher Thorne*, 1937 (also known as *The Wonderful Scheme*); *Cheung Detective*, 1938 (also known as *Y. Cheung, Business Detective*); *When Thief Meets Thief*, 1938; *Find Actor Hart*, 1939 (also known as *The Portrait of Jirjohn Cobb*); *The Man with the Magic Eardrums*, 1939 (also known as *The Magic Eardrums*); *Cleopatra's Tears*, 1940; *The Man with the Crimson Box*, 1940 (also known as *The Crimson Box*)

1941-1952 • *The Lavender Gripsack*, 1941; *The Man with the Wooden Spectacles*, 1941 (also known as

The Wooden Spectacles); *The Peacock Fan*, 1941; *The Sharkskin Book*, 1941 (also known as *By Third Degree*); *The Bottle with the Green Wax Seal*, 1942; *The Book with the Orange Leaves*, 1943; *The Case of the Two Strange Ladies*, 1943; *The Search for X-Y-Z*, 1943 (also known as *The Case of the Ivory Arrow*); *The Case of the Sixteen Beans*, 1944; *The Iron Ring*, 1944 (also known as *The Case of the Mysterious Moll*); *The Case of the Canny Killer*, 1946 (also known as *Murder in the Mills*); *The Monocled Monster*, 1947; *The Case of the Transposed Legs*, 1948; *The Murdered Mathematician*, 1949; *The Strange Will*, 1949 (with Hazel Goodwin Keeler); *The Steeltown Strangler*, 1950; *The Murder of London Lew*, 1952

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MARY KELLY

Mary Theresa Coolican

Born: London, England; December 28, 1927

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Brett Nightingale, 1956-
Hedley Nicholson, 1961-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

BRETT NIGHTINGALE is a Scotland Yard inspector, the protagonist in Kelly's first three published mysteries. When he is not sleuthing, he sings tenor roles in a London amateur opera company. His likable qualities are as important as his decisiveness and courage when he is puzzling out a crime.

HEDLEY NICHOLSON is a mysterious private investigator and a somewhat flawed narrator who appears in two of Kelly's novels.

CONTRIBUTION

Mary Kelly is unique in her use of industrial settings for many of her novels—a steel mill, a paper factory, and a pottery, for example. Her murders often involve elaborately planned industrial espionage, rather than personal grudges. Her characters, however, are complex; her detectives themselves are confused about their lives, often flawed in their capacity to maintain human relationships. Because of her interesting settings and compelling characterization, Kelly can maintain suspense from the first paragraph to the final page of a novel.

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Kelly was born Mary Theresa Coolican on December 28, 1927, in London, the daughter of Francis Spenser Coolican and Kathleen Reedy Coolican. She was educated at the Ursuline Convent in London and then at the University of Edinburgh, receiving her master's degree in 1951. In 1950, she married Denis Charles Kelly and moved to Surrey, where she taught in a private school and then in Surrey County Council schools from 1952 to 1954.

Although her first book was published in 1956, it was not until *The Spoilt Kill* (1961) that critics began to rank her at the top of her genre. For that book she was given the Gold Dagger Award of the Crime Writers' Association. Between 1962 and 1974, she published six additional novels, and in 1963 American readers discovered her recent books and read her earlier ones. Kelly's interest in music, particularly in opera, is evident in many of her mysteries.

ANALYSIS

A Mary Kelly novel does not ordinarily begin with the discovery of a body, but instead with the establishment of the confusion of a central character. In her first novel, *A Cold Coming* (1956), for example, Alec Stormer awakens on the edge of a cliff, with no knowledge of where he is or memory of how he came to be there. Less dramatically, the librarian in *March to the Gallows* (1964) spots a medallion, which has been stolen from her, being worn by a strange woman; from her puzzlement about the reappearance of that medallion comes the larger mystery that is the core of the book. *The Twenty-fifth Hour* (1971) also begins with a puzzled protagonist, in this case a devoted aunt, who cannot understand why her niece in France has sent for money without explaining her needs. There is no suggestion of criminal activity until the aunt gets to France, and even then, she is concerned primarily about the safety of her secretive niece, who is finally dragged back to England. Because a Kelly novel often begins with seemingly unexplainable events and sustains that nightmare atmosphere throughout the book, it holds the reader in suspense in a very different way from the novel of detection, which offers subtle clues, both valid and misleading, all along the way.

The industrial settings also produce an almost surrealistic quality in the novels. The landscape of *Due to a Death* (1962) is not the green countryside of England but an ugly industrial estuary; the body in *The Spoilt Kill* is found in a clay-filled machine for making pottery. Generally, the homes in which Kelly's charac-

ters live are either unlovely, standardized middle-class houses or sordid slums.

THE SPOILT KILL AND DUE TO A DEATH

The flaws of Kelly's characters are as evident as the defects of their surroundings. After her third novel, she abandoned the musical inspector for a mysterious private investigator or secret agent, Hedley Nicholson, who appears in *The Spoilt Kill* and *Due to a Death*. Nicholson's own uncertainties are evident in both of these novels. In the first, he has been hired by the management of the pottery to investigate the theft of some designs. His undercover work demands that he deceive the chief suspect, a widow; unfortunately, while he is cultivating her friendship, gaining her trust, as his job demands, he first likes and respects her, then falls in love with her. With this new focus, he sees himself more clearly. As he lies, snoops, and reports to his employer, getting people fired and jailed, he becomes more and more disgusted with his work and himself, less and less capable of setting himself apart from the thief and later from the murderer whom he is pursuing. At last, he is as much a loser as those whom he destroys; when the widow, who is innocent, discovers that he has been lying to her and using her, she is broken-hearted; although she loves him, she feels that she cannot trust him, and she breaks off the relationship. This consciousness of self-destruction by one who is supposedly on the side of right explains Nicholson's rejection of any close relationship in *Due to a Death*, to the bewilderment of the female narrator, who admires him and throughout the novel is on the verge of loving him.

Like Graham Greene, to whom she has been compared, Kelly creates not only confused and tormented heroes but also sometimes appealing and understandable villains. In *The Spoilt Kill*, the murderer is a man who committed his crime almost by accident, a man whom Nicholson, the investigator, recognizes to be more generous than he. Similarly, in *Due to a Death*, the murderer is a kind man who shows a profound love for his son by his first marriage and a great patience with his shrewish second wife; when he is discovered and kills himself, one is not relieved that a killer is out of the way but appalled at the tragic waste.

In all of Kelly's novels, her Catholic background is obvious. When she shows the defects of her sympa-

thetic characters (their pride, their difficulty in loving others) while pointing out the generosity and kindness of those who have stolen or killed, she is stressing the fact that all human beings are equal before God and that all are in need of divine grace. Thus after he is exposed, the murderer of *The Spoilt Kill*, penitent, clearly believes that he has been forgiven by God, though not yet punished by civil law. In contrast, the representative of human justice, the detective Nicholson, is aware of lacking that divine grace that the murderer has received.

MARCH TO THE GALLOWES

The difference between human and divine values is also emphasized in *March to the Gallows*. Here, however, it is the sleuth, a humble librarian, who receives the gift of grace. From childhood, she has felt inferior to the members of a wealthy neighboring family. While they glittered, she grew up in the shadows, sometimes treated kindly, sometimes ridiculed. Then her purse is snatched and she realizes that she has lost the medallion that her fiancé gave her before his accidental death. In tracing the medallion, she discovers some dreadful truths about the family that had patronized her: Their lives are a cesspool of crime and treachery, drug addiction, and blackmail. They have not struggled against sin; instead, they have become evil precisely because they believe in neither good nor evil, turning to degradation to find some excitement in their meaningless lives. Face-to-face with their emptiness, the librarian has the grace to pity them, and she announces that she will not take the initiative in turning them over to the law.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH HOUR

It was in Kelly's fourth mystery, *The Spoilt Kill*, the book in which she abandoned Inspector Nightingale in favor of the flawed narrator, Hedley Nicholson, that the metaphysical quest began to assume more importance than the search for the criminal. By the time she wrote *The Twenty-fifth Hour* ten years later, the new emphasis was evident. Although one revolutionary is shot during the course of the story, there is no actual murder. The mysteries are the whereabouts of the niece, who keeps disappearing with some revolutionaries and then reappearing, and the reason for the sinister behavior of a family who have shut themselves up

behind their gates, where they are discovered to be concealing some secrets left over from World War II. Appropriately, the title refers to a mythical extra hour in the day, when mystifying events occur—mystifying, not murderous. That the book is structured to include the interpolated comments of the heroine's husband, who has obviously been reading what she says in it about her involvement with another man, indicates that the real mysteries here are love, grace, and forgiveness, not a body in a pool or in a library.

It is to Kelly's credit that she is able to maintain suspense in her unconventional pattern. In *A Cold Coming*, she had not yet mastered her art, and long sections of conversation alternated with equally long sections of frenetic action. In the later books, however, Kelly learned to suggest the presence of danger in the most prosaic scenes and during the most searching conversations.

WRITE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PAPER

Write on Both Sides of the Paper (1969) illustrates the mastery of form and theme that Kelly attained after her early apprenticeship works. Typically, the opening of the novel is dramatic and mysterious. Three men, identified only by their first names, are burglarizing some kind of plant. The sentences are short, the description crisp and accurate, the thoughts of "Aidan" fragmentary and profane. When the section ends, the narrator Hannah Major takes over, introducing herself and announcing that she has begun by re-creating that opening scene because it is the key to the story that she will tell. Hannah does not, however, narrate the entire book. A number of episodes switch back and forth between Hannah and the other major characters: Aidan Losely Gough, an advertising agency executive so pressed by a debt to a "club" owner that he has been willing to sign on as a burglar, and Hannah's lover, William Lockett, who works for the paper company that has been burglarized in the initial episode. The characters eventually come together at the old home of David Kinto, and once Hannah arrives, she indeed takes over as the single narrator. She does not, however, explain the episodes that she re-creates; she simply describes events and repeats dialogue. When the novel ends, William has foiled the theft, and Hannah has helped Aidan to get out of trouble, but the characters agree that al-

though they know that the theft involves a company in another country, they still do not know, nor do they want to know, what scheme has brought death to one man and peril to them all. Thus the mystery novel ends with the mystery still unsolved.

As in Kelly's other novels, the real quest in *Write on Both Sides of the Paper* is not a murderer, but the attainment of goodness and the display of grace in human beings. After he is attacked in the woods, William recognizes his attacker as David Kinto, who once stole William's girl. Worried because Kinto's one good eye has been put out of commission in the fight, William abandons his job and his respectable life to nurse Kinto, who is an unprincipled liar and one of the thieves of the first episode. Later Hannah joins the group, and she and William work desperately to free Aidan from the debt that caused him to be the second thief. The novel operates on contrasts: the hatred Kinto's mother felt for her son, as shown by the mocking "inheritance" of pennies he finds in his old home; the forgiving love shown by William to his old enemy; the deceit of Kinto, the honesty of Hannah; Aidan's desire to maintain his middle-class respectability; Kinto's acceptance of his status as a reprobate; and ironically, Aidan's insistence on turning over the paper to his criminal employers, no matter what the results, contrasted with Kinto's decisive act when he tosses the paper roll into a reservoir—not because of what trouble it might cause in South America but because it was causing quarrels among the four comrades. At the end of the story, Hannah makes a statement that would seem strange in most murder mysteries, but one that is typical of Kelly: One should not pity the dead, she says, but the living; it is in this world that pity is in such short supply.

Thus, once again Kelly dramatizes her consistent theme. Given the mystery and terror of the world in which all must live, given the torment and the imperfection in every human being, given the irresponsibility of the disreputable and the selfish arrogance of the respectable, the only answer can be human compassion, provided through redeeming grace. There is indeed in Kelly more emphasis on pity for the living than on behalf of the dead.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR BRETT NIGHTINGALE SERIES: *A Cold Coming*, 1956; *Dead Man's Riddle*, 1957; *The Christmas Egg*, 1958

HEDLEY NICHOLSON SERIES: *The Spoilt Kill*, 1961; *Due to a Death*, 1962 (also known as *The Dead of Summer*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *March to the Gallows*, 1964; *Dead Corse*, 1966; *Write on Both Sides of the Paper*, 1969; *The Twenty-fifth Hour*, 1971; *That Girl in the Alley*, 1974

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Review of this Brett Nightingale series book provides a contemporary critique of Kelly's work.

Review of *Dead Corse*, by Mary Kelly. *The Times Literary Supplement*, July 21, 1966, p. 640. This contemporary review provides a useful sampling of her critical reception.

HARRY KEMELMAN

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; November 24, 1908

Died: Marblehead, Massachusetts; December 15, 1996

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nicky Welt, 1947-1970

Rabbi David Small, 1964-1996

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

NICKY WELT, the Snowden professor of English language and literature at an unnamed New England university, is a perennial bachelor. In his late forties throughout the series of short stories, Welt is white-haired, gnomelike, cold-natured, and condescending. He solves cases for his friend and chronicler, the nameless Fairfield County attorney and a former university colleague, for the same reason that he plays chess with him—to prove his own intellectual superiority.

RABBI DAVID SMALL, the rabbi of the Barnard's Crossing Conservative Temple, is married to Miriam and is the father of Jonathan and Hepsibah. Just under thirty in the first novel, he ages to his mid-forties and fathers two children as the series progresses. Mild-mannered, scholarly, rumped, and shy, he is a devout man of inflexible principles when it comes to Judaic tradition and ethics. Never popular with his congregation, he precariously clings to his job by solving crimes that involve the temple members.

CONTRIBUTION

Harry Kemelman's Nicky Welt stories represent a revival of the intellectual armchair detective, who solves crimes much as he solves chess problems, through the use of his superior logic and for his own entertainment. Welt is not interested in morality or justice but in demonstrating his mental superiority, especially his superiority over his closest friend, chess partner, and

faithful “Watson,” the nameless narrator, who identifies himself as the Fairfield County attorney and a former law-school faculty member at Nicky’s university.

Although the Nicky Welt stories are clever and entertaining, their chief significance lies in the fact that they are the forerunners to the Rabbi David Small series. As Kemelman himself wrote, “Rabbi David Small can be said to be the son of Professor Nicholas Welt.” Like Nicky Welt, David Small solves cases through logical analysis. The rabbi’s logic is derived not from chess but from *pilpul*, the traditional, hair-splitting analysis used in yeshivas (rabbinical schools) to study the Talmud, the Judaic oral law that interprets the Torah (the Pentateuch). By using a rabbi as his detective, Kemelman turned his mysteries into a series of lessons in ancient Judaic tradition and modern Jewish sociology—“a primer to instruct the Gentiles,” according to Anthony Boucher. Rabbi Small becomes involved in sleuthing to help those who have been unjustly accused and to restore moral order to his corner of the universe. Although Nicky Welt arrogantly demonstrates his own superiority over lesser mortals, Rabbi David Small gently discourses on Judaism’s ethical superiority over Christianity.

Critic Diana Arbin Ben-Merre has pointed out that Kemelman’s most significant achievement was in expanding the cultural horizons of American and British detective and mystery fiction. Until the 1960’s, with the emerging popularity of Rabbi Small, no significant Jewish characters existed in detective fiction without the onus of lingering stereotypes and anti-Semitism. In creating a space for Jewish issues within the detective milieu, Kemelman built on the success of Jewish-American postwar novelists such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth, who helped establish the value and interest of Jewish culture.

BIOGRAPHY

Harry Kemelman was born on November 24, 1908, in Boston, the son of Dora Prizer Kemelman and Isaac Kemelman, a diamond merchant and talmudic scholar. Kemelman attended Boston Latin School from 1920 to 1926. From the age of eleven to fourteen, he also attended Hebrew classes after school from four to six P.M. at his father’s request and a Talmud class from six

to seven P.M. for his own enjoyment. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, he went to Hebrew and Talmud evening classes at the Hebrew Teachers College, which he describes as the hardest school he ever attended. Despite his academic achievements, Harvard University rejected Kemelman’s applications for undergraduate admission, probably because of a problematic high-school discipline record, although “there were also rumors that some colleges had set a percentage limit on Jewish students.” From 1926 to 1930, Kemelman attended Boston University and received his bachelor of arts degree in English. He was then admitted to Harvard for postgraduate studies, receiving his master of arts degree in English in 1931.

Kemelman became a teacher over his father’s objections that teaching violated the talmudic principle that one should not use knowledge “as a spade to dig with.” Kemelman taught on a substitute teacher’s license from 1935 to 1941, traveling to four different Boston area schools “to put together one poor salary.” He also taught literature and composition in the evening division of Northeastern University from 1938 to 1941. On March 29, 1936, Kemelman married Anne Kessin, a medical secretary-technician whom he met at a party. The couple had three children: Ruth, Arthur Frederick, and Diane. From the 1940’s, Kemelman lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where he loved to take seaside strolls.

From 1942 to 1949, Kemelman worked as the chief civilian wage administrator for the American Army Transportation Corps in Boston and as chief job and wage administrator for the New England Division of the War Assets Administration.

After the war ended, Kemelman tried to set up his own employment agency for people leaving war-related industries, but the enterprise failed. Kemelman then became a successful real-estate agent, selling housing to young postwar families. Teaching remained his first love, however, and he accepted an assistant professorship in English at Franklin Technical Institute in 1963. In 1964, Kemelman became associate professor of English at Boston State College. Around 1970, he retired from teaching gradually, going on a leave of absence to Israel for several semesters and finally writing a letter of resignation.

Kemelman published his first Nicky Welt story in 1947. Between 1964 and 1988, Kemelman published ten novels featuring Rabbi David Small, one collection of Nicky Welt short stories, and one critique of post-World War II college education, *Common Sense in Education* (1970). After Kemelman's retirement from teaching, he and his wife, Anne, divided their time between summers in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and winters in Israel. His annual visits to Israel provided inspiration and an ability to write free of distractions. Kemelman died on December 15, 1996, at the age of eighty-eight.

ANALYSIS

"Nicky Welt was born in the classroom," says Harry Kemelman, describing the start of his career as a mystery writer. Trying to show a composition class that "words do not exist *in vacuo* but have meanings that transcend their casual connotations," he noticed a newspaper headline about a Boy Scout hike and created the sentence, "A nine-mile walk is no joke, especially in the rain." Fearing some sort of pedagogical trap, the class was unresponsive, but the sentence and its varying possible implications gave Kemelman the idea for his first Nicky Welt story, a story that he tried to write on and off for fourteen years. When it finally did jell it was like copying it down rather than writing it, according to Kemelman. Except for a few spelling changes, it needed no revision. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* accepted it at once and offered Kemelman twenty-five-dollar increases in pay for each subsequent Nicky Welt story. It took Kemelman a year to write the second story, but after that, they flowed at the rate of one a month.

NICKY WELT

In the finest Sherlock Holmes tradition, Nicky solves crimes that are presented to him by baffled minions of the law, who possess all the clues but lack intellect to interpret what they know. Like Holmes, Nicky is a cold-natured, solitary figure whose few human contacts include a dedicated landlady who caters to his eccentricities and one devoted male friend who shares Nicky's interests and chronicles his triumphs.

RABBI DAVID SMALL

Soon publishers were clamoring for a full-length Nicky Welt novel, but Kemelman had no interest in

writing one. Although these stories were amusing, Kemelman believed that a longer work should say something more meaningful to the reader. Having just moved to the suburbs of Boston, he found himself, at the age of forty, the oldest member of a struggling new congregation. The young, suburban Jewish parents wanted to pass their religious traditions on to their children, but having been brought up at a time when religion had generally lost significance, they themselves had no such knowledge. What would happen to future generations of Jews reared in ignorance of their history? Kemelman wondered. Out of these experiences and questions came his first, never-to-be-published novel, "The Building of a Temple." The editors whom Kemelman approached found the book pleasant but too low-keyed and lacking in excitement.

One of the editors, Arthur Fields, "jokingly suggested that maybe the book would be more interesting if it were written in the style of a detective story." Driving home from Fields's office, Kemelman passed the grounds of his suburban temple and was struck by the thought that its parking lot, a deserted spot on the edge of town, was a good place to hide a body. It also occurred to him that a rabbi's traditional role in Europe had not been that of a religious leader hired by a congregation but rather that of a judge hired by the Jewish community to settle civil disputes. In that capacity, the rabbi had always acted as a detective, questioning witnesses and laying traps for liars. Rabbi David Small had just been born.

Like his literary father, Nicholas Welt, David Small is prickly, pedantic, and unprepossessing at first acquaintance. Unlike Nicky Welt, however, he becomes very lovable as the reader gets to know him better. More important, unlike Nicky Welt, who was created for the reader's amusement, the rabbi is Kemelman's spokesperson for his deepest concerns about the ancient Judaic tradition and its place in the modern world. Indeed, Kemelman has said,

The purpose of the books is to teach and explain Judaism to Jews and Gentiles. The fact that the books, particularly *Conversations with Rabbi Small* are used in theology schools, seminaries, and conversion classes, indicates, I think, that they appear to serve their purpose.

FRIDAY THE RABBI SLEPT LATE

In his Edgar-winning first novel, *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (1964), Kemelman sets the stylistic and thematic pattern for the entire series. The rabbi is introduced in his habitual setting—at the temple and in trouble with his congregation. With the very first paragraph, the reader learns that Jewish morning prayers require the attendance of ten men and that phylacteries, small black boxes containing a passage taken from the Scriptures, are worn on the foreheads and upper arms of the congregants. The scene is thus set, and a Jewish custom is described and explained. Speaking among themselves, several of the men reveal that they find their young rabbi too traditional, too dogmatic, and too pale and rumped looking to lead their progressive, assimilationist, and image-conscious temple. They want his contract terminated as soon as possible

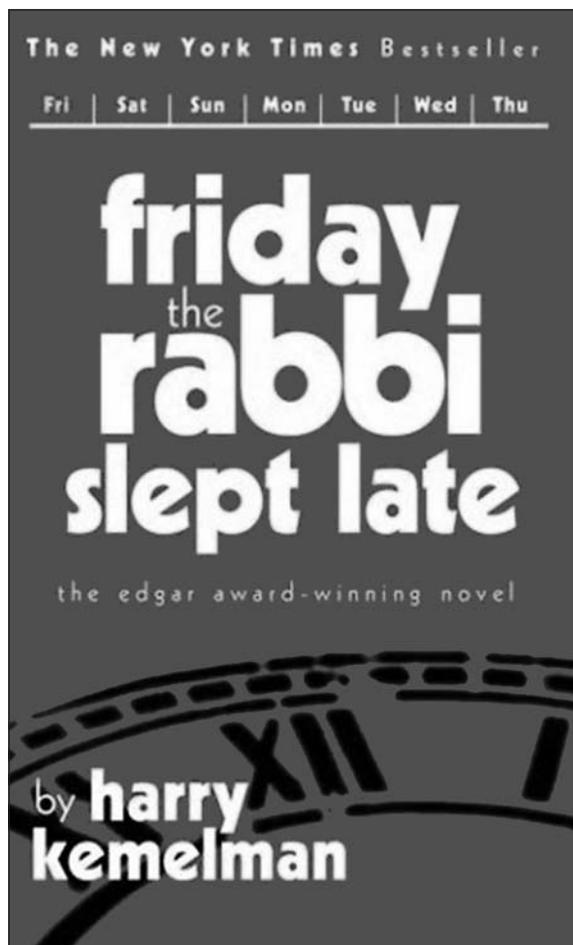
so they can bring in a rabbi more to their liking—a well-groomed, fund-raising organizer with the deep, resonant voice of an Episcopal bishop, a progressive ecumenicist who will let their wives serve shrimp cocktails at sisterhood suppers. In brief, they want a Gentile rabbi and a synagogue that is indistinguishable from any of the Christian churches.

Although the temple board members are united in their opposition to the rabbi, some of them are in conflict over a car that one member borrowed and returned with a damaged engine. Unaware of their machinations against him, the rabbi offers to serve in his traditional European capacity as a civil judge; he settles the case to everyone's satisfaction, winning a few admirers in the process.

The scene then shifts to a seemingly unrelated plot. Elspeth Bleech, the unmarried nursemaid to the Serafino family, is seen suffering from morning sickness and preparing to visit a doctor. The narrative cuts back and forth from the board's plans to oust the rabbi to Elspeth's problematic pregnancy. The two stories seem totally unconnected until Elspeth, vainly awaiting her unnamed lover in a restaurant, meets Mel Bronstein, the business partner of Al Becker, the board's most outspoken opponent to the rabbi. Mel invites the obviously jilted and distraught young woman to his table, and they spend a pleasant, chaste evening together. The next day, Elspeth's corpse, dressed only in a slip and a raincoat, is discovered in the parking lot of the temple. She has been strangled in the backseat of the rabbi's car, and David Small thus becomes the prime suspect in the case.

Hugh Lanigan, the Catholic police chief of Bernard's Crossing, finds it difficult to suspect a man of the cloth in a sex-related slaying. He could never bring himself to accuse a priest of such a thing, he tells David. Blissfully unaware that he is thrusting his own neck deeper into the noose, David tells Lanigan, "I presumably differ from the average member of my congregation only in that I am supposed to have a greater knowledge of the Law and of our tradition. That is all."

The rabbi's naïveté and candor convince Lanigan that he is innocent, and Mel Bronstein is arrested for Elspeth's murder. With the tacit consent of his para-



lyzed wife, Mel has been having an affair with a woman whose name he will not reveal. Elspeth's pregnancy convinces the police that she had become burdensome to her married lover. By use of talmudic logic, however, the rabbi clears Mel of suspicion and wins the gratitude and loyalty of Mel's partner, the obstreperous Al Becker.

Kemelman's technique is cinematographic, employing rapid jump cuts from one scene to the next. The characters are revealed through their own words and actions, and the subplots shift and intertwine to baffle and delight the reader. The rabbi is the one who finally ties all the mysterious events together. Watching his wife, Miriam, undress to go to bed, he suddenly realizes why Elspeth was seminude at the time of her murder. By applying *pilpul*, talmudic "hair-splitting distinctions and twists of logic," the rabbi demonstrates to Lanigan the logical identity of the killer. Because the rabbi is now the hero of the Gentile community, the board is appeased and votes to extend David's contract.

OTHER RABBI SMALL BOOKS

The rest of the books follow the same pattern. The rabbi ages, his family grows, the board members are voted in and out of office, but David Small's basic conflict with his congregation remains the same. Refusing a lifetime contract as too restrictive, the rabbi prefers to fight for his job year by year, as he strives to keep his Conservative flock from straying too far into assimilation or into ultra-Orthodoxy.

Murder continues to dog the rabbi's footsteps, much to his consternation and the reader's delight. Along with each crime, David Small also investigates and explains a different problem or issue of Judaism and modern society. In *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry* (1966), an apparent suicide who should not be buried in consecrated ground proves to be a murder victim. In *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home* (1969), an integrated beach party attended by members of the rabbi's teen fellowship turns into tragedy. In *Monday the Rabbi Took Off* (1972), a vacation in Israel finds David Small enmeshed in Arab terrorism and a murder whose roots lie in World War II and a Russian gulag. In *Tuesday the Rabbi Saw Red* (1973), a brief teaching stint at Windemere Christian College involves the rabbi with campus radicals and a bombing that results in a profes-

sor's death. In *Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet* (1976), an encounter with Jewish mysticism (a doctrine of despair that arises when reality is extremely difficult, according to Kemelman's own words) leads to a fatal pharmaceutical mix-up. In *Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out* (1978), a volatile mixture of women's liberation and anti-Semitism explodes into homicide. In *Someday the Rabbi Will Leave* (1985), corrupt politics combine with a hit-and-run killing.

In *One Fine Day the Rabbi Bought a Cross* (1987), David and Miriam return to Israel and encounter religious fanatics, both Jewish and Muslim, bent on mutual destruction. In *The Day the Rabbi Resigned* (1992), Rabbi Small aids Police Chief Hugh Lanigan once again in solving a murder framed as a drunk-driving accident. He finally resolves the long tension with his congregation by retiring from Barnard's Crossing. In Kemelman's final book, *The Day the Rabbi Left Town* (1996), Rabbi Small has accepted the position of professor of Judaic studies at Windemere College in Boston. Soon enough, a professor's body is discovered under circumstances that would seem to incriminate the temple's new rabbi. Though Small has left the temple, this novel continues his—and Kemelman's—focus on the history, laws, and culture of Judaism.

CONVERSATIONS WITH RABBI SMALL

Conversations with Rabbi Small (1981) is the only Kemelman novel in which David Small gains respite from both his congregation and his detective labors. The plot of this book is slender, almost nonexistent. The rabbi finds himself vacationing alone at Hotel Placid while his wife Miriam is in New York visiting her parents. He meets Joan Abernathy, a Christian resident of Barnard's Crossing, who is staying at the same hotel with her Jewish fiancé, Aaron Freed. Although Aaron is totally nonobservant, his parents would prefer a Jewish daughter-in-law, and Joan is willing to convert. The rabbi tries to discourage her from an insincere conversion for love but becomes intrigued by the possibility of winning Aaron back to Judaism. The young couple and the rabbi begin a series of nightly conversations that cover all aspects of Judaism quite literally from A to Z—from abortion to the return to Zion. This book, a pocket encyclopedia Judaica complete with index, encapsulates and encom-

passes the true purpose of the entire "Rabbi" series.

The murders the rabbi solves are intrinsically fascinating to mystery buffs, but Kemelman uses them as a vehicle for involving the readers, both Gentile and Jewish, in the history, tradition, ethics, and sociology of Judaism. David Small's conversations with Hugh Lanigan are not really comparisons of clues but contrasts in theology. Lanigan's statements of the Catholic position on various issues give David a springboard from which to launch his lessons in Judaism. The role of the priest, the ultimate spiritual authority to his congregation, is contrasted with the role of the rabbi, a purely secular figure with legal and academic, not spiritual, authority. The nature of faith in God, central to all Christian beliefs, but not required of Jews, is discussed. Lanigan is amazed to learn that mainstream Judaism has no concept of heaven or hell and that to a Jew virtue must be its own reward and vice its own punishment.

The members of the temple congregation, too, provide the rabbi with opportunities to teach Judaic tradition and ethics. A young woman who wants a nonkosher wedding reception is sharply reminded of Mosaic law. On the other hand, a stubborn, ailing old man who insists on fasting on Yom Kippur to the detriment of his health is told that refusal to take medicine could be considered suicide rather than religious observance.

Above all else, the rabbi sees Judaism as a rational faith rather than one of *credo quia absurdum est*. (Kemelmann himself has described aspects of Christianity as "expecting you to believe what you know ain't so.") Therefore, just as he opposes too much liberalization and modernization of tradition, so too does he oppose ostentatious religiosity and an exaggerated reverence for form. His moderation earns for him enemies in both the liberal and the ultra-Orthodox factions of his congregation.

The disgruntled factions' repeated machinations to get rid of the rabbi provide Kemelman with the opportunity to demonstrate the day-to-day working of temple life and modern Jewish values, both noble and crass. The reader is shown the politics and economics of temple governance and fund-raising. The rabbi's vacation in Israel becomes a forum on the Jews' spiritual ties to that land. An encounter with a Hasidic ye-

shiva student leads to a consideration of the fate of various other now-dead branches of Judaism. The rabbi thus finds an opportunity to discuss every aspect of Judaism, from its most abstruse theology to its most common daily habits.

There is, in fact, only one central Judaic concern that Kemelman never approaches, and that is the Holocaust. When asked about this glaring omission, Kemelman replied, "It's not something that is incumbent upon Jews to explain. Germany has to explain it. We don't."

Margaret King and Sheldon Hershinow have described the rabbi as an "outsider" figure, a minority of one within a minority group in American society: "He is set off from the Gentile community, on the one hand, by his Jewish beliefs, and from his own temple membership, on the other, because of his refusal to strive for the accommodation of his religion to the American way of life." As an outsider, he has no partisan views to cloud his perceptions. This clarity of vision enables him to function more effectively both as religious spokesman and as detective.

In a 1975 interview with Daisy Maryles of *Publishers Weekly*, Kemelman said that he is surprised by the reaction of American and Israeli rabbis who have told him how much his books have affected their behavior. Kemelman's own creation, Nicky Welt, however, would not be at all surprised. In a story entitled "The Bread and Butter Case," Ellis Johnston, the Suffolk County district attorney, is cynically surprised at the decent behavior of Terry Jordan, a not overly intelligent young thug whom Nicky has exonerated of a murder charge.

"Like the hero in a soap opera or a TV western," Johnston sneered.

"Precisely," said Nicky. "People like Terry get their ideas of morality and ethics, as do the rest of us, from the books they read and the plays they see."

Apparently so do rabbis. Except for the rabbis of the Talmud, they could not find a better role model than David Small.

Zohara Boyd
Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NICKY WELT SERIES: *The Nine Mile Walk: The Nicky Welt Stories of Harry Kemelman*, 1967

RABBI DAVID SMALL SERIES: *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late*, 1964; *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry*, 1966; *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home*, 1969; *Monday the Rabbi Took Off*, 1972; *Tuesday the Rabbi Saw Red*, 1973; *Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet*, 1976; *Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out*, 1978; *Someday the Rabbi Will Leave*, 1985; *One Fine Day the Rabbi Bought a Cross*, 1987; *The Day the Rabbi Resigned*, 1992; *The Day the Rabbi Left Town*, 1996

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Conversations with Rabbi Small*, 1981

NONFICTION: *Common Sense in Education*, 1970

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BAYNARD H. KENDRICK

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; April 8, 1894

Died: Ocala, Florida; March 22, 1977

Also wrote as Richard Hayward

Types of plot: Private investigator; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Miles Standish Rice, 1936-1938

Captain Duncan Maclain, 1937-1962

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MILES STANDISH RICE, a tall, lanky deputy sheriff from Florida, is chiefly remembered for his famous self-introduction: "I'm Miles Standish Rice—the Hungry!" His cases reveal the author's interest in the landscape and varied traditions of his adopted state.

DUNCAN MACLAIN, a private investigator, is blind. Adaptation to his visual disability has heightened the awareness of his other senses to an extraordinary degree, but it is his sensitivity to others and their emotional handicaps that is memorable.

CONTRIBUTION

The first six of the thirteen Duncan Maclain novels have been described as "outstanding," ranking with the best detective fiction done in the late 1930's and early 1940's by an American. Out of his personal experience working with blinded veterans, Baynard H. Kendrick created the character of Captain Duncan Maclain. Kendrick wanted to prove that the disadvantages associated with lack of sight could be overcome, and that the blind need not be treated as dependent children. Consequently, he deliberately placed his blind investigator in the most harrowing of situations. Maclain is not, however, superhuman in the mold of Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados. Kendrick could invent puzzles and twisting plots as well as the best of his contemporaries, but his unique contribution is his portrait of a believable disabled person in a dangerous occupation. Kendrick was one of the founders of the Mystery Writers of America, served as its first president, and received the organization's Grand Masters Award in 1967.

BIOGRAPHY

Baynard Hardwick Kendrick was born on April 8, 1894, the son of John Ryland Kendrick and Juliana Lawton Kendrick. Graduated from the Episcopal Academy in 1912, he later became the first American to join the Canadian army, enlisting in the infantry only one hour after the declaration of war. He was on active duty in France and Salonika and was decorated by the British and Canadian governments. His association with World War I convalescent homes led to a lifelong interest in the training of the blind. On May 2, 1919, he married Edythe Stevens; they had three children, Baynard, Edith, and Julia. After Edythe's death, he married Jean Morris in 1971. During the years between the end of the war and the publication of his first novel, *Blood on Lake Louisa* (1934), Kendrick traveled widely, lived in almost every corner of the United States, and tried almost every job imaginable, including those of lawyer, certified public accountant, hotel manager, publisher, and secretary to a door company.

Kendrick considered Florida his home and was a member of the editorial board of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* and director of the Florida Historical Society; he wrote the column "Florida's Fabulous Past" for the *Tampa Sunday Tribune* (1961-1964). His best-selling novel *The Flames of Time* (1948) deals with the state's turbulent past.

Kendrick was the organizer of the Blinded Veteran's Association and served as chairman of the board of directors and as its only sighted consultant. In honor of his work in the training and rehabilitation of blinded veterans, Kendrick received a plaque from General Omar Bradley. The film *Bright Victory* (1951), an adaptation of his novel *Lights Out* (1945), which concerns the trauma of the blinded soldier, earned for him the Screen Writers Guild's Robert Meltzer Award and the Spearhead Medal of the Third Armored Division. It is no surprise that all of his works have been transcribed into Braille.

In addition to *Lights Out*, Kendrick has had other works adapted for film, and the 1971 television series *Longstreet* was based partly on the character of Dun-

can Maclain. Suffering from ill health during the last ten years of his life, Kendrick wrote his last mystery, *Flight from a Firing Wall*, in 1966. He received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award in 1967. He remained an active fund-raiser for the Blinded Veterans' Association until his death in 1977.

ANALYSIS

In *The Last Express* (1937), Baynard H. Kendrick introduced the figure of Captain Duncan Maclain, the tall, handsome war hero turned private investigator who is blessed with the gift of analytic reasoning and a flair for the dramatic. This description is typical of many detectives of the 1930's. The plots of the early Maclain books, in their love of the bizarre and the complex, are also representative of the era. What separates the Maclain novels from the rest is a marked shift in emphasis.

In many classic novels of detection, the sleuth, even though he may be endowed with a variety of affectations and idiosyncrasies, is a subordinate figure. The star attraction is generally the plot, on whose intricacy and brilliance the success of the novel depends. Therefore, even if the reader cannot tolerate the detective, the ingenuity of the problem and its resolution can still be admired. In a Duncan Maclain novel, however, the opposite is true. The work stands or falls on the credibility of the characterization of Maclain himself, for he is blind. Consequently, the things that a physically able detective takes for granted become magnified in importance and, in some cases, must be explained in great detail. For example, a sighted detective may explain why he shot at a fleeing criminal and missed. Maclain must explain why he did not—he shoots at first sound.

It is essential to point out that Kendrick's choice of a blind detective is not a gimmick. Supposedly based on a friend of Kendrick who was blinded in World War I, Maclain is not blind simply to be different. Passionate in his support for the disabled and an authority on the training and rehabilitation of the blind, Kendrick deliberately created a detective who could stand as a symbol not only for the sightless but also for those who could not accept the blind as valuable members of society. Kendrick admitted that he wanted his novels



to be used as propaganda in the fight for the understanding and the mainstreaming of the handicapped. Therein lies the artistic problem inherent in the portrayal of Duncan Maclain. It is very difficult to be a propagandistic symbol and, at the same time, an interesting and credible human being. Yet Maclain must be interesting and credible because of his complete domination of the novels in which he appears. The plot is secondary to the man and the detective. How does one portray the vulnerability and humanity of the man when one also wants to emphasize his invulnerability to the accidents of fate?

Kendrick's solution was to surround Maclain with an array of secondary characters, both friends and servants, who function as his own personal support group. Unfortunately, too often they are just that: merely members of a group with little or no individuality. At times they are stereotypes, such as Cappo, Maclain's manservant-chauffeur. As chorus characters, they exist simply to provide transportation for the

captain or to comment on his brilliance. Even his wife is a vague, shadowy figure. The only memorable auxiliary figures are his Seeing Eye dogs, Driest and Schnucke, who generally seem more human than the humans themselves. Schnucke acts as the detective's guide, and Driest, an attack dog, is his bodyguard. The two are lovingly described in the novels, and when they are wounded trying to protect their master, the reader feels more sympathy for them than for any of the human victims, including perhaps Maclain.

This stance seems to be a deliberate decision on the author's part—he wants no sympathy for his blind detective. He wants Maclain to be judged according to his skill and intelligence as a detective. In the understandable desire to prove that Maclain can compete and even excel in his dangerous career, however, Kendrick sacrifices the human credibility for the professional and surrounds Maclain with an aura of rigid perfection. Kendrick was aware of this difficulty and frequently has his characters comment on their reactions to the captain's personality or lack of it. The typical response is one of awe:

She returned to her apartment feeling a little awed. There was a quality of frightening perfection about Duncan Maclain. She knew he was engaged, but sometimes Bonnie wondered. Was Maclain's fiancée in love with the handsome, virile man, or fascinated by the cold perfection of the disembodied human machine?

The second reaction to Maclain is usually one of disbelief on discovering that he is actually blind. Here again, given the didactic motives underlying the creation of Maclain, Kendrick was faced with an almost unsolvable dilemma. On one hand, he was adamant in his belief that the blind are not different from others and should not be set apart or perceived as special in any way. In fact, Maclain does not even agree that he is blind in the accepted sense of the word:

“I'm not blind, though,” said Duncan Maclain. “I merely lost the use of my eyes in the last World War. There are many definitions of the word *blind* in the dictionary, Miss Vreeland. There are even more of the verb to see. Only one definition of each applies to impression through the eyes.”

On the other hand, proud of the accomplishments of the blind and eager to prove their worth, Kendrick wants to demonstrate what they can achieve. Therefore, the reader has the paradoxical portrait of a blind man who is never happier than when people forget that he is blind, but who also delights in displaying what he, without sight, can do. Maclain loves to show off; his favorite parlor tricks are doing jigsaw puzzles and his famous Sherlock Holmes routine. The following sequence, with variations, is repeated at the beginning of all Maclain novels and short stories.

He sank down farther in his chair and clasped his long, sensitive fingers together. “You're five foot six, Miss Vreeland—a couple of inches taller than your cousin. You weigh—I trust I won't offend you—about fifteen pounds more. One hundred and thirty to her hundred and fifteen. You are older than she is—.” “Wait,” said Katherine, “You must have made inquiries about us. Why, Captain Maclain?”

“My only inquiries were made through my senses.” The captain sat erect, holding her with a sightless stare from his perfect eyes. “Your height is unmistakable from the length of your stride. I've walked with both you and Bonnie across this hall. Weight can be judged unerringly by the feel of anyone's arm. Every fair has weight guessers who make a living from this knowledge. The voice betrays one's age, and many other things—sorrow, pleasure, and pain.”

MAKE MINE MACLAIN

The impression gathered about Maclain is always one of superiority, that is not atypical. Great detectives are great detectives because they are superior, and most of them love to demonstrate the scope of their intellects. What is different is that Maclain and his creator continuously feel compelled to vaunt the detective's talents. Clearly, to a great extent, this showboating is a result of the blind person's position in society. Kendrick's novels are treatises on the treatment afforded the blind. One of the successes of his work is his artful and sardonic capturing of the various nuances of society's ignorance and prejudices. This skill is especially manifest in the novels that describe the closed society of the upper class—for example, *Make Mine Maclain* (1947). The Beautiful People simply do not know how to treat someone who is less than physically perfect, and although they can

pretend that the less fortunate and the disabled do not exist, they cannot overlook Duncan Maclain. Criminals are at an even greater disadvantage when they are confronted by the captain. Scornful of the sighted representatives of law and order, they find the idea of a blind investigator laughable—until they fail and he succeeds. Good examples of Kendrick's richest irony can be found in his analysis of the three-layered prejudice of upper-class criminals who, being Nazis, view Maclain as a type of freak. They, like much of society, take it for granted that because Maclain is physically disabled, he must also be mentally deficient, a fact that the detective exploits to the fullest. In many of these cases, his success is a direct result of his blindness. His adversaries continually underestimate their foe.

It is also certainly true that the success of Duncan Maclain, literary character, is a result of his blindness. Although Kendrick won critical acclaim for his earlier Miles Standish Rice novels (for example, *The Iron Spiders*, 1936, in which a serial killer leaves behind black spiders as his calling card), they evoked little popular response. With the introduction of the blind captain, however, Kendrick's stock as a mystery writer soared. (It did not hurt that most of the Maclain novels, especially those written during the war years, were serialized in many of the most popular magazines of the time.) Readers were fascinated by the tall, enigmatic Maclain and the necessary paraphernalia of his life—his dogs, his Braille watch, his Dictaphones and recording devices. They loved seeing him triumph in situations that would have made a sighted superathlete cringe. Such public approval, in addition to the enthusiastic support of organizations for the blind and the disabled, led to a change in direction for Kendrick.

THE ODOR OF VIOLETS

In his earlier work, the puzzle and its solution had always dominated. Buoyed by the public response to the exploits of his blind investigator, however, Kendrick gradually turned away from the classic novel of deduction to the world of espionage and the thriller. In these later works, Maclain is confronted by ever more dangerous situations; this harried leaping from one escapade to another robs the blind man of some of his credibility, the quality that is of most value to him as a literary figure. Maclain had been at his best in novels

such as *The Odor of Violets* (1941), perhaps the major work of this series. *The Odor of Violets*, even though it deals with spies and saboteurs, is still essentially a novel of deduction set in the closed world of a private house.

OUT OF CONTROL AND FLIGHT FROM A FIRING WALL

The critics, impressed by the skilled maneuvering of the intricate plotting, compared Maclain favorably to Bramah's Max Carrados, the first blind detective in fiction. Increasingly, however, as Kendrick puts Maclain through his paces, the novels begin to emphasize violence and frantic pursuit. *Out of Control* (1945), the last important Maclain novel, is one long chase scene. There is no mystery as the detective trails a psychopathic murderess through the wilds of the mountains of Tennessee. After 1945, the quality of Kendrick's work suffers a marked decline. Kendrick did make a minor comeback with his last work, *Flight from a Firing Wall*, a novel of suspense centered on the author's firsthand knowledge of intrigue and espionage in the Cuban refugee enclaves of Southern Florida.

Kendrick considered his support of the blind to be his profession. His creation of Duncan Maclain was only one aspect of that lifelong advocacy. When speaking of the Maclain novels, Kendrick never mentioned the artistic nature of his work but instead always stressed the technical detail required for the depiction of a blind hero. He was most proud of the fact that "the accuracy with which I attempted to portray the character . . . caused me to be called in for consultation on the training of the blinded veterans by the U.S. Army in World War II."

Although he was a writer of popular fiction, Kendrick espoused a classical theory of literature: He believed that art should teach while it entertained. One adjective that could be used to describe his fiction, however, is very modern: Kendrick's work was nothing if not committed.

Charlene E. Suscavage

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MILES STANDISH RICE SERIES: *The Eleven of Diamonds*, 1936; *The Iron Spiders*, 1936; *Death Beyond the Go-Thru*, 1938

CAPTAIN DUNCAN MACLAIN SERIES: *The Last Express*, 1937; *The Whistling Hangman*, 1937; *The Odor of Violets*, 1941 (also known as *Eyes in the Night*); *Blind Man's Bluff*, 1943; *Death Knell*, 1945; *Out of Control*, 1945; *Make Mine Maclain*, 1947 (also known as *The Murderer Who Wanted More*); *You Die Today*, 1952; *Blind Allies*, 1954; *Reservations for Death*, 1957; *Clear and Present Danger*, 1958; *The Aluminum Turtle*, 1960 (also known as *The Spear Gun Murders*); *Frankincense and Murder*, 1961

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Blood on Lake Louisa*, 1934; *The Tunnel*, 1949; *Trapped*, 1952 (as Hayward); *The Soft Arms of Death*, 1955 (as Hayward); *Hot Red Money*, 1959; *Flight from a Firing Wall*, 1966

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Lights Out*, 1945; *The Flames of Time*, 1948

NONFICTION: *They Never Talk Back*, 1954 (with Henry Trefflick); *Florida Trails to Turnpikes*, 1964; *Orlando: A Century Plus*, 1976

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Langman, Larry, and Daniel Finn. *Guide to American Crime Films of the Forties and Fifties*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1995. Several films were developed from Kendrick's work, including *Eyes in the Night* (1942) from *The Odor of Violets*; *The Hidden Eye* (1945), based on his characters; and *Bright Victory* (1951) from *Lights Out*. This work examines similar films and mentions Kendrick.

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The Saturday Review of Literature. Review of *The Last Express*, by Baynard H. Kendrick. 16 (June 5, 1937): 16. Favorable review of this novel that introduces blind detective Captain Duncan Maclain.

PHILIP KERR

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; February 22, 1956

Also wrote as P. B. Kerr

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; historical; police procedural; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Bernie Gunther, 1989-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

BERNIE GUNTHER is a wisecracking, hard-drinking,

private eye/police inspector in Germany who during the 1930's and 1940's attracts women and becomes entangled in high-level Nazi plots in approximately equal proportions. He prefers to work alone and undercover but inevitably must rely on politically dangerous characters who cause him grief. His ethical code moves him to help underdogs, especially beleaguered Jews, but he also earns the grudging respect of high-ranking Nazi, Russian, and American intelligence agents and police, who try to manipulate him for their own ends.

CONTRIBUTION

Philip Kerr enjoyed a stellar literary debut. *March Violets*, the first of his Bernie Gunther novels, appeared in 1989 to wide critical appreciation. By the time the third novel in the series was published two years later, Kerr's reputation was established. As eminent a literary voice as Salman Rushdie hailed him as brilliantly innovative, and in 1993 the literary review *Granta* named Kerr among the top twenty living British authors. His subsequent techno-thrillers attracted further admirers: He was called the Michael Crichton of the 1990's. His *A Philosophical Investigation* (1992), *Gridiron* (1995), and *The Second Angel* (1998) are considered benchmarks for crossover genre fiction.

Kerr became noted for two qualities: the detailed realism of his historical settings and the intricacy of his plot-driven novels and their intellectual tenor. The novels typically contain long discussions of philosophy, science, and technology, all fundamental to the plots. Although many reviewers find his depictions of historical characters (such as Isaac Newton, Adolf Hitler, and Franklin D. Roosevelt) to be believable, others complain that his emphasis on story in preference to characterization results in stereotyping and oversimplification. Moreover, Kerr received the unwelcome distinction of a Bad Sex Award, an annual antitribute from Britain's *Literary Review* for a purple sex scene in an otherwise good novel. Some critics complain of his gruesome violence and gloomy tone. The majority, however, find that among genre writers, Kerr produces novels that most resemble literary fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Ballantyne Kerr said that he wanted to be a writer from the very first moment he could read. His family, however, had different plans for him. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on February 22, 1956. His father, a property developer, and his mother raised him in a strict household, imbuing him with a Scottish-Protestant work ethic and the desire to make something of himself. Education and their Baptist church were of central importance. The family moved south to Northampton, England, while he was in grammar school.

Kerr began writing early, completing his first short

story when he was ten years old, and during his last year in secondary school, he won the Stopford Sackville English Prize. Still, his father insisted that he become a lawyer. In 1974 Kerr entered the University of Birmingham and finished a master's degree in law in 1980. However, feeling that the legal profession did not suit him, he took a job at an advertising agency. He later worked as a copywriter for the prestigious firm Saatchi & Saatchi. At this profession, too, Kerr felt out of place. He later claimed that he never wrote a single successful advertising slogan and that he felt he was living a double life. He spent his days at the agency and his nights writing fiction at home.

After his first novel, *March Violets*, was published in 1989, he devoted himself to writing full time. In addition to writing novels, he compiled two anthologies, *The Penguin Book of Lies* (1990) and *The Penguin Book of Fights, Feuds, and Heartfelt Hatreds: An Anthology of Antipathy* (1992). He also wrote teleplays, including *Grushko* (with Robin Mukherjee), a television movie version of his novel *Dead Meat* (1993) aired by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1994. Thereafter, he continued to be successful selling scripts based on his novels to Hollywood studios. This success gave Kerr considerable leverage in the publishing industry, and he made lucrative deals for his novels, including record advances and as many as fifteen contracts for translations into foreign languages.

Long wanting to write books for children as well as for adults, Kerr began writing one after 2000, initially as a way to encourage his own children to read instead of playing video games. The result was *The Akhenaten Adventure* (2004), a tale of two young American genies on a quest to find and defeat an ancient pharaoh, set in modern Egypt and England. It was meant only for a private printing. His agent, however, was able to sell the book and two sequels to a publisher (as well as film rights and translations), and it appeared in 2004. A sequel, *The Blue Djinn of Babylon*, was published in 2006. In the meantime, Kerr continued writing historical mysteries and thrillers, returning to the Bernie Gunther series in 2006 with *The One from the Other*. Kerr married novelist Jane Thynne, and they have three children.

ANALYSIS

Philip Kerr remarked in the afterword to one of his novels that thrillers and mysteries are merely children's books for adults in that they are fantasy entertainment. Nevertheless, his novels treat a variety of momentous themes, frequently delve into the corruption and conflicts of famous historical eras, and ponder the nature of evil in the human psyche, often through characterizations of historical luminaries. Even if they are fantasies, his novels still impel readers to ponder fundamental questions about human behavior.

Several of Kerr's novels examine international politics and society. *Hitler's Peace: A Novel of the Second World War* (2005) concerns secret negotiations among Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in Teheran in 1943 and the factions in each nation that tried to ruin the meeting. *A German Requiem* (1991), the third Bernie Gunther novel, unfolds in post-World War II Vienna, where the Soviets, French, British, and Americans ostensibly coadminister the city but in fact devote themselves to spying on each other, even supporting organizations made up of former Nazi leaders if they will aid them; the international presence has less to do with reconstruction of Germany than with the looming conflict between the communist Soviet Union and the democratic West. In *Esau* (1996), events unfold against the background of an escalating conflict between India and Pakistan, thus raising another of Kerr's major international themes: the danger of technology (in this case, nuclear weapons) both to civilization and to the environment. A third international theme is anti-Semitism. Persecution of Jews forms a pervasive undercurrent to the first three Bernie Gunther novels and is the major motivation for events in the fourth. Kerr demonstrates that anti-Semitism not only harms those persecuted but also causes a moral degeneracy in the persecutors that haunts them long after World War II. A fourth international theme concerns the growing disparity between a small privileged class of the wealthy and a large underprivileged class. In *The Second Angel* (1998), a techno-thriller set in 2069, this gap is given symbolic force. Humanity is split into two classes, those who are infected with a slow-acting virus that is uniformly fatal and those who are free of infection. The only way to cure the disease

is through complete replacement of diseased blood with healthy blood, and accordingly pure blood becomes the most valued commodity in society, jealously guarded by the healthy from the diseased.

Kerr also addresses the unforeseen pernicious effects of technology within a society. In *Gridiron*, for instance, arrogant developers build a skyscraper run by a single advanced computer. It turns vicious, destroying the developers and their clients. In *A Philosophical Investigation*, genetic screening and sophisticated computing allow England to identify potential serial killers. The system enables authorities to track and offer preventive treatments to these proto-murderers, but any technological system, however well intended, can be compromised and misused, Kerr implies. One of the proto-murderers hacks into the computer system to erase his own file and then identify all others like him. He then sets out to murder them. The overarching irony is that a preventive program produces a killer who kills those it is intended to prevent from becoming killers—the principal component of the novel's complex satire.

Kerr's plots typically develop in nations that are degenerating because of corruption, crime, and political extremism, and critics widely praise the detailed accuracy of his settings. In the Bernie Gunther novels, the fascist statism of the Nazi Party, rife with corruption and competition among leaders, provides a violent, hypocritical, seamy context for the detective's investigations. In *A Five-Year Plan* (1998) and *The Shot* (1999), the connivance among organized crime, espionage, and law enforcement create opportunities for a cunning lone character to exploit the corrupted institutions for his own benefit. In *Dark Matter: The Private Life of Sir Isaac Newton* (2002), political intrigue among religious and political factions leads to murders during England's attempt to revamp its debased coinage.

Although Kerr's novels focus more on plot than characterization, the characters are nevertheless often their leading attraction, and he employs a variety of traditional detective styles. Bernie Gunther comes from the tradition of hard-boiled detectives, made famous by Raymond Chandler—always tough, often abused by clients and enemies, but at base compas-

sionate and crusading. Kerr also uses a traditional police-procedural inspector in *A Philosophical Investigation* and intellectual detectives, most notably Sir Isaac Newton in *Dark Matter*. Kerr draws from real statesmen for his secondary characters as well and emphasizes reputed historical traits: for instance, an affable but paranoid Hitler; a Machiavellian (and foul-mouthed) Roosevelt; and a romantic, superstitious Heinrich Himmler.

MARCH VIOLETS

In *March Violets*, hard-boiled private investigator Bernie Gunther, called by some critics the German Philip Marlowe, makes a precarious living investigating missing persons in the late 1930's, especially for the relatives of Jews who have disappeared. A former inspector in the Kripo, Berlin's police department, he is famous for having cracked a difficult murder case. His reputation brings him a job to track down the kill-

ers of the daughter and son-in-law of a powerful German industrialist. During the investigation, related in the first-person point of view, Gunther comes into contact with Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler, as well as a host of Gestapo agents, shady characters, and a beautiful actress, in the middle of a political battle. He uncovers corruption everywhere, and the concluding scene, involving rape and murder, leaves him with a solved crime that harms everyone involved and reflects a society fast sinking into depravity. Even the best efforts by an honest man like Gunther are of no avail and only mark him as someone to be manipulated by the powerful.

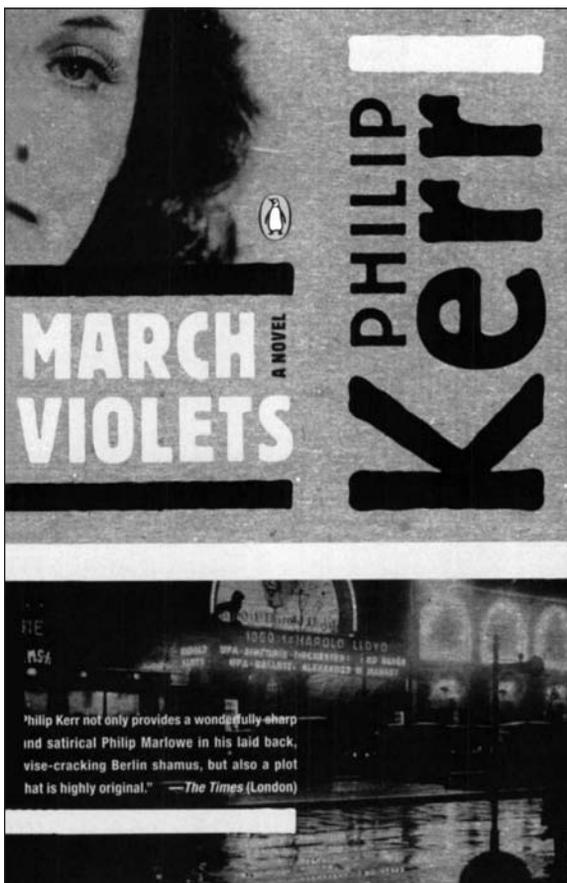
DARK MATTER

Dark Matter takes place in late seventeenth century England, where the government, immersed in a costly war with the French, finds that the realm's coinage is badly corrupted by counterfeiters. To correct the problem, the Great Recoinage is undertaken, overseen by Sir Isaac Newton, newly appointed as warden of the Mint. He hires a feisty young gentleman, Christopher Ellis, as his personal assistant to help him investigate a series of grisly murders at the Mint that threaten the recoinage. The story is related from Ellis's first-person point of view. Ellis and Newton learn that the murders are part of a larger plot by radical Protestants to stage a massacre of Roman Catholics within the country as revenge for the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of Huguenots in France. The plot involves much about coding and late Renaissance English politics and shows an amiable Newton using his genius to save his nation from disorder and the incompetence of lesser men in government.

THE ONE FROM THE OTHER

Set in 1949, *The One from the Other* has Bernie Gunther trying to make a living as a hotel manager, but the hotel, located next to the Dachau concentration camp, is failing, and his wife is dying. Desperate for money, he relaunches his private investigator business. Ironically, although he once made a precarious living helping Jews in prewar Germany, he quickly earns a lot of money uncovering information about German war criminals who persecuted Jews, information that is used in their defense.

Gunther's third case embroils him in the Comrades,



a secret network of former SS officers. The reader learns that during the war Gunther also had been in the SS, although unwillingly, and that he nearly died as a Russian prisoner of war. As in previous novels, he is made a dupe: Because they look alike, Gunther is tricked into being arrested as Eric Gruen, a Nazi concentration camp doctor guilty of horrible medical experiments that killed thousands with malaria. He soon finds himself on the run from the International Police, the Central Intelligence Agency, assassins of the Haganah (an Israeli intelligence organization), and former SS generals. In the end he escapes on a boat to Argentina through a secret organization that helps war criminals escape punishment. Despite his anti-Nazi history, he must start a new life as a fugitive, just like Adolf Eichmann, who is on the same boat.

Collusion between Western intelligence agencies and former Nazis creates a nightmarish atmosphere of corruption, intrigue, greed, and fear that besmirches everyone involved, whether innocent of war crimes or not.

Roger Smith

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BERNIE GUNTHER SERIES: *March Violets*, 1989; *The Pale Criminal*, 1990; *A German Requiem*, 1991; *Berlin Noir* (omnibus with *March Violets*, *The Pale Criminal*, and *A German Requiem*), 1993; *The One from the Other*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Pacificism Is Not Enough*, 1990; *A Philosophical Investigation*, 1992; *Dead Meat*, 1993; *Gridiron*, 1995 (also known as *The Grid*); *Esau*, 1996; *A Five-Year Plan*, 1998; *The Second Angel*, 1998; *The Shot*, 1999; *Dark Matter: The Private Life of Sir Issac Newton*, 2002; *Hitler's Peace: A Novel of the Second World War*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

TELEPLAY: *Brushko*, 1993 (with Robin Mukherjee)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS P. B. KERR): *The Akhenaten Adventure*, 2004; *The Blue Djinn of Babylon*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *The Penguin Book of Lies*, 1990;

The Penguin Book of Fights, Feuds, and Heartfelt Hatreds: An Anthology of Antipathy, 1992

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- Leonard, John. "Blood on the Tracts." *The Nation* 256, no. 22 (June, 1993): 788-800. An arch but mostly laudatory reading of Kerr's *A Philosophical Inquiry* as a satire of sociobiology and of the modern preference for empiricism over reason.
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GERALD KERSH

Born: Teddington-on-Thames, Middlesex, England; August 6, 1911?

Died: Middletown, New York; November 5, 1968

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage; hard-boiled; historical; horror; police procedural; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Gerald Kersh wrote extensively about the underside of London society (the gamblers, hustlers, prostitutes, pimps, psychopathic killers, drug dealers, and bohemians), as well as about his military experience during World War II in the Coldstream Guards. Effective as some of his writing is in these areas, Kersh will most likely be remembered for his highly imaginative and very diverse mystery stories. His body of fiction—some twenty novels, approximately fifteen volumes of short stories, a number of uncollected fiction pieces—though quite uneven, contains many eloquent and highly polished passages and some that approach brilliance. In spite of a modest formal education, he was well-read and possessed of enormous curiosity about the world and its past history. At his best, Kersh suggests the verbal dexterity and aphoristic deftness of a variety of masters of English prose style: Oliver Goldsmith, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, and O. Henry. Occasionally too, when Kersh is in particularly good literary form, a hilarious comic sequence may suddenly appear, calling attention to the wide range of his literary talents. Through a number of well-crafted short stories and at least one brilliantly wrought novel, *The Great Wash* (1953; published in the United States as *The Secret Masters*), Kersh brought new distinction to the tradition of the mystery story.

BIOGRAPHY

It is believed that Gerald Kersh was born in Teddington-on-Thames, Middlesex, England, on August 6, 1911, although some accounts give his birth date as June 8, 1909. His parents were Leon Kersh, a Russian, and Lea Miller Kersh, who was Jewish. He wrote his first story at the age of seven and succeeded in pub-

lishing his fourth literary effort, a novel—*Jews Without Jehovah* (1934)—while in his mid-twenties. An individual who always prided himself on his prodigious physical strength, Kersh almost died at the age of three from complications after a bout with measles; given up for dead by his parents, he spontaneously recovered.

Oddly, considering the broad reading background his fiction reveals, Kersh suspended formal education on leaving secondary school. Concerned with earning a living, he worked at many different jobs, as a salesperson, wrestler, baker, and bouncer—among others. During this time, the energetic Kersh resumed his education, at an extension school (the Regent Street Polytechnic), concurrently teaching himself to become a writer. He published several novels during the 1930's. In late 1939, he joined the Coldstream Guards, remaining there until the early 1940's; after a narrow escape from death in a bombing raid, he was removed from active duty. Kersh then joined the Ministry of Information's Films Division and served as war correspondent for the United States War Department. He also wrote for a Labour Party newspaper and published ten books, including two about his beloved Coldstream Guards.

After the war, Kersh continued to publish: collections of mystery stories and novels of London's sleazy underworld, lower class, and raffish social misfits. In 1958, he won the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for his short story "The Secret of the Bottle." Kersh was married three times: to Alice Thompson Rostron in 1938, to Claire Alyne Pacaud in 1943, and to Florence Sochis in 1955. Resenting the British welfare state and what he considered its confiscatory taxation, Kersh lived in the United States between 1950 and 1952 and again in the last years of his life. He died of throat cancer in Middletown, New York, on November 5, 1968.

ANALYSIS

It is regrettable that Gerald Kersh's substantial output of novels and short stories is largely out of print.

Most reference sources that include Kersh list only a smattering of his books, many of which were first published in England. Even *Book Review Digest*, during the years his books appeared (1934-1969), recognized only a modest number of them. Much may be said, however, regarding a few significant titles of works within the mystery and detective genre.

As a writer of whodunits, Kersh was generally not at his best. At home in the seamy pubs and low neighborhoods of London, Kersh often lost himself in detailing sordid slices of life. On occasion his vibrant sense of humor came to the fore; now and then readers saw his rare gift with language—accurate reproduction of vernacular speech, as well as a rich vocabulary and a wide range of appropriate literary allusions. Yet Kersh was not often granted the wonderful concentration of mind that makes for masterful chronicling of crime and sleuthing.

PRELUDE TO A CERTAIN MIDNIGHT AND CLOCK WITHOUT HANDS

Prelude to a Certain Midnight (1947) deals with the violation and murder of an eleven-year-old girl in a vile bohemian area of London. Despite a good bit of character delineation, there is a seeming pointlessness to the story; the killer is never brought to justice. *Clock Without Hands* (1949) is lacking in literary style, characterization, local color, suspense, and authorial imagination. A ruggedly virile man, separated from his wife and carrying on adulterously with a succession of women, is found murdered in his small rented room. His wife is the prime suspect. The real killer, tracked down by an amateur sleuth, who happens to be a newspaper reporter, is the murder victim's landlord, a small, meek man trying to take on the strong, masculine qualities of his victim, trying in fact to make the authorities believe that he committed the murder. Yet no one believes this man, the most ordinary of persons, described in the story as "a clock without hands," and before he can commit another such crime (the intended victim this time is a barmaid to whom the dead tenant had been attracted), he is run over by a truck and killed.

The significant Kershian theme in this flat tale is the strong male pitted against the weak male. Proud of his unusual physical strength, ferocious appearance,

and fighting ability, Kersh had a penchant for describing fierce tough-guy types and powerful, aggressive individuals of either sex—as is evident in his novel *The Weak and the Strong* (1945) and his story about Potiphar's wife (imaginatively adapted from the biblical account, in Genesis, of Joseph in Egypt), "Ladies or Clothes," included in the story collection *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories* (1955).

THE GREAT WASH

With *The Great Wash*, however, Kersh's dormant detective-story talents emerged at last. The result was a psychological thriller combining horror, violence, and a redeeming expression of love for one's fellow humans. Deeply fascinated by the atom bomb developed during World War II, and all the attendant technology, Kersh describes the ultimate global plot for the total domination of humankind. This is a mysterious plan of two British masterminds of an organization of so-called Sciocrats, Kadmeel and Chatterton. Working with certain heads of government throughout the world, they wish to use silicon bombs to blow up the deep underwater mountain barriers in strategic locations, thereby causing enormous tidal waves that will flood the major population centers. Only a select few from each nation with a participating leader will survive, sheltered in some high mountain sanctuary against the time when the cataclysmal floods will recede sufficiently for these chosen ones to come down and develop a new society in accordance with the Sciocrats' elitist program.

The novel's two central figures, a newspaper reporter named Albert Kemp and his close friend George Oaks, a mystery writer, are drawn into the swirl of this intrigue. They begin by trying to track down two missing atomic scientists who were brought into the Sciocrats' sphere of influence. After a series of cloak-and-dagger adventures involving espionage, murder, mistaken identity, and police investigation, Kemp and Oaks become prisoners of Kadmeel and Chatterton in the Sciocrats' secret Canadian stronghold. They escape, against nearly impossible odds, and at the cost of Oaks's life blow up the central nuclear installation, destroying any chance the Sciocrats might have had for giving the world a "great wash" and controlling what was left.

To suggest the elevated literary level of this psychological and philosophical mystery (one of whose most puzzling secrets is the nature of the “unknown islands” in the drawings left by one of the missing scientists), an example or two of Kersh’s style must be given. In one passage, Kemp, the story’s narrator, reflects on a mothball he picked up from his hotel bed, in “one of those moments in which, looking away from the crushed husks of lives, you see the expressed wine, and, in a flash of sublime understanding, perceive the ultimate goodness of many little things. . . .” Kemp continues, describing the mothball as it “caught the light and threw its own shadows in such a way that I might have been holding in my hand the full moon in all its mystery. . . .” In a book with many such gems, however, the following seems to occupy its own place. George Oaks comments on *Life*:

I used to be passionately in love with *Life* when I was young and foolish, Albert, and then I was terribly jealous of her, and frightened to death of losing her. But after I had lived with her and given her everything I had—worn myself out trying to keep her—and she threatened to leave me, I found myself indifferent to her. Whereupon she grew jealous of me and clung to me, complaining that I’d die without her. She was trying to come it over me with pity, you understand. So I gave her a good smack in the face and told her that, much as I loved her, I’d see myself dead and damned before I let her humiliate me. So she blinked in a shocked kind of way, smiled again as she used to smile in the old days—only with more restraint, showing fewer teeth—and told me that without George Oaks she would be nothing at all, a mere wandering itch without direction. So we agreed to be faithful to each other until our dying day.

Kersh seemed much more at home with mystery short stories than with mystery novels; in his stories, he reaches further into the depths of the human imagination than most mystery writers would dare to go. Kersh’s work within this category reveals the strong and the weak sides of his writing talent, but his love of storytelling was such that even the less effective of his published tales (those pieces that seem to have been written hastily, for some indiscriminating magazine editor) show the rich potential of his creative faculty and his verbal legerdemain.

“THE CREWEL NEEDLE”

Kersh’s affinity for working scientific principles and their implications into his fiction is evident in the detective story “The Crewel Needle” (in *On an Odd Note*, 1958). In this story, a police officer deduces from problematic evidence at a death scene, wherein an eight-year-old girl was alone with her aunt when the latter was killed by having a crewel needle driven into her brain, that the girl committed the murder. She had read, the officer learned, exactly how to drive the needle through her aunt’s skull, in a book of tricks that explained how to perform a comparable feat (though an innocent one) with the aid of a cork and a hammer.

“WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CORPORAL CUCKOO?”

A recurring theme in Kersh’s mystery stories is that of the individual who is taken for dead but is later “recalled to life”—so important to Kersh, apparently, because of his own similar experience at the age of three. (Note that “mystery” here is not limited to, in fact may not even involve, the solving of a perplexing crime.) Kersh seems to have asked a difficult question of his creative imagination: How can the dead quicken—by what miracle or natural process? In “Whatever Happened to Corporal Cuckoo?” (in *Nightshade and Damnations*, 1968), a French soldier in the 1530’s is mortally wounded on the battlefield—his head split open by a halberdier in the enemy army. The doctor applies a “digestive” made of naturally occurring substances to the wound, whereupon healing takes place and his head is made whole again. The recovered soldier lives on through four centuries of war and deadly injuries in battle, always using the same life-giving concoction, making it up himself from the original ingredients whenever his supply is exhausted.

“FROZEN BEAUTY” AND “THE EPISTLE OF SIMPLE SIMON”

“Frozen Beauty” (in the same story collection) concerns a young tribal girl frozen to death in a hut with other tribal members in Siberia’s Belt of Eternal Frost ten thousand years ago. The group is found by a doctor, whose fire, kindled in the hut, revives the girl; once she has recovered, he takes her away with him. Far more suggestive than this tale, whose main idea had been applied years earlier by Edgar Rice Burroughs, is “The

Epistle of Simple Simon" (in *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories*). Drawing on his deep-seated curiosity about the mysterious lives of famous figures (Jesus Christ, Potiphar's wife, Leonardo da Vinci, William Shakespeare, Ambrose Bierce, and the like), Kersh recreates the events following the Crucifixion of Jesus. In this story, Christ does not die on the cross, but is carried away by his friend Joseph of Arimathea, laid in Joseph's private tomb, and given clothing and ointment for his wounds. Almost fifty years later, Jesus, self-exiled in a cave, rescues from death one of the early Christians, Simon the Simpleton, who has been brutally attacked and left for dead by some barbarians he had sought to convert. Jesus does not understand Simon's evangelizing and asks Simon which Jesus he is talking about, of all the numerous Jesuses who must have died on the Roman gallows—the cross—for some capital offense. After a week, he loses his temper with the persistent proselytizer Simon and sends Simon on his way because there is nothing to be done. One of Kersh's most penetrating ironies remains with the reader, Jesus' response to Simon's earnest attempts to bring the Gospel to this "good heathen": "My friend, the law has taken its course with me. I am betrayed, tried, captured, and executed."

**"THE APE AND THE MYSTERY" AND
"THE DANCING DOLL"**

Two stories, in the collection *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories*, reveal unrecorded events in Leonardo's life. There is a double irony in "The Ape and the Mystery." Leonardo's patron, the young duke, ignores his plans for, and request to build, a water purification system; he wants only to know more about the fascinating La Gioconda (Mona Lisa), who recently sat for a portrait. What caused her strange smile? She was hiding her rotten teeth, Leonardo answers. In "The Dancing Doll," Leonardo, still in the duke's service, is obliged to spend his time making a puppet for the duke's gravely ill son, instead of inventing a submarine, plans for which are occupying his mind.

"THE MADWOMAN" AND "THE HACK"

Kersh's marvelous sense of humor comes out in some of his stories about Shakespeare, too. "The Madwoman" (in *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories*) explains the mystery behind the composition of *King*

Lear. The bard was strongly moved by his observations of a poor, deranged gentlewoman, Mistress Leah, fallen on hard times and cast out by the wives of her three worthless sons. Her sad story suggests a subject for a new play. "The Hack" (in *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories*) presents a harried Shakespeare in a tavern with Ben Jonson, telling the younger man his troubles and revealing something about the mystery of literary art and its antithesis: hack writing. Monetary needs compelled him to set aside his important play, *Belisarius*, and produce such commercial junk as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Worse, he has been driven by necessity to rewrite in proper prose the notes of a "slobbery, sly-looking, crafty little man" named Francis Bacon. A superb adventure yarn, "The Oxoxoco Bottle" (in the same collection) unravels the mystery of what happened to Ambrose Bierce when he disappeared for good in the interior of Mexico in 1914.

"THE BRIGHTON MONSTER" AND "PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR"

Among Kersh's mystery stories making use of science fiction or fantasy there are several significant examples. "The Brighton Monster" (in *Nightshade and Damnations*) is the strange tale of a Japanese man blown out of his house by the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945 and deposited in Brighton, England, two hundred years in the past. "Note on Danger B" is about an experimental jet aircraft flying much faster than the speed of sound, which causes its pilots to grow ever younger as the velocity increases. Each of these two stories represents a riddle to be solved by observers of the phenomenon in question. Who or what was the Brighton Monster? How could a test pilot in a jet airplane regress in age in the course of his flight? "Prophet Without Honor" (in *On an Odd Note*) tells of a heavy-drinking newspaper editor with prophesying ability. This man, composing an important news story on his typewriter—whose keys, unbeknown to him, have had their letter tabs jumbled by a practical joker—produced a mysterious confusion of letters (as a drunk might be expected to do). Yet his typing reveals an amazing series of political prophecies, in phonetic Arabic with Roman characters. At their best, Kersh's tales offer action, drama, suspense, and a sense of wonder.

Samuel I. Bellman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Jews Without Jehovah*, 1934; *Men Are So Ardent*, 1935; *Night and the City*, 1938; *They Die with Their Boots Clean*, 1941; *The Nine Lives of Bill Nelson*, 1942; *Brain and Ten Fingers*, 1943; *The Dead Look On*, 1943; *Faces in a Dusty Picture*, 1944; *An Ape, a Dog, and a Serpent*, 1945; *The Weak and the Strong*, 1945; *Prelude to a Certain Midnight*, 1947; *The Song of the Flea*, 1948; *Clock Without Hands*, 1949; *The Thousand Deaths of Mr. Small*, 1950; *The Great Wash*, 1953 (also known as *The Secret Masters*); *Fowlers End*, 1957; *The Implacable Hunter*, 1961; *A Long Cool Day in Hell*, 1965; *The Angel and the Cuckoo*, 1966; *Brock*, 1969

SHORT FICTION: *Selected Stories*, 1943; *The Battle of the Singing Men*, 1944; *The Horrible Dummy, and Other Stories*, 1944; *Clean, Bright, and Slightly Oiled*, 1946; *Neither Man nor Dog*, 1946; *Sad Road to the Sea*, 1947; *The Brazen Bull*, 1952; *The Brighton Monster and Others*, 1953; *Guttersnipe: Little Novels*, 1954; *Men Without Bones, and Other Stories*, 1955 (revised 1962); *On an Odd Note*, 1958; *The Ugly Face of Love, and Other Stories*, 1960; *The Terrible Wild Flowers: Nine Stories*, 1962; *More than Once upon a Time*, 1964; *The Hospitality of Mrs. Tolliver, and Other Stories*, 1965; *Nightshade and Damnations*, 1968

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *Nine Men*, 1943 (with Harry Watt); *The True Glory*, 1945 (with others)

NONFICTION: *I Got References*, 1939

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Best of Gerald Kersh*, 1960

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LAURIE R. KING

Born: Oakland, California; September 19, 1952

Also wrote as Leigh Richards

Types of plot: Historical; police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kate Martinelli, 1993-

Mary Russell, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

KATARINA CECILIA “KATE” MARTINELLI, an inspector with the San Francisco Police Department, begins the series as a somewhat closed, guarded woman who seems confident in her professional abilities but unsure in her personal life. As a woman in a traditionally male job and as a lesbian in a largely heterosexual society, Kate tends to keep people at a distance. Although she lives with a woman, she refuses to make their relationship public because she fears that being branded a lesbian will hurt her career. During the course of the series, Kate becomes more open about her sexuality and accepting of herself. Her confidence and maturity increase as she takes on new roles, including that of a mother, as she and her life partner raise a daughter together.

ALONZO “AL” HAWKEN is a stocky, rumped police detective, fond of coffee and chocolate doughnuts, with a dedication to his job that makes him nearly a workaholic. His first marriage ended because he paid more attention to police work than to his family, but in the course of the series, he begins a relationship and eventually starts a new family. Initially assigned to work with Kate Martinelli on a case involving a child murder, he grows to like and respect her, and provides a sometimes teasing, sometimes steady force in her professional life.

LEONORA “LEE” COOPER, an art therapist, meets Kate Martinelli at a time when Kate is still dating men. Although Kate initially tries to deny her attraction to Lee, they fall in love and begin sharing a house and a life. More introverted and analytical than her partner, Lee encourages Kate to accept her true self. During the course of the series, she is seriously injured by a

gunshot to her spine and must undergo years of rehabilitation. At one point in her recovery, Lee leaves Kate to spend time alone but decides to return. A quiet but confident presence, she provides Kate with a safe haven from the violence of her work life.

MARY RUSSELL is a young woman—only fifteen at the outset of the series—whose sharp intellect and unconventional thinking make her only the second woman to win the respect of Sherlock Holmes, with whom she works. An early feminist, Russell defies her era’s norms for feminine behavior. She cherishes her independence, seeks higher education, and, in her detecting adventures with Holmes, often disguises herself as a man and takes unusual risks, sometimes rushing into action while the older, more experienced Holmes prefers to watch and wait. She was orphaned in a car accident that took the lives of her parents and brother and left her physically and psychologically scarred.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, the detective invented by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is perhaps the best-known fictional sleuth of all time, and certainly among the best-known fictional characters. Holmes, as reinvented in the Mary Russell series, is a middle-aged, solitary, and sometimes rather arrogant man whose “retirement” from detecting is constantly being interrupted by cases that call for his expertise. His initially supercilious attitude is modified when he realizes that, age and sex notwithstanding, Russell’s is a mind to match his own. Holmes has given up cocaine injections, though not his ubiquitous pipe, and has modified some of his more Victorian attitudes. This modern Sherlock Holmes, while still a formidable foe of criminals, is also capable of deep love, humor, and human weakness.

CONTRIBUTION

Laurie R. King is probably best known as the writer who dared disturb Sherlock Holmes’s century or so of bachelorhood by reinventing him as the mentor, partner, and eventually husband of Mary Russell, a scholar and sleuth whose wit matches that of the fabled detective. Although some Sherlockian purists objected to any tampering with Sir Arthur Conan

Doyle's creation, King's Mary Russell series has won her many fans and critical accolades, including a Nero Wolfe Award. Keeping Holmes's astute eye and amazing reasoning ability, King takes him out of the world of gaslights and hansom cabs and into the early years of the twentieth century, from World War I through the 1920's. By pairing Holmes with a modern, independent young woman, King breathed new life into the legendary figure and created a character with whom female mystery readers can identify.

However, King is more than a reinventor of Sherlock Holmes. She is also the author of the Kate Martinelli series, featuring a thoroughly modern, lesbian female police detective in San Francisco. Amazingly, these two series began at approximately the same time and have continued to coexist, often with a title from each series published in the same year. While different in style and setting, the Russell and Martinelli series do share certain elements: a strong female protagonist and plots that concern themselves with aspects of women's lives and women's rights. Mary Russell, coming of age during and shortly after World War I, lives in a world in which a woman's place is still strictly proscribed; women could not vote, were discouraged from working in many professions, and were expected to devote themselves to child rearing and homemaking. In her pursuit of freedom and adventure, Russell must at times go undercover dressed in men's clothes. Kate Martinelli, however, lives in a time when women do vote and even hold office; like Martinelli herself, they may work in traditionally male domains, such as police work. This is not to say, however, that subtler forms of sexism and discrimination do not exist; they do, and Martinelli must confront them at work and in her personal life.

King has a background in theological study, and as befits a scholar, all her mysteries are meticulously researched so that the details of time and place ring true, whether in a historical or modern setting. They are seldom simple mysteries, and they bring up complex questions on the path to their complex solutions. In *A Letter of Mary* (1997), for example, Russell uncovers signs of a deliberate suppression of historical evidence about the role women played in the early Christian church. *Night Work* (2000) has Kate Martinelli investi-

gating a series of murders of men who have been accused of abusing women or children, an investigation that becomes even more emotionally charged for the detective when she realizes that she may know the vigilante killer. Along with their willingness to take on big questions, King's novels are also notable for their attention to character development. Her characters are not only extraordinary crime solvers but also fully rounded human beings with rich personal lives.

BIOGRAPHY

Laurie R. King was born in 1952 in Oakland, California, and grew up on the West Coast. As a child, her family moved often, so that the library was her true home and books her only constant companion. Although reading was a constant in her life, writing came later. King earned her bachelor's degree at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and later earned a master's degree from the Graduate Theological Union. Married in her twenties, she raised two children and did not start writing until the age of thirty-five, when her younger child started preschool. King said that the character of Mary Russell suddenly appeared in her head and began telling her story. The bulk of the first draft was written inside a month, but *The Beekeeper's Apprentice: Or, On the Segregation of the Queen* (1994), the first volume in the Mary Russell series, was not King's first published book. Instead, the second work King wrote, *A Grave Talent*, introducing Inspector Kate Martinelli of the San Francisco Police Department, was published in 1993, winning an Edgar Award. Although there were some initial legal problems over King's use of the Sherlock Holmes character, these were resolved and *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* was published in 1994.

King found herself in the enviable position of having two successful mystery series, both widely read and critically praised, although the Mary Russell series was the more popular of the two. Although two ongoing series might seem enough to keep most writers busy, the prolific King has also written nonseries thrillers, beginning with *A Darker Place* (1999), and a futuristic novel, *Califa's Daughters* (2004), released under the name Leigh Richards. She contributed the introduction to a reissue of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's

The Hound of the Baskervilles (1901-1902) and has published short fiction in several anthologies.

ANALYSIS

Laurie R. King's versatility as a writer allows her to span time periods and to write convincingly of places as diverse as World War I-era England, the Middle East, British India during the 1920's, and present-day San Francisco. King's lifetime love of reading is evident in the fun she so clearly has in paying homage to her favorite books and writers. The Mary Russell series, for example, not only plays with characters from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works but also features "guest appearances" by other characters both real and fictional, including the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924), scholar and folklorist, in *The Moor* (1998); a glimpse of T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935), the legendary British soldier known as Lawrence of Arabia, in *O Jerusalem* (1999); Rudyard Kipling's character Kim in *The Game* (2004); and crime writer Dashiell Hammett in *Locked Rooms* (2005). Possibly unable to resist cross-pollination, King brought a mysterious manuscript that may have been written by Sherlock Holmes himself into Kate Martinelli's world in *The Art of Detection* (2006).

Beyond the games and literary name-dropping, however, is a writer of serious intent and considerable skill. King's novels take on emotionally charged and sometimes controversial themes, from feminism to religious beliefs, all within the context of an elegantly plotted mystery. Although the crime and its investigation exist as a stage for the characters to play out their desires and conflicts, it is ultimately the characters who matter. As King said, she does not write whodunits; she writes stories about people within the format of the mystery novel.

A GRAVE TALENT

In *A Grave Talent*, the brutal murder of three small girls, all of kindergarten age and in the San Francisco Bay area, prompts police officials to team veteran investigator Alonzo "Al" Hawkin with a junior partner: Katarina Cecilia Martinelli, known as Casey (K.C.), or Kate, to her friends. Initially, Al is reluctant to work with Kate, who has only a year's experience as a detective, and she is wary of his reputation as the terror

of the force. However, police protocol determines that when children are involved, a woman should be part of the investigation. It is this sort of casual assumption about women's roles that underscores a central theme of *A Grave Talent*: the struggle of women to be who they are in a culture that prefers to place them safely within domestic roles. This theme is highlighted when suspicion falls on Vaun Adams, a woman artist who has served time in jail for a child murder, and Kate and her lover, Lee Cooper, debate the old question of why there are so few great women artists. Are women who defy norms—choosing art, for example, rather than marriage and family—bound to be twisted, perhaps even dangerous?

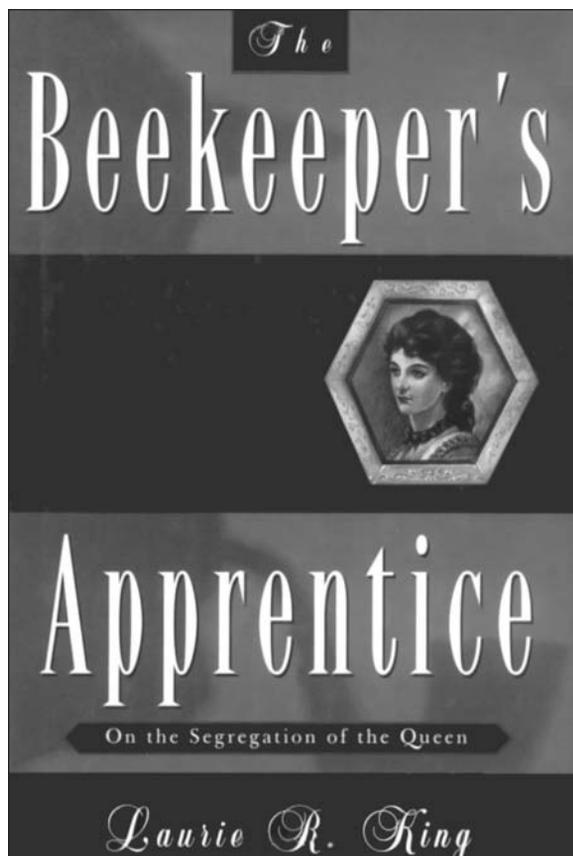
Choosing to obey or defy behavioral norms for women is also, for Kate, a personal conflict, because Lee, her lover, is a woman. Kate keeps her private life carefully guarded, fearing discrimination from fellow police officers and from the public, but her need to separate her public and private selves causes both internal tension and conflict within her relationship. As Kate and Al learn more about Vaun Adams and get closer to finding the truth about the child murders, Kate must also come to terms with her own true self.

A Grave Talent was praised by critics for its well-drawn characters, psychological complexity and intricate plotting. It received the Edgar Allan Poe Award for best mystery.

THE BEEKEEPER'S APPRENTICE

If Sherlock Holmes were a woman, he might look something like Mary Russell, the young, Jewish Anglo-American detective and scholar featured in King's *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* and its sequels. On her Web site, King describes Russell as Holmes in feminine dress: a woman of the twentieth century and interested in theology but with a mental acuity to match that of the great detective. King has said that *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is the book she wished she had when she was age twelve or fourteen: the story of a bright, independent teenage girl who becomes first apprentice, then an equal partner to Sherlock Holmes.

The Beekeeper's Apprentice begins with the voice of Mary Russell, who tells the reader that she was fifteen years old when she met Sherlock Holmes. Russell, orphaned after a car crash that killed her parents



and brother and living with an aunt whom she dislikes, discovers the middle-aged detective in retirement in Sussex, raising bees. Interweaving quotations from a manual on beekeeping throughout the chapters, King gradually and skillfully develops the growing friendship and mutual respect of two extraordinary minds. Holmes teaches Russell his crime-solving secrets, and the two of them, disguised as Gypsies, go undercover to investigate the kidnapping of a visiting senator's daughter. Finally, with Russell's "apprenticeship" over, they find themselves confronting a dangerous and relentless adversary whose hidden past contains a connection to Holmes's most notorious enemy.

Although some purist fans of the original Doyle stories objected to King's reimagining of Sherlock Holmes, one reviewer noted that King captured the spirit of Holmes with affection for the original creation, yet also created a space for female readers to project themselves into the novel. King's Holmes is

still a brilliant thinker, but he has been humanized and rounded. Russell emerges as a fascinating, multilayered character of considerable complexity. Although their relationship is entirely platonic in the first novel, the stage is set for the more complete partnership that will develop as Russell comes of age.

LOCKED ROOMS

In *Locked Rooms*, a psychological mystery, King probes deep into Mary Russell's psyche to gradually uncover a years-old crime buried amid repressed memories. Holmes and Russell, fresh from adventures abroad, visit Russell's birthplace, San Francisco. The initial reason for the visit is to take care of some business matters, including the house Russell inherited from her parents, but troubling dreams involving locked rooms, flying objects, and a "man with no face" haunt her sleep. Her husband, Sherlock Holmes, fears for her well-being, and with good reason: In addition to her night terrors, Russell faces a daylight attack by an unknown shooter. Holmes believes that the dreams and the shooting are related and hires a young former Pinkerton detective turned writer, Dashiell Hammett, to help with the search. As the layers of Russell's memory are peeled back, she and Holmes learn that she survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and that a crime committed during the quake may be the reason someone killed her parents and is now trying to kill her. Filled with colorful details of San Francisco in the roaring twenties, this Holmes-Russell adventure drew praise for its character-driven story and use of alternating viewpoints, Holmes's and Russell's, to tell the tale. The addition of Hammett is a noteworthy and amusing touch, as King imagines the meeting of one of the mystery genre's greatest writers with one of its most enduring fictional creations.

THE ART OF DETECTION

In *The Art of Detection*, the fifth Kate Martinelli novel, King brings together her two fictional worlds, that of Sherlock Holmes in the 1920's and that of modern-day San Francisco police detective Kate Martinelli. In this work, Kate investigates the murder of a Sherlock Holmes fanatic who has created a gaslit shrine to the fictional detective in his home. Or is Holmes, after all, a fictional character? The discovery of a manuscript, dating from 1924 and seemingly written by

Holmes, may hold the clue to the motivation for a seemingly senseless killing. The nearly one-hundred-page manuscript is reproduced in its entirety in the novel. Told in the first person, it seems to be a pastiche of the Conan Doyle adventures, but its San Francisco setting and the case it describes, involving Billy Birdsong, a transvestite singer make it unique among Holmes stories. The manuscript, whether truth or hoax, would be a hot property. Hot enough to kill for? That's what Kate determines to find out.

Booklist praised *The Art of Detection* for its impeccably logical plotting and its seamless melding of the Russell-Holmes series with the Martinelli series. Readers of *Locked Rooms* will notice details from the earlier novel resolving themselves here, giving them the sense of being deeply immersed in a fully imagined fictional world.

Kathryn Kulpa

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KATE MARTINELLI SERIES: *A Grave Talent*, 1993; *To Play the Fool*, 1995; *With Child*, 1996; *Night Work*, 2000; *The Art of Detection*, 2006

MARY RUSSELL SERIES: *The Beekeeper's Apprentice: Or, On the Segregation of the Queen*, 1994; *A Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 1995; *A Letter of Mary*, 1997; *The Moor*, 1998; *O Jerusalem*, 1999; *Justice Hall*, 2002; *The Game*, 2004; *Locked Rooms*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Darker Place*, 1999 (also known as *The Birth of a New Moon*); *Folly*, 2001; *Keeping Watch*, 2003; *Califia's Daughters*, 2004 (as Richards)

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Burgess, Michael, and Jill H. Vassilakos. *Murder in Retrospect: A Selective Guide to Historical Mystery Fiction*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2005. This genre study includes a brief overview of the Mary Russell series, with plot summaries of all the series novels through *The Game* (2004), as well as King's short story, "Mrs. Hudson's Case," which appeared in the anthology *Crime Through Time*

(1997). The authors analyze King's contributions to the historical mystery genre, citing the quality of King's writing and her ability to blend timeless themes with historical detail.

King, Laurie R. "Historical Mysteries: The Past Is a Foreign Country." In *Writing Mysteries: A Handbook by the Mystery Writers of America*, edited by Sue Grafton. Cincinnati: Writers Digest Books, 2002. This chapter in a manual for mystery writers contains advice from King and reflections on her own research and writing process in the Mary Russell series.

_____. Laurie R. King: Mystery Writer/Author. <http://www.laurierking.com>. Author's Web site includes a biography and ongoing news about King, as well as descriptions of her works, excerpts from reviews, background on the Russell and Martinelli series, and links for teachers. Her site includes a long autobiography.

Nichols, Victoria, and Susan Thompson. *Silk Stalkings: More Women Write of Murder*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998. The chapter "After the Fall: Historical Mysteries" discusses the Mary Russell series through *A Monstrous Regiment of Women*. The authors describe Russell as the perfect counterpoint to Sherlock Holmes: a young woman who can match his intellect but also helps to humanize his character.

Winks, Robin W., and Maureen Corrigan, eds. *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998. King is discussed in two sections, "Gay and Lesbian Mystery Fiction," which analyzes the Kate Martinelli series in the context of other mystery novels with lesbian protagonists, and "The Historical Mystery," which places King's Mary Russell novels in the context of the historical pastiche mystery; there is also a comparison of King's two series. The authors praise King's historically accurate depiction of feminist Mary Russell not only as an outsider in early twentieth century British society but also as a woman of her times.

PETER KING

Christopher Peter King

Born: England; 1922

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Gourmet Detective, 1996-
Jack London, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE GOURMET DETECTIVE is a former chef who makes his living as a consultant to the food industry. He specializes in locating rare and exotic foods, finding substitutes for hard-to-find ingredients, and authenticating historical food items and menus. He always emphasizes that he is not really a detective; however, his assignments inevitably embroil him in dangerous adventures involving theft and murder.

JACK LONDON is the real-life author who as a young aspiring writer lived on the Barbary Coast in San Francisco in the 1890s. London helps the local police battle the never-ending crime wave that sweeps the area.

CONTRIBUTION

Peter King has contributed a light, witty entertaining mystery series to the culinary mystery subgenre. His novels are filled with recipes, culinary trivia, details of food preparation and ethnic cooking, and information about the everyday functioning of a gourmet restaurant's kitchen. Each work takes readers on both a food-oriented tour and a tour of an interesting locale, such as New Orleans or the vineyards of Provence, France. The Gourmet Detective mysteries have received enthusiastic praise from mystery readers and critics for their unique combination of a well-written mystery with an informative discussion of food preparation and recipes.

King's Jack London series combines the historical mystery with the thriller and real-life characters with fictional events in mysteries that both entertain and inform the reader. King has enjoyed the same enthusias-

tic response to this series as he has to his Gourmet Detective series. The first novel of the series, *Jewel of the North* (2001), was named a Top Pick by *Romantic Times* magazine.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter King was born Christopher Peter King in England in 1922. He has enjoyed a number of careers. Trained in aerospace science, he was the leader of the team of engineers who designed and developed the rockets used in the Apollo program, which sent a man to the moon. King's interest in how things work and in scientific investigation add a special dimension to his novels. King's second career was that of a professional chef. His firsthand knowledge of gourmet cooking and the food industry gives his novels authenticity and makes them a wonderful source of recipes and cooking tips.

In 1994, with the publication of *The Gourmet Detective*, King received recognition as a highly talented mystery writer. The novel was chosen by *People* magazine as the Beach Book of the Week. The favorable reception of his first novel inspired King to continue to write culinary mysteries, and in 2001 he began another mystery series with author Jack London as the principal character. Although King's major success as a writer has been in the mystery genre, he has written stage plays, radio plays, and short stories. He has also written travel books and several technical books.

King settled in Sarasota, Florida, but he has also lived in France and Brazil and in several cities in the United States, including Chicago and Los Angeles. The settings of his novels reflect his familiarity and fascination with places.

ANALYSIS

Peter King writes two distinctly different kinds of mysteries. His Gourmet Detective series investigates food as much or perhaps even more so than it does crime, which usually includes murder. The Gourmet Detective is hired to perform a job related to food,

ranging from authenticating a rare spice to revising a medieval menu to teaching a cooking class. Without fail, he becomes involved in solving a crime.

King follows a basic formula in writing his culinary mysteries. The Gourmet Detective (who remains nameless) always narrates the story in first person, from his point of view. He meets and becomes interested in one or more attractive women whom he meets in the course of his food-related quest. Most of the time the romantic adventure simply plays out in his mind, but on occasion, the romantic interlude becomes reality. Inevitably, a theft, a murder, or both occur as the Gourmet Detective is doing his food-related investigation, and he becomes involved in a police investigation. Therefore, the Gourmet Detective—who is always explaining that he is not really a detective—is doing just what a detective does and often risking his life in the process.

The Gourmet Detective is extremely personable. In spite of his tendency to be slightly pompous and overly impressed with himself, he is a very likeable character. Readers are quickly caught up in his enthusiasm for the culinary experiences that he is enjoying and the adventures, which add excitement to his life. King surrounds his principal character with unusual, eccentric supporting characters who flesh out the narration of his adventures. The members of the Circle of Careme in *The Gourmet Detective*, the eccentric Italian chefs of *Death al Dente* (1999), and the WITCHES (a group of female restaurant owners) in *Roux the Day* (2002) imbue the mysteries with a humorous tone.

In his Jack London series, King combines characters drawn from real life with fictional ones to create fast-moving, action-packed adventures. His main character is the real-life author Jack London. In the series, London works with the San Francisco police to solve crimes and to foil criminal plots. Although the stories are foremost hard-hitting adventures filled with danger and a considerable amount of violence, King allows London to digress in contemplation of his real profession, that of a writer. London describes his difficulty in creating female characters, how he draws on his own experiences to write his stories, and other aspects of the difficulty of writing as well as his love of his profession.

The setting of San Francisco's Barbary Coast in the

1890's is colorful and creates a realistic atmosphere. Just as the Gourmet Detective series is filled with details of the places the detective goes, so the Jack London mysteries are copiously detailed and bring places to life. Saloons, pleasure palaces, and the wharf play a role equal to that of the characters.

THE GOURMET DETECTIVE

In his first mystery novel, *The Gourmet Detective*, King combines a tale of mystery with references to mystery writers and famous mystery characters and food information and recipes to create a novel with a threefold interest. Readers are interested in solving the mystery; the shared facts about mystery writing enable them to participate in the novel as insiders; and the commentary on gourmet dining entertains them with a look at a specialized field.

King's skill in creating eccentric humorous characters who remain believable is already apparent in this novel. The two supposedly rival chefs Raymond and François are the first of many such characters to appear in King's mysteries.

SPICED TO DEATH

In *Spiced to Death* (1997), the Gourmet Detective goes to New York City to authenticate a rare ancient spice called Ko Feng. The spice is worth millions of dollars and in spite of elaborate security precautions, it is mysteriously stolen. Then, murders and sinister telephone calls cause the Gourmet Detective to worry about his own safety. He becomes involved with Hal Gaines, a detective with the New York Police Department. Gaines is the opposite of the food expert in every way, and this odd coupling adds a humorous touch to the mystery.

Although solving the mystery and retrieving the Ko Feng is the main plot of the novel, King also entertains his reader with a tour of New York restaurants and food fairs. His descriptions of ethnic restaurants and cooking methods add an interesting dimension to the novel. The discussion of food is an integral part of the narrative because the various chefs and restaurant proprietors all have an interest in obtaining some of the Ko Feng.

DYING ON THE VINE

In *Dying on the Vine* (1999), the Gourmet Detective travels to Provence, France, to investigate the rea-

sons for a small winery's insistence on purchasing its neighbor winery, which is much larger and whose owners have no desire to sell. The setting in the south of France gives King ample opportunity to include recipes, discussions of wine, and trivia about food—all of which are trademarks of this series.

The narration of the mystery in this novel incorporates somewhat more violence and bloodshed than is usual in King's mysteries. On arriving at the winery, the Gourmet Detective discovers a corpse, which has apparently been gored by a wild boar. Bodies in wine vats, a bee attack, and exploding gliders plus a private army of men trained to kill create the ambiance of a thriller in this novel. However, the novel is not without humor. Once again, King has created a number of eccentric amusing characters, including Professor Rahmani of the Institute for the Study of Planetary Influence and Alexis Sukarov, the owner of a glider delivery service.

ROUX THE DAY

The seventh novel in the Gourmet Detective series, *Roux the Day*, takes the reader on an exploration of the culinary world of New Orleans and the surrounding area. Using the setting of a television show, King presents an in-depth comparison of Cajun and Creole cooking. He adds humor to the presentation by creating participants in the discussion who are opinionated and at times aggressively insulting to the representatives of the rival cooking style.

Recipes for all the dishes for which the city is famous are included. Blackened redfish, gumbo, oyster dishes, catfish, crawfish, and all of the spices essential to both Cajun and Creole dishes such as garlic, cayenne, basil, and paprika are discussed. The group of female restaurant proprietors known as the WITCHES, who kidnap the Gourmet Detective, further elaborate this rich treatment of food. All the women serve Cajun and Creole dishes in their restaurants; however, some of them are experimenting with combining the traditional local cooking styles with other ethnic styles such as Italian or Chinese.

The plot of the novel focuses on a missing chef's book belonging to the Belvedere family, who owned a world-famous restaurant, particularly renowned for its oysters Belvedere. The restaurant has been closed for several years because of a mental illness, which

seemed to pass from generation to generation. Now the last member of the family, who has just graduated from business school, intends to reopen the restaurant and has had his lawyer hire the Gourmet Detective to find the book. However, he is not the only one interested in the book. Theft and murder occur, and the Gourmet Detective is once again working with the police and risking his life. King incorporates a considerable amount of local color in this novel as the food detective travels about the city in search of the missing chef's book. The reader experiences the French Quarter, the paddle boats, jazz clubs, and Mardi Gras and its floats and mule-drawn carriages.

King repeats the odd couple Gourmet Detective/police detective motif that he used in *Spiced to Death*. New Orleans detective Lieutenant Delancey, a former New Yorker, interacts with the Gourmet Detective in much the same way as Hal Gaines did.

DEAD MAN'S COAST

The second novel in the Jack London series, *Dead Man's Coast* (2002), is a historical thriller with a real-life hero. London is not the only real-life character in this mystery: It also features Ambrose Bierce, Martin Beck, Carrie Nation, James McFarland, and Harry Houdini, all well-known individuals who played important roles in American life in the 1890's and early twentieth century. London knew all these individuals and was exceptionally close to Houdini. King anchors his novel in reality by using these characters, then adds fictional characters, including the very provocative music-hall entertainer Belle Conquest and the medium Eulalia Paradino. King's setting is the bars, music halls, saloons, and the Barbary Coast wharf, which were all part of the daily life of San Francisco when London lived there. The plot takes London on a dangerous adventure from the Barbary Coast to Chinatown to the pleasure palaces of the city and to the political rallies and social events.

Shawncey Webb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE GOURMET DETECTIVE SERIES: *The Gourmet Detective*, 1994; *Spiced to Death*, 1997; *Dying on the Vine*, 1999; *Death al Dente*, 1999; *A Healthy Place to Die*, 2000; *Eat, Drink and Be Buried*, 2001;

Roux the Day, 2002; *Dine and Die on the Danube Express*, 2003

JACK LONDON SERIES: *The Jewel of the North*, 2001; *Dead Man's Coast*, 2002; *The Golden Gate Murder*, 2002

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Croan, Robert. "Delicious Mystery Is Served 'Al Dente' on a Silver Plate." Review of *Death al Dente*, by Peter King. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 26, 1999, p. 2. The Gourmet Detective travels to Italy to help a famous actor create a great Italian restaurant in London and ends up being attacked by a herd of buffalo and a monk. Reviewer finds the work amusing but light on plot.

DeCandido, GraceAnne A. Review of *Roux the Day*, by Peter King. *Booklist* 98, no. 18 (May 15, 2002): 1579. Reviewer of this Gourmet Detective novel set in New Orleans praises King's description of ingredients and finds it a light and pleasant mystery.

Kershaw, Alex. *Jack London: A Life*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999. Good source for the real life and character of Jack London. Discusses his careers and his devotion to socialism and environmental protection. Also examines him as a writer. Provides knowledge of the real London to contrast with King's fictionalized version.

Lambert, Pam. Review of *The Gourmet Detective*, by Peter King. *People Weekly*, June 10, 1996, 38. Reviewer likes the culinary humor and trivia included in the first of the Gourmet Detective series novels and finds the work pleasant light reading.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on mystery and detective fiction that looks at settings and subgenres as well as a chapter on historical crime fiction. Gives a perspective from which to understand King's writing.

STEPHEN KING

Born: Portland, Maine; September 21, 1947

Also wrote as Richard Bachman

Types of plot: Horror; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

In the traditional mystery story, a crime (usually a murder) has been committed, and the guilty party must be caught by a detective or the crime must be explained by characters in a logical fashion. Mystery stories often depend on suspense, which is generated by the detective's pursuit of the criminal, or by events that raise doubts about whether the murderer will be found out. In the end, however, a rational view of the world is triumphant; that is, clues to the crime lead to the apprehension of the criminal. Stephen King's mystery stories introduce elements of the supernatural and the irrational

that cannot be resolved by the deductive method employed in a classic of detective and mystery fiction. The world is less stable than adults are usually willing to admit, King suggests. He often takes a child's point of view, harking back to the fears that most adults have felt to demonstrate that their anxieties have not been overcome but have been merely repressed. Horror, King implies, is the subtext of human life—the frightening unknowability of things that human beings dare not face. There are malevolent powers out there that cannot be accounted for in a modern, secular world.

BIOGRAPHY

Stephen King was born in Portland, Maine, on September 12, 1947. Most of his life has been spent in Maine, and a significant portion of his fiction has been

set in the state. He and his brother grew up without any contact with their father, who abandoned their mother. His mother worked very hard to support the family and to keep it together.

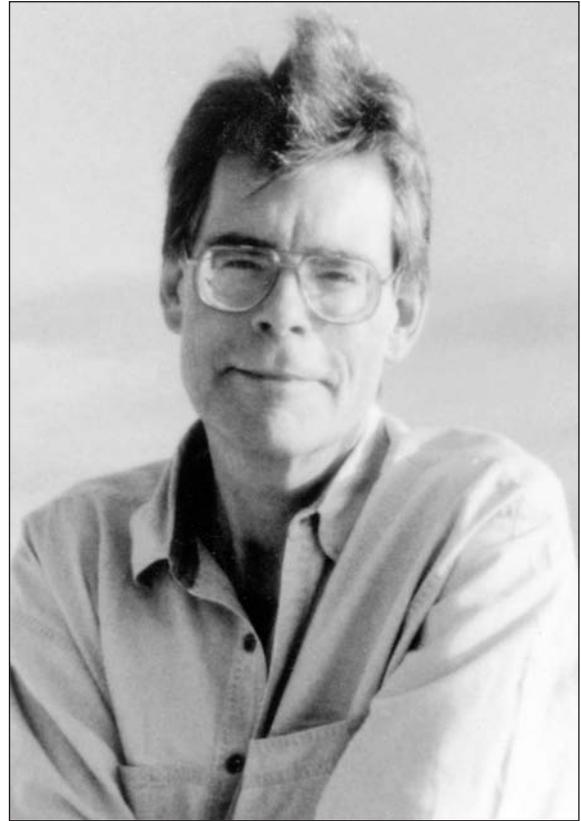
King began writing as an undergraduate at the University of Maine at Orono. He majored in English and earned a teaching certificate. He sold short stories to magazines and wrote several full-length novels that were not accepted for publication. He turned to teaching as a way to support himself and his wife and children. As rejection slips from publishers mounted, he began to wonder whether he would ever be a success. He has admitted that in his despair he turned to drinking and drugs. He persisted with his writing, however, and finally *Carrie* (1974) was not only accepted for publication but became, in paperback, a huge best seller as well.

King does not like to think of himself as a celebrity. He has settled in Maine with his family, although he has become involved with some of the film adaptations of his work and has traveled across the country to promote his books. He is known primarily as a writer of horror fiction. His works written under the name Richard Bachman have also been successful. King received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award in 2007.

ANALYSIS

In Stephen King's fictional world, evil exists in and of itself—not simply as an abstraction or as a manifestation of human character. Evil cannot be explained away in psychological terms. One of King's quarrels with Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of *The Shining* (1977) is that the director put the emphasis on the main character's imagination of evil and not on the Overlook Hotel, which King has called "a huge storage battery charged with an evil powerful enough to corrupt all those who come in contact with it." For King, evil is some kind of operational, preadult, elemental force that is completely beyond human control. It haunts the world; it is not merely a psychological aberration. King's stories focus on this evil; they are not clichéd studies of demented persons.

In the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe, King writes metaphysical mystery stories that focus on crumbling



Stephen King. (Tabitha King)

families who represent a disintegrating universe. King, referring to *The Shining*, puts it this way:

People ask, "Is it a ghost story or is it just in this guy's mind?" Of course it is a ghost story, because Jack Torrance himself is a haunted house. He's haunted by his father. It pops up again and again and again. He's haunted by that. It's just a case of however you want to define "haunted."

King's "however" refers to the inside and the outside, the character's mind and the hotel's ambience. They are, so to speak, one and the same—as they are in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," in which the "house" of the title refers to both the physical residence and the family of Madeleine and Roderick Usher, brother and sister in Poe's classic horror tale of human and earthly corruption. As Roderick and Madeleine collapse against each other, so does their house crumble. Modern readers may prefer a psychologi-

cal—that is to say, a social science—explanation, but the power of Poe’s and King’s stories derives from their refusal to reduce their work to parables about the mental lives of human beings.

Roderick Usher is not responsible for his ability to read his sister’s mind; in fact, he is terrified by his closeness to his sister and by the power that has taken possession of him. The same is true in *Carrie*, in which a mother’s bullying stimulates her adolescent daughter’s telekinetic powers. In *Firestarter* (1980), two adults who have acquired parapsychic powers in a government drug experiment pass on these powers to their child. In *The Dead Zone* (1979), John Smith suffers several severe head injuries that trigger his powers of second sight, making him able to see aspects of both the past and the future. In *The Shining*, Danny Torrance seems born with the ability to “shine,” to visualize images of the future; something in the atmosphere of the Overlook Hotel stimulates his ability to forecast the horrible crimes his father will commit. All these stories suggest how strongly King has been influenced by both science fiction and the gothic tradition in the novel. From the image of the haunted house (a staple of gothic novels), he has moved to the prospect of a haunted world. In *The Stand* (1978), for example, a virus developed in a government laboratory is let loose in spite of a sophisticated security system and nearly succeeds in killing every human being.

King’s mystery and horror fiction has a subtext. His stories take up things that people do not want to confront openly. In one interview, he speaks of writing *Salem’s Lot* (1975) during the Watergate hearings. He kept watching witnesses saying that they could not recall what had happened. He was fascinated with Senator Howard Baker’s repeated question to witnesses, “What did you know and when did you know it?” For King, the element of mystery and horror in *Salem’s Lot* was not the vampires but the town that was obviously hiding something, tucking away things in closets, and that these events were occurring in daylight, when it should have been possible to see what was happening.

THE SHINING

Both Danny Torrance in *The Shining* and Johnny Smith in *The Dead Zone* know things that they would

prefer to forget. Danny desperately loves his father, Jack, but the signs of Jack’s unstable personality and violence are everywhere in evidence. He has broken his son’s arm in an angry fit over Danny’s messing with his play manuscript and has severely beaten one of his students for slashing his car’s tires. Jack is an alcoholic who has always had trouble controlling his temper, but he views his violent reactions as fits or attacks—much like the attack of the wasps that sting him when he inadvertently disturbs them. Life itself has a way of unnerving Jack Torrance. He is out of control, yet as a parent and as a writer he wants very much to be in charge. He has, in fact, a rage for order that drives him insane, for life cannot compose itself for him. Each of Danny’s visions makes it clearer that it is his father whom he should fear, but each time Danny is aroused from his spells he tries to deny the evidence that his father is a murderer. The very word “murder” appears in Danny’s waking dreams as “red-rum,” a telling reversal, a clue that the father he loves is not his protector but his destroyer.

THE DEAD ZONE

In *The Dead Zone*, Johnny Smith shakes a politician’s hand and realizes that Greg Stillson will one day be president of the United States. The trouble is that Stillson is pure evil. He has intimidated powerful figures into supporting him and pandered to the lowest elements of society while pretending to stand for decent American values. He is a malevolent personality who will start World War III. Johnny can envision this scenario and believes that it is as inevitable as Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. Johnny’s dilemma is that he does not want to resort to violence. Yet he watches Stillson go from one success to another. Diagnosed as having a brain tumor, knowing that he has very little time to live, Johnny decides to intervene in history, but assassinating Stillson proves unnecessary. When Stillson grabs a young child to shield himself from Johnny’s rifle, his political career is doomed.

As mystery-horror novels, *The Shining* and *The Dead Zone* exemplify King’s view that much of what people know is repressed. Reality has its own mysterious subtext that cannot be simply resolved by the detective or the novel’s hero. Indeed, Johnny Smith must die because of his knowledge of history. The Overlook

Hotel seems malign because it looks over—has an overview of—history. It is a repository of evil to which someone as sensitive as Danny Torrance responds. In *The Dead Zone*, *The Shining*, and other King novels there is little doubt about who the criminals are. Suspense is created not by finding out who did what, but by putting together the horrifying clues that demonstrate that people would just as soon overlook the evil in their midst.

“The dead zone” is a term Johnny Smith coins. It stands for those things that he cannot see or remember—the elusive aspects of history that make gaps in his life. He suggests that the gaps in every human being’s life account for much of the mystery of existence. He describes the dead zone as “a mental birthmark. A fouled circuit, a faulty relay . . . [a] small faulty section.” Even Johnny’s kind of knowing is a “pretty limited thing,” he tells one character. “It’s like some of the signals don’t conduct.” As one of his doctors puts it, the dead zone is a “subset of a larger overall set.” In traditional mystery stories, the dead zone or subset comprises those clues and bits of missing evidence that are eventually found and fitted into a solution to a crime. When the criminal is caught or the crime exposed, the world of the mystery novel recovers its equilibrium. It is whole, it is complete, it is a “set.” The terms “set” and “subset” suggest King’s interest in scientific explanations of mystery, yet the terms do no more than define the problem. Johnny’s gift of second sight is never adequately explained.

Although King’s work has been immensely popular and his books have received many rave reviews, he has also been attacked in the press for a lack of wit and intelligence. Some of his early work is rather leaden, the dialogue stilted and the plotting somewhat confused. King admits to a certain lack of maturity in his presentation of female characters and of minorities. He sees the later attacks on his fiction, however, as a sign that he is out of step with modern liberal notions of morality. He believes that his fiction does not inhabit the relativistic universe of his severest critics. His view of existence is conservative—almost reactionary in the sense that he implies that human beings are still living in the dark ages. He has referred to his “old-fashioned frontier vision.” He believes that “there

exist fundamental values of good and evil warring for supremacy in this universe.” Thus, he suggests that he is “at odds with what is essentially an urban and liberal sensibility that equates all change with progress and wants to destroy all conventions, in literature as well as in society.” Life in his stories is regressive, not progressive. His characters have to return to childhood and to their origins. Sometimes, as in *Cujo* (1981), children cannot withstand elemental evil; other times, as in *The Shining*, a child escapes madness, if not the horror of a disintegrating family. At best, however, King’s characters are granted no more than a reprieve from diabolism.

’SALEM’S LOT

Many of King’s novels are ingenious reworkings of classic mystery and horror stories. *’Salem’s Lot*, for example, was inspired by Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Having taught Stoker’s novel as a high school teacher, King was intrigued by the idea of creating a modern vampire story. Set in a small town in Maine, *’Salem’s Lot* centers on a successful writer who returns to write about his hometown. In this case, he is fascinated with a supposedly haunted lot, the place where, in fact, he went through a horrible initiation experience. The novel is about origins, about where people really come from. It seems to have a strongly autobiographical source, for King, lacking a father, seems drawn to stories about families gone awry, children questioning their identities, and adults finding that they have not outgrown their childish fears. King’s fiction reads like a haunted house standing for and holding the haunted minds of human beings.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1974-1980 • *Carrie*, 1974; *’Salem’s Lot*, 1975; *Rage*, 1977 (as Bachman); *The Shining*, 1977; *The Stand*, 1978, unabridged version 1990; *The Dead Zone*, 1979; *The Long Walk*, 1979 (as Bachman); *Firestarter*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Cujo*, 1981; *Roadwork*, 1981 (as Bachman); *The Gunslinger*, 1982 (revised 2003, illustrated by Michael Whelan); first volume of the Dark Tower series); *The Running Man*, 1982 (as Bachman); *Christine*, 1983; *Cycle of the Werewolf*, 1983 (novella;

illustrated by Berni Wrightson); *Pet Sematary*, 1983; *The Eyes of the Dragon*, 1984, 1987; *The Talisman*, 1984 (with Peter Straub); *Thinner*, 1984 (as Bachman); *The Bachman Books: Four Early Novels by Stephen King*, 1985 (includes *Rage*, *The Long Walk*, *Roadwork*, and *The Running Man*); *It*, 1986; *Misery*, 1987; *The Drawing of the Three*, 1987 (illustrated by Phil Hale; second volume of the Dark Tower series); *The Tommyknockers*, 1987; *The Dark Half*, 1989

1991-2000 • *Needful Things*, 1991; *The Waste Lands*, 1991 (illustrated by Ned Dameron; third volume in the Dark Tower series); *Gerald's Game*, 1992; *Dolores Claiborne*, 1993; *Insomnia*, 1994; *Rose Madder*, 1995; *Desperation*, 1996; *The Green Mile*, 1996 (six-part serialized novel); *The Regulators*, 1996 (as Bachman); *Wizard and Glass*, 1997 (illustrated by Dave McKean; fourth volume in the Dark Tower series); *Bag of Bones*, 1998; *Storm of the Century*, 1999 (adaptation of his teleplay); *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, 1999

2001-2006 • *Black House*, 2001 (with Straub); *Dreamcatcher*, 2001; *From a Buick Eight*, 2002; *Wolves of the Calla*, 2003 (fifth volume of the Dark Tower series); *Song of Susannah*, 2004 (sixth volume of the Dark Tower series); *The Journals of Eleanor Druse: My Investigation of the Kingdom Hospital Incident*, 2004 (written under the pseudonym Eleanor Druse); *The Colorado Kid*, 2005; *Cell*, 2006; *Lisey's Story: A Novel*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Night Shift*, 1978; *Different Seasons*, 1982; *Skeleton Crew*, 1985; *Dark Visions*, 1988 (with Dan Simmons and George R. R. Martin); *Four Past Midnight*, 1990; *Nightmares and Dreamscapes*, 1993; *Hearts in Atlantis*, 1999; *Everything's Eventual: Fourteen Dark Tales*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *Creepshow*, 1982 (with George Romero; adaptation of his book); *Cat's Eye*, 1984; *Silver Bullet*, 1985 (adaptation of *Cycle of the Werewolf*); *Maximum Overdrive*, 1986 (adaptation of his short story "Trucks"); *Pet Sematary*, 1989; *Sleep Walkers*, 1992

TELEPLAYS: *The Stand*, 1994 (based on his novel); *Storm of the Century*, 1999; *Rose Red*, 2002

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon: A Pop-up Book*, 2004 (text adaptation by Peter Abrahams, illustrated by Alan Dingman)

NONFICTION: *Danse Macabre*, 1981; *Black Magic and Music: A Novelist's Perspective on Bangor*, 1983; *Bare Bones: Conversations on Terror with Stephen King*, 1988 (Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller, editors); *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, 2000; *Faithful: Two Diehard Red Sox Fans Chronicle the 2004 Season*, 2004 (with Stewart O'Nan)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Creepshow*, 1982 (adaptation of the D. C. Comics); *Nightmares in the Sky*, 1988

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dialogic narratives in King's work; the sixteen pieces examine most of King's novels and some short fiction. Individual essay bibliographies, book bibliography, and book index.

_____. *Landscape of Fear: Stephen King's American Gothic*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1988. Placing King in an American gothic tradition with Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and William Faulkner, this study treats sociopolitical themes such as "The Betrayal of Technology," individual accountability, innocence betrayed, and survival in the novels through *It*. The text is supplemented by a bibliography of scholarship from 1980 to 1987.

Russell, Sharon. *Revisiting Stephen King*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002. Analyses of King's later works, from *The Green Mile* through *Dreamcatcher*.

Spignesi, Stephen J. *The Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia: The Definitive Guide to the Works of America's Master of Horror*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1991. First published with the title *The*

Shape Under the Sheet, this is an important guide for all students of King. Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

_____. *The Essential Stephen King: The Greatest Novels, Short Stories, Movies, and Other Creations of the World's Most Popular Writer*. Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page, 2001. A useful discussion of the horror writer's works by a King enthusiast.

Vincent, Ben. *The Road to "Dark Tower": Exploring Stephen King's Magnum Opus*. New York: NAL Trade, 2004. In-depth study of King's seven-volume masterwork, which revolves around the mystery of the tower from which the series takes its name.

Wiater, Stanley, Christopher Golden, and Hank Wagner. *The Stephen King Universe: A Tale-by-Tale Examination of the Interconnected Elements in His Work*. Los Angeles: Renaissance Press, 2001. A critical feast of all things King. The authors explore the common themes, places, and characters that run through King's novels. Resources include a biographical chronology, a bibliography, and an index.

NATSUO KIRINO

Mariko Hashioka

Born: Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan;
October 7, 1951

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; inverted; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Japanese crime writer Natsuo Kirino first became known to English readers with the publication of *Out*, the 2003 translation of *Auto* (1997), her harrowing tale of four apparently demure women suddenly engaging in murder and body dismemberment. The success of *Out* led to the 2007 translation of *Gurotesuku* (2003; *Grotesque*), a mystery in which Kirino continues her focus on women and crime. *Grotesque*, the story of a double murder of two Tokyo prostitutes, reveals as much about a perpetrator's deviant mind as it does

about the severe peer pressures and bullying confronting young Japanese women.

In Japan, Kirino's crime fiction has won her six major awards. *Out* was nominated for the 2004 Edgar Allan Poe Award for best novel, the first nomination for a translation from Japanese. With her strong focus on female protagonists and perpetrators, Kirino is part of a group of innovative Japanese female crime writers such as Miyuki Miyabe who have been challenging, changing, and developing crime fiction in Japan since the 1990's. Kirino's combination of deep psychological insights and her stark depiction of social and economic pressures has made her crime fiction internationally popular.

BIOGRAPHY

Natsuo Kirino was born Mariko Hashioka on October 7, 1951, in Kanazawa, capital of Ishikawa Prefecture. She began her life in one of the few Japanese cities that was not firebombed in World War II and thus contained a treasure of traditional architecture. Her father, a peripatetic architect, soon moved the family to Sendai and Sapporo, before relocating to Tokyo when Kirino was fourteen years old. Kirino attracted attention as an imaginative teenager who loved to read.

After obtaining her law degree in 1974 from Seikei University in Tokyo, Kirino found no appropriate employment and worked as an organizer of film festivals and as a magazine editor and writer. Later, she would say that during this period she had a rough time and no good job at all. In 1975, she married, and in 1981, her daughter was born. For a while she tried her luck as a scenario writer for films before writing her first romance in 1984.

Kirino turned to mystery writing and was influenced by Japanese writers Yukio Mishima, Fumiko Hayashi, and Ryu Murakami, as well as by Western writers such as Flannery O'Connor, Anne Tyler, Stephen King, and Patricia Highsmith. Her breakthrough came in 1993, when she was writing under the pseudonym Natsuo Kirino. Her mystery *Kao ni furikakaru ame* (1993; the rain that falls on the face) won the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Award in 1993 and launched her career as a major crime writer in Japan. Her protagonist, female private detective Miro Murano, made one more appearance in *Tenshi ni misuterareta yoru* (1994; the night abandoned by angels) before Kirino turned away from serial fiction.

Kirino's next success was *Out*, which saw an initial printing run of five hundred thousand copies in Japan and won her the 1998 Mystery Writers of Japan Award. Translated into English and other foreign languages, the novel established Kirino's international fame as an original mystery writer. Her fiction focuses on the social forces driving contemporary women over the edge into committing crimes of astonishing ferocity.

Kirino's novel *Yawarakana hoho* (1999; soft cheeks) won the important Naoki Prize awarded annually since 1935 to the best young author of popular fiction. Her *Grotesque* won the Izumi Kyoka Literary

Award, *Zangyakuki* (2004; record of cruelty) won the Shibata Renzaburo Award, and *Tamamoe!* (2005; a soul burns) received the Fujinkoron Literary Award. Kirino has also published short story collections, and a number of her mysteries have been made into Japanese films. *Out* was turned into a film in 2002, and New Line Cinema picked up the rights for a high-production-value remake.

Kirino and several other female Japanese crime writers have added a decisively new, female perspective to modern Japanese mysteries. No longer working with serial characters, Kirino is attracted to psychological realism, eschewing the flights into the supernatural of her contemporary Miyuki Miyabe. Kirino prefers to explore the noir world of Japanese society in the throes of economic and gender depression. Sadly for the society, her imaginative tales of murder and mayhem increasingly find themselves mirrored by the reality of ever more bizarre murder cases in Japan. In January, 2007, the confession of a woman who murdered and dismembered her husband and dumped the body parts across Tokyo uncannily echoed the plot of *Out*.

ANALYSIS

The publication of English translations of the work of Japanese crime writer Natsuo Kirino has garnered for her a loyal English-speaking readership. Her readers appreciate Kirino's stark, laconically told tales of evil spreading out against the dark backdrop of a modern Japan that is in the grip of economic stagnation and social alienation. As rendered by her translators, Kirino's style is cold, detached, yet observant, painfully direct, and to the point. The reader is instantly reminded of the classic American hard-boiled detective stories.

Kirino is part of a wave of Japanese female crime writers whose focus on women and crime has invigorated the mystery genre beginning in the early 1990's. By making women active agents in their crime stories, these writers bring new experiences and insights to the genre. Kirino's crime novels all place stylistic emphasis on a remorseless and relentless revelation of the dark side of modern Japanese society. Kirino's key interest lies in revealing the psychological and social

makeup of outsiders, or grotesque characters. Her narratives favor ambiguity and multiplicity.

Those whose profession it is to solve crimes figure only marginally in Kirino's translated mysteries. In *Out*, one of the perpetrators remarks of Detective Imai, the police officer who comes closest to figuring out the first murder, that he draws the wrong conclusions from correct observations, in part because of his gender bias. In *Grotesque*, the police are a mere trigger to force the prime suspect to tell the story from his point of view. Significantly, the crimes of *Out* are never solved or punished, nor is the perpetrator of the second murder in *Grotesque* revealed by the end of the novel.

At the heart of Kirino's literary mysteries are modern Japanese women who choose, for a variety of reasons, to drop out of respectable society. In Japan, this is perhaps the most shocking aspect of Kirino's crime fiction. Her female characters forcefully reject the social tradition of being meek, subordinate, conciliatory, and willing to suffer for the sake of peace and harmony in family and society and at work. For them, crime becomes an alternative to a bullying, harassing, and discriminatory society.

A central theme of Kirino's crime novels is the utter loneliness of her characters. Generally, this loneliness comes from a total lack of love that begins in the family and continues in the realm of sexuality. Indeed, both *Out* and *Grotesque* describe modern Japanese families that resemble war in hell. At the root of the breakdown of the family, Kirino's narratives suggest, lies crass materialism, egoism, and relentless selfishness not tempered by any moral or ethical standards in the age of abject consumerism.

This idea that money has permeated and destroyed the family and romantic love alike is a strong theme in Kirino's crime fiction. In the absence of love to govern intimate human relationships, money becomes the medium through which characters seek to define their status and power in their interactions with each other. In an economically stagnant capitalist society, the fight for money becomes bitter and quickly turns violent. Not surprisingly, once money replaces love in human relationships, the issue of prostitution appears. Prostitution figures centrally in *Grotesque*. In this work, at least one of the two murders of prostitutes oc-

curs because one sex worker demands more money for the extra work of letting a client indulge in his incestuous fantasy.

Kirino's mysteries also openly reveal the persistent nature of severe gender discrimination in contemporary Japan. Masako Katori, the strongest personality of the criminal quartet of *Out*, experienced job discrimination firsthand for more than twenty years at her former banking job. Even the extraordinary beauty of Yuriko Hirata in *Grotesque* fails her professionally as a fashion trend passes her by.

When Kirino's women leave ordinary society, these departures are far more self-destructive and less glamorous than those made by the typical disaffected young men who turn to crime in most Japanese crime fiction. There is a bitterness, harshness, self-loathing, and self-destructiveness to female crime in Kirino's work that keeps readers on edge. This bitterness disallows cozy, romantic delusions about the nature of crime and the cost it extracts from the criminal and the victims.

A final poignant literary characteristic of Kirino's fiction is her expressive use of multiple narratives. In *Out*, chapters and sections are written from the third-person perspective of a full variety of characters. The climactic showdown is rendered twice, first from the view of the villain and then from that of survivor Masako. In *Grotesque*, the story of the murder of two prostitutes is told by various characters in first-person narratives. The characters address the reader either directly, or through their journals or written confessions. By juxtaposing different perspectives throughout her mysteries, Kirino creates a permanent state of uncertainty. Unusual for the crime genre, there is no authoritative master narrative in Kirino's mysteries that finally reassures the reader which of the many voices one is to trust.

OUT

Indicative of the tightness of its plot, the bleakness of the setting in which Kirino's acclaimed thriller *Out* opens and ends corresponds to the bleakness of the lives of its female protagonists. Kirino deftly introduces her cast of four middle-aged women, each representative of an aspect of Japanese womanhood, as their night shift begins at a lunchbox-meal factory. Masako Katori picked this blue-collar job after suffering gender bias and harassment at her banking job.

Widowed Yoshie Azumi keeps working to provide for her ungrateful bed-ridden mother-in-law and equally ungrateful youngest daughter. Kuniko Jonouchi, the youngest and vainest, needs money to pay off debts from her spending sprees. Yayoi Yamamoto works to help earn the down payment for a family home.

One night Yayoi reveals that her husband, Kenji, has gambled away their savings while courting a Chinese club hostess. When Yayoi confronted him, he beat her. The next evening, Yayoi strangles Kenji in an explosion of hatred for an unfaithful, abusive husband who has betrayed her, rejected her, and robbed her of her most cherished dream of a harmonious family life. Her co-workers, who are called to help or who stumble on the process, cooperate as professionally as if they were at work and dismember Kenji's body in Masako's bathroom so that it fits into forty-three garbage bags.

Kuniko's laziness, which causes her to dump her share of the bags in public park containers rather than closed residential trash bins, leads to their discovery. However, the police arrest Misuyoshi Satake, owner of the club where Kenji lost his money and a former hit man who was jailed seven years for the sadistic rape-murder of a rebellious prostitute. *Out* chillingly demonstrates that the police cannot grasp the true motive leading to the murder and dismemberment of Kenji.

Released for lack of evidence but ruined financially, Satake swears revenge on the women he suspects. As Satake hones in on his first victim, Kuniko, *Out* unsentimentally exposes the vast alienation and loneliness in modern Japan. In the climax, Masako fights for her life in the abandoned factory where Satake has dragged her. It is Masako's will to live, the narrative implies, that allows her to win the battle. Freeing herself from all familial and social bonds, she is ready to move out of Japan completely, avoiding any punishment.

GROTESQUE

In the psychological crime novel *Grotesque*, Kirino combines the investigation of the murder of two Tokyo prostitutes with a chilling picture of hatred and self-loathing among its female characters. Being bullied and sexually hurt and failing in spite of their best efforts all happen to the young women in *Grotesque*. By the end of the novel, almost all the women consider themselves grotesquely disfigured by their resulting hatred.



Grotesque opens as a murderer has struck twice within one year and strangled to death two very different victims. Yuriko Hirata descended to streetwalking after being a sought-after call girl in high school and experiencing a brief stint as a model and fashionable escort. Kazue Satō, however, was a professional manager by day and plied the same streets as Yuriko after dark. Through these two victims, the narrative suggests that in the absence of love at home and the hardship of enduring sexual predation and extreme bullying in a highly competitive, snobbish educational system symbolized by Kirino's fictional Q preparatory school, high school, and university system, the psyche of young women is disfigured.

For the plot, Kirino relishes in using multiple first-person narratives. Yuriko's unnamed elder sister expresses lifelong sibling rivalry. Yuriko and her sister are both Eurasians whose Japanese mother killed herself when their egoistic father relocated the family to

his native Switzerland. The older sister hates Yuriko for her good looks, which are missing in her own physiognomy. Yuriko speaks from the grave through her diary, which reveals the abyss of her soul. Her beauty turned out to be a curse.

At the trial, the police seem confident that the murders are the work of one man, the illegal Chinese immigrant Zhang Zhe-zhong. However, he stubbornly insists that he killed only Yuriko because she charged him extra for pretending to be his dead sister. Zhang may have murdered his own sister when illegally migrating to Japan, highlighting Kirino's penchant for unresolved riddles in her mysteries. Zhang has a grotesquely deformed soul, reminiscent of that of the psychopathic Satake in *Out*.

The journals of Kazue Satō expose a soul damaged by incessant bullying at Q High School. She considers prostitution an act of revenge on men and enters an ambiguous, masochistic relationship with Zhang.

The ending of *Grotesque* is indicative of Kirino's interest in psychopathology and her disinclination to follow the mystery tradition of solving all crimes at the end of the story. In an effort to understand the two victims, Yuriko's sister appears ready to assume the sex work that they did. The murder of Kazue remains unsolved.

What distinguishes *Grotesque* is Kirino's trademark eye for the loneliness, alienation, and hostility in the life of her female characters. It appears that one cannot obtain love and happiness through beauty or intelligence, or even luck or hard work.

R. C. Lutz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MIRO MURANO SERIES: *Kao ni furikakeru ame*, 1993; *Tenshi ni misuterareta yoru*, 1994

NOVELS: *Auto*, 1997 (*Out*, 2003); *Mizu no nemuri hai no yume*, 1998; *Faiabōro burūsu*, 1998; *Yawarakana hoho*, 1999; *Gyokuran*, 2001; *Dāku*, 2002; *Gurotesuku*, 2003 (*Grotesque*, 2007); *Kogen*, 2003; *Riaru wārudo*, 2003; *Zangyakuki*, 2004; *Aimu sōri mama*, 2004; *Tamamoe!*, 2005; *Boken no kuni*, 2005; *Metabōra*, 2007

SHORT FICTION: *Sabiru kokoro*, 1997; *Jiorama*, 1998; *Rozu gāden*, 2000; *Anbosu mundōsu*, 2005

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Harrison, Sophie. "Memoirs of a Geisha's Sister." *New York Times Book Review*, April 15, 2007, p. 15. Ironic juxtaposition of Kirino's thriller versus the well-known best seller by Arthur Golden; argues Kirino's vision offers close, unsentimental psychological insight to forms of prostitution in contemporary Japan.

Kirino, Natsuo. Kirino Natsuo: Bubblonia. <http://www.kirino-natsuo.com>. Kirino's official Web site offers information on her works and life in English and in Japanese.

Samul, Ron. Review of *Out*, by Natsuo Kirino. *Library Journal* 128, no. 11 (June 15, 2003): 101. Positive review of Kirino's debut novel, expresses admiration for her caustic revelation of criminal revenge carried out by women in a hostile social environment.

Seaman, Amanda. *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004. Section on Kirino discusses her place among modern Japanese female crime writers. Praises Kirino's narrative skill and how her crime fiction exposes the dark sides of Japan's society.

_____. "Inside *Out*: Space, Gender and Power in Kirino Natsuo." *Japanese Language and Literature* 40, no. 2 (2006): 197-217. Academic critique of Kirino's mystery; analysis focuses on evocation of threatening places, gender struggle, and the anti-heroine's ultimate triumph.

Takayama, Hideko. "Breaking *Out* of Japan." *Newsweek International*, August 18, 2003, 50. Attentive analysis of Kirino's debut novel in English; praises author for highlighting the dark, misogynist side of modern Japan and creating a suspenseful crime novel, feels *Out* reveals new aspects of post bubble-economy Japan.

Vrabel, Leigh Anne. Review of *Grotesque*, by Natsuo Kirino. *Library Journal* 132, no. 4 (March 1, 2007): 74-75. Critical review praises Kirino's skills at creating a tale of psychological horror but with some reservations about the relentless onslaught of dysfunctional, grotesque characters.

KATHLEEN MOORE KNIGHT

Born: United States; c. 1890

Died: United States; 1984

Also wrote as Alan Amos

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Elisha Macomber, 1935-1959

Margot Blair, 1940-1944

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ELISHA MACOMBER, chairman of the Penberthy Board of Selectmen, is married, then a widower. He ages from his mid-fifties to about eighty in the course of the series, but the effects of aging are not noticeable. Deeply moral and God-fearing, he is caring, humorous, and highly logical.

MARGOT BLAIR, the co-owner of a public relations agency, in the course of her work finds it necessary to protect wealthy young women by solving various criminal cases involving murder. She is a strong-willed, sympathetic, and highly active investigator.

CONTRIBUTION

Kathleen Moore Knight is of primary interest for her sixteen novels featuring Elisha Macomber. These stories combine two popular genres: the Golden Age novel of detection and the romantic crime novel. Knight's puzzles are solved both by Macomber's deductions and by unveiling the murderer to the narrator or other main characters. Combining detection with family and love plots, the novels—especially the fourteen Macomber novels, which are set in New England—are notable for their skillful evocation of place. All Knight's novels feature clear and interesting plots in well-visualized settings. Her style is straightforward, not dated by use of perishable vocabulary, and her books cannot be said to reflect the style or approach of any one specific writer.

BIOGRAPHY

Kathleen Moore Knight was born in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Her home was on Mar-

tha's Vineyard, the island that, with Cape Cod, furnished settings for her Elisha Macomber series. During her writing career, she showed considerable interest in the local color of this area, as she did in other areas of the world, most notably Panama and Mexico. Her published writings consist solely of crime novels, many of which appeared through the Detective Book Club, and all of which were widely reviewed, especially in *The New York Times*, whose reviewers praised her work. She died in 1984.

ANALYSIS

The crime novels of Kathleen Moore Knight, who published works in no other genre, display individual characteristics while still exemplifying the influence of the Golden Age fiction of S. S. Van Dine and the romantic suspense fiction of Mary Roberts Rinehart. Knight uses regionalism not only for local color or embellishment but also for clues, making place essential to her fiction. Because she stresses clues—the crime puzzle—in all thirty-eight novels, they may be classed under that Golden Age term, “novel of detection.” She refers frequently to Van Dine's character Philo Vance, even coining a verb for detection, “philovancing,” in *Death Blew Out the Match* (1935; the title refers, as do many of her titles, to a clue repeatedly analyzed in the story). The Rinehart influence on her basic plot, present to a greater or lesser extent in every book, is revealed in plot elements characteristic of what Ogden Nash called the Had-I-But-Known school.

As novels of detection, Knight's books have three patterns, depending on the nature of the main detective (nearly all of her characters are involved in solving mysteries). In his series, Elisha Macomber, like other great detectives of the puzzle mystery, is involved only as an investigator. (Like many other main detectives, he is unattached to a family, although a wife, Hattie, is mentioned in *Death Blew Out the Match*; she never appears in the stories, and she is dead by Knight's second book, *The Clue of the Poor Man's Shilling*, 1936.) Macomber is never in real danger, although he is shot

at for a warning in *The Tainted Token* (1938) and he uses himself as bait for the murderer in *Acts of Black Night* (1938). This absence of personal risk is necessary for the calm and stability of his role.

Margot Blair, Knight's other series character, performs very differently, narrating her stories and dominating the action, causing events to occur. She threatens criminals and so is often in danger herself; she and her assistant from her public relations agency are sometimes injured. For example, Blair is shot in *Rendezvous with the Past* (1940).

Knight began using a third pattern during the World War II years: nonseries books with the usual basic family plot but with no one detective dominant. In these books, the lead character, who is always female and sometimes narrates, does much of the detecting; police work is usually involved as well.

In series and nonseries tales alike, the reader cannot predict whether the case will be resolved through the Van Dine method of analyzing clues or through the Rinehart method of events conspiring to expose the criminal; Knight draws from both patterns to end her stories, with the criminal dead, or trying to kill someone else, or trapped just as the detective or the police officer arrives and explains the mystery.

THE CLUE OF THE POOR MAN'S SHILLING AND THE TROUBLE AT TURKEY HILL

Knight's pattern shows clearly in two of her best Macomber novels, *The Clue of the Poor Man's Shilling* and *The Trouble at Turkey Hill* (1946). Both narratives are in the first person, a voice Knight always handles well. Luella Paige, narrator of *The Clue of the Poor Man's Shilling*, is a fifty-four-year-old former schoolteacher who retired early, and Marcy Tracy of *The Trouble at Turkey Hill* is a retired teacher from the Penberthy School, currently the town librarian. She is also middle-aged. Both women are carefully kept out of the plots as suspects, and neither has any family. They are commentators, distanced from the action. Sympathetic, they enjoy helping others through detection. Because they are mature and uninvolved, they are often called on for help by others in the story, especially Elisha Macomber.

Typical of all Knight mysteries, both novels have young lovers of varying degrees of virtue. In *The Clue*

of the *Poor Man's Shilling*, Laura May Howland and Evan Rider are the "true lovers," while the alcoholic seducer Julian Hollister, with whom Laura May is temporarily infatuated, represents the false. Hollister's wife, of whom the reader learns after Hollister's murder, and her lover are neutral, although as city dwellers they are naturally suspect in the determinedly rural Penberthy series. Relationships are more numerous and complex in *The Trouble at Turkey Hill*, as the lovers include both victims and murderer. One triangle of an unhappily married couple and a Portuguese girl includes two victims; another comprises a pair of childhood sweethearts and a local rich man. Candy Pierce is the "true lover," but her love is the murderer, and the rich man who saves her at the end has some slight instability, which disqualifies a male for marriage to a true lover. Although a few other Knight books end without imminent wedding bells, *The Trouble at Turkey Hill* is unique among Knight stories: It ends by extolling single women. Knight finds variations in every story though she always follows the same kind of plot.

The setting for the Macomber series is Penberthy, a fictional island near Boston. Maps are provided in some of the earlier novels, but Penberthy is not precisely Cape Cod or Martha's Vineyard. It is rural, old New England, a sparsely populated prototype, a setting that one might like to imagine once existed, completely Yankee and still upholding—despite the presence of mistrusted "off-islanders"—the old Puritan virtues.

The island supplies not only mood and color to the series but also motivation and clues. The boat trip along the coast taken by Luella Paige and the bicycle ride of Marcy Tracy, for example, both lead to informative (if ridiculous) happenings, events that are rooted in New England geography. In *The Bass Derby Murder* (1949), the murderer is betrayed by his misuse of the dialect in forging an islander's letter. Throughout the series, localisms play an essential role: weather, plants, birds (they can discover corpses), tides, fields, dunes, hills, sea cliffs, even recipes.

In both *The Clue of the Poor Man's Shilling* and *The Trouble at Turkey Hill*, Elisha Macomber is the character who (through detection and reason) solves the murder puzzle. Typical for Knight's books, both novels end with a ratiocinative explanation by Macomber after the

confession and death of the murderers. Persh is thrown off balance and falls to his death as he tries to kill the virtuous and beautiful Candy; George Howland, long-suffering father and husband, kills himself while tolling the bell to help others. Just after each death—Candy having been saved by her insufficient lover, Mrs. Howland having been saved at sea by the detective himself—Macomber enters, knowing all, and gives an explanation (his summaries may run as long as ten pages). Both novels show another common element of Knight's stories: murderers who are basically decent people driven by intolerable suffering. Persh, for example, is a returning World War II veteran who lost a wife and child abroad; George Howland has had to endure much, for his son's death ruined his wife's health and spirit. As in some of Knight's other stories, notably *The Bass Derby Murder*, suspicion is diverted from them because of their goodness, especially given the unpleasant nature of other characters. It is true that a few novels resort to minor characters, least likely suspects, as murderers: The early Macomber tale *The Wheel That Turned* (1936) and the late, nonseries *Panic in Paradise* (as Alan Amos; 1951) have minor characters as murderers so that the families are left scandal-free. Occasionally Knight can startle by showing an important member of the family guilty: At the end of *Death Goes to a Reunion* (1952), the grandmother is taken to jail for multiple murder.

KNIGHT'S PLOTS

Knight's books were praised by contemporary reviewers, especially Anthony Boucher in *The New York Times*, for the ability to hook readers with inventive plots, detection, and settings, although a few other critics found the stories wildly implausible with poorly drawn characters. Both views are reasonable. There are no great amateur detectives out in the actual world solving mysterious crimes. Elisha Macomber and Margot Blair, like most heroes in the mystery genre, cannot be said to be believable.

With the conventions of the genre, Knight's tales are clear even when most implausible. The author uses point of view well, especially in her first-person narrations by a female (she seldom attempts male narrators). Her third-person narrations are successful when they remain centered on one character, such as Susan Brooks in one of Knight's wildest plots, *Invitation to*

Vengeance (1960), which works because of its calm, fair narration. When Knight switches consciousnesses, the results are often unsuccessful. *The Wheel That Turned* presents unfair glimpses into the murderer's mind (a criticism often leveled against Christie); there is also the unnecessary, confusing movement from one mind to another in *Panic in Paradise*, where the shifts are arbitrary, and in *Dying Echo* (1949), where various consciousnesses are awkwardly invaded to keep important information from the reader. In the latter two novels, confused point of view leads to uncertain motivations and unclear relationships.

The process of detection is well developed in Knight's novels. An early reviewer pointed out that having so many characters sleuthing and finding reasons to suspect one another augments the puzzle. Even the murderer frequently gets into the spirit of detection, one example being Felix in *Terror by Twilight* (1942), who pretends to help Margot Blair. The police are usually not helpful; the best officers show their intelligence by leaving the amateurs alone. Buck Edwards, police chief of Penberthy, follows Elisha Macomber's orders, although Edwards is somewhat touchy about this situation by the last work of the series, *Beauty Is a Beast* (1959). The good sense of the captain of the Massachusetts State Police in *Three of Diamonds* (1953) is shown by his agreeing to stay away from the island so that Macomber can solve the crime, and both Sheriff Ben Crandall, the almost Macomber-like detective of *The Silent Partner* (1950), and the dignified Inspector Mena of *Dying Echo* assert control of their cases while letting the amateurs do the legwork. Like Macomber, Ben Crandall appears at the end, having solved the case with his knowledge of the locality, just as the murderer openly appears to the narrator.

ELISHA MACOMBER

Elisha Macomber is the great detective of Knight's fiction. Appearing in all of her pre-World War II stories, he was dropped for several years, during which Knight wrote Margot Blair and nonseries tales, then was picked up again after the war. With his quaint rural dialect—though he is a graduate of Harvard University—he is a center of stability, giving the final explanations, quieting characters' fears, and arranging

lovers' affairs (the two Panama novels, *The Tainted Token* and *Death Came Dancing*, 1940, display him at his best as matchmaker). He begins the series as a weatherbeaten and middle-aged fisherman and chairman of the Board of Selectmen of Penberthy. In the 1946 *Trouble at Turkey Hill* he is sixty-five, while in the 1938 *Acts of Black Night* he is sixty; his age for the series could then run from fifty-four to eighty-one, which seems about right. Such calculations, however, are probably silly in fiction: Hercule Poirot, retired from the police before World War I, was still detecting in the 1970's. The point is that Macomber is not a geriatric detective, for his role is avuncular, not grandfatherly. In the final novel of the series he suffers a concussion and broken rib in a car wreck, yet he breaks out of the hospital after one day to solve a murder and save a foolish heroine's life. His age makes believable his wisdom, depth of local knowledge, exceptional stability, balance, and humor.

Although the dialect and setting of the Macomber novels are somewhat reminiscent of those in Phoebe Atwood Taylor's Asey Mayo novels, Knight's stories otherwise bear little resemblance to Taylor's farcical tales. Elisha is stable, not hyperactive, and he represents the old order, not the new (Asey Mayo, on the other hand, is a car designer and builder of World War II tanks). The mood, structure, and characterization of the Knight and Taylor stories are dissimilar. Elisha Macomber has just as much resemblance to other Golden Age detectives: Like Philo Vance and Uncle Abner, Macomber has strength beneath his act, and like Vance, Macomber arranges endings to suit himself, as in *Akin to Murder* (1953), in which he orchestrates Sylvia's suicide. After the 1930's, as Philo Vance's fame dwindled, Knight began to have her characters refer to Macomber as a Sherlock Holmes, although the similarities are not particularly compelling.

Despite Elisha Macomber's success, characterization is generally a problem for Knight. Macomber and the middle-aged narrators are strong, as are a few others scattered throughout Knight's books: Sheriff Crandall, Inspector Mena, and Dr. Sargent (Penberthy's medical examiner, a major character only in *Beauty Is a Beast*). Most of her characters, however, are stereotypes: faithful or deceitful lovers, patriarchal

and matriarchal tyrants, loyal and disloyal servants, bumbling police and detectives. At times, like other Golden Age authors, Knight is blatantly racist. Black servants roll the whites of their eyes and speak in corny illiteracies; Latin Americans are oily; Italians are highly emotional, Mafiosi, or both. The sympathetic treatment of ethnic characters in *Intrigue for Empire* (1944) and *Dying Echo* cannot atone for such prejudice. Knight's gender-typing is obvious, even in the Margot Blair series; Blair is a full-time partner of a public relations agency, a co-owner, but virtually nothing of the work such a firm would do is shown. Instead, Blair spends her time as a guardian of young female nitwits, so that a role that at times seems almost feminist—career woman successfully detecting murder cases—collapses into romantic suspense.

Knight's stories exemplify Golden Age puzzle mysteries, and their faults and virtues are characteristic of their type. Thriller elements are downplayed, as in the kidnappings of *Acts of Black Night* and *Invitation to Vengeance*. (In both novels, the children are stolen toward the end and are quickly rescued. The kidnapping in the latter novel is even comic, with the grandfather's whipping of the villain.) Like Agatha Christie, Knight is interested primarily in the puzzle, such as the clue of the bits of pottery in *The Blue Horse of Taxco* (1947), but her ability to evoke place sets her apart. Nostalgia abounds in the colliding of present and past civilizations in old Italy, old Florida, old Massachusetts—all Golden Age settings for her romantic Golden Age puzzles.

Stephen J. Curry

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ELISHA MACOMBER SERIES: *Death Blew Out the Match*, 1935; *The Clue of the Poor Man's Shilling*, 1936 (also known as *The Poor Man's Shilling*); *The Wheel That Turned*, 1936 (also known as *Murder Greets Jean Holton*); *Seven Were Veiled*, 1937 (also known as *Seven Were Suspect* and *Death Wears a Veil*); *Acts of Black Night*, 1938; *The Tainted Token*, 1938 (also known as *The Case of the Tainted Token*); *Death Came Dancing*, 1940; *The Trouble at Turkey Hill*, 1946; *Footbridge to Death*, 1947; *Bait for Murder*, 1948; *The Bass Derby Murder*, 1949; *Death Goes*

to a Reunion, 1952; *Valse Macabre*, 1952; *Akin to Murder*, 1953; *Three of Diamonds*, 1953; *Beauty Is a Beast*, 1959

MARGOT BLAIR SERIES: *Rendezvous with the Past*, 1940; *Exit a Star*, 1941; *Terror by Twilight*, 1942; *Design in Diamonds*, 1944

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Pray for a Miracle*, 1941 (as Amos; also known as *Jungle Murder*); *Bells for the Dead*, 1942; *Trademark of a Traitor*, 1943; *Intrigue for Empire*, 1944; *Port of Seven Strangers*, 1945; *Stream Sinister*, 1945; *Borderline Murder*, 1947 (as Amos); *The Blue Horse of Taxco*, 1947; *Birds of Ill Omen*, 1948; *Dying Echo*, 1949; *The Silent Partner*, 1950; *Panic in Paradise*, 1951 (as Amos); *High Rendezvous*, 1954; *The Robineau Look*, 1955 (also known as *The Robineau Murders*); *They're Going to Kill Me*, 1955; *Fatal Harvest*, 1957 (as Amos); *A Cry in the Jungle*, 1958; *Invitation to Vengeance*, 1960

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RONALD A. KNOX

Born: Knibworth, Leicestershire, England; February 17, 1888

Died: Mells, Somerset, England; August 24, 1957

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Miles Bredon, 1927-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MILES BREDON, the Indescribable Insurance Company's special investigator, was formerly an intelligence officer in World War I. In his early thirties when the series begins, he is a big, good-humored man of lethargic temperament, well thought of by everyone ex-

cept himself. Though Bredon's application to his duties is desultory, Indescribable finds his work so useful in cases that piqued his interest that he became indispensable to the company.

AGNES BREDON, a convent-bred girl whose mocking eyes induced Miles to marry her at the end of World War I, makes allowances for his absorption in the trivial and is happy to serve as nurse and chauffeur for her untidy, absent-minded husband. She is a willing audience for his speculations and is always conspiring for his happiness behind his back.

LEYLAND, a police inspector, was an officer in the same regiment as Bredon in World War I, where he gained a reputation for efficiency. Bredon and Leyland

rarely see eye-to-eye on police methods, and Leyland, the law's official representative, often serves as a foil to the unconventional Bredon.

CONTRIBUTION

Ronald A. Knox is better known as a critic than as a writer of detective fiction. His essay "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," published in *Essays in Satire* (1928), has become a classic. This lighthearted inquiry into the series of stories by Arthur Conan Doyle (who himself found Knox's essay amusing and instructive) is now regarded as the seminal work in the higher criticism of Holmes and largely responsible for the subsequent expansion of Holmesian scholarship. The success of this essay depressed Knox, who regretted that his one permanent achievement in the genre was to have started "a bad joke." In another well-known essay Knox discussed the "ten commandments" of the detective story. According to some critics, these rules of fair play for detective writers represent his most important contribution to the form.

Knox wrote his six detective novels to support himself as chaplain at Oxford University. Despite their pragmatic origin, his stories were carefully plotted and seriously intended, and a fascinating dialectic between the law of humankind and the law of God underlies their composition. When his detective fiction was written, there was a vogue for elaborate puzzles such as he presented and then ingeniously solved. Fashions have changed, however, and modern audiences are often bewildered by his highly allusive style (he sprinkles Latin quotations and literary references throughout the Bredon corpus). Modern readers are more concerned with the passions of the criminal than with the intellectual games that Knox plays with his readers. On the other hand, Knox was always scrupulously fair in providing clues and creating interesting problems; he was also witty, clever, and logical in arriving at his solutions. Though the modern reader may find his stories too cerebral, his time may come again.

BIOGRAPHY

Ronald Arbuthnott Knox was born in 1888, the youngest of a family of four sons and two daughters. He was descended from Anglican bishops through his

mother as well as through his father, who himself would become bishop of Manchester in 1903. His mother died when he was four years old, and between the ages of five and eight, Knox spent most of his time in a country rectory under the care of his father's mother, brother, and sisters, who impressed him with their strict Protestant piety. After a private school education during which his precociousness manifested itself in his skill in composing verses in English, Latin, and Greek, he won a scholarship to Eton College. There he participated in the catholicizing movement within the Church of England. At the age of seventeen, to be able to serve God without impediment, he vowed himself to celibacy. Yet he was not a dour, repressed youth; rather, his high spirits made him attractive to his fellows. This same playful spirit can be seen in his writings for the *Eton College Chronicle*.

In 1906, after a distinguished career at Eton, Knox went to Balliol College, Oxford University, where he was a brilliant student, winning several scholarships and prizes and acquiring the reputation of a nimble-witted debater and writer. In 1910 he was graduated with a first in "Greats" (studies in the Greek and Latin classics) and was elected a Fellow of Trinity College. Following his ordination as a priest in the Church of England in 1912, he was appointed chaplain of Trinity College. He believed that the Church of England was a branch of the Roman Catholic Church, and his introduction of Roman practices into his services brought him into conflict with some Anglican bishops. He responded by satirizing the liberal views of his opponents in parodies of Swiftian bite. Increasingly dissatisfied with his Anglicanism, he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1917. He described the evolution of his beliefs in *A Spiritual Aeneid* (1918).

After theological studies at St. Edmund's College, Knox was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1919. He never had a parish, but he had an active apostolate via his teaching and writing. He taught at St. Edmund's until 1926, when he was appointed chaplain of the Catholic students at Oxford University, a post he held for thirteen years. In the summer of 1939, at the request of the English hierarchy, he withdrew from his chaplaincy to devote himself to a modern translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate. Though much

criticized, his translation has an individuality and unity that no other possesses. He completed the New Testament in 1945 and the Old Testament in 1950. Prominent among his later works was *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (1950), which, like his translation of the Bible, represented a summation of his life. This study of religious leaders who assert that they have had a special revelation of God's will was the product of thirty years of research.

In 1946 Knox moved to Mells, Somerset, where he resided for the rest of his life. In 1950, he was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and in 1956 he was elected to the Pontifical Academy. In his last public appearance, he delivered the Romanes Lecture at Oxford in June, 1957. Many in the audience knew that he was dying of cancer, and the lecture was both a brilliant success and a poignant occasion. Knox died at Mells on August 24, 1957. Following a requiem mass in Westminster Cathedral, he was buried in the churchyard at Mells, with a small group of friends as witnesses.

ANALYSIS

Ronald A. Knox was a Catholic apologist, and in all of his books, from theological treatises to detective stories, he tried to harmonize his literary efforts with his religious beliefs. He had deeply held principles, and he deduced things from them. He did not question his principles but explored ways in which human phenomena could be reconciled to them. For him, the world was a place of exile, of puzzles and probation. Home was the spiritual world, where these puzzles were resolved. These same themes occur in disguised forms throughout his detective stories, where crimes create tension and confusion but where their resolution brings peace and moral enlightenment.

Despite his deeply felt religious principles, Knox did not write his detective stories to illustrate and defend the faith. He wrote them to entertain, and no acquaintance with theology is necessary to enjoy these intricately plotted works. On one level Knox's detective fiction is like an acrostic or a crossword puzzle (both of which he liked to solve). On another level, however, these stories can be read as medieval moral-

ity plays, in which good battles evil. This multiplicity of levels is a manifestation of the complexity of Knox, an urbane, exuberant, but ultimately serious man who could treat sacred themes lightly and profane themes profoundly. This man who refined his wit by studying the Greek and Roman classics became accessible to a wider public when he applied the methods of German Higher Criticism to the Sherlock Holmes stories.

"STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES"

Knox's intention in "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," which first appeared in the magazine *The Blue Book* in 1912, was to satirize German biblical critics who had found all kinds of sources, authors, traditions, and forms to explain the various books of the Bible. He was aware of the inadequacies of these critical methods and wanted to expose the dangers of their exaggerated use in the study of Scripture. His tone of mock seriousness in this Holmes essay delighted his first readers, and it started a trend in scholarship that continues to the present, long after the specific satiric point of his essay has been forgotten.

One of the questions central to this essay is the existence of two Watsons. According to Knox, some scholars held that there was a proto-Watson, who wrote *The Sign of the Four* (1890), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-1902), and a deutero-Watson, who wrote *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), "The Gloria Scott," and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905). The theory of the two Watsons hinges on whether Sherlock Holmes really died in his tumble from the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. If "The Final Problem" was genuine, then the stories in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* were fabrications. Knox analyzes the evidence that Holmes's character and methods changed in the later stories. He even performs an astute linguistic analysis: The Holmes of the classic stories never splits an infinitive, whereas the Holmes of the *Return* stories splits infinitives on several occasions. Knox himself does not support the theory of the two Watsons. He believes that, though Watson wrote all the stories, there were actually two cycles: one set of stories that happened and another set that Watson invented. Watson also illustrates one of Knox's rules for

detective writers, because his intelligence is below that of the average reader. Knox compares Watson to the chorus in a Greek play—ever in touch with the action but always several steps behind in discovering what is really going on. Knox's essay also analyzes Sherlock Holmes biographically (Knox argues that he was an Oxford man), philosophically (Knox argues that Holmes used observation a posteriori and deduction a priori), and psychologically (Knox argues that Holmes was a man of passion rather than a cold-hearted scientist).

“A DETECTIVE STORY DECALOGUE”

A similar mixture of levity and seriousness, of the sacred and profane, can be seen in Knox's essay “A Detective Story Decalogue.” It was certainly appropriate for a clergyman to set down the ten commandments for the writing of detective stories. Although these are presumably objective rules for the proper behavior of detective writers, they also manifest Knox's personality and philosophy. He had no taste for the occult and macabre, and so he rules out all supernatural or preternatural agencies in detective stories. He had a taste for logic and fair play, insisting that the criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story and that in perpetrating the crime no poisons unknown to science may be used. Knox had no taste for magic solutions; thus, the detective may have inspirations but no unexplainable intuitions, and no accident must ever help him in solving a crime. Finally, the detective must not himself commit the crime, and he must not discover any clues that are not immediately revealed to the reader.

THE VIADUCT MURDER

Knox punctiliously obeyed these rules in all six of his detective stories, although in his first, *The Viaduct Murder* (1925), one critic accused him of violating the “eleventh commandment” when he allowed the police to incriminate the right man. *The Viaduct Murder* begins as a lighthearted satire when four golfers discover a body with a mutilated head under the railroad trestle near the third tee. Was it murder or suicide? The coroner's jury brings in a verdict of suicide while of unsound mind, but some at the golf club suspect murder. The four amateur detectives, who constantly criticize one another's suggestions, pay more attention to clues

than motives. Suspicion is cast on a kindly clergyman of the Established Church who, the reader is asked to believe, has murdered a parishioner who has obnoxiously publicized his disbelief in the immortality of the soul. The surprise of the story is that the one character with a clear motive for committing the crime actually does commit it. Though the murderer is a Catholic, Knox makes it clear that people commit crimes not because of their religion but because of their psychology. None of the four amateur detectives solves the riddle, and here again Knox seems to be poking fun at the Higher Critics, that is, on the slant of mind that rejects a priori any likely explanation in favor of a convoluted one.

THE THREE TAPS

Unable to settle on a single detective in his first novel, Knox committed himself to four. In the second of his detective stories, *The Three Taps: A Detective Story Without a Moral* (1927), he settled on a single sleuth, Miles Bredon, who became the principal character in all the other whodunits Knox wrote. Several critics have found Knox's creation of this character unfortunate. Robert Speaight, for example, wrote that Miles Bredon was a bore and suggested that Knox should have based his detective on himself. Knox, however, was handicapped in this choice, for G. K. Chesterton had patented the priest-detective in his Father Brown stories. Like Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Lord Peter Wimsey, Miles Bredon possesses an agile and penetrating mind, but Knox fails to give him a memorable personality. Bredon enjoys smoking a pipe and playing his own devilishly difficult version of the card game Patience, but these seem to be traits attached to a paper creation rather than characteristics of a living individual.

THE BODY IN THE SILO

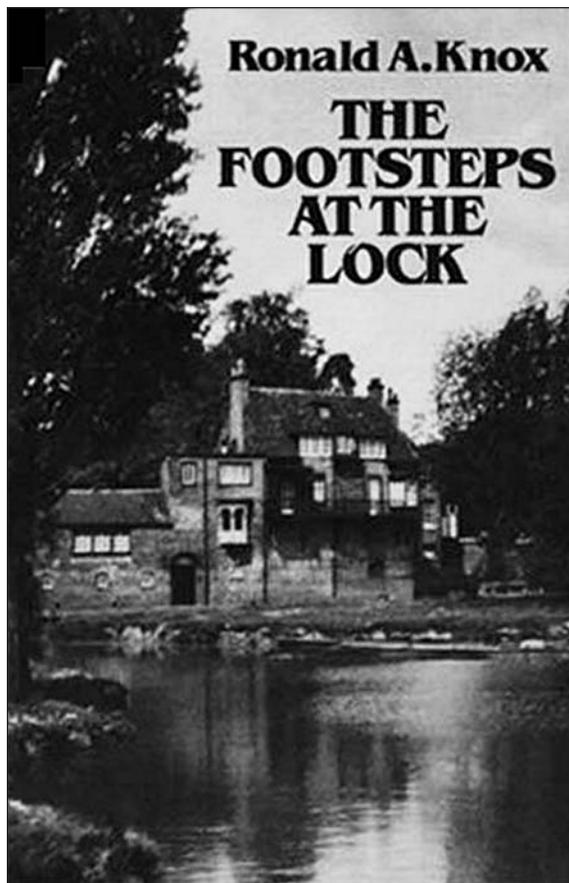
The Indescribable Insurance Company, Bredon's employer, also smacks more of calculation than of life. Insurance is gambling, says Knox, and Indescribable takes big risks and charges big premiums, but it is obvious that its main task is to provide interesting cases for Bredon. For example, in *The Body in the Silo* (1933) the body of a guest at a house party in the country is found in a silo, presumably killed by the gas generated from the fermenting vegetation. The guest hap-

pens to be insured by Indescribable, and Bredon happens to be a guest at the same party. Accidents abound in the setting up of cases for Bredon, though never in their resolution. Insurance exists as a hedge against accidents, but Knox also uses it to reveal the deeper levels in his stories. According to Indescribable, insurance provides a safety net under the tight-rope walk of existence. Yet Bredon finds in his cases that there is no security in life, and the Indescribable Insurance Company ends up paying as often as it ends up winning. The implied meaning is that humankind's only true security rests with God.

Although religion does not dominate the Bredon series the way it does Chesterton's Father Brown series, Knox's stories always feature characters whose religion plays an important role in the plot. Furthermore, in the resolution of these stories a moral often surfaces that is compatible with Knox's Catholicism. For example, in *The Three Taps* Mr. Jephthan Mottram, a Protestant manufacturer, has a fondness for the Catholic church, and at the end of the novel the reader discovers that he has been testing the thesis that a Catholic bishop will do anything for money. Happily, the bishop involved turns out to be a man of integrity. In *The Footsteps at the Lock* (1928), Knox is concerned with the redemption of two unpleasant cousins, and the one with murderous intentions ends up on his deathbed surrounded by nuns and ministered to by a priest. In *The Body in the Silo* a murderess gets her comeuppance by killing herself in her attempt to kill her husband. Bredon uses this example of poetic justice to state his preference for allowing Providence to take a hand in the game of life.

STILL DEAD

Perhaps the best example of Knox's intentions and techniques is *Still Dead* (1934), the novel that several critics regard as his best. The setting is the Scottish Lowlands, often a vacation retreat for Knox. The focus of the story is on the Reiver family. Donald Reiver is master of the Dorn Estate. He piloted it through World War I, but after his wife's death, his heart was no longer in managing his property. His son Colin, however, an invalid and a heavy drinker, is ill-suited to step into his father's shoes. Worried about the future, Donald Reiver insures Colin's life with Indescribable. Throughout this



exposition one can see Knox's use of mild satire: Donald Reiver could not bring up a son to his liking but he could use money to turn that son into a financial asset.

An important event in the novel occurs when Colin, under the influence of alcohol, kills the gardener's young son with his sports car. Although he is acquitted of wrongdoing, he is plagued by guilt and announces his intention to leave England. He seems to make good on his promise when he is found dead—twice. On a Monday, the head keeper sees Colin's dead body lying by the roadside; it then vanishes, only to turn up two days later in the same spot. The manipulation of the corpse is connected with an overdue premium on Colin's life-insurance policy, but many complications follow in connection with Colin's supposed trip and his activity back on the estate.

Bredon is assigned to the case by his company, and his investigations uncover much contradictory evi-

dence, some of it supporting an accidental death and some suggesting foul play. It turns out that Colin, fortified by drink, returned to the estate to apologize to the gardener for killing his young boy. Colin collapsed outside his door, and the gardener let him remain in the cold throughout the night. Once Bredon discovers what actually happened, a debate ensues over the morality of the gardener's action. This discussion brings out the levels of Knox's fiction: the level of law (where rules govern both the insurance company and society) and the level of Providence (where justice and mercy reign in a mysterious unity). One character sees the gardener's action as murder because he made no effort to bring the drunk man inside. Another says that there is no law against allowing a man to die. Yet another says that the gardener helped Providence in a piece of poetic justice (Colin killed the gardener's son through neglect, and now the gardener kills Colin by neglect). In this debate Knox makes clear that laws are blunt instruments for obtaining justice: They cannot be relied on to give the morally correct solution to human problems. Colin killed a child, in act but not in intention, and the law could not punish him. The gardener killed Colin, in intention but not in act, and the law could not accuse him. Knox concludes that if the law cannot deal with a man, then he should be left to his own conscience. In this particular case Bredon decides to persuade all to keep the truth of the affair quiet, because publicizing it would mean a multiplication of hatred, malice, and uncharitableness.

In his treatment of law and morality Knox uses a theme familiar to the hard-boiled school of writers, whose detectives often solve the human problems they encounter not by following the letter of the law but by doing what will genuinely enhance the lives of those about whom they care. Despite this similarity, Knox would never be categorized with the hard-boiled school. Rather, he belongs with G. K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers in the analytic school. The point of his stories is the puzzle and its solution. There is also a paucity of violence in his plots, unlike those of the hard-boiled school. Though Knox's satire is gentle, his wit often gives some bite to it, and he uses his impish humor to relieve as well as enlighten painful situations. Most important, Knox is concerned in his stories

with the workings of the moral law in characters who imagine themselves to be unnaturally immoral. As in his other works, Knox tried in his detective fiction to construct alternatives to doubt, despair, and decadence. As a priest, he found these alternatives in a world beyond appearances, approachable for many people through a recognition of the moral law. Induction or deduction would not lead to this recognition. Faith was at the heart of the matter.

Robert J. Paradowski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MILES BREDON SERIES: *The Three Taps: A Detective Story Without a Moral*, 1927; *The Footsteps at the Lock*, 1928; *The Body in the Silo*, 1933 (also known as *Settled out of Court*); *Still Dead*, 1934; *Double Cross Purposes*, 1937

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Viaduct Murder*, 1925; *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Six Against the Yard*, 1936 (with others); *The Scoop, and Behind the Scenes*, 1983 (with others)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Memories of the Future, Being Memories of the Years 1915-1972, Written in The Year of Grace 1988 by Opal, Lady Porstock*, 1923; *Sanctions: A Frivolity*, 1924; *Other Eyes than Ours*, 1926

PLAYS: *Londinium Defensum*, pb. 1925; *Thesaurο-polemopompus*, pb. 1925

POETRY: *Signa Severa*, 1906; *Remigium Alarum*, 1910; *Absolute and Abitofhel*, 1915; *Q. Horati Carminum Liber Quintus*, 1920 (with others); *In Three Tongues*, 1959

NONFICTION: 1910-1920 • *Juxta Salices*, 1910; *A Still More Sporting Adventure!*, 1911 (with Charles R. L. Fletcher); *Naboth's Vineyard in Pawn*, 1913; *Some Loose Stones, Being a Consideration of Certain Tendencies in Modern Theology*, 1913; *An Hour at the Front*, 1914 (revised as *Ten Minutes at the Front*, 1916); *Reunion All Round: Or, Jael's Hammer Laid Aside*, 1914; *The Church in Bondage*, 1914; *Bread or Stone: Four Conferences on Impetrative Prayer*, 1915; *An Apologia*, 1917; *A Spiritual Aeneid*, 1918; *The Essentials of Spiritual Unity*, 1918; *Meditations on the Psalms*, 1919; *Patrick Shaw-Stewart*, 1920

1921-1930 • *A Book of Acrostics*, 1924; *An Open-Air Pulpit*, 1926; *The Belief of Catholics*, 1927; *Anglican Cobwebs*, 1928; *Essays in Satire*, 1928; *Miracles*, 1928; *The Mystery of the Kingdom and Other Sermons*, 1928; *The Rich Young Man: A Fantasy*, 1928; *On Getting There*, 1929; *The Church on Earth*, 1929; *Caliban in Grub Street*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Broadcast Minds*, 1932; *Difficulties, Being a Correspondence About the Catholic Religion Between Ronald Knox and Arnold Lunn*, 1932, revised 1952; *Barchester Pilgrimage*, 1935; *Heaven and Charing Cross: Sermons on the Holy Eucharist*, 1935; *Let Dons Delight, Being Variations on a Theme in an Oxford Common-Room*, 1939; *Captive Flames: A Collection of Panegyrics*, 1940; *Nazi and Nazarene*, 1940

1941-1950 • *In Soft Garments: A Collection of Oxford Conferences*, 1942; *I Believe: The Religion of the Apostles' Creed*, 1944; *God and the Atom*, 1945; *A Retreat for Priests*, 1946; *The Mass in Slow Motion*, 1948; *A Selection from the Occasional Sermons*, 1949; *The Creed in Slow Motion*, 1949; *The Trials of a Translator*, 1949; *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries*, 1950; *St. Paul's Gospel*, 1950; *The Gospel in Slow Motion*, 1950

1951-1961 • *Stimuli*, 1951; *A New Testament Commentary for English Readers*, 1952-1956; *The Hidden Stream: A Further Collection of Oxford Conferences*, 1952; *Off the Record*, 1953; *A Retreat for Lay People*, 1955; *The Window in the Wall and Other Sermons on the Holy Eucharist*, 1956; *Bridegroom and Bride*, 1957; *On English Translation*, 1957; *Literary Distractions*, 1958; *The Priestly Life: A Retreat*, 1958; *Lightning Meditations*, 1959; *Proving God: A New Apologetic*, 1959; *Occasional Sermons, the Pastoral Sermons, University and Anglican Sermons*, 1960-1963; *Retreat for Beginners*, 1960; *The Layman and His Conscience*, 1961

EDITED TEXTS: *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, 1923; *Virgil: Aeneid, Books VII to IX*, 1924; *The Best Detective Stories of the Year 1928, 1929* (with Henry Harrington; also known as *The Best English Detective Stories of 1928*); *The Best Detective Stories of the Year 1929, 1930* (with Harrington; also known as *The*

Best English Detective Stories of the Year); *The Holy Bible: An Abridgement and Rearrangement*, 1936; *Manual of Prayers*, 1942 (with others); *Father Brown: Selected Stories*, 1955 (by G. K. Chesterton)

TRANSLATIONS: *Robert Browning*, 1908; *The Holy Gospel of Jesus According to Matthew*, 1941; *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 1944; *The Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and Holidays*, 1946; *The Book of Psalms in Latin and English, with the Canticles Used in the Divine Office*, 1947; *The Missal in Latin and English*, 1948 (with J. O'Connell and H. P. R. Finberg); *The Old Testament*, 1948-1950; *Encyclical Letter—Humani Genesius—of His Holiness Pius XII*, 1950; *Holy Week: The Text of the Holy Week Offices*, 1951; *The Holy Bible*, 1955; *Autobiography of a Saint: Thérèse of Lisieux*, 1958; *The Imitation of Christ*, 1959

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- Erb, Peter C. *Murder, Manners, and Mystery: Reflections on Faith in Contemporary Detective Fiction—The John Albert Hall Lectures, 2004*. London: SCM Press, 2007. Collected lectures on the role and representation of religion in detective fiction. Sheds light on Knox's novels.
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- Waugh, Evelyn. *Two Lives*. New York: Continuum, 2005. This reprint edition of two biographies by Waugh includes his study of Knox, first published in 1959.

DEAN R. KOONTZ

Born: Everett, Pennsylvania; July 9, 1945

Also wrote as David Axton; Leonard Chris; Brian Coffey; Deanna Dwyer; K. R. Dwyer; John Hill; Leigh Nichols; Anthony North; Richard Paige; Owen West; Aaron Wolfe

Types of plot: Horror; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Odd Thomas, 2003-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

ODD THOMAS, a young short-order cook, can speak to ghosts and other psychic manifestations, such as bodachs, spirits that presage death and disaster. He attempts to lead a quiet existence in Pico Miundo, California, with his girlfriend Bronwen, but his ability, accompanied by prophetic dreams, leads him into danger, often on the behalf of endangered friends.

CONTRIBUTION

Dean R. Koontz is an acknowledged master of the horror genre but is also skilled at genre blending, drawing from the genres of horror, science fiction, thriller, comedy, and sometimes satire. He began his career with a science-fiction novel and wrote in that genre for four years before branching out to other genres. His novel *Chase* (1972), the story of a Vietnam veteran experiencing the rigors of civilian life, received excellent reviews and marked the moment when he first felt himself to be a serious writer.

After the cross-genre novel *Whispers* (1980) became Koontz's first paperback best seller, his novels have made the best-seller lists multiple times. Works such as *Phantoms* (1983) and *Odd Thomas* (2003) are among a collection of work that crosses genres, combining the realms of horror and thriller. In 1986, *Strangers* was his first hardback best seller, and at that point, Koontz dropped the other pseudonyms under which he had been writing and began writing solely under the Dean R. Koontz name.

Koontz is one of the hardest-working authors in any field, spending ten hours a day, six days a week at

work, feeling that extended stints of writing help him focus more deeply on his characters so that he can understand their stories. His impressive range of works features a finely tuned and precise style with occasional graceful metaphors that are polished and compelling.

BIOGRAPHY

Born and raised in rural Pennsylvania, Dean Ray Koontz had an abusive father and an impoverished and rigorous childhood. Nevertheless, he graduated from Shippensburg State College. While a college senior, he won the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* Creative Writing Award for his short story "Kittens," a victory that pushed him to continue writing. After college, he worked with the Appalachian Poverty Program and as an English teacher at Mechanicsburg High School, but after several years, his high school sweetheart and wife, Gerda, offered to support him for five years to determine whether he could make it as a writer. By the end of the five years, she had quit her job to handle the business end of Koontz's writing, although it was not until fifteen years had passed that they were both fully supported by his writing.

Koontz's first novel, written while he was a teacher, was *Star Quest*, a science-fiction novel published as part of an Ace Double in 1968. In the 1970's, he began writing and publishing works of horror and mainstream literature, many of which appeared under a variety of pseudonyms. His novella *Beastchild* received a Hugo Award nomination in 1971. Koontz used pseudonyms to avoid negative crossover, a phenomenon wherein work in a new genre alienates existing fans and fails to create new ones. He divided his works in different genres among a number of pen names: David Axton (adventure), Brian Coffey (short suspense), Deanna Dwyer (gothic romance), K. R. Dwyer (suspense), John Hill (occult mystery), Leigh Nichols (romantic suspense), Anthony North (technothriller), Richard Paige (romantic suspense), Owen West (horror), and Aaron Wolfe (science fiction).

Koontz's breakthrough book was the cross-genre

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Dean R. Koontz. (AP/Wide World Photos)

thriller *Whispers*, published in 1980, which established an audience for his uniquely placed work. Since then he has had close to two dozen best sellers in hardcover and paperback, has been published in thirty-eight languages, and has branched out in several literary directions, including nonfiction and essays.

Meanwhile, Koontz moved to California in 1975 and settled in Newport Beach with his wife and his dog Trixie. His work continued to range widely, from children's books such as *The Paper Doorway: Funny Verse and Nothing Worse* (2001) and *Robot Santa: The Further Adventures of Santa's Twin* (2004) to nonfiction such as *Writing Popular Fiction* (1972) and *The Underground Lifestyles Handbook* (co-written with his wife in 1970), but his central focus remained fiction. Koontz does not consider himself a horror writer, insisting that the optimistic outlook of his works, which do not end as darkly as those of the majority of his contemporaries in the horror field, moves them outside that genre. One of Koontz's goals in his writing has been to convey that humans can survive and

overcome the disabilities imposed on them by their pasts, having himself survived a grim and often terrifying childhood.

Although for the most part, Koontz has avoided series books, he has made an exception for the character Odd Thomas, who appears in the book by the same name as well as in *Forever Odd* (2005) and *Brother Odd* (2006), saying that the character came complete to him, insisting on his own story.

ANALYSIS

While Dean R. Koontz is typically regarded as a writer of horror fiction, in the majority of his works, the horror is the result of one character's inhumanity toward another and not the product of any supernatural force. His tautly written psychological explorations of the darker side of the human mind often share major elements, including a protagonist with an abusive upbringing who has achieved financial independence and success, a sociopathic antagonist who cannot be redeemed, and the motif of love and compassion as forces of salvation along with lesser elements such as a dog as a character, the appearance of a Ford sports utility vehicle, and a Southern California setting.

Larger themes are frequently repeated. Distrust of the government often appears in Koontz's books, a relic of his time with the Appalachian Poverty Program, which left him with the belief that such programs encourage the impoverished to depend on them rather than to work to better their condition and are vastly inefficient means of getting help to those who most critically need it.

Antagonists are seldom women in Koontz's works. When female antagonists do appear, they are usually partnered with a dominant male figure. Many of his female characters seem unwontedly passive and unable to escape their fates, although a few characters do contradict such a generalization.

WHISPERS

In *Whispers*, a young woman, Hilary Thomas, becomes the target of a psychopathic killer. When the killer dies but somehow still continues to stalk Thomas, she and her detective boyfriend, Tony Clemenza, must track down the real-world explanation behind the killer's continued existence.

The book showcases one of Koontz's at times unfortunate tendencies in that characters are prone to pausing and delivering long expository statements or dialogues whose topics range from the meaning of life to politics. In Koontz's work, what seem to be supernatural events are eventually shown to have explanations more grounded in reality, although sometimes that reality seems to be somewhat stretched.

PHANTOMS

In *Phantoms*, when sisters Jenny and Lisa Paige arrive in the small ski resort town of Snowfield, California, they discover that the inhabitants have recently vanished. Only a few bodies remain, all bearing the marks of having died in a moment of terror. Despite the disruption of electronic communications, the sisters manage to make a call to the police of nearby Santa Mira. When the police arrive, they find themselves and the Paige sisters trapped and hunted by a deadly force. The force turns out to be an ancient giant amoeboid creature that feeds rarely but largely and is responsible for past disappearances of entire populations.

Phantoms is solidly cross-genre; it contains elements of suspense, science fantasy, horror, mystery, police procedural, and romance. In this novel, Koontz performs a sleight of hand that is apparent in other works: Initially he offers a supernatural explanation, referencing Satan and "the Ancient Enemy" over and over again, only to rescind that easy answer by presenting the creature as both mortal and as having possibly learned its cruelty and viciousness from exposure to human beings.

LIGHTNING

In *Lightning* (1988), Laura Shane, born in 1955, has a guardian angel: a mysterious stranger who shows up time and time again to save her, including at her birth, when he prevents a drunken doctor from delivering her. When her father dies, Laura is sent to an orphanage, where again the mysterious stranger saves her from perils such as a rapist.

As an adult, Laura builds a happy life with her husband and child, but they find themselves pursued by individuals somehow connected with the mysterious stranger, who appears to save Laura and her child, although her husband is killed. Eventually the stranger's

identity is revealed: a time traveler from 1944, he fell in love with Laura during a visit to 1984 and originally sought only to prevent the drunken doctor from delivering her, which had left her disabled.

Lightning's repeated message is that in loving one another, people give one another the power to accept life and their individual fates. Like most of Koontz's works, *Lightning* insists that love is what makes life worth living and is the ultimate redemptive force.

INTENSITY

In *Intensity* (1996), Chyna Shepard, a college student, is visiting a friend's house when a serial killer breaks in and kills everyone except her and her friend. Chyna hides and finds herself in the killer's motor home. She decides to stow away, hoping to rescue the young woman the killer has boasted of keeping prisoner in his basement. The killer, however, realizes that she is aboard the motor home and takes her prisoner as well. Eventually both women escape, defeating the killer in the process.

Intensity showcases Koontz's ability to show the process of a killer playing cat and mouse with an unknowing victim with chilling detail in one of his shorter works. Taut, tightly written prose underscores the precision of the details in his presentation of a psychopath. The ultimate conclusion of the novel is that people have power over their fates and that they choose whether to become victims, a lesson Chyna acts out repeatedly in the course of the novel.

ODD THOMAS

In *Odd Thomas*, a short-order cook with psychic abilities finds himself led by ghosts, often to avenge or resolve their murder. Odd Thomas also sees bodachs—dark creatures drawn by pain and death. A customer he nicknames "Fungus Man" shows up at the restaurant followed by swarms of bodachs. Realizing that their appearance signals some pending catastrophe, Odd enlists his girlfriend Bronwen in an attempt to avert the disaster and, in the process, discovers increasingly disturbing details about the man. In the end, Odd prevents a mall disaster but is injured. After several weeks of being tended in the hospital by his girlfriend, he reluctantly realizes that she is a ghost and comes to terms with her death.

Catherine Rambo

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ODD THOMAS SERIES: *Odd Thomas*, 2003; *Forever Odd*, 2005; *Brother Odd*, 2006

MIKE TUCKER SERIES (AS COFFEY): *Blood Risk*, 1973; *Surrounded*, 1974; *The Wall of Masks*, 1975

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1971-1980 • *Legacy of Terror*, 1971 (as Deanna Dwyer); *Demon Child*, 1971 (as Deanna Dwyer); *Children of the Storm*, 1972 (as Deanna Dwyer); *The Dark of Summer*, 1972 (as Deanna Dwyer); *Chase*, 1972 (as K. R. Dwyer); *Shattered*, 1973 (as K. R. Dwyer); *Dance with the Devil*, 1973 (as Deanna Dwyer); *A Werewolf Among Us*, 1973; *Strike Deep*, 1974 (as Anthony North); *After the Last Race*, 1974; *Dragonfly*, 1975 (as K. R. Dwyer); *Prison of Ice*, 1976 (as Axton; revised as *Icebound*, 1995); *Night Chills*, 1976; *The Vision*, 1977; *Whispers*, 1980; *The Face of Fear*, 1977 (as Coffey); *The Voice of the Night*, 1980 (as Coffey)

1981-1990 • *Strangers*, 1986; *Watchers*, 1987; *Lightning*, 1988; *Midnight*, 1989; *The Bad Place*, 1990

1991-2000 • *Cold Fire*, 1991; *Hideaway*, 1992; *Mr. Murder*, 1993; *Dragon Tears*, 1993; *Dark Rivers of the Heart*, 1994; *Intensity*, 1996; *Tick Tock*, 1996; *Sole Survivor*, 1997; *Fear Nothing*, 1998; *Seize the Night*, 1998; *False Memory*, 1999; *From the Corner of His Eye*, 2000

2001-2007 • *One Door Away from Heaven*, 2001; *By the Light of the Moon*, 2002; *The Face*, 2003; *The Taking*, 2004; *Life Expectancy*, 2004; *Dean Koontz's Frankenstein: Prodigal Son*, 2005 (with Kevin J. Anderson); *Velocity*, 2005; *Dean Koontz's Frankenstein: City of Night*, 2005 (with Ed Gorman); *The Husband*, 2006; *Dean Koontz's Frankenstein: Dead and Alive*, 2007 (with Gorman); *The Good Guy*, 2007

SHORT FICTION: *Strange Highways*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1968-1975 • *Star Quest*, 1968; *The Fall of the Dream Machine*, 1969; *Fear That Man*, 1969; *The Dark Symphony*, 1970; *Hell's Gate*, 1970; *Dark of the Woods*, 1970; *Anti-Man*, 1970; *Beastchild*, 1970; *Hung*, 1970 (as Chris); *The Crimson Witch*, 1971; *The Flesh in the Furnace*, 1972; *A Darkness in My Soul*, 1972; *Time Thieves*, 1972; *Starblood*, 1972; *Warlock*, 1972; *Hanging On*, 1973; *Demon Seed*,

1973; *The Haunted Earth*, 1973; *Nightmare Journey*, 1975; *Invasion*, 1975 (as Wolfe; also known as *Winter Moon*, 1994); *The Long Sleep*, 1975 (as Hill)

1976-1987 • *The Funhouse*, 1980 (as West); *The Mask*, 1981 (as West); *Phantoms*, 1983; *Darkfall*, 1984; *Twilight Eyes*, 1985; *The Door to December*, 1985 (as Paige); *Key to Midnight*, 1979 (as Nichols); *The Eyes of Darkness*, 1981 (as Nichols); *The House of Thunder*, 1982 (as Nichols); *Twilight*, 1984 (also known as *The Servants of Twilight*, 1988; as Nichols); *Shadowfires*, 1987 (as Nichols)

SHORT FICTION: *Soft Come the Dragons*, 1970 (as West)

SCREENPLAY: *Phantoms*, 1998

POETRY: *The Time, the Place*, 1969; *Selected Poems*, 1971

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Santa's Twin*, 1996; *Oddkins: A Fable for All Ages*, 1988; *The Paper Doorway: Funny Verse and Nothing Worse*, 2001; *Every Day's a Holiday: Amusing Rhymes for Happy Times*, 2003; *Robot Santa: The Further Adventures of Santa's Twin*, 2004

NONFICTION: *The Underground Lifestyles Handbook*, 1970 (with Gerda Koontz); *The Pig Society*, 1970 (with Gerda Koontz); *Bounce Girl*, 1970 (with Gerda Koontz; also known as *Aphrodisiac Girl*); *Writing Popular Fiction*, 1972; *How To Write Best-Selling Fiction*, 1981; *Life Is Good! Lessons in Joyful Living*, 2004 (with Trixie Koontz); *Christmas Is Good! Trixie Treats and Holiday Wisdom*, 2005 (with Trixie Koontz)

EDITED TEXT: *Night Visions Six*, 1988 (with Paul Mikol)

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Kotker, Joan G. *Dean Koontz: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. Kotker examines Koontz's mature fiction, focusing on novels such as *Dark Rivers of the Heart*, *Intensity*, *Lighting*, and *Watchers*, providing both conven-

tional and alternative readings of each.

Ramsland, Katherine. *Dean Koontz: A Writer's Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. This full-length biography presents Koontz's life from the days of his childhood to the mid-1990's. Ramsland draws parallels between Koontz's writings and his life, sometimes to an illuminating effect.

THOMAS KYD

Alfred Bennett Harbage

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; July, 18, 1901

Died: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; May 2, 1976

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sam Phelan, 1946-1948

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SAM PHELAN, a former boxer, is a police lieutenant in a large Eastern city in the early 1940's. About thirty years old, he remains a bachelor through three books. He is blunt, patient, diligent, sometimes blundering, but more intelligent and imaginative than he appears.

CLEVELAND JONES, the chief of police, is Phelan's boss, adviser, and chess partner. An educated man with literary taste, Jones nevertheless learned his job from the beat up.

J. ROTH NEWBOLD, the district attorney, is sarcastic and something of a dandy. Responsive to public demands for efficient justice, he presses the police for speedy arrests even in complex and baffling cases.

DR. ALEXANDER SURTEES, a retired octogenarian professor, irritating and unfathomable to Phelan, must be interviewed in each of his cases. Given to maddening digressions and abrupt naps in the midst of interrogations, Surtees provides much of the novels' comic relief.

CONTRIBUTION

Thomas Kyd's is a transitional type of detective

fiction. His Sam Phelan shares some attributes with earlier detectives and differs somewhat from the typical police detective of later crime fiction. Although Phelan's investigations are among the earliest fictional ones that make use of the expertise of professional cohorts, the solutions remain largely the personal triumphs of a resourceful hero. The subsequent development of the police procedural demanded a different kind of protagonist and more systematic attention to the department. Other features of Kyd's novels, such as his conventional dramatic climaxes, were scarcely compatible with this new genre.

The hybrid nature of Kyd's Phelan novels has obscured their originality for many historians of mystery and detective fiction. Phelan exemplified many people, in police and other work, who attained vocational competence before World War II only later to find themselves laboring amid specialized professionals. The Phelan type of detective actually did exist but rapidly became obsolete. In the interests of realism the police procedural sent its Phelans to pasture and focused on the exigencies of the precinct. Thus, Phelan can no longer be replicated; he can, however, still be enjoyed.

BIOGRAPHY

Alfred Bennett Harbage, who would adopt the name Thomas Kyd for his detective writings in middle age, was born in Philadelphia on July 18, 1901, the son of John Albert Harbage, a grocer, and Elizabeth (Young) Harbage. Entering the University of Pennsyl-

vania in 1920, he earned successively the degrees of bachelor of arts (1924), master of arts (1926), and doctor of philosophy (1929). He married Eliza Finnesey in 1926; the couple subsequently had four children.

An academic to the core, he began teaching at his alma mater while a graduate student in 1924 and remained there for twenty-three years, meanwhile earning a reputation as an author of scholarly books on English drama. In 1946 he published the first Phelan novel; the second followed the next year, when he also accepted an appointment as an associate professor of English at Columbia University. After his third Phelan novel in 1948, Harbage turned his attention to the mystery thriller for a time.

With his detective novels behind him, he became professor of English literature at Harvard University in 1952, remaining there until his retirement in 1970 and adding to his already impressive academic achievements. He served as general editor of the thirty-eight-volume Pelican Shakespeare series (1956-1967) and wrote several books on William Shakespeare and numerous scholarly articles. He received many academic awards, including honorary doctorates from the University of Pennsylvania in 1954 and Bowdoin College in 1972.

In retirement Harbage returned to the Philadelphia area where he had spent his first forty-six years, residing in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, until his death at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia on May 2, 1976.

ANALYSIS

When Thomas Kyd began writing his Sam Phelan novels in the mid-1940's, the detective assigned to an urban police force had not yet become a staple of mystery and detective fiction. Although elements of earlier detective genres recur in the Phelan books, they are transmuted into a fresh conception. Like earlier mystery writers of the genteel variety, Kyd demonstrates a fondness for wit and literary allusion, but he does not allot such accomplishments to Phelan; rather, he distributes them among his cohorts and minor characters. To a considerable extent Sam's character is defined by means of his plainspoken reactions to their knowledge and cleverness. Closer to the practical, tough-minded,

tough-talking private investigators of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, Phelan emerges as less crude and cynical, more sensitive and kindhearted, than his hard-boiled predecessors.

He is also a public servant, part of a team of investigators whose analysis of criminal evidence has become increasingly specialized. Kyd was offering a detective much closer to reality than either the leisured English sleuth of writers from Arthur Conan Doyle to Dorothy L. Sayers or the private eye who freelanced or had vague connections with an agency. Such a figure posed a considerable challenge for Kyd. A police detective could not plausibly operate in the highly distinctive manner of either of those previous types; nor could the author afford to lose him in a maze of officials and procedures. A different personality was called for: someone who attained distinction not as a brilliant or bold individual but as a leader and coordinator of the efforts of a heterogeneous group. Prescribed routine and scientific techniques became more important, but neither could be allowed to swamp the interest in the protagonist that had sustained the detective novel for several decades. In response to this problem, Kyd created Sam Phelan.

Police officers had long suffered from a reputation as brave and tenacious but stupid enforcers of the law—a reputation presumably justifying the amateur or private detective. Kyd wisely avoided making Phelan a mere butt of humor. Instead, he created a sympathetic investigator with manifest strengths and weaknesses, a man who strikes readers as like them in many ways, though in the last analysis a bit more perceptive, as a good detective of any sort should be. Phelan, a mere high school graduate, must, like many of his generation in various fields of endeavor, deal with and depend on the assistance of the more highly educated. J. Roth Newbold, the dapper district attorney, takes a dim view of Phelan's intelligence, while the latter despises the snobbishness of this wittier and more sophisticated representative of a class he can well do without. Phelan manages to maintain a generally good working relationship with Newbold's two assistants, both clever and well educated, although he is inclined to disparage their overingenious theorizing about the crimes they investigate and to wax gleeful

when he can disprove them.

Phelan is intelligent enough to acknowledge his reliance on the findings of police photographers, ballistic experts, and other technicians. An essentially practical man, he values the mysterious ways of analysts of physical evidence but has little use for abstract speculations, his impatience with long-windedness even leading him to neglect his usual thoroughness on occasion. In Kyd's third novel, *Blood on the Bosom Devine* (1948), for example, Phelan avoids the duty of interrogating an eyewitness to a murder because he knows the witness to be an exasperatingly absentminded professor—until his chief, Cleveland Jones, advises him to carry it out. Phelan trusts the chief, despite the latter's penchant for quoting Shakespeare and John Milton, because Jones has worked his way up through the local police ranks and demonstrated his command of constabulary nuts and bolts. Naturally, Phelan learns nothing valuable from the professor—his instincts are usually correct—but he realizes that while a good detective pursues positive hunches, he cannot afford to exclude witnesses on the basis of even well-founded hunches.

Sam Phelan sometimes jumps to conclusions that are right but only gratuitously so. In *Blood on the Bosom Devine* he suspects the right person and accuses him after several days of intensive work, but then, because of the murderer's sincerely indignant reaction to a wrongly attributed motive, withdraws his accusation, only later realizing the true motive and circling back to get his man. Because Phelan can admit his mistakes, however, neither Chief Jones nor the reader loses faith in him. Phelan seems to rule out some of his suspects very abruptly; his decisions, however, reflect a commonsense approach that keeps him on or close to the right track. Diverting details hold no charm for him.

Phelan uses much of the lingo of the hard-boiled detective. He is likely to tell witnesses to "beat it" when he is through with them and readily calls young females "sweetheart," but his unpolished manners are a professional mechanism rather than a reflection of the essential Sam, who proves to be old-fashioned and even prudish. He worries over the morals of young boys who sneak into theaters to watch burlesque

shows and rules out as a girlfriend an otherwise admirable young woman immodest enough to appear as a "curvaceous cutie" en route to what she hopes is a more dignified theatrical career. Though prejudiced, he is capable of enlargement. He struggles to absorb at least a few of the great books recommended by Chief Jones and finds it difficult to blame criminals when he discovers the circumstances underlying their antisocial behavior. A relatively unschooled man, he nevertheless takes advantage of his opportunities to learn through living and doing.

The settings of the Sam Phelan books reflect Kyd's background and interests: the academic environment, the ethnic neighborhoods and prestigious suburban enclaves of an area patterned after Philadelphia, and the world of the theater. He studiously avoided the pseudo-gothic trappings that the first Philadelphia mystery writer, Charles Brockden Brown, had attempted to domesticate in America a century and a half earlier. Kyd's murders occur in the open before witnesses: in a crowded university lecture hall, on the spacious lawn of an elegant estate, on a spotlighted stage. Surprisingly, he manages to engender and maintain mystery in circumstances unfavorable to calculated and anonymous violence.

BLOOD IS A BEGGAR

Unlike the literary detective who seems always to be in his or her element, Phelan, the former boxer from a working-class neighborhood, finds himself thrust into the rarefied atmosphere of the university in Kyd's first novel, *Blood Is a Beggar* (1946). The novel is set a few years earlier, in a time when only a small and chiefly privileged segment of the population attended college. Kyd knew this world well, but it is significant that he knew it as a Philadelphia grocer's son and thus was able to imagine the mingled awe and condescension of a man such as Sam Phelan toward well-heeled undergraduates and comfortable professors. Amused and annoyed by the college crowd, Phelan in turn seems incomparably droll to his social betters. When *Blood Is a Beggar* appeared, the influx of veterans had begun to work profound changes on higher education, but Phelan mirrors an attitude still prevalent among the general population in 1946. Phelan encounters the upper crust in its native lair in *Blood of Vintage* (1947)

and solves the case without winning any prizes for diplomacy.

BLOOD ON THE BOSOM DEVINE

It was in the third and last Sam Phelan novel, however, that Kyd used his setting to best advantage. Under his given name, Alfred B. Harbage, he had written extensively about the stage and also about theatergoers, as evidenced by the title of one of his best books, *Shakespeare's Audience* (1941). The mystery and solution of *Blood on the Bosom Devine* depend on the author's familiarity with theatrical architecture, properties, and equipment, especially lighting. A burlesque queen is murdered onstage as she poses on a pedestal that revolves in and out of a spotlight. Phelan intuitively recognizes that the killer cannot be from the audience; it is only when he learns more of what his creator knows about the angles and possibilities of vision onstage and in the wings that he can reconstruct the murder accurately.

His investigation obliges him to question an obnoxious young fraternity man and the aggravating Professor Surtees, as well as a clergyman who has attended the show to determine for himself the seriousness of the threat it posed to the moral health of his congregation. Will Ferguson, an assistant to District Attorney Newbold, constructs an elaborate Freudian argument to "prove" the Reverend Tumpton guilty of the murder. Phelan's visit to Tumpton's Chapel of the Burning Bush enables him to demolish Ferguson's theory. This interview and one with Professor Surtees are the humorous high points of this best of Kyd's novels. Later, Newbold's other assistant, Hugh Espendale, develops his own ingenious scenario—complex, logical, and wrong. Phelan has already used psychology of a more basic sort to solve the murder.

Kyd's academic background contributes in another way to his fiction. A large proportion of scholarly work is detection, by nature consisting largely of negative and irrelevant evidence that cannot, however, be dismissed until shown to be such. The test of the scholar as well as of the detective is likely to be a willingness to continue patiently, systematically, and imaginatively at times when the fun has gone out of the investigation. Kyd skillfully conveys the inevitable weariness and discouragements of such work as well

as the exhilaration of success that justifies the whole endeavor.

By and large Kyd plays fair with his readers, who have an adequate chance to solve the crimes. *Blood of Vintage* is perhaps overly complicated, but in *Blood on the Bosom Devine* especially he presents the clues adroitly, one as early as the first sentence in the story—although only the most alert reader would be likely to know what to make of it. Artful plotting in the mode of the classical detective story, rather than fast-moving adventure punctuated by frequent violence, predominates in this novel; still, the tightly knit plot reflects a recognizable world.

The prose of the Sam Phelan novels is inelegant but serviceable and straightforward. The sentences are short; the description is generally curt, though colorful at times. These qualities are visible in the following passage from the first chapter of Kyd's third novel:

Ferguson reached for the typescript and read a few lines. When he would come to certain words, his owlish expression would dissolve into imbecilic delight. His eyes would widen and leer, his lips seem to drool. The Chief burst into a guffaw.

Kyd's style reflects his academic roots only when he is presenting the speech of academic characters; elsewhere it runs to the laconic simplicity that Ernest Hemingway bequeathed to the hard-boiled school. He depends much—some might think excessively—on short, snappy dialogue. There is very little show of authorial omniscience. Although Phelan clearly reflects on the evidence he so doggedly accumulates, very little sense of his mental processes is given until the final unraveling, when he shows himself adept at extracting the essential from a mass of testimony and technical data.

COVER HIS FACE

Although Kyd chose settings not remote in time, the world he showed was rapidly vanishing even as the Sam Phelan books appeared. Rather than bring Phelan into the postwar era, Kyd published in 1949 a mystery novel called *Cover His Face*, in which a young English instructor goes to England in search of letters by Dr. Samuel Johnson but finds instead nerve-wracking danger. In this work and in a few short stories published in the 1950's, Kyd abandoned detection as such

for thrills and suspense. Thus, the career of Sam Phelan was a short one, but he stands as one of the earliest and most neglected protagonists of the detective genre later to be typed as the police procedural. Persistent, dedicated, subject to unwelcome political pressure and the constraining orders of superiors, fallible, thoroughly human, equipped with enough fortitude and common sense to prevail, Sam Phelan remains a believable and engaging character.

Robert P. Ellis

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SAM PHELAN SERIES: *Blood Is a Beggar*, 1946; *Blood of Vintage*, 1947; *Blood on the Bosom Devine*, 1948

NONSERIES NOVEL: *Cover His Face*, 1949

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION (AS HARBAGE): *Thomas Killigrew: Cavalier Dramatist*, 1930; *Sir William Davenant, Poet-Venturer*, 1935; *Cavalier Drama*, 1936; *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, 1940; *Shakespeare's Audience*, 1941; *As They Liked It: An Essay on Shakspeare and Morality*, 1947; *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, 1952; *Theater for Shakespeare*, 1955; *William Shakespeare: A Reader's Guide*, 1963; *Conceptions of Shakespeare*, 1966; *Shakespeare Without Words, and Other Essays*, 1972; *A Kind of Power: The Shakespeare-Dickens Analogy*, 1975

EDITED TEXTS (AS HARBAGE): *The Tempest*, 1946 (by William Shakespeare); *As You Like It*, 1948 (by Shakespeare); *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, 1956 (by Shakespeare); *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 1958 (by Shakespeare); *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 1961 (with Douglas Bush); *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1963 (by

Shakespeare); *Shakespeare: The Tragedies—A Collection of Critical Essays*, 1964; *Henry V*, 1965 (by Shakespeare); *Narrative Poems*, 1965 (by Shakespeare); *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 1969; *The Sonnets*, 1970 (by Shakespeare)

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Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The American Police Novel: A History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003. Traces the evolution of the police procedural and helps place Kyd's work within the subgenre. Bibliographic references and index.

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L

ED LACY

Leonard S. Zinberg

Born: New York, New York; 1911

Died: New York, New York; January 7, 1968

Also wrote as Steve April; Len Zinberg

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dave Wintino, 1957-1965

Toussaint Moore, 1957-1964

Lee Hayes, 1965-1967

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAVE WINTINO, a young, strong, and wiry detective on the New York police force, makes a reputation for himself very quickly as a smart and incorruptible investigator and as a formidable pugilist.

TOUSSAINT MOORE, a black private investigator, was reared in Harlem. He had been a postal worker, but idealism—and the desire to make better money—motivated him to give up his government post in favor of work as a private investigator. Somewhat introspective, Moore is a sensitive, intelligent individual.

LEE HAYES, a black police detective in New York City, becomes involved in investigations of violent crimes while managing to steer clear of both the corruption that is pervasive in the city's bureaucracy and the temptation to succumb to racial hatred.

CONTRIBUTION

Ed Lacy is one of the many underrated detective-fiction writers who both flourished and faded all too rapidly. In 1958, he received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best mystery of the year, *Room to Swing* (1957). Later works did not bring him the same degree of success, and his reputation faded to near oblivion after his death. Yet his crime novels still merit critical attention. Unlike

his peers, Lacy often chose blacks as protagonists. His characters have greater psychological depth than is ordinarily found in detective fiction, an achievement that is all the more remarkable when one considers that those same characters are generally immersed in the stereotypically macho worlds of boxing and urban crime. Lacy's plotting is similarly skillful, featuring recurring flashbacks, considerable action but little gratuitous violence, and double-twist endings. In 1957, the *Los Angeles Mirror-News* called *Room to Swing* "the occasional perfect mystery novel." The hyperbole of this judgment should not be allowed to obscure the fact of Ed Lacy's genuine achievement as a writer of detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Ed Lacy is the pen name of Leonard S. Zinberg, who was born in New York City in 1911. He continued to live in New York throughout most of his life, gaining an intimate familiarity with the city that proved to be very useful to his fiction writing. He and his wife, Esther, had one child, a daughter named Carla.

Lacy began his writing career in 1940 with the non-detective novel *Walk Hard—Talk Loud*, which is set in the world of boxing, a milieu that would become a lifelong interest. During World War II, he served as a correspondent for *Yank*. After the war, he met some writers, and although they were poor, according to his account, he decided that theirs was the career that he would pursue. From that time, Lacy earned his livelihood as a freelance writer. After a slow start, he saw some success with his first detective novel, *The Woman Aroused* (1951), intended to be a satire. He wrote dozens of stories that were published in such periodicals as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *The Saint*, *Esquire*,

The New Yorker, and *Collier's*. Finally, after four non-detective and five detective novels, *The Best That Ever Did It* (1955), a caper novel, achieved considerable popularity. Three years later, Lacy received the Edgar for *Room to Swing*. Lacy also was awarded a Twentieth Century Fox Literary Fellowship.

Lacy died on January 7, 1968, in New York City. His manuscript collection is currently held in the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University.

ANALYSIS

Ed Lacy began his career of mystery writing in 1951 with the satiric *The Woman Aroused*, succeeded by *Sin in Their Blood* (1952) and *Strip for Violence* (1953). The titles suggest that the books have no literary merit whatsoever, and Lacy himself expressed wonder at the titles his editors and publishers created and approved. Yet these books mark a strong beginning to Lacy's contribution to the mystery and detective genre.

That contribution may be judged credible, consistent, and often creative. During the mid-1950's, before the Civil Rights movement had begun, Lacy was featuring black investigators, both private and police, who possessed the requisite invincibility of the detective hero. Each is literate, intelligent, ethical, physically powerful, and sensitive, often to a greater degree than his white counterparts. Lacy believed that stories were given new depth if the characters were Mexican, Puerto Rican, or black.

Toussaint Moore, the hero of the Edgar-winning *Room to Swing*, is originally selected to solve the case on which the plot hinges because he is black. Lacy gives his character compelling internal struggles: struggles between security and possible wealth, between the pain of racial discrimination in the South and the pleasure of success in solving his case. Minor characters who are black, such as Ollie Jackson in *Be Careful How You Live* (1958), are similarly presented as being intelligent and capable people. It is to his credit that Lacy writes of black characters without a trace of stereotyping—and without the self-righteousness sometimes found in works of the 1960's.

Lacy does at times, however, commit the sorts of technical mistakes that are common in novels in which first-person narration is employed. For example, he

fails to explain why the narrator is bothering to tell this story at all and how a narrator such as this would ever consider writing such a work. Most important, Lacy sometimes forces the narrator to record the events surrounding his own death, a neat trick indeed. Still, though Lacy is guilty of all these mistakes, they are more than compensated for by the psychological insights presented and the skillful and somewhat sophisticated manipulation of time through multiple flashbacks. These shifts in chronology flow naturally, and the revelations they contain are well placed. Such clever placement of information is an important component of the consistently well-structured plots of Lacy's novels.

Lacy's annual summer visits to the East End of Long Island became a source for *Shakedown for Murder* (1958). Both the idyllic village setting and the less-than-idyllic village "frustration and bigotry of long standing" figure strongly in the plot. Trips to Europe, particularly to Paris, offered Lacy the ideas for *Go for the Body* (1954), *The Sex Castle* (1963), and *The Freeloaders* (1961). Work was another source of story ideas for him. Lacy once took a job in a butcher shop to learn about freezing meat, a subject taken up in *The Men from the Boys* (1956).

In a 1959 article, "Whodunit?—You?" Lacy describes his customary process of assembling a plot. He began each novel with "the denouement clearly in mind." It was important to him that clues be planted carefully throughout the text and the solution to the mystery not be unrelated to the plot. He wrote for three hours a day, seven days a week, and produced five typed pages per day. It took about a month for him to complete a first draft, to which he returned some weeks later for the extensive revision he or his editors required. He claimed that an average mystery novel during the 1950's could earn five thousand dollars over its life from magazine serialization, hardcover and paperback publication, and foreign rights. (Most of his works were translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and German.)

Though he could be classified as a member of the American hard-boiled school of writers, Lacy's plots avoid the gratuitous violence and sex often associated with this genre. Although considerable violence does

take place, rarely is it exaggerated or without function within the plot. On this topic Lacy commented, “There is more than sufficient violence about us, so [I] don’t use violence for violence’s sake.” He also refrained, he added, from putting characters “in bed 20 times a day.”

BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE

An illuminating example of a Lacy novel is *Be Careful How You Live*, published in 1958 after a string of five successes that had earned high praise from critics. *Be Careful How You Live* describes the adventures of Bucky Penn, a young New York police detective who becomes the partner of Doc Alexander, a very clever, streetwise, older detective. Together they operate successfully on the elite Commissioner’s Squad. Risks and temptation arise, however, when they become members of a special unit assigned to solve an important kidnapping case.

Narrated in the first person by the main character, and using a large amount of flashback, the novel reveals how events in Bucky’s childhood explain, if not justify, his adult behavior. He became an undirected, dissatisfied young man who gave vent to his aggressions by becoming first a boxer, then a soldier, then a physically abusive New York police officer. The account of his rise and fall is realistic and credible. Ollie Jackson, a black officer and a minor character, is ethical, intelligent, and loyal—perhaps the most attractive character in the book. The female characters, on the other hand, are seen by Bucky as either slovenly, slut-tish, or pleasantly compliant—the only categories he understands. Lacy keeps judgments and observations consistent and appropriate to Bucky’s nature. Not until the shower of bullets at the very end of the story does the reader flinch, faced with a denouement that simply does not ring true. Given the many strengths of this book, and, indeed, of the entire canon of Ed Lacy, it is disappointing that he and his works have nearly fallen into the category of the forgotten.

Vicki K. Robinson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVE WINTINO SERIES: *Lead with Your Left*, 1957; *Double Trouble*, 1965

TOUSSAINT MOORE SERIES: *Room to Swing*, 1957; *Moment of Untruth*, 1964

LEE HAYES SERIES: *Harlem Underground*, 1965; *In Black and Whitey*, 1967

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Woman Aroused*, 1951; *Sin in Their Blood*, 1952 (also known as *Death in Passing*); *Strip for Violence*, 1953; *Enter Without Desire*, 1954; *Go for the Body*, 1954; *The Best That Ever Did It*, 1955 (also known as *Visa to Death*); *The Men from the Boys*, 1956; *Be Careful How You Live*, 1958 (also known as *Dead End*); *Breathe No More, My Lady*, 1958; *Devil for the Witch*, 1958; *Shakedown for Murder*, 1958; *Blonde Bait*, 1959; *A Deadly Affair*, 1960; *The Big Fix*, 1960; *Bugged for Murder*, 1961; *South Pacific Affair*, 1961; *The Freeloaders*, 1961; *The Sex Castle*, 1963 (also known as *Shoot It Again*); *Two Hot to Handle*, 1963; *Pity the Honest*, 1965; *The Napalm Bugle*, 1968; *The Big Bust*, 1969

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Walk Hard—Talk Loud*, 1940 (as Len Zinberg); *What D’ya Know for Sure*, 1947 (also known as *Strange Desires*); *Hold with the Hares*, 1948 (as Len Zinberg); *Route 13*, 1954 (as Steve April); *Sleep in Thunder*, 1964; *The Hotel Dwellers*, 1966

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EMMA LATHEN

Mary Jane Latsis and Martha Henissart

MARY JANE LATSIS

Born: Chicago, Illinois; July 12, 1927

Died: Plymouth, New Hampshire; October 27, 1997

MARTHA HENISSART

Born: Place unknown; 1929?

Also wrote as R. B. Dominic

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Thatcher, 1961-1997

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN PUTNAM THATCHER, the senior vice president of the Sloan Guaranty Trust, was born in Sunapee, New Hampshire, and attended Harvard University. A widower, Thatcher maintains cordial relations with his daughter, Laura, and his two sons and their families. Having had much experience with money matters and people, he is cautious, contemplative, and conservative, and enjoys investigating murder mysteries precisely because he dislikes chaos.

BEN SAFFORD is a democratic congressman from Ohio, whose insider knowledge of national politics serves him well when he more than occasionally becomes embroiled in murder investigations.

CONTRIBUTION

Emma Lathen is a pseudonym used by the writing team of Mary Jane Latsis and Martha Henissart. Lat-

sis, an economist, and Henissart, a lawyer, looked to their professional journals and activities for ideas and information to create the Emma Lathen novels, which make a witty contribution to the tradition of the amateur sleuth whose specialized knowledge leads to the solution of crimes. Even readers unfamiliar with the language or activities of the world of high finance can enjoy the explorations of the workings of Wall Street and the financial shenanigans that lead to murder.

Lathen's ability to condense the complicated world of corporate finance into a recognizable form for the uninitiated, while framing it in the tradition of the Golden Age of mystery and crime fiction, was something of a novelty in the early 1960's. The mixture of business and murder allowed Lathen to address a wide range of social issues (and political ones in the Ben Safford series). It also provided rich fodder for expanding the dimensions of the traditional mystery novel. Lathen received the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award for best crime fiction in 1967 for *Murder Against the Grain*, the Ellery Queen Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1983, and the Agatha Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1997.

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Jane Latsis and Martha Hennissart, the two personalities behind Emma Lathen, first met in the 1950's as graduate students at Wellesley College. They resumed their friendship in 1960 and began a literary collaboration that would span nearly four de-

cares and produce more than two dozen novels. Latsis was born in Chicago and studied economics at Wellesley. She later moved to New York to work in corporate finance. Hennisart studied law and worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome before returning to Wellesley to teach.

A common interest in crime fiction and a similar dissatisfaction with the quality and range of contemporary works in the genre led them to form a literary partnership in 1960. As they both worked in the corporate world, Latsis and Hennisart decided to adopt a pseudonym to avoid complications with business clients who might worry that their private affairs would end up as material for their mysteries. They devised the name Emma Lathen, comprising components of each of their names. Emma approximates the “M” from Mary and the “Ma” from Martha, while Lathen comes from the “Lat” of Latsis and the “Hen” of Hennisart. Later novels appeared under a second pseudonym, R. B. Dominic.

Latsis and Hennisart divided the labor by writing alternate chapters of their books—Latsis with a pen and a legal pad and Hennisart on a manual typewriter. When a manuscript was complete, they reviewed it for inconsistencies before producing a final draft. Their first book, *Banking on Death*, was published in 1961 to wide critical acclaim and introduced the mystery world to the character of John Putnam Thatcher, a corporate financial officer and amateur sleuth, and the hero of their long-running Thatcher series of crime novels. *Murder Sunny Side Up*, the first in a second crime series featuring Congressman Ben Safford, appeared in 1968.

After the pair achieved greater prominence, Latsis and Hennisart gave up their corporate jobs and purchased a house together in New Hampshire, where they spent part of every year writing and hiking in the White Mountains. Their identities eventually became known, but Latsis and Hennisart remained intensely private about their personal lives and avoided public attention and interviews.

Latsis died in 1997 at the age of seventy, shortly before the publication of *Shark Out of Water* (1997), the twenty-fourth novel in the Thatcher series.

ANALYSIS

A steady diet of Emma Lathen novels may not qualify readers for business degrees, but it would be a highly entertaining way to be instructed in the ways of the financial world. Since the first novel, *Banking on Death*, introduced the powerful senior vice president of the Sloan Guaranty Trust, the third largest bank in the world, delighted readers have followed John Thatcher and his efficient and knowledgeable band of associates into the intricacies of the fast-food business, cocoa trading, Greek and Puerto Rican politics, grain business with the Soviet Union, the second-home development industry, hockey games, the Winter Olympics, the auto industry, college boards, and the development of tomato hybrids.

Complex and potentially confusing subjects such as these are so skillfully woven into the classic pattern of detective novels that Lathen has been acclaimed as the “best living American writer of detective stories” by the writer C. P. Snow and “the most important woman in American mystery” by the *Los Angeles Times*. The Lathen novels are indeed classically constructed, though not so much in the tradition of American hard-boiled fiction, with its dark underside, but rather more in the tradition of British Golden Age fiction. The pattern of such detective novels is also the pattern of classic comedy. Defined broadly, the ritual pattern starts with a society in disorder; the underlying impulse driving the plot is the need to restore harmony in the community, a function that, in a detective novel, is undertaken by the detective figure.

This underlying pattern structures a Lathen novel, in which John Thatcher is drawn, sometimes against his will, into the investigation of a murder. Because the Lathen specialty is to show some aspect of the world of big business gone awry, Thatcher is particularly well qualified to put together pieces of financial information from various sources. Thatcher becomes embroiled in a case not only because he represents the Sloan and its investments but also because he has considerable experience with people’s behavior and motivations and because he is curious. Having carefully observed and weighed the significance of what he has witnessed, he has a moment of insight when the pieces fall together; thereupon, he puts the mighty forces of the Sloan to

work, gathering more information to validate his insight. The cause of the disorder, the murderer, is discovered and rooted out, and social order is restored. After the guilty party is disposed of, Thatcher and the rest of the innocents gather to thrash out the details of the complex causes that led to the murder.

Lathen novels, while developing in such a classic pattern, depict a wide variety of people, classes, and issues. Lathen plays scrupulously fair with readers by limiting the number of suspects and by providing enough information for readers to draw their own conclusions. Though the criminal element is usually a member of an elite class, the canvas of a Lathen novel can be very broad; its community can be any part of the world, any level of society affected by a particular business, because the invisible thread that ties the whole world together is money. Lathen takes an unalloyed pleasure in the vagaries of money, in its power to travel to far-flung places, to seep into every crevice and crack of political and social institutions, to tangle together races, cultures, and ideologies in its universal web. Therefore, every novel begins with a specific reference to Wall Street, the heart of any big business:

Above all, Wall Street is power. The talk is of stocks and bonds, of contracts and bills of lading, of gold certificates and wheat futures, but it is talk that sends fleets steaming to distant oceans, that determines the fate of new African governments, that closes mining camps in the Chibougamou.

Lathen invariably incorporates vignettes of the common folk affected by financial upheavals, the plucky, hardworking men and women whose hopes, dreams, and livelihoods hang in the balance. When an arrogant member of the privileged class decides in desperation to protect his status in his community by randomly poisoning the batter mix used in a national fried-chicken franchise, for example, the Sloan becomes involved because it has twelve million dollars at stake. Lathen also takes her readers, however, to Willoughby, New Jersey, to see how this devastates Vern Ackers and Dodie Ackers, whose life savings, invested in the Chicken Tonight franchise, appears to be lost when the nation in a panic quits buying chicken in any form (*Murder to Go*, 1969). When the mighty Vandam Nursery and Seed Com-

pany's patent for the find of the century, a biennial tomato, is challenged and an injunction placed on their mail-order catalog (*Green Grow the Dollars*, 1982), a spry sixty-year-old woman in Shelburne, Vermont, desolately complains: "It's as if that catalog is the only thing that can convince me that spring really will come."

Though the main characters in a Lathen novel are the affluent and powerful of the financial world, they are the ones who come in for some of Lathen's most ironic commentary. Thatcher, after all, is senior vice president of the Sloan, highly placed but not at the top. His attitude toward the president of the bank, Bradford Withers, is to hope devoutly that he is away sailing or exploring exotic countries, or if he must take an interest in the bank, that he will limit himself to behaving graciously at social functions, the only service his class, education, and personality allow him to provide for the Sloan. In Lathen's world, the most visible people at the top of a hierarchy are dangerously ignorant of the realities of the wealth that keeps them at the top. When Thatcher wants information, he knows better than to bother with figureheads:

Going straight to the top is a stratagem best left to amateurs. The president and the chairman of the board of Standard Foods resembled the Joint Chiefs of Staff—too wise, too farseeing and too remote for the nuts-and-bolts working of their complex apparatus.

Thatcher's colleagues, though admirably competent, tend to be droll personalities. Thatcher's friend Tom Robichaux, for example, is a member of an investment firm that does business with the Sloan, a man with gourmet tastes and a firm grasp of money matters. Yet his private life becomes a social minefield for Thatcher whenever they meet for lunch, as Thatcher tries desperately to remember the name of Robichaux's latest wife and what stage of which divorce proceedings he is suffering through now. Everett Gabler, a health nut with a poor digestive system, can be counted on to disapprove of any but the most conservative ventures; Charlie Trinkam, head of the Utilities Department and a confirmed bachelor, can be counted on to find an outstandingly attractive and colorful single woman as a source of esoteric business information.

Thatcher himself is often outmaneuvered by the women in his life. He has to pull himself together to assert his authority with his unflappable secretary, Miss Corsa, who disapproves of almost anything that interferes with his getting through the pile of paperwork always on his desk. He is equally helpless in the face of demands from his daughter Laura, who learned much from her mother about getting Thatcher to do what he would rather not, which most often consists of attending glittery cultural or social functions. The subtle overturning of the expected hierarchy at the Sloan and the tug-of-war between generations, frequent motifs in Lathen's work, are ageless comic conventions.

Since the Sloan Guaranty Trust is the third largest bank in the world and therefore a significant force in the world economy, even novels with a specific setting—such as a small hospital in *A Stitch in Time* (1968) or St. Bernadette's Parochial School in *Ashes to Ashes* (1971)—are not confined to one locale. Thatcher may be called on to travel to faraway places such as Greece or Switzerland. Even when Thatcher is not actually in another part of the world, Lathen shows the reader how the mighty resources of the Sloan can pick up the paper trail of money wherever it goes.

Lathen's novels are traditionally conservative, upholding social order and stability. This is reflected in her characters' financial dealings. Admirable characters treat money with professional respect and integrity; the criminals, on the other hand, are those unhappy creatures who manipulate it with unrealistic, desperate hopes of making it perform miraculous tricks on their behalf. Lathen's specialty is the light touch with which she depicts the very large forces that impinge on the lives of individuals as they dream and scheme to find their good life.

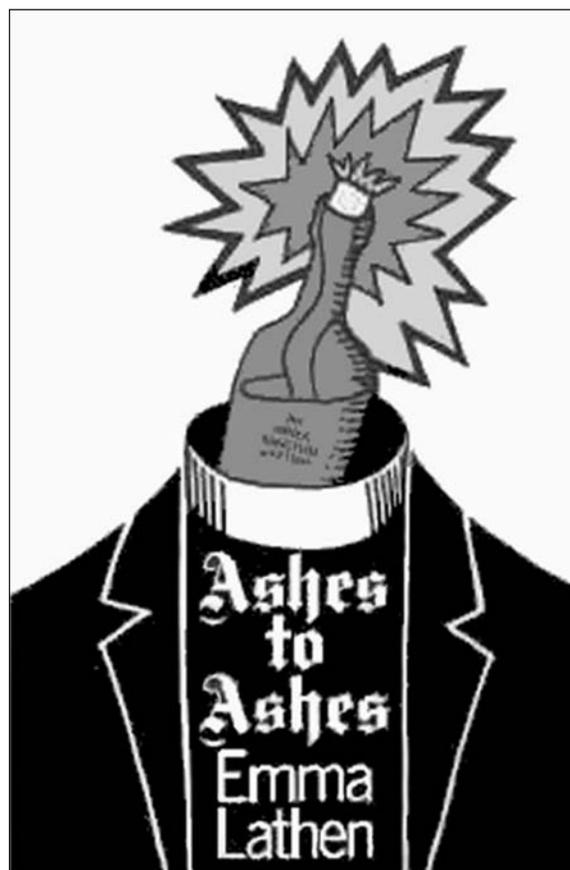
DEATH SHALL OVERCOME

Because to bankers money is the root of everything, including but not limited to evil, Thatcher, the Sloan, and Wall Street often are embroiled in political and social issues of international proportions. In *Death Shall Overcome* (1966), the murderer tries to cover an ordinary color-blind case of embezzlement by inciting the latent racists on Wall Street to oppose the election of a black millionaire to the New York

Stock Exchange. So successful is the camouflage that Thatcher, infuriated by Simpson, a publicity-seeking black activist planning a kneel-in media event at the Sloan, mobilizes the Sloan Glee Club. Thatcher welcomes the protesters with a "ringing speech which placed the Sloan so far in the vanguard of the civil rights movement that it left Simpson looking like a Ku Klux Klansman"; a chorus of seven hundred Sloan voices then thunders out Civil War songs.

THE LONGER THE THREAD

In *The Longer the Thread* (1971), Thatcher finds a series of suspicious accidents in the operation of a failing Puerto Rican clothing manufacturer funded by Sloan Guaranty Trust. With three million dollars of his bank's money at stake and with corpses piling up, Thatcher struggles to uncover a pattern to the violence and to determine who stands to gain the most by it. Lathen employs considerable wit in the novel, as she



does in all the Thatcher mysteries. Some early chapters have titles such as “Bias Binding,” “Following a Pattern,” “Double Seams,” “Sewing the Wind,” and “Pinking Shears”; chapters in which Thatcher is close to discovering the criminal are titled “Gather at the Neck” and “Stitch, Stitch, Stitch.”

SHARK OUT OF WATER

In *Shark Out of Water*, Thatcher travels to Gdansk, Poland, to ferret out new investment opportunities for Sloan Guaranty Trust and, as usual, stumbles on a murder. The city serves as the headquarters of a European consortium called the Baltic Area Development Association (BADA), which governs its delegates with a heavy and corrupt hand.

When BADA’s chief of staff turns up dead after alleging widespread irregularities within the group, Thatcher senses foul play. In his traditionally calm but effective manner, Thatcher helps the Gdansk police navigate the rough waters of international finance to determine who might benefit most from the death of the would-be whistleblower.

Each Lathen novel provides a happy blend of the familiar and the predictable with the fresh and informative, delivered with wit and good humor. As long as John Thatcher was around to keep an eye on the “endearingly childlike innocents” on Wall Street who always expect “the good, the beautiful, the true and the profitable,” and as long as Lathen was there to explain why a surefire money-making proposition is not, her fans could rest assured that, in mystery fiction at least, someone was watching the bank.

Shakuntala Jayaswal

Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN THATCHER SERIES: *Banking on Death*, 1961; *A Place for Murder*, 1963; *Accounting for Murder*, 1964; *Death Shall Overcome*, 1966; *Murder Makes the Wheels Go Round*, 1966; *Murder Against the Grain*, 1967; *A Stitch in Time*, 1968; *Come to Dust*, 1968; *Murder to Go*, 1969; *When in Greece*, 1969; *Pick Up Sticks*, 1970; *Ashes to Ashes*, 1971; *The Longer the Thread*, 1971; *Murder Without Icing*, 1972; *Sweet and Low*, 1974; *By Hook or by Crook*, 1975; *Double, Double, Oil and Trouble*, 1978; *Going*

for the Gold, 1981; *Green Grow the Dollars*, 1982; *Something in the Air*, 1988; *East Is East*, 1991; *Right on the Money*, 1993; *Brewing Up a Storm*, 1996; *A Shark Out of Water*, 1997

BEN SAFFORD SERIES (AS DOMINIC): *Murder Sunny Side Up*, 1968; *Murder in High Place*, 1969; *There Is No Justice*, 1971 (also known as *Murder Out of Court*); *Epitaph for a Lobbyist*, 1974; *Murder Out of Commission*, 1976; *The Attending Physician*, 1980; *A Flaw in the System*, 1983; *Unexpected Developments*, 1984

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JONATHAN LATIMER

Born: Chicago, Illinois; October 23, 1906

Died: La Jolla, California; June 23, 1983

Also wrote as Peter Coffin

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; hard-boiled; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

William Crane, 1935-1939

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

WILLIAM "BILL" CRANE, a private investigator, is an urbanely witty upper-class man who pursues business and pleasure simultaneously. From an alcoholic sleep, he wakes with inspired ratiocination. Although he admits to being repulsed by a violent and grotesque world, Crane is most intent on satisfying his boss.

DOC WILLIAMS sports a waxed mustache and black hair with a streak of white over the left temple. He does the legwork for the Crane-Williams team. Doc's vernacular speech, casual taste, and street smarts suggest that he comes from a working-class background.

COLONEL BLACK, owner of the discreet agency for which Crane and Williams work. The colonel is mostly absent except when he is contacted by telephone and telegram for advice and consent. He takes only wealthy clients and is very urbane in matters of dress, food, and wine. He is fascinated with the Elizabethan Age.

CONTRIBUTION

In the five William Crane novels, Jonathan Latimer synthesized puzzle-mystery and tough-guy conventions by introducing a series protagonist of great intelligence and social sophistication who comes into violent contact with crime. For Crane, pleasure and pain

interact as forceful agents by which both conscious and unconscious processes produce enlightenment. The larger world (mostly Chicago) appears irredeemably corrupted. For the detective Crane, the model of order seems to be survival in the hierarchy of the Black Detective Agency, where he is confirmed by bonds of loyalty and good job performance.

Latimer's experimentation with shifting points of view in the Crane novels and elsewhere anticipates the author's later fiction, in which he seeks to reconcile the depth of characterization and richness of technique of mainstream literary fiction with the appeal of detective fiction. In these novels, William Crane and crew have been dismissed and replaced by solitary and more introspective protagonists: amateur sleuths whose profession as writers (newspaperman, Hollywood scriptwriter) makes them especially sensitive to the way words shape reality.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Chicago on October 23, 1906, Jonathan Wyatt Latimer was named in honor of an ancestor who served on General George Washington's staff. Latimer was educated at a boarding school in Arizona and Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where in 1929 he took a bachelor's degree with high honors and earned membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He became a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, and for a brief period he served as ghostwriter for the retired secretary of the interior Harold Ickes. Latimer was married to Ellen Baxter Peabody in 1937, and together they had three children. He was married to Jo Ann Hanzlik in 1954.

While writing the five William Crane series novels, Latimer also launched a career as Hollywood screen-

writer. From his detective novel *The Lady in the Morgue* (1936), he developed the script for the 1938 Universal Studios film of the same title. From 1938 to 1959 he wrote or collaborated on some twenty screenplays for various film companies, including the film noir classics adapted from Dashiell Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1930), Kenneth Fearing's *The Big Clock* (1946), and Cornell Woolrich's *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1945). The Hollywood period was interrupted by a tour of duty in the United States Navy (1942-1945). During the early 1960's, Latimer turned to television writing for the Perry Mason series; he wrote forty-five original scripts and fifty adaptations of Erle Stanley Gardner's books. Latimer's postwar detective fiction included two novels, *Sinners and Shrouds* (1955) and *Black Is the Fashion for Dying* (1959). On June 23, 1983, he died of lung cancer in La Jolla, California.

ANALYSIS

Jonathan Latimer's detective fiction falls into two groups: the 1930's William Crane novels and the post-World War II novels. The earlier group reflects the author's unique merging of puzzle-mystery and hard-boiled conventions to develop stories of wide appeal. The later, and unfortunately smaller, group shows Latimer seeking to build a richness of characterization and complexity of technique into the formulaic detective mystery. Functioning well as rational analysts, the protagonists of these books also tend toward introspection and a sensitive awareness of the complex interrelations of lives as they are touched by criminal behavior.

In the William Crane series, Latimer used a recurring fictional situation. The two detectives, William Crane and Doc Williams, are employed by the Black Detective Agency of New York City and are given assignments by its director, Colonel Black. Only the very wealthy, particularly those possessing old money, seem to apply to the Colonel, who is of the same class as his clients. (He wears English tweeds, drinks aged brandy, and has a dilettante's interest in Elizabethan literature.) While Crane and Williams carry out assignments in Chicago, Miami, or a New England sanatorium, the Colonel remains in New York City to serve as a guide and a resource through telephone calls and

telegrams. Black is present for an investigation only in *The Search for My Great Uncle's Head* (1937), a novel that is not part of the Crane series.

Commonly, reviews of the William Crane novels emphasize their debt to the hard-boiled school of detective fiction. (One review of *The Lady in the Morgue* offered an alliterative catalog of the work's characteristics: "Rough, rowdy, riotous, rum-soaked, irreverent.") Yet the novels also have a firm basis in puzzle-mystery convention: the superrational detective and his confidant of lesser mental acuity, the locked-room murder, the searching out of all the clues, and the formal denouement in which the detective offers the analysis his brain has hatched to an assembly of the surviving innocent and guilty. In his special adaptation of these elements, Latimer conceives of an American setting (the seething city of the 1930's, with polarized ethnic and economic classes) coming into contact with an efficiently managed organization (the Black Detective Agency).

Crimes in these novels have clear references to the dynamics of class, wealth, and power in the United States. Common threads run through the series. A generation of strong men have accumulated great wealth through intelligence, work, and will. Their second- and third-generation descendants, grown decadent and wasteful, conspire to inherit through murder or apparent murder (*The Dead Don't Care*, 1938). Alternatively, the virtuous wealthy are preyed on by failed associates (*Headed for a Hearse*, 1935) or by classless professionals of great intelligence who desire the power that wealth confers (*Murder in the Madhouse*, 1935, and *Red Gardennias*, 1939). Often, Latimer's murderers forge a significant alliance with elements of urban organized crime—represented by ethnic Jews, Italians, and Irish who are willing to kill the original fathers to establish their class and power through the possession of wealth.

The series detective William Crane fits nicely into the milieu of the upper class. His sophistication, wit, and graceful manners allow him to enter easily the boardrooms, estates, and watering holes of the rich. Like the wealthy, he seals himself off from the masses through a condescension toward the lower classes disguised as ethnic humor; in the Crane series, caricatures of Jews, Italians, Irish, and African Americans abound.

RED GARDENIAS

None of this, however, establishes Crane's true character. Beneath the surface, the detective is an outsider who identifies with those criminals whom he is hired to thwart. In the last of the Crane books, *Red Gardenias*, Latimer places the detective in the role of impostor, a role that is implicit throughout the series. In this novel, he is given a false identity (with a classy wife, suburban house, automobile, and maid) as a successful associate of Simeon March, an industrial magnate whose sons are being murdered. Although Crane may recognize the inner virtues of some members of the aristocracy, it is the application of wealth—the fact that wealth creates opportunities—that motivates him.

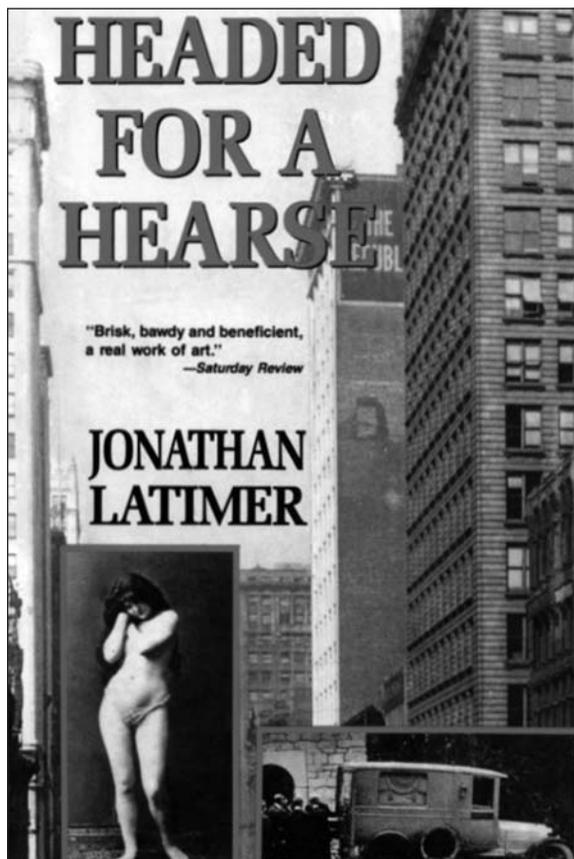
The Crane novels are a record of the good life of hotels and fine food and drink. Wealthy women walk Latimer's pages in glorious high style. Although Crane lusts after them, he is also attracted to women of

the lower class, as his seduction of the exotic dancer in *The Dead Don't Care* and of a gangster's mistress in *Red Gardenias* attest. In *Red Gardenias*, Crane receives for his labors a promise of marriage from an appropriately named woman, Ann Fortune, who is the wealthy niece of his boss, Colonel Black.

The blessing of good fortune that William Crane finally receives is, however, no product of the entrepreneurial genius of the rich fathers. Latimer's Black Detective Agency is organized on the industrial-management model, a structure that forms the basis for the hierarchy into which the characters fall. The agency is organized like an industrial corporation, with the invested capital of the wealthy (agency clients) flowing into the boardroom (Colonel Black is the chairman of the board), where remote corporate decisions are made for management (Crane), which in turn uses labor (Doc Williams as foreman of contracted labor) by writing job descriptions and allocating resources. Ironically, it is not the service of justice but the satisfaction of Colonel Black that is Crane's primary objective, as he struggles to strike a balance between the restrictions of the agency's capital and the demands of the clients.

HEADED FOR A HEARSE

The curious mixture of comedy and tragedy in these books also has reference to the detective's position as mediator. On one hand, the novels abound in a comedy based on class distinctions: the rigid xenophobia and ritual displays of the wealthy confronting the social crudity and physical ugliness of the ethnic poor. On the other hand, this comedy of manners exists in a cultural stew heated by widespread violence. The constant wordplay between Crane and Williams reflects their efforts to construct private meanings that will insulate them from their fears. Violence and death erupt with fearful energy, sometimes taking the innocent, as in *Headed for a Hearse*, where assassins bring down a black passerby, who "slithered halfway up on the sidewalk, making swimming motions with his legs and arms, and then slid back off the curb into the street." Latimer controls such horror through gallows humor in the obscenely funny episodes of transporting a female corpse from a cemetery to a morgue in *The Lady in the Morgue*.



THE SEARCH FOR MY GREAT UNCLE'S HEAD

The last William Crane novel was published in 1939, and Latimer did not return to detective fiction until 1955. The later novels reveal Latimer moving toward greater complexity of narrative structure, with characters of fuller and more persuasive dimensions. Some of this deepening is anticipated in his earlier work. In *Headed for a Hearse*, Latimer used a shifting point of view in an effort to describe more intimately the experience and personality of three inmates. In *The Search for My Great Uncle's Head*, Latimer introduced Peter Coffin, not a professional but an amateur sleuth. A first-person narrative, the novel offers a protagonist of moral and philosophical sensitivities. The amateur detectives of the post-World War II novels are extensions of Peter Coffin. Like him, they are literate men (newspaper journalist, screenwriter) who understand the connection between words and reality. Unlike Coffin and the earlier William Crane, they possess the wisdom of mature middle age.

BLACK IS THE FASHION FOR DYING

Black Is the Fashion for Dying makes use of a limited omniscient point of view by which various characters respond to the central issue of the mystery—the murder of the actress Caresse Garnet. Owing much to Latimer's long Hollywood experience, the novel makes persuasive use of detail about filmmaking, but the shifts in point of view detract from the development of the characters.

SINNERS AND SHROUDS

Sinners and Shrouds, however, is a provocative novel; it brings into rich focus themes and characters Latimer found in his earlier work as well as in other detective fiction. The themes of the novel—the past, wealth, gender, kinship, knowledge, and order—are presented through the experience of the reporter Sam Clay, who awakens in a northside Chicago apartment and finds the young woman he has been with murdered. His memory of the immediate past has been erased by an alcoholic blackout. He finds himself the object of the police investigation that he is assigned to cover. Forced into self-examination, he is frightened by what he sees in himself: alcoholism, misogyny, and seething hatred.

Motivated first by the desire to escape punishment, Clay's detective work becomes self-therapy. He investigates the kinship (real and symbolic) between the mur-

dered girl, himself, and his coworkers. The truth gives itself up obliquely—in letters, yellowed newspapers, telephone recorders, telegrams, folk ballads, and police depositions—as the motif of a ludicrous dream helps establish the atmosphere of the novel.

This surrealism is extended further by Amos Bundy and Miss Dewhurst, whom Clay contacts for help. Their origin is in the detective-confidant, John-Joan pairing of many hard-boiled narratives. Eccentric in dress and behavior, the two seem to be imbued with magical powers of detection. Amos Bundy is linked to the stable past, out of which he appears to have stepped (he looks like Abe Lincoln). Although he speaks and writes in riddles, he leads Sam Clay to the solution. Latimer's observations about the links between power, wealth, gender, and class make *Sinners and Shrouds* the capstone of his career.

Bill Brubaker

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

WILLIAM CRANE SERIES: *Headed for a Hearse*, 1935 (also known as *The Westland Case*); *Murder in the Madhouse*, 1935; *The Lady in the Morgue*, 1936; *The Dead Don't Care*, 1938; *Red Gardenias*, 1939 (also known as *Some Dames Are Deadly*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Search for My Great Uncle's Head*, 1937 (as Coffin); *Solomon's Vineyard*, 1941 (also known as *The Fifth Grave*); *Sinners and Shrouds*, 1955; *Black Is the Fashion for Dying*, 1959 (also known as *The Mink-Lined Coffin*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Dark Memory*, 1940

SCREENPLAYS: *The Lone Wolf Spy Hunt*, 1938; *Phantom Raiders*, 1940 (with William R. Lipman); *A Night in New Orleans*, 1941; *Topper Returns*, 1941 (with Gordon Douglas and Paul Gerard Smith); *The Glass Key*, 1942 (with Dashiell Hammett); *Whistling in Dixie*, 1942 (with others); *Nocturne*, 1946 (with Frank Fenton and Rowland Brown); *They Won't Believe Me*, 1946 (with Gordon McDonell); *The Big Clock*, 1947 (with Harold Goldman); *Beyond Glory*, 1948 (with Charles Marquis Warren and William Wister Haines); *Sealed Verdict*, 1948; *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes*, 1948 (with Barré Lyndon); *Alias*

Nick Beal, 1949 (with Mindret Lord); *Copper Canyon*, 1950 (with Richard English); *Submarine Command*, 1951; *The Redhead and the Cowboy*, 1951 (with Liam O'Brien and Warren); *Botany Bay*, 1953; *Plunder of the Sun*, 1953; *Back from Eternity*, 1956 (with Richard Carroll); *The Unholy Wife*, 1957 (with William Durkee); *The Whole Truth*, 1958

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JANET LAURENCE

Born: England; December 3, 1927

Also wrote as Julie Lisle

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Darina Lisle, 1989-
Canaletto, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DARINA LISLE is a cookbook writer and culinary expert. She is romantically involved with William Pigram, chief inspector for the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Her ability in crime detection leads her away from her recipes and into amateur sleuthing, at times with William, at times on her own.

CANALETTO is an eighteenth century Italian painter with a gift for solving crimes. He has moved to England, where he continues to exercise both his talent as a painter and his aptitude in solving mysteries.

CONTRIBUTION

Janet Laurence has created both a culinary mystery series and a historical mystery series. The Darina Lisle series features an independent cookbook writer, which allows Laurence to showcase her expertise as a food writer. Her Canaletto series brings a somewhat lesser known painter and his contribution to English history to the attention of the reading public. Her novels have received critical praise from major publications such as *Library Journal* and *Booklist*.

BIOGRAPHY

Janet Laurence was born Janet Duffell in England in 1937. Although she always wanted to be a writer, she began her professional career in advertising and public relations. In 1978, she and her husband moved to Somerset, England, where she started Mrs. Laurence's Cookery Courses. The beginning courses were targeted toward teenage girls and dealt with basic

cooking techniques. She later added a number of more advanced courses for experienced cooks. She also began writing about food for *Country Life* and for the *Daily Telegraph*. She eventually became solely responsible for the weekly food column *Bon Viveur*.

By the late 1980's, Laurence was writing cookbooks and also began to write her first mystery novel showcasing Darina Lisle, cookbook writer and amateur sleuth. In 1989 she published *A Little French Cookbook* and *A Deepe Coffyn*, the first book in her Darina Lisle series. She followed with *A Tasty Way to Die* (1990) and continued to add volumes to the series.

In 1993, the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery presented an exhibition on the painter Canaletto. Laurence became more and more enthralled with Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto, and his involvement with England. She began to do research on the painter, his paintings, and the role he played in English history, and she decided to write a series featuring him. In 1997 she published her first historical mystery, *Canaletto and the Case of Westminster Bridge*. In 1999, she published *Canaletto and the Case of the Privy Garden*, and *Canaletto and the Case of Bonnie Prince Charlie* in 2002.

Laurence's nonseries novel *To Kill the Past* (1994) is a darker murder mystery that abandons the culinary motif and dwells on motivation and the psychological dimensions of the characters and their actions. Laurence has also written contemporary women's fiction under the name Janet Lisle. She has served as a chairperson of the Crime Writers' Association.

ANALYSIS

Janet Laurence writes mystery novels peopled with entertaining, often eccentric, characters who add touches of wit, irony, and humor to the serious matter of murder. In the Darina Lisle series, the plots mix culinary activities with murder investigation. Darina is a well-respected cookbook writer with a special flair for uncovering clues and solving mysteries. Her romantic interest, William Pigram, is a professional detective with the CID. Laurence does not spare her heroine when it comes to presenting her with professional, personal, and crime-related problems. William, try as he will, constantly has difficulty accepting Darina's spirit of independence and lack of time for him. Darina has a

propensity for becoming involved with male culinary experts whose interest goes beyond food preparation, consequently complicating her professional life. Cooking shows, competitions, and demonstrations lead to murder.

Laurence creates authentic settings, often filled with local color, for her novels. Her characters, drawn from various social classes, are realistic and individualized so that the reader not only relates to them but also remembers them. Although solving the novel's murder mystery remains the operating force behind the work, the daily life of Laurence's characters, their culinary exploits, and their interpersonal relationships tend to push murder away from center stage. The reader wants to solve the mystery but finds many distractions along the way.

Laurence's Canaletto series is set in the eighteenth century in England. The three novels in this series contrast sharply with the Darina Lisle series. Murder is gruesome and violent, and life is very dangerous. Laurence re-creates life in eighteenth century England among the pickpockets, prostitutes, and thieves as well as among the aristocracy. Much of the authenticity of her narrative can be attributed to her sensitive use of dialect and language appropriate to her characters. Detailed description, carefully delineated characters, and a complex plot take the reader on a fast-paced search to solve the crime.

Laurence's nonseries novel *To Kill the Past* reveals yet another aspect of her writing. The cozy community atmosphere that often appears in the Darina Lisle series is replaced by an atmosphere of isolation, betrayal, and spine-chilling danger. Violence, dishonesty, amorality, greed, and revenge are the standards of the world portrayed in the novel. Laurence explores the motivation behind crime and the psychological aspects of the characters.

RECIPE FOR DEATH

In *Recipe for Death* (1992), Darina Lisle, culinary expert and amateur sleuth, becomes involved in the lives of the locals in Somerset, England, where she is living with William Pigram in his cottage. The cleverly constructed novel begins with an official cooking competition. Later a cooking competition among friends provides the opportunity for murder. Foreshad-

owing is a device Laurence uses fairly often in her novels. At times, her use of it is very subtle, and the reader only becomes aware of it at the end of the mystery.

This novel is structured with multiple plots in which two characters, Constance Fry and Nathalie Duke, are murdered. The Fry family is trying to keep its organic farm solvent. Pru Fry is renewing her relationship with her estranged husband, Simon Chapman, who is trying to keep his restaurant out of bankruptcy. Verity Fry is launching a culinary career and about to marry a wealthy businessman. Daniel Duke and Erica Strangers are trying to establish a profitable business in the fresh-food industry and Darina and William are trying to save their romantic relationship. These multiple plots are further complicated by assumed identities and disguises.

DEATH AT THE TABLE

In *Death at the Table* (1994), when Darina accepts a position as a regular on the television show *Table for Four*, she becomes enmeshed in a triple murder and finds her own life in danger. First, Bruce Bennett, an Australian wine expert, mysteriously drops dead as the show's stars share a Christmas toast. Bennett's sister Kate suspects foul play in Bruce's death, so she flies to England. Shortly after her arrival, she falls from the window of her hotel room. The third victim is David Bartholomew, the production manager for *Table for Four*, who was starting his own company. As Darina searches for clues to the killer's identity, she uncovers facts about the various members of the cast and crew that make more than one of them suspects. Laurence creates suspense in the novel as Darina, alone in her house, realizes someone is in her garden. Then in the final pages of the novel, Laurence brings Darina into immediate danger as the killer is waiting for her in her home.

Although the novel is primarily a well-written murder mystery filled with suspense and three hard-to-solve murders, Laurence has added another dimension to the novel. She has interwoven several women's issues into the plot of the novel. William is investigating a number of assaults on elderly women that lead to a conversation between him and Darina about the importance of a woman having some knowledge of self-

defense. This discussion also foreshadows the battle for her life that Darina faces at the end of the novel.

Male-female relationships and the role of women are important themes in this mystery. Laurence uses staff members Jan, home economics specialist Lynn, Bruce's sister Shelley, Darina, and the mothers of Darina and William to present various ideas and attitudes regarding women. Darina and William are engaged and planning their wedding. Darina's mother feels that her daughter should concentrate all her energies and attention on the wedding and not worry about her career at the moment. William's mother insists that Darina stop working and focus on William and his career. Darina insists on continuing with her professional activities; however, she also realizes that having time to spend with William is essential for a successful relationship with him. The outcome of the novel affirms Darina's position.

Laurence addresses the problem of the abusive man and the battered woman. Bruce's mother was forced to leave her husband as a result of his brutality. His sister Shelley reveals that Bruce was like his father. Lynn, one of the staff for *Table for Four*, corroborates Bruce's penchant for brutality both by her appearance and by her account of her short-lived affair with him.

Jan, who turns out to be the murderer, is a complex character. Motivated by a strong ambition not only to succeed but also to prove herself more capable than her male colleagues, she is embittered and aggressive. Hungering after affection, she is attempting to establish a lesbian relationship with Shelley. She believes Bruce's death would make Shelley the owner of the lucrative Yarramarra winery and make her relationship with Shelley possible. Jan has taken advantage of Bruce's allergy to nuts to kill him. His sister Kate, who knows about her brother's allergy, presents a threat to Jan, and so Jan kills her. However, when Shelley arrives, she becomes romantically involved with David Bartholomew, thwarting Jan's plans, so she decides to kill him. As Darina is getting close to identifying the murderer, Jan waits for her in her home. The desperate fight that ensues between Jan and Darina has been foreshadowed by the case William is investigating and the discussion of the importance of self-defense for women.

Laurence ends the novel on a positive note as Darina and William are discussing their careers and finding solutions to the problem of lack of time for each other.

TO KILL THE PAST

To Kill the Past is a dark, suspenseful novel filled with violence and tension. The heroine Felicity Frear has been badly burned in a car accident and is suffering from amnesia. Felicity is isolated by her amnesia and by a perplexing hostility in the individuals who have been part of her life. As her closest relative died in the car crash that injured Felicity, she has inherited the family's country estate, Kingsleigh. After moving into the house, she receives a menacing phone call. The vaguely familiar male voice on the phone demands what is his. The sinister oppressive atmosphere of the mystery continues to mount as Felicity becomes more and more frightened and suspicious of everyone around her.

Laurence adds even more tension to the novel as she misleads her heroine and the reader in regard to Sam McLean and Malcolm Biddulph. False clues cause Felicity and the reader to believe that Sam is the man making the phone calls. He is actually a police detective and the one person who can protect Felicity. Malcolm, the lawyer whom she trusts, is part of the ring of drug smugglers who are stalking her.

CANALETTO AND THE CASE OF WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

In *Canaletto and the Case of Westminster Bridge*, Laurence portrays characters from all levels of eighteenth century English society. Her portrayal of the prostitutes, thieves, and other criminals whom aspiring artist Fanny Rooker encounters in the jail is authentic in tone and characterization through her use of dialect and descriptions of physical appearance. Her aristocrats are equally believable. Her portrayal of Madame Anne Montesqui definitely makes her a descendant of the clever, conniving female characters of the eighteenth century novels.

Laurence treats the practice of arranged marriage popular in the century. For financial and social reasons, Charlotte More, the daughter of wealthy and influential merchant Balthasar More, is to be married to the viscount of Purbeck, a man of questionable character. Jame Bennett, tutor to the viscount during his

grand tour and now secretary to the viscount's father, the marquess of Brescon, is determined to prevent the marriage as he and Charlotte have fallen in love.

The mystery deals with efforts to sabotage the completion of the Westminster Bridge, which Canaletto has arrived to paint. From the moment he sets sail for England, Canaletto is pursued and attacked by ruffians hired to keep the crime-solving painter from ever reaching the bridge. Canaletto is saved from death at the hands of Jack Scallion, a dangerous hired assassin, by Fanny, who adds some lightness and levity to the mystery. Fanny is slightly too much a superwoman to be totally believable, yet Laurence manages to get the reader to accept her as a character who belongs in the story.

Shawncey Webb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DARINA LISLE SERIES: *A Deepe Coffyn*, 1989; *A Tasty Way to Die*, 1990; *Hotel Morgue*, 1991; *Recipe for Death*, 1992; *Death and the Epicure*, 1993; *Death at the Table*, 1994; *Death a la Provencale*, 1995; *Diet for Death*, 1996; *Appetite for Death*, 1998; *The Mermaid's Feast*, 2000

CANALETTO SERIES: *Canaletto and the Case of Westminster Bridge*, 1997; *Canaletto and the Case of the Privy Garden*, 1999; *Canaletto and the Case of Bonnie Prince Charlie*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *To Kill the Past*, 1994

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *A Little French Cookbook*, 1989; *A Taste of Somerset: Guide to Good Food and Drink*, 1989; *A Little Scandinavian Cookbook*, 1990; *Little Coffee Cookbook*, 1992 (with Catherine McWilliams); *Writing Crime Fiction: Making Crime Pay*, 2007 (with Graham Lawler); *The Food and Cooking of Norway: Traditions, Ingredients, Tastes, and Techniques in Over Sixty Classic Recipes*, 2007

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_____. Review of *Death at the Table*, by Janet Laurence. *Publishers Weekly* 244, no. 7 (February 17, 1991): 213. A mixed review of this work in the Darina Lisle series, which says the work is enjoyable for its culinary flavorings and sprightly writing but is critical of the somewhat abrupt and methodical ending.

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Links, J. G. *Canaletto: A Venetian Artist Abroad, 1746-1765*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007. Recounts Canaletto's activities in England during the nine years he spent there. Provides information on the real-life Canaletto to contrast with the fictionalized version.

Menzie, Karol V. "These Culinary Mysteries Will Eat at You." *Sun Sentinel*, June 9, 1994, p. 1. Article discusses the popularity of culinary mysteries, which tend to be less violent and attract women readers. Laurence is noted as being among the culinary writers who include poison among their murder methods.

MAURICE LEBLANC

Born: Rouen, France; 1864

Died: Perpignan, France; November 6, 1941

Type of plot: Inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Arsène Lupin, 1905-1941

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ARSÈNE LUPIN is a master gentleman-burglar who is anathema to the French bourgeoisie but a hero to the working class. Lupin abhors murder, never carries a lethal weapon, and sometimes assists the police in catching violent criminals.

INSPECTOR GANIMARD of the Sûreté (the Parisian equivalent of London's Scotland Yard) is Lupin's nemesis. Each, nevertheless, admires and respects the other.

HOLMLOCK SHEARS (a.k.a. SHERLOCK HOLMES), the famous British detective, who fiercely pursues Lupin.

CONTRIBUTION

Undoubtedly, Maurice Leblanc's most important contribution to the mystery and detective genre was his creation of the extraordinary Arsène Lupin, the quintessential criminal-detective. Leblanc's focus on

his character, who dons many disguises throughout the series and who functions as both criminal and hero, raises fundamental questions concerning truth and value, and their uncertainty in a basically unjust world. Jean-Jacques Tourteau, the author of a major critical study of Lupin, has identified the key devices that Leblanc employed in his crime fiction and that have influenced other writers in the genre: First, Leblanc conferred on his protagonist, Lupin, a histrionic character, especially in making him a "quick-change artist"; second, Lupin is a master at manipulating his victims; third, Leblanc, in like fashion, manipulates the reader; fourth, Leblanc especially uses setting to do so, choosing details that subliminally suggest psychological nuances to the reader; and fifth, Leblanc sustains suspense by delaying the progress of the narration except in cases in which immediate action is necessary.

The impact of the Lupin series is attested by the many critical studies that Leblanc's protagonist has engendered. There are even two journals devoted to the topic: the *Revue des études lupiniennes* and the periodical publication of the Société des Études Lupiniennes, founded in 1965.

BIOGRAPHY

Maurice Marie Émile Leblanc was born in Rouen, Normandy, France, in 1864. He was the son of Émile Leblanc, an ironworker and builder of boats, who was partly of Italian descent, and of a mother who came of an old Norman family. Maurice had two sisters, Georgette and Johanna. Georgette was a restless girl, scornful of the bourgeois mode of life, who at seventeen went to Paris and became an actress at the Opéra Comique. Attracted to the writings of the Belgian dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck, she pursued him and in 1895 became his *amoureuse*, a relationship that lasted until 1914.

As a boy, Leblanc was noted for his scholarship, his fervid imagination, and the pleasure he took in the landscape around Rouen. A student at the Lycée Corneille and the Pension Patry, he won many scholastic prizes. On the completion of his secondary studies, he took a job with the firm of Miroude-Pichard in Rouen, which manufactured cards. Whenever he had time on his hands, he practiced writing. It was soon evident that he was not meant for the card business, so he decided to go to Paris to study law.

On completion of his law studies, Leblanc returned to Rouen and entered into the family business of boat building. He soon decided, however, that he was best suited to be a writer. He began to write psychological fiction critical of certain bourgeois values. His first novel in this vein was *Une Femme* (1893). Other similar works followed; although only moderately successful in terms of sales, these works at least served to introduce him to the world of letters. To earn a living he took up journalism.

Leblanc's real success began with the *feuilleton* publication of the short story "L'Arrestation d'Arsène Lupin" ("The Arrest of Arsène Lupin) in *Je sais tout* (July 15, 1905). In this story, he introduced for the first time his extraordinary creation, Arsène Lupin. The story proved popular, and other stories about Arsène Lupin followed during 1906-1907. These stories were then collected to make up the first volume of the series, *Arsène Lupin, gentleman-cambrioleur* (1907; *The Exploits of Arsène Lupin*, 1907; also known as *The Seven of Hearts* and *The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar*). Leblanc now devoted him-

self almost entirely to recording the adventures of his criminal-hero, who appeared in twenty novels or collections of short stories, the last of the series appearing in 1941. Concurrently, Leblanc wrote some ten volumes of detective-mysteries or suspense novels that were independent of the Lupin series. He also from time to time produced the kind of psychological fiction with which he had begun his career.

When not engaged in the art of writing, Leblanc read the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Honoré de Balzac, played chess, and cycled through the countryside. A photograph of Leblanc, taken perhaps when he was in his forties, discloses a not unhandsome face with dark gimletlike eyes, a prominent Roman nose, a mouth largely concealed by a scraggly handlebar mustache, and a strong chin. Altogether he appears more Italian than French.

Leblanc died at the home of his son in Perpignan, Vichy, France, on November 6, 1941, two weeks after the death of Georgette. He apparently died as the result of a chill that he had taken on the unheated train he had ridden to visit his son.

ANALYSIS

The English author E. W. Hornung, Arthur Conan Doyle's brother-in-law, anticipated Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin by creating his criminal-hero Raffles, the "Gentleman Cracksman," in his *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899). Doyle himself was opposed to Hornung's idea and admonished him, saying, "You must not make the criminal a hero." Julian Symons has stated that the Raffles tales of Hornung and the Lupin tales of Leblanc "represent the last flicker for a long time of the criminal hero tradition."

France in the belle époque was undergoing a time of change and flux by virtue of increasing industrialization, improved communications, and new technology. Because the *haute bourgeoisie* of France were unwilling to make the concessions necessary to ease the hardships of displaced artisans and exploited workers, new political and economic theories supportive of political and social reforms were bandied about by conflicting interests. The frustration of some also brought about new, antitheological moralities that negated the moralities of church and state. Some of the new moralities

were individualistic, others were cooperative and collective; but principally they were anti-God, antichurch, antistate, and antibourgeois. They issued from such thinkers as William Godwin, Max Stirner, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Alexander Herzen, Karl Marx, Mikhail Bakunin, Pyotr Kropotkin, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, Emma Goldman, and Émile Armand.

In his treatise *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* (1840; *What Is Property?*, 1876), French socialist Proudhon answered: "La propriété, c'est la vol" (property is theft). The anarchists of the so-called Bonnot Gang (c. 1911) defined theft as "individual reprisals against the bourgeoisie." The French word *bourgeois* (or *bourgeoisie*) has no English equivalent. Rather than meaning simply "a member of the middle class" or "any person owning property," it implies a certain attitude assumed by a property owner or by one ambitious to own property—namely, that material possessions and money are to that person the most important thing in life. To socialists and anarchists, all bourgeois were criminals. Nevertheless, in France not all men of property were regarded as necessarily bourgeois; those who carried their wealth lightly and were not cesspools of cupidity were not bourgeois. The view that all bourgeois were by definition criminals was not confined to any particular social class. Although laborers and artisans were most likely to hold such a view, it ran the gamut of the social hierarchy.

During the belle époque and later, thousands of Frenchmen could respond favorably to the sort of criminal-hero represented by Leblanc's creation, Arsène Lupin. Lupin, born Raoul d'Andrésey, never knew his father, who died in prison in the United States before Lupin was born. Lupin's mother, Henriette, supported herself and Lupin as maid to a countess. When the precocious Lupin, at the age of six, stole the famous "queen's necklace" from the countess's husband to arrange lifetime financial stability for Henriette, the countess accused Henriette of the robbery and dismissed her. Henriette died six years later, leaving her twelve-year-old son to fend for himself. Lupin prepared himself for a career as a professional burglar, eventually becoming known as "the man of a thousand disguises," operating in châteaux, *grands salons*, and transatlantic liners.

Lupin's motivation, aside from the delight he takes in baffling the police and executing complex robberies, is to avenge himself on the money-grubbing bourgeoisie. Lupin eschews violence and murder, but he considers all bourgeois thieves. His aplomb, debonairness, snobbery, dandyism, and finesse are designed to demonstrate to the bourgeois that he is inherently an aristocrat. In *L'Aiguille creuse* (1909; *The Hollow Needle*, 1910), it is hinted that he is descended from royalty. From the standpoint of the philosophy of morals, however, Lupin is a casuist, a François Villon, who seeks to convince the noble old warrior, the *seigneur* of Brisetout, that he is no better than the poet-thief. Lupin, too, is an artist who practices robbery as a fine art.

ARSÈNE IN PRISON

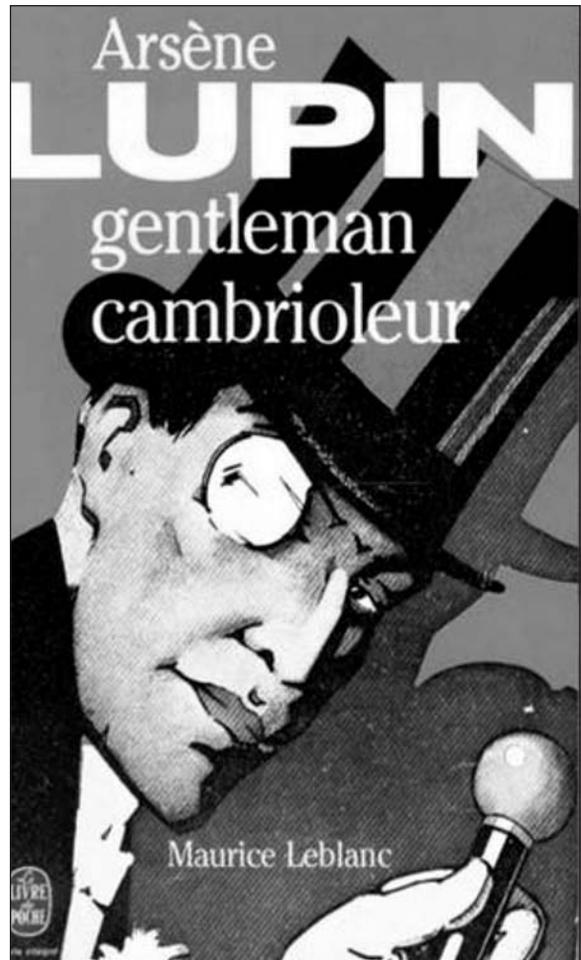
Tourteau has pointed out that the Lupinian stories and novels are not constructed around a murder but around an "enigma" of the planning and execution of a crime. From Lupin's point of view, the enigma consists of a problem that he must solve: how to execute a seemingly impossible robbery. To solve this problem, Lupin must devise a plan, adopt the role of detective to test it, and perform as an artist in its execution. Part of the execution will involve the manipulation of the victim. Such a manipulation occurs in "Arsène in Prison" in *The Exploits of Arsène Lupin*. To rob the wealthy retired financier and art collector Baron "Satan" Cahorn, Lupin must manipulate his victim if he is ever to gain admittance to the baron's impenetrable stronghold, located in the middle of the Lower Seine. Knowing well the cupidity of the baron, Lupin devises a plan that will play on this weakness.

With the strategy of gaining entrance to the fort, Lupin plots a sequence of tactical moves, each of which will advance the progress toward this end by a predictable action on the part of the baron according to Lupin's own calculus of probabilities. It is all very much like the playing of a chess game. Lupin begins with the gambit of a letter to the baron threatening robbery unless his terms are met. Then the editor of the local newspaper is made to notify readers of the presence of Ganimard, who put Lupin in prison. Denied assistance by the authorities at Rouen, the baron seeks to hire Ganimard, who declines. Lupin sends a telegram to the baron, who attempts to hire Ganimard

again. This time he offers him a large sum of money, and Ganimard agrees. He advises the baron to dismiss his servants before he arrives at the castle. On the eve of Lupin's proposed robbery—in his letter he named the precise date—Ganimard and two strong men arrive at the castle to stay overnight and guard the baron's treasures. During the night the robbery takes place, but it is not discovered until daybreak. The guards appear to have been drugged. The baron is beside himself. He declares that he will pay a huge sum to retrieve his stolen things. Ganimard tells him that is a sensible approach and promises to look into such a possibility. The baron informs the authorities that he has been robbed by Arsène Lupin. When their investigation fails, they seek the assistance of the Paris Sûreté. Although its agents arrive on the scene, their investigation, too, seems to be getting nowhere. Ganimard suggests to the baron that the one man who might help in this matter is Lupin himself.

The reader does not know that this Ganimard is an impostor. This is revealed only when the real Ganimard visits Lupin in his cell at La Santé in Paris to inquire of him whether he has any knowledge of the Cahorn affair—just as the false Ganimard had told the baron he intended to do; hence, the visit of the real Ganimard was another prediction in Lupin's calculus of probabilities. Lupin confesses to Ganimard that the whole Cahorn robbery has been masterminded by him. He also informs Ganimard, however, that the baron's charges against him will soon be dropped, for the baron's stolen treasures have already been returned to him for the sum of 100,000 francs. This money will be beneficial to him, Lupin says, in his charitable activities. In short, Lupin saw from the first that the only way to gain entrance to the fortified château was to have its owner invite him in. Every move that Lupin made had led to a predictable action on the part of the baron, the victim of Lupin's manipulation. The guards had not been drugged; they had passed the baron's treasures to their confederate outside, who took them away in his car. Then the guards had taken a sleeping potion. Lupin's plan had worked to perfection.

While Arsène Lupin is manipulating his victim and sometimes other characters, Leblanc is manipulating his reader. His principal method is the concealment of



"Gentleman-cambrioleur," Maurice Leblanc's nickname for the hero of most of his books, reflects Lupin's contradictory traits as a gentleman burglar.

the true identities of characters from the reader until the end of the narrative. This concealment is accomplished by introducing the characters to the reader under false identities and allowing the reader to retain the misperception until the end of the narrative, when their true identities are disclosed. In "Arsène in Prison," the identities of the robbers of Baron Cahorn are concealed from the reader by the presentation of them as police officers.

"THE ARREST OF ARSÈNE LUPIN"

In "The Arrest of Arsène Lupin," the story that opens *The Exploits of Arsène Lupin*, the identity of the protagonist-narrator (the narrative point of view is first-person singular), Monsieur d'Andrésy, a young man

of the world traveling to America aboard a transatlantic liner, is *in petto* until after the ship has docked in New York Harbor. Then the reader learns that M. d'Andrésey is actually Arsène Lupin. This sort of deception was used later by Agatha Christie in her controversial detective-mystery *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). Christie was accused by critics of not being fair to the reader and came close to being expelled from the Detection Club of London.

EIGHT STROKES OF THE CLOCK

Leblanc utilized enclosure (*le local clos*), whether by fence, boxlike casing, or wall (with or without door, window, and lock, as a protective wall or a locked room) in a casual manner but with the motive of producing a kind of subliminal psychological effect on the reader. That is, he appears to attach no importance to the enclosure described while at the same time he seeks to leave a definite impression on the reader's mind. For example, in *Les Huit Coups de l'horloge* (1922; *Eight Strokes of the Clock*, 1922) the protagonist, Sernine-Lupin, and Hortense force the door to enter a room that has remained closed for twenty years. On their entrance, the clock begins to tick and immediately strikes eight times. How could such an event transpire? The mechanism of this eight-day clock would permit but one movement a week. The truth is that the mechanism of the clock has been blocked for twenty years by the weapon used to commit a crime. The blows used to force the door unblocked the mechanism, the gravitational pull of the falling weights produced power, the pendulum and its escapement began to act and ticked, and the clock's hammer hit the bell eight times, signaling the time the crime took place. At the same time, the ticking of the sprocket wheel of the clock set in motion "the spirit of Lupin," who would later reconstruct the crime that had taken place twenty years before.

THE CRYSTAL STOPPER

Deductive reasoning figures in all the adventures of Lupin, although it is not always very rigorous. It serves to establish connections between the author and the reader. Leblanc's narrative is constructed in such a manner that the reader's efforts to figure things out will be confirmed some pages later if they are correct. In *Le Bouchon de cristal* (1912; *The Crystal Stopper*, 1913), the reader eventually learns that the list of the

Twenty-seven has been hidden in the pack of Maryland tobacco that Daubrecq smokes. Later, the reader learns that this list is a forgery because the paper on which it is written lacks the watermark of the Lorraine cross. Later still, the reader learns that the genuine list has been concealed in the hollowed crystal stopper that Daubrecq has worn as a glass eye. Unlike most mystery and detective writers, who reserve logical explanation for the conclusion of a story, Leblanc plants logical explanations throughout his account of the course of events. Lupin's deductive reasoning depends more on intuition than on logical procedure, the latter process being reserved to confirm for the reader the soundness of the intuitively arrived-at hypotheses. Lupin always divines the truth before the other fictional characters and discovers it in advance of the reader in most cases. He dislikes employing material indices and is scornful of the empirical method. He loves the free play of the intellect.

Leblanc's protagonist Lupin operates both as a criminal and as a detective. As the books of the Lupinian series appeared—from *The Exploits of Arsène Lupin* in 1907 to *Les Milliards d'Arsène Lupin* in 1941—Leblanc's presentation of his hero roughly went through three stages. From 1907 to 1913 or 1914, Lupin's criminal activities are stressed; he is simply the dashing young gentleman-burglar. From about 1915 to 1919, however, his efforts to assist the official police in pursuing criminals by correcting the police's errors are stressed. Finally, from about 1922 to the conclusion of the series, the emphasis shifts to Lupin's activities as a detective; he cooperates almost openly with the official police to help them catch criminals who are especially malign. Surely Leblanc's changes in emphasis in the presentation of his hero reflect historical conditions in France that altered the prevailing attitudes of the French public toward government during successive phases of their history: the prewar period; the period of the Great War, 1914-1918; and the postwar period that led to France's defeat by the Germans and the fall of the Third Republic in 1940. Leblanc's writing career spanned the belle époque and the fin de siècle, but it also encompassed the avant-garde and the birth of modernism. His canon reflects this social evolution.

Richard P. Benton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ARSÈNE LUPIN SERIES: 1907-1910 • *Arsène Lupin, gentleman-cambrioleur*, 1907 (*The Exploits of Arsène Lupin*, 1907; also known as *The Seven of Hearts* and *The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar*); *Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes*, 1908 (*The Fair-Haired Lady*, 1908; also known as *Arsène Lupin Versus Holmlock Shears*, *Arsène Lupin Versus Herlock Sholmes*, *The Blonde Lady*, *The Arrest of Arsène Lupin*, and *Sherlock Holmes Versus Arsène Lupin: The Case of the Golden Blonde*); *Arsène Lupin: Pièce en quatre actes en collaboration avec Francis de Croisset*, 1908; *L'Aiguille creuse*, 1909 (*The Hollow Needle*, 1910); 813, 1910 (English translation, 1910)

1911-1920 • *Une Aventure d'Arsène Lupin*, 1911 (also known as *Le Retour d'Arsène Lupin: Comédie en un acte en collaboration avec Francis de Croisset*); *Le Bouchon de cristal*, 1912 (*The Crystal Stopper*, 1913); *Les Confidences d'Arsène Lupin*, 1913 (*The Confessions of Arsène Lupin*, 1913); *L'Éclat d'obus*, 1916 (*The Bomb-Shell*, 1916; also known as *The Woman of Mystery*); *Le Triangle d'Or*, 1918 (*The Golden Triangle*, 1917); *L'Île aux trente cercueils*, 1920 (*Coffin Island*, 1920; also known as *The Secret of Sarek*)

1921-1941 • *Les Dents du tigre*, 1921 (*The Teeth of the Tiger*, 1914); *Les Huit Coups de l'horloge*, 1922 (*Eight Strokes of the Clock*, 1922); *La Comtesse de Cagliostro*, 1924 (*The Candlestick with Seven Branches*, 1925; also known as *Memoirs of Arsène Lupin*); *La Demoiselle aux yeux verts*, 1927 (*The Girl with the Green Eyes*, 1927; also known as *Arsène Lupin, Super-Sleuth*); *L'Agence Barnett et cie*, 1928 (*Jim Barnett Intervenes*, 1928; also known as *Arsène Lupin Intervenes*); *La Demeure mystérieuse*, 1929 (*The Melamare Mystery*, 1930); *La Barre-y-va*, 1931; *La Femme aux deux sourires*, 1933 (*The Double Smile*, 1933; also known as *The Woman with Two Smiles*); *Victor, de la brigade mondaine*, 1933 (*The Return of Arsène Lupin*, 1933); *La Cagliostro se venge*, 1935; *Les Milliards d'Arsène Lupin*, 1941

NONSERIES NOVELS: *La Frontière*, 1911 (*The Frontier*, 1912); *Les Trois yeux*, 1920 (*The Three Eyes*, 1921); *Le Formidable événement*, 1921 (*The Tremendous Event*, 1922); *Dorothée, danseuse de corde*, 1923

(*Dorothy the Rope-Dancer*, 1923; also known as *The Secret Tomb*); *La Vie extravagante de Balthazar*, 1925; *Le Prince de Jéricho*, 1930 (*Man of Miracles*, 1931); *De minuit à sept heures*, 1932 (*From Midnight to Morning*, 1933); *L'Image de la femme nue*, 1934 (*Wanton Venus*, 1935); *Le Chapelet rouge*, 1934; *Le Scandale du gazon bleu*, 1935

SHORT FICTION: *Les Heures du mystère*, 1896; *La Robe d'écailles roses*, 1912

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Des Couples*, 1890; *Une Femme*, 1893; *Ceux qui souffrent*, 1894 (third edition); *L'Œuvre de mort*, 1896; *Armelle et Claude*, 1897; *Voici des ailes*, 1898; *Les Lèvres jointes*, 1899 (second edition); *L'Enthousiasme*, 1901; *Un Vilain Couple*, 1916

PLAY: *La Pitié: Pièce en trois actes*, pr. 1906

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *La Forêt des aventures: Ou, Peau d'âne et Don Quichotte*, 1932

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Sims, Michael. Introduction to *Arsène Lupin: Gentleman-Thief*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007. Overview of Leblanc's works and discussion of his most famous creation, written to accompany this reprint edition of the author's earliest Lupin story.

JOHN LE CARRÉ

David John Moore Cornwell

Born: Poole, Dorset, England; October 19, 1931

Type of plot: Espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

George Smiley, 1961-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

GEORGE SMILEY is a master spy and holder of various official and unofficial posts in Great Britain's Secret Intelligence Service; he is separated from his unfaithful wife. Middle-aged, short, plump, and bespectacled, the waddling, owlish, Pickwickian Smiley is a most unlikely hero. Vaguely idealistic, he lives for his work.

CONTRIBUTION

John le Carré began writing espionage novels in the early 1960's, when the major figure in the field was Ian Fleming, creator of the cartoonishly superhuman James Bond. Le Carré's fiction stands in sharp contrast, emphasizing the drudgery, boredom, and moral ambiguity in the decidedly unglamorous world of the real-life agent, who is more often a bureaucrat than an adventurer. Although many credit him with inventing the realistic espionage tale, le Carré denies such an achievement, acknowledging such predecessors as W. Somerset Maugham with his Ashenden stories. By creating some of the most believable characters and plausible situations in the genre, le Carré has perhaps had the most influence on the development of espionage fiction. In addition to being the best-selling espionage novelist, he has been acclaimed for turning a form of entertainment into an art form, for finding the poetry in the labyrinthine machinations of his plots. He has been judged more than a genre writer by many critics, deserving of inclusion in such serious company as Iris Murdoch and John Fowles. According to Andrew Rutherford, le Carré offers "exciting, disturbing, therapeutic fantasies of action and intrigue; but in his best work he also engages with political, moral and psychological complexities, demonstrating the capac-

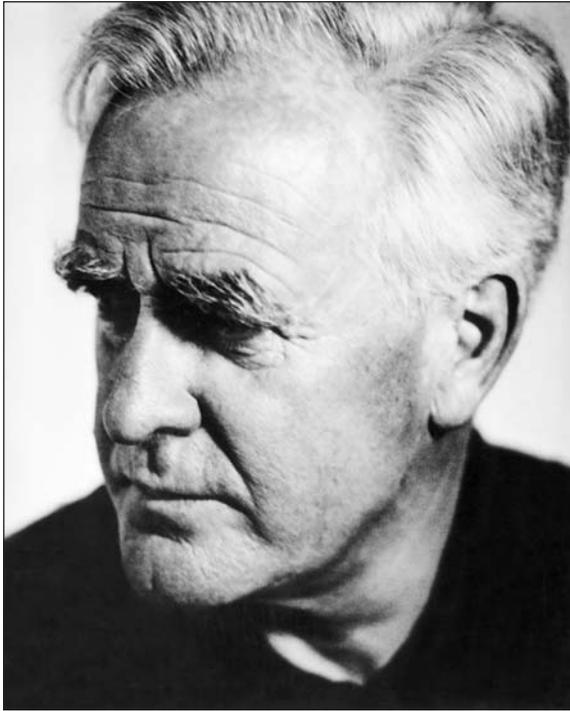
ity of entertainment art to transcend its own self-imposed limitations."

BIOGRAPHY

John le Carré was born David John Moore Cornwell on October 19, 1931, in Poole, Dorset, England, the son of Ronald Thomas Archibald Cornwell and Olive Glassy Cornwell. His father was an extravagant businessman who ran for Parliament as a Liberal, and as *A Perfect Spy* (1986), le Carré's most autobiographical novel, makes clear, he was also a confidence trickster who went to prison for fraud. Because his parents divorced when he was five, young David experienced no consistent family life: He did not see his mother from the time he began school until he was twenty-one. "I think a great part of one's adult life," he has said, "is concerned with getting even for the slights one suffered as a child."

The lonely little boy sought an outlet for his frustrations in writing. Although his literary efforts were discouraged at Sherborne School in Dorset, Cornwell won the school's prize for English verse. He attended Berne University in Switzerland for a year and served in the Army Intelligence Corps in Vienna before reading German at Lincoln College, Oxford University. He married Alison Ann Veronica Sharp in 1954 and received a first-class honors degree from Oxford University in 1956. After teaching for two dismal years at Eton College and trying unsuccessfully to become a freelance illustrator of children's books, he found a position in the Foreign Service in 1959.

While commuting by train from Buckinghamshire to the Foreign Office in London, he wrote his first novel, *Call for the Dead* (1960). Because Foreign Service officials were not supposed to publish novels under their own names, he acquired his pseudonym, le Carré, translated as "the square" in French. From 1960 to 1963, he served, officially, as second secretary in the British embassy in Bonn while following Germany's internal politics for British intelligence; during that time, he wrote his second novel, *A Murder of Quality* (1962).



John le Carré. (The Douglas Brothers)

After the modest successes of his first two books, le Carré's initial best seller came in 1963 with *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, written while he commuted to work in Bonn. In addition to selling more than twenty million copies, the novel won several awards, including the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America in 1965. It also enabled le Carré to quit his job and write full time.

Le Carré has three sons, Simon, Stephen, and Timothy, by his first marriage. After his 1971 divorce, he married Valerie Jane Eustace, an editor for his English publisher, in 1972, and they have one son, Nicholas. In 1984 he received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America, and in 1988 he won the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger lifetime achievement award.

ANALYSIS

John le Carré's agents are tired, bitter, and lonely men desperately trying to hold on to the vestiges of their ideals and illusions, to keep away from the abyss of cynicism and despair. Alec Leamas, the protagonist

of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, has been in the field too long but allows himself to be talked into undertaking one last assignment, only to be deceived by his masters, spiritually destroyed, and killed. There are no heroes or villains on le Carré's Cold War battlefields: Everyone uses everyone, and conspiracies lie everywhere, like mines.

In a 1974 interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, le Carré said that his novels differ from most thrillers in which the plot is imposed on the characters. He said that he writes the kind of book in which "you take one character, you take another character and you put them into collision, and the collision arrives because they have different appetites, and you begin to get the essence of drama." When bringing about these collisions, le Carré is less interested in the events than in how the characters respond, that is, their moral behavior.

Le Carré's novels reflect his belief that people barely know themselves, that in human relations "we frequently affect attitudes to which we subscribe perhaps intellectually, but not emotionally." He considers such relations "fraught with a nerve-wracking tension." Such a view of life in which this tension leads to conspiracies is appropriate for a writer of espionage fiction. The espionage novel, according to le Carré, becomes "a kind of fable about forces we do believe in the West are stacked against us."

George Smiley is the perfect le Carré protagonist because of his ability to see conspiracies of which others are unaware. In *Call for the Dead*, his suspicions about the suicide of a Foreign Office clerk lead to unmasking the duplicities of one of his closest friends. (Betrayal of one's friends is a major le Carré theme.) In *A Murder of Quality*, a straightforward mystery, Smiley enters the closed world of the public school—an institution le Carré finds almost as fascinating and corrupt as the intelligence establishment—to solve the murder of a schoolmaster's wife. After appearing as a minor character in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *The Looking-Glass War* (1965), Smiley reaches his fullest development in the trilogy that pits him against his Soviet opposite number, known as Karla. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974), *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), and *Smiley's People* (1980) show le Carré

working on a much larger canvas than before with dozens of characters serving as the chess pieces that Karla and Smiley deploy all over Europe and Asia in their deadly battle of wits.

TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY

Smiley is forced to accomplish his goals not only without the help of his superiors but also often despite their interference. In *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, Control, the longtime head of the Secret Intelligence Service (always referred to as the Circus, for the location of its offices in the Cambridge Circus section of London), has died and is replaced by the unctuous Percy Alleline. Control had suspected that the Soviets had placed a double agent, or mole, in the higher echelons of the Circus. (Le Carré is credited with making this use of “mole” popular.) He had therefore sent Jim Prideaux, one of the Circus’s best agents, to Czechoslovakia to uncover evidence about the mole’s identity, but a trap is laid, resulting in the wounding and torture of Prideaux.

After Control’s death, Smiley, with the help of the delightfully colorful Connie Sachs, head of Russian research, slowly and painstakingly tracks the mole through the records of intelligence operations. This procedure is hampered by the lack of cooperation from Alleline, whom the mole cleverly manipulates. Smiley learns more and more about the head of Moscow Centre, Karla, the man behind the mole, the then-unknown agent Smiley once had in his grasp. He discovers that the mole is Bill Haydon—the Circus’s golden boy, the lover of Ann Smiley, and the best friend of Jim Prideaux. (Haydon clearly suggests the infamous double agent Kim Philby; le Carré wrote the introduction to a 1968 study of Philby.) Before Haydon can be swapped to the Soviets, the shocked, disillusioned Prideaux kills him. Because *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* centers on the quest for Karla’s mole, it more closely resembles traditional mystery fiction than any of le Carré’s other espionage novels.

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY

The Honourable Schoolboy, which won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Gold Dagger of the Crime Writers’ Association, focuses on Smiley’s efforts to restore the credibility of the Circus. Again with the help of Connie Sachs, he backtracks through

the files to attempt to learn what information Haydon has covered up or destroyed, discovering that Karla has made large gold payments to a Hong Kong trust account. Smiley’s legman, Jerry Westerby, a dissolute, aristocratic journalist, goes to Hong Kong to help unravel the strands of the multilayered plot.

The trust proves to be controlled by Drake Ko, a Hong Kong millionaire, whose supposedly dead brother, Nelson, is Karla’s double agent in China. Nelson Ko intends to sneak into Hong Kong to be reunited with Drake, but Saul Enderby, Smiley’s new boss, has been working behind his back and has arranged for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to reap the rewards, including details of China’s military capabilities. Westerby has fallen for Drake’s beautiful English mistress and attempts to disrupt Nelson’s capture and is killed.

SMILEY’S PEOPLE

In *Smiley’s People*, the now-retired Smiley learns that Soviet agents in Paris are attempting to establish a new identity for a Russian girl. Piecing together bits of seemingly unrelated information, he, with the assistance of Connie Sachs and other old friends, discovers that Karla has a disturbed daughter in a Swiss sanatorium. Smiley is his own legman this time as he travels to Hamburg, Paris, and Berne to ferret out the facts and obtain satisfaction from his nemesis. By detecting that Karla has illegally used public funds to care for his daughter, Smiley forces the Soviet superspy to defect. As with Jerry Westerby, Karla’s downfall results from love, a particularly dangerous emotion throughout le Carré’s works, as Smiley’s feelings for his adulterous Ann particularly attest.

A SIMPLE STYLE

Le Carré’s writing style is primarily simple, with heavy reliance on dialogue. His descriptive passages usually focus on the actions of his characters and only occasionally delineate places and things. When presenting a complex idea, personage, or situation, however, his style can become more ornate, with meandering, parenthetical sentences resembling those of Henry James and William Faulkner. Le Carré has been criticized for creating excessively intertwined, difficult-to-follow plots. Although this charge has some validity, he is trying to present his stories in the same

way his characters see them: as fragments of a puzzle, the outline of which will be clear once its components finally begin to connect. The reader trusts le Carré as a guide through this moral miasma, since his close attention to detail indicates that he truly knows the minutiae of espionage.

A DEVIANT WORLD

Like Graham Greene (who called *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* the best espionage story he had ever read), le Carré is a moralist who uses the conventions of espionage to convey his views of society. His is a devious world in which the best intentions have little effect. In 1966, le Carré wrote, "There is no victory and no virtue in the Cold War, only a condition of human illness and a political misery." The Cold War espionage in his novels is a morally ambiguous undertaking full of fear, deceit, betrayal, and disillusionment. The unmasking of Haydon destroys Prideaux's illusions about friendship, loyalty, and love. (Le Carré has said that he cannot believe in "constancy, group values, [or] obligations.")

Le Carré's spies are generally weak, decent men manipulated by cynical bureaucrats who rarely take any risks. These spies are uncertain whether the values they defend are more endangered by the enemy or by their employers. Those in power see their work as a form of gamesmanship, with these particular games played to create the impression that Great Britain remains a world power, while the realities only underscore the decay of the lost empire, especially in the Hong Kong scenes of *The Honourable Schoolboy* and the ironic first names of the Ko brothers.

Distrust of institutions and those who run them appears throughout le Carré's fiction. In an interview with the French monthly *Lire*, he admits,

I probably took refuge in the world of espionage to escape my father. . . . To understand, explain and justify my father's betrayal of his milieu, class and society, one has to blame the institutions and the men behind them as well as the respectability in which I found temporary refuge when I fled.

Le Carré sees the institutions taking on lives of their own contrary to their creators' intentions. This lack of control is clearly evident in Great Britain, where the

social system produces an administrative elite, personified by Saul Enderby, who can be affable and charming while remaining morally sterile. When someone such as Westerby attempts to make a stand as an individual, he is destroyed. Le Carré considers Western institutions arrogant for attempting to transform the rest of the world in their image. As Westerby, with his suggestive name, travels through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in 1975, he witnesses the decadence and degradation brought on by the failure of the West to understand the East.

The Karla trilogy is crammed with allusions to the myth of the Holy Grail: The Soviet disinformation in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* comes from an imaginary agent known as Source Merlin. Smiley is both a Percival pursuing the Grail—Ann refers to her husband's obsession with Karla as the "black Grail"—and an aged King Arthur attempting to restore harmony in his land. The Circus is in disarray because the members of the inner circle, abetted by Haydon's treachery, have, like the knights of the Round Table, broken their vows of loyalty and obedience. Le Carré evokes this myth to emphasize the loss of ideals in an England where everything is shrouded in ambiguity.

THE CHARACTERS

Le Carré has said that each of his novels begins with the image of a character, and his skill at creating enthralling protagonists and scores of believable secondary characters is perhaps the greatest strength of his stories. He juggles his Whitehall officials, police, journalists, schoolmasters, CIA agents, prostitutes, and drug smugglers with the finesse of Charles Dickens. Characterization is so prominent in a le Carré novel that a reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* criticized *A Murder of Quality* for paying it excessive attention.

Westerby and Smiley, the most captivating characters in the Karla trilogy, clearly illustrate their creator's skills. Westerby has long been called "the schoolboy" because of his ever-present bag of books. On his journey through Southeast Asia, he reads works by Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, T. E. Lawrence, and Graham Greene, writers who explore the failures of romantic idealism and discover the heart of darkness. He is particularly reminiscent of the doomed romantic hero

of Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) and is pathetic for failing to see that he is repeating the errors of the characters about whom he is reading. Despite being a journalist and would-be novelist, Westerby is essentially a man of action, often taking unnecessary risks: "Jerry at heart was a soldier and voted with his feet. . . . What a man thinks is his own business. What matters is what he does." Last in a line of English aristocrats, Westerby represents the best of those believing in honor and good intentions as well as their inevitable failure. In a world of Karlas, Allelines, Enderbys, and Haydons, Westerby stands out for his admirable, if foolish, belief that romantic heroism has a place in a world of Cold War tensions.

Le Carré's most remarkable achievement with George Smiley is that, over seven novels and twenty years, he grows into an almost mythic figure while remaining all too human. Clumsy, meek, and short-sighted, he is both extremely specific and quite enigmatic. Peter Guillam, his protégé, assistant, and most devoted supporter, never truly understands him. His name is doubly ironic since Smiley wears an emotionless mask, and George is the name of England's dragon-slaying patron saint and of the kings who were heads of state during the two world wars. Westerby is surprised to learn that such a seemingly ordinary man served three years undercover in Germany during World War II.

Like his creator, Smiley interprets all of life in terms of conspiracy. He keeps a photograph of Karla in his office to remind him that at least one conspiracy has a human face. Because spying should be an impersonal business, his superiors reprimand him for always saying "Karla" when he means "Moscow Centre." They also believe that he wastes time on menial matters when he should delegate responsibility to his subordinates. Nevertheless, his need for control compels him to involve himself in all aspects of an operation.

Smiley has enough self-knowledge to realize that because he is obsessed by his work he cannot blame Ann for her infidelity. He is also possessed by self-doubt, wondering "whether Ann was right and his striving had become nothing other than a private journey among the beasts and villains of his own insufficiency." Le Carré ensures some distance between the

reader and Smiley by having reliable characters question his actions. Westerby is perturbed by the "failed priest" side of Smiley, who seems to assume "that the whole blasted Western world shared his worries and had to be talked round to a proper way of thinking." In a 1985 speech at the Johns Hopkins University, le Carré criticized his creation for being the kind of man who "would sacrifice his own morality on the altar of national necessity." Westerby is finally a more admirable character for daring, however hopelessly, to assert the dignity of the individual over that of the institution.

At the end of *Smiley's People*, Peter Guillam tells Smiley that he has won, but his master is not so certain. What exactly has been won, and at what cost? If, in le Carré's ambiguous world, there are no heroes or villains, neither can there be any victories.

In addition to the renowned Smiley, le Carré created a host of other memorable characters. In the third and fourth decades of his writing career came Charlie, his first female protagonist, in *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), who is initiated into the violent and illusory world of espionage; Magnus Pym of *A Perfect Spy*, who suffers the humiliation of his father's betrayals, only to turn his own duplicitous behavior into art form; Jonathan Pine from *The Night Manager* (1993), who was as close as le Carré ever came to a James Bond-type superspy; and Nat Brock of *Single and Single* (1999), who many likened to a spiffed up and modernized George Smiley.

As le Carré's literary dominance entered its fifth decade, it remained important to note that his tales of espionage have also been adapted to film. Worthy of note are *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965, starring Richard Burton), *The Russia House* (1990, starring Sean Connery), *The Tailor of Panama* (2001, starring Pierce Brosnan), and *The Constant Gardener* (2005, starring Ralph Fiennes) and television versions of *A Perfect Spy* from Masterpiece Theatre and the extraordinary BBC miniseries of *Tinker, Tailor, Sailor, Spy*, which starred Alec Guinness as George Smiley. Although le Carré characterized Guinness's performance as "brilliant," it nevertheless had a negative impact on the author; he had imagined his most famous creation rather differently. Yet Guinness so inhabited the role and had so firmly imprinted his image in le

Carré's mind that the author chose to abandon Smiley in favor of newer protagonists, such as Charlie, Magnus, Ned Palfrey (who was prominent in both *The Russia House* and *The Secret Pilgrim*), Jonathan, and finally Nat, who appeared ready to carry on where Smiley left off.

Michael Adams
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and
Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

GEORGE SMILEY SERIES: *Call for the Dead*, 1960 (also known as *The Deadly Affair*); *A Murder of Quality*, 1962; *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, 1963; *The Looking-Glass War*, 1965; *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, 1974; *The Honourable Schoolboy*, 1977; *Smiley's People*, 1980

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A Small Town in Germany*, 1968; *The Little Drummer Girl*, 1983; *A Perfect Spy*, 1986; *The Russia House*, 1989; *The Secret Pilgrim*, 1991; *The Night Manager*, 1993; *Our Game*, 1995; *The Tailor of Panama*, 1996; *Single and Single*, 1999; *The Constant Gardener*, 2000; *Absolute Friends*, 2004; *The Mission Song*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Naive and Sentimental Lover*, 1971

SCREENPLAYS: *Dare I Weep, Dare I Mourn*, 1966; *The End of the Line*, 1970; *The Tailor of Panama*, 2001 (adaptation of his novel; with Andrew Davies)

TELEPLAYS: *Smiley's People*, 1982 (adaptation of his novel; with John Hopkins); *A Murder of Quality*, 1991 (adaptation of his novel)

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Aronoff, Myron J. *John le Carré's Novels: Balancing Ethics and Politics*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. A careful study of le Carré's novels, explicating the author's moral universe.

Beene, Lynn Diane. *John le Carré*. New York: Twayne, 1992. This is a very useful biography of David Cornwell's life before he adopted the pseudonym John le Carré and his career since becoming a writer. Following the biography, the author provides a detailed and well-referenced analysis of

le Carré's novels through *Smiley's People*.

Cobbs, John L. *Understanding John le Carré*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998. This is a thorough and comprehensive critical work about John le Carré's novels, all of which through *The Tailor of Panama* are analyzed.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies in the work of le Carré and others to actual intelligence agents to demonstrate that truth is stranger than fiction. Pays special attention to le Carré's characters and the psychological realism of their portrayal.

Hoffman, Tod. *Le Carré's Landscape*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. Focuses on the settings of le Carré's novels and their importance to the author's particular portrayal of Cold War and post-Cold War espionage. Bibliographical references and index.

Lewis, Peter E. *John le Carré*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1985. An extensive critique of John le Carré's work, with special mention of its political context. The material is well organized and includes a useful bibliography.

Monaghan, David. *The Novels of John le Carré: The Art of Survival*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985. Provides book-by-book coverage of all of le Carré's novels through *The Little Drummer Girl*. Also includes an insightful chapter on George Smiley.

_____. *Smiley's Circus*. London: Orbis Press, 1986. A wonderful illustrated index of characters from all the novels through *A Perfect Spy*, particularly focusing on the Karla trilogy of novels. Includes chronologies of the plots of the novels, maps, and photographs of some of the more famous British landmarks featured in le Carré's work. This is an invaluable tool for untangling the byzantine complexity of George Smiley's world.

Wolfe, Peter. *Corridors of Deceit: The World of John le Carré*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1987. An in-depth probing of le Carré's writing, this work contains many interesting insights into the author's characters but lacks a bibliography.

JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU

J. Sheridan Le Fanu

Born: Dublin, Ireland; August 28, 1814

Died: Dublin, Ireland; February 7, 1873

Types of plot: Historical; horror; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

In considering Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu as a writer in the mystery and detective tradition, one might be tempted to call his novels mysteries without a detective. In nearly every one of his novels (and in a high proportion of his shorter fiction), there is some mysterious situation that confuses the main characters and usually threatens their lives and fortunes. There may be two mysteries, one from the past impinging on the present and one developing in the course of the action; they may be causally connected and involve the same agents. The revelation may occasionally be the result of amateur or official detective work, though the detective is never the main character, but usually it is the result of chance. The supernatural is often present; sometimes it proves to have a natural explanation, but sometimes it has to be accepted as real. Julian Symons, in *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (1972), speaks of an interregnum between the first appearance of the detective stories of Edgar Allan Poe and Wilkie Collins and the publication of Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Written during this period, Le Fanu's novels should not be regarded as flawed detective stories but as sharing certain features of a genre that had yet to be firmly defined.

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu was born in Dublin on August 28, 1814; his father was of Huguenot descent and his mother was a niece of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Le Fanu spent most of his childhood in Chapelizod, a village west of Dublin near Phoenix Park, where his father was chaplain of the Hibernian Military School. In 1826, the elder Le Fanu elected to move to Abingdon near Limerick in the west of Ireland. As a minister of the established Church of Ireland, he was

naturally resented by the predominantly Catholic peasantry who were supposed to pay tithes for his support; after a time, during the Tithe Wars, the tithes simply ceased to be paid.

The young Le Fanu was largely educated at home until he entered Trinity College in Dublin. He trained as a barrister but never practiced, his interests having shifted to journalism and fiction. From time to time, he was involved in the operation of various newspapers and of the *Dublin University Magazine*, in which much of his fiction first appeared. In December, 1844, he married Susanna Bennett, the daughter of a barrister; they had four children before her death in 1858. During her last illness, she was plagued by religious doubts, which Le Fanu apparently shared. In his uncertainty, he turned to Swedenborgianism, whose elaborate mythology of the spiritual world might have encouraged his interest in the supernatural. After his wife's death, he became increasingly reclusive and died on February 7, 1873.

ANALYSIS

Symbolic of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's transitional status is the fact that his first novel, *The Cock and Anchor* (1845), originally a historical novel, was rewritten much later as a real mystery story, with a change of time and place, and published as *Checkmate* (1871). One cannot but admire the cleverness with which he adapts the characters and even the minor details of plot to his changed purpose.

THE COCK AND ANCHOR

The Cock and Anchor gives a vivid reconstruction of the social and political atmosphere of Dublin in 1709-1710. Mary Ashewoode, the heroine, is a member of the Protestant, Anglo-Irish aristocracy that controlled most of the land and power in Ireland after the overthrow of James II. Her father and brother, Sir Richard and Henry Ashewoode, are particularly obnoxious members of this class, dissipated and improvident; Henry is a compulsive gambler. Mary loves a Catholic Jacobite, Edmund O'Connor, newly returned

from exile; her family, however, has other ideas. For a time they encourage the suit of an elderly fop named Lord Aspenly. After Sir Richard's death, however, Henry falls into the hands of a villainous usurer named Barden who wishes to marry Mary. He tricks Henry into forgery, for which he is eventually hanged. Blackmailing Ashewoode, Barden prepares for marriage by imprisoning Mary in her own home; he is betrayed, however, by a barmaid hired to watch Mary, who escapes. An elderly friend of O'Connor named Audley then escorts the heroine to the country house of an uncle, where, contrary to the conventions of the romantic novel, she simply dies, leaving her lover to fall in battle.

CHECKMATE

Some of the changes in *Checkmate* may not be relevant to this discussion, being made necessary by the change of setting from eighteenth century Ireland to Victorian England; some of the subordinate villains change from stage Irishmen to stage Jews, and the hero becomes a respectable gentleman who waits in the wings to marry the heroine (who does not die). It is the handling of the villain that shows Le Fanu's skill in a new genre. Barden is a villain of the crudest kind, but his counterpart, Walter Longcluse, is an elegant gentleman who moves easily in the best society; he has immense wealth but a somewhat mysterious past. Although there is nothing improper about his courting the heroine, Alice Arden, her family rejects him in favor of a presentable lord; in his anger, he behaves like Barden and blackmails Alice's brother. At this point, a somewhat primitive Sherlock Holmes figure intervenes. Alice's uncle, David Arden, a successful businessman, follows a hunch that there is some connection between Longcluse and Yelland Mace, who years before had been involved in the murder of Arden's brother. In Paris, Arden tracks down the mysterious Baron Vanboeren, the plastic surgeon who had transformed Mace into Longcluse. Mace/Longcluse turns out to be an illegitimate Arden, who seeks revenge. Though not considered one of Le Fanu's best novels, *Checkmate* is notable for the ingenious development of the plot and for the character of Longcluse. The transformation of the benevolent uncle should be noted: Mary Ashewoode's uncles are ready to defend

her with their money and the sword, but David Arden protects his niece with his analytical mind. There is an official detective in the novel, but he has been discharged from the police force, is duped by the villain, and dies ignominiously of scarlatina.

THE HOUSE BY THE CHURCHYARD

By general agreement, Le Fanu's best novels are *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), *Wylder's Hand* (1864), and *Uncle Silas* (1864); all three can properly be termed mysteries, though none has as strong a detective element as *Checkmate*. *The House by the Churchyard*, set in Chapelizod in 1767, is to some extent a historical novel, and it also contains much comedy and social satire. Here is a clear-cut version of Le Fanu's double mystery. Years before, in England, there had occurred a murder that was the result of gambling; a certain Lord Dunoran had been convicted of the crime and had committed suicide. Twenty years later, chance brings together in Chapelizod four persons connected with the crime: Mervyn, Lord Dunoran's son; Dr. Sturk, an innocent witness; Ezekiel Irons, the parish clerk and an accomplice; and Paul Dangerfield, really Charles Archer and the actual murderer. Dangerfield mortally wounds Sturk and allows the blame to fall on Charles Nutter, Sturk's rival for a land agency. The murderer oversteps himself, however, when he employs an alcoholic surgeon to trepan the comatose Sturk; Sturk recovers temporarily and with the aid of a repentant Irons exposes Dangerfield. The novel ends with a flurry of marriages, including Mervyn's. This work was the source of many of the allusions in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

WYLDER'S HAND

Wylder's Hand, with an English Victorian setting, is far less picturesque than the Irish novel, but it might be considered a better mystery story, because there is little comic distraction. There is no mystery in the past. Mark Wylder, a wealthy young man, is engaged to his cousin Dorcas Brandon; it is a marriage of convenience, intended to settle some property disputes. Mark unaccountably disappears; soon, letters from him begin to arrive from the Continent. Some scandal is assumed, and Dorcas feels free to marry Captain Stanley Lake, whose moral character is gradually revealed to be even more worthless than Wylder's. Cir-

cumstances increasingly suggest that Wylder is in fact dead—the letters arrive in the wrong order—and at the climax, it is revealed that he was killed by Lake in a quarrel. Lake has victimized not only Dorcas but also his sister Rachel, who has been persuaded to cover up the murder. Both Dorcas and Rachel, who might have married a lord, are so disillusioned that they leave England, intending to lead a life of retirement on the Continent. The handling of these heroines differs from Le Fanu's usual pattern; they are not physically threatened, but their lives are permanently scarred by the worthlessness of Wylder and Lake.

UNCLE SILAS

Uncle Silas, Le Fanu's most celebrated novel, also uses a double mystery and a threatened heroine. Maud Ruthyn is the daughter of Austin Ruthyn, a kindly but withdrawn man, and the niece to Silas Ruthyn, who was suspected years before of murder for money. Austin is convinced of his brother's innocence and shows it by leaving a will in which Maud is to become Silas's ward; this will is all the more trusting in that Silas will inherit Maud's property if she dies before coming of age. Maud does not protest; she trusts her father and finds her uncle a romantically tragic figure.

At first, the atmosphere in her uncle's house is anything but threatening. Silas, however, is facing financial ruin. He first tries to get Maud's money by arranging her marriage to his oafish son Dudley; Dudley, however, is already married. Silas then plots to murder Maud, enlisting Madame de la Rougierre, once Maud's hated, alcoholic governess. The two are sent off on a complicated journey that is supposed to terminate in Paris but actually leads Maud to the chamber in which the original murder victim met his end. Maud escapes by a clever ruse, leaving the governess to be murdered in her stead.

In spite of her experiences, Maud is still capable of happiness and finds it as the wife of Lord Ilbury, one of the trustees of her estate. Silas is the most striking of Le Fanu's villains. According to Nelson Browne, "A tarnished reputation, penury, guilt, all conspired to present the melancholy spectacle of something a trifle wasted."

IN A GLASS DARKLY

Le Fanu's short fiction is of a miscellaneous character; several stories have plots that were subsequently

expanded into novels, and some could be classified as folktales. It is in the short fiction, however, that Le Fanu is at his best in the mystery of the supernatural, and he is nowhere better than in the collection entitled *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). In "Carmilla," a vampire story, the reader must suspend disbelief in vampires or the story will make no sense. In "The Room in the Dragon Volant," on the other hand, the supernatural turns out to be quite natural, though no less evil. Beckett, a young English tourist in Paris after Waterloo, allows himself to be convinced that a young countess with an aged husband loves him and wants him to rescue her. The reader discovers that he is to be the third person to disappear from a room in the Dragon Volant Inn and be buried alive for his money. The French police are on the alert, however, and they rescue him at the last moment; this tale could be called pure detective fiction, except that the reader is not aware of the detective until the climax.

Two other stories, "Green Tea" and "The Familiar" (also known as "The Watcher"), are ambiguous as to the reality of apparitions. In "Green Tea," a scholarly clergyman is haunted by a small, black, and particularly malignant monkey, which eventually drives him to suicide. In "The Familiar," a retired naval officer is harassed in the streets of Dublin by the figure of a seaman whom he had oppressed and whose death he believed he had caused.

In neither case is a naturalistic explanation needed, and in each case, it is perfectly possible. The seaman may have survived or someone else may be impersonating him; whatever the case, the captain's guilt is unmistakable. With "Green Tea," the reality of the monkey is not questioned, although its interpretation is. Dr. Hesselius, Le Fanu's persona, in his comments on the stories, suggests that disease may make a person susceptible to invasions by the supernatural.

Le Fanu's work, in his gothic moments, perhaps deserves the label of "commercialized romanticism," but in the ingenious plotting of the longer novels and in the concentrated horror of his shorter fiction, he no more needs to be justified by assimilation to a popular genre than do the Brontës.

John C. Sherwood

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The House by the Churchyard*, 1863; *Wylder's Hand*, 1864; *Uncle Silas*, 1864; *Guy Deverell*, 1865; *All in the Dark*, 1866; *The Tenants of Malory: A Novel*, 1867 (3 volumes); *A Lost Name*, 1868; *Haunted Lives*, 1868; *The Wyvern Mystery*, 1869; *Checkmate*, 1871; *The Rose and the Key*, 1871; *Willing to Die*, 1873 (3 volumes)

SHORT FICTION: *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery*, 1851; *Chronicles of Golden Friars*, 1871; *In a Glass Darkly*, 1872; *The Watcher, and Other Weird Stories*, 1894; *A Chronicle of Golden Friars, and Other Stories*, 1896; *Madam Crowl's Ghost, and Other Tales of Mystery*, 1923 (M. R. James, editor); *Green Tea, and Other Ghost Stories*, 1945; *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*, 1964; *Ghost Stories and Mysteries*, 1975

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Cock and Anchor*, 1845; *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien*, 1847; *Morley Court*, 1873

SHORT FICTION: *The Purcell Papers*, 1880

POETRY: *The Poems of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, 1896

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Signorotti, Elizabeth. "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in 'Carmilla' and *Dracula*." *Criticism* 38 (Fall, 1996): 607-632. Argues that in contrast to Bram Stoker's work, the female characters in Le Fanu's story are allowed to usurp male authority; claims that *Dracula* attempts to repossess the female body for the purposes of male pleasure and exchange and to rectify the reckless unleashing of female desire that occurs in *Carmilla*.

Towheed, Shafquat. "A Chasm in the Narrative of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Green Tea.'" *Notes and Queries* 46 (March, 1999): 67. Accounts for a chronological inconsistency in the story by arguing the author of this serial fiction inadvertently confused real time and fictional time.

Veeder, William. "'Carmilla': The Arts of Repression." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22 (1980): 197-223. A highly detailed discussion of the psychological dynamics of the story as a story of sexual repression. Discusses the dualities that dominate the story.

DENNIS LEHANE

Born: Dorchester, Massachusetts; August 4, 1965

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PATRICK KENZIE is a private investigator in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston. Patrick (“don’t call me Pat”) comes from an Irish Catholic family and was routinely abused by his alcoholic father, who to the rest of the neighborhood is a firefighter and hero. Patrick still retains the scar from having been burned with an iron. Married, he is divorced by the end of the first novel in the series.

ANGELA “ANGIE” GENNARO is a private investigator who works with Kenzie and was his high school classmate. Angie is the granddaughter of a Mafia overlord, and although she is not ashamed of her family, she is determined to be successful without her family’s help. Early in the series, Angie is married to an abusive husband, Phil Dimassi, who also was a classmate in school and Patrick’s best friend. The relationship between Patrick and Angie is marked by a kind of witty banter. Despite their best intentions, Patrick and Angie do move in and out of a romantic and sexual relationship. This relationship is predicted and even expected by mutual friends.

CONTRIBUTION

Dennis Lehane has extended the gritty realism of James Ellroy and James Crumley to the traditional private detective form. His first novel, *A Drink Before the War* (1994), won the Shamus Award for best first novel. In the next four novels in the Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro series, Lehane continued to explore the darkest recesses of human behavior, with a collection of violent and grotesque characters few writers would even have attempted. Though he admits that elements of the thriller and more generic crime writing are present in his work and he is clearly aware that he is working within the conventions of the private inves-

tigator novel, when asked to classify his own writing, Lehane calls it noir.

Despite the dark tone, there is always an undercurrent of comedy in his novels, from the flippancy of the Patrick-Angie relationship to the comic, clownishly dressed would-be enforcers of *Sacred* (1997) to Cheese Olamon, the 430-pound Swede who thinks he is an African American. Some critics have complained that Lehane inappropriately mixes tones, switching from the comic to the unbearably gruesome in his works, but his comedy is more organic to his plots than are the wisecracks included by Raymond Chandler or Robert B. Parker. *Sacred* won a Nero Award and was nominated for a Shamus.

Even when Lehane felt he had exhausted the detective form after five Kenzie-Gennaro novels, he continued to write about crime, mystery, and the horrifying. *Mystic River* (2001), his best-known work and a critically acclaimed best seller, is imprinted with the style and themes of his series novels—murder, the presence of evil, and the impact of evil on whole generations—but without a detective as a major presence. *Shutter Island* (2003), an unsettling psychological thriller about a United States marshal trapped in an asylum for the criminally insane on an island during a hurricane, has a surprise ending that goes well beyond the mere unmasking of a killer and questions the very nature of reality and perception.

In 2002, *Mystic River* became a finalist for the L. L. Winship/PEN New England Award (for best book about New England) and won both the Anthony Award and the Barry Award for best novel of the year.

BIOGRAPHY

Dennis Lehane was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, a tough Irish Catholic working-class neighborhood of Boston. He graduated from a Catholic high school in Boston and, after two years at two different Boston-area colleges, attended Eckerd College in Florida, where he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1988. While at Eckerd, he considered himself a writer of gloomy short stories but tossed off a draft of a novel



Dennis Lehane in 2006. (David Shankbone)

in three weeks “to entertain myself,” as he puts it.

Lehane then took on a variety of jobs—counselor for handicapped and abused children, limousine driver, and truck loader. During this period, *A Drink Before the War* was published, a heavily revised version of that first novel dashed off at Eckerd. While attending Florida International University on a fellowship, he produced a draft of what would become *Mystic River* as his master’s thesis. After graduating in 2001 with a master of fine arts degree, he returned to Boston, continuing to work at jobs he did not have to take home with him, leaving time for writing, his true passion.

ANALYSIS

Influenced by the gritty realism of James Ellroy and James Crumley (especially *The Last Good Kiss*, 1978), Dennis Lehane calls his writing noir, for its dark mood and the almost palpable presence of unbearable evil that are constants running through all his work, beginning with the five Kenzie-Gennaro detec-

tive novels and continuing through the nonseries novels *Mystic River* and *Shutter Island*.

The neo-noir aspect of Lehane’s writing is most evident in his graphic descriptions of violence—killings, torture, maimings, and excessive displays of inhuman behavior. Characters have their hands and tongues cut off, spines are broken by being jumped on until they crack like splintering doors, and victims are crucified on the ground. Violence is emblematic of, as Patrick realizes in *Darkness, Take My Hand* (1996), “[e]verything rancid in this world . . . swastikas and killing fields and labor camps and vermin and fire that rained from the sky.” The violence extends to the psychological realm—in *Prayers for Rain* (1999), for example, the monstrous Scott Pearse is able to kill Karen Nicholls by simply torturing her psychologically and driving her to commit suicide, all without touching her.

More than anything, Lehane’s novels demonstrate humanity’s great capacity for unspeakable evil. The evil is so all-encompassing that none of the novels seem to have any kind of enduring moral center. Patrick is swept up by it, killing an unarmed man in the first novel of the series, participating (albeit with a kind of disgust) in the bowling alley scene of *Darkness, Take My Hand* in which Jack Rouse and Kevin Hurlihy, themselves icons of power and unconscionable evil, are tortured unimaginably before being killed and “disappeared.” Innocent characters like Grace Cole and her daughter Mae are driven out of the fictional world of the novel; pure and simple characters like Karen Nicholls are driven to suicide; children like Amanda McCready are returned to exploitative parents to have all hope and light stripped from them. There is never an easy answer—even the protagonists and everyone with whom the reader wants to identify are flawed in some way.

In Lehane’s novels, children are almost always victims. This provides the novels with a certain power—who does not agonize over child abuse?—without becoming cheap exploitation of the images for the sake of sensationalism. Lehane is genuinely concerned with the plight of children in society, which at best drugs children with television and commercialization and strips them of hope and joy, and at worst commits unspeakable acts of violence against them. This re-

doubles the feeling of hopelessness one gets from Lehane—not only is this generation evil, but also it is replicating the evil in future generations. Every evil character has a past history of abuse and mistreatment.

Another major theme in Lehane is gentrification, the slow infiltration of vacuous and morally empty yuppies into strong ethnic neighborhoods. The yuppies bring condominiums where triple-decker houses used to stand, trendy cafés where neighborhood delis used to be. This is the transition from the Flats of Mystic River, where working-class Jimmy and Dave grew up, to the upperclass Point, where Sean Devine resides. Though Lehane shows the dark inner workings of the neighborhoods, he still seems to believe that they are better than what is replacing them.

Lehane's primary technical skill as a novelist—the one thing he says he was born with—was an ear for dialogue. All his novels are rich with the sounds and rhythms of the neighborhoods, the wealthy and the criminal. At times witty and flip, at times tough and frightening, the dialogue of these characters is realistic and natural, depending not on cheap phonetic spellings, but the true speech intonations and contexts of people who use the language.

DARKNESS, TAKE MY HAND

Darkness, Take My Hand, Lehane's second novel, is, according to him, "over the top." It builds on the grotesques introduced in *A Drink Before the War* (especially the lumbering and frightening comic character of Bubba Rogowski) and introduces a cast of monsters for whom pathological is almost too mild a description: Gerry Glynn, the mastermind of a violent vigilante group "cleansing" the streets of Dorchester while masquerading as the friendly local bartender; Kevin Hurlihy, another classmate of Patrick and Angie, who rapes, murders, and tortures without the slightest pang of conscience; Evander Arujo, the innocent sent to Walpole, Massachusetts's toughest prison, on a minor charge who returns to the world a deranged torturer and killer; Alec Hardiman, the HIV-positive psychopath who molests Arujo inside the prison and uses Arujo as his remote-control murderer while outside; and Jack Rouse, the head of the Irish mafia in Dorchester.

The murders that punctuate the book are eventually shown to be part of a series of murders over the past twenty years that have one feature in common: The victims, after mutilation, are fastened to the earth in an image of crucifixion, the vigilantes' comment on sin and execution. In the end, the vigilantes' plots are exposed (it turns out that Patrick's father was a leader before his death), most of them are killed, Angie's husband is also killed, and Angie herself is recovering from gunshot wounds. The ringleader, Gerry Glynn, is shot by police as he stands in a ring of fire he himself set, in a symbolic scene straight from Dante's *Inferno* in the *La divina commedia* (c. 1320; *The Divine Comedy*, 1802). Vigilantism is seen as just another form of self-righteous violence, and it sickens Patrick.

Patrick's current love Grace Cole rejects him because of the violence in his life, and Patrick moves in with the bereaved Angie.

GONE, BABY, GONE

Gone, Baby, Gone (1998) is Lehane's fullest treatment of his recurrent theme of child abuse and his most despairing look into the treatment society affords its children. The ending is painful; the kidnapping of Amanda McCready, the central plot element, is resolved as Patrick, Angie, and two Boston police detectives discover that Amanda's kidnapping is part of a larger kidnapping ring headed by a handful of rogue police officers. These officers take abused and threatened children from their home lives and place them with genuinely loving parents, committing illegal acts of genuine kindness and mercy for the children.

As Patrick, Angie, and the two detectives close in on the illegal foster parents of Amanda, Detective Jack Doyle, the head of the kidnapping ring, and his wife, it is clear that the moral dilemma is beyond solution: return Amanda to her abusive and monstrous mother or allow her to remain illegally with the Doyles, who love her and provide her with a hope she will never get from her mother. Patrick sides with the Boston police and participates in the arrest of Doyle, and Angie, pained and distraught beyond words, leaves him. No one wins. In *Prayers for Rain* (1999), fate throws the pair together again, and they begin a fairly comfortable relationship.

MYSTIC RIVER

Mystic River is LeHane's most praised book and his first nonseries book. Again, an abused child is central, but the emphasis in *Mystic River* is on how the entire neighborhood reacts to the abuse. Twenty-five years before the time in which most of the novel takes place, three children are playing in the streets of East Buckingham, an amalgam of Dorchester and a number of other Boston suburbs. The three are approached by two men claiming to be police officers and ordered into the car for fighting. Two refuse, but one—Dave Boyle—gets in, and though he returns alive four days later, the neighborhood is scarred forever.

Twenty-five years later, the young daughter of Jimmy Marcus, one of the two who did not get into the car with Dave Boyle, is kidnapped and murdered; Sean Devine, the other boy with Jimmy and Dave on that fateful day, is the investigating officer; and Dave Boyle, though innocent, is the chief suspect. Though Katie Marcus's murder is a mystery, LeHane has said, "Who dunnit? Who cares?" The novel is about how the effects of the murder can be felt in every part of the narrow streets, every neighborhood bar, and on the porches of every triple-decker house in the city.

It has been said that place is a character of its own in *Mystic River* and that the river itself is central to the novel—flowing throughout the book, a mystical place where people can find hope and where bodies and dark secrets of the past disappear.

H. Eric Branscomb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KENZIE AND GENNARO SERIES: *A Drink Before the War*, 1994; *Darkness, Take My Hand*, 1996; *Sacred*, 1997; *Gone, Baby, Gone*, 1998; *Prayers for Rain*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Mystic River*, 2001; *Shutter Island*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

MISCELLANEOUS: *Coronado Stories*, 2006

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_____. "Dennis LeHane: Hard-boiled in Boston." Interview by Louise Jones. *Publishers Weekly* 246, no. 25 (June 21, 1999): 40-41. Examines LeHane's family and educational background and how they influenced his works, which at this time were the Kenzie and Gennaro series.

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gers University Press, 2002. The chapter "White Readings of Race" discusses *A Drink Before the War*, noting that Patrick tries to confront his racism but is prevented from doing so fully because of the "first-person, intensely masculinist narrative voice."

ELMORE LEONARD

Born: New Orleans, Louisiana; October 11, 1925

Also wrote as Dutch Leonard

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chili Palmer, 1990-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHILI PALMER is a picaresque Miami loan shark who, on orders from his mob boss, goes to Las Vegas and then Los Angeles within the organized crime and film industry subcultures, as Palmer incongruously becomes a motion picture producer. Later, the parochial lack of creativity in the American film industry—perhaps best illustrated in its penchant to create sequels, is critiqued as Palmer transitions into the recording industry.

CONTRIBUTION

In 1953 Elmore Leonard began producing Western, then detective and mystery fiction, creating more than forty books. Leonard earned a significant but limited reputation as a writer of Western stories, novels, and screenplays, but his enduring contribution will be his witty, unorthodox crime thrillers that reveal the particulars of the made-men and wise guys of Detroit, Atlantic City, Miami, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and wherever human motivation and endeavor might be on display. Leonard has also written extensively for television and film. In a review of Leonard's *Bandits* (1987), noted author Walker Percy said, "He is as good as the blurbs say: 'The greatest crime writer of our time, or perhaps ever.'" He shares with musician Bruce Springsteen

(who achieved the feat in 1978) the distinction of being the only nonpresident to be on the covers of both *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines (in 1988) in the same calendar year; *Time* magazine characterized Leonard as "the [Charles] Dickens from Detroit." Leonard continues to be a phenomenally successful popular writer who continues to merit scholarly attention for his literary corpus.

Leonard developed a cult following of crime novel readers in the 1970's and 1980's with such notable works as *Fifty-two Pickup* (1974) and *City Primeval: High Noon in Detroit* (1980). However, he did not have a best-selling novel until *Glitz* (1985), which, combined with the television movie that was made from this book in 1988, made his name a household word. In 1986, *City Primeval* won the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. For the past two decades, Leonard's novels and the television movies and feature films made from them have enjoyed immediate and considerable audiences; he has transcended the world of crime fiction and made significant contributions as a screenwriter and in his interactions with such figures as director Quentin Tarantino (*Jackie Brown*, 1997; made from Leonard's 1992 novel, *Rum Punch*) and actor John Travolta (*Get Shorty*, 1995; *Be Cool*, 2005). Leonard received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1992 and the Cartier Diamond Dagger lifetime achievement award from the Crime Writers' Association in 2006. A devoted grandfather who has written the children's book *A Coyote's in the House* (2004), he continued to be productive beyond his eightieth birthday, with the publication of his forty-first novel, *Up in Honey's Room* (2007).

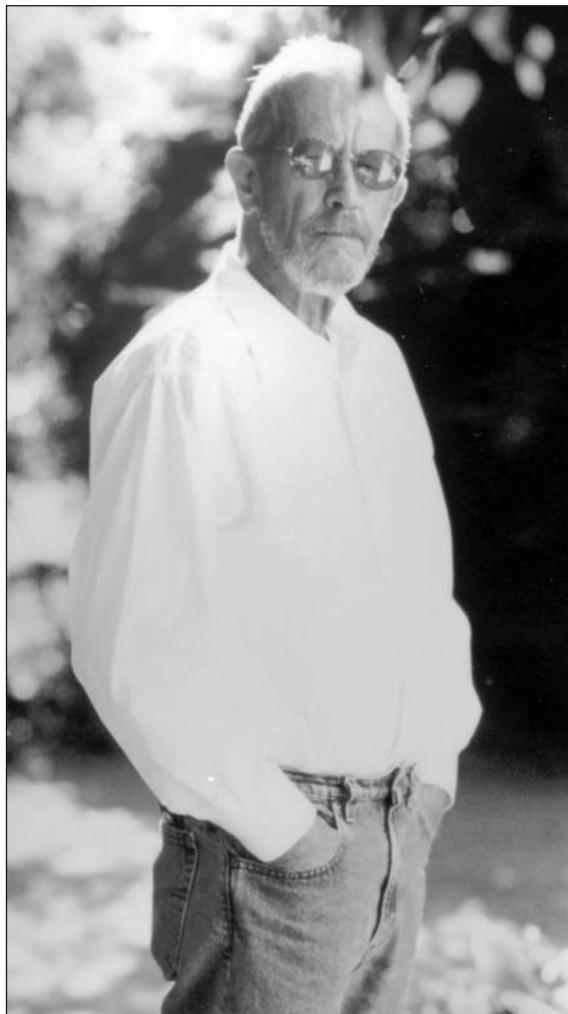
BIOGRAPHY

Born in New Orleans on October 11, 1925, Elmore John Leonard, Jr., is the son of a General Motors location scout. His father frequently moved the family, mostly in the southeastern United States, before settling permanently in Detroit, Michigan, where Elmore (nicknamed “Dutch” by his childhood friends) attended a Roman Catholic grammar school and graduated from the University of Detroit Jesuit High School in 1944. Leonard was profoundly affected by his reading of Erich Marie Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1929, 1968; *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1929, 1969), and by his high school years, he was writing short stories that he purposefully modeled after those of his favorite writers, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and John O’Hara.

After high school, Leonard joined the United States Navy and served in a Seabee unit in the South Pacific. After he earned a degree in English from the University of Detroit in 1948, he took a job as an advertising copywriter for the Campbell Ewald Agency in Detroit and wrote copy for the Chevrolet account, among others, between 1948 and 1961. Leonard wrote Western stories and novels throughout the 1950’s, publishing his first short story, “Trail of the Apache,” in *Argosy* magazine in 1951, and his first novel, *The Bounty Hunters*, in 1953. Leonard has published more than thirty short stories in such periodicals as *Zane Grey’s Western Magazine* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Leonard’s Western novels adapted easily to the big screen, and in 1957 two of his stories, “The Captives” (the film was titled *The Tall T*) and “3:10 to Yuma,” were sold to Columbia Pictures.

Between 1961, when he quit Campbell Ewald and optioned *Hombre* (1961; which did not appear as a film until 1966) to Twentieth Century Fox, and 1969, when he published his first crime novel, *The Big Bounce*, Leonard supported himself and his growing family (which would eventually reach five children) with fee-for-piece writing, mostly in educational films, including a number of Encyclopaedia Britannica films as well as a recruiting film for the Franciscan order of Catholic priests.

The pictorial quality of his writing and his simple but eloquent diction and honest dialogue, often com-



Elmore Leonard. (© Linda Solomon)

pared to that of Hemingway, served him well as a writer of Westerns and especially well as he transitioned in the 1960’s and 1970’s to becoming not so much a mystery and detective writer but a crime writer—indeed, perhaps *the* crime writer of the final three decades of the twentieth century—detailing quirky characters in the crime capitals of Detroit, Miami, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. Leonard attributes his research for a freelance article in the late 1960’s for the *Detroit News*, in which he rode for a shift in a police cruiser with a felony homicide squad, as an impetus in what he describes as a “four-decade spree” as a crime novelist and screenwriter.

ANALYSIS

Although Elmore Leonard became a published novelist with film credits within the Western genre, his lasting contribution to world culture will certainly be his crime fiction in the distinctive Leonard style—reticent, understated prose and evocative but understated descriptions—and the film adaptations of his works. The quality of Leonard's storytelling is enhanced by the insights and complexities with which he invests his characters. Although he is known for his exact descriptions of Detroit and the sordid characters who populate industries from organized crime to filmmaking to the recording industry, Leonard is able to create characters who are white and male (Chili Palmer) as well as those that are black and female (Jackie Brown) and characters who are vulnerable males (Vince Majestyk) as well as indomitable females (Karen Sisco).

HOMBRE

Hombre, acclaimed by the Western Writers of America as one of the best Westerns of all time, is important to the Leonard corpus for a number of reasons. Unlike later Leonard novels, which usually feature a third-person, omniscient narrator, this work is narrated by a minor character, Carl Allen. John Russell, a man of mixed white and American Indian heritage and raised by a band of Apache in Arizona, has liquidated a boardinghouse property and boarded a stagecoach, prepared to enter mainstream white society. However, he is literally shunned by the other passengers and forced to ride outside with Mendez, the Mexican driver.

When the stagecoach is attacked by outlaws, it is Russell's ability with guns and his laconic assurance in the face of danger that saves the other stagecoach passengers, even as Russell sacrifices himself for the others, who may not be worthy of the gesture. Like many of Leonard's later heroes and antiheroes, Russell is a man of action and few words. Although the film adaptation did not appear until the height of the Vietnam War in 1967, it has weathered the years well with Paul Newman as John Russell, Fredric March as a despicable Indian agent who has redeeming qualities that come out under duress, and Richard Boone as a lascivious stagecoach traveler.

GLITZ

Lieutenant Vincent Mora, a Miami police detective, is the central character in *Glitz*. When Mora goes to Puerto Rico to convalesce from a bullet wound, Teddy, a rapist and former convict seeking revenge for his incarceration, wreaks havoc on Mora's life and appears to be connected with the death of Mora's girlfriend, Iris, in Atlantic City. Lieutenant Mora suspects homicide rather than suicide, and his hypothesis draws him into conflict with the worlds of casino gambling and organized crime. As usual, Leonard creates memorable and distinctive characters, from blueblood Nancy Donovan (from Philadelphia's suburban Main Line) to exotic lounge act Nancy Moon to mob characters Ricky the Zit and Frank the Ching.

GET SHORTY

The premise of *Get Shorty* (1990), a quirky crime novel, is that a reasonably successful criminal can segue seamlessly into the Hollywood film industry. Chili Palmer, a Miami loan shark, travels to Las Vegas then to Hollywood on the trail of an unpaid loan. Palmer connects with horror-film producer Harry Zimm and begins to evaluate screenplays, articulate film ideas, and meet on equal terms with studio executives.

BE COOL

In the sequel, *Be Cool* (1999), Palmer takes on the Southern California music industry. Palmer's follow-up film to his hit film, *Get Leo*, has bombed, and he decides to pitch his proposed third film to a recording industry executive who is an acquaintance from Palmer's youth in Brooklyn. However, when his acquaintance becomes a mob hit before the end of the luncheon, Palmer is thrust into contact with Los Angeles Police Department detective Darryl Holmes, and they work together to find some Russian gangsters and to avoid being their next victims. Palmer fakes his way into the recording industry, even as he had earlier faked his way into the film industry in *Get Shorty*.

RUM PUNCH

In *Rum Punch*, Jackie Burke is a thrice-divorced forty-four-year-old white stewardess in Miami. Caught by the local police at the Miami airport as she attempts to bring cash back into the country from the Bahamas for arms dealer Ordell Robbie, she agrees to engage in a sting to implicate him. However, with the help of bail

bondsman Max Cherry, she creates a scheme in which she tries to keep the money for herself. In the film version of this novel, *Jackie Brown*, directed by Quentin Tarantino, the white Jackie Burke becomes African American Jackie Brown, and the scene is moved to Los Angeles. The story line remains mostly the same, though Tarantino adds the issues of gender and race, especially by casting 1970's blaxploitation actress Pam Grier in the leading role.

Richard Sax

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHILI PALMER SERIES: *Get Shorty*, 1990; *Be Cool*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1969-1980 • *The Big Bounce*, 1969; *The Moonshine War*, 1969; *Fifty-two Pickup*, 1974; *Mr. Majestyk*, 1974; *Swag*, 1976; *Unknown Man No. 89*, 1977; *The Hunted*, 1977; *The Switch*, 1978; *City Primeval: High Noon in Detroit*, 1980; *Gold Coast*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Split Images*, 1981; *Cat Chaser*, 1982; *Stick*, 1983; *LaBrava*, 1983; *Glitz*, 1985; *Elmore Leonard's Double Dutch Treat: Three Novels*, 1986; *Bandits*, 1987; *Touch*, 1987; *Freaky Deaky*, 1988; *Killshot*, 1989

1991-2007 • *Maximum Bob*, 1991; *Rum Punch*, 1992; *Pronto*, 1993; *Riding the Rap*, 1995; *Out of Sight*, 1996; *Naked Came the Manatee*, 1996 (with others); *Pagan Babies*, 2000; *Tishomingo Blues*, 2002; *Mr. Paradise*, 2004; *The Hot Kid*, 2005; *Up in Honey's Room*, 2007

SHORT FICTION: *When the Women Come Out to Dance*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Bounty Hunters*, 1953; *The Law at Randado*, 1954; *Escape from Five Shadows*, 1956; *Last Stand at Saber River*, 1959; *Hombre*, 1961; *Valdez Is Coming*, 1970; *Forty Lashes Less One*, 1972; *Gunsights*, 1979; *Cuba Libre*, 1998

SHORT FICTION: *The Tonto Woman, and Other Western Stories*, 1998; *The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard*, 2004

SCREENPLAYS: *The Moonshine War*, 1970; *Joe Kidd*, 1972; *Mr. Majestyk*, 1974; *Stick*, 1985; *Fifty-*

two Pickup, 1986; *The Rosary Murders*, 1987; *Cat Chaser*, 1989

TELEPLAYS: *High Noon Part 2: The Return of Will Kane*, 1980; *Desperado*, 1987

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Coyote's in the House*, 2004

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LEONID MAKSIMOVICH LEONOV

Born: Moscow, Russia; May 31, 1899

Died: Moscow, Russia; August 8, 1994

Also wrote as Lapot; Maksim Laptev

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

In some of Leonid Maksimovich Leonov's most celebrated works, written early in his career, problems of good and evil are set against a background of political upheaval during crucial periods in Soviet history. Thus, his fiction serves to document and explore the dislocation of values and traditions and the blurring of moral distinctions that followed from the social reorganization begun by the Russian Revolution. Leonov's work deals largely with the political implications of criminal acts.

In spite of ideological objections that occasionally have been expressed by those in official positions, in his own country Leonov's work generally was accepted as politically sound by those who determined Soviet literary standards. While adhering basically to the criteria established by Soviet authorities, he produced works that also represent original, deeply personal approaches to literature. The success of Leonov's works disproves some critics' contention that political requirements precluded the acceptance of crime fiction among Soviet readers.

BIOGRAPHY

The political and literary direction of Leonid Maksimovich Leonov's career may reflect the circumstances of his early life. He was the son of Mariya Petrovna Leonova and Maksim Lvovich Leonov, and was born in Moscow on May 31, 1899. His father was originally from a peasant family and was largely self-educated; in addition to ventures as a small merchant, he wrote some poetry and became involved in radical journalism. He was arrested in 1908 on charges of subversion, and two years later he was exiled to Arkhangelsk, in northern Russia.

Leonov was educated in Moscow, where from time to time he published poetry and theater reviews in a

newspaper his father had started; for several summers, he worked as a proofreader. In 1918 after he had completed his secondary schooling, Leonov joined his father and settled for a time in Arkhangelsk. After Allied forces that had intervened against the Bolsheviks departed from that city, Leonov joined the Red Army; in addition to working for *Krasny voyn*, an army newspaper, he took part in operations to the south, at Perekop and in the Crimean peninsula. Although on his return to civilian life he was denied admission to Moscow University, he recommenced his literary efforts. In 1923 he was married to Tatiana Mikhailovna Sabashnikova, the daughter of a well-known publisher. With the appearance of major stories and his first novels, Leonov won recognition as an important new figure in Soviet letters.

Early in his career, Leonov met the poet Sergei Yesenin; he also became acquainted with Maxim Gorky, whom he visited in the course of a journey across Europe. Sometimes Leonov's works came under official reproach, though he was not subjected to the proscription or persecution that befell many other writers. During World War II, he served as a correspondent on major fronts; later, in 1945 and 1946, he was one of *Pravda's* reporters at the Nuremberg trials. During the onset of the Cold War, he became involved in a polemical exchange about responsibility for international tensions. In 1960, he was a member of a writers' delegation that visited the United States. In Leonov's later works he largely abandoned strictly political concerns, preferring to explore questions of literary criticism and issues of nature conservation. Leonov died in Moscow on August 8, 1994.

ANALYSIS

Leonid Maksimovich Leonov's earliest prose fiction dealt with problems of reality and morals in ways that sometimes bordered on the fantastic; such themes resurfaced in his later crime fiction, though in treatments that were markedly different. One early story, for example, concerns a man in the Arctic who comes on strange, seemingly mythical beings in an arche-

typal quest; in another work, a lonely man falls in love with the black queen on his chessboard. "Petushikhinsky prolom," however, depicts the revulsion a frail, good-hearted youth feels when peasants beat a horse thief to death. In "Konets melkogo cheloveka," a demon challenges a paleontologist's preoccupation with the study of the past; once he has been tempted by the spirit, the protagonist considers destroying his manuscripts and abandoning his research. Eventually, the scientist succumbs to hunger and privation.

When Leonov explicitly raised questions of criminal activity, it was often in relation to larger questions of the social order. Acts of theft, violence, and rebellion frequently were depicted as the work of groups that, in keeping with their defiant postures, would sanction and encourage such undertakings. In some of his major novels, Leonov succeeded in conveying the outlook and peculiar mores of robber bands without yielding in his conviction that opposing ideals of socialism and cooperation should prevail.

THE BADGERS

In the novel *Barsuki* (1924; *The Badgers*, 1947), turmoil and upheaval in Moscow, where the Soviet government has established its power, are contrasted with the disorders that seem to propel the distant countryside in a different direction. Around Arkhangelsk, far to the north, Soviet authorities must contend with peasant groups who have taken the law into their own hands. Apart from a few backward glances on the part of older men, the previous regime seems to have passed into history with few regrets on any side. Among many peasants, however, recollections of the more recent past remain alive: Some had undergone confinement in a czarist prison or were caught up in revolutionary outbreaks. Grim and bloody battles of World War I, fought in a cause few held dear, appear to have severed any loyalties to the older government. Memories of murderous conflict are reinforced once more by the sight of men who have been left lame or badly disfigured. Some villagers still profess religious beliefs, which are mingled with folk practices. There seems to be no consensus about the proper political course to follow. Among those who have sided with the Bolsheviks, a district committee is formed to put requisitioning measures into effect; the most immediate,

though onerous, concerns they must confront are raising taxes and preventing the hoarding of foodstuffs.

Open conflict erupts when a soldier is shot, and then a prominent village leader, Petka Grokhotov, is found dead, slashed through the body with a scythe. It is learned that elsewhere a village chairman has been found murdered from stab wounds. What began as a series of local mysteries begins to take on much wider connotations. Indeed, tracking down culprits must yield to more basic concerns of self-preservation when full-fledged rebellion engulfs the area. Local chieftains are chosen to lead peasant communities; in addition to dispensing justice according to ingrained notions of fairness, they lead their people into battle against a neighboring village that reputedly is more sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. There ensues a protracted campaign in which barns are burned and Soviet convoys are intercepted; wild and seemingly spontaneous outbreaks of violence are punctuated with proceedings in ad hoc courts, imposing the peasants' conceptions of martial law. The villagers become known as "badgers," from their practice of digging entrenchments and placing barricades about the territory they control. Eventually, the cycle of bloody confrontations runs its course; the insurgents lack any wider aims or program, and their leader loses heart when his own brother, a commander in the Bolshevik army, convinces him that further resistance would be futile.

THE THIEF

Although crime and violence are tied to peasant revolts in *The Badgers*, Leonov's second novel, *Vor* (1927; *The Thief*, 1931), deals more directly with lawless behavior carried out for personal gain. The urban setting, near Moscow, is marked by a bustling, impersonal air that in some ways befits the complex, interlocking series of subplots that reveal the organization and procedures of the criminal underworld around the capital. At the outset, readers are introduced to two major characters whose lives and destinies for the time being have become intertwined. Mitka Vekshin, a peasant youth who was once caught up in war and revolution, and who still is inwardly affected by his killing of a White officer during the civil war, has applied his skills to some rather dubious enterprises. Although initially he brushes aside the inquiries of Fyodor

Fyodorovich Firsov, a minor writer whose work on a novel appears in counterpoint to the main action, in due course the aspiring author is introduced to a number of Mitka's associates. Along the way, the varied circumstances that have brought them together are laid forth. Among the assorted malefactors are an expert in railway robberies, a receiver of stolen goods, and a man who serves as a scout or decoy. Some of them evidently are hardened criminals, while others have simply found no certain employment; even the latter eventually shrug aside any compunctions they may feel about the expropriation of others' property. The characteristic manners and speech of outlaws are recorded in connection with visits to typical haunts, such as a thieves' bar; odd bits of robbers' lore crop up from time to time. Mitka's own specialty is safecracking; though there are some vaults he cannot open, his success overall has earned for him the esteem of others in his immediate circle. Firsov is intrigued by this adventurous existence. Yet Mitka's reflections about his early life lead briefly to some rather nostalgic passages that suggest the extent to which he has become estranged from once-familiar people and places.

The progress of Firsov's work seems to illuminate some of the peculiar moral beliefs and forms of self-regard that are held by those he has met. Many of his acquaintances comment on his depiction of criminal ways to suggest similarities as well as divergences between their outlook and the views of the conventional law-abiding world. One individual maintains doubts that it is ever right to kill a man; another reproaches Firsov for offering up too many victims in his fictional narrative. Eventually, his novel, which features a protagonist presumably based on Mitka, is finished and published, but critics are generally disapproving.

In the meantime, Mitka, who has disappeared for a short time, has undergone yet another change of heart. However disillusioned he may have become with life after the Revolution, he has never quite fit the role of a romantic villain. For some time, tragedy and betrayal seem to follow at every turn; one of his associates is shot during a police raid, and in the underworld there are rumors that an informer has been operating in their midst. Many clamor for the calling of a thieves' court-martial to uphold their own sense of honor and respect

for their fellows. Mitka's sister Tanya, a graceful, charming circus performer, is killed when a rope becomes caught too tightly about her neck during a spectacular maneuver. Increasingly preoccupied with forebodings and guilt, Mitka consults a psychiatrist, but to no avail; after a stormy meeting with his colleagues in crime, he takes his leave of them. At the end, he recommences life as a woodcutter.

Some critics objected to *The Thief* on political grounds, considering Mitka's disillusionment with the Revolution disloyal. In 1959, Leonov brought out a new edition that was intended in part to answer such reproaches.

Other problems of social justice are examined in a story from this period that, like *The Badgers*, has a rural setting. In this later story, however, the villagers seem to have accepted only too well the need to maintain order. When the only blacksmith in a village is caught stealing horses, a deaf and mute carpenter is chosen to be punished in his place; since there are several carpenters about, it is considered that, innocent or not, his life is expendable, whereas those of others are not.

SOT AND SKUTAREVSKY

This uneasy accommodation between collectivist ideals and older values marks other works from this period; events such as the enactment of the first Five Year Plans inspired Leonov's literary imagination. In *Sot* (1930; English translation, 1931), efforts to build a paper mill in a backward region of northern Russia come to represent a struggle between rural superstition and modern industrial innovation; though some questions of sabotage arise here and there, dedication to a common task eventually takes primacy. The political orientation of the old intelligentsia is handled in the rather more complex work *Skutarevsky* (1932; English translation, 1936), which deals with conflict within the family of an aging and introverted scientist who, while accepting Soviet ideals, must confront opposition from those close to him. Although hitherto he has pursued his research with a single-minded devotion that seemingly excluded other concerns, Skutarevsky becomes involved in bitter debates at home with Arseny, his wayward son. Although the father cannot find an effective answer to his son's denunciation of the re-

gime's excesses, Arseny becomes troubled by guilt over his part in a conspiracy. Unable to confess, he finally kills himself. Others at the scientific institute are implicated as well, including Skutarevsky's brother-in-law and his assistant. When one of Skutarevsky's experiments fails, he offers to resign his position, but he is accepted back once his political loyalty has been confirmed. Despite this rather platitudinous ending, skillful characterization and the presentation of conflicting viewpoints distinguish this novel from many other politically inspired works of its period. Elements of the detective story remain vaguely in evidence in some of Leonov's works of this time, but such themes are largely overshadowed by other concerns. *Doroga na okean* (1935; *Road to the Ocean*, 1944) is an ambitious effort to recapture the ethos of socialist economic development; while political differences from the past put important characters at odds with one another, this saga of railroad building ultimately gives way to three imaginative journeys into the future.

THE RUSSIAN FOREST

Leonov also became known for his work with drama, and adapted some of his fictional pieces for the stage. Although controversy arose over some of his offerings, others were widely accepted. During World War II, Leonov produced plays and stories that recaptured in graphic human terms incidents of struggle and suffering. *Zolotaya kareta* (pb. 1946) was received with official approbation for its implication that not all had shared equally in the hardships of the wartime years. The lengthy novel *Russkii les* (1953; *The Russian Forest*, 1966), with its themes of political intrigue and family loyalties, also reflects Leonov's concerns for his country's woodlands; depredations against nature are depicted alongside the difficult events that followed Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Questions of guilt, innocence, and crime are again evident in Leonov's bold implication that, where political charges were concerned, guilt or innocence could often be construed at the whim of those who were able to bring those charges.

LATER WORKS

Later works also include *Begstvo Mistera Mak-Kinli* (1961), a screenplay that concerns the scheme of a seemingly insignificant man to kill a wealthy widow

to obtain money. Ultimately he hopes to be placed in a "salvatorium," which supposedly could preserve his body indefinitely against the ravages of time and disease. Eventually, however, he abandons this notion and indeed finds himself content with his actual situation. This work, which is presumably set in the United States, refers obliquely to fictional conceptions of Fyodor Dostoevski. Some critics have also discerned in it a parody of certain attitudes that were common during that period of the Cold War. A rather different work is *Evgenia Ivanovna* (1963), a sensitive evocation of an émigré's troubled feelings for her native Russia.

Because Leonov's works possess both breadth and subtlety, a number of comparisons to other writers have been suggested; it has also been possible to trace the most important influences on his creative efforts. Although he noted that the examples of Aleksandr Blok and Sergei Yesenin were important for his poetry, the writer most frequently cited in discussions of his narrative works has been Dostoevski. On several occasions early in his career, Leonov declared that Dostoevski's writings had been of great importance to him. Clear affinities may be found in Leonov's interest in elucidating the subjective origins of aberrant and criminal behavior. Concerns with questions of ultimate moral truth also arise in some parts of Leonov's work. Yet Leonov manifested little interest in metaphysical or religious issues. Where Dostoevski would consider problems of human relations to God, Leonov pondered the moral concerns of socialist society.

In his early use of fantastic elements, Leonov displayed some similarities to Nikolai Gogol. Leonov's studies of literature focused on Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekhov, explicating their contributions to traditions that he has attempted to carry forward. He also acknowledged the influence of Maxim Gorky.

Leonov's handling of dialogue is particularly skillful; expressions and nuances common to various social classes are faithfully rendered. Indeed, some terms Leonov put in the mouths of fictional thieves may have become part of the written language only after he had recorded them in his early works. His grasp of regional dialects is so considerable that the distinguished Asian specialist Ilya Petrushevsky was impressed with his

knowledge of Tatar speech. Leonov is also notable for the loving tribute he pays to his country's natural beauty through his description of landscape.

When Leonov took up matters of crime or mystery, it was always in the context of a probing of the values underlying the socialist state. While managing to adhere more or less faithfully to the ideological standards imposed by the Soviet system, he found room to raise important questions and express his personal concerns.

J. R. Broadus

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Barsuki*, 1924 (*The Badgers*, 1947); *Vor*, 1927 (*The Thief*, 1931); *Skutarevsky*, 1932 (English translation, 1936)

SHORT FICTION: *Rasskazy*, 1926

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Saranchuki*, 1930; *Sot*, 1930 (English translation, 1931; also known as *Soviet River*, 1932); *Doroga na okean*, 1935 (*Road to the Ocean*, 1944); *Vz'yatie Velikoshumska*, 1944 (*Chariot of Wrath*, 1946); *Russkii les*, 1953 (*The Russian Forest*, 1966); *Evgenia Ivanovna*, 1964; *Fragmenty iz romana*, 1984

SHORT FICTION: *Derevyannaya koroleva*, *Bubovnyy valet*, *Valina kukla*, 1923

PLAYS: *Untilovsk*, pr. 1928; *Usmireniye Badadoshkina*, pr. 1929; *Polovchanskije sady*, pb. 1938 (*The Orchards of Polovchansk*, 1946); *Skutarevsky*, pr. 1933; *Pesy*, pr. 1935; *Volk*, pr. 1939; *Metel*, pr. 1940; *Obyknovenny chelovek*, pr. 1942; *Nashestvie*, pb., pr. 1942 (*Invasion*, 1943); *Lyonushka*, pr., pr. 1943; *Zolotaya kareta*, pb. 1946; *Teatr: Dramaticheskie proizvedeniya, stati, rechi*, pb. 1960

SCREENPLAY: *Begstvo Mistera Mak-Kinli*, 1961

NONFICTION: *Stati voennykh let*, 1946; *V nashi gody*, 1949; *Literatura i vremya*, 1964; *O prirode nachistotu*, 1974; *Put k pobede*, 1985

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WILLIAM LE QUEUX

Born: London, England; July 2, 1864

Died: Switzerland; October 13, 1927

Types of plot: Espionage; historical; private investigator

CONTRIBUTION

William Le Queux was one of the earliest authors of espionage fiction; he strongly influenced the direction of the genre for nearly twenty-five years. In writing more than one hundred novels dealing primarily with political intrigue and spying, he anticipated almost every development of the spy story until the writings of Eric Ambler. Yet because he was reputed to have been a member of the British secret service for a number of years, his works are somewhat difficult to assess: Le Queux's lively and vivid imagination makes it hard to distinguish between his factual and fictional writings; he was not at all reluctant to embellish a situation and present it as historical fact. During the early part of his career, Le Queux warned of a Continental invasion of England. As a result, his early novels were extremely popular for their topicality and sensationalism.

BIOGRAPHY

William Tufnell Le Queux was born on July 2, 1864, in London, the eldest son of William Le Queux of Châteauroux, France. Traveling extensively with his parents during his childhood, he was educated in London, France, and at Pegli, near Genoa. As a young man, Le Queux studied art in Paris, but his desire to travel led him to give up a career as a painter. During a trip to Russia, he gathered material for his first book, *Guilty Bonds* (1891), which dealt with the revolutionary movement in czarist Russia and was banned in that country. Later, he worked as a correspondent and from 1891 to 1893 served as foreign editor of London's *Globe* newspaper. In 1893, he resigned from his position to devote most of his time to writing novels.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Le Queux visited North Africa and the Middle East and also made a trip to the Arctic. He was London's *Daily Mail* cor-

respondent during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). At one time, he also served as consul to the Republic of San Marino. During and after World War I, Le Queux was popularly believed to have been involved in espionage work for the British government. Indeed, he himself insisted that his novels were written to support himself as a freelance member of the British secret service.

After retiring to Switzerland, he continued to write and lecture on spies and their techniques. He became an expert in wireless transmission and was a member of the Institute of Radio Engineers and president of the Wireless Experimental Association. Le Queux died of natural causes in Switzerland on October 13, 1927.

ANALYSIS

William Le Queux's first novel, *Guilty Bonds*, dramatized the political conflicts in prerevolutionary Russia, but more important it marked the beginning of his professional writing career. He began his career as a novelist in earnest with the publication of *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894). The first of many novels detailing the threat of military invasion to Great Britain, the novel portrays the menace posed by a Franco-Russian alliance. Five years later, Le Queux wrote *England's Peril*, in which a member of Parliament is betrayed and ruthlessly murdered by his wife, who is having an affair with the head of the French secret service.

Although Le Queux was of French parentage, he had become the quintessential Englishman—more English than his fellow citizens. He summarily dismissed the importance of Anglo-French political cooperation and friendship, sharing the popular belief that France was Great Britain's enemy on the Continent. As a result, Le Queux's warnings that England was not prepared to withstand an invasion from the Continent influenced spy fiction more than did the writings of many other authors during the same period. Although his novels were not of the same literary quality as those of Erskine Childers because they were overwrought and highly melodramatic, they were nevertheless very popular. Le Queux had a journalist's sense of the topical,

which, when combined with his talent for sensationalism, made his novels compelling reading. With a vast readership and numerous supporters, he soon became a widely admired and often-imitated novelist.

After further travels throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, Le Queux became convinced that the threat to England's security was not France but Germany. The first of his anti-German books, *The Invasion of 1910: With a Full Account of the Siege of London* (1906), singled out Germany as Great Britain's probable future enemy. The novel *The Mystery of a Motor-Car* (1906) quickly followed, and Le Queux intentionally began using his espionage novels as propaganda instruments. In this story, a country doctor finds himself involved in a German plot against England when he treats the victim of an automobile accident.

SPIES OF THE KAISER

Le Queux soon found several senior officers in the British army who shared his views on Germany's growing military might. The most important of these men was Field Marshall Lord Roberts, a supporter of conscription. In *Spies of the Kaiser* (1909), Le Queux warned that England was in imminent danger of an invasion by Germany and that thousands of German spies were living in Great Britain and gathering information on important individuals, shipyards, factories, arsenals, and the country's overall military preparedness.

THE GERMAN SPY

One of the best examples of Le Queux's books during this time is *The German Spy: A Present-day Story* (1914), written just before the outbreak of World War I. His style in this book is characteristic of all of his other writings:

Zarñatu was . . . a bacteriologist, and, leaving the twelve half-penny stamps untouched, he had prepared the three small leaves, each of six penny stamps, with a gum that contained the most deadly germs. Thus a stamp placed upon the tongue would mean certain death.

Had not all the impregnated stamps been destroyed by Wedderburn, I should, I confess to the reader, have been sorely tempted to leave one of them for Whitmarsh himself, and thus avenge his dastardly and inhuman crimes.

Le Queux's prose is typical of pieces written during the early part of the twentieth century in England. The language is stiff, excessive, and melodramatic. Many of his story lines also involve easily recognizable stock characters, including the intelligent, witty, urbane Englishman; the country gentleman; the scientist; the military attaché; the beautiful female love interest; and the foreign spy. In spite of these limitations, Le Queux could maintain an intense level of suspense. In fact, the combination of melodrama and heightened suspense contributed most to Le Queux's success as an author.

BOLO, THE SUPER-SPY

When World War I actually started, Le Queux continued writing about German spies in books such as *The Mystery of the Green Ray* (1915), *Number 70, Berlin* (1916), *The Unbound Book* (1916), and many others. Yet although his prewar plots were well constructed and not at all contrived, during the war they became more and more preposterous, as is illustrated by his novel *Bolo, the Super-Spy* (1918):

The real adventures of this most mysterious individual, this *escroc* who began life as a lobster merchant in Marseilles, and who before his execution as a traitor was a financier dealing in millions of francs, were indeed a romance more astounding than any imagined by a writer of fiction. . . . At the trial . . . much remarkable and sensational evidence was given and many startling statements were made—allegations only equaled by those proved against the mock monk Gregory Rasputin.

Although the background of his stories remained authentic and quite believable, the plots themselves seemed to undermine his authority as a writer of spy fiction. Indeed, from the literary standpoint, Le Queux became a casualty of the war—he was so obsessed with it that his writings lost all objectivity or detachment. Perhaps his association with the British secret service led to this obsession: Le Queux once remarked that, after the war had started, he carried a loaded revolver at all times because his life was constantly threatened by foreign agents.

RASPUTIN, THE RASCAL MONK AND CIPHER SIX

In his nonfictional material, he invented overly dramatic situations to provide a degree of texture and rich-

ness to his work. Unfortunately, the lively imagination that assured his reputation as a novelist handicapped him as a writer of nonfiction, especially when fictional plots were presented as factual occurrences. This tendency makes it extremely difficult to evaluate what he wrote about his own actions. For example, Le Queux stated that during the Russian Revolution the provisional government had secretly provided him with a considerable number of official papers and documents supposedly discovered in a safe in the cellar of Gregory Rasputin's residence. According to Le Queux, he wrote *Rasputin, the Rascal Monk* (1917) using this material. The existence of such papers, however, has never been independently verified. Another example of Le Queux's extravagant embellishment of situations is his book *Cipher Six* (1919). This postwar work was supposedly based on actual occurrences that took place in the East End of London during the peace negotiations in 1918. According to the story, Le Queux assisted the police in unraveling one of the most baffling mysteries to take place in the recent past. Once again, fact and fiction are not easily distinguishable; no one has ever corroborated either Le Queux's contribution to the police investigation or his portrayal of the events in question.

When Le Queux retired to Switzerland in the 1920's, he returned to writing the kind of spy stories in which he had specialized at the turn of the century. No longer was there a single devious foreign country that served as the focus for his novels. Except for the change to a Swiss setting, his style remained the same—suspenseful plots interwoven with a large dose of melodrama.

Thomas Derdak

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1891-1900 • *Guilty Bonds*, 1891; *The Great War in England in 1897*, 1894; *The Temptress*, 1895; *Zoraida: A Romance of the Harem and the Great Sahara*, 1895; *Devil's Dice*, 1896; *The Great White Queen*, 1896; *A Madonna of the Music Halls*, 1897 (also known as *A Secret Sin*); *The Eye of Ishtar*, 1897; *Whoso Findeth a Wife*, 1897; *If Sinners Entice Thee*, 1898; *Scribes and Pharisees*, 1898; *England's Peril*, 1899; *The Bond of Black*, 1899; *The Day of Temptation*, 1899; *Wiles of the Wicked*, 1899; *An Eye*

for an Eye, 1900; *In White Raiment*, 1900; *Of Royal Blood*, 1900

1901-1905 • *Her Majesty's Minister*, 1901; *The Court of Honour*, 1901; *The Gamblers*, 1901; *The Sign of the Seven Sins*, 1901; *The Under-Secretary*, 1902; *The Unnamed*, 1902; *The Seven Secrets*, 1903; *The Three Glass Eyes*, 1903; *The Tickencote Treasure*, 1903; *The Idol of the Town*, 1904; *As We Forgave Them*, 1904; *The Closed Book*, 1904; *The Hunchback of Westminster*, 1904; *The Man from Downing Street*, 1904; *The Red Hat*, 1904; *The Sign of the Stranger*, 1904; *Behind the Throne*, 1905; *Sins of the City*, 1905; *The Czar's Spy*, 1905; *The Mask*, 1905; *The Spider's Eye*, 1905; *The Valley of the Shadow*, 1905; *Who Giveth This Woman?*, 1905

1906-1910 • *The Great Court Scandal*, 1906; *The House of the Wicked*, 1906; *The Invasion of 1910: With a Full Account of the Siege of London*, 1906; *The Mysterious Mr. Miller*, 1906; *The Mystery of a Motor-Car*, 1906; *The Woman at Kensington*, 1906; *Whatsoever a Man Soweth*, 1906; *The Great Plot*, 1907; *The Secret of the Square*, 1907; *Whosoever Loveth*, 1907; *Stolen Sweets*, 1908; *The Crooked Way*, 1908; *The Looker-On*, 1908; *The Pauper of Park Lane*, 1908; *The Woman in the Way*, 1908; *Fatal Thirteen*, 1909; *The House of Whispers*, 1909; *The Red Room*, 1909; *Lying Lips*, 1910; *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 1910; *Treasure of Israel*, 1910 (also known as *The Great God Gold*)

1911-1915 • *Hushed Up!*, 1911; *The Money-Spider*, 1911; *Fatal Fingers*, 1912; *The Mystery of Nine*, 1912; *Without Trace*, 1912; *The Lost Million*, 1913; *The Price of Power: Being Chapters from the Secret History of the Imperial Court of Russia*, 1913; *The Room of Secrets*, 1913; *Her Royal Highness*, 1914; *Sons of Satan*, 1914; *The Four Faces*, 1914; *The German Spy: A Present-day Story*, 1914; *The Hand of Allah*, 1914 (also known as *The Riddle of the Ring*); *The Maker of Secrets*, 1914; *The White Lie*, 1914; *At the Sign of the Sword*, 1915; *The Double Shadow*, 1915; *The Mysterious Three*, 1915; *The Mystery of the Green Ray*, 1915 (also known as *The Green Ray*); *The Sign of Silence*, 1915; *The White Glove*, 1915

1916-1920 • *Annette of the Argonne*, 1916; *Number 70, Berlin*, 1916; *The Broken Thread*, 1916; *The Man About Town*, 1916; *The Place of Dragons*, 1916;

The Unbound Book, 1916; *The Zeppelin Destroyer*, 1916; *Behind the German Lines*, 1917; *No Greater Love*, 1917; *Rasputin, the Rascal Monk*, 1917; *The Breath of Suspicion*, 1917; *The Devil's Carnival*, 1917; *Two in a Tangle*, 1917; *Bolo, the Super-Spy*, 1918; *The Catspaw*, 1918; *The Little Blue Goddess*, 1918; *The Minister of Evil: The Secret History of Rasputin's Betrayal of Russia*, 1918; *The Secret Life of the Ex-Tsaritza*, 1918; *The Sister Disciple*, 1918; *The Stolen Statesman*, 1918; *The Yellow Ribbon*, 1918; *Sant of the Secret Service*, 1918; *Cipher Six*, 1919; *Rasputinism in London*, 1919; *Secrets of the White Tsar*, 1919; *The Doctor of Pimlico*, 1919; *The Forbidden Word*, 1919; *The King's Incognito*, 1919; *The Lure of Love*, 1919; *The Secret Shame of the Kaiser*, 1919; *No. 7 Saville Square*, 1920; *The Heart of a Princess*, 1920; *The Intriguers*, 1920; *The Red Widow: Or, The Death-Dealers of London*, 1920; *The Terror of the Air*, 1920; *Whither Thou Goest*, 1920

1921-1925 • *Mademoiselle of Monte Carlo*, 1921; *The Fifth Finger*, 1921; *The Open Verdict*, 1921; *The Power of the Borgias: The Story of the Great Film*, 1921; *This House to Let*, 1921; *The Golden Face*, 1922; *The Stretton Street Affair*, 1922; *The Voice from the Void*, 1922; *The Young Archduchess*, 1922; *Three Knots*, 1922; *The Bronze Face*, 1923 (also known as *Behind the Bronze Door*); *Where the Desert Ends*, 1923; *A Woman's Debt*, 1924; *Fine Feathers*, 1924; *The Crystal Claw*, 1924; *The Blue Bungalow*, 1925; *The Broadcast Mystery*, 1925; *The Marked Man*, 1925; *The Valrose Mystery*, 1925

1926-1930 • *Hidden Hands*, 1926 (also known as *The Dangerous Game*); *The Black Owl*, 1926; *The Fatal Face*, 1926; *The Letter E*, 1926 (also known as *The Tattoo Mystery*); *The Mystery of Mademoiselle*, 1926; *The Scarlet Sign*, 1926; *Blackmailed*, 1927; *The Chameleon*, 1927 (also known as *Poison Shadows*); *The House of Evil*, 1927; *The Lawless Hand*, 1927; *The Office Secret*, 1927; *Concerning This Woman*, 1928; *The Rat Trap*, 1928; *The Secret Formula*, 1928; *The Sting*, 1928; *Twice Tried*, 1928; *The Amazing Count*, 1929; *The Crinkled Crown*, 1929; *The Golden Three*, 1930

SHORT FICTION: 1892-1910 • *Strange Tales of a Nihilist*, 1892 (also known as *A Secret Service*); *Stolen Souls*, 1895; *The Veiled Man*, 1899; *Secrets of Monte*

Carlo, 1899; *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, 1903; *Confessions of a Ladies' Man*, 1905; *The Count's Chauffeur*, 1907; *The Lady in the Car*, 1908; *Spies of the Kaiser*, 1909

1911-1920 • *Revelations of the Secret Service*, 1911; *The Indiscretions of a Lady's Maid*, 1911; *The Death-Doctor*, 1912; *Mysteries*, 1913; "Cinders" of *Harley Street*, 1916; *The Spy Hunter*, 1916; *Beryl of the Biplane*, 1917; *Donovan of Whitehall*, 1917; *Further Secrets of Potsdam*, 1917; *Hushed Up at German Headquarters*, 1917; *More Secrets of Potsdam*, 1917; *The Bomb-Makers*, 1917; *The Rainbow Mystery: Chronicles of a Colour-Criminologist*, 1917; *The Scandal-Monger*, 1917; *The Secrets of Potsdam*, 1917; *Mysteries of the Great City*, 1919; *The Hotel X*, 1919; *In Secret*, 1920; *Society Intrigues I Have Known*, 1920; *The Secret Telephone*, 1920

1921-1931 • *The Elusive Four: The Exciting Exploits of Four Thieves*, 1921; *The Lady-in-Waiting*, 1921; *The Luck of the Secret Service*, 1921; *The Gay Triangle: The Romance of the First Air Adventurers*, 1922; *Tracked by Wireless*, 1922; *Bleke, the Butler*, 1923; *The Crimes Club: A Record of Secret Investigations into Some Amazing Crimes, Mostly Withheld from the Public*, 1927; *The Peril of Helen Marklove, and Other Stories*, 1928; *The Factotum, and Other Stories*, 1931

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *The Proof*, pr. 1924 (also known as *Vendetta*)

NONFICTION: *An Observer in the Near East*, 1907 (also known as *The Near East*); *The Balkan Trouble: Or, An Observer in the Near East*, 1912; *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds*, 1914; *The War of the Nations*, 1914; *Britain's Deadly Peril: Are We Told the Truth?*, 1915; *German Spies in England: An Exposure*, 1915; *The Devil's Spawn: How Italy Will Defeat Them*, 1915; *The Way to Win*, 1916; *Love Intrigues of the Kaiser's Sons*, 1918; *Landru: His Secret Love Affairs*, 1922; *Things I Know About Kings, Celebrities, and Crooks*, 1923; *Engelberg: The Crown Jewel of the Alps*, 1927

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GASTON LEROUX

Born: Paris, France; May 6, 1868

Died: Nice, France; April 16, 1927

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; thriller; horror

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Joseph Rouletabille, 1907-1923

Chéri-Bibi, 1913-1925

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOSEPH ROULETABILLE, an investigative reporter and amateur sleuth, is employed by the Paris daily *L'Époque*. Rouletabille's editor assigns him to investigate "the mystery of the yellow room," and the brilliance that the reporter displays in solving this and later mysteries brings him world renown as a detective.

CHÉRI-BIBI is regarded by the public as the king of criminals. After being wrongly sentenced to prison for murder, he escapes and solves the original murder but is imprisoned again. Another escape leads to a third imprisonment.

CONTRIBUTION

Gaston Leroux, a journalist by profession, proved himself an outstanding author of two different kinds of popular fiction: what the French term the *roman policier* and the *roman d'aventure*. Both these terms are broad and ambiguous: the first embraces more specifically the detective mystery, the police procedural, and the crime story. The second term embraces such vague categories as thriller, novel of suspense, and horror story as well as the more specific espionage story, gothic romance, Western, fantasy, and science fiction.

Leroux created two main series characters, Joseph Rouletabille and Chéri-Bibi. Rouletabille is a prodigy who displayed his mathematical genius at the age of nine. As a child, he was accused of a theft of which he was innocent and ran away from his boarding school in Eu. He lived on the street until age eighteen, when he became a reporter on the Paris paper *L'Époque*. Although a rationalist, he is not a worshiper of reason. He holds that it is incorrect to apply logical processes to external signs without first having grasped them in-



Gaston Leroux.

tuitively. In his thinking, therefore, Rouletabille is as much a philosopher as a mathematician.

Chéri-Bibi, whose real name is Jean Mascart, grew up in Puits, near Dieppe. He was a butcher's apprentice when he was mistakenly convicted for the murder of M. Bourrelier, a wealthy shipowner and the father of Cécily, the beautiful girl whom the poor butcher's boy loved. Although Chéri-Bibi's life was spared, he was sentenced to a long term in prison. His life then became a series of escapes and repeated imprisonments as he committed various crimes in his efforts to survive and to remain free. As an innocent man to whom society has meted out injustice, he blames his difficulties on fate. At the same time, he is a man who knows how to laugh.

Leroux's first novel in his famous Joseph Rouletabille series, *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1907; *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908; also known as *Murder in the Bedroom*), is a detective mystery. It fo-

cuses on the solution of a mysterious crime by an unofficial detective whose method is opposed and superior to that of the police. In composing this novel, Leroux followed his predecessor Edgar Allan Poe, who in inventing the detective mystery had reacted negatively to the police-procedural narrative emerging in François-Eugène Vidocq's work. Leroux also sought to go Poe one better, by using a locked room that, unlike Poe's in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," is hermetically sealed.

In following Poe rather than his important French predecessor Émile Gaboriau—who was the first after Poe to focus on the process of criminal detection, in his *L'Affaire Leroux* (1866; *The Widow Lerouge*, 1873)—Leroux composed a contrapolic narrative (Gaboriau's detective, M. Lecoq, is an *agent de police*, and hence his novel is a police procedural and not a detective mystery). In trying to do something different from both Poe and Gaboriau, Leroux created with *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* a detective mystery that became a landmark in the history of this genre. Indeed, it remains a valued classic of the form.

Although his second Rouletabille novel, *Le Parfum de la dame en noir* (1908; *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, 1909), proved less successful than his first, it is more important than the rest of the series. After 1909, the series becomes focused less on detective mysteries and more on adventures that hew closely to the political realities of the time.

Leroux's legend of Chéri-Bibi begins with *Chéri-Bibi* (1913), a play. It continues with five novels, the last published in 1925. The books in this series belong to the subgenre of the crime novel, but they are concerned with mythic crime, with crime against the order of things as well as crime against the body and soul of humankind. At the same time their style is baroque, with an intertextuality showing the traces of archaeological myths, social codes, and literary techniques. They declare themselves immediately as something artificial, a matter of artistry.

Their Rabelaisian excess suggests that the Chéri-Bibi novels are not to be taken seriously; it would, however, be wrong to conclude that they are ridiculous melodrama. They are extraordinary books, whose texts are stuffed with signs of political, ethical, and

aesthetic importance precursive of the age of modernity, of the primitive, repressed drives within human-kind's unconscious that underlie class prejudice and legal judgments, of the later developments of existentialist philosophy and negative theology, and of the post-structuralist view that literary texts are not products of innocence but laden with hidden meaning. The legend of Chéri-Bibi as told by Leroux amounts to tragicomedy of modernist proportions, although its *fons et origo* is archaeological and archetypal.

BIOGRAPHY

Gaston Leroux, a lawyer, journalist, and writer of fiction, was born in Paris on May 6, 1868, two years before the formation of the Third Republic. He was the son of a building contractor. Although Paris-born, Leroux always thought of himself as a *Normande*, as his mother was from Normandy. He lived for some years at Eu, inland from Le Tréport, while his father was engaged in the restoration of a castle. Leroux attended a school in Eu for a time; later, he was graduated from secondary school in Caen, Normandy.

Leroux removed himself to Paris, where he took up residence in the Latin Quarter and began the study of law, which he later practiced on completion of his studies. A description of his physique about this time by a contemporary indicates that he was a plump man with a curly, chestnut beard. From behind his spectacles, his dark eyes sparkled with malice, his countenance suggesting repressed irreverence. He overflowed with life and energy, and he seemed to have in him something of the street Arab and the Bacchic reveler. The whole judicial system frustrated and irritated him. Eventually, he quit. Leroux remained cynical about the judicial system the rest of his life, and this attitude pervades his fiction. His *Rouletabille* redresses the errors of human justice, and Chéri-Bibi, for a time at least, is both the victim of judicial error and the instrument of supreme justice.

After his stint as a lawyer, Leroux decided to enter the world of journalism. In 1892, he worked for the *Ècho de Paris*, first as a law reporter, then as a theater critic. Soon leaving the *Ècho de Paris*, he became a reporter on the *Matin*. It was not long before Leroux became one of the greatest journalists of his time. He in-

terviewed illustrious persons, covered the Dreyfus affair, and became a foreign correspondent. He followed the peripatetics of the Otto Nordenskjöld expedition to Antarctica (1901-1903). He covered the Russian Revolution of 1905 and later interviewed the admiral who had quelled the rebellion in Moscow. In 1907, Leroux spent some time in Morocco and covered the eruption of Vesuvius in Italy. Too old to be mobilized at the outbreak of World War I, he covered the Armenian massacre by the Turks in 1915. At that point, Leroux decided that he had had enough of traveling to foreign places and terminated his career as a journalist.

Having to find another way to earn a living, Leroux hit on the writing of novels of adventure, including the *roman policier*. After several months of writing, he produced the manuscript of his first novel, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. This story was first published in the September 7, 1907, issue of the magazine *L'Illustration*. It proved an immediate success and was succeeded the following year by *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, which was almost as successful as his first novel. With these two books, Leroux became a world-famous author, and he was to continue to write many more successful novels until his death in Nice on April 16, 1927. As a skilled writer of fiction he has not been forgotten. Apart from the fine study of him by Antoinette Peské and Pierre Marty in their *Les Terribles* of 1951, the journal *Bizarre* devoted its first issue to him in 1953, and the journal *Europe* paid tribute to him in its June/July, 1981, issue.

ANALYSIS

The first two volumes of the *Rouletabille* series, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* and *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, are Gaston Leroux's masterpieces. These novels complement each other by rounding out the character and personality of their hero, the reporter-detective Joseph Rouletabille. They also involve Rouletabille's confidant Sainclair (who also serves as the narrator), Mathilde Stangerson (the Lady in Black), Robert Darzac, and the notorious criminal Ballmeyer (alias Jean Roussel and Frédéric Larsan). Both stories involve the attempted murder of Mathilde Stangerson by the same persistent criminal whose identity is hidden from the rest of the characters until uncovered by

Rouletabille, and both concern the mystery of how the criminal entered a hermetically sealed room to make such attempts and escaped thereafter.

**THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW ROOM AND
THE PERFUME OF THE LADY IN BLACK**

The two novels differ in the times and places in which their stories occur in France. *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* takes place in 1892, principally at the Château du Glandier, located on the edge of the forest of Sainte-Genevieve, just above Épinay-sur-Orge. It is the residence of the famous American-French chemist Professor Stangerson and his beautiful daughter Mathilde, who assists her father in his experiments regarding his theory of the “dissociation of matter” by electrical action that contradicted the law of the “conservation of matter.” Her bedroom, abutting her father’s laboratory, is the sealed “yellow room,” in which she is viciously attacked and seriously injured by the unknown criminal. The narrative of *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* takes place in 1895—although flashbacks take the reader to earlier times in the lives of Rouletabille, Stangerson, and Larsan. The main events take place at the Fort of Hercules, located at Roches Rouges, near Menton on the Côte d’Azur, the home of Arthur and Edith Rance. In *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Mathilde Stangerson and Robert Darzac are married. As husband and wife, they occupy adjoining bedrooms in the Square Tower of the fort, and these apartments are hermetically sealed when an attempt on the life of Darzac takes place inside, thus constituting another locked-room mystery. In addition, there are mysteries concerning the identification of Larsan and the one “body too many.”

What is not so plain about these two novels, among a number of subordinate matters, is their underlying mythical structures, which are hidden, particularly in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, by the technical device of displacement or the adaptation of myth to realistic criteria. In *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, Rouletabille says of Mathilde Stangerson: “I saw her. . . . I breathed *her*—I inhaled the perfume of the lady in black. . . . How the memory of that perfume—felt by me alone—carries me back to the days of my childhood.” Although ignorant at this time that she is his mother, he—and he alone—senses the fragrance, one

might say the aura, of the mother he knew as a child. *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* reveals that Rouletabille was separated from his mother at the age of nine. When he applied for the job of reporter in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, its editor in chief asked him his name. He replied “Joseph Josephine.” The editor remarked, “That’s not a name,” but added that it made no difference. Like Odysseus, Rouletabille has no name because he does not know the identity of his parents. His fellow reporters gave him the nickname Rouletabille because of his marble-shaped head.

Endowed with an Oedipus complex, Rouletabille—as it turns out—seeks to protect his mother from her male attacker and to identify him. Hence, from a mythical point of view, the plot of *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* amounts to a “search for the father,” although Rouletabille does not learn the identity of his father until *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*. Nevertheless, Rouletabille is powerfully intuitive; he is a psychic before he is a mathematician or a logician. He may seem a Telemachus and in a way he is. Not only does he search for his father but also, having learned of his father’s identity, Rouletabille cannot help admiring him for his bravery, wisdom, and cunning, which are the chief qualities of Odysseus. At the end of *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, he allows Larsan (who is revealed as his father) to escape the law, ostensibly to protect his mother’s secret, but one suspects that his psychic feeling would not allow for both his father’s capture and the protection of his mother.

The Perfume of the Lady in Black begins by asking the question: Who is Rouletabille? In answering this question, the novel is more frank than *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. It soon discloses that its plot is, in essence, a “search for the mother,” the father being found by accident, or, more likely from Leroux’s point of view, the finding of the father being the result of fate or destiny. Toward the conclusion of *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Oedipus-Rouletabille is prepared to kill Laius-Larsan if need be to protect Jocasta-Mathilde, but he does not have to because Larsan kills himself. After the reunion of the real Robert Darzac and Mathilde, Rouletabille resolves his Oedipus complex (he is now twenty-one and has become an adult) by contentedly leaving his mother in the protection of her new hus-

band. He returns to Paris in favor of his journalistic responsibilities and a proposed trip to Russia.

If the two novels taken together have an overriding theme, it is an attack of pure empiricism: Presumptions based on what is seen alone may prove false if the reality lies in what has not been seen. Rouletabille is suspicious of appearances because they may be illusory. Hypotheses based on the intuitive and creative power of the imagination must form a circle within whose circumference reason and logic must be confined. Reasoning has both good and bad ends. Observations must be instinctive, and logic must not be twisted in favor of preconceived ideas. Rouletabille says to Larsan: "It's dangerous, very dangerous, Monsieur Fred, to go from a preconceived idea to find the proofs to fit it." Facts are empty sacks that will not stand upright until filled with correct interpretations.

The Mystery of the Yellow Room and *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* differ considerably in style and treatment. The style of the former is plain, factual, largely unemotional. Descriptions are sparse, and little or no use is made of simile. Nevertheless, the style is interesting—indeed, it is absorbing—from beginning to end. On the other hand, *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* is more complicated and lavish. It contains more elaborate descriptions and more imaginative speculations. Leroux's treatment of his subject in *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* is far more emotional than that in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. For example, he remarks of Larsan's attack on the Square Tower:

In a siege as mysterious as this, the attack may be in everything or in nothing. . . . The assailant is as still as the grave . . . and the enemy approaches the walls walking in his stocking feet. . . . It is, perhaps, in the very stillness itself, but again, it may, perhaps, be in the spoken word. It is in a tone, in a sigh, in a breath. It is a gesture. . . . It may be in all which is hidden . . . all that is revealed—in everything which one sees and which one does not see.

In *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* Rouletabille is continually losing control of his emotions, then regaining his concentration. As a result, the narrator, Sainclair, is sometimes required to sustain the story line. This frenetic seesawing between emotionalism

and calmness veils from the reader the novel's development and its unity.

Although Leroux's work is rooted in nineteenth century melodrama and the prototypical detective fiction of Poe and his followers, it also anticipates the post-World War II vogue for serious fiction that appropriates the conventions of the detective novel only to subvert them. The difference is that, while in the works of modern writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet and Leonardo Sciascia the subversion is intentional, in Leroux's baroque fictions it may have been unconscious.

Richard P. Benton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOSEPH ROULETABILLE SERIES: *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*, 1907 (*The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908; also known as *Murder in the Bedroom*); *Le Parfum de la dame en noir*, 1908 (*The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, 1909); *Rouletabille chez le tsar*, 1913 (*The Secret of the Night*, 1914); *Le Château noir*, 1916; *Les étranges noces de Rouletabille*, 1916; *Rouletabille chez Krupp*, 1920; *Le Crime de Rouletabille*, 1922 (*The Slave Bangle*, 1925; also known as *The Phantom Clue*); *Rouletabille chez les Bohémians*, 1923 (*The Sleuth Hound*, 1926; also known as *The Octopus of Paris*)

CHÉRI-BIBI SERIES: *Chéri-Bibi*, 1913 (with Alévy and Marcel Nadaud); *Chéri-Bibi et Cécily*, 1921 (*Chéri-Bibi and Cécily*, 1923; also known as *Missing Men*); *Fatalitas!*, 1921 (*Chéri-Bibi, Mystery Man*, 1924; also known as *The Dark Road*); *Les Cages flottantes*, 1921 (*The Floating Prison*, 1922; also known as *Wolves of the Sea*); *Palas et Chéri-Bibi*, 1921; *Le Coup d'état de Chéri-Bibi*, 1925 (*The New Idol*, 1928)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *La Double Vie de Theophraste Longuet*, 1904 (*The Double Life*, 1909); *Fantôme de l'opéra*, 1910 (*The Phantom of the Opera*, 1911); *Le Fauteuil hanté*, 1911 (*The Haunted Chair*, 1931); *Balao*, 1912 (English translation, 1913); *L'épouse du soleil*, 1913 (*The Bride of the Sun*, 1915); *L'Homme qui revient de loin*, 1917 (*The Man Who Came Back from the Dead*, 1918); *Le Capitaine Hyx*, 1920 (*The Amazing Adventures of Carolus Herbert*, 1922); *Le Cœur cambriolé*, 1922 (*The Burgled Heart*,

1925; also known as *The New Terror*); *La Machine à assassiner*, 1923 (*The Machine to Kill*, 1935); *La Poupée sanglante*, 1924 (*The Kiss That Killed*, 1934); *Le Fils de trois pères*, 1926 (*The Son of Three Fathers*, 1927); *Mister Flow*, 1927 (*The Man of a Hundred Masks*, 1930; also known as *The Queen of Crime*); *Lady Helena*, 1929 (*Lady Helena: Or, The Mysterious Lady*, 1931)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *La Maison des juges*, pb. 1906 (with Pierre Wolff); *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*, pb. 1907; *Le Lys*, pb. 1909 (with Pierre Wolff); *L'Homme qui a vu le diable*, pb. 1911; *Alsace*, pb. 1913 (with Lucien Camille)

NONFICTION: *L'Agonie de la Russie blanche*, 1928

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Novel and Its Progeny. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Study of the tropes of sublimation and repression in *Phantom of the Opera* and its many film and stage adaptations. Bibliographic references and index.

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Sayers, Dorothy L. *Les Origines du Roman Policier: A Wartime Wireless Talk to the French*. Translated by Suzanne Bray. Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, England: Dorothy L. Sayers Society, 2003. Address to the French by the famous English mystery author, discussing the history of French detective fiction and its relation to the English version of the genre.

Symons, Julian. *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972. Places Leroux in a lineage of crime-fiction writers, focusing on his role in the evolution of the genre in France and the influence of the French on British and American authors.

Thomson, H. Douglas. *Masters of Mystery: A Study of the Detective Story*. Reprint. New York: Dover, 1978. Places Leroux alongside his fellow "masters" in the process of comparing the French detective story with other national crime literatures.

JOHN LESCROART

Born: Houston, Texas; January 14, 1948

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Auguste Lupa, 1986-

Dismas Hardy, 1989-

Abe Glitsky, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

AUGUSTE LUPA is a British secret service agent who works for Mycroft Holmes, the brother of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. He is also pat-

terned after Rex Stout's detective, Nero Wolfe, whose orchid-growing hobby Lupa emulates.

DISMAS HARDY, a Vietnam War veteran, is a former police officer turned defense attorney who specializes in homicide cases, often relying on police detective Abe Glitsky, even though their jobs also lead them into conflict.

ABE GLITSKY, a half African American and half Jewish homicide detective, is a rather dour yet sensitive man. He has a rigid code of behavior, forbidding colleagues to swear in his presence, and adheres to a set of methods and ethics that sometimes puts him in

conflict with district attorneys and defense attorneys who work the system but are not necessarily as single-minded as Glitsky is about finding and convicting the real criminals.

CONTRIBUTION

John Lescroart has said that he wanted to create a detective looking for a sense of direction. In other words, the detective's involvement in crime solving is inseparable from his maturation as a man. Dismas Hardy was the result: a man who has had several careers and is troubled about how to maintain a well-rounded family life. Hardy needs help and finds it in the form of Abe Glitsky, a homicide detective whose major failing is that he is all too sure about himself and his cases. In other words the two men need each other—Hardy supplying the doubt, Glitsky the confidence. Unlike in earlier two-man detective teams (Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin), there is no master/mentor relationship. Hardy solves crimes by asking endless questions while keeping his theories of what happened open to constant revision, whereas Glitsky tends to press his perception of what happened and who did it until all the facts fit or he has to start again with a different set of premises.

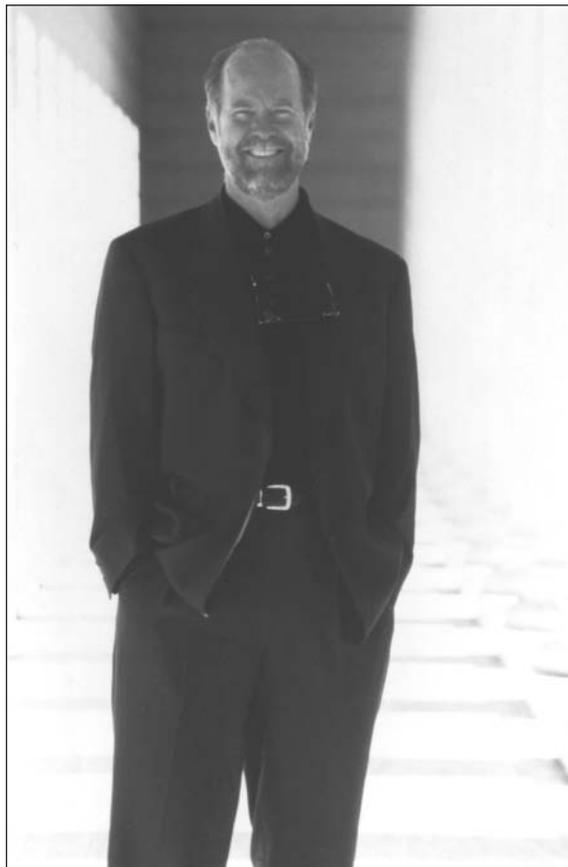
Thus this unusual duo upsets the conventional format of the crime story, allowing Lescroart to combine the police procedural (Glitsky) with the legal thriller (Hardy). The friendship of Hardy and Glitsky—in spite of the conflicting roles of defense attorney and homicide detective—injects a level of intensity and complexity that is unusual in crime fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

John Lescroart was born in Houston on January 14, 1948. He has said that writing has always been in his blood. His father, a businessman, was a frustrated writer who regretted never writing the novel he said he had in him. Lescroart published plays, poems, and essays in high school and college. Majoring in English at the University of California at Berkeley, he completed a first novel heavily influenced by Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. A year later he wrote a second novel, but he did not attempt to get his work published, regarding writing as a means of self-expression but not

as a career. Then came an interest in music that led him to composing songs and performing in the 1970's in Europe. He returned to Los Angeles intent on becoming a rock star.

By the late 1970's Lescroart began to realize that his dreams of rock stardom were unlikely to be realized, and he stopped performing. He wrote one novel about his experiences in Europe but did not seek a publisher. Then he wrote a few novels experimenting with the mystery and detective genre (pastiche of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries). When his early novel, *Sunburn* (1982), won a writing prize and was later published, he began to think about a full-time writing career. However, Lescroart had not yet found his voice. This was a troubling period for him. In 1979, he divorced his first wife, Leslee Ann Miller, after a three-year marriage. He married Lisa Marie Sawyer in 1984. They had one son and one daughter. Lescroart



John Lescroart. (© John Earle/Courtesy, Delacorte Press)

continued to write and supported himself as a editor and writing consultant. His wife encouraged him to submit his Lupa series for publication, and within six weeks he had a contract.

Lescroart has attributed his increasing productivity and success to a life-changing event in 1989. He went bodysurfing in Seal Beach, California, was exposed to contaminated seawater, and contracted spinal meningitis. The doctors gave him only two hours to live, but he emerged from an eleven-day coma and a near-death experience that, he suggests, led to a creative rebirth. He then built on the experience of working as an administrator in a law firm for seven years by developing the Hardy and Glitsky series. In 1991 Lescroart became a full-time writer.

In addition to his years working in a law firm, Lescroart has attributed the authenticity of his legal thrillers to a lifelong friendship with Al Gianini, a violent-crime prosecutor in the San Francisco Bay area. The two men have known each other since Lescroart was fourteen, which perhaps accounts for Lescroart's deft handling of the friendship between Hardy and Glitsky.

ANALYSIS

John Lescroart's Dismas Hardy is an unusual defense attorney. He often asks his clients if they are guilty (the best defense lawyers, as Hardy knows, disapprove of this kind of interrogation), and he confesses to considerable sympathy with the prosecution. This behavior may be due to Hardy's having been a police officer before entering law school and his having a homicide detective, Abe Glitsky, as his best friend. The need to see justice done is what motivates Hardy and Glitsky. Therefore, even when Hardy believes he has a guilty client—or when the client has confessed—problems with police procedure or with the prosecution's methods arouse Hardy's anger. Consequently, he has acquired a reputation for taking on cases that put him at odds with the legal system and with his friend Glitsky.

The desire of these two men to maintain their friendship and to solve crimes together results in complex psychological stories that get at the heart of the personalities who pursue crime and at the way justice is administered. Lescroart's own experience in a law firm has obviously contributed significantly to his dra-

matization of how the legal system functions—often to the detriment of suspects, unless indefatigable attorneys like Hardy represent them.

DEAD IRISH

Dead Irish (1989), the first novel in the Dismas Hardy series, begins with the main character at a low point. His careers as police officer and attorney are gone. He has also failed as a family man (his infant son dies in a tragic accident). He now works as a bartender for his old Vietnam War buddy, Moses, at the Little Shamrock Bar near Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. However, Hardy's spirits start to revive as he begins to investigate the death of his friend Eddie Cochran, a young man with a promising future who dies in circumstances that suggest suicide. Hardy cannot believe his friend killed himself. To investigate, he has to deal with a police department that clearly wants no vigilante detective barging in on its case. That Hardy persists not only restores a measure of his own dignity but also recovers the truth of Eddie's death for his family, allowing them to heal as well.

THE MERCY RULE

In *The Mercy Rule* (1998), Graham Russo is accused of killing his father Sal, a down-and-out loner suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It is known that Sal was thinking of suicide and that he had a stash of morphine that he vowed to use when life became unbearable. Did Graham merely assist his father's desire to end his suffering? Graham is charged with murder when fifty thousand dollars in cash and a valuable baseball card collection (both belonging to Sal) are found in Graham's safe deposit box. Even Graham's family suspects him of criminal intent. Although trained as a lawyer, Graham has given up the profession, first pursuing his dream of playing in major league baseball and then, when he failed to make the cut, indulging in a helter-skelter life that makes it seem probable that his father's cash and card collection were too much of a temptation for him.

Even Dismas Hardy thinks Graham may be guilty, although Graham steadfastly refuses any deal with the prosecutor. To understand the nature of the crime and who is really guilty, Hardy must take several tangents. He must look at what happened to Sal, who was once an upstanding member of his community, and what

happened to Graham, whose abrupt rejection of the law has made him persona non grata among the San Francisco legal community. Essentially Hardy is called on to research the lives of father and son and their friends, finding out, in the process, that Sal's dropping out of society is connected to an overwhelming sense of guilt over a restaurant fire that somehow shattered his faith in himself and in society. Hardy's work is complicated by his fraught relationship with Abe Glitsky, who has little patience for the attorney's roundabout way of gathering evidence and interpreting his client's gestalt. Psychological analysis dominates legal procedure in this absorbing mystery.

THE HEARING

In *The Hearing* (2000), Cole Burgess, a drug addict, is caught standing over the dead body of Elaine Wager, with the proverbial smoking gun in his hand. Normal procedure is to send drug-addict suspects to the hospital and to detox before they are interrogated. However, Elaine is Abe Glitsky's daughter, the result of a liaison with Loretta Wager, who later became a United States senator and then killed herself. Loretta did not tell Glitsky that Elaine was his child because he refused to marry her, and Elaine died before Glitsky was able to figure out whether he should contact his daughter. Grieving and angry about Elaine, Glitsky makes a major mistake, turning Burgess over to detectives, who grill him for hours until the exhausted suspect, who is in withdrawal, confesses to the crime.

Members of Burgess's family—one of whom is a reporter and Hardy's close friend—call on Dismas Hardy to defend Burgess. Dismas would prefer not to get involved not only because he believes Burgess is guilty but also because he has promised his wife, Frannie, not to take on any more high-profile murder cases because they disrupt their marriage and family life. However, Hardy cannot help himself when he learns that District Attorney Sharon Pratt is going to make the prosecution of Burgess a political issue in her campaign for reelection. She is way behind in the polls and decides she needs to look tough on crime, especially because her administration has never called for the death penalty during her term in office. Hardy's ire, then, stems from this perversion of the criminal justice system. Burgess has no criminal record, and Pratt's

grandstanding aggravates Hardy so much that he runs afoul of the judge at Burgess's hearing. In open court, Hardy accuses the district attorney of turning the trial into a political circus. In his chambers, Judge Hill admonishes Hardy that if he makes one more outburst he will be charged with contempt of court.

Unlike some of the other Hardy and Glitsky mysteries, *The Hearing* adheres closely to the format of a legal thriller in which legal procedure is paramount. The narrative explains in fascinating detail what "probable cause" means, how the defense has to prove, in effect, that the prosecution does not have enough evidence to bring a case to trial before a jury.

In this case, Hardy finds Glitsky more of an ally than adversary because Glitsky comes to his senses and realizes that Burgess's confession is not "righteous"—a term the police use to mean a confession is ethically and legally obtained. Hardy's fellow attorney, David Freeman, a master of legal procedure and courtroom histrionics, is another memorable character.

It is also in this novel that Glitsky meets Treya Ghent, Elaine's paralegal, who not only contributes significantly to Burgess's exoneration but also captures Glitsky's heart. Finally coming out of mourning for Flo (his first wife who died of cancer), Glitsky now seems ready to start a new family and a new life with the compassionate but confident Treya.

THE OATH

In *The Oath* (2002), when Tim Markham, the head of a health maintenance organization (HMO), is struck by a hit-and-run driver and dies in his own hospital, his death seems to be an accident. Then, however, Markham's wife and family are murdered. Suspicion turns toward Dr. Eric Kensing, a doctor on Markham's staff whose conflicts with Markham are well known—not to mention that Markham had also been having an affair with Kensing's wife.

As usual Hardy and Glitsky begin to unravel a complex set of motivations and cross-purposes that make Kensing only one of several suspects. Much closer to a police procedural than a legal thriller (there are no courtroom scenes), this novel provides an in-depth look at how the efforts of HMOs to cut costs can jeopardize sound medical practice.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

AUGUSTE LUPA SERIES: *Son of Holmes*, 1986; *Rasputin's Revenge*, 1987

DISMAS HARDY SERIES: *Dead Irish*, 1989; *The Vig*, 1990; *Hard Evidence*, 1993; *The Thirteenth Juror*, 1994; *The Mercy Rule*, 1998; *Nothing But the Truth*, 1999; *The First Law*, 2003; *The Second Chair*, 2004; *The Motive*, 2005

ABE GLITSKY SERIES: *A Certain Justice*, 1995; *Guilt*, 1997; *The Hearing*, 2000; *The Oath*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Hunt Club*, 2005; *The Suspect*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Sunburn*, 1982

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Anderson, Patrick. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Includes a short but informative section on Lescroart, comparing him to other writers of legal thrillers such as Scott Turow and John Grisham. Anderson concludes that Lescroart's novels are just as entertaining as Grisham's but more realistic, and that his strengths are characterization and his ability to "set legal battles in a believable world." Several novels

are discussed, especially *The Motive*. Anderson also supplies some important biographical details.

Lescroart, John. John Lescroart: Website of the Author. <http://www.johnlescroart.com>. The author's official Web site includes a biography emphasizing how Lescroart became a novelist, news about forthcoming novels, interviews, summaries of his books, compilations of his music, and a list of forthcoming appearances at bookstores and other book signings.

Pickard, Nancy, and Lynn Lott. *Seven Steps on the Writer's Path: The Journey from Frustration to Fulfillment*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003. Lescroart is interviewed about how he is able to continue writing novels. He describes his working methods, including writing several opening scenes, discarding them and beginning again, and searching for a way to write a better book than the last one.

White, Terry, ed. *Justice Denoted: The Legal Thriller in American, British, and Continental Courtroom Literature*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003. Detailed discussion of Lescroart's novels. He is quoted as saying his work is closer to police procedurals than legal thrillers, and he names the writers who have influenced him (Hemingway and Lawrence Sanders, for example) and writers he admires, such as Elmore Leonard and John D. MacDonald.

IRA LEVIN

Born: New York, New York; August 27, 1929

Died: New York, New York; November 12, 2007

Types of plot: Horror; inverted; psychological; thriller; metaphysical and metafictional parody

CONTRIBUTION

Ira Levin began his career as a writer in his early twenties by winning a screenplay-writing contest sponsored by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1949. His entry, "The Old Woman," about a wealthy elderly woman who thwarts a plot by her nephew to murder

her for her money, won the second-place prize of two hundred dollars. Levin soon sold this script to CBS's rival, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), for four hundred dollars, and it was filmed as an episode of NBC's popular mystery anthology series, *Lights Out*. This early success allowed Levin to avoid having to work in his father's toy business and launched him on a versatile career as a popular writer of both Broadway plays and best-selling novels, a number of which were later made into critically acclaimed films.

Beginning with the publication in 1953 of his first

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Ira Levin. (AP/Wide World Photos)

novel, *A Kiss Before Dying*, Levin became one of the most influential writers within the thriller genre, and his works left a mark on popular culture for the next four decades. In the warped, cold-blooded murderer at the center of the plot of *A Kiss Before Dying*, Levin provided a prototype for the repulsive but endlessly fascinating psychopathic and sociopathic killers who populated American crime fiction and film for much of the twentieth century, from Norman Bates in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959) to the sadistic Leatherface in the cult horror-film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and the many "slasher" films of the 1970's and 1980's, to, most notably, Hannibal Lecter in Thomas Harris's series of novels featuring a compellingly clever, cannibalistic madman. With the immense popularity of his 1967 novel of devil-worship and black magic in modern New York, *Rosemary's Baby*, Levin inaugurated another subgenre that would prove popular for years to come—horror tales involving demonic impregnation or

diabolic children. Subsequent works that reflect this aspect of Levin's influence include the novel and film formats of *The Exorcist* (1971 and 1973, respectively), the popular series of *Omen* films (beginning in 1976) dealing with the birth of an antichrist, and David Cronenberg's much-admired 1979 film, *The Brood*.

Admired by other writers of supernatural-themed thrillers such as Stephen King, Levin demonstrated in his novels and plays a talent for more than tightly constructed plots containing ample surprises. He also displayed a deft ability to incorporate into accessible, entertaining stories topical themes of the day without becoming preachy or heavy-handed. For example, *A Kiss Before Dying* depicts the growing paranoia and mistrust of the Cold War years, while *Rosemary's Baby* reflects unease about radical changes in religious thought in the 1960's in the United States as well as the nation's growing concern about reproductive issues. Likewise, *The Stepford Wives* (1972) addresses doubts about changing gender roles in the 1970's, and *Sliver* (1991) deals with worries in the 1990's about lack of privacy as the result of the increasing sophistication of monitoring devices.

BIOGRAPHY

Ira Levin was born in New York City on August 27, 1929, to a toy merchant and importer, Charles Levin, and his wife, Beatrice Schlansky Levin. As a boy, he became fascinated with magic and began frequenting shops that sold supplies for professional magicians. In his early teens, he developed a passionate interest in theater and in mystery stories. Soon, he had decided to be a playwright or novelist—or both. However, his father was insistent that his son enter the family's toy business. After graduating from the Horace Mann School in New York, Levin decided to attend Drake University in Iowa, but after two years moved back to New York and enrolled in New York University, from which he received a bachelor of arts with a major in English and philosophy. Levin was in his senior year when he won the second-place prize in CBS's screenplay contest.

After Levin graduated, the conflict with his father about a choice of career resumed. Eventually the two agreed on a plan: For two years, his father would sup-

port Levin financially while he tried to establish himself as a writer. If Levin was unsuccessful after two years, he would join his father's business. Levin quickly succeeded, however, selling screenplays to the television anthology series *Lights Out* and *The United States Steel Hour* and stories to such magazines as *The Ladies Home Journal* and *Manhunt*. In 1953, when he was only twenty-two years old, Levin published his first novel, *A Kiss Before Dying*, in which he employed techniques using multiple narrators and points of view similar to those used by James Joyce and William Faulkner. A best seller, it won the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Award for best first novel in 1954.

Later in 1953, Levin was drafted into the United States Army. Soon after his discharge, he wrote first a teleplay and then a stage play based on Mac Hyman's comic novel about military life, *No Time for Sergeants*. The play became a huge success on Broadway, running for nearly a thousand performances. However, his next five plays were failures, with one running for only a few months and the other four running for only a handful of performances each. Finally, after fourteen years, Levin decided to try his hand at writing a novel again, and the result, *Rosemary's Baby*, a tale of a midwestern woman who comes to New York and is impregnated by the devil, was one of the best-selling novels of the 1960's. It was soon adapted for the screen by writer-director Roman Polansky as a film starring Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes. Other best-selling novels followed: *This Perfect Day* (1970), *The Stepford Wives*, *The Boys from Brazil* (1976), and *Sliver*. In 1978, Levin returned to the theater with his most important contribution to the mystery genre, the slyly satirical *Deathtrap*, which became the longest-running mystery in the history of Broadway, with almost eighteen hundred performances. In 1980 the Mystery Writers of America gave Levin an Edgar Award for *Deathtrap*, and in 2003 that organization presented him with a Grand Master Award.

Levin was married twice—to Gabrielle Aronsohn from 1960 to 1968 and to Phyllis Finkel from 1979 to 1981. He had three sons by Aronsohn: Adam, Jared, and Nicholas. He died November 12, in New York.

ANALYSIS

Ira Levin's career offers worthwhile insights into

how an author can successfully utilize tropes and conventions of the mystery genre without producing a single major work that can be labeled a straightforward mystery. Beginning his career in the early post-World War II era, Levin was a pioneer in a trend that continued well into the twenty-first century—one of blending genres and experimenting with conventions not only in highbrow literature but also in popular fiction. With few exceptions, Levin's most successful works, both with critics and readers, have been skillfully constructed hybrids of at least two genres, with one always being the mystery story, his favorite form of reading as a boy. This combining of genres is evident in his most popular works, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Stepford Wives*.

Levin repeatedly explored the fate of the outsider in a corrupt, inimical environment. The outsiders in *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Stepford Wives* are the young wives who are new to the community. In *A Kiss Before Dying*, both the killer and Marion, the young woman who ultimately escapes him, are quirky and do not fit comfortably into society, and the hero of Levin's dystopian science-fiction novel, *This Perfect Day*, is called Chip in a futuristic society where everybody else has one of eight approved names followed by a number, and he has eyes of two contrasting colors in a world where defects and differences have been eliminated.

ROSEMARY'S BABY

Rosemary's Baby, Levin's phenomenal best seller of the 1960's, is essentially a story of supernatural horror and the occult: a coven of devil worshipers conjure up the Prince of Darkness to impregnate a young housewife, Rosemary Woodhouse, who has just moved into the gloomy apartment house in New York where the cult operates. However, the plot format that Levin employs is taken directly from classic mystery and detective fiction: The protagonist becomes convinced that something sinister is afoot after the death of a young neighbor. As her suspicions grow, she pursues a pathway of investigation typical to mystery tales, involving eavesdropping, unraveling secret identities, solving anagrams, conducting historical research, and perceiving and analyzing subtle clues such as recurring scents and sounds and slight changes in characters' behavior.

Absolutely nothing overtly supernatural is depicted until the very last chapter, which is almost a parody of the final scene of a mystery novel: Rosemary moves through a secret passageway in a closet into a parlor full of all the surviving characters where points of the plot are rehashed and the truth is revealed.

THE STEPFORD WIVES

The Stepford Wives employs a similar formula, but this time Levin combines science fiction with mystery conventions. In *The Stepford Wives*, a heroine very similar to Rosemary moves with her husband to the placid suburb of Stepford, where a misogynist scientist is replacing the women of the town with slavish android replicas. Here, though, Levin seems to play with the conventions of the cozy mystery format such as that used in Agatha Christie's Jane Marple series. The protagonist finds herself living in a conservative, quiet, seemingly ideal small town in New England but soon picks up numerous clues that something odd is going on, especially in the manor house of the wealthiest and most respected member of the community. Nothing obviously suggestive of science fiction and robotics occurs until the final revelation scene.

A KISS BEFORE DYING

Levin's first novel, *A Kiss Before Dying*, in many ways is seen as his most innovative and surprising work. A taut psychological thriller, it also fits neatly into the mystery subgenre of the inverted narrative that focuses primarily on the killer. The antihero, Bud, is a psychopathic college student who kills quickly and easily to solve whatever problems he encounters. He gets his girlfriend Dorothy pregnant and pushes her off a roof at the Marriage Bureau because he feels that early marriage will interfere with his career. When his girlfriend's sister Ellen investigates her death and gets too close to the truth, he kills Ellen as well. Then Bud sets his sights on marrying and killing the third sister, Marion, to inherit her share of her wealthy father's estate. However, this time he is thwarted, and confronted with his crimes, he commits suicide by jumping into a copper smelter with the same offhandedness with which he dispatched his victims.

Despite more sadistic and graphically rendered psychopathic killers in later mystery and crime fiction and film, Bud remains a chilling, creepy literary cre-

ation and can easily be taken as the prototype of Norman Bates in Bloch's *Psycho* and Patrick Bateman in Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991). This first novel also demonstrates Levin's love of intricate and surprising plots. In a more conventional crime novel or detective story, after Dorothy's murder, a heroic protagonist would arrive to play a cat-and-mouse game of confrontation and interrogation with Bud, but when such a figure does arrive in the form of Ellen, the second sister, she too is murdered. The more traditional amateur-sleuth figures, Gordon Gant and the third sister, Marion, do not even figure prominently in the plot until the last third of the novel.

DEATHTRAP

The longest-running mystery ever to appear on Broadway, *Deathtrap* is a metafictional parody of the mystery genre that nevertheless supplies its audience with the sorts of surprises and plot twists that mystery fans crave. At least a dozen tropes and conventions of the genre are exploited in the play: secret romance as motive for murder, professional jealousy as motive, fears regarding one's reputation as motive, murder by heart attack brought on by fear, a culprit's tricking other people into incriminating themselves by handling weapons and leaving fingerprints, apparent death that turns out to have been faked, conspirators betraying each other, weapons that fail, dark and stormy nights, power failures and blackouts, premonitions of murder, and surprise endings. Nevertheless, with extremely rapid pacing and sardonic dialogue often commenting on the writing of mysteries, Levin manages to surprise the audience with each new twist, even though any mystery fan watching or reading the play will have encountered these conventions hundreds of times previously. As with much parody and metafiction, *Deathtrap* is difficult to summarize, because—as is typical of Levin's work—the pleasure of his plot lies not in its construction but in the order and way in which it is revealed.

Deathtrap tells the story of a has-been playwright who seemingly murders a younger man to appropriate a promising mystery play he has written. When the man seemingly rises from the dead, the older playwright's wife, who has a weak heart, dies of fright. At this point, the audience realizes that the two men are

lovers and have conspired to scare the wife to death. However, the older man comes to distrust his younger lover when he discovers that he has written a play based on the murder that they committed. The play ends with both men dead at each other's hands and a casual visitor in possession of the play.

In addition to spoofing the conventions of the mystery genre, *Deathtrap* takes satirical jabs at Broadway and the writing profession. Until *Deathtrap* premiered, Levin had not had a hit play since *No Time for Sergeants* in the early 1950's. In the play's dialogue, jokes abound about the fickleness of the theater-going public, writer's block, and professional envy among writers. The ironies of Levin's profession are neatly detailed in the play's ending: two men have committed murder and betrayed each other in their quest for a hit play, yet the manuscript that eventually does become a Broadway success ends up in the possession of Helga, who merely happened to be visiting in the neighborhood when the crimes were committed.

Thomas Du Bose

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *A Kiss Before Dying*, 1953; *Rosemary's Baby*, 1967; *The Stepford Wives*, 1972; *The Boys from Brazil*, 1976; *Sliver*, 1991; *Son of Rosemary: The Sequel to "Rosemary's Baby,"* 1997

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *This Perfect Day*, 1970

PLAYS: *No Time for Sergeants*, pr., pb. 1955; *Interlock*, pr., pb. 1958; *Critic's Choice*, pr. 1960; *General Seeger*, pr., pb. 1962; *Drat! The Cat!*, pr. 1965; *Dr.*

Cook's Garden: A Melodrama, pr. 1967; *Veronica's Room*, pr. 1973; *Deathtrap*, pr. 1978; *Break a Leg: A Comedy in Two Acts*, pr. 1979; *Cantorial*, pr. 1988

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Wexman, Virginia Wright. *Roman Polanski*. Boston: Twayne, 1985. The section entitled "Trauma of Infancy" analyzes one of Levin's major themes, the treatment of outsiders and children.

ELIZABETH LININGTON**Barbara Elizabeth Linington****Born:** Aurora, Illinois; March 11, 1921**Died:** Arroyo Grande, California; April 5, 1988**Also wrote as** Anne Blaisdell; Lesley Egan; Egan O'Neill; Dell Shannon**Type of plot:** Police procedural**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Lieutenant Luis Mendoza, 1960-1987

Detective Vic Varallo, 1961-1985

Jesse Falkenstein, 1961-1983

Sergeant Ivor Maddox, 1964-1986

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LUIS MENDOZA is the head of homicide in the Los Angeles Police Department. In his late thirties and a dapper, cynical bachelor when the series begins, he later marries and has children. A fortune inherited from a miserly grandfather enables him to enjoy a luxurious lifestyle.

ALISON WEIR MENDOZA is the girlfriend and later the wife of Mendoza. In her early thirties and the operator of a charm school when the series begins, she later pursues a minor career as an artist. She offers Mendoza stability and acts as a sounding board for his ideas.

ARTHUR "ART" HACKETT, a homicide detective in the Los Angeles Police Department, is Mendoza's senior sergeant, the practical one who balances Mendoza's hunches, and his closest friend. Hackett is a large man and looks like a police officer. Initially unmarried, he later marries and has children over the course of the series.

GEORGE HIGGINS, a homicide detective in the Los Angeles Police Department, is the other senior sergeant in the squad. He does much of the practical investigation and is even larger than Hackett. Originally unmarried, he woos and weds the widow of a fellow police officer.

LUDOVIC "VIC" VARALLO, a detective in the Glendale, California, Police Department. In the first book, he is a police captain in the fictional town of Contera.

When he is thirty-three years old, he quits to become an average rookie in Glendale. He marries as he leaves his original job and later has a family. Because of his past experience, he is extremely knowledgeable.

CHARLES O'CONNOR is a lieutenant of detectives in the Glendale Police Department. In the early books, he is single and rather crusty; marriage to a schoolteacher whom he meets in the course of the series mellows him slightly.

JESSE FALKENSTEIN is a Jewish lawyer in Los Angeles. In his early thirties when the series begins, he loves music, especially Bach, and frequently quotes the Talmud.

NELL VARNEY FALKENSTEIN is first Falkenstein's client and later his wife. Wrongly convicted of murder, she is saved from execution by new evidence uncovered by Falkenstein and Vic Varallo.

IVOR G. MADDOX is a detective sergeant in Wilcox Avenue Precinct, Hollywood. In his early thirties when the series begins, he ages slowly. Although ordinary in appearance, he is very attractive to women, which puzzles him. He eventually marries police officer Sue Carstairs.

CÉSAR RODRIGUEZ, one of Maddox's colleagues, is dapper, bored, and cynical. He develops an interest in mystery fiction, which he finds more fascinating than the real crime he encounters daily.

DROGO D'ARCY, another of Maddox's colleagues, is tall, lanky, excitable, and constantly falling in love. His despised and unusual first name is a closely guarded secret for most of the series.

CONTRIBUTION

Elizabeth Linington's novels show uniformity in both style and substance. Although police procedurals usually focus on the issue of good versus evil, Linington emphasized this archetypal conflict to such a degree that it becomes the essence of her work. She called the detective story "the morality play of our time." The police officer is so much a representative of good in her books that the police officers take on a uniformity of at-

titude and behavior; they are distinguished from one another only by individual mannerisms and physical characteristics. The other distinguishing characteristic of her work is the large number of cases included in each book. In her early police procedurals, the detectives focus on several cases at once. Later, they focus on large numbers of cases at once.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Linington was born Barbara Elizabeth Linington on March 11, 1921, in Aurora, Illinois, the daughter of Byron G. Linington and Ruth Biggam Linington. When she was a child, her family moved to California, settling in Hollywood. She was graduated from Herbert Hoover High School and received a bachelor of arts degree from Glendale College in 1942. Although she began writing in high school, it was not until 1955 that her first novel, *The Proud Man*, a historical novel about a sixteenth century Irish prince, was published. She wrote several more historical novels.

In 1960, Linington wrote her first mystery, *Case Pending*, under the pseudonym Dell Shannon; this novel launched the Lieutenant Luis Mendoza series. In 1961, she wrote *Nightmare*, a suspense thriller, under the pseudonym Anne Blaisdell. In 1961, writing as Lesley Egan, she published the first novel in the Detective Vic Varallo series, *A Case for Appeal*. This novel also introduces Jewish lawyer Jesse Falkenstein, who is the protagonist of the fourth Linington series (the only one not a police procedural). The Sergeant Ivor Maddox series began in 1964 with *Greenmask!*

Linington received several prizes for her writing, including a gold medal for the best fiction by a California writer from the California Commonwealth Club in 1956 for *The Long Watch*. Her wide range of interests is apparent in her novels. These include the John Birch Society, of which she was a longtime member, parapsychology, archaeology, music, the occult, and languages. Once Linington realized that she was involved in writing many books about police officers, she researched the techniques of the Los Angeles Police Department carefully. It is apparent that the later books are more closely based on actual police procedures than are the early ones.

Linington also wrote historical novels, including

her last work published before her death in 1988, *The Dispossessed*. Oddly, perhaps, she published this and a number of her historical novels under her Dell Shannon pseudonym. Two police procedurals were published posthumously, again under the Dell Shannon name, by Linington's literary executors. The *Manson Curse* (1990) and *Sorrow to the Grave* (1992) were inferior works, but manuscripts unpublished in their author's lifetime are always objects of intrigue for the dedicated fan. Linington died in Arroyo Grande, California, on April 5, 1988.

ANALYSIS

Elizabeth Linington was a successful author when she turned to mystery fiction in the 1960's. Within a few years, critics were calling her the "Queen of the Procedurals." Linington never intended to write a series, let alone four. While writing a suspense novel, *Case Pending*, under the Dell Shannon pseudonym, she needed a police officer to develop the plot, and thus Lieutenant Luis Rodolfo Vicente Mendoza was born. According to Linington, "he rose up off the page, captured me alive, and dismayingly refused to let me stop writing about him." Mendoza was Linington's most important series character.

Linington's early police novels, written under her own name and as Dell Shannon and Lesley Egan, had not yet developed into the procedural formula. Instead, in the early books in the Mendoza series and to a degree in the Ivor Maddox series and the Vic Varallo series, the protagonists are great detectives who happen to be police officers. In the great detective tradition, an individual acting more or less alone solves the mystery through his analysis of people and visible clues. These detectives include such figures as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Lord Peter Wimsey. It is not necessary to be a police officer to be a great detective; in these novels, the police are often shown to be unintelligent, stubbornly wrong, and an impediment to the solution of the case.

The early books in the Mendoza series are in this tradition; nevertheless, Mendoza, like Ngaio Marsh's Roderick Alleyn, happens to be a police officer. Many of the recurring characters who support Mendoza appear in *Case Pending*, but the emphasis is less on po-

lice procedure than on Mendoza's uncanny hunches and his reading of people. The pattern continues in *The Ace of Spades* (1961) and *Extra Kill* (1962). In *Extra Kill*, Mendoza remarks:

With all the laboratories and the chemical tests and the gadgets we've got to help us, . . . like everything else in life it always comes back to individual people. To people's feelings and what feelings make them do or not do. Quite often the gadgets can give you an idea where to look, but once in a while you've got to find out about the people first—then the gadgets can help you prove it.

The early books also lack Linington's later, characteristic multitude of cases—a major difference between a great detective and a real police officer. The great detective may confront a number of seemingly unrelated cases, but ultimately there will be a connection and usually a common perpetrator. Police officers, however, cope with a number of cases simultaneously, and the true police procedural will, as it develops, have fictional police officers take on more cases. In the early works, there is basically one case—usually two or more seemingly unrelated cases turn out to be related. In *Extra Kill*, for example, Mendoza discovers that a confidence man and a police officer have been murdered by the same person.

Finally, in her early works, Linington gives more space to character development than in later books. The early novels are traditional, with full character development of police officers, witnesses, suspects, and criminals. With the later increased caseloads, the length of the books remains the same, but the details about both people and cases decline.

In no other mystery subgenre are the supporting characters as important as in the police procedural, which by definition requires that mysteries be investigated and resolved much as are actual cases—with teamwork. Linington establishes her ensemble of supporting players in the early books. Each is given certain easily described physical characteristics and idiosyncrasies—these become an abbreviated description in subsequent works. In the Mendoza series, for example, these include Mendoza's fastidiousness, detective Art Hackett's dieting, detective George Higgins' cautious wooing of a fellow officer's widow, and detective

Tom Landers's perpetual youthfulness.

The greatest character development is in the Mendoza series. Mendoza is unique in two respects: He is Mexican American, and he is independently wealthy. When he first appeared in print, Mendoza was the only ethnic minority hero in a series of this kind in the United States. Nevertheless, Mendoza's ethnic background appears only in his use of Spanish words and phrases in conversation. There is no other indication of values, beliefs, or ideas significantly different from those of his Anglo-American associates. The author uses brief interjections and comments in foreign languages to indicate ethnic background: Mairí MacTaggart, Mendoza's housekeeper-nanny, speaks Gaelic; Vic Varallo, Italian; and César Rodríguez, Spanish.

Mendoza's wealth makes him even more unusual. Because of his early poverty and his police career, which predates his inheritance, he is saved from being merely a wealthy dilettante. Although he sometimes wonders why he stays with the "thankless job" and occasionally talks about retiring, he continues because he believes that the police are the good guys in the struggle between good and evil.

Under the superficial differences, there is a uniformity of attitude and behavior within each series and from series to series. The good characters in the books—whether police officers, witnesses, or bystanders—share the same conservative political, economic, and social views.

Linington's books stress family values. Over the course of the various series, many of the recurring characters marry; most become parents. The marriages are uniformly traditional and happy, without arguments or divorce (belying the divorce statistics for real police officers). Families make the police officers vulnerable; in the early books, they have nothing to lose but their lives. Later, they have wives and children, "hostages to fortune." Family life serves several purposes: It humanizes the police officers, allows them to express themselves freely, provides light relief, and serves as a counterpoint to the evil and violence of the outside world. Linington described the work life of police officers:

Police officers see very little of the good; . . . they are in too many cases dealing with the mud at the bottom of

things, the sordid, the stupid, the random violence. . . . There are no fuzzy edges around that job, no gray areas, no vagueness. . . . This is . . . why so many people enjoy reading about it. . . . They turn . . . to a fictional world where there is solid ground underfoot. A world where right and wrong, good and evil, are starkly defined: though it is so much oftener goodness and stupidity.

Often, the characters in Linington's novels view violence and lawlessness with detachment. At other times, the nature of the crime or the detectives' personal involvement makes detachment impossible. Some of the most effective books are those in which the action is close to home. In *Knave of Hearts* (1962), Alison Weir, Mendoza's estranged girlfriend, is kidnapped by a psychotic rapist-murderer and is rescued by Mendoza and Hackett. In *Mark of Murder* (1964), Hackett himself is attacked and near death. In *The Death-Bringers* (1965), Sergeant Albert Dwyer is killed by a bank robber. In *Deuces Wild* (1975), the Mendoza twins are kidnapped and Mendoza, a self-proclaimed agnostic, returns to the religion of his youth. In other cases, the crime is so heinous as to demand their emotional involvement—especially if it involves child victims or sexual abuse.

CHAOS OF CRIME

The title of the novel *Chaos of Crime* (1985) describes Linington's literary premise better than any other. The novel follows the usual formula: One major case encompasses the entire book; two or three smaller, featured cases occupy much of the book; numerous cases appear and are resolved quickly; and other cases are barely mentioned as requiring time and paperwork. This "chaos of crime" contrasts with the normality of the home lives of the detectives.

Linington consistently used simple, economical language that flows naturally from paragraph to paragraph. Descriptions are brief and straightforward. Her development of character and plot is deft and effective in spite of reduction in the space devoted to developing individual plots and characters. Although lacking the gritty realism of Joseph Wambaugh or Ed McBain, Linington's characters and events catch the reader's attention and arouse empathy.

Linington effectively takes the reader into the mind of a criminal; this foray into the criminal mind is the

leitmotif of *Chaos of Crime*. For example, the mental processes of a serial killer, nicknamed the werewolf, are described: "All last night the Voice had been talking to him, so he knew it was time for another. Today when he had come to work he had brought his tools, locked away in the little case in the trunk of the car."

Meanwhile the routine goes on; cases come and go. "Jack the Stripper," an armed gas-station bandit who takes his victims' clothing so as to escape unobserved; "Bonnie and Clyde," teenage liquor store bandits; and the murder of a rookie patrol officer during a routine traffic stop provide secondary plots. The last is resolved quickly because the officer was holding his killer's driver's license when he died. A man dies in an argument over a coin-operated dryer. There are witnesses but no evidence, and the investigating detectives are resigned. An elderly couple, long dead, are discovered in their home. Detective Landers wonders why they were not discovered sooner. The older, more experienced Sergeant Hackett replies, "People in a big city, Tom. They don't notice, or if they do they don't do anything about it." A supermarket bandit, surprised at being caught, is told by an amused detective, "Only yourself to blame. . . . You really haven't got much sense, Bennie." Stupidity is blamed when an engraved locket from a burglary-homicide leads to the criminal: "Just as well they're nearly all stupid so we can catch up to them."

New cases pile up on the unsolved, old ones. The werewolf kills again. A man kills an unfaithful wife. A teenage boy is dead of a drug overdose. A man is held prisoner in his apartment by his brother, an escaped convict. The detectives reluctantly investigate the werewolf's latest crime. More cases accumulate. Twelve juveniles under the age of fifteen, high on drugs and liquor, watch as one of them kills the mother of the girl having the party, and then continue carousing. A man is arrested for beating his wife after learning that she had a sex-change operation.

Contrasting vividly with this chaos is the normality of the police officers' home lives. Everyone seems to be having a baby or looking for a new home. The ordinary routines of daily life are the detectives' relief (and the reader's) from the chaos of their jobs.

Mendoza's home life reveals a different aspect of

his character. His young twins, Johnny and Terrie, are devastated following their ejection from a pool party because they cannot swim. He refuses their request for a swimming pool (which he can well afford): "No swimming pool. You can just forget about it, *niños*, and if either of you starts to cry I'll spank you." "I'll bet you wouldn't really," his son responds.

At work, stupidity seems more prevalent than evil. A mugger who killed an elderly man is caught wearing the victim's necktie, embroidered with the names of his grandchildren. The mugger never learned to read. Another elderly victim is killed by her teenage gardener, who wanted money to take his girlfriend to Disneyland.

A distinctive watch left at the scene of the werewolf's last crime is identified by a jeweler who repaired it. When Mendoza and Hackett go to arrest the werewolf, a bookkeeper for a major insurance company, he goes to pieces. The psychiatrist tells Mendoza, "All his fantasies have two clear threads running through, religion and sex." Mendoza is not impressed: "Just so he's not out hunting more women to cut up."

Like the robbery-homicide detectives, Mendoza is glad to get home, "This had been another grueling week with a good deal of legwork to do." There are still, however, the twins and the matter of the swimming pool.

Although this is the only one so titled, all Linington's mystery novels deal with the chaos of crime. The burden of cases often seems as overwhelming to the reader as it must to the detectives, but the relief of the home life mitigates it. Critics may dismiss her books as formula writing, but she makes her readers care about her characters. Readers become so involved in both the professional and home lives of her characters that they keep coming back for more.

Judith A. Parsons

Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LIEUTENANT LUIS MENDOZA SERIES (AS SHANNON): 1960-1970 • *Case Pending*, 1960; *The Ace of Spades*, 1961; *Extra Kill*, 1962; *Knave of Hearts*, 1962; *Death of a Busybody*, 1963; *Double Bluff*, 1963; *Mark of Murder*, 1964; *Root of All Evil*, 1964;

Death by Inches, 1965; *The Death-Bringers*, 1965; *Coffin Corner*, 1966; *With a Vengeance*, 1966; *Rain with Violence*, 1967; *Kill with Kindness*, 1968; *Chance to Kill*, 1969; *Crime on Their Hands*, 1969; *Schooled to Kill*, 1969; *Unexpected Death*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The Ringer*, 1971; *Whim to Kill*, 1971; *Murder with Love*, 1972; *With Intent to Kill*, 1972; *No Holiday for Crime*, 1973; *Spring of Violence*, 1973; *Crime File*, 1974; *Deuces Wild*, 1975; *Streets of Death*, 1976; *Appearances of Death*, 1977; *Cold Trail*, 1978; *Felony at Random*, 1979; *Felony File*, 1980

1981-1987 • *Murder Most Strange*, 1981; *The Motive on Record*, 1982; *Exploit of Death*, 1983; *Destiny of Death*, 1984; *Chaos of Crime*, 1985; *Blood Count*, 1986; *The Scalpel and the Sword*, 1987

DETECTIVE VIC VARALLO SERIES (AS EGAN): *A Case for Appeal*, 1961; *The Borrowed Alibi*, 1962; *Run to Evil*, 1963; *Detective's Due*, 1965; *The Nameless Ones*, 1967; *The Wine of Violence*, 1969; *Malicious Mischief*, 1971; *Scenes of Crime*, 1976; *A Dream Apart*, 1978; *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 1979; *A Choice of Crimes*, 1980; *Crime for Christmas*, 1983; *Chain of Violence*, 1985

JESSE FALKENSTEIN SERIES: *Against the Evidence*, 1962; *My Name Is Death*, 1964; *Some Avenger, Rise!*, 1966; *A Serious Investigation*, 1967; *In the Death of a Man*, 1970; *Paper Chase*, 1972; *The Blind Search*, 1977; *Look Back on Death*, 1978; *Motive in Shadow*, 1980; *The Miser*, 1981; *Little Boy Lost*, 1983

SERGEANT IVOR MADDOX SERIES: *Greenmask!*, 1964; *No Evil Angel*, 1964; *Date with Death*, 1966; *Something Wrong*, 1967; *Policeman's Lot*, 1968; *Practice to Deceive*, 1971; *Crime by Chance*, 1973; *Perchance of Death*, 1977; *No Villain Need Be*, 1979; *Consequence of Crime*, 1980; *Skeletons in the Closet*, 1982; *Felony Report*, 1984; *Strange Felony*, 1986

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Nightmare*, 1961 (as Blaisdell)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Proud Man*, 1955; *The Long Watch*, 1956; *Monsieur Janvier*, 1957; *The Anglophile*, 1957 (as O'Neill; also known as *The Pretender*); *The*

Kingbreaker, 1958 (as Shannon); *The Dispossessed*, 1988 (as Shannon); *Manson Curse*, 1990 (as Shannon); *Sorrow to the Grave*, 1992 (as Shannon)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Forging an Empire: Queen Elizabeth I*, 1961

NONFICTION: *Come to Think of It*, 1965

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Landrum, Larry. *American Mystery and Detective Novels*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999. This thoughtful analysis of mystery fiction has several references to Linington or her pseudonyms that place her in the context of a very male genre.

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LAURA LIPPMAN

Born: Atlanta, Georgia; January 31, 1959

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tess Monaghan, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

TESS MONAGHAN, an unemployed newspaper reporter in her late twenties when the series begins, stumbles into detective work. As the novels continue in real time, she moves from part-time researcher to full-time, self-employed, licensed private investigator. In the process, she navigates complicated relationships with friends, family, and a boyfriend six years her junior. Unlike many of her private investigator counterparts, she does not grow jaded from her exposure to crime. Her sense of humor remains intact throughout the series, and she retains a guarded optimism while living and working in a city that averages a homicide every thirty-six hours.

CONTRIBUTION

Laura Lippman achieved immediate success with her first novel, *Baltimore Blues* (1997), which was nominated for a Shamus Award for best first novel; the later books in the series have won every major award for mystery writing. *Butcher's Hill* (1998) won an Anthony Award and an Agatha Award. *Charm City* (1997) won a Shamus Award and an Edgar and was nominated for an Anthony. *In Big Trouble* (1999) won a Shamus Award and an Anthony Award. *The Sugar House* (2000) won a Nero Award. Her nonseries suspense novel, *Every Secret Thing* (2003), won Barry and Anthony awards.

Lippman began publishing as a paperback original author, but since 2000 her novels have been released in hardback editions, and her reputation has grown accordingly. Her work is available overseas in Europe, the United Kingdom, and Japan. Lippman places herself in the middle range of American crime writers, no longer an obscure author with a strong regional following but not yet a household name with a string of best sellers. She is committed to advancing the genre

of crime fiction and to discovering and encouraging new writers.

Lippman's twenty years' experience as a journalist and her intimate knowledge of state and local politics in Maryland and Baltimore contribute to the believability of her work. Both her series and her nonseries novels are known for their social realism. Her writing is informed by considerations of class, race, and gender but avoids any sense of shrillness, tokenism, or political correctness.

BIOGRAPHY

Laura Lippman was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1959, the daughter of Theo Lippman, Jr., a journalist, and Madeline Mabry Lippman, a librarian. Two years later, her family moved to Washington, D.C., when her father became a correspondent for the *Atlanta Constitution*. In 1965 her father accepted a position with *The Sun*, then the morning newspaper of Baltimore, and the family relocated again. Lippman attended Baltimore city schools through ninth grade and graduated from Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, Maryland, where she was captain of the It's Academic team. After studying journalism at Northwestern University, she began a career as a reporter, working in Waco and San Antonio, Texas, before joining the Baltimore *Evening Sun* in 1989. When that paper was taken over by *The Sun* in 1991, she and her father became colleagues until his retirement a few years later.

While in her twenties, Lippman began writing fiction; she credits a workshop directed by the novelist Sandra Cisneros with encouraging her to pursue publishing her work. After abandoning several novels, Lippman completed *Baltimore Blues* in 1994; later that year, even though she had yet to secure an agent, she began writing her second novel in what would become the Tess Monaghan series. She completed seven novels in the series while continuing to work full time at the *Baltimore Sun*. Although her years as a journalist/novelist were highly productive ones, the demands of maintaining a dual career placed enormous strains on her personal relationships. In interviews, she has attributed the breakup of an early marriage in part to her "workaholicism."

After leaving the *Baltimore Sun*, Lippman became

involved in a relationship with David Simon, author of *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (1991) and producer of the Home Box Office series *The Wire* (beginning in 2002). Lippman avoids discussing personal matters, but she has contrasted her fictional version of Baltimore with Simon's, which portrays more accurately the nature of crime in the city, which regularly registers five homicides a week and where the victims are frequently young black men.

The city of Baltimore is central to all of Lippman's writing. Since becoming a novelist, she has lived in several different areas of the city, immersing herself in neighborhood culture and participating in community activities. She donates a portion of her appearance fees to Health Care for the Homeless and volunteers at a Baltimore soup kitchen. Although she shares a number of traits with Tess Monaghan, such as a fondness for greyhounds and a healthy appetite, Lippman rejects the idea that her character is an alter ego; any resemblance is superficial.

Lippman maintains a disciplined schedule, writing a thousand words every morning—most often at a local coffee shop, where the background noise reminds her of a newsroom—and exercising every afternoon. Once she has completed a first draft, she revises the entire manuscript several times. Her own writing practices are consistent with the advice that she gives to novice writers: establish a routine, finish the manuscript, and revise.

After completing seven books in the Tess Monaghan series, Lippman began alternating between non-series crime novels and books featuring Tess.

ANALYSIS

Laura Lippman follows in the footsteps of Sue Grafton, Sara Paretsky, and Marcia Muller, who broke new ground in the 1980's by introducing female private investigators into an exclusively male territory. Lippman describes her series character, Tess Monaghan, as a second-generation feminist detective who, unlike her predecessors, Kinsey Millhone, V. I. Warshawski, and Sharon McCone, need not perform better than her male counterparts to pursue a successful career. In fact, when Tess is first introduced, she is an unemployed journalist who undertakes a surveillance op-

eration as a favor for a friend; Lippman has referred to her character as “the accidental detective.” It is not until the third novel of the series that Tess obtains her license and sets up her own business. Neither her career choice nor her independence alienates her from the larger society. In contrast to the hard-boiled loner Kinsey Millhone, Tess enjoys family, friends, and house pets, and unlike V. I. Warshawski, she does not agonize over retaining her independence within romantic relationships. Having come of age in a culture more receptive to female autonomy, Tess is better equipped than her older sisters-in-crime to balance professional and personal interests. Lippman keeps her character on a human scale so that her problems are ordinary ones; her missteps may lead to heartache but not to melodrama.

Generally regarded as social realism, the Monaghan series encompasses a range of contemporaneous concerns, yet the novels do not foreground social issues at the expense of character, and the tone is never shrill. Lippman writes in third-person limited, restricting point of view to Tess and allowing her voice to dominate. The character’s sense of humor keeps the writing entertaining without trivializing serious subject matter.

Lippman’s experience as a reporter serves her well in this series. She gives Tess a remarkably similar background to her own, one that provides the character with the skills and resources to succeed as an investigator. One of the strengths of the series is how convincing Tess is as she tracks down information from public records and as she “interviews” contacts. She is comfortable with technology, but she does not rely on computer wizardry for answers.

Overall, Lippman has produced a body of fiction that, while staying within the boundaries of the genre, possesses a true-to-life quality. She frequently bases plots on actual cases; in addition her intimate knowledge of Baltimore, where all but one of her books is set, allows her to place her characters in well-defined social and cultural contexts. Realism is also reflected in her plot resolution, which resists oversimplification and pat, happy endings.

In keeping with the genre, many of Lippman’s secondary characters are two-dimensional; Aunt Kitty, the

femme fatale, and friend Whitney, the wealthy socialite, are predictable stereotypes, while boyfriend Crow, in spite of maturing as the series progresses, remains too good to be true. However, in later works, Lippman has shown an improved facility for character development as she has employed a more complex point of view. The increasing sophistication of her style is particularly apparent in *Every Secret Thing* and *To the Power of Three* (2005), which are less formulaic than the books in the Monaghan series.

CHARM CITY

In the second book in Lippman’s Tess Monaghan series, *Charm City*, Lippman draws on her knowledge of the newspaper industry to set her story in motion. Tess, still an unlicensed investigator working for lawyer Tyner Gray, accepts an assignment from her former employer, the *Beacon Light*, to look into the unauthorized publication of a story that led to the suicide of a prominent citizen involved in a deal to bring a professional basketball franchise to Baltimore. A subplot examines the dog racing industry and the fate of retired greyhounds. Lippman brings plot and subplot together neatly in this traditionally crafted mystery, but the strength of this early work lies in characterization as Tess learns to apply her skills in a new profession.

THE SUGAR HOUSE

A variation on the conventional whodunit, *The Sugar House* reveals the identity of the murderer in the prologue. Tess’s challenge is to identify the victim. When the murderer is killed in prison, his sister hires Tess to find out why. The key appears to lie with the victim, a Jane Doe whose body was never claimed. The case leads Tess to a treatment center for eating disorders; Lippman provides a shocking view into the world of anorexia while examining Tess’s past problems with bulimia. Midway through the novel, Tess solves her case, but establishing who Jane Doe is raises more questions than it answers. As Tess continues the investigation, Lippman takes the story into Maryland’s colorful political history, adding another layer of sophistication to the story. *The Sugar House*, the first work of the series to be published in hardback, attracted international attention and established Lippman as a significant literary figure within the genre.

IN A STRANGE CITY

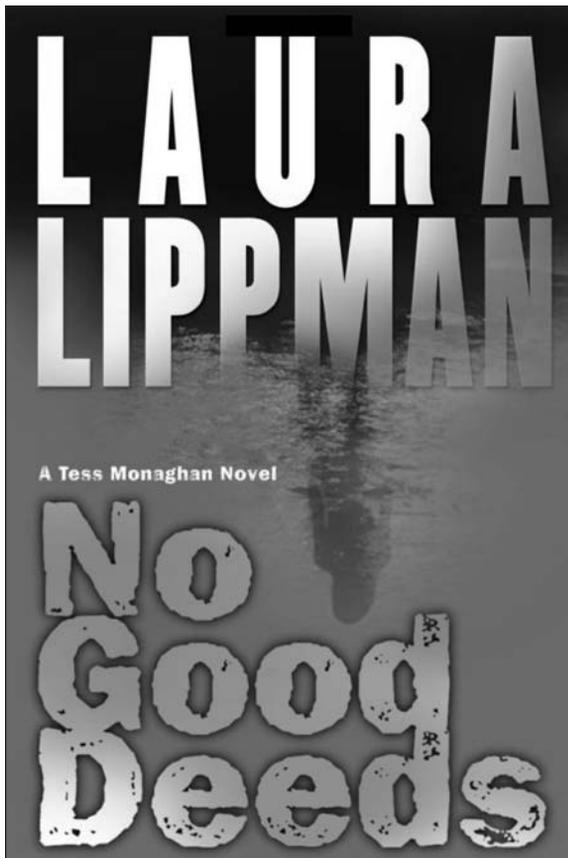
Since the mid-twentieth century, Baltimoreans have been enchanted by the mysterious appearance of the Poe Toaster, a cloaked figure who makes an annual visit to the grave of Edgar Allan Poe on the night of Poe's birthday, leaving an offering of three red roses and a half bottle of cognac. *In a Strange City* (2001) puts the identity—and life—of the Poe Toaster at risk. Tess, approached by a shady antiques dealer to track down the Toaster, turns away the potential client, then sets off to protect the Baltimore legend. While standing watch at the gravesite on the poet's birthday, Tess witnesses the murder of a Toaster impersonator and finds herself involved in a dangerous entanglement. This book is notable for its tribute to Poe, the father of the modern detective story. Lippman's considerable research is evident throughout, and she weaves into the plot a number of fitting tributes to Poe's stories.

NO GOOD DEEDS

No Good Deeds (2006) reflects Lippman's stylistic development as she grows more adventurous with point of view. In this work, perspective is focalized through several different characters: Tess; her boyfriend, Crow; and Lloyd Jupiter, a homeless black teenager whom Crow is trying to help. Lloyd is a particularly well-drawn character, whose distrust of white people undermines his opportunity to escape a cycle of poverty and violence. In this novel, Lippman defines for the first time "two Baltimores": one affluent and white, the other poor and black.

Lippman's unvarnished portrayal of racial tensions suggests how strongly her fictional worldview has been affected by the city's problems with urban crime, drug-infested neighborhoods, and failing schools. The social realism of this work is enhanced by a plot with strong parallels to the unsolved murder in 2003 of federal prosecutor Jonathon Luna. *No Good Deeds* suggests that the Monaghan series is moving in a more serious direction as the principal characters become more fully engaged in larger concerns.

K. Edgington

**PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION**

TESS MONAGHAN SERIES: *Baltimore Blues*, 1997; *Charm City*, 1997; *Butcher's Hill*, 1998; *In Big Trouble*, 1999; *The Sugar House*, 2000; *In a Strange City*, 2001; *The Last Place*, 2002; *By a Spider's Thread*, 2004; *No Good Deeds*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Every Secret Thing*, 2003; *To the Power of Three*, 2005; *What the Dead Know*, 2007

EDITED TEXT: *Baltimore Noir*, 2006

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Lippman, Laura. Laura Lippman.com. <http://www.lauralippman.com>. Author's Web site has a biography, descriptions of her writings, a newsletter, links to interviews, and an archive of letters from the author to her fans.

_____. "PW Talks to Laura Lippman." Interview by Pat Koch. *Publishers Weekly* 248, no. 34 (August

20, 2001): 61. Includes information about the young Lippman, the crime on which *In a Strange City* was loosely based, and the importance of place in her writing. This issue of *Publishers Weekly* also contains a review of the book, summarizing the legend of the Poe Toaster.

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RICHARD LOCKRIDGE and FRANCES LOCKRIDGE

RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

Born: St. Joseph, Missouri; September 25, 1898

Died: Tryon, North Carolina; June 19, 1982

FRANCES LOCKRIDGE

Born: Kansas City, Missouri; January 10, 1896

Died: Norwalk, Connecticut; February 17, 1963

Also wrote as Francis Richards

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural; comedy caper; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Mr. and Mrs. North, 1940-1963

Merton Heimrich, 1947-1976

Nathan Shapiro, 1956-1980

Bernie Simmons, 1962-1974

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PAM NORTH, a slim, attractive woman, charms and bewilders her listeners with her elliptical conversa-

tions. She is very fond of cats, often talking to them. Intelligent and curious, Pam often takes the lead in walking inadvertently into dangerous situations that lead to the murderer.

GERALD "JERRY" NORTH, a publisher, is devoted to his wife. Accustomed to her style, he understands her and acts the role of a straight man. Like his wife, he favors dry martinis and good companionship at elegant meals. Jerry and Pam are both compassionate, a quality that motivates them to become involved in detection.

BILL WEIGAND, an officer in the homicide squad, and his assistant, DETECTIVE SERGEANT ALOYSIUS CLARENCE MULLINS, work closely with the Norths on cases. Weigand is a likable character, a kind and effective professional.

MERTON HEIMRICH, of the New York State Police, rises steadily in rank in the series devoted to his adventures, from lieutenant to captain to inspector. He also meets and marries Susan Faye, a widow with a ten-year-old son, Michael. Heimrich's gradual success in

his professional and personal life has little effect on his kind nature and rather gloomy outlook.

NATHAN SHAPIRO, a lieutenant in the homicide squad, is a self-doubting but competent investigator. He normally works with Captain Weigand, but in one novel he is teamed with Merton Heimrich. Unlike the other North principals, he prefers sweet sherry to a dry martini. Some readers have compared him to the television detective Columbo.

BERNARD SIMMONS is a tall, red-haired assistant district attorney of New York City. When not working on cases, he is working on a relationship with his girlfriend, Nora Curran, hoping that she will marry him.

WALTER BRINKLEY, a white-haired, pudgy professor of English, retired from Dykeman University, is a recurring Lockridge character, though he does not have his own series.

CONTRIBUTION

With the creation of their husband-and-wife team, Pam and Jerry North, Richard Lockridge and Frances Lockridge added to the small number of mystery novels featuring couples as amateur detectives. The novels featuring the Norths were immensely popular and were developed into a radio and television series, a play, and a motion picture. The Mystery Writers Association awarded the Lockridges the first Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best radio mystery program in 1946.

Both journalists, the Lockridges produced novels at a steady rate, drawing on their own experiences. Even the series about law-enforcement detectives emphasizes the characters' personal lives and their relationships with their spouses or lovers, creating a comfortable air of stability and family strength. Although the novels feature a variety of detective figures, the Lockridge novels as a whole create a miniature world of their own, in that characters sometimes overlap series. Lockridge readers are thus provided with the pleasure of entry into a familiar world in most of the novels.

Although the Lockridges' plotting was seldom intricate, they created a series of personable characters and picked interesting subjects as backgrounds. Simply and clearly written, their novels have been admired for the civilized tone, the gentle humor, and the glimpses they afford of American life.

BIOGRAPHY

Richard Orson Lockridge was born on September 25, 1898, in St. Joseph, Missouri, the son of Ralph David L. Lockridge and Mary Olive (née Notson) Lockridge. He attended Kansas City Junior College and the University of Missouri at Columbia before his education was interrupted by navy service in 1918. After the war, he held a variety of jobs, including stints at the United States Census Bureau, a wholesale grocer, a carnival, and a printing shop. He studied journalism briefly before he started his journalistic career as a reporter for the *Kansas City Kansan* in 1921. In New York, he became the drama critic at the *New York Sun* and contributed frequently to *The New Yorker*. He served as a public relations officer for the Navy in World War II. Returning to journalism after the war, he acquired a reputation as a fast, reliable rewrite man in his newspaper work.

Frances Lockridge, born Frances Louise Davis on January 10, 1896, in Kansas City, Missouri, also became a journalist. She attended the University of Kansas and worked for four years at the *Kansas City Post* as a reporter and feature writer. In New York City, she wrote for the "Hundred Neediest" section of *The New York Times*, continuing her role as a "sob sister." Her long experience as a publicist for the State Charities Aid Association (1922-1942) led to an interest in the problems of child adoption and a book, *How to Adopt a Child* (1928).

Davis and Lockridge met and married in 1922. Their first move to New York City was not successful; they returned to Kansas, but decided to try again. Their second attempt succeeded, though they lived precariously, never having enough money. It was during these lean times that Richard wrote about some of their experiences in short humorous pieces that led to the Pam and Jerry North characters. Both avid readers of mysteries, together they created three long-running series, keeping up on other writing as well. They were elected co-presidents of the Mystery Writers Association in 1960.

Two years after Frances's death in 1963, Richard married Hildegard Dolson, also a writer, and continued to write prolifically. Richard Lockridge died in 1982, after a series of strokes, in Tryon, North Carolina.

ANALYSIS

The Lockridges' most popular characters, Pam and Jerry North, appeared in nonmystery genres before they became amateur sleuths. Richard Lockridge first wrote of the experiences of a couple similar to his wife and himself in a series of short pieces for the *New York Sun*. Later, the Norths resurfaced in the short domestic comedies that he wrote for *The New Yorker*. Their surname, their creator said, "was merely lifted from the somewhat amorphous, and frequently inept, people who played the North hands in bridge problems." In their initial existence, the couple did not have first names, and neither had an occupation.

MR. AND MRS. NORTH SERIES

The Norths' final passage to amateur-sleuth status came when Frances Lockridge decided to write a mystery during one summer vacation. Her husband became interested, and together they worked out a story. Because the Norths were well-established characters by then, the Lockridges kept them as the main characters and retained the humorous tone previously used in North stories. According to Frances, her own role was to contribute interesting characters and her husband's was to kill them off. After their story conferences and the joint preparation of outlines and summaries, Richard did all the writing.

When Richard continued writing other series after the death of Frances, reviewers suggested that his style had changed, a claim that seemed to baffle and amuse him. The style of the collaborative Lockridge books, praised as quiet, understated, graceful, and easy to read, certainly is consistent, though the novels featuring characters other than the Norths seem more serious in tone. The North novels were initially admired for their infectious humor. They are a delightful blend of urbane chic (somewhat reminiscent of the tone of motion-picture screwball comedies) and an attention to social issues, a legacy of the authors' journalistic training.

The Lockridges fall into the category of detective-fiction writers who consider it their job to play fair with the reader in producing interesting puzzles to solve. Among his rules, Richard Lockridge said, were that butlers and detectives are never the criminals, that there is only one murderer, and that the detective must disclose all the clues. It is this last requirement that oc-



casions the frequent meals and dry martinis in the North series. Pam and Jerry, often with their police-officer friend Bill Weigand and his wife, Dorian, discuss cases over meals at elegant restaurants or at home. A whimsical fascination with the activities of cats adds to the comic charm of the novels. Pam's thought processes are sometimes relayed in her conversations with the assorted cats that appear throughout the series. These monologues, like the scenes of socializing, serve a dual purpose, adding a warm, sometimes comic touch of characterization and deftly passing on information to the reader.

Another unwavering source of amusement for the reader is the ire the Norths arouse in Inspector O'Malley, Bill Weigand's superior. "Those Norths!" he sputters whenever he discovers that they are in the thick of the latest homicide. A running gag is the obligatory suspicion that falls on the Norths themselves: Why do

they so often find the bodies? the inspector wonders. Though on an intensive diet of the North books this comic touch becomes rather wearying, it is nevertheless true that, as with characters in a situation comedy or any other kind of series, these predictable touches are part of the appeal.

Though Richard Lockridge found the casting of Gracie Allen as Pam North in the film featuring the Norths a "triumph of miscasting," there is a distinct aura of the daffy charm of George Burns and Gracie Allen about Pam and Jerry North. Like Gracie Allen, Pam is much given to elliptical dialogue that bewilders everyone unaccustomed to her thought processes; Jerry, like George Burns, is the straight man who can practically foretell the confusion that Pam is about to spread. Jerry's publishing career, which presumably supports their elegant lifestyle, comes in handy as a source of cases. In *Murder Within Murder* (1946), for example, one of his freelance researchers is murdered; in *The Long Skeleton* (1958), one of Jerry's authors becomes centrally involved in the murder, and *Murder Has Its Points* (1961) similarly revolves around one of Jerry's authors. Pam is the one who solves the mystery, however, because of her intuitive intelligence, a quality described by Richard Lockridge as a "superior mental alacrity." She is so often caught up in a dangerous situation in the final scenes of a novel that the predictability moved Howard Haycraft, by 1946, to complain: "Someday I'd like to read a North story in which Mrs. North does not wander alone and unprotected into the murderer's parlor in the last chapter."

MURDER IS SUGGESTED AND TWICE RETIRED

Though Pam is also sometimes described as scatterbrained, and though the structure of the North novels themselves leaves an impression of flighty formula fiction, the Lockridges' novels as a whole tackle interesting political and social issues. Hildegard Dolson, Richard Lockridge's second wife, noted that a reviewer had once said that her husband did more good for liberal causes than polemics do, to which Richard responded that his social theories intentionally spilled out in the novels. *Murder Is Suggested* (1959) gives an interesting account of the view of hypnosis at that period; the sobering responsibilities of medical practice are taken up in *Murder by the Book* (1963). In

Twice Retired (1970), a Bernie Simmons mystery, there is a touching portrayal of the evil effects of fascism on families: The egocentric behavior of a general in the armed forces, recklessly deploying forces for his own glory, brings about tragedy for his nephew.

FICTION FROM EXPERIENCE

The Lockridges were skillful in incorporating their own experiences into their novels; thus, the early novels in particular have been praised for their mirroring of specific elements of American life. The atmosphere of prewar Greenwich Village, for example, is rendered faithfully in *The Norths Meet Murder* (1940). *Death on the Aisle* (1942) is set in a theater, a milieu with which Richard Lockridge was familiar from his years as a drama critic. The Merton Heimrich novels are often set in suburban Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess counties, in all of which the Lockridges lived for a while. The Lockridges' experience with a friend who bred Angus cattle is reflected in *Death and the Gentle Bull* (1954), a novel featuring Captain Heimrich. Frances Lockridge's experiences as a publicist with a private committee for the placement and adoption of children underlies *A Pinch of Poison* (1941) and *Quest for the Bogeyman* (1964), both of which have an adoption theme.

The Lockridges' own life also accounts for another characteristic of their novels: In marked contrast to the American tradition of the lone detective, the Lockridge detectives, as Chris Filstrup and Jane Filstrup observe, have stable relationships. In addition to the compatible marriage of Pam and Jerry North, there are Bill Weigand and his wife, Dorian; Merton Heimrich and his wife, Susan; and Bernie Simmons and his girlfriend, Nora Curran.

These touches of personal and social realities, however, contribute only to the variety of milieus in the Lockridge novels. Although these novels do provide realistic glimpses of American life, in other respects they follow the murder-mystery convention of a closed circle of people. A distinguishing Lockridge extension of this convention is the overlapping in the series. Captain Bill Weigand, the family friend in the North series, appears in the Nathan Shapiro series as the main character's superior. Even fictional settings reappear: For example, the imaginary Dyckman Uni-

versity (based on Columbia University, where Richard Lockridge taught briefly) appears in *Murder Is Suggested*, a North mystery, and is the home institution of Professor Emeritus Walter Brinkley in *Twice Retired*, a Bernie Simmons novel. This familiarity of recurring characters and settings extends the family atmosphere of the North series to the other novels as well.

As a reporter, Richard Lockridge had covered crime stories and many important trials, while Frances had specialized in human-interest articles. Nevertheless, though New York City appears frequently as a locale, and law enforcement officials—Heimrich, Shapiro, Weigand, Simmons—outnumber the amateur sleuths as principal characters in the Lockridge novels, there is little of the grim, the sordid, or the violent. Far from depicting the harsh realities of big-city life or exploring the complexities of police politics, the Lockridges created their own version of the cozy English village murder mystery. Indeed, asked to which writers he was often compared, Richard Lockridge said, “They identify me as a writer of the old-fashioned mystery, which I am. Which I prefer to the bang-bang school, the private eye who is slugged, knocked unconscious, and is up without a bruise the next day.”

The Lockridge novels—charming, humorous, interesting for their treatment of a variety of social issues—are in the tradition of well-crafted novels of entertainment. The Norths’ long fictional lives—more than forty books, a radio series that lasted thirteen years, a television series that ran for two years, a Broadway play with 162 performances, and a film—are a testament to the ability of their creators to intrigue and amuse. The Lockridges are rightly admired for their ability to sketch comically endearing characters. For the Lockridge fan there is great comfort in the sheer quantity of the Lockridge output. With a combined total of more than eighty titles to their credit, the Lockridges have produced for readers the pleasure of many engrossing reads.

Shakuntala Jayaswal

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MR. AND MRS. NORTH SERIES: 1940-1950 • *The Norths Meet Murder*, 1940; *A Pinch of Poison*, 1941; *Murder out of Turn*, 1941; *Death on the Aisle*, 1942;

Hanged for a Sheep, 1942; *Death Takes a Bow*, 1943; *Killing the Goose*, 1944; *Payoff for the Banker*, 1945; *Death of a Tall Man*, 1946; *Murder Within Murder*, 1946; *Untidy Murder*, 1947; *Murder Is Served*, 1948; *The Dishonest Murderer*, 1949; *Murder in a Hurry*, 1950

1951-1963 • *Murder Comes First*, 1951; *Dead as a Dinosaur*, 1952; *Curtain for a Jester*, 1953; *Death Has a Small Voice*, 1953; *A Key to Death*, 1954; *Death of an Angel*, 1955 (also known as *Mr. and Mrs. North and the Poisoned Playboy*); *Voyage into Violence*, 1956; *The Long Skeleton*, 1958; *Murder Is Suggested*, 1959; *The Judge Is Reversed*, 1960; *Murder Has Its Points*, 1961; *Murder by the Book*, 1963

MERTON HEIMRICH SERIES: *Think of Death*, 1947; *I Want to Go Home*, 1948; *Spin Your Web, Lady!*, 1949; *Foggy, Foggy Death*, 1950; *A Client Is Cancelled*, 1951; *Death by Association*, 1952 (also known as *Trial by Terror*); *Stand Up and Die*, 1953; *Death and the Gentle Bull*, 1954 (also known as *Killer in the Straw*); *Burnt Offering*, 1955; *Let Dead Enough Alone*, 1956; *Practice to Deceive*, 1957; *Accent on Murder*, 1958; *Show Red for Danger*, 1960; *With One Stone*, 1961 (also known as *No Dignity in Death*); *First Come, First Kill*, 1962; *The Distant Clue*, 1963; *Murder Roundabout*, 1966 (by R. Lockridge); *With Option to Die*, 1967 (by R. Lockridge); *A Risky Way to Kill*, 1969 (by R. Lockridge); *Inspector’s Holiday*, 1971 (by R. Lockridge); *Not I, Said the Sparrow*, 1973 (by R. Lockridge); *Dead Run*, 1976 (by R. Lockridge); *The Tenth Life*, 1977 (by R. Lockridge)

NATHAN SHAPIRO SERIES: *The Faceless Adversary*, 1956 (also known as *Case of the Murdered Red-head*); *Murder and Blueberry Pie*, 1959 (also known as *Call It Coincidence*); *The Drill Is Death*, 1961; *Murder Can’t Wait*, 1964 (by R. Lockridge); *Murder for Art’s Sake*, 1967 (by R. Lockridge); *Die Laughing*, 1969 (by R. Lockridge); *Preach No More*, 1971 (by R. Lockridge); *Write Murder Down*, 1972 (by R. Lockridge); *Or Was He Pushed?*, 1975 (by R. Lockridge); *A Streak of Light*, 1976 (by R. Lockridge); *The Old Die Young*, 1980 (by R. Lockridge)

BERNIE SIMMONS SERIES: *Catch as Catch Can*, 1958; *The Innocent House*, 1959; *The Golden Man*, 1960; *And Left for Dead*, 1962; *The Ticking Clock*,

1962; *The Devious Ones*, 1964 (also known as *Four Hours to Fear*); *Squire of Death*, 1965 (by R. Lockridge); *A Plate of Red Herrings*, 1968 (by R. Lockridge); *Twice Retired*, 1970 (by R. Lockridge); *Something up a Sleeve*, 1972 (by R. Lockridge); *Death on the Hour*, 1974 (by R. Lockridge)

PAUL LANE SERIES: *Night of Shadows*, 1962; *Quest for the Bogeyman*, 1964

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death in the Mind*, 1945 (by R. Lockridge with G. H. Estabrooks); *Sgt. Mickey and General Ike*, 1946 (by R. Lockridge with Michael McKeogh); *A Matter of Taste*, 1949 (by R. Lockridge); *Murder in False-Face*, 1968 (by R. Lockridge); *Troubled Journey*, 1970 (by R. Lockridge); *Death in a Sunny Place*, 1972 (by R. Lockridge)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Empty Day*, 1965 (by R. Lockridge); *Encounter in Key West*, 1966 (by R. Lockridge)

SHORT FICTION: *Mr. and Mrs. North*, 1936 (by R. Lockridge)

RADIO PLAY: *Mr. and Mrs. North*, 1945

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Proud Cat*, 1951; *The Lucky Cat*, 1953; *The Nameless Cat*, 1954; *The Cat Who Rode Cows*, 1955; *One Lady, Two Cats*, 1967 (by R. Lockridge)

NONFICTION: *Darling of Misfortune: Edwin Booth*, 1932 (by R. Lockridge); *How to Adopt a Child*, 1928 (by F. Lockridge; revised as *Adopting a Child*, 1950); *Cats and People*, 1950

EDITED TEXT: *Crime for Two*, 1955

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Penzler, Otto, ed. *The Great Detectives*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Penzler, the editor of *The Armchair Detective* and proprietor of the Mysterious Bookshop in New York City, compiled these essays paying tribute to fictional detectives and their creators. Provides context for understanding the Lockridges' work.

Shumway, David R. *Modern Love: Romance, Intimacy, and the Marriage Crisis*. New York: New York University Press, 2003. Study of the representation of marriage in literature; helpful in interpreting the representation of Mr. and Mrs. North in the Lockridges' fiction.

PETER LOVESEY

Born: Whitton, Middlesex, England; September 10, 1936

Also wrote as Peter Lear

Types of plot: Historical; police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sergeant Cribb, 1970-

Bertie, the Prince of Wales, 1988-

Peter Diamond, 1991-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SERGEANT CRIBB, in his forties at his first appearance, is a tall, lean man with full side-whiskers, who dresses well and relishes impersonations on the job. His keen sense of morality is tempered with irony, and his delight in the new and unusual is offset by the bitterness of having worked seventeen years without a promotion. He is married, but his wife, Millie, appears only infrequently.

EDWARD THACKERAY, a burly constable, is proud of his full gray beard. He is a more conventional man than his superior and is uneasy in strange situations. Unable to pass official examinations, he serves Cribb as a sounding board and performs most of the legwork on their cases, with little hope of promotion.

INSPECTOR JOWETT, once Cribb's fellow sergeant, is now his superior and an obstacle to his promotion. An astute politician and a class snob, Jowett has risen rapidly in the ranks because of his ability to present himself well in written reports of cases without giving credit to those who actually did the work.

BERTIE, THE PRINCE OF WALES is largely based on the public perception of the eldest son of Queen Victoria, who later became King Edward VII. He is a large, gourmandizing womanizer who enjoys the sports of the upper classes and thinks he can use his deductive skills to solve crimes.

PETER DIAMOND, a large, imposing man whose bald spot is hidden by his omnipresent Trilby hat, is in his late forties at the beginning of the series. A detective superintendent living in Bath, England, Diamond is a tra-

ditional police detective who distrusts technology and bureaucracy, relying on interviewing skill and deductive reasoning to solve his cases.

CONTRIBUTION

One of the attractions of Peter Lovesey's work is the interesting sidelights the author offers into esoteric aspects of history. His background in the history of sports has served him well, but not content with the Victorian setting with which he made his name, he has widened his scope to explore other time periods. Rather than trying to recapture the style of bygone eras, Lovesey writes from a modern perspective, thus achieving an interesting juxtaposition of different detective-fiction traditions. The consistently high quality of his historical research, his brilliant plots, and the skill with which he tells stories, ranging in tone from the serious to the comic, put Lovesey in the top ranks of historical mystery writers.

Lovesey's later novels, while set in more recent times, reveal the same skill in plotting, characterization, and subtle humor, whether the novels are set in a small corner of England or range around the globe. Although Lovesey's plots sometimes center on modern technology, his sleuths' commitment to using traditional methods, while maintaining their own independence, shows the connection between the past and the present, particularly in the mystery genre.

Lovesey's numerous awards include the Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger Awards in 1978 for *Waxwork*, 1995 for *The Summons*, and 1996 for *Bloodhounds*, and the Gold Dagger Award in 1983 for *The False Inspector Dew*; the Anthony Award in 1992 for *The Last Detective*, and Macavity Awards in 1997 for *Bloodhounds* and 2004 for *The House Sitter*. In 2000 he was awarded the Cartier Diamond Dagger Award by the Crime Writers' Association of Great Britain for his lifetime achievement in the field.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter Harmer Lovesey was born on September 10, 1936, in Whitton, Middlesex, England, the son of Rich-

ard Lear, a bank official, and Amy Strank Lovesey. He attended Hampton Grammar School and the University of Reading, receiving honors in English in 1958. He served as an education officer and flying officer in the Royal Air Force from 1958 to 1961, and he married Jacqueline Ruth Lewis in 1959. After teaching at Thurrock Technical College in Grays, Essex, for eight years, Lovesey became the head of the general education department at Hammersmith College for Further Education in London until 1975. Lovesey has two children: a daughter and a son, Philip, who as Phil Lovesey, has become a crime novelist in his own right.

In the article "Magician, Actor, Runner—Writer," Lovesey traces the influences of his childhood ambitions on his writing career. By his own account, he was one of the first joggers, accompanying himself with his own radio commentary as he trained on dark suburban streets. When he realized that he was not cut out to be a runner, he became a fan of those who were and, utilizing his academic skills, turned to research on the history of running. A photograph in a sports magazine of a nineteenth century North American Indian, Deerfoot, spurred Lovesey's interest in the Victorian period. Researching accounts of running events of the previous century in a newspaper museum, he found stories full of "character, color, and eccentricity," which he turned into articles for track and field magazines. After five years of writing, earning nothing but the title of "world's foremost authority on the history of athletics," Lovesey published a book on long-distance runners, *The Kings of Distance: A Study of Five Great Runners* (1968).

For his entry to the Panther-Macmillan First Crime Novel Competition, Lovesey decided to create a mystery involving a nineteenth century running event known as wobbles. The result was his first mystery novel, *Wobble to Death* (1970), which won the competition. Since then, he has delved into other aspects of Victorian life for the Sergeant Cribb series and branched out into other historical periods. In 1975, he became a full-time writer. With his wife, Jackie, who holds a degree in psychology and was more of a mystery fan than he, Lovesey adapted some of the Cribb novels and wrote six new ones for the television series based on the Cribb novels. Jackie, being more familiar

with the genre, helped Lovesey steer clear of hackneyed situations in his novels.

ANALYSIS

Unusual among mystery writers, Peter Lovesey started his career in the genre not because he loved reading mysteries but because he loved sports, long-distance running in particular. His prizewinning debut, *Wobble to Death*, is set in the Agricultural Hall in Islington in 1879, at one of the running events known as wobbles, in which contestants try to run the greatest possible distance in six days. The hardships of the runners, the filth and stench pervading the building rented for the event, the tricks that athletes and trainers used to gain an extra winning edge, and the varied and sometimes mysterious reasons that a sport becomes so obsessively important to its contestants are all evoked in vivid detail. The reader learns about this nineteenth century sporting event along with Sergeant Cribb and his assistant Thackeray, who are called to the scene when one of the runners favored to win is murdered.

This winning combination of the historical setting, the sociology and psychology of sports, and a modern police procedural story led to a series of Cribb adventures highlighting other aspects of Victorian life: bare-knuckle prizefighting in *The Detective Wore Silk Drawers* (1971), hammer throwing and the music-hall stage in *Abracadaver* (1972), seaside resorts in *Mad Hatter's Holiday: A Novel of Murder in Victorian Brighton* (1973), and Irish terrorism in *Invitation to a Dynamite Party* (1974). *A Case of Spirits* (1975) explores the dynamics of Victorian family life, the emancipated new woman, and the craze for spiritual phenomena.

Lovesey's other novels branch out from the Cribb series; they may be set in a different historical period, such as the Hollywood of Mack Sennett in *Keystone* (1983) or a transatlantic ocean liner in the 1920's in *The False Inspector Dew* (1982). *Rough Cider* (1987), set in the 1960's, describes the consequences of an incident during World War II. In *Bertie and the Tinman* (1988), however, Lovesey returns to the Victorian sporting scene.

Mystery novels set in the past, whether in Victorian times as in the works of Lovesey, Julian Symons, or Nicholas Meyer, or centuries ago as in the works of

Ellis Peters or Robert van Gulik, automatically have a charm of their own. As a genre, mystery fiction has traditionally been considered a form of escapist literature, and historical mysteries provide an escape even further removed from the realities of modern life. The Victorian setting of Lovesey's Cribb series, for example, evokes not only the stereotypes of a slower, more leisurely era but also the tradition of those mystery-fiction giants, Sherlock Holmes and Watson. The unequal intellectual contest between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous duo is re-created in Lovesey's Sergeant Cribb and Edward Thackeray; the latter wishes, as he plods through the tedious tasks assigned him, to surprise his superior just once with some vital discovery, but like Watson, he cannot.

Lovesey has explained that Victorian society was a rich source of motivations for crime; the twentieth century with its "social welfare and easier divorce and psychiatric care has removed many of the bad old reasons for murder." By contrast, the Victorian need for respectability provides more motives for murder: "The need to achieve security by inheritance, or life insurance, or marriage; the risk of losing it when scandal threatened; the equating of sex with sin; the stigma of insanity; the things that went unsaid."

A historical setting, Lovesey notes, must conform to a framework of historical fact, which cannot be changed and which thus assures a measure of certainty and control. In *Invitation to a Dynamite Party*, for example, which the author describes as a Victorian James Bond book, the reader knows that the plot to assassinate the Prince of Wales cannot succeed. Although some elements of plot are thus deprived of suspense, there is still the whimsical pleasure of recognizing real historical characters or events juxtaposed to the fictional: Sergeant Cribb will occasionally mention Charlie Peace, an infamous Victorian murderer, or the equally infamous Jack the Ripper; the pioneers of Hollywood—Mack Sennett, Mabel Normand, and Fatty Arbuckle—appear in *Keystone*; and *The False Inspector Dew* features a brief description of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. In *Bertie and the Tinman*, the Prince of Wales is the detective figure, with cameo appearances from his mother, Queen Victoria.

As interesting as their backgrounds are, Lovesey's

novels do not appeal merely because of their historical detail; rather, they illustrate his own view of such historical novels: "All we ask of the historical mystery is that it tell a story consistent with known facts and that those facts arise naturally from the plot. If we want a history lecture, we can go to college." Because of their historical setting and their range of tone, it would be misleading to characterize the Sergeant Cribb novels as typical police procedurals. Some elements, however, as described by George Dove and Earl Bargainnier in their introduction to *Cops and Constables: American and British Fictional Policemen* (1986), are indeed typical. Dove and Bargainnier place the police story within the classic category of mystery fiction, which develops step by step, and within the hard-boiled school, with its physical and pragmatic approach. This category of fictional police detectives is in turn divided into two: the older school, with its emphasis on "cop sense," relying on intelligence, common sense, and a broad understanding of human nature; and the more recent school, drawing on technological advances in police work such as forensic science, the police laboratory, and computers.

Lovesey's historical detective figures are of necessity in the older school. Sergeant Cribb has been with the Criminal Investigation Department since its inception, and although a few scientific advances have been made in the field of crime detection, he must rely on his experience and understanding of human nature to solve cases. As is typical of police detectives, who cannot exercise a private code of ethics or choose their cases as the private investigators of hard-boiled detective fiction can, Cribb has to work on cases within the limitations imposed by police hierarchy and politics. In *Waxwork* (1978), for example, he glumly reflects that after seventeen years his chances for a promotion are practically nil because he tends to be so outspoken. Aware of this bitter situation, his superior, Inspector Jowett, who has advanced primarily through his skill with paperwork and rigorous adherence to the police code, forces him to take a politically dangerous assignment. Cribb fully realizes, however, that the assignment cannot advance his career in any way, because no matter what part he plays in the case, Jowett will appropriate all the credit.

The hard-boiled tradition, however, does not dominate all of Lovesey's novels. A more lighthearted twentieth century perspective prevails in other novels. *Swing, Swing Together* (1976) and *The False Inspector Dew*, for example, have a delightfully wry post-modernist self-referential quality. *The False Inspector Dew*, as indicated in the title, plays on the case of the real Inspector Dew, who captured the infamous Dr. Crippen and his lover. Such extended jokes blended into classic puzzle plots are surely hard to find in college history lectures. Luckily for anyone who does not mind accumulating bits of history as long as the promise of a good murder story is there, Lovesey offers fascinating glimpses of life in other eras with skill, imagination, thoughtfulness, and humor.

These same qualities imbue Lovesey's later detective fiction, including the psychological mysteries *Rough Cider, On the Edge* (1989), and *The Reaper* (2001), and particularly his series about Peter Diamond, head of the Murder Squad for the Avon and Somerset police force until he resigns in a dispute with his superior. Diamond later returns under his own terms, thus establishing his independence of traditional bureaucracy and authority. Diamond distrusts modern police technology and cannot operate a computer, but he will use the results of technology if someone else obtains them for him. He relies on his own common sense and ability to talk to people to achieve his results, which are successful enough that his gruff manner and uncontrolled tongue are often—if not always—excused by superiors and coworkers. However, his irascibility causes an assistant he admires, Julie Hargreaves, to ask for a transfer to headquarters, even though she otherwise likes and admires him. Diamond also suffers deep personal loss during the series. Lovesey's presentation of Diamond is complex enough so that admiration for him is usually tempered by regret over his lack of forethought. Though these novels are set in the present, Lovesey's love of the past has not disappeared: Bath, we are reminded in several novels, was the home, at various times, of Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. All in all, this series shows Lovesey's mastery in combining modern themes and subjects with the traditional genre virtues of skillful plotting and interesting characterization.

SWING, SWING TOGETHER

Drawing on the enormous popularity of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of a Dog)*, published in 1889, Lovesey anchors *Swing, Swing Together* in Jerome's story of a trip on the Thames River. Harriet Shaw, a romantic seventeen-year-old, inadvertently witnesses a murder involving three men and a dog in a boat. Unaware that there is a vogue for re-creating the events of the book among the populace, Cribb, Thackeray, and a young village police officer, all traveling incognito, take Harriet along to track the movements of the men Harriet saw. They are disconcerted to find that numerous parties of three in boats are following the same trail and that no one is inclined to take their search seriously.

WAXWORK

An excellent example of Lovesey's skill in integrating historical ambience and detail with a good story is *Waxwork*, in which Cribb is asked to conduct an independent investigation to clear up some inconsistencies in the confession of a condemned murderer, Miriam Cromer. The story is woven from three separate threads, one following Cribb as he retraces the trail of evidence, one tracing the process of Miriam's incarceration, and a third following James Barry, a real Victorian hangman, as he negotiates with Madame Tussaud's for the sale of Miriam's clothing after he executes her. Memorable scenes of a Victorian women's jail and the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, a testimony to the public's fascination with criminals, emerge naturally from the plot. The three story lines are intertwined when Barry, seeking only to present his wife with a picture of himself done by Miriam's husband, a famous photographer, innocently precipitates the hasty actions that reveal the true murderer to Cribb.

Waxwork is one of the most hard-boiled of the Cribb police procedurals in its dark tone, its depiction of inept police officers, its intimation of high-level political manipulation, its cynical view of humanity, and its portrayal of Cribb as a lone and lonely figure in search of the truth regardless of where it leads him. Significantly, it is one Cribb novel in which Thackeray does not appear. Indeed, Lovesey has described Cribb as a character who manifests the three qualities that

Ross Macdonald, the American writer of hard-boiled mysteries, listed as typical of a contemporary American detective hero: "an impatience with special privilege, a sense of interdependence among men and a certain modesty."

THE SUMMONS

The Summons (1995) establishes Bath as the geographical center of the Peter Diamond series, as Diamond uses an escaped convict's threat to leverage a return to the police force. Diamond's skill in eliciting information and interpreting it are highlighted, as is his reluctance to use deadly force in apprehending a suspect. Above all, Diamond's integrity is recognized, particularly by the convict, who asks for Diamond because he is "straight." Lovesey's skill at plotting is also exhibited in the explanation for the chief clue in the original crime, roses stuffed in the mouth of the victim. Diamond's success represents the triumph of the older, more traditional methods of policing.

DIAMOND DUST

Lovesey here forces his readers out of their comfort zone as Peter Diamond investigates (against orders, of course) the death of his wife, Stephanie, who in previous novels had proved to be a thoroughly likeable, yet human character. Diamond's pain is depicted realistically and unsentimentally, and his search is characteristically blunt and thorough. The explanation of the killer's motive is believable and psychologically sound, as Lovesey plays fair with the clues and evidence. If Lovesey has a weakness, it is in the coziness of some of his plots, particularly in the historical novels. *Diamond Dust* shows that charge no longer applies, and that the world of crime can enter the circle of the detective.

Shakuntala Jayaswal

Updated by William E. Laskowski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SERGEANT CRIBB SERIES: *Wobble to Death*, 1970; *The Detective Wore Silk Drawers*, 1971; *Ab-racadaver*, 1972; *Mad Hatter's Holiday: A Novel of Murder in Victorian Brighton*, 1973; *Invitation to a Dynamite Party*, 1974 (also as *The Tick of Death*); *A Case of Spirits*, 1975; *Swing, Swing Together*, 1976; *Waxwork*, 1978

BERTIE, THE PRINCE OF WALES SERIES: *Bertie and the Tinman*, 1988; *Bertie and the Seven Bodies*, 1990; *Bertie and the Crime of Passion*, 1993

PETER DIAMOND SERIES: *The Last Detective*, 1991; *Diamond Solitaire*, 1992; *The Summons*, 1995; *Bloodhounds*, 1996; *Upon a Dark Night*, 1997; *The Vault*, 2000; *Diamond Dust*, 2002; *The House Sitter*, 2003; *The Circle*, 2005; *The Secret Hangman*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Goldengirl*, 1977 (as Lear); *Spider Girl*, 1980 (as Lear; also known as *In Suspense*); *The False Inspector Dew*, 1982; *Keystone*, 1983; *The Secret of Spandau*, 1986 (as Lear); *Rough Cider*, 1987; *On the Edge*, 1989 (also known as *Dead Gorgeous*); *The Reaper*, 2001

SHORT FICTION: *Butchers, and Other Stories of Crime*, 1985; *The Crime of Miss Oyster Brown, and Other Stories*, 1994; *Do Not Exceed the Stated Dose*, 1998; *The Sedgemoor Strangler, and Other Stories of Crime*, 2001

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *The Kings of Distance: A Study of Five Great Runners*, 1968 (also as *Five Kings of Distance*); *The Guide to British Track and Field Literature, 1275-1968*, 1969 (with Tom MacNab); *The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association*, 1979

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- _____. "An Up-to-Date Victorian." Interview by Leonard Picker. *Publishers Weekly* 252, no. 13 (March 28, 2005): 60. Brief interview with Lovesey on the publication of *The Circle*. Discusses his use of a female detective with Diamond and whether he would ever resurrect the Sergeant Cribb series.
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MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES

Marie Belloc

Born: Marylebone, London, England; 1868

Died: Eversly Cross, Hampshire, England;
November 14, 1947

Also wrote as Philip Curtin; Elizabeth Rayner

Types of plot: Psychological; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hercules Popeau, 1913-1940

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HERCULES POPEAU, an elderly French detective, follows the pattern of traditional detective fiction. Perhaps because of the author's French heritage, Popeau is never given to the histrionics and idiosyncrasies so typical of his many French and Belgian detective contemporaries.

CONTRIBUTION

Marie Belloc Lowndes was one of the first novelists to base her work on historical criminal cases, at times utilizing actual courtroom testimony. This innovation, however, presented her with a dilemma: If the reader knows the outcome of the problem, where is the suspense? Lowndes's solution was to focus attention not on the crime but on the underlying motives and, above all, on the reactions of those affected by its consequences. Most of her characters, whether murderers, accomplices, or bystanders, are ordinary people who, to their horror, become gradually enmeshed in circumstances beyond their control. Lowndes, unique in her day, was particularly adept at portraying the psychology of women who not only shielded criminals but also could be cold-blooded killers. It is to one extraordinary, even mythical, figure in criminal lore, how-

ever, that Lowndes owes her place of honor in the mystery hall of fame. In *The Lodger* (1913), she was the first to seize on the rich material latent in the Jack the Ripper murders. She also was the first to participate in the game of guessing the Ripper's identity. Her assumption that the hierarchy of the Metropolitan Police knew and covered up the identity of the murderer has formed the basis of many subsequent theories concerning the notorious serial killer.

BIOGRAPHY

Marie Adelaide Belloc Lowndes was born in the summer of 1868 into a family renowned for its literary, social, and scientific achievements. Her parents, both nearing forty at the time of her birth, had already distinguished themselves in their respective careers, her French father, Louis Belloc, in law, and her English mother, Bessie Raynor Parkes, as a leader in the fight for women's rights. Bessie Parkes was also the editor of one of the first women's magazines in Great Britain. Lowndes's French grandmother had translated Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1882), and her maternal great-great-grandfather was J. B. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen. Her younger brother, Hilaire Belloc, was the well-known novelist and poet.

The bilingual Lowndes considered herself to be French, even though she was born and later died in England, wrote in English, and lost her French father during her early childhood. She had little formal schooling, except for two years in a convent school, but claimed to have begun writing at the age of sixteen. Her familial connections brought her in contact with the important figures of the day, and her literary career began with sketches of famous writers such as Jules Verne that were published in magazines such as *The Strand*. In 1896, she married the journalist and writer Frederic Sawrey Lowndes. They had two daughters and a son.

At the beginning of her literary career, Lowndes was primarily known as a writer of witty and satirical sketches of upper- and middle-class society. After the publication of her first novel of suspense, *When No Man Pursueth: An Everyday Story* (1910), however, her works increasingly began to focus on the psychological motivation of crime. Since 1926, numerous

versions of her suspense novels have been adapted to the screen. The most famous have clearly been the various reworkings of *The Lodger*, starting with the Alfred Hitchcock classic *The Lodger* (1926) with Ivor Novello as the mysterious upstairs tenant.

During the 1930's, Lowndes concentrated her energies on writing for the stage, adapting many of her own works. Her expertise in the manipulation of dialogue served her well in her account of another famous murder case, that of Lizzie Borden. In *Lizzie Borden: A Study in Conjecture* (1939), Lowndes offers her own solution to the crime. Lowndes wrote four biographical volumes: "*I, Too, Have Lived in Arcadia*": *A Record of Love and of Childhood* (1941), *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt* (1943), *The Merry Wives of Westminster* (1946), and *A Passing World* (1948). *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt* contains fascinating glimpses into the lives of important literary and political figures of the early twentieth century. During World War II, the Lowndes family house in London was destroyed in a bombing raid, and she retired to her country house in Hampshire, where she died on November 14, 1947.

ANALYSIS

Marie Belloc Lowndes subtitled her first attempt at suspense fiction, *When No Man Pursueth*, "An Everyday Story." Its setting is not the gothic castle, the lonely moor, or the Chinese opium den, so beloved of her generation, but a tiny, common English village filled with pleasant, ordinary English people living pleasant, ordinary lives—except for the fact that one man is slowly murdering his wife in quite a vile manner. The protagonist is a country doctor who, to his own amazement, begins to realize the truth. He has no direct proof, and another doctor does not agree with his suspicions, but slowly and reluctantly he is drawn into action. The focus of the novel is on neither the victim nor the murderer but on the workings of the young doctor's mind. This careful delineation of the psychology of an ordinary person confronted by extraordinary circumstances was to become the linchpin of all Lowndes's later work. What interested Lowndes was not the "who" but the "why." In fact, her trademark was the revelation of the criminal's identity at the beginning of the novel rather than at the end. Bereft of the value of

the dramatic denouement, Lowndes experimented with different narrators and narrative techniques. In *The Chink in the Armour* (1912), which somewhat resembles the much later *Before the Fact* (1932) by Francis Iles, the story is told from the point of view of the intended victim.

THE STORY OF IVY AND LETTY LYNTON

Victims were not, however, psychologically interesting to Lowndes. Her emphasis on motivation enabled her to break away from many of the stereotypes of her time. Although her writing does have its share of pathetic heroines, more common are the strong, amoral women whose straying from the path of accepted behavior is painstakingly depicted. Lowndes was particularly intrigued by the psychology of the female poisoner. Two of her most popular works, *The Story of Ivy* (1927) and *Letty Lynton* (1931), analyze two such women who ruthlessly try to rid themselves of all obstacles that block their path to monetary gain or sexual satisfaction. Interest in these novels is maintained in the revelation of the protagonist's true identity as layer after layer of psychological camouflage is painfully stripped away. Both works contain courtroom scenes, and Lowndes's skill at dialogue is evident in her adroit maneuvering of the verbal give-and-take of a trial. In 1939, Lowndes united this expertise to her concentration on psychological motivation in her acclaimed tour de force, *Lizzie Borden*.

LIZZIE BORDEN

Lowndes had long used actual criminal cases as background for her suspense novels, and she is principally remembered for these fictional reconstructions. The Borden case fascinated her—the case was one of the most controversial in United States criminal history, and the notorious Borden seemed to be the real-life counterpart of Lowndes's own fictional murderesses. In 1893, the New York jury, although apparently presented with incontrovertible evidence of guilt, voted to acquit Borden. In Lowndes's reconstruction of the case, Borden's guilt or innocence is never an issue. She wholeheartedly accepts Edmund Pearson's 1924 analysis of the trial that ridiculed the acquittal. For Lowndes, the interesting question is the motive underlying the guilt, which she defines as destructive love. Controlled by a tyrannical father and dominated

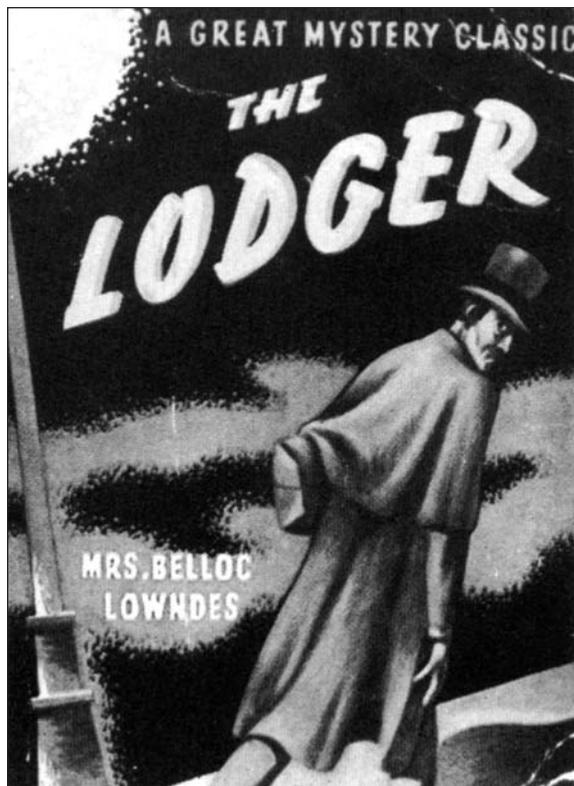
by passions that she could not control, the quiet, repressed Borden visualized murder as a logical step in her quest for sexual liberation. Although no shred of evidence has ever arisen to substantiate Lowndes's claim, her psychological insights and masterful setting of the scene lend a credibility that is further reinforced by its insertion between the factual prologue and epilogue. Unfortunately, the technical skill of the novel has at times been obscured by the prevailing theories about the Borden case. In 1971, both Pearson's and Lowndes's work were caustically attacked by the journalist Edmund Radin, who, decrying the bias of Pearson's assertions, named the Borden servant, Bridget, as the culprit. Since the publication of Radin's own book, *Lizzie Borden: The Untold Story* (1971), opinion generally has been divided between the Lowndes-Pearson and Radin camps. Another theory, rapidly gaining a following, deals with reputed epilepsy and concomitant temporary insanity in the Borden family.

THE LODGER

The Lowndes work that is considered a classic of its kind concerns another famous criminal, Jack the Ripper. *The Lodger* is a complex weaving of Lowndes's preoccupation with criminal history, feminine psychology, and obsessive motivation. It also represents a milestone as the first fictional treatment of a subject that has continued to fascinate connoisseurs of crime; many consider it to be not only the first but also the best fictional reworking of the Jack the Ripper story.

In 1913, Lowndes was still wary of using actual names. Her murderer is called "The Avenger," and all of her references to historical names and details are veiled. So well did she execute this deliberate vagueness that on publication of the work, many critics did not even mention its similarity to the Ripper case. Instead, labeling it a psychological study, they congratulated her for her clinical impartiality.

Rather than focusing on the murderer himself, Lowndes centers her attention on an impoverished former servant named Ellen Bunting. The tale is set in a shabby street near Marylebone Road, London, in an old house whose tenants, to survive, have had to rent their upstairs rooms to lodgers. (Lowndes herself was born in a lodging house in Marylebone, although in a far better section.) The beginning of the novel is a mi-



cosmos of Lowndes's art in suspense writing. The reader is presented with detailed descriptions of an ordinary, middle-aged couple and their house and its furnishings, typical of their class and period. Everything is in order and nothing attracts attention. The thick damask curtains are drawn against the dampness and intrusions from the street. Suddenly, however, the outside world enters with the echoing shout of newsboys crying the late edition of the day's paper. Only one word stands out—murder.

Reading about the series of brutal murders committed during the past fortnight has been Mr. Bunting's only diversion from his financial woes. Slipping out into the street, he guiltily buys the paper and reads it under the street lamp, afraid to return home with his purchase. Remorsefully, he realizes not only that it was wasteful to have spent the sorely needed money, but also that his wife, Ellen, is angered by any reference to immorality or physical violence. Decent people, in her opinion, should be above such morbid curiosity. It is cold and foggy outside, however, and

Bunting slowly enters the house with his paper and sits down to read about the most recent murder. Absorbed in the paper, he does not respond to the sudden knock, and so it is his wife who slowly opens the front door:

On the top of the three steps which led up to the door, there stood the long, lanky figure of a man, clad in an Inverness cape and an old-fashioned top hat. He waited for a few seconds blinking at her, perhaps dazzled by the light of the gas in the passage. . . .

"Is it not a fact that you let lodgings?" he asked, and there was something shrill, unbalanced, hesitating, in his voice. . . .

And then, for the first time, Mrs. Bunting noticed that he held a narrow bag in his left hand. It was quite a new bag, made of strong brown leather.

"I am looking for some quiet rooms," he said.

Ellen Bunting, knowing instinctively that this man is a gentleman, smilingly invites Mr. Sleuth into her home. The Buntings are overjoyed. Financial disaster has been temporarily postponed with the arrival of this most-generous stranger. His oddities do not concern them, for after a lifetime spent in servitude, the Buntings are tolerant of, and even amused by, the eccentricities of the upper classes.

A decrease in suspense and surprise generally accompanies any familiarity with the subject, but, paradoxically, it is the modern reader's detailed knowledge of the Whitechapel murders that increase the drama in *The Lodger*. In 1913, unaware of many of the facts or theories surrounding the case, few readers recognized Lowndes's skill in weaving historical detail or surmise into her fictional pattern. By 1944, the year of the remake of the film *The Lodger*, starring Laird Cregar, the audience was immersed in Ripper lore and thrilled at the first close-up of the small leather bag surrounded by swirling fog. Consequently, the modern reader is well ahead of Ellen Bunting in her discovery of the truth. Such prescience, however, in no way diminishes the novel's impact. The true center of interest has always been Ellen, and it is soon made clear that what the reader knows Ellen would give anything to hide.

Their lodger quite literally represents hope for the Buntings. Without the rent money, they would starve. Moreover, Mr. Sleuth is Ellen's lodger; he trusts her.

In a famous passage, Lowndes analyzes the psychological motivation underlying this protective instinct:

In the long history of crime it has very, very seldom happened that a woman has betrayed one who has taken refuge with her. The timorous and cautious woman has not infrequently hunted a human being fleeing from his pursuer from her door, but she has not revealed the fact that he was ever there. In fact, it may almost be said that such betrayal has never taken place unless the betrayer has been actuated by love of gain, or by a longing for revenge. So far, perhaps because she is subject rather than citizen, her duty as a component part of civilised society weights but lightly on woman's shoulders.

Ellen Bunting feels no obligation to the forces of law and order. As a respectable, nineteenth century woman of her class, she would consider it a mark of shame to be associated with the police. The fact that the beau of her stepdaughter Daisy is a police officer makes no difference. One can have a police officer as an acquaintance or even as a member of the family, but one must not be soiled by his sordid occupation. It is indeed fortunate that this particular police officer, besotted by Daisy, shows no curiosity in the lodger or his odd comings and goings. Ellen is also typical of the psychology of her class and time in her feelings toward the victims. One reason that she can shield the real murderer is that she is not sympathetic toward the dead women. Contemptuous of their class and morality, she believes that they deserve what they get.

It is clear why Lowndes's portrait of Ellen Bunting surprised many critics. The taciturn, prejudiced, unlovely landlady is a far cry from the usual lady in distress. Lowndes has justly been praised by writers such as Ernest Hemingway for psychological insights into the mind of this woman, who slowly becomes a prisoner of her own fear. It is not physical fear; Ellen is afraid not of her lodger but of social ostracism. Lying in bed at night listening for the sounds of Mr. Sleuth's footsteps, Ellen has visions of being identified as the woman who harbored the criminal, which would mean that she and her husband would never get another lodger. Although differing from most of Lowndes's female protagonists in age and class, Ellen, who considers herself to be an extremely decent, religious

woman, is nevertheless like the others in her amoral approach to her problem. Ellen sees no inherent ethical dilemma in sheltering a homicidal maniac. On the contrary, self-interest demands that she keep him safe.

There are times, however, when her resolution wanes. For example, spurred by a need to know if the police are any closer to the truth, she attends the inquest on one of the Avenger's victims. For the first time, a victim becomes human to her, and the enormity of the crimes hits home. Hearing the gruesome details, Ellen becomes physically ill but still cannot bring herself to betray Mr. Sleuth. In fact, she never does. It is not her fault that in a final ironic twist of fate, her loyalty becomes meaningless. At the end, Mr. Sleuth believes that she has betrayed him.

In the best of Lowndes's fiction, suspense lies in the unraveling of an ordinary mind and spirit confronted by unusual circumstances. Lowndes resented being called a crime writer and would have been amazed to discover her name indelibly linked with that of an extraordinary criminal.

Charlene E. Suscavage

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HERCULES POPEAU SERIES: *A Labor of Hercules*, 1943

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1910-1920 • *When No Man Pursueth: An Everyday Story*, 1910; *Jane Oglander*, 1911; *Mary Pechell*, 1912; *The Chink in the Armour*, 1912 (also known as *The House of Peril*); *The End of Her Honeymoon*, 1913; *The Lodger*, 1913; *Good Old Anna*, 1915; *The Price of Admiralty*, 1915; *Lilla: A Part of Her Life*, 1916; *The Red Cross Barge*, 1916; *Love and Hatred*, 1917; *Out of the War?*, 1918 (also known as *The Gentleman Anonymous*); *From the Vasty Deep*, 1920 (also known as *From Out of Vasty Deep*); *The Lonely House*, 1920

1921-1930 • *What Timmy Did*, 1922; *The Terriford Mystery*, 1924; *What Really Happened*, 1926; *The Story of Ivy*, 1927; *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, 1927; *Cressida: No Mystery*, 1928; *Duchess Laura: Certain Days of Her Life*, 1929 (also known as *The Duchess Intervenes*); *Love's Revenge*, 1929; *One of Those Ways*, 1929

1931-1941 • *Letty Lynton*, 1931; *Vanderlyn's Ad-*

venture, 1931 (also known as *The House by the Sea*); *Jenny Newstead*, 1932; *Love Is a Flame*, 1932; *The Reason Why*, 1932; *Duchess Laura—Further Days from Her Life*, 1933; *Another Man's Wife*, 1934; *The Chianti Flask*, 1934; *Who Rides on a Tiger*, 1935; *And Call It Accident*, 1936; *The Second Key*, 1936 (also known as *The Injured Lover*); *The Marriage-Broker*, 1937 (also known as *The Fortune of Bridget Malone*); *Motive*, 1938; *Lizzie Borden: A Study in Conjecture*, 1939; *Reckless Anger*, 1939; *The Christine Diamond*, 1940; *Before the Storm*, 1941

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Studies in Love and Terror*, 1913; *Why They Married*, 1923; *Bread of Deceit*, 1925 (also known as *Afterwards*); *Some Men and Women*, 1925; *What of the Night?*, 1943

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Philosophy of the Marquise*, 1899; *The Heart of Penelope*, 1904; *Barbara Rebell*, 1905; *The Pulse of Life*, 1908; *The Uttermost Farthing*, 1908; *She Dwelt with Beauty*, 1949

PLAYS: *The Lonely House*, pr. 1924 (with Charles Randolph; based on her novel); *The Key: A Love Drama*, pb. 1930 (also known as *The Second Key*); *With All John's Love*, pb. 1930; *Why Be Lonely?*, pb. 1931 (with F. S. A. Lowndes); *What Really Happened*, pb. 1932 (based on her novel); *Her Last Adventure*, pr. 1936; *The Empress Eugenie*, pb. 1938

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Told in Gallant Deeds: A Child's History of the War*, 1914

NONFICTION: *H. R. H. the Prince of Wales: An Account of His Career*, 1898 (revised as *His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII*, 1901); *The Philosophy of the Marquise*, 1899; *T. R. H. the Prince and Princess of Wales*, 1902; *Noted Murder Mysteries*, 1914; "I, Too, Have Lived in Arcadia": *A Record of Love and of Childhood*, 1941; *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt*, 1943; *The Merry Wives of Westminster*,

1946; *A Passing World*, 1948; *The Young Hilaire Belloc*, 1956; *Letters and Diaries of Marie Bellow Lowndes 1911-1947*, 1971 (Susan Lowndes, editor)

TRANSLATION: *Edmund and Jules de Goncourt, with Letters and Leaves from Their Journals*, 1895 (with M. Shedlock)

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ROBERT LUDLUM

Born: New York, New York; May 25, 1927

Died: Naples, Florida; March 12, 2001

Also wrote as Jonathan Ryder; Michael Shepherd

Types of plot: Thriller; espionage

CONTRIBUTION

Each of Robert Ludlum's novels typically features a middle-class American in his mid-thirties, well educated and often financially secure, who can be said to represent a type of twentieth century Everyman. This individual unwittingly and unwillingly faces a Dantesque midlife crisis, becoming involved in events that transcend his own experiences and demand that he respond and react to a life-threatening, often world-threatening challenge as the result of an all-encompassing conspiracy. The particular conspiracy faced by a Ludlum protagonist can be perpetrated by executives of international corporations, members of organized crime, fascists, communists, Middle Eastern terrorists, or religious fanatics, but it always threatens to destroy the ideals and institutions of a way of life.

Ludlum's heroes battle against power, particularly absolute power; monopolistic institutions, whether political, ideological, economic, or criminal, threaten the acceptable status quo that his heroes strive to maintain. In Ludlum's fast-paced writing, with its convoluted plots and its international settings, the confrontation between good and evil is complex but ultimately clear-cut, and the conclusion generally manifests itself in graphic violence. Power and evil, however, are not always permanently defeated; like the phoenix, they rise from the ashes only to be faced again by the hero.

Ludlum himself acquired a phoenix-like quality, publishing for years after his death. A planned mass-market series called Covert-One allowed Ludlum to collaborate with several top-flight suspense writers, such as Philip Shelby and Gayle Linds. Ludlum's name is featured prominently on the covers, but the credit for authorship is somewhat fudged. *The Lazarus Vendetta* (2004) gives Ludlum credit only for "creating" the series. Eric van Lustbader, a popular author of thrillers, was commissioned by the publisher to pro-

duce *The Bourne Legacy* (2005) and *The Bourne Betrayal* (2007). A number of novels appeared, beginning with *The Janson Directive* (2002), that may have been cobbled from Ludlum's notes but clearly were the work of ghostwriters.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Ludlum was born on May 25, 1927, in New York City, the son of George Hartford Ludlum and Margaret Wadsworth. His family was from the upper middle class, and although his father died when Ludlum was still young, he attended a series of private schools. He became enamored of acting and the theater, and on his own initiative he obtained a part in a Broadway show. Before finishing school, he attempted to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force but was rejected because he was underage. He later served in the United States Marine Corps. After leaving the service, he enrolled in Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, as a theater major. At college he met his future wife, Mary Ryducha, with whom he later had three children. Ludlum was graduated with honors in 1951.

For the next several years Ludlum pursued an acting career. He was moderately successful, playing a number of parts in regional theater, on Broadway, and particularly in television. He became a featured player but never achieved stardom, often playing, he said, a murderer or a lawyer. In the late 1950's he turned to producing plays rather than acting in them, and he established a financially successful theater in a New Jersey suburban shopping center; he later complained that although he personally wished to produce more avant-garde plays, they inevitably were financial failures. By 1970, at the age of forty-three, he was ready for a new beginning.

Ludlum had considered becoming a writer for many years. He took the plot for his first novel from a short-story outline that he had begun years before. After numerous rejections, *The Scarlatti Inheritance* was published in 1971. He continued to supplement his income by doing voice-overs for television and radio advertisements, but by the mid-1970's his novels had be-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Robert Ludlum in 1986. (AP/Wide World Photos)

come so successful that he was able to write full-time. From their home in a two-hundred-year-old farmhouse in suburban Connecticut, Ludlum and his wife traveled widely. Many notes and photographs from their travels served as research for his novels. On March 12, 2001, Ludlum died in Naples, Florida.

ANALYSIS

Robert Ludlum established both his writing style and his literary themes in his first book, *The Scarlatti Inheritance*. Although his style and themes were to be subsequently refined, what he discovered then has proved to be successful in his later novels. Long an avid reader of history, Ludlum considered the question of how the Nazis came to power in Germany. His answer, in fiction, was that they were supported by a small number of ruthless and ambitious international

financiers, including Americans, who hoped to create an economic superpower. The conspiracy was discovered by a lone American intelligence officer who successfully dealt with the threat in an equally ruthless and violent manner. As with his later books, no reviewers praised Ludlum's style, but most were captivated by the energy and entertainment of the fast-moving story. The plot was convoluted and improbable and the writing melodramatic, but the formula worked. Various themes in his first novel would reappear in later ones: the relatively powerless individual who accidentally stumbles across a larger-than-life conspiracy to do evil, historical issues regarding the Nazi movement, and various international settings.

THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND

His next two novels saw Ludlum restrict his locale to the United States. He possibly perceived that in

spite of the success of his first book, he was not yet ready to deal fully with such broad historical and international topics, even through his imaginative fiction. *The Osterman Weekend* (1972) continued the precedent established by his first novel of a three-word title (which was followed in all the novels published under his own name), but instead of ranging over years and countries, the story is played out in only a few days in a New Jersey suburb. Four couples are invited to the home of John Tanner, but just before the party Tanner is approached by a supposed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent who warns Tanner about an international conspiracy of financial fanatics known as "Omega" and tells Tanner that it is likely that at least some of the invited guests are members of that secret order. Over the course of a few hours, tension and paranoia become paramount, violence occurs, the CIA fails to protect the innocent, and Tanner is forced to save the day himself. Ludlum, who has identified himself as a political liberal of the 1950's, has stated that "What I don't like in the world is largeness—large corporations, large governments." His moral anger at such conglomerations of power is a recurring theme in his novels.

THE MATLOCK PAPER

In his third novel, *The Matlock Paper* (1973), Ludlum keeps his scenes in the northeastern United States. James Barbour Matlock, a young English professor at Carlyle University (possibly modeled on Ludlum's own Wesleyan), becomes involved in a conspiracy, known as Nimrod, which aims to control the narcotics trade in New England. Both college officials and students have been sucked into the corrupt maelstrom of Nimrod. Matlock is approached, as was John Tanner, by officials of the United States government, but the government agency is unable to protect Matlock, and he is forced to become increasingly involved, resorting to violence to expose and defeat Nimrod.

The basic plots of Ludlum's earliest books were improbable but compelling. If professional historians remained doubtful about the existence, much less the efficacy, of the various conspiracies that Ludlum proposed, nevertheless he had succeeded in touching deep chords in many modern readers. Since the end of World War II, questions concerning the rise of communism in China,

the acquisition of atomic secrets by the Russians, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the motives for American involvement in Vietnam, and the Watergate conspiracy have puzzled Americans. Most persons refused to believe that these situations were the result of mere chance, accident, bad luck, long-term historical trends, or abstract forces. Instead, they were seen as the result of conscious human actions inspired by alien ideologies, immoral ambitions, superhuman greed, or fanatic commitments. In the bureaucratic world of the mid- and late twentieth century, the antagonist was not merely a single individual but a group of dedicated fanatics, acting together, secretly, with unlimited goals and demands aiming toward total power. Ludlum understood these fears: "We're living in a time when you can't take things at face value anymore. This is no longer the age of Aquarius—it's the age of conspiracy." To that insight he added fast-paced writing, complex plots, exotic locations, and considerable violence. His books became international best sellers.

TREVAYNE, THE CRY OF THE HALIDON, AND THE ROAD TO GANDOLFO

After the success of his first three novels, Ludlum, for some unexplained reason, published two novels, *Trevayne* (1973) and *The Cry of the Halidon* (1974), under the pseudonym Jonathan Ryder, a variation on one of his wife's acting names. Both novels concerned conspiracies engendered by international finance, and both were set on the exotic Caribbean island of Jamaica. In an interesting if not entirely successful change of pace, during that same period he also published *The Road to Gandolfo* (1975), under the pseudonym Michael Shepherd, in which he seems to be spoofing his own work, or at least his chosen genre. The plot revolves around the kidnapping of a pope by a military figure aiming at financial and political power, but the typical Ludlum theme is handled humorously and satirically. Under his own name, Ludlum always presents his conspiracies with great seriousness: "I take my work very seriously, and I generally write about something that outrages me as a man."

THE GEMINI CONTENDERS

The Gemini Contenders (1976) was one of Ludlum's most ambitious and successful novels. The story begins in the early days of World War II but only sec-

ondarily concerns one of his perennial bêtes noires, German fascism. The plot progresses to the waning days of the Vietnam War, but one of the most significant events in the novel occurred almost two thousand years before. No other Ludlum novel has covered so many centuries. Less unusually but still impressively, the story travels around the globe, from its beginnings in Greece and Italy, to England, to the United States—Washington, New England, and New York City—to Vietnam, and back to Europe. As is usual in Ludlum's books, the background detail adds considerably to the veracity of the plot, but the geographical and historical information never detracts from the story line and the dynamic energy of the writing. Ludlum has observed, "As Shaw once said, if you want to convince somebody, entertain him. That's what I try to do. In the theater you can't bore people. They'll walk out." Ludlum rarely bores the reader.

Ludlum generally begins his novels with the hypothetical question "What if?" In *The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977), the author asks what if J. Edgar Hoover had been assassinated instead of dying of natural causes? In *The Gemini Contenders*, Ludlum poses to the reader the possibility that a long-secret, first century C.E. document concerning the origins of Christianity exists. For many centuries the document has been kept in total secrecy by a fanatical order of Greek monks, but in the early days of World War II it was deemed too dangerous for it to remain in its traditional place of hiding. In the event of a Nazi invasion of Greece, the document might be discovered and then used by the German government to create religious differences within the Christian community and thus weaken the allied cause, facilitating Adolf Hitler's dream of establishing his Third Reich for a thousand years.

As usual in Ludlum's plots, the story's resolution involves a secret and corrupt conspiracy that entangles the hero; in *The Gemini Contenders*, however, the heroes are twin brothers, grandsons of the only man who knew the hiding place of the secret document. One twin, Andrew, is a professional soldier and a war hero in Vietnam; the other, Adrian, more reflective, has become a lawyer. Like Cain and Abel, the brothers become antagonists. Both, however, are committed to

rooting out corruption—Andrew in the military, Adrian in government and business. Ludlum has claimed, "I have one true loathing—for fanatics of all persuasions, right or left," and in his desire to cleanse the military, Andrew has become a fanatic. He and several of his comrades have formed a secret organization known as Eye Corps. It is a typical example of one of Ludlum's conspiracies: Secret and elitist, it follows its own rules, and regardless of its initial beneficial goals, it has become seduced by the vision of power and aims at taking over the United States Defense Department and, in effect, the country itself. In *The Chancellor Manuscript*, the secret elite group dedicated to preservation and betterment of the country is a small cadre of elder statesmen known as Inver Brass. In time, individual members of the secret organization also turn from the light to the darkness. Ludlum is consistent throughout his novels in portraying the corrupting effects of power, and secret power is the most dangerous.

In most Ludlum stories, issues and confrontations are resolved only through violence, and *The Gemini Contenders* is no different. When accused of glamorizing mayhem, Ludlum responds to his critics: "Have they read Sophocles? What about Aeschylus? C'mon, this century has not exactly been all roses. I use violence because it is realistic to my plots, but I do not romanticize it." Ludlum's use and description of violence has not only furthered his plots but has also undoubtedly contributed to his great popularity. By the time of the final battle between Andrew and Adrian, literally scores of characters—men, women, and children, the young and the old—have been most graphically maimed and murdered. Ludlum describes Andrew's death in the following manner:

The soldier's hand was in the grave. He whipped it out. In his grip was a rope; he lurched off the ground, swinging the rope violently. Tied to the end was a grappling hook, its three prongs slashing through the air.

Adrian sprang to his left, firing the enormous weapon at the crazed killer from Eye Corps.

The soldier's chest exploded. The rope, held in a grip of steel, swung in a circle—the grappling hook spinning like an insanely off-course gyroscope—around the soldier's head. The body shot forward, over

the sheet of rock, and plummeted down, its scream echoing, filling the mountains with its pitch of horror.

With a sudden, sickening vibration the rope sprang taut, quivering in the thin layer of disturbed snow. . . .

. . . He [Adrian] limped to the edge of the plateau and looked over the sheet of rock.

Suspended below was the soldier's body, the grappling hook imbedded in his neck. A prong had been plunged up through Andrew's throat, its point protruding from the gaping mouth.

Thus Ludlum's originally unwilling and unwitting individual triumphs over fanatics and conspiracies; Abel/Adrian kills Cain/Andrew. However, in Ludlum's novels, the triumph is not necessarily permanent or clear-cut. At the end of *The Gemini Contenders*, Adrian has finally discovered the message of the secret document, the message that could threaten the world's stability: It was not Christ who died on the cross but an impostor, and Christ himself committed suicide three days after the Crucifixion. The novel ends with Adrian neither releasing the document to the public nor permanently ensuring its secrecy by destroying it; he decides instead to keep it secret for the present, bearing the burdens of it himself, an existential act that perhaps represents Ludlum's ideal human quality.

THE BOURNE TRILOGY

In the second decade of his prolific writing career, Ludlum began to carry characters from one book to the next. Jason Bourne, the American suffering from amnesia in *The Bourne Identity* (1980), was brought back for further conspiratorial adventures in both *The Bourne Supremacy* (1986) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (1990). The secret group Inver Brass, introduced in *The Chancellor Manuscript*, reappeared in *The Icarus Agenda* (1988), Sam and the Hawk, from Ludlum's satirical *The Road to Gandolfo* (written under the Shepherd pseudonym and republished in 1982 under Ludlum's name) were revisited in the similarly humorous *The Road to Omaha* (1992), while rowdy Brandon Scofield from *The Matarese Circle* (1979) returned in *The Matarese Countdown* (1997) to once again battle maniacal Matarese members intent on dominating the world.

THE COVERT-ONE SERIES

After five more bestsellers in the 1990's, Ludlum decided to try something different—a paperback origi-

nal, *The Hades Factor* (2000), as the first in a series called Covert-One, similar to Tom Clancy's hugely popular OpCenter and Net Force books. Cowritten with Gayle Lynds, the thriller followed Ludlum's usual tenets of terrorism and conspiracy, this time involving biological warfare.

THE SIGMA PROTOCOL

Ludlum's last novel, *The Sigma Protocol* (2001), was widely considered one of his finest. As its release was nearly coincident with his death, the work probably was authored by Ludlum himself. His publisher, St. Martin's, let it be known at the time that there were a number of unpublished manuscripts, but it is doubtful that these were anywhere near ready for publication. Ghostwriters were certainly employed to finish the incomplete works, and it is speculated that much that has been published under Ludlum's name has been written entirely by other hands.

Ludlum's characters and plots also gained wider exposure through film adaptations: *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, *The Osterman Weekend*, and *The Holcroft Covenant* (1978) were made into major motion pictures and later released on video; *The Rhinemann Exchange* (1974), *The Bourne Identity*, and *The Apocalypse Watch* (1995) were transformed into television miniseries. Though critics greeted the films in much the same way reviewers did the books—lamenting the overwrought plots filled to capacity with ultraviolence—audiences were willing to overlook contrivance for a chance to see a Ludlum adventure on celluloid. In 2002 Ludlum's film reputation improved with the release of *The Bourne Identity* starring Matt Damon as Jason Bourne.

Eugene S. Larson
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan,
Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf, and
Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JASON BOURNE TRILOGY: *The Bourne Identity*, 1980; *The Bourne Supremacy*, 1986; *The Bourne Ultimatum*, 1990

COVERT-ONE SERIES: *The Hades Factor*, 2000 (with Gayle Lynds); *The Compact Cassandra*, 2001 (with Philip Shelby); *The Paris Option*, 2002 (with

Lynds); *The Altman Code*, 2003 (with Lynds)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, 1971; *The Osterman Weekend*, 1972; *The Matlock Paper*, 1973; *Trevayne*, 1973 (as Ryder); *The Cry of the Halidon*, 1974 (as Ryder); *The Rhinemann Exchange*, 1974; *The Road to Gandolfo*, 1975 (as Shepherd); *The Gemini Contenders*, 1976; *The Chancellor Manuscript*, 1977; *The Holcroft Covenant*, 1978; *The Matarese Circle*, 1979; *The Parsifal Mosaic*, 1982; *The Aquitaine Progression*, 1984; *The Icarus Agenda*, 1988; *The Road to Omaha*, 1992; *The Scorpio Illusion*, 1993; *The Apocalypse Watch*, 1995; *The Matarese Countdown*, 1997; *The Prometheus Deception*, 2000; *The Sigma Protocol*, 2001; *The Janson Directive*, 2002 (ghostwritten); *The Tristan Betrayal*, 2003 (ghostwritten); *The Ambler Warning*, 2005 (ghostwritten); *The Bancroft Strategy*, 2006 (ghostwritten)

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MacDonald, Gina. *Robert Ludlum: A Critical Com-*

panion. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997. A full-length study of Ludlum's novels, including a biographical introduction.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Devotes a full chapter to the thriller genre. Priestman argues that there is no expectation of literary or intellectual skill involved in writing a thriller. Rather, the genre has its roots in Victorian melodrama and derives its attraction from the steady delivery of adrenalin.

Weeks, Linton. "The Plot Thickens—Name Brand Authors Hire Writers to Flesh Out Their Bare-Bones Stories." *The Washington Post*, July 24, 2002, p. C01. Weeks describes how Tom Clancy and other writers are creating series that are written by ghostwriters. Gale Lynds, Ludlum's collaborator on the Cover-One series, describes how Ludlum would supply the plot, character, and a general idea, and she would fill in the gaps. Notes Ludlum's publisher's intent to have ghostwriters complete several of Ludlum's story ideas after his death.

Zaleski, Jeff. Review of *The Sigma Protocol*, by Robert Ludlum. *Publishers Weekly* 248, no. 39 (September 24, 2001): 63. In this favorable review of the first novel released after Ludlum's death, Zaleski praises Ludlum's writing style and his ability to handle multiple plotlines.

M

ED McBAIN

Salvatore A. Lombino

Born: New York, New York; October 15, 1926

Died: Weston, Connecticut; July 6, 2005

Also wrote as Curt Cannon; Hunt Collins; Ezra Hannon; Evan Hunter; Richard Marsten

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

87th Precinct, 1956-2005

Matthew Hope, 1978-1998

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

STEVEN LOUIS CARELLA, the 87th Precinct's senior police detective, is between thirty-five and forty years old. Tall, athletic, and of Italian descent, he is devoted to his wife, a beautiful deaf-mute, and to their twin children. Honest, intelligent, tenacious, and experienced, Carella is humanized by his humor, temporary defeats, and concern for denizens of his hard world.

TEDDY CARELLA is Steven's wife and a source of tenderness, intrepidity, and insightful intelligence. She provides her husband with his emotional compass.

THE DEAF MAN, who periodically appears in the series, is a cunning, big-city superhood who delights in challenging the police. Often Carella's nemesis, he is a ruthless, streetwise variation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty.

COTTON HAWES is an 87th Precinct detective who often works with Carella. Named for Cotton Mather, Hawes loves the police officer's existence, looking up at society's underbelly. He has a sense of outrage and is one of the few characters allowed brief bursts of social commentary, particularly on the degradations of life in the streets of slums.

MEYER MEYER, a veteran, middle-aged 87th Precinct detective, is a source of humor and commonsensical morality.

ARTHUR "BIG BAD LEROY" BROWN is a huge, experienced, thoughtful black detective. When teamed with Teddy Carella, understated musing on race relations attends their conversation and interactions.

BERT KLING is a white, midwestern hayseed. Self-conscious about his relative inexperience as a police officer in earlier volumes, he matures somewhat as the series does.

EILEEN BURKE is a female detective and past par amour of Kling, whose presence and secondary story line recurs in later volumes.

CONTRIBUTION

Ed McBain's fifty-plus 87th Precinct novels rank him among the most prolific authors of police procedurals. Acclaimed the best in this genre by, among others, the Mystery Writers of America, McBain won a Grand Masters Award in 1986. His knowledge of police methods was thorough and convincing; the 87th Precinct novels focus on them with a ruthless economy that adds to their excitement, information, and entertainment. In spite of this singular concentration, McBain nevertheless managed to present his readers with several plausible, three-dimensional—though never complex, profound, or overpowering—characters who operate in an otherwise largely implied, lightly sketched and labeled urban landscape. McBain's special skill lay in his keen depiction of these characters as trackers and the unwavering quality of his narrative gaze. A major contribution of the 87th Precinct series to the genre has been to establish the ensemble detectives scenario in the popular consciousness. Long before the television series *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987)—which many readers believe was based on McBain's series—the detectives of the 87th Precinct set the standard for intelligent police procedural featuring a group cast. In addition,

McBain's Matthew Hope series, begun in 1978 and concluded in 1998, as well as suspense and mystery novels written outside the two series, furnish the genre with many compelling, complex, and involving works.

BIOGRAPHY

Ed McBain, who legally changed his name to Evan Hunter in the 1950's, was born Salvatore A. Lombino, the son of Charles Lombino and Marie Lombino, in New York City on October 15, 1926, and reared during the first dozen years of his life in an Italian slum. He attended Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, where his family had moved in 1938. Following graduation, he went to New York City's Art Students' League on scholarship and from there to Cooper Union Art School. Hunter's own self-estimate, however, was that his artistic talents ranged well below those of his fellow students. He had enjoyed writing for his high school literary magazine, and when he joined the Navy in 1944, he started writing once again. After more than a year of service on a destroyer in the Pacific, he left the Navy and entered Hunter College. In 1950, he was graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor's degree in English. In

1949, he married Anita Melnick, a classmate at Hunter College; they had three sons. The marriage eventually ended in divorce, and Hunter married Mary Vann Finley in 1973.

Until 1954, Hunter held various jobs: He was a substitute teacher in New York vocational schools, worked for a literary agency, answered the night phone at the American Automobile Club, and sold lobsters for a wholesale firm. Although by 1954 he had published nearly one hundred short stories and had written several novels as Evan Hunter and under various pen names, *The Blackboard Jungle* (1954) was the first to bring him success.

The first novel Hunter published under the name Ed McBain was the initial 87th Precinct novel *Cop Hater* (1956). The author maintained a stylistic distinction between his more literary Hunter persona and his grittier McBain alter ego. The McBain name became so well established, however, that works originally published under Hunter's other pseudonyms were eventually reissued under the McBain byline.

Hunter wrote the screenplay for Hitchcock's late masterpiece, *The Birds*, and a number of television movies of the 87th Precinct novels have been made. His frank *Let's Talk* (2005) describes the author's fight with throat cancer and the difficult adjustment to living without a voice. Hunter died on July 6, 2005, from cancer of the larynx. *Fiddler*, the final installment in the 87th Precinct series, was published posthumously in 2005.

ANALYSIS

Ed McBain was a serious, versatile, prolific, and successful writer. His 87th Precinct police procedurals were usually written in about a month, yet they were and are appreciated by large audiences, who are more familiar with Ed McBain than with Evan Hunter. Indeed, McBain's works effectively replaced those of Erle Stanley Gardner and Georges Simenon, among others, as a standard on the bookstores' mystery and detective fiction shelves.

McBain's appeal is explicable in several ways. Clearly, he intended to entertain with swiftly moving, dramatic stories. In addition, he clearly entertained himself in the sense that he was free to explore any

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Ed McBain in 1976. (AP/Wide World Photos)

subject matter so long as it related to his characters' criminal investigations. This freedom allowed him considerable range. Indeed, his work offers glimpses of a Dickensian array of characters: junkies, medical examiners, prostitutes, actors, patrolmen, psychologists, lawyers, businessmen, burglars, arsonists, psychopaths, gang members, homemakers, social workers, clergy, district attorneys, female police officers, and politicians. The list, if not inexhaustible, is extensive.

Considerable appeal also stems from McBain's clinical concentration on the crime. A corpse is discovered—hanged, beaten, shot, dismembered, poisoned, drowned, or overdosed—and everything subsequently concentrates on how it came to be where and what it was. Kept distinct are whatever effects the corpse and the crime may have on shaping those who are involved with it or are enmeshed in the crime. The detailing of violence is employed not to titillate or to provoke but to underscore the fact that violence, senseless and otherwise, is part of a police officer's daily reality. Nauseating situations are normal.

THE 87TH PRECINCT SERIES

The 87th Precinct's professional survival—and sanity—thus depends on the extent to which its individuals understand, have mastered, and have a feel for certain unvarying procedures “as disciplined as the pattern of a bull fight.” McBain holds his readers because his knowledge of those procedures (learned from the New York and Florida police) has a professional imprimatur. It is the application of procedures, authoritatively unfolded by McBain, that is central to every novel.

Descriptive background in the 87th Precinct stories is minimal. New York City is called simply Isola; it is divided into five sections, as dissimilar as foreign countries. There are the River Harb and the River Dix (Styx), which surround the city; Calm's Point (ironically, a dangerous section); West Riverhead; Lower Isola; the Gold Coast; and Cloak City (a garment center, in later books Coke City).

Principal characters in the 87th Precinct stories are also sketchily described. Detective Steve Carella is merely a tall, athletic man in his late thirties or early forties with somewhat slanted, Asian eyes. However, Carella, as much as anyone, is the central figure. So it

is with the other precinct detectives. McBain's rough characterization reflects his view of the police and the nature of their work. Like an army, Isola's police force is a vast, hierarchical organization, and detectives are only organization men. He has compared them to account executives, a notoriously cutthroat profession, yet detectives have a singular difference: They view the myriad forms of death daily. In McBain's corpus, police officers witness the slow, individual decay of the slums' inhabitants. Each day, they witness the death in the addicts' search for heroin; the death by confinement for burglars, thieves, pimps, hustlers, muggers, and killers; the death of the whore's honor and integrity under repeated sexual stabbings; the death of street gangs, which live in fear and use violence to banish it; and the death of love in ordinary and deadly domestic violence. McBain's detectives focus on the case, probe for information with their tested methods, in the hope that “another one” can be filed. Nevertheless, McBain registers their recognition that their procedures are often intrinsically inadequate, that with nothing to go on, the police often have little chance of solving many murders, and that chance and coincidence, as much as the skillful adherence to procedure, frequently illuminate and resolve the crime.

Given this setting, in which organization and procedure are paramount, the detectives, not without passion, are pushed toward functioning as emotionally uninvolved trackers and observers. Consequently, while McBain certainly does not treat the precinct's detectives as interchangeable parts, he realistically depicts them as a unit. When Carella is not on center stage, Cotton Hawes, Meyer Meyer, Arthur Brown, and Bert Kling, among others, carry on. In such a context, McBain uses situations—rather than lengthy descriptions, extended conversations, stream-of-consciousness ruminations, or one character's analysis of another—to define them as individuals.

In this sense, his 87th Precinct detectives are relatively dull and unimaginative fellows—relative, that is, to the people whom they encounter and pursue. McBain merely illustrates something that every newspaper reporter and his readers accept: Crimes and criminals, as a rule, are perceived as intrinsically more interesting than the badge-numbered organization

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

When Manhunt Detective Story Monthly printed one of Ed McBain's stories in a 1955 issue, it called attention to his recent bestseller Blackboard Jungle, a dramatic story about a teacher in a rough inner-city high school.

men and women who try to stop them. McBain, who ably recounts what the police do and how they do it, copes with this perception in two ways. He gives a third dimension to the detectives: Carella's devotion to his family and his belated recognition in high school that he was not only an Italian but an Italian Jew as well; Cotton Hawes's continual embarrassment, on and off the job, because of his name (and as far as readers are concerned, because of the fact that he is puritanical); Meyer Meyer's unblinking defense of his ridiculously apparent toupee, his avuncular insistence on lecturing a junkie, and his delight in discovering a murder victim whom he knew—so that for once there is a name for the detectives to use; and Bert Kling's horror, when, turning over a murder victim, he discovers that it is his fiancé and his delight in marrying a gorgeous model, only to be cuckolded within months—

all of these touches humanize most of the precinct's seventeen detectives.

Further plays of imagination and injections of color come from those whom detectives interview, interrogate, and pursue, although none of these characters rises to the stature of the Deaf Man. A quintessential villain, the Deaf Man is also the quintessential embodiment of criminality. He taunts and challenges Carella and the precinct with clues to past or impending crimes; he flaunts his disguises, changes his appearance and name; he apparently dies a number of deaths but phoenixlike rises again; he recruits and when necessary abandons his dupes; he is a virtuoso murderer, thief, arsonist, con man, and layer of false trails; and he is to the precinct a perpetual reminder that crime always pays for some, that criminality is perpetual and elusive.

THE MATTHEW HOPE SERIES

In 1978, McBain brought out the first of his Matthew Hope novels. *Goldilocks* inaugurated a series in which the lead investigator begins as a newly transplanted (from New York to Florida) civil attorney who soon turns to criminal law—hardly a surprising career move given the bodies that pile up around his practice. Each fairytale-themed title refers to a particularly gruesome crime; its motive is always bestial and its principals are frequently irresistible beauties. Hope is not as skeptical as he ought to be and is inclined to believe a woman's story, whether she is a grouchy old garden maven with three children buried in the yard or an asylum inmate with a billion dollars coming her way. Hope's optimism leads him into dangerous situations, and he often cannot penetrate the veils of deceit in which his clients are naturally swathed. Readers tended to enjoy the occasional, more freeform Hope diversion between the tightly woven procedurals of McBain's better-known series.

LATER WORKS

Near the end of his life, McBain apparently intended to create a new series. His last completed work, *Alice in Jeopardy* (2005), was to be followed by *Becca in Jeopardy*, though that manuscript remained unfinished. Alice, in a departure for McBain, is let down in her hour of need by infighting authorities and must strike out on her own in search of her abducted chil-

dren. Set in southwest Florida, where McBain had not ventured since ending his Matthew Hope series, the author once again provided his readers a balmy break from the precinct after *Fiddlers*, the last book featuring Carella and his colleagues.

The 87th Precinct books matured and deepened over the years. Entries such as *Lullaby* (1989); *Mischief* (1993), which features the return of the Deaf man; *Nocturne* (1997); *The Last Best Hope* (1998), which brings together the principals of the Matthew Hope series with the 87th Precinct detectives; and *The Last Dance* (2000) have the strength and freshness of true virtuosity. Violence, emotion, sex, insights and musings on the fraught and continual decay of urban life, bad jokes, and black humor blend together with McBain's trademark procedural and forensic veracity, understated characterizations, well-realized, tautly paced plots into cogent stories with essentially American, urban hearts. His detectives—brave as they can be—mostly are neither heroes nor antiheroes. They persistently, humorously, at times foolishly and sometimes successfully proceed against the worst human products of those values and environs inimical to the American self-image.

Clifton K. Yearley

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan, Jessica Reisman,
and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

87TH PRECINCT SERIES: 1956-1960 • *Cop Hater*, 1956; *The Mugger*, 1956; *The Pusher*, 1956; *The Con Man*, 1957; *Killer's Choice*, 1958; *Killer's Payoff*, 1958; *Lady Killer*, 1958; *'Til Death*, 1959; *Killer's Wedge*, 1959; *King's Ransom*, 1959; *Give the Boys a Great Big Hand*, 1960; *See Them Die*, 1960; *The Heckler*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Lady, Lady, I Did It!*, 1961; *Like Love*, 1962; *The Empty Hours*, 1962; *Ten Plus One*, 1963; *Ax*, 1964; *Doll*, 1965; *He Who Hesitates*, 1965; *Eighty Million Eyes*, 1966; *Fuzz*, 1968; *Shotgun*, 1969; *Jigsaw*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!*, 1971; *Let's Hear It for the Deaf Man*, 1972; *Sadie When She Died*, 1972; *Hail to the Chief*, 1973; *Bread*, 1974; *Blood Relatives*, 1975; *Where There's Smoke*, 1975; *So Long As You Both Shall Live*, 1976; *Long*

Time No See, 1977; *Calypso*, 1979; *Ghosts*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Heat*, 1981; *Ice*, 1983; *And All Through the House*, 1984; *Lightning*, 1984; *Eight Black Horses*, 1985; *Poison*, 1987; *Tricks*, 1987; *Lullaby*, 1989; *Vespers*, 1990

1991-2005 • *Widow*, 1991; *Kiss*, 1992; *Mischief*, 1993; *Romance*, 1995; *Nocturne*, 1997; *The Big Bad City*, 1999; *The Last Dance*, 2000; *Lullaby*, 2001 (includes *Lullaby*, *Vespers*, and *Widow*); *Money, Money, Money*, 2001; *Fat Ollie's Book*, 2002; *The Frumious Bandersnatch*, 2004; *Hark!*, 2004; *Fiddlers*, 2005

MATTHEW HOPE SERIES: *Goldilocks*, 1978; *Rumpelstiltskin*, 1981; *Beauty and the Beast*, 1982; *Jack and the Beanstalk*, 1984; *Snow White and Red Rose*, 1985; *Cinderella*, 1986; *Puss in Boots*, 1987; *The House That Jack Built*, 1988; *Three Blind Mice*, 1990; *Mary, Mary*, 1992; *There Was a Little Girl*, 1994; *Gladly the Cross-Eyed Bear*, 1996; *The Last Best Hope*, 1998

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1952-1960 • *The Big Fix*, 1952 (as Marsten; also known as *So Nude, So Dead*); *The Evil Sleep!*, 1952; *Don't Crowd Me*, 1953 (also known as *The Paradise Party*); *Cut Me In*, 1954; *The Blackboard Jungle*, 1954 (as Hunter); *Runaway Black*, 1954 (as Marsten); *Murder in the Navy*, 1955 (as Marsten; reissued as *Death of a Nurse*, 1964, as McBain); *The Spiked Heel*, 1956 (as Marsten); *Tomorrow's World*, 1956 (as Collins); *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, 1957 (as Collins); *Vanishing Ladies*, 1957 (as Marsten); *Even the Wicked*, 1958 (as Marsten); *I'm Cannon—For Hire*, 1958 (as Cannon; revised and reissued as *The Gutter and the Grave*, 2005, as McBain); *Sucker*, 1958 (as Collins); *A Matter of Conviction*, 1959 (also known as *The Young Savages*); *Big Man*, 1959 (as Marsten)

1961-1980 • *The Sentries*, 1965; *A Horse's Head*, 1967; *Nobody Knew They Were There*, 1971; *Every Little Crook and Nanny*, 1972; *Doors*, 1975 (as Hannan); *Guns*, 1976

1981-2005 • *Lizzie*, 1984; *Another Part of the City*, 1986; *Downtown*, 1991; *Driving Lessons*, 2000; *Alice in Jeopardy*, 2005

SHORT FICTION: *The Jungle Kids*, 1956 (as Hunter); *I Like 'Em Tough*, 1958 (as Cannon); *The Last Spin, and Other Stories*, 1960 (as Hunter);

Happy New Year, Herbie, and Other Stories, 1963 (as Hunter); *The Beheading, and Other Stories*, 1971 (as Hunter); *The McBain Brief*, 1982; *McBain's Ladies: The Women of the 87th Precinct*, 1988; *McBain's Ladies Too: More Women of the 87th Precinct*, 1989; *Barking at Butterflies, and Other Stories*, 2000 (as Hunter); *Running from Legs, and Other Stories*, 2001; *Learning to Kill*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS HUNTER): *Second Ending*, 1956 (also known as *Quartet in H*); *Strangers When We Meet*, 1958; *Mothers and Daughters*, 1961; *Buddwing*, 1964; *The Paper Dragon*, 1966; *Last Summer*, 1968; *Sons*, 1969; *Come Winter*, 1973; *Streets of Gold*, 1974; *The Chisholms: A Novel of the Journey West*, 1976; *Walk Proud*, 1979; *Love, Dad*, 1981; *Far from the Sea*, 1983; *Criminal Conversation*, 1994; *Privileged Conversation*, 1996; *Candyland*, 2001 (as McBain and Hunter); *The Moment She Was Gone*, 2002

PLAYS (AS HUNTER): *The Easter Man*, pr. 1964 (also as *A Race of Hairy Men*); *The Conjuror*, pr. 1969

SCREENPLAYS (AS HUNTER): *Strangers When We Meet*, 1960; *The Birds*, 1963; *Fuzz*, 1972; *Walk Proud*, 1979

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Find the Feathered Serpent*, 1952 (as Hunter); *Rocket to Luna*, 1952 (as Marsten); *Danger: Dinosaurs!*, 1953 (as Marsten); *The Remarkable Harry*, 1961 (as Hunter); *The Wonderful Button*, 1961 (as Hunter); *Me and Mr. Stenner*, 1976 (as Hunter)

NONFICTION (AS HUNTER): *Me and Hitch*, 1997; *Let's Talk*, 2005

EDITED TEXTS: *Crime Squad*, 1968; *Homicide Department*, 1968; *Downpour*, 1969; *Ticket to Death*, 1969; *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 1999; *Transgressions*, 2005

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Easter Man (a Play) and Six Stories*, 1972 (as Hunter; also known as *Seven*)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Patrick. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Anderson praises McBain, saying he was prolific and produced quality works that evoked New York City.

Dove, George N. *The Boys from Grover Avenue: Ed McBain's 87th Precinct Novels*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. Though an old resource, this book is focused on McBain's best-selling series.

Landrum, Larry. *American Mystery and Detective Novels*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999. A thorough critical analysis of the American wing of the genre. Details McBain's seminal role in the development of the police procedural.

McBain, Ed. The Official Site: Ed McBain. <http://www.edmc bain.com>. The official Web site of Ed McBain. Offers many interesting links to interviews and other sources. A complete bibliography (no small feat) accompanies a short biography.

Stasio, Marilyn. "Evan Hunter, Writer Who as Ed McBain Created Police Procedural, Dies at Seventy-eight." *The New York Times*, July 7, 2005, p. B10. Obituary summarizes Hunter's career, focusing on his popular 87th Precinct series and noting his Matthew Hope series and early success. Describes some of his private life as well.

Vicarel, Jo Ann. *A Reader's Guide to the Police Procedural*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1995. A helpful source for short entries. Covers 271 writers and more than one thousand titles, including Ed McBain and many of his novels.

ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH

Born: Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe); August 24, 1948

Types of plot: Private investigator; amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Number One Ladies' Detective Agency, 1998-

The Sunday Philosophy Club, 2004-Scotland Street, 2005-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PRECIOUS RAMOTSWE is the founder and chief investigator of the Number One Ladies' Detective Agency in Gaborone, Botswana. The congenial and wise Ramotswe is as capable of revealing the mysteries of the human heart as she is clever in solving the cases her clients present. Her signature pleasure in life is indulging in a cup of red bush tea.

MR. J. L. B. MATEKONI is Ramotswe's suitor and eventual husband. The owner of Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Matekoni is a skilled and honest mechanic. Although Ramotswe appreciates his repairs on her tiny white van's erratic engine, it is his high moral standards and kindness that attract her respect and romantic interest. In one story, Matekoni undertakes an investigation himself but afterward decides to stick to what he knows best—being a mechanic.

GRACE MAKUTSI advances from secretary to assistant detective at the Number One Ladies' Detective Agency. Makutsi is renowned for earning a 97 percent in her final exam at the Botswana Secretarial College. Her intelligence is matched by her heart; she provides for her ailing brother financially and emotionally until his death from an ailment that appears to be AIDS. She supplements her meager agency income with monies from her typing school for men.

ISABEL DALHOUSIE is an amateur sleuth and degree-bearing philosopher whose knowledge of ethics helps her unravel mysteries in Edinburgh, Scotland. Born of an American mother and a Scottish father, a family inheritance has left her financially independent. When

not sleuthing, she edits the *Review of Applied Ethics* and hosts the Sunday Philosophy Club.

CAT is Isabel's niece, a young independent woman in her twenties who owns and manages a local delicatessen. Though Cat's predilection for fast cars and faster men concerns her aunt, the two women maintain a close relationship.

JAMIE is a musician who supports himself playing bassoon in a chamber orchestra and offering private lessons locally. Smitten with, but rejected by, Cat, the soulful Jamie develops a growing friendship with, and interest in, her Aunt Isabel.

CONTRIBUTION

Alexander McCall Smith's mystery series, particularly the Number One Ladies' Detective Agency series, have gained a wide and loyal following of readers worldwide, but critics are divided on the worth of his contributions to the genre as a whole. Although some critics term his emphasis on human decency a retreat from the harsh realities of the modern world, others laud his focus on values as either an antidote to or an expansion of those realities. In an age when many espionage and true-crime stories are ripped from the headlines, McCall Smith seemingly draws his inspiration from otherwise underreported, and perhaps undervalued, stories of human interest.

Whether McCall Smith's mystery series are set in the remote but developing country of Botswana, or the established metropolis of Edinburgh, Scotland, his principal characters are women and men of conscience who strive to live decent lives. To take action in response to an outright crime or to investigate a mysterious circumstance is a moral choice on their parts. Characters such as Precious Ramotswe and Isabel Dalhousie choose involvement in the lives of others and in their communities in cases where others, in fiction and in life, would most likely remain apathetic.

BIOGRAPHY

Alexander Alasdair McCall Smith (also known as McCall-Smith) was born in the British colony of

Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1948. As a child he was educated in Bulawayo, and as a young man he earned his law degree from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Following his graduation, he returned to Africa, accepting a position at the University of Botswana. There he helped develop a program of study in law and assisted in the writing of Botswana's inaugural criminal code. That McCall Smith returns to these familiar and beloved locales in his mystery series is a testament to their impact on his development as a man of both law and letters.

In the late 1970's, McCall Smith began coauthoring nonfictional books on medical law and ethics. His first solo ventures in fiction were stories for children published in the 1980's. Although he continues to publish works of nonfiction and children's literature, the 1998 debut of *The Number One Ladies' Detective Agency* and subsequent entries in the series led to his success as a writer of mysteries. Two additional mys-



Alexander McCall Smith in 2004. (Chris Watt/
Library of Congress)

tery series have followed in its wake: the Sunday Philosophy Club and the Scotland Street series. A fourth, the von Igelfeld series, features the antics of a German professor of linguistics. The von Igelfeld books are not mysteries in the vein of his other series but rather broad comic novels.

As an academic, McCall Smith held the post of professor of medical law at the University of Edinburgh and was, on two occasions, a visiting professor at Southern Methodist University School of Law in Dallas. He is retired from classroom teaching and is now professor emeritus of the School of Law at the University of Edinburgh. He served with distinction as vice chair of the Human Genetics Commission of the United Kingdom, as chair of the Committee for British Medical Ethics, and as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization International Bioethics Commission. Increasing obligations as an author, including international book tours, forced his withdrawal from these committees, but he remains supportive of their work.

ANALYSIS

What distinguishes mysteries written by Alexander McCall Smith is his almost singular focus on morality. Although a number of other writers include ethics in the mysteries they concoct, McCall Smith typically reverses the focus in his works. His protagonists' chief interests lie in examining the morality (or lack thereof) of human behavior contributing to the predicament; only then are the mysteries themselves explored and ultimately resolved. In interviews, he admits his penchant for writing mysteries featuring women with a heightened moral compass and an intuitive sense for detection, such as Precious Ramotswe and Isabel Dalhousie. He has acknowledged his personal interest in moral issues. Certainly his background in jurisprudence and medical ethics has prepared him to write knowledgeably on the subject.

Often McCall Smith's protagonists are less focused on solving mysteries than they are on resolving human dilemmas. That success in the latter often leads to a break in the former is indicative of how his characters operate. The maintenance of personal relationships is crucial to the establishment of community trust and

openness. As Ramotswe observes of her line of work in *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies* (2004), “Sometimes we are able to do something that helps somebody else. That is the important thing. That makes our job a good one.”

In the case of the Number One Ladies’ Detective Agency series, McCall Smith’s depiction of the lands and villages skirting the Kalahari Desert creates a literary terrain that is at once curiously exotic and comfortably familiar. Although the foliage (Namaqualand daisies and Tsama melons) described by the author may be unfamiliar to many readers, the human dilemmas, foibles, and hardships are not. Cheating husbands, embezzling employees, and blemished beauty queens are universal in their apparent normalcy.

Although subsequent series centered in Edinburgh may seem less exotic than Gaborone, Botswana, McCall Smith’s depictions of human life still combine the ordinary with the extraordinary in ways that charm. In the Sunday Philosophy Club series, Isabel Dalhousie witnesses unusual circumstances in common environments, such as a body falling from an upper balcony at an opera house and a coffee shop admission by a stranger that he has acquired, in addition to a new heart, the emotional memories of the donor. The Scotland Street series features an ensemble of characters representing cross sections of Edinburgh society. The rooming house at 44 Scotland Street is the ultimate urban landscape in which to explore social values and behaviors as exemplified by its inhabitants, among them a domineering mother, a narcissistic young man, and a struggling writer.

Certain authors of mystery novels, such as Patricia Highsmith and Robert Bloch, turn to the social science of psychology to account for criminal acts. McCall Smith, like the chief protagonists he creates, relies on moral philosophy to examine the choices men and women purposefully make. Rather than explain away their behaviors, he holds his characters accountable for their actions.

THE NUMBER ONE LADIES’ DETECTIVE AGENCY

In *The Number One Ladies’ Detective Agency* (1998), which launched McCall Smith’s career as a best-selling author, Precious Ramotswe is Botswana’s

best and only female detective, hence the name of the agency. After receiving her deceased father’s estate (he bequeathed to her his cattle), Ramotswe sold most of the livestock and invested in a detective agency. The mysteries that require her attention are primarily domestic in nature: missing husbands, recalcitrant daughters, cheating spouses. An unconventional private eye, on occasion she abandons the advice of Clovis Andersen’s *The Principles of Private Detection*, which she used to start her agency. Rather than spy on suspects, she prefers to contact them and ask straight out what they have done. Frequently, and perhaps in response to her own forthrightness, clients and suspects respond with the truth or reveal more than they intend. Ramotswe then offers them advice on what might be done to remedy situations. Not a typical female detective, she is the only one of her kind in Botswana and perhaps in the genre.

IN THE COMPANY OF CHEERFUL LADIES

Critics have lauded *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies* (2004) as McCall Smith’s best addition to the series. The sixth in the series, this novel focuses on the efforts of Precious Ramotswe and her assistant Grace Makutsi to locate a missing financier. Their goal is complicated by other curious events that claim their attention: a stranger hiding under the bed who loses his trousers in flight, a pumpkin that appears overnight in the garden, a mysterious woman in a Cadillac who lures Charlie from his apprenticeship at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, and the disappearance of Ramotswe’s beloved white van. Moral dilemmas abound and are less readily resolved. At what point does society allow a former convict to reenter its ranks? Can Ramotswe, content in her marriage to J. L. B. Matekoni, handle the reappearance of her former lover, jazz musician Note Mokoti, particularly when he tries to extort money from her? That the perseverant Gaborone detective succeeds in resolving these dilemmas is not surprising; following her own advice, she keeps the channels of communication—and her eyes—open.

THE SUNDAY PHILOSOPHY CLUB

The Sunday Philosophy Club (2004), the first in the series, introduces readers to Isabel Dalhousie, the philosopher sleuth who tackles moral quandaries and unsolved crimes with equal intelligence and composure.

A resident of Merchiston, an area of Edinburgh that is also home to Alexander McCall Smith, the independently wealthy Dalhousie finds herself exploring other sections of the city in search of an explanation for the mysterious death of a young man following a symphony performance. Though his tumble from a balcony is deemed an accident by the police, Dalhousie intuits otherwise. The chief question posed by this novel is to what extent people should involve themselves in the lives of others, strangers and family members alike. It is the first of many ethical dilemmas that McCall Smith tackles in the series.

44 SCOTLAND STREET

The creation and design of *44 Scotland Street* (2005) differ from those of McCall Smith's previous mysteries. The novel was originally serialized in 110 installments in *The Scotsman* newspaper. Rather than rely on a sole protagonist, *44 Scotland Street* is populated by a cast of interesting characters, no one more important than the others. Frequently characters are driven by their need for self-advancement: the mother who pushes her talented son to extremes in the hope of creating a prodigy; the surveyor who aims to join the country club elite; the son of a gallery owner who hopes to make his way in the world independently. The whodunit involves the disappearance of a work of art and the detective talents of author Ian Rankin, but as is the case with McCall Smith's other series and characters, the more compelling mysteries are those surrounding the human heart.

Dorothy Dodge Robbins

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE NUMBER ONE LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY SERIES: *The Number One Ladies' Detective Agency*, 1998; *Tears of the Giraffe*, 2000; *Morality for Beautiful Girls*, 2001; *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*, 2002; *The Full Cupboard of Life*, 2003; *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies*, 2004; *Blue Shoes and Happiness*, 2006; *The Good Husband of Zebra Drive*, 2007

THE SUNDAY PHILOSOPHY CLUB SERIES: *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, 2004; *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate*, 2005; *The Right Attitude to Rain*, 2006; *The Careful Use of Compliments*, 2007

THE SCOTLAND STREET SERIES: *44 Scotland Street*, 2005; *Espresso Tales*, 2005; *Love Over Scotland*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Portuguese Irregular Verbs*, 2003; *The Finer Points of Sausage Dogs*, 2003; *At the Villa of Reduced Circumstances*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *Children of Wax: African Folk Tales*, 1989; *Heavenly Date, and Other Stories*, 1995 (also known as *Heavenly Date, and Other Flirtations*, 2003); *The Girl Who Married a Lion, and Other Tales from Africa*, 2004

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Perfect Hamburger*, 1982; *Film Boy*, 1988; *Mike's Magic Seeds*, 1988; *Alix and the Tigers*, 1988; *The Tin Dog*, 1990; *Suzy Magician*, 1990; *The Five Lost Aunts of Harriet Bean*, 1990; *Calculator Annie*, 1991; *The Popcorn Pirates*, 1991; *The Doughnut Ring*, 1992; *Teacher Trouble*, 1994; *Paddy and the Ratcatcher*, 1994; *The Muscle Machine*, 1995; *The Bubblegum Tree*, 1996; *The Chocolate Money Mystery*, 1997; *Bursting Balloons Mystery*, 1997; *The Popcorn Pirates*, 1999; *Akimbo and the Elephants*, 2005; *Akimbo and the Lions*, 2005; *Akimbo and the Crocodile Man*, 2006; *The Cowgirl Aunt of Harriet Bean*, 2006; *Harriet Bean and the League of Cheats*, 2006

NONFICTION: *Butterworths Medico-Legal Encyclopedia*, 1987 (with John Kenyon Mason); *Family Rights: Family Law and Medical Advances*, 1990 (with Elaine Sutherland); *Law and Medical Ethics*, third edition, 1991 (with John Kenyon Mason); *The Criminal Law of Botswana*, 1992 (with Kwame Frimpong); *Justice and the Prosecution of Old Crimes: Balancing Legal, Psychological, and Moral Concerns*, 2000 (with Daniel W. Shuman); *Errors, Medicine, and the Law*, 2001 (with Alan Merry)

EDITED TEXTS: *Power and Maneuverability*, 1978 (with Tony Carter); *The Duty to Rescue: The Jurisprudence of Aid*, 1993 (with Michael A. Menlowe); *Forensic Aspects of Sleep*, 1997 (with Colin Shapiro)

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Block, Allison. Review of *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate*, by Alexander McCall Smith. *Booklist* 101, no. 21 (July, 2005): 1877. Praises Smith's colorful depiction of Edinburgh and his creation of moral philosopher-turned-sleuth Isabel Dalhousie.

Glover, Sandy. Review of *44 Scotland Street*, by Alexander McCall Smith. *Library Journal* 131, no. 4 (March, 2006): 134-135. Reviews the first volume in Smith's third detective series. Regards residents who inhabit 44 Scotland Street as representative of various levels of Edinburgh society.

McCall Smith, Alexander. Alexander McCall Smith. <http://www.alexandermccallsmith.co.uk>. Author's Web site provides a biography, plot summaries for all his novels, newsletter, forum, and listing of signings and other events.

Matzke, Christine. "A Good Woman in a Good Country: Or, The Essence Is in the Pumpkin—Alexander McCall Smith's Mma Ramotswe Novels as a Case of Postcolonial Nostalgia." *Wasafiri: The Transnational Journal of International Writing* 47 (Spring, 2006): 64-71. Posits that Smith's novels present an overly simplistic Botswana, one indicative of the author's longing for a way of life that supposedly existed before colonial independence.

Mekgwe, Pinkie. "All That Is Fine in the Human Condition: Crafting Words, Creating Mma Ramotswe." *Research in African Literatures* 37, no. 2 (Summer, 2006): 176-186. Smith discusses his creation of Ramotswe, a character whom he believes appeals to readers weary of the nihilism that dominates contemporary literature.

Nicoll, Ruaridh. "Applied Ethics: Alexander McCall Smith's New Female Detective—an Edinburgh Bluestocking—Is No Less Delightful than Her African Predecessor." *New Statesman* 133, no. 4704 (September, 2004): 52-54. Compares McCall Smith's new female detective favorably to Precious Ramotswe.

CHARLES McCARRY

Born: Pittsfield, Massachusetts; June 14, 1930

Types of plot: Espionage; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Paul Christopher, 1973-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PAUL CHRISTOPHER, a government agent, has spent his entire adult life working for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which he knows as the Outfit. Indeed, his work represents a family commitment, because his father was one of the first agents to serve in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the CIA's precursor. Although he is entirely loyal to the Outfit, Christopher remains a loner, developing plans of action that sometimes conflict with the agendas of other

agencies and government officials. Although he tries to maintain a satisfying private life, his need for secrecy constantly puts him at odds with the women with whom he becomes involved.

CONTRIBUTION

Charles McCarry's novels have often been compared to the espionage thrillers of John le Carré. McCarry's characters are also caught in the morally ambiguous Cold War world of agents and double agents. Like le Carré's George Smiley, McCarry's Paul Christopher carries out his duties as a government agent (in the novels the CIA is called the Outfit) while he realizes that his own side engages in dubious, unethical, and even evil actions to protect national interests.

Christopher's personal life, like that of Smiley, suf-

fers because of his need to be secretive and contain his emotions. A decent man who refuses to carry a gun, Christopher is often at odds with the Outfit's programs, although he usually finds a way to operate within the system even as he risks termination.

Christopher differs from Smiley, however, in that his moral purpose is never compromised. However opposed he may be to the Outfit's policies, his ability to gather intelligence and to determine the identities of the real enemies makes Christopher not only a survivor but also the holder of a point of view about the covert world of espionage that is quite different from that of Smiley. That Christopher has moral convictions that he never relinquishes actually makes him a better agent than anyone else in the Outfit. In other words, his morality is not a luxury but a necessity.

Whereas le Carré exposes the corruption on both sides of the Cold War, McCarry, through the indomitable Christopher, suggests a "third way," a personal code of conduct that makes his series hero an exemplar of values that neither side can warp.

BIOGRAPHY

Charles McCarry was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on June 14, 1930. His father, Albert, was a farmer and his mother, Madeleine Rees McCarry, was an avid reader who inspired her son's love of literature. On September 12, 1953, McCarry married Nancy Neill. They have four sons. McCarry's home is in the Berkshires, where generations of his family have lived.

McCarry's novels draw extensively on his experience as a journalist, government official, and CIA agent. From 1952 to 1955, he was a reporter and editor on the *Lisbon Evening Journal* in Ohio. He spent another year (1955-1956) on the *Youngstown Vindicator* in Ohio as a reporter and columnist. His government service began as an assistant to the secretary of labor in Washington, D.C. (1956-1957). From 1958 to 1967, McCarry worked for the CIA. He worked as a freelance writer from 1967 to 1983. His last job in journalism was at the *National Geographic*, where he served as editor at large from 1983 to 1990.

Although McCarry is best known for his espionage thrillers, he has simultaneously fashioned an impressive career in nonfiction. His well-received biography,

Citizen Nader, appeared in 1972. The subject of this biography, a maverick public activist beholden to no institution, is not so different, in some respects, from McCarry's series hero, Paul Christopher, who is constantly confronting and sometimes flouting the Outfit's strict protocols. Indeed, in *The Tears of Autumn* (1975), when Christopher's desire to investigate the John F. Kennedy assassination goes way beyond what he is permitted to do as a government agent, he resigns from the Outfit.

McCarry's novels reflect his collaborations with government officials such as Alexander M. Haig, Jr., former secretary of state, and Don T. Regan, chief of staff under President Reagan. McCarry cowrote with Haig *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (1983), *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World* (1992), and with the Regan *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (1988).

McCarry has published more than a hundred articles and stories in magazines, including *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, *National Geographic*, *Esquire*, *Saturday Review*, and *True*. He has also worked extensively as a "script doctor," contributing to several screenplays without receiving authorial credit.

Although Paul Christopher uses work as a journalist as a cover for his covert espionage activities, McCarry has said that he kept his journalism and his spy work in two separate worlds. In the novels, however, Christopher uses journalism as a cover to travel extensively and to mingle with government officials, foreign nationals, and just about anyone a journalist might wish to interview or befriend.

The Paul Christopher novels: *The Miernik Dossier* (1973), *The Tears of Autumn* (1975), *The Secret Lovers* (1977), *The Last Supper* (1983), *Second Sight* (1991), and *Old Boys* (2004), have received many accolades from critics who praise their authenticity and elegance. The novels are "compulsively readable," as one critic put it.

Part of McCarry's authority derives from his travels. McCarry spent time in Berlin in 1948, observing firsthand the U.S.-Soviet Cold War confrontation. During his CIA period, he had deep cover assignments in Europe, Africa, and Asia—locations that are Paul Christopher's turf. Rome, for example, is Christo-

pher's home base, a place that comes alive as he walks the streets, dines, and mingles with the everyday sights and smells that have no doubt been experienced by his creator as well.

McCarry apparently wanted to end his twenty-five-year career as a novelist with *Lucky Bastard* (1998), which featured a politician (a mixture of John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton) whose seriocomic adventures marked a departure from McCarry's series of espionage novels. Then Peter Mayer, publisher of Overlook Press, sought out the retired novelist at his home in Massachusetts, promising to reprint his work, and encouraging McCarry to write more novels. The result was *Old Boys* (2004), which centers on the disappearance of a retired Paul Christopher. Critics deemed this novel a great success, confirming McCarry's place not merely in the espionage thriller category but in the history of the literary novel.

ANALYSIS

Otto Penzler in *The Armchair Detective*, like many other reviewers, highly praised Charles McCarry, saying he stood out among the American creators of believable spy novels, a very difficult category, because of the brilliance of his plots and characterization and his poetic style of composition.

McCarry's spy hero, Paul Christopher, is handsome, a Yale graduate, and a poet. His father was also a spy, killed in Berlin in a Soviet setup. Christopher's mother, a courageous anti-Nazi German who helped many Jews escape the Third Reich, was sent to a concentration camp during the war and then vanished. As a loner, it is difficult for Christopher to maintain relationships with the women who fall in love with him, and it is not surprising that an early marriage ends in divorce.

This composite biography of Christopher can be gleaned from several of McCarry's novels. Each work of fiction, in fact, is a revelation, delving not only into Christopher's background but also into the widening network of contacts that implicate him in the major events of the Cold War. To read the sequence of the Paul Christopher novels is not only to journey through the complexity of contemporary history but also to constantly revise perceptions of Christopher himself.

Thus biography, history, and psychology are melded into the plots of the spy novels, making McCarry's handling of the genre so sophisticated and elegant that he has few equals.

THE MIERNIK DOSSIER

McCarry's stunning debut novel, *The Miernik Dossier*, is also an innovative work that is reminiscent of such great novels as William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Miernik is a Polish diplomat who wishes to defect to the West, but is he a double agent? The novel takes the form of a dossier, which includes reports from Paul Christopher and his superiors, excerpts from Miernik's own writings, and other materials that typically are included in intelligence reports. Christopher is doubtful all along that Miernik is duplicitous; that is, Christopher tends to think that Miernik is what he says he is. However, mired in the Cold War world of deceit (Federal Bureau of Investigations director J. Edgar Hoover titled one of his anti-communist books *Masters of Deceit*, 1958), Christopher's superiors overrule his assessments, and the result is tragic for Miernik.

The novel never explicitly ratifies Christopher's judgment. There is no smoking gun, no way to absolutely confirm what is surely true: that Miernik's suspicious behavior would not have seemed all that problematic if the Cold War had not fomented the conditions in which the truth itself becomes a victim of the competition between superpowers.

Mystery novels in general are supposed to solve a mystery. What is striking about *The Miernik Dossier* is that like *Absalom, Absalom!* the mystery is solved only insofar as readers are able to decipher the novel's escalating ironies and negotiate its intricate ambiguities.

THE TEARS OF AUTUMN

Considered by many critics to be McCarry's masterpiece, *The Tears of Autumn* tracks Paul Christopher's quest to discover who set up Lee Harvey Oswald to assassinate John F. Kennedy. Christopher does not doubt that Oswald was the assassin, but his years as a covert agent for the Outfit lead him to suspect that Oswald did not act alone.

Early on, Christopher intuitively senses who is behind the plot. He does this not because of any particular clue

but rather because of his travels in Southeast Asia. He realizes that the United States' involvement in the assassination of South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem, a figure intricately situated within the clan structure of his society, has set off forces that will bring down an American president.

The problem for Christopher, however, is that his superiors do not really want to know who is behind the Kennedy assassination. Christopher finds himself opposing highly placed officials inside the White House, and ultimately he resigns from the Outfit to pursue his personal quest for the truth.

What is it that Christopher hopes to accomplish? The answer to this question is what distinguishes McCarray from virtually all other writers of political thrillers and espionage novels. Christopher has no political agenda—not even a basic desire to see justice done or to exact revenge. On the contrary, what motivates him is a pure quest after the truth no matter where it might lead. This dedication to truth and knowledge endows Christopher with an extraordinary ethical authority that is highly unusual in the annals of the mystery genre.

THE SECRET LOVERS

In *The Secret Lovers*, when one of Paul Christopher's agents is run over in a Berlin street, the Outfit assumes he has been killed by the Soviets. However, Christopher watched the event happen, and though it has all the earmarks of a Soviet-style murder, he is suspicious. Why would the courier (who had just handed off a manuscript that exposes Stalin's crimes, including the gulags) be eliminated after he accomplished his mission?

Christopher finds himself opposing not only the higher command of the Outfit but also one of his most trusted foreign agents, who wants the manuscript published even though Christopher is sure it will result in the author's death. He wonders why the agent would not just wait until the author, an old and ailing man, dies.

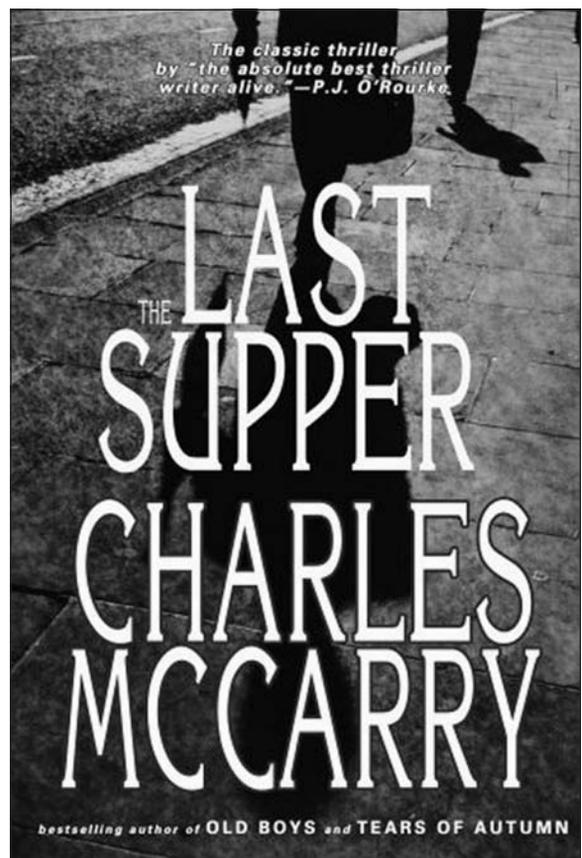
Ultimately Christopher unravels a complex set of affairs (including secret lovers) that explains the concatenation of events in Berlin. At the same time, his own personal life is disintegrating as his wife finds Christopher's need for secrecy unbearable because he

cannot share much of what he does for the Outfit with her. A clinging, demanding, beautiful woman, she attempts to construct a secret life of her own, challenging Christopher to come out of his shell.

Both Christopher's marriage and the publication of the manuscript result in disaster—as Christopher, more than ever a tragic protagonist—has anticipated. This is one of the bleakest and certainly the most honest of McCarray's spy thrillers. The human cost of spying, as in John le Carré's novels, is brought home with devastating effect.

THE LAST SUPPER

The Last Supper constitutes a virtual biography of Paul Christopher. So much of what motivates Christopher is inherent in his family's history—his father's quest to find out what happened to his wife after the Nazis captured her and how others related to the Christophers became mired in Cold War politics and the missions of the Outfit.



Not as taut as the other novels but with the heft of a historical novel, *The Last Supper* merges a family saga with the history of American intelligence. Descriptions of how the Outfit (CIA) developed out of World War II and how Christopher sees himself in the geopolitical jockeying of the Cold War make this novel the most comprehensive of all McCarry's works.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PAUL CHRISTOPHER SERIES: *The Miernik Dossier*, 1973; *The Tears of Autumn*, 1975; *The Secret Lovers*, 1977; *The Last Supper*, 1983; *Second Sight*, 1991; *Old Boys*, 2004; *Christopher's Ghosts*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Better Angels*, 1979; *The Bride of the Wilderness*, 1988; *Shelley's Heart*, 1995; *Lucky Bastard*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Citizen Nader*, 1972; *Double Eagle*, 1979 (with others); *Isles of the Caribbean*, 1979 (with others); *The Great Southwest*, 1980; *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*, 1983 (with Alexander M. Haig, Jr.); *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*, 1988 (with Donald T. Regan); *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World*, 1992 (with Haig)

EDITED TEXT: *From the Field: A Collection of Writings from National Geographic*, 1997

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Anderson, Patrick. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Contains a section on McCarry that looks at his background and discusses *The Tears of Autumn* at length.

Callendar, Newgate. Review of *The Miernik Dossier*, by Charles McCarry. *The New York Times Book Review*, July 8, 1973, p. 26. One of the first reviewers to hail McCarry as one of the most important practitioners of the spy novel.

Fletcher, Katy. "Evolution of the Modern American Spy Novel." *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 2 (April, 1987): 319-331. Situates McCarry in the context of other spy novelists, including E. Howard Hunt and William F. Buckley, Jr. McCarry's work is praised for its authenticity and compared with several nonfictional works criticizing the CIA.

Heilbrun, Jacob. "Old Fangled Espionage." *The New York Times Book Review*, April 2, 2006, 11. A review of the reissued *The Last Supper* that also assesses McCarry's place in the pantheon of Cold War novelists. Heilbrun ranks McCarry as the best American novelist in this genre while reserving judgment as to whether McCarry equals the best of the work of John le Carré and other British contemporaries.

Kegley, Charles W., Jr. "How Did the Cold War Die? Principles of an Autopsy." *Mershon International Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (April, 1994): 11-41. McCarry's novels can be profitably read in the light of this searching study of the Cold War. The author examines the books McCarry wrote with Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

Penzler, Otto. *Armchair Detective* (Summer, 1989): 272-73. Review of *The Better Angels*, *The Bride of the Wilderness*, *The Last Supper*, *The Miernik Dossier*, *The Secret Lovers*, and *The Tears of Autumn*. Penzler, one of the most important critics of mystery fiction, ranks McCarry as one of the great writers in this genre

JAMES McCLURE

Born: Johannesburg, South Africa; October 9, 1939

Died: Oxford, England; June 17, 2006

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tromp Kramer and Mickey Zondi, 1971-1991

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

TROMP KRAMER, a lieutenant on the Trekkersburg Murder and Robbery Squad, South African Central Intelligence Division, is an unmarried Afrikaner. As the series progresses, he matures from a youthful, lusty, irreverent, and independent man into a more introspective, sympathetic detective. He retains his compassionate but antisocial stance, observing quietly the vagaries of South African apartheid. Kramer's observations in detection are astute, but he depends on others for information on which he can speculate, using wit, luck, and an uncanny intuition to develop leads and solve cases.

DETECTIVE SERGEANT MICKEY ZONDI, Kramer's assistant, partner, and friend. A Zulu from a rural village who worked as a houseboy for a year before joining the Central Intelligence Division and who was educated by missionaries, Zondi lives in the Trekkersburg township of Zwela Village. He thus has insights that Kramer can only discern intuitively or have reported to him. Gifted with a photographic memory, Zondi frequently contributes as much to a crime's solution as Kramer does, often using recall and logic while Kramer relies on experience and intuition.

THE WIDOW FOURIE, Kramer's slightly younger lover, who despite her sense of propriety agrees to live with Kramer on a small farm, Blue Haze, just outside the city. Supportive and attentive to Kramer's domestic needs, Fourie is not only his sexual companion but also his confidante, providing refuge from his hectic job; her questions often provoke Kramer to further insights into the case at hand.

DR. CHRISTIAAN STRYDOM, the district surgeon, is a pathologist for the Trekkersburg Central Intelligence Division. A man of relatively liberal views, Strydom

craves data, often being so thorough in researching background information that he misses the obvious conclusions at which Kramer arrives. Whether by uncovering the constrictive powers of a python or by discovering a little-known treatise on the hangman's art, Strydom provides an exotic technology of death in the series.

CONTRIBUTION

With the procedurals that develop the Tromp Kramer-Mickey Zondi partnership, James McClure fashioned a neutral portrayal of South African apartheid society as seen from within. Amassing much historical and cultural information in the course of his exposition, characterization, and plot, McClure nevertheless maintained a carefully guarded distance from any direct, judgmental commentary. Indeed, McClure claimed that "the *neutrality* of the crime story" is the primary appeal of the genre. Of the South African novel, he said, "Every novel . . . that I'd come across . . . had been self-limiting . . . in that its antiapartheid slant made it appeal only to the 'converted.'" By guarding the neutrality of his novels, he believed that he can "leave people to make their own moral judgments." Seeking to appeal universally to his readers, McClure considered his first obligation to be entertainment, "leaving graver matters—which [can] be included, but obliquely—to those with the time, money, and intellectual capacity to indulge them."

Although conscious of his craftsmanship and the psychological complexity of his characters, McClure made his procedurals hew closely to the facts of daily existence under apartheid, so that the culture and place, evoked even descriptively, are integral to his success as a crime novelist. That McClure's readership included not only mystery devotees but also international antiapartheid activists and academic literati as well as the South African police attested his achievement of neutrality without compromising the serious, socially significant framework of his novels. McClure's Kramer and Zondi novels are taught in creative writing courses at the college level in the United States.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on October 9, 1939, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the son of a military intelligence officer, James Howe McClure was, from his earliest years, witness to the violence and compassion of the paradoxical South African lifestyle. During World War II, while the family was living at military headquarters near Pretoria, anti-aircraft guns were installed in the family garden. When the family moved to Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal and the hometown model for Trekkersburg, the violence shifted from international war to domestic but bloody strife among the servants and workers. McClure's mother was able to temper that violence, however, through her close, compassionate relationship with Miriam Makhatini, the family's Zulu nanny, whom McClure considered a second mother. Along with his natural mother's relative openness within apartheid, the boy received, from his father—an avid reader, occasional writer, and master of seven languages—a respect for books, languages, and people that kept him reading actively, despite his marginal interest in formal education.

Growing up and remaining in Pietermaritzburg, McClure developed interests in art and photography, working for a commercial studio in 1958-1959 after his graduation from high school. He then taught art and English at a boys' preparatory school until 1963. Although he had written stories, plays, and a young adult novel, McClure did not yet think of himself as a writer, preferring instead to hone his editing skills, to practice photography, and to develop a new career in journalism. From 1963 to 1965, he worked for Natal newspapers, often in regular contact with the police and the courts as a reporter. The paradoxes of such an inside look at law enforcement under apartheid, however, led to his working long hours; during that time, he "saw too much."

In 1965, McClure, his American wife, Lorly, whom he had wed in 1962, and the first of his three children left South Africa for Edinburgh, Scotland, where he worked for a year as a subeditor. During the following three years, the McClure family lived in a small apartment in Oxford while he worked for the *Oxford Mail*. After a momentary triumph when he sold a script, "The Hole," about an American in Viet-

nam, to Granada Television and could then afford a modest house, a television directors' strike left that play and another, "Coach to Vahalla," without hope of production. Feeling that success depended on more than his writing, McClure stopped working for television drama, and in 1969 he switched employers, intent on developing a features department for the *Oxford Times*. Then, encouraged by the success of a fellow subeditor, facing a vacation during which he could not afford to travel, and bored with television for entertainment, McClure began his first Kramer and Zondi novel, *The Steam Pig* (1971). Ten days after he submitted the typescript, he had a contract—and *The Steam Pig* went on to be named the Best Crime Novel of 1971 and to win the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award.

With the success of this first novel and the continued favorable reviews and critical acclaim of those that followed, McClure turned to writing professionally in 1974, winning the Silver Dagger Award for his spy thriller *Rogue Eagle* (1976). He continued to garner praise not only for his series but also for his non-fictional studies of police departments in Liverpool and San Diego. His last novel in the Kramer and Zondi series, *The Song Dog*, was published in 1991, three years before the formal end of apartheid. He died in Oxford, England, in 2006.

ANALYSIS

Rather than emphasize the obvious political contexts of his South African crime novels, James McClure focused on providing his readers with the straightforward entertainment of detection. Clues are not withheld, but the rationale for the solutions to which they lead is so deeply enmeshed in apartheid that one leaves the resolution of a case knowing who committed the crime but pondering circumstance and motive in an effort to understand why it was committed—even when a superficial answer is readily apparent. Weaving observations of daily survival, the historical background, and the social tensions of life in South Africa into exposition, dialogue, and description, McClure, like anti-apartheid novelist Naomi Stride, who was later murdered, did in *The Artful Egg* (1984), kept the political undertones oblique. Conse-

quently, the polemical themes of much South African fiction are muted, and the novels are not so much subversive as they are compassionate toward all races suffering from the bleakness of a rigidly racist society.

McClure maintained his neutral stance by means of a shifting point of view controlled by the perspective of his characters. Although he avoided explicit judgment of the society he described, he nevertheless showed so much of South African life that, once having been offered the material, his readers were virtually compelled to arrive at their own moral judgments. Scene shifts are rapid and diverse; Kramer and Zondi often pursue parallel and sometimes related cases that take them into the country as well as through various sections of the city, bringing them into contact with blacks and whites, rich and poor. Besides describing the center of these diverse scenes, Central Intelligence Division headquarters, McClure, throughout the series, developed portraits of a rural Zulu village, a library, an illicit township drinking house (*shebeen*), the city council chambers, a liberal's mansion, a white nationalist's farm, a township shack, a zoological institute, a prostitute's bungalow, a forensic laboratory, a prison gallows, an apartheid hospital, and a decaying resort, among many other locales. His precise details and evocative images are interspersed so carefully among plot development, characterization, and exposition that readers are never distracted from Kramer and Zondi's detective work, yet each scene, on reflection, reveals the subtle effects of apartheid.

McClure's knack for shifting the point of view in his scenes permitted his characters, even minor ones, to express their values through dialogue and in the contextual narration that reflected attitudes varying from crude, overt racism to blind revolutionary zeal. Many of Kramer's fellow white police officers are proponents of Afrikaner nationalism, yet McClure refrained from stereotyping his characters. He also allowed his African characters the same extended range of responses to conditions under apartheid. Zondi, in *The Gooseberry Fool* (1974), is nearly killed by a rioting crowd of people evicted from their homes by the Security Forces—the crowd believes that all police officers, whatever the branch, are racist murderers. Lenny Francis, in *The Steam Pig*, arranges his own sis-

ter's murder, in part because of his envy of her ability to pass as white. Mario Da Gama and Ruru, in *Snake* (1975), use apartheid's blindness to shape a white-black alliance in crime, certain that such a partnership is beyond suspicion. Because the viewpoints and values expressed by McClure's characters embody such a range of sensibilities, he deterred readers from easy, snap judgments about South Africa and its peoples.

In the rapid exchanges between Kramer and Zondi and in more extended dialogues, McClure suggested that the messy search for clarity not only in solving the case but also in understanding apartheid would not come easily. Ethnic pride and linguistic heritage permeate the dialogue, both directly and subtly. Spiked with humor, yet provoking consistently a sense of doubt, hostility, or fear, his dialogue includes occasional Afrikaans and Zulu words and phrases even as his characters find bemusement in the irregularities of English. Although McClure's dialogue models the process of detection, it also illustrates the fragility and tension both within a racial group and across racial lines. Characters, as a result, seem tentative and fearful of speaking their minds. Just as Kramer and Zondi probe and push to crack the alibis of their suspects, so McClure's dialogue probes and pushes his readers to crack their narrow views of South Africa.

THE STEAM PIG AND THE SUNDAY HANGMAN

The exotic plotting of McClure's novels is so integral to their South African setting that even this basic element of the procedural provokes thought long after the entertainment has faded. In *The Steam Pig*, the Zulu murderer uses a sharpened bicycle spoke as a weapon, seeking to make the death appear to have resulted from heart failure. The murder itself, however, is one of the disastrous consequences of an arbitrary reclassification of a family's race. In *The Sunday Hangman* (1977), a group of Boer farmers become obsessed with the technical lore of hanging in their self-righteous sentencing of criminals who have escaped the courts through legal loopholes; these vigilantes undermine the authority of the very laws on which their privileges depend.

SNAKE

McClure's plots suggest through their surface construction the deeper, psychological turmoil of apartheid. In *Snake*, a wealthy white liberal, son of a

Supreme Court justice, strangles an exotic dancer, making it appear that her own pet python was the culprit. His motive is an obsessive desire for illicit sex with a black woman, but his victim is instead a darkly tanned, racist white. In no other setting but South Africa would such complex ironies and the thematic possibilities they raise be possible.

The essence of McClure's novels, however, is found in the complicated relationship between Kramer and Zondi. Despite their growing affection and understanding, they must present the mask of master and slave to others around them: Everyone expects the conventions of apartheid, especially the police. Consequently, Kramer must feign racism and Zondi must act subservient. Only when they are alone can they tease each other with racial humor or comment on the blindness of others. They may save each other's lives while on the job, but neither can inhabit the social world of the other, however well they may know and understand it. McClure illustrated the stark contrast in their personal lives in each novel. In *The Sunday Hangman*, the Widow Fourie suggests to Kramer that, should Zondi lose his job as the result of a lingering leg injury, he might work for them as their gardener. Zondi's family dwells in a two-room, dirt-floor shack while Kramer and Fourie live in Blue Haze, a sprawling old farmhouse. The couple's admiration for Zondi, even Fourie's charity in *The Gooseberry Fool*, cannot change the circumstances of his life. In the same novel, Kramer waits while Zondi lies in a coma and grapples with his anguish because he cannot show his compassion for fear of being perceived as a black sympathizer, thereby losing his authority as a detective among his white assistants.

Kramer and Zondi, however, work so well as partners that they serve as a symbol of not only the failures but also the hopes of South African culture. Although they demonstrate the limiting effects of historical and cultural racism on their individual lives and friendship, they also testify to the potential of individuals to overcome those dehumanizing constraints.

THE SONG DOG

The Song Dog is a "prequel" to the Kramer and Zondi series, in that it reveals how they first met in the early 1960's. Kramer is still new to Natal and appears more uncouth, more Afrikaner and hard-line than he is

in the later works. The book was inspired by the arrest of the African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in Howick, which McClure heard about when he was visiting the police station that very afternoon. McClure told an interviewer that he intended the book to be the last in the series as well as the first, and to dramatize the relationship between Kramer and Zondi as they get to know each other and to "get it right."

McClure's allusions to previous books in the series suggest that, on the whole, the series itself sought to fulfill that potential of an identity based on personal qualities and capabilities rather than on race and class. These books offered no definitive, absolute answers to the questions they raised; just as Kramer noted his reluctance to confront the truth in *Snake*, McClure's fictions provided a limited truth, "having solved a problem without supplying any real answers." Readers, however, found that beneath the surface of entertaining detection they had to confront the turmoil of apartheid in South Africa. McClure's vivid material, well-crafted writing, and neutral stance provided just that opportunity for his readers' own cultural detective work—if they so chose.

Michael Loudon

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TROMP KRAMER AND MICKEY ZONDI SERIES:

The Steam Pig, 1971; *The Caterpillar Cop*, 1972; *The Gooseberry Fool*, 1974; *Snake*, 1975; *The Sunday Hangman*, 1977; *The Blood of an Englishman*, 1980; *The Artful Egg*, 1984; *Imago: A Modern Comedy of Manners*, 1988; *The Song Dog*, 1991

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Hanging of the Angels*,

1968; *Four and Twenty Virgins*, 1973; *Rogue Eagle*, 1976

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NONFICTION: *Killers*, 1976; *Spike Island*, 1980; *Cop World*, 1984

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SHARYN McCRUMB

Born: Wilmington, North Carolina; February 26, 1948

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Elizabeth MacPherson, 1984-
Ballad, 1990-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ELIZABETH MACPHERSON is clever and articulate and engages in highly allusive verbal sparring with her brother Bill and cousin Geoffrey. The series traces Elizabeth's personal and professional life as she solves a variety of cases and also falls in love, marries, and is widowed.

SPENCER ARROWOOD has been elected sheriff, but he still feels inferior to his predecessor, Nelse Miller, and his brother Cal, the football hero who died in Vietnam. His self-confidence grows as the series pro-

gresses. Spencer sometimes expresses an ironic view of events, but the Arrowood series lacks the humor found in the MacPherson novels.

NORA BONESTEEL has "the Sight," and although Spencer admits that she sometimes possesses information that cannot be explained rationally, he has little faith in her powers. In the early Arrowood novels, Nora primarily serves to advise other characters, but in the later novels, she becomes increasingly central to the plot.

CONTRIBUTION

Sharyn McCrumb, who considers herself primarily a storyteller, has increasingly used her mystery novels as vehicles to portray a southern/Appalachian culture where contact with modern issues and problems results in various kinds of violence. Thus, she has stretched the boundaries of the mystery novel, emphasizing the interaction of culture and characters and exploring complex

relationships within families or groups of close friends.

McCrumb's novels have won numerous awards. *Lovely in Her Bones* (1985) and *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* (1992) were named Best Appalachian Novel by the Appalachian Writers Association in 1986 and 1992, respectively. Several of her novels have been selected as Notable Books of the Year by *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and her fiction has won three Agatha Awards (*She Walks These Hills*, 1994; *If I'd Killed Him When I Met Him*, 1995; and "A Wee Doch and Doris"), two Anthony Awards (*She Walks These Hills* and "The Monster of Glamis"), the Nero Wolfe Award (*She Walks These Hills*), and the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America (*Bimbos of the Death Sun*, 1987). She also received the 2006 People's Choice Award for Fiction, given by the Library of Virginia and the James River Writers, for *St. Dale* (2005). Her novels have been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, and Japanese. She has also received the Wilma Dykeman Award for Regional Historical Literature from the East Tennessee Historical Society in 2003 and the award for Outstanding Contribution to Appalachian Literature from the Appalachian Writers Association in 1997.

BIOGRAPHY

Sharyn McCrumb was born Sharyn Elaine Arwood in Wilmington, North Carolina. Her father, Frank Arwood, was chairman of the Elementary Education Department at East Carolina University. McCrumb acknowledged the formative influence of his storytelling when she dedicated *Lovely in Her Bones* to him. His bedtime stories were installments from the *Iliad* (c. 750 B.C.E.; English translation, 1611), but he also told her about the circuit-riding preachers who were their ancestors (the Arrowoods and the McCourys). Helen Arwood, McCrumb's mother, grew up in the eastern part of North Carolina, and McCrumb's grandmother told her stories about North Carolina during the Civil War. Many of the family legends have made their way into McCrumb's novels, especially the *Ballad* series.

McCrumb completed a bachelor's degree in Spanish and communications at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1970, and by 1976 she had become a professional writer. She also took graduate classes in

speech and theater at Wake Forest University in 1977 and earned a master's degree in English at Virginia Tech in 1985.

On January 9, 1982, McCrumb married David Kenneth McCrumb, an environmental engineer. The McCrumb family has two children, Spencer and Laura. In 1983 Sharyn McCrumb became a member of the Appalachian Studies faculty at Virginia Tech.

ANALYSIS

The early Elizabeth MacPherson novels by Sharyn McCrumb emphasize astute observation and deductive reasoning as Elizabeth unmasks murderers, using her academic training in anthropology, her skill in dealing with people, and her familiarity with the mores of both mountain and flatland cultures. Increasingly, though, as the series progresses, Elizabeth's cases deal with issues of blood ties, family tradition, links to the land, and timeless domestic problems.

The interrelationship of past and present also figures prominently in the *Ballad* series. Nora Bonesteel, who possesses "the Sight," intuitively knows that his-



Sharyn McCrumb. (© Jerry Bauer)

torical events often reflect the same emotions and personality traits seen in modern actions. The more pragmatic Sheriff Spencer Arrowood reluctantly learns to accept Nora's authority in these matters, though he continues to prefer demonstrable evidence.

LOVELY IN HER BONES

Lovely in Her Bones explores themes of personal relationships and ethnic identity. Elizabeth MacPherson, who has finished a sociology degree, still has not chosen a career when she meets Milo Gordon, her brother Bill's roommate and the research assistant for Alex Lerche, a forensic anthropologist specializing in Native American studies. Elizabeth and Milo are attracted to each other, but she is also intrigued by folk medicine and eventually by Lerche's process of determining the ethnic identity of Native American groups.

Comfrey Stecoah, a Cullowhee leader, enlists Lerche's help in proving that the Cullowhees are a Native American tribe and thus entitled to federal protection for their land. Lerche agrees to examine the ancient graves, primarily because this project provides a temporary escape from his wife, Tessa, and a chance for trysts with Mary Clare, one of his graduate students. Elizabeth decides to join the group, primarily for the chance to meet the medicine woman, Amelanchier Stecoah, who is Comfrey's mother.

The project is opposed by Bevel Harkness, whose family owns land where a strip mine may be located, but it is also plagued by dissent among Lerche's group. Lerche is so involved in his scientific research that he cannot relate well to other people, as both women in his life discover. Milo is similarly distant toward Elizabeth, and Victor Bassington, one of the undergraduates, annoys everyone with his grandiose lies.

When destruction of the project computer does not deter Lerche, he is murdered. Because the sheriff is unavailable, the investigation is conducted by Deputy Sheriff Barnes, who quickly calls in the local Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent. Although Milo believes Harkness is the murderer, Barnes's primary suspects are Tessa and Mary Clare, because both have recently been rejected by Lerche. The subsequent murder of Victor changes the way the investigators view the crime and provides Elizabeth the clue she needs to unmask the murderer.

In this novel, the primary focus is the two murders; the themes of personal conflict and racial identity are present merely to suggest motivation for the crime, though there is some indication that both Elizabeth and Milo learn from this experience.

IF I'D KILLED HIM WHEN I MET HIM

Though part of the MacPherson series, *If I'd Killed Him When I Met Him* appears to begin McCrumb's transition to the Ballard series, developing themes that recur in those novels. The overall subject is marital conflict and the violence that sometimes results when marriages end. McCrumb drew the novel's title from a battered woman's comment: "If I'd killed him when I met him, I'd be out of prison now."

Elizabeth—still reeling from her husband's death—is an investigator for the law firm of her brother Bill and his partner, Amy Powell "A. P." Hill. A. P. is hired to defend socialite Eleanor Royden for murdering her former husband and his new wife. Eleanor has openly entered the home of her former husband, Jeb, and shot him and his new wife. She has proudly proclaimed what she has done, and A. P. must save her from the death penalty. Compounding the problem is the fact that Jeb was a prominent lawyer and that the entire legal establishment has closed ranks against Eleanor. Even women who supposedly were Eleanor's friends refuse to testify for her, and most of the men suggest that she simply did not understand appropriate behavior for supplanted wives.

Meanwhile, Bill, initially hired to sue Donna Jean Morgan's husband, ends up trying to clear Donna Jean of poisoning her husband. Donna Jean hired Bill because her husband, Chevy, a part-time preacher, declared that God told him to take a second wife. Chevy and sixteen-year-old Tanya Faith knelt in the back of his carpet truck and promised to be man and wife, then Tanya moved into the Morgans' home. Donna Jean refuses to file for divorce because that violates her beliefs, so Bill sues Tanya Faith for criminal conversion (adultery with Donna Jean's husband). When Chevy dies of arsenic poisoning, suspicion falls on Donna Jean, in part because her great-grandmother, Lucy Todhunter, was suspected of poisoning her husband, Philip, after the Civil War.

The prologue, which serves to indicate the timeless

nature of marital conflict, describes the death of Philip Todhunter, depicted by his widow's attorney as a wealthy Yankee who married genteel and land-poor Lucy Avery soon after the Civil War. When Philip died of arsenic poisoning, Lucy was tried for murder but acquitted because no one could determine how she could poison him without making anyone else ill. Months later, Lucy gave birth to Todhunter's son (Donna Jean's grandfather), but she died soon after. The family declined in wealth and prestige, but Lucy became a local legend.

Although Elizabeth realizes her job in the law firm is intended primarily as a distraction, she solves the mystery of both poisonings. During the investigation, she and Bill must cope not only with the dissolution of their parents' marriage but also with their mother's semifacetious claim that she has become a "political" lesbian.

The novel closes with Elizabeth's last letter to her deceased husband, Cameron. She asserts that they were lucky their marriage did not end in boredom or hatred. She declares herself free to move on with her life and her career as a forensic anthropologist.

IF EVER I RETURN, PRETTY PEGGY-O

Traditional ballads play major roles in McCrumb's *Ballad* series, and folk ballads are the source of important clues in *If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O* (1990). Peggy Muryan, a semifamous folk singer, has moved to town. Sheriff Spencer Arrowood initially is attracted to her, perhaps because he seems to associate her with everything he missed during the era when folk music was popular and he was a high school senior.

Spencer's deputy Martha Ayers, who is organizing a class reunion at the local high school, arranges for Spencer to present a plaque in memory of his brother Cal and two other local men killed in Vietnam. Martha has unresolved issues with her high school classmates, and Spencer still feels ambivalent about the memory of his supposedly heroic brother and is convinced that both his mother and his former wife consider him inferior to Cal.

Spencer's association with Peggy becomes professional when she becomes the object of harassment, possibly by a Vietnam veteran. A series of animal mutilations culminates in the murder of a high school girl

who looks like the young Peggy. Initially Spencer handles the case as he thinks his predecessor, Nelse Miller, would have, but he gains self-confidence as his investigation progresses.

This novel establishes Spencer as a major character in the *Ballad* series. As he investigates the threats Peggy is receiving, Spencer begins to understand how the Vietnam experience directly and indirectly changed not only the men who fought there but also American society as a whole.

THE ROSEWOOD CASKET

The Rosewood Casket (1996) explores characteristic McCrumb themes: family ties, love of the land, and individuals' links to family and community history. Sheriff Spencer Arrowood's responsibilities tie him to all three elements. He must carry out Randall Stargill's dying wish that all his sons come home to build his coffin, and later Spencer must try to mediate between the Stallards, who own a prime piece of mountain farmland, and Frank Whitescarver, who holds their mortgage and wants to develop the land. Finally, he must help Nora Bonesteel reconcile the Stargill family's historical guilt.

There are two rosewood caskets. First is the one Randall wants his sons to build for his burial; the other is the small casket Randall made and gave to Nora Bonesteel when they were young lovers. By bringing the small casket, which contains a child's skeleton, to be buried with Randall, Nora sets in motion the resolution of an old mystery. When both Randall and Nora were small children, Randall's stepsister Fayre disappeared, and because Nora possesses "the Sight," for many years she has known what actually happened to the girl. Threatened by her knowledge, Randall ended their relationship and married someone else. Now Nora releases Randall by helping to arrange a proper burial for Fayre.

Randall has left written instructions for his four sons, whose lives have followed totally different paths. Robert Lee, the eldest, is a salesperson who believes his father has always been disappointed in him; his wife, Lilah prays for a miracle to convince him of his success. The second, Garrett, is an Army officer, but he too believes he has failed, primarily because he was unable to prevent a fellow soldier's rape of his wife,

Debba. The third, Charles Martin, is a country singer. Financially he has been more successful than his brothers, but he has not been able to sustain an emotional attachment. When he returns to bury Randall, he is accompanied by his girlfriend Kelley and her daughter Kayla, but the relationship does not seem likely to endure. The youngest son, Clayton, has chosen not to pursue fame or financial success. He lives simply, and his only job is giving schoolchildren nature tours and talks about frontier life. To build the casket as Randall instructed, these men must learn to cooperate as brothers, burying their antagonism toward each other and coming to terms with their long-suppressed resentment of their dead brother, Dwayne.

While building their father's casket, the Stargills also discuss the future of their father's farm. Two brothers consider the land their family heritage and want to keep it, but two are eager to sell to a developer like Whitescarver. Their neighbor Dovey Stallard is determined to hang on to her family's land, however, even if she has to shoot Whitescarver. McCrumb suggests a parallel between Dovey and Nanyehi "Nancy" Ward, the female Cherokee chief who also fought unsuccessfully to keep the mountain land for her people.

Charmaine Allmon Mosby

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ELIZABETH MACPHERSON SERIES: *Sick of Shadows*, 1984; *Lovely in Her Bones*, 1985; *Highland Laddie Gone*, 1986; *Paying the Piper*, 1988; *The Windsor Knot*, 1990; *Missing Susan*, 1991; *MacPherson's Lament*, 1992; *If I'd Killed Him When I Met Him*, 1995; *PMS Outlaws*, 2000

BALLAD SERIES: *If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O*, 1990; *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, 1992; *She Walks These Hills*, 1994; *The Rosewood Casket*, 1996; *The Ballad of Frankie Silver*, 1998; *The Songcatcher*, 2001; *Ghost Riders*, 2003; *Death's Betrayal*, 2005 (with Jeffrey Deaven); *St. Dale*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, 1987; *Zombies of the Gene Pool*, 1992; *Bimbos and Zombies*, 1998

SHORT FICTION: *Our Separate Days*, 1989 (with Mona Walton Helper); *Foggy Mountain Breakdown, and Other Stories*, 1997

EDITED TEXT: *Malice Domestic Seven*, 1998

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GREGORY MCDONALD

Born: Shrewsbury, Massachusetts; February 15, 1937

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Fletch, 1974-

Francis Xavier Flynn, 1977-

Son of Fletch, 1993-

Skylar Whitfield, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

IRWIN MAURICE “FLETCH” FLETCHER, a reporter in his early twenties, is constantly in trouble. He has been married and divorced twice, and each adventure provides him with a new relationship. He is at times care-free and irresponsible, but there is always a method to his eccentric behavior. In the end he usually manages to do the right thing. Not at all like the traditional hard-boiled private eye, Fletch is a nonconformist in every way.

FRANCIS XAVIER FLYNN is an inspector for the Boston Police Department. He is cultured and articulate, a devoted family man, a brilliant investigator, and a shrewd judge of character. His police colleagues find him inscrutable and his methods incomprehensible. It is hinted that besides his police work he has taken on special, top-secret government assignments.

SKYLAR WHITFIELD is a small-town Tennessee high school graduate of considerable talent—academic, musical and romantic—but little ambition. Because of his innate charm, he has the capacity to adapt to any situation, and he blends in well because of his ability to speak proper or countrified English.

CONTRIBUTION

Gregory McDonald is often called the “clown prince” of the detective genre. The world of his major character, Fletch, is a world where anything can happen and usually does. Many of these events are serious, but McDonald always gives them a humorous edge. Irwin Maurice Fletcher, better known as Fletch, breaks new ground for the amateur detective. McDon-

ald uses the anarchic worldview and sarcastic humor of this character to make a wry commentary on life.

McDonald’s fiction evolved out of the political and social rebellion of the 1960’s. Fletch is apolitical, but he never hesitates to thumb his nose at the Establishment. He is an outsider who has little use for rules and regulations or maintaining regular hours, jobs, or traditional relationships. The events of his life occur haphazardly, as a series of bizarre situations into which he falls with regularity. Fletch never complains. He continues making his jokes or quips and deals with each situation as it happens. He is never at a loss for words or solutions. There is little emotional involvement or commitment in the Fletch series. Fletch is whimsical and fickle, though in the long run, this character cares.

McDonald is different from his predecessors in the genre. It is difficult to compare him to a Raymond Chandler or a Ross Macdonald, but like them, he uses the realities of his time to fashion a character that is a reflection of that time. Fletch’s world is an ironic one, and he must laugh at himself as well as at everything else. McDonald’s Fletch mysteries are unique in the sense that they consist largely of dialogue, with few long narrative or descriptive passages. Wildly successful—the original nine Fletch novels published between 1974 and 1987 have sold some one hundred million copies worldwide—the mysteries also served as the basis for two films starring Chevy Chase in the title role (*Fletch*, 1985, and *Fletch Lives*, 1989).

For his fiction, McDonald has received two Edgar Allan Poe Awards (1975 and 1977). He has also been recognized for his nonfiction with a number of awards for his efforts at the *Boston Globe*, where he was one of the first American journalists to write against the Vietnam War and in support of civil rights, gay rights, and women’s rights. Such honors included the Tennessee Association of Federal Executives Humanitarian of the Year Award (1989), the National Association of Social Workers’ Citizen of the Year Award (1990), the National Conference of Christians and Jews’ Roger Williams Strauss Award (1990), and the first annual Alex Haley Award (1992).

BIOGRAPHY

Gregory Christopher McDonald was born in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1937, the son of author Irving Thomas McDonald and painter Mae Haggarty McDonald. He attended private school in Massachusetts and, accepted to Harvard University at the age of sixteen, obtained a bachelor of arts degree in 1958. During college, McDonald created an international yacht troubleshooting enterprise and worked as a sailboat captain to help pay tuition. He also began writing his first novel. Following graduation, he was employed as a marine insurance underwriter (1959-1961) before serving as a volunteer in the Peace Corps for a year. In 1963, the year he began teaching, McDonald married Susan Aiken (they divorced in 1990), and she bore two sons, Christopher Gregory and Douglas Gregory.

In 1964, McDonald was hired as critic-at-large columnist and arts and humanities editor for the *Boston Globe*—in which position he remained for nearly a decade—where he began to develop a fictional character: a reporter who would become the author's best-known protagonist, the irreverent Fletch. The same year, McDonald published his first novel, *Running Scared* (1964), a dark story of a college student who makes no effort to prevent a friend from committing suicide. Though the book received critical acclaim for believability, the subject matter was controversial and disturbing, and caused the author considerable difficulty in placing further manuscripts with publishers.

McDonald, who served from 1970 to 1973 as a member of the voting committee for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, left the *Boston Globe* in 1973 to become a full-time freelance writer. He concentrated on the character he had first dreamed up while working as a reporter, and he produced his first mystery, *Fletch* (1974), in which the titular journalist is working undercover on a story involving drug transactions when he is approached by a man who offers the investigator three million dollars to kill him. The novel was critically acclaimed, became a commercial success, and won an Edgar Award for best first mystery. McDonald, who had not originally planned a sequel to the novel, was forced by popular demand to devise a followup. The result, *Confess, Fletch* (1976), also won an Edgar

Award (the only time in the history of the award that a debut novel and its sequel have received top honors), and spawned a series of sequels, prequels, and offshoots. These included a trilogy involving a minor character from *Confess, Fletch*, Boston Police Department inspector Francis Xavier Flynn, now promoted to major protagonist, for darker, more serious-toned novels (*Flynn*, 1977; *The Buck Passes Flynn*, 1981; and *Flynn's In*, 1984), and a related novel, *Son of Fletch* (1993), which along with *Fletch Reflected* (1994), formed a new series.

Beyond the Fletch and Flynn canons, McDonald has also produced a number of standalone novels, the nonmystery Time Squared trilogy (*A World Too Wide*, 1987; *Exits and Entrances*, 1988; and *Merely Players*, 1988) exploring the relationships of a group of friends, and a quirky new mystery series set in Tennessee (*Skylar*, 1995, and *Skylar in Yankeeeland*, 1997).

ANALYSIS

Gregory McDonald has created two detective series that have attracted serious attention from critics. The first series, Fletch, with its wildly comic tone, has gained widespread readership. The second series, the Francis Xavier Flynn novels, takes a more traditional detective approach. It is built around Flynn, a wily Irish Boston detective who had his genesis as a character in the second Fletch novel, *Confess, Fletch*.

Irwin Maurice Fletcher, or Fletch, is not a detective, private or otherwise, but rather a journalist who ultimately becomes a freelance reporter and troubleshooter. As a journalist, Fletch has ample freedom of movement to follow whatever crisis or crime he happens to stumble across. Fletch is financially independent, thanks to money he has fortuitously acquired in his first caper; this money affords him further freedom to pursue any situation that arises. For Fletch, life has no plan or design. Life is haphazard. Things happen and Fletch, following his instincts, reacts. In Fletch, McDonald has created an anarchic character, one that determines the moral boundaries of his own life. Though Fletch is physically attractive, he never bothers much about what he wears or what he drives. He is not a materialist, but if he has money, he is going to enjoy it. He is not introspective like detectives such as

Robert Parker's Spenser. He is not self-analytical, nor does he try to analyze others; he accepts things and people for what they are. Fletch is not emotional and sentimental; making it difficult to identify with Fletch on that level, and the reader is not moved by McDonald's detective stories. What the reader can count on is that Fletch will always be entertaining.

As a character, Fletch is not guided by a clear set of inviolable principles. Indeed, he views rules as made to be broken. He makes up methods as he goes along; he employs no clear investigative strategy. Whatever he thinks will work, he tries. He lies outrageously and shamelessly to whatever degree the situation seems to require. Fletch's off-the-cuff, unsystematic approach results in judgments of which the reader may not always approve. Neither a truly admirable figure nor a thoroughgoing rogue, he is designed to keep the reader off balance. In *Fletch and the Widow Bradley* (1981), for example, he goes to ridiculous lengths to return twenty-five thousand dollars he could easily have kept, while in *Fletch* he expresses no qualms about keeping a much larger sum of money belonging to someone else.

Clearly, Fletch inhabits a world that is morally ambiguous. McDonald does not preach about right and wrong. Readers are intuitively aware of this fact, and while they may not approve of everything Fletch does, they accept his style as a reflection of the reality of modern life, as Fletch himself does. In any case, like most antiheroes, he usually does the right thing in the end.

In most of the Fletch novels, McDonald creates multiple plotlines. For example, in *Fletch and the Widow Bradley*, Fletch finds a wallet containing twenty-five thousand dollars before being fired from his reporting job for writing a story quoting a man who has been dead for two years. The story develops along both lines, with Fletch trying to redeem himself with the newspaper but never forgetting his quest for the owner of the wallet. Such dual plots are sometimes but not always connected in McDonald's novels.

However, McDonald's work is primarily built around the creation of character through the liberal use of dialogue; characters are largely defined by what they say. It is characterization that is at the center of his writing, and there are times when plot becomes

secondary. The plots in the Fletch series are greatly exaggerated and cannot be taken seriously. Characters who are eccentric and offbeat are ubiquitous throughout the series: actor Frederick Mooney, who pretends drunkenness and orates his way through life; Louise Habeck, a genuinely comic character who thinks she is still married to the husband who divorced her years ago; the Widow Bradley's husband, Tom, supposedly dead two years, who is actually alive and well and living in New York after a sex-change operation. These are McDonald's people and he captures them as broadly comic exaggerations. Such characters would have no place in a novel by Raymond Chandler or Ross Macdonald.

McDonald's Flynn series is considerably different than the Fletch series, though both have a common origin. Francis Xavier Flynn is introduced in the second Fletch novel, *Confess, Fletch*. Fletch enters an apartment he has borrowed in Boston and finds a beautiful naked woman, who, unfortunately, has been murdered. Police Inspector Flynn, with whom Fletch develops a curious relationship, investigates the murder. Both Fletch and Flynn admire and respect one another, but each recognizes the limitations of the friendship.

Flynn is a brilliant investigator. He is much closer to the traditional concept of a detective as one who investigates and detects. Flynn is iconoclastic and his methods are unorthodox, but he is much more the procedural detective than Fletch. McDonald gives Flynn a strange and intriguing background. He is an Irishman who was brought up in Germany during World War II. The SS shot his parents at the end of the war, and Flynn made his way to the United States.

Flynn is occasionally mysteriously called away on special assignments. The suggestion is that Flynn works not only for the Boston Police Department but also for one of the federal government's secret service agencies. Unlike Fletch, Flynn is a devoted family man. He has a passion for music and has trained his family to perform as a small chamber orchestra. In one of the more effective scenes in *Confess, Fletch*, Flynn takes Fletch to his home, where his children perform a Beethoven sonata.

Flynn's sense of humor is low-key, but he continually makes quips and sardonic remarks, often directed

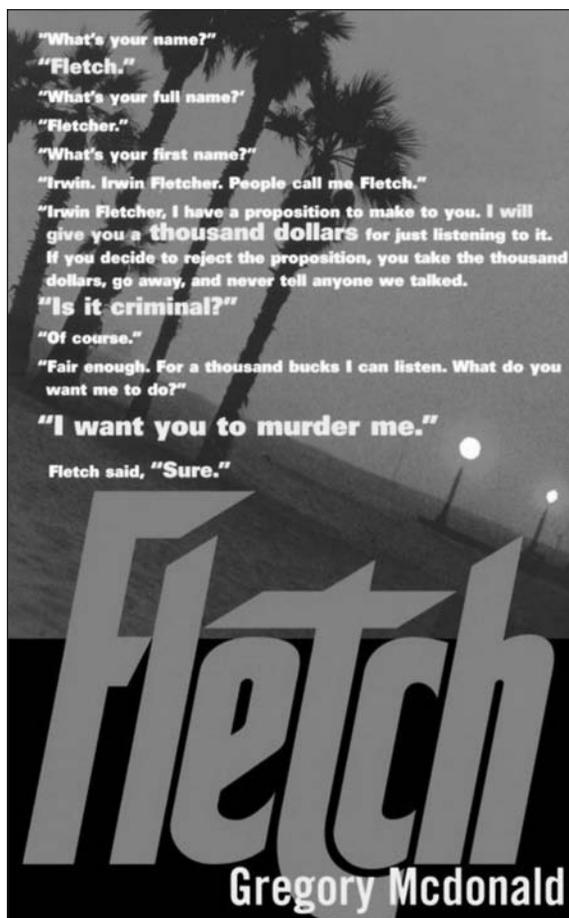
at his partner, Richard Whelan, whom Flynn insists on calling Grover. Whelan has little understanding of anything Flynn says, and generally serves as a comic foil.

Intellectually, Flynn is far superior to his colleagues in the police department. In *Flynn's In*, for example, the Boston police commissioner calls on the Irish detective to investigate a murder at a private hunting club. In many ways, the plot resembles a British locked-room murder mystery. Flynn has to use all his acumen and intelligence to solve the case. There is little action or violence in the book, other than the discovery of the victims. Once again, it is the main character, not the plot, that is central to the story.

Both the Fletch and Flynn series have achieved considerable popularity, but it is with Fletch that McDonald established his reputation as one of the major humorists in the genre. Fletch is most certainly not in the mainstream of the private investigator. He has carved his own niche—an anarchic man, an antihero, an ironic commentator; as an investigator he breaks all the rules, willingly and consciously. Fletch is an original, rollicking character in a series of novels that give an amusing skew to many of the traditions of mystery and detective fiction.

FLETCH

In *Fletch*, McDonald's debut mystery, Alan Stanwyk hires Fletch, who is working undercover on a drug story, to murder another man. Fletch is to be the ultimate victim, so Stanwyk can start a new life in Rio de Janeiro with a new wife and child. Stanwyk's scheme, however, goes awry; he is killed, and Fletch ends up with the three million dollars of loot. McDonald purposely creates an ending that is in direct contrast to the traditional detective-story ending, in which the hero is supposed to refuse any reward, especially that which is ill-gotten. Instead, Fletch takes the money and flies off to Rio himself, leaving behind two former wives clamoring for alimony that he has been too irresponsible to pay. Moreover, he leaves a perfectly decent woman and her child waiting at the airport for Stanwyk and the money, which will never come. McDonald makes no apologies for his hero's behavior. Fletch need not give the money to the widows and orphans fund; he invests it and lives on the beach in Rio for six months. These actions define Fletch as



an anarchic antihero. He has cleaned up the mess, nailed a police chief who had been in charge of distributing drugs on the beach, and settled the Stanwyk situation. His work done, he will use the three million dollars as he likes.

CARIOCA FLETCH

In *Carioca Fletch* (1982), Fletch has used Stanwyk's money to become a beach bum in Rio de Janeiro. As he walks the streets of Rio with his Brazilian girlfriend, an old crone emerges from the shadows to point her finger at him and croak the name "Janio Barreto." It seems Fletch resembles her dead husband, murdered forty years ago. This strange event forms the basis for one of the plots, as Fletch unravels the forty-year-old mystery and almost gets beaten to death in the process.

The plot of *Carioca Fletch* is typical of the Fletch series. The hero is led from one exaggerated event to

the next. After being mistaken for Janio Barreto, Fletch finds that Stanwyk's wife (from *Fletch*) has arrived in Rio. She enlists Fletch's help after being robbed, then disappears. While the rest of the frantic plot unwinds, Fletch is also trying to locate Joan Stanwyk. McDonald spends an inordinate amount of time describing Carnival, which he calls "the biggest, most amazing human spectacle in the world. Except war."

During carnival week, four upper-class Brazilian cariocas (playboys) befriend the hero. They take Fletch outside Rio to a brothel, where one of the cariocas suffers a fatal heart attack in the arms of a prostitute. McDonald spends four chapters describing the group's attempt to make their friend's death look respectable. These farcical scenes include the four being stopped by the police while the corpse is propped up in the back seat next to Fletch. The scene, at the center of the book, is absurdly long; it does not have much relation to the principal story. Such digressions are an important part of McDonald's distinctiveness as a writer of mysteries: Even to the neglect of the plot, he will indulge in prolonged play with his characters. Sometimes these digressions are successful; sometimes they are not.

FLETCH WON

Fletch Won (1985) could be titled "Fletch's First Case," for it is set before the events that occur in *Fletch*. In this book, Fletch is a fledgling reporter on the *News-Tribune*, about to be married to his first wife. He attempts to solve the murder of a lawyer killed in the newspaper's parking lot while doing a story on the Ben Franklyn Service, an escort service that is the front for an illicit sex ring. Most of the strands of plot are tied together at the end, but it is difficult to take the plot too seriously as it careens crazily from one situation to the next.

FLETCH, TOO

Fletch Won was followed by *Fletch, Too* (1986), in which the star reporter travels to Kenya. Fletch has tied up all the loose ends of *Fletch Won* and is about to go on a skiing honeymoon when he receives a note from his long-lost father inviting him to Kenya for a reunion (the elder Fletcher disappeared soon after his son was born). Fletch and his new wife, Barbara, race to the airport with their skis and ski clothes (a recurring comic motif in the book is Fletch and Barbara

having nothing but ski clothes in the sweltering heat of Kenya). On their arrival in Kenya, Fletch witnesses a murder in the men's room at the Nairobi airport. Typical in a Fletch plot, comical situations pile up, the repartee is fast and amusing, and the pace is frenetic.

SON OF FLETCH

Son of Fletch takes the popular series in a new direction. In this entry, the hero, now in middle age, is living in Tennessee with girlfriend Carrie, when a group of convicts escapes from a prison in neighboring Kentucky and makes a beeline straight for Fletch's home. Among them is an alleged attempted murderer, John "Jack" Fletcher Faoni, who claims to be Fletch's illegitimate son, the product of a moment of passion with an obese woman from the protagonist's past. Though Jack physically resembles his supposed father and moves like him, Fletch has his doubts and feels there may be more to the situation than meets the eye. Doing the unexpected, as usual, Fletch assists the convicts in eluding a dragnet and transports them to a compound in Alabama, a haven for lowlife white supremacists, where one of the escapees, Kris Kriegel, unveils a sinister plan to rain down murder and mayhem among humans deemed inferior. Sprinkled throughout with McDonald's trademark humorous dialogue, *Son of Fletch* has more violence and a harder edge than other entries in the series, and the ending sets up a sequel featuring father and son, *Fletch Reflected*.

Steven C. Klipstein

Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FLETCH SERIES: *Fletch*, 1974; *Confess, Fletch*, 1976; *Fletch Forever*, 1978; *Fletch's Fortune*, 1978; *Fletch and the Widow Bradley*, 1981; *Carioca Fletch*, 1982; *Fletch's Moxie*, 1982; *Fletch and the Man Who*, 1983; *Fletch Won*, 1985; *Fletch Too*, 1986; *The Fletch Chronicles*, 1988 (3 volumes)

FRANCIS XAVIER FLYNN SERIES: *Flynn*, 1977; *The Buck Passes Flynn*, 1981; *Flynn's In*, 1984; *Flynn's World*, 1999 (omnibus)

SON OF FLETCH SERIES: *Son of Fletch*, 1993; *Fletch Reflected*, 1994

SKYLAR SERIES: *Skylar*, 1995; *Skylar in Yankee-land*, 1997

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Running Scared*, 1964; *Love Among the Mashed Potatoes*, 1978; *Who Took Toby Rinaldi?* 1980; *Safekeeping*, 1985; *The Brave*, 1991

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

TIME SQUARED SERIES: *A World Too Wide*, 1987; *Exits and Entrances*, 1988; *Merely Players*, 1988

NONFICTION: *The Education of Gregory McDonald*, 1985

PLAY: *Bull's Eye*, pr. 1987

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- Dahlin, Robert. "PW Interviews: Gregory McDonald." *Publishers Weekly* 229, no. 25 (December 18, 1981): 14-16. Contains biographical tidbits from the author's life and insights into his methods of work.
- DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. Provides brief entries on Gregory McDonald and on his major creation, Fletch.
- Henry, William A., III. "Blood, Blonds and Badi-nage." *Time*, November 4, 1984, 83-86. Brief reviews of *Fletch Won* and *Safekeeping*; the latter

novel is particularly cited for its plot—a small boy, heir to a dukedom, is orphaned during the London blitz and sent to New York to be looked after by a tabloid writer. The novels are called a blend of "sociology and satire."

- King, Nina, with Robin Winks. *Crimes of the Scene: A Mystery Novel Guide for the International Traveler*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Provides a brief description of the Brazilian locations depicted in McDonald's *Carioca Fletch*.
- Lukowsky, Wes. *Booklist* 91, no. 2 (September 15, 1994): 117. A review of *Fletch Reflected*, the followup to *Son of Fletch*, in which undercover reporter Jack, having just completed an exposé of a redneck racist cult, embarks on a new investigation: an old flame, soon to be married to a billionaire inventor's son, asks Jack to investigate a series of incidents that occurred at the estate of her father-in-law-to-be. Favorably cited for witty dialogue and for its unique blend of suspense and cartoon-like characters.
- McDonald, Gregory. Gregory McDonald. <http://www.gregorymcdonald.com>. The author's official Web site contains a biography and information on the author's books and films made from his works.
- Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller, eds. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. Contains reviews of *Fletch* and *Flynn's In*—the former is called a "page-turner with dazzling dialogue," while the latter is labeled a "rollicking story with deadpan wit."
- Winks, Robin. "Mysteries." *The New Republic* 188, no. 23 (June 13, 1983): 35-36. A brief, positive review of *Fletch's Moxie*, described as "one of the most biting of McDonald's satires."

JOHN D. MacDONALD

Born: Sharon, Pennsylvania; July 24, 1916

Died: Milwaukee, Wisconsin; December 28, 1986

Type of plot: Hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Travis McGee, 1964-1985

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

TRAVIS MCGEE is a self-described “salvage expert,” specializing in recovering stolen goods for clients who are helpless, hapless, and innocent victims of confidence men. He is a tough, independent man with a romantic streak and a moral code.

CONTRIBUTION

John D. MacDonald takes the hard-boiled detective and fashions him into the modern version of a knight-errant. MacDonald’s Travis McGee usually gets involved in helping young women who have been bilked of their money by charming male swindlers. In McGee’s code of honor, the worst crime is taking advantage of the innocent and the naïve. He couples his fiercely moral views with strong convictions about the nature of modern society, which he deplors for its rapacious violation of the environment and its greedy exploitation of human beings. Knowing he cannot change the structure of society fundamentally, McGee opts for living on its fringes and for doing battle with the hucksters and cheats who thrive on fooling women—and sometimes gullible men—by deceit and trickery. Although he is a fierce individualist, McGee is remarkable for having such a well-developed social consciousness. He is a man who realizes that his way of life is in itself a statement, a challenge to the status quo.

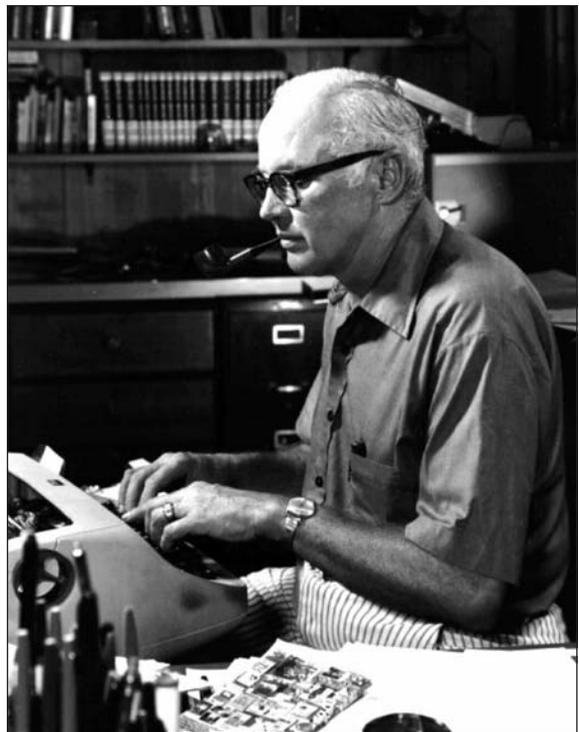
BIOGRAPHY

John Dann MacDonald was born on July 24, 1916, the only son of Andrew MacDonald and Marguerite MacDonald, in Sharon, Pennsylvania. When he was ten years old, his family moved to Utica, New York, where he attended the Utica Free Academy. Two years later he contracted mastoiditis and scarlet fever and al-

most died. His sickness changed his life, making him an avid reader and a deeply reflective person.

MacDonald’s father wanted his son to be a businessman, and MacDonald obliged his father by attending business schools in Philadelphia and Syracuse, where he was graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1936. After his marriage in 1938, graduation from the Harvard Graduate Business Administration School in 1939, and a series of unsatisfactory jobs, he enlisted in the navy in 1940. It was a relief to him to have a sure means of supporting his family (his son was born in 1939) and not to worry about his place in the competitive business world. Soon he began to write—although his first short story was not published until 1946. His work for the navy and for the Office of Strategic Services (the precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency) gave him valuable background and experience for his fiction.

After World War II, MacDonald began to make a



John D. MacDonald.

modest living from selling stories to magazines. He published his first full-length novel in 1950 and went on to produce books about a wide range of subjects, including science fiction. In 1952, he began living in Florida, the setting for all the Travis McGee novels. Although he is best known for the Travis McGee series, it makes up less than half of his total output as a writer. *Condominium* (1977), for example, was a best seller and earned significant praise for the fineness of its moral and aesthetic vision. In 1972, he received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1986.

ANALYSIS

As John D. MacDonald freely admitted on many occasions, Travis McGee was his mouthpiece for the expression of opinions on a wide range of issues. MacDonald was a mature writer when he created McGee in 1964, so he knew how to create the detective as a full-fledged character interacting in complex ways with other characters. Although MacDonald showed that he could cleverly manipulate detective story plots, he always emphasized the significance of themes and characterization. He was not overly concerned with the whodunit form or with the mysteries the detective solves, but instead stressed the detective's moral nature and intelligence. How McGee goes about his job is at least as important as his discovery and apprehension of the murderers he pursues.

Because McGee is always the first-person narrator of the novels, his consciousness is of paramount interest. He works for himself and the people who hire him. He owns and lives on a boat, *The Busted Flush*, named in memory of a winning hand in a poker game. McGee had been losing hand after hand and then finally won one by bluffing a flush. His luck turned, and he won enough to take possession of the boat. The name of the boat points to the basic situation in which McGee usually finds himself. Fate usually deals him what looks like a losing hand, but somehow he manages to pull out or "salvage" something of value.

McGee is no unmarked hero. Indeed, the McGee series is remarkable for the many wounds and broken bones the detective suffers. He has been shot in the head and has endured all manner of injuries to his

face, his ribs, and his legs. He is a rugged six feet, four inches tall and weighs more than two hundred pounds (although his opponents often mistake him for being a good twenty pounds lighter). McGee always manages to escape with his life because of his mental and physical agility. He can duck and dance away from blows, and he can fall out of a hot-air balloon from a height of about four stories, landing so that only his knee needs surgery. Yet he recognizes that no matter how good he is, sooner or later he will be nailed. One of the finer pleasures of the McGee series is reading his analyses of fights, his calculations as to when to take blows on his forearms and elbows and when to penetrate his opponent's defense.

BRIGHT ORANGE FOR THE SHROUD

McGee never comes away from any of his cases with a clean victory. Sometimes one of his clients dies. Many times innocent people who get in the way of McGee's investigations die. For example, McGee understands that to catch up with Boone Waxwell in *Bright Orange for the Shroud* (1965), he has to use a woman whom Waxwell is stalking as bait. McGee's timing is off, however, and Waxwell snatches the woman and rapes her before McGee's plan of entrapment gets under way. Characteristically, the vicious Waxwell eventually manages to impale himself in a way that is just retribution for the many women he has violated. A rough, crude sort of justice—a kind of symmetry—does operate in the McGee novels, but it is at the expense of the guilty and the innocent alike.

Waxwell is also a particularly good example of MacDonald's deftness at creating complex characters. Waxwell talks like an easygoing country boy. He does not seem particularly bright. Yet McGee finds that this is a facade, that Waxwell hides his cunning, murderous nature with a mild-mannered, good-natured style. Knowing this, and even after being warned, McGee still underestimates Waxwell.

FREE FALL IN CRIMSON

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Travis McGee series is his patient piecing together of plots and human characters. In *Free Fall in Crimson* (1981), a terminally ill millionaire is beaten to death. He had, at most, another six months to live. Why was he murdered? Is there any connection between his daughter's

fatal bicycle accident, his death, and the fact that she was due to inherit his fortune? To trace the chain of events and to understand who had the most to profit from the millionaire's death, McGee calls on his friend Meyer, an economist among other things, who has a gift for seeing the "big picture" in ways that are beyond Travis, who is better as a painstaking collector of details. Because virtually every McGee case revolves around money, he needs a knowledgeable consultant who can explain or speculate on the many ways money can be extorted and conned from people or how it can find its way into various enterprises that conceal the source of revenue.

MCGEE AND MEYER

McGee and Meyer often work as a team. MacDonald found it necessary to invent Meyer because of the limitations of the first-person point of view. With McGee as narrator, everything is seen or reported from his perspective. Dialogue sometimes allows other points of view to intrude, but only a true collaborator could widen and extend McGee's consciousness. Like Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson or Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin, McGee and Meyer complement each other and compensate for what the other lacks. Meyer is certainly no man of action—as is proved in *Free Fall in Crimson*, where he buckles under pressure and almost causes McGee's death.

MacDonald also introduced Meyer to give his detective series a tension and variety that is often lacking in formula fiction. As MacDonald notes, Meyer helped solve a technical problem:

I have to keep the plot the same without allowing it to look as if it is the same. Little Orphan Annie gets into a horrible situation and Travis—Daddy Warbucks—comes and saves her. Every time. So . . . you become a little bit wary of a plot structure which is going to leave too many doors closed as you're writing it. I brought in Meyer about the fourth book because there were getting to be too many interior monologues.

If McGee is a Daddy Warbucks helping vulnerable young girls who have been swindled and molested, he is also a romantic who falls in love with some of the women he saves. McGee's cases take an emotional toll on him. Like Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, McGee

has a tough-guy exterior that hides a streak of sentimentality. He knows better than to indulge himself, yet he never completes a case unscarred by mental trauma. Compared to most fictional detectives, McGee is a feminist—in the sense that he is deeply aware of women's feelings. He often rejects women who invite him to engage in recreational sex. He is not above using manipulative women sexually to solve a case, but such women are his equals. He does not condescend to them. He also likes to describe love play. Sex scenes in the MacDonald series are as evocative as the fight sequences.

In Travis McGee, MacDonald created a character with a temper—if not a background—like his own. MacDonald hated working for business firms. He did not find himself as a man or as a writer until he decided to abandon the competition of the business world. Similarly, Travis McGee turns his back on the corporate enterprise. He has contempt—as did MacDonald—for the industries that are ruining Florida's environment. The McGee novels are full of laments for the spoilage of the state's lovely land and sea refuges. Neither MacDonald nor McGee sees a way to change the world, but both the author and his character elaborate on a consciousness of exquisite, discriminating taste.

Travis McGee is a rough-hewn version—perhaps it would be better to say an inversion—of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe. Wolfe never left home; McGee is rarely at home. He travels the state of Florida—and sometime beyond it to Iowa, Illinois, and other states—to solve his cases. His home is a boat, and he is always in motion. Whereas Wolfe is sedentary and fat, McGee watches his diet. For all of their differences, however, each detective is admired for the way he savors and measures experience. McGee, the poor man's Nero Wolfe, the proletarian amateur, is the upholder of public and private standards.

In medieval literature, the knight went forth to save a damsel in distress or to vindicate a lady's honor. In *The Deep Blue Good-by* (1964), the first McGee novel, in *A Purple Place for Dying* (1964), and in *The Green Ripper* (1979), McGee explicitly refers to himself as a kind of worn-out, yet indefatigable knight, ready to tilt his lance at dragons. He realizes that the

odds are against him, but he cannot live with himself if he does not set forth. The imperative is moral. A seasoned veteran who knows how to spell himself, who waits for his second wind, McGee is the resilient hero and the modern antihero, making no great claims for his prowess yet surviving precisely because he knows his limitations. In a Florida fast being overtaken by developers, confidence men, and greedy corporations, McGee remains a voice of conscience, acting on his own principles and pointing out the damage caused by a world that ignores ethical and ecological concerns.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TRAVIS MCGEE SERIES: 1964-1970 • *The Deep Blue Good-by*, 1964; *A Purple Place for Dying*, 1964; *Nightmare in Pink*, 1964; *The Quick Red Fox*, 1964; *A Deadly Shade of Gold*, 1965; *Bright Orange for the Shroud*, 1965; *Darker than Amber*, 1966; *One Fearful Yellow Eye*, 1966; *Pale Gray for Guilt*, 1968; *The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper*, 1968; *Dress Her in Indigo*, 1969; *The Long Lavender Look*, 1970

1971-1985 • *A Tan and Sandy Silence*, 1972; *The Scarlet Ruse*, 1973; *The Turquoise Lament*, 1973; *The Dreadful Lemon Sky*, 1975; *The Empty Copper Sea*, 1978; *The Green Ripper*, 1979; *Free Fall in Crimson*, 1981; *Cinnamon Skin*, 1982; *The Lonely Silver Rain*, 1985

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1950-1956 • *The Brass Cupcake*, 1950; *Judge Me Not*, 1951; *Murder for the Bride*, 1951; *Weep for Me*, 1951; *The Damned*, 1952; *Dead Low Tide*, 1953; *The Neon Jungle*, 1953; *All These Condemned*, 1954; *Area of Suspicion*, 1954 (revised 1961); *A Bullet for Cinderella*, 1955 (also known as *On the Make*); *Cry Hard, Cry Fast*, 1955; *April Evil*, 1956; *Border Town Girl*, 1956 (also known as *Five Star Fugitive*); *Murder in the Wind*, 1956; *You Live Once*, 1956 (also known as *You Kill Me*)

1957-1960 • *A Man of Affairs*, 1957; *Death Trap*, 1957; *The Empty Trap*, 1957; *The Price of Murder*, 1957; *Clemmie*, 1958; *Soft Touch*, 1958 (also known as *Man-Trap*); *The Deceivers*, 1958; *The Executioners*, 1958 (also known as *Cape Fear*); *Deadly Welcome*, 1959; *The Beach Girls*, 1959; *The Crossroads*, 1959; *Slam the Big Door*, 1960; *The End of the Night*,

1960; *The Only Girl in the Game*, 1960

1961-1986 • *One Monday We Killed Them All*, 1961; *Where Is Janet Gantry*, 1961; *A Flash of Green*, 1962; *A Key to the Suite*, 1962; *The Girl, the Gold Watch, and Everything*, 1962; *On the Run*, 1963; *The Drowner*, 1963; *The Last One Left*, 1967; *One More Sunday*, 1984; *Barrier Island*, 1986

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *End of the Tiger, and Other Stories*, 1966; *Seven*, 1971; *The Good Old Stuff: Thirteen Early Stories*, 1982; *Two*, 1983; *More Good Old Stuff*, 1984

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Wine of the Dreamers*, 1951 (also known as *Planet of the Dreamers*); *Ballroom of the Skies*, 1952; *Cancel All Our Vows*, 1953; *Contrary Pleasure*, 1954; *Please Write for Details*, 1959; *I Could Go On Singing*, 1963; *Condominium*, 1977

SHORT FICTION: *Other Times, Other Worlds*, 1978

NONFICTION: *The House Guests*, 1965; *No Deadly Drug*, 1968; *Nothing Can Go Wrong*, 1981 (with John H. Kilpack)

EDITED TEXT: *The Lethal Sex*, 1959

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Hirshberg, Ed. *John D. MacDonald*. Boston: Twayne, 1985. Book-length study of MacDonald's life and work.

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Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. A scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre. Includes extensive treatment of MacDonald, discussing nine of his novels. Bibliographic references and index.

Merrill, Hugh. *The Red Hot Typewriter: The Life and Times of John D. MacDonald*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. Extremely well-researched biography

that uses correspondence and other personal papers to paint a picture of the author and his creative process.

Moore, Lewis D. *Meditations on America: John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee Series and Other Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994. Uses a cultural studies methodology to detail the nature and meaning of MacDonald's contributions to American culture.

Shine, Walter, and Jean Shine. *A Bibliography of the Published Works of John D. MacDonald with Selected Biographical Materials and Critical Essays*. Gainesville: Patrons of the Libraries, University of Florida, 1980. Useful checklist of works by and about MacDonald. A good starting point for further research.

ROSS MACDONALD

Kenneth Millar

Born: Los Gatos, California; December 13, 1915

Died: Santa Barbara, California; July 11, 1983

Also wrote as John Ross Macdonald

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Lew Archer, 1949-1976

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

LEW ARCHER is a private investigator, formerly on the Long Beach police force. About thirty-five years old and divorced when he first appears, he ages in the course of the series to fifty or so, remaining unmarried. A tough but caring man, he is sustained by his conviction that "everything matters"—that every human life has a meaning that awaits discovery and understanding.

CONTRIBUTION

Ross Macdonald's eighteen novels featuring Lew Archer, the compassionate private eye who serves as their narrator and central intelligence, have been described as "the finest series of detective novels ever written by an American." Working in the tradition of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, masters of the hard-boiled detective novel, Macdonald surpassed them in craftsmanship and psychological depth. He saw in popular fiction the promise of "democratic prose," fashioned from the American vernacular. His language is economical, deceptively simple, capable of poetry. For the most part, his characters are ordinary people, neither heroes nor villains, rendered with full justice to the moral complexity of their experience. His books are also a composite portrait of a particular place and its society; few novelists, whether inside or outside the mystery genre, have achieved the accuracy, the social range, and the insight of Macdonald's anatomy of California.

BIOGRAPHY

Ross Macdonald was born Kenneth Millar on December 13, 1915, in Los Gatos, California, the son of John Macdonald Millar and Annie Moyer Millar. ("Ross Macdonald" was a pen name that he adopted after having published several books; in private life he remained Kenneth Millar.) Millar was an only child; his parents, both forty years old at his birth, were Canadian. When Millar was still an infant, the family moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where Millar's father, an amateur writer, worked as a harbor pilot. When Millar was three years old, his father abandoned the family.

Millar spent most of his childhood and youth in the homes of relatives all across Canada. In Kitchener, Ontario, he attended the Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School, from which he was graduated in 1932. There, he met his future wife, Margaret Ellis Sturm; his first publication, a Sherlock Holmes parody, appeared in an issue of the school magazine that also included her first published story.



Ross Macdonald. (Hal Boucher)

In 1932, Millar's father died, leaving an insurance policy of twenty-five hundred dollars. On the strength of that modest legacy, Millar was able to enter the University of Western Ontario. Following his graduation in 1938, he married Margaret Sturm; their only child, Linda Jane Millar, was born a year later.

In 1941, Millar began graduate study in English literature at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. (He received his doctorate in 1952 on completion of his dissertation, "The Inward Eye: A Revaluation of Coleridge's Psychological Criticism.") In the same year, Margaret Millar published her first novel, *The Invisible Worm*; she was to enjoy a productive and successful career as a mystery writer. Kenneth Millar's own first novel, *The Dark Tunnel*, was published in 1944, by which time he was an ensign in the United States Naval Reserve, serving as a communications officer on an escort carrier. After the war, Millar joined his wife and daughter in Santa Barbara. With the exception of a year spent in Menlo Park, 1956-1957, during which time he underwent psychotherapy, Millar lived in Santa Barbara for the remainder of his life.

Between 1946 and 1976, Millar published twenty-three novels. In 1974, he was awarded the Grand Master Award of the Mystery Writers of America. In 1981, he was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease. He died on July 11, 1983.

ANALYSIS

Ross Macdonald began his career with two spy novels: *The Dark Tunnel*, written in only one month while he was taking courses for his doctorate, and *Trouble Follows Me* (1946), which he completed on board ship while serving in the navy. His third and fourth books, *Blue City* (1947) and *The Three Roads* (1948), in which he turned to the hard-boiled style, were written in Santa Barbara in a nine-month span after his discharge. Together, these four novels constitute Macdonald's apprenticeship. They are marred by overwriting and other flaws, but they served their purpose, allowing him to establish himself as a professional writer.

THE DETECTIVE HERO

Macdonald found his voice with his fifth novel, *The Moving Target* (1949). It is no accident that this key

book was the first to feature private investigator Lew Archer: With Archer as narrator, Macdonald was able to deepen and humanize the form he had inherited from Hammett and Chandler. In his analytical awareness of what he was doing as a writer and how he was doing it, Macdonald was quite exceptional, and his essays and occasional pieces, collected in *Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly into the Past* (1981), remain the best guide to his work. In his essay "The Writer as Detective Hero," he sketches the history of the detective story and discusses his contribution to the genre via the character of Archer.

The focus of the essay, as its title suggests, is on the complex relationship between fictional detectives and their creators, from Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes to Hammett's Sam Spade and Chandler's Philip Marlowe. In Macdonald's view, the central purpose of the detective story is to provide an "imaginative arena" in which troubling realities can be confronted "safely, under artistic controls." The fictional detective, Macdonald suggests, is a projection of the author, a mediating figure by means of which the writer is able to "handle dangerous emotional material." Early detectives such as Dupin and Holmes enact the triumph of reason over the "nightmare forces of the mind" (although in Poe's stories, Macdonald notes, there remains a "residue of horror"). Sam Spade, the archetypal hard-boiled detective, is a much more realistic character, yet his creator deprives him of the ability to make sense of his experience—and thereby denies him full humanity. Marlowe is gifted with a richer sensibility, at once ironic and lyrical, yet there is a strong vein of romanticism in his portrayal.

Macdonald's Lew Archer has something in common with all these predecessors, yet he differs from them as well:

Archer is a hero who sometimes verges on being an antihero. Although he is a man of action, his actions are largely directed to putting together the stories of other people's lives and discovering their significance. He is less a doer than a questioner, a consciousness in which the meanings of other lives emerge. This gradually developed conception of the detective hero as the mind of the novel is not wholly new, but it is probably my main contribution to this special branch of fiction.

With this passage, Macdonald's title, "The Writer as Detective Hero," gains added resonance. Macdonald, the writer, is a kind of private investigator; Archer, the detective, is a poet, perceiving hidden connections. Both writer and detective are in the business of "putting together the stories of other people's lives and discovering their significance." Indeed, in many of the novels, Archer explicitly identifies the impulse that keeps him going, nowhere more forcefully than in *The Far Side of the Dollar* (1965), when, in response to a skeptical question ("Why does it matter?"), he states his credo: "Life hangs together in one piece. Everything is connected with everything else. The problem is to find the connections."

As Macdonald acknowledges, this altered conception of the detective hero (and, thereby, the detective novel) developed gradually. The early Archer books, while unmistakably individual, nevertheless retain many features of the traditional hard-boiled novel; like Chandler's Marlowe, Archer trades insults with gangsters, is repeatedly embroiled in violent, melodramatic confrontations, and encounters the requisite complement of dangerous and seductive women: "The full red lips were parted and the black eyes dreamed downward heavily. . . . I had to remind myself that a man was dead" (*The Way Some People Die*, 1951). The texture of the later books is subtler; Archer is less cynical, more introspective. It is easy to exaggerate the contrast, as many critics have done; after all, every one of the Archer books follows the conventions of the detective novel—a form as artificial, Macdonald remarked, as the sonnet. Still, it is undeniable that Macdonald's novels following *The Galton Case* (1959), the book he regarded as marking his breakthrough, reveal his increasing mastery of those familiar conventions and his ability to employ them in a highly original fashion.

THE UNDERGROUND MAN

That mastery is particularly apparent in *The Underground Man* (1971), the sixteenth Archer novel and one of the best. The title echoes Fyodor Dostoevski; Macdonald thus claims for his own a tradition that includes *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912). The point is that the heritage of the crime novel is much richer than

is generally acknowledged. Macdonald was not seeking to add a literary cachet to his work; rather, he was passionately committed to the value of popular literature. His experience of poverty and the humiliation that went with it made him a lifelong partisan of the underclass and an enemy of privilege. Those attitudes are reflected in the social commentary that threads through his books; more important, they helped to shape the language of his fiction.

The opening sentences of *The Underground Man* are typical: "A rattle of leaves woke me some time before dawn. A hot wind was breathing in at the bedroom window. I got up and closed the window and lay in bed and listened to the wind." The language is economical and direct; the sentences follow one another with compelling speed. Macdonald's apparently simple language is in fact highly stylized; to achieve the effect of simplicity—without falling into self-parody—requires great art. Macdonald based his style on the spoken language, "the carrier of our social and cultural meanings." A genuinely democratic society, he believed, needs a vital popular literature written in a language accessible to all its members: "A book which can be read by everyone, a convention which is widely used and understood in all its variations, holds a civilization together as nothing else can."

It is just such a convention that permits readers to accept a private eye who (to borrow Macdonald's tribute to Chandler's style) writes "like a slumming angel." Here is Lew Archer on the first page of *The Underground Man*: "It was a bright September morning. The edges of the sky had a yellowish tinge like cheap paper darkening in the sunlight." The marvelous similes that are Macdonald's trademark do not serve a merely decorative purpose; they create patterns of imagery that are integral to the structure of his novels. Here, there is a hint of the forest fire that will dominate the narrative.

On that bright morning, Archer is feeding peanuts to jays on the lawn of his apartment building in West Los Angeles. An anxious little boy emerges from an apartment usually occupied by an older couple; soon the boy, whose name is Ronny Broadhurst, is having a good time with Archer, catching peanuts in his mouth. The fun is interrupted by the arrival of the boy's father,

Stanley Broadhurst, who has come to take Ronny to Santa Teresa (a fictitious town modeled on Santa Barbara) to visit his grandmother. The boy's mother, Jean Broadhurst, comes out of the apartment and an ugly scene ensues, initiated by Stanley. Eventually he leaves with his son and a young blond woman, evidently eighteen or nineteen, who has been waiting out of sight in his car.

The reader may be grumbling that Archer's entry into the Broadhursts' troubles is a little too conveniently arranged. Does not Archer himself say (in this book and in others as well), "I don't believe in coincidences"? Indeed, there is no coincidence here, for Macdonald has a reversal in store. Several hours after Stanley leaves, Jean Broadhurst comes to Archer's apartment. A forest fire has started in Santa Teresa, near Stanley's mother's ranch. Jean asks Archer to take her there; she is worried about Ronny. On the way, she admits that the Wallers, the couple whose apartment she is borrowing, have told her about Archer and his profession, and that, under the pressure of her trouble with her husband, this knowledge may have prompted her to stay in the Wallers' place.

The deftness of this opening is sustained throughout the novel. Everything fits, yet nothing is contrived. Stanley's father has not been seen for fifteen years, having apparently left his wife and son for another woman. Stanley has become obsessed with tracing his father, increasingly neglecting his own family. At the Broadhurst ranch in Santa Teresa, Archer meets a Forest Service investigator who has discovered Stanley's hastily buried body. The fire, now raging out of control, was started by his cigarillo, dropped in the tinderlike grass when he was murdered. Ronny and the teenage girl have disappeared.

With no forcing, Macdonald draws a parallel between the fire and the ramifying Broadhurst case, which proves to involve many people in a tangle of guilt, deception, and murder. The consequences of the fire are enormous—completely out of scale, it would seem, with the tiny flame that started it. So it is, Macdonald suggests, with human affairs.

Such a conclusion, baldly stated, is little more than a cliché. Macdonald's novels, however, are not statements: They are stories that unfold in time with the in-

evitability of tragedy, and their revelations, even on a second or third reading, move the reader to pity and wonder.

John Wilson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LEW ARCHER SERIES: *The Moving Target*, 1949 (as John Macdonald; reissued as *Harper*, 1966); *The Drowning Pool*, 1950 (as John Ross Macdonald); *The Way Some People Die*, 1951 (as John Ross Macdonald); *The Ivory Grin*, 1952 (as John Ross Macdonald; reissued as *Marked for Murder*, 1953); *Find a Victim*, 1954 (as John Ross Macdonald); *The Name Is Archer*, 1955 (as John Ross Macdonald); *The Barbarous Coast*, 1956; *The Doomsters*, 1958; *The Galton Case*, 1959; *The Wycherly Woman*, 1961; *The Zebra-Striped Hearse*, 1962; *The Chill*, 1964; *The Far Side of the Dollar*, 1965; *Black Money*, 1966; *The Instant Enemy*, 1968; *The Goodbye Look*, 1969; *The Underground Man*, 1971; *Sleeping Beauty*, 1973; *The Blue Hammer*, 1976; *Lew Archer, Private Investigator*, 1977

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Dark Tunnel*, 1944 (as Millar; also known as *I Die Slowly*, 1955); *Trouble Follows Me*, 1946 (as Millar; also known as *Night Train*, 1955); *Blue City*, 1947 (as Millar); *The Three Roads*, 1948 (as Millar); *Meet Me at the Morgue*, 1953 (as John Ross Macdonald; also known as *Experience with Evil*, 1954); *The Ferguson Affair*, 1960

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OTHER MAJOR WORKS

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Sipper, Ralph B., ed. *Ross Macdonald: Inward Journey*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Cordelia Editions, 1984. This collection of twenty-seven articles includes two by Macdonald, one a transcription of a speech about mystery fiction and the other a letter to a publisher that discusses Raymond Chandler's work in relation to his own. Contains photographs and notes on contributors.

Skinner, Robert E. *The Hard-Boiled Explicator: A*

Guide to the Study of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1985. An indispensable volume for the scholar interested in tracking down unpublished dissertations as well as mainstream criticism. Includes brief introductions to each author, followed by annotated bibliographies of books, articles, and reviews.

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PATRICIA MCGERR

Born: Falls City, Nebraska; December 26, 1917

Died: Bethesda, Maryland; May 11, 1985

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted; espionage; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Selena Mead, 1963-1982

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SELENA MEAD is an agent for a secret federal counterespionage group, Section Q. She ages from her early twenties to her mid-thirties in the course of the series. Daughter of an aristocratic ambassador and his socialite wife, Selena rejects marriage to a young banker of her own social status in favor of elopement with a mysterious young man whose life she saves in East Berlin.

SIMON MEAD, the mysterious young man to whom Selena is married, is ostensibly a journalist for *Background* (a rather staid, nonpartisan political journal) but actually an agent for Section Q. When Simon is knifed to death in the course of an assignment, Selena takes over his journalistic cover and his post at Section Q.

CONTRIBUTION

Patricia McGerr's stories featuring the intrepid Selena Mead are stylish, entertaining, cerebral puzzles. Although there is much action and the character development of these stories is quite good, their chief appeal lies in their intellectual challenge to the reader. In each of the episodes, Selena is faced with a problem

that must be solved through brains, not brawn. Is the handsome young congressman who courts her a Russian agent or an innocent dupe? Is the vacationing scientist planning to defect behind the Iron Curtain? Which of several trusted aides and family members is plotting to assassinate the visiting monarch? Selena must analyze the words and actions of all these suspects and set hastily devised intellectual traps for them. The reader is challenged to outthink Selena and the criminal. Written in the 1960's, the Selena Mead series presented the reader with a strong, resourceful, intelligent female spy who solved cases by using her brains at a time when James Bond was the model espionage hero and female characters in typical espionage novels were disposable ornaments who distracted the macho agent from his bloody feats of derring-do.

The Selena Mead stories, however, are not McGerr's most original and creative efforts. McGerr will be best remembered as the author who reworked the whodunit into the "whodunin," a plot in which the identity of the killer is known from the start but the identity of the victim remains a mystery until the very end. The reader is invited to decide which character out of a large cast is the most likely to be murdered. In yet another twist on conventional plotting, McGerr presents a murderous wife whose suspicious husband sent for a detective just before his untimely and most unnatural demise. The murderess must then determine which of several new acquaintances is the detective who has come to prove her guilt. Like the Selena

Mead stories, these unconventionally crafted novels have a strongly feminist undertone.

BIOGRAPHY

Patricia McGerr, daughter of Patrick Thomas McGerr and Catherine (née Dore) McGerr, was born December 26, 1917, in Falls City, Nebraska. A practicing Catholic all of her life, McGerr attended Trinity College in Washington, D.C., before receiving a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1936. She then went on to receive a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University in 1937. She returned to Washington for her first job as publicity director for the American Road Builders' Association, where she worked from 1937 to 1943. In 1943, she took a job in New York City as assistant editor of *Construction Methods* magazine, where she remained until 1948.

While working for *Construction Methods*, McGerr published two of her most original and experimental crime novels, *Pick Your Victim* (1946) and *The Seven Deadly Sisters* (1947). In 1948, the success of these books enabled McGerr to leave her editorial job in New York and return to Washington as a full-time writer. From 1960 onward, McGerr also served as a lecturer and consultant to the Georgetown University Writers' Conference.

Never married, McGerr devoted herself to her writing career and to various liberal political and social causes. Her Catholicism found its literary outlet in two biblical novels, *Martha, Martha* (1960), the story of Lazarus's domestic sister, and *My Brothers, Remember Monica* (1964), a novel about the mother of Saint Augustine. McGerr was an active member of the Mystery Writers of America and served several terms on its board of directors. She was treasurer and later president of the Catholic Interracial Council of Washington and treasurer of the Northwest Washington Fair Housing Association. She was also an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic National Committee of Washington, D.C. McGerr's literary honors include first prize in the Catholic Press Association short-story contest in 1950, the French Grand Prix de Littérature Policière in 1952, and two awards for short stories from *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (second prize

in 1962 for "Justice Has a High Price" and first prize in 1967 for "Match Point in Berlin"). Patricia McGerr died of cancer on May 11, 1985, at the Carriage Hill Nursing Home in Bethesda, Maryland.

ANALYSIS

To read a Patricia McGerr novel is to enter into an implausible world peopled with peculiar characters. Yet the reader who is willing to suspend disbelief, to leave real-life logic behind for the duration of the book, will find a realm of suspense, bafflement, and intellectual enchantment. Her characters and situations may not be true to life, but within the McGerr universe they function perfectly. McGerr was a consummate mistress of style, and she took risks with the mystery form that few other writers have dared to imitate.

PICK YOUR VICTIM

Pick Your Victim was a bravura start to McGerr's career. Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor, who edited a series of the fifty greatest crime-fiction works written from 1900 to 1950, included McGerr's first novel to stand among such classics as Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-1902) and Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). According to Barzun's preface to the book, McGerr devised a whole new mystery genre:

Unlike any other detective tale on record, *Pick Your Victim* challenges attention by a double reversal, that of the standard problem and of its form. Here is a crime fully understood, in no way mysterious at the time and place of its occurrence, yet it tantalizes a group of people 3,000 miles away; and if this were not enough, the element unknown to the distant inquirers is not the criminal but the victim.

Dubbed a whodunin by several critics, the story develops through a frame narration. The year is 1944, and a group of soldiers stationed in the Aleutians are eager for any scraps of news from home. One of them, Davey Miller, receives a food package wrapped in newspaper shreds. The men devour the clippings as eagerly as they do the treats, even reading the fashion advertisements. Pete Robbins, the narrator of the tale, comes across one torn fragment dealing with a murder that

has occurred at the Washington, D.C., office where he worked before being drafted. According to the truncated news story, Paul Stetson, managing director of the Society to Uplift Domestic Service (SUDS), admitted to strangling one of the other executive officers of the organization with a brown wool scarf. The newspaper is torn at a crucial point in the story, so the identity, even the gender, of the victim is a mystery. There were ten officers in the organization, seven men and three women, when Robbins left. Management by turmoil was the organization's hallmark, and on any given day any two people might be sworn foes or best friends. Depending on how matters went on the day of the murder, any of the ten executives could have been the victim.

The soldiers decide to organize a betting pool on the victim's identity, and Pete agrees to write to his girlfriend, Sheila, who will send him the information. It will take approximately two weeks for her answer to arrive, and for the next ten days, Pete, like Scheherazade, tells the tale of a different organization member, holding his audience spellbound with the byzantine inner workings of an outfit ostensibly dedicated to aiding American housewives and paid domestic help.

Founded by Bertha Harding as a newsletter of domestic tips for maids, the tiny organization was taken over by Paul Stetson, a venture capitalist who turned it into a nationwide chain of women's clubs and a political organization that lobbies for various women's interests. From an inexpensive mailing service for domestic workers, SUDS grew into a representative group for the five million or so upper-middle-class housewives who can afford to hire maids. The leadership of the organization was taken over by a group of men who agree that "it's still a man's world, and even women have more confidence in a setup that is conducted by men." Bertha Harding, the founder, was relegated to a secretarial position, and Anne Coleman, Stetson's mistress, became the only woman in the group with real power. Coleman's queen-bee supremacy among the men became threatened, however, by Loretta Knox, an unpaid officer who had organized the West Coast contingent of SUDS and added temperance work to the SUDS agenda. The seven male officers vied with one another to be Stetson's right hand,

and each one secretly longed to dethrone Stetson, even though it was his money and organizational ability that had transformed the nickel-and-dime newsletter into a multimillion-dollar outfit.

The betting among the men changes with each new story Robbins tells, and when Sheila's answer finally arrives, all the soldiers have picked their victim. A lucky few have chosen the right one, and oddly enough, the clue to the victim's identity lies not in the Machiavellian infighting Robbins has described, but in Stetson's choice of murder weapon. *Pick Your Victim* is delightfully plotted, and the reader's interest is captivated not only by the murder but also by the bizarre people Robbins describes. McGerr's characters may not be realistic, but they are certainly riveting.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SISTERS

McGerr repeated her ingenious plotting in her second novel and second whodunit, *The Seven Deadly Sisters*. Once again, physical distance and incomplete communication separate an interested party from knowledge of a murder victim's identity. This time both killer and victim are unknown, but they are so closely linked that to know one is to know the other. Sally Bowen, the narrator of this story, is in England with her husband when she receives a letter from her friend Helen in New York. The letter offers sympathy in the light of tragic events that have befallen Sally's family—her aunt poisoned her uncle and then committed suicide. In writing the note, Helen is apparently unaware that Sally's family consists of seven unhappily married aunts, and Sally has received no news from any of them. Helen's note mentions that she is leaving for a vacation, so Sally cannot get in touch with her to find out which aunt is the suicide-murderess. She is reluctant to call any of the aunts for fear of reaching the bereaved household. Sally's husband proposes that they wait until morning, when the London library will be open and they can look at back issues of *The New York Times* until they find the story. Unable to sleep, Sally tells her husband the story of each of her aunts, and in the course of the night they try to deduce which aunt is the most likely culprit.

Orphaned at an early age, Sally was reared by Clara, the oldest and bossiest of her aunts. Married to a rich, tolerant, spineless husband, Clara has dedicated

her whole life to making respectable matches for her six younger sisters, with predictably disastrous results. Bert, young and handsome, abandons plain, aging Tessie shortly after their marriage. Agnes divorces quarrelsome Walter and goes on to a second, equally contentious marriage with Steve. Spendthrift Judy tries to bankrupt her well-meaning but frugal George. Edith cannot cope with Phil's interfering mother and becomes an alcoholic. Molly is pathologically terrified of sex and refuses to have relations with Tom, who follows Clara's misguided advice to force the issue and rapes her. Molly aborts the child she has conceived as a result of this violation and breaks down completely. Doris weds Mike out of spite because she cannot have Tessie's Bert and then proceeds to sleep with most of her brothers-in-law. Throughout this domestic turmoil, Clara tries to pretend that the family is happy. She quarrels with Frank when he finds the courage to stand up to her and tries to stop her from forcing the incompatible couples to stay together.

Recently married and newly pregnant, Sally is afraid that the familial neuroses, unhappy marriages, alcoholic tendencies, and homicidal urges may be hereditary. When the killer's identity and motives are finally revealed, Sally's anxieties are relieved, and the reader's theories and expectations are completely yet logically reversed.

MCGERR'S WOMEN

Although McGerr's stories are excellent studies in suspense and stylistics, they do seem to have a deeper purpose than mere entertainment. A theme of thwarted feminism underlies most of McGerr's novels. Over and over again, women struggle to gain independence, only to be beaten back by society, by circumstance, and by the men in their lives. In *Pick Your Victim*, an entire network of working women falls prey to Stetson the venture capitalist and his group of female-scorning henchmen. The only woman who attains any power in the novel does so by sleeping with Stetson. In *The Seven Deadly Sisters*, Clara, the dominant sister, rules over her siblings because she has no other outlet for her executive abilities. She was born to rule, and the only dominion available to her is on the home front. Each of the other sisters struggles to avoid a domestic fate and goes down in defeat before Clara and social pressure.

Margot Weatherby of *Catch Me If You Can* (1948) is a thoroughly wicked and reprehensible woman. Nevertheless, she is driven to murder because one of the few ways for a woman to attain wealth is through inheritance. In *Death in a Million Living Rooms* (1951), Podge O'Neill, the murdered comedian, is the creation of his wife, Sarah Scott, who gets none of the credit for Podge's success and all of the blame for controlling him. Sarah-Anne and Emily, the two career women of *Fatal in My Fashion* (1954), both fail miserably. Emily becomes a monster, feeding herself emotionally off her sister's success. She is ultimately murdered. Sarah-Anne, the spunky young girl who dreamed of independence, becomes rich and famous but is at the mercy of her creators: Emily, who wants to control her sister's life, and St. Pierre, who wants possession of Sarah-Anne's body. Susan Wills of *Stranger with My Face* (1968) leaves a treacherous husband to fall prey to a treacherous stranger. When she is finally rescued from Pierce Manning's machinations, it is only to fall into the arms of her rescuer, whom she will marry. In every McGerr novel women struggle to achieve sovereignty over their own lives. In each case they are either thwarted or they do gain control over their own fates but lose their souls and become murderous monsters in the process.

SELENA MEAD STORIES

Selena Mead, McGerr's series character, is the only one of her female creations who achieves full autonomy over her own life. Heroine of *Is There a Traitor in the House?* (1964), *Legacy of Danger* (1970), and more than twenty-five short stories (uncollected), she refuses the socially correct marriage her parents have planned for her and travels to Europe to revisit some of the scenes of her childhood as an ambassador's daughter. While visiting East Berlin, she manages to save the life of a handsome journalist, Simon Mead, who is actually an agent for Section Q, a top-secret counterespionage group answerable only to the president of the United States. She and Simon elope, and they spend eight happy years together until he is murdered in the course of an assignment.

Beautiful, intelligent, multilingual, and socially well connected in the United States and Europe, Selena proves to be an even more valuable agent than Simon

was. Assuming his cover as a roving reporter for *Background*, a respected, politically neutral newsmagazine, she goes to work for Hugh Pierce, Simon's immediate superior at Section Q and their Georgetown neighbor. Pierce's cover is that of an eccentric, bohemian, dilettante painter who lives off his trust funds. It is a shock to her friends and family when Selena falls in love with Hugh and is married to him. Yet their marriage does not end her espionage career. Although Hugh is reluctant to place her in danger, Selena insists on maintaining her position in Section Q and usually gets her way. The Selena Mead stories are not realistic—nor are they particularly well crafted. Indeed, they are rather mechanical puzzles with clues studded throughout the story like raisins in a bowl of oatmeal. *Legacy of Danger* is actually a rehash of several of the short stories strung together with a thin narrative thread. Revealing its short-story origins, the book jumps clumsily from one episode to another.

Despite their technical flaws, the Selena Mead stories are a pleasure to read. Selena is the one sunny, wholesome, autonomous female character in the entire McGerr canon. Courageous and resolute, she is able to maintain a career, a marriage, a healthy mind, and a loving heart. The women in McGerr's other, better written works are not so blessed.

Zohara Boyd

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SELENA MEAD SERIES: *Is There a Traitor in the House?*, 1964; *Legacy of Danger*, 1970

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Pick Your Victim*, 1946; *The Seven Deadly Sisters*, 1947; *Catch Me If You Can*, 1948; *Save the Witness*, 1949; . . . *Follow, As the Night . . .*, 1950 (also known as *Your Loving Victim*); *Death in a Million Living Rooms*, 1951 (also known as *Die Laughing*); *Fatal in My Fashion*, 1954; *Murder Is Absurd*, 1967; *Stranger with My Face*, 1968; *For*

Richer, for Poorer, till Death, 1969; *Daughter of Darkness*, 1974; *Dangerous Landing*, 1975

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Missing Years*, 1953; *Martha, Martha*, 1960; *My Brothers, Remember Monica*, 1964

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- Barzun, Jacques, and Wendell Hertig Taylor. "Preface to *Pick Your Victim*." In *A Book of Prefaces to Fifty Classics of Crime Fiction, 1900-1950*. New York: Garland, 1976. Preface by two preeminent scholars of mystery and detective fiction, arguing for McGerr's novel's place in the annals of the genre.
- Britton, Wesley. *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005. Traces the evolution of the figure of the spy in espionage thrillers and other works of film and fiction. Sheds light on McGerr's work.
- Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. This study of British and American spy fiction begins with three general chapters on the appeal, emotional effects, and narrative codes of the genre that provide a context for understanding McGerr's work.
- Manson, Cynthia. Introduction to *Women of Mystery*, edited by Cynthia Manson. Edison, N.J.: Castle Books, 2002. Introduction discusses McGerr and her character, Selena Mead, as well as the fourteen other female mystery authors included in this anthology.
- Mizejewski, Linda. *Hardboiled and High Heeled: The Woman Detective in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Study of the representation of female sleuths and spies in popular fiction, film, and television that sheds light on McGerr's novels.

PATRICK MCGINLEY

Born: Glencolumcille, Donegal, Ireland; February 8, 1937

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Each of Patrick McGinley's novels explores the fortunes of modern Irish characters as they struggle with the burden of Ireland's historical past and its always uncertain future. In most of the novels, rural Donegal provides the setting for an investigation not only of crime but also, and more important, of local language, customs, and folklore. McGinley's intimate knowledge and appreciation of the Irish landscape and how it has profoundly influenced the lives of its inhabitants stand as his greatest strengths. His darkly comic vision and ironic manipulations of the conventions of the classic detective story lend a distinctive quality to his fictions. McGinley's characters are much more than stock figures, and they speak in a ribald, original language that is captivating and unmistakably Irish.

BIOGRAPHY

Patrick Anthony McGinley was born on February 8, 1937, in Glencolumcille, County Donegal, Ireland, to Peter McGinley and Mary Anne Heekin McGinley. One of five children, McGinley was educated at Cashel National School in Glencolumcille and at St. Edna's College in Galway. From 1954 to 1957, he studied literature at University College, Galway, and developed a particular interest in Middle English poetry.

After receiving the bachelor of arts in 1957, McGinley spent four years teaching in secondary school before emigrating to London in 1962. There he worked as an assistant publisher, except for a year in the mid-1960's, during which he lived in Sydney, Australia. In 1981, McGinley began serving as managing editor of Europa Publications Limited, publishers of academic and reference books.

ANALYSIS

With the publication of his first novel, *Bogmail*, in 1978, Patrick McGinley was immediately hailed as a

major new mystery novelist. What critics were quick to emphasize, however, was the distinctive quality of his works, a quality that raises them above the ordinarily formulaic mystery fare. Although there are mysteries and secrets in his work, these have less to do with "whodunit" than with a study of the minds of the killers and the victims. *Bogmail* is described as "a novel with murder," and such a description seems especially fitting for many of his other novels as well. Murders occur, and indeed they propel the plot; they are, however, almost secondary to the novels' primary investigations of landscape, manners, and customs.

BOGMAIL

In many of McGinley's novels the focus is squarely on rural Irish life. In *Bogmail*, the setting is the village of Glenkeel, County Donegal, where the local pub, the center of nearly all the novel's action, hums with talk of a persistent drought. Inevitably all conversations turn to the weather and its effect on crops, animals, and humans. The other important setting is the surrounding bog, where the pub owner, Tim Roarty, buries the body of an employee who is corrupting Roarty's estranged daughter. For the Irish, the bogs are extraordinary landscapes providing not only the turf for their fires but also secrets preserved from lost civilizations. Things are easily lost in a bog, but once recovered, as this body is, they can return to haunt the living.

McGinley is especially expert at capturing the randy, colloquial speech of the rural Irish. Characters speak not only a heavily inflected English but also Irish itself. The topics are, appropriately, those that would most concern country people. Thus, in one case there is a discussion of keeping land in the family, as an old codger refuses to sell his property, fearing that it will be exploited or unappreciated. In another instance, the sexual rapacity of widows, a time-honored theme in all Irish literature, commands attention.

A repeated McGinley theme is also a distinctly Irish one: the role of fantasy in Irish experience. In each novel, truth emerges as an elusive commodity as characters lie, dissemble, or coyly tell stories. In

Bogmail, the narrator interrupts a conversation to describe one character “trying to make out if she were being serious, always a problem in Ireland.” At another point in the novel the local police officer remarks that all crime is imaginary in the country.

McGinley uses dreams to show characters leading a double existence. Each of his protagonists, as well as various minor characters, struggle with divided senses of self. In *Bogmail*, Roarty finds he is becoming a stranger to himself the longer he hides his crime from others.

GOOSEFOOT

In *Goosefoot* (1982), a young university graduate, Patricia Teeling, leaves a family farm in Tallage, County Donegal, for a year in Dublin. Before her departure, she is offered her uncle’s prosperous farm but sets out for the city in search of herself. Throughout the novel she contemplates the differences between city and country living and returns periodically to her hometown. There, she feels free and uninhibited as she wanders the fields and visits the pubs, where discussion of crops and cattle dominate conversation. When Patricia loses the land to a scheming cousin, McGinley could well be revealing the fate of all Ireland—as it loses its connections with its rural origins, it loses itself.

The image of a cracked mirror appears periodically to reveal Patricia’s divided experiences. She is a country girl trying to live in the city; she disdains urban life but eventually grows bored of rural ways when she returns home. She is further divided because she cannot decide what course she wants her life to take.

McGinley liberally laces all of his novels with dreams, as characters wander in and out of consciousness searching for the significance of their existence. In a nation of dreamers, where hard definitions between reality and fantasy continually blur, dream becomes the perfect vehicle for expressing character and action. In McGinley’s hands, dreams presage events, although in oblique or exaggerated ways.

In *Goosefoot*, the heroine has horrifying erotic dreams. In one, she imagines herself lying astride her naked boyfriend and stabbing him in the heart for no apparent reason. By the end of the novel this dream makes perfect sense as she grows further from him,

emotionally and geographically. In another dream she imagines herself a naked captive, tied to a bed over which hangs a long sword. Into the room walks a nude Inspector McMyler, who cuts the cords that encircle her and then stabs her as he approaches for an embrace. In the closing chapter, Patricia Teeling is briefly held captive in McMyler’s room, under the shadow of an immense sword that later impales her as she tries to escape Dublin.

Truth is unstable, as characters dance around one another, never clearly revealing their fundamental natures. Each person creates a persona for the public, leading one character to comment, “In our separate ways we are all would-be novelists.”

One detective, McMyler, is an impostor and ultimately is shown to be the killer himself. Under the guise of being a watchful protector, he invades the victim’s life and eventually murders her. Like the murderers in the other novels, McMyler is a poor man’s Moriarty (in *Bogmail*, in fact, the detective continually sees his case in terms of a contest between a latter-day Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty), a master criminal who matches wits with the police and often outdoes them.

THE TRICK OF THE GA BOLGA

In *The Trick of the Ga Bolga* (1985), McGinley offers his densest, most intricate view of rural Ireland and its folklore. The novel’s title remains enigmatic throughout the first half of the narrative until one of the locals explains to the English immigrant, George Coote, the legend of the Ga Bolga, which he describes as a rare sexual maneuver. At the novel’s close, however, as Coote is dying at the hands of an enraged war veteran, it is revealed that the Ga Bolga was the extraordinary weapon of the mythical Irish hero, Cuchulainn, which when wielded ensured the death of any foe. Also in this novel, there is a local legend surrounding the name of a cove where Irish residents hid to escape pacification by occupying British soldiers. The eventual discovery and slaughter of the Irish escapees operates as a grim foreshadowing of Coote’s destiny.

The power of the priesthood, which is mentioned in McGinley’s other novels, is dramatically presented in this work. Here Father McNullis cajoles and co-

erces the villagers into doing his will, which involves erecting a concrete bridge over a river. As an outsider, Coote watches scornfully as McNullis connives to emulate his inspiration, Pope Julius II, by erecting his own version of a timeless monument.

Many of McGinley's novels feature the fantastic; *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, however, offers the most thoroughgoing use of fantastic elements. For example, all characters have at least two names; as one character remarks to the British outsider, "Here the names we use aren't real. Anybody who's anybody has at least two nicknames." The longer he stays in this headland the more disoriented Coote becomes, finding himself in a fog, both literally and figuratively. All of this is part of the Irish national character. One character explains, "The Irish imagination is not to be inconvenienced by fact." Earlier, the narrator comments on Ireland within the description of a treacherous country road: "Like so many things in Ireland, it was makeshift and incomplete, lacking the dependable solidity that comes from a confident history and undisturbed centuries of careful husbandry."

In *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, the split revealed by dreams appears in the figure of Coote, who escapes war-ravaged London for the unfamiliarity of rural Ireland "to find unity of experience, to escape from the criticism and counter-criticism of the split self that continues to refuse wholeness and reconciliation." Everywhere he turns, he confronts doubles—two lovers, two neighbors who fight with each other, a nightshirt made for two, and his own two-facedness.

Coote cannot escape the eerie sensation of being two people living two very different lives, whose "actions were not his own." In the novel's final scene, as his murderer demands to know Coote's final wish, the injured man exclaims, "I wish to live till the true shape of my life is made plain to me—and no longer." Like so many of McGinley's searching characters, Coote fails to see the shape of his life as it unfolds; he imagines that there must be something else, and yet he fails to recognize what exists right under his nose.

The failure to interpret palpable clues recalls one of McGinley's ironic manipulations of mystery conventions. The detectives in McGinley's work, usually police inspectors, are comic figures. On one hand, they

remind readers of similar figures in Agatha Christie's novels who are well-meaning and hard-working, but ultimately incapable of solving anything. Thus in both *Bogmail* and *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, the police arrest the wrong men after lengthy, secretive investigations. The comedy is especially sharp in *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, where the principal killer, Coote confesses to Inspector Blowick, only to have the police officer discount the confession because he is convinced that Coote is operating from some misguided sense of compassion for the wrongly accused man. In both these novels the murderers remain unknown and unapprehended by the authorities.

THE RED MEN

The Red Men (1987) presents the Heron clan, a father and four sons, who own and run a hotel, store, and vast acreage in an unnamed Donegal community. In following the call of commerce, literary scholarship, and the priesthood, members of the family have divorced themselves from the land and the folk history of the region. As family members abruptly begin to die, they superstitiously wonder if they are not cursed. *The Red Men* is the first of McGinley's works in which that staple of Irish life—the Gypsy rover—appears, in the person of Andy Early. Early initially seems to be little more than a charming bit of local color, but by the novel's close he is as integral to the family and its twisted fortunes as any of the major characters.

Each of the main characters in *The Red Men* must undergo his or her own dark night of the soul. Their self-examination results in the knowledge that what they have taken for granted eludes their grasp. All realize that they are not exactly the people they thought they were, and their worlds are not nearly as secure as they imagined. Cut loose from their delusions and convenient explanations, they suddenly wander, some into death and others into possibilities for new and more meaningful lives.

FOXPRINTS

McGinley's third novel, *Foxprints* (1983), continues with the theme of fantasy, but the setting changes to suburban England. Here an Irishman, concealing his identity with the name Charles Keating, puts on a series of disguises to ingratiate himself with the villagers of Wistwood. He finds himself living in Foxgloves,

a mansion where fantasy has so fully replaced reality that Keating loses sense of himself as well as others. Once again fiction becomes the staff of life, and facts become rare.

The elusiveness of the master criminal is dizzyingly complex in *Foxprints*. Soon after enigmatic Charles Keating arrives in Wistwood, a series of murders occurs, each of which has as its most prominent clue some article relating to foxes. Keating becomes obsessed with the murders, to the point that he even wonders if he could be the culprit. Yet, when Keating becomes a victim, the reader remains uninformed of the killer's identity.

Other mysteries in the novel abound—what happened to a disappearing body in the garage, why one victim was finally spared death, who one girl on a train was, even why one woman's knees have different textures—and ultimately these mysteries are left unexplained. McGinley has crafted too ingenious a plot to leave so many unanswered questions unless they are integral to his purpose. Clearly, he is not interested in writing the traditional whodunit; instead, he uses mystery conventions to probe the psyches of various characters.

A DIFFERENT VIEW

In McGinley's novels, victims, not detectives or criminals, command the most attention. In most mysteries, victims are figures who remain in the narrative shadows; the reader must be concerned that they die but must never become too emotionally engaged by them either. In McGinley's novels, the protagonists are usually the victims, victims of their own insecurities and misgivings about themselves and victims of others who would prey on them.

As many scholars of mystery and detective fiction have noted, the genre is a fundamentally conservative one. It often posits, especially in the hands of writers such as Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Dorothy L. Sayers, an ordered world that has been violated by crime. The role of the detective is to solve the case and thus restore order where it belongs. The suggestion is that the world is a fundamentally rational place and that senseless crime is merely an occasional aberration.

McGinley frequently plays with this view, and his

protagonists are forced to reject convenient notions of order and accept the world's unpredictability. In *Bogmail*, the "spoilt priest," Roarty, views the world as one absent of God and takes on himself the divine role of "benefactor of humanity" in his slaying of Eales.

In *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, Coote, a man who escapes chaos in search of sanity and order, must eventually reconcile himself to the bitter fact that life is uncontrollable. As the village idiot tells him, "There's a thing called Life that goes its own way in spite of all that Tom, Dick and Harry do to stop it. We're only in control a fraction of the time. Someone else is doing the driving." Reluctantly, Coote must acknowledge that reason and logic are powerless against chance and necessity.

McGinley's works, apart from their distinct individual merits, represent the ever-expanding possibilities for mystery fiction. Some theorists have argued that mystery fiction has generally reached a creative dead end. McGinley, however, demonstrates that through wit and ironic manipulations mystery fiction can remain healthy and vigorous. His use of Irish speech, life, and manners gives his fiction an originality often absent from other mystery fictions. Furthermore, his works illustrate that the best mysteries are never bound by a fictional formula but may exploit that formula to offer keen and fresh perceptions of the human condition.

David W. Madden

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Bogmail*, 1978; *Goosefoot*, 1982; *Foxprints*, 1983; *Foggage*, 1983; *The Trick of the Ga Bolga*, 1985; *The Red Men*, 1987; *The Devil's Diary*, 1988; *The Lost Soldier's Song*, 1994

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text. There are also stimulating, though necessarily brief, asides on McGinley's works up to and including *The Red Men*.

Clissmann, Anne. *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975. Chapters 2 and 3 of this work offer a useful means of assessing the imaginative terrain on which much of McGinley's fiction rests.

Kenner, Hugh. "A Deep and Lasting Mayonnaise." *The New York Times Book Review*, July 21, 1985, p. 20. A review of *The Trick of the Ga Bolga* by a very influential commentator on Irish literary themes. Many of McGinley's interests and orientations are succinctly brought to the fore.

Knowles, Nancy. "Empty Rhetoric: Argument by Credibility in Patrick McGinley's *Bogmail*." *English Language Notes* 39 (March, 2002): 79-87. Comments on the postmodern, post-structuralist nature of McGinley's representation of language as

"empty," an endless chain of signifiers chasing an elusive signified.

Shea, Thomas F. "Patrick McGinley's Appropriation of Cuchulainn: *The Trick of the Ga Bolga* (1985)." *New Hibernia Review* 5, no. 3 (Fall, 2001): 114-127. Looks at McGinley's use of ancient Irish legend, employing analysis of changes in the original typescripts to discuss the evolution of McGinley's novel and his creative process.

_____. "Patrick McGinley's Impressions of Flann O'Brien: *The Devil's Diary* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 40 (Summer, 1994): 272-281. Taking a cue from Hugo McSharry, the novelist-character in the work, Shea examines McGinley's novel as a palimpsest, a parchment partially erased yet retaining traces of the original inscriptions, with the echoes of other writers, particularly Flann O'Brien.

WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

Born: Chicago, Illinois; December 6, 1922

Died: Palm Desert, California; November 18, 1982

Also wrote as Bill Peters

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

William P. McGivern's work differs considerably from the general run of crime fiction of the 1940's and 1950's, the years when the author did his best work. Although much of the writing of his contemporaries during this period presented protagonists with fixed, relatively stable personalities, McGivern's work generally took another direction. His novels on crime are particularly notable for their depth and sensitivity in the portrayal of the central character and for their trenchant analysis of the moral and psychological effects of the corruption that surrounds him in the netherworld of big-city politics and public service.

The McGivern protagonist is generally at the crux

of a moral dilemma, wrestling with problems of ethical, moral, even spiritual responsibility. Although formidable and independent in his interaction with others, the McGivern protagonist struggles with an inner world of psychological complexity and moral peril. He is consistently engaged in reluctant self-analysis and introspection, following a path that inevitably leads to self-discovery.

McGivern also brings to his writing a thorough knowledge of police work. In a subtle blend of casuistry and objective analysis, he examines the implications of its pressures and scant rewards, its frequent inability to meet the high and often-unrealistic expectations of the public, with an insight achieved by few of his contemporaries in the genre of crime fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

William Peter McGivern was born in Chicago on December 6, 1922, the second son of Peter Francis

McGivern and Julia Costello McGivern. His father was a banker and businessman, his mother a dress designer who catered to a fashionable clientele in her shop on Michigan Boulevard. For a time, his father's business interests brought the family to Mobile, Alabama, where McGivern was reared.

In 1937, McGivern quit high school and returned to Chicago, where he worked as a laborer for the Pullman Company in the Pennsylvania Railroad yards. During this time, he read widely and eclectically, particularly the works of American authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. He also discovered the prose of G. K. Chesterton and the poetry of Robert Burns. In addition to his wide reading, he had begun to write. By 1940, he was publishing in the pulp-fiction market, particularly in science-fiction and fantasy magazines.

During World War II, McGivern served three and one-half years in the United States Army and was decorated for service in the European campaign. He would later draw on these experiences in an autobiographical novel, *Soldiers of '44* (1979), based on his experiences as a sergeant in charge of a fifteen-man gun section during the Battle of the Bulge. At war's end, he was stationed in England, where, for a period of four months, he attended the University of Birmingham. McGivern was discharged from the army in January, 1946.

In December, 1948, McGivern married Maureen Daly, also a writer. They had two children, a son and a daughter. From 1949 to 1951, McGivern worked as a reporter and book reviewer for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. As a police reporter, he became interested in police officers and detectives and how they function in an environment of big-city corruption. The experience provided the details and factual basis for several of his crime novels.

In a long and distinguished career, McGivern published some twenty-five crime novels and an array of short stories, screenplays, and television scripts. In 1980, he was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, which in 1954 had given him its Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Motion Picture for his writing of the novel *The Big Heat* (1952). McGivern died on November 18, 1982.

ANALYSIS

William P. McGivern began his career as a conventional crime-fiction writer, submitting to pulp magazines the formula fiction that was their mainstay through the 1920's and 1930's. He continued this formula approach into the late 1940's, when he turned from the short story to the crime novel with the publication of his first book, *But Death Runs Faster* (1948). His brief tenure as a crime reporter in Philadelphia gave him both factual material and psychological insight into the daily, behind-the-scenes operations of big-city police, a combination that brought considerable authenticity to his writing. In the early 1950's, McGivern experimented with other forms of writing, including fantasy and science fiction. More notably, in his writing about crime he experimented with a Mickey Spillane-style plot and protagonist, exemplified in his fifth novel, *Blondes Die Young* (1952). Apparently, he had some misgivings about the Spillane approach to plot and characterization, for he published the novel under the name Bill Peters. It was the first and last time McGivern used a pseudonym for crime fiction.

Eventually, McGivern's interest focused on the complex characterization of the police detective as fallible hero, the culpable human being on the front lines of civilization's perennial battle with a criminal element that threatens to undermine and destroy it. Specifically, McGivern centered his attention on the intrinsic nature of urban corruption, the two-sided, inherent duplicity of society. He concentrated on the darker, ambiguous side of human nature that is subsumed and obscured by the surface appearance of a functioning, law-abiding society.

ROGUE COP

In novels such as *The Big Heat*, *Rogue Cop* (1954), and *The Darkest Hour* (1955), McGivern places his protagonists in solitary—and lonely—confrontation with the seemingly overwhelming power of an underworld that thrives on duplicity. Although the detective/protagonist is clearly superior to his fellow officers in his ability to observe, investigate, and make deductions concerning a crime, that superiority is always taken for granted. Mike Carmody, the protagonist of *Rogue Cop*, stops by a hotel room where a murder has

been committed. His fellow detectives are in the middle of their investigation. It is not Carmody's case, but in a matter of minutes and in an offhand, matter-of-fact way, he solves the crime for his befuddled colleagues.

In his crime fiction, McGivern is never overly concerned with details of investigative deduction and solution; his emphasis is on character study. The reader's attention in *Rogue Cop* is focused on Carmody's inner struggle, the psychological/ethical/moral conflict that McGivern's protagonists invariably face. The depiction of their struggle frequently reflects the influence of McGivern's Catholic background and his abiding interest in humanity's need for a spiritual center. Essentially, McGivern illustrates a very basic conflict between good and evil. In these novels, evil in the modern world comes in a highly attractive and deceptive package, with money and power its primary attributes. It is simultaneously seductive and destructive, and its appeal is easily and readily rationalized.

MIKE CARMODY

In developing the character of Mike Carmody, McGivern has drawn, at least indirectly, on the New Testament story of the prodigal son. Seduced and corrupted, Carmody is a crooked cop, the scion of a loving Catholic family that he rejects. As the novel begins, he is a prodigal without a home to which he can return. His mother died when he was a child; his father, whose values and spiritual optimism Carmody cynically dismissed, lived long enough to know the pain of his son's corruption. In his attempt to justify his choices and the life he lives, Carmody has all but totally convinced himself that he is simply playing the percentages, living the good life that only a fool would reject. Yet the richly furnished apartment, the expensively tailored suits, and the other accouterments of a life lived according to material wants all bear testimony to a moral, ethical, and spiritual poverty.

Carmody's redemption, along with the opportunity for retribution and subsequent atonement, comes after his younger brother, an incorruptible rookie cop, is murdered by racketeers because he has refused to follow his older brother's example. Bereft of family and career, Mike Carmody nevertheless regains in some semblance his lost integrity by turning state's evi-

dence. The lost son returns, if not to the father, at least to the father's values. When Carmody becomes the star witness for the prosecution, however, his motivation is not only retribution and atonement; there is also an old-fashioned desire for revenge, another element of the darker side of human nature that plays a significant role in McGivern's fiction.

THE BIG HEAT

The motif of the good man in righteous pursuit of vengeance is the energizing force in several of McGivern's novels—including *The Big Heat*, *The Darkest Hour*, *Savage Streets* (1959), and *Reprisal* (1973). In *The Big Heat*, Dave Bannion, the protagonist, is a police detective who has rigorously maintained the straight and narrow path and is uncompromising in his opposition to racketeers and corrupt officials. Unlike Mike Carmody of *Rogue Cop*, Bannion has a spiritual center. (He reads, for example, the sixteenth century *Ascent of Mount Carmel* by Saint John of the Cross for guidance and perspective.) His meditations are put aside, however, when first a fellow police officer and later Kate, Bannion's wife, are killed by racketeers who enjoy respectable status in the community and the protection of corrupt police officials and politicians. Like a patriarch of the Old Testament, Bannion pursues his adversaries with the fury of an avenging angel. His winning struggle against seemingly overwhelming odds is a veritable Armageddon. When he and the forces of good have triumphed, he returns, at the conclusion of the novel, to his meditations on Saint John of the Cross.

SAVAGE STREETS

In his exercise of the revenge motif, McGivern explores the gray areas of the issue as well. The law-abiding citizen, for example, vengeful because he is frustrated by the apparent inability of the police to exact justice in a legal system that seems to offer more protection to the criminal than to the victim, is effectively portrayed in *Reprisal* and *Savage Streets*. In both novels men whose lives, family, and property had always been insulated from crime suddenly become victims. That which had previously occurred only in the remote strata of society to which they were passive witnesses and bystanders has struck home, filling them with a sense of personal outrage and injustice.

Savage Streets, ostensibly a novel about juvenile delinquency and the lynch-mob mentality of vigilantism, reads like a sociological treatise. In this novel McGivern indicts middle-class, suburban America and the shallow values of a materialistic society. John Farrell and his neighbors live the comfortable commuter life of cocktail parties, backyard barbecues, and dinners at their restricted country club. When their children are threatened and intimidated by two teenage thugs, Farrell and the others become involved, attempting to intimidate the teenagers with their adult authority. The young hoodlums, however, are not intimidated, and a small war develops. When Farrell is driven to beat one of the young thugs senseless, mistakenly believing that this youth was responsible for the hit-and-run accident that sent Farrell's daughter to the hospital, he realizes what he has become. He attempts to reason with his vigilante neighbors to prevent further violence—but to no avail. Before Farrell can successfully enlist the police to halt the madness, one of his neighbors is dead, another boy is badly beaten, and a teenage girl is raped. In the course of the experience, Farrell comes to realize that there are actually two "gangs": one led by teens from the proverbial "wrong side of the tracks," the other by the exclusionary suburban set, whose property and career positions will be preserved at any cost, stopping, only by chance, just short of murder. The plot is a bit simplistic, but to his credit McGivern offers no easy answers to what he presents as a veiled class warfare. The focus in *Savage Streets* is on John Farrell, the typical American family man who comes to discover, after almost destroying his own life, that there is no satisfactory substitute for rule by law, regardless of how provocative the circumstances may be.

ODDS AGAINST TOMORROW

McGivern examined social issues in other crime novels, one of the best of which combines a social question with a well-plotted caper, a major robbery planned in extensive detail. In *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1957), Dave Burke, a former police officer who was fired from the force for taking bribes, and Novak, his accomplice, have planned a seemingly foolproof bank robbery. They require two additional men with special talents to make it work: John Ingram, a black man who needs money desperately to pay overdue gambling debts, and

Earl Slater, a Southern redneck, a misfit who is painfully becoming aware that after distinguishing himself in wartime combat, he seems unable to do anything else. From the moment these two meet, it is clear that Slater's prejudice threatens the success of the robbery. Ironically, it is the failure of this desperate enterprise that brings Slater and Ingram together. Deserted by Novak after Burke is killed, they gradually become closer, even dependent on each other.

McGivern's political liberalism is clearly in evidence here, offering the failed robbery as a metaphor for a stalled society, impeded in its progress by bigotry. As is typical in McGivern's novels, the details of the well-planned robbery and its failure are of secondary interest. Although his character study of Ingram is pedestrian and not particularly insightful, his study of Slater proves far more penetrating and interesting. McGivern offers a vivid analysis of a frightened sociopath, a man desperate for love and security, whose only talent is for making enemies.

McGivern's novels of the 1970's and 1980's show a marked commercial bent and seem to have been written for the screen. This is hardly surprising because McGivern was a successful writer of screenplays and television scripts, and nine of his novels have been made into motion pictures. Novels such as *Night of the Juggler* (1975), about a Central Park serial killer, seem written more for film producers than for readers of crime fiction. *Caprifoil* (1972), however, is a first-rate espionage/secret agent thriller, worthy of comparison with the work of John le Carré.

LIE DOWN, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU

McGivern's fiction is not without a lighter side, evidenced by the dual spoof of psychiatry and the caper plot in *Lie Down, I Want to Talk to You* (1967). Otis Pemberton, an overweight psychiatrist with a tendency to gamble (and lose), is a most unlikely and atypical McGivern protagonist. Pemberton is blackmailed into participating in a bank robbery by a patient. Because the patient has failed at previous robbery attempts, he needs Pemberton to "reprogram" him and his associates for success. Complicating the entire operation is a rival psychiatrist who has been treating the same patient and who ultimately becomes part of the scheme.

McGivern's books constitute crime fiction of a high order. In each, the actual crime and its concomitant details serve primarily as a point of departure for his highest interest: the texture of humanity that emerges with the creation and development of character. McGivern writes in the third person, combining spare prose and taut dialogue with an economical, highly selective use of descriptive detail. The situation in which the McGivern protagonist finds himself may be remote from the average reader's experience, but the reader readily empathizes; the angst McGivern depicts is universally felt and understood.

Richard Keenan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *But Death Runs Faster*, 1948 (also known as *The Whispering Corpse*); *Heaven Ran Last*, 1949; *Very Cold for May*, 1950; *Shield for Murder*, 1951; *Blondes Die Young*, 1952 (as Peters); *The Big Heat*, 1952; *The Crooked Frame*, 1952; *Margin of Terror*, 1953; *Rogue Cop*, 1954; *The Darkest Hour*, 1955 (also known as *Waterfront Cop*); *The Seven File*, 1956 (also known as *Chicago-7*); *Night Extra*, 1957; *Odds Against Tomorrow*, 1957; *Savage Streets*, 1959; *Seven Lies South*, 1960; *The Road to the Snail*, 1961; *A Pride of Place*, 1962; *A Choice of Assassins*, 1963; *The Caper of the Golden Bulls*, 1966; *Lie Down, I Want to Talk to You*, 1967; *Caprifoil*, 1972; *Reprisal*, 1973; *Night of the Juggler*, 1975; *Summitt*, 1982; *A Matter of Honor*, 1984

SHORT FICTION: *Killer on the Turnpike*, 1961

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Soldiers of '44*, 1979; *War Games*, 1984

SCREENPLAYS: *I Saw What You Did*, 1965; *The*

Wrecking Crew, 1969; *Caprifoil*, 1972; *Brannigan*, 1975; *Night of the Juggler*, 1975

TELEPLAYS: *San Francisco International Airport* series, 1970; *The Young Lawyers* series, 1970; *Banyon* series, 1972; *Kojak* series, 1973-1977

NONFICTION: *Mention My Name in Mombasa: The Unscheduled Adventures of an American Family Abroad*, 1958 (with Maureen Daly McGivern); *The Seeing*, 1980 (with McGivern)

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Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre. Analyzes McGivern's two most famous noir novels, *The Big Heat* and *Odds Against Tomorrow*.

Irwin, John T. *Unless the Threat of Death Is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Study of noir fiction and film that emphasizes the interrelationship of the two forms and the representation of masculinity in each. Provides perspective on McGivern's work.

JILL McGOWN

Born: Campbeltown, Argyll, Scotland; August 9, 1947

Died: Kettering, Northamptonshire, England; April 6, 2007

Also wrote as Elizabeth Chaplin

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspectors Lloyd and Hill, 1983-2004

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHIEF INSPECTOR LLOYD is a middle-aged, balding man, rather slight in stature. He is a Celt, born in Wales to Welsh parents, but he has spent most of his life in England. Lloyd chose not to go to college. When a friend who was a police sergeant bet him that he could not make the grade as a police officer, Lloyd joined the force and proved him wrong. Lloyd's dedication to his job caused his first marriage to end in divorce, but he has remained on good terms with his daughter. Later in the series, Lloyd marries Judy Hill, and they have a child, Charlotte.

SERGEANT JUDY HILL is an attractive young woman with brown hair and brown eyes. Although her father was a university lecturer, she has no interest in academics. She is career oriented; she cannot cook and does not like organizing a household. Hill and Lloyd met sixteen years before, but at that time Lloyd was still married. When the series begins, Hill is married, but she soon ends what has become a perfunctory relationship.

CONTRIBUTION

Jill McGown adapted her chosen genre, the traditional whodunit, to make it more appealing to contemporary readers. Like her predecessors, she satisfied the intellectual needs of her readers by presenting them with brilliantly devised plots. Where McGown diverged from the tradition, however, is in making penetrating psychological analyses of her characters and their relationships. Both of her detectives are careful observers of human nature; though they begin their in-

vestigations by looking for evidence at the scene of the crime, they proceed by gathering information about the suspects, then by watching not only their responses to the most casual questions but also their behavior in informal situations. Thereafter these sleuths do much of their most productive investigating by withdrawing to discuss their findings and to present various hypothetical solutions for analysis. These sessions, which are often stormy, hold additional interest for McGown's readers because as they spar, Hill and Lloyd reveal a good deal about themselves, and because their romance is one of the threads that unifies the series, readers find themselves watching the two detectives as closely as the sleuths observe their suspects. By so brilliantly uniting mind and heart as well as thought and feeling, McGown transmuted the classic whodunit into a far more satisfying literary form.

BIOGRAPHY

Jill McGown was born on August 9, 1947, in Campbeltown, Argyll, Scotland, on the Mull of Kintyre. Her father and his brother owned a fishing boat and earned their living as fishermen. Her mother, who was originally from Glasgow, was a secretary. During those years, the family spent summer holidays at Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, which seemed much more lively than Campbeltown, with its end-of-pier shows and its one neon sign. The McGowns would also take steamers to such places as Lochranza on Arran and Ardrossan in the Firth of Clyde. However, though she did enjoy beach picnics, McGown soon realized that she was not overly enthusiastic about nature. She was delighted when her mother took her to Glasgow to visit her aunt and uncle, and she could choose between her two favorite modes of transportation, the subway and the tram.

While the family was still living in Campbeltown, McGown attended an infants' school, then a primary school, and finally a second one. In 1957, when she was ten, she had to change schools for a fourth time. Jill's father, realizing that he could no longer make a living fishing for herring, decided to move to Corby in Northamptonshire, England, where he found a job at

Lloyds Ironworks, later Stewarts and Lloyds. Because the company was bringing in a great many new workers from Scotland, though McGown now lived in England, she grew up in an atmosphere more Scottish than English. Scottish accents dominated, and there was an annual Highland gathering. Even though McGown was not a great nature lover, she spent hours in the woods with her friends playing games. She summed up her childhood as a happy one.

After junior school, McGown proceeded to Corby Grammar School, where her Latin teacher was Colin Dexter, author of the mystery series that features Inspector Morse. She soon left to attend Kettering Technical College. In 1964, she left the college, having obtained the training in shorthand and typing that would enable her to obtain a clerical job. She remained in Corby, working as a secretary from 1964 to 1966 for Corby Development Corporation. She was then hired as a secretary by a firm of solicitors, Toller Halls and Collcutt, where she remained for five years. In 1971, she went to work for the British Steel Corporation, handling voluntary redundancies. After ten years there, McGown found her own job made redundant. Partly because of the high unemployment rate, she decided to live on her redundancy pay while she wrote a novel. Thereafter, she supported herself by writing, remaining in Corby in the same house where she had lived since she was ten.

When *A Perfect Match* (1983) was accepted for publication, McGown was advised not to try to develop it into a series. Bowing to what she believed was good advice, she proceeded to write three nonseries novels, which were published between 1985 and 1987. However, when her readers insisted they liked her first work far better, McGown decided to proceed with the Lloyd and Hill series, and it proved extremely successful. The thirteenth Lloyd and Hill book appeared in 2004. Because *A Perfect Match* was not written as the first book in a series, the ages of Lloyd and Hill were somewhat advanced. McGown solved this problem by aging them slowly, so that they aged only about ten years over the life of the series. She departed briefly from the series in 1990 to publish a spoof entitled *Murder Movie*, and in 1992, under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Chaplin, she published her only suspense

novel, *Hostage to Fortune*. However, at the urging of her publishers, thereafter she wrote only books in the Lloyd and Hill series.

ANALYSIS

In calling her Lloyd and Hill books classic whodunits, Jill McGown emphasized the fact that they were written in the tradition established by the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, who is credited with inventing the detective story in 1841, when he published "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." By the time the term "whodunit" was coined in 1930, the conventions of the genre had long been established. Typically, a murder is committed; a detective becomes involved in the search for the murderer; all the clues essential to the solution of the crime are presented to the reader; the author deliberately misdirects the reader without concealing any important clues; and finally, the detective identifies the criminal and explains how the clues that were presented led inexorably to the conclusion. Clearly, the whodunit emphasizes reason, rather than emotion, and therefore characterization is far less important than the plot itself.

McGown followed these rules scrupulously, but as a modern writer, she felt free to make some adaptations. For example, many of her predecessors paired a brilliant, eccentric detective with a well-meaning but somewhat obtuse friend; one example of this pattern would be the mysteries by the Golden Age writer Agatha Christie in which Hercule Poirot masterminds the investigation and Captain Arthur Hastings serves as his aide and his confidant. In McGown's mysteries, though Chief Inspector Lloyd is of higher rank, Judy Hill is not a mere second-in-command. In fact, in some of the books, *A Shred of Evidence* (1995), for example, Lloyd takes a backseat, and it is Hill who is primarily responsible for solving the crime. The fact that the two operate as equal partners underscores the idea that women are now supposed to have the same opportunities as men. Therefore it is appropriate that Hill, who is at the beginning of her career, should be anticipating future promotions, while Lloyd, who has already established his reputation, looks forward to retirement. It is true, of course, that theory and practice are not always the same. To her credit, McGown

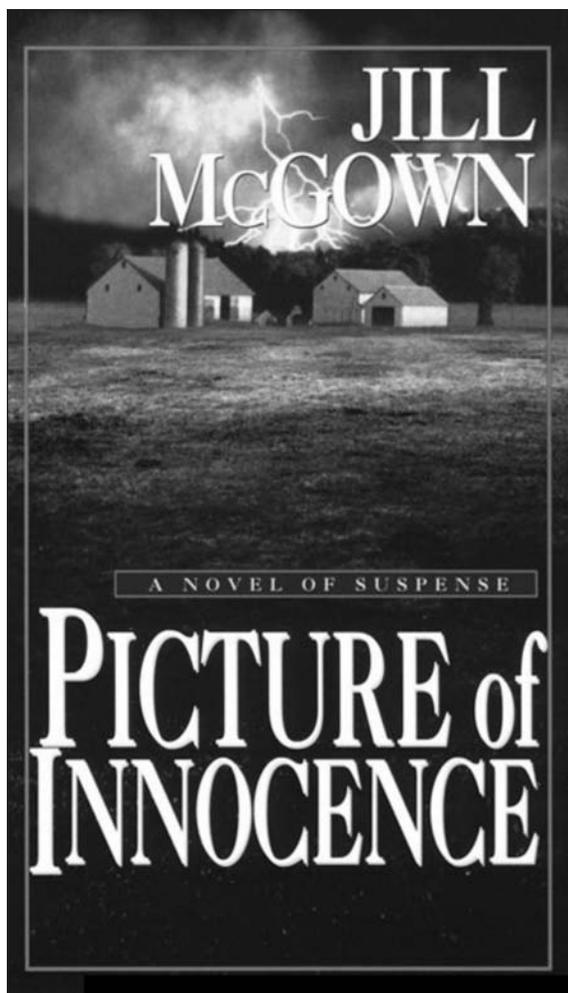
showed the two partners often disagreeing about the direction a case should take and even more often arguing bitterly about their own future goals, whether as individuals or as a married couple.

By venturing to explore the inner lives of her sleuths and of her primary suspects, McGown departed from the conventions of the traditional whodunit. She was interested at least as much in human nature and in human relationships as she was in presenting an intricate plot. Most critics applaud this alteration of the pattern, for they believe that novels such as hers hold the interest of modern readers better than the admittedly entertaining but essentially superficial mysteries on which they are modeled.

McGown also altered the conventional pattern by stressing the importance of place. Although she did not like to admit that her Lloyd and Hill books are in any way akin to the cozy subgenre, her series novels do resemble the early cozies in that they are set in rural England and involve village life. On her Web site, McGown explained that the fictional Stansfield is in fact Corby in Northamptonshire, where she spent most of her life, and she even included photographs of some of the real places in or near Corby that she used as settings for her fictional crimes. However, in her books, Stansfield is not just a convenient location; it is an integral part of her characters' lives. Thus when she described what she called the "three Corbies," the Elizabethan village, the mill town, and the New Town filled with newcomers, she underlined the theme of social change in a way that the originators of the cozy subgenre did not.

PICTURE OF INNOCENCE

In most of McGown's mysteries, the victim of the crime is a character for whom one can feel some sympathy. However, in *Picture of Innocence* (1998), when Bernard Bailey turns up dead in his home despite his state-of-the-art security system, most of the people in the Stansfield area feel like celebrating. Bailey has made his wife, Rachel, a virtual prisoner, alternately beating her and subjecting her to his sexual needs. She has remained with him because their marriage was based on a bargain between them: As soon as she bore him a son, thus enabling him to hold on to his extensive property, she was to receive a handsome reward and be free to leave. Though both Rachel and her se-



cret lover are obvious suspects in the murder, Bailey has been receiving death threats for the previous six months, and he has so many enemies in the Stansfield area that Hill and Lloyd hardly know where to begin their investigations.

Picture of Innocence is unique among McGown's novels in that it is essentially a one-character book. Reviewers who liked Rachel were enthusiastic about the book; those who did not were more critical. The fact that readers reacted so strongly to the central character in *Picture of Innocence* is an indication of McGown's gift for characterization.

PLOTS AND ERRORS

McGown's tenth Lloyd and Hill novel, *Plots and Errors* (1999), begins with what appears to be a double

suicide. Everyone knows that Andrew and Kathy Cope, who run a detective agency, are burdened by debt and likely to lose their home. When they are found in their car, asphyxiated, most people assume that they committed suicide. However, the details that Lloyd observes at the crime scene convince him that they were murdered. When their sole client, Mrs. Angela Esterbrook, is killed that same night, Lloyd and Hill look for a connection between the murders. However, they are hampered by their discovery that all the members of the immensely wealthy Esterbrook family are quite capable of committing a murder either for profit or on a whim.

Plots and Errors is a distinctive novel in that it was admittedly inspired by Shakespearean tragedy. By focusing on the very rich instead of the villagers and middle-class characters in most of her books, McGown took her readers into an alien culture. However, in exposing the Esterbrooks as essentially corrupt, she made it clear that, as Lloyd and Hill have long since discovered, evil is evil, no matter how cleverly it is disguised.

One of McGown's virtues as a writer was that, as she put it, she never wrote the same book twice. In the thirteen volumes in the Lloyd and Hill series, she never repeated a plot or a situation nor did she use a stock character. Moreover, she did not permit either her two detectives or their relationship to become stagnant; throughout the series, they were constantly changing. As a result, she built up a considerable following, both among critics and within the general public. She was admired for her versatility, her command of details, her logical brilliance, and her psychological insights.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTORS LLOYD AND HILL SERIES: *A Perfect Match*, 1983; *Redemption*, 1988 (also known as *Murder at the Old Vicarage*, 1989); *Death of a Dancer*, 1989 (also known as *Gone to Her Death*, 1990); *The Murders of Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Beale*, 1991; *The Other Woman*, 1992; *Murder . . . Now and Then*, 1993; *A Shred of Evidence*, 1995; *Verdict Un-*

safe, 1997; *Picture of Innocence*, 1998; *Plots and Errors*, 1999; *Scene of Crime*, 2001; *Births, Deaths and Marriages*, 2002 (also known as *Death in the Family*, 2003); *Unlucky for Some* 2004

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Record of Sin*, 1985; *An Evil Hour*, 1986; *The Stalking Horse*, 1987; *Murder Movie*, 1990; *Hostage to Fortune*, 1992 (as Chaplin)

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Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*, 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an essay on McGown that discusses her work and her life.

McGown, Jill. Jill McGown. <http://www.jillmcgown.com>. Web site maintained by the author. Contains up-to-date biographical information, photographs, a commentary on each book, a section on settings, and an imagined interview with McGown's series detectives.

Times Literary Supplement. Review of *Redemption*, by Jill McGown. 4460 (September 23, 1988): 1448. The reviewer finds the characters in this book interesting and the plot well developed. Regards the author worthy of placement in the top rank of mystery writers because of this work.

Windrath, Helen, ed. *They Wrote the Book: Thirteen Women Mystery Writers Tell All*. Duluth, Minn.: Spinsters Ink, 2000. Essays by well-known British and North American female mystery writers on such subjects as research, choice of setting, character development, plotting, and style. Includes comments on special problems of female writers.

RALPH McINERNEY

Born: Minneapolis, Minnesota; February 24, 1929

Also wrote as Harry Austin; Matthew FitzRalph;

Ernan Mackey; Monica Quill

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Father Dowling, 1977-

Sister Mary Teresa, 1981-

Andrew Broom, 1987-

University of Notre Dame, 1997-

Egidio Manfredi, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

FATHER ROGER DOWLING is a tough, unsentimental suburban Chicago priest-detective, low-key but also witty, irascible, and old-fashioned. His experiences as a priest have taught him about sin, guilt, and expiation. He firmly believes that “anyone is capable of anything” and that danger can lurk in unexpected places: a park, a country club, or even a dentist’s chair.

PHIL KEEGAN is a chief of detectives who has known Dowling since they were boys, attended the preparatory seminary of the Chicago Archdiocese with him, and believes in the efficacy of routine. A good Catholic who at times regrets the inability to master the intricacies of Latin that kept him from the priesthood, Keegan is as eager to dispense justice as Dowling is to mediate mercy.

SISTER MARY TERESA “EMTEE DEMPSEY” is a nonsense, brusque woman, a medieval scholar specializing in the twelfth century, one of the three remaining nuns in the Order of Martha and Mary (“the M and M’s”), and the bane of the Chicago police force. In her late seventies but still acutely perceptive, this heavy-set old nun magisterially presides over a Frank Lloyd Wright house and the two other sisters. Of necessity she engages in the detection of crimes that impinge on her territory (often ones involving former students or old friends). Rarely leaving home, she sends the other nuns out to gather information. Then deriding police methods as slow and uninspired, she engages in imaginative guesswork that leads to unexpected solutions.

ANDREW BROOM is a wealthy lawyer from Wyler, Indiana, whose interest in criminal cases inevitably involves personal twists and tangled conspiracies of clients and relatives that produce chains of ironic effects.

ROGER KNIGHT, a three-hundred-pound man, is a professor of Catholic studies at the University of Notre Dame, and a licensed—though only part-time—private eye, who invariably becomes involved in mysterious doings at the institution. His brother Philip, a retired private detective and a fellow lifelong bachelor, assists Roger in untangling the cases.

EGIDIO MANFREDI, the world-weary captain of the police force of Fort Elbow, Ohio, who is nearing mandatory retirement age, has appeared in novels of a non-violent but nonetheless puzzling nature.

CONTRIBUTION

Ralph McInerney brings to the mystery genre a theological and philosophical base, and his books look at events from an orthodox point of view. He scrutinizes the social and moral problems of the contemporary church; studies the relationships between a priest and his parishioners, a nun and her sisterhood, and a lawyer and his client; and examines crimes that grow out of a loss or failure of faith or a lapse into one or more of the seven deadly sins. His priest, Father Dowling, must wrestle with issues surrounding the sanctity of the confessional, the loyalties of the church hierarchy, and the confusions wrought by changes in the church itself; his nun, Sister Mary Teresa, must face the realities of a failing order, the confusions of lonely women trapped in a changing world, and the extremes of fanatics; his lawyer, Andrew Broom, in turn must confront the puzzles of life and death and seek meaning through action. McInerney is particularly interested in causal chains in which violence begets violence and a single act unleashes a series of interlocked events.

For his fiction, McInerney received the Mystery Writers of America’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993 and the *Crisis* magazine P. G. Wodehouse Award in 1995.

BIOGRAPHY

Ralph Matthew McInerny was born on February 24, 1929, in Minneapolis, the son of Austin Clifford McInerny, a mechanical engineer, and Vivian Rush McInerny. He was heir to a midwestern directness and an Irish Catholic sense of wit and humor. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1946 to 1947 and then returned to school to continue his education. He received a bachelor of arts degree from St. Paul Seminary in 1951, a master of arts degree from the University of Minnesota in 1952, and licentiate (1953) and doctoral (*summa cum laude*, 1954) degrees in philosophy from Laval University in Quebec, Canada.

As McInerny's schooling suggests, his original goal was the priesthood, but he instead became a philosopher and, thereafter, a teacher. He was married to Constance Terrill Kunert on January 3, 1953, and they had six children: Cathleen, Mary Hosford, Anne Polincinski, David, Elizabeth, and Daniel. He taught philosophy at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, during the school year 1954-1955. In 1955, he joined the faculty of the University of Notre Dame, beginning as an instructor in philosophy. He moved up to assistant professor (1957-1963), to associate professor (1963-1969), and to full professor in 1969. In 1978, McInerny was named the Michael P. Grace Professor of Medieval Studies and served as director of the Medieval Institute from 1978 to 1985. In 1979, he became director of the Jacques Maritain Center.

A respected academician, a renowned Thomas Aquinas scholar, a noted philosopher and leader in Catholic thought, McInerny has received numerous honors. He conducted research on Fulbright grants in Belgium (1959-1960) and Argentina (1985-1986 and 1986-1987) and was a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow (1977-1978), a National Endowment for the Arts fellow (1983), and a Pontifical Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas fellow (1987). McInerny has also frequently served as a visiting professor at such institutions as the Catholic University of America (1971), St. Mary's College (1976), Senior Scholarship University of Scranton (1977-1978), Katholieke Universitet in Belgium (1982), Cornell University (1988), John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family (1988), Truman State University (1999),

and Fu Jen University in Taiwan (2002). McInerny has also received such accolades as the Thomas Aquinas Medal (1990 and 1993), the Maritain Medal (1994), and the Gerhart Niemeyer Award (2002), and has collected more than six honorary doctorates.

McInerny is also an extremely prolific—with more than one hundred books to his credit—and versatile author and editor of fiction, a translator and writer of nonfiction, poetry, and plays. His initial full-length published work was *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (1961), the first of more than twenty-five nonfictional books that include such titles as *Thomism in an Age of Renewal* (1966), *The Frozen Maid of Calpurnia* (1982), *Miracles: A Catholic View* (1986), and *What Went Wrong with Vatican II: The Catholic Crisis Explained* (1998).

McInerny debuted as a fiction writer with *Jolly Rogerson* (1967), the first of more than a dozen non-series novels. He began his long-running Father Dowling mystery series in 1977 with *Her Death of Cold*, and since then has introduced four other mystery series: Sister Mary Teresa (as Monica Quill, *Not a Blessed Thing!* 1981), Andrew Broom (*Cause and Effect*, 1987), University of Notre Dame (*On This Rockne*, 1997), and Egidio Manfredi (*Still Life*, 2000).

McInerny, in addition to his academic work and writing, acts as editor of the *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly* and president of the American Maritain Association.

ANALYSIS

Ralph McInerny's titles all involve puns and allusions that grow out of the action. The title *The Basket Case* (1987), for example, carries the implication not only of psychological derangement but also of an infant abandoned in a basket, like Moses in the bulrushes. *A Loss of Patience* (1982) brings a loss of patience to all concerned, and those who rest in peace in *Rest in Pieces* (1985) have literally been blown to pieces. *The Grass Widow* (1983) focuses on two rejected women, one of whom smokes marijuana. The titles *Nun of the Above* (1985) and *And Then There Was Nun* (1984) clearly rely on linguistic play, while *The Noonday Devil* (1985) alludes to the medieval malaise *accidie*. Names of McInerny's characters also

reflect a certain gamesmanship, as with Geoffrey Chaser, the name of a pornographic novelist, clearly intended to conjure the ghost of Geoffrey Chaucer; Marie Murkin, suggestive of “merkin”; and Sister Mary Teresa’s nickname, Emtee, all too evocative of “empty.”

By virtue of the setting of the Father Dowling mysteries, the small Fox River community on the outskirts of Chicago, the novels partake of the ambience of both the small town and the booming metropolis. A portion of the wit and originality of the books, in fact, comes from this clash of big-city crime and sophistication with the values and culture of a midwestern small town. *A Loss of Patients* and *The Basket Case*, for example, center on local events, while *Lying Three* (1979) and *Rest in Pieces* bring the world of international politics and terrorism to Fox River. In *Lying Three*, a former anarchist confesses her past to Father Dowling, an assassin’s bullet narrowly misses the Israeli consul at Wrigley Field, an ardent Zionist is shot on the Fox River golf course, and the son of a local arms manufacturer with Arab connections is found drowned under suspicious circumstances. In *Rest in Pieces*, a Maryknoll priest, a liberation theologian who believes that the United States exploits Central America, brings with him international cocaine traffic and political assassination. In either locale, the crime itself most frequently involves the wealthy or the upper middle class.

Andrew Broom’s Wyler, Indiana, setting and Sister Mary Teresa’s Chicago setting involve some of the same mix in their portraits of established neighborhoods and the seamy inner city.

Furthermore, these worlds are a peculiar mix of Rome and the Midwest—the medieval and the modern. Dowling reads Dante and Saint Thomas Aquinas and interprets human behavior through their eyes. A swinging-singles bar, the scene of heavy drinking, sexual misbehavior, and social mayhem of various sorts, is known as the Gutter Ball; with its smoke-filled darkness, smoldering vocalist, and despairing laughter, it seems “some penitential place whose habitués were paying for their sins.” There the murderer meets his intended victims, and there, “no matter the smiles on their faces,” the patrons suffer the torments of Hell. Another

bar, the Mangy Manger, is likened to a vision of Hell, with “the bestial beat” of its “dreadful music” and its clientele with “utterly joyless” expressions, such as “those of the doomed and damned.” In *The Basket Case*, one of the characters has created his own Dantesque hell, for he experiences on Earth the punishment merited by adultery (the child of his unholy union is born with spina bifida; the anguished father consents to euthanasia and bars himself from confession and Holy Communion; he dies without holy rites in his mistress’s arms). In *Getting a Way with Murder* (1984), Father Dowling imagines the villain, a man who has murdered at least five people to prevent the discovery of an insurance fraud involving millions, “up to his neck in ice in the lowest region of the inferno.” Sister Mary Teresa, in turn, finds twelfth century parallels and advocates old-fashioned hanging and flogging for modern sins. This medieval judgment of the modern is an inseparable element of McInerney’s worldview.

In a typical McInerney plot, the murderer is someone who cannot relate to others in a normal fashion, someone so obsessed with possessions or with family honor that for him or her people lack value and are expendable obstructions. Readers sometimes learn who the murderer is early in the game, so the pleasure comes from seeing how the mystery will be unraveled, the guilt fixed, and the charges made. At other times, the identity of the murderer is a total surprise, though his unveiling grows out of the amateur detective’s psychological analysis of events and people.

Murder begets murder, as the murderer tries to hide his guilt and as investigators seek the weak link in a chain of deaths. In most instances the solution depends on the unveiling of a lie or a series of lies, particularly about relationships. Police routine proves inadequate, and solutions depend instead on imaginative flair and intuitive leaps. Furthermore, witnesses fail to tell the police details vital to unraveling motives and acts, but sometimes let them slip to Father Dowling or Emtee or else go to them for confession or reassurance. In *Getting a Way with Murder*, for example, a young innocent brings Father Dowling a computerized list of insurance-policy beneficiaries that reveals an insurance scam of a scale sufficient to explain multiple

murders. In like manner, confidences made to Andrew Broom in his capacity as lawyer give him an inside track on motives and possibilities.

Both Father Dowling and Emtee clearly respond to a higher law than humankind's and consequently do not feel too uncomfortable about keeping information from the police or handling cases in their own way. Emtee sidesteps the police at every opportunity, obstructing the law in the name of justice, lying and encouraging her associates to lie when occasion requires, withholding evidence, and making accusations on the basis of incredibly flimsy evidence. Father Dowling is not above slipping a credit card between frame and door to make an illegal entry in a just cause, plying a fellow clergyman with drink to loosen his tongue about a parishioner, or visiting a woman involved in a murder in order to slip a key photograph into his pocket when he asks for a second cup of coffee. Nor does he worry about confronting a suspect head-on, spelling out his suspicions as fact, tête-à-tête, and awaiting the response. Sometimes, however, his openness brings him into uncomfortable proximity to violence.

The forensic details of the crimes in McInerney's novels are not always convincing; for example, the police are not disturbed by a supposed suicide's making no trial cuts on her wrists, only deep, professional incisions. The Sister Mary Teresa series in particular is weak on hard criminal evidence. McInerney is simply not interested in the realities of a police investigation. Instead, motive, manner, behavior, and human interaction are for him most significant. His characters are a mixture of good and bad, with one or more of the seven deadly sins luring them into trouble and their own self-justifications plunging them deeper into chaos and even murder. As a consequence of his peculiar perspective, McInerney's endings sometimes leave situations somewhat unresolved when Dowling is satisfied with the spiritual state of all involved. *Second Vespers* (1980), for example, ends with police and priest entertaining dramatically different interpretations of the events of the plot, though it is understood that Dowling will intercede if an innocent is put at risk. A McInerney plot may turn into a circuitous labyrinth in which disparate motives and acts interlock in

causal patterns whose key is the heart of humanity. In fact, it is in his exploration of ironic causal sequences that McInerney excels, with the interlocking five deaths in *Cause and Effect* causing effects with a vengeance. The Sister Mary Teresa plots, however, are more conventionally suspenseful, with Emtee bringing all the suspects together at the end in a traditional unraveling.

McInerney uses his mysteries to explore issues and values that are of concern to him. For example, Father Dowling's discussions with his detective friend Phil Keegan and with his parishioners postulate and defend a conservative (what some have called reactionary) Roman Catholic worldview. Dowling misses the beauty and power of the Latin Mass, advocates daily Mass, confession, and penance, praises marriage and family, and has painful memories of his experiences on the church's marriage court. He and Emtee both clearly disapprove of the changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council and would prefer a return to the old ways of the church. Throughout the McInerney canon there are references to Catholics who feel rejected by the new church and who have left their faith, disillusioned by the growing laxness in Catholic moral theology. In *The Noonday Devil* the slackened values of Vatican II are blamed for an uprising among American bishops, who plan to replace an assassinated archbishop and maybe even the pope himself.

McInerney suggests that sex should be confined to marriage and should be for the sake of procreation rather than pleasure. In a number of the mysteries, sexual misalliances produce long-term conflicts that lead to murder and mayhem. The Sister Mary Teresa novels in particular often focus on "deviant" sexuality (pornography, dating clubs, singles bars) that precipitates murder.

A firm believer in the authority of the church, Dowling expresses disapproval of most Protestant ideas; he thinks, for example, that laypeople who become amateur biblical scholars are engaging in activities that are properly left to priests. Eccentric Protestant sects, television evangelists, and ignorant working-class Protestant converts are the subject of light ridicule throughout McInerney's canon.

Humbled by his alcoholism and embarrassed by his earlier ambitions to achieve a position of impor-

tance within the church hierarchy, McInerney's Father Dowling has found serenity in tending his flock. He derives aesthetic and spiritual satisfaction from the familiar words of the breviary and from psalms, hymns, and biblical passages. As McInerney puts it in *Lying Three*: "His parishioners were all the flock he needed; his life as a priest had moved onto a different and more solid stage. Something like peace returned when the anguish of insoluble marital tangles no longer tempted him to the oblivion of drink." Father Dowling devotes himself to the riddles of sin and grace and the mystery of the human heart, wonders about "the apparent inconsequence of so many lives," and believes that without faith there would be no adequate defense against the theory that life is futile. He befriends the lonely, feeds the hungry (Dowling's housekeeper is noted for her wholesome, hearty meals), and seeks out murderers—to protect Christ's flock and to offer them God's grace. In fact, most of the Dowling novels end, after the victim has been ferreted out and his earthly punishment assured, with the priest's attempts to make the murderer understand the degree of his guilt and the all-encompassing nature of God's forgiveness.

McInerney tries to humanize Dowling by having him smoke a pipe, enjoy a game of golf, and chat about sports with friends. He occasionally lapses into diction that echoes the cadences of the King James Bible, just as Emtee tosses out medieval allusions and Latin phraseology. Overall, however, Father Dowling is put forth as a model of a good man and a good priest: someone who has given up worldly ambitions, is satisfied with his lot in life, devotes himself to his parishioners, and personifies the best of church values. Emtee, too, despite her old-fashioned habit, her dismissal of Sigmund Freud, and her contrary ways, is a measure by which the more modern figures are judged.

Throughout his works McInerney studies spiritual and psychological motivations. His argument is that departures from Christian values (for him, conservative Catholic practices) lead to selfishness, misery, and perhaps even murder. Father Roger Dowling, Sister Mary Teresa, and, to a lesser extent, Phil Keegan have achieved spiritual well-being despite setbacks in their professional and personal lives; their well-being is di-

rectly attributable to their obedience and restraint. However, this very concern with spirituality leads to some disturbing contradictions. For all of their kindly manners, Dowling and Emtee are willing to believe the worst of virtually anyone, and their concern for the next life results in a seeming tolerance for failures in this one. Both affirm the need for earthly punishment despite the possibility of heavenly mercy. They seem at times uncharitable and even arrogant as they pontificate on orthodoxy and use the law and its representatives to achieve their own ends. There is a censorious air of self-righteousness, an unctuous piety to their words and deeds.

Furthermore, McInerney's Chicago, Fox River, and Wyler, for all of their midwestern charm and McInerney's witty descriptions of them, are cold, cheerless places inhabited by superficially pleasant but unhappy people. Wives and husbands betray each other casually; a son kills a woman to get revenge on his mother; a daughter lies obsessively and acts with contempt for the lives of even those most dear; a religious fanatic kidnaps a small boy, and another strangles a series of women. Dante's horrific visions are credible precisely because they are not set in the real world; McInerney's seem, in a curious way, to reflect a private view of Hell, one that is a bit jarring when located in the American Midwest.

HEIRS AND PARENTS

In *Heirs and Parents* (2000), Helga Bjornsen, a beautiful blond college student who once interned at lawyer Andrew Broom's practice, is found murdered, her throat slashed, in a car at a cemetery where she worked part-time in Wyler, Indiana. The crime features a wealth of hidden motives in conflict with one another and a plethora of potential suspects who move up or down the scale of probability as the police investigation intensifies and is just the opening salvo in a variety of criminal activities that plague the small town. The murder investigation intersects with a case Broom is working on: the probation of the will of local millionaire Stanley Waggoner, who shortly before his death apparently married a young nurse named Catherine, an action that raises the ire of other heirs. *Heirs and Parents* demonstrates many of author McInerney's trademarks: a fondness for puns, a dry and sometimes caustic wit in

observing society's foibles through close examination of a closed community, strong moral sensibilities, well-drawn characters who interact in believable fashion, and plenty of unexpected twists and turns to keep the reader guessing until the last page.

GREEN THUMB

Green Thumb (2004), the eighth entry in the University of Notre Dame traditional mystery series (who knew that crime was so rampant at the storied Catholic institution?), opens with a man found dying on the putting green at a university golf course. Apparently the victim of a heart attack, the dead man—Mortimer Sadler, class of 1977—was actually done in with poison derived from the deadly nightshade plant. As usual, private detective Phil Knight, retired but on retainer to the university, is called on to investigate, in league with friend Jimmy Stewart of the South Bend Police Department. As usual, Phil enlists the aid of his brilliant, obese

brother, professor of Catholic studies (and himself a licensed private detective) Roger Knight to help solve the crime. As usual, suspects abound. Is the murderer beautiful Maureen O'Kelly, valedictorian of the class of 1977, a noted gardener and a feminist who spurned the dead man when they were students? Is it one of Sadler's former roommates, all in attendance for an alumni get-together? Is it the dead man's brother, Samuel, or Samuel's son Paul, currently a student at Notre Dame, who is growing marijuana and deadly nightshade in his dorm room? Or is it someone else? As always, McInerny provides an intricate, complex story complete with philosophical digressions, touches of humor, and intimate glimpses into the workings of the university where he has taught for more than fifty years.

Andrew F. Macdonald and Gina Macdonald
Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FATHER DOWLING SERIES: 1977-1985 • *Her Death of Cold*, 1977; *The Seventh Station*, 1977; *Bishop as Pawn*, 1978; *Lying Three*, 1979; *Second Vespers*, 1980; *Thicker than Water*, 1981; *A Loss of Patients*, 1982; *The Grass Widow*, 1983; *Getting a Way with Murder*, 1984; *Rest in Pieces*, 1985

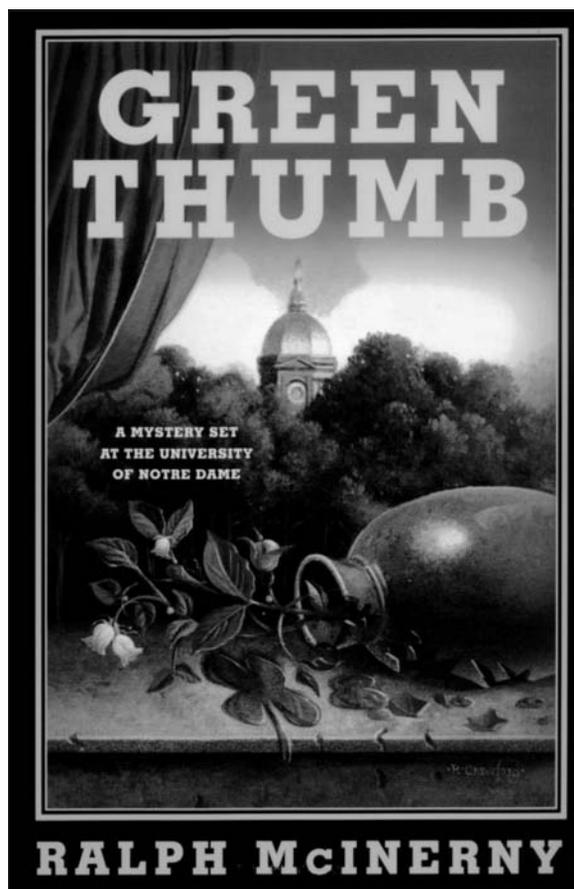
1986-1996 • *Leave of Absence*, 1986; *The Basket Case*, 1987; *Abracadaver*, 1989 (also known as *Sleight of Body*, 1989); *Four on the Floor*, 1989; *Judas Priest*, 1991; *Desert Sinner*, 1992; *Seed of Doubt*, 1993; *A Cardinal Offense*, 1994; *The Tears of Things*, 1996

1997-2007 • *Grave Undertakings*, 2000; *Triple Pursuit*, 2001; *Prodigal Father*, 2002; *Last Things*, 2003; *Requiem for a Realtor*, 2004; *Blood Ties*, 2005; *The Prudence of Flesh*, 2006; *The Widow's Mate*, 2007

SISTER MARY TERESA SERIES (AS QUILL): *Not a Blessed Thing!* 1981; *Let Us Prey*, 1982; *And Then There Was Nun*, 1984; *Nun of the Above*, 1985; *Sine Qua Nun*, 1986; *Veil of Ignorance*, 1988; *Sister Hood*, 1991; *Nun Plussed*, 1993; *Half Past Nun*, 1997; *Death Takes the Veil, and Other Stories*, 2001

ANDREW BROOM SERIES: *Cause and Effect*, 1987; *Body and Soul*, 1989; *Frigor Mortis*, 1989; *Savings and Loam*, 1990; *Mom and Dead*, 1994; *Law and Ardor*, 1995; *Heirs and Parents*, 2000

NOTRE DAME SERIES: *On This Rockne*, 1997;



Lack of the Irish, 1998; *Irish Tenure*, 1999; *The Book of Kills*, 2000; *Emerald Aisle*, 2001; *Celt and Pepper*, 2002; *Irish Coffee*, 2003; *Green Thumb*, 2004; *Irish Gilt*, 2005; *The Letter Killeth*, 2006

EGIDIO MANFREDI SERIES: *Still Life*, 2000; *Sub Rosa*, 2001

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Romanesque*, 1978; *The Noonday Devil*, 1985; *Easeful Death*, 1991; *Infra Dig*, 1992; *As Good as Dead*, 2002; *The Ablative Case*, 2003; *Slattery: A Soft-Boiled Detective*, 2004

SHORT FICTION: *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Father Brown, Father Dowling and Other Ecclesiastical Sleuths*, 1992 (with G. K. Chesterton and John Mortimer)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Jolly Rogerson*, 1967; *A Narrow Time*, 1969; *The Priest*, 1973; *Gate of Heaven*, 1975; *Rogerson at Bay*, 1976; *Spinnaker*, 1977; *Quick as a Dodo*, 1978; *Abecedary*, 1979; *Connolly's Life*, 1983; *The Red Hat*, 1998

PLAYS (AS AUSTIN): *The Chinese Pendant and Other Plays*, pb. 1983; *The Little Lights of Kimberly and Other Plays*, pb. 1985

POETRY: *Shakespearean Variations*, 2001; *The Soul of Wit*, 2004

NONFICTION: 1961-1970 • *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas*, 1961; *History of Western Philosophy, Vol. 1: From the Beginnings of Philosophy to Plotinus*, 1963; *Thomism in an Age of Renewal*, 1966; *Studies in Analogy*, 1968; *History of Western Philosophy, Vol. 2: Philosophy from Augustine to Ockham*, 1970

1971-1990 • *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1977; *Rhyme and Reason: Saint Thomas and Modes of Discourse*, 1981; *The Frozen Maiden of Calpurnia*, 1982; *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 1982 (revised 1997); *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations*, 1986; *Miracles: A Catholic View*, 1986; *Art and Prudence: Studies in the Thought of Jacques Maritain*, 1988; *The Catholic Moment: Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World*, 1988; *A First Glance at Saint Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists*, 1990; *Boethius and Aquinas*, 1990

1991-2006 • *The Search Committee*, 1991; *Aquinas on Human Action: A Theory of Practice*, 1992; *Aquinas Against the Averroists: On There Being Only One Intellect*, 1993; *The Question of Christian Ethics*, 1993; *The God of Philosophers*, 1993; *Aquinas and Analogy*, 1996; *An Uncertain Legacy: Essays on the Pursuit of Liberty*, 1997 (with others); *What Went Wrong with Vatican II: The Catholic Crisis Explained*, 1998; *A Student's Guide to Philosophy*, 1999; *Characters in Search of Their Author*, 2001; *The Defamation of Pius XII*, 2001; *Aquinas*, 2003; *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain: A Spiritual Life*, 2003; *I Alone Have Escaped to Tell You: My Life and Pastimes*, 2006; *Some Catholic Writers*, 2006

EDITED TEXTS: *New Themes in Christian Philosophy*, 1968; *Modernity and Religion*, 1994; *The Degrees of Knowledge (The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain)*, 1995; *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*, 1998; *Great Mystery Series: Eleven of the Best Short Stories from Alfred Hitchcock's and Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazines*, 2000 (with Lawrence Block and Mary Higgins Clark); *Murder Most Divine: Ecclesiastical Tales of Unholy Crimes*, 2000 (with Martin H. Greenburg); *Murder Most Catholic: Divine Tales of Profane Crimes*, 2002 (with Greenburg)

TRANSLATIONS: *Kierkegård: The Difficulty of Being Christian*, 1968 (with Leo Turcotte); *A History of the Ambrosiana*, 1983 (by Angelo Paredi; with Constance McInerney); *Introduction to the Summa Theologiae of Thomas Aquinas by John of Saint Thomas*, 2004

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DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. Contains brief entries on Ralph McInerney and two of his major fictional creations: Father Dowling and Sister Mary Teresa Dempsey.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Still Life*, by Ralph McInerney. 68, no. 18 (September 15, 2000): 1319. A review of a novel featuring Egidio Manfredi of the Fort Elbow, Ohio, police force, who investigates the disappearance of a poet and encounters a case of mistaken identity. The novel is praised for

its interesting theological concept—how long should one be responsible for acts of the past—and for its world-weary protagonist, but the reviewer takes McInerny to task for his verbosity.

Levin, Martin. "Reader's Report." Review of *Jolly Rogerson*, by Ralph McInerny. *The New York Times Book Review*, November 26, 1967, p. 68. A review of *Jolly Rogerson*, in which the protagonist is an ordinary professor at an ordinary university who, dissatisfied with his lot in life, begins conceiving absurd research projects, writing poison-pen letters, and turning his lectures into surrealistic exercises.

Lukowsky, Wes. Review of *Sub Rosa*, by Ralph McInerny. *Booklist* 98, no. 4 (October 15, 2001): 386. A review of *Sub Rosa*, the second Egidio Manfredi novel, in which an unattractive romance novelist kidnaps men to have sex. Favorably recommended for its cozy nonviolence, its gently satirical tone, and its satisfying puzzle.

McInerny, Ralph. *I Alone Have Escaped to Tell You: My Life and Pastimes*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006. McInerny's autobiography describes the influences on his life and his career and his thoughts about writing and the works of other Catholic writers.

_____. "Saints Preserve Us: The Catholic Mystery." In *The Fine Art of Murder: The Mystery Reader's Indispensable Companion*, edited by Ed Gorman, Martin H. Greenberg, and Larry Segriff with Jon L. Breen. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993. McIner-

ny's definition of what constitutes a Catholic novel: fiction that contains both the law enforcement concept of crime and punishment and the religious concept of sin and forgiveness. McInerny uses his own Father Dowling series to illustrate how the two concepts "overlap, interlock and play off against each other."

Mort, John. "Christian Fiction." *Booklist* 94, no. 17 (May 1, 1998): 1503. Brief reviews of eight novels dealing with religion, among them McInerny's *The Red Hat*, which is called a "convoluted tale of intrigue within the Catholic Church." McInerny's novel earns a mixed review: positive marks for a bizarre plot involving a defrocked priest and the author's witty erudition, but demerits for pacing—the story is considerably slowed by long, pedantic sections about church doctrine.

Needham, George. Review of *Grave Undertaking*, by Ralph McInerny. *Booklist* 96, no. 8 (December 15, 1999): 761. A review of the nineteenth Father Dowling mystery, *Grave Undertaking*, which is panned because of repetition, underdeveloped characters, and a time line that makes no sense.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Triple Pursuit*, by Ralph McInerny. 248, no. 9 (February 26, 2001): 61. A mixed review of *Triple Pursuit*, the twentieth Father Dowling mystery: though comfortable, familiar, leisurely, and repetitive, and laced with the author's dry wit, the novel is called a "predictable entry in a generally lackluster series."

HELEN MacINNES

Born: Glasgow, Scotland; October 7, 1907

Died: New York, New York; September 30, 1985

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage

CONTRIBUTION

At the height of her popularity, Helen MacInnes was known as the "queen of international espionage fiction." Although her novels contain much less sex

and violence than others of the genre, they are highly suspenseful. In addition, they are based on an appreciation of justice, freedom, and individual dignity. Perhaps the most characteristic element of MacInnes's novels is their settings, which are invariably beautiful and of historic interest. The capital cities of Europe and its many forests, lakes, castles, and opera houses are described in such detail that the novels may be

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Helen MacInnes in 1974. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

enjoyed as travel books. Brittany, Salzburg, Málaga, Venice, and Rome come alive for the reader. MacInnes's love for these and other spots of the world, as well as her appreciation of democratic values, illuminates and enhances her novels.

BIOGRAPHY

Helen Clark MacInnes was born on October 7, 1907, in Glasgow, Scotland, where she was also educated. She married Gilbert Highet, a Greek and Latin scholar, in 1932. To finance trips abroad they collaborated in translating books into English from German. The couple moved to the United States in 1937. After her son was born, MacInnes began writing her first novel. *Above Suspicion* (1941) not only was an immediate best seller but also was made into a popular film, as were *Assignment in Brittany* (1942), *The Venetian Affair* (1963), and *The Salzburg Connection* (1968).

The film *Assignment in Brittany* was used to help train intelligence operatives during World War II.

During the course of her life, MacInnes wrote more than twenty novels and a play. Her novels were highly successful, and more than 23 million copies of her books have been sold in the United States alone. They have been translated into twenty-two languages including Portuguese, Greek, Arabic, Tamil, Hindi, and Urdu. Her work is admired by both the general audience and professional intelligence agents. Allen Dulles, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, called MacInnes a "natural master of the thriller" and included an excerpt from *Assignment in Brittany* in an anthology of espionage literature that he compiled. Not all of her novels, however, concerned espionage in foreign lands. *Friends and Lovers* (1947) was a semiautobiographical love story set at Oxford University in England, and *Rest and Be Thankful* (1949) satirized the New York literary

and critical establishment, showing some of its members trying to survive at a dude ranch in Wyoming.

In 1985, MacInnes died in Manhattan following a stroke. Her death occurred shortly after her last novel, *Ride a Pale Horse* (1984), appeared on *The New York Times* paperback best-seller list.

ANALYSIS

Helen MacInnes began her first novel, *Above Suspicion*, after an apprenticeship that included translating German works with her husband and taking careful notes on the political situation in Germany. Like her succeeding novels, it is based on the necessity of resisting the advance of Nazism. During World War II, the enemy was the Gestapo, the German secret police. MacInnes writes that after the war, villainous Nazis were replaced by communists and terrorists who were convinced of the superiority of their own ideologies and disdained Western democratic values, which they considered decadent. Because of their discipline, efficiency, and toughness the enemies of freedom could achieve limited success in the short run but were ultimately doomed to be overwhelmed by the forces of good.

MacInnes disapproved heartily of dictatorships of both the Left and the Right. Indeed, she considered herself a Jeffersonian democrat, and her books promote the ideals of freedom and democracy. The earlier novels not only demonstrate the evils of fascism but also insist on the danger of pacifism in the face of the Nazi threat. The later novels pitch the evils of communism and the danger of appeasing the Soviet Union. MacInnes's work is not harmed by such overt political commentary. On the contrary, her novels lack the sense of languor and depression, even boredom, that certain modern espionage novels exhibit. MacInnes's professional intelligence agents, a few of whom appear in more than one novel, are skillful operatives who love their country. There is no doubt in their minds that the Western democracies are morally superior to the governments of their enemies. This conviction is in strong contrast to the posture of the operatives in the novels of John le Carré or Len Deighton, who seem to see little difference between the methodology and goals of the Soviet Union and those of the West.

To convince the reader that Western intelligence operatives and U.S. State Department personnel are truly patriotic, MacInnes affords her audience glimpses into the mental processes of her characters. They are not professional agents, but they learn the craft of intelligence quickly after they are recruited by a professional agent for a mission. MacInnes's early heroes are often academics, while later heroes include a music critic, an art consultant, and a playwright. Their occupations allow MacInnes to comment on the current state of painting, music, and theater, which, for the most part, she finds inferior to the comparable arts of the past. These heroes are typically good-looking, gentle, and kind, as well as brave, intelligent, and resourceful, but they are also lonely. Not at all promiscuous, these young men are waiting for the right woman to come along, and by the conclusion of nearly all the novels, they are usually committed to a monogamous relationship. The contrast with Ian Fleming's James Bond is clear. Also unlike James Bond, MacInnes's heroes are not superathletes and they do not possess technical devices with seemingly magical powers.

ABOVE SUSPICION

In *Above Suspicion*, Mrs. Frances Myles is the principal character, although her husband, Richard, proves to be braver, calmer, and more capable than she. In subsequent novels, MacInnes uses male heroes. Although she pays lip service to the idea of female equality, she seems to be afraid to compromise her heroines' "femininity" by making them too intelligent or too brave. Young, beautiful women exist either to be rescued by the hero or, if they are enemy agents, to tempt him. The plucky hero is frequently pitted against a sexually predatory villainess; the latter may attract the hero initially but eventually disgusts him. This situation changes slightly in *The Snare of the Hunter* (1974), where the hero is aided by Jo Corelli, MacInnes's version of the liberated career woman who is able to take charge.

THE DOUBLE IMAGE

In this and other ways, MacInnes always tried to be current. For details concerning espionage techniques, she drew on evidence collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Many of her plots were suggested by current events. The plot of *The Double Image* (1966), for example, was suggested by news reports that the

grave of a Nazi war criminal was found to be bogus. This event reminded her of the possibility that several communist spies had masqueraded as Nazis during World War II, as Richard Sorge, a real historical figure, had done. MacInnes has also been lauded for the accurate manner in which she described the communist influence on the Algerian revolt against France, which took place in the early 1960's. Indeed, she considered herself obligated not to falsify the past. It is interesting, however, that in her earlier novels she was more accurate about the details of the craft of espionage than in her later books. In the later novels, she chose to ignore certain technological advances, particularly in communications, because she believed that dedicated personnel were more important than gadgets.

MacInnes is most accurate in her use of locale. In *Above Suspicion*, the reader is given a picture of pre-war Oxford, Paris, and Austria. In *Assignment in Brittany*, the reader is shown Brittany as it must have been when the Nazis first came to power; *North from Rome* (1958) affords the reader a tour of Italy; in *Decision at Delphi* (1961), the reader is taken on an excursion through Greece, and *Message from Málaga* (1971) is set in Spain. *The Double Image* and *The Salzburg Connection* focus on postwar Austria, a mecca for tourists visiting concert halls, opera houses, and quaint mountain villages. In fact, MacInnes's most graphic writing is devoted to the historic delights of Europe and parts of Asia. In *Prelude to Terror* (1978), she describes the Neustrasse, a street in the Austrian town of Grinzing:

It was lined with more vintners' cottages, their window boxes laden with bright petunias. Each had its walled courtyard, whose wide entrance doors stood partly open to show barrels and tables and more flowers. All of them had their own individual vineyards, long and narrow, stretching like a spread of stiff fingers up the sloping fields.

MacInnes's language is simple but evocative. The accurate descriptions of her settings, as well as her obvious love for them, lend a depth and a resonance to her novels, affording them an additional dimension few other espionage novels achieve. Because her plots are structured around a chase, they are exciting. Reader

interest is further heightened by the love story, which is an intrinsic element of these novels. Unless the hero and heroine are already married to each other, two attractive young people will certainly meet and fall in love. To this mixture of travelogue and romance, MacInnes adds elements of action and suspense, as the hero and heroine must avoid capture, torture, and even death.

MacInnes's storytelling is tightly controlled. She keeps the reader's attention by providing only small bits of information at a time and by provoking concern at appropriate intervals. Will the garage mechanic unknowingly betray the heroine to her enemy? Will the villain reach the hidden door and escape? In all the novels, the protagonists are in danger, but only minor characters, or evil ones, die or get seriously hurt. Murder and mayhem either occur offstage or are not described vividly, which is clearly not standard practice in the modern espionage novel. Another unusual element in these novels is the emphasis on romance coupled with an absence of sexual description. The limited amount of sexual activity that does occur is glossed over as discreetly as it would have been in a Victorian novel.

Without relying on graphic descriptions of violence or sexual behavior, MacInnes has managed to entertain a generation of readers by keeping them in great suspense as she exposes her extraordinarily likable characters to familiar dangers. She has made it apparent that just as her characters barely manage to avoid disaster, so too are democracy and freedom constantly threatened by the forces of terror and chaos. In addition to the stratagems MacInnes employs to involve the reader, the chases, which often serve as the foundation of her plots, take place in some of the most picturesque settings in the world.

Barbara Horwitz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROBERT RENWICK SERIES: *Hidden Target*, 1980; *Cloak of Darkness*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Above Suspicion*, 1941; *Assignment in Brittany*, 1942; *While Still We Live*, 1944 (also known as *The Unconquerable*); *Horizon*, 1945; *Neither Five Nor Three*, 1951; *I and My True Love*,

1953; *Pray for a Brave Heart*, 1955; *North from Rome*, 1958; *Decision at Delphi*, 1961; *The Venetian Affair*, 1963; *The Double Image*, 1966; *The Salzburg Connection*, 1968; *Message from Málaga*, 1971; *The Snare of the Hunter*, 1974; *Agent in Place*, 1976; *Prelude to Terror*, 1978; *Ride a Pale Horse*, 1984

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Friends and Lovers*, 1947; *Rest and Be Thankful*, 1949

PLAY: *Home Is the Hunter*, 1964

TRANSLATIONS: *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*, 1934 (with Gilbert Highet; by Otto Kiefer); *Friedrich Engels: A Biography*, 1936 (with Gilbert Highet; by Gustav Mayer)

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Breit, Harvey. *The Writer Observed*. Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956. Examination of the process of

crafting fiction that uses MacInnes as one of its case studies.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies to actual intelligence agents to demonstrate that truth is stranger than fiction. Helps readers gain perspective on MacInnes's work.

McDowell, Edwin. "Helen MacInnes: Seventy-seven, Novelist and Specialist in Spy Fiction." *The New York Times*, October 1, 1985, p. B6. Obituary of Manhattan resident MacInnes describes her life, noting that an encounter with Nazis while on her honeymoon influenced her writing of *Above Suspicion*.

Seymour-Smith, M. *Novels and Novelists*. London: Windward, 1980. Discusses MacInnes as a novelist first and a mystery novelist second.

Terry, Stephen. "Helen MacInnes, Spy Novelist." *Evening Times*, April 25, 2001, p. 14. Short profile of MacInnes that notes her Scottish roots and her renown as a writers of spy thrillers.

ADRIAN McKINTY

Born: Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland; 1967

Types of plot: Espionage; hard-boiled, thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Michael Forsythe, 2003-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MICHAEL FORSYTHE is a young, highly articulate illegal immigrant from Ireland living in New York City. After he joins the Irish mob in America and takes on investigations throughout the world, he finds that the troubles he left behind in Belfast have followed him.

CONTRIBUTION

Adrian McKinty has joined the long line of talented writers to come out of Ireland. In all of his novels, he exposes readers who might know little about Irish history to the long war waged in Ireland between Roman Catholics and Protestants. In particular, McKinty's fast-paced, intensely violent mystery novels provide insights into a dark period in Irish history known as the Troubles, during which Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organizations in British-ruled Northern Ireland engaged in various forms of violence from the late 1960's until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. McKinty's characters—especially his dark, popular protagonist Michael Forsythe, who illegally

immigrates to New York City to escape the Troubles in Northern Ireland—are all products of this violent era in Irish history. McKinty, who has been described by crime-fiction specialist Otto Penzler as “the super-talented Irishman,” joins a number of Irish writers who have recently gravitated to crime writing such as John Banville, the winner of the 2005 Man Booker Prize for *The Sea*. Irish writer Frank Court, author of *Angela’s Ashes: A Memoir* (1996), describes McKinty as “a cross between American mystery writer Mickey Spillane and Damon Runyon.”

McKinty’s novels contribute to an emerging genre known as Irish noir, which, scholars suggest, has been created by the collision of the older political and social violence with the newer crime-based violence produced as a result of the prosperous economic era that made Ireland into the Celtic Tiger.

McKinty’s *Dead I Well May Be* (2003), which was adapted to screen, was short-listed for the Crime Writers’ Association’s Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award. His *The Dead Yard* (2006) was named one of the fifteen best novels of 2006 by *Publishers Weekly*.

BIOGRAPHY

In 1967, Adrian McKinty was born in Carrickfergus, County Down, a town five miles outside Belfast in British Northern Ireland. Soon after his birth, Northern Ireland entered a violent period known as the Troubles, centered on the clash between the Unionist government in Ulster and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which sought, through militant means, to reunite the six counties in Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland in the southern part of the island. The Troubles, which could at any moment have escalated into a full-scale civil war, seriously affected the daily lives of everyone living in Northern Ireland at that time and no doubt shaped the people’s political and social perspectives. In 1972, when McKinty was only five years old, twenty-six protesters in Derry, Northern Ireland, were shot by members of the British Parachute Regiment. This incident, known as Bloody Sunday, dramatically intensified the violence and caused an increase in enlistment in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which was campaigning for Northern Ireland’s independence from Britain. McKinty’s

youth was thus shrouded in scenes of horrific violence. The author once described his hometown Carrickfergus, as “old school—no cars, much drunkenness, wives in their place and many, many fights.” Hardly surprising then, that his background in Northern Ireland provides much of the material for his highly suspenseful, brutally violent novels.

McKinty attended Oxford University, where he studied politics and trained as an attorney before immigrating illegally in the 1990’s to New York City, where for five years he worked at various odd jobs, including security guard, teacher, construction worker, mail carrier, bartender, salesman, and rugby coach. At one time, he sold books at the Barnes and Noble on Eighty-second Street and Broadway in New York City. McKinty lived in Harlem in New York City and traveled for a time to India before eventually returning to the United States, where he took a job as a schoolteacher and settled in Denver. As is true with many successful writers, his various jobs and his sojourns in various geographic locales provided McKinty with myriad experiences from which to create interesting settings and unusual, dynamic, bigger-than-life characters.

ANALYSIS

A new generation of Irish mystery writers continues to proliferate partly, as one critic argues, in response to Ireland’s changing social landscape. Although Ireland had been one of the poorer nations in Western Europe, thanks in part to its membership in the European Union, Ireland prospered from the 1990’s to the early 2000’s, becoming known as the Celtic Tiger. However, a rise in crime and violence typically accompany a rise in prosperity, and Ireland was no exception. This meeting point between wealth, misdeeds, and fear has given rise to a new literary genre called Irish noir, a blending of American hard-boiled crime fiction with twenty-first century Irish settings, social mores, and dialogue that illustrates the collision of primitive deep-seated violence with the modern world.

One way that the Irish have come to terms with the violence in their country is through the art of storytelling. Psychiatrists explain that storytelling can be viewed as a survival mechanism used by cultures to

sublimate or diminish their fears. The act of writing or telling shadowy tales of horror and violence makes evil seem less frightening. Described by one critic as “a stunning new noir voice, dark and stylish, mythic and violent—complete with an Irish lilt,” McKinty, whose own early life was steeped in violence and suspicion, writes novels that fit easily into this new Irish noir genre.

Although noir, the genre made famous by American writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, features tough-talking male protagonists and is set in cities in early twentieth century America, Irish noir, for the most part, is set in dark, shadowy and moody Dublin. Indeed, the Gaelic *dubh linn* translates as “dark pool.” However, Irish noir is often transplanted to other sinister, shadowy geographic locations such as, in the case of McKinty, inner-city Boston and New York City, locales that fit the noir genre. Both cities contain large Irish communities complete with pubs and have drawn violent IRA men on the run. In this regard, McKinty also uses Mexico effectively in his noir novels, but he has recently come under criticism for using Denver, Colorado, as the setting of *Hidden River* (2005). As one critic points out, Denver does not work quite as well as a backdrop for the dark horror and violence that, in addition to his lurid descriptions of pain, fear, and brutality, have come to define McKinty’s novels. According to one critic, his novels tend to mirror the real-life violence that has plagued Northern Ireland.

There are no good guys in McKinty’s novels. His heroes are really antiheroes who are, without exception, dark, complex, and brooding: bad boys, drug addicts, and murderers, who just might descend into madness before the readers’ eyes if they are pushed too far. It is not difficult to understand these horrifically violent heroes, because they are products of dark, shadowy, noir worlds and have rarely, if ever, encountered trustworthy people. In McKinty’s novels, everyone, even the seemingly sweet, innocent young women favored by his heroes, is corruptible: No one can be trusted.

In addition, McKinty is an intellectual. His novels are replete with entertaining literary and historical allusions that range from Christopher Marlowe’s *Faustus* to Sigmund Freud.

ORANGE RHYMES WITH EVERYTHING

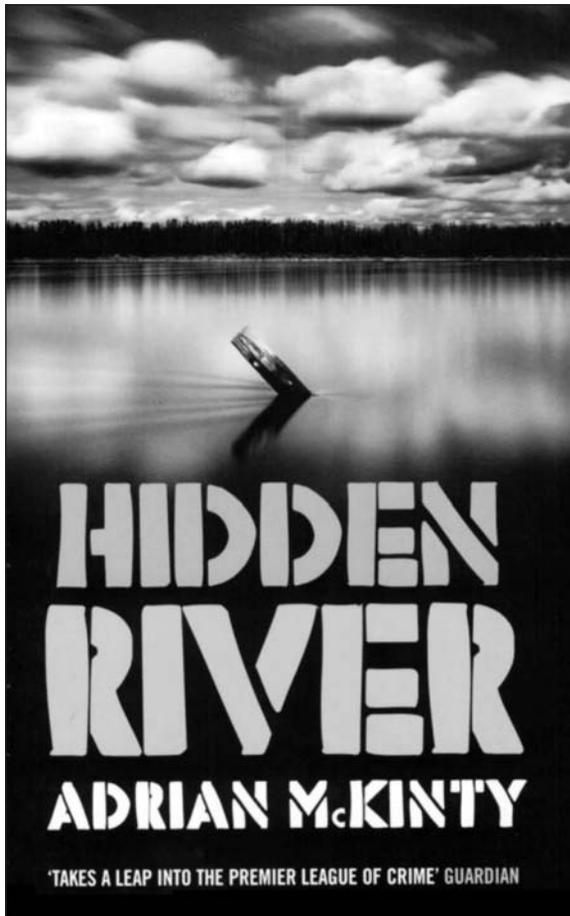
In his first novel, the 1997 thriller *Orange Rhymes with Everything*, McKinty uses two unnamed narrators, a Protestant terrorist and his disabled teenage daughter, to illustrate Northern Ireland’s ongoing historical, cultural, and religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. In New York, a patient with Irish Loyalist leanings and intent on returning home to Northern Ireland at any cost breaks out of a mental institution. Soon, bodies begin to pile up as he makes his way home to see his estranged teenage daughter, who lives an ordinary rough working-class life in dark and violent Ulster.

DEAD I WELL MAY BE

McKinty’s second novel, *Dead I Well May Be*, takes its title from the lyrics of the famous Irish ballad “Danny Boy.” First-person narrator Michael Forsythe, a nineteen-year-old illegal immigrant living in New York City to escape the Troubles in Belfast, finds life just as violent and unpredictable in his adopted country as it was in Ireland. Fearless, clever, and in need of money, Forsythe gets a job working for Darkey White, the ironically named Irish mobster. In between fighting various ethnic gangs for control of the dark streets of the Bronx and Harlem and dealing with various crack addicts, murderers, and prostitutes as Darkey’s enforcer, Forsythe manages to fall in love with his boss’s luscious girlfriend Bridget. After Darkey discovers Forsythe and Bridget have betrayed him, Forsythe winds up in a horrific Mexican prison for his involvement in a drug deal gone wrong. After escaping, he predictably returns to New York to exact revenge on the Irish mobster.

HIDDEN RIVER

Hidden River (2005), which has been compared to Raymond Chandler’s noir *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), presents another flight from Ireland to America, this time by a twenty-four-year-old disgraced former Royal Ulster Constabulary officer turned heroin addict. Alex Lawson, another of McKinty’s brooding antiheroes, leaves Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland, to investigate the death of his former girlfriend, the Irish-born Indian Victoria Patawasti, who was murdered in Denver. He also needs to leave Ireland quickly, as he is being pursued by a heroin dealer to whom he owes



money, police investigators, and crooked Ulster police officers. Lawson, who remains addicted to heroin, soon is wanted by the Colorado police after a suspect falls from a balcony. Lawson's investigation reveals that Victoria was in fact killed by her boss, the enormously rich Charles Mulholland, who is married to the beautiful quirky Amber, the iconic mysterious noir femme fatale, whom predictably Alex finds attractive.

THE DEAD YARD

The Dead Yard, the popular sequel to McKinty's acclaimed *Dead I Well May Be*, opens in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, where McKinty's primary antihero Michael Forsythe is taking a long-deserved holiday. However, Forsythe is arrested after a riot breaks out at a soccer match between Ireland and England and finds himself threatened with long-term incarceration back in the horrific Mexican prison from which he earlier escaped. However, a typical McKinty noir femme fatale,

this time the voluptuous British intelligence agent Samantha, offers him a chance for release if he takes an Federal Bureau of Investigation assignment to infiltrate an Irish terrorist sleeper cell in Massachusetts. After saving the life of Kit, the teenage daughter of McCaghan, the cell's leader, Forsythe is immediately integrated into the renegade Sons of Cuchulainn. He stays at McCaghan's palatial beachside estate in the company of Touched, McCaghan's star sadistic killer; McCaghan's new wife; and Kit and her boyfriend, Jackie. Predictably, Forsythe develops a fondness for Kit but this does not save her, and the rest of her family, from a violent end in the Maine wilderness at the hands of Forsythe.

THE BLOOMSDAY DEAD

In *The Bloomsday Dead* (2007), a sequel to *The Dead Yard*, Michael Forsythe arrives in Dublin on June 16, otherwise known as Bloomsday, the annual remembrance of the life of Irish writer James Joyce in which celebrants relive the events in his famous novel *Ulysses* (1922), the action of which takes place on June 16, 1904, in Dublin. Forsythe is working as a security guard in Lima, Peru, keeping tourists, prostitutes, and others in line, when two Colombian hit men force him into a hotel room to take a call from his old girlfriend, Bridget Callaghan, in Ireland. He is told to find her daughter or be killed, so he returns to Ireland. Like Joyce's hero Leopold Bloom, in a one-day odyssey Forsythe manages to penetrate the IRA network, is kidnapped, escapes, infiltrates the Irish mob, and finds Bridget's daughter on a cliff in the company of her kidnappers and, unexpectedly, her own mother.

M. Casey Diana

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MICHAEL FORSYTHE SERIES: *Dead I Well May Be*, 2003; *The Dead Yard*, 2006; *The Bloomsday Dead*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Orange Rhymes with Everything*, 1997; *Hidden River*, 2005; *The Lighthouse Land*, 2006

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_____. *The Triumph of the Thriller: How Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction*. New York: Random House, 2007. Provides a short biography of McKinty as well as an analysis of *Dead I Well May Be*.

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Kee, Robert. *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*. Long book covering Irish history from the first stirrings of Irish nationalism to the Protestant Plantations, the Great Famine, the be-

ginning of the Fenian Movement, and the Irish Free State. Authoritative and comprehensive, Kee's book provides a historical framework to better understand the complex history that informs McKinty's novels.

McCarthy, Jerry. "Literature: The Dark Side of the Boom." *The Sunday Times*, June 4, 2006. Literary essay that illustrates how economic prosperity in contemporary Ireland has given rise to the brutal crime and violence inherent in McKinty's Irish noir novels.

McKinty, Adrian. "Irish Heroin Addict in America." Interview by Patrick Millikin. *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 49 (December 6, 2004): 44. Interesting interview with McKinty that provides biographical information and insights into the author's novels.

Sennett, Frank. Review of *The Bloomsday Dead*, by Adrian McKinty. *Booklist* 103, 7 (December 1, 2006): 28. Favorable review praises the book for its action and characterization, although the reviewer feels *Dead I Well May Be* is a superior book.

ALISTAIR MacLEAN

Born: Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland; April 28, 1922

Died: Munich, West Germany (now in Germany); February 2, 1987

Also wrote as Ian Stuart

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Alistair MacLean was a writer of thrillers in the tradition of John Buchan, though without Buchan's depth. Although a few of his books, such as *H.M.S. Ulysses* (1955), may be described as straight adventure stories, most of MacLean's novels involve international intrigue or espionage. In contrast to a writer such as Robert Ludlum, however, whose lengthy novels of intrigue and espionage feature tortuously complicated plots, MacLean crafted taut narratives that move at breakneck

speed from the first chapter to the last. The hero of a MacLean novel faces one apparently insoluble problem after another, leading to a final confrontation fraught with peril. Formulaic but vividly realized, many of MacLean's novels have been adapted for the screen.

BIOGRAPHY

Alistair Stuart MacLean was born in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland. MacLean approached authorship as a business and apparently considered himself a businessman rather than a celebrity. Many facts about his early life are not generally known. He was educated at Glasgow University. During World War II, he served in the Royal Navy, an experience that he later put to good literary use. Many of the adventures in his novels occur at sea, and several of his best-known works are set during World War II.

After the war, MacLean taught English and history at Rutherglen, a secondary school in Glasgow. In 1954, he entered a literary competition in the Glasgow *Herald*, and his sea story "The Dileas" won the hundred-pound prize over nine hundred other entries. His first novel, *H.M.S. Ulysses*, appeared in England in 1955 and in the United States the next year. Thereafter, despite his initial doubts that he could succeed as a writer, he produced a book virtually every year until his death. In 1961, he adopted the pseudonym Ian Stuart while continuing to write steadily under his own name. He became an accomplished scenarist—in fact, he first wrote several of his novels in the form of screenplays.

Of MacLean's first marriage, like much of his private life, little is known except that it produced three sons. His second marriage, to Mary Marcelle Georges, a film production company executive, took place in 1972. He lived in England for a time, operating a small chain of hotels until he lost his taste for that business. He eventually took up residence near Geneva, Switzerland. His interest in science and astronomy, especially science as applied to technology, is apparent in his fiction. While visiting a friend in Munich, West Germany, he suffered a stroke. Three weeks later, on February 2, 1987, he died of heart failure in a Munich hospital.

ANALYSIS

Alistair MacLean was a writer who found his niche at the very beginning of his writing career. Having made a successful debut with *H.M.S. Ulysses*, he proceeded to turn out thirty-three novels in the next thirty years. He worked very quickly, completing a screenplay in about two months and a novel in even less time. That he set a demanding schedule for himself can be inferred from his output. He was a formula writer, whose formula was exceedingly successful, and he would not have claimed to be anything else. To MacLean, writing was a business, and his responsibility as a businessman was to please the customer (that is, the reader).

As noted above, MacLean's fast-moving narratives and their often rugged settings are eminently filmable, and several of his early books were adapted for the

screen. By 1967, MacLean was ready to try his own hand at screenwriting. His first effort was the script for *Where Eagles Dare*, which had been published as a novel that year. He enjoyed solving the technical problems associated with screenwriting and went on to adapt several more of his novels: *The Guns of Navarone* (1957), *Caravan to Vaccarès* (1970), *When Eight Bells Toll* (1966), *Puppet on a Chain* (1969), *Force 10 from Navarone* (1968), and *The Golden Rendezvous* (1962). MacLean novels adapted for the screen by others include *Fear Is the Key* (1961), *Ice Station Zebra* (1963), *The Last Frontier* (1959), *South by Java Head* (1958), *The Satan Bug* (1962), *Bear Island* (1971), *H.M.S. Ulysses*, and *Breakheart Pass* (1974). These films have been vehicles for action stars such as Clint Eastwood (*Where Eagles Dare*) and Charles Bronson (*Breakheart Pass*), as well as other major stars, such as Richard Burton (*Where Eagles Dare*), Rock Hudson (*Ice Station Zebra*), and Anthony Hopkins (*When Eight Bells Toll*).

The novels follow a pattern that millions of MacLean fans have endorsed for more than three decades. The protagonist is a strong man, usually an extreme individualist, who is often in conflict with regularly constituted authority. He is pitted against an implacable, often a totalitarian, enemy. The confrontation usually takes place in some bleak and menacing locale—the turbulent North Atlantic, the sheer face of a cliff, a windswept mountain peak, or frozen arctic tundra. The action consists of a series of encounters (a capture, an escape, a recapture, a reescape), violent and intense but essentially inconclusive, leading up to the final climactic scene. Here, MacLean follows the basic episodic structure of the adventure story, descending from Homer and the medieval romance through James Fenimore Cooper and Alexandre Dumas, *père*. He adds to the mix an emphasis on twentieth century technology, so that the hero is often simultaneously facing hostile men, a hostile environment, and hostile machines.

THE GUNS OF NAVARONE

An example of a novel that blends twentieth century technology with the traditional adventure story is *The Guns of Navarone*, one of MacLean's best-known tales, thanks in part to the highly successful motion-

picture version starring Gregory Peck, David Niven, and Anthony Quinn. In this work, the Allied heroes must destroy mammoth German guns housed in supposedly impenetrable caves high up the face of a sheer and seemingly unscalable cliff. This novel, like many of the ones that followed, has an additional complication. There is a Judas in the protagonists' camp, who constantly betrays them to their enemies.

MacLean's heroes are marked by their steadfastness and by their competence in some crucial field of endeavor. They survive and triumph as much through their expertise as through their character. Andreas in *The Guns of Navarone* and Force 10 from *Navarone* has almost superhuman strength, Bruno in *Circus* (1975) is a high-wire walker, and Mitchell in *Seawitch* (1977) has uncanny night vision. These characters share an indomitable will and an inexhaustible resilience.

THE CRITICS WEIGH IN

The worldwide sales of MacLean's books, as well as the box-office success of the films he wrote, attest his popularity. The critical response to his work, however, is quite mixed. Some critics complain that MacLean tells the same story over and over, and with considerably less zest and energy in the later novels. Such is likely to be the case with any commercially successful formula writer: He knows that his public thoroughly enjoys the literary meal he is serving up, and he is reluctant to begin adding new dishes to the menu. MacLean's subject matter gives the superficial appearance of being varied. Some novels deal with war, others with espionage, and still others with crime—one, *Circus*, even borders on science fiction. The conflict, however, is always physical and unambiguous. The protagonist always possesses the manly virtues, and the antagonists are always recognizably evil: Nazis, Bolsheviks, international drug dealers, terrorists. The protagonist's mission is a seemingly impossible one: to blow up the indestructible gun turrets at Navarone, to kidnap a German general from an impregnable mountain fortress that can be reached only by a single cable car, to rescue VIPs held hostage in the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, to retrieve sunken atomic and hydrogen weaponry from the ocean's floor. Moreover, the hero must succeed even while someone close to him (MacLean's typical Judas figure) is secretly

attempting to sabotage his efforts.

MacLean's handling of violence has been faulted on several counts, some of them seemingly contradictory. Some critics believe that MacLean glorifies violence, that he appeals to the reader's atavistic warlike tendencies. Some even purport to find in MacLean's dialogue simpleminded moralizations about the absolute need for violence in a world filled with vermin. Others argue that so numerous are the violent deaths in most of the novels that they become repetitious, *pro forma*. The scenes of violence are like children's games of pretend; they lack the power to stir the emotions. It may be true that MacLean glamorizes and romanticizes violence, or that he renders it merely banal and boring; he could hardly do both at the same time.

The political perspective of the novels has been characterized as a kind of radical conservatism. Certain critics rather disparagingly suggest that the values at the heart of MacLean's fiction are those of the old-fashioned middle-class morality. In the later novels, however, the author seems to have lost his faith in the institutions of society and in their ability to enforce the traditional standards. A stalwart individual, or perhaps a small band of committed men, must save society in spite of itself. Bureaucracy, both British and American, receives harsh treatment in the novels. The armed forces, the intelligence services, the police forces are all riddled with officious fools, spies, and traitors. A MacLean hero must struggle against the ineptitude of the bureaucracy with one hand while he fights villains with the other.

BREAKHEART PASS

Perhaps criticism of MacLean's writing is most justified as it relates to characterization. MacLean tends to differentiate his characters by giving each a dominant personality trait or an eccentricity or a tic; too often, the result is caricature rather than characterization. Good examples of these deficiencies can be found in *Breakheart Pass*, the story of a disguised federal agent aboard a snowbound train in the American West of 1870. Up to its midpoint, *Breakheart Pass* is a mystery novel. A series of murders occur on the train, and the murderer's identity is withheld until the reader is well into the book. The emphasis in the last half of the novel is on the hero's efforts to get the train

through the pass. MacLean makes little effort to capture the atmosphere of the American West or, for that matter, of the nineteenth century. The characters employ an occasional Americanism; otherwise, they might as easily be modern-day Englishmen stranded in some European mountain pass. This critical assessment of MacLean's characterization is particularly applicable to his treatment of his female characters, who serve primarily as props to the he-man types who star in the novels. Yet it can also be argued that such a criticism is obviated by MacLean's material, which is primarily concerned with masculine exploits.

What MacLean unquestionably does best is to grab readers on the first page and rush them pell-mell through a novel that has great energy and an unflagging pace. Nick Totton says in his review of *Seawitch*, "Those who read Alistair MacLean will read it, and those who do not need no encouragement." The MacLean fan may put the book down with no inclination ever to reread a word of it but will soon be longing for another just like it.

Patrick Adcock

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1955-1960 • *H.M.S. Ulysses*, 1955; *The Guns of Navarone*, 1957; *South by Java Head*, 1958; *The Last Frontier*, 1959 (also known as *The Secret Ways*); *Night Without End*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Fear Is the Key*, 1961; *The Dark Crusader*, 1961 (also known as *The Black Shrike*); *The Snow on the Ben*, 1961 (as Stuart); *The Golden Rendezvous*, 1962; *The Satan Bug*, 1962; *Ice Station Zebra*, 1963; *When Eight Bells Toll*, 1966; *Where Eagles Dare*, 1967; *Force 10 from Navarone*, 1968; *Puppet on a Chain*, 1969; *Caravan to Vaccarès*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Bear Island*, 1971; *The Way to Dusty Death*, 1973; *Breakheart Pass*, 1974; *Circus*, 1975; *Death from Disclosure*, 1976 (as Stuart); *The Golden Gate*, 1976; *Flood Tide*, 1977 (as Stuart); *Goodbye California*, 1977; *Sand Trap*, 1977 (as Stuart); *Seawitch*, 1977; *A Weekend to Kill*, 1978 (as Stuart); *Fatal Switch*, 1978 (as Stuart); *Athabasca*, 1980

1981-1986 • *River of Death*, 1982; *Partisans*, 1982; *Floodgate*, 1983; *San Andreas*, 1984; *Santorini*, 1986

SHORT FICTION: *The Lonely Sea*, 1985

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *Where Eagles Dare*, 1968; *Puppet on a Chain*, 1969 (with Don Sharp and Paul Wheeler); *When Eight Bells Toll*, 1971; *Breakheart Pass*, 1975

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:

All About Lawrence of Arabia, 1962 (also known as *Lawrence of Arabia*)

NONFICTION: *Alistair MacLean Introduces Scotland*, 1972 (Alastair M. Dunnett, editor); *Captain Cook*, 1972

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Hepburn, Allan. *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. This study of British and American spy fiction begins with three general chapters on the appeal, emotional effects, and narrative codes of the genre. Provides context for understanding MacLean.

"Ho-Hum Life of the Man from Navarone." *Life* 71 (November 26, 1971): 91. Profile of MacLean, written for a mass audience.

Lee, Robert A. *Alistair MacLean: The Key Is Fear*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Borgo Press, 1976. Very brief but focused study of MacLean's writing; part of the Popular Writers of Today series.

McDowell, Edwin. "Alistair MacLean Dies: Books Sold in Millions." *New York Times*, February 3, 1987, p. B7. Obituary looks at the life and works of MacLean, who wrote in a variety of genres. Notes that it took him about a month to write a book.

Webster, Jack. *Alistair MacLean: A Life*. London: Chapman's, 1991. The first major biography of MacLean to be published after the author's death; as the title implies, the focus is more on biography than on criticism of the author's work.

CHARLOTTE MacLEOD

Born: Bath, New Brunswick, Canada; November 12, 1922

Died: Lewiston, Maine; January 14, 2005

Also wrote as Alisa Craig; Matilda Hughes

Type of plot: Cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Peter Shandy, 1978-1996

Sarah Kelling and Max Bittersohn, 1979-1998

Janet Wadman and Madoc Rhys, 1980-1992

Grub-and-Stakers, 1981-1993

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PETER SHANDY, an agriculturalist and college professor, is in his late middle ages when he first appears as the developer of the Balaclava Buster, a prize rutabaga. He ages a little in the course of the series and marries Helen Marsh, a librarian who is Shandy's twin in temperament. A calm and quiet man, Shandy has strong moral convictions and enjoys a display of wit and repartee. His keen observations and his love of counting anything and everything are often the means by which he detects important clues.

SARAH KELLING, a Boston Brahmin in her mid-twenties, is made a widow in the first book in which she appears. In the early books in the series, she lacks self-confidence and is easily cowed by those around her and by tradition, but her character develops greater strength and assurance in the course of the series. She develops a relationship with and eventually marries private investigator Max Bittersohn.

MAX BITTERSohn, Sarah's husband, is a private investigator who specializes in art theft and art fraud.

His middle-class upbringing allows him to move more comfortably in the greater world than Sarah; thus, he serves to balance Sarah, whose view of the world is more limited.

JANET WADMAN is a perceptive amateur who relies on her knowledge of the past and of local people to gain insights into cases. She holds to her strong moral convictions, though these at times make her appear overly straitlaced. Her character grows in the series as she becomes more self-reliant and less judgmental. Her confidence develops in part through her marriage.

MADOC RHYS, Janet's husband, a Welshman who has become a Mountie, is assisted by Janet in his cases.

DITTANY HENBIT MONK is the principal member of the Grub-and-Stake Gardening and Roving Club, a women's social organization in Lobelia Falls, Ontario, which fosters a love of gardening and of archery. Dittany is the energetic amateur sleuth who mobilizes other club members for worthy causes while engaging in her own investigations. She frequently calls on Sergeant MacVicar of the local police to assist her.

CONTRIBUTION

In her mysteries, Charlotte MacLeod created local communities that, along with her principal series characters, served as continuing elements within her fiction. Her development of these communities, with all their customs and eccentricities, the new residents who bring change, and the movement of minor characters into major roles in particular novels, made her work distinctive. To define these communities further, MacLeod used domestic detail, conveying realism and evaluating her characters' states of mind by the states

of their domestic circumstances. A love interest in each series culminates in marriage, indicating the importance of stability in the domestic sphere of her sleuths, amateur and professional. MacLeod's portrayals of domestic detail and marital relationships to support the development of her characters places her in a company that includes Ngaio Marsh, Dorothy Simpson, and Patricia Moyes, among others. The light touch MacLeod brought to her mysteries, in which humor and satire are as important to the overall effect of her work as the plot, further distinguished her fiction from that of her contemporaries and allowed her to present mysteries that were also comedies of manners.

MacLeod was a member of the Mystery Writers of America and Crime Writers of Canada. In 1992 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bouchercon convention and in 1998 she received the Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement. She also received the Nero Wolfe Award for *The Corpse in Oozak's Pond* (1987), and she was twice nominated for Edgar Allan Poe Awards and three times nominated for an Agatha Award.

BIOGRAPHY

Charlotte Matilda Hughes MacLeod was born in Bath, New Brunswick, Canada, on November 12, 1922, the daughter of Edward Philips MacLeod and Mabel Maude Hayward MacLeod. During her childhood, her family moved to the United States, and she attended public schools in Weymouth, Massachusetts. She then attended the School of Practical Art in Boston (now the Art Institute of Boston).

MacLeod began her professional career in advertising in 1952, working for N. H. Miller in Boston, where she remained until 1982. She worked as copy chief and eventually became a vice president in the firm. While working in Boston, MacLeod resided on Beacon Hill and later in Sudbury, a small town west of Boston. There, she was a member and officer of the Sudbury Garden Club. After leaving N. H. Miller, MacLeod moved to Maine.

By the age of ten, MacLeod had decided that she would write mysteries for young readers because she could not find enough of them to read. MacLeod first began publishing fiction and articles in popular maga-

zines in the 1960's. Her early fiction was written primarily for teenagers, and many of these works are mysteries. One of her juvenile mysteries, *We Dare Not Go A-Hunting*, published in 1980, was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award by the Mystery Writers of America.

MacLeod began writing her better-known mystery fiction for adult readers in the late 1970's and quickly attracted a reading audience that enjoyed her "witty and literate" style. In addition to writing, she did illustrations and paintings. MacLeod died on January 14, 2005, at the age of eighty-two in Lewiston, Maine.

ANALYSIS

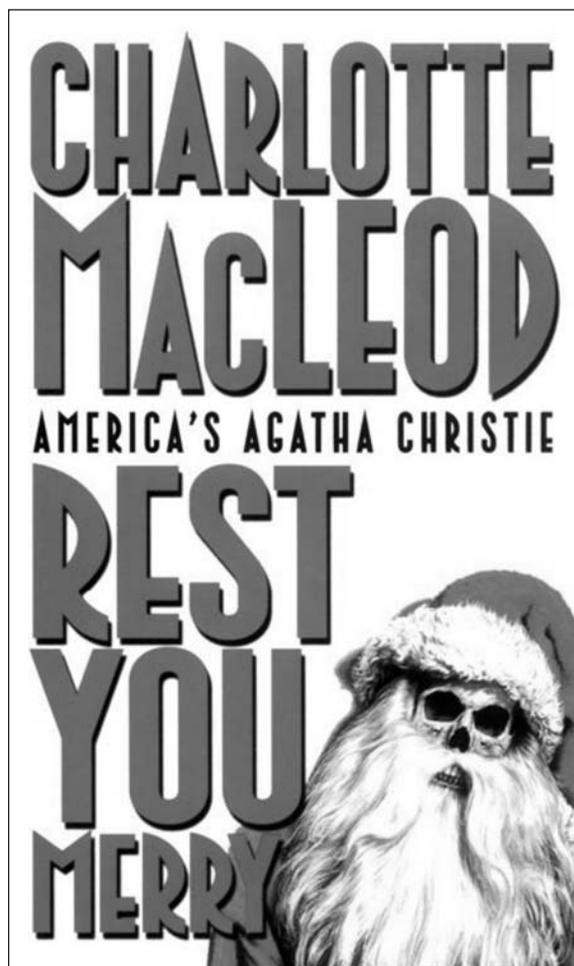
About her own mystery fiction, Charlotte MacLeod commented, "My murders are simple, old-fashioned affairs using weapons that might be found in any well-appointed home: plant poisons, quicklime, contaminated food, bed pillows." Most of the crime and detection in MacLeod's novels occurs in the domestic scene. Her approach to the domestic life is marked by humor and satire; while a few of her novels reflect the dark side of life in a community, most focus on amusing incidents and social relationships that are temporarily disrupted by murder. In her novels, the perpetrators are often obvious and the solutions at times implausible, but these are not the central elements in her work. MacLeod presented comedies of manners in which verbal wit and social foibles and faux pas often take center stage. Her writing supports the structure of the comedy of manners by relying on marriage as a means of reestablishing stability in the community. MacLeod used each series to allow character development: The personalities of continuing characters evolved as new novels appeared. Thus, the characters were not fixed at the time of their first appearances, and in the course of each series, many characters changed from being types to becoming rounded and interesting figures. While developing the personalities of her continuing characters, MacLeod also allowed the identities of the particular community in each series to emerge, revealing local folklore, customs, and values that influence the crimes and the solutions.

Mystery fiction is often regarded as a literature of reassurance and conformity, and this is the case for

MacLeod's writings. In her various series, MacLeod established secure relationships for her sleuths and returned communities to a sense of well-being at the end of each mystery. She provided few gory details, and though suspense was created through the use of the unknown, it did not culminate in moments of violence. MacLeod's use of the domestic and her humorous touches in each series contributed to the positive outlook on the world that her mysteries convey. For the fictional worlds that MacLeod created, murder is merely a momentary diversion in the development of social relationships and the satirizing of those who cannot laugh at their own foibles.

REST YOU MERRY

MacLeod's first series, featuring Peter Shandy as an amateur sleuth, began with *Rest You Merry* (1978).



Reflecting traits that suggest Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, Peter Shandy enjoys puns and plays on words, collects literary obscurities, and displays a few "Shandyisms" of his own, including his proclivity for counting everything he sees and beginning statements with "M'yes." Peter serves as a moral center for his community at Balaclava Agricultural College, a fictional institution in western Massachusetts, though he sometimes overestimates the self-serving motives behind other people's actions. In his first appearance, he is a staunch bachelor, but when the librarian Helen Marsh arrives on the campus to catalog the library's Buggins collection, she brings an end to his bachelor days and works with him to solve two murders that have marred Balaclava's Christmas extravaganza of holiday lighting and winter sport. Under Helen's influence, Peter becomes less priggish and allows more of his sense of humor to show. By the novel's end, the couple are involved in a budding romance.

THE CORPSE IN OOZAK'S POND

By the time Peter and Helen appear together in *The Corpse in Oozak's Pond*, they have settled into a comfortable marriage and often work together to solve cases, using Helen's research skills and knowledge of the Balaclava Buggins collection to turn up clues related to the town's and the college's past. The efficiency of their household and the details of their domestic life serve as a means of contrasting the chaos and disintegration that mark the home life of many criminals and their victims.

While developing the character of Peter Shandy in this series, MacLeod also defines the town-and-gown world of Balaclava College. She draws heavily on humor to present the sources of conflict found in academic life—the struggle for funding, the need for grants, the prima donna personalities of some faculty members, and the unbelievable eccentricities of others, including the school's president, Viking-like Thorkjeld Svenson and his equally imposing wife, Sieglinde. MacLeod's work reveals a realistic appreciation for the less-than-idyllic nature of college life and for the tensions that exist between a college and its host community.

To convey continuity and development in her setting, MacLeod includes information about new mem-

bers of the faculty and new residents in town. When Professor Joad joins the chemistry department and moves onto the Crescent, where almost all college faculty live, Peter consults him on a case and makes him part of the investigating team. MacLeod also allows characters to provide background information on the town's past, as Grace Porbles does in *The Corpse in Oozak's Pond*, recalling incidents and details from her childhood. This sense of change and growth in the community is accompanied by the development of minor characters, the best example of which is Police Chief Fred Ottermole. In the first few books in the series, Ottermole is a flat character whose principal function is to serve as a foil for Peter; as the series continues, however, Ottermole gradually becomes more perceptive and more likable, with his own particular quirks and mannerisms. The presence of a community that provides a context for the mysteries but does not remain a fixed and static place has helped to make this series a favorite among reviewers of MacLeod's work.

THE FAMILY VAULT

In her second series, MacLeod follows a method similar to that in the Shandy series, though the setting and the types of characters are markedly different. MacLeod again focuses on domestic activity and social relationships as the substance of the Sarah Kelling and Max Bittersohn series and creates a continuing community made up of Sarah's family, her boardinghouse tenants, and Max's family. Not all the books in this series, however, reflect MacLeod's usual humor and lightness. With its implications of human cruelty and deception, the first book, *The Family Vault* (1979), is a much darker novel than any in the Shandy series. There is little laughter in Sarah Kelling's life, other than that evoked by wry observations and black humor regarding the family's morbid enjoyment of funerals. In this novel, Sarah is married to a fifth cousin, Alexander, a man a generation older than she is, who treats her "like his child instead of his wife." Their relationship is further hampered by Alexander's mother, Caroline, a cruel and vindictive woman whose dark secrets have brought the once-wealthy family to the brink of financial collapse. Much of this first book focuses on the signs of disintegration apparent in the Kellings' domestic life as Sarah makes do for meals and enter-

taining, uses worn-out linens and clothing, and finds plaster falling on her while she bathes. The only bright moment in the course of the novel comes with the appearance of Max Bittersohn at a dinner party; Sarah finds herself attracted to him in part because he treats her like a human being and an adult. They work together to solve the mystery of an old murder that has present-day consequences, but Sarah is still held within the bonds of her marriage and her family ties. Her release from this entrapment comes with the death of her husband and mother-in-law in a car accident, and with her new independence, Sarah begins to develop her own character.

The Kelling and Bittersohn novels feature two communities: Beacon Hill and the North Shore (north of Boston), especially Ireson's Landing, where the Kellings own summer estates and members of Max's family run businesses. In this series, family members who have minor roles in early novels, including Sarah's uncles Dolph and Jem and her cousin Brooks, later become central figures within particular mystery cases. All these cases revolve around Boston's upper-class society and the world of art, making use of Sarah's knowledge of society and Max's expertise in the area of art fraud and theft. In this series, the satire is directed toward the upper class, poking fun at their foibles, their snobbishness, their traditions, and the silliness of their preppy nicknames—such as Miffy, Biff, and Lassie. Even activities and props become a part of this continuing community, as Dolph's recycling center, which is first mentioned in *The Withdrawing Room* (1980), becomes a focal point in *The Recycled Citizen* (1987) and the George Romney portrait of a Kelling ancestor mentioned in *The Palace Guard* (1981) becomes central to *The Plain Old Man* (1985). Family members also provide love-interest subplots for a number of the mysteries, and Sarah often succeeds in matchmaking for many of them.

THE BILBAO LOOKING GLASS

The novels that continue this series reveal both the changes in Sarah's character, first as she must struggle to make her own way in the world and then in the development of her relationship with Max, who becomes a tenant in her brownstone boardinghouse on Beacon Hill. While allowing the introduction of a wider range

of characters and social classes, the boardinghouse also presents an opportunity for MacLeod to expand Sarah's personality and her abilities as an amateur sleuth, though this is slow to happen. As Sarah gains experience being around people who come from different backgrounds, she becomes more self-reliant and finds that she is able to stand up to her family and assert her own views. When she appears in *The Bilbao Looking Glass* (1983), the fourth book in the series, Sarah realizes that she is not "little Sarah" anymore, and she finds that with an adult perspective on life there is more room for humor.

The growth in Sarah's character is facilitated by her relationship with Max Bittersohn, which quickly evolves into one of the love interests in the series. Max's Jewish middle-class background and strong family ties to the North Shore are gradually revealed through the first four novels in the series. Max functions as a "one-man detective agency" and enjoys a freedom of movement based on his class status and his expertise in the field of art fraud. Sarah is sometimes envious that Max is accepted in places where she is not, and she must painfully confront the issue of anti-Semitism among her own family and associates when she announces her engagement to Max in *The Bilbao Looking Glass*. Though obstacles appear, Max and Sarah do marry, again establishing the pattern of stability and domestic order that has become a mainstay in MacLeod's fiction. The two books that follow their marriage reflect little character development and are hampered by a thinness of plot, but at the end of *The Recycled Citizen*, Max and Sarah have their first child, suggesting that their roles will continue to change.

THE BALLOON MAN

The Balloon Man (1998) was the last of the Kelling and Bittersohn novels to be published. In it, Sarah and Max's son, Davy, is three years old and has become the central focus of their lives. The couple has recently moved into a new house that replaces the memory-laden Kelling home at Ireson's Landing. Once again, themes of Sarah's unhappy past ride in tension with the joyous and supportive network of family and friends that now surrounds her. The action involves stolen gems (part of the old Kelling estate), two kidnappings, and the aid of Sarah's eccentric uncle

Jem and his butler. It also involves many passages in which Sarah reminisces about her first marriage, marking a sort of transition in which she is finally able to put her first husband's ghost to rest.

JANET WADMAN AND MADOC RHYS SERIES

Writing as Alisa Craig, MacLeod set two of her series in Canada. The first, featuring Janet (pronounced "JEN-net") Wadman and Madoc Rhys, takes place in New Brunswick, with two of the books set in and around Janet's hometown of Pitcherville. Here, as in her other series, MacLeod takes as many pains to establish the identity of the community as of her characters. Many of the aspects of life in Pitcherville are revealed through the thoughts and insights of Janet Wadman, the amateur sleuth who suspects murder when an elderly neighbor dies of food poisoning in the opening novel of the series, *A Pint of Murder* (1980). Janet draws on her knowledge of country life and customs to analyze the events that occur, and her knowledge of family histories proves helpful to Madoc Rhys of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police when he appears to conduct the official investigation. MacLeod uses the character of Rhys to undercut the stereotyped image of the Mounties, as Madoc looks less like "Renfrew of the Mounted" than he does "an unemployed plumber's helper" in his rumpled clothes and baggy pants. The relationship that develops between Janet and Madoc is important for its reinforcement of middle-class values. In *Murder Goes Mummifying* (1981), the habits and behaviors of the wealthy Condrycke family are satirized and at times openly ridiculed, while Janet and Madoc agree that they will live "mostly . . . on [his] weekly pay packet." Their marriage and lifestyle develop further in *A Dismal Thing to Do* (1986), which also presents a less straitlaced Janet whose self-reliance and powers of observation support Madoc's investigation of bootlegging and possible espionage.

GRUB-AND-STAKERS SERIES

The other Canadian series focuses on the Grub-and-Stake Gardening and Roving Club of Lobelia Falls, Ontario, and its most active member, Dittany Henbit. Like MacLeod's other series, this series presents a domestic relationship at its center as Dittany marries Osbert Monk (also known as the author Lex

Laramie). His attitude toward the domestic is used in this novel as a test of worthiness: Osbert says that he loves Dittany's kitchen with its old-fashioned pantry exactly as it is, thus winning Dittany's approval and her heart. Dittany and Osbert assist Sergeant MacVicar in his efforts to solve local crimes, often serving as temporary deputies. This is the lightest of MacLeod's series of mystery novels, and though murder occurs, wordplay and farce rule the stories.

Melissa M. Pennell

Updated by Ann D. Garbett

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PETER SHANDY SERIES: *Rest You Merry*, 1978; *The Luck Runs Out*, 1979; *Wrack and Rune*, 1982; *Something the Cat Dragged In*, 1983; *The Curse of the Giant Hogweed*, 1985; *The Corpse in Oozak's Pond*, 1987; *Vane Pursuit*, 1989; *An Owl Too Many*, 1991; *Something in the Water*, 1994; *Exit the Milkman*, 1996

SARAH KELLING AND MAX BITTERSohn SERIES: *The Family Vault*, 1979; *The Withdrawing Room*, 1980; *The Palace Guard*, 1981; *The Bilbao Looking Glass*, 1983; *The Convivial Codfish*, 1984; *The Plain Old Man*, 1985; *The Recycled Citizen*, 1987; *The Silver Ghost*, 1988; *The Gladstone Bag*, 1989; *The Resurrection Man*, 1992; *The Odd Job*, 1995; *The Balloon Man*, 1998

JANET WADMAN AND MADOC RHYS SERIES (AS CRAIG): *A Pint of Murder*, 1980; *Murder Goes Mummifying*, 1981; *A Dismal Thing to Do*, 1986; *Trouble in the Brasses*, 1989; *The Wrong Rite*, 1992

THE GRUB-AND-STAKE SERIES (AS CRAIG): *The Grub-and-Stakers Move a Mountain*, 1981; *The Grub-and-Stakers Quilt a Bee*, 1985; *The Grub-and-Stakers Pinch a Poke*, 1988; *The Grub-and-Stakers Spin a Yarn*, 1990; *The Grub-and-Stakers House a Haunt*, 1993

NONSERIES NOVEL (AS CRAIG): *The Terrible Tide*, 1983

SHORT FICTION: *Grab Bag*, 1987; *It Was an Awful Shame, and Other Stories*, 2002

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Mystery of the White Knight*, 1964; *Next Door to Danger*, 1965; *We Dare Not Go A-Hunting*, 1980

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Food of Love*, 1965 (as Hughes); *Headlines for Caroline*, 1967

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Mouse's Vineyard*, 1968; *The Fat Lady's Ghost*, 1968; *Ask Me No Questions*, 1971; *Brass Pounder*, 1971; *King Devil*, 1978; *Cirak's Daughter*, 1982; *Maid of Honor*, 1984

NONFICTION: *Astrology for Skeptics*, 1972; *Had She But Known: A Biography of Mary Roberts Rinehart*, 1994

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DeCandido, GraceAnne A. Review of *The Balloon Man*, by Charlotte MacLeod. *Booklist* 95, no. 2 (September 15, 1998): 203. Although the reviewer objects to MacLeod's persistent whimsy, she says the novel will appeal to those who can set aside their skepticism.

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Oliver, Myrna. "Charlotte MacLeod, Eighty-two: Author of 'Cozy' Mysteries, Juvenile Books." *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2005, p. B9. Obituary that notes how the MacLeod's ladylike manner and white gloves fit the cozy genre. MacLeod, who lived in Maine, was regarded by some as the inspiration for Jessica Fletcher in the *Murder, She Wrote* (1984-1996) series. Contains substantial biographical information.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *The Balloon Man*, by Charlotte MacLeod. 245 (November 2, 1998): 73. This brief review praises the zaniness of the novel's events and MacLeod's witty urbanity.

_____. Review of *Exit the Milkman*, by Charlotte MacLeod. 243, no. 27 (July 1, 1996): 45. This brief review praises MacLeod's whimsy and wit in the Shandy novels.

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Routledge, Chris. "Detective Fiction." In *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*. Detroit: St. James Press, 2000. This basic essay offers an overview of the conventions of detective fiction through the centuries, concentrating on the subgenres of the subject. Sheds light on MacLeod's work. Bibliography.

PIERRE MAGNAN

Born: Manosque, France; September 19, 1922

Types of plot: Master sleuth; police procedural; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Laviolette, 1977-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR MODESTE LAVIOLETTE, born in the tiny town of Piégut, spends most of his active career in Digne, one of the main towns of the region, where he has acquired a house from one of the protagonists of the first novel in the series. Laviolette is portly, eats, drinks, and smokes too much, and is resolutely anti-modern, to the point of still rolling his cigarettes. He drives an old Simca Vedette, considers his television set a skylight to a world he does not much care for, and prefers to spend his leisure time reading Proust, drinking good wine, or in the company of full-bodied women. He rarely leaves his beloved Provence; his posting there, which his superiors consider punishment for his refusal to follow standard procedures and for his lack of tact with high-ranking officials, is the result of careful planning on his part. At the age of seventy-five, he returns to his birthplace to get over an unhappy love affair and lives in his old family home.

JUDGE CHABRAND is Laviolette's superior. The French criminal system puts a investigating judge, much like a district attorney, in charge of a murder investigation to supervise the police investigation. Chabrand is a physical contrast to Laviolette: Twenty years younger, he has

the lean, ascetic appearance of a fanatic. An avowed communist who wants to change the world by achieving social justice and by ridding society of its exploitive, mainly bourgeois criminal element. The Provence assignment has been a punitive posting for Chabrand with his leftist views, but he has fallen in love with its people and landscape. At one point in the series, the judge turns down a tempting (though illegal) offer from Laviolette to make him a rich man because it would have forced him to leave Provence. Although the relationship between Chabrand and Laviolette remains outwardly formal (they never use the familiar *tu*), it is clear that behind their sometimes irascible banter there is genuine esteem and even friendship.

CONTRIBUTION

Pierre Magnan's reputation as a writer of detective fiction is based predominantly on the literary qualities of his crime novels rather than the ingenuity of his plots or the machismo or the eccentricity of his protagonists. He is above all a Provençal author, in the tradition of Henri Bosco, Marcel Pagnol, and particularly his friend and mentor, Jean Giono. Magnan turned to detective fiction only to support himself at a time when he was unemployed and unable to sell his more traditional regionalist novels. He set out to create a synthesis between his historical-regional fiction and the more lucrative detective novel. Because Magnan's Laviolette novels incorporate features of all the subgenres of crime fiction, it makes it difficult to assign his work to any single subgenre.

The law enforcement positions of Laviolette and Chabrand and the use of scientific police apparatus (though often maligned) makes the novels police procedurals. However, the superior acumen and the eccentricity of both Laviolette and Chabrand suggest the orthodox detective novel. In addition, the abundant descriptions of sex and violence, combined with Oedipal motifs; the frequent empathy with the perpetrators of the crimes; and the subliminal leftist political messages evoke the French roman noir and film noir of the post-World War II years. Laviolette thus is a earthier, darker, and less domesticated Inspector Maigret figure.

Magnan's national and international reputation has grown dramatically in the last ten years; his novels have been translated into several languages, including English, and several novels in the Laviolette series have been adapted for film and television. His sales, after the publication of *La Maison assassinée* (1984; *The Murdered House*, 1999), have skyrocketed, and his work is beginning to receive critical acclaim. Many critics complain that his plots are either too convoluted or too obvious and that his novels are fairly long and require considerable effort to read because they deviate from the mystery and dwell on matters of mood, physical descriptions, and the landscape.

Magnan considers such criticism high praise. The Provençal landscape, more than Inspector Laviolette, is his main protagonist, shaping and forming his characters. Most of the crimes can be solved only by an intricate remembering of things past as they are motivated by century-old family feuds and atavistic urges. Magnan's Laviolette series is great detective fiction and superb Provençal regional fiction that would have made Jean Giono proud of his protégé.

BIOGRAPHY

Pierre Magnan was born in the small Provençal town of Manosque on September 19, 1922, and went to school there until the age of twelve, when he concluded his formal education. He worked as an apprentice typesetter, then joined the voluntary youth labor service, which substituted for the draft in occupied France. In 1937, at the age of fifteen, he became a member of the famous Contadour group around Jean

Giono, who became Magnan's friend and teacher, loaning him books from his library and encouraging him to write. Magnan writes about this period in his autobiographical novels *Apprenti: memoires* (2003; memoirs of an apprentice), and *Un Monstre sacré* (2004; a sacred monster). He wrote his first novel, *Périple d'un cachalot* (the voyage of a sperm whale) in 1938, on lined notebooks given to him by Giono, though it was not published until 1993. In 1942, to avoid the compulsory National Labor Service that would have made him perform forced labor in Germany, he joined a group of the French Resistance in the Isère region.

Magnan's first novel, *L'Aube insolite* (1945; strange dawn) draws on his experiences in the Maquis and was published to critical acclaim, but it and his two subsequent novels did not sell enough copies to allow him to live as a writer; therefore he worked for a refrigerated trucking company for the next twenty-seven years, until he was laid off because of an economic downturn. Suddenly unemployed and without prospects, as he describes in his novel *L'Homme rejeté* (1979; the rejected man), he was told by several editors that his novels were too old-fashioned in the era of the nouveau roman. He decided to write a detective novel because in that popular genre a beginning, a middle, and an end were still required, and he embarked on a new career at the age of fifty-five.

Magnan's first attempt at detective fiction, *Le Sang des Atrides* (1977; the blood of the Atrides), won the prestigious Prix du Quai des Orfèvres and sold one hundred thousand copies. However, the next three Laviolette novels did not sell nearly as well, and when he submitted *The Murdered House* to his publisher, Fayard, it was refused because of his previous poor sales. When the novel was finally picked up by Denoël, it became an instant best seller and has sold more than five hundred thousand copies.

Magnan's new fame led to bigger sales for his subsequent Laviolette novels and allowed him to turn his attention to autobiographical and regional novels. In 2000, he published the last novel in the series, *Le parme convient à Laviolette* (purple suits Laviolette), in which he kills off his famous character. Despite vociferous protests from his readership, he has not re-

vived his series protagonist, although he appeared to be wavering in a 2005 interview.

ANALYSIS

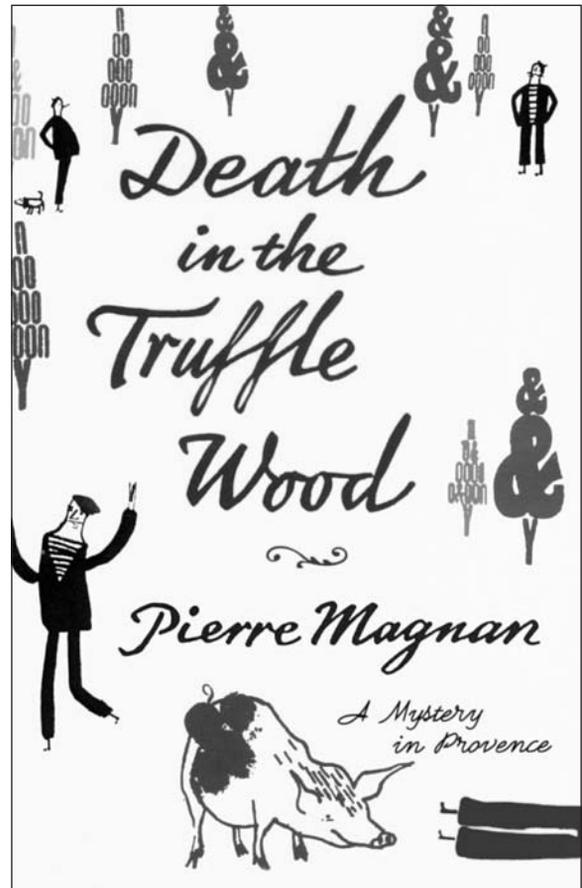
Pierre Magnan turned to genre fiction out of financial necessity, not because he was a fan of detective fiction. However, as an admirer of the great Provençal writers of the previous generation and as a strong opponent of the postmodernist French *nouveau roman*, Magnan found that the detective novel, particularly the more conservative mystery novel, as published in France by the Le Masque editions, permitted him to write highly structured novels whose investigative plots necessitate the unraveling of past events, often connected to family feuds. Magnan's preoccupation with "blood," in the sense of family and heredity, informs most of his plots, and the solution for most of the crimes in his novels can be found in the past, sometimes as far back as one hundred years.

LE SANG DES ATRIDES

Magnan's basic approach is fully developed in the first novel of the Laviolette series, *Le Sang des Atrides*. There is a series of murders, all which have been committed with a pebble propelled by a slingshot. The early victims are young men, but the case complicates itself when an old woman is found dead. An unfinished letter left at the murder scene begins, "My dear little assassin . . .," and Laviolette deduces that a child must be the murderer and that the old woman was killed because she discovered the identity of the perpetrator. Readers should be able to guess the identity of the killer and the motive from the hint given in the title of the novel: The reference is to the House of Atreus, specifically to Orestes and Elektra, who plot to kill both their mother and her lover for having been unfaithful to their father and having murdered him. However, Magnan professes to have been fairly sure that most contemporary readers of detective fiction would not be familiar enough with the House of Atreus to easily solve the puzzle.

DEATH IN THE TRUFFLE WOOD

It is not surprising that *Le Commissaire dans la truffière* (1978; *Death in the Truffle Wood*, 2005) is one of the few Laviolette novels that have been translated into English, as it is his most original and most



tightly constructed novel. One of the main characters is Roseline, a truffle sow who has made the fortune of Alyre Morelon, her owner, and is thus the apple of his eye. Laviolette is called to the small town of Banon to investigate the disappearance of several members of a small hippie community camped just outside the town. Not long after Laviolette's arrival, the body of the first missing hippie shows up in the freezer of a local eatery, drained of all his blood. Roseline's erratic behavior leads Laviolette to an old abandoned chapel, where he finds the rest of the bodies, all having been bled like pigs. One of the bodies, that of a young factory-owner-turned-hippie, appears to be out of place among the rest of the corpses.

The investigation soon begins to focus on a book of ancient magical spells and recipes by the seventeenth century alchemist Albertus Magnus, which has been stolen from the library of Laviolette's old friend, who

is soon found dead with his throat cut. When the inspector finds a copy of the book, he discovers that one of the magical recipes indicates that human blood poured on the trees near truffle beds will stimulate the growth of this expensive plant.

The climactic ending unites all the main characters on a snowy country road and ends with the death of the serial killer. Desperate for money to buy the sexual favors of Alyre's promiscuous wife, the murderer tried to increase his income from his truffle harvest by applying the ancient alchemist's gruesome method. The murderer himself is killed by the sister of the former factory owner, who unsuccessfully tries to cover up her murder of her brother over a business dispute. Laviolette clearly has more sympathy for the poor man driven to kill by his sexual obsession than for the wealthy and greedy female factory owner.

THE MESSENGERS OF DEATH

Written after the upsurge in Magnan's popularity due to the publication of *The Murdered House*, *Les Courriers de la mort* (1986; *The Messengers of Death*, 2006) is the author's masterpiece of detective fiction. Lured out of retirement by Judge Chabrand, Laviolette investigates a series of murders that have their origin and motive in a family dispute dating back to 1860. The novel describes the meager living Provençal farmers have had to scratch from their small, rocky properties for hundreds of years and the resulting custom, not supported by law, that forces all but the eldest son to leave home at the death of the father, often reinforced by the shotgun of the inheritor.

As always, Laviolette's sympathies lie with the wretched criminals rather than with the affluent victims. The sparse house of the ascetic killer, who single-mindedly tries to right a wrong committed on his great-grandfather and will stop at nothing to find the treasure one of the villains cleverly hid, is contrasted favorably with the sumptuous and sexually depraved lifestyle of his victims, which finds its climax during a bacchanalian orgy in a derelict castle in the mountains. Once more Magnan interweaves motifs of heredity, social justice, atavistic urges, folk superstition, and Freudian themes into a rich canvas of rural Provençal life.

Franz G. Blaha

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR LAVIOLETTE SERIES: *Le Sang des Atrides*, 1977; *Le Commissaire dans la truffière*, 1978 (*Death in the Truffle Wood*, 2005); *Le Secret des Andrônes*, 1980; *Le Tombeau d'Hélios*, 1980; *Les Charbonniers de la mort*, 1982; *Les Courriers de la mort*, 1986 (*The Messengers of Death*, 2006); *Les Secrets de Laviolette*, 1991; *Le Parme convient à Laviolette*, 2000

NONSERIES NOVELS: *La Maison assassinée*, 1984 (*The Murdered House*, 1999); *Le Mystère de Séraphin Monge*, 1990 (*Beyond the Grave*, 2002); *La Folie Forcalquier*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *L'Aube insolite*, 1945; *Le Monde encirclé*, 1949; *L'Homme rejeté*, 1979; *Périple d'un cachalot*, 1993; *Un Grison d'Arcadie*, 1999 (*Innocence*, 2001); *Laure du bout du monde*, 2006

NONFICTION: *L'Amant du poivre d'âne*, 1988; *Pour saluer Giono*, 1990; *Apprenti: memoires*, 2003; *Un Monstre sacré*, 2004

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then a three-week-old infant, alive, and tries to find the real killers.

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BARRY MAITLAND

Born: Paisley, Scotland; date unknown

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

David Brock and Kathy Kolla, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAVID BROCK, head of Scotland's Yard's Serious Crimes Branch, is a large, bearded, and aging detective, legendary among the Metropolitan Police of London for his ability to solve baffling murders. Little is revealed about his past, except that he is long since divorced and has a son in America whom he has not seen in years. He is urbane, articulate, cultured, an effective leader, and highly sensitive to the psychological needs of his subordinates. He has repeatedly refused promotion, disdaining administrative work.

KATHY KOLLA is the rising star on Brock's Serious Crimes team. She is a young, single, brilliantly intuitive, and ambitious detective sergeant. Embittered by memories of her father's suicide, she is obsessive about her work. Although there is little conflict between her and Brock, she often strikes out on her own initiative, a trait that gets results but also frequently places her life in peril.

CONTRIBUTION

Barry Maitland began publishing only after a successful career as an architect and academic in both England and Australia. Even in his earliest novels he dis-

plays a mature insight into character and motivation that is rare in crime fiction. His background has also enabled him to incorporate into his fiction a breadth of learning in a number of fields, especially art, architecture, and urban history. Although Maitland's novels have been commercially successful and critically well received, they have not as yet achieved the reputation that they merit. Like the works of the British master of the police procedural, P. D. James, Maitland's novels are intricately plotted, thematically sophisticated, and symbolically suggestive.

Maitland's chief contribution to the police procedural is his imaginative and often symbolic depiction of crime settings. Broadly speaking, all of his fictions are set within the city of London or its suburban environs. Having spent many years growing up in the city, Maitland is intimately aware of its many layers of history but is also acutely aware of the changes that successive waves of immigration and social change have brought. This awareness is deftly woven into the fabric of all his novels.

BIOGRAPHY

Barry Maitland was born in Paisley, Scotland, and raised in London. He studied architecture at Cambridge University, graduating in 1966, and worked as an architect in the United Kingdom for a number of years before attending the University of Sheffield, where he earned a doctorate in urban design. In 1984 he accepted a position as dean of the School of Architecture at the

University of Newcastle, in New South Wales, Australia, where he remained until 2000. He became a full-time writer settled in the Hunter Valley region of south-eastern Australia, two hours north of Sydney.

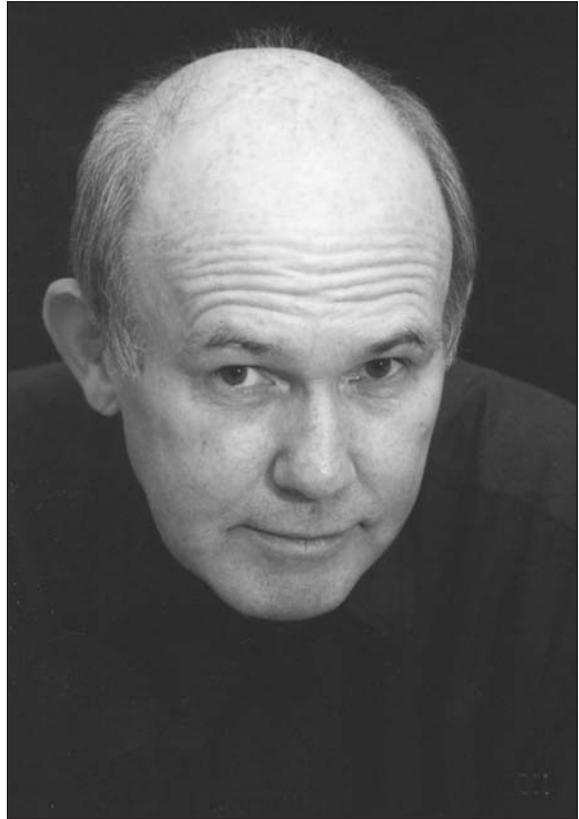
Maitland's first novel, *The Marx Sisters* (1994), was short-listed for the John Creasey New Blood Dagger award by the British Crime Writers' Association. *The Marx Sisters*, which was translated into several languages, also established the series characters, David Brock and Kathy Kolla, who would become the mainstay of Maitland's subsequent crime fiction. Maitland's second novel, *The Malcontenta* (1995), was awarded the New Kelly Award for best crime-fiction novel by an Australian author.

Before his 1994 debut, Maitland had already published several academic works on architecture and design. One of these, *Shopping Malls: Planning and Design* (1985), is a study of how shopping malls have evolved, architecturally, out of more traditional urban retail spaces and how they might become more amenable to a broader range of human social uses.

ANALYSIS

As a writer of police procedurals, Barry Maitland is no iconoclast. He works within the classical limitations of the genre. David Brock and Kathy Kolla are both brilliant but fallible and, thus, are realistic practitioners of police detection. Maitland's realism is also evident in his depiction of how the modern police detective is dependent on teams of forensic, medical, ballistics, and computer specialists. The methodical and painstaking gathering of evidence is always given its due in these novels, yet Maitland never allows his stories to become bogged down in scientific or technical detail.

In the police procedural's most commonly employed plot structure, a murder is committed in an early chapter, investigators are called to the scene of the crime, and the ensuing investigation leading to a solution constitutes the whole of the story's plot. Thus far in his career, Maitland has relied exclusively on this classic structure. Its chief advantage is that, at each step of the way, the readers know no more than do the investigators and must piece together the evidence, sort through the clues, and eliminate false trails without any prior knowledge of the relationships be-



Barry Maitland. (Howard Johnson/Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

tween victims and perpetrators. Although Maitland's plots are not in this respect innovative, they are nonetheless distinguished by their multilayered intricacy. For example, in *All My Enemies* (1996), Brock's team investigates a murder that appears to be tied to a number of previously unsolved killings of young women. Although the main line of investigation focuses on a middle-aged amateur photographer who is believed to stalk his victims on the London subways, Kolla pursues a much less promising trail that leads to her involvement in a London theater company. What begins as a subplot ends by absorbing the primary plot in a final solution that is at once elegant and shocking.

One of the weaknesses of crime fiction as a genre, and especially of the police procedural, is that it traditionally allows little room for development of character, which is generally dominated by the exigencies of plot. Maitland addresses this weakness, first of all, in a manner typical of modern police procedurals. He al-

lows conflict to develop between his detectives' personal lives and their police careers. Given the psychological demands of the crime investigator's job, the long hours, and the brutal realm in which he or she must operate, it is almost inevitable that familial or romantic relationships will be difficult to maintain. Maitland is adept at weaving such conflicts into his novels, especially in his exploration of Kolla's troubled family history and her repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to establish stable relationships. However, Maitland is also aware that the development of his detectives as fully three-dimensional characters must remain subordinate to the demands of plot. Unlike many other modern writers of crime fiction, he does not allow the personal conflicts of his detectives to lapse into melodrama or to deflate the suspense that a satisfying work of crime fiction demands. As for Maitland's perpetrators and suspects, they are almost never mere psychological "types," but complex and realistically motivated characters.

Maitland's greatest strength, however, is his ability consistently to place his characters in settings of striking originality. This feature of Maitland's writing is already evident in the first novel, *The Marx Sisters*, in which an all but forgotten street in the heart of London, virtually unchanged since the nineteenth century, is threatened by modern development. Equally impressive in this regard are several of the later novels, including *Silvermeadow* (2000), in which a glittering new suburban shopping mall becomes not only a setting for murder but also a symbolic device for reflection on the alienated social conditions of modern consumerism; *The Verge Practice* (2003), in which the ultramodern corporate headquarters of an architectural firm becomes symbolically resonant of its founder's egomania; and *No Trace* (2004), in which an urban colony of postmodern artists becomes a staging ground for murder masquerading as performance art.

SILVERMEADOW

In *Silvermeadow*, after the horribly crushed and shrink-wrapped body of a teenage girl is found in a trash compactor at an industrial waste disposal site, investigators have reason to believe that the girl was killed at a nearby shopping mall, called Silvermeadow. After Brock and Kolla become involved, the investiga-

tion is temporarily headquartered at Silvermeadow during the height of the Christmas shopping season. Initially, the investigation centers on two suspects who work within the mall because Brock is convinced that the mall's ultramodern security arrangements would have rendered a murder or abduction by an outsider nearly impossible. The investigation is further complicated by the suspicion that at least one other girl's death is connected to the mall.

Although the plotting and characterization in *Silvermeadow* are superbly crafted, the real center of attention is the mall itself. Built on the site of an ancient Anglo-Saxon battle against the Vikings, Silvermeadow is no ordinary mall, but a megamall consisting of nearly three hundred retail outlets, cinemas, a fitness center, and a leisure pool—all spread over a million square feet of climate-controlled space. Among the many entertainments on the mall's grand concourse is an enormous, scaled model of a volcano that erupts on the hour, complete with realistic lava flows. The mall is a gigantic consumption machine designed to maximize profits by creating an all-encompassing fantasy of comfort and security for the consumer. However, Brock's murder investigation must of necessity strip away this illusion and peer behind the facade of security and manufactured Christmas cheer.

The central thematic irony in *Silvermeadow* turns on this discrepancy between the mall's carefree and reassuring appearance and the frightening reality that lurks beneath. As the investigation probes deeper into the mall's history and politics, it becomes an increasingly sinister place. Just as the mall preys parasitically on its unwary customers (and the local communities whose economies it has disrupted), so also a murderer is preying on the flocks of teenage girls for whom the mall is a home away from home. Maitland suggests that the mall stands symbolically for the larger society in which the modern individual, reduced to a passive consumer, is all too easily manipulated by the illusions of advertising and the false promises of comfort, satisfaction, and security. The essential message of the mall is that you, the consumer, may have all that you desire. What is most disturbing about *Silvermeadow* is that among the mall's thousands of shoppers, a murderer, too, has heard the same message.

In *Silvermeadow*, Maitland has clearly drawn heavily on his own architectural expertise in the planning, building, and management of malls. However, none of this technical knowledge is on display merely to impress the reader with the author's learning; all of it is central to the investigation and is revealed in a way that avoids disrupting the narrative with long digressions.

THE VERGE PRACTICE

In *The Verge Practice*, when Brock and Kolla are sent to investigate the murder of the wife of a famous British architect, Charles Verge, the evidence strongly suggests that Verge himself is the killer. However, Verge has mysteriously disappeared and Brock's Scotland Yard superiors would, for political reasons, prefer to see the great architect exonerated. When Sandy Clarke, Verge's business partner, commits suicide and leaves behind a signed "confession" to the murder of Verge's wife, Brock, against his better instincts, is forced to close the investigation. Meanwhile, Kolla undertakes an unofficial line of inquiry that leads her to Barcelona, Spain, where, she suspects, a sinister plastic surgeon may have altered Verge's appearance and aided him in fleeing to South America. Although this proves, in part, to be a false trail, Kolla does uncover a revealing videotape that points toward the eventual solution to the murder.

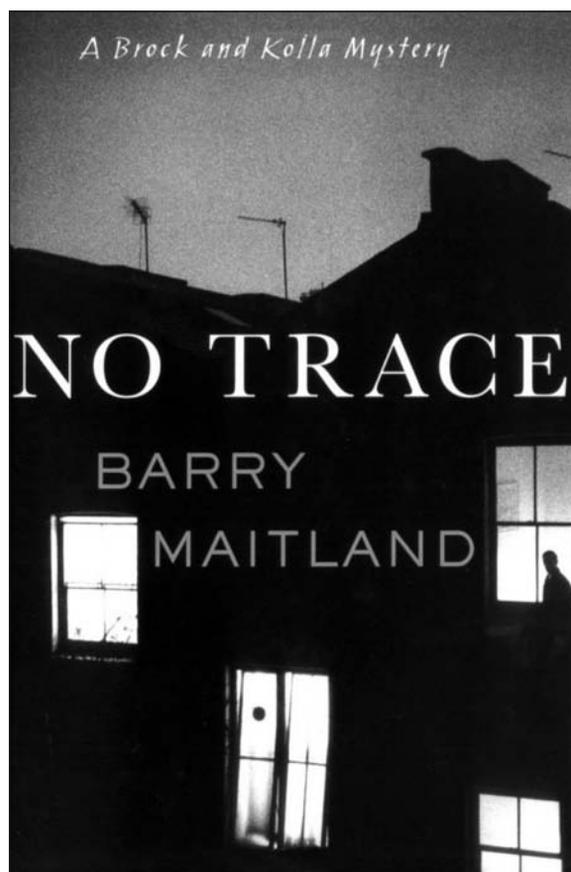
The Verge Practice has been described as Maitland's "architectural novel" with good reason. Many of the novel's most important scenes are placed in architecturally rich settings, both in England and in Spain. Three of Verge's most famous buildings are featured: an award-winning house, built early in his career; the Verge Practice corporate headquarters in London; and a recently completed, state-of-the-art, maximum security prison. All three of these buildings are striking examples of the ultramodern minimalism that has won Verge an international reputation. The novel reflects extensively on the history of modern architecture but never in a merely didactic fashion. Instead, Maitland seems most interested in exploring the underlying psychological connections between the cold and controlling personality of Verge and the minimalist austerity of the buildings he designs. Although the point is never overtly thrust on the reader, it is clear that Maitland is disturbed by the inhumane emphasis

on function over form in these buildings—a trend in modern architecture dating back to the revolutionary work of German architect Mies van der Rohe, whose aesthetics are the model for Verge's own work.

NO TRACE

In *No Trace*, two little girls have gone missing and are feared to be the victims of a serial child rapist and killer when Brock and Kolla are called to the scene of a third abduction, Northcote Square, a purely fictional neighborhood and art colony in east London. Six-year-old Tracey Rudd has disappeared from her home, and the police have reason to believe that she was taken from her ground-floor bedroom in the wee hours of the morning while her father, the famous conceptual artist Gabriel Rudd, slept in another part of the house. Rudd, a widower, is one of several suspects in the case.

Just as Maitland uses a shopping mall setting in *Silvermeadow* to comment indirectly on the social alienation reflected in mall culture, in *No Trace* Mait-



land employs an urban community of artists to make a comment on the morally repellant spectacle of postmodern art, which is here presented as essentially parasitical on the more authentic art of the past. Northcote Square is an old London neighborhood that has been recently colonized by a number of artists, some traditional, but most of them self-consciously postmodern, which is to say that their “art” consists largely of what is known as pastiche, that is, borrowings (sometimes acknowledged, sometimes not) from previous artistic styles and techniques.

Maitland’s novel takes its title from the Rudd exhibition, “No Trace,” mounted in the Pie Factory, a gallery run by Rudd’s tireless promoter and art impresario, Fergus Tait. The exhibition consists of a series of banners, each depicting in cryptic fashion a day in the course of the investigation of the abduction of Rudd’s daughter. Although Maitland is careful to include various points of view regarding the value of the artworks depicted here, there is nonetheless a strong undercurrent of satire suggesting that much of the postmodern art world is not really about art, in the traditional sense, but about the exploitation of a gullible public by cunning, self-promoting artists, their agents and promoters, and a media establishment all too willing to heap publicity on the latest outrageous artistic “statement.”

In certain respects, *No Trace* resembles the American novelist Carol O’Connell’s *Killing Critics* (1997), a brilliant police procedural in which the New York art community is similarly satirized. However, in Maitland’s novel, the satire is subtler and more effectively subordinated to the demands of the plot. In fact, the plot’s final solution turns in large part on Kolla’s ability to decipher Rudd’s artistic borrowings from an obscure eighteenth century painter, Henry Fuseli, particularly the image of a mysterious dark figure leading a small child by the hand into a dark tunnel.

Jack E. Trotter

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAVID BROCK AND KATHY KOLLA SERIES: *The Marx Sisters*, 1994; *The Malcontenta*, 1995; *All My Enemies*, 1996; *The Chalon Heads*, 1999; *Silvermeadow*, 2000; *Babel*, 2002; *The Verge Practice*, 2003; *No Trace*, 2004; *Spider Trap*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Design and Planning of Retail Systems*, 1976 (with David Gosling); *Concepts of Urban Design*, 1986 (with Gosling); *Shopping Malls: Planning and Design*, 1985; *The New Architecture of the Retail Mall*, 1990

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- _____. Review of *No Trace*, by Barry Maitland. *Publishers Weekly* 253, no. 29 (July 24, 2006): 39. Favorable review that notes Maitland’s ability to bring the setting of the novel alive and calls the work “haunting” and “unnerving.”
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- Underhill, Paco. *The Call of the Mall*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004. An exploration of mall culture and its effect on the consumer; provides helpful background on the social and economic function of malls relevant to Maitland’s *Silvermeadow*.

MARGARET MARON

Margaret B. Brown

Born: Greensboro, North Carolina; August 25, year unknown

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sigrid Harald, 1981-
Deborah Knott, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SIGRID HARALD, a police lieutenant in New York City, is at first essentially a loner, not sharing her personal information or her emotions. As the series continues, she begins to develop close personal relationships and becomes more open in dealing with others. She is somewhat idealistic and remains dedicated to her work. She is efficient and thorough in solving the cases to which she is assigned.

DEBORAH KNOTT is a defense attorney running for election as a judge in the first novel, and in the following novels she is a district court judge in North Carolina. The only daughter in a large family, she becomes involved as an amateur sleuth in most of her cases because they involve relatives or friends in her rural community. The first-person narrator in most of the novels in the series, she gives vivid descriptions of the area, which, like Deborah herself, changes and develops throughout the series.

CONTRIBUTION

Margaret Maron has won the hearts of a vast readership and the continuing praise of critics. Her Deborah Knott series started with *Bootlegger's Daughter* (1992), which won the Edgar, Anthony, Agatha, and Macavity Awards for best novel. To win all four major mystery and detective fiction awards in the United States was an honor that no other writer had accomplished. She has continued to receive awards for many of her works, including an Agatha Award in 2000 for *Storm Track*. Before the Deborah Knott series, Maron was already known for her mystery short stories and her Sigrid

Harald series. She has also published nonseries detective novels and collections of short stories. She is known especially for her sharp creation of characters, her effective use of dialogue and regional dialect, and her insightful depiction of rural North Carolina.

Maron has been a significant influence on other mystery writers. Following her creation of Judge Deborah Knott, several other series featuring a female protagonist and by southern female writers have appeared. They have benefited from Maron's model of an independent professional woman who is competent and likeable. Maron also incorporates important social issues in her works, a trend increasingly followed by other writers.

Maron has been an active leader in promoting the mystery genre. She was a founding member of the Carolina Crime Writers Association, serving on its steering committee (1988-1998); president of the international organization Sisters in Crime (1989-1990); president of the American Crime Writers League (1997-1998); and president of the Mystery Writers of America (MWA) in 2005. She has encouraged other writers and worked to increase the visibility and prestige of the genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Maron was born Margaret B. Brown in rural North Carolina and grew up on a farm near Raleigh. She is the daughter of C. O. Brown and Claudia Stephenson Brown. She says that from the time she was eleven years old and discovered the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay, she wanted to be a writer, but it was many years before she began her professional career. Shortly after high school she moved to the North. In 1959 she dropped out of college to marry Joseph "Joe" J. Maron, an officer in the U.S. Navy whom she had met while working in the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. They lived for a time in Italy, where he was stationed, and then in New York. Her time in Brooklyn later provided the setting for her Sigrid Harald series. They moved back to her family's homeplace in North Carolina. They had a son, John, and al-

though Maron says her life was full, she realized that she needed to start writing if she was ever to fulfill her childhood dream.

Maron's first interest was poetry, but when she began writing seriously and selling her work, she wrote short stories, mostly mysteries, starting with "The Death of Me" in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* in 1968. She says that short stories seemed to be her natural form, and for twelve years of writing it never occurred to her that she could write novels because she was intimidated by the long form. However, the short-story market was not strong in the late 1970's, and she kept adding to one of her stories until she finally had enough pages to call it a book. Her first novel, *One Coffee With* (1981), introduced Sigrid Harald.

Maron continued to write short stories, most of which were first published in anthologies and later collected in *Shoveling Smoke* (1997) and *Suitable for Hanging* (2004). The story that was to mark the most significant development in her career was first published in *A Woman's Eye* (1991), edited by the well-known detective-fiction author Sara Paretsky. When Paretsky invited Maron to contribute a story to the anthology, Maron has reported that suddenly Deborah Knott strolled into her head and began telling a story. Deborah made her first appearance in "Deborah's Judgment." The next year, 1992, Deborah was the protagonist in the novel *Bootlegger's Daughter*. The Deborah Knott series greatly expanded Maron's readership. Deborah is a fascinating and developing central character, and the series struck a resonating chord with readers in terms of place. The American South was epitomized in the fictional Colleton County, North Carolina. Maron has commented that the mystery form is the framework on which she can hang her concerns for the passing of a culture, the despoliation of a region, and the issues of the time. She has said that if her books have a strong sense of place, she learned it all from the poet Millay.

ANALYSIS

Margaret Maron's Sigrid Harald novels are best read in order of their publication. The reader who starts with a later book in the series does so without the benefit of considerable backstory regarding Sigrid Harald and her motivations for her actions. When Maron began her se-

ries about the New York Police Department (NYPD) homicide detective with *One Coffee With*, she portrayed her as an awkward and painfully shy young woman, inept at dealing with her emotions, thus allowing Maron plenty of room to show her character's personal growth. The solitary Sigrid grows into a more confident woman, who dresses differently, views herself differently, and has a new understanding of her parents' influence in her life. She has a lover as well as friends.

After *One Coffee With*, Maron wrote six more Sigrid Harald novels between 1984 and 1991, then let four years lapse before publishing *Fugitive Colors* (1995). That novel included a tragic accident involving Oscar Nauman, a major character in the series, leaving Sigrid despondent and readers shocked. By that time, Maron had already started her second series. She has said she plans to write at least one additional Sigrid Harald novel.

Although Sigrid is a police officer in a big city, the novels are not typical police procedurals. Maron has referred to her character as a sleuth with a badge, one who has much in common with an amateur detective but who has a legitimate reason for being involved in solving a murder case. The emphasis in Maron's novels is on character development, mood, and setting rather than on the investigative process followed by the police in identifying and finding the murderer, and the presentation of the solution to the crime is like that in classically plotted puzzle mysteries.

ONE COFFEE WITH

The primary setting of *One Coffee With* is the campus of the fictional Vanderlyn College in the middle of New York City, specifically in the art department. The cramped departmental office always has people coming and going. One morning someone has put a spoonful of poison in Professor Ripley Quinn's coffee, killing him. Lieutenant Sigrid Harald, the only female homicide detective in the precinct, interviews faculty and staff and learns that Professor Quinn and Professor Oscar Nauman, the department chair, both used sugar in their coffee. Their cups were placed next to each other, so the intended victim is not clear. Almost certainly the perpetrator was someone involved with the department. The puzzle is which of the limited suspects, all of whom potentially had motive, means, and

opportunity, actually committed the murder. Sigrid must use her insights into the psychology of those involved and deduce which clues are relevant.

THE DEBORAH KNOTT SERIES

Maron's style throughout the Deborah Knott series is much more relaxed than in her Sigrid Harald series. The language is colloquial, the emphasis on place more dominant, and the main character easy for most readers to identify with and enjoy. The murder mystery plot is less dominant than the depiction of the lives of those living through changing times in the South.

Judge Deborah Knott frames the Old South through the eyes of a modern career woman. The series traces southern family relationships, traditions, and social attitudes, repeatedly demonstrating the inseparability of language, geography, and history in creating cultural norms. Like Maron, Deborah grew up on a farm in North Carolina, left for the North for several years, and then returned to her homeland and family ties. A persistent theme throughout the series is Deborah's search for autonomy and for a way to promote her own sense of justice in an area still entrenched in patriarchal control and its own long-standing brand of justice.

Judge Knott's official cases range from the more serious to the hilarious. They form a recurring backdrop in the novels to establish her as a good judge of character, fair-minded, and lenient when possible, but harsh on such matters as spousal abuse or violence against others. The courtroom is also the place where the two Souths meet, the black and the white, and Maron uses it to show the continuing problems that result from a long-standing white supremacist, patriarchal culture. Even more, however, the view that Maron presents of the South is shown through Deborah's everyday life and the murder cases she becomes unofficially involved with throughout the series.

Deborah is the youngest in a big family, the only girl, with eleven older brothers. Her widowed father, Keezie Knott, is traditional in his view of himself as patriarch of the family, and her brothers, although they differ in degree, for the most part assume a similar superior-because-male attitude and in general think they can tell Deborah what to do. This becomes less pronounced as the series continues, both because Deborah insists on doing things her way and because of

changing social attitudes toward women. Most of the brothers still live in Colleton County with their wives and children, and a sizeable network of relatives lives in the community. Deborah can rattle off the precise genealogy of her family with the fluency of the traditional southern belle. Maron eventually decided to provide a diagram of the family tree, which changes when new characters appear, at the beginning of the novels.

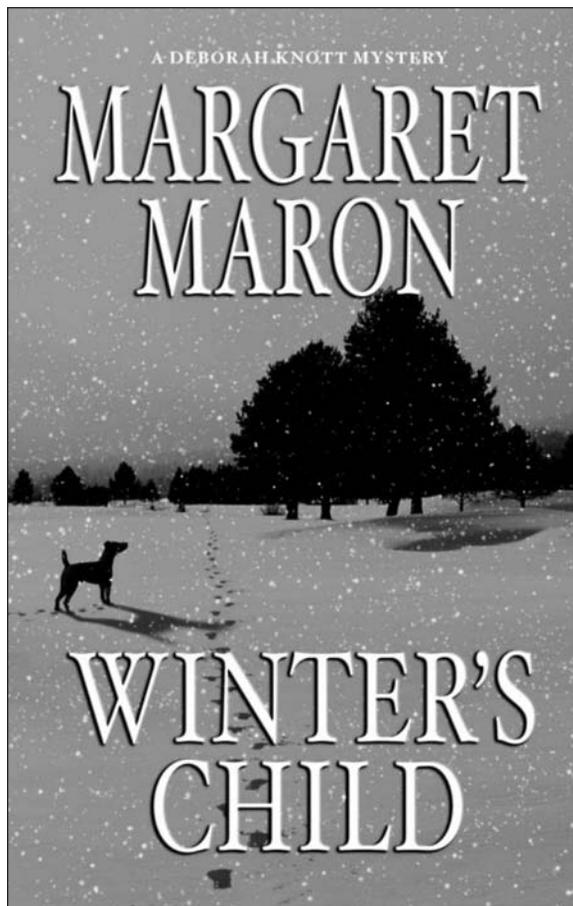
Deborah's extended family and community are a microcosm of the larger society with its racial and gender stereotypes and class attitudes that remain mainstream images of the American South. However, that image is being altered, as population changes force the intersection of the Old South's past with its high-tech nonagrarian future. The new South, with its advantages and problems, becomes more evident during the course of the series.

BOOTLEGGERS DAUGHTER

Maron's most highly acclaimed novel, *Bootlegger's Daughter*, establishes Deborah Knott's stance on the always problematic relationship between means and ends when it comes to politics. She is running for the office of district judge. If she wins, she will be the first woman to do so. Her campaigning is disrupted when Gayle Whitehead, whom Deborah has known all her life, begs her to investigate the murder of infant Gayle's mother eighteen years earlier. Deborah reluctantly agrees to try. Things escalate dramatically as she investigates, and two people are murdered. Just before election day, Deborah has not only solved the murder of Gayle's mother but also has been in a gunfight, saved Gayle's life, exposed the outcome of prejudice against homosexuals, identified the killer of the two people murdered during her investigation, and identified the culprit in another past murder. The newspapers do not get the story right in time, and Deborah loses the election. However, a judge has had a heart attack, and the governor will appoint someone to finish his term. In a complicated ending, Deborah's "daddy," Keezie, the former bootlegger, helps Deborah get appointed, even though he considers a judge's job to be inappropriate work for a woman.

WINTER'S CHILD

In this twelfth novel in the series, *Winter's Child* (2006), Deborah, whose wedding to Deputy Sheriff Dwight Bryant was the highlight ending of the previ-



ous novel, *The Rituals of the Season* (2005), becomes embroiled in a case involving her own new family. Her husband's eight-year-old son, Cal, is living with his mother in another town. Just as Dwight is starting to investigate a local murder, Cal anxiously calls to remind his father that he promised to talk to his class at school the next morning. Dwight reluctantly goes but soon realizes Cal's situation is serious: His mother has not been home for the past few days and Cal does not know where she is. Deborah comes to help. Both Dwight and Deborah are emotionally unsettled as they delve into his former wife's personal life for clues to her disappearance. As the search expands, Cal too disappears. Both his and Deborah's lives are in danger, and Dwight is being regarded as a suspect. The end of the novel reveals that violence and darkness often lurk beneath surface appearances.

Lois A. Marchino

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SIGRID HARALD SERIES: *One Coffee With*, 1981; *Death of a Butterfly*, 1984; *Death in Blue Folders*, 1985; *The Right Jack*, 1987; *Baby Doll Games*, 1988; *Corpus Christmas*, 1989; *Past Imperfect*, 1991; *Fugitive Colors*, 1995

DEBORAH KNOTT SERIES: *Bootlegger's Daughter*, 1992; *Southern Discomfort*, 1993; *Shooting at Loons*, 1994; *Up Jumps the Devil*, 1996; *Killer Market*, 1997; *Home Fires*, 1998; *Storm Track*, 2000; *Uncommon Clay*, 2001; *Slow Dollar*, 2002; *High Country Fall*, 2004; *Rituals of the Season*, 2005; *Winter's Child*, 2006; *Hard Row*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Bloody Kin*, 1985; *Last Lessons of Summer*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *Shoveling Smoke*, 1997; *Suitable for Hanging*, 2004

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Women: The Woman Mystery Reader's Indispensable Companion. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998. Short articles by and about late twentieth century writers, including Maron, who writes about the influence of poet Edna St. Vincent Millay and gives her list of "The Ten Best Pieces of Writing Advice I Ever Received," which include to read more and to write more. Pictures and index.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay detailing Maron's life and works.

Maron, Margaret. Margaret's Web. <http://www.margaretmaron.com>. Comprehensive and informative author's Web site. Contains a biography, list of books, and information on Maron's series characters.

JOHN P. MARQUAND

Born: Wilmington, Delaware; November 10, 1893

Died: Newburyport, Massachusetts; July 16, 1960

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Mr. Moto, 1935-1957

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MR. MOTO, a special agent of the Japanese government, often works against elements inside his own country in the cause of the balance of international power and world harmony. Mr. Moto's distinguishing features are his spectacles and gold teeth. His extremely polite manner and self-effacing demeanor conceal a brilliant mind and a small, judo-trained body ready to attack and defend against any danger.

CONTRIBUTION

John P. Marquand wrote five novels featuring Japanese secret agent Mr. Moto between 1935 and 1942, when World War II forced him to abandon the Japanese figure as a hero. During that time, these novels, first appearing as serials in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, attracted many readers because of their intriguing characters, exotic and mysterious settings, action-filled plots, and polished style. Moto became one of the most popular mystery characters of the 1930's, and Twentieth Century Fox, the same studio that produced the Charlie Chan films based on the Earl Derr Biggers character, made eight films, with Peter

Lorre expertly playing Moto between 1937 and 1939. Although the films sometimes had the same titles as the novels, their plots bore little relationship to the books. Another film was added to the series in 1965, with Henry Silva as the detective. Near the end of his life, Marquand produced one more Moto book. In it, Moto aids an American intelligence agency against Russian spies.

BIOGRAPHY

John Phillips Marquand was born in 1893, a relative of such respected New Englanders as Margaret Fuller and Edward Everett Hale. When his father lost his money in the panic of 1907 and had to resume his work as an engineer, however, Marquand became a poor relation. Although Marquand eventually worked his way to the top of New England society by dint of sheet effort, there was always a taint on his achievement. He attended Harvard University, majored in chemistry, and was graduated in 1915, but he was not selected for any of the important clubs and worked only on *The Harvard Lampoon*. After graduation, he married Christine Sedgwick of the family that edited *The Atlantic Monthly*, began to work as a magazine writer, and spent more than a decade perfecting his craft. Ultimately, he was one of the most skillful and highly paid fiction writers in the United States, but he was looked down on by his associates, who wanted him to write "serious" fiction.

The tension between what Marquand had worked

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

John P. Marquand posing with his wife in 1943. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

to become and what society expected him to be was reflected in his personal life, which was unsettled. He divorced Christine Sedgwick after the birth of a son, John P. Marquand, Jr., and a daughter, Christine; he married Adelaide Hooker in 1937, had three children with her—Blanch Ferry Marquand, Timothy Fuller Marquand, and Elon Huntington Hooker Marquand—and divorced her in 1958. Marquand's frequently unpleasant relations with women were mirrored in his last, valedictory novel, *Women and Thomas Harrow* (1958). Marquand died at home in his sleep in 1960.

The financial success of Marquand's magazine stories and the Mr. Moto novels freed him to do the kind of writing he had always wanted to try—novels about a

successful man who is nevertheless unhappy because he has had to make too many compromises or because he lives in a new world that he does not understand and that does not appreciate his accomplishments and values. In this vein, Marquand wrote *The Late George Apley* (1937), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, and followed it with other successful social novels—*Wickford Point* (1939), *H. M. Pulham, Esquire* (1941), *B. F.'s Daughter* (1946), *Point of No Return* (1949), *Melville Goodwin, USA* (1951), and *Sincerely, Willis Wayde* (1955)—several of which were made into plays and films.

ANALYSIS

The Mr. Moto series grew out of John P. Marquand's travels to Asia as a result of his connection with *The Saturday Evening Post*, which wanted to broaden the experience of one of its most successful writers. Marquand was fascinated by Asia, particularly China, and used that part of the world as the backdrop for all but

two of the Moto books—*Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937) takes place in Hawaii and *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto* (1942) in the Caribbean. All the books in the series follow an easily recognized formula except for the last, *Stopover: Tokyo* (1957), which appeared fifteen years after *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto*, the last of the original series of five books.

In a pattern obviously derived from Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) and also suggested by elements of Marquand's own life, the central figure of each book is a thirtyish American whose career has been compromised by shady events in his past and who has fled to another part of the world to escape that past. He suffers from low self-esteem and often believes that he

has reached the end of his rope. Through association with another foreigner, often British, often corrupt, the American stumbles into a dangerous situation that threatens his life and that of a young, beautiful, and spirited woman whom he first distrusts but to whom he becomes attracted. With the help of Moto, the man and woman manage to escape the villains. The protagonist also finds that the woman has revived feelings that he thought were dead, and he falls in love with her. He finds, too, that his honor and ability were merely dormant, and he is ready to face life with new resolve.

The change in the main character is central to each novel; Moto is almost a minor character, although he ties together the various plot strands, explains the mystery, and enables the central character to triumph. Moto superficially fits the Japanese stereotype that existed at the time the books were written: He is short, has prominent teeth, wears glasses, and is unfailingly courteous. One of his favorite expressions is “very, very nice.” Nevertheless, Moto can suddenly turn violent; he is an expert in judo, and on several occasions he cold-bloodedly murders unarmed opponents—for example, at the conclusion of *Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1936), often considered the best of the series.

NO HERO AND MR. MOTO IS SO SORRY

Yet Moto is not a slavish devotee of Japanese imperialism. In *No Hero* (1935), he announces that he serves the emperor and is opposed to the more militaristic and aggressive elements that dominate the Japanese army, the elements that want to expand into China and thereby challenge the West. Moto is more representative of the Asian concept of feng shui, or balance, of which Marquand learned in China. Moto helps the main character, K. C. Lee, an aviator who has a drinking problem, to destroy a formula that would have halved the oil consumption of warships and thereby doubled their cruising radius. Because no country gets the formula, balance is maintained. In *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry* (1938), Moto is working to prevent further Japanese military adventures in Mongolia; the Japanese are using a base in Manchuria, which Japan has already seized from China.

Moto was educated in the United States and has a good understanding of Western ways; the Western be-

lief that all Asians look alike aids him in his penchant for disguise, although his one failing is that his attempts to dress like a Westerner only make him look garish and therefore highly conspicuous. Unfortunately, “Moto” cannot really be a name in Japanese; it is only a suffix like the English “-son,” a fact that Marquand discovered only after he began the series and which he notes in the last novel.

The unusual settings of the Moto books contributed much to their success: Moto foils a scheme that launders money for Chinese warlords at a crumbling gambling house near Honolulu in *Think Fast, Mr. Moto*; beautiful Peking rooms full of art treasures figure in *Thank You, Mr. Moto*; a village in the deserts of Mongolia is the final destination in *No Hero*; and in *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry*, the Japanese agent and other spies range over Japan, Korea, and northern China, finally flying to a town in Manchuria in search of a message concealed in the inlaid pattern of a cigarette case.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Hungarian-born actor Peter Lorre as John P. Marquand's Japanese detective, Mr. Moto.

LAST LAUGH, MR. MOTO

Although Moto's activities were rather surprisingly favorable to the American viewpoint, by World War II, Marquand could no longer ignore political realities. In *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto*, which appeared after Pearl Harbor, Moto and a German agent fight to obtain a bombsight from a French plane abandoned on a Caribbean island; this time, the main character, a naval officer whose drunkenness has caused him to leave the American navy, destroys the bombsight and foils the efforts of both agents. Because several elements in this novel are similar to those of the first in the series, *No Hero*, Marquand may have already decided to retire Moto for a time, as the formula was beginning to repeat itself.

STOPOVER: TOKYO

Moto did not reappear until the Cold War, helping Americans defeat Russian agents in Japan in *Stopover: Tokyo*. In this final entry in the series, Marquand varied the formula in a number of ways. The main character, Jack Rhyce, rather than being drawn into the intrigue by accident, is consciously involved in espionage as a member of an American intelligence agency. Much of the drama of the book concerns Rhyce's doubts about his actions and his fear for Ruth Bogart, the woman who works with him and with whom he falls in love. Moto seems even more peripheral to this book, which has a more realistic, sour, tragic ending than the others, reflecting the increasing bitterness and malaise of Marquand's social novels.

The Moto books are not really mysteries but spy thrillers; usually motives and the identities of the villains are clear after only a few chapters. The interest lies in seeing how Moto will extract the other characters from their difficulties. The action generated from these situations and the appeal of their exotic master of ceremonies have continued to attract readers.

James Baird

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MR. MOTO SERIES: *No Hero*, 1935; *Thank You, Mr. Moto*, 1936; *Think Fast, Mr. Moto*, 1937; *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry*, 1938; *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto*, 1942; *Stopover: Tokyo*, 1957

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Ming Yellow*, 1935; *Don't Ask Questions*, 1941; *It's Loaded, Mr. Bauer*, 1949

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Unspeakable Gentleman*, 1922; *The Black Cargo*, 1925; *Warning Hill*, 1930; *The Late George Apley*, 1937; *Wickford Point*, 1939; *H. M. Pulham, Esquire*, 1941; *So Little Time*, 1943; *Repent in Haste*, 1945; *B. F.'s Daughter*, 1946; *Point of No Return*, 1949; *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.*, 1951; *Sincerely*, *Willis Wayde*, 1955; *North of Grand Central*, 1956; *Women and Thomas Harrow*, 1958

SHORT FICTION: *Four of a Kind*, 1923; *Haven's End*, 1933; *Life at Happy Knoll*, 1957

PLAY: *The Late George Apley: A Play*, pr. 1944 (with George S. Kaufman)

NONFICTION: *Prince and Boatswain: Sea Tales from the Recollection of Rear-Admiral Charles E. Clark*, 1915 (with James Morris Morgan); *Lord Timothy Dexter of Newburyport, Mass.*, 1925 (revised as *Timothy Dexter Revisited*, 1960); *Thirty Years*, 1954

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Gross, John J. *John P. Marquand*. New York: Twayne, 1963. This full-length study examines Marquand's success in his day and gives critical acknowledgment of his expertise as a social novelist. Discusses the action in his later novels, written in the last

twenty-five years of his life. Deliberately omits review of Marquand's work in popular magazines, gives some background information, and relates Marquand to other writers of his time. Includes a useful but dated selected bibliography.

Hoffman, Daniel, ed. *Harvard Guide to Contemporary Writing*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979. Discusses Marquand in the context of novelists of manners. Provides commentary on his novels, which is appreciative but also faults Marquand for becoming an emblem of the "trap of popular success."

Penzler, Otto. *John P. Marquand's Mr. Moto*. New York: Mysterious Bookshop, 2000. A complete bib-

liography of Marquand's works featuring Mr. Moto by the publisher of *The Armchair Detective*.

Whipple, Robert D., Jr., ed. *Essays on the Literature of American Novelist John P. Marquand (1893-1960)*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004. Collection of scholarly essays on Marquand and his works that argue for the author's continued relevance. An entry in the Studies in American Literature series.

Wires, Richard. *John P. Marquand and Mr. Moto: Spy Adventures and Detective Film*. Muncie, Ind.: Ball State University Press, 1990. Focuses on Marquand's detective fiction. Includes filmography and bibliographic references.

NGAIO MARSH

Born: Christchurch, New Zealand; April 23, 1895

Died: Christchurch, New Zealand; February 18, 1982

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Roderick Alleyn, 1934-1982

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

RODERICK ALLEYN is a superintendent in the Central Intelligence Division. At the outset he is forty-two years old and single, then he marries Agatha Troy Alleyn and has one son, Ricky. Alleyn possesses an ironic wit that often runs to facetiousness. His preciosity is offset by his self-deprecating manner and his natural egalitarianism in a class-conscious society.

CONTRIBUTION

Ngaio Marsh's novels embody many of the traditions of the British Golden Age of detective fiction. Most critics include her among the grand dames: Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, and Margery Allingham. She enjoyed a writing career second only to Christie's in longevity and productivity. She is sepa-

rated from her colleagues by her New Zealand background and loyalties, which give her a different, "outsider's," view of the England about which she writes. She transcends many of the familiar limitations of detective fiction as she creates an aristocratic professional police officer who solves crimes committed in theaters, drawing rooms, and the New Zealand wilderness. Marsh writes with a uniquely well-honed ear for dialogue and how it reveals character. Her genius lies in her synthesis of three great traditions: detective fiction, character study, and the novel of manners.

BIOGRAPHY

Edith Ngaio Marsh's life begins, appropriately enough, with a mystery. Though she was born April 23, 1895, in Christchurch, New Zealand, her father listed her natal year as 1899. This act generated confusion about which the author herself remains vague in her autobiography. She describes her father as an absentminded eccentric descended from commercially successful English stock. Her mother, Rose Elizabeth Seager Marsh, was a second-generation New Zealand pioneer. Though never financially comfortable, her parents provided their only child with an excellent sec-

ondary education at St. Margaret's College, where one teacher instilled in her "an abiding passion for the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare." This passion interrupted her subsequent education in art at the University of Canterbury when she was invited to join the Allan Wilkie Company to act in Shakespearean and modern drama. She spent two years learning her chosen craft under Wilkie's tutelage and four more years as a writer, director, and producer of amateur theatricals in New Zealand.

In 1928, Marsh visited friends in England who persuaded her to open a small business in London. The business flourished, as did her writing. Inspired by either Dorothy L. Sayers or Agatha Christie (her memory contradicts itself), she began her first detective novel, which was published as *A Man Lay Dead* in 1934. Shortly thereafter, she returned to New Zealand and remained there through World War II, serving in the Ambulance Corps and writing twelve more mysteries by the end of the war. Perhaps her best among

these books is *Vintage Murder* (1937), which incorporates many of her themes and settings.

After the war Marsh traveled extensively, maintained homes in both London and New Zealand, wrote more mysteries, and directed plays, primarily those of William Shakespeare, for the students of the University of Canterbury. Her contributions were honored by the university in 1962 when the Ngaio Marsh Theatre was opened on the campus. In 1966, the queen declared her a Dame of the British Empire. Other honors include the 1978 Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America and induction into the Detection Club of Great Britain. On February 18, 1982, Dame Ngaio died in her home in Christchurch.

ANALYSIS

In many ways, Ngaio Marsh's mysteries follow the rules of detective fiction as prescribed by S. S. Van Dine in 1928. These rules emphasize the genre's intellectual purity: the puzzle, the clues, and the solution. They insist on fairness for the reader: The author must not indulge himself with hidden clues, professional criminals, spies, or secret cults. No mere trickery should sully the game between the author and the reader. There is an implicit emphasis on the classical dramatic unities of time, place, and action. In *A Man Lay Dead*, her first novel, Marsh adheres to these strictures with spare character and place description, well-planted but subtle clues to the murderer's motives and identity, and a quick solution. On the strength of this novel and the several that followed, one critic referred to her as "the finest writer in England of the pure, classical puzzle whodunit." Yet to insist on her books as "pure" is misleading. By the time she had written three novels, she was challenging some of Van Dine's most sacred tenets—not his doctrine of fairness and logical deduction but his demand for simplicity in all but plot. Her challenge succeeded in cementing her reputation as a novelist without sacrificing her commitment to detective fiction. She so successfully joined the elements of character and tone with the detective yarn that she provides a link between the older traditions of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins and the newer writings of Agatha Christie.

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Ngaio Marsh in 1966. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

A MAN LAY DEAD

In her first six novels, Marsh introduced characters and settings to which she would return with more sophistication later. Her murders nearly always occur in some sort of theater in front of witnesses. Among the witnesses and suspects are her artistic characters, a few mysterious foreigners, the occasional fanatic, and usually one or two pairs of lovers. Their observations are shaped into the solution by Marsh's detective, Roderick Alleyn, of Scotland Yard. It is his character that unites these disparate people and places. Marsh introduces Alleyn through the eyes of Angela North in *A Man Lay Dead*:

Alleyn did not resemble a plain-clothes policeman, she felt sure, nor was he in the romantic manner—white-faced and gimlet-eyed. He looked like one of her Uncle Hubert's friends, the sort they knew would "do" for house-parties.

He is the younger son of a peer, educated at Oxford, courteous, but always somewhat detached. Alleyn's fastidious nature, combined with his facetious wit, confuses those who expect either a foppish amateur or the plodding copper. Marsh aimed at creating a normal man whose personality never cloyed or bored his creator.

Alleyn also possesses a dry, almost peculiar sense of humor about his work. In *Enter a Murderer* (1935), he leaves headquarters remarking "Am I tidy? . . . It looks so bad not to be tidy for an arrest." Earlier, he had described himself as feeling "self-conscious" about asking suspects for fingerprints. Despite Jessica Mann's contention in *Deadlier than the Male: Why Are Respectable English Women So Good at Murder?* (1981) that Alleyn does not change or develop in the thirty-two novels, Marsh gradually introduces different aspects of his personality. In *Artists in Crime* (1938), Alleyn falls in love and is refused, though not absolutely, but in *Death in a White Tie* (1938), he has won the hand of Agatha Troy, a famous painter. By 1953, in *Spinsters in Jeopardy*, the couple has a son, Ricky. Troy and Ricky occasionally embroil Alleyn in mysteries that arise in the course of their careers or lives. Their presence assists Marsh in moving Alleyn into the murder scene. Amateurs might happen on

crime with rather appalling frequency, but a professional police officer must be summoned.

DEATH IN A WHITE TIE

In *Death in a White Tie*, Alleyn's character and pedigree are assured. This novel is pivotal in Marsh's development of character description and social analysis. She quietly opens the drawing-room door onto the secrets, misery, and shallowness of those involved in "the season" in London. Lady Alleyn, the mother of the detective, and Agatha Troy attend the debutante parties, including a memorable one at which a popular older gentleman, Lord Robert, who is known by the improbable nickname "Bunchy" and the Dickensian last name, Gospell, is murdered. Murder is not the worst of it; blackmail, bastardy, adultery, bad debts, and many other ills beset these social darlings. As Bunchy himself ruminates,

he suddenly felt as if an intruder had thrust open all the windows of [his] neat little world and let in a flood of uncompromising light. In this cruel light he saw the people he liked best and they were changed and belittled. . . . This idea seemed abominable to Lord Robert and he felt old and lonely for the first time in his life.

Moments later, Bunchy is murdered. Alleyn, who was his friend, is called in to investigate.

During the investigation Marsh introduces him to some of her favorite types: the "simple soldier-man" who fought the war from the home front, the gauche American lady (whose venality drives her to accept payment for sponsoring an awkward debutante who is part Jewish), the quintessential cad who cheats at cards, and the callow youth rescued from his own obtuseness by his clever girl. These characters begin to emerge from the cardboard restrictions deemed appropriate for classical detective fiction. Marsh adds grace notes of humor, such as General Halcut-Hackett's outburst: "'Some filthy bolshevistic fascist,' shouted the General, having a good deal of difficulty with this strange collection of sibilants. He slightly dislodged his upper plate but impatiently champed it back into position." Marsh's ear for such verbal quirks as well as her eye for color and line truly set her apart from the conventions of detective-fiction characterizations. In praising Agatha Christie for her books, Marsh com-

mented that Christie was at her best in plotting: “Her characters are two-dimensional. . . . To call them silhouettes is not to dispraise them.” Marsh described herself as trying “to write about characters in the round and [being] in danger of letting them take charge.” Although some critics charge that in *Death of a Peer* (1940), the Lamprey family and their peculiarities do overwhelm the mystery, she never loses the struggle with these lively, complicated folk—rather, she enriches the yarn, encouraging her readers to care more fully about who is innocent or guilty.

OVERTURE TO DEATH

In *Overture to Death* (1939), Marsh expands her repertoire of characters by developing a type that will reappear several times throughout her subsequent novels—the iron-willed, often sexually repressed never-married woman. Her two old maids, Eleanor Prentice and Idris Campanula, rival each other for domination of community good works and for the affections of the naïve rector. Eleanor, “thin, colorless . . . disseminated the odor of sanctity.” Her best friend and yet most deadly competitor, Idris, is described as a “large and arrogant spinster with a firm bust, a high-colored complexion, coarse gray hair, and enormous bony hands.” Throughout the novel, the tension between their artificial civility toward each another and their jaw-snapping, claw-sharpening ill will fuels the plot. Idris is the victim of a bizarre and deadly booby trap. She is shot, while playing the piano, by a pistol propped between the pegs where the piano wires were affixed. A loop of string tied around the trigger had been fastened to the soft-pedal batten, and pushing the pedal discharged the report into her face. As Alleyn discovers, Eleanor, driven to desperation by what she regarded as her rival’s ultimate success with the rector, cleverly utilized what had begun as a harmless joke set with a child’s water pistol for her own nefarious purpose. Such an involved means of murder is typical of Marsh’s imagination. In this novel and others, she murders her victims by grisly methods: decapitation, meat skewers through the eye, boiling mud, and suffocation in a wool press. Though Marsh never ceased to insist that she was squeamish, her sense of the dramatic demanded a dramatic dispatch of the victim.

Running throughout all Marsh’s novels is a wry

sense of humor, often turned inward. Because she considered her life’s work to be in theater rather than in detective fiction, Marsh often parodied the conventions of detective novels in her own works. In her first novel, Alleyn comments, “Your crime books will have told you that under these conditions the gardens of the great are as an open book to us sleuths.” In *Death in a White Tie*, Marsh quotes part of the oath of the prestigious detection club when she has Lord Robert exclaim, “No jiggery-pokery.” *Overture to Death* finds a police sergeant lamenting that “these thrillers are ruining our criminal classes,” and in *Vintage Murder*, Alleyn remarks sarcastically, “so the detective books tell us, . . . and they ought to know.” In none of the works of the other grand dames of detective fiction is this self-mockery so pronounced, though Allingham and Sayers both professed, like Marsh, to be more seriously occupied in other pursuits. Marsh echoes Rebecca West’s statement: “There is this curious flight that so many intelligent women make into detective writing” in *Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography* (1966, revised 1981). According to Marsh, “If I have any indigenous publicity value it is, I think for work in the theater rather than for detective fiction. . . . Intellectual New Zealand friends tactfully avoid all mention of my published work, and if they like me, do so, I cannot but feel, in spite of it.” Toward the end of her life, however, Marsh, in a revised edition of her autobiography, did acknowledge the benefits of her writing, for without its profits she could never have directed student theater and have indulged her passion for Shakespearean production.

VINTAGE MURDER

No discussion of Marsh, her life, or her detective fiction can afford to ignore her loyalty to her native New Zealand and its influence on her fiction. Four of her novels take place in New Zealand, with the faithful Alleyn still in command. In each of these novels, the setting plays an important part in the mystery; indeed, the country becomes a character—lovingly and lyrically examined in Marsh’s prose. Certainly the most beautiful aspects of the country are discussed in *Vintage Murder*. This novel, an early one, contains many elements of what would become vintage Marsh: Alleyn, the theater, a bizarre murder, a cast of flam-

boyant actors, and the country. Though Marsh paints hauntingly stark portraits of rural England, nowhere does her painterly sense serve her so well as at home. New Zealand, Alleyn senses, is a new world, clean, light, immaculate; it purges the squalid and revitalizes the jaded. In the forest, he muses,

There was something primal and earthy about this endless interlacing of greens. It was dark in the bush, and cool, and the only sound there was the sound of trickling water, finding its way downhill to the creek. There was the smell of wet moss, of cold wet earth. . . . Suddenly, close at hand, the bird called again—a solitary call, startlingly like a bell.

The forest renews him, stimulates his senses and his imagination. Marsh weaves the love of her land and of her people—Maori and Paheka alike—into her novels with elegant prose and a colorful palette.

These are “Marshmarks” as one observer has noted: sound deductive logic to please the conventions of the detective story, colorful but willful characters skillfully endowed with dialogue that is as lively as thought, and a sense of atmosphere and place that is palpable. Each of these qualities transforms her novels from a clever puzzle into an analysis of character and manners.

Kathryne S. McDorman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RODERICK ALLEYN SERIES: 1934-1940 • *A Man Lay Dead*, 1934; *Enter a Murderer*, 1935; *The Nursing-Home Murder*, 1935 (with Henry Jellett); *Death in Ecstasy*, 1936; *Vintage Murder*, 1937; *Artists in Crime*, 1938; *Death in a White Tie*, 1938; *Overture to Death*, 1939; *Death at the Bar*, 1940; *Death of a Peer*, 1940 (also known as *Surfeit of Lampreys*)

1941-1950 • *Death and the Dancing Footman*, 1941; *Colour Scheme*, 1943; *Died in the Wool*, 1945; *I Can Find My Way Out*, 1946; *Final Curtain*, 1947; *Swing, Brother, Swing*, 1949 (also known as *A Wreath for Rivera*)

1951-1960 • *Opening Night*, 1951 (also known as *Night at the Vulcan*); *Spinsters in Jeopardy*, 1953 (also known as *The Bride of Death*); *Scales of Justice*, 1955; *Death of a Fool*, 1956 (also known as *Off with*

His Head); *Singing in the Shrouds*, 1958; *False Scent*, 1960

1961-1982 • *Hand in Glove*, 1962; *Dead Water*, 1963; *Killer Dolphin*, 1966 (also known as *Death at the Dolphin*); *Clutch of Constables*, 1968; *When in Rome*, 1970; *Tied Up in Tinsel*, 1972; *Black as He's Painted*, 1974; *Last Ditch*, 1977; *Grave Mistake*, 1978; *Photo-Finish*, 1980; *Light Thickens*, 1982

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *The Nursing-Home Murders*, pb. 1935 (with Henry Jellett); *False Scent*, pb. 1961; *A Unicorn for Christmas*, pr. 1965; *Murder Sales at Midnight*, pr. 1972

TELEPLAY: *Evil Liver*, 1975

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Three-Act Special*, 1960; *Another Three-Act Special*, 1962; *The Christmas Tree*, 1962; *New Zealand*, 1964

NONFICTION: *New Zealand*, 1942 (with Randall Matthew Burdon); *A Play Toward: A Note on Play Production*, 1946; *Perspectives: The New Zealander and the Visual Arts*, 1960; *Play Production*, 1960; *Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography*, 1966 (revised 1981)

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A. E. W. MASON

Born: Camberwell, London, England; May 7, 1865

Died: London, England; November 22, 1948

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Hanaud, 1910-1946

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

INSPECTOR HANAUD, a detective in the French *Sûreté*, is "stout and broad-shouldered with a full and almost heavy face. In his morning suit, at his breakfast-table, he looked like a prosperous comedian." Although never pompous, Hanaud has no delusions as to his infallibility. His skill rests in his ability to glean every scrap of information from every possible source and to act swiftly on his conclusions.

CONTRIBUTION

A. E. W. Mason's five Inspector Hanaud novels and seven other mystery novels are but a small portion of the output of a very prolific writer. Indeed, Mason's primary contribution should be considered to be his historical and adventure novels. By combining excitement with character development, Mason advanced the genre of adventure fiction beyond the simplistic level that was standard for his time.

In his mystery novels he tried to "combine the

crime story which produces a chill with the detective story which aims at a surprise." His most famous detective, Hanaud, is "first of all a professional; secondly, as physically unlike Mr. Sherlock Holmes as he could possibly be; thirdly, a genial and friendly soul; and fourthly, ready to trust his flair or intuition and to take the risk of acting on it, as the French detective does." Although not in a class with later great English mystery writers such as Agatha Christie, Mason significantly contributed to the art of detective fiction that was, in 1910, still in its infancy.

BIOGRAPHY

Alfred Edward Woodley Mason was born on May 7, 1865, in Camberwell, a southern suburb of London, England. He was the youngest son of William Woodley Mason, an accountant, and Elizabeth Hobill Mason. He was educated at Dulwich College, London (1878-1884), and at Trinity College, Oxford University (1884-1887), where he earned a degree in classics. While at Oxford University, he was interested in acting and in public speaking; he appeared in numerous plays and was a notable speaker in the Oxford Union, the university's debating society.

On graduation from Oxford, he turned to acting for his first career. Although moderately successful on the stage, in 1894, encouraged by Oscar Wilde, he wrote

his first novel, *A Romance of Wastdale* (1895). Over the next seven years, he published other novels, plays, a short-story collection, and many short stories. He then wrote and published his most successful and famous work, *The Four Feathers* (1902), which was to set his style of writing, modern adventure, for the next forty years. Throughout his life Mason traveled widely and sought adventure through activities such as exploring, sailing, and mountain climbing. For five years he was a Liberal Member of Parliament for Coventry. During World War I he served in the Royal Marine Light Infantry and was involved in Naval Intelligence Division secret service missions in Spain, Morocco, and Mexico.

After the war, Mason returned to writing and achieved substantial success for the next twenty-five years in a variety of genres, including adventure, mystery, and historical fiction. His best work is considered to be in the historical novels, in which, as he matured as a writer, he showed insight and understanding of character development. Several of his novels were adapted to the screen in the 1930's (*Fire over England*, which was published as a novel in 1936, and *The Four Feathers*, among others). Mason was also a dramatist, although he was far less successful in that area.

Mason's writing success resulted in his being financially secure; he was also a member of many famous clubs, a much sought-after guest in society, a brilliant storyteller, and generally a well-liked man. Mason was never married and "refused a knighthood since 'such honours mean nothing to a childless man.'" He died in London on November 22, 1948.

ANALYSIS

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the detective novel was still young and unestablished. Nineteenth century mystery fiction writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle had already established a style and formula for the writing of detective novels. The genre had become very popular, as is evidenced by the number of inexpensive, mass-produced detective-fiction magazines published at the turn of the century. Yet these stories usually focused primarily on action with very little character development. A. E. W. Mason's chief contribution to the genre was

that, while he certainly utilized action and realistic backgrounds in his novels, he paid much attention to character development.

Mason researched the locales for his novels thoroughly. In an era when Great Britain in particular and European nations in general administered and maintained peace throughout most of the world, he traveled widely. Using his yacht and his substantial income, he explored the Sudan, Morocco, Spain, South America, South Africa, India, Burma, Ceylon, Australia, and many other areas of the world. Always seeking adventure, he sailed oceans and rivers whenever he could; he also became an avid mountain climber, climbing the mountains of England, Switzerland, and Morocco. As might be expected, Mason's experiences during World War I were also adventurous; he was a secret service agent in Spain and Mexico. Using his keen eye for detail and an almost photographic memory, Mason observed many scenes that later appeared in his stories. For background information for his crime stories, Mason attended many notable trials in Great Britain and on the Continent, using these details in his stories as well.

Yet while others researched similarly, Mason's true forte in writing was character analysis. Mason's first career on the stage had taught him how to learn from observation instead of experience. He had learned to study characters and to form himself into the role that he was to play. Of necessity, he had also learned to study other characters in the plays. To develop this ability, he began to study his friends and acquaintances in order to learn their motivations and their responses to various stimuli. This passion for character development was transmitted directly to his novel writing. One need only note that many of his novels ultimately became plays, or vice versa, to see the correlation between the two. At trials, Mason would carefully study the criminal in the dock as well as the witnesses on whom the fate of the criminal rested. He wanted to know how these people felt and acted. This insight, in his best novels, led to strong character development and to insight into human behavior.

In analyzing Mason's crime novels, particularly his Hanaud series, one is immediately struck by his understanding of the importance of the detective. Mason

himself wrote, for an article titled "Detective Novels" in 1925, that

all the great detective novels are known by and live on account of their detectives. . . . The detective must be an outstanding person, actual, picturesque, amusing, a creature of power and singularity. Without such a being, the detective novel, however ingenious, will pass back to the lending library. With him it may find a permanent place on the bookcase.

Mason's creation was Inspector Hanaud of the French Sûreté. Hanaud is a large man—adroit and inventive. Although he is the best detective at the Sûreté, he is self-deprecating, describing members of his profession as "servants of chance" who "seize quickly the hem of her skirt when it flashes for the fraction of a second" in front of them. Hanaud, then, is a thoroughly believable character.

AT THE VILLA ROSE

Mason's first Hanaud novel was *At the Villa Rose* (1910). He had been planning the novel for several years. Indeed, he had visited Aix-les-Bains, the site of the mystery, in 1908 and had ridden between there and Geneva by car (the ride is an important element in the mystery). Moreover, the year before his visit to Aix-les-Bains, there had occurred in that spa the murder of a wealthy elderly woman. Many of the participants in the real murder appeared in his novel. Mason wrote, "I had thus a good deal of my story before me, both as regards the characters and the sequence of events." What Mason did was to add the detective and tell the story through the eyes of the detective's companion, the slow-witted, wine-loving dilettante, Ricardo. The mystery, however, is relatively easy to solve, and the final third of the novel is a retelling of the story, with explanations by Hanaud.

THE HOUSE OF THE ARROW

A far better murder mystery, *The House of the Arrow* (1924), was published fourteen years later. As before, the story is set in a locale that Mason knew intimately (Dijon, France). Again, the story, that of the murder of a wealthy widow, is based on a similar crime that had occurred in the same vicinity. In the novel, the local police enlist the aid of Hanaud, and through his acute detective abilities, he solves the

crime. For several stylistic reasons, this detective novel is far superior to Mason's first effort. By this time, Mason's experience and expertise in novel writing is manifest. In this novel he shows his skill at creating atmosphere, developing character, portending evil, and telling a good story. More important, the murderers are not revealed until the very end of the novel. Mason was now incorporating suspense into his work: That is, he was becoming a mature writer.

THE PRISONER IN THE OPAL AND THEY WOULDN'T BE CHESSMEN

For the next twenty years, Mason's work was never out of print. New works and reprints of earlier work testify to his popularity throughout the period. His mystery novels continued as reflections of the successful formula of *The House of the Arrow*. His third Hanaud novel, *The Prisoner in the Opal* (1928), is a morbid story set in the Bordeaux region of France. The Château Mirandel is the site of a Black Mass celebration where a human sacrifice has occurred. Hanaud and Ricardo investigate and solve the mystery. Again, Ricardo is confused by the case but records the detective's abilities. Seven years later, *They Wouldn't Be Chessmen* (1935) was published. This novel is set in Trouville, on the coast of France, and involves murder, stolen jewels, romance, and a perfect crime. In the novel, the murderers plot everything to the last detail, but all goes awry because human beings are involved, not chessmen. This novel became Mason's most successful mystery.

OTHER WORKS

Mason's other mysteries are essentially suspenseful adventure or historical novels. The mystery occurs in the vagaries of human nature and not so much in the crime. *The Watchers* (1899), for example, has as its mystery the purpose of a strange group of seafarers who are watching a house. *Running Water* (1907) is ostensibly a story about a perfect crime but is more about mountain climbing and human motivation. Indeed, Mason was at his best in the adventure and historical novel. It was an adventure novel, *The Four Feathers*, which assured his place in posterity. As a recognized author, Mason could have published almost anything that he wrote. It is to his credit that he continually improved his style. Indeed, critics deem

his greatest work to be *Musk and Amber* (1942), a novel that he completed when he was close to eighty years of age.

Mason was a prolific writer who was at home in many of the literary genres of the twentieth century. He was a talented observer, both of setting and of humankind, and he deftly transferred his keen observations to the printed page. His technique of exploring the psychological nature of his characters was relatively advanced for his time, and his novels provided a pattern for others to follow.

William S. Brockington, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR HANAUD SERIES: *At the Villa Rose*, 1910; *The House of the Arrow*, 1924; *The Prisoner in the Opal*, 1928; *They Wouldn't Be Chessmen*, 1935; *The House in Lordship Lane*, 1946

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Watchers*, 1899; *Running Water*, 1907; *The Witness for the Defence*, 1913; *The Summons*, 1920; *The Winding Stair*, 1923; *No Other Tiger*, 1927; *The Sapphire*, 1933

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Ensign Knightley, and Other Stories*, 1901; *The Clock*, 1910; *The Four Corners of the World*, 1917; *Dilemmas*, 1934; *The Secret Fear*, 1940

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Romance of Wastdale*, 1895; *The Courtship of Morrice Buckler*, 1896; *Lawrence Clavering*, 1897; *The Philanderers*, 1897; *Miranda of the Balcony*, 1899; *Parson Kelly*, 1899; *Clementina*, 1901; *The Four Feathers*, 1902; *The Truants*, 1904; *The Broken Road*, 1907; *The Turnstile*, 1912; *The Dean's Elbow*, 1930; *The Three Gentlemen*, 1932; *Fire over England*, 1936; *The Drum*, 1937; *Königsmark*, 1938; *Musk and Amber*, 1942

SHORT FICTION: *Making Good*, 1910; *The Episode of the Thermometer*, 1918

PLAYS: *Blanche de Malètroit*, pr., pb. 1894; *The Courtship of Morrice Buckler*, pr. 1897; *Marjory Strode*, pr. 1908; *Colonel Smith*, pr. 1909; *The Princess Clementina*, pr. 1910 (with George Pleydell Ban-

croft); *The Witness for the Defence*, pr. 1911; *Open Windows*, pr. 1913; *At the Villa Rose*, pr. 1920; *Running Water*, pr. 1922; *No Other Tiger*, pr. 1928; *The House of the Arrow*, pr. 1928; *A Present from Margate*, pr. 1933

NONFICTION: *The Royal Exchange*, 1920; *Sir George Alexander and the St. James' Theatre*, 1935; *The Life of Francis Drake*, 1941

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Morain, Alfred. *The Underworld of Paris: Secrets of the Sûreté*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1931. Nonfictional study of crime and criminals in Paris that provides context for Mason's writing.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel—A History*. 3d ed. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993. Symons, a successful mystery author in his own right, argues that mystery fiction evolved over time from being concerned with the figure of the detective and the methods of detection to a primary focus on the nature of crime and criminality. Sheds light on Mason's work.

Thomson, H. Douglas. *Masters of Mystery: A Study of the Detective Story*. Reprint. New York: Dover, 1978. Places Mason alongside his fellow "masters" in the process of comparing various national crime literatures, including the British and the French.

Vicarel, Jo Ann. *A Reader's Guide to the Police Procedural*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1995. Geared to the mainstream reader, this study introduces and analyzes the police procedural form used by Mason.

LIA MATERA

Born: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; 1952

Types of plot: Thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Willa Jansson, 1987-

Laura Di Palma, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

WILLA JANSSON is a San Francisco law student, then a practicing lawyer, with parents who still carry on the tradition of 1960's radicalism. Clearly focused on her career, Willa nevertheless finds herself inextricably involved in the very social and political issues that have been her parents' concern.

LAURA DI PALMA is a no-nonsense corporate lawyer who becomes involved in criminal defense work. Possessed with a social conscience, she often has to brook her colleagues' disapproval when she becomes involved in investigations of crimes. Eventually she forsakes corporate law for a practice of her own.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Lia Matera's novels tend toward the thriller format, they are based, as well, on traditional cozy mysteries. Willa Jansson, for example, would like to focus on her career and private life but keeps getting drawn into cases with political consequences. Laura Di Palma has similar career concerns—although she is, in some respects, more willing than Willa to pursue crimes that are outside the purview of her day job. In both series, however, Matera eschews the neat endings of traditional mysteries—the return to a cozy feeling that all is right with the world after the criminals have been apprehended. The novels begin in a state of anxiety that can be only temporarily alleviated by the actions of the series hero and her enablers.

Matera favors the first-person narrative. Both Willa Jansson and Laura Di Palma narrate the novels as though they were speaking to a friend in confidence. Although both characters are earnest investigators, they exhibit a wry sense of humor and even a jokey manner that enhances the informal tone of the novels,

although the Di Palma series is less lighthearted. Both series, however, include serious explorations of ethical and moral issues. Matera is especially interested in the way her characters can be set up and themselves become victims. Willa's and Laura's legal training not only guides them in sorting out the innocent and the guilty but also in establishing how they approach the nexus between crime and politics.

Matera's novels have an implicitly feminist focus insofar as they show their female protagonists in conflict with male-dominated law firms and the criminal justice system. Whatever flaws that system may contain, however, and no matter how leftist Matera's novels may seem, she demonstrates in *Havana Twist* (1998) just how worse off a society can be without an independent judiciary and a legal justice system in which defendants have rights that are balanced against the impersonal forces of the corporation and government.

BIOGRAPHY

Lia Matera was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1952 into a family she describes as "Italian immigrant tailors." In 1959, the family moved to Eureka in Northern California. Her first language was Italian. As she told interviewer Walter Sorrells: "The ability to express oneself was the central issue in our lives. Add to that all the stories I heard around the dinner table—the sheer drama of being forced to leave one's homeland and start fresh with nothing. Every meal became an opera. So I was focusing on language and getting tutored in storytelling before I could even ride a trike."

Matera's leftist politics seem to have been shaped during her years at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Although she wanted to write fiction, she also prudently enrolled in law school and in 1981 graduated from the Hastings School of Law in San Francisco. Matera was on her school's law review journal, taught law at Stanford University, and practiced law for a private firm, but she resisted the ethos of a conventional law career, working only intermittently until she was able to sell her first novel. What interests her

are lawyers' lives and the way they practice law. She has said that she wants to portray the milieu of the law, not the minutiae of law cases.

Matera has collected her short stories in *Counsel for the Defense* (2000). Her stories have also appeared in anthologies, including *Sisters in Crime* (1989), *Deadly Allies* (1992), *Crimes of the Heart* (1995), *Irreconcilable Differences* (1999), and *First Cases, Volume Four* (2002). Her work has been translated into Italian, German, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, and Japanese.

ANALYSIS

Lia Matera focuses on the psychology and sociology of the legal world. The mind-sets of district attorneys and defense lawyers are quite different. Her lawyers are shaped by what they practice, and she enjoys contrasting the attorney employed in commercial litigation with the one committed to labor unions. Her own interest is in how practicing these different kinds of law shapes personality. The process of becoming a certain kind of lawyer intrigues her as she probes the strengths and weaknesses of her characters. The lawyers become, she points out, a lot like their clients, which explains, in part, why they are attracted to certain sorts of law. It is the intersections of crime, the law, and the personalities of clients, lawyers, judges, and their cohorts that make Matera's novels intriguing. In her own account of her decision to stop practicing law, she suggests that writing was the only way for her to obtain an overview of the legal system.

Matera's novels tend to focus on single issues: She begins with the question "What do I care about now?" She has canvassed issues as different as pornography and unidentified flying objects (UFOs).

In an interview with Walter Sorrells, Matera clearly distinguished her writing from traditional thrillers: "I have a problem with the basic premise of most successful thrillers: that the system doesn't work and justice can only be achieved through personal vengeance. . . . I hate to see popular fiction glorify yahooism and add more sparks to the American tinderbox." Matera's characters fumble their way toward understanding the crimes they are investigating, and what they learn, Matera implies, is only a part of the truth.

In both the Willa Jansson and Laura Di Palma series, the main characters continue to develop—in Willa's case from law school to corporate work to her involvement in cases beyond the scope of a conventional attorney, and in Laura's case from her corporate law practice to the decision to go into business for herself. While Willa defends the poor and the indigent, Laura takes on unpopular clients and causes. The Jansson novels often present a satiric view of the law; the Di Palma novels are more acerbic about the criminal justice system. Critics have praised the interplay of Matera's offbeat and amusing characters, her irreverent and witty style, her wry attitude toward the law, and her ingenious plots.

WHERE LAWYERS FEAR TO TREAD

The first novel in the Willa Jansson series, *Where Lawyers Fear to Tread* (1987), is set in San Francisco's Malhousie Law School, an amusing name for an institution rather like the one Matera herself attended. Willa becomes acting editor-in-chief of her school's law review after its editor has been murdered. When other students are murdered, Willa begins to investigate, inspired by her childhood reading of Nancy Drew. There are suspects galore, including other members of the law review and the faculty. Unlike Nancy Drew, however, Willa finds herself arrested and a suspect, thus setting a pattern that will be repeated in subsequent Jansson mysteries. The fierce competition for good grades and jobs and the pretentiousness of law school clearly owe something to Matera's own experience.

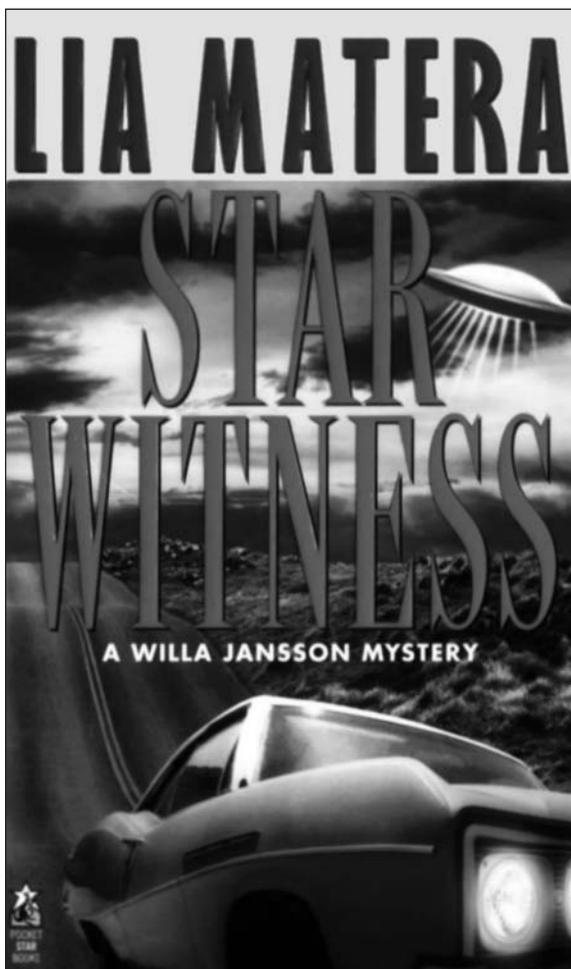
A RADICAL DEPARTURE

In *A Radical Departure* (1988), Willa is working as a first-year associate for a San Francisco law firm that caters to the rich and the powerful when her boss dies from hemlock poisoning. Willa's left-leaning mother is named in the boss's will and stands to inherit his plush home. It is all rather suspicious and rather too much for Willa, who is still trying to find her bearings after a rocky experience in law school. It gets worse as Willa begins to realize that she may be the next murder victim. She tries to relax by smoking a little dope, but it hardly helps because she has a reputation that the press cannot resist exploiting. Mixed in with her fitful understanding of what is happening is her ambiva-

lence over her parents' politics as well as over the kind of posh world the firm represents.

STAR WITNESS

In *Star Witness* (1997), Willa takes on the case of a man who claims aliens have abducted him. This is the alibi he offers when he is accused in a hit-and-run manslaughter case. He explains that his car was in a spaceship when it fell on another vehicle, killing the driver. The setting is Santa Cruz, California, and the UFO watchers are portrayed sympathetically as Willa tries to come to terms with strange phenomena such as crop circles, mysterious sightings, and assassination attempts. The plot is complex and sometimes opaque, but the evocation of a subculture is convincing, and Willa never loses her authority as a defense attorney, even though she is skeptical of her client's story.



HAVANA TWIST

Havana Twist, set in modern-day Cuba, may be Matera's most ambitious Willa Jansson novel. Willa's mother has traveled with a leftist group to Cuba, convinced that the country represents her political ideals. Willa is frustrated at her mother's inability to recognize that Cuba is a police state. When the group returns without Willa's mother, Willa begins an investigation, taking her not only to Havana but also to Mexico, where a Fidel Castro sympathizer may have information that will help Willa learn what has happened to her mother. The task is too much for Willa alone, and she accepts help from a police detective with whom she had once been romantically involved. The risk-averse Willa nevertheless finds herself in an underground Havana tunnel that the Chinese are helping the Cubans build in anticipation of an attack by the United States. Some of the plot twists are hard to follow, but Matera's evocation of everyday Cuban life and the conniving that is necessary to survive is engrossing.

THE SMART MONEY

In *The Smart Money* (1988), the debut novel for the Laura Di Palma series, Laura's San Francisco law firm delegates her to set up a branch office in Hillside. This is Laura's hometown, and she is bent on ruining the practice of her former husband. However, as so often happens in a Matera novel, the lawyer/protagonist becomes a murder suspect. In other words, Laura has jeopardized everything—her career in a prestigious firm and the notion that she has rebuilt her life after her divorce. Laura is a sharper-edged version of Willa Jansson, and Matera is not afraid to make her main character unsympathetic. Although Laura eventually regains her equilibrium, it is at no small cost to herself, since she realizes she is not quite the big-city professional she supposed herself to be.

A HARD BARGAIN

In *A Hard Bargain* (1992), Laura Di Palma has failed to make partner at her upscale corporate law firm because of her involvement in high-profile criminal cases. Taking time off, Laura retreats to the woods with her lover Hal. Soon, however, a friend draws her into an investigation of an apparent suicide that looks suspicious. The victim had a history of self-destructive behavior, abetted by a husband who would point a gun at

her. As Laura involves herself more deeply in the case, she begins to confront her own demons, including Hal's dependency on her. Caring for this traumatized Vietnam War veteran, she realizes, may just be a way of deflecting her own troubles. Unlike many legal thriller writers, Matera combines fast-paced action with sustained examination of her main character's psychology.

FACE VALUE

In *Face Value* (1994), perhaps Matera's most feminist novel, Laura Di Palma finds herself immersed in the world of pornography. A high-tech California guru, Big Mike, manipulates videotapes of people having sex, claiming that he can show them their inner selves. Laura, now in solo practice, begins to investigate Big Mike after he starts selling his tapes as pornography. Inevitably his actions lead to accusations of betrayal, followed by murder. As Laura comes to know the women on the tapes, she begins to question her own identity. This is one of Matera's darker, introspective novels set in the milieu of cults and sex clubs.

DESIGNER CRIMES

In *Designer Crimes* (1995), Laura Di Palma is a witness to a murder when she sees the lawyer she is about to hire shot in front of her at a desk in a financial district law office. Was the bullet intended for her? She is representing a high school classmate accused of murdering his girlfriend who has disappeared. The case has aroused considerable publicity and controversy. The murdered lawyer belongs to a firm that seems to be undergoing some kind of mysterious shakeup with tapped telephones and secret computer files. Why are certain employees targeted? As Laura investigates, Matera elaborates what is perhaps her most intricately plotted mystery.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

WILLA JANSSON SERIES: *Where Lawyers Fear to Tread*, 1987; *A Radical Departure*, 1988; *Hidden*

Agenda, 1988; *Prior Convictions*, 1991; *Last Chants*, 1996; *Star Witness*, 1997; *Havana Twist*, 1998

LAURA DI PALMA SERIES: *The Smart Money*, 1988; *The Good Fight*, 1990; *A Hard Bargain*, 1992; *Face Value*, 1994; *Designer Crimes*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Counsel for the Defense*, 2000

EDITED TEXT: *Irreconcilable Differences*, 1999

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- Matera, Lia. Lia Matera. <http://www.liamatera.com>. An excellent author's Web site. Contains a list of her publications, short stories, and excerpts from reviews of her novels.
- Murphy, Stephen M., and Steve Martini. *The Word Is Law*. New York: Berkeley Trade Publishing, 2002. Contains an interview with Matera. Discusses her as one of several new female legal thriller writers.
- Walton, Priscilla, and Manina Jones. *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Extensive references comparing Matera to a range of other writers in the same genre.

SEICHŌ MATSUMOTO

Kiyoharu Matsumoto

Born: Kokura (now Kokura Kita Ward, Kitakyūshū City), Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan; December 21, 1909

Died: Tokyo, Japan; August 4, 1992

Types of plot: Police procedural; inverted; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Seichō Matsumoto is a premier author of Japanese mystery and detective fiction. Credited with popularizing the genre among readers in his country, Matsumoto became his nation's best-selling and highest earning author in the 1960's. His most acclaimed detective novels, including *Ten to sen* (1958; *Points and Lines*, 1970) and *Suna no utsuwa* (1961; *Inspector Imanishi Investigates*, 1989), have been translated into a number of languages, including English, and remain in print. Although Matsumoto is known for police procedurals that involve intriguing criminal investigations, he also wrote novels and short fiction that feature historically based mysteries.

Matsumoto's works depart from traditional styles of Japanese mystery and detective fiction. Dispensing with formulaic plot devices such as puzzles, Matsumoto incorporated elements of social significance and postwar nihilism that expanded the scope and further darkened the atmosphere of the genre. In particular, his exposé of corruption among police officials as well as criminals was a new addition to the field. The subject of investigation was not just the crime but also the society in which the crime was committed. In a Matsumoto detective story, Japanese society is often fingered as an accomplice.

A prolific author, the self-educated Matsumoto did not see his first book in print until he was in his forties. He wrote until his death in 1992, producing in four decades more than 450 works. Although Matsumoto also produced popular historical novels and respected works of nonfiction, it is his mystery and detective fiction that solidified his reputation as a writer at home and abroad.

BIOGRAPHY

Born Kiyoharu Matsumoto in Kokura (now Kokura Kita Ward, Kitakyūshū City), Fukuoka Prefecture, on the island of Kyushu in Japan in 1909, he later adopted the pen name of Seichō Matsumoto. A product of humble origins, he was his parents' only child. Following his graduation from elementary school, Matsumoto found employment at a utility company. As an adult he designed layouts for the *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper in Kyushu. His work in the advertising department was interrupted by service in World War II. A medical corpsman, Matsumoto spent much of the war in Korea. He resumed work at *Asahi Shinbun* after the war, transferring to the publication's Tokyo office in 1950.

Though Matsumoto attended neither secondary school nor university, he was well read. As a rebellious teenager, he read banned revolutionary texts as part of a political protest. This act so enraged Matsumoto's father that he destroyed his son's collection of literature. Undeterred, the young Matsumoto sought award-winning works of fiction and studied them intently. His official foray into literature occurred in 1950 when *Shukan Asahi* magazine hosted a fiction contest. He submitted his short story "Saigō satsu" (Saigō's currency) and placed third in the competition. With three generations dependent on him (he supported his parents as well as his wife and children), Matsumoto welcomed the prize money. His modest success and the encouragement of fellow writers fueled his efforts. Within six years he had retired from his post at the newspaper to pursue a full-time career as a writer.

Renowned for his work ethic, Matsumoto wrote short fiction while simultaneously producing multiple novels—at one point as many as five concurrently—in the form of magazine serials. Many of Matsumoto's crime stories debuted in periodicals, among them the acclaimed "Harikomi" (1955; "The Stakeout," 1985), in which a woman reunites with her fugitive lover while police close in on her home. As is true of much of Matsumoto's fiction, this psychological portrait reveals more about the characters than the crime.

For his literary accomplishments, Matsumoto received the Mystery Writers of Japan Prize, the Naoki Prize, and the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature, all awards bestowed on writers of popular fiction. In 1952 he was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for “Aru ‘Kokura nikki’ den” (the legend of the Kokura diary). Considered Matsumoto’s best story, it features a disabled but diligent protagonist who seeks entries that are missing from the diary of author and army medical physician Mori Ōgai. For Matsumoto’s contributions to nonfiction, including volumes on Japanese history, society, and architecture, the Association of Japanese Journalists presented him with the Nihon Janaristo Kaigi Prize. He received the NHK Hōsō Bunka Award, a broadcasting award, in 1978 and the Asahi Award in 1990.

A lifelong activist, Matsumoto voiced anti-American sentiment in some of his writings, but he was equally critical of his own society. Many of his works of fiction and nonfiction reveal corruption in Japanese government and academia. A political radical despite (or perhaps in reaction to) growing up in a conformist society, Matsumoto associated with like-minded individuals. In 1968 he traveled to communist Cuba as a delegate of the World Cultural Congress and later that same year ventured to North Vietnam to meet with its president. Though he continued to write works of mystery and detective fiction in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the author dedicated increasing time to works of nonfiction on more political topics.

Since his death from cancer at the age of eighty-three, Matsumoto’s popularity as a writer of mystery and detective fiction has grown internationally, and he has achieved iconic status in Japanese culture.

ANALYSIS

An esteemed postwar writer, Seichō Matsumoto is credited with changing the format and expanding the content of Japanese mystery fiction. He dispensed with the formulaic insertion of clues common to the genre and added emphasis to more complex issues of human behavior and societal problems. Whereas mystery writers before Matsumoto provided readers the literary equivalent of a trail of bread crumbs, he gave readers the entire loaf. Followers of his detective fic-

tion know as much or as little as the detective; nothing is kept in confidence to create artificial surprise at the conclusion of a work.

At first glance, Matsumoto’s straightforward and sparse style of writing seems to take its inspiration from journalism, not unexpected given his earlier association with a newspaper and his focus on detective fiction. However, as a number of critics have noted, the simplicity of Matsumoto’s writing is deceptive. His prose style has been compared to haiku, a Japanese poetic form consisting of seventeen syllables that evoke a clear but expansive image. Likewise Matsumoto’s plots are carefully scripted, with elements of Japanese society playing a crucial role in the discovery of how a crime was committed. Train schedules (trains are well known for running on time in Japan) feature in several works where the time frame of an alibi is in question.

In a Matsumoto novel, more than just the crime is under investigation; postwar Japanese society also undergoes interrogation. All imposters and pretenders—dishonest officials, pretentious academics, and social climbers—have their falsities exposed. Because Matsumoto’s detectives see their society so clearly, with an outsider’s detached perspective, usually they are able to get their man (or their woman). A combination of detective ability, dogged perseverance, and understanding of human behavior guides their search. When they fail, as is the case in *Kuroi fukuin* (1961; black gospel), bureaucracy is often the culprit. Matsumoto based *Kuroi fukuin* on an actual crime in which the prime suspect was a foreign Catholic priest and the victim was a Japanese stewardess. The investigation was disbanded after the Japanese government allowed the priest to return to his own country. Matsumoto wrote his novel both to spur public interest in the case and to protest its closure.

Often Matsumoto’s investigators are civilization’s scrappy underdogs. The most memorable of his detectives, Inspector Imanishi, survives on a modest salary, fights forces of corruption within his own department, and maintains emotional equilibrium through his pursuit of outside interests. Imanishi’s composition of haiku and his tending of a garden provide readers with additional insight into the inspector’s methods. His

construction of the case is pursued with the same careful attention to detail as is required in his hobbies.

POINTS AND LINES

Ten to Sen is the novel that in 1958 secured Matsumoto's inclusion in an elite cadre of Japanese mystery writers. Published in English as *Points and Lines*, the novel introduced Matsumoto to an English-language audience and helped him gain an international following. In this police procedural, Matsumoto manipulates the number two: The plot centers on a double homicide masquerading as a double suicide and follows two detectives, one local and one from Tokyo, who join forces to solve the crime and track the criminal. Veteran Jutarō Torigai of the local precinct partners with Kiichi Mihara, a rookie from Tokyo's metropolitan force. Their investigation of the deaths of a young couple, whose bodies are found on a popular Japanese beach, eventually exposes a national crime ring. Two careful analyses of departure and arrival times in the train schedules for busy Tokyo station—one to refute the suspect's alibi and one to fix the time of the murders—are necessary for the detectives to crack their case.

Japan's highly structured society, with its divisions between social classes and workplace hierarchies, also undergoes examination in *Points and Lines*. The relationship between subordinate and superior, another duality, is scrutinized in this context. Matsumoto provides readers with two models. First, a traditional pairing in which each man conforms to his place in society is presented in the relationship between Ishida, a high-ranking ministry official, and Sayama, an assistant. Although Sayama is competent and knowledgeable, Ishida regards him as his inferior; their relationship does not allow a free exchange of information. In contrast to this standard, the relationship between novice detective Mihara and his superior officer, Inspector Kasai, breaks with Japanese convention. Though they are members of disparate social and departmental ranks, their mutual respect allows them to share information liberally to advance the investigation. As in many a detective novel by Matsumoto, Japanese society is under the microscope.

INSPECTOR IMANISHI INVESTIGATES

Perhaps the most popular of Matsumoto's works is *Suna no utsuwa* (1961; *Inspector Imanishi Investi-*

gates, 1989). The novel features a homicide detective intent on solving a murder case even after his superiors have disbanded the investigation. With a single clue—the name Kameda—to guide his search, Inspector Imanishi travels throughout the prefectures of Japan, often on the same train line that passed through the station in Tokyo where the mangled body of the victim was discovered. Uncertain whether the name is a surname or a place name, Inspector Imanishi follows maps and directories to different locales, including the provinces, where the pace of life is depicted as less hurried than in the city, but the quality of life more impoverished.

Because the setting of the novel predates Japan's economic recovery and eventual boom in the 1960's and 1970's, there is an appropriately lean quality to the novel's descriptions of the nation's cities, towns, and countryside. Matsumoto's sparse prose creates a Tokyo that is afflicted by social maladies, including vice and apathy. As part of his investigation into the murder, the middle-aged Inspector Imanishi must circulate among a younger subpopulation consisting of radical writers, visual artists, and actors. Members of this scene are less focused on reviving their city's arts than they are on subverting an inherited culture that appears to them as staid as the inspector in his suit and tie. As a writer of haiku and a gardener, Imanishi's own foray into the arts is more conventional. However, it is these tense juxtapositions between traditional and modern Japanese lifestyles, urban and rural settings, and established and emerging generations that provide the novel its context and that contribute to Inspector Imanishi's success in identifying the victim and the perpetrator.

THE VOICE, AND OTHER STORIES

The Voice, and Other Stories, a collection of Matsumoto's crime stories translated into English by Adam Kabat, was published in 1989, although the individual stories were composed in the 1950's and 1960's. These tales are set in a Japan still recovering from the economic devastation of World War II and enmeshed in the Cold War. A time of transition for most Japanese citizens, it was an era in which women clad in traditional kimono traveled by the efficient modern railway system.

The six stories are linked by the fact that each in-

volves an unsolved crime, but each story is distinct in its perspective. In some stories the detective is featured; in others, the criminal, and occasionally the not-so-innocent bystander. In “Kao” (1959; “The Face”) a movie star harbors a secret. Before achieving fame, he murdered his lover, an event witnessed by a second pair of eyes. The same exposure that will escalate his career could jeopardize his life. In this work of psychological realism, the actor cannot help but choose the allure of the spotlight over the safety of obscurity. Likewise, “Kantō-ku no onna” (1960; “The Woman Who Wrote Haiku”) examines the emotional triggers behind deviant human behavior. The story features a

terminally ill, and thereby vulnerable, poet conned into acting as an accessory to murder. In “Kyōhansha” (1965; “The Accomplice”), a businessman spies on his former partner-in-crime to ensure that his past life will not intrude on his present success.

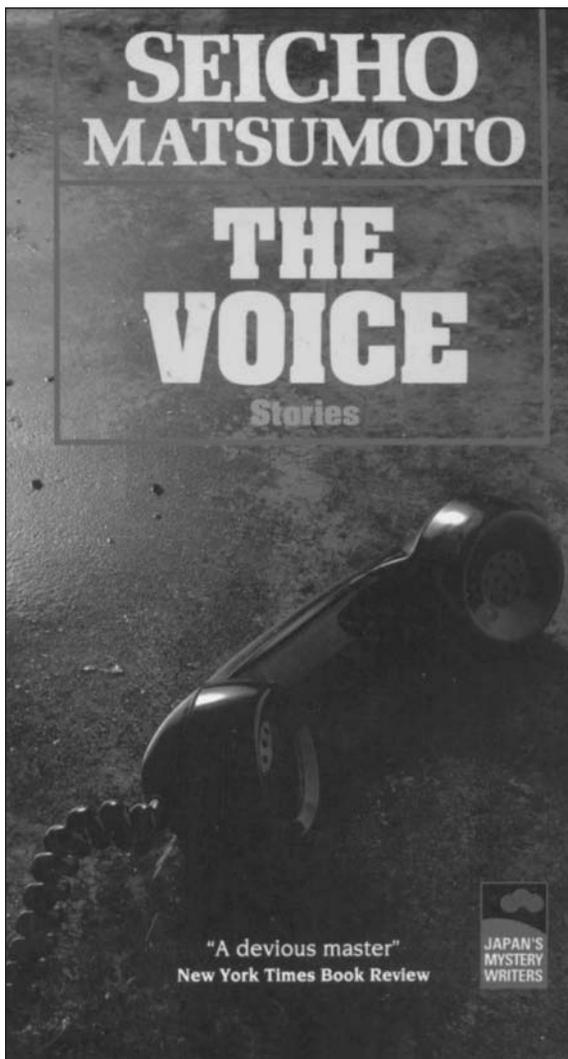
Dorothy Dodge Robbins

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1955-1970 • *Akuma ni motomeru onna*, 1955; *Ten to sen*, 1958 (*Points and Lines*, 1970); *Me no kabe*, 1958; *Aoi byōten*, 1959; *Kiroi fudo*, 1959; *Zero no shōten*, 1959; *Kuroi gashū 1959-1960*; *Kuroi jukai*, 1960; *Nami no tō*, 1960; *Kuroi fukuin*, 1961; *Kage no chitai*, 1961; *Kangaeru ha*, 1961; *Kiri no hata*, 1961; *Kōkō satsujin jiken*, 1961; *Suna no utsuwa*, 1961 (*Inspector Imanishi Investigates*, 1989); *Yuganda fukusha*, 1961; *Warui yatsura*, 1961; *Kaze no shisen*, 1962; *Fuan na ensō*, 1962; *Renkan*, 1962; *Kami to yajū no hi*, 1963; *Hi no nawa*, 1963; *Rakusa*, 1963; *Kemonomichi*, 1964; *Kenrantaru ryūri*, 1964; *Kajitsu no nai mori*, 1964; *Kita no shijin*, 1964; *Saimu*, 1964; *Kusa no ankoku*, 1965; *Aozameta reifuku*, 1966; *Oboredani*, 1966; *Kaei*, 1966; *Hanagoromo*, 1966; *Hansei no ki*, 1966; *Sabaku no shio*, 1967; *Nijū yōmyaku*, 1967; *D no fukugō*, 1968; *Shōsetsu Tōkyō teikoku daigaku*, 1969; *Bunri no jikan*, 1969; *Shōmei*, 1970; *Ningen suiiki*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Ikeru Pasukaru*, 1971; *Kikanakatta basho*, 1971; *Tsuyoki ari*, 1971; *Sōshitsu no girei*, 1972; *Kokuso sezu*, 1973; *Kaze no iki*, 1974; *Jiko*, 1975; *Kuro no kairō*, 1976; *Shōchō no sekkei*, 1976; *Watasareta bamen*, 1976; *Garasu no shiro*, 1976; *Uzu*, 1977; *Kussetsu kairo*, 1977; *Seisoku bunpu*, 1978; *Fūmon*, 1978; *Mizu no hada*, 1978; *Shiro to kuro no kakumei*, 1979; *Tensaiga no onna*, 1979; *Kurogawa no techō*, 1980; *Hi no michi*, 1980

1981-1997 • *Jūmanbun no ichi no gūzen*, 1981; *Yakōo no kaidan*, 1981; *Giwaku*, 1982; *Satsujingyō oku no hosomichi*, 1982; *Shi no hassō*, 1982; *Irodorigawa*, 1983 (2 volumes); *Kotei no kōbō*, 1983; *Seijū hairetsu*, 1983; *Kazatta senmai*, 1984; *Ami*, 1984; *Nurareta hon*, 1984; *Atsui kinu*, 1985; *Kiri no kaigi*, 1987; *Akai hyōga ki*, 1989; *1952-nen Nikkōki “gekitsui” jiken*, 1992; *Hanzai no kaisō*, 1992; *Inka heigen*, 1993; *Kamigami no ranshin*, 1997



SHORT FICTION: *Kao*, 1959; *Kiken na shamen*, 1959; *Kage no kuruma*, 1961; *Harikomi*, 1964; *Kichiku*, 1964; *Satsui*, 1964; *Koe*, 1964; *Kyōhansha*, 1965; *Kuro no yōshiki*, 1967; *Hyōshō shijin*, 1968; *Kyojin no iso*, 1973; *Kajin hisatsu*, 1973; *Nakai no wa*, 1974; *Mizu no hada*, 1978; *Tōku kara no koe*, 1964; *Meisō chizu*, 1983; *The Voice, and Other Stories*, 1989

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Saigō-satsu*, 1950; *Mushukunin betchō*, 1957; *Kagerō ezu*, 1958; *Soshoku hoyden*, 1958

NONFICTION: *Nihon no kuroi kiri*, 1961; *Zuihitsu kuroi techō*, 1961; *Tenpō zuroku*, 1962; *Shōwa-shi hakkutsu*, 1965-1972; *Kodaishi-gi*, 1967; *Misuteri no keifu*, 1968; *Seichō tsushi*, 1976-1983; *Seichō nikki*, 1984; *Mikkyo no suigen o miru*, 1984; *Nafudano mai nimotsu*, 1992

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linked to the author's own interests.

Hong, Lawrence. "Mystery as Poetry, Suicide as Literary Device: The Works of Seichō Matsumoto." *Popular Culture Review* 12, no. 2 (August, 2001): 1-14. Critiques Matsumoto's unique style, positing that the author's works of popular fiction are actually quite literary.

Kohl, Stephen. "Seichō Matsumoto." In *Japanese Fiction Writers Since World War II*, Vol. 182 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, edited by Van C. Gessel. Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 1997. Places the author in the context of twentieth century Japanese literature and society. Provides brief analyses of major works in various genres, including mystery, historical fiction, historical nonfiction, and archaeology.

Manji, Gonda. "Crime Fiction with a Social Consciousness." *Japan Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April/June, 1993): 157-164. A Japanese literary critic and associate professor who studies detective writers presents a picture of Matsumoto's influence on mystery writing in Japan. Provides history and analysis of works.

Wheeler, Wolcott. "Seichō Matsumoto's *Points and Lines*: The Shortest Distance is the Truth." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 18, no. 2 (Fall-Winter, 1997): 59-70. Critiques Matsumoto's novel in terms of its structure and its social commentary.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Born: Paris, France; January 25, 1874

Died: Nice, France; December 16, 1965

Type of plot: Espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ashenden, 1928

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

ASHENDEN, an English author turned intelligence officer, is a cultured, urbane bachelor. Assigned to carry out intelligence activities during World War I, he approaches his tasks with a curiosity about human be-

ings (the writer's raw material), a sense of irony, and cool clinical detachment. Basically tolerant, he finds eccentricities of character and behavior appealing; at the same time, he is efficient in his work and unswervingly loyal.

CONTRIBUTION

W. Somerset Maugham's sixteen short stories and sketches in the Ashenden series were among the first in English fiction to present espionage activities as realistic and even dull at times. Because of their accurate depiction, they became required reading for British

agents before World War II. Ashenden is sent first to Switzerland and later to Russia to carry out assignments, usually intended to counter German intelligence or, in the example of Russia, to influence internal politics. Both the events and characters from the series are based on Maugham's experiences as an agent for British Military Intelligence (MI6). Yet Ashenden seems more interested in describing eccentric characters and reflecting on the ironies of the human condition than in reporting on specific missions. Maugham writes in the lucid, idiomatic, and colloquial English typical of his voluminous prose. His hero is the prototype of the later reflective and analytical spymasters of Graham Greene and John le Carré.

When he collected his complete short stories, Maugham compressed the Ashenden series into six long narratives: "Miss King," "The Hairless Mexican," "Giulia Lazzari," "The Traitor," "His Excellency," and "Mr. Harrington's Washing." Fourteen other Ashenden stories, still in manuscript, were destroyed after Winston Churchill gave Maugham his opinion that they violated English laws concerning official secrets. In addition to the Ashenden series, Maugham wrote a few short stories dealing with murder, and in numerous essays and sketches he drew on his experience as an intelligence officer.

BIOGRAPHY

William Somerset Maugham, the fourth son of an English solicitor, was born in the British Embassy in Paris on January 25, 1874. He spent his early childhood in France, but following the deaths of his parents he went to England to live with an uncle, the Reverend Henry Maugham, vicar of Whitstable. In a nearby boarding school, King's School, Canterbury, Maugham found that the bitterness of his childhood only increased. A permanent stammer that developed at the time prevented his becoming a lawyer like his father and two brothers. Instead of entering an English university after his schooling, he traveled to Heidelberg, where he learned German, attended lectures by Kuno Fischer on the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, and saw the dramas of Henrik Ibsen. On his return to England, he enrolled in the medical school at St. Thomas Hospital in London.



W. Somerset Maugham. (Library of Congress)

Although Maugham received his doctor of medicine degree in 1897, he found that his interest in writing overshadowed his desire to become a practicing physician. With the publication of *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), a naturalistic novel, he resolved to devote his career to writing. Although none of the numerous novels he wrote during the next decade approached the success of *Liza of Lambeth*, Maugham was to become one of the most prolific and successful English authors. He achieved sudden and unexpected fame with drama, producing numerous comedies of manners for the London stage. In 1915, Maugham published his most important novel, *Of Human Bondage*; in the same year he was recruited for service as a British agent in MI6, headed by Captain Sir Mansfield Cumming, and sent to Switzerland. After a year he was sent to Russia via the South Pacific, a trip that probably involved some intelligence work en route. Arriving in

Vladivostok, he took the Trans-Siberian Railway to Petrograd (Leningrad), where his mission was to support the government of Aleksandr Kerensky, to keep Russia in the war, and to prevent the Bolsheviks from taking power. As he himself admitted in his autobiography, *The Summing Up* (1938), his mission was a dismal failure. In 1917, he married Syrie Bernardo Wellcome, but the marriage ended in divorce after ten years.

Following World War I, Maugham traveled extensively, gathering material for his fiction. Making his home at the Villa Mauresque on the French Riviera, he continued his prolific production of literature. With the outbreak of World War II, he came to the United States, where he lived until 1946. Although he probably did some work for MI6 during the war, his age and place of residence limited his efforts. After the war, he returned to the Riviera, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Plagued with deteriorating health beginning in his late eighties, Maugham suffered a stroke at Villa Mauresque and died on December 16, 1965, at the age of ninety-one.

ANALYSIS

Ashenden: Or, The British Agent (1928) consists of sixteen stories and sketches bound by the central character, an authorial persona. Ashenden's experiences are based on W. Somerset Maugham's work with MI6 during 1915-1917, though Maugham carefully notes that the accounts are fictional. The name Ashenden, like many in Maugham's work, is common in Kent and was the surname of a schoolmate of the author at King's School in Canterbury. Maugham continued to use the name after the spy series, most notably in *Cakes and Ale: Or, The Skeleton in the Cupboard* (1930), where the authorial persona is given the first name Willie, as Maugham was called by his friends. Ted Morgan reports that sometimes Maugham introduced himself as Willie Ashenden, and there can be little doubt that the author of the stories is closely identified with his hero.

Maugham is noted for introducing the life of the workaday spy or intelligence officer, a hero who is neither heroic nor idealistic. When Ashenden is recruited by R., a British colonel who becomes his chief, the latter narrates a story of a recent event that might

be useful in fiction. An agent meets an attractive woman, forms a liaison with her, and together they go to a hotel room. During the evening she manages to drug him, and when he awakens she and his secret papers are missing. This premise, R. says, should make a good story. Ashenden's response gives the writer's perspective: "We've been putting that incident on the stage for sixty years, we've written it in a thousand novels. Do you mean to say that life has only just caught up with us?" In reality, an agent's work proves far less dramatic. In his preface to a later edition (1941), Maugham points out that intelligence work is often monotonous and uncommonly useless to a writer. To form coherent plots, an author must impose organization and provide logical connections.

Ashenden is more an intermediary than an actor in events; he receives his orders from R. and transmits information to other agents. Sometimes he serves as a supervisor, sometimes as paymaster; at other times his mission is not entirely clear even to himself. He gives the impression that he grasps a small part of a large puzzle while operating in an atmosphere rife with intrigue. When Ashenden is in Switzerland, he serves without pay; he has been told that his success will not be rewarded; thus, his failure will be his own responsibility. Skeptical, detached, analytic, and even cynical at times, he never questions his own loyalty. He would no more think of betraying his nation or its interests than of appearing to be lower class. When he finds out that R. has been receiving reports on his activities, including social ones, he reacts with wry amusement. Among the other characters in the series, only R. recurs with any regularity. Ashenden's chief is humorless and somewhat self-conscious about his lack of culture, but he is cunning, masterful, single-minded, and completely devoted to his profession.

Ashenden is first sent to Geneva with access to codes and a diplomatic passport under the name Somerville. He assures the skeptical Swiss authorities that he has come there only to write a play, since wartime England is in too much turmoil for artistic creation. The Swiss know that their country is filled with spies for both sides and accept the situation, though they are always on the lookout for flagrant and open violations of their neutrality.

“THE FLIP OF A COIN”

The conflicts faced by Ashenden in his role as an agent are revealed in the brief story “The Flip of a Coin,” which Maugham omitted when he prepared the Ashenden material for his volumes of collected short stories. An assassin has approached Ashenden with the idea of killing the King of B., a monarchy allied with Germany, and for the deed he wants five thousand pounds. Ashenden takes the matter to R., who reponds, “It’s not the kind of thing we can have anything to do with. We don’t wage war by those methods. We leave them to the Germans. Damn it all, we are gentlemen. . . .” Shortly afterward he suggests that having the king out of the way would be quite a good thing, and that if from a sense of patriotism anyone chose to arrange it, he could not object. Ashenden snaps back that he would not pay for a mission of that kind out of his own pocket. He then has to resolve the main conflict, deciding whether a saboteur should be sent to blow up German factories. The problem is that many innocent foreign workers would die, a point that Ashenden belabors to the eager saboteur Herbartus. Unable to decide the matter, Ashenden decides to flip a coin, and the story ends without providing the answer. Ashenden’s reflections on war, intrigue, and folly, however, bring him to a pessimistic conclusion: “Man, with so short a time between the cradle and the grave, spent his life in foolishness. A trivial creature!”

“THE HAIRLESS MEXICAN”

In the main, the Ashenden stories narrate the agent’s reactions to people he meets—largely Americans, Russians, or unusual Englishmen—or they deal with his efforts to thwart the German intelligence officers, as in “The Hairless Mexican.” R. Sends Ashenden to accompany an assassin, an exiled Mexican revolutionary, whose mission is to murder a Greek businessman carrying documents of interest to the Germans. The Mexican meets the Greek as he disembarks at Brindisi, Italy, strikes up an acquaintance, and in short order kills the man. Afterward, Ashenden and he search the hotel room in vain for the papers. Ashenden then opens a telegram from R. saying that the targeted individual has not yet left Greece. He turns to the assassin with the scathing remark, “You bloody fool, you’ve killed the wrong man!”

“THE TRAITOR”

Not all the missions are this disastrous. In “The Traitor,” Ashenden meets an Englishman with a German wife, a man discovered to be a traitor. R. simply tells Ashenden to make his acquaintance without any specific directions. By carefully piecing together facts and reaching a logical conclusion, Ashenden discovers that the German officer in charge of his English compatriot has demanded more information of him. The Englishman, Grantley Caypor, asks Ashenden to use his influence to secure for him a place in the Censorship Department in London, since he can no longer bear to shirk the war effort. To avoid anti-German sentiments in England, his wife will remain in Switzerland, though in reality she is there to relay to German agents any information he obtains in England. Ashenden gladly complies with the request, even arranging a visa, knowing that once Caypor has crossed the French border he will be arrested and shot.

“GIULIA LAZZARI”

In “Giulia Lazzari,” Ashenden uses his talent as a writer to secure the arrest of an Indian agitator, Chandra Lal, who stirs resentment among colonial troops from his office in Berlin. Lal has fallen in love with Giulia Lazzari, a Spanish dancer of Italian descent, who tours various European countries. On one tour, R. has her arrested on espionage charges, claiming to possess enough information to imprison her for ten years. Ashenden’s job is to persuade her to lure Lal across the French border in return for her own freedom. Ashenden accompanies her from Paris to Thonon, a town near the Swiss border, and overcomes her opposition to the idea, often dictating letters to the reluctant target. Chandra Lal is persuaded to visit her, crosses the border, is detained, and knowing that he is caught, manages to commit suicide.

“MISS KING”

In several stories, however, Maugham seems more interested in portraying a character or re-creating a setting than in narrating incidents of counter-intelligence. In “Miss King,” an elderly English governess who lives in Ashenden’s hotel suffers a stroke and asks that he come to her in the middle of the night. Ashenden hardly knows her and cannot imagine what she has to tell him. On his arrival, he finds her unable

to speak. Left alone with her by the attending physician, he sits patiently beside her bed, awaiting her recovery. Before morning, she rouses herself with great effort, exclaims "England!" and dies. The story suggests that she only wanted the company of a fellow countryman at the time of her death.

"HIS EXCELLENCY"

In "His Excellency," Ashenden dines with an English ambassador who narrates a lengthy story of lost opportunity in love and a successful career at the expense of an embittered life. Although the ambassador uses pseudonyms, Ashenden recognizes that the story is about the narrator. Among other memorable characters is the American John Quincy Harrington, whom Ashenden meets in Russia. Brimming with confidence, expansive and optimistic, Harrington implicitly believes that his American citizenship is adequate protection anywhere, even amid the chaos of revolutionary Russia, and he ignores the well-intended warnings of Ashenden and his Russian friends. He is killed by a reckless band of soldiers while trying to recover his laundry before leaving Russia. This account ends shortly after the fall of the Kerensky government and the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, events that mark the failure of Ashenden's (and Maugham's) mission to Russia.

OTHER WORKS

Apart from the Ashenden stories, Maugham's interest in mystery and detective fiction was fitful and scattered. In *A Writer's Notebook* (1949), Maugham recorded many of his notes and sketches from Russia during 1917, and a posthumous publication, *A Traveler in Romance* (1984), includes a character sketch of the Russian terrorist Boris Savinkov. Among his short stories, several deal with murder but usually do not emphasize mystery and crime solving. In "Footprints in the Jungle," a murder results from a love triangle. The killer, though known to everyone, marries his victim's widow, and the two lead normal lives, as there is no adequate proof that he is the murderer. In "The Letter," a woman pleads self-defense to the murder of her secret lover and is acquitted. The story became accessible to a wide audience when a stage adaptation and a film version were made.

With his interest in plot and narration, Maugham

found the detective story enjoyable and highly readable. In his essay "The Decline and Fall of the Detective Story" (in *The Vagrant Mood*, 1952), he explores the genre and praises the hard-boiled detective fiction of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. When he was called on to edit anthologies, Maugham often included detective fiction among the selections. In *The Traveller's Library* (1933) he included *Trent's Last Case* (1953) by E. C. Bentley, with a note on detective stories. In *Great Modern Reading: W. Somerset Maugham's Introduction to Modern English and American Literature* (1943), he included stories by John Dickson Carr, Anthony Berkeley, and Dashiell Hammett. He found the genre more meritorious than his short story "The Creative Impulse" suggests; in that account, a female author who has been deserted by her husband turns to detective fiction to make money.

Stanley Archer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ASHENDEN SERIES: *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent*, 1928

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Casuarina Tree: Six Stories*, 1926; *Ah King: Six Stories*, 1933

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Liza of Lambeth*, 1897; *The Making of a Saint*, 1898; *The Hero*, 1901; *Mrs. Craddock*, 1902; *The Merry-Go-Round*, 1904; *The Bishop's Apron*, 1906; *The Explorer*, 1907; *The Magician*, 1908; *Of Human Bondage*, 1915; *The Moon and Sixpence*, 1919; *The Painted Veil*, 1925; *Cakes and Ale*, 1930; *The Narrow Corner*, 1932; *Theatre*, 1937; *Christmas Holiday*, 1939; *Up at the Villa*, 1941; *The Hour Before Dawn*, 1942; *The Razor's Edge*, 1944; *Then and Now*, 1946; *Catalina*, 1948; *Selected Novels*, 1953

SHORT FICTION: *Orientations*, 1899; *The Trembling of a Leaf: Little Stories of the South Sea Islands*, 1921; *Six Stories Written in the First Person Singular*, 1931; *East and West: The Collected Short Stories*, 1934; *Cosmopolitans*, 1936; *The Favorite Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham*, 1937; *The Round Dozen*, 1939; *The Mixture as Before: Short Stories*, 1940; *Creatures of Circumstances: Short Stories*, 1947; *East of Suez: Great Stories of the Tropics*,

1948; *Here and There: Selected Short Stories*, 1948; *The Complete Short Stories*, 1951; *The World Over*, 1952; *Seventeen Lost Stories*, 1969

PLAYS: *A Man of Honor*, wr. 1898-1899, pr., pb. 1903; *Loaves and Fishes*, wr. 1903, pr. 1911; *Lady Frederick*, pr. 1907; *Jack Straw*, pr. 1908; *Mrs. Dot*, pr. 1908; *The Explorer*, pr. 1908; *Penelope*, pr. 1909; *Smith*, pr. 1909; *The Noble Spaniard*, pr. 1909; *Landed Gentry*, pr. 1910 (as *Grace*; pb. 1913); *The Tenth Man*, pr. 1910; *The Land of Promise*, pr., pb. 1913; *Caroline*, pr. 1916, pb. 1923 (also known as *The Unattainable*); *Our Betters*, pr. 1917; *Caesar's Wife*, pr. 1919; *Home and Beauty*, pr. 1919 (also known as *Too Many Husbands*); *The Unknown*, pr., pb. 1920; *The Circle*, pr., pb. 1921; *East of Suez*, pr., pb. 1922; *The Constant Wife*, pr., pb. 1926; *The Letter*, pr., pb. 1927; *The Sacred Flame*, pr., pb. 1928; *The Breadwinner*, pr., pb. 1930; *The Collected Plays of W. Somerset Maugham*, pb. 1931-1934 (6 volumes; revised 1952, 3 volumes); *For Services Rendered*, pr., pb. 1932; *Sheppey*, pr., pb. 1933

SCREENPLAY: *Trio*, 1950 (with R. C. Sherriff and Noel Langley)

NONFICTION: *The Land of the Blessed Virgin: Sketches and Impressions in Andalusia*, 1905 (also known as *Andalusia*, 1920); *On a Chinese Screen*, 1922; *The Gentleman in the Parlour: A Record of a Journey from Rangoon to Haiphong*, 1930; *Don Fernando*, 1935; *The Summing Up*, 1938; *Books and You*, 1940; *France at War*, 1940; *Strictly Personal*, 1941; *Great Novelists and Their Novels*, 1948; *A Writer's Notebook*, 1949; *The Writer's Point of View*, 1951; *The Vagrant Mood: Six Essays*, 1952; *Ten Novels and Their Authors*, 1954 (revision of *Great Novelists and Their Novels*); *The Partial View*, 1954 (includes *The Summing Up* and *A Writer's Notebook*); *The Travel Books*, 1955; *Points of View*, 1958; *Looking Back*, 1962; *Purely for My Pleasure*, 1962; *Selected Prefaces and Introductions*, 1963; *Wit and Wisdom*, 1966; *Essays on Literature*, 1967; *A Traveller in Romance*, 1984

EDITED TEXTS: *The Traveller's Library*, 1933 (also known as *Fifty Modern English Writers*); *Tellers of Tales: One Hundred Short Stories from the United States, England, France, Russia, and Germany*, 1939

(also known as *The Greatest Stories of All Times*); *Great Modern Reading: W. Somerset Maugham's Introduction to Modern English and American Literature*, 1943

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Great Exotic Novels and Short Stories of Somerset Maugham*, 2001

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Archer, Stanley. *W. Somerset Maugham: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1993. An introductory survey of Maugham's short fiction, focusing on style and technique of the stories and the frequent themes of how virtue ironically can cause unhappiness, how colonial officials come in conflict with their social and physical environment, and how people are often unable to escape their own cultural background.

Connon, Bryan. *Somerset Maugham and the Maugham Dynasty*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997. Connon examines the influence that the Maugham family had on the life and works of W. Somerset Maugham. Includes bibliography and index.

Furst, Alan. Introduction to *The Book of Spies: An Anthology of Literary Espionage*, edited by Alan Furst. New York: Modern Library, 2003. Furst's introduction discusses Maugham's place in the exclusive company of literary (as opposed to merely popular) portrayals of espionage in fiction.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares famous fictional spies and spy stories—including those of Maugham—to real espionage agents and case studies to demonstrate that truth is stranger than fiction.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *Somerset Maugham*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. This well-reviewed examination of Maugham's life and work provides comprehensive detail and new insights into his creative process.

Morgan, Ted. *Maugham*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980. The first full-scale biography of Maugham and therefore an essential text in all studies of the man and his work. Unlike previous biographers, Morgan enjoyed the cooperation of Maugham's lit-

erary executor and, therefore, is able to correct many distortions in previous studies. Offers a comprehensive account of the private man, including photographs, a complete primary bibliography, and an index.

Rogal, Samuel J. *A William Somerset Maugham Encyclopedia*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997. Contains information on Maugham's life as well as his works. Includes bibliographical references and an index.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Born: Château de Miromesnil, near Dieppe, France;
August 5, 1850

Died: Passy, Paris, France; July 6, 1893

Types of plot: Psychological; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Between 1880 and 1890, Guy de Maupassant published more than three hundred short stories in a variety of modes, including the supernatural legend, the surprise-ending tale, and the realistic story. Although he is best known for such surprise-ending tales as “La Parue” (“The Necklace”) and is most respected for such affecting realistic stories as “Boule de suif,” literally “ball of fat,” Maupassant also contributed to the sophistication of the traditional horror story by pushing it even further than did Edgar Allan Poe into the modern realm of psychological obsession and madness.

BIOGRAPHY

Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant was born on August 5, 1850, the eldest son of Laure Le Poitevin and Gustave de Maupassant, both from prosperous bourgeois French families. When Maupassant was eleven, his strong-willed mother obtained a legal separation from her husband. In the absence of her husband, Maupassant's mother assumed an exaggerated importance in his life. The most important masculine figures for Maupassant during his youth were Alfred, his mother's brilliant brother, and Alfred's literary student, Gustave Flaubert. With the death of Alfred at a relatively young age, Flaubert began to have an even more significant role, encouraging the young Maupassant to write.

Maupassant's education was aimed at training him for a career in the law, and after a brief period of military service during the Franco-Prussian War he was given a position in the Naval Ministry. However, under the tutelage of Flaubert he began to publish poetry and stories in various obscure journals. He also became part of a group of literary figures—which included Alphonse Daudet, Émile Zola, and Ivan Turgenev—that met regularly at Flaubert's home. In 1880, with the publication of “Boule de suif,” a tale that Flaubert praised extravagantly, Maupassant ceased working for the government and devoted himself completely to his writing. In the next ten years, he wrote numerous articles for newspapers, published more than three hundred short stories, and wrote six novels.

Many critics believe that Maupassant's best-known mystery story, “Le Horla” (“The Horla”), a first-person account of psychological hallucination, was the first indication of the madness (caused by syphilis) that eventually led to his death. In the last few years of his life, his eyesight weakened, his memory failed, his thinking became erratic, and he suffered from delusions. After undergoing several unsuccessful treatments for his disease and even attempting suicide, Maupassant was incarcerated in a sanatorium, where he died on July 6, 1893.

ANALYSIS

Although Guy de Maupassant is not known as a master of the detective genre, many of his stories fall within the tradition of the mystery tale developed by Edgar Allan Poe. After beginning with the supernatural legend and the revenge tale, Maupassant created

stories of madness and obsession and thus helped to develop the mystery tale from its focus on unknown forces existing outside the self to uncontrollable forces originating within the mind of man. Consequently, he was part of a larger movement that helped bring the short story as a genre into the twentieth century.

“THE HAND”

Maupassant’s mentor Flaubert encouraged the aspiring poet to turn to writing short stories, for the form was very popular at the time, and magazine publishers had been buying short tales since the 1860’s. Maupassant’s first published story, “La Main d’écorché” (“The Skinned Hand”), later reworked in 1883 as simply “La Main” or “The Hand,” belongs to a tradition of supernatural short fiction that is as old as legend itself; in its 1883 reworking, however, Maupassant grounds it within the revenge-tale tradition popularized by his

countryman Prosper Mérimée, while at the same time making the story an ironic comment on supernatural fictions. The narrator, a Corsican police magistrate quite familiar with cases of vendetta, revenge, murder, massacre, and hatred, tells of an Englishman living in Corsica who has a dried human hand mounted and chained on his wall. When the Englishman is found murdered, the hand is gone—but a finger is found between his teeth. Later, when the hand itself is found on the Englishman’s grave, as is usual with such supernatural stories, one of the fingers is missing. Although the narrator explains that perhaps the owner of the hand has come to exact revenge on the Englishman, his listeners are not satisfied with such a rational answer, preferring instead the more grisly supernatural one.

There are other stories of savage revenge and the supernatural in the Maupassant canon—such as “Une Vendetta” (“The Vendetta”), in which a Corsican widow teaches her dog to kill to exact a fearful vengeance on the murderer of her son, and “Apparition” (“The Specter”), in which a man confronts the ghost of a young woman who urges him to comb and braid her long hair. Nevertheless, the Maupassant stories that more properly belong within the tradition of the mystery tale are the group of short pieces focusing on madness, hallucination, and murder. The primary stories in this group are: “Fou?” (“Am I Insane?”), “Lui?” (“He?”), “La Peur” (“Fear”), “Un Fou” (“The Madman”), “Lettre d’un fou” (“Letter from a Madman”), and “The Horla.”

The predominant mode of these stories is not the manifestation of the ghostly supernatural in the traditional sense; instead, the stories focus on some mysterious dimension of reality existing beyond that which the human senses can perceive. Yet despite this realm of reality being justified rationally, the reader is never sure whether it truly exists “out there” in the world of the story or is a product of the obsessive mind of the narrator. The style of several of these tales is reminiscent of some of the works of Poe, particularly the stories of the perverse that combine narrative story line with narrator’s quasi-philosophical considerations of madness, murder, and the mysterious realm beyond the pale of ordinary understanding.



Guy de Maupassant. (Library of Congress)

“LETTER FROM A MADMAN”

The story that focuses most explicitly on this realm is “Letter from a Madman,” parts of which were used later in the more famous story “The Horla.” As told by the narrator to a doctor, the story unfolds a theory that the human mind receives only sparse and uncertain information about the external world because the limitations of the five senses restrict perception. The narrator argues, for example, that if humans had additional senses, they could perceive a reality that is closed to their present senses. From this assumption he tries to infer, rather than directly perceive, the mysterious, impenetrable world that lies all around. As a result, he believes himself to be in the presence of noncorporeal beings, although he does not actually have the sense organ that would make it possible for him to “see” them. Once, while sitting in front of a mirror, he could not see himself, for the invisible thing stood between him and the mirror and blocked his reflection. Since that time, he has spent hours before his mirror, going mad waiting for “It” to return, knowing that he will wait until death.

“HE?”

The story “He?” is similar to “Letter from a Madman” in its focus on some unseen but felt presence; it differs thematically, however, in that it emphasizes the appearances of the apparition as a result of the narrator’s loneliness, and it differs stylistically in that it features a more developed narrative with less discursive meditation. “He?” is very similar to stories by Poe that focus on the fear of fear itself and that emphasize the power of hallucination. The narrator acknowledges that he suffers from the disease of fear, an incomprehensible terror that causes him to fear the very madness or confusion of mind that constitutes the fear itself. He describes entering his room after a walk and seeing a man sitting in his chair before the fire. When he reaches out to touch him, there is nothing there. Although convinced that the figure was obviously a hallucination, he cannot shake the fear that it will appear again. Even though he knows that it does not exist except in his own apprehension, he cannot escape that apprehension. In both of these stories, it is the narrators’ own intense self-consciousness that constitutes their insanity; they push what they consider to be reasonable assumptions to such extremes that the inevita-

ble result is madness—that is, the perception of a state of being that exists outside the normal everyday limits of human experience, perception, and thought.

“AM I INSANE?”

In “Am I Insane?” and “The Madman,” Maupassant’s focus is on how an obsession becomes so powerful that it is translated into murderous action. In “Am I Insane?” the simpler of the two, the narrator loves a certain woman to madness. He also hates her passionately, however, for he knows that she is impure and without a soul; he intensely desires both to possess her and to kill her. When she tires of him, he becomes insanely jealous, determines that her horse (which she rides enrap-tured) is his rival, and executes it with a bullet to the brain before also killing his mistress. His madness is similar to the meaningful madness in many Poe stories; there is some basis for the narrator’s jealous obsession, both figuratively in the powerful male symbolism of the horse and literally in the narcissism and autoeroticism that the woman’s daily rides suggest.

“THE MADMAN”

In “The Madman,” Maupassant carries to extremes the concept of madness resulting from carrying a line of reasoning to its ultimate conclusions. The story consists of the journal entries of a dead judge who always seemed to know the secret hearts of criminals. Over and over again, he considers the pleasure there must be in killing. He justifies his obsession in long discursive passages in which he wonders why it is a crime to kill when killing is indeed the law of nature; inevitably, he puts his theories into action. Equating his desire to kill with the power of sexual passion, he describes in graphic detail, reminiscent of the Marquis de Sade, his murder of a young boy by strangulation and his killing of a fisherman by splitting his head open with a spade. After he sentences the fisherman’s nephew to death for the murder that he himself committed, he describes watching the boy’s head being chopped off and wishing that he could have bathed in the blood. Although the ostensible theme of the story is that many such madmen exist secretly in society, the predominating motif is the notion philosophically examined by Friedrich Nietzsche and fictionally explored by Fyodor Dostoevski that killing is the nearest thing to creation.

“THE HORLA”

Of all the Maupassant tales that focus on madness, hallucination, obsession, and the mystery of a dimension beyond the senses, the most sustained and deservedly the most famous is “The Horla.” Although many critics point to the autobiographical elements in this story (for during its writing Maupassant was possessed by his increasing madness), others suggest that the work stands on its own merits as a masterpiece of psychological horror. Told by means of diary entries, the story charts the protagonist’s growing awareness of his own madness as well as his understanding of the process whereby the external world is displaced by psychic projections.

The story begins with many of the same themes that Maupassant had earlier developed in “Letter from a Madman,” at times using much the same language as that story. The narrator begins considering the mystery of the invisible, the weakness of the senses to perceive everything in the world, and the theory that if there were other senses, one could discover many more things about the world around human life. The second predominant consideration here is that of apprehension, a sense of some imminent danger, a presentiment of something yet to come. This apprehension, which the narrator calls a disease, is accompanied by nightmares, a sense of some external force suffocating him while he sleeps, and the conviction that there is something following him; when he turns around, however, there is nothing there.

This sense of something existing outside the self but not visible to the ordinary senses is pushed even further when the narrator begins to believe that there are actual creatures who exist in this invisible dimension. This conviction is then developed into an idea that when the mind is asleep an alien being takes control of the body and makes it obey. These ideas then lead easily into the concept of mesmerism or hypnosis, for under hypnosis it seems as if an alien being has control of actions of which, when he is awake, he has no awareness. Although the narrator doubts his sanity, he also believes that he is in complete possession of all of his faculties; he becomes even more convinced that an invisible creature is making him do things over which his mind has no control. Thus, he

finally believes that there are Invisible Ones in the world, creatures that have always existed and that have haunted humankind even though they cannot be seen.

The final event to convince him of the external, as opposed to the psychological, existence of the creatures, is a newspaper article about an epidemic of madness in Brazil in which people seem possessed by vampirelike creatures that feed on them during sleep. He remembers a Brazilian ship that sailed past his window and believes that one of the creatures has jumped ship to possess him. Now he knows that the reign of humankind on earth is over and that the forces of the Horla that mankind has always feared—forces called spirits, genies, fairies, hobgoblins, witches, devils, and imps—will enslave man.

Finally, in a scene taken from “Letter from a Madman,” he “sees” the creature in the mirror when its presence blurs his own image by coming between him and the mirror. He decides to destroy the creature by locking it in his room and burning his house to the ground. As he watches the house burn and realizes that his servants are inside, he wonders if indeed the Horla is dead, for he considers that it cannot, like humans, be prematurely destroyed. His final thought is that because the Horla is not dead he shall have to kill himself; the story ends with that decision.

“The Horla” becomes distinctive with the increasing need of the narrator to account for his madness as being something external to himself. This universalizes the story, for human beings have always tried to embody their most basic desires and fears in external but invisible presences called gods, devils, and spirits. “The Horla” is a masterpiece of hallucinatory horror because it focuses so powerfully on that process of mistaking inner reality for outer that is the very basis of hallucination.

Because of his ability to transform the short mystery tale from a primitive oral form based on legend into a sophisticated modern one in which the mystery originates within the complex mind of man, Maupassant is an important figure in marking the transition between the nineteenth century tale of the supernatural and the twentieth century short story of psychological obsession.

Charles E. May

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Mademoiselle Fifi*, 1882 (*Mademoiselle Fifi, and Other Stories*, 1922); *Contes de la bécasse*, 1883; *Les Sœurs Rondoli*, 1884 (*The Sisters Rondoli, and Other Stories*, 1923); *Le Horla*, 1887 (*The Horla, and Other Stories*, 1903)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Une Vie*, 1883 (*A Woman's Life*, 1888); *Bel-Ami*, 1885 (English translation, 1889); *Pierre et Jean*, 1888 (*Pierre and Jean*, 1890); *Forte comme la mort*, 1889 (*Strong as Death*, 1899); *Notre cœur*, 1890 (*The Human Heart*, 1890)

SHORT FICTION: *La Maison Tellier*, 1881 (*Madame Tellier's Establishment and Short Stories*, 1910); *Clair de lune*, 1883; *Miss Harriet*, 1884 (*Miss Harriet, and Other Stories*, 1923); *Contes du jour et de la nuit*, 1885 (*Day and Night Stories*, 1924); *Toine*, 1885 (*Toine, and Other Stories*, 1922); *Yvette*, 1885 (*Yvette, and Other Stories*, 1905); *La Petite Rogue*, 1886 (*Little Rogue, and Other Stories*, 1924); *Monsieur Parent*, 1886 (*Monsieur Parent, and Other Stories*, 1909); *Le Rosier de Madame Husson*, 1888; *L'Inutile Beauté*, 1890 (*Useless Beauty, and Other Stories*, 1911); *Eighty-eight Short Stories*, 1930; *Eighty-eight More Stories*, 1932; *Complete Short Stories*, 1955

POETRY: *Des Vers*, 1880 (*Romance in Rhyme*, 1903)

NONFICTION: *Au Soleil*, 1884 (*In the Sunlight*, 1903); *Sur l'eau*, 1888 (*Afloat*, 1889); *Le Vie errante*, 1890 (*In Vagabondia*, 1903); *Lettres de Guy de Maupassant à Gustave Flaubert*, 1951

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Life Work of Henri René Guy de Maupassant*, 1903 (17 volumes); *The Works of Guy de Maupassant*, 1923-1929 (10 volumes)

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Bloom, Harold, ed. *Guy de Maupassant*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004. Compilation of critical studies of Guy de Maupassant and other essays on his life and work.

Fusco, Richard. *Maupassant and the American Short*

Story: The Influence of Form at the Turn of the Century. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994. Argues that Maupassant was the most important influence on American short-story writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Focuses on his effect on Kate Chopin, Ambrose Bierce, Henry James, and O. Henry. Arranges Maupassant's stories into seven categories based on narrative structure.

Gregorio, Laurence A. *Maupassant's Fiction and the Darwinian View of Life*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. Fascinating study of the influence of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on Maupassant's works. Bibliographic references and index.

Harris, Trevor A. *Le V. Maupassant in the Hall of Mirrors: Ironies and Repetition in the Work of Guy de Maupassant*. New York: Macmillan, 1990. A critical evaluation of Maupassant's use of irony and repetition.

Lloyd, Christopher, and Robert Lethbridge, eds. *Maupassant: Conteur et romancier*. Durham, England: University of Durham, 1994. A collection of papers, in both French and English, commemorating the centenary of Maupassant's death in 1993. Papers in English on Maupassant's short stories include an essay on "Mademoiselle Fifi," David Bryant's paper "Maupassant and the Writing Hand," and Angela Moger's essay "Kissing and Telling: Narrative Crimes in Maupassant."

Sullivan, Edward. *Maupassant: The Short Stories*. Great Neck, N.Y.: Barron's, 1962. A pamphlet-length introduction to some of Maupassant's basic themes and story types. Particularly helpful are Sullivan's attempts to place Maupassant's short stories within their proper generic tradition.

Wallace, Albert H. *Guy de Maupassant*. New York: Twayne, 1973. Wallace presents an excellent analysis of recurring themes in Maupassant's major works. He discusses with much subtlety Maupassant's representations of war and madness. This well-annotated book is an essential introduction to the thematic study of Maupassant's major works.

ARCHER MAYOR

Born: Mount Kisco, New York; July 30, 1950

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Joe Gunther, 1988-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOE GUNTHER is a police lieutenant in Brattleboro, Vermont, who eventually becomes head of the Vermont Bureau of Investigation. He is a thoughtful man of simple tastes, not given to strong expression or violent gestures. Years after his first wife succumbed to cancer, Joe becomes involved with Gail Zigman, a woman of strong character who is in many ways his opposite: She is a vegetarian, while he prefers pre-packaged convenience foods; she works in the public eye, while Gunther prefers to work behind the scenes. Gunther's sensitivity to the thoughts and actions of those around him is perhaps his greatest strength, often leading to the inspiration or insight that solves the case.

WILLY KUNKLE, Gunther's colleague, is in many ways his foil as well. Impulsive in word and action, Kunkle is as abrasive as Gunther is unassuming. Although both men have their demons, they react to them differently. A former New York City police officer, Kunkle has a checkered past: He has lost the use of his left arm because of a bullet wound, and he is known to have been a heavy drinker and to have abused his wife.

CONTRIBUTION

Aside from the intricate but never unduly convoluted plots, the most noticeable quality of Archer Mayor's Joe Gunther novels is their strong evocation of—and affection for—their setting, Vermont. Mayor's familiarity with the small New England state is evident throughout the novels. The appearance of the landscape and the character of the towns and their inhabitants are Mayor's concerns as much as are the infrequent crimes he describes and the understaffed law enforcement agencies that solve them. Mayor is very much a regionalist.

Although it is one of his most interesting characteristics, Mayor's allegiance to Vermont is also one of his greatest challenges. In choosing to set more than a dozen murder mysteries in a small, sparsely populated state that has averaged no more than seven murders a year, Mayor has set himself a difficult task; it is a testimony to his talent that he has kept the novels fresh and the plots credible. Most of his early novels are set in Brattleboro, but later in the series, Mayor broadens his canvas to include all of Vermont. Occasionally, Gunther travels to cities such as Newark or Chicago to solve Vermont-based crimes. Mayor has stated that he likes to work in Vermont because it is a small state where everybody is aware of everybody else. For some characters in his novels, this ease of access to local and state authorities is a blessing; for others, the lack of anonymity is a curse.

In an interview, Mayor listed a number of authors whose work he enjoyed, and in many cases their influence on him is evident: Arthur Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Maurice Leblanc, Georges Simenon, and Ross Macdonald are some of these authors. Mayor, however, synthesizes these influences and takes them in a different direction, in part with the small-town and rural settings he uses, and in part with the very nature of his protagonist. Joe Gunther does not have the flamboyant or strong personality of many protagonists in detective fiction; he is a man of strong character but not overpowering characteristics.

Mayor's Joe Gunther books have received positive reviews in major newspapers as well as in publications devoted to mystery and detective fiction. He is also a recipient of the New England Book Award for fiction from the New England Booksellers Association.

BIOGRAPHY

Born on July 30, 1950, on a farm in New York, Archer Huntington Mayor traveled widely in his youth and amassed a breadth of experience that has served him well as a writer. Mayor has stated that before the age of thirty, he never lived for more than four years in

the same locale. In 1980 he came to live in Vermont and in 1982 moved near Brattleboro, the town that would provide the setting for most of the novels in the Joe Gunther series. He later moved to Newfane, Vermont. Mayor has stated that moving from place to place gave him a sociologist's ability to "read" a place or situation quickly and go about fitting in; this ability surely came in handy when he returned to the United States for college after having been raised largely abroad, and it is an ability his protagonist, Joe Gunther, has in abundance.

Mayor held a variety of jobs before becoming a full-time novelist. He studied history at Yale and is the author of at least one nonfictional historical work published by an academic press: *Southern Timberman: The Legacy of William Buchanan* (1988). He has stated that in addition to writing history, he worked as a scholarly editor, a political advance man, a theater photographer, a newspaper writer and editor, a lab technician, and a medical illustrator. He also made several attempts at writing novels, which he later dismissed as "typing."

From this wide range of formative experiences, Mayor gained skills that would serve him well in his career as a novelist; persistence was not the least of these. His training as a historian is evident in the plots of several of his novels that feature the piecing together of cold cases, as well as in his meticulous documentation of the people and locales of Vermont. Although he has joked that his work as a writer of political advertisements taught him how to be a good liar, his awareness of and sensitivity to politics is a significant quality in his novels: The ambition and sometimes corruption of elected officials such as state attorneys, town selectmen, and even governors, frequently play important roles in Mayor's plots. Mayor's training as a journalist reveals itself in the sympathetic portrayal of Stanley Katz, a hard-nosed but principled newspaper writer and later editor who is a recurring character in Mayor's novels. Mayor also has attributed his ability to write to deadline and to overcome writer's block to his journalistic training and experience.

Although Mayor has been a full-time novelist for many years, he has also served his community in ways that clearly enhance his fiction. He has worked for

many years as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician for the Newbrook Fire Department in his home of Newfane. He has worked in Vermont law enforcement as a town constable and as a part-time patrol officer for the town of Bellows Falls, close to the New Hampshire border. He is also an assistant medical examiner for the state of Vermont, where his job is to investigate and document all unattended deaths. He has stated that he becomes a mini-biographer of the deceased, in addition to helping the survivors begin the grieving process. Mayor participates in writers' conferences and workshops around the Northeast.

ANALYSIS

Like many other series, Archer Mayor's Joe Gunther novels are loosely connected but ultimately, discrete, stand-alone episodes in the life of the protagonist. The books can be read out of order or individually without detriment to understanding or enjoyment. Readers who approach the novels sequentially, however, will enjoy following the stories of several of the supporting characters. Although Gunther is the protagonist of most of the novels, he seems to change relatively little. This is not surprising as most of the novels are told from his point of view, whether they are narrated in the first person, as are the earlier novels, or in the third person, as they are from *The Sniper's Wife* (2002) forward. Gunther directs his attention outward, not inward.

Although Gunther is at the center of the series and his backstory is painted in considerable detail, he is not described physically. This was a conscious decision on Mayor's part; he has left the physical details of his protagonist vague so that the reader becomes a participant in the creation of the character. In *Scent of Evil* (1992) it is revealed that he hails from Thetford Hill, a town on the eastern side of Vermont, and was not a particularly ambitious young man. A voracious reader, he was content to stay around the farm, though it is his brother Leo who eventually stays home to care for their aging mother. Like Mayor himself, Gunther becomes something of a nomad early in life. After fighting in the Korean War and attending college in California, he returned to Vermont, where he married Ellen, who has died of cancer by the time the novels begin.

In the earlier novels, when Gunther is the lieutenant in charge of the Brattleboro detective squad, the cast of supporting characters remains fairly constant. They include Tony Brandt, the chief of police, who is supportive of Gunther and adept at negotiating the often troubled political waters of Brattleboro and soothing the friction between the state's attorney and the cops on the street. Willy Kunkle, an antihero who is the protagonist of *The Sniper's Wife*, is the darkest recurring character in the series, yet he is Gunther's most trusted sidekick when it comes to action. J. P. Tyler is a studious detective who has been trained in forensics; he is the fastidious custodian of the crime scene, and he is happiest in his makeshift lab, examining the garbage or personal effects of suspects and victims. Ron Kleszczewski is the youngest and most idealistic member of the department; he is serious and detail-oriented, with a head for paperwork and computers. Although he is insecure, Gunther supports and grooms him, and after the creation of the Vermont Bureau of Investigation removes Gunther from the Brattleboro force, Kleszczewski takes over the detective squad. Sammie Martens, the only female detective in a squad of men, is similarly enthusiastic and often comes close to overcompensating. Her youthful athleticism occasionally shows up the negative effects of Gunther's sedentary middle-aged lifestyle in crisis situations, as in, for instance, *Fruits of the Poisonous Tree* (1994).

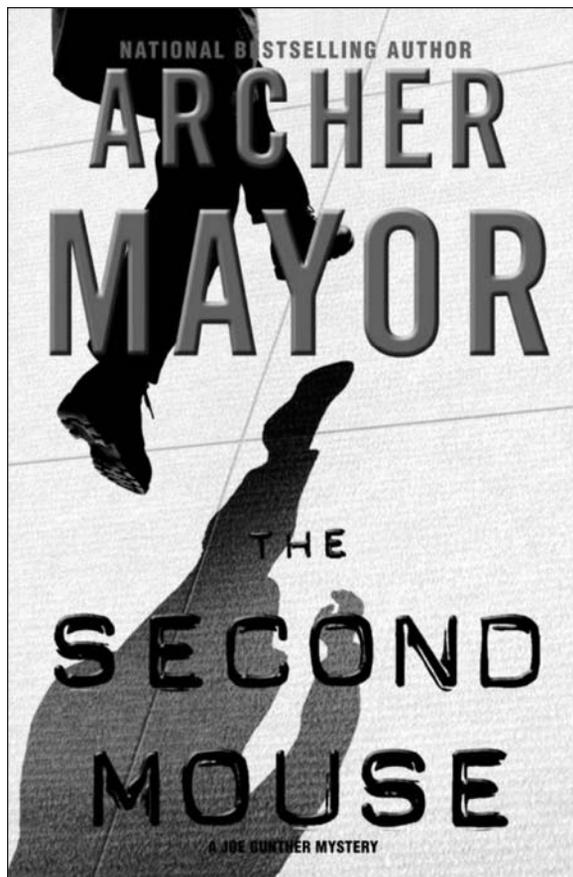
The most significant interpersonal relationship in the Joe Gunther novels, however, is not between police officers but between Gunther and his longtime lover, Gail Zigman. In the earliest novels, she is a realtor who is elected to the position of selectwoman (a member of the town's ruling council). Through the course of the novel, her career follows a steady upward trajectory. She serves as a volunteer at a women's crisis center and, after earning a law degree, becomes a prosecutor in the state attorney's office. Eventually she is elected to the state senate. Her relationship with Gunther is exclusive and long-term, if often precarious. In many ways, they are opposites: She is a vegetarian with liberal political leanings, while Gunther is resolutely moderate. He respects Gail and seems almost to be in awe of her. By *The Second Mouse* (2006), their relationship appears to be over.

As can be seen from the progression of Gail's career, time does pass in Mayor's Vermont. Gail goes from realtor to state senator. Stanley Katz, the crime reporter for the local paper, leaves for a job in a neighboring town but is lured back to his original employer, becoming editor of the town paper. In later novels, Willy Kunkle and Sammie Martens slowly develop an unlikely romantic relationship.

Other, larger changes also take place, almost in the backdrop of the individual mysteries. Political challenges abound; the state's attorney is under constant threat of losing the next election and must court public opinion while prosecuting his cases. Gunther himself, in *Occam's Razor* (1999), is drawn into a political quagmire over the creation of a new law enforcement agency with statewide jurisdiction and some degree of oversight. His promotion to a leadership position within the Vermont Bureau of Investigation further complicates his reluctant support of the measure, as earns it him varying degrees of hostility from his erstwhile peers in agencies across the state.

Mayor has said that to him, mysteries are less about puzzle than they are about process, as befits the police procedural subgenre. He is more interested in character than in the convolutions of plot. Although the crimes described in his novels are frequently sensational, even horrific, they remain within the bounds of credibility. It is clear in the Joe Gunther novels that Mayor is interested in the motivations that drive his characters' actions. He has indicated that the germ of each novel is the antagonist and that person's motivation. He decides who committed the crime and why, and lets the narrative develop around it organically rather than working from a strict outline.

People are seldom all good or all evil in Mayor's novels, and the author and his protagonist Joe Gunther both seem highly attuned to wide range of effects people have on one another. In the earlier novels, in which Gunther is the narrator, this is handled very adroitly; many of the insights that lead Gunther to the solution of a case come from his almost preternatural awareness of how his words and actions make other people feel. In the later novels, the third-person narrator's allusions to Gunther's sensitivity to the feelings of those around him may seem out of keeping with a character



in his position, but it is that quality that makes Gunther both unique and credible as the protagonist in an extended cycle of detective novels.

OPEN SEASON

In *Open Season* (1988), the first Joe Gunther novel, Gunther investigates the murder by a widow of a wealthy young man who is looking for his dog and the assault on a young woman by a man wearing a ski mask. He finds these incidents are linked because three years ago the widow and the woman both served on a jury that found a Vietnam veteran guilty of killing a young woman. Gunther is discouraged from pursuing the case; the man in the ski mask pursues him and he is injured in an auto accident in which the police chief dies. The climactic scene is in a snowstorm, and Mayor tidily wraps up the ends and reveals the identity of the masked man.

THE SECOND MOUSE

In *The Second Mouse*, the seventeenth book in the series, Gunther senses something strange about Michelle Fisher's death. When he tries to get an autopsy done, however, he runs into political problems that keep medical examiner Beverly Hillstrom from doing her work. Gunther is presented with another challenge involving Mel Martin, a petty criminal who is aiming to become a big-time player with his wife, Nancy, and friend Ellis, who may have other ideas. Mayor skillfully plays out the moves in each case, as readers wonder if and how these cases may be related.

James S. Brown

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOE GUNTHER SERIES: *Open Season*, 1988; *Borderlines*, 1990; *Scent of Evil*, 1992; *The Skeleton's Knee*, 1993; *Fruits of the Poisonous Tree*, 1994; *The Dark Root*, 1995; *The Ragman's Memory*, 1996; *Bellevue Falls*, 1997; *The Disposable Man*, 1998; *Occam's Razor*, 1999; *The Marble Mask*, 2000; *Tucker Peak*, 2001; *The Sniper's Wife*, 2002; *Gatekeeper*, 2003; *The Surrogate Thief*, 2004; *St. Albans Fire*, 2005; *The Second Mouse*, 2006; *Chat*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NONFICTION: *Southern Timberman: The Legacy of William Buchanan*, 1988

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_____. "PW Talks with Archer Mayor." Interview by Louise Jones. *Publishers Weekly* 248, no. 42 (October 15, 2001): 49. Mayor speaks about his life and his writing, saying his writing is fueled by "ignorance and curiosity." Although his early life was nomadic, he states that he identified with his father's New England roots and therefore settled in Vermont.

JAMES MELVILLE

Roy Peter Martin

Born: London, England; January 5, 1931

Also wrote as Hampton Charles; Peter Martin

Types of plot: Police procedural; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Superintendent Otani, 1979-

Miss Seeton, 1990-

Ben Lazenby, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

TETSUO OTANI is the middle-aged superintendent of the Hyogo Prefectural Police, headquartered in the large, western Japanese city of Kobe. He is traditional in outlook, and although by no means a supersleuth, he is highly skilled as both an administrator and a criminal investigator.

HANAE OTANI, his wife, is ten years younger than he and is a fairly typical Japanese woman of her generation, traditional but with some modern tendencies. She frequently functions in the role of confidante when her husband is working on a case.

AKIKO SHIMIZU, their daughter, is married to Akira Shimizu, and they have a son named Kazuo. The Shimizus appear periodically throughout the series and figure prominently in at least two of the books.

JIRO KIMURA is one of Otani's two main assistants.

Born and raised partially in the United States, he speaks fluent English. He is urbane, flamboyant, a flashy dresser, and a ladies' man. He is particularly skilled in dealing with foreigners.

NINJA NOGUCHI, the second of Otani's two principal assistants, is a gruff, scruffy-looking fellow whose particular skills lie in his understanding of and connections to the Japanese underworld.

MISS SEETON is the principal character in the Miss Seeton mystery series, originated by the British author Heron Carvic.

BEN LAZENBY figures in two spy/espionage mysteries set in Eastern Europe. The books use the author's experience in that region as a cultural diplomat in the early 1970's.

CONTRIBUTION

James Melville began his Superintendent Otani mystery series with the publication of *The Wages of Zen* in 1979. The series reflects an interest in Japan resulting from the author's posting there as a cultural diplomat in the 1960's as well as his long-time interest in mystery fiction.

The Otani series falls into the police procedural genre of mystery writing. Otani is by no means a great detective but is extremely competent in directing the

operations of a large Japanese prefectural police department. Melville employs both realism and humor in his work, and he uses highly innovative plots and an interesting array of characters that together provide a rich vehicle for the exploration of cultural differences between Japan and the West. His work has been well received critically and has been compared to the classic works of Georges Simenon as well as to the writings of such modern authors of the ethnic mystery as H. R. F. Keating, Tony Hillerman, and James McClure.

Although Melville has done other mystery writing and has published works in other literary genres, it is the Otani series that forms the basis for his reputation.

BIOGRAPHY

James Melville was born Roy Peter Martin in London on January 5, 1931. Coming from a working-class background—his father, Walter, was a postal worker and his mother, Annie Mabel, a dressmaker—he was educated at Highbury Grammar School (1942-1948) and then at Birkbeck College, University of London, where he completed a bachelor's degree in philosophy with honors in 1953. His university studies were interrupted by two years of service in the Royal Air Force Education Branch from 1950 to 1951. During the years before and after military service, he worked as a local government officer for the London County Council, and after university graduation, he was employed as a schoolteacher. In 1954 he returned to Birkbeck College, and he completed a master's degree in political philosophy there two years later. After working as deputy publicity officer for the Royal Festival Hall (1956-1960) and doing additional graduate study (1958-1959) at the University of Tübingen in West Germany, he took a position in 1960 with the British Council, working in the area of cultural diplomacy. It was this work that would eventually take him to Japan, the setting for his famous Superintendent Otani mysteries.

After first being assigned in Indonesia for three years, Melville began the first of two tours in Japan as a cultural diplomat in 1963, when he was appointed director of the British Cultural Institute in Kyoto. He quickly fell in love with Japan. His first book, *Japanese Cooking*, written with his second wife, Joan Martin, was published in 1970. After leaving Japan in

1970, his next overseas assignment was with the British embassy in Budapest, where he served two years (1972-1973) as a cultural attaché. Although less influential in his later writing than the time spent in Japan, his Hungarian experience provided the background for two later spy/espionage novels, *Diplomatic Baggage* (1994) and *The Reluctant Spy* (1995).

After spending several years in London in the mid-1970's, Melville returned to Japan in 1979, serving as a cultural counselor with the British embassy in Tokyo. In this same year, the first of the Superintendent Otani mysteries, *The Wages of Zen*, was published under the pen name James Melville, which the author later said combined the names of his sons, Adam Melville Martin and James Peter Martin. Melville wrote the book in London in the 1970's, and it became the basis of a substantial series. Melville remained in Japan in his second diplomatic posting until 1983. After his return to England, he dedicated himself full-time to his literary career.

In addition to the Superintendent Otani mysteries and the other works mentioned, Melville is the author of two historical novels set in Japan, *The Imperial Way* (1986) and *The Tarnished Phoenix* (1990), and a non-fictional work, *The Chrysanthemum Throne: A History of the Emperors of Japan* (1997, under the name Peter Martin). Under the pseudonym Hampton Charles, he wrote three books in the Miss Seeton mystery series (originated by Heron Carvic): *Miss Seeton, by Appointment* (1990), *Advantage, Miss Seeton* (1990), and *Miss Seeton at the Helm* (1998).

Melville was married to Marjorie Peacock (1951-1960) and Joan Drumwright (1960-1977), with whom he had two sons, Adam and James, before marrying Catherine Sydee in 1978.

ANALYSIS

The Superintendent Otani mysteries are an outgrowth of James Melville's love of mysteries, especially the works of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, and his interest in discovering a vehicle for the discussion of cultural differences between Japan and the West. He first attempted writing in the genre in London in the mid-1970's, when he produced a draft of the work that was later to become, with consider-

able revision, the second book in the Otani series, *The Chrysanthemum Chain* (1980). In the original manuscript, Otani appeared only briefly as a minor character, but over time his significance for the author grew, and he became the linchpin of the series. *The Chrysanthemum Chain* also featured a young British diplomat named Andrew Walker, who was probably modeled at least in part on the author. Walker appears only in that book.

THE WAGES OF ZEN

The Wages of Zen, the first book in the Otani series, introduces the principal characters as well as some plot devices and many of the stylistic elements that characterize the series. The principal characters are Tetsuo Otani, superintendent of the Hyogo Prefectural Police, and his two main assistants, Jiro Kimura and Ninja Noguchi. Melville presents Otani's family: his wife, Hanae, and their married daughter Akiko and her husband, Akira (although Akiko and Akira are mentioned only briefly, they figure more prominently in later volumes in the series). The author uses the family members to provide glimpses into Japanese domestic life, weaving in both modern and traditional elements.

The plot, which involves the murder of a foreigner living at a Zen Buddhist temple where a number of other foreigners also reside, demonstrates a fairly common plot device found in the series, one that serves to create a high level of interaction between Japanese and non-Japanese characters. Most of the books in the series are about crimes involving foreigners. This allows Melville to introduce a wide range of foreign types into his works. In this book, for example, Melville inserts two American women, one of whom is African American; a British woman; a young Danish man; and an Irish Catholic priest.

The Wages of Zen also employs a narrative technique found in many of the books in the series, that of shifting back and forth, chapter by chapter, between the stories and perspectives of Japanese and non-Japanese characters. Melville has described his use of this technique as a way of accentuating the cultural differences between the two sets of characters.

The book, like the others in the series, contains numerous examples of Japanese traditions and practices that serve to create a sense of the often unusual (from a

Western perspective) character of everyday life in Japan. These include eating rice crackers wrapped in a strip of seaweed, using a Japanese squat toilet, and sleeping on mats on the floor. These small touches often serve to introduce a humorous tone into his works, as characters on both sides of the cultural divide attempt to understand the differences they are experiencing.

SAYONARA, SWEET AMARYLLIS

The plots of the Otani series generally follow chronologically in the order in which they were written. (The only major exception is *A Haiku for Hanae*, 1998, which is set in 1968 and is written in the form of a flashback.) This chronological sequencing allows the author to add to the background of his principal characters as the series progresses and in several instances to use an earlier character as a central figure in the plot of a later book. A good example of this occurs in *Sayonara, Sweet Amaryllis* (1983), the fifth book in the series, where additional information regarding Otani's subordinate Ninja Noguchi is provided and this individual plays an important role in the plot. During the course of the narrative the reader learns that Noguchi has been involved in a longtime relationship with a Korean woman—a cultural taboo in Japan where Koreans continue to have second-class status—and that the son they had together is now involved in a drug-smuggling ring linked to a murder. Noguchi must stand by powerlessly while his son is eventually arrested by Otani. In *The Reluctant Ronin* (1988), Otani's own son-in-law becomes a suspect in the murder of a Dutch woman. The gradual development of the series characters enhances their interest and makes reading the books in the order they were written worthwhile.

DEATH OF A DAIMYO

Death of a Daimyo (1984), the sixth book in the series, reverses the setting in which the author's exploration of cultural differences between Japan and the West occurs. Otani and his wife travel to England to visit their daughter, son-in-law, and young grandchild, who are living there. During the visit, Otani becomes involved in the investigation of the murder of a prominent Japanese businessman that occurs in this foreign locale. Otani must oversee a highly complex investigation that has connections back to Japan. The story line

thus reverses the pattern of Westerners viewed against the backdrop of Japanese culture, with the Otanis now representing the foreign side of the intercultural equation. The book offers an opportunity to see the chief character in the series interacting with Japanese living abroad and with the heads of foreign police departments, and it provides numerous chances to observe cultural differences from the perspective of first-time Japanese travelers in a foreign country. A few of these cultural oddities are Western-style beds, the oversized portions served in British restaurants, and the Western customs of paying by check rather than cash and of tipping for service. In this way, *Death of a Daimyo* offers an interesting variation on the topic of exploring cultural differences and provides an opportunity to see Superintendent Otani working and traveling in a foreign environment.

THE BODY WORE BROCADE

In *The Body Wore Brocade* (1992), the thirteenth book in the series, major changes in both character development and narrative technique occur. First, Otani is now retired from active police work, and second, the book, unlike the previous twelve in the series, uses a first-person narrative form. In a fictional foreword, Melville informs the reader that Otani has somewhat reluctantly given in to his request to provide a firsthand account of this investigation, which may be his last. Melville, does, however, hold out the possibility that Otani, who at the time of the book's writing is serving as a special consultant to the National Police Force of Japan, may again return to active criminal investigation.

The story that follows, told in Otani's own words, includes a number of additional elements of character development. At the beginning of the book, Otani describes an argument with his wife during which she accuses him of being crabby and contentious and threatens to leave him. This puts him into an introspective mood, and he reflects on the course and purpose of his life. Then, he is shot by a sniper and severely wounded, and this too contributes to the introspective tone of the work. The use of the first-person narrative, combined with Otani's advancing years, provides a deeper look into the inner workings of his character than is found in the earlier books of the series.

Scott Wright

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SUPERINTENDENT OTANI SERIES: *The Wages of Zen*, 1979; *The Chrysanthemum Chain*, 1980; *A Sort of Samurai*, 1981; *The Ninth Netsuke*, 1982; *Sayonara, Sweet Amaryllis*, 1983; *Death of a Daimyo*, 1984; *The Death Ceremony*, 1985; *Go Gently, Gaijin*, 1986; *Kimono for a Corpse*, 1987; *The Reluctant Ronin*, 1988; *A Haiku for Hanae*, 1989; *The Bogus Buddha*, 1991; *The Body Wore Brocade*, 1992

MISS SEETON SERIES (AS CHARLES): *Miss Seeton, by Appointment*, 1990; *Advantage, Miss Seeton*, 1990; *Miss Seeton at the Helm*, 1998

BEN LAZENBY SERIES: *Diplomatic Baggage*, 1994; *The Reluctant Spy*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Imperial Way*, 1986; *A Tarnished Phoenix*, 1990

NONFICTION (AS PETER MARTIN): *Japanese Cooking*, 1970 (with Joan Martin); *The Chrysanthemum Throne: A History of the Emperors of Japan*, 1997.

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MARGARET MILLAR

Born: Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; February 5, 1915

Died: Santa Barbara, California; March 26, 1994

Also wrote as M. Sturm

Types of plot: Psychological; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dr. Paul Prye, 1941-1942

Inspector Sands, 1943-1945

Tom Aragon, 1976-1982

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. PAUL PRYE is a youngish, very tall and very bookish (his favorite author is William Blake) psychoanalyst who tends to get involved in murder mysteries. A bit clumsy but quick on the repartee, Prye attracts and is attracted to beautiful women.

INSPECTOR SANDS is both less flamboyant and less visually conspicuous than Paul Prye. He is described as "a thin, tired-looking middle-aged man with features that fitted each other so perfectly that few people could remember what he looked like." Inspector Sands is with the Toronto Police Department and has almost as much trouble keeping his police cohorts in line as he has with the ingenious murderers prowling the streets of Toronto. He is, however, always successful, thanks to his intelligence and quiet insistence.

TOM ARAGON, though a series character, has greater depth than Prye or Sands, and his books hold a darker tone more in keeping with the artistic psychological thrillers that Millar had developed by that time. A young Hispanic lawyer, Aragon is very junior in his firm, and his talents at detection are sometimes tried by uncertainty or moral doubts about the investigation.

His chief emotional support is his wife, Laurie MacGregor, with whom he has a modern, long-distance relationship, as she lives and works in another city; their frequent phone conversations help him clarify aspects of his cases.

CONTRIBUTION

Margaret Millar began her writing career with three successive novels about the amusing psychoanalyst-detective Dr. Paul Prye, but she became successful when she decided to make the psychological profiles of demented criminals and their victims her focus. With *The Iron Gates* (1945), her sixth book, Millar scored her first major success. The book centers on the effect that the monsters of fear can have on the mind of an outwardly happy, well-adjusted, well-to-do woman.

After *The Iron Gates*, Millar wrote more than a dozen books of suspense, most of which have been both critically acclaimed and commercially successful. She helped turn the psychological thriller into an art form, and she created books brimming with three-dimensional characterizations: real, breathing people, portrayed in crisp, vivid prose.

Millar's novels are concerned with the inner life of the individual, with the distortions of reality that psychopathology and stressful situations can forge in the mind. Although Millar did not focus as heavily on social analysis as did her husband, Ross Macdonald, her novels do present current social concerns whose treatment deepens over the span of her work. Her characters exist in Freudian microcosms, shaped and determined by their significant relationships: parent/child, husband/wife, brother/sister.

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Millar was born Margaret Ellis Sturm in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, on February 5, 1915, to Henry William Sturm and Lavinia Ferrier Sturm. Young Margaret's first love was music. She studied the piano from an early age and became an accomplished player, giving recitals when she was still in high school. At the Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate Institute, she was a member of the debating team, along with Kenneth Millar, who would later become her husband. Their first stories appeared together in their high school magazine, *The Grumbler*, in 1931. While attending the University of Toronto from 1933 through 1936, Margaret majored in classics and developed a lifelong interest in psychology that would figure strongly in her work. She and Kenneth Millar were married on June 2, 1938, after his graduation from the same university.

After the birth of her only child, Linda Jane, in 1939, Millar was ordered to remain in bed because of a heart ailment. An invalid for some time, she began to write mysteries, achieving early success with *The Invisible Worm* (1941)—a success that allowed her husband to give up teaching high school and return to graduate school full time. Margaret's success also inspired Kenneth to begin his own attempts at writing; as her first reader and editor (though never her collaborator), he said that he learned to write from observing her work. To avoid confusion with his wife's growing fame, he adopted the pen name Ross Macdonald. Ironically, though both were successful crime novelists, and she the more widely read at the outset, his reputation would eventually eclipse hers.

While Kenneth served in the U.S. Navy, Margaret relocated the family to Santa Barbara, with which she had fallen in love during a trip to see him off. Santa Barbara would be a frequent setting in her novels, thinly disguised as "Santa Felicia" and "San Felice," and her books were often bathed in the brilliant sunlight of her adopted home. For a short period Millar worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood (1945-1946), but the bulk of her literary output was novels—mostly, but not exclusively, mysteries.

Millar and her husband shared a passion for environmental concerns that led them to found a chapter of the National Audubon Society in Santa Barbara, pro-

test an oil spill and establish the Santa Barbara Citizens for Environmental Defense, and work together to protect the endangered California condor. They were ardent dog lovers and bird-watchers, and nearly collaborated on *The Birds and Beasts Were There* (1968), which Margaret would eventually write alone.

Millar and her husband also shared the tragedy of their troubled daughter. At the age of seventeen, Linda killed a child while driving under the influence of alcohol. Two years later she dropped out of college because of the continuing weight of guilt and psychological problems. Though she later returned to her family, she died at the age of thirty-one, in 1970. Millar published nothing for six years after her daughter's death.

Millar attributed her interest in writing detective novels to having been an avid reader of suspense fiction from the age of eight. She became a world-class best-selling writer, and her books were translated into French and Swedish. She twice received the coveted Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America, for *Beast in View* (1955) and *Banshee* (1983). Two other novels, *How Like an Angel* (1962) and *The Fiend* (1964), were runners-up for Edgar awards. In 1965, she was named the *Los Angeles Times* Woman of the Year. The Mystery Writers of America honored her with the Grand Master Award for lifetime achievement in 1983 and made her the organization's president from 1957 to 1958. In 1986 Millar received the Derrick Murdoch Award from the Crime Writers of Canada. Faced with increasing blindness and grieving over her husband's suffering and eventual death from Alzheimer's disease in 1983, Millar completed only one more novel after that year. She died of a heart attack on March 26, 1994.

ANALYSIS

Margaret Millar first began writing in the style of classic Golden Age detection, with series characters, plots that challenge readers to race to solve the crime before the end, final revelatory chapters, and even her version of the English country-house mystery. Each of her series characters appears in three books, though one, *The Devil Loves Me* (1942), includes both Prye and Sands. Her first books, *The Invisible Worm* and *The Weak-Eyed Bat* (1942), were good-

natured, amusing mysteries with some clever psychological twists and insights. With her short series featuring the Toronto detective Inspector Sands, she settled into a more serious style and began to establish herself as a master of the psychological thriller.

The first of her books to win both critical and popular acclaim was *The Iron Gates*. This was her second and last book with Sands as the detective-hero. For decades, Millar abandoned the series format and wrote her novels as separate works of fiction that share only an emphasis on the psychological portrait. Each of her novels (until the Tom Aragon series in 1976) introduces the reader to a completely new cast of characters and set of circumstances. In her three or four best books, such as *The Fiend*, *How like an Angel*, and *Beast in View*, Millar created highly original and self-contained works of literature that would not have been served by having to conform to a series format.

It can be argued that the second of Millar's series characters, Inspector Sands, simply faded into the background of her books. He is a thoroughly uninteresting character whose sole mark of distinction is that he has no distinction. Indistinguishable from millions of other graying, middle-aged men, he has "no strong sense of identity" and lives "in a vacuum." With Millar's interest in the psychologically and physically colorful, such a character was bound to be short-lived.

Millar's final venture into the realm of the series detective, with Tom Aragon, belongs more to the psychological portrait novels of her later writing. Dark and often disturbing in tone, the three Aragon books are far from the amusement of Prye or the careful and successful detection of Sands. Aragon is thrust into situations that test his morals as well as his detecting skills, and he himself is nearly the victim of some of his mysteries, as in *Ask for Me Tomorrow* (1976), in which he is framed for a series of murders that follow his efforts at investigation—an investigation that he later learns has made him an unwitting accomplice of the murderer.

Although Millar does not follow any set formula in writing her novels, there are several features they share. Complex webs of plotting provide a high level of suspense that is usually resolved in the end in a final revelatory scene. During the course of the novel, shifts

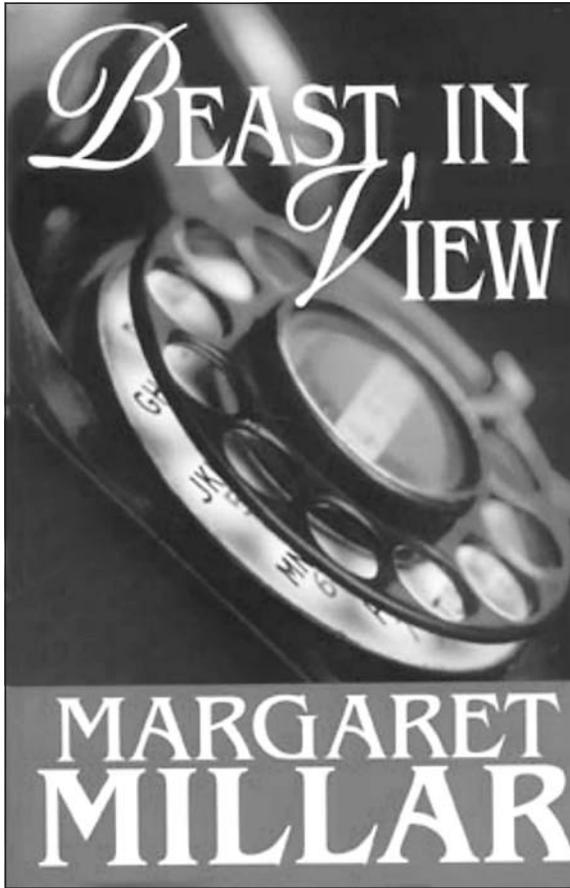
in perception and ongoing reinterpretations create a whirling effect of constant surprise in which things are never as they seem. For the most part, Millar's talent at plotting and penetrating characterization makes these shifts wholly believable, as the reader constantly comes to new understandings along with the characters. Each of her books focuses on the inner life of one character. Usually this character is under some kind of stress, caused by either a set of outward circumstances that challenges the character's notions about reality or some kind of psychological disorder. In *Banshee*, the mysterious circumstances surrounding a young girl's death change all the people around her and their relationships in sad and shocking ways.

In *The Fiend*, the protagonist is a young man whose mental problems cause his sense of reality and agency to slip. This novel brings out another feature of Millar's books: Reader are invited to merge their consciousness with that of the protagonist, Charlie Gowen, a convicted child molester. Once inside Gowen's mind, readers are treated to a ride on an experiential rollercoaster. The world perceived by Charlie Gowen—or any other of Millar's mental cases—is distorted. Reality changes shape, and what was familiar becomes alien and threatening. In Charlie Gowen's world, children are not simply smaller and cuter than adults, they are dangerously alluring.

BEAST IN VIEW

Most of Millar's books written after the Sands series are not whodunits per se. They are psychological thrillers, where the suspense lies in the acts of deception—either by cunning criminals, as in *An Air That Kills* (1957), or by a tormented mind, as in *Beast in View*—that implant distortions into the minds of the other characters and the reader. The books are chronicles of psychological afflictions and their slow and painful unraveling.

Beast in View, one of Millar's best novels, tells the story of a woman with a disorder known in psychology as multiple personality. Helen Clarvoe, a rich and lonely single woman, is being persecuted by Evelyn Merrick, a homicidal and demented young woman whom she once knew. The book chronicles the movements and thoughts of the two women as they dance a dance of death and destruction, only to merge them at



the end as the two sides of one woman. Clearly influenced by the theories of both Sigmund Freud and R. D. Laing, the book is a record of the effects parental pressure can have when exerted on a fragile personality.

HOW LIKE AN ANGEL

In *How Like an Angel*, Millar focuses on another weak and defenseless person: a man caught between two women, one strong and domineering, the other offering him pleasure and a chance to assert himself. Millar also introduces in this book one of California's numerous religious sects, replete with a slightly deranged leader, a rich and senile old woman, and a coven of colorful and clearly drawn disciples in white robes and bare feet. The hero of the book, Quinn, a sometime Las Vegas detective and gambler down on his luck, embarks on a quest for truth like a prince in a fairy tale. In the end, he has obtained not only knowledge about the mysterious events surrounding the disappearance and

presumed death of Patrick O'Gorman but also insights about himself and the world that allow him to claim the prize and marry the princess/widow.

In *How Like an Angel*, as in all Millar's books, the emphasis is on characterization and on psychological revelations. Millar is a master at describing children, primarily little girls. She created a series of portraits of nine-year-old girls starting with *The Cannibal Heart* (1949) and culminating with *The Fiend*. The portrait in *How Like an Angel* of the pimpled teenage girl is wonderfully penetrating and compelling. Even in weaker books, such as *Banshee*, which is marred by overwriting and bad similes, there are two fascinating portrayals of young girls who invite the reader into their world of fantasy and confusion about the verbal and physical behavior of grown-ups.

THE FIEND

Even when the central characters are adults, they are often remarkably childish and lost in a confusing world belonging to and defined by others. In *The Fiend*, the two protagonists, Charlie Gowen and his fiancé, Louise Lang, are outsiders who cannot fit into the adult world of marriage and adultery. In Charlie's case the result has been disastrous: He, with his nine-year-old emotions and adult body, has forced himself onto a little girl. He suffers the consequences, jail and a lifelong fear of committing a similar crime.

In the character of Charlie Gowen, Millar's writing is at its best. One sees her ability to depict a beleaguered mind. Yet in Charlie's character one also sees Millar's primary weakness: the creation of believable dialogue. Charlie Gowen is a college-educated man who holds down a job, but he speaks like a nine-year-old boy. It is hard to accept that he could have completed even the fifth grade, much less college, and it is equally hard to believe that he has a job and manages to stay out of a mental institution.

That children are trapped inside adults is a central idea in Millar's books. Another character in *The Fiend*, the immature Kate Oakley, combines an inability to face the world without the mediating agency of a man with a childish distrust and hatred of men. She is a typical Millar character, unable to function as an adult in her private or public life. Almost all Millar's books feature characters who are locked in an infantile

universe, with no escape other than crime and murder.

It is interesting that these books that chronicle the lives and worlds of people who cannot cope are written with almost clinical detachment. Millar seems to be more interested in dissecting sick minds than in expressing any sympathy for those who suffer or in trying to assess the social causes of individual disaster. The stories are absorbing because they are so convincingly told. Even Millar's weakest books are so suspenseful that neither bad similes nor her propensity for heavy-handed metaphor turns the reader away. Before everything else, Millar is a master of the plot, of the slow unfolding of a multifaceted story. Her psychological insight, great as it is, remains secondary to the genius of her architectonic plots.

Per Schelde

Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DR. PAUL PRYE SERIES: *The Invisible Worm*, 1941; *The Weak-Eyed Bat*, 1942; *The Devil Loves Me*, 1942

INSPECTOR SANDS SERIES: *Wall of Eyes*, 1943; *The Iron Gates*, 1945 (also known as *Taste of Fears*)

TOM ARAGON SERIES: *Ask for Me Tomorrow*, 1976; *The Murder of Miranda*, 1979; *Mermaid*, 1982

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Fire Will Freeze*, 1944; *Do Evil in Return*, 1950; *Rose's Last Summer*, 1952 (also known as *The Lively Corpse*); *Vanish in an Instant*, 1952; *Beast in View*, 1955; *An Air That Kills*, 1957 (also known as *The Soft Talkers*); *The Listening Walls*, 1959; *A Stranger in My Grave*, 1960; *How like an Angel*, 1962; *The Fiend*, 1964; *Beyond This Point Are Monsters*, 1970; *Banshee*, 1983; *Spider Webs*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Experiment in Springtime*, 1947; *It's All in the Family*, 1948; *The Cannibal Heart*, 1949; *Wives and Lovers*, 1954

SHORT FICTION: *Early Millar: The First Stories of Ross MacDonald and Margaret Millar*, 1982 (with Ross MacDonald)

NONFICTION: *The Birds and Beasts Were There*, 1968

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Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Essay on Millar compares her to five of her fellow female mystery novelists, examining her distinctive contribution to the genre.

Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Scholarly treatise on the thriller genre discussing four of Millar's novels, from *The Iron Gates* to *Beyond This Point Are Monsters*. Bibliography and index.

Lachman, Marvin. "Margaret Millar: The Checklist of an Unknown Mystery Writer." *The Armchair Detective* 3 (October, 1970): 85-88. Complete bibliography of Millar's early works.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. "Margaret Millar." *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains biographical information and analysis of the author's works.

Reilly, John M. "Margaret Millar." In *Ten Women of Mystery*, edited by Earl F. Bargainnier. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1981. Compares Millar with nine of her fellow female mystery writers, detailing her distinctive contributions to the genre.

Russell, Ruth Weber, ed. *Women of Waterloo County*. Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.: Canadian Federation of University Women, 2000. This study of Ontarian women includes a chapter on Millar. Bibliographic references and index.

A. A. MILNE

Born: London, England; January 18, 1882

Died: Hartfield, Sussex, England; January 31, 1956

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy; comedy caper

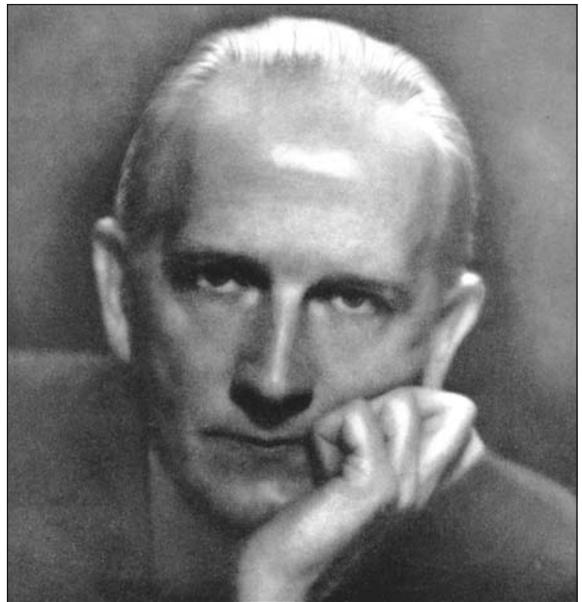
CONTRIBUTION

A. A. Milne brought his own brand of humor to the mystery story. One of his early essays for the British publication *Punch* was a satirical account of a Sherlock Holmes story. This tone stayed with him when he wrote his one famous mystery novel, *The Red House Mystery* (1922). The book borders on parody as both Milne's characters and his readers play detective. Standing at the dawn of the Golden Age of British detective fiction, Milne helped set the tone for the other pre-World War II writers. To him, the mystery was a parlor game played by the idle rich, and murder was simply an excuse to engage in a fun-filled evening of puzzle solving. He created stock characters who engage in idle diversions and who float whimsically through life until their carefree existence is interrupted by a distasteful and indecorous murder—a situation replayed over and over again in many famous murder mysteries.

Milne sets his mystery in the pristine atmosphere of the English countryside and focuses on life in the country manor house. His detective is not as stodgy as Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin or as morose as Sherlock Holmes. Milne's amateur sleuth is a whimsical, elfish character with a fine eye for detail and a keen sense of intuition, while his Watson character is a bright and dapper English gentleman with the zest and verve of a young prep school graduate. Milne avoids entangling his characters in romantic involvements and refuses to get his detective bogged down in the details of criminology. Violence is almost absent from his mystery, and no one is ever really threatened by danger. Having a potential murderer lurking about is merely an excuse for playing a game of hide-and-seek. For Milne, his characters, and his readers, playing detective is great fun, a perfect leisure-time activity.

BIOGRAPHY

Alan Alexander Milne, born in London on January 18, 1882, was the youngest son of John Vine Milne, the headmaster of Henley House, an exclusive school for boys. Milne won a scholarship to Westminster School, where he started to write light verse for the school magazine. Eventually, Milne went to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study mathematics; his attention, however, was diverted toward literary pursuits as he became editor of *Granta*, the college's literary magazine. Although he was graduated with honors and received his bachelor's degree in mathematics, he failed to meet his father's expectations. Using part of his inheritance, he went to London to earn a living as a freelance journalist, publishing articles in *Vanity Fair* and *Punch*. After one year, he had exhausted his funds and earned only twenty pounds. Eventually, he started writing for *Punch*, Great Britain's leading satirical journal, and in 1906, he became assistant editor, a position he held until the beginning of World War I. In 1913, he married Dorothy de Sélincourt (because, he said, she had laughed at his jokes and memorized his articles). A year



A. A. Milne. (Library of Congress)

later, he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was stationed in France.

During the war years, Milne turned to writing plays and children's literature. Encouraged by his wife, who acted as his scribe, he completed a children's book, *Once on a Time* (1917), and wrote his first play of note, *Wurzel-Flummery* (pr. 1917). Suffering from trench fever, he returned to England and completed the war years writing propaganda for the intelligence service.

After the war, Milne did not go back to *Punch*; instead, he launched his career as a playwright and children's author. Inspired by British playwright Sir James Barrie and actor-manager Dion Boucicault, Milne became the successful author of a series of light comedies. His comedy *Mr. Pim Passes By* (pr. 1919) ran for 246 performances on the London stage. Always moving in new directions, Milne scored a success with his detective novel *The Red House Mystery*. Next he began to focus on children's literature, achieving lasting fame with *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). During the 1930's and 1940's, he continued to write, although never equaling his earlier efforts. He died on January 31, 1956, at the age of seventy-four.

ANALYSIS

With the exception of a few short stories, *The Red House Mystery* is A. A. Milne's only true venture into the detective and mystery genre, yet it had a great impact on the development of the English mystery novel between World War I and World War II, and it helped to shape the pattern of the tales of the Golden Age of the detective story. Alexander Woolcott called it the third-best mystery ever written. It also enjoyed immense popularity, going through twenty-two printings between 1922 and 1965. On the strength of this one novel, Milne was offered two thousand pounds for the serial rights to his next mystery novel; instead, he chose to write children's literature.

Although Milne was influenced by Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, he established some rules of his own for the detective story. First, Milne believed that a detective story should be written in a plain, unadorned style, terse, witty, and readable. He did not want to force the reader to wade through Latinate words, technical jargon, and bombastic prose. In

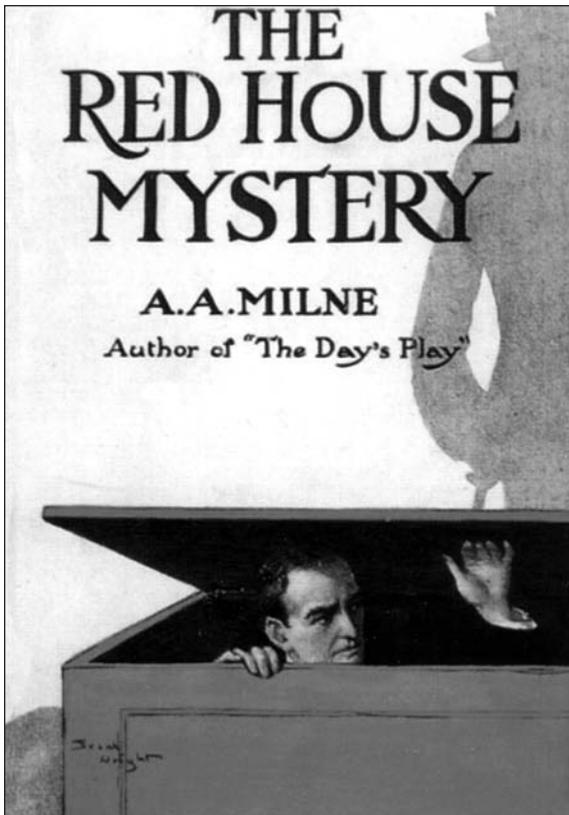
his opinion, there was no need for murderers to be "continually effecting egresses when they might just as easily go out."

Second, Milne did not believe that romance should be mixed with detective fiction, because love scenes would distract the reader from focusing on the true business of the mystery novel, the finding of the clues. The romance should be a separate genre from the mystery. Third, Milne believed that in a murder mystery both the murderer and the detective should be amateurs. The murderer should not be a shrewd, professional killer, but a man who has the same abilities as the reader. Also, because he has no criminal record, "no *dossier* nor code index nor finger-print," he can easily evade the police inspector but is fit prey for the amateur detective, who must not be a criminologist. Having no more of the complicated technology of scientific analysis at his disposal than does the ordinary reader, the amateur detective does not use blood analyses or ballistics tests but bases his investigation on "the light of cool inductive reasoning and the logic of stern remorseless facts."

This is Milne's own view of the "fairness doctrine." The reader, like the detective, is in possession of all the essential facts of the case, but these are mixed in with a number of irrelevant facts. For example, "a scar on the nose of one of the guests might suggest nothing to a detective, but the explicit mention of it by the author gives it at once an importance out of all proportion to its face-value." The joy of reading a mystery story is watching the detective carefully sort out the relevant from the irrelevant. To ensure this pleasure, the reader must see the detective at work; thus, the detective needs a foil, someone to whom he can reveal his deductions. A good mystery does not hide the detective's thoughts from the reader until the end of the novel but shows the detective's deductions piecemeal throughout the narrative. Finally, the Watson character should not be a complete fool, for he would lose the reader's sympathy. He should be a little slower than the detective but an integral part of the story, "friendly, human, likable."

THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY

Using his own guidelines, Milne helped to amalgamate the English comedy of manners with the de-



tective genre to create the comic mystery. Milne sets his story in the English country house, isolated from the bustle of the city. This setting would become the stock setting for the English murder mystery. The Red House provides a narrowly defined world with few characters, all from the upper echelons of society. This world that Milne creates is what W. H. Auden calls “The Great Good Place.” In analyzing the archetypal setting for the Golden Age detective story, Auden holds that “the more Eden-like it is, the greater the contradiction of murder.” Milne opens *The Red House Mystery* as though he were writing a pastoral idyll. On a warm summer day, the murmur of bees intermixes with the gentle cooing of pigeons. To emphasize the Edenic qualities of this environment, Milne writes, “From distant lawns came the whir of a mowing-machine, that most restful of all country sounds.” Life at the Red House is a paradise of ease and pleasure, filled with golf games and garden parties—a fairy-tale world where a ditch is called a moat; a shed, a summer

house; and a pond, a lake. It is a “delightful house” with “opportunities for every game or sport that has been invented.” It is a perfect world for high comedy, populated by upper-class comic characters who will reappear time and time again in the classic English mystery story. There is a gruff old major nursing his war wounds, a professional actress given to histrionics, a would-be writer who never writes, and a snooty maid who overhears private conversations. This ideal world, however, is jolted by a gunshot and a corpse.

At this point, the victim takes center stage. Like most mystery writers, Milne creates a victim who is worthy of his fate. Yet Milne complicates the role of the victim. First, the false victim is Robert Ablett, the black sheep of the family who has always caused trouble and who was shipped off to Australia. He is depicted as a gruff, intimidating man, constantly pressuring his brother Mark for money. Portrayed as a callous and brutal man, he is seen as an outsider whose apparent intrusion into the tranquil world of the Red House is viewed as an invasion. Thus, his alleged murder causes no one undue anguish. The true victim, however, is not Robert Ablett but his brother Mark, disguised as Robert to play a vindictive prank on one of his houseguests. At first, Mark, the owner of the Red House, is seen as a model gentleman, but later he is revealed to have been a pompous, priggish cad who ordered and regulated the lives of his guests according to his whims—a vain man who had to be pampered and praised and who always sought glory for himself. Worst of all, he was a closet alcoholic, gradually showing the signs of dissipation. As a gentleman, he broke the social code for acceptable behavior. Like the blocking character of British comedy, he arranged a marriage with an innocent, but reluctant, young socialite. It was at this point that he was killed.

True to Milne’s code, the murderer is no professional, and even though he murders for what he believes to be a good reason, he is a man with a flaw. Cayley is Mark’s younger cousin; he was groomed by Mark, yet he appears worn and not as attractive as his cousin. When Mark refused to bail Cayley’s brother out of jail and Cayley’s mother died, Cayley never forgave him and plotted to destroy him. Cayley is a clever amateur who masterminds both an elaborate charade

and a carefully worked-out cover-up by disguising Mark as Robert and then shooting him.

Nevertheless, Cayley is no match for Anthony Gillingham, Milne's amateur sleuth. Anthony is an amiable gentleman, comfortable in the world of high society. Although thirty, he has no family ties and no romantic interests. A polite, genial man, he has none of the morose characteristics of Sherlock Holmes. His comments are always urbane, witty, and free from ironic overtones. He is a perfect detective for the English comic mystery. Like other detectives who would follow him, he is a jack-of-all-trades. A tobacconist, a writer, a valet, he moves freely from one profession to another, always accomplished at what he does and always seeking a new venture. Such a cosmopolitan with eclectic talents becomes the perfect English sleuth, personable, witty, and clever. Because Anthony simply drops in to see his friend William Beverly and is not a regular guest at the Red House, Milne sees him as the perfect detective. Anthony is able to maintain the cool detachment of an outsider, one who has no emotional ties to anyone in the house and who gets all of his information from carefully observed details. Because of his detachment, he is free of personal bias and can entertain any hypothesis regardless of how odious it might seem to the inhabitants of the Red House. Even though he is detained in the Red House until the coroner's inquest, he makes sure that he keeps his room in the inn because he does not want to be an obligated guest in the house. Also, since he works solely on his own first impressions, he can take a clear, rational approach in weighing his facts.

Following the tradition of earlier detective stories and expanding on it, Milne realized the advantage of the amateur detective who could move freely, examining all aspects of the crime. The inept Inspector Birch, as a representative of the official police, becomes an almost farcical character. He always has an eye on the sensational solution, but he inevitably follows the obvious path, wasting his time charting railway schedules, documenting unreliable sightings of the murder suspect, and dragging the pond as a perfunctory part of routine procedure. He arrives at the most obvious solution: Mark murdered his brother Robert and fled.

Anthony, however, is not sure of anything. He always carefully weighs details, a skill that he practices almost unconsciously. Milne describes him as having "grey eyes which seem to be absorbing every detail." Anthony notices on what side of the door keys are placed, which windows are left open, and how long it takes to run a certain distance. He is able to remember instantly that Mark rearranged his library or to recall Cayley's shadow on the wall when Cayley left the scene of the crime. Like Poe's Dupin, Anthony has a photographic memory that can unconsciously record details and store them away for later use. This uncanny ability is compared to the ability of Sherlock Holmes, who supposedly knew the number of steps to his club. Anthony, however, does not count the steps to his club. He simply conjures up a mental picture of himself walking to his club and automatically remembers the number of steps. Milne supplements his detective's reasoning abilities with a highly active subconscious.

As for the Watson character that Milne finds essential to a good mystery, Bill Beverly serves the role perfectly. Following the Holmes tradition almost to the point of parody, Anthony tells Bill, "You're the perfect Watson. . . . You take to it quite naturally. Properly speaking I oughtn't to explain to the last chapter, but I always think that's so unfair." Bill is a model of the spry young man of English drawing-room comedy, always eager for a romp or some new adventure. Like an overzealous young boy waiting to hear a delicious secret, Bill carefully listens to Anthony's deductions, yet he is no fool. As an accomplice, he is able to ad-lib a conversation with Anthony as Anthony walks away to locate a spy. Also, he is quick-witted enough to transmit a Morse code signal to Anthony when Anthony is in danger of being discovered in a secret passage. For Bill Beverly, just as for Milne, playing detective is an exciting game. At every new discovery he exclaims, "What fun" or "How exciting."

True to his philosophy, Milne's style is simple and terse, filled with tongue-in-cheek witticisms. Composed primarily of dialogue, his novel flows smoothly, combining light banter with clever, levelheaded prose. The conversation is glib and the retorts are facile. Anthony tells Bill: "One should modulate the voice, my dear William, while breathing gently from the hips.

Thus one avoids the chest-notes which have betrayed many a secret. In other words, pass the toast.”

In *The Red House Mystery*, Milne combines some of the techniques of the Doyle/Poe detective story with the essential ingredients of the British comedy of manners to create a genteel aesthetics for the murder mystery. Milne’s novel, along with the English school of mystery writers, would come under fire from Raymond Chandler and the American school of mystery writers, who called for greater realism in detective fiction. Chandler criticized Milne for omitting exactly those details of criminology that Milne deliberately chose to overlook. Chandler found it implausible that Milne’s coroner did not attempt to identify the body or that no one tried to investigate the background of the deceased. As for Milne’s charming detective, Chandler states, “The English police seem to endure him with their customary stoicism; but I shudder to think of what the boys down at the Homicide Bureau in my city would do to him.”

Yet Milne was writing a different detective story for a different age. His novel stands in the vanguard of the English murder mystery of the Golden Age. According to George Grella, such novels demonstrate “the last identifiable place where traditional, genteel British fashions, assumptions, and methods triumph in the twentieth century novel.” In explaining the social phenomena behind this kind of novel John Patterson states:

In an age of the Boom, the Great Depression, flappers, gangsterism, and the Fascist solution, it recalls the sober gentility and crude optimism of an earlier and more complacent generation; it asserts the triumph of a social order and decorum that have all but passed away.

The age of gentility never passed away for Milne, who saw the murder mystery as a delightful way to celebrate triviality in the midst of social stability.

Paul Rosefeldt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Red House Mystery*, 1922; *Four Days’ Wonder*, 1933

SHORT FICTION: *A Table near the Band, and Other Stories*, 1950

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Mr. Pim*, 1921 (also known as *Mr. Pim Passes By*); *Two People*, 1931; *One Year’s Time*, 1942; *Chloe Marr*, 1946

SHORT FICTION: *The Secret, and Other Stories*, 1929; *Birthday Party, and Other Stories*, 1948

PLAYS: 1917-1920 • *Wurzel-Flummery*, pr. 1917 (revised 1919); *Belinda: An April Folly*, pr., pb. 1918; *The Boy Comes Home*, pr. 1918; *Mr. Pim Passes By*, pr. 1919; *The Camberley Triangle*, pr., pb. 1919; *The Lucky One*, pr., pb. 1919 (also known as *Let’s All Talk About Gerald*); *The Red Feathers*, pb. 1919; *The Romantic Age*, pr. 1920; *The Stepmother*, pr. 1920

1921-1930 • *The Dover Road*, pr. 1921; *The Great Broxopp: Four Chapters in Her Life*, pr. 1921; *The Truth About Blayds*, pr. 1921; *Berlud, Unlimited*, pr., pb. 1922; *Success*, pr., pb. 1923 (also known as *Give Me Yesterday*); *The Artist: A Duologue*, pr., pb. 1923; *To Have the Honour*, pr. 1924 (also known as *To Meet the Prince*); *Ariadne: Or, Business First*, pr. 1925; *Portrait of a Gentleman in Slippers: A Fairy Tale*, pr., pb. 1926; *Miss Marlow at Play*, pr. 1927; *The Ivory Door: A Legend*, pr. 1927; *Gentleman Unknown*, pr. 1928; *The Fourth Wall: A Detective Story*, pr. 1928 (also known as *The Perfect Alibi*); *Michael and Mary*, pr. 1929

1931-1951 • *They Don’t Mean Any Harm*, pr. 1932; *Other People’s Lives*, pr. 1933; *Miss Elizabeth Bennet*, pr., pb. 1936; *Sarah Simple*, pr. 1937; *Before the Flood*, pr., pb. 1951

SCREENPLAYS: *Bookworms*, 1920; *Five Pounds Reward*, 1920; *The Bump*, 1920; *Twice Two*, 1920; *Birds of Prey (The Perfect Alibi)*, 1930 (with Basil Dean)

POETRY: *For the Luncheon Interval: Cricket, and Other Verses*, 1925; *Behind the Lines*, 1940; *The Norman Church*, 1948

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *Once on a Time*, 1917; *Make-Believe*, 1918; *The Man in the Bowler Hat: A Terribly Exciting Affair*, 1923; *When We Were Very Young*, 1924; *A Gallery of Children*, 1925; *King Hilary and the Beggarman*, 1926; *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926; *Now We Are Six*, 1927; *The House at Pooh Corner*, 1928; *Toad of Toad Hall*, 1929; *The Ugly Duckling*, 1941; *Prince Rabbit, and the Princess Who Could Not Laugh*, 1966

NONFICTION: *Lovers in London*, 1905 (essays); *The Day's Play*, 1910; *The Holiday Round*, 1912; *Once a Week*, 1914; *Happy Days*, 1915; *Not That It Matters*, 1919; *If I May*, 1920; *The Sunny Side*, 1921; *The Ascent of Man*, 1928; *By Way of Introduction*, 1929; *When I Was Very Young*, 1930; *Peace with Honour: An Enquiry into the War Convention*, 1934 (revised 1935); *It's Too Late Now: The Autobiography of a Writer*, 1939 (also known as *Autobiography*); *War with Honour*, 1940; *War Aims Unlimited*, 1941; *Going Abroad?*, 1947; *Books for Children: A Reader's Guide*, 1948; *Year In, Year Out*, 1952

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Chandler, Raymond. "The Simple Art of Murder." In *The Simple Art of Murder*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. One of the most famous American authors of detective fiction discusses Milne's contributions to the genre.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Comprehen-

sive overview of the development of crime fiction in the twentieth century helps the reader understand the nature and importance of Milne's distinctive contributions.

Milne, A. A. *It's Too Late Now: The Autobiography of a Writer*. London: Methuen, 1939. Milne's autobiography delivers insights into his writing process and the life experiences that shaped his work.

Panek, LeRoy. "A. A. Milne." *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain, 1914-1940*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979. Milne's place in British detective fiction is explicated in this tightly focused study of the genre between the two world wars.

Swann, Thomas Burnett. *A. A. Milne*. New York: Twayne, 1971. A standard critical biography from Twayne's English Authors series.

Thwaite, Ann. *A. A. Milne: His Life*. Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990. Thwaite draws on the memoirs of Milne and his son Christopher Robin, as well as on unpublished letters.

DENISE MINA

Born: Glasgow, Scotland; August 21, 1966

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; psychological; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Maureen O'Donnell, 1998-
Patricia "Paddy" Meehan, 2005-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MAUREEN O'DONNELL, a Glasgow native in her twenties, has survived sexual abuse and a mental breakdown. Once an art history student, Maureen works menial jobs and drinks too much, haunted by memories of her abusive father and struggling to cope with her unsympathetic mother and sisters. She becomes involved in a series of police investigations when her married boyfriend is found murdered in her apartment.

PATRICIA "PADDY" MEEHAN is a young woman from a working-class Irish Catholic family in 1980's Glasgow. Paddy pursues a career in journalism, first as an office gofer then as a night-shift reporter. Her sharp tongue and fearlessness help her gather information and earn her colleagues' respect. Overweight, always dieting and wishing she were more stylish, Paddy is engaged to a conservative Catholic boy who she fears is the only man who will have her, but she decides to forgo marriage in favor of her career.

CONTRIBUTION

Denise Mina is often cited alongside Ian Rankin, Christopher Brookmyre, and Val McDermid as a leading writer of the Scottish crime fiction popularly known as tartan noir, a reference to film noir, a genre known for its bleak point of view and focus on corrup-

tion. Tartan noir typically features black humor, profanity, and realistic, flawed characters whose behavior raises questions about the distinction between innocence and guilt.

Mina's fiction reveals a strong social conscience; her characters experience poverty, religious conflict, unemployment, workplace discrimination, addiction and the ugliness of life on the wrong side of the law, all within the framework of the traditional murder mystery. Mina goes beyond puzzle making to write realistically about young women's lives in the poorer urban neighborhoods of Glasgow, although critics note that Mina's highly detailed and often grim settings can overwhelm her novels' central crimes.

Mina's heroines are unconventional for the genre: young, working-class Scottish women who have suffered or witnessed the effects of childhood sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, and mental illness. These characters are complex, deeply affected by these experiences but intelligent and proactive; they have been exposed to brutal violence and can even behave violently themselves. They become psychologically stronger over time, develop and maintain relationships with family and friends, defy religious and social expectations, and overcome legacies of abuse.

BIOGRAPHY

Denise Mina was born into a Catholic family in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1966. Her father, a self-educated oil engineer, traveled frequently, and the family moved twenty-one times while Mina was young. She attended convent schools across Europe. Mina left school at sixteen and took a series of jobs in London as a waitress, bartender, cook, and meat-factory worker, then as a nurse in a home for the elderly and terminally ill. Caring for people who had lived through World War II, Mina developed an appreciation for their life stories; she was particularly moved by elderly women who had once been independent, holding responsible positions in the workforce.

In 1986 Mina returned to Glasgow. At twenty-one she passed examinations allowing her to enroll in Glasgow University's School of Law. After graduating she taught classes in criminology and criminal law. At the University of Strathclyde she began research for a

doctoral degree on why women offenders were often considered mentally ill but spent more time working on her first novel, *Garnethill* (1998), about a former mental patient who becomes a suspect in a murder.

Published when Mina was thirty-one, *Garnethill* won the John Creasey Gold Dagger Award from the Crime Writers' Association, was translated into fifteen languages, and was adapted by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Scotland for television. Two subsequent novels in what became known as the Garnethill trilogy, *Exile* (2000) and *Resolution* (2001) were also best sellers in Europe.

A psychological mystery published after the *Garnethill* series, *Sanctum* (2002) (released as *Deception* in the United States) brought Mina greater success in the United States. Inspired by Mina's academic research on women who develop relationships with men who have committed violent crimes, *Deception* somewhat humorously traced one man's efforts to understand his wife's involvement with a convicted murderer.

Field of Blood (2005) followed, the first in a planned five-part series featuring young Glasgow news reporter Paddy Meehan. Mina was pregnant with her first child while writing *Field of Blood*. Although friends had warned Mina that pregnancy and motherhood would diminish her interest in gruesome stories of human corruption, Mina portrayed with disturbing realism the novel's central crime, the murder of a toddler by two older children. Mina felt writing about a shocking crime involving children as perpetrators would allow her to examine problems with Scotland's treatment and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. Mina followed *Field of Blood* with another Paddy Meehan story, *The Dead Hour* (2006), and began plans to adapt the series for British television.

Mina deliberately limited the Meehan series so contractual obligations would not force her to keep characters alive after she (or her readers) had tired of them. She had found with the Garnethill trilogy that continually writing about mental illness, drug abuse, and domestic violence had somewhat depressed her.

Mina's work includes comic books in DC Comics' *Hellblazer* series, as well as feature articles, short stories, and plays for live theater and radio. She has fre-

quently provided radio and television commentary on film and the arts for the BBC.

ANALYSIS

In both her Maureen O'Donnell and Paddy Meehan series Denise Mina follows many conventions of mystery and detective fiction. A murder occurs early in each novel and then clues are discovered and compiled until the murderer's identity is revealed. The reader has the opportunity to notice and interpret clues along with the main character and often has additional information that adds to the puzzle but has yet to be discovered by the amateur sleuth.

Both series are set in Glasgow and characterized by authentic, gritty descriptions of the city's seamy lower-class neighborhoods. Mina often links her characters' activities and moods to their observations of, and familiarity with, Glasgow's streets, architecture, and weather. Mina's use of dialogue enhances the specificity of her local setting, as her characters frequently use slang peculiar to Glasgow residents.

Mina heads each chapter with a cryptic title, the significance and humor of which is revealed in the text. These chapter headings may serve as a summing up of the main character's experience and her emotional response or may focus the reader's attention on an apparently insignificant detail.

The O'Donnell and Meehan stories are told primarily from the young female protagonists' points of view. Maureen O'Donnell and Paddy Meehan are not conventionally successful or attractive, but their low social positions and frequent lack of regard for their own safety allow them to discover facts beyond the reach of professional investigators. Both women tell lies easily and are capable of physical violence, and both are deeply loyal to, and frequently misunderstood by, their families.

GARNETHILL TRILOGY

Maureen O'Donnell is the heroine of the three Garnethill novels (*Garnethill*, *Exile*, and *Resolution*). The series follows Maureen, an alcoholic and former mental patient, through the aftermath of her married boyfriend's murder. She tries to solve the crime while coping with suspicious investigators, shielding her beloved drug-dealing brother from police scrutiny, and

struggling with the aftereffects of the sexual abuse she endured as a child.

The series departs from the traditional detective story format in that it contains two story arcs that are resolved over the course of three novels. One involves the central murder mystery. Maureen confronts the killer at the end of the first novel; the official police investigation provides a subplot in the second, while Maureen pursues an unrelated crime; and the murder story line is resolved in the third, again as a counterpoint to a more traditional mystery.

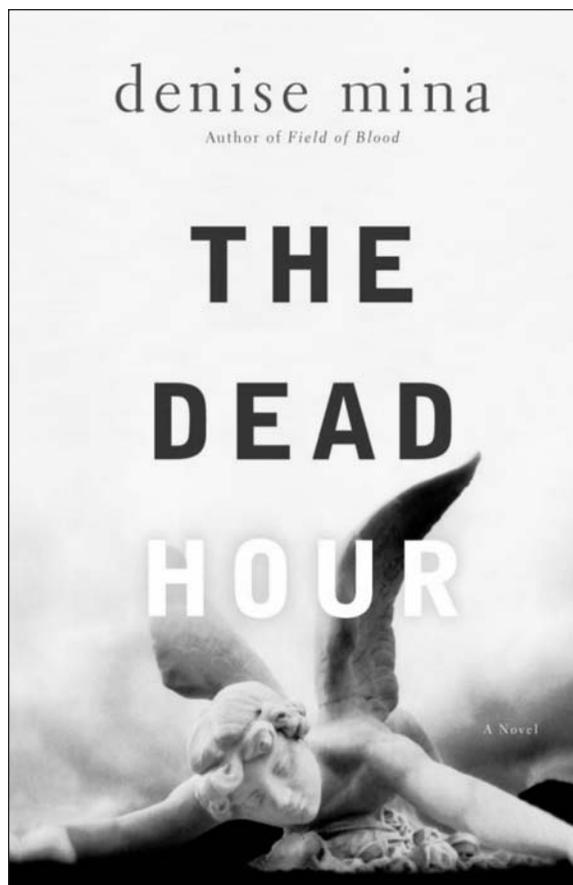
The second story arc concerns Maureen's struggles as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and mental illness. In *Garnethill* she is recovering from a mental breakdown; in *Exile*, her alcoholism becomes more serious and the rift with her family more acute when she learns her long-absent abusive father is in Glasgow. Finally in *Resolution*, Maureen confronts her fears, makes peace with her family, and seeks sobriety.

Mina explores the effects of sexual abuse on the individual in Maureen's nightmarish visions of her abusive father, Michael, and her conviction that he is watching and waiting for her. Mina also examines how Maureen's family responds to her accusations, even though they found her hiding after an incident of abuse and Michael abandoned the family shortly afterward. Maureen's mother retreats into alcoholism and her sisters deny the abuse, even insisting on allowing their father access to Maureen's baby niece.

Mina reveals Maureen's addictive personality in her constant need for alcohol and cigarettes and the comfort they give her, only addressing Maureen's alcoholism as a naked need near the end of the series when her friends attempt an intervention. Although Maureen is a damaged character, she is sympathetic because she feels compassion and responsibility toward others who have been victimized, cares about justice, and maintains close friendships throughout the series.

PADDY MEEHAN SERIES

Paddy Meehan is a young newspaper reporter in 1980's Glasgow. Overweight and self-conscious, Paddy constantly wonders what the men in the news office think of her. She is often treated with disdain but holds her own, sparring verbally with male coworkers. Mina created Paddy as a character who would grow



and change over time; she also wanted to illustrate the evolution of the male-dominated newspaper industry. Mina planned the series to cover three decades in Paddy's life as a reporter.

In the opening pages of *Field of Blood*, two children murder an even younger child. The crime was based on the 1993 murder in England of two-year-old James Bulger by two ten-year-olds. Paddy's fiancé Sean is related to one of the murderers, giving Paddy, a gofer at her newspaper, a chance to scoop the real reporters. To protect Sean's family, Paddy ignores the story but relays it to a young woman journalist who prints it. Blamed for the public disgrace and shunned by her family and Sean's, Paddy involves herself recklessly in the case, interviewing possible witnesses under a false name, planting evidence, and inadvertently leading the murderer to one of her coworkers before the truth behind the murder is revealed.

Sean is a nice Catholic boy who thinks Paddy's am-

bitions are too manly and her sexual desires inappropriate in an unmarried woman. Paddy clings to Sean, thinking no one else will have her, but in time realizes she would rather pursue her career than marry and have children. In *Field of Blood*, Paddy loses her virginity to a reporter who helps her investigate the child murder; in *The Dead Hour*, she has sex with a police officer and, in a cliffhanger ending, discovers she is pregnant.

Paddy often makes mistakes that she fears will cost her a relationship or her career. In *The Dead Hour*, Paddy, now working as a real reporter, tries to interview a man at the scene of an apparent domestic dispute, sees a woman with blood on her face in the home behind him, and walks away after the man pushes money into her hand. Paddy tells herself she had no choice but to accept the bribe but expects when it is discovered to lose her credibility and her job.

Throughout the series Paddy pursues an interest in Patrick "Paddy" Connelly Meehan, a real-life safecracker who was falsely convicted of a 1969 murder and later pardoned largely because of the efforts of a journalist who investigated his case. Paddy has been drawn to his story since she was a child and heard his name, just like her own, on the news. She has never believed in Catholicism and feels she substituted Patrick Meehan for Jesus, taking as her inspiration Meehan's story of injustice and retribution. In *The Dead Hour*, Paddy is trying to write a book about Patrick Meehan but completely unable to begin.

Maureen J. Puffer-Rothenberg

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MAUREEN O'DONNELL SERIES: *Garnethill*, 1998; *Exile*, 2000; *Resolution*, 2001

PADDY MEEHAN SERIES: *Field of Blood*, 2005; *The Dead Hour*, 2006; *Slip of the Knife*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Sanctum*, 2002 (also known as *Deception*, 2003)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

GRAPHIC NOVEL: *John Constantine Hellblazer: Empathy Is the Enemy*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Helena and the Babies*, 1999

PLAY: *Ida Tamson*, pb. 2005

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Mina, Denise. Denise Mina's Official Website. <http://www.denisemina.co.uk>. The author's Web site provides biographical information, photographs, a bibliography, and overview of major works, first chapters of selected novels and full text of selected short stories.

_____. "PW Talks with Denise Mina: Tartan Noir." Interview by Nancy Weber. *Publishers Weekly* 252, no. 19 (May, 2005): 40. Brief comments from Mina on Scottish names, her childhood, and juvenile justice in Scotland. Includes a portrait.

Rafferty, Terrence. "Tartan Noir." *GQ: Gentleman's Quarterly* 72, no. 12 (December, 2002): 184. Briefly profiles Ian Rankin and Val McDermid as two leading writers of modern Scottish crime fiction. Sheds light on Mina's work.

Smith, Dinitia. "The Writer Who Is Raising the Bar on Scottish Fiction." *The New York Times*, July 22, 2006, p. E6. Discusses Mina's place among writers of tartan noir.

GLADYS MITCHELL

Born: Cowley, Oxfordshire, England; April 19, 1901

Died: Corfe Mullen, Dorsetshire, England; July 27, 1983

Also wrote as Stephen Hockaby; Malcolm Torrie

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dame Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley, 1929-1985

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DAME BEATRICE ADELA LESTRANGE BRADLEY is a psychiatric adviser to the Home Office. Middle-aged when the series begins, Dame Beatrice ages until she has the appearance of a "benign lizard." Formidable, witty, stylish, holding honorary degrees from almost every university in the world, she resolves cases with reference to the suspect's psyche and the supernatural.

LAURA MENZIES GAVIN is Dame Beatrice's faithful secretary and general dogsbody. In later novels, she is conveniently married to a Scotland Yard detective. She is athletic, attractive, intelligent, intrepid, and also, as

the series progresses, the mother, somewhat reluctantly, of two children.

NOEL WELLS is a rather dim young curate who plays Watson to Beatrice's Holmes in the early novels of the series before he disappears in favor of the more satisfactory Laura Menzies (later Gavin).

CONTRIBUTION

It is tempting to compare Gladys Mitchell, the creator of Dame Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley, to her contemporaries, Agatha Christie, the creator of Miss Jane Marple, and Patricia Wentworth, the originator of Miss Maud Silver. All three began writing mysteries in the 1920's with novels that featured eccentric female sleuths who occupied their spare time with knitting. There the similarities end, for in Dame Beatrice Gladys Mitchell created a far more complex and controversial character than either Christie or Wentworth imagined. In her fifty-year career, Dame Beatrice turned into the sleuth many readers loved to hate.

Gladys Mitchell's personal interests are clearly reflected in those of her female sleuth: Dame Beatrice is, among other things, a psychoanalyst and is reputedly the descendant of a woman executed for witchcraft.

This intermingling of modern psychoanalytic theory and the supernatural in Mitchell's fiction has made her books either maddening or absolutely intriguing depending on the biases of her readers.

An extremely literate writer, Mitchell constructs plots that are, at their best, exceptionally intricate and filled with digressions on various subjects (such as transvestism) and, at their worst, improbably convoluted. At times it is difficult to decide whether she is writing serious crime fiction or attempting an arcane spoof of the genre.

She was, however, nothing if not prolific, having written more than sixty novels in her fifty-four-year career as a mystery novelist. Her fiction is quirky and eccentric, in keeping with the fictional sleuth she created in 1929, but she is never dated. In fact, Mitchell's greatest strength lies in her originality and her attempts at contemporaneity.

BIOGRAPHY

Gladys Maude Winifred Mitchell was born on April 19, 1901, in the village of Cowley, Oxfordshire, the daughter of James Mitchell and Annie Julia Maude Simmonds Mitchell. After attending Goldsmith's College, University of London, from 1919 to 1921, from which she received a diploma in history in 1926, she became an elementary teacher, a career that lasted for more than a quarter of a century. Although she first began teaching out of financial necessity, her foray into the field of detective fiction in 1929 soon made her financially independent. During and after World War II she continued to teach because of the national teacher shortage.

Conservative in political philosophy, agnostic in her religious beliefs, Mitchell pursued her career as an educator until 1961; at the same time, she produced at least one mystery novel every year, writing under her own name and the pseudonyms of Stephen Hockaby and Malcolm Torrie. She was a member of the Society of Authors, the Crime Writers' Association, and the Detection Club. She was also a fellow of the Ancient Monuments Society. In 1976 she was awarded a special award from the Crime Writers' Association in recognition of her having written more than fifty mysteries. She died at her home in Dorsetshire on July 27,

1983, at the age of eighty-two. She was still writing mysteries at the time of her death.

ANALYSIS

Speedy Death (1929), the first novel featuring perennial sleuth Mrs. (soon to be Dame) Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley, set the tone for Mitchell's half-century-long career as a mystery writer. In this novel Mrs. Bradley commits justifiable homicide (much as Hercule Poirot does in Agatha Christie's last book to feature the Belgian sleuth). Mitchell's refusal from the very outset of her career to make her villains totally villainous or her heroes and heroines totally heroic partly explains the difficulty critics have in coming to grips with her as a writer of detective fiction. It is exceedingly difficult to decide—since Mitchell consistently refused to give her readers direction in this matter—whether she regarded herself as a serious practitioner of the craft of crime writing or whether she wrote with tongue in cheek.

Considering the female sleuths created by Mitchell's contemporaries Christie and Wentworth, Dame Beatrice is a model of the liberated woman. Although she knits, she is more similar to Madame Defarge than she is to Miss Marple and Miss Maud Silver. Not only are marriage (at least two and possibly three husbands exist in her past) and motherhood (she has at least one son, the eminent barrister Ferdinand Lestrangle, possibly two) part of her experience; she is a woman of the world par excellence. It is not by coincidence that the first novel in which Dame Beatrice appears revolves around the question of transvestism, one of many subjects in the treatment of which Mitchell was ahead of her time. In the early novels *Speedy Death* and *The Mystery of a Butcher's Shop* (1929), for example, Dame Beatrice professes a belief in the necessity of birth control. Dame Beatrice is highly educated, sophisticated, and worldly wise. She is a psychoanalyst, soon to become psychiatric adviser to the Home Office, an amateur expert on the occult, and the recipient of too many academic honors to count.

Dame Beatrice's intellectual sophistication is matched only by her fascination with the occult. Like her creator, she values her purported descent from a witch. As the series progresses and Dame Beatrice

ages, her appearance becomes more and more witch-like. The relationship between madness and the supernatural is underlined by the titles of many of Mitchell's books: *Convent on Styx* (1975), *Merlin's Furlong* (1953), *The Rising of the Moon* (1945), *Uncoffin'd Clay* (1980), and *Here Lies Gloria Mundy* (1982).

Many of Mitchell's early novels verge on being spoofs of the genre in which she became so firmly entrenched as a writer. Even Dame Beatrice's ubiquitous knitting of unidentifiable objects serves as a parody of the fluffy pink items that Miss Marple's needles produce or the practical baby clothes that result from Miss Maud Silver's endeavors. In contrast to the limited perspectives of these two single women, Dame Beatrice's intellectual breadth and worldliness seem to represent an attempt at deliberate satire. One thing Dame Beatrice can never claim to be (especially after committing homicide in *Speedy Death*) is innocent.

Dame Beatrice's choice of Watsons also reflects her author's growing sophistication. In her early novels Mitchell provided Mrs. Bradley with Noel Wells, a curate whose brain she likens to a turnip. It is not surprising that Wells's views of Mrs. Bradley are at first unsympathetic; throughout the series, however, he comes to admire her originality and her intellect. Because he prefers old women to be soothing, Wells's discomfiture with Mrs. Bradley's character is all too understandable.

LAURELS ARE POISON

Mitchell created a far more successful companion for Dame Beatrice in Laura Menzies (later Gavin), who first appeared in *Laurels Are Poison* (1942). Like many of Mitchell's novels, this one is set in a teachers' training college, where Laura Menzies is a student. Athletic, Amazonian, given to plunging into an ice-cold bath every morning, Laura remains unperturbed in the face of whatever adventures her association with Dame Beatrice happens to bring her. In the forty years ahead of her in her role as secretary, typist, assistant, protector, and companion, Laura will need whatever sangfroid her creator can afford her. In time she acquires a husband, not without coincidence an officer at Scotland Yard, and two children, whose needs always come second to those of her employer. Her original motto is "Action! Give me action!" As Dame Bea-

trice's Watson she is certain to have her desire fulfilled.

THE SALTMARSH MURDERS

Although Mitchell's novels feature settings with which she was familiar (girls' schools, small villages, teachers' training colleges), her treatment of the events that occur in them is far from ordinary. One of the most difficult aspects of Mitchell's writings lies in the complexity of her plots and the ubiquity of her digressions. Mitchell's personal passion for the occult, the supernatural, and the depths of the human psyche frequently interferes with the progress of her novels, much to the readers' annoyance. *The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932) is a perfect example of this tendency of Mitchell to allow her own enthusiasms to baffle and confuse her readers. The vicar is an adulterer, and his wife a repressed nymphomaniac as well as a sadist. Mitchell's preoccupation with the complexities of their psyches interferes with the action of the novel. *The Saltmarsh Murders* also features a young maid who gives birth to an illegitimate child, a promiscuous actress, and a closet pornographer, not to mention bodies that end up in the wrong coffins, all heady stuff for the era in which Mitchell was writing.

In the first few novels Dame Beatrice is an amateur sleuth. Not long into her fictional career, however, she is given the role of psychiatric adviser to the Home Office. Elevation to this quasi-official status undoubtedly gives her access to a wider variety of crimes. It also allows her to exhibit a degree of professionalism not available to her female contemporaries such as Miss Marple and Miss Silver. If it were not for her marriages and her children, one would think—given Dame Beatrice's reptilian appearance—that Mitchell was trying to make her more like a male detective in the mold of Albert Campion or Roderick Alleyn.

Mitchell's novels tackle a number of fanciful aspects of British life in the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's, most of which reflect her own wide-ranging interests. Witchcraft is foremost among them, but the topics dealt with in her many novels also include morris dancing, archaeology, pig farming (a specialty of Dame Beatrice's nephew in *Here Lies Gloria Mundy*), seawater baths, and Druidism. Contrived plots concerning arcane topics were characteristic of British mystery

writing during the 1930's and 1940's, but Mitchell continued to build her novels around them into the 1980's.

Her writing, however, has never become totally dated. Partly because she always wrote ahead of or at least outside her time, Mitchell was, even at the end of her long career, far more adept at dealing with modern subjects than was Agatha Christie. Arcane, convoluted, quirky, Mitchell's books will always be limited in their appeal, but they constitute a distinctive contribution to the mystery genre.

Mary Anne Hutchinson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BEATRICE LESTRANGE BRADLEY SERIES: 1929-1940 • *Speedy Death*, 1929; *The Mystery of a Butcher's Shop*, 1929; *The Longer Bodies*, 1930; *The Saltmarsh Murders*, 1932 (with Anthony Berkeley, Milward Kennedy, John Rhode, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Helen Simpson); *Ask a Policeman*, 1933 (with others); *Death in the Wet*, 1934 (also known as *Death at the Opera*); *The Devil at Saxon Wall*, 1935; *Dead Men's Morris*, 1936; *Come Away, Death*, 1937; *St. Peter's Finger*, 1938; *Printer's Error*, 1939; *Brazen Tongue*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Hangman's Curfew*, 1941; *When Last I Died*, 1941; *Laurels Are Poison*, 1942; *Sunset over Soho*, 1943; *The Worst Viper*, 1943; *My Father Sleeps*, 1944; *The Rising of the Moon*, 1945; *Here Comes a Chopper*, 1946; *Death and the Maiden*, 1947; *The Dancing Druids*, 1948; *Tom Brown's Body*, 1949; *Groaning Spinney*, 1950

1951-1960 • *The Devil's Elbow*, 1951; *The Echoing Strangers*, 1952; *Merlin's Furlong*, 1953; *Faintly Speaking*, 1954; *Watson's Choice*, 1955; *Twelve Horses and the Hangman's Noose*, 1956; *The Twenty-third Man*, 1957; *The Man Who Grew Tomatoes*, 1959; *Say It with Flowers*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Nodding Canaries*, 1961; *My Bones Will Keep*, 1962; *Adders on the Heath*, 1963; *Death of a Delft Blue*, 1964; *Pageant of Murder*, 1965; *The Croaking Raven*, 1966; *Skeleton Island*, 1967; *Three Quick and Five Dead*, 1968; *Dance to Your Daddy*, 1969; *Gory Dew*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Lament for Leto*, 1971; *The Murder*

of Busy Lizzie, 1973; *A Javelin for Jonah*, 1974; *Winking at the Brim*, 1974; *Convent on Styx*, 1975; *Late, Late in the Evening*, 1976; *Fault in the Structure*, 1977; *Noonday and Night*, 1977; *Mingled with Venom*, 1978; *Wraiths and Changelings*, 1978; *Nest of Vipers*, 1979; *The Mudflats of the Dead*, 1979; *The Whispering Knights*, 1980; *Uncoffin'd Clay*, 1980

1981-1985 • *Lovers, Make Moan*, 1981; *The Death-Cap Dancers*, 1981; *Death of a Burrowing Mole*, 1982; *Here Lies Gloria Mundy*, 1982; *Cold, Lone, and Still*, 1983; *The Greenstone Griffins*, 1983; *Spotted Hemlock*, 1985

TIMOTHY HERRING SERIES (AS TORRIE): *Heavy as Lead*, 1966; *Late and Cold*, 1967; *Your Secret Friend*, 1968; *Churchyard Salad*, 1969; *Shades of Darkness*, 1970; *Bismarck Herrings*, 1971

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS HOCKABY): *Marsh Hay*, 1933; *Seven Stars and Orion*, 1934; *Gabriel's Hold*, 1935; *Outlaws of the Border*, 1936; *Shallow Brown*, 1936; *The Grand Master*, 1939

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Three Fingerprints*, 1940; *Holiday River*, 1948; *The Seven Stones Mystery*, 1949; *The Malory Secret*, 1950; *Pam at Storne Castle*, 1951; *Caravan Creek*, 1954; *On Your Marks*, 1954; *The Light-Blue Hills*, 1959

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MIYUKI MIYABE

Born: Tokyo, Japan; December 23, 1960

Types of plot: Psychological; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Detective Chikako Ishizu, 1998-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHIKAKO ISHIZU is an unpretentious middle-aged Japanese police detective who has risen through the ranks until appointed detective to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police arson squad when the public demanded more women detectives. She is considered rather maternal by her male colleagues. After refusing to bend the law in the course of solving her first big case, she is demoted to work at a regular police precinct, where she is confronted with another intricate case featuring a double murder.

CONTRIBUTION

Award-winning Japanese crime author Miyuki Miyabe is known to the English-speaking world primarily through the handful of her intense crime novels available in translation. Miyabe's translated work is distinguished by imaginative plots at the cutting edge of contemporary society, featuring identity theft, the dark playing fields of the Internet, and extrajudicial vengeance in face of a justice system apparently failing to react effectively to ultravicious crimes. Her focus is on young Japanese women whose violent reaction against the vicissitudes of a rigid, hostile society

turns them into explosively charged perpetrators.

The outstanding popular literary success of Miyabe in Japan resulted in one of her prize-winning crime novels, *Kasha* (1992), being translated into English as *All She Was Worth* in 1996. Miyabe's English-language publisher then decided to translate *R.P.G.* (2001) as *Shadow Family* in 2004, even though it was not the first novel in the detective Chikako Ishizu series, partly because the novel corresponds tightly to the conventions of the police procedural. *Kurosufuia* (1998), translated the following year as *Crossfire*, introduced Miyabe's detective Chikako Ishizu. Ishizu's first case in the series involves arson caused by supernatural abilities. In spite of the occurrence of pyrokinesis, the paranormal ability to start fires by willpower alone, the crimes and conflicts featured in *Crossfire* are realistic and psychologically grounded.

In Japan, Miyabe's crime fiction has won a huge following, with several of her novels made into films. For the English reader, her well-crafted focus on violent women not only offers psychologically intense portraits but also a close view at the pitfalls and problems of contemporary Japanese society. Ultimately, through her female and male detectives, Miyabe gives voice to those who do not believe that the end justifies the means.

BIOGRAPHY

Miyuki Miyabe was born in the downtown Kōtō Ward of Tokyo on December 23, 1960. She graduated from the Sumigadawa High School and started to

write fiction in 1983 while working for a law office. In 1984, Miyabe took creative writing courses offered by the Japanese publishing house Kodansha, whose subsidiary, Kodansha International, publishes much of Japanese literature in English translation and is committed to disseminating Japanese culture in the English-speaking world. Her breakthrough was the short story "Warera ga rinjin no hanzai" (1987; we are the crimes of a neighbor). Soon after, she quit her job at the law office to focus on her writing.

In 1992, Miyabe published the acclaimed crime novel *Kasha*, which won her the prestigious Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize. This success persuaded Kodansha International to commission an English translation that was published as Miyabe's first work in English, *All She Was Worth*, in 1996. Her story of two different women running afoul of Japanese loan sharks fascinated English readers and established her name among foreign crime writers in the United States.

In Japan in the 1990's, Miyabe became widely popular for not only her crime fiction but also her many novels in genres as varied as historical fiction, science fiction, young-adult fiction, and social realism. Her novel *Riyū* (1998; the reason) won the Naoki Prize in 1998, considered the top prize for Japanese popular fiction.

Miyabe's 1998 mystery-cum-science fiction novel *Crossfire* introduced Detective Chikako Ishizu of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police arson squad. Choosing an English title for her work underlined Miyabe's belief in America's vast influence on contemporary Japanese popular culture and imagination. *Crossfire* was the first of Miyabe's novels to be turned into a motion picture; the 2000 film *Kurosufaia* (*Pyrokinesis*) by director Shusuke Kaneko emphasized the science-fiction elements of the novel.

Preferring to establish Miyabe as a crime writer for her English audience and wary of the cross-genre elements of *Crossfire*, Kodansha decided to translate first the sequel, *R.P.G.* written in 2001, as *Shadow Family* in 2004. By this time in Japan, another of Miyabe's crime novels, *Mohōhan* (2001; copycat killer), had been made into a film, underlining her mass-culture appeal.

When *Crossfire* was translated in 2005, English readers could trace the first case of Detective Ishizu,

which ultimately led to her demotion, alluded to at the beginning of *Shadow Family*. Occasionally likened to a Stephen King novel because of its juxtaposition of the everyday world with the supernatural, *Crossfire* nevertheless emphasizes sound police work and modern crime fighting.

In Japan, Miyabe's fiction successfully spans many genres, mysteries being one of them. Her translated crime novels have established a loyal readership fascinated by her illumination of the dark side of modern Japanese society from the point of view of fiercely independent women who often transgress into crime when faced with obstacles and apparent injustice.

The fourth work of Miyabe to be published in English is a fantasy novel, *Bureibu sutōri* (2003; *Brave Story*, 2007), indicating her publisher's trust in her cross-genre appeal. A fifth novel, *Majutsu wa sasayaku* (1989), a mystery dealing with an orphaned teenager, was published as *The Devil's Whisper* in 2007. There are quite a few other mysteries by Miyabe that could be translated into English, and the prolific author shows no signs of stopping her creative output.

ANALYSIS

The translated mysteries of Miyuki Miyabe share a strong emphasis on the workings of the inner minds of the women perpetrators and the psychological and social factors that push them into crime. From the beginning, Miyabe is interested in the characteristics of modern Japanese society that may propel a woman beyond socially acceptable behavior.

Perhaps because ordinary, mundane crime is still relatively rare in Japan compared with the United States, the crimes that tend to stand out and shock the nation are often of an especially heinous and imaginative character. For a mystery writer like Miyabe, the challenge arises to offer her reader fictional villains with a special modus operandi that reveals a criminal energy rivaling that of the most outlandish real crime figures. At the same time, Miyabe juxtaposes the criminal with detective figures who, even though damaged by everyday life, nevertheless commit to upholding decency, morality, and human kindness.

In her greatly successful *All She Was Worth*, Miyabe combines elements of good sleuthing, echoes

of hard-boiled detective fiction, and concise social observation and criticism. The fortunate combination of these elements in this novel may be what solidified her popular fame in Japan and made it the first of her books to be translated into English.

All She Was Worth showcases Miyabe's keen interest in the intricacies of actual police work. The author has stated how she peruses publicly available materials on forensics and scientific approaches to criminal investigations and keeps in close contact with the public relations offices of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. Thus she is able to build a realistic background for her detectives' quests. At the same time, Miyabe is intensely interested in the psychological, social, and economic factors that may drive a nondescript young person, generally a woman, into a life of crime. Her analysis of the lures of consumer culture, which may trap a soul on a trajectory of no return, fascinated readers of *All She Was Worth*.

In *Crossfire*, Miyabe uses the supernatural as a metaphor for an individual's desperate attempt to strike back at a society seen as severely out of kilter. Punishing criminals by willing fires to engulf them at first may liken the novel's young Junko Aoki to a kind of supercharged Japanese Batman meting out justice on her own. However, in Miyabe's world this approach backfires. Here the powers of society prove far more intolerant of a solitary vigilante than are the fictional denizens of Gotham City. Reinforcing the message in *Shadow Family*, Miyabe is at considerable pains to show that extrajudicial violence cannot be the correct way to end injustice.

Equally as convincing as her highly imaginative perpetrators are Miyabe's detective protagonists. From Shunsuke Honma in *All She Was Worth* to the disillusioned Detective Chikako Ishizu in *Crossfire* and *Shadow Family*, Miyabe's fictional counterparts to the world of crime are ordinary citizens who possess a strict, functioning moral guidance compass. Faced with the outlandish imagination of the criminal mind, these down-to-earth, middle-aged detectives reassert moral order and human decency even in a world that poses a threat to these values.

Japanese culture has always valued the poetic, the imaginative, and the beautiful tinged with a strong fla-

vor of death. Samurai took pains to groom well before battle so their severed heads would make proper trophies if they lost in combat. Drawing on this tradition, Miyabe's villains exude creativity, criminal energy and imagination. However, when they are brought down, social order is reestablished for everyday people. In addition, Miyabe avoids a Western tendency to excuse her villains' behavior through their victimization by society. In her mysteries, criminals become bad because of their own free will and must suffer the consequences.

ALL SHE WAS WORTH

Miyabe's first award-winning novel, *All She Was Worth*, opens inconspicuously enough as a missing-person case. On sick leave recovering from a gunshot wound to his leg, forty-three-year-old Tokyo police detective Shunsuke Honma is visited by his arrogant young cousin, who implores him to search for his fiancé, Shoko Sekine. The woman dropped out of sight when the cousin found out she had once filed for personal bankruptcy. Soon, however, the reader, following the creative sleuthing of Honma, learns that his cousin's fiancé stole the identity of another woman. Even though the cousin angrily dismisses Honma's findings, the police officer does not give up his quest to find the impostor.

In the course of Honma's inquiries, Miyabe treats the reader to a haunting portrayal of the pitfalls of modern Japanese consumer credit society. Whereas the real Shoko is able to discharge her accumulated debt legally through new bankruptcy regulations, her impostor is not so lucky. As her spendthrift father ruined the family and got involved with Yakuza loan sharks, his daughter is made to pay a terrible price that destroys her first marriage. Driven to despair, the impostor, Kyoko Shinjo, stops at nothing, even murder, to acquire a new identity. At the dramatic showdown of Miyabe's novel, Honma and his friends ready themselves to confront Kyoko with their knowledge of her crime.

The positive American reception of Miyabe's novel was based on both its superb plotting and its haunting, in-depth view of characters trapped by the intricacies of modern Japanese consumer society. Miyabe's meticulous rendition of a woman's path to despair and her imaginative efforts to obtain a new

identity against the backdrop of the Japanese public-records system fascinated her foreign readers. Even though Miyabe's narrative is not without sympathy for the woman victim turned perpetrator, at the novel's end the police veteran reasserts the importance of morality and free will even in a deeply flawed social environment. This is typical of Miyabe's crime fiction.

CROSSFIRE

Perhaps because it features the paranormal, Miyabe's crime novel, *Crossfire*, which introduced detective Chikako Ishizu, was published in English only after its sequel, *Shadow Family*. It is easy to see how the pyrokinetic ability of *Crossfire*'s antagonist, Junko Aoki, is a metaphor for a woman's desire—and ability—to effect swift vengeance. It is the social ramifications of such individually pursued justice that stand at the philosophical core of Miyabe's mystery.

Crossfire opens as—burdened by her ability, which she has used for vengeance once before—Junko Aoki stumbles on yet another crime-for-thrills by a juvenile gang. After she incinerates the gang but misses its leader, callous teenager Keiichi Asaba, Junko tracks him down. At the same time, Detective Chikako Ishizu of the arson squad of Tokyo's Metropolitan Police is called on to solve this bizarre crime spree. Middle-aged, down-to-earth, and with a son in college and a husband who is generally absent and makes only one late-night drunken appearance in the novel, Ishizu is considered both a maternal presence and a jealously disliked product of the Japanese version of affirmative action. Ishizu's sharp intellect propels her to solve the case together with male Detective Makihara, who believes in pyrokinesis for traumatic personal reasons.

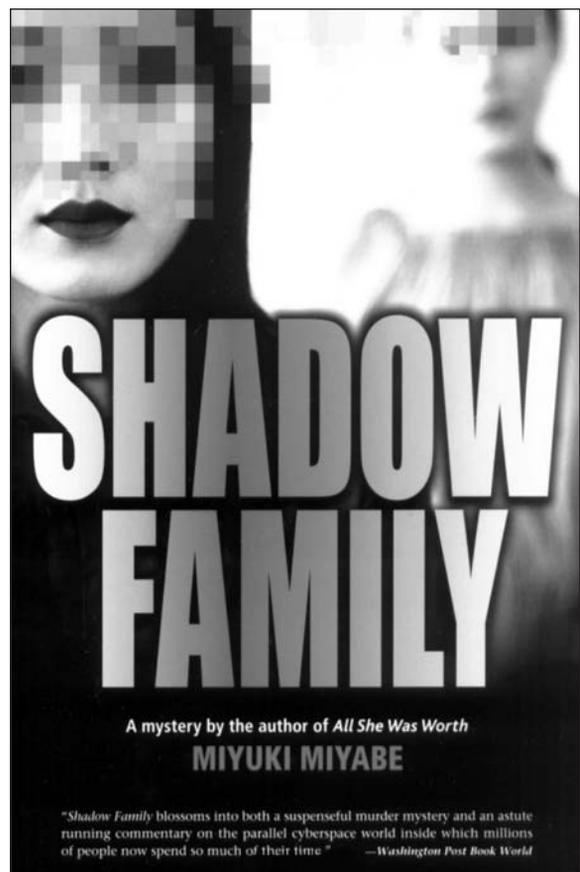
Miyabe's novel skillfully mixes the sensational with keen observations on the spiritual and emotional loneliness persuasive in contemporary Japanese society. The detectives encounter another pyrokinetic, the girl Kaori Kurata, just as Junko becomes involved in a shadowy organization of high-placed vigilantes.

For all its paranormal fireworks, *Crossfire* confronts the issue of taking the law into one's own hands. Miyabe ends her novel with the moving scene of Junko's farewell, as she dies in the snow outside a remote villa. Detective Ishizu refuses to bow to the vigilantes.

SHADOW FAMILY

Originally published as *R.P.G.*, short for "role playing games" and showing Miyabe's penchant for English original titles, *Shadow Family* revisits detective Ishizu after she runs afoul of her superiors in *Crossfire*. Working within a larger scheme dreamed up by a police veteran, Ishizu takes on the bizarre case of the murder of a man and his girlfriend. The man had created his own virtual family on the Internet to the detriment of his real-life teenage daughter. Again, Miyabe's tightly constructed plot, full of twists and surprises, fascinates as much as her meticulous rendition of the mind of her teenage woman villain.

In this tightly constructed mystery, which takes place during one afternoon in a Tokyo ward police station, Ishizu and her colleagues try to force the man's sixteen-year-old daughter, Kazumi Tokoroda, to tell the truth about the double murder by appearing to bring in the players of the virtual family of the murder



victim. Again, Miyabe treats her readers to the details of Japanese police procedures as well as to a disillusioning picture of alienation, power games, and decay within a contemporary Japanese family.

The two-way mirror of the interrogation room separating the people reenacting their roles on the Internet and the observant Kazumi observed by Ishizu is an apt metaphor of Miyabe's craft in bringing out the hidden layers of modern Japanese society through her popular crime fiction. Although there is an implication that some of the extreme violence in Japan has come from America, indicated by Miyabe's use of English titles for many of her novels, there is also a reminder that the intricacies of indigenous Japanese society are equally responsible. The conflict between social conformity and the quest for individual expression takes center stage. The fact that it is young women who lash out is what gives Miyabe's mysteries their special flair.

R. C. Lutz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DETECTIVE CHIKAKO ISHIZU SERIES: *Kurosufaia*, 1998 (*Crossfire*, 2005); *R.P.G.*, 2001 (*Shadow Family*, 2004)

DORĪMUBASUTĀ SERIES: *Dorīmubasutā*, 2001; *Dorīmubasutā 2*, 2003; *Dorīmubasutā 3*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Pāfekuto burū*, 1989; *Majutsu wa sasayaku*, 1989 (*The Devil's Whisper*, 2007); *Tōkyō uōtafuronto satsujin boshoku*, 1990; *Reberu 7*, 1990; *Honjō Fukugawa fushigi sōshi*, 1991; *Henji wa iranai*, 1991; *Konya wa nemurenai*, 1992; *Sunāku gari*, 1992; *Kasha*, 1992 (*All She Was Worth*, 1996); *Nagai nagai satujin*, 1992; *Torinokosareta*, 1992; *Sutteppu fāzā suteppu*, 1993; *Sabishii karūdo*, 1993; *Yume ni mo omowanai*, 1995; *Hitojichi kanon*, 1996; *Gamoutei jiken*, 1996; *Tengu kazu*, 1997; *Kokoro torokasu yō na masa no jiken*, 1997; *Riyū*, 1998; *Heisei no okachi nikki*, 1998; *Bonkura*, 2000; *Ayashi-kai*, 2000; *Mohōhan*, 2001; *Akanbee*, 2002; *Dare ka/Somebody*, 2003; *Higurashi*, 2005; *No mo naki doku*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Warera ga rinjin no hanzai*, 1987

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Saboten no hana*, 1990; *Ryū wa nemuru*, 1991; *Kamatachi*, 1992; *Furueru iwa*, 1993; *Chika-*

gai no ame, 1994; *Genshoku Edogoyomi*, 1994; *Hatsu monogatari*, 1995; *Hatobuesō*, 1995; *Kanninbako*, 1996; *Brureibu sutōri*, 2003 (*Brave Story*, 2007); *Panrukurin*, 2003 (with Hiroshi Kurotetsu); *ICO—Kiri no shiro*, 2004; *Koshuku no hito*, 2005

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Loughman, Celeste. Review of *Shadow Family*, by Miyuki Miyabe. *World Literature Today*, 79, nos. 3-4 (September/December, 2005): 86. Perceptive discussion of the crime novel that gives away the ending. Asserts that the novel's focus on a woman killer links it to Miyabe's first novel translated into English and to the works of fellow Japanese crime novelist Nat-suo Kirino; suggests that Japanese women's struggle for independence can breed violence.

McLarin, Jenny. Review of *Shadow Family*, by Miyuki Miyabe. *Booklist*, 101, nos. 9-10 (January 1, 2005): 828. Generally positive review praising that novel for its imaginative look at the downside of the Internet.

Miyabe, Miyuki. "A Japanese Crime Caper." Interview by Sally Stanton. *Publishers Weekly*, 252, no. 3 (January 17, 2005): 37. In-depth interview with author, who talks about her mode of research, concerns with social problems like family breakdown or extremes of consumer society, and her future projects.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *All She Was Worth*, by Miyuki Miyabe. 243, no. 46 (November 11, 1996): 59. Review of the novel praising its unique portrayal of modern Japanese people falling into consumer debt; lists author's literary awards earned by 1996.

Williams, Wilda. Review of *Shadow Family*, by Miyuki Miyabe. *Library Journal*, 130, no. 3 (February 15, 2005): 124. Balanced review of the novel; considers Miyabe's social critique too strong.

ANNE MORICE

Felicity Wolthington

Born: Kent, England; February 18, 1918

Died: Place unknown; 1989

Also wrote as Felicity Shaw

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Tessa Crichton Price, 1970-1988

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

TESSA CRICHTON PRICE, an amateur sleuth and actress, is the wife of Scotland Yard Detective Robin Price. Although her age and appearance remain undefined, clues suggest that Tessa is youthful and attractive. Seldom performing in a long-running play, she travels in England, visiting friends and relatives who require her detective expertise. A talkative narrator, she displays exuberance, curiosity, and perceptiveness.

TOBY CRICHTON is Tessa's curmudgeonly, reclusive playwright cousin, with whom she enjoys discussing solutions to the murderous events around her.

CONTRIBUTION

Anne Morice's twenty-one novels featuring amateur sleuth Tessa Crichton Price, the loquacious narrator, have been described as offering "sneaky endings, civilized middles and comfortable beginnings, which tell you in a page or two that you're in the company of a classic detective-story writer." Following in the tradition of Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh, Morice placed her characters in confined settings and examined the reality of psychological turmoil hovering beneath a facade of social harmony. Misled by skillfully placed red herrings, the reader can verify in reflection that the author faithfully provided the clues necessary to successful detection. Morice expanded the "puzzle" technique to include commentary on writing itself, creating, in essence, the metamystery. Her style simulates conversation, conveying essential information in skillful dialogue that reveals her interest in the theater. Her mysteries lend credence to the genre as a medium of social, psychological, and literary commentary.

BIOGRAPHY

Anne Morice was born Felicity Wolthington in 1918, in Kent, England, the daughter of Harry Wolthington and Morice Wolthington. She attended Francis Holland School, in London, and schools in Paris and Munich. In 1939, she married Alexander Shaw, a film director, with whom she had two daughters and one son. Several members of her family have had theatrical ties: father, a playwright; sister, an actress; brother-in-law, a theatrical producer; and two nephews, Edward Fox and James Fox, actors.

She began writing mysteries when she and her husband were living in Paris. On frequent trips to see her son, who was in school in England, she purchased the latest mysteries, eagerly sharing them with her husband on her return home. Between 1970 and 1988, she published twenty-two mysteries, only one of which did not feature Tessa, *Design for Dying* (1988). Although her husband's work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank enabled her to travel widely, she selected England as the setting for most of her works. She died in 1989.

ANALYSIS

Anne Morice began her mystery-writing career with *Death in the Grand Manor* (1970), and she wrote eight more novels in which Tessa's acting career remains a mere device to explain her insight into character. In *Nursery Tea and Poison* (1975), Tessa visits her godmother, Serena Hargrave, at her cottage in Herefordshire and discovers the murderess of Nannie to be Serena's "truculent" daughter Primrose. A particularly vivid scene, indicative of Morice's knowledge of set design, depicts Serena clutching a carving knife, Tessa listening to a Bob Newhart monologue on the gramophone, and Primrose vanishing. For *Death of a Wedding Guest* (1976), Roakes Common, her cousin Toby's home, becomes the setting for the wedding of Toby's daughter Ellen. Her mother, Irene, who deserted her and Toby years before, returns for the wedding, only

to be murdered because she has witnessed a hit-and-run accident committed by the mother-dominated Phillip, once Ellen's boyfriend. Portraying Tessa between acting assignments and in the midst of friends and relatives, these early mysteries establish Morice as an author of mysteries of manners.

MURDER IN MIMICRY

With *Murder in Mimicry* (1977), Morice moves the theater to center stage, using a theatrical milieu for this novel set in Washington, D.C. In it, she introduces two characters who will appear in several mysteries: Lorraine Beasely, an assertive and untidy friend with whom Tessa stays in Georgetown, and Henry Thurloe, a successful lawyer who will become Lorraine's fifth husband. Beginning before Tessa departs from England for the United States, the novel opens with Tessa and Robin having just finished a celebration lunch in honor of their fifth wedding anniversary and his promotion to chief detective inspector. At the conclusion, Robin joins Tessa and Toby at dinner as they discuss highlights of the solved case. Morice maintains this pattern, in which the mysteries begin and end with conversations between Tessa and at least one of the men in her life.

This narrative style emphasizing conversation reveals Morice's indebtedness to Rex Stout, whom she identified as her favorite author. Tessa shares Archie Goodwin's narrative facility, attention to detail, and psychological expertise. Morice particularly admired Stout's realistic description. She explained, "I still believe if I walk down 35th Street, I'll find Wolfe's townhouse, and if I look up, I'll see his orchids growing on the roof." In addition, she paid homage to Nero Wolfe by transferring many of his qualities to Toby: his reclusive nature, fondness for food, and abrasive manner. Even her decision to write mysteries of manners might have been influenced by Stout, who declared Jane Austen the greatest writer and *Emma* (1815) a masterpiece.

With the setting of *Murder in Mimicry* in the United States, Tessa begins to interject comments on the writing process itself. She and Toby speculate on creating a traditional detective story using her cohorts in the theatrical company as characters. Engaging in banter, the cousins create motives for murdering Gilbert, the supercilious star of Toby's comedy, *Host*

of Pleasures, currently appearing in Washington, D.C. Speaking of the "anti-Gilbert motif," Tessa and Toby discuss the "classic pattern," inserting names of her fellow thespians.

DEATH IN THE ROUND

Death in the Round (1980) contains more reflective commentary. Tessa evaluates the plays of Jamie Crowther, the author of the work in which she comes to the Rotunda Theatre to appear: "They neither were nor aimed to be in any way memorable or profound, but the formula was unbeatable: tautly constructed plots, sharp characterization, an innate sense of the theatre and the magic gift of being able to make people laugh." Such a formula might well be the one to which Morice subscribed in creating her mysteries. Tessa argues, "In my experience, nearly all playwrights are martyrs to neurosis in one form or another." The nervous Crowther attempts to control his fears by doing petit point to re-cover his dining-room chairs. In her later works, Morice has continued to depict the fictional author's concern for both the created work and the audience's response. Even fellow characters become involved in naming the mysteries. Tessa asks Robin, "If this had been fiction, instead of merely truth, what would you have called it?" He responds, "How about *Death in the Round*?"

THE MEN IN HER DEATH

To provide a sense of continuity, Morice allows Tessa to interact with the same friends in more than one book. In each case, the friendship itself reveals a growth. *The Men in Her Death* (1981) finds Lorraine and Henry Thurloe married since they last saw Tessa. Lorraine arrives in England to stay with Tessa and Robin as she looks for Sandy Thurloe, the daughter of Henry's sister-in-law. Roakes Common again provides the setting for much of the action. Tessa first encounters Kim Enolls, the poet who proves to be the murderer, clipping Toby's hedges. Mr. Parkes, the temperamental gardener who refuses to perform this task, appears with his iron-willed housekeeper-wife in most of the later novels. Robin saves Tessa from being killed by Enolls, who murdered Sandy because she did not sufficiently appreciate his literary talent. Authors frequently serve as suspects or victims in Morice's mysteries.

HOLLOW VENGEANCE

Elsa Carrington and her two children, Millie and Marcus, first appear in *Hollow Vengeance* (1982). Here the reader receives one clue about Tessa's age. She baby-sat Millie, now sixteen, and her brother when not too much older than her charges are now. Astounded at Elsa's naïveté, Toby argues that if he should turn the events of this mystery into a play, he must drop Elsa, because no audience would ever believe in her trusting nature. Thus, Morice continues to manipulate illusion and reality.

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER?

Elsa and her children, who have aged two years, reappear in *Getting Away with Murder?* (1984). Once again Tessa is invited to visit them at their home, Sowerly Grange, near Storhampton, Oxfordshire. Gregory Laycock proves to be one of Morice's least sympathetic murderers. His daughter, Andrea, seems initially to be an insensitive friend of Marcus, but actually, she suffers from emotional abuse perpetrated by her father. Realizing that his guilt has been discovered, he commits suicide, a typical response for Morice's murderers. They seldom remain at the conclusion to be judged, reflecting Morice's opinion that the repeal of capital punishment has taken "the bite" from crime stories.

DEAD ON CUE

Dead on Cue (1985) typifies the distinctive quality of Morice's work. As Robin and Tessa are returning home from "one of the most disastrous first nights in theatrical history," he informs her of his invitation to speak at the Alibi Club, a group of outstanding mystery writers. Thus begins a metamystery in which linguistic peculiarities identify the murderer. The members of the club revel in their eccentricity. Tessa describes red-haired Myrtle Sprygge: "Had she been auditioning for the part of Cleopatra's grandmother during a stormy period of her life, she would have got it without opening her mouth." Before her murder, Myrtle reveals that she has sent a script to a fellow Alibi Club member, the now-deceased William Montgomerie, a playwright whom Tessa has admired. The script has not been seen, according to Montgomerie's second wife, Gwen, and his longtime secretary, Joyce Harmon. When Tessa receives a play entitled *Loop-holes* to consider, she recognizes it as Myrtle's.

Part of the plot concerns the study of a text to identify authorship. Nigel Banks, the president of the Alibi Club, exhibits that eccentricity Morice bestows on her author characters. When Tessa encounters him in a bookstore furtively rearranging his books to display them better to the buying public, he dispels her opinion that he is either an indignant or a furious fox. He reveals psychological insight with his description of Joyce:

"She picks up things most people wouldn't notice. Trouble with Joyce, though, is that she's gone through life with blinkers on. Hasn't much awareness of what's going on in the world outside. It sometimes leads her into false conclusions."

Nigel's comment causes Tessa to reevaluate the seemingly shy and ineffectual secretary. Such an analysis applies to many of Morice's murderers, who display an arrested emotional development.

Joyce, who admits that she is a liar, exhibits an unusual speech style. Tessa realizes that Joyce begins a conversation by using words that convey the opposite of her intention. When she lies, she articulates fluently. With an actress's sensitivity to speech patterns, Tessa suspects Joyce's duplicity. Moreover, Joyce's habit of tapping her fingers as "a sort of offering to the jealous gods" does seem suspicious. A chance reading of a women's magazine article on making ice sculptures provides Tessa with another clue. Her skill in synthesizing various clues to solve the mystery is foreshadowed by her admission that she is "a dedicated student of psychology" and a reader of mysteries. Although she attempts to poison Tessa, Joyce remains a poignant murderess, less a hypocrite than those who have committed no legal crime.

Throughout the series Tessa comments on the relationship between the author and the created work. She evinces surprise that Bockmer, the new member being inducted into the Alibi Club, is an "insignificant, comically shy man." Perhaps she speaks for Morice when she suggests that "the profession he had so wisely chosen enabled him to act out his secret fantasies during every minute of his working life and thereby earn enough money to carry on doing so."

Beatrice Christiana Birchak

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TESSA CRICHTON PRICE SERIES: *Death in the Grand Manor*, 1970; *Death of a Gay Dog*, 1971; *Murder in Married Life*, 1971; *Murder on French Leave*, 1972; *Death and the Dutiful Daughter*, 1973; *Death of a Heavenly Twin*, 1974; *Killing with Kindness*, 1974; *Nursery Tea and Poison*, 1975; *Death of a Wedding Guest*, 1976; *Murder in Mimicry*, 1977; *Scared to Death*, 1977; *Murder by Proxy*, 1978; *Murder in Outline*, 1979; *Death in the Round*, 1980; *The Men in Her Death*, 1981; *Hollow Vengeance*, 1982; *Sleep of Death*, 1982; *Getting Away with Murder?*, 1984 (also known as *Murder Post-Dated*); *Dead on Cue*, 1985; *Publish and Be Killed*, 1986; *Treble Exposure*, 1987

NONSERIES NOVEL: *Design for Dying*, 1988

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS SHAW): *The Happy Exiles*, 1956; *Sun Trap*, 1958

PLAY: *Dummy Run*, 1977

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tery, edited by Jane S. Bakerman. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. Study of the life and work of Morice, who is discussed alongside Patricia Highsmith and Daphne du Maurier, among other famous "women of mystery."

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay on Morice detailing her life and works.

Library Journal. Review of *Getting Away with Murder?* by Anne Morice. 110, no. 1 (January 1, 1985): 105. Reviewer finds this Tessa Crichton series novel about a two-year-old murder to be well-written but somewhat slow.

_____. Review of *Murder in Mimicry*, by Anne Morice. 102, no. 9 (May 1, 1977): 1047. Review of a Tess Crichton series novel that finds the actress in Washington, D.C., is described as entertaining and fun.

Morice, Anne. Interview. *The Mystery FANcier* 6 (November/December, 1982): 5-8. Brief but revealing interview with the author, discussing her mysteries and her approach to writing.

DAVID MORRELL

Born: Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; April 24, 1943

Types of plot: Thriller; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rambo, 1972-

Saul Grisman and Drew MacLane, 1984-

Frank Balenger, 2005-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN RAMBO is described in *First Blood* (1972), but most people probably see him as the actor Sylvester Stallone, who played him in three films (1982, 1985, 1988). Rambo's mother died early; his father was an abusive alcoholic. The boy was often hungry

and quit school to work. Later, Rambo fought in the Vietnam War as a Green Beret and won the Medal of Honor but was tortured as a prisoner of war and left psychologically scarred. Rambo's popular characterization owes much to the films, although expanded novelizations were created for the second and third films.

SAUL GRISMAN is an orphan, who along with his friend Chris Kilmoonie is befriended by Eliot, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative. Eliot trains them as operatives but later tries to murder them. Chris is killed; Saul goes after Eliot for revenge.

DREW MACLANE is a former assassin living in a monastery when his past returns to threaten him. Saul

and Drew join forces to uncover a conspiracy that punishes sons for their fathers' sins.

FRANK BALENGER fought in Operation Desert Storm as a member of the Army Rangers. He suffered Gulf War syndrome and left the army to become a police detective. His wife, Diane, disappeared, and Balenger lost his job because he was searching for her. To earn money for his search, Balenger took a corporate security job in Iraq after the Gulf War but was captured and tortured. After his rescue, he returned to the United States and was treated for post-traumatic stress disorder.

CONTRIBUTION

David Morrell is often considered the father of the modern action thriller. He revels in that identification, and action sequences are clearly his greatest strength. His novels set a relentless pace and are filled with chase scenes, violent confrontations, and a large body count. Morrell continually tries to speed the pacing of his novels. His prose, especially since the mid-1990's, has been stripped to the bare essentials to keep the story moving. His chapters are short and often end with cliffhangers. Morrell's success with action novels has helped usher in an age of hyper-fast thrillers that make the spy novels of the 1980's look slow.

Morrell's works are generally not acclaimed by literary critics, as is typical of plot-driven novels, but his books consistently make best-seller lists and his readers are enthusiastic. It is telling that when thriller writers started organizing themselves, they immediately invited Morrell to help. He sat on the steering committee that formed the International Thriller Writers and was elected copresident. Within that community, his work is highly regarded.

BIOGRAPHY

David Bernard Morrell had a troubled childhood. His father, George Morrell, flew with the Royal Air Force in World War II but was wounded and died of pneumonia shortly after David's birth. His mother, Beatrice Markle Morrell, who struggled financially and had her own troubled childhood, temporarily put David in an orphanage when he was four. Morrell has wondered if the woman who retrieved him was the

same one who had left him. Morrell's mother then placed David on a Mennonite farm while she worked, seeing him only on weekends.

Morrell's mother eventually remarried and brought him to live with her and her new husband above a bar. His stepfather was always arguing with his mother, however, and provided a poor father figure. Morrell often slept under his bed out of fear. The family had no television or telephone. Neither his mother nor his stepfather read much, so there were few books in the home. For entertainment, Morrell listened to the radio, explored abandoned buildings, and watched drunks fight beneath his window.

After their finances improved, the family moved to suburbia. Morrell treated school as a distraction, spending his time playing pool, running with street gangs, or watching television and films. Morrell's life changed in 1960 when the television series *Route 66* (1960-1964) aired. Stirling Silliphant wrote most of the show's episodes, and Morrell found himself stimulated emotionally and intellectually by the stories. In the eleventh grade at the time, Morrell decided to become a writer. He wrote Silliphant about his plans, and Silliphant wrote back with encouragement. If it had not been for that letter, Morrell claims he never would have attended college.

Morrell married his high-school sweetheart, Donna Maziarz, in 1965. He was in college in Canada at the time, and he read a book on Ernest Hemingway by the scholar Philip Young. Young taught at Pennsylvania State University, and Morrell, his wife, and newborn daughter, Sarie, moved to the United States in 1966. Morrell became Young's student, eventually earning a master's degree and a doctorate in American literature. At Penn State, Morrell met the noted science-fiction writer Philip Klass (who wrote as William Tenn). Morrell persistently pursued Klass's help with his fiction, and after a time, the older writer agreed and gave him some personal instruction. Because of this, Morrell began reading popular suspense fiction for the first time, and his writing took on more immediacy. This culminated in the publication of *First Blood* in 1972.

After earning his doctorate in 1970, Morrell began teaching at the University of Iowa. He wrote fiction and taught literature for sixteen years, acquiring ten-

ure and full professorship, but retired in 1986 to write full time. Unfortunately, Morrell's son, Matthew, died in 1987 at the age of fifteen of complications from bone cancer, and it was several years before Morrell recovered his ability to write fiction. Morrell chronicled Matthew's death in *Fireflies: A Father's Tale of Love and Loss* (1988). In 1992, Morrell moved with his wife to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he regained his momentum as a writer.

Morrell is cofounder and copresident of the International Thriller Writers. He has trained in weapon tactics, wilderness survival, defensive driving, and other skills that he portrays in his books. He received a Distinguished Recognition Award for *First Blood* and has twice won the Bram Stoker Award for shorter fiction. His *Creepers* (2005) tied for the Stoker Award for best novel.

ANALYSIS

The three most important elements of David Morrell's work are his focus on thrillers, his early themes (before his son's death), and his later themes (after). Morrell takes the role of thriller writer seriously. He never apologizes for writing to excite and entertain readers. Action is at the core of his work, but his books also examine specific ideas that Morrell finds interesting. *Creepers* introduced readers to urban exploration, where people venture into storm drains, abandoned subway lines, and derelict buildings in search of the past. *Scavenger* (2007) wove information about time capsules and virtual reality into the action scenes.

Because of the thriller's pace, Morrell's characters are typically sketched quickly and in broad terms. He is sometimes criticized for creating shallow characters. There are certainly commonalities among his characters. Frank Balenger was created for *Creepers* and *Scavenger*; two of Morrell's later books, but is remarkably similar to Rambo, from his first novel. Both Balenger and Rambo were in the military special forces. Both experienced the trauma of war, and both suffered capture and torture by enemies. In fact, almost all of Morrell's characters are either former members of special forces, spies, or assassins, and though Morrell was never in the military, his characters follow a military-style code that demands honor, loyalty, courage, and

self-sacrifice. After moving to Santa Fe in 1992, however, Morrell began introducing more mature male/female relationships into his work.

Before his son's death in 1987, Morrell's primary themes seemed to be fear, especially of war and violence; security and its loss; a son's search for his father; religion; and personal identity. These themes were a natural result of his own childhood. He feared abandonment because his mother had already left him once. He feared war because the father he never knew died in one, and he feared violence because he saw it on the streets and experienced it through countless arguments between his mother and stepfather. He also desperately craved a father and was envious of friends who had fathers. His search for a father led him to strong men who significantly affected his life, including Silliphant, Young, and Klass. His Roman Catholic upbringing led him to create a significant number of Catholic characters, including Rambo, and his curiosity and confusion over his own history led to a crisis of personal identity that informs many of his works.

Many of Morrell's early themes continued in the second half of his career, after his son's death, but these themes were often altered slightly, and new themes were added. Fear and violence continued to play major roles in his work, perhaps best illustrated in *The Protector* (2003), which features a chemical that can literally frighten people to death. Morrell's interest in the nature of personal identity also continued, in such books as *Assumed Identity* (1993), in which a retired intelligence agent is confused about his real identity after years of assuming the identities of others. Morrell's interest in security followed him into the 1990's and beyond, but the focus became less about personal security and more about family security. In *First Blood*, Rambo has to take care of only himself, and his personal security begins and ends with his individual skills. In contrast, in *The Protector*, the security agent hero depends on a team, and when that team is destroyed, he turns to his wife.

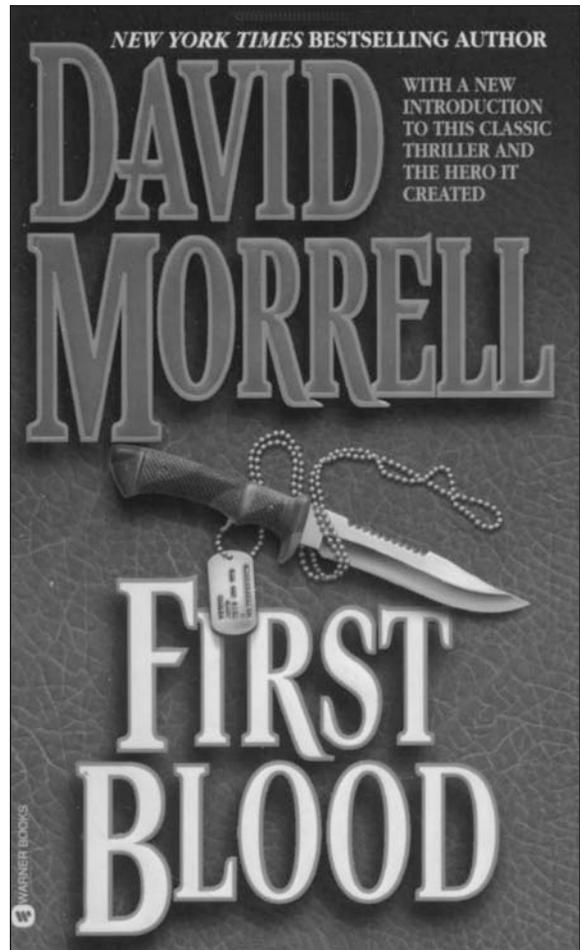
Morrell's father/son theme changed dramatically after his own son's death. In his early period, Morrell wrote about sons searching for fathers. In *Blood Oath* (1982), Morrell's most autobiographical work, an American professor journeys to France to find the

grave of his father, who was killed in World War II. Orphans searching for fathers are major characters in the trilogy that begins with *The Brotherhood of the Rose* (1984). After his son's death, however, Morrell became a grief-stricken father searching for a son. Morrell had planned a sequel to *The League of Night and Fog* (1987, the third book in the trilogy) that would continue the theme of sons seeking fathers, but he could no longer identify with such characters after the loss of his own boy. Instead, he began using fiction to recover something of his son, which played out dramatically in *Desperate Measures* (1994), a book whose main character has lost a son to bone cancer.

A theme that largely faded away during the second half of Morrell's career was his fascination with religious concepts. Although early books like the Grisman and MacLane novels all dealt with religion and religious institutions, after his son's death, only *The Covenant of the Flame* (1991) did so, and it is considered one of his weaker books. Morrell's feelings on religion are discussed in *Fireflies*. In contrast, a theme that intensifies dramatically in Morrell's post-1987 work is his concern over how humans damage the environment. In *The Covenant of the Flame*, for example, a religious group protects the environment by brutally slaughtering anyone who seriously harms it. Morrell received hate mail from nonenvironmentalists over this book. *The Covenant of the Flame* brought environmental concerns to the forefront in Morrell's work, and most of his later books touch on the subject. In *Creepers*, the theme of environmental decay and destruction is particularly strong. One notable theme that does not appear often in Morrell's work is humor, although it shows up in short stories such as "The Partnership" and "The Storm."

FIRST BLOOD

In *First Blood*, the novel on which the series of films starring Sylvester Stallone was based, Vietnam veteran and Green Beret John Rambo has returned to the United States. He is hitchhiking across the country when his rough appearance draws the attention of Wilfred Teasle, a local police chief in Kentucky. Escorted out of town, Rambo returns, and when a deputy tries to cut his hair and give him a shave, the veteran retaliates and escapes. This leads to a chase through



the mountains of Kentucky and the ultimate face-off between Teasle and Rambo. Returning Vietnam veterans, who were not greeted warmly by the public, saw something of themselves in Rambo. The success of the 1982 film based on this novel led to Morrell's writing two sequels.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSE

The Brotherhood of the Rose was Morrell's first large-scale novel. It had more characters than his previous books and a more complicated plot involving international intrigue. The initial book in a trilogy, it illustrates most of Morrell's early themes. Saul Grisman, a Jew, and Chris Kilmoonie, a Roman Catholic, are raised in a Philadelphia orphanage. They are befriended by an older CIA operative named Eliot, who becomes like a foster father to the boys and trains them

as assassins but later tries to incriminate and kill them to protect himself from his own mistakes. Chris is killed but Saul survives and seeks revenge. This novel contains the themes of sons searching for fathers, fear of abandonment and betrayal, religion, and the code of honor and self-sacrifice that forms the backbone of a Morrell hero.

FIREFLIES

Although not a thriller, *Fireflies* is essential for understanding Morrell as a writer, particularly how his themes altered midway in his career. *Fireflies* is a memoir of his son's death. Fifteen-year-old Matthew died of a heart attack triggered by septic shock as a result of a bone marrow transplant to treat his bone cancer. However, *Fireflies* is not completely factual. Morrell fictionalized part of the account, having himself experience a nightmare/premonition about how Matthew would die and then try to prevent it. According to Morrell, however, the book accurately presents the emotional turmoil surrounding Matthew's death, and it reveals actual experiences that convinced Morrell his son's spirit survived. *Fireflies* is an emotionally wrenching read.

THE PROTECTOR

In *The Protector*, the protagonist Cavanaugh was in Delta Force, the U.S. Army counterterrorism special forces unit, for five years. Having become addicted to adrenaline, he becomes a security agent for high-profile celebrities and businessmen. He and his team try to help Prescott, a brilliant biochemist, disappear, but Prescott has invented a chemical that triggers intense fear, and after using Cavanaugh's team, Prescott turns on them, killing all but Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh must then learn to depend on his wife, Jamie, as he pursues Prescott across the country with rogue government agents hunting them all. *The Protector* is absolutely action-filled and features Morrell's prototypical hero, a former special forces soldier with a rough childhood. The book examines Morrell's themes of loss and betrayal, security, and identity.

Charles A. Gramlich

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RAMBO SERIES: *First Blood*, 1972; *Rambo (First Blood Part II)*, 1985; *Rambo III*, 1988

SAUL GRISMAN AND DREW MACLANE SERIES: *The Brotherhood of the Rose*, 1984; *The Fraternity of the Stone*, 1985; *The League of Night and Fog*, 1987

FRANK BALENGER SERIES: *Creepers*, 2005; *Scavenger*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Testament*, 1975; *Blood Oath*, 1982; *The Fifth Profession*, 1990; *The Covenant of the Flame*, 1991; *Assumed Identity*, 1993; *Desperate Measures*, 1994; *Extreme Denial*, 1996; *Double Image*, 1998; *Burnt Sienna*, 2000; *Long Lost*, 2002; *The Protector*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Last Reveille*, 1977; *The Totem*, 1979; *The Totem*, 1994 (complete and unaltered)

SHORT FICTION: *Black Evening*, 1999; *Night-scape*, 2004

NONFICTION: *John Barth: An Introduction*, 1976; *Fireflies: A Father's Tale of Love and Loss*, 1988; *Lessons from a Lifetime of Writing: A Novelist Looks at His Craft*, 2002

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Hundred-Year Christmas*, 1983 (with R. J. Krupowicz)

EDITED TEXTS: *American Fiction*, *American Myth: Essays by Philip Young*, 2000 (with others)

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Faludi, Susan. *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000. Contains a section focusing on *First Blood* and on Morrell's father/son theme.

Morrell, David. *Black Evening*. New York: Warner Books, 1999. A collection of Morrell's stories, each with a personal introduction by the author. These contain a wealth of biographical information.

_____. *The David Morrell Network*. <http://www.davidmorrell.net>. Morrell's official Web site. Good resource with considerable biographical information. Allows readers to e-mail questions to Morrell.

_____. *Fireflies: A Father's Tale of Love and Loss*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988. This book on the death of Morrell's son reveals why the author's themes changed in midcareer.

_____. *Lessons from a Lifetime of Writing*. Cin-

cinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2002. The best work for understanding how Morrell writes. Has chapters on plot, characters, research, viewpoint, the writing business, and the Rambo films. Contains considerable biographical material.

_____. *Nightscape*. London: Headline Book Publishing, 2004. A short-story collection with personal, often biographical, story introductions by Morrell. The general introduction has information about Morrell's mother that is seldom seen elsewhere.

ARTHUR MORRISON

Born: Poplar, England; November 1, 1863

Died: Chalfont St. Peter, England; December 4, 1945

Type of plot: Private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Martin Hewitt, 1894-1903

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

MARTIN HEWITT, a private investigator, had been a law clerk, but his genial ways, powers of observation, and general acumen proved so useful in solving a crime in which his firm was interested that he decided to go into private investigative work on his own. Hewitt, a bachelor, remains in his middle years throughout the series. A corpulent, sociable type, Hewitt applies his formidable powers of reasoning to the information that he obtains by exercising his ability to charm.

CONTRIBUTION

Arthur Morrison's numerous tales of detection, including four volumes of Martin Hewitt stories, helped to create a transition between Sherlock Holmes and later hard-boiled detectives. Critics generally see Morrison's Hewitt as a more realistic and therefore believable offshoot of the Sherlock Holmes character, devoid of the Holmesian eccentricity and imperiousness that mar the sleuths of Morrison's competitors, such as Jacques Futrelle.

Beyond merely recounting processes of detection, Morrison offers reflective commentary on working-class dilemmas and other issues with political implications. His nondetective fiction, such as *Tales of Mean*

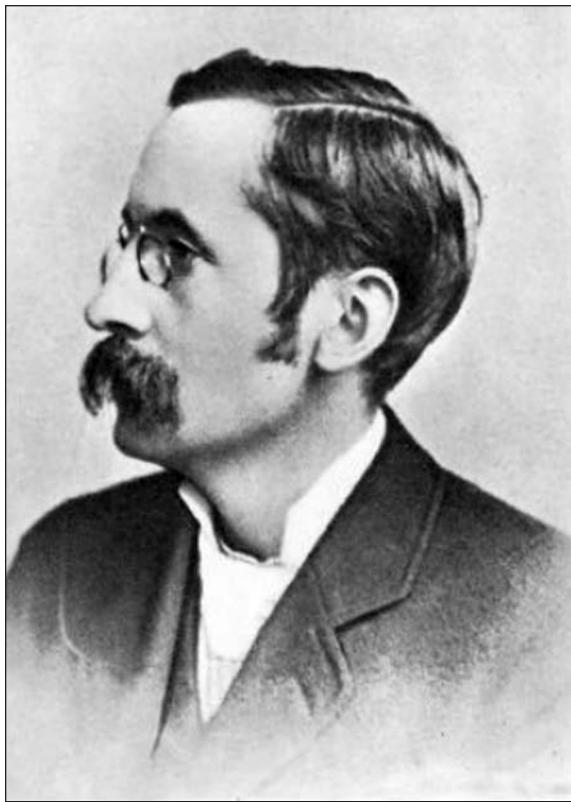
Streets (1894) and *A Child of the Jago* (1896), often focuses on themes of class struggle.

BIOGRAPHY

Arthur Morrison was born on November 1, 1863, in Poplar, England, the son of an engine fitter. Morrison seems to have desired to sever his working-class connections, for as an adult he referred to his father as a professional and asserted that he had been born in Kent, though his birth certificate indicates otherwise. His humble origins influenced him deeply; as he grew, he became a stalwart champion of talent and upward mobility as opposed to the stratification of class.

At the age of twenty-three, Morrison became a clerk for the Beaumont Trustees, a charitable organization, in the administration of the People's Palace, a social improvement facility in the East End. Here his principal interest was in cultural activities—musical performances, debates and lectures, and club and society meetings. He became a subeditor of the *Palace Journal* and wrote articles on sports and other subjects for various periodicals. In 1890, he began working as a freelance journalist. He was married to Elizabeth Thatcher, whom he had met at the People's Palace. In 1893, a son, Guy, was born to them.

In the process of becoming established as a writer, Morrison embarked on a study of the occult, which resulted in *The Shadows Around Us: Authentic Tales of the Supernatural*, published in 1891. That same year, his article describing the respectable monotony of a street in the East End aroused the interest of W. E. Henley, editor of the *National Observer*, who encouraged Morrison to continue documenting the realities



Arthur Morrison.

of working-class life. Thus, Morrison was set on the strange course of earning his living by exploring in print a background that embarrassed him and that he had desired to conceal: He became known as a working-class realist. *A Child of the Jago* has been credited with influencing public opinion in favor of slum clearance legislation.

Morrison's venture into detective fiction began after Arthur Conan Doyle shocked his readership—as well as his editors—by sending Holmes and Professor Moriarty over the Reichenbach Falls in 1893. The genre provided Morrison with the opportunity to challenge his intellect while simultaneously making use of his knowledge of crime and poverty. The first Martin Hewitt story appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in March, 1894.

Beginning in about 1895, Morrison devoted much energy to what became his chief love: the collecting of fine Asian art. In 1911, he published a two-volume study on the subject: *The Painters of Japan*. Soon, he had left journalism behind entirely and was able to

support his family from his work as an art dealer.

On her husband's death in 1945, Elizabeth Morrison, in accordance with his wishes, consigned all of his manuscripts, papers, and notebooks to the fire.

ANALYSIS

As might be expected of a writer from a working-class background, Arthur Morrison made extensive use of characters from the laboring class and lower middle class; he extended this fascination with the underdog to anguished members of the professional and aristocratic classes. He frequently subordinated the subject of murder to the subject of theft, which is uppermost in the minds of those who have had relatively little at one time. "The Case of the Dixon Torpedo," an early story, concerns the trials of an engineer, F. Graham Dixon, whose career may go under because of the theft of his plans for a torpedo in which the government has great interest. Claridge and Woollett, jewelers in "The Stanway Cameo Mystery," fall prey to guilt arising from the foisting on Claridge of a fake cameo by a confidence man. In "The Holford Will Case," an elderly lawyer, assigned as an estate executor, is befuddled by the theft of his friend Holford's will and the resulting threat to the main legatee's financial security. It is Morrison's working-class tales, however, that seem to have originated in the author's strongest feelings and evoke his reader's strongest sympathy for Morrison's hapless victims.

"THE CASE OF MR. FOGGATT"

In "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," Sidney Mason, the murderer of his father's enemy, Foggatt, is a rising young barrister whose athletic injuries give him away to Hewitt, who is seeking a culprit with a tall, athletic build. Hewitt has seen Mason before around the premises of the crime, since Foggatt, Hewitt, and the narrator, Mr. Brett, occupy chambers in the same building. The sleuth also has found marks of jagged teeth in an apple in Foggatt's apartment. In a restaurant, Hewitt, with Brett, engages Mason in a conversation about cycling. Cycling is the sport into which Mason had been led by the conditions of poverty in which he and his mother lived after the tragic death of his father. Hewitt has spotted Mason in the restaurant by the stooping posture characteristic of a cyclist. In a discus-



Detective Martin Hewitt looks for clues in a cemetery in Arthur Morrison's story "The Quinton Jewel Affair." The illustration is by Sidney Paget, who also illustrated Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories for The Strand Magazine.

sion about cycling champions of old, Mason then begins to detail his racing injuries. He exhibits

a neat gold medal that hung at his watch-guard. That was won, he explained, in the old tall bicycle days, the days of bad tracks, when every racing cyclist carried cinder scars on his face from numerous accidents. He pointed to a blue mark on his forehead, which, he told us, was a track scar, and described a bad fall that had cost him two teeth and broken others. The gaps among his teeth were plain to see as he smiled.

While the young man is addressing the waiter, Hewitt steals Mason's apple after he has bitten into it. The indentations in the fresh apple prove to match perfectly the indentations in the plaster cast Hewitt had taken from the first apple. When Mason turns back and discovers that his apple is missing, his suspicions are aroused. He already knows of Hewitt as a successful, relentless, and resourceful detective, but he has believed until now that Hewitt had no interest in the Foggatt case because of the detective's silence at the inquest.

The more important question is, however, what does Hewitt know of Mason? The latter is described as

"a rather fine-looking fellow, with a dark though very clear skin, [who] had a hard, angry look of eye, a prominence of cheek-bone, and a squareness of jaw that gave him a rather uninviting aspect." These signs of the stubbornness and distrustful nature of one who has been forced to make his own way in the world combine with the scars of the sporting tough, a role from which Mason has dissociated himself only after a struggle. What of Foggatt, the reclusive gentleman whom Mason murdered to avenge the evil done to his father? A connoisseur of fine paintings and champagne, Foggatt, "fat as he was . . . had a way of carrying his head forward on his extended neck and gazing widely about with a pair of the

roundest and most prominent eyes" Brett had ever seen, "except in a fish." Hewitt has ready sympathy for Mason, whose social climb parallels his own, and he recognizes in Foggatt the type of the wily predator who can hide himself in the urban sprawl with not even his name on the building directory.

"THE QUINTON JEWEL AFFAIR"

In "The Quinton Jewel Affair," a true lower-class type, the Irishman Mick Leamy, serves as a pathetic pawn, the patsy for Wilks, a jewel thief, who is attempting to withhold a ruby, the chief prize taken in a recent heist, from his boss, Hollams. Unwittingly, poor Leamy is made a bagman decoy by Wilks and is repeatedly savaged by Hollams's gang as they try to recapture the gem. In Leamy, who seeks Hewitt's "protecshin," Morrison achieves an authentic representation of the shanty Irish Londoner of his day.

"THE CASE OF LAKER, ABSCONDED"

Charles William Laker, a character in "The Case of Laker, Absconded," is a walk-clerk, carrying financial papers from bank to bank. He disappears, and with him disappears his wallet, which contains bills and cash totaling more than fifteen thousand pounds. Us-

ing an assortment of clues, including an umbrella, a reconstructed code message in a newspaper advertisement, and a distinctive bank doorman's jacket, Hewitt unearths the missing Laker, who has not absconded at all but has been imprisoned in the basement of a condemned building by a gang, one of whose members, impersonating Laker, has carried off the securities.

"THE LOSS OF SAMMY CROCKETT"

In "The Loss of Sammy Crockett," Sammy, an English counterpart to Mick Leamy, is lured by his unfaithful girlfriend into the hands of Danby, a bookmaker and archrival of Sammy's promoter, Kentish, who stands to lose much by Sammy's absence from the championship footraces. One of Morrison's most poignant scenes is the picture of Sammy in the basement in which he is held captive, cold and vulnerable in his track shorts. The language of such characters as Kentish and Sammy's trainer, Raggy Steggles, who aids Danby's plot, brings realism to the story.

"THE CASE OF THE MISSING HAND"

The shade of terror evoked in Sammy's story deepens considerably in Morrison's stories of superstition and the occult, such as "The Case of the Missing Hand." In this tale, Jonas Sneathy, an evil schemer come to a ruinous end, hangs himself. His death is blamed on his stepsons, who have threatened him many times for brutalizing their mother. An especially chilling feature of this case is the fact that a hand is missing from the corpse. Questioning Gypsies in the woods where the corpse was discovered, Hewitt, who is conversant in Romany, locates within the band the man who took the hand from the corpse. His intention had been to use it in an occult ceremony supposed to ensure a successful thief's hand in breaking and entering.

THE RED TRIANGLE

The specter of totalitarian rule looms in the figures of Rameau in "The Affair of the Tortoise" and of Everard Myatt in the remaining stories of *The Red Triangle: Being Some Further Chronicles of Martin Hewitt, Investigator* (1903). All these stories are set in the Caribbean. In "The Case of the Lost Foreigner," however, Morrison's villain is not a malevolent swindler but the threat of anarchism, an ominous cloud over Europe.

Morrison's real emphasis, however, is on little people, the victims and pawns of evil power. Morrison's

sympathies extend to protecting the fortunes and freedoms of Mrs. Sneathy and her sons, who have been treated abominably by Sneathy. The diminutive odd-jobman Victor Goujon is no match for the towering Rameau, nor is Gerard, tortured by the anarchist mob who will not let him renege on their plot, any match for the cruel machinations of the Bakunin Club. They can turn for assistance, however, to the affable but vigilant Martin Hewitt. Hewitt is an alter ego of Morrison himself, righting in fiction some of the wrongs that Morrison saw all about him in the London he knew so well.

Frederick Rankin MacFadden, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MARTIN HEWITT SERIES: *Martin Hewitt: Investigator*, 1894; *Chronicles of Martin Hewitt*, 1895; *Adventures of Martin Hewitt: Third Series*, 1896; *The Red Triangle: Being Some Further Chronicles of Martin Hewitt, Investigator*, 1903

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The Hole in the Wall*, 1902

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Dorrington Deed-Box*, 1897; *The Green Eye of Goona: Stories of a Case of Tokay*, 1904 (also known as *The Green Diamond*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Child of the Jago*, 1896; *To London Town*, 1899; *Cunning Murrell*, 1900

SHORT FICTION: *Tales of Mean Streets*, 1894; *Zig-Zags at the Zoo*, 1894; *Divers Vanities*, 1905; *Green Ginger*, 1909; *Fiddle O'Dreams*, 1933

PLAYS: *That Brute Simmons*, pr. 1904 (with Herbert C. Sargent); *A Stroke of Business*, pr. 1907 (with Horace Newte); *The Dumb-Cake*, pr. 1907 (with Richard Pryce)

NONFICTION: *The Shadows Around Us: Authentic Tales of the Supernatural*, 1891; *The Painters of Japan*, 1911

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between Victorian and Edwardian culture.

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Haycraft, Howard, ed. *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Reprint. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1983. Massive compendium of essays exploring all aspects of the mystery writer's craft. Sheds light on Morrison's writings.

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Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. This tightly focused reading of fifteen years of British detective fiction is useful for understanding the transitional nature of Morrison's work.

Pritchett, V. S. "An East End Novelist." In *The Living Novel and Later Appreciations*. Rev. ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Profile and critical study of Morrison.

Swafford, Kevin. *Class in Late-Victorian Britain: The Narrative Concern with Social Hierarchy and Its Representation*. Youngstown, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2007. Includes a chapter comparing the representation of the slums in Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* to that in W. Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*.

JOHN MORTIMER

Born: London, England; April 21, 1923

Also wrote as Geoffrey Lincoln

Types of plot: Courtroom drama; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rumpole of the Bailey, 1978-

Under the Hammer, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HORACE RUMPOLE spends much of his time as a London barrister representing petty criminals and the underprivileged, people scorned by his law chambers colleagues. Refusing to kowtow to the privileged, such as judges and other of society's elites, Rumpole has never "taken silk" (risen to the rank of Queen's Counsel) but regularly outsmarts those who theoretically are his betters. He is somewhat less successful besting his wife, Hilda, who has tried vainly for years to advance his position in the legal hierarchy and to whom he secretly refers as She Who Must Be Obeyed.

BEN GLAZIER, almost sixty, and MAGGIE PEROWNE, about thirty, work for the London branch of Klinsky's international auction firm, he as an art ex-

pert and she as head of the Old Masters department. Although Glazier would like a closer relationship, the two are just close friends. They work together to authenticate art objects that come to Klinsky's, searching the art underground and its byways in England and abroad. Not all their cases involve uncovering criminal behavior. Occasionally, they let their enthusiasm and suspicions involve them in futile chases after nonexistent crimes.

CONTRIBUTION

John Mortimer has created in Horace Rumpole a character who stands apart from other memorable fictional detectives—Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Peter Wimsey—because he is more than just a brilliant and resourceful solver of mysteries. Though a self-described Old Bailey hack, he has such keen legal and ratiocinative skills that he is an effective advocate and exceptional courtroom presence. His sympathetic understanding of people, strong social conscience, and disdain for empty pomp and circumstance inform not only his legal work but also his jousts with colleagues, politicians, and other members of the establishment.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

John Mortimer in 1996. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Within a format combining mystery and humor, Mortimer presents an insider's view of the British legal system, notably its hypocritical barristers and biased, sometimes ignorant, judges. Iconoclast and nonconformist Rumpole often seems to be tilting at windmills, but his frequently successful struggles on behalf of society's outsiders and oppressed imbue these comic mysteries with a thematic substance rare in genre fiction. The recurring cast of characters—the Timsons, whose generations of petty criminals have helped support Rumpole over the years; his second-rate colleague Claude Erskine-Brown; the bemused head of chambers Soapy Sam Ballard; a parade of injudicious judges; and Rumpole's somewhat shrewish wife, Hilda—creates a perfect backdrop for Mortimer's social and legal satire, as compelling as the courtroom scenes that are the climax of every Rumpole story and novel.

BIOGRAPHY

John Clifford Mortimer was born in London on April 23, 1923, the only child of Kathleen May Smith Mortimer and Clifford Mortimer, a barrister, and was educated at Harrow and Brasenose College, Oxford. Because of weak eyesight, he was exempt from World War II military service and instead made documentaries and training films with the Crown Film Unit. His first novel, *Charade* (1947), is based on this experience.

In 1948, Mortimer began practicing law in London as a barrister in divorce cases. The following year he married novelist Penelope Fletcher; they divorced in 1972, and he married Penelope Gollop. He has two children from each marriage. After becoming Queen's Counsel in 1966, he specialized in criminal law, often arguing for the defense in censorship cases, and partly

through his efforts, the Lord Chamberlain's authority to censor plays was abolished in 1968. Mortimer pursued two careers, law and literary, until he retired from the former in 1986 to write full time.

Having written six novels by 1954, the next year he turned to a different genre, the radio play, adapting his 1953 novel *Like Men Betrayed*. His first original drama for radio, *The Dock Brief* (1957), won the Italia Prize in 1958, the year he debuted as a stage dramatist with a double bill including a revised *The Dock Brief* and *What Shall We Tell Caroline?*, his first original stage play. Over the next two decades, he wrote radio plays as well as original scripts and adaptations for motion pictures and television, but he did his most important work for the stage, primarily comedies of manners and sex farces. The autobiographical *A Voyage Round My Father* (1970) is his major play, and he adapted it for television in 1982. Though he continued to do stage adaptations and translations and write a few original plays, starting in the 1980's he focused on other literary forms, including newspaper interviews of public figures and four autobiographical volumes.

In 1978 Mortimer started writing a series of witty detective stories about Horace Rumpole, which he adapted for television and which brought him his greatest popular success; created *Under the Hammer* (1994), a television series and collection of short stories featuring employees of an auction house who become part-time sleuths; and after almost three decades, resumed writing serious novels. Asked by Thames Television for something on post-World War II England, Mortimer decided that instead of adapting a book, he would write his own and then adapt it. The success of both versions of *Paradise Postponed* (1985) led to two sequels, *Titmuss Regained* (1990), again as a novel and television miniseries, and *The Sound of Trumpets* (1998), which satirized 1990's British politics. As in his early novels, these Rapstone Chronicles include mysteries and detection, as do his other non-Rumpole novels since the mid-1980's: *Summer's Lease* (1988), about an English family that rents an Italian villa and becomes consumed by strange circumstances surrounding the absent owner (Mortimer did a four-part television adaptation in 1989); *Dunster* (1992), set both in Italy and in familiar Mortimer milieus: a corporate boardroom, an English country house, and a Lon-

don law court; and *Felix in the Underworld* (1997), whose hero, suspected of murder and charged with fathering an illegitimate son, joins London's street people.

Mortimer has served on the National Theatre Board and the boards of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Royal Court Theatre. He received a knighthood in 1998.

ANALYSIS

John Mortimer, who claims to have been inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tales, has written dozens of humorous detective stories and a few novels featuring Horace Rumpole, who specializes in crime cases—such as shoplifting and petty burglaries—that his colleagues shun. Though his wife frets about his failure to rise to Queen's Counsel, he is satisfied with his lot, perhaps because he usually prevails over his nominal superiors, including judges and Queen's Counsels. Readers quickly become familiar with his rejuvenating visits to Pommeroy's Wine Bar, where he drinks cheap claret; his penchant for small cigars whose ashes cloak his weskit; his love for simple food like steak-and-kidney pie; his habit of quoting from William Shakespeare and William Wordsworth; and his dislike of ceremony.

The stories and novels have multiple plots, professional and personal, the latter either a domestic crisis between the old barrister and his wife or a problem with the courts or a colleague. The personal elements not only entertain and provide filler for an occasionally simple crime plot but also are complementary, offering a different take on the same theme. In addition, they further characterize Rumpole, an unlikely hero who selfishly rescues the reputations and careers of hapless colleagues and whose insight and slyness enable him to shape people and events to his own ends. It is in the courtroom, however, where he really comes alive and is most happy. His advocacy, often on behalf of unworthy clients, does not rely as much on legal knowledge as on detection skills and an ability to judge character, and he is an exemplary cross-examiner. A moral center, sophisticated comic voice, and timeliness are hallmarks of the stories.

Mortimer's vast practical legal experience is obvious throughout, and Rumpole is his creator's spokes-

person on such issues as political correctness, animal rights activism, euthanasia, penal reform, and British politics. Though Mortimer uses a standard template (for easy adaptation to television), he also provides variety. For instance, in *Rumpole à la Carte*, a 1990 collection, the crusty barrister is put in unfamiliar milieus. In the title story, Hilda's expatriate cousin takes them to a three-star restaurant where Rumpole must deal with what he calls the curse of nouvelle cuisine. In "Rumpole at Sea," Hilda books them on a cruise over his objections, Mr. "Miscarriage of Justice" Graves turns out to be a fellow passenger, and these erstwhile adversaries are caught up in a shipboard mystery that the judge bungles but Rumpole solves. In "Rumpole for the Prosecution," as the title reveals, he becomes, for the first time in his career, a prosecuting attorney, and despite his unfamiliarity and unhappiness with the role, he follows his conscience and secures an acquittal of murder for his client. In *Rumpole and the Angel of Death* (1995), Mortimer again departs from his template, which always has had Rumpole as narrator. "Hilda's Story" is in the form of a letter that She Who Must Be Obeyed writes to an old school friend, and "Rumpole and the Rights of Man" takes him to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, where he confronts the reality of an international tribunal taking precedence over decisions of British courts. Of special interest in this 1995 collection is "Rumpole and the Little Boy Lost," one of many stories in the Rumpole canon about the Golden Thread that is central to English law: the presumption of innocence until a fair trial determines otherwise.

RUMPOLE AND THE PENGE BUNGALOW MURDERS

The first full-length Rumpole novel, *Rumpole and the Penge Bungalow Murders* (2004), is about a case (to which Rumpole alludes in previous tales) in the early 1950's in which two World War II heroes were killed, apparently by a son of one of them. Rumpole, an Old Bailey novice and newcomer to the law chambers where he would spend his career, takes on the defense though the incriminating evidence seems overwhelming and others despair of saving their client. He unexpectedly triumphs, becomes an instant star, and marries the boss's daughter.

RUMPOLE AND THE REIGN OF TERROR

Mortimer's tendency to keep pace with the times informs the Rumpole novel *Rumpole and the Reign of Terror* (2006), in which a Pakistani physician in London is suspected of aiding terrorists linked to Al Qaeda, arrested without being specifically charged, and held for trial before a special tribunal that flouts hallowed legal traditions. Balancing this case against a more typical one involving a Timson, Rumpole successfully manages to finesse both, strikes a blow in behalf of the Magna Carta, and regains the respect and devotion of Hilda, who ends a brief dalliance with a judge and reveals to her husband that she too has been writing memoirs.

UNDER THE HAMMER

Less enduring than the Rumpole tales is *Under the Hammer*, a 1993 television series of just six episodes that Mortimer expanded for a collection of short stories published as a Penguin paperback the following year. The episodes revolve about employees of the London branch of Klinsky's auction house, an international conglomerate presided over by a former supermarket magnate. Ben Glazier and Maggie Perowne, art experts at Klinsky's, join forces to check the authenticity of items that come to the firm, becoming involved in escapades that take them not only to aristocrats' homes but also to the criminal underground of London and Moscow. They also must deal with the questionable ethics of coworkers and art-world colleagues. Ben in particular develops a cynicism and iconoclasm similar to that of Rumpole, but lacks a social conscience that would foster action against the system. The stories also have a dollop of romantic adventure and comic relief, as in the Rumpole stories, but the adventures of Ben and Maggie have a pervasive frivolity and focus almost exclusively on people's acquisitiveness and the mega-rich. Absent the social issues that pervade the Rumpole stories, the Klinsky adventures are little more than entertaining capers.

Gerald H. Strauss

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RUMPOLE SERIES: *Rumpole of the Bailey*, 1978; *The Trials of Rumpole*, 1979; *Rumpole's Return*, 1980; *Regina Rumpole*, 1981; *Rumpole for the Defense*, 1981;

Rumpole and the Golden Thread, 1983; *The First Rumpole Omnibus*, 1983; *The Second Rumpole Omnibus*, 1987; *Rumpole and the Age of Miracles*, 1988; *Rumpole's Last Case*, 1988; *Rumpole à la Carte*, 1990; *Rumpole on Trial*, 1992; *The Best of Rumpole*, 1993; *Rumpole and the Angel of Death*, 1995; *The Third Rumpole Omnibus*, 1997; *Rumpole Rests His Case*, 2001; *Rumpole and the Primrose Path*, 2002; *Rumpole and the Penge Bungalow Murders*, 2004; *Rumpole and the Reign of Terror*, 2006

UNDER THE HAMMER SERIES: *Under the Hammer*, 1994

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Charade*, 1947; *Like Men Betrayed*, 1953; *The Narrowing Stream*, 1954; *Summer's Lease*, 1988; *Dunster*, 1992; *Felix in the Underworld*, 1997

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Rumming Park*, 1948; *Answer Yes or No*, 1950; *Three Winters*, 1956; *Will Shakespeare*, 1977; *Paradise Postponed*, 1985; *Titmuss Regained*, 1990; *The Sound of Trumpets*, 1998; *Where There's a Will*, 2003; *Quite Honestly*, 2005

PLAYS: 1958-1960 • *The Dock Brief*, pr., pb. 1958; *What Shall We Tell Caroline?*, pr., pb. 1958; *I Spy*, pr., pb. 1958; *Call Me a Liar*, pr., pb. 1960; *The Wrong Side of the Park*, pr., pb. 1960; *Lunch Hour*, pr., pb. 1960 (one act); *Lunch Hour, and Other Plays*, pb. 1960

1961-1970 • *Collect Your Hand Baggage*, pb. 1961; *Two Stars for Comfort*, pr., pb. 1962; *A Flea in Her Ear*, pr. 1966 (adaptation of Georges Feydeau's play); *The Judge*, pr., pb. 1967; *Cat Among the Pigeons*, pr. 1969 (adaptation of Feydeau's play); *A Voyage Round My Father*, pr. 1970; *Five Plays*, pb. 1970; *Come as You Are: Four Short Plays*, pr. 1970

1971-1980 • *The Captain of Köpenick*, pr. pb. 1971 (adaptation of Carl Zuckmayer's play); *I, Claudius*, pr. 1972 (adaptation of Robert Graves's novels *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*); *Mill Hill*, pr. 1972; *Collaborators*, pr., pb. 1973; *Heaven and Hell*, pr., 1976 (two one-act plays, *The Prince of Darkness* and *The Fear of Heaven*); *The Bells of Hell*, pr. 1976 (revision of *The Prince of Darkness*); *The Lady from Maxim's*, pr., pb. 1977

1981-2001 • *John Mortimer's Casebook*, pr. 1982 (includes *The Dock Brief*, *The Prince of Darkness*, and *Interlude*); *When That I Was*, pr. 1982; *Edwin*, pr. 1982 (adaptation of John Fowles's story); *Edwin, and Other Plays*, pb. 1984; *A Little Hotel on the Side*, pr. 1984 (adaptation of Feydeau and Maruice Desvalliers' play); *Three Boulevard Farces*, pb. 1985; *Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol,"* pr. 1994; *Hock and Soda Water*, pr., pb. 2001; *Naked Justice*, pr., pb. 2001

RADIO PLAYS: *Like Men Betrayed*, 1955; *No Hero*, 1955; *The Dock Brief*, 1957; *I Spy*, 1957; *Three Winters*, 1958; *Call Me a Liar*, 1958; *A Voyage Round My Father*, 1963; *Personality Split*, 1964; *Education of an Englishman*, 1964; *Mr. Luby's Fear of Heaven*, 1976; *Edwin*, 1982

TELEPLAYS: *David and Broccoli*, 1960; *The Head Waiter*, 1966; *The Exploding Azalea*, 1966; *The Other Side*, 1967; *Desmond*, 1968; *Rumpole of the Bailey*, 1975, 1978, 1979; *Rumpole's Return*, 1980; *Brideshead Revisited*, 1981 (adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's novel); *A Voyage Round My Father*, 1982; *The Ebony Tower*, 1984 (adaptation of John Fowles's story); *Paradise Postponed*, 1986; *Titmuss Regained*, 1991; *Under the Hammer*, 1993; *Cider with Rosie*, 1998; *Don Quixote*, 2000 (adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes novel)

SCREENPLAYS: *Ferry to Hong Kong*, 1959; *The Innocents*, 1961 (with Truman Capote and William Archibald); *I Thank a Fool*, 1962 (with others); *Guns of Darkness*, 1962; *Lunch Hour*, 1962; *The Running Man*, 1963; *Bunny Lake Is Missing*, 1964 (with Penelope Mortimer); *A Flea in Her Ear*, 1967 (adaptation of his play); *John and Mary*, 1969; *Tea with Mussolini*, 1999

NONFICTION: *With Love and Lizards* (with Penelope Mortimer), 1957; *No Moaning of the Bar* (as Lincoln), 1957; *Clinging to the Wreckage: A Part of Life*, 1982; *In Character*, 1983; *Character Parts*, 1986; *Murderers and Other Friends: Another Part of Life*, 1994; *The Summer of a Dormouse*, 2000; *Where There's a Will*, 2003

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tion and the development not only of Rumpole but also of the supportive cast of characters.

Lord, Graham. *John Mortimer—The Devil's Advocate: The Unauthorized Biography*. London: Orion, 2005.

An inclusive biographical study, but emphasizes the negative about Mortimer's personal life, perhaps because he withdrew his support for Lord's project.

Mortimer, John. Interview by Rosemary Herbert. *Paris Review* 30 (Winter, 1988): 96-128. A far-ranging interview covering the span of Mortimer's writing ca-

reer and the impact his legal work has had on it.

_____. "The Man Who Put Rumpole on the Case." Interview by Mel Gussow. *The New York Times*, April 12, 1995, p. C16. An interview with Mortimer that is partly biographical but also deals with the origins of Rumpole stories.

Parker, Ian. "Son of Rumpole." *The New Yorker*, March 20, 1995, 78-86. Based on several visits with Mortimer, this article is an informal review of his life and career that is filled with anecdotes.

WALTER MOSLEY

Born: Los Angeles, California; January 12, 1952

Type of plot: Hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Easy Rawlins, 1990-

Fearless Jones, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

EASY RAWLINS is a black, unlicensed investigator working in the Watts area of Los Angeles. He does most of his work for friends and friends of friends who pay him in friendship and favors. The series begins in the late 1940's after Easy returns from serving in World War II. His struggles with his inner self and the racist society of the mid-twentieth century United States are a significant part of the first-person narratives.

FEARLESS JONES is a black man living in Watts in the 1950's. Fearless relies on his instincts and is not afraid to use violence.

PARIS MINTON, Fearless's friend, is the second-hand bookstore owner who narrates the first-person tales. Paris plays a central role in the series, but Fearless is important to the action and is always the instinctive truth teller.

CONTRIBUTION

In Walter Mosley's first detective series, he presents in Easy Rawlins a thoughtful, powerful African American detective who deals not only with the

crimes and problems of the individuals living in Los Angeles in the mid-twentieth century but also with the racial and social complexities of the time. Paris Minton and Fearless Jones of the second series deal with similar problems and demonstrate the complementary nature of their distinct personalities.

Mosley's rich description and understanding of the black community in Los Angeles at this time reveal a part of the city not depicted by any previous detective writer. Other hard-boiled detective-fiction writers such as Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald set their work in Los Angeles, but none look as deeply and knowingly at the poor of that city and at the Watts area as does Mosley. Mosley's work is most similar to that of Chester Himes in his novel *If He Hollers, Let Him Go* (1945), which deals with racial justice and black alienation in Los Angeles.

Mosley's immediate popular success with the Easy Rawlins series as well as with the more recent Fearless Jones series demonstrates the interest in his subject matter. Mosley's storytelling skills and refusal to offer simple answers to complex questions add to the success of these series.

BIOGRAPHY

Walter Mosley was born in Los Angeles, California, on January 12, 1952, to an African American father and a Jewish mother. Mosley's father, who moved to California from Texas, shared with his son the sto-

ries of African Americans moving from the South to California in the 1930's and 1940's, which became the background for both of Mosley's detective series.

In 1970, Mosley entered Goddard College in Vermont. He dropped out of Goddard but later enrolled at Johnson State College, graduating in 1975 with a degree in political science. He moved to New York City in 1981 and, after working at various jobs, enrolled at City College of New York's writing program in the mid-1980's. He found success with his first novel, *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990), and was nominated for an Edgar Award by the Mystery Writers of America and received a Shamus Award from the Private Eye Writers of America.

Mosley's literary novel *RL's Dream* (1995) was a finalist for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Award in Fiction and won the 1996 Black Caucus of the American Library Association's Literary Award. Mosley won the Anisfield Wolf Award, given to works that increase the appreciation and understanding of race in the United States. His 1996 short story "The Thief," featuring Socrates Fortlow, won an O. Henry Award and is featured in

Prize Stories 1996: The O. Henry Awards (1997). His short fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and other publications.

In 1995, Mosley's first novel was made into the film *Devil in a Blue Dress* starring Denzel Washington, and in 1998, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* (1997) was turned into a Home Box Office (HBO) film starring Lawrence Fishburne.

In 1996, Mosley was named the first artist-in-residence at the Africana Studies Institute, New York University. He has continued to work with that program since his residency, creating the innovative Black Genius lecture series. In 1999, a collection of these lectures, with an introduction and essay by Mosley, was published as *Black Genius: African American Solutions to African American Problems*. In 2005, Mosley received the Nero Award for *Fear Itself* (2003).

ANALYSIS

Walter Mosley uses the detective-fiction genre to write novels about race and poverty in the mid-twentieth century. His style is typical of that of the hard-boiled genre with clean sentences, fast-paced action, and psychological and social realism. The main character in his first series is a man succeeding on the edges of the system. Coming to Los Angeles after being in the service during World War II, Easy Rawlins found work at a factory and bought a small house. He seemed to be living the American Dream, but the racial discrimination of his plant foreman cost him his job and led directly to his new career as a private investigator. Detecting allows him to follow his own standards and goals and to aid others whom the system has failed.

Easy always struggles with using violence during his investigations, but his friend and sometimes partner Mouse reacts instinctively and almost always with the use of force, often deadly. For this reason, Easy is afraid of Mouse but finds himself invariably needing Mouse, almost as if Mouse completes him, suggesting that in the racially/socially unequal world in which Easy and Mouse live, violence is sometimes the only answer. Through this struggle, Mosley demonstrates inadequacies of the social and judicial system. His use of characters from the black, Hispanic, Asian, and



Walter Mosley. (Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

working-class white communities allows him to show that poverty and abuse affect all races.

In his second detective series, Mosley introduces two characters who also work in Los Angeles and in many ways are similar to Easy and Mouse. The narrator of this series is Paris Minton, a black man from Louisiana who runs a secondhand bookstore. He lives in the back of the store and seems to have few needs beyond those that owning the store can meet. However, when trouble finds Paris, he seeks his friend Fearless Jones, a man feared and respected by the black community in Los Angeles. Unlike Paris, Fearless is not a man who thinks too much about a situation. He seems instinctively to know what needs to be done and then does whatever that is, even if it involves violence. Fearless does, however, rely on Paris to make the more complicated decisions. Paris does not seem to fear Fearless the way Easy does Mouse. In fact, Paris and Fearless seem to be more successfully synergistic than Easy and Mouse.

Mosley's series also include interesting female characters. Typically, in hard-boiled detective fiction, women are often the source of evil and violence. Such women are present in Mosley's work—for example, Elana Love in *Fearless Jones* (2001)—but more often the women are seen as victims of the system, such as Daphne Monet in *Devil in a Blue Dress*. However, other women, such as Easy's wife, Regina, who first appears in *White Butterfly* (1992), and Loretta, a Japanese woman who works for the bail bondsman Milo Sweet in the Fearless Jones series, are strong and independent. This use of three-dimensional female characters is unusual in much hard-boiled detective fiction written by men.

Mosley's rich descriptions of Los Angeles in the early 1950's turn the city into a character in the novels. Raymond Chandler similarly wrote about Los Angeles, focusing on Hollywood in the 1930's and 1940's, but Mosley seems to be the first to use the Watts area so integrally. Many of the people living in the area have moved there from the South: Easy Rawlins is from Houston's Ninth Ward, and Paris and Fearless are from Louisiana. In both series, the main characters and the other inhabitants of Watts have connections to each other through their past in the South or their family

members who still live there. Watts is rich with transplanted southern culture.

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS

Mosley's first novel, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, introduces Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins, who in the opening of the novel is not a detective but a factory worker recently fired for standing up to his white foreman. After losing his job, Easy has no way to make his mortgage payments, which leads him in desperation to accept a job sent his way by Joppy, the bartender at a local establishment. Joppy introduces Easy to a threatening white man named Albright, who is looking for a white woman named Daphne Monet. Albright says Daphne's former lover wants to get in touch with her, and he wants Easy to help him find her.

A string of murders apparently connected with the missing woman alerts Easy to the danger of the situation. He is picked up and beaten by the police. On his release, he summons Mouse, his friend from Houston, a fearless man who has killed before and would not think twice about doing it again. At difficult moments, Easy hears an inner voice that tells him how to "survive like a man."

Daphne is linked to gangster Frank Johnson, a black man whom Easy is afraid of and wants to avoid. Daphne calls Easy to ask him for help, and he helps her instead of reporting her location to Albright. Daphne disappears again, taking with her \$30,000, which Easy believes Albright is after. Forced to contact Frank Johnson, Easy is about to be killed by Johnson when Mouse shows up, scaring Johnson away.

When Daphne calls again, Easy takes her for safety to the home of his Hispanic friend Primo. While there, Easy and Daphne become lovers, but Albright and his men find them and take Daphne. Easy finds Daphne with Albright and Joppy, who are trying to find out where the money is. Mouse, always interested in money, kills Joppy, mortally wounds Albright, and makes Daphne reveal the whereabouts of the money. Daphne also reveals that she is Frank Johnson's half sister. She has left her previous lover to keep him from learning that she is not white. Daphne leaves Easy because he now knows her racial secret. Before she leaves, Daphne, Easy, and Mouse divide the \$30,000. Easy is left to explain the situation to the police with-

out implicating Mouse and Daphne; he does implicate Albright, Joppy, and another man.

At the end of the novel, Easy takes Jesus, a boy he has rescued from sexual abuse earlier in the story, to live with Primo and his wife. Easy cannot make Daphne accept her own racial identity or change other social ills, but he is able to save this one child.

WHITE BUTTERFLY

White Butterfly, set in 1956, finds Easy married and raising two children, an infant from his new marriage and Jesus, the orphan from the earlier books. Easy has not told his wife, Regina, about his business holdings or his detective work.

Easy is approached by a black police officer and a number of high-ranking city officials for help in finding a serial murderer in Watts. The interest in the case is a result of the recent victim being a white college student from a respectable family. When officials threaten to pin the crime on Mouse, Easy is forced to help. Visiting local bars and asking questions lead Easy to a suspect and to the surprising discovery that the white coed led a double life working in Watts as the White Butterfly. The victim's father, a former district attorney, wants this information suppressed; this cover-up, along with that of a chain of similar murders in San Francisco, leaves Easy frustrated.

Easy discovers that the victim's father is the murderer. In part because of his lack of openness, Easy's marriage fails, leaving him heartbroken. He begins drinking heavily until Mouse and Jesus rescue him from self-destruction.

During this investigation, Easy helps his business manager, Mofass, get out of trouble with a group of white developers, which also helps solidify Easy's financial situation. So despite the failure of his marriage, he gains financial independence.

FEARLESS JONES

The first novel in this series, *Fearless Jones*, is named for one of its two main characters, Tristan "Fearless" Jones, a World War II veteran. The story opens in the used bookstore of Paris Minton, the other main character and narrator of the series. The time is 1954; the place is the Watts district of Los Angeles. The store has been open about a month, and Paris is doing enough business to pay the bills. This job allows him

to do what he likes best—read. A young woman, Elana Love, enters the store and asks for the Reverend Gross. Paris tells her that Gross used to preach at a storefront church down the street, but one night two months previously, everything was moved out from the site. Huge Leon Douglas shows up looking for Elana Love and beats up Paris.

Later that night, his bookstore is burned down. Paris needs his friend Fearless Jones to assist him, but Fearless is in jail. Paris feels guilty for having refused to pay Fearless's fine, especially because he now truly needs Fearless. Paris takes his only remaining money and goes to bail bondsman Milo Sweet to get Fearless out. Once together, Fearless and Paris start looking for Elana Love.

Fearless and Paris go to the home of Fanny and Sol Tannenbaum; Elana had told Paris that Leon is looking for her because he thinks she has a bond in Mr. Tannenbaum's name that is worth thousands of dollars. When they arrive, they find that Sol has been stabbed. After the police leave, Fanny invites them to stay with her because they have nowhere to go and she is afraid to stay alone. Before Sol is taken to the hospital, Fearless promises him that he will protect Fanny.

The case involves a crooked police officer, some Israeli agents, the mob, a Nazi pretending to be an Israeli agent, and the two other members of the Tannenbaum family, Gella and Morris. Both Fanny and Sol die, but not before Sol tells Fearless where to find the money he has embezzled from Zimmerman, the former Nazi who got the money by telling frightened Jews in Germany that he would take them to freedom in exchange for their valuables. Sol intended to go to Israel with the money. Fearless, Paris, and Milo escape a shootout with Zimmerman, Leon, and other Nazis, but Paris is arrested for arson related to the fire at his store. When he is released several weeks later, Gella has gotten the money and given Paris, Fearless, and Milo a cut before leaving for Israel. It is enough for Paris to start a new bookstore.

By using his detective team to assist the displaced Jewish family, Mosley demonstrates the possibilities for racial and ethnic harmony between Jews and African Americans.

Bonnie C. Plummer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

EASY RAWLINS SERIES: *Devil in a Blue Dress*, 1990; *A Red Death*, 1991; *White Butterfly*, 1992; *Black Betty*, 1994; *A Little Yellow Dog*, 1996; *Gone Fishin'*, 1996; *Bad Boy Brawly Brown*, 2002; *Six Easy Pieces*, 2003; *Little Scarlet*, 2004; *Cinnamon Kiss*, 2005

FEARLESS JONES SERIES: *Fearless Jones*, 2001; *Fear Itself*, 2003; *Fear of the Dark*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *RL's Dream*, 1995; *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*, 1997; *Blue Light*, 1998; *Walkin' the Dog*, 1999; *The Greatest*, 2000; *Whispers in the Dark*, 2000; *The Man in My Basement*, 2004; *The Wave*, 2006; *Fortunate Son*, 2006; *Killing Johnny Fry*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Futureland: Nine Stories of an Imminent World*, 2001

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Forty-seven*, 2005

NONFICTION: *Workin' on the Chain Gang*, 2000; *What's Next: An African American Initiative Toward World Peace*, 2003; *Life Out of Context*, 2006; *This Year You Write Your Novel*, 2007

EDITED TEXT: *The Best American Short Stories*, 2003

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Coale, Samuel. *The Mystery of Mysteries: Cultural Differences and Designs*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999. Coale looks at the cultural issues in the works of mystery writers Mosley, Amanda Cross, James Lee Burke, and Tony Hillerman. Contains an interview with Mosley.

Gray, W. Russel. "Hard-Boiled Black Easy: Genre Conventions in *A Red Death*." *African American Review* 38 (Fall, 2004): 489-499. Demonstrates how Mosley uses popular culture forms to critique racial hypocrisy.

Mason, Theodore O., Jr. "Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins: The Detective and Afro-American Fiction." *Kenyon Review* 14 (Fall, 1992): 173-183. Shows Mosley's similarity to other modern African American writers in his emphasis on genealogy and origin.

Wilson, Charles E., Jr. *Walter Mosley: A Critical Companion*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003. This volume examines the life and works of Mosley, containing chapters on some of his most famous books.

Young, Mary. "Walter Mosley, Detective Fiction, and Black Culture." *Journal of Popular Culture* 32 (Summer, 1998): 141-150. Discusses the use of African American folklore, the trickster, and the bad black man in Mosley's work.

PATRICIA MOYES

Patricia Moyes Haszard

Born: Dublin, Ireland; January 19, 1923

Died: Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands; August 2, 2000

Type of plot: Cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Henry Tibbett, 1959-1993

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HENRY TIBBETT begins as an inspector with Scotland Yard and earns steady promotions through the course of the series. He is a small, mild-mannered, happily married, and friendly man who can easily conceal his identity until he springs his trap and catches a criminal. Tibbett solves crimes without violence and

without technology; he relies most often on his intelligence, his analytical powers, and his confidence in his instincts, or what he refers to as his “nose.” When Tibbett rubs the back of his neck while deep in thought, the reader knows he is about to unravel a puzzle.

CONTRIBUTION

Patricia Moyes wrote her first novel, *Dead Men Don't Ski* (1959), on a whim, and she never looked back. She produced a long series with her first novel's main characters, Scotland Yard detective Henry Tibbett and his wife, Emmy, portraying Henry's ability to solve crimes through analysis and intuition rather than through violence or typical police procedures. Her books were both critical and popular successes, praised for their intricate plots, their warmth and optimism, and their attention to detail.

Moyes's novels are peopled with complex characters who stand out from the one-dimensional figures in many mysteries. Even her villains are driven by complicated motives, and Tibbett is sometimes faced with moral ambiguity where he expected certainty. Important contributions of Moyes were the creation of dignified and respected gay and black characters at a time when to do so was rare and her subtle demonstration, through Henry's and Emmy's kindness and insight, that empathy can bring different people together.

Moyes's novels occupy a distinct place in the chronology of mystery and detective stories. She created one of the last great series of cozy detective novels, getting through the entire series without blood or sex on stage. Emmy Tibbett is also one of the last main characters to be a full-time homemaker, although one whose intelligence and bravery are undeniable. Later writers, including Susan Wittig Albert and Diane Mott Davidson, would feature happy couples and relatively bloodless imagery, but their female protagonists would play a more modern role in their domestic lives and in solving crimes.

Moyes's novels consistently sold well (although she was more popular in the United States than in Great Britain). She won the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1971 for *Many Deadly Returns* (1970). She also received the Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1999.

BIOGRAPHY

Patricia Moyes was born Patricia Pakenham-Walsh in Dublin, Ireland, on January 19, 1923, to Ernst Pakenham-Walsh and Marion Boyd Pakenham-Walsh. By the age of eight Patricia (known as Penny) had decided to become a writer, and from 1934 to 1939, when she attended the Overstone School, a girls' boarding academy, her writing skills drew attention and encouragement. She also revealed a gift for languages and became fluent in French, Italian, and other languages. When World War II began in 1939, she lied about her age to join the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), where she worked until 1945 as a flight officer and radar controller.

Moyes's next job was working as a technical adviser to the film director and producer Peter Ustinov from 1945 to 1953. She was chosen for the position because Ustinov needed someone with writing ability and knowledge about radar. An eager student, she learned about the film industry from the bottom up. In 1951 she married John Moyes, a photographer, and changed her name to Patricia Moyes, the name she would use throughout her career as a novelist. In 1954 she became an assistant editor for *Vogue* magazine, writing a monthly column titled “Shophound.” During this period, Moyes crafted an English translation of a French play by Jean Anouilh, which had a successful run in London and on Broadway, earning Moyes enough money to quit the magazine and move to Switzerland. She and her husband divorced in 1959.

Moyes was an excellent sailor and skier, but it was a skiing accident, which laid her up for some months, that gave her the incentive to write her first mystery novel, *Dead Men Don't Ski*, featuring the neophyte skiers Chief Inspector Henry Tibbett of Scotland Yard and his wife, Emmy, a multilingual veteran of the WAAF. *Dead Men Don't Ski* would become the first novel in Moyes's Inspector Henry Tibbett series, the author's primary occupation over the next three decades.

In 1963 Moyes married James Haszard, an interpreter and lawyer working in the Netherlands at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Haszard shared her passions for sailing and skiing, and the two of them settled into a life that included travel, gourmet dining, and the restoration of an eighteenth century

house on the Rhine, which they shared with a series of beloved cats. Several of Moyes's novels use elements of Haszard's work as background, as Henry Tibbett solves crimes involving international politics, set in locations where Haszard's job took the couple. In the early 1970's, Haszard joined the International Monetary Fund and they moved to Washington, D.C. During this period, Moyes published two successful non-fictional books that appealed to a new group of readers beyond the fans of her mystery novels: *After All, They're Only Cats* (1973), a memoir, and *How to Talk to Your Cat* (1978), a guidebook for pet owners.

When Haszard retired, the couple moved to the British Virgin Islands, settling on the island of Virgin Gorda. They brought their boat and several pets, and Moyes quickly developed a love for her new home. She wrote six more novels from Virgin Gorda, three of them set in the Caribbean. After Haszard died in 1994, Moyes did not write any more novels. She published one collection of short fiction and devoted much of her time to a campaign to protect and neuter the wild cats that lived in the British Virgin Islands. She died at home on August 2, 2000.

ANALYSIS

When Patricia Moyes began writing mysteries, the age of the cozy British detective story of the type written by such notables as Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, and Dorothy L. Sayers seemed all but over. By the 1960's, readers had come to expect thrilling action and scenes of sex and violence. In spite of this, Moyes created, in her Inspector Henry Tibbett series, the kind of mysteries she herself liked to read, focusing on interesting and intricate puzzles, exotic locales, and richly drawn characters. At the center of the series is the detective, Henry Tibbett, who rises through the ranks from chief inspector to chief superintendent of Scotland Yard over the course of the series, and his wife, Emmy, a full-time homemaker. Henry is sandy haired and pleasant looking, the kind of man one does not notice in a crowd, and Emmy is plump, athletic, and companionable. The two have been married for some time and are entirely believable as a long-established couple.

In the series, Tibbett and his wife travel to the parts of the world that Moyes knew best: Italy and Switzer-

land, the Netherlands, London, Washington, D.C., and the Caribbean. They ski and sail, as Moyes did throughout her life. Wherever they go, they befriend local people who confide in the kindly couple, providing information that Tibbett, with the aid of his "nose," puts together to solve a crime. Common in the novels are comfortable domestic scenes, with the couple conversing in their simple and unfashionable home. However, there are also exciting scenes involving break-neck skiing, deathly hide-and-seek in Dutch canals, kidnapping, murder, and drug smuggling.

MURDER À LA MODE

A strength of Moyes's novels is their powerful sense of setting; the writer paid a great deal of attention to getting the small details of a location or an industry correct. Often, she drew on her own experiences to bring the reader into a fascinating corner of the world, as she did in one of her best novels, *Murder à la Mode* (1963), which revolves around the world of fashion. The novel's fictional magazine *Style* resembles *Vogue*, where Moyes worked for three years while she was in her thirties. Through the course of the novel, readers learn about the different career choices that might bring a clothing designer fame or a steady income, the long and dreary workdays of the models on whom clothing is constructed in a design studio, and the importance to manufacturers of the *toile*, the cotton model that is an exact copy of a designer original. Typical of Moyes's work, the mystery involves a crime—the stealing of original dress designs—that could take place only within the given setting.

Moyes drew on her past to create the settings for other novels. *Falling Star* (1964) involves an actor who is killed while making a film and includes technical information Moyes gained during her years working with Peter Ustinov. In *Johnny Under Ground* (1965), Moyes's sixth novel, the plot focuses on Tibbett's wife Emmy who, like Moyes herself, was a section officer working with radar in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during World War II. When Emmy begins writing a history of her old Air Force base, it leads to the sharing of memories among her former colleagues and then to murder.

Also typical of Moyes's work is *Murder à la Mode*'s lack of sex and violence. Although the characters are

believable adults, and although Tibbett's unmarried niece Veronica Spence is suspected of scandalous behavior with her significant other, Donald McKay, there are only hints at sexual behavior. In this novel, the lack of frankness about sex feels old-fashioned—even the police are embarrassed to say that a murder victim may have been pregnant—but in later novels scenes of passion are hardly missed. By the same token, although the cases Tibbett investigates involve murder, international intrigue, and even drug smuggling, there is virtually no blood on stage. Tibbett himself is shot several times through the series, but the bullet nearly always passes neatly through his shoulder.

A final way in which *Murder à la Mode* is representative is in the character of Nicholas Knight, the first of several gay characters who appear in the series. Knight is a dress designer and an entirely sympathetic character, accepted easily by Henry and Emmy but less so by several other characters. Gay and lesbian characters were not common in popular fiction in the 1960's, and Moyes included Knight among the mix of humanity populating her novel without emphasizing his sexual orientation to make a political point. Similar characters include Air Force veteran Arthur Price in *Johnny Under Ground*, interior decorator Denton Westbury in *Who Is Simon Warwick?* (1978), and tourist Harold Vandike in *A Six-Letter Word for Death* (1983). *Who Is Simon Warwick?* also features Sally Benson, a transsexual character. Sexual orientation is not part of the motive or the solution in these novels, but simply a detail that makes Moyes's characters rich and full.

MURDER FANTASTICAL

In her seventh novel, *Murder Fantastical* (1967), Moyes turned to a more whimsical tone and created her most delightful recurring characters, the eccentric Manciple family of county Fenshire. While Tibbett solves a mystery involving long-hidden jewels, he stays with the Manciples and enjoys tea and conversation with Edwin Manciple, the retired bishop of Bugolaland, who is also an expert at solving British crossword puzzles; wacky Aunt Dora; lovelorn Cousin Maude; the communist revolutionary Frank Mason; and other relatives, who are themselves involved in preparations for the annual fair. The Manciples form an immediate close friendship

with Henry and Emmy, and the couple visit the family again when Henry needs help with a crossword puzzle at the heart of a murder in *A Six-Letter Word for Death* or information about local history and gossip in *Twice in a Blue Moon* (1993). Moyes had written comedy during her years with Ustinov, and the amusing mysteries featuring the Manciple family are among her best novels.

DEATH AND THE DUTCH UNCLE

With *Death and the Dutch Uncle* (1968), Moyes introduced a theme that runs through the series: the struggles of newly independent nations to establish autonomy. *Death and the Dutch Uncle* is set in the Netherlands, at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, where Moyes's husband James Haszard was employed as an interpreter. The plot revolves around the inner workings of that court as two young nations, Galunga and Mambesi, attempt to resolve a dispute over borders and mining rights. At issue is a series of treaties established by the former French imperialists, and the degree to which the new governments are responsible for upholding those treaties.

Moyes returned to issues of independence and imperialism in *Black Widower* (1975), set in Washington, D.C., where Moyes and Haszard were living at the time the work was written. The title refers to Sir Edward Ironmonger, the ambassador to the United States from the nation of Tampica, until recently a British colony. Ironmonger is black and is subject to racial stereotyping by Washington bureaucrats and by tourists in Tampica. As she does with homophobia, Moyes does not foreground the issue of racism but makes a subtle point by the fact that all of the characters who make casually racist remarks also reveal other flaws and that Henry and Emmy treat Ironmonger and his compatriots with dignity and respect. The political struggles of young nations surface again in *Black Girl, White Girl* (1989), another mystery set in Tampica.

As is true of many long series, Moyes's novels were uneven in quality, but readers looking for an intriguing puzzle with all the clues in place, a close-up view of an exotic location, and a cozy visit with a happily married couple were never disappointed.

Cynthia A. Bily

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR HENRY TIBBETT SERIES: *Dead Men Don't Ski*, 1959; *The Sunken Sailor*, 1961 (also known as *Down Among the Dead Men*); *Death on the Agenda*, 1962; *Murder à la Mode*, 1963; *Falling Star*, 1964; *Johnny Under Ground*, 1965; *Murder by Threes*, 1965; *Murder Fantastical*, 1967; *Death and the Dutch Uncle*, 1968; *Helter-Skelter*, 1968; *Who Saw Her Die?*, 1970 (also known as *Many Deadly Returns*); *Seasons of Snow and Sins*, 1971; *The Curious Affair of the Third Dog*, 1973; *Black Widower*, 1975; *To Kill a Coconut*, 1977 (also known as *The Coconut Killings*); *Who Is Simon Warwick?*, 1978; *Angel Death*, 1980; *A Six-Letter Word for Death*, 1983; *Night Ferry to Death*, 1985; *Black Girl, White Girl*, 1989; *Twice in a Blue Moon*, 1993

SHORT FICTION: *Who Killed Father Christmas? And Other Unseasonable Demises*, 1996

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *Time Remembered: A Romantic Comedy*, 1954

SCREENPLAY: *School for Scoundrels*, 1960 (with Peter Ustinov and Hal E. Chester)

RADIO PLAY: *Time Remembered*, 1954

NONFICTION: *After All, They're Only Cats*, 1973; *How to Talk to Your Cat*, 1978

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Mahoney, MaryKay. "Patricia Moyes." In *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*, edited by Kathleen Gregory Klein. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. An analysis of Moyes's ability to create vivid characters and locales, and comparisons of her work to that of other female mystery writers.

Scherer, Ron. "Tracking Down a Mystery Writer in the Caribbean." *Christian Science Monitor*, February 24, 1987, p. 25. Scherer, an avid sailor and a fan of Moyes's mysteries, tours Virgin Gorda with the writer as his guide.

ADOLF MÜLLNER

Born: Langendorf, Saxony (now in Germany);
October 18, 1774

Died: Weissenfels, Saxony (now in Germany); June
11, 1829

Type of plot: Police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

Adolf Müllner is best known in German literature for his “fate tragedies” (*Schicksalstragödien*) *Der neunundzwanzigste Februar* (1812, revised as *Der Wahn*, 1818; the twenty-ninth of February) and *Die Schuld* (1813; *Guilt*, 1819). His sole contribution to detective fiction is his short novel *Der Kaliber* (1828; *The Caliber*, 1999), which is often called the first detective novel in German literature. The story is told in the first person, the narrator being the examining magistrate charged with investigating the murder of a young man who is killed in the presence of his brother. The brother believes himself guilty, but he is proved innocent because the bullet that killed his brother was of a larger caliber than the ones shot by his pistol.

This work was kept from complete oblivion by being reprinted in obscure anthologies several times, the last as late as 1908. It seems to have had little influence and is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. Its interest is thus primarily that of a historical curiosity.

BIOGRAPHY

Adolf Müllner was born Amandus Gottfried Adolf Müllner on October 18, 1774, in Langendorf, a town near Weissenfels, a small city in Saxony (now in Germany). His father was an official in the service of the electoral prince of Saxony and his mother a sister of Gottfried Bürger, a well-known German poet. Müllner attended elementary and secondary schools in Weissenfels and Schulpforte, and he studied law in Leipzig from 1793 to 1797. Later he obtained a doctorate from the University of Wittenberg. He settled down to a career in law, first in Delitzsch and then in Weissenfels, where he lived for most of his life. In 1802, he married Amalie von Logau, whom he had long loved but who

had first been engaged to his stepbrother, who died before the union took place.

Müllner was a prolific writer. He wrote numerous reviews of juridical works and a number of articles and books on various aspects of jurisprudence. He was also interested in literature and the theater. His first belletristic work was a lurid novel called *Der Incest: Oder, Der Schutzgeist von Avignon* (1799; incest: or, the protective spirit of Avignon). He founded an amateur theater in Weissenfels in 1810 and wrote a number of short comedies that were produced there. These works are slight and imitative but dramatically effective. They were not published until 1815.

In 1812 Müllner reached the pinnacle of his literary success with his two fate tragedies, *Der neunundzwanzigste Februar* and *Guilt*. The latter was especially successful; it is considered one of the best specimens of the fate tragedy genre, in which tragic events take place on certain fateful days or in certain fateful places. Both plays are written in trochaic tetrameter, in imitation of the classical Spanish drama. Müllner essayed his hand at two more dramas in the same vein, *König Yngurd* (King Yngurd) in 1817 and *Die Albaneserin* (the Albanian woman) in 1820, neither of which met with much success. For the rest of his life he edited anthologies and journals and wrote a number of lesser works, most of them short. His novel *The Caliber* first appeared in the 1828 issues of a journal he edited, *Mitternachtsblatt für gebildete Stände* (midnight paper for the educated classes). Müllner died of a stroke on June 11, 1829.

ANALYSIS

To qualify as a detective novel and not merely a novel depicting a crime, a work must conform to certain criteria. The mystery of who perpetrated the crime must be paramount, rather than the crime itself. The reader must be made aware of the mystery and must be shown the evidence that leads ultimately to the solution of the crime. Several suspects should be present. There should be clues for the reader to interpret, and red herrings should be drawn across the reader's path.

There must be an investigator who is perspicacious enough to interpret the evidence correctly and eventually disclose the culprit.

The many lurid tales of murder, robbery, and mayhem that were published in Europe in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries displayed for the most part few of these characteristics. The horrible crimes themselves were the principal object of these works, together with the biographies of the villains, who generally ended up on the gallows or under the executioner's ax. Literature of a higher order that dealt with crime was interested in the motivations of the perpetrator, or in his guilt, and seldom was much concerned with the detection of his crime.

THE CALIBER

There is some disagreement among German scholars as to whether Adolf Müllner's *The Caliber* should be labeled a detective novel or novel depicting a crime. Certainly it contains a number of the characteristics mentioned. The story takes place in 1816 somewhere in Germany. The work is told in the first person, the narrator being an *Untersuchungsrichter*, or examining magistrate, roughly equivalent to an American district attorney. In those days the task of investigating crimes fell into the hands of such magistrates. Therefore, to the extent that such was possible in this period, this is a police procedural.

One autumn evening, the magistrate is perusing documents pertaining to robberies that took place in the nearby forest. He is interrupted by a young man coming to his door. The man is a commercial traveler named Ferdinand Albus, and he informs the magistrate that his brother Heinrich was shot to death by a robber in the forest, yet he is not able to describe the robber. The magistrate goes to the scene of the crime with Ferdinand and the appropriate officials and finds the brother lying there shot through the heart, with his cane-sword beside him, partly unsheathed. Ferdinand tells the magistrate that he had left his pistol at the murder site, but it cannot be found. The young man is overcome with grief and cries out, "Mariane—Mariane! You won't be able to bear it—I can't bear it! Both—both lost!" At first the circumstances make the magistrate suspicious of Ferdinand, but he decides that there is really no evidence against him.

An autopsy shows that Heinrich was killed by a bullet that penetrated the heart and lungs but that remains lodged, only partly out of shape, in the shoulder blade. The magistrate learns that the Mariane whose name Ferdinand had invoked is the daughter of a rich merchant. He meets the daughter and becomes her confidant. He learns that she is engaged to Ferdinand, but that Heinrich, too, had been in love with her. In the meantime, with the help of the militia of the adjacent state, the robber gang has been apprehended, and the members have been divided up between the two states to answer to justice.

When spring arrives, the magistrate is informed by Mariane that Ferdinand is obsessed by the idea that he was responsible for his brother's death. He cannot bring himself to marry Mariane because of his guilt feelings. Mariane persuades the magistrate to convince Ferdinand that he is innocent. The magistrate apparently does so, and the wedding date is set. On the eve of the wedding, however, Ferdinand confesses that he perpetrated the crime. He and his brother had quarreled, and his brother had started to draw his cane-sword on him. Fearful for his life, Ferdinand had drawn his pistol and struck Heinrich's arm with it. The gun had accidentally fired and killed Heinrich.

The magistrate finds an able attorney to defend Ferdinand's interests—Dr. Rebhahn. Rebhahn finds the case interesting because it deals with a gray area between intentional guilt and accident. Ferdinand had intended to strike his brother in self-defense, but he had not intended to kill him. In spite of his spirited defense, Ferdinand is found guilty and sentenced to death.

To gain time, Rebhahn procures a stay of execution until the murder weapon is found. A search is made, and the pistol is found in a nearby river where Ferdinand said he had thrown it. It is a double-barreled pistol called a *Terzerol*, and to everyone's surprise both barrels still contain a ball, indicating that the pistol had not been fired. Even more surprising, it is found that the type of bullet used for this pistol is of a smaller caliber than the one lodged in Heinrich's shoulder. Amazingly, Ferdinand, still obsessed by the idea of his guilt, refuses to listen to the new evidence, believing that the devil is behind the efforts of his friends to help him. The court, too, refuses to amend its verdict, al-

though it does grant a further stay of execution.

Soon help arrives from an unexpected quarter. A package comes from the adjacent state, containing Heinrich's signet ring, which had been found on the person of one of the robbers who had been apprehended. It is accompanied by a copy of the confession of the robber to the crime and his weapon, which fired bullets of the same caliber as the one that killed Heinrich. When Mariane confronts Ferdinand with this fresh evidence, he realizes that he is innocent. The court now comes to the same conclusion, and Ferdinand is completely exonerated. He and Mariane get married and emigrate to the United States.

The German critic Albert Ludwig has contended that the author had no intention of engaging the reader's interest in the question of the guilt or innocence of the hero, that it was not the unraveling of the mystery that he wished to present but rather the love story and the history of the hero's demented state and consequent recovery.

Hans Otto Hügel, however, the author of a learned work on the history of the German detective novel in the nineteenth century, disagrees. He notes that the story is told completely from the perspective of the examining magistrate as he investigates the case in the course of his duties. The magistrate reveals his suspicions to the reader as they occur or are dispelled, presenting all the facts of the case. He never describes the suspect's mental state as a fact, but rather indicates what he appears to be thinking or feeling.

When the magistrate first hears of the crime, he is immediately suspicious of the witness's statement, as an examining magistrate should be. He asks Ferdinand about his gun, which he declares he left in the woods. Ferdinand is unable to describe the assailant—his memory seems to fail him, says the narrator. At the scene of the crime a feverish horror seems to overcome him when he views the corpse. His excessive grief and his invocation of the name of Mariane feed the magistrate's suspicions. The narrator says:

Even the unworthy suspicion that the witness of the murder himself could be the murderer occurred to me, and tried to impress itself on my mind, while my heart discarded it in disgust. A criminal magistrate will be

pardoned such a thought. This position accustoms even the best-humored person to attribute the greatest malevolence to others. But mind and heart became united before I arrived at the village. The horrible suspicion was basically without foundation except for the excess of grief on the part of Ferdinand Albus and the invocation of a "Mariane."

When he learns that Heinrich, too, was in love with Mariane, the magistrate's suspicions are again aroused. He realizes that Ferdinand is the one loved by Mariane, but he wonders if Ferdinand knew this when he invoked Mariane's name and cried, "Mariane, you won't be able to bear it!" When Mariane describes Ferdinand's character to him, however, especially his tendency to torture himself, the magistrate discards his suspicions again. After Ferdinand's confession, the magistrate is forced to believe him guilty of manslaughter, if not of deliberate murder, but the reader sees him change his mind again when the pistol is found.

The story is replete with clues that the shrewd reader can interpret. The significance of the condition of Ferdinand's pistol, with the barrels still loaded, and the disparity in caliber strike the reader before they are elucidated by the narrator. For example, if the ball had been shot from close range it would not have been stopped by the shoulder blade, according to Hügel. (Whether this was so for the muzzle-loading pistols of this era only an expert on weaponry of the period can say.) More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that an autopsy was performed (surely a rarity in this period) when it was clear how the victim had died; also, the use of evidence from the autopsy, evidence eventually strong enough to free the accused, is unusual. That Ferdinand could not remember how the alleged robber looked adds to the intrigue.

The title supports Hügel's contention that *The Caliber* is a prototype of the mystery. The caliber of the bullet is, after all, the central clue in the mystery, and the title surely emphasizes that for Müllner the mystery and its clarification formed the salient material. Although the ballistics evidence is crude from a modern point of view, this certainly is one of the first works in crime fiction in which ballistics plays an important role.

The theme of rivalry between two brothers for the hand of a girl, as well as involuntary fratricide, also

appeared in Müllner's drama *Guilt*. In the drama the protagonist kills his rival, who is married to the object of his passions, but he is unaware that the two of them are brothers. Doubtless this theme originated in the author's personal life. He and his stepbrother loved the same girl, who, however, favored the stepbrother, whom Müllner despised. Fortunately for Müllner, his stepbrother died young, and he was able to marry the girl he loved. Perhaps he expiated his guilt by writing on the theme.

The actual crime depicted in *The Caliber* is not a very likely one. The fact that the robber shot from some distance at the exact moment that Ferdinand struck his brother is hardly realistic, nor is it quite believable that Ferdinand mistook a distant shot for one from his own pistol. Also, why did the robber not dispatch Ferdinand at the same time and rob both of them? Did Ferdinand actually see a robber? If not, and it appears that he did not, it is again quite coincidental that the very story he made up turns out to be true. Clearly, *The Caliber* is not a great work, yet as an early example of the detective genre, it is not without significance.

Henry Kratz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *Der Kaliber*, 1828 (*The Caliber*, 1999)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Der Incest: Oder, Der Schutzgeist von Avignon*, 1799

PLAYS: *Der neunundzwanzigste Februar*, pb. 1812 (revised as *Der Wahn*, 1818); *Die Schuld*, pb. 1813 (*Guilt*, 1819); *Spiele für die Bühne*, pb. 1815; *König Yngurd*, pb. 1817; *Die Albaneserin*, pb. 1820; *Müllners dramatische Werke*, pb. 1828

NONFICTION: *Modestins sechzig Gedanken über den Entwurf zu einer neuen Gerichtsordnung für die Chursächsischen Lände*, 1804; *Allgemeine Elementarlehre der richterlichen Entscheidungskunde*, 1812; *Vers und Reim auf der Bühne*, 1822

EDITED TEXT: *Almanach für Privatbühnen*, 1817, 1818, 1819

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N

SHIZUKO NATSUKI

Born: Tokyo, Japan; 1938

Types of plot: Inverted; police procedural; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Shizuko Natsuki has enjoyed enormous success and popularity in Japan, publishing more than eighty books. Translations of several of her mysteries have brought her international recognition as a mystery writer. In 1973, she won the Mystery Writers of Japan Award for *Jōhatsu* (vanishing). In 1989, she was awarded the French Prix du Roman d'Aventure for *Daisan no onna* (1978; *The Third Lady*, 1987).

BIOGRAPHY

Shizuko Natsuki was born in Tokyo in 1938. She graduated from Keio University with a degree in English literature. She married in 1963 and moved to Fukuoka, where she has lived since that time with the exception of nine years spent in Nagoya. Natsuki is not only one of Japan's best-selling mystery writers but also one of the most prolific. She has written more than eighty novels and short-story collections, and more than forty of her novels and stories have been made into films.

Natsuki published her first mystery novel, *Tenshi ga kiete iku* (the angel has gone), in 1970. The first of her novels to be translated into English was *W no higeki* (1982; *Murder at Mount Fuji*, 1984). Several of her short stories have been published in translation in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Natsuki's writing, like that of many other Japanese mystery writers of her generation, often shows the strong influence of well-known mystery writer Seichō Matsumoto.

ANALYSIS

Shizuko Natsuki writes murder mysteries that are meticulously developed through detailed analysis

of what did or could have occurred and what will happen. Detailed description is very important for building suspense and atmosphere in her novels. She accumulates precise details of the plot, often with considerable repetition of exactly what occurred or may have occurred, without really explaining its importance. This technique imbues the story with a sense of the unknown. The puzzle plot is a common structure in her novels. In *Kumo kara okuru shi* (1990; *Death from the Clouds*, 1991), she portrays detectives who reconstruct the crime in various ways by reasoning out how it may have taken place. Her use of this technique recalls the analytical style of Seichō Matsumoto.

Another technique that Natsuki often employs is that of the public inquiry. This plot structure is built on collaboration between the police and the people questioned. By portraying the interaction between the police and the public in slightly different ways, she creates complex plots in her novels and challenges the reader to solve them. She uses this technique in *Fuhō wa gogo niji ni todoku* (1983; *The Obituary Arrives at Two O'Clock*, 1988). The relationship between the police and the public is often not portrayed as totally positive. There is a reluctance on the part of many of the characters to talk with the police. They view the police with a mixture of respect and fear.

Natsuki also uses the inverted plot structure and a variation on it. In *The Third Lady*, Kohei Daigo plots and reasons about the murder that he is planning to commit. Natsuki uses this type of plot in the traditional way, giving the killer's view and interpretation of the murder. In *Kokubyaku no tabiji* (1977; *Innocent Journey*, 1989), Yoko Noda and Takashi Sato enter into a suicide pact, but when Yoko wakes up from the sleeping pills, she finds Takashi has been murdered and she is likely to be the prime suspect in his death. In an effort to find Takashi's killer before the police arrest her,

Yoko attempts to reconstruct the crime and find the psychological motivation for it. Here the crime is not portrayed through the eyes or mind of the murderer but rather through the eyes of the innocent suspect.

Natsuki's novels inform the reader about social customs and the Japanese lifestyle. Japanese temples and their social and financial relationship to the public are extensively discussed in *Death from the Clouds*. The settings of her novels also reveal much about life in Japan. Her male characters are typically businessmen whose lives revolve around their companies. Business trips are common, and the men are often called away on such trips; thus, business hotels and coffee shops play a major role in her novels.

Telephone calls also play a significant role in Natsuki's mysteries. Her businessman husbands often call

to inform their wives that they will not be home that evening or that they are going away for a few days on a business trip. The lives of her wives are centered on their homes and children, while their husbands' daily lives are controlled by their companies. Natsuki portrays a society in which married couples live separate lives.

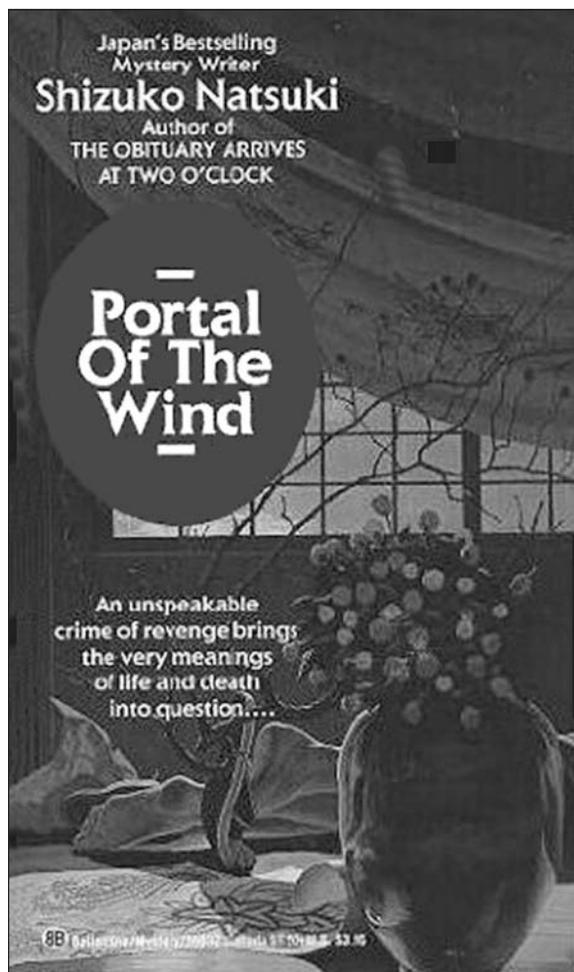
The social background of the characters—their financial and social class and family status—are important in the plots of Natsuki's novels. She demonstrates the affluence of her characters by giving them golf club memberships, very expensive in a nation where real estate is at a premium. Family relationships and status form the driving force of the plot of *Murder at Mount Fuji*. Chiyo, the favorite in the Wada family, suddenly claims that she has killed her grandfather; however, the death actually appears to have been an accident. Concerned for their family reputation and for Chiyo, the family bands together to create alibis, deceive the police, and throw the blame on someone who is not a member of the family.

Natsuki's murder mysteries are permeated with psychological drama and a sense of an inexplicable supernatural element. *Kaze no tobira* (1980; *Portal of the Wind*, 1990) recounts a murder that may not have happened. A man's photograph in a magazine has a mysterious, overwhelming attraction for a young woman, and a bereaved daughter has a sense of a tragedy that she cannot identify. The protagonists are continually forced to cope with loneliness, isolation, and a sense of dread. The characters are also fascinated by death; suicide and murder occupy them as they accumulate facts about potential acts of destruction either of themselves or of someone else.

THE THIRD LADY

The Third Lady is a novel of revenge and of a strange quasi-religious sharing of love, which leads to a murder pact. In Chateau Chantal, a hotel in France, Kohei Daigo meets a mysterious woman named Fumiko. Sitting in the dark salon of the hotel during a severe thunderstorm and blackout, Daigo and Fumiko experience an inexplicable bonding that causes them to reveal their darkest secrets and hatreds. Both return to Japan fatalistically bound to murder for each other.

The novel has been compared to *Strangers on a*



Train (1950) by Patricia Highsmith. However, Natsuki's novel intensifies the suspense as her characters' motivations are not rational. The end of the novel reveals a shocking surprise for Daigo and for the reader: Fumiko has killed the colleague whom Daigo hated because he was responsible for causing cancer in a number of children. Daigo has in turn killed Midori, who murdered Kume and whom Fumiko hated—or so Daigo believes. Fumiko's sister Akane, pretending to be Fumiko, meets Daigo in a darkened room, recreating the scene in the salon of the Chateau Chantal. She reveals to Daigo that he killed Fumiko when he killed Midori. Fumiko had chosen him as her executioner. The novel ends with Daigo, eyes glazed over, waiting to board a plane to France to refine the illusion he had experienced in the salon of the Chateau Chantal.

The police have constructed a more practical series of events for the crime. According to them, Daigo and Fumiko/Midori had made a murder pact. Midori poisoned Daigo's colleague. However, instead of carrying out his part of the pact, Daigo betrayed and killed Midori to keep her from revealing the pact.

THE OBITUARY ARRIVES AT TWO O'CLOCK

In *The Obituary Arrives at Two O'Clock*, Natsuki uses a fake wrong-number call to frame the protagonist Kosuke Okita for murder. A woman dials Kosuke seemingly by mistake, and moved by her desperation, he rushes to help her. Meanwhile, Nasuno, an entrepreneur who owes Kosuke money, is killed with a golf club. Kosuke's wife, Shimako, and Kinumura have framed Kosuke, who figures out what they have done. He devises a plan to make them reveal that Kinumura is actually the murderer. Kosuke sends a note to Shimako stating that he has been kidnapped. Then, he cuts his finger off and recuts it such that the finger appears to be from a dead man. He sends this finger to Shimako. Relying on his belief that the shocked and frightened Shimako will immediately go to her accomplice, Kosuke hopes to cause them to reveal themselves. His plan works.

As well as being an entertaining mystery, this novel is an excellent source of sociological detail about Japan. The business activities among the owners of the golf club and the landscaping companies and the portrayal of the employees who sell the memberships de-

pict business life in Japan. The detailed description of Shimako's life as she waits for news of Kosuke provides an insight into Japanese home life.

Objects play an important role in this novel. A five iron is missing from Nasuno's set of clubs, and the golf club, along with a towel and a pair of gloves, is found under a shed in Kosuke's backyard. The five iron is identified as the murder weapon. Natsuki foreshadows this discovery by mentioning dogs barking in the neighborhood. It is assumed that the neighbor's dog, who has a habit of digging in the Okitas' yard, has dug up the items. In a separate incident, a child's tricycle is placed in the road to stop a car. The driver is put in immediate danger when he stops, so the tricycle becomes a sinister object that signals someone is about to be hurt.

A common theme in Natsuki's novels is a love interest or a developing love affair between a fleeing suspect and a younger woman. Kosuke is romantically involved with Chiharu, who, of course, believes in his innocence. As in Natsuki's other novels, she portrays the lovers, here Kosuke and Chiharu, clandestinely meeting in coffee shops as the suspect attempts to clear himself.

INNOCENT JOURNEY

Innocent Journey is an extremely complex novel. It is a novel of revenge, criminal pasts, and characters who have taken new identities. The novel begins with the relationship between Yoko Noda and Takashi Sato. Takashi and Yoko met in the Jugon bar where she works as a hostess and have entered into a casual sexual relationship. Takashi is the president of the Sato Metal Company, a wholesale firm on the verge of bankruptcy. Takashi acquired his position by marrying the only daughter of the previous president and was adopted into the Sato family. His wife died because of an abnormal pregnancy and he remarried. He is in an awkward position because his connection to the Sato family is through his dead wife. In addition, Takashi has accidentally killed a little girl who ran in front of his car. Disgusted with life, he asks Yoko to commit suicide with him. Yoko, who suffers from depression and schizophrenia, agrees to the suicide pact without really knowing why.

Yoko and Takashi go into the mountains and take what they believe is a fatal dose of sleeping pills. However, the suicide attempt fails. A very sick Yoko

wakes up to find Takashi dead, not from the pills but from a knife in his back. Yoko is now the most likely suspect, and Natsuki introduces the technique of reconstruction and analysis of the crime into the novel.

Yoko's search for the real killer leads the reader through an extraordinarily complex tangle of events. Yoko is helped in her search by Taki, who is looking for his missing brother-in-law Tanaka, who was last seen at the Jugon bar looking for Takashi. When the crime is finally solved, it is revealed that Takashi Sato is still alive. Takashi's wife, Midori, killed Tanaka, and she substituted his body for Takashi's at the suicide site. Tanaka had been looking for Midori, who was Jiro Miki until he had a sex-change operation, because Midori killed Tanaka's fiancé. This tale of murder, subterfuge, and disguise is the most complex of Natsuki's translated novels.

Shawncey Webb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1970-1980 • *Tenshi ga kiete iku*, 1970; *Mishiranu waga ko*, 1971; *Hikaru gake*, 1971; *Jōhatsu*, 1973; *Suna no satsui*, 1974; *Gonin taiho*, 1975; *Aribai no kanata ni*, 1976; *Muhyō*, 1976; *Nanajūnana bin ni nani ga okita ka*, 1977; *Kokubiyaku no tabiji*, 1977 (*Innocent Journey*, 1989); *Tōi yakusoku*, 1977; *Hoshi no shōgen*, 1977; *Garasu no kizuna*, 1977; *Beddo no naka no tanin*, 1977; *Aribai no nai onna*, 1977; *Keibatsu*, 1978; *Futari no otto o motsu onna*, 1978; *Daisan no onna*, 1978 (*The Third Lady*, 1987); *Jūkon*, 1978; *Hikaru gake*, 1977; *Harukana saka*, 1978; *Aozameta kokuhatsu*, 1978; *Kaze no tobira*, 1980 (*Portal of the Wind*, 1990)

1981-1990 • *W no higeki*, 1982 (*Murder at Mount Fuji*, 1984); *Biggu appuru wa nemuranai*, 1982; *Ashita no kao*, 1982; *Hana no shōgen*, 1982; *Fuhō wa gogo ni ni todoku*, 1983 (*The Obituary Arrives at Two O'Clock*, 1988); *Akai kagerō*, 1983; *Tōzakarū kaze*, 1983; *Kurai junkan*, 1983; *Yuki no betsuri*, 1984; *Ao no bohime*, 1984; *Tabibitotachi no meiro*, 1984; *Tsumatachi no hanran: Otto wa kono genjitsu o shiranai*, 1984; *Saigo ni ai o mita no wa*, 1984; *Ai no bohime*, 1984; *Kodoku no feauei*, 1986; *Waga kyōshū no Mariannu*, 1986; *Eki ni tatsu hito*, 1987; *Shi no tani kara kita onna*, 1987; *Misshitsu kōro*, 1987;

Kurai junkan, 1987; *Onna no jū*, 1988; *Tōkyō eki de kieta*, 1989; *Himeta kizuna*, 1989; *Dōmu: Shūmatsu e no jokyoku*, 1989; *Konsetsu na isho*, 1990; *Kumo kara okuru shi*, 1990 (*Death from the Clouds*, 1991); *Shi no tani kara kita onna*, 1990; *Daiamondo Heddo no niiji*, 1990; *Kiri no shōgen: Bengoshi Asabuki Riyako*, 1990

1991-2001 • *Soshite dare ka inaku natta*, 1991; *Hakushū no toki*, 1991; *Kiri no mukōgawa*, 1992; *Joyū X: Izawa Ranja no shōgai*, 1993; *Dyuaru raifu*, 1994; *M no higeki*, 1994; *Kuroitseru sonata*, 1995; *Isshun no ma*, 1997; *Mariko*, 1999; *Saigo no wara*, 1999; *Ieji no hate*, 2000; *Ryōkei*, 2001

SHORT FICTION: *Shikeidai no rōpūei*, 1975; *Natsuki Shizuko jisen kessaku tampen shū*, 1976; *Yoru no enshutsu*, 1980; *Hitosuji no yami ni*, 1982; *Himera-reta shinjū*, 1984; *Onna kenji Kasumi Yūko: Rasen kaidan o oriru otoko*, 1985; *Perusona non gurāta*, 1989; *Mizuumi, doku, yume*, 1991; *Natsuki Shizuko no Gōruden 12*, 1997; *Kenji Kasumi Yūko yofuke no shukuden*, 2000; *Okuru shōgen: Bengoshi Asabuki Riyako*, 2000; *Maboroshi no otoko*, 2002; *Moraru no wana*, 2003; *Hana o suteru onna*, 2003; *Kenji Kasumi Yūko fūkyoku no misaki*, 2004

NONFICTION: *Isu ga kowai: Watashi no yōtsū hōrōki*, 1997; *Ittari kitari*, 2003

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Herbert, Rosemary. Review of *Murder at Mount Fuji*, by Shizuko Natsuki. *Library Journal* 109, no. 8 (May 1, 1984): 918. Knowing Natsuki's reputation, the reviewer wonders if the translator did her justice. Finds the novel flawed but captivating.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay looking at the life and earlier works of Natsuki.

"Musings." *The Daily Yomiuri*, April 3, 2004, p. 1. This editorial bemoans the increase in violent

crime and murder in Japan. It quotes Natsuki, in her *Ittari kitari* memoir, as saying that writing about crime is becoming more difficult as actual crimes are more horrific than anything she could create.

Pollack, David. *Reading Against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992. This work examines how culture interacts with modern Japanese fiction. Although it does not cover Natsuki's work, it helps readers understand Japanese fiction.

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ney, by Shizuko Natsuki. *The New York Times*, May 14, 1989, p. A30. Reviewer finds her style less elegant than that of Seichō Matsumoto, another famous Japanese mystery writer, but praises her storytelling.

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FREDERICK NEBEL

Born: Staten Island, New York; November 3, 1903

Died: Laguna Beach, California; May 3, 1967

Also wrote as Grimes Hill; Lewis Nebel

Type of plot: Hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Captain Steve MacBride and reporter Kennedy, 1928-1936

Donny Donahue, 1930-1935

Jack Cardigan, 1931-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN STEVE MACBRIDE, a police officer, and KENNEDY, a newspaper reporter, form an unlikely but effective team of crime fighters. MacBride is the tough but intelligent cop who supplies the muscle, and Kennedy is the heavy-drinking, irreverent, and intuitive oddball who usually sets the investigation on the right trail.

DONNY DONAHUE, an investigator with the Interstate Detective Agency, is a former cop who was kicked off the force when he refused to sanction bribery and corruption. He is an extremely tough and cynical man, capable of both quixotic acts of altruism and savage retributive violence. He dispenses his own brand of justice without worrying about legal technicalities.

JACK CARDIGAN, a private investigator for the Cosmo Agency in St. Louis, is a somewhat more conventional version of Donny Donahue. Where the latter makes his own rules and fights his way through to the truth, Cardigan's cases tend to emphasize the causal chain in the process of detection, though with plenty of action and abrasive dialogue.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Frederick Nebel published three novels, two of which have to do with crime, his major contribution was the large number of hard-boiled short stories he wrote between 1926 and 1937. Along with Dashiell Hammett, Carroll John Daly, Raoul Whitfield, Erle Stanley Gardner, and a few others, he was one of the writers closely associated with the magazine *Black Mask* under the editorship of Joseph Shaw. Although his later decision to abandon crime fiction in favor of slicker, mass-market journalism has led to his being almost completely forgotten, Nebel should be considered one of the seminal figures in the development of the hard-boiled style. Grimy, realistic, graphically violent, and often pitiless in their contempt for human frailty, his best stories merit the same serious literary consideration given to those of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

BIOGRAPHY

Frederick Nebel was born Louis Frederick Nebel on November 3, 1903, in Staten Island, New York. He dropped out of school at the age of fifteen to work on the New York waterfront. In 1920, he traveled to northern Canada, where he helped his granduncle operate a farm. In 1922, he returned to New York, found a job as a railroad brakeman, and began to write about some of the things he had seen in his travels.

Having sold several tales of life in the Canadian backwoods to *Northwest Stories* in 1925, a year later Nebel sold his first story to *Black Mask*. Thus began an association that during the next ten years would make him one of the major influences on the development of hard-boiled detective fiction and would result in a close friendship with Dashiell Hammett. In 1930, he married Dorothy Blank, whom he had first met during a visit to Paris two years earlier, and settled down in their Ridgefield, Connecticut, home to write steadily for *Black Mask* and other pulp magazines such as *Action Stories*, *Danger Trail*, and *Sea Stories*.

In 1933, his first novel, *Sleepers East*, was published, and its brisk sales and lucrative screen-rights optioning alerted Nebel to the possibilities of other markets. He obtained a literary agent, wrote two more popular novels in the next three years, and began to submit his work to such slick periodicals as *Cosmopolitan* and *McCall's*. During the 1940's and 1950's, he also penned a number of television scripts, and he made a brief return to mystery fiction with the ten stories he wrote for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* between 1956 and 1962.

In 1958, Nebel's failing health necessitated a move to California, and in the following year he and his wife settled in Laguna Beach. His last story was published in 1962, although during the remaining five years of his life he worked intermittently on a novel that he was unable to finish. On May 3, 1967, three days after a severe cerebral hemorrhage, he died at the age of sixty-three, an obscure yet significant figure in the development of the classic hard-boiled detective story.

ANALYSIS

Frederick Nebel sold his first mystery tale to *Black Mask* in 1926, and during the next two years eleven

other stories of his appeared in the magazine. In 1928, editor Joseph Shaw encouraged him to develop a series character to whose adventures readers could regularly look forward, and Nebel obliged by creating the team of Captain Steve MacBride and reporter Kennedy.

"WINTER KILL"

Richmond City is the mythical community in which MacBride and Kennedy operate, and like Dashiell Hammett's Poisonville or Raymond Chandler's Bay City, it is scarred by political corruption and police graft. MacBride is an honest cop who copes as best he can with this situation, but it is the hard-drinking Kennedy whose irreverence toward authority allows him to think and act in ways that help solve MacBride's most difficult cases.

Although the atmosphere of impending violence and general social decay that characterizes the hard-boiled idiom is an important element in the MacBride-Kennedy stories, the stories also feature a sophisticated humor rarely found in the genre. Kennedy's shenanigans often transcend mere wisecracking and approach the surreal zaniness of the Marx Brothers' films. Thus, in the story "Winter Kill," Kennedy wanders into a bereaved man's den, becomes interested in a pair of snowshoes, and astounds everyone by asking if they are for sale. At the conclusion of the narrative, after having solved the case by following a hunch, Kennedy gets drunk and is arrested for trying to snowshoe down a busy street. As MacBride listens to this latest exploit with stolid calm, the arresting officer supplies a downbeat punch line by adding that Kennedy "can't snowshoe worth a damn."

"TAKE IT AND LIKE IT"

Nebel's clever blending of suspense, action, and comedy make the MacBride-Kennedy stories models of their kind. In "Take It and Like It," the plot begins in medias res, as Kennedy's drunken quest for a highly recommended "chili joint" is interrupted by an encounter with an even more intoxicated young woman. He takes her to his room, puts her to bed, resumes his search for the restaurant, and eventually returns home to find her murdered. As the prime suspect, he must avoid the police at the same time that he pursues the murderer, and the ensuing multiple-chase narrative is

hilariously punctuated with such comic set pieces as this bizarre mock confession:

“What,” said Flannery, “was your real reason for killing her? I mean the one thing that finally drove you to it?”

Kennedy sighed. “She did not know how to make a Martini.”

“Hell, he’s completely screwy!” Rube Wilson said.

Kennedy cried: “I killed her because she was too beautiful for this world. This world is so crass and desigining, and so full of filth and tragedy. I killed her because—well, because she was a flower, a fair flower.”

If the MacBride-Kennedy stories emphasize the humorous possibilities of hard-boiled fiction’s general irreverence toward authority and convention, Nebel’s Donny Donahue tales are squarely in the tough-guy tradition. Donahue is a law unto himself, and he pursues his prey with a relentless concentration that recognizes neither physical obstacles nor ethical constraints.

“ROUGH JUSTICE”

“Rough Justice” offers a typical example of Donahue’s modus operandi. Assigned to recover a stolen ring, he treats the world of cops and criminals as a hornet’s nest that when vigorously shaken will yield up his quarry. Donahue’s attitude toward the series of murders and maimings that results is strictly pragmatic: Whatever helps him find the ring is good, and anything else—even the shooting of a police officer—is irrelevant. At the conclusion of the story, with his task accomplished, Donahue lets the man who stole the ring escape in a characteristic display of his contempt for the letter of the law. As he has explained earlier in the story, “My job is to get the ring, and not the killer of a cop that didn’t watch his tricks.”

“RED PAVEMENT”

If Donahue often operates outside the law, he does, however, have his own peculiar kind of sentimental morality. In “Red Pavement,” his initial involvement in a case of murder among thieves occurs when he helps a drunk into a taxi. When the drunk is gunned down, Donahue feels compelled to help the victim’s naïve girlfriend. After ensuring that the killers receive their just deserts, however, the girlfriend double-crosses ev-

eryone in a way that only confirms Donahue’s misanthropic view of human nature: “When you got right down to it, the girl as a personality meant nothing to him; she was significant only for the fact that her death would bring the cops down on him.”

The sardonic wit of reporter Kennedy and the cynical ruthlessness of Donny Donahue are perhaps reflected in the personality of Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe; it is quite possible that Nebel provided Chandler with some of his inspiration. Although Chandler made no formal acknowledgment of any debt to Nebel’s example, he did state that he read *Black Mask*’s hard-boiled fiction with a scholar’s thoroughness. Thus, it is likely that Nebel exerted some degree of influence on one of the most famous characters spawned by the genre.

Nebel, for his part, had been impressed by Dashiell Hammett’s Continental Op, whose combination of intelligence and toughness set him apart from such essentially thuglike *Black Mask* detectives as Carroll John Daly’s Race Williams. Hammett and Nebel were close friends and drinking companions who respected each other’s work, and both would eventually abandon the hard-boiled idiom for greener commercial pastures. Nebel and Hammett expanded the conventions of hard-boiled fiction by demonstrating that a lone wolf had better be a very intelligent wolf, although they also served up enough action and violence to keep even the dimmest pulp-magazine readers satisfied.

When writing for other pulp periodicals, Nebel was forced to adhere more closely to the genre’s norms. The forty-three Jack Cardigan stories he wrote for *Dime Detective* are much more conventional and much less interesting than his work for *Black Mask*, as “Murder by Mail” all too effectively demonstrates.

Dime Detective wanted Nebel to write at novelle length, which meant an approximately fifteen-thousand-word manuscript divided into five chapters. That was about half again as long as his usual *Black Mask* story, and he made up the difference by padding the narrative with superfluous verbiage: Each new character receives a full paragraph of description rather than a few concise but telling details, and events to date are periodically summarized in speeches by Cardigan. Things also tend to happen in multiples, so that if Cardigan

takes a gun out of a suspect's right hand, it is more than likely that the latter's left hand will shortly be holding some variety of weaponry.

"MURDER BY MAIL"

"Murder by Mail" exhibits all of these qualities while putting Cardigan through a complicated and not very believable plot concerning a murder and a postal swindle. Even his wisecracks about the police, one of the staple topics of hard-boiled humor, seem less than inspired: "Well, I always wondered what happened to cops when they became lieutenants, and now I know: they put their brains away in mothballs." The Cardigan stories do permit their female characters a greater degree of action and independence than is usually the case in the genre, but this is virtually the only positive quality of a series that seldom exhibits anything more than Nebel's professional competence as a prolific producer for the pulps.

SLEEPERS EAST AND FIFTY ROADS TO TOWN

Nebel's first novel, *Sleepers East*, is a smoothly constructed thriller set on a passenger train, with political conflict rather than criminal intent the dramatic spring of the narrative. Both here and in his next novel, the diffuse family saga *But Not the End* (1934), private detectives play minor roles as sleazy, immoral underlings; the contrast with his pulp series heroes accurately represents the difference between his magazine and his book-length fiction. His final novel, *Fifty Roads to Town* (1936), concerns a small town's reaction to a mysterious disappearance, but Nebel undercuts the possibility of suspense by dwelling at inordinate length on the problems of minor characters. Nebel's novels are written in a polite, chatty, and often glibly superficial style that bears little resemblance to his hard-boiled fiction, although it does demonstrate how easy it was for him to switch markets and write for the slick magazines.

In assessing Nebel's role in the development of the hard-boiled idiom, it is probably best to view him as a necessary but by no means sufficient force in the transition from the suburban gardens of genteel British sleuths to the mean streets of the American private eye. He was a significant member of that small group of *Black Mask* writers who made its 1926-1936 issues a gold mine of evocative hard-boiled writing. His

abandonment of the genre for more lucrative markets, however, and the fact that only one book of selections from his pulp fiction was ever published ensured that he would always be one of the more obscure figures in the development of the vivid, violent, and still-vital world of the hard-boiled detective story.

Paul Stuewe

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CAPTAIN STEVE MACBRIDE AND REPORTER KENNEDY SERIES: Stories in *Black Mask*, 1928-1936

DONNY DONAHUE SERIES: Stories in *Black Mask*, 1930-1935; *Six Deadly Dames*, 1950

JACK CARDIGAN SERIES: Stories in *Dime Detective*, 1931-1937

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Sleepers East*, 1933; *Fifty Roads to Town*, 1936

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *But Not the End*, 1934

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BARBARA NEELY

Born: Lebanon, Pennsylvania; 1941

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Blanche White, 1992-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

BLANCHE WHITE, an African American maid who works for wealthy white families, uses the invisibility of her race and station as an opportunity to gather clues. Her dark skin, age, occupation, gender, and weight all suggest a “mammy” stereotype, but her keen awareness of social injustices, which she vocalizes in sharp critiques of white characters and culture, not only makes clear that she is no mammy but also deconstructs the stereotype itself. Blanche is an entertaining, astute, and outspoken sleuth who educates readers about racial and social issues as she solves her crimes.

CONTRIBUTION

Barbara Neely’s Blanche White mysteries help make a traditionally conservative genre a vehicle for exploring social ills—especially those with racial implications—and for analyzing American cultural attitudes and practices. Each book in this series focuses on a different social problem, beginning in *Blanche on the Lam* (1992) with the impact of racial stereotypes and class prejudices. Neely’s second book, *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth* (1994), explores the psychological and social impacts of Western standards of beauty, especially the color hierarchy among African Americans; the plot of her next book, *Blanche Cleans*

Up (1998), concerns political corruption, homophobia, and environmental issues; the fourth, *Blanche Passes Go* (2000), exposes the frequency and emotional consequences of physical abuse of women. In all her works Neely shows the relatedness of race, class, and gender issues. Neely’s Blanche White was a landmark character when she first hit the scene: Not only was she one of the few female African American protagonists in a mystery series, but she also was one of the few sleuths who reflected a working-class perspective. Blanche’s persona as an outspoken, politically savvy lower-class black woman was an instant success with readers.

BIOGRAPHY

The daughter of Ann Neely and Bernard Neely, Barbara Neely grew up in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Although she lived in a neighborhood populated by loving members of her extended family, throughout her school years she was often the only African American child in her class. Both her grandmothers were important figures in Neely’s childhood, especially her maternal grandmother, a woman she describes as the matriarch of the family and who against all odds achieved financial success with her earnings as a domestic worker.

At the age of nineteen Neely moved to Philadelphia, where she began what was to become a lifetime of social activism. She became involved with the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History and helped organize the Philadelphia Tutorial Project. She came to believe that she could do more for her causes if she acquired a graduate degree. Al-

though she had always enjoyed writing, it did not occur to her to enter a creative writing program, she later explained. Instead, she earned a master's degree in urban studies from the University of Pittsburgh. Her thesis proposed integrating women's prisons into suburbs; after graduating she was employed as director of a women's correction center in Pittsburgh, where she was able to help establish a women's residential prison as she had envisioned in her thesis.

Over the next decades Neely held a series of jobs across the country—in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, California, and Massachusetts. These included stints as a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) director and at Head Start, being a consultant for non-profit ventures, and working at the Institute for Social Research, the African News Service, and *Southern Exposure Magazine*. She has been a director of Women for Economic Justice and helped found Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom. Neely has won several awards for her efforts to address social ills. In the 1980's she and her partner moved to Jamaica Plain, near Boston, where she became the host of the radio program *Commonwealth Journal*. During this time Neely also began writing short stories, which have been published in a variety of magazines and anthologies. Neely incorporates her experiences as a social activist and her knowledge of different parts of the country into her novels: *Blanche on the Lam* and *Blanche Passes Go* are set in North Carolina; *Blanche Cleans Up* is set in Boston.

ANALYSIS

Barbara Neely's Blanche White series, while not extensive, shows evolution of intent and scope. The first novel, *Blanche on the Lam*, introduces readers to Blanche, whose voice and persona set the tone for the series. A middle-aged domestic worker, Blanche quickly begins educating readers on the injustices and indignities that African Americans often experience in their daily lives. The book opens with Blanche's appearance in court, a scene that suggests connections between race and poverty and that exposes hypocrisies in class structure in the United States. Soon, however, Neely begins to focus on racial stereotypes (especially that of the mammy), exposing how prevalent and how

psychically damaging such perceptions of African Americans are. Throughout the novel Blanche comments on prejudices against dark-skinned persons (in both black and white communities) and the invisibility of lower-class service personnel.

Neely surprised reader expectations in her second novel, *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth*, by turning away from black/white relationships to examine color prejudice among African Americans, a prejudice that privileges light-skinned African Americans and has created a market for an array of beauty products designed to make black people look whiter. Throughout, Blanche comments on elitist attitudes among affluent African Americans and worries about her adopted daughter's growing preoccupation with and acceptance of the white culture's standards of beauty. Neely also uses this novel to show Blanche's rejection of traditional Christianity in favor of an African-influenced spirituality that includes calling on the guidance of ancestors.

The plot in the third Blanche White novel, *Blanche Cleans Up*, is set against a backdrop of political corruption, urban environmental hazards, and Blanche's worries about her children's need to be smart about sexual choices. All these issues cross race lines, but Blanche knows that African Americans and the poor are often disproportionately affected by them.

The fourth book in the series, *Blanche Passes Go*, brings resolution to an incident alluded to in the first novel: the rape of Blanche by a white employer. More thematically focused than the previous book, this novel weaves together crimes that collectively show the scope of abuse against women—a societal pattern that crosses race and class lines. This work has a psychological dimension not always present in Neely's work, as Blanche struggles to overcome the fear of her previous attacker and to vent her righteous anger without succumbing to a resentment and distrust of all men.

As these descriptions suggest, readers are more likely to recall each story's social concern more than the plots and to enjoy Blanche's personality and her interaction with her immediate circle of family and friends than to become engrossed in the whodunit aspect of the novels. The antagonists are not particularly memorable, but for most readers that will be forgivable. What keeps

readers coming back for more is Blanche's voice, with its no-holds-barred, tell-it-like-it-is explanations of the ways of the world for African Americans and for female domestic workers of all ilks.

BLANCHE ON THE LAM

Blanche on the Lam introduces Neely's protagonist Blanche White and opens with a scene that sets the tone for the series: Blanche is in court, waiting to be sentenced for writing a bad check, thinking about all her white clients who so often fall behind in paying her wages. Blanche is a domestic worker who supports herself and the two children she is raising by cooking and cleaning homes for white families. When Blanche realizes the judge is sending her to jail instead of letting her pay a fine, she panics and bolts. She hides out as a live-in maid for a white family and soon learns that they have secrets of their own. Blanche looks like a stereotypical mammy, but readers immediately perceive that she is anything but—instead, she is a feisty, opinionated woman with a keen sense of how intertwined race, class, and gender issues are. Blanche's personality dominates the story, which is peppered with her comments to readers on the ways of white folks, on what is wrong with American culture, and on what it means to be black in the United States. Although the bulk of her criticisms are of whites and white culture, she also has plenty to say about blacks who buy into white values that demean blacks and black culture—a theme Neely returns to in her second book.

Blanche's commentary is contained within a mystery plot, as Blanche tries to discover the family's dark secrets—secrets, it turns out, that involve racial injustices. Set in Farleigh, North Carolina (a fictional rendering of Raleigh, where Neely briefly resided), the story addresses racial attitudes that are both steeped in Southern history and nationally ubiquitous. An interesting twist to the plot, largely peopled by one-dimensional villains, is the emotional complication Blanche experiences as she gets to know and like Mumford, whose affliction with Down syndrome, Blanche comes to realize, causes him to experience many of the same social rejections as African Americans. Neely ends this novel in a way that goes against reader's expectations—and that perhaps uncovers readers' own stereotypic assumptions about the relationships between mummies and

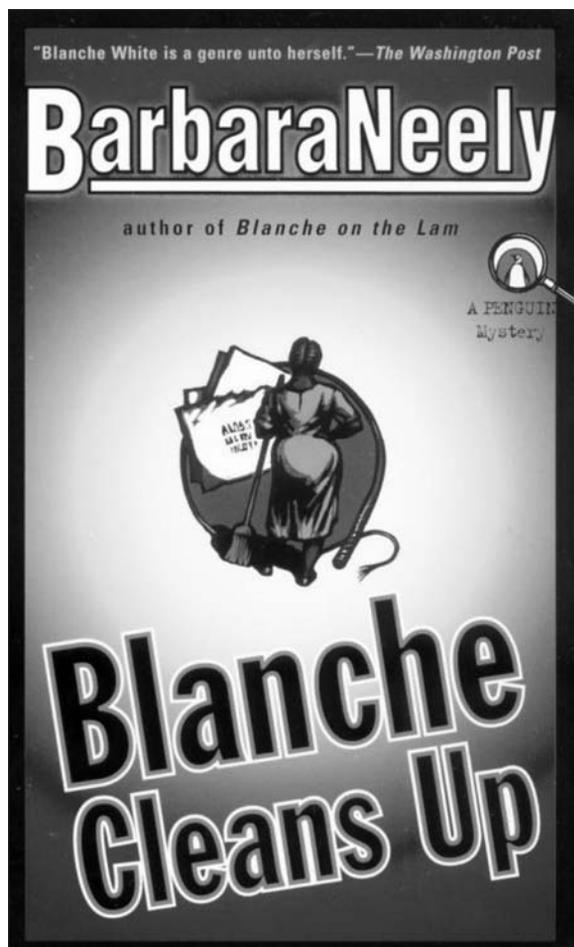
their white charges. *Blanche on the Lam* won several awards designated for an author's first novel: the Agatha, the Macavity, the Anthony, and the Go On Girl!

BLANCHE AMONG THE TALENTED TENTH

The title of Neely's second novel, *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth*, alludes to W. E. B. Du Bois's use of the phrase "the talented tenth" to describe the well-educated, affluent, socially prominent African American elite that he felt would be the catalyst for racial uplifting. Blanche, however, does not find sisterhood among this elite; instead, when she goes on vacation to a ritzy black resort on the coast of Maine, she is ostracized because she is dark-skinned. Blanche, as usual, has plenty to say about the situation, and her comments provide a critique of the color hierarchy among African Americans and the self-loathing that this hierarchy instills in many blacks. Blanche fumes about the popularity of skin lighteners, hair straighteners, and other beauty products meant to help blacks conform to white America's standards of beauty. Her anger is fueled by frustration: Her efforts to keep her daughter from accepting these values have been met with stubborn resistance. There is a mystery plot amid the commentary, and Blanche uncovers the truth about a death at the resort, but readers are more likely to be interested in Blanche's critiques of the black community's classism and color hierarchy, her rejection of "black" standards of beauty, and her personal quest for spiritual fulfillment—which involves spiritualist readings, invoking her ancestors, and rejection of any religion molded by white Western culture.

BLANCHE CLEANS UP

Set in Boston, where Blanche and her family have relocated, *Blanche Cleans Up* is the most urban of the Blanche mysteries. As usual, Neely's plot focuses on specific social issues, and her tone is set by Blanche's personality. Political corruption, teen pregnancy, pornography, homophobia, and urban environmental issues—specifically, lead poisoning—all get their share of the spotlight here. This novel also highlights more than others the struggles black mothers have in raising children healthy in both body and spirit in urban America. Blanche struggles to cope with her son's new pre-adolescent machismo and her daughter's self-esteem



issues, all the while trying to decide how to deal with the fact that both children are now young adults who will soon be making sexual decisions that could alter their lives. Meanwhile she becomes aware—as she had in *Blanche on the Lam*—of how much common ground working-class African Americans have with other marginalized persons, from gays to immigrants. The plot exposes the depth and scope of corruption in local politics, but it also suggests the possibility of getting results through working within the system—a lesson Blanche’s son learns as he ventures for the first time into social activism.

BLANCHE PASSES GO

Blanche Passes Go is Neely’s most feminist novel and Blanche’s most self-reflective story. Readers learned in the first novel in the series that years ago Blanche had been raped. She had kept quiet about the

incident and thought she had coped fairly well with the crime’s psychological aftermath. In this novel, though, Blanche moves back to Farleigh, North Carolina, to become a partner in her friend Ardell’s catering business and begins to reexperience her old terrors when she sees her rapist again. Her feeling that danger surrounds her is heightened as she begins to notice other acts of violence against women—a local young woman is killed, and a neighbor, she suspects, is being abused by her husband. Blanche soon realizes that her lack of closure is affecting her ability to trust any man—even the seemingly very nice man she has begun dating—and she resolves to deal with her feelings in a more open and honest way. She finally does so—and not only discovers the young woman’s murderer but also confronts her neighbor’s abuser and conquers her fears of her rapist.

Blanche’s crisis illustrates the lifelong effects of being a victim of violence. Because previous books so consistently portray Blanche as an assertive, in-your-face, no-holds-barred woman, this story provides a surprising—yet believable—new dimension to her character. Blanche’s vulnerability seems all the more poignant because it goes against readers’ expectations, and it makes her final triumph all the more satisfying.

Grace McEntee

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BLANCHE WHITE SERIES: *Blanche on the Lam*, 1992; *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth*, 1994; *Blanche Cleans Up*, 1998; *Blanche Passes Go*, 2000

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RICHARD NEELY

Born: New York, New York; April 18, 1920

Types of plot: Thriller; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Richard Neely's writing career is a success story: He has worked steadily at his craft and has seen his novels rise from paperback obscurity to the best-seller lists. He has not been a groundbreaker in the field, nor do lines of influence radiate from his work, yet that work has been consistent, never failing to show the touch of the professional.

BIOGRAPHY

Richard Neely was born on April 18, 1920, in New York City and attended high school in Montclair, New Jersey. Before turning to writing as a full-time career, Neely was first a newspaperman and then an advertising executive in New York. He settled in Marin County, California, north of San Francisco.

ANALYSIS

Although Richard Neely has more than a dozen novels to his credit, all of them reliant on "thriller" or suspense elements, his work cannot be fit comfortably into any generic pigeonhole. Neely writes about crimes and criminals, yet his novels seem only peripherally concerned with the psychology of crime. He places his characters in dire jeopardy, yet he does not insist that his readers earnestly desire their rescue. He often locates his characters among the new gentry of modern society, yet there is not an ounce of genuine social criticism to be found in any of his novels.

Two questions thus naturally present themselves: What is Neely after in his work and what are the most productive ways into his work? The answer to the first question is problematic and speculative; the second can be gotten at a bit more easily by considering the fictional world that Neely's thrillers (for lack of a more precise term) create.

In the world of the typical Neely thriller, the everyday codes of moral behavior have been suspended and replaced by a curiously ad hoc morality. In Neely's world, morality is situational in application and Darwinian in function. Significant human action is almost always governed by pragmatic rather than ethical exigencies. Value finally resides, if it exists at all in this mechanistic system, in survival and success. The abstract principles of innocence and guilt may have legal but seldom moral meaning; ideas of "good" and "evil," per se, have virtually no meaning at all.

As a result, Neely's men and women play out their dramas against a moral backdrop that is relativistic and frequently even neutral. The reader is invited to observe the goings-on from a distance that renders empathic or sympathetic involvement difficult. Even the most basic of reader responses—desiring success for some characters and failure for others—is only conditionally evoked. Consequently, just as other binary oppositions fail to yield much meaning, the categories of "hero" and "villain" seem moot. Yet there is a catch. Though legitimate heroes may be in short supply in Neely's world, most of the villains are small, relatively petty, and so paper-thin as to cast no appreciable shadows. (Compared with even a minor villain in a John D. MacDonald novel, they seem particularly bloodless.) From his distance, with no characters to applaud, the reader looks on dispassionately, engaged in the cool, primarily intellectual pleasures of anticipating the next plot twist and, ultimately, of determining "whodunit."

In most ways, Neely is a traditionalist. His characters, for example, are motivated exactly as though they were stock James M. Cain creations: That is, their crimes proceed from motives of lust (though seldom love), revenge, and—most important—money and the social and personal power that goes along with it.

AN ACCIDENTAL WOMAN

Neely is unusually hard on his women, who more often than not are portrayed as Circean seductresses who employ sex as a kind of emotional currency with a murderous rate of exchange. In fact, this view of women seems to be a hallmark of the Neely thriller. With few exceptions, women in significant roles are portrayed as cunning (though not always intelligent),

ruthless, and sexually opportunistic. This is true in one of Neely's first novels, *The Plastic Nightmare* (1969), and in one written almost ten years later, *Lies* (1978). In perhaps his most popularly successful work, *An Accidental Woman* (1981), the title character undergoes a slightly bungled brain operation that "accidentally" transforms her from a timid, sexually repressed being into a virtual nymphomaniac who uses and discards men at a speed even Harold Robbins might admire. That this woman's sexual "liberation" coincides with her meteoric rise up the corporate ladder in a Madison Avenue advertising agency suggests that Neely may be, if not quite a misogynist, at least a cynic.

Neely's male protagonists are scarcely more attractive. They range from a victimized amnesiac (*The Plastic Nightmare*) to a modern-day Jack the Ripper (*The Walter Syndrome*, 1970) to a cirrhotic newspaper editor who nearly kills his publisher in a drunken rage (*Shadows from the Past*, 1983). In *The Sexton Women* (1972), the putative "hero" is a Vietnam veteran turned would-be filmmaker who returns home long enough to bed his beautiful young stepmother and to get himself involved in other equally unsavory affairs. The two central male characters in *The Japanese Mistress* (1972) involve themselves in adultery, murder, extortion, and what seems—for a brief time—to be incest. The unfortunate protagonist of *A Madness of the Heart* (1976) enjoys a minor extramarital tryst, only to discover that while he was conveniently away, his wife was raped and murdered, leaving him the principal suspect.

What these characters seem to share, in addition to bad luck, is a certain native incompetence. Simply put, they are seldom up to the jobs Neely assigns them. Things may turn out relatively well (though Neely is not exactly generous with happy endings), but rarely as a direct result of their labors. At times it even seems that Neely takes pleasure in frustrating them. Terry Donovan, the ace reporter whose detective work accounts for a major chunk of *Shadows from the Past*, uncovers and doggedly pursues several intriguing red herrings (among them yet another hint of incest), but not a single item of real use in solving the novel's core mystery. His function seems to be to divert the reader's attention, the ironic joke perhaps being that the ace reporter does ab-

solutely no useful reporting. The one apparently competent male in *Lies* is Frank Reno, a tough ex-cop who claims to be very good at one thing: catching criminals. Yet the character who finally pieces together the puzzle and dramatically names the culprit is Lee Brewer, a handsome nobody whose sexual misadventures were partly responsible for three murders.

Readers who go knowingly to a Neely thriller are not likely to be in search of the perceptively keen, believable characters that can be found in the work of Elmore Leonard, nor are they likely to be after the complex, richly nuanced themes that mark Ross Macdonald's work. They go instead for the one pleasure that Neely offers and always delivers: a conclusion that will probably surprise even the most experienced veteran of the genre. To this end, Neely does not merely "twist" his plots; he wrings them into Gordian knots. At this aspect of his craft, Neely is something of a master. Particularly deft surprise endings can be found in *The Walter Syndrome*, *A Madness of the Heart*, and *No Certain Life* (1978).

THE WALTER SYNDROME

Such narrative victories, however, have their price. Moreover, one cannot help but wonder how many readers derive unmitigated pleasure from Neely's manipulations. *The Walter Syndrome* is a case in point. Here Neely's passion for the surprise runs him smack into the difficulties often attending "unreliable" first-person narrators, in this case the two halves of a split, homicidally deranged personality. By creating a kind of narrative liturgy, with each half of the principal narrator's personality alternately responding to the other, Neely manages to pull off a genuinely shocking conclusion, yet the reader is given little to hold onto during this roller-coaster ride. With one exception, the characters emerge as shabby, pitiful creatures whose lives lack even the quiet desperation that might make them worth the reader's time and sympathy. By allowing his mad narrator to tell his own story, Neely forces his reader into the role of father confessor. The result is too much like overhearing a lengthy obscene phone call: The initial titillation soon gives way to an uneasiness just short of embarrassment.

SHADOWS FROM THE PAST

Shadows from the Past, a later but less successful

work, is also revealing on this point. Here Neely presents his readers with a curiously fractured narrative: The first-person narrator, newspaper editor Max Willis, occasionally relinquishes his storytelling responsibilities to an unnamed third-person narrator, the point—presumably—being to heighten the suspense of discovering just who might have wanted to put a bullet in the head of Charles Dain, Willis's rich, handsome, somewhat priapic publisher. The sadly anticlimactic payoff (related by Dain, fresh out of a coma) is the revelation that the assailant was Max Willis himself. The reader, unfortunately, must trudge through more than three hundred pages to arrive at this knowledge—too stiff a cost for the sake of another surprise ending.

To return to the question previously asked: What is Neely trying to achieve? A proper answer must begin with a frank acknowledgment both of Neely's skills and of his limitations. As what Graham Greene might call "entertainments," most of Neely's books come off reasonably well. Four of his most readable novels—*The Plastic Nightmare*, *The Walter Syndrome*, *The Japanese Mistress*, and *Lies*—are honest, workmanlike attempts to engage the reader's interest in characters that are seriously flawed and unattractive. This is no easy task, and Neely should be commended for maintaining what seems the courage of his convictions. If these novels finally lack art, they do not lack craft; readers will not be disappointed. *The Smith Conspiracy* (1972), a political assassination thriller reminiscent of Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959), also passes muster. Less successful are Neely's attempts to transcend his own limitations in ambitiously "big" novels. What he seems unable to capture winningly is the "feel"—the multilayered texture—of a particularly rich time and place. *Shadows from the Past*, with its suggestions of *Citizen Kane* (1941), is largely unsuccessful at re-creating New York in the 1940's. Without that background to illuminate them, Neely's characters skitter one-dimensionally across a dim surface. This is even more the case in *An Accidental Woman*, whose Madison Avenue setting fails to convince and whose array of stereotyped characters fails to interest the reader.

Michael Stuprich

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Death to My Beloved*, 1969; *The Plastic Nightmare*, 1969; *While Love Lay Sleeping*, 1969; *The Walter Syndrome*, 1970; *The Damned Innocents*, 1971 (also known as *Dirty Hands*); *The Japanese Mistress*, 1972; *The Sexton Women*, 1972; *The Smith Conspiracy*, 1972; *The Ridgway Women*, 1975; *A Madness of the Heart*, 1976; *Lies*, 1978; *No Certain Life*, 1978; *The Obligation*, 1979; *An Accidental Woman*, 1981; *Shadows from the Past*, 1983

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O

CAROL O'CONNELL

Born: New York, New York; May 26, 1947

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kathy Mallory, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

KATHY MALLORY, a New York Police Department sergeant, was a child living on the streets when she was caught stealing by New York police inspector Louis Markowitz, who, with his wife, Helen, raised the girl. There are many facets to Mallory: the computer hacker, the police sergeant, the dutiful daughter, the lost child, the sociopath, and the vengeful, rebellious girl. Mallory ("not Kathy") is an extremely aloof, even feral, but highly intelligent young woman. She is repeatedly depicted as a gunslinger, at times wearing a duster or a cowboy hat, flipping back her jacket to display her gun, or sharpshooting a gun out of someone's hand. Her sense of morality was developed during her early years on the street fending for herself and is tempered by the influence of her foster mother and father: Mallory has her own code of honor and conduct, similar to a gunslinger's ideology with an overall theme of an eye for an eye.

CONTRIBUTION

Carol O'Connell's first novel, *Mallory's Oracle* (1994), was very well received by readers and reviewers, lauded as a completely new mystery with an original character, and nominated for an Edgar Award. The novel brings in elements of many genres, crossing the police procedural and the cozy mystery with a bit of contemporary intrigue and a gothic air. *Mallory's Oracle* reinvents the mystery genre, partly by creating a character who is almost too dysfunctional not to be real. The plot has many twists and turns, drawing dis-

parate events or random details together and weaving them into a complex story line that moves toward an inevitable but unpredictable conclusion.

Kathy Mallory is an innovative main character, engaging and perplexing at the same time; this causes the reader to wonder about her, trying to divine what is going through her head or why she did something. Her character, even as the series progresses and more of her background is revealed, remains an enigma. Therefore, O'Connell's novels featuring Mallory are always compelling and fresh, the last one as gripping as the first.

BIOGRAPHY

Carol O'Connell was born May 26, 1947, in New York to Norman O'Connell, an accountant, and Berta O'Connell. She received a bachelor of fine arts from Arizona State University and trained as a painter at the California Institute for the Arts. She lived as a surrealist painter for several years in Greenwich Village, supplementing her income with such freelance jobs as copy editing and proofreading.

In her forties, O'Connell turned to writing. She made many submissions to American publishers without much luck, finally deciding that she might have a better chance with British publishers. The character of Kathy Mallory was born in a manuscript called "Whistling Dogs," which was not specifically about Mallory but rather about a police officer named Louis Markowitz. O'Connell has said that both characters were so strong that they were at odds. She sent this manuscript to Hutchison, the publisher of one of her favorite writers, Ruth Rendell. This first manuscript was turned down, but the rejection letter was complimentary enough to give O'Connell some direction and encouragement.

O'Connell was forty-six years of age before she finally achieved success as a writer of mysteries with a

second manuscript sent to Hutchison, this one with Kathy Mallory as the primary character, investigating the murder of her foster father, Louis Markowitz. The manuscript was immediately recognized by publishers as an imaginative and engaging work, garnering interest on both sides of the Atlantic, and at the Frankfurt Book Fair, it sold to Dutch, French, and German publishers. It was also sold for \$800,000 to an American publisher, who published it as *Mallory's Oracle*.

It may be that O'Connell's past struggles have made her conservative, for she treats writing as both a calling and a commitment, working more than eight hours a day and essentially publishing a new book every year, all written to the same caliber and level of innovation as her first one.

ANALYSIS

Mallory's Oracle is both a traditional mystery and a psychological thriller, in which the investigator tries to figure out the motives of the killer and understand the crime from the killer's perspective. The reader becomes intrigued trying to determine the motivations of Sergeant Kathy Mallory, who is stalking the suspect. O'Connell's work is noteworthy for its compelling characters, who have the depth and grittiness that make them resemble real-life people.

Mallory is socially dysfunctional, even perhaps sociopathic, and a genius with the face of an angel and an ability to draw people to her. To her friends, there are two sides to Mallory: the lost child and the vengeful police officer, two personas that may seem at odds but are perfect complements. Her friends are both charmed by her and afraid of her, and they find it difficult to predict how she will react or know what she is thinking.

Charles Butler, the one character in the series who could be called noble, seems to stand apart from the action, almost as if he is representing the reader. He is often accused of being gallant or "born in the wrong century." In the beginning of the series, he makes a living by investigating unusual talents and debunking the paranormal. The perfect foil for Mallory, he partners with her on a professional level and balances her on a personal level with his optimistic point of view.

Louis and Helen Markowitz, Mallory's foster family, play a large role in the series, although Louis is a

widower who dies in the first novel. The couple act as Mallory's conscience, lurking in the background and stopping her from acting inappropriately so that she can interact in polite society. Because Mallory is most likely a sociopath, she can clearly understand what motivates criminals. This trait also allows her to blackmail people for the information she needs to find the answers. Mallory lacks a real conscience, but she is not without feeling; however, her feelings resemble those of a young child or a wild animal, intense and uncontrolled. As opposed to struggling in a male-dominated world, she dominates it, drawing men to her even as they realize that she is using them. In a real sense, she is a femme fatale. She is a gifted liar whose philosophy, learned at Louis Markowitz's knee, is "Everybody lies," and who knows how to figuratively cut the truth out of people.

O'Connell's books are somewhat different in that the plot always contains two equally compelling mysteries: the murder or crime that Mallory is trying to unravel professionally and the mystery surrounding Mallory—her origins and the forces that shaped her personality. Each novel reveals a major piece of the puzzle: who her mother was, where Mallory came from, why she left her home, what she did on the street, who her father was, how she was found, and how she came to be a police officer. It is the mystery around Mallory that makes this series so engaging and appeals to the reader at least as much as if not more than the solution to the murder.

O'Connell retains a third-person point of view in her novels but tells the story from the perspective of nearly every character—Detective Riker, Charles Butler, Lieutenant Coffey, and even the murderer—but almost never Mallory.

MALLORY'S ORACLE

Mallory's Oracle, published in 1994, contains a mixture of old magic tricks, spirit mediums, and good old-fashioned greed. It opens with the murder of Louis Markowitz and the impact it has on his foster daughter, Kathy Mallory, who is a sergeant with the New York Police Department. She is ordered to take bereavement leave and does not hesitate to do so, starting an investigation of her own and becoming a partner in a consulting firm owned by Charles Butler, a friend of

the Markowitz family. Butler has earned a livelihood by identifying “special” talents and advising people on the most productive way to use them as well as by debunking the supernatural. Their first case together concerns a young boy who may be psychokinetic or haunted; inexplicably, knives have gravitated toward his stepmothers, the first two of whom have died under suspicious circumstances.

In pursuing the mystery surrounding Markowitz's death, Mallory moves into an apartment building where she believes the killer lives and gets to know the residents (or, in her mind, suspects), including Butler's aunt. The aunt has made a name for herself as a medium and is the widow of a famous magician who died in a spectacular magic trick gone wrong, an accident that she predicted. The interaction between Mallory and the other residents involves much verbal and non-verbal fencing, with a finale that eclipses all predictions.

THE MAN WHO CAST TWO SHADOWS

The Man Who Cast Two Shadows (1995) opens with the murder of a woman who looks like Mallory, and initially, a number of Mallory's friends assume that she has been killed. Mallory, decidedly alive, resolves to investigate the murder. It becomes a cat-and-cat game with the killer—one stalking the other, one taunting the other.

Charles Butler sheds some light on Mallory's psyche as he reaches a conclusion:

And now his eyes took on some pain as he clearly understood their separate roles in this business. Mallory could crawl into the mind of a killer with disturbing ease. She had left the difficult job to him, the job of identifying with a frail human being who had no pathology or defenses in a brutal landscape peopled with those whom Mallory best identified with. . . . And a game it was to Mallory. Murder was the best game.

In a way, Mallory maneuvers her friends as much as her suspects, in an effort to get to the truth.

Charles also builds his own sense of reality, employing a technique learned from his uncle, a former magician who talks to his dead wife: Charles starts an imaginary relationship with the victim who resembled Mallory, and she becomes what he wants Mallory to

be, revealing his own growing feelings for her. His compassion for Mallory is only strengthened when it is revealed that when Mallory was a child, the makers of a snuff film had intended to make her their victim. This he sees as a possible reason for her present emotional dysfunction.

STONE ANGEL

Stone Angel (1997) provides many answers to the mysteries regarding Mallory's childhood, her pathology, and even her name. Mallory returns to the town in Louisiana where she grew up and where her mother was stoned to death. In the graveyard in this town stands a stone angel carved in the likeness of Mallory's mother and in her honor; it is the spitting image of Mallory. The bayou provides a lush and mysterious backdrop for the story, which starts out with an autistic savant having his hands broken for playing piano, Mallory saving a sheriff's deputy who had a heart attack, and a faith healer being murdered. The day concludes with Mallory in jail.

The characters are memorable and steeped in southern culture, including a clever, aging southern belle who does a lot of plotting of her own. The stage is set for determining not just who killed the faith healer but also who was involved in stoning Mallory's mother seventeen years before and why. Although the details of her early childhood are revealed, Mallory remains an enigmatic character, and even her friends Charles and Riker do not know what kind of retribution she has in mind for the mob that killed her mother.

The mysteries are intertwined, as many such stories are in small towns. In spite of Mallory's ferocious tendencies, everyone is trying to protect her from herself, from the truth, and from the killers. Through it all, Mallory has set the scene in an effort to find and punish the killers—regardless of the collateral damage. However, she does achieve her end. Always knowing how to make an exit, she walks off into the sunset, and despite his best intentions, Charles follows her.

JUDAS CHILD

In *Judas Child* (1998), O'Connell took a break from Kathy Mallory and introduced two new characters, Rouge Kendall and Ali Cray. Kendall is a police officer investigating the disappearance of two girls who have been kidnapped, as his own twin sister was

many years ago. Ali Cray is a forensic psychologist specializing in pedophiles who enters the picture with a secret of her own.

Running throughout this story is guilt: the guilt of a parent whose child has been taken; the guilt of a psychiatrist maintaining the confidentiality of a repeat pedophile and serial murder; the guilt of a childhood friend used as a lure, or Judas goat, to catch her friend; the guilt of the surviving twin; and the guilt that comes from punishing the wrong suspect. Redemption and forgiveness bring the story to a close.

After *Judas Child*, O'Connell returned to the overwhelmingly successful Mallory series, publishing *Shell Game* (1999), *Crime School* (2002), *Dead Famous* (2003), and *Find Me* (2006).

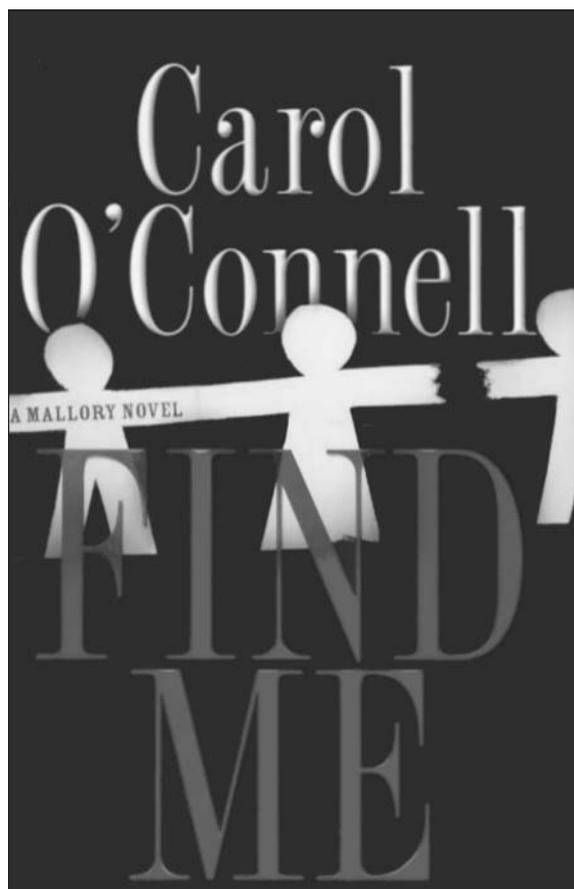
FIND ME

Find Me is the story of a serial killer who over the years has abducted and killed children along Route 66

as a tribute to the Mother Road. The story begins with a woman found dead in Mallory's apartment and Mallory nowhere to be found. Ultimately, Charles and Riker track her to Chicago, where she is peripheral to an investigation into a murder. The murder is of a parent of one of the missing children who are presumed victims of the Route 66 serial killer. Charles, Riker, and Mallory then join a caravan formed by the families of the missing children and fraternize with Federal Bureau of Investigation agents who are led by a seemingly incompetent and self-absorbed agent who has a lot of information he is not sharing.

More murders ensue, including the death of a former priest/psychologist who has been counseling the killer, all leading to the abduction of a child, sister to one of the missing children. Mallory uses a pipe and her Volkswagen to ram and impale the killer, leaving the abducted child unharmed in the seat next to him. The story ends with Mallory surprising her long-lost father, who never knew she existed. His surprise is palpable, and Mallory's response, bizarrely enough, is laughter.

Wendi Arant Kaspar



PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KATHY MALLORY SERIES: *Mallory's Oracle*, 1994; *The Man Who Cast Two Shadows*, 1995 (also known as *The Man Who Lied to Women*); *Killing Critics*, 1996; *Stone Angel*, 1997 (also known as *Flight of the Stone Angel*); *Shell Game*, 1999; *Crime School*, 2002; *Dead Famous*, 2003 (also known as *The Jury Must Die*); *Find Me*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Judas Child*, 1998

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Dubose, Martha Hailey. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. A look at female mystery writers from Mary Roberts Rinehart to cozy writers such as Agatha Christie to modern writers such as Sue Grafton. Brief biography of O'Connell gives a sense of how her works differ from those of her contemporaries and earlier female mystery writers.

Gaughan, Thomas. Review of *Find Me*, by Carol

O'Connell. *Booklist* 103, no. 4 (October 15, 2006): 32. Reviewer finds the work to be "dense, demanding, and very powerful," although he found that some of the subplots did not work as well.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Discusses O'Connell's work and her life and their interactions.

O'Connell, Carol. "The Booklist Interview." Interview by Emily Melton. *Booklist* 94, no. 16 (April 15, 1998): 1370-1371. Interview discusses how O'Con-

nell developed her character and how she prepares for writing.

Shindler, Dorman T. "Mallory's True Oracle: An Interview with Carol O'Connell." *The Armchair Detective* 28, no. 4 (1995): 440-443. Discussion with the author of the primary character and how she came to be published.

Smith, Julia Llewellyn. "Prime Time for a Crime Writer." *The Times*, May 11, 1994. Background on the author including an interview, details of her life, and her perspectives on writing.

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Born: London, England; October 22, 1866

Died: St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands; February 3, 1946

Also wrote as Anthony Partridge

Types of plot: Espionage; thriller; police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

E. Phillips Oppenheim contributed more than 150 novels to the mystery and detective genre. Because he served in the British Ministry of Information during World War I, Oppenheim was privy to at least some of the workings of the British Secret Service, and his protagonists are frequently Secret Service employees. There are no detective series in Oppenheim's work; each novel introduces a new set of characters. Oppenheim wrote about wealthy supermen and their way of life. His largely upper-class characters share a love of good wine and smoke exotic cigarettes. The women are beautiful and virtuous. While the men fall in love in almost every novel, the excitement of adventure takes precedence over that of romance. Oppenheim claimed to have begun each book with "a sense of the first chapter and an inkling of something to follow," and his plots are rarely dull.

That the plots of his immense oeuvre are not repetitive is a credit to Oppenheim's fertile imagination.

Most of his books involve some kind of international intrigue, and many of them reveal a surprise hero. His single greatest literary influence was probably his neighbor in the French Riviera, Baroness Orczy, author of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905). Louis, the maître d' of the Milan Hotel in *A Pulpit in the Grill Room* (1938) and *The Milan Grill Room: Further Adventures of Louis, the Manager, and Major Lyson, the Raconteur* (1940), is reminiscent of Orczy's armchair detective, the Old Man in the Corner.

BIOGRAPHY

Edward Phillips Oppenheim was born in London on October 22, 1866. He left the Wyggeston Grammar School in Leicester in 1882 before graduation because his father, a leather merchant, was having financial problems. During World War I, Oppenheim served in the Ministry of Information, an experience that fed his imagination and allowed him to write so many novels of international intrigue. He married New Englander Elsie Hopkins, and the couple had one daughter. Until World War II, they lived on the French Riviera; forced to leave, they moved to Guernsey, in the Channel Islands. Oppenheim, who occasionally wrote under the name Anthony Partridge, died in St. Peter Port, Guernsey, on February 3, 1946.

ANALYSIS

E. Phillips Oppenheim, dubbed “The Prince of Storytellers,” was a master of the spy novel. As a longtime resident of the French Riviera, Oppenheim kept his finger on the European pulse; he located his intrigues in Poland, Russia, England, and Africa, as well as in a small, imaginary European country. He was a monarchist whose characters did not like Germany, Russia, socialism, or communism. Oppenheim boasted that he had foreseen the expansionist ambitions of Russia, Japan, and, particularly, Germany. His writing before World War I was so anti-German, in fact, that his name was on a list of British citizens to be eradicated if the Germans successfully invaded England. Ironically, when the Germans did obtain control of the Channel Islands, the Luftwaffe chose Oppenheim’s house on Guernsey as their headquarters.

In *A Maker of History* (1905), a young Englishman obtains a copy of a secret treaty between the kaiser and the czar detailing an agreement to wage war against England. In *The Double Traitor* (1915), a diplomat ob-

tains a list of the German spies in England and is able to identify them when war breaks out. In *The Kingdom of the Blind* (1916), an English aristocrat proves to be a German spy. Oppenheim had little faith in the ability of the League of Nations or the United Nations to obtain a permanent world peace, and he frequently emphasized the power and importance of secret societies engaged in world trade.

MYSTERIOUS MR. SABIN

Among the novels that established Oppenheim’s reputation as a spy novelist was *Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (1898), in which the protagonist steals British defense documents to sell to Germany. He plans to use the money to finance a new French revolution. Sabin’s secret society, however, orders him to burn the documents obtained through blackmail, and Sabin must convince the other characters that he meant well all along.

THE GREAT IMPERSONATION

Another successful novel, *The Great Impersonation* (1920), describes the impersonation of the German major-general Baron Leopold von Ragastein in England of his former Etonian classmate Everard Dominey. Ragastein’s intent is to influence enough British citizens to keep England from entering World War I against Germany. His attempt is frustrated by his double, Dominey, a British aristocrat who has become an alcoholic. (This novel was later adapted as a film, featuring Edmund Lowe.)

THE DUMB GODS SPEAK AND THE WRATH TO COME

In the prophetic novel *The Dumb Gods Speak* (1937), Oppenheim describes the discovery of an all-powerful weapon in the year 1947. It is not an atomic bomb; rather, it is an electrical ray that can stop fleets of warships in the ocean without any casualties. In the novel, a single American warship defeats Japan by immobilizing its entire fleet. The people of the world deplore this action so much that they legislate against any future wars. In *The Wrath to Come* (1924), a German-Japanese plot for a joint attack on the United States is uncovered and prevented by the appearance of a *deus ex machina* in the form of a document.

MISS BROWN OF X.Y.O.

In the novel *Miss Brown of X.Y.O.* (1927), the bored secretary Miss Brown is sitting on the steps of a



E. Phillips Oppenheim. (Library of Congress)

London mansion with her typewriter when she is called in to take a deposition from a dying famous explorer. If the dictated information should fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, a European war would result. The dying explorer proves to be a healthy secret agent, and after withstanding many enemy attempts to steal the important document, Miss Brown and the agent not only save Europe from war but also fall in love.

UP THE LADDER OF GOLD AND THE GALLOWES OF CHANCE

Oppenheim's sympathy with the wealthy and aristocratic is demonstrated in both *Up the Ladder of Gold* (1931) and *The Gallows of Chance* (1934). In the first novel, a fantasy about the power of money, the rich American Warren Rand corners the gold market and, using this power, tries to persuade the nations of the world not to go to war for forty years. Rand commits crimes for a good cause, and clearly Oppenheim approved. In *The Gallows of Chance*, Lord Edward Keynsham, a member of an illegal bootlegging syndicate, is allowed to escape indictment for murder because he is beloved in his community. Indeed, he will marry his love, Katherine Brandt, an otherwise law-abiding leading actress who knows of his crimes. His best friend, Sir Humphrey Rossiter, resigns as home secretary to escape the duty of prosecuting Lord Edward. This occurs in spite of the fact that Lord Edward and his syndicate had kidnapped Sir Humphrey and threatened to hang him unless he met their demands to stay the execution of a convicted murderer.

MR. MIRAKEL

In *Mr. Mirakel* (1943), the protagonist sets up a utopia to which he takes his followers; they escape with him, not only from war but also from an earthquake. The powerful leader is able to convince his followers that they will achieve a lasting peace.

THE SEVEN CONUNDRUMS

One of Oppenheim's most unusual books, *The Seven Conundrums* (1923), has a Faustian theme. Maurice Little, Leonard Cotton, and Rose Mindel, three down-at-the-heel performers, sell their souls to Richard Thomson in return for professional and financial success. In seven different actions, the three go where they are told and carry out Thomson's typed and mysteriously delivered orders. After each order is carried out, they ques-

tion Thomson. Instead of a reply, he counters with "That is the First [or Second . . .] Conundrum." Although the performers refer to Thomson as Mephistopheles privately, he promises to return their souls at the end of a year; at that time, he supplies answers to all seven conundrums and reveals his own identity as a member of the British Secret Service. The structure, the allusions, and the credible love story make *The Seven Conundrums* one of Oppenheim's finest works of fiction.

THE OSTREKOFF JEWELS

Although many of Oppenheim's tales of intrigue involve spies acting alone, *The Ostrekoff Jewels* (1932) pits American diplomat Wilfred Haven against a beautiful Russian spy, Anna. The two escape from Russia together, the last leg of their journey to England taking place on a commandeered, antiquated, German plane. Not until the end of the novel does Wilfred trust Anna, although he had fallen in love with her at first sight. She proves to be the Princess Ostrekoff, the rightful owner of the crown jewels for which Wilfred has risked life and career.

THE STRANGERS' GATE

Mr. Treyer in *The Strangers' Gate* (1939) is another of the Germans determined to topple the British government. In this story, Nigel Beverley, president of a British-owned company, represents the Crown. In a situation unusual for an Oppenheim protagonist, Nigel has to choose between three women: his fiancé, a wealthy socialite who is the daughter of his business partner, Lord Portington; Katrina, a beautiful opera singer who is the mistress of Prince Nicolas of Orlac and who makes advances toward Nigel; and Marya, an impoverished princess from Orlac who has been reared in a convent. Nigel chooses the innocent Marya, who will learn how to be the wife of a businessman-socialite. The action centers on the conflicting attempts of Great Britain and Germany to control the bauxite mines of Orlac.

Whether detective story or straight espionage, Oppenheim's fiction is infused with his love of storytelling. So successful was his writing career that Oppenheim was able to enjoy the same luxurious lifestyle of many of his characters. Read by millions of thrill seekers, his works betray his interest in "world domination

for good purpose, especially pacifism, his admiration for the superman of wealth, and his fascination with the game of world politics played as on a chess board.”

Sue Laslie Kimball

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1887-1900 • *Expiation*, 1887; *The Peer and the Woman*, 1892; *A Monk of Cruta*, 1894 (also known as *The Tragedy of Andrea*); *A Daughter of the Marionis*, 1895 (also known as *To Win the Love He Sought*); *A Modern Prometheus*, 1896; *False Evidence*, 1896; *The Mystery of Mr. Bernard Brown*, 1896 (also known as *The New Tenant and His Father's Crime*); *The Postmaster of Market Deighton*, 1896; *The Wooing of Fortune*, 1896; *The World's Great Snare*, 1896; *The Amazing Judgment*, 1897; *A Daughter of Astrea*, 1898; *As a Man Lives*, 1898 (also known as *The Yellow House*); *Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, 1898; *Mr. Marx's Secret*, 1899; *The Man and His Kingdom*, 1899; *A Millionaire of Yesterday*, 1900

1901-1910 • *Master of Men*, 1901 (also known as *Enoch Strone*); *The Survivor*, 1901; *The Great Awakening*, 1902 (also known as *A Sleeping Memory*); *The Traitors*, 1902; *A Prince of Sinners*, 1903; *The Yellow Crayon*, 1903; *Anna the Adventuress*, 1904; *The Betrayal*, 1904; *The Master Mummer*, 1904; *A Maker of History*, 1905; *A Lost Leader*, 1906; *Mr. Wingrave, Millionaire*, 1906 (also known as *The Malefactor*); *Berenice*, 1907; *Conspirators*, 1907 (also known as *The Avenger*); *The Missioner*, 1907; *The Secret*, 1907 (also known as *The Great Secret*); *The Vindicator*, 1907; *Jeanne of the Marshes*, 1908; *The Ghosts of Society*, 1908 (also known as *The Distributors*); *The Governors*, 1908; *The Kingdom of Earth*, 1909 (also known as *The Black Watcher*); *Passers-By*, 1910; *The Golden Web*, 1910 (also known as *The Plunderers*); *The Illustrious Prince*, 1910; *The Missing Delora*, 1910 (also known as *The Lost Ambassador*); *The Moving Finger*, 1910 (also known as *The Falling Star*)

1911-1920 • *Havoc*, 1911; *The Tempting of Taver-nake*, 1911 (also known as *The Temptation of Taver-nake*); *The Court of St. Simon*, 1912 (also known as *Seeing Life*); *The Lighted Way*, 1912; *The Mischief-Maker*, 1912; *The Double Life of Mr. Alfred Burton*, 1913; *The Way of These Women*, 1913; *A People's*

Man, 1914; *The Black Box*, 1914; *The Vanished Messenger*, 1914; *Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo*, 1915; *The Double Traitor*, 1915; *The Kingdom of the Blind*, 1916; *The Cinema Murder*, 1917 (also known as *The Other Romilly*); *The Hillman*, 1917; *The Curious Quest*, 1918 (also known as *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss*); *The Pawns Count*, 1918; *The Zep-pelin's Passenger*, 1918 (also known as *Mr. Lessing-ham Goes Home*); *The Strange Case of Mr. Jocelyn Thew*, 1919 (also known as *The Box with Broken Seals*); *The Wicked Marquis*, 1919; *The Devil's Paw*, 1920; *The Great Impersonation*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Jacob's Ladder*, 1921; *Nobody's Man*, 1921; *The Profiteers*, 1921; *The Evil Shepherd*, 1922; *The Great Prince Shan*, 1922; *The Inevitable Millionaires*, 1923; *The Mystery Road*, 1923; *The Passionate Quest*, 1924; *The Wrath to Come*, 1924; *Gabriel Samara*, 1925 (also known as *Gabriel Sam-ara, Peacemaker*); *Stolen Idols*, 1925; *Harvey Gar-rard's Crime*, 1926; *Prodigals of Monte Carlo*, 1926; *The Golden Beast*, 1926; *The Interloper*, 1926 (also known as *The Ex-Duke*); *Miss Brown of X.Y.O.*, 1927; *Matorni's Vineyard*, 1928; *The Fortunate Wayfarer*, 1928; *The Light Beyond*, 1928; *Blackman's Wood*, 1929; *The Glenlitten Murder*, 1929; *The Treasure House of Martin Hews*, 1929; *The Lion and the Lamb*, 1930; *The Million Pound Deposit*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Simple Peter Cradd*, 1931; *Up the Ladder of Gold*, 1931; *Moran Chambers Smiled*, 1932 (also known as *The Man from Sing Sing*); *The Ostrekoff Jewels*, 1932; *Jeremiah and the Princess*, 1933; *Murder at Monte Carlo*, 1933; *The Bank Man-ager*, 1934 (also known as *The Man Without Nerves*); *The Gallows of Chance*, 1934; *The Strange Boarders of Palace Crescent*, 1934; *The Battle of Basinghall Street*, 1935; *The Spy Paramount*, 1935; *Judy of Bunter's Buildings*, 1936 (also known as *The Magnifi-cent Hoax*); *The Bird of Paradise*, 1936 (also known as *Floating Peril*); *Envoy Extraordinary*, 1937; *The Dumb Gods Speak*, 1937; *The Mayor on Horseback*, 1937; *The Colossus of Arcadia*, 1938; *The Spymaster*, 1938; *Exit a Dictator*, 1939; *Sir Adam Disappeared*, 1939; *The Strangers' Gate*, 1939; *The Grassleyes Mystery*, 1940

1941-1943 • *Last Train Out*, 1941; *The Shy Pluto-*

crat, 1941; *The Man Who Changed His Plea*, 1942; *Mr. Mirakel*, 1943

SHORT FICTION: 1908-1920 • *The Long Arm of Mannister*, 1908; *The Double Four*, 1911 (also known as *Peter Ruff and the Double Four*); *For the Queen*, 1912; *Peter Ruff*, 1912; *Those Other Days*, 1912; *Mr. Laxworthy's Adventures*, 1913; *The Amazing Partnership*, 1914; *The Game of Liberty*, 1915 (also known as *The Amiable Charlatan*); *Mysteries of the Riviera*, 1916; *Aaron Rod, Diviner*, 1920; *Ambrose Lavendale, Diplomat*, 1920; *The Honourable Algernon Knox, Detective*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Michael's Evil Deeds*, 1923; *The Seven Conundrums*, 1923; *The Terrible Hobby of Sir Joseph Londe, Bt.*, 1924; *The Adventures of Mr. Joseph P. Cray*, 1925; *The Little Gentleman from Okehampstead*, 1926; *Madame*, 1927 (also known as *Madame and Her Twelve Virgins*); *Mr. Billingham, the Marquis and Madelon*, 1927; *Nicholas Goade, Detective*, 1927; *The Channay Syndicate*, 1927; *Chronicles of Melhampton*, 1928; *The Exploits of Pudgy Pete and Co.*, 1928; *Jennerton and Co.*, 1929; *The Human Chase*, 1929; *What Happened to Forester*, 1929; *Slane's Long Shots*, 1930

1931-1944 • *Inspector Dickins Retires*, 1931 (also known as *Gangster's Glory*); *Sinners Beware*, 1931; *Crooks in the Sunshine*, 1932; *The Ex-Detective*, 1933; *Advice Limited*, 1935; *General Besserley's Puzzle Box*, 1935; *Ask Miss Mott*, 1936; *Curious Happenings to the Rooke Legatees*, 1937; *A Pulpit in the Grill Room*, 1938; *And Still I Cheat the Gallows: A Series of Stories*, 1938; *General Besserley's Second Puzzle Box*, 1939; *The Milan Grill Room: Further Adventures of Louis, the Manager, and Major Lyson, the Raconteur*, 1940; *The Great Bear*, 1943; *The Man Who Thought He Was a Pauper*, 1943; *The Hour of Reckoning, and The Mayor of Ballydaghan*, 1944

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *The Money-Spider*, pr. 1908; *The King's Cup*, pr. 1909 (with H. D. Bradley); *The Gilded Key*, pr. 1910; *The Eclipse*, pr. 1919 (with Fred Thompson)

NONFICTION: *My Books and Myself*, 1922; *The Quest for Winter Sunshine*, 1927; *The Pool of Memory: Memoirs*, 1941

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Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies to actual intelligence agents with the aim of demonstrating that truth is stranger than fiction. Although he does not mention Oppenheim, this work provides context for understanding his work.

Overton, Grant. "A Great Impersonation by E. Phillips Oppenheim." In *Cargoes for Crusoes*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1924. This essay on Oppenheim's work forms part of a wide-ranging study of 1920's literature and culture. An idiosyncratic but useful reading.

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Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on crime thrillers that provides a perspective on Oppenheim's work.

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BARONESS ORCZY

Emma Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy

Born: Tarna-Örs, Hungary; September 23, 1865

Died: London, England; November 12, 1947

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Old Man in the Corner, 1905-1925

Lady Molly of Scotland Yard, 1910

Patrick Mulligan, 1928

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE OLD MAN IN THE CORNER (BILL OWEN) is an extremely eccentric man who spends much of his time in a restaurant, the A.B.C. Shop, working untiringly at tying and untying knots in a piece of string. He is ageless and apparently unchanging. Not much concerned with justice or morality, he is interested in crime “only when it resembles a clever game of chess, with many intricate moves which all tend to one solution, the checkmating of the antagonist—the detective force of the country.”

POLLY BURTON, a journalist, is the Old Man in the Corner’s foil. An invariably baffled reader of stories of mysterious deaths in the newspapers, she comes to the A.B.C. Shop to hear the old man unravel the mystery.

LADY MOLLY OF SCOTLAND YARD is a strong-willed, direct, and clever woman who time after time manages to beat her male colleagues at the game of crime solving. She is somewhat of a feminist, if only in the sense that she claims that her feminine intuition—as opposed, presumably, to male intellect and logical thinking—equips her better for the job of detecting than any man.

MARY is Lady Molly’s confidant and foil. This young police officer tells the story and represents the intrigued but skeptical reader.

PATRICK MULLIGAN, an Irish lawyer, is a hero of still another volume of detective stories written by the prolific baroness. Both the Lady Molly and the Patrick Mulligan stories are far inferior to the first two volumes of stories about the Old Man in the Corner, although they are very similar in construction and execution.

CONTRIBUTION

One student of crime literature calls Baroness Orczy’s stories about the Old Man in the Corner “the first significant modern stories about an armchair detective.” They are also rather unusual because of the purely cerebral interest the old man has in crime as a kind of mind game. The extent of his amorality is brought out in the story of “The Mysterious Death in Percy Street.” In this story, Polly Burton realizes, after the old man has laid all the evidence and a damning piece of evidence—a length of rope with expert knots in it—before her, that the old man is the murderer, reveling in his own cleverness.

All the stories about the Old Man in the Corner and his journalist friend, Polly Burton, are set in the A.B.C. Shop, where he habitually sits, as the baroness describes him in her autobiography, “in his big checked ulster [and] his horn-rimmed spectacles,” with “his cracked voice and dribbling nose and above all . . . his lean, bony fingers fidgeting, always fidgeting with a bit of string.” Either he or Polly brings up some mysterious death or crime that is currently intriguing the public. The events are outlined by the old man, who, when he is not sitting in his corner, is an avid reader of newspapers and spectator in courtrooms. He is unfailingly—and jeeringly—contemptuous of the police and their feeble efforts at untying the knots clever criminals tie. With Polly as a respectful but not necessarily credulous listener, he proceeds—once the facts as he sees them are presented—to point to the logical and necessary solution to the mystery. He scoffs at offering his insights to the police because he is sure that they would not listen to him, a mere amateur, and because he admires the clever criminal who can outwit the entire Scotland Yard. Thus, the emphasis is on the ingeniously planned crime and the intelligent, rigidly logical unraveling of it, not on psychology, human relations, or morality.

BIOGRAPHY

Emma Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy was born in Hungary on September 23, 1865,

the daughter of Baron Felix Orczy, an able composer and conductor, and Emma (née Wass) Orczy. Problems, including a peasant uprising, persuaded the Orczys to move first to Budapest, then to Brussels, followed by Paris and, finally, London. Young Emma, or Emmuska, as she preferred to be called, was educated first as a musician and later, when it was decided on the advice of Franz Liszt—a family friend—that she did not have the gift of music, as an artist. Emmuska attended the West London and Heatherly schools of art. She showed promise and was for several years an exhibitor at the Royal Academy. While she was at the Heatherly School of Art, the young Hungarian met another student, Montagu Barstow, who was to become her husband.

It is intriguing that a woman who did not speak a word of English until she was fifteen years of age should have become one of the most prolific and popular writers of her time, writing more than thirty books in her adopted language. Baroness Orczy explained how the idea of becoming a writer first came to her. She and her husband were staying with a family whose members wrote stories that they sold to popular magazines. Orczy, observing that people with little education who had never traveled were successful as authors, decided that she, with her international background and solid education, should be able to do at least as well. She wrote two stories and found to her joy not only that they were accepted immediately—by *Pearson's Magazine*—for the amount of ten guineas but also that the editor asked that she give him first refusal on any future stories she wrote. A literary career had begun.

It was suggested to the baroness that she write detective stories, somewhat in the style of the then very popular Sherlock Holmes stories. As a result, she created the strange old man who sits in his unobtrusive corner, playing with his string and expounding in a haughty and self-assured manner to the reporter from *The Evening Observer* on crime and criminals. The stories caught on and ran as a series in *The Royal Magazine* before their publication in book form under the title *The Old Man in the Corner* in 1909.

Baroness Orczy produced four series of stories featuring Bill Owen, the peculiar old man, and Polly Burton. The first two series ran in *The Royal Magazine*

from 1901 to 1904 and were later published as *The Old Man in the Corner*; the third series was first published in book form as *The Case of Miss Elliott* in 1905. The fourth and last series was published in 1925 as *Unravelling Knots*. Baroness Orczy is most famous, however, not for her detective stories but for being the author of that epic of trans-Channel derring-do and genteel romance, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905).

At the outbreak of World War I, Barstow and Orczy moved to Monte Carlo, where they lived until his death in 1943; at that time, the baroness moved back to London. During her later years, Orczy's literary output slowed down considerably, although she kept writing until the end—her autobiography, *Links in the Chain of Life* (1947), being her last published work. Baroness Orczy died in London, at the age of eighty-two, in 1947.

ANALYSIS

Although Baroness Orczy wrote more than thirty volumes of fiction, she is remembered principally as the author of the books about the Scarlet Pimpernel and to a lesser degree for her stories about the arm-chair detective in the corner of the A.B.C. Shop, Bill Owen. The first of these stories, "The Fenchurch Street Mystery," appeared in the May, 1901, issue of *The Royal Magazine* and is typical of all of them.

"THE FENCHURCH STREET MYSTERY"

Polly Burton, a journalist at *The Evening Observer*, is sitting in the A.B.C. Shop reading her newspaper and minding her own business when a curious little man irritably pushes his glass away and exclaims, "Mysteries! . . . There is no such thing as a mystery in connection with any crime, provided intelligence is brought to bear on its investigation." Burton is, not surprisingly, somewhat taken aback by being spoken to by a total—and very strange—stranger, but even more so because he seems to have read her thoughts: She is reading an article in the paper dealing with crimes that have frustrated the police.

Such is the opening of the first story about the Old Man in the Corner. Each of the stories is structured in the same way: First, the reader is drawn into the mystery to be investigated and solved via a conversation in the A.B.C. Shop between the two series protagonists;



Baroness Orczy was a comparatively prolific writer, but she is now remembered almost exclusively as the creator of the dashing Scarlet Pimpernel.

next, the data of the case in question are presented, usually by Bill Owen; and finally, Owen presents a neat, logical solution.

In the exposition phase, the old man gives what almost amounts to an eyewitness account of the facts of the case. He often carries with him photographs he has taken or obtained of the protagonists of the case or, as is the case in "The Fenchurch Street Mystery," copies of pertinent letters or other documents. The old man also spends a considerable amount of his time in courtrooms listening to cases and taking notes. He is always early enough to get a seat in the first row, enabling him to see and hear everything. His account of the facts is lively and full of colorful adjectives and verbatim quotations from witnesses. He makes sure to

call Burton's attention to those aspects of the case that seem to him pertinent to its solution.

Despite the old man's care to present the case so that all an intelligent person has to do is make logical deductions, Burton, like the police before her, invariably has to give up and leave the unraveling of the mystery to her interlocutor. The cases discussed at the A.B.C. Shop are to everyone but Owen true mysteries that seem to resist all attacks. To Owen there are no mysteries. He is so cocksure about this that he irritates Burton, who insists that crimes the police have despaired of solving are, for all intents and purposes, insoluble. The old man demurs: "I never for a moment ventured to suggest that there were no mysteries to the *police*; I merely remarked that there were none where intelligence was brought to bear on the investigation of crime." He has deep contempt for the public, the journalists covering crimes, and, especially, the police. The last phase of each story is the protracted denouement: the Old Man in the Corner demonstrating how, with a minimum of insight into the human psyche and a keen intelligence, he can make any case that to the rest of the world is opaque become crystal clear.

This three-part structure is characteristic of every one of the stories about the Old Man in the Corner. Orczy makes the reader her confidant and interlocutor. The stories are told in the first person by Polly Burton as if she were telling them to a friend over a cup of tea. The relationship between the reader and the narrator is, in other words, somewhat like that between Polly Burton and the old man who tells his stories to her. This device of pulling the reader into the narrative by making him an intimate, common in nineteenth century literature, is used to great effect by Orczy.

The stories move back and forth in time and place, between the present in the A.B.C. Shop and the various events in the past that are presented as facts pertinent to the case. The old man creates in vivid narrative the situations in which the protagonists in the case have found themselves, or he re-creates the testimonies of witnesses at the trial in colloquial detail and color. Thus, the reader must follow the case on two levels: as Polly Burton's alter ego or confidant and as a witness to key events and the proceedings in court. The mixture is both entertaining and pleasing.

In the end, the reader, along with Polly Burton, must put up with the old man's annoying complacency and self-congratulatory air as he points out where the police and everybody else went wrong. The old man jeers at the police and brims over with conceit because he has presented all the evidence so that any intelligent person should be able to come to the one and only conclusion to the case, the conclusion that he has made and that makes sense of all the facts. When he has made the last knot on his string and thrown his pearls before the swine, he gets up, leaving Polly and the reader to wonder what exactly has happened. Have they just witnessed a brilliant amateur sleuth at work, or is the old man a hoax, fleet of fingers and mouth but actually merely testing the credulity of novelists and their readers?

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the stories about the Old Man in the Corner is that they are totally devoid of morality and human compassion. The world conjured up by the author is one where greed and the will to outsmart society's laws and their representatives reign supreme. The emphasis is on how a smart criminal can get away with nearly anything. The criminal described and hailed as a hero by the old man—and by extension by his author and her alter ego, Polly Burton, who is only minimally interested in seeing justice served—is a virtual Nietzschean superman, a Raskolnikov who is not plagued by the monsters of conscience and who is never caught. If a criminal comes to a bad end in the stories, it is through the agency of fate, not the police or society. The successful culprit, as in "The Dublin Mystery," sometimes lives only a short time to enjoy the results of his mischief before being overtaken by fate and a natural death. It is almost as if the author wanted to suggest that even if the agents of socially defined justice are slow of wit, the most vicious of malefactors—the father murderer ("The Dublin Mystery") and the murderer of the rightful heir to the earldom ("The Tremarn Case"), to name two examples—will eventually be brought to justice and executed by some kind of higher agency.

This bare-knuckled social Darwinism, where the smart outwit, defraud, and kill the less smart with no immediate punishment, is both the strength and the weakness of Orczy's stories. The Old Man in the Cor-

ner and his cases are interesting because they introduce readers to an amoral universe that lies beyond the stories found in the newspapers. These stories are superior to the later series about Lady Molly of Scotland Yard and the Irish lawyer Patrick Mulligan because they are not sentimental. Their amoral tone is refreshing because it is so unexpected and so unusual. The weakness, however, is that it is hard for the reader to care about anything or anybody in the stories. The two protagonists, Polly Burton and Bill Owen, are too sketchy and, in Owen's case, too unsympathetic to like, and the people whose dramas are being retold are unreal and even unbelievable, mere shadows of real people, pawns to be moved about on the old man's chessboard.

The stories about the Old Man in the Corner are good early examples of the armchair-detective subgenre, with interesting and well-designed plots. Their weakness lies in the characterizations and in a certain moral and emotional callousness.

Per Schelde

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE OLD MAN IN THE CORNER SERIES: *The Case of Miss Elliott*, 1905; *The Old Man in the Corner*, 1909 (also known as *The Man in the Corner*); *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Khaki Tunic*, 1923; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Russian Prince and of Dog's Tooth Cliff*, 1924; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Pearl Necklace, and The Tragedy in Bishop's Road*, 1924; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the White Carnation, and The Montmartre Hat*, 1925; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Fulton Gardens Mystery, and The Moorland Tragedy*, 1925

LADY MOLLY OF SCOTLAND YARD SERIES: *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*, 1910

PATRICK MULLIGAN SERIES: *Skin o' My Tooth*, 1928

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Castles in the Air*, 1921; *The Miser of Maida Vale*, 1925; *The Celestial City*, 1926

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Man in Grey, Being Episodes of the Chouan Conspiracies in Normandy During the First Empire*, 1918

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1899-1910 • *The Emperor's Candlesticks*, 1899; *By the Gods Beloved*, 1905 (also known as *Beloved of the Gods* and *The Gates of Kamt*); *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1905; *A Son of the People*, 1906; *I Will Repay*, 1906; *Beau Brocade*, 1907; *In Mary's Reign*, 1907; *The Tangled Skein*, 1907; *The Elusive Pimpernel*, 1908; *The Nest of the Sparrowhawk*, 1909; *Petticoat Government*, 1910 (also known as *Petticoat Rule*)

1911-1920 • *A True Woman*, 1911 (also known as *The Heart of a Woman*); *Fire in the Stubble*, 1912 (also known as *The Noble Rogue*); *Meadowsweet*, 1912; *Eldorado: A Story of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1913; *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1914; *Unto Caesar*, 1914; *A Bride of the Plains*, 1915; *The Bronze Eagle*, 1915; *Leatherface: A Tale of Old Flanders*, 1916; *A Sheaf of Bluebells*, 1917; *Lord Tony's Wife: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1917; *Flower o' the Lily*, 1918; *His Majesty's Well-Beloved*, 1919; *The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1919; *The First Sir Percy: An Adventure of the Laughing Cavalier*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Nicolette*, 1922; *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1922; *Pimpernel and Rosemary*, 1924; *The Honourable Jim*, 1924; *Sir Percy Hits Back: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1927; *Blue Eyes and Grey*, 1928; *Marivosa*, 1930

1931-1947 • *A Child of the Revolution*, 1932; *A Joyous Adventure*, 1932; *The Way of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1933; *A Spy of Napoleon*, 1934; *The Uncrowned King*, 1935; *Sir Percy Leads the Band*, 1936; *The Divine Folly*, 1937; *No Greater Love*, 1938; *Mam'zelle Guillotine: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1940; *Pride of Race*, 1942; *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, 1947

SHORT FICTION: *The Traitor*, 1912; *Two Good Patriots*, 1912; *The Old Scarecrow*, 1916; *A Question of Temptation*, 1925; *Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1929; *In the Rue Monge*, 1931; *Unravelling Knots*, 1925

PLAYS: *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, pr. 1903 (with Montagu Barstow); *The Sin of William Jackson*, pr. 1906 (with Barstow); *Beau Brocade*, pr. 1908 (with Barstow); *The Duke's Wager*, pr. 1911; *The Legion of Honour*, pr. 1918; *Leatherface*, pr. 1922 (with Caryl Fiennes)

NONFICTION: *Les Beaux et les dandys des grands siècles en Angleterre*, 1924; *The Scarlet Pimpernel Looks at the World*, 1933; *The Turbulent Duchess: H. R. H. Madame la Duchesse de Berri*, 1935; *Links in the Chain of Life*, 1947

TRANSLATIONS: *Fairyland's Beauty (The Suitors of the Princess Fire-Fly)*, 1895; *Old Hungarian Fairy Tales*, 1895 (with Montagu Barstow); *The Enchanted Cat*, 1895; *Uletka and the White Lizard*, 1895

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P

STUART PALMER

Born: Baraboo, Wisconsin; June 21, 1905

Died: Glendora, California; February 4, 1968

Also wrote as Theodore Orchards; Stuart Palmer
Orcles; Jay Stewart

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hildegarde Withers, 1931-1969

Howard Rook, 1956-1968

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HILDEGARDE MARTHA WITHERS, a dry-witted and keenly observant amateur sleuth, is about forty when she first appears. An elementary school teacher in the early books, she later retires to devote more time to detecting. Although a single woman throughout the series, she is engaged to Oscar Piper for approximately half an hour between the events of the first and second books. Palmer based her on his high-school English teacher, Miss Fern Hackett, and on his father.

OSCAR PIPER, inspector, New York City Police Department, is about forty, graying, tall, and gaunt. Rough-spoken, with a taste for whiskey and with a cigar constantly in the corner of his mouth, Piper is the opposite of the prim and abstemious Miss Withers.

HOWARD ROOK, a retired newspaperman, is a middle-aged misogynist, overweight and sloppy, who, forced into retirement, maintains a running argument with the police.

CONTRIBUTION

Stuart Palmer's fourteen novels and three short-story collections featuring Hildegarde Withers are most notable for forging, in a period dominated in America by male detectives, a woman who can hold her own in a male world. Palmer also created, with quick sketches and convincing settings, an ability that

complemented one of his most intriguing techniques: opening novels with a scene that sets a mood but that is often only tangentially related to the ensuing mystery. This technique is responsible for establishing some of the humor in the novels, and it is for his dryly witty style, embodied in Miss Withers, that Palmer is best known. He created an enduringly popular character, the subject of six motion pictures and one made-for-television film.

BIOGRAPHY

Stuart Palmer was born as Charles Stuart Hunter Palmer in Baraboo, Wisconsin, on June 21, 1905, the son of Jay Sherman Palmer and Nellie Secker Palmer. He attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 1922 to 1924 and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, from 1924 to 1926. Palmer began writing as a child; his first short story was completed when he was six, and at twenty he had his first publication in a college literary magazine. Before turning to writing as a career, Palmer held a variety of jobs that provided background for some of his books. Among these were sailor, apple picker, Ringling Brothers clown, iceman, cabdriver, publicist, reporter, copywriter, editor, poet, and ghostwriter.

In 1928, Palmer married the first of five wives, Melina Racioppi, from whom he was divorced in 1937, and in 1931 he wrote his first mystery, *Ace of Jades*. This novel was followed in the same year by the first of the Hildegarde Withers books, *The Penguin Pool Murder*, which was an immediate success. After the success of the Miss Withers character, especially of the 1932 film version of the first Withers book, Palmer went to Hollywood to work as a screenwriter while continuing to produce novels and short stories featuring Miss Withers.

In 1939 Palmer was married to his second wife,

Margaret Greppin (they were divorced in 1945), and in 1942 he enlisted in the United States Army. As an army major, he served first as a training-film instructor in the field artillery school and then as the liaison officer between the United States Army chief of staff and Hollywood production companies, as well as with all newsreel production companies. In 1947, still in the army, he was married to Ann Higgins.

Discharged in 1948, Palmer returned to screenwriting, and in 1950 he began writing for television as well. Having been divorced from Ann in 1950, he was married for the fourth time in 1952 to Winifred Graham. In 1954-1955, he was president of the Mystery Writers of America; in 1956, he wrote the first of two books featuring Howard Rook, *Unhappy Hooligan*, set in a circus and drawing on his own experience as a circus clown. Divorced again in 1963 and remarried three years later to Jennifer Elaine Venala, Palmer died on February 4, 1968, in Glendora, California.

A prolific writer, Palmer left, in addition to dozens of film and television scripts, fourteen Hildegard Withers novels, three collections of short stories featuring Miss Withers, two Howard Rook novels, and five other mystery books. A fifteenth Miss Withers book was in rough draft when he died; it was completed by Fletcher Flora and published posthumously in 1969.

ANALYSIS

Stuart Palmer's second mystery, *The Penguin Pool Murder*, was an immediate success. In it he introduced the character who was to become one of the most popular amateur sleuths in American fiction. He also established in that book the qualities that were to become his hallmark as a writer: strong characterization of major characters, humor, convincing settings, clever plotting, and a rapid-fire style that captured mood and setting.

Hildegard Withers is Palmer's greatest creation, and her first appearance indicated her personality, for she appeared not as a person but as an anonymous force. A fleeing purse snatcher is sent sprawling by an umbrella thrust between his legs from a crowd. The umbrella belongs to Miss Withers, and its use suggests, before the reader sees or meets her, the presence of someone who takes action when others are too surprised or confused to act. Her desire for action pushes

her into the center of events, because not content with giving the police an account of finding a body in the penguin pool at the New York City aquarium, she proceeds to take shorthand notes of the other witnesses' statements, as well as of Inspector Piper's musings and orders to his officers. She makes herself so useful that he allows her to accompany him.

MURDER ON THE BLACKBOARD

This determination not to be left out but to act recurs in each book. When, in *Murder on the Blackboard* (1932), Inspector Piper is seriously injured by a murderer, Miss Withers announces to his second in command that she will be Piper's understudy and assist in the investigation, and the reader knows that she will do so despite the sergeant's hesitancy. Left alone while the police are excitedly examining an apparent grave, Miss Withers remains behind, seizing the opportunity to do some uninterrupted sleuthing. She goes through the desks of several of her fellow teachers and discovers clues that later help her solve the mystery, clues that the police misinterpret. Later her investigative determination leads to decidedly unladylike action for a middle-aged woman: "With much grunting and bustling, together with a certain amount of damage to the lady's serge skirt, Miss Withers clambered to the board and from that eminence managed to squirm through the hole in the ceiling."

Palmer complements his character's determination with keen powers of observation. Withers, like her contemporary never-married sleuth, Agatha Christie's Jane Marple, notices details. She notices a sliver of light where there should be none in *The Penguin Pool Murder*; she is aware of the sound of a fellow teacher's footsteps as she goes down the hall and, more important, registers a difference in sound when she returns. Her powers are honed by close contact over the years with third-grade students; just as Miss Marple believes that observing behavior in a small town allows her to understand human behavior on a wider scale, Miss Withers believes that observation of the behavior of small boys gives her an understanding of adult duplicity.

THE PUZZLE OF THE RED STALLION

Her observation and determination are not, however, infallible. In *The Puzzle of the Red Stallion* (1936), Miss Withers finds at the scene of a murder a briar pipe that

the police have overlooked. Convinced that it is a clue, she deduces from this single object that the owner is middle-aged, has traveled in Europe widely, is well-to-do, has excellent taste, works with chemicals, is sometimes careless, and wears dentures. Palmer's humor comes into play when Miss Withers discovers that the pipe belongs to the medical examiner, who dropped it while examining the body. These occasional slips and Miss Withers's reactions to them add greatly to the reader's delight in the character and to the appeal of the books.

Much of the series' popularity stems from such humor, which also springs from Hildegard's acerbic wit. Never one to suffer fools gladly, when an unimaginative police sergeant decides the murderer must be someone familiar with the school in *Murder on the Blackboard*, Miss Withers says, "Simple, isn't it? . . . You've narrowed the suspects down to thirty or forty thousand." Again, in *The Puzzle of the Red Stallion*, while walking her dog, Miss Withers is stopped by a pair of particularly doltish police officers who charge her with violating the city's muzzle ordinance; when Sergeant Greeley says that her clearly gentle dog might bite someone, her barbed response is: "There are times when I would consider it in the light of a direct answer to prayer," a jab rendered all the more humorous by the obtuse sergeant's failure to recognize it.

Comic situations add much to the reader's pleasure in Palmer's novels. In *The Puzzle of the Red Stallion*, Miss Withers, hot on the trail of the murder weapon, is being followed by Inspector Piper and Sergeant Burke, who are hot on her trail to see what she will discover. Miss Withers encourages her dog to fetch an object that she believes to be the weapon from a small pool in Central Park. Burke and Piper look down from an elevated transverse:

At the moment the quiet of this sylvan scene was being rudely shattered by a small and excited terrier who was leaping about in the shallow water near the shore and barking at the top of his lungs.

Beside him, perched precariously upon a teetering rock which threatened every moment to tip and hurl her headlong into the water, stood Miss Hildegard Withers. She was engaged in poking at the depths with a thin willow switch.

That the much-sought-for object proves to be a turtle amplifies the ridiculousness of the scene, but even more amusing are the quirks of character revealed by the situation: the bungling ineptitude of the professionals who must follow the superior, if amateur, sleuth, and the awkwardness of the lady prodding at the water while her dog yaps at her.

Palmer similarly undercuts the seriousness of the opening scene in *Murder on the Blackboard*: "The solitary prisoner sat quietly, his hands clasped in front of him. One shoe moved up and down against its mate, but there was no quivering of his lips. He'd show Them if he could take it or not!" The prisoner, however, is a small boy kept after school, and the release of tension that the reader experiences on learning the prisoner's identity causes a smile of relief and amusement. Palmer moves between comedy and threat, even terror, in his mysteries, and that movement enhances the reader's interest in both character and plot by striking a balance between the two. The results are compelling novels.

The opening scene of *Murder on the Blackboard* exemplifies another Palmer device: the opening that creates a mood and sets a scene but frequently has little to do with the actual case. In this mystery, the mood of threat is established, then dissipated; the dissipated threat does not mean that this has become an ordinary day, however. It is not: The situation described in the opening scene gives rise to Miss Withers's varying her ordinary routine, and as a result she finds the body and eventually solves the case. Palmer's opening scene thus establishes the mystery and begin the series of steps toward its resolution. Any other opening would demand a different approach telling the story.

THE PUZZLE OF THE HAPPY HOOLIGAN

Related to this type of opening is Palmer's ability to create convincing settings. The brevity of the opening scene in *Murder on the Blackboard* is typical of Palmer's technique. In *The Puzzle of the Happy Hooligan* (1941), Miss Withers becomes a technical adviser for a film to be made about Lizzie Borden, and is given her own office:

There was a big oak desk, a typewriter on a stand, two chairs and an uncertain-looking lounge. The one window was covered with a Venetian blind, but since the

view consisted only of the flat roofs of studio sound stages, with some round brown hills beyond, that was small loss.

In only a few words, Plamer gives the reader an understanding of place, something which many writers would spend more time doing. The single phrase "uncertain-looking lounge" tells as much about the office as could several paragraphs of description.

Palmer at times used his own experiences as background for his books. *Unhappy Hooligan* (1956), for example, is set in the circus, and Palmer's stint working as a clown for Ringling Brothers is clearly responsible for the setting's realism. Similarly, *The Puzzle of the Happy Hooligan*, set in Hollywood, with much of the action taking place in a film studio, draws on Palmer's experiences as a screenwriter. Palmer is not above inserting inside jokes into his novels; in *The Puzzle of the Happy Hooligan*, Hildegarde is at one point mistaken for Edna May Oliver, the actress who played Miss Withers in three motion pictures: *The Penguin Pool Murder* (1932), *Murder on the Blackboard* (1934), and *Murder on a Honeymoon* (1935).

Palmer's plots are complicated, not because the motives or methods of murder are complicated, but because the reader learns things only as Miss Withers does. Therefore, clues may not be recognized, and false scents may be followed. On the other hand, Palmer's plots are usually tightly constructed, and the reader, like Palmer's protagonist, is given enough information to solve the case. The quick-witted reader can see where Miss Withers is going astray.

Nevertheless, readers may find that there are some irritating flaws in plot and characterization. The principal asks Miss Withers to investigate in *Murder on the Blackboard*, then nervously withdraws the invitation; his actions are never adequately explained. In the same novel, the reader never learns how the suspect circumvented an exacting system of identification. Still, these flaws are negligible compared with Palmer's failure to develop minor characters adequately. He devotes his energies to the major characters, plots, and settings, leaving the supporting cast largely two-dimensional. The police are, with the exception of Oscar Piper and a very few others, dumb Irish flatfeet who are unimaginative

and incapable of detecting anything. The head of Mammoth Productions, Mr. Thorwald L. Nincom, is a broadly drawn composite of the popular image of a film producer; he is thoroughly two-dimensional. Yet one can also credit such stock characterization as the source of much of these novels' humor, in a medium where humor and atmosphere often count for more than fully rounded characterization on all levels.

Miss Withers was created in the depth of the Depression, and she and her exploits provided some respite from the problems of the time. That she remains a charming figure and an appealing sleuth long after the 1930's is testimony to her enduring qualities.

Krystan V. Douglas

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HILDEGARDE WITHERS SERIES: *The Penguin Pool Murder*, 1931; *Murder on the Blackboard*, 1932; *Murder on Wheels*, 1932; *The Puzzle of the Pepper Tree*, 1933; *The Puzzle of the Silver Persian*, 1934; *The Puzzle of the Red Stallion*, 1936 (also known as *The Puzzle of the Briar Pipe*); *The Puzzle of the Blue Banderilla*, 1937; *The Puzzle of the Happy Hooligan*, 1941; *Miss Withers Regrets*, 1947; *The Riddles of Hildegarde Withers*, 1947; *Four Lost Ladies*, 1949; *The Green Ace*, 1950 (also known as *At One Fell Swoop*); *The Monkey Murder, and Other Hildegarde Withers Stories*, 1950; *Nipped in the Bud*, 1951 (also known as *Trap for a Redhead*); *Cold Poison*, 1954 (also known as *Exit Laughing*); *People vs. Withers and Malone*, 1963 (with Craig Rice); *Hildegarde Withers Makes the Scene*, 1969 (with Fletcher Flora)

HOWARD ROOK SERIES: *Unhappy Hooligan*, 1956 (also known as *Death in Grease Paint*); *Rook Takes Knight*, 1968

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Ace of Jades*, 1931; *Omit Flowers*, 1937 (also known as *No Flowers by Request*); *Before It's Too Late*, 1950; *The Adventures of the Marked Man and One Other*, 1973; *Once upon a Train, and Other Stories*, 1981 (with Craig Rice)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *Yellowstone*, 1936 (with others); *Bulldog Drummond's Peril*, 1938; *Hollywood Stadium Mystery*, 1938 (with Dorrell McGowan and Stuart

McGowan); *Arrest Bulldog Drummond*, 1939; *Bulldog Drummond's Bride*, 1939 (with Weston Garnett); *Death of a Champion*, 1939 (with Cortland Fitzsimmons); *Emergency Squad*, 1940 (with others); *Opened by Mistake*, 1940 (with others); *Seventeen*, 1940 (with Agnes Christine Johnson); *Who Killed Aunt Maggie?*, 1940 (with Frank Gill, Jr., and Hal Fimberg); *Secrets of the Lone Wolf*, 1941; *The Smiling Ghost*, 1941 (with Kenneth Gamet); *Half Way to Shanghai*, 1942; *Home in Wyomin'*, 1942 (with Robert Tasker and M. Coates Webster); *Pardon My Stripes*, 1942 (with others); *The Falcon's Brother*, 1942 (with Rice); *X Marks the Spot*, 1942 (with others); *Murder in Times Square*, 1943 (with Paul Gangelin); *Petticoat Larceny*, 1943 (with Jack Townley); *The Falcon Strikes Back*, 1943 (with Edward Dein and Gerald Geraghty); *Step by Step*, 1946 (with George Callahan); *Mrs. O'Malley and Mr. Malone*, 1950 (with Rice and William Bowers)

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Kaye, Marvin, ed. *The Game Is Afoot: Parodies, Pastiche, and Ponderings of Sherlock Holmes*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. A collection of works about Sherlock Holmes or that use him as a character. Includes Palmer's story "The Adventure of the Marked Man" and a brief introductory biography of him.

Pringle, David. *Imaginary People: A Who's Who of Modern Fictional Characters from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1996. Contains an entry on Hildegard Withers, Palmer's most famous character.

Queen, Ellery. Introduction to *The Monkey Murder and Other Hildegard Withers Stories*. New York: L. E. Spivak, 1950. Essay devoted to Palmer's most famous character and her place in the annals of detective fiction.

Rice, Grantland. Introduction to *Sporting Blood: The Great Sports Detective Stories*, edited by Ellery Queen. Boston: Little, Brown, 1942. Includes discussion of Palmer's contribution to sports detective fiction.

SARA PARETSKY

Born: Ames, Iowa; June 8, 1947

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

V. I. Warshawski, 1982-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

V. I. WARSHAWSKI is a female private investigator in her mid-thirties who practices in Chicago. A tough professional with a wry sense of humor, she specializes in financial crime.

BOBBY MALLORY, Warshawski's frequent nemesis, is a friendly lieutenant on the Chicago police force who provides the foil needed by most private investigators.

DR. LOTTY HERSCHEL, Warshawski's closest friend, is a woman in her fifties who operates a clinic for women and children. She is a renowned perinatologist at the fictional Beth Israel Hospital.

MURRAY RYERSON, head of the crime desk at the fictitious Chicago *Herald-Star*, often feeds Warshawski information, but more often than not, he is eager for leads on her investigations. Ryerson and Warshawski were lovers early in the series and have since devolved into drinking buddies.

CONTRIBUTION

Sara Paretsky is notable in the mystery and detective genre for her ability to shift the conventions of the hard-boiled private investigator tradition to a female charac-



Sara Paretsky in 2001. (AP/Wide World Photos)

ter. Her V. I. Warshawski is a tough-minded, able woman whose gender does not hamper her in the line of duty. Paretsky takes many opportunities to play against the expectations of the genre and to point out the competence of women in roles traditionally held by men. Paretsky imbues Warshawski with wit, cynicism, and a feminist perspective that allows her to deliver sardonic observations about her interactions and adventures. One of the most sharply drawn of the first wave of female private investigators, Paretsky's protagonist has also paved the way for subsequent, equally distinctive, generations of the breed. Warshawski is one of the most sharply drawn of the steadily growing tribe of female private investigators. In 1992 Paretsky received an Anthony Award for *A Woman's Eye* (1991), a collection she edited. The Crime Writers' Association awarded Paretsky a Silver Dagger for *Blood Shot* (1988; published in England as *Toxic Shock*), a Gold Dagger for *Blacklist* (2003), and a Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement in 2002.

BIOGRAPHY

Reared in Kansas within a large family that was liberal and socially activist—except where concerning the roles of girls and women—Sara Paretsky began creating heroines and stories for herself early on. Although her brothers were sent to college, she was sent to secretarial school, so she worked to put herself through college on her own. She later settled in Chicago, the city that provides the generous, colorful details of her novels' settings. She earned a doctorate in history at the University of Chicago but has no formal training in fiction writing. She was working as an executive at a large insurance company when she began writing detective fiction; this background is apparent in the insurance company-related plots and settings of her first three novels.

Paretsky credits the women's movement of the 1960's with helping her see that she could "occupy public space," and she later used the visibility afforded by her success in the socially conscious tradition in which she was reared. A founding member of Sisters in Crime, she mentors high school students in downtown Chicago and has endowed scholarships for students in the sciences and arts. Dorothy L. Sayers's attention to relationships and class issues has influenced Paretsky's work, but her novels replace Sayers's typically lettered style with a more colloquial, vigorously American and contemporary assessment of relationships and of women's social roles. One of her reasons for creating the V. I. Warshawski series was to portray a woman character freed from stereotypically passive feminine traits.

Paretsky hit a writer's slump after *Tunnel Vision* (1994). During this time, she "dug out of a drawer" a number of unpublished Warshawski short stories and collected them as *Windy City Blues* (1995). Taking a break from detective fiction, over the objections of her publisher, Paretsky wrote *Ghost Country* (1998), a novel about Chicago's homeless. Readers welcomed Warshawski back in *Hard Time* (1999), but *Total Recall* (2001) suffered both from a general pall inflicted by the September 11 terrorist attacks and from many fans' impatience with the intrusion of larger political issues into the business of murder, a trend that accelerated as Paretsky became increasingly alarmed by the

policies of the George W. Bush administration. Her concerns are expressed in the meditative memoir *Writing in an Age of Silence* (2007).

ANALYSIS

Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski series simultaneously works within and comments on the conventions of the hard-boiled genre by changing the gender of the central character. The tough, hard-boiled detective, who operates alone, outside traditional law-and-order systems, is a mythic figure of American folklore. He is typically envisioned as Humphrey Bogart, wearing a raincoat and a slouch hat, squinting over a perpetually smoking cigarette. Warshawski is carved from the Sam Spade tradition—with a few humorous references to Nancy Drew—and yet her gender makes for a very different reading of the same character type. When the hard-boiled characteristics are assigned to a woman—traditionally women figure in this detective genre merely as the private eye's love interest or the femme fatale—the device can offer insights into the nature of gender roles and a refreshing new slant on the genre's conventions.

Warshawski's gender adds another dimension to the detective's traditional marginality with respect to dominant legal and social systems. While the myth of the male hero allows for the individual man to buck the system, or at least step outside it by riding off on his lone horse into the sunset, women are generally expected to remain protected by, if not subservient to, the dictates of law and order. Warshawski is a member in good standing of the Illinois bar but gave up her career in the district attorney's office to work alone.

Warshawski's choice to strike out on her own continually infuriates police lieutenant Bobby Mallory, a character who serves several functions in Paretsky's narratives. On one hand, the Mallory character is relatively predictable within the conventions of the genre. He is Warshawski's link with the system; he resents her intrusions on his cases, yet admires her ability to get the results that his position keeps him from obtaining.

In addition to being the aggravated law enforcement officer, Mallory serves now and then as a father figure for Warshawski. The usually predictable relationship is given a new dimension by the gender con-

siderations. Mallory worked with Warshawski's father, who was an officer on the Chicago police force. Mallory glowers paternally at Warshawski when she gets involved in cases that seem inevitably to cross his desk, but his anger is a mixture of professional jealousy and fatherly concern.

Paretsky's novels often open with seductive descriptions of the Chicago locale in which Warshawski thrives, evoking the special relationship between the detective and the city for which Raymond Chandler, in his tributes to Los Angeles, is famous. Most of the Warshawski series takes place in the heat of the summer. The steamy atmosphere tends to intensify Warshawski's interactions with other characters and her own dogged pursuit of her cases. The details of the Chicago setting help to particularize the Warshawski series and lend it veracity. Each story is a compelling travelogue into the intricacies of one of Chicago's many locales: finance networks (*Indemnity Only*, 1982), shipyards (*Deadlock*, 1984), Catholic dioceses in ethnic neighborhoods (*Killing Orders*, 1985), and suburban hospital settings (*Bitter Medicine*, 1987). The mix of fiction and fact in Warshawski's wry descriptions provides Paretsky with an outlet for the acute, sardonic social observations in which she specializes.

The Warshawski character is crafted with the mix of cynicism and compassion that marks the best of the private investigators. Her specialty is financial crime, a venue that has allowed Paretsky to comment on corrupt bureaucracies and the machinations of those in the higher strata of the social order. *Indemnity Only* centers on an insurance hoax perpetrated by the officers of Ajax Insurance, a company later involved with illegal dealings and intrigue in the shipping industry in *Deadlock*. The suspect dealings of Ajax come under investigation again in *Total Recall*, when payment is denied to a widow at the same time that the unscrupulous mishandling of policies belonging to Holocaust victims comes to light.

In 1992's *Guardian Angel* Warshawski unearths a complex bond-parking conspiracy, in *Tunnel Vision* there is a money-laundering scheme involving Iraq, and *Hard Time* takes on the subject of the privatization of American prisons and the corruption and abuse—all for the sake of financial gain—it affords. However, all

these novels deal with a great deal more than financial crime, for the financial crimes usually reside at the nexus of many other social ills—homicide, spouse and child abuse, exploitation of illegal immigrants, homelessness, corrupt politicians, venal lawyers, and cruelty to animals. In *Fire Sale* (2005), Warshawski investigates big-box retailer By-Smart (a very thinly veiled Wal-Mart), contrasting the mind-boggling wealth acquired in an ethical vacuum with the lives of Chicago's poorest.

Although Warshawski frequently deals with the chief executive officers of large corporations, her clients tend to be middle to lower class. Her own financial status is best described as “down at the heels”—her office is in an old, dimly lit building near the financial district in downtown Chicago. The elevator to her fourth-floor suite rarely works, and the building lobby is often home to street people. Warshawski's setup is reminiscent of Toby Peters's office locale in Stuart M. Kaminsky's detective series. Warshawski's lack of a generous income does not cramp her style. She can afford the Johnny Walker she regularly orders at the Golden Glow, a serious drinker's bar in the south Loop run by a dignified black woman named Sal. Paretsky's attention to detail helps to build a convincing portrait of Warshawski as a woman comfortable in her surroundings, one who knows exactly what she needs and who can navigate through the obstacles that come her way.

The Warshawski stories are written in the first person, which gives the narrator the observer's status, always slightly marginal to the events she describes. Warshawski is something of a loner. Rather than playing sports, she stays in shape by running in the early mornings along Lake Michigan. Her running, her scotch drinking, and her often insulting irreverence evince her comfort with her outsider status.

In contrast to the detached cynicism of most of the male characters in the genre, however, Warshawski tends to become personally involved in the events she describes and to evoke the larger picture into which they fit. Indeed, in *Hard Time* she gets so involved—against the advice and pleadings of her friends—that she ends up in prison for several chapters. Warshawski, in fact, is quick to joke about her well-developed sense

of social justice and her ability to do automatic affirmative action tallies in large groups of people. Her feminism, too, is displayed through humor, often in the aphorisms by which she operates. Paretsky thus contributes to the subtly crusading spirit that pervades the genre but refrains from didacticism by continually commenting on her sarcastic observation of social mores.

Warshawski's investigative method is relatively unscientific. She pokes around talking to people and begins to fit events and suspects into logical patterns. Paretsky's plots grow complex and then unravel by accretion—their climactic moments are ones of logical disclosure rather than fast chases or violent encounters. Yet they do not lack suspense or tension—Warshawski's methods are frequently illegitimate, if not illegal. For example, she is adept with lock-picking tools left in her possession by a burglar she once defended in the district attorney's office. She gathers information directly from her sources, which often involves nighttime visits to offices in which she does not belong.

Warshawski is not above relying on her feminine wiles to advance her cause, but Paretsky uses her heroine's moments of false identity and disguise to comment on the traditional expectations of the female role. If some men generally expect women to be less intelligent than Warshawski, she will impersonate a more foolish woman to get some piece of vital information. In her own guise, she is adamant that no one condescend to her, and her feminism is more pronounced.

MEN, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY

In the tradition of the detached observer, Warshawski's relationships with men are casual and short-lived, rarely figuring prominently in the development of the plot. More traditional detective stories typically punish sexually active women under the auspices of the femme fatale stereotype. Warshawski's casual, healthy attitude toward her sexual encounters reflects the feminist premise that grounds Paretsky's writing.

Warshawski and journalist Murray Ryerson are occasional lovers, but their interactions are based more on mutual respect, affection, and the sharing of information than on building a long-term, secure commitment. In *Deadlock* and *Killing Orders*, Warshawski takes up with an English reinsurance broker named

Roger Ferrant, whose expertise gives Paretsky a way to include information on securities and insurance transactions necessary for her plots. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski has an affair with Peter Burgoyne, the head of obstetrics at Friendship V Hospital (he was the doctor in charge during Consuelo's treatment and subsequent death). Warshawski's involvement with Burgoyne eventually becomes suspect when she realizes that he and the hospital administrator have been involved in Tregiere's murder and the cover-up of various illicit operations and false advertising practices. She takes up with a new beau in *Guardian Angel*, only to have him decide to step back from the relationship because of her lone wolf style in *Tunnel Vision*.

Warshawski's lack of permanent romantic involvements is incidental to Paretsky's stories. Her character's professional veneer is fleshed out with humanizing notes from her family history. Like the city she loves, Warshawski is a melting pot of ethnicity—her mother was an Italian immigrant who married a Polish Jew. A good-natured but alcoholic and underhanded aunt gets Warshawski involved in arson, the homicide of a young hooker, and other difficulties in *Burn Marks* (1990). The spirit of Paretsky's innocent, revered mother is evoked in each of her stories with mention of the red Venetian wineglasses that were her mother's legacy. In "Grace Notes," a story in *Windy City Blues*, a long-lost cousin turns up looking for sheet music that belonged to Warshawski's mysterious mother, and a bit more is revealed about her. In *Hard Time*, events and losses cause Vic to contemplate her mother's death on other levels.

Warshawski's closest friend, Dr. Lotty Herschel, often serves as a model of social consciousness that Paretsky contrasts with the corruption of top-heavy bureaucracies. A Viennese immigrant, Herschel fled Nazism by coming to the United States as part of the Kindertransport, as revealed in *Total Recall*. She has dedicated her life to helping disadvantaged people as a response to the evils she has personally endured. Herschel is a woman of stature within the medical field. In addition to her regular duties as a perinatologist at Beth Israel Hospital, she runs a clinic for low-income families in the run-down Chicago neighborhood where Warshawski rents an apartment.

Herschel is a woman with enormous personal dignity and compassion; her commitment to her work supersedes expectations of the more traditional female role. Although her suitors are distinguished gentlemen, she refuses to marry. Herschel offers companionship and support, and she is even something of a role model. Her advice provides a counterpoint to Mallory's blustery admonitions to be more of a conventional "girl."

BITTER MEDICINE

Herschel figures largely in *Bitter Medicine*, the fourth novel in the Warshawski series and Paretsky's first excursion outside the realm of financial crime. Warshawski is present at the scene of the untimely death of a pregnant teenage girl, who happens to be the sister of Herschel's nurse. Consuelo's death at a tidy suburban hospital whose staff is unaccustomed to treating low-income emergency patients raises the specter of malpractice suits against both the hospital and Lotty Herschel. When Herschel's partner, Malcolm Tregiere, is murdered and his dictation on Consuelo's case is missing, Warshawski begins to seek out the pattern that ties together Consuelo's death, Tregiere's murder, an antiabortion rally at Herschel's clinic, and the less-than-honest machinations of the suburban hospital's administration. *Guardian Angel* finds Warshawski pursuing a course of action that puts her and Herschel at odds and strains their friendship.

Bobby Mallory is somewhat displaced in *Bitter Medicine* by Detective Rawlings, a black man assigned to the case. Attention to racial issues is an integral part of the story's development, from Warshawski's maneuverings through the intricacies of implicit racism toward her Hispanic friend to a Hispanic gang's probable involvement in the murder of a black doctor. The gang theme allows Paretsky to place her female sleuth on turf usually addressed only by white male police officers in violent displays of machismo.

Bitter Medicine allows Warshawski her first trip outside Chicago's city limits, and it gives Paretsky the opportunity for some playful commentary on the difference between affluent suburban and low-income city values. Warshawski's former husband, Richard Yarborough, appears for the first time, as the high-priced lawyer representing a sleazy antiabortionist.

Warshawski's dialogues with Yarborough are intentionally nasty. He has exchanged his marriage with her for one with a more traditionally feminine woman, and he is easily angered at Warshawski's frank jabbing at his bourgeois lifestyle. The Chicago suburbs appear as empty, sanitized havens from the gang violence and poverty of inner-city living—a milieu that Warshawski prefers.

KILLING ORDERS

Killing Orders embroils Warshawski in a case that touches her personally when her Aunt Rosa is accused of placing counterfeit securities in a Dominican priory safe. There is little love lost between Warshawski and her reproving, hostile aunt, but family obligations require that Warshawski see the case through. In the process, emotional ghosts add a more complex layer to Warshawski's personality. In her investigation, she must deal with murder, the Dominicans, an international conglomerate, and the Mafia, and she begins to suspect her lover, Roger Ferrant, or her aunt might be responsible for some of the crimes.

Not a polite, urbane lady sleuth in the Sayers tradition, Paretsky's Warshawski is a female private investigator based on the traditional male model. Warshawski is kin to an ever-growing host of female detectives fashioned in the hard-boiled tradition. The new women investigators are smart, physical, hard-living women, whose facility to move through the cracks and underbellies of big cities makes them well suited to their work. Although hard-boiled, such a character is not afraid to let her emotions and intuition influence the way she handles her cases. Paretsky and other female mystery and detective writers are reshaping a pervasive American myth by creating admirable female characters who get the job done as well as—or better than—their male predecessors.

Jill Dolan

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan,

Jessica Reisman, and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

V. I. WARSHAWSKI SERIES: *Indemnity Only*, 1982; *Deadlock*, 1984; *Killing Orders*, 1985; *Bitter Medicine*, 1987; *Blood Shot*, 1988 (also known as *Toxic Shock*); *Burn Marks*, 1990; *Guardian Angel*, 1992;

V. I. Warshawski, 1993; *Tunnel Vision*, 1994; *Hard Time*, 1999; *Total Recall*, 2001; *Blacklist*, 2003; *Fire Sale*, 2005

SHORT FICTION: *A Taste of Life, and Other Stories*, 1995; *V. I. for Short*, 1995; *V. I. Warshawski Stories*, 1995; *Windy City Blues*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Ghost Country*, 1998

NONFICTION: *Case Studies in Alternative Education*, 1975; *Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe*, 2000 (with others); *Writing in an Age of Silence*, 2007

EDITED TEXTS: *Beastly Tales*, 1989; *A Woman's Eye*, 1991; *Women on the Case*, 1996

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Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Devotes significant discussion to Paretsky as a dominant force both in contemporary hard-boiled detective novels and in the increasing presence in fiction of female private eyes.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. The many references to Paretsky in this nearly comprehensive work testifies to the importance of the writer within and beyond her genre.

Mizejewski, Lind. *Hardboiled and High-Heeled: The Woman Detective in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004. As one of the seminal detectives of recent hard-boiled fiction, who helped break ground for tougher, younger female sleuths, Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski comes in for her share of discussion in this narrowly themed book.

Paretsky, Sara. Sara Paretsky. <http://www.sara.paretsky.com>. This well-managed Web site offers a wealth of information on the author, her work, and her characters. Paretsky clearly has much input, and the reader will find interviews and press releases,

as well as links suggested by Paretsky herself.

_____. *Writing in an Age of Silence*. New York: Verso, 2007. A book of essays, many based on lectures Paretsky has given, that form a memoir describing Paretsky's life and work and her interest in political and social dissent. She describes how she developed her V. I. Warshawski character.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. This valuable reference devotes a full chapter to women detectives, focusing primarily on

those of Marcia Muller, Sue Grafton, and Paretsky.

Reddy, Maureen T. "Loners and Hard-Boiled Women." In *Sisters in Crime: Feminism and the Crime Novel*. New York: Continuum, 1988. Reddy's book locates Paretsky's work in a historical context of women investigators in detective fiction.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains significant discussion of Paretsky's work. Scaggs sees Paretsky's appropriation of the hard-boiled detective model as a validation of the form.

ROBERT B. PARKER

Born: Springfield, Massachusetts; September 17, 1932

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Spenser, 1974-
Jesse Stone, 1997-
Sunny Randall, 1999-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SPENSER is a wisecracking private eye, a former professional boxer and police officer fired for insubordination. He is highly literate, notices what people wear, and cooks gourmet meals. He lives by a code of honor that involves keeping his word and protecting the helpless. Spenser is a faithful lover to Susan Silverman, a psychologist with a doctoral degree from Harvard. Spenser has a circle of loyal friends, ranging from police officers to criminals; his closest friend, Hawk, a black thug, works with him on most of his cases.

JESSE STONE is a former Los Angeles homicide detective who has been fired for alcoholism. Corrupt city officials in Paradise, Massachusetts, hire him as chief of police because they assume that he will be ineffective, but he proves them wrong. His unfaithful former wife, with whom he is still obsessed, has followed him to Massachusetts.

SUNNY RANDALL, a petite blond private investigator, lives alone with her mini bull terrier but receives help from her gay sidekick. She is still involved with her former husband Ritchie, whose family has mob connections.

CONTRIBUTION

Robert B. Parker is heir to the tradition of the hard-boiled detective most notably embodied in Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. Parker's Spenser is principled and honorable but not a loner like Chandler's Marlowe. Spenser has a monogamous relationship with an intelligent and liberated woman, Susan Silverman, and he is ably assisted by Hawk, a formidable African American who is less principled but just as honorable as Spenser. In 1976 Parker received the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for *Promised Land* (1976). In 1995, Parker and John Lutz jointly received the Eye, a lifetime achievement award from the Private Eye Writers of America. In 2002 Parker was named a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America. In 2006 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention.

In addition to his detective series, Parker has written three mainstream novels, *Wilderness* (1979), *Love and Glory* (1983), and *All Our Yesterdays* (1994).

Critics have described them as thoughtful and well written but flawed, and they have not achieved the popularity of his detective series. Parker's Spenser series has been optioned for television and films, and he acted as a consultant for the television series *Spenser for Hire* (1985-1988). In 2005-2007, several novels in the Jesse Stone series were turned into television films starring Tom Selleck. Parker's female detective, Sunny Randall, was created because he was asked to write a novel that could be adapted as a film vehicle for Helen Hunt, the Academy Award-winning actress.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Brown Parker was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on September 17, 1932, to Carroll Snow, a telephone company executive, and Mary Pauline (Murphy) Parker. During his youth, he read widely in pulp fiction, learning the conventions of the hard-boiled detective. He attended Colby College, where he met Joan Hall, whom he married on August 26, 1956, two years after he graduated with his bachelor's degree. He served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956 in Korea. After completing his military service, he returned to school and received his master of arts degree from Boston University in 1957. He then sought employment as a technical writer to support his wife and son David, born in 1959. His second son, Daniel, was born in 1963. In 1957 he was a management trainee with Curtiss-Wright Company, Woodridge, New Jersey. From 1957 to 1959 he worked as a technical writer with Raytheon in Andover, Massachusetts, then went into advertising with Prudential Insurance Company in Boston from 1959 to 1962. At the same time, from 1960 to 1962, he was a partner in his own advertising agency, Parker-Farman Company.

In 1962 Parker's wife, Joan, persuaded him to return to Boston University and complete his doctoral degree, which he received in 1970. While completing his doctorate, he held positions as an instructor at Boston University (1962-1964), the University of Lowell (1964-1966), and Massachusetts State College at Bridgewater (1966-1968). From 1968 to 1974 he was an assistant professor at Northeastern University. He completed his dissertation, "The Violent Hero, Wilderness Heritage and Urban Reality: A Study of the

Private Eye in the Novels of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross MacDonald" in 1970 (later published as *The Private Eye in Hammett and Chandler*, 1984).

Parker estimates that it took him two and a half years of writing in his spare time to complete his first novel, *The Godwulf Manuscript*, published by Houghton in 1974. He was promoted to associate professor in 1974, and after publishing *God Save the Child* (1974), *Mortal Stakes* (1975), and *Promised Land*, he was promoted to full professor in 1976, the same year that *Promised Land* won an Edgar Award.

Parker became a househusband while his wife, Joan, attended graduate school to earn a master's degree in early childhood development. She began a teaching and administrative career in education. In 1977 Joan was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a mastectomy two weeks later. Parker and his wife coauthored a personal account published the following year as *Three Weeks in Spring* (1978). This devastating experience made Joan aware of tensions in her marriage, and in 1982 she asked for a separation. During their four years of separation, they each underwent psychotherapy. They decided to remain together and purchased a house, which they remodeled to create two separate entrances leading to different levels, two kitchens, and two baths. Parker has made use of this arrangement in his fiction: Spenser and his longtime lover, Susan Silverman, have separate residences. Parker also has used his experience as the father of two sons in depicting Spenser's relationship with Paul Giacomin, a lost young man whom Spenser befriends.

ANALYSIS

Robert B. Parker is the acknowledged literary heir to Raymond Chandler. In 1988 he was asked by the Chandler estate to complete the thirty-page manuscript that Chandler was working on at the time of his death. The resulting *Poodle Springs* (1989) carried both authors' names. Parker also wrote a sequel to Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), which he called *Perchance to Dream: Robert B. Parker's Sequel to Raymond Chandler's "The Big Sleep"* (1991). Although Parker's Spenser has remained true to the conventions of the American hard-boiled detective as established

by Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross MacDon-ald, Parker differs from his predecessors in having combined the detective novel and the love story. Spenser is in love with Susan Silverman, a psychologist with a doctorate from Harvard. Spenser and Susan are not married and do not live together, but they have a monogamous relationship. Parker has also changed the locale from Chandler's Los Angeles to Boston. His Boston is so fully realized that he and one of his fans, Kasho Kumagai, compiled a book entitled *Spenser's Boston* (1994).

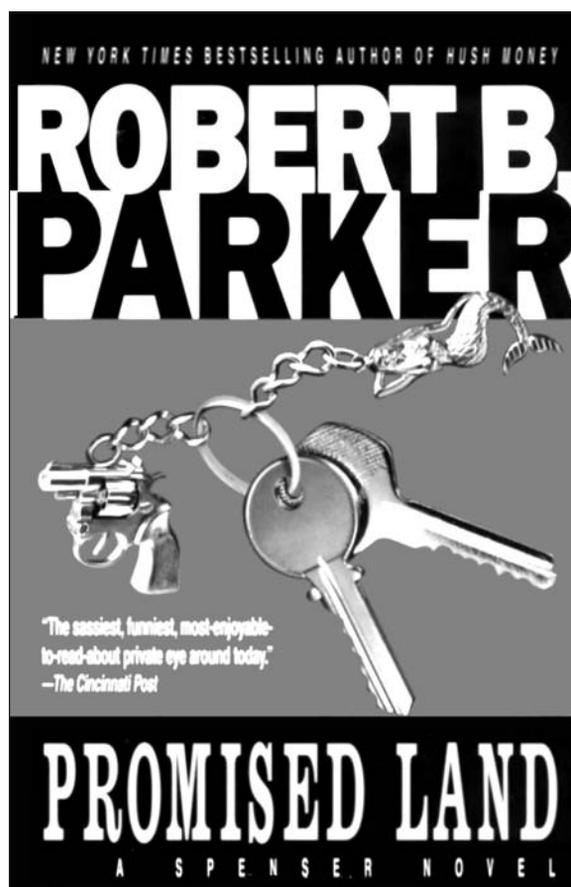
With unerring skill, Parker writes in first-person narrative interlaced with dialogue. The reader sees everything through Spenser's eyes; his wit enlivens every conversation. Parker's work is highly literate. Spenser, his detective's name, is a reference to Edmund Spenser, regarded by his contemporaries as the heir to Geoffrey Chaucer and the leading sixteenth century nondramatic English poet. The selection of name is deliberate. Chandler initially called his hero Malory after the English poet Sir Thomas Malory, author of *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Parker's Spenser is well aware that his literary namesake wrote *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) and just as aware that few of the police officers and mobsters who populate his world have heard of the English poet. Nevertheless, he frequently quips "Spenser, spelled with an 's,' like the English poet." Each book of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* focuses on a knight who engages in a quest relating to a particular virtue: holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy. Like these literary knights, Parker's Spenser is concerned with virtue. He lives by a code that involves protecting the weak and never engaging in gratuitous murder or violence; he is faithful to Susan in spite of temptation. Honor matters; the means that he uses to solve a crime becomes as important as his success in completing a case.

Hawk, Spenser's longtime friend, always keeps his word, and he understands but does not share Spenser's values. Tall, black, and bald, with a ghetto background, Hawk dates Harvard professors but has shady connections with the underworld. He makes his living by working in a criminal world that Spenser knows about but rejects. Whenever Spenser needs backup, Hawk is there, working for free and exchanging wisecracks

with his buddy. Other repeating characters include Martin Quirk, a police lieutenant; Lee Farrell, a homosexual police officer; Vinnie Morris, a thug who is a good shooter and loyal to Spenser and Hawk; and Rachel Wallace, a feminist and gay activist. Parker, like William Faulkner, deliberately uses the past history of his characters in new stories. This developing fictionalized context becomes its own world.

PROMISED LAND

In *Promised Land*, Spenser is hired by Harvey Shepard to find his wife, Pam. She has taken up with Rose and Jane, who plan to organize a women's movement modeled on the Black Panthers; they set up a bank holdup to get money to buy guns. Pam participates in this holdup, in which a man is killed. Spenser discovers that Harvey has invested unwisely in a real estate development, the Promised Land. To make good on some bad debts, he is now in the clutches of the



loan shark and gangster King Power and his enforcer, Hawk. Spenser works out a scheme in which King Power sells guns to Rose and Jane, and the police pick them up. He lets Hawk know in time for him to get away from the police, and in return, Hawk saves Spenser's life during the violent denouement.

A CATSKILL EAGLE

The title of *A Catskill Eagle* (1985) is taken from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick: Or, The Whale* (1851). Spenser comes to grips with despair and jealousy when his relationship with Susan Silverman is threatened. To pursue her career, Susan has separated from Spenser. She has left him for another man, Russell Costigan, the son of the wealthy and unscrupulous Jerry Costigan. Spenser receives a short note from Susan saying that Hawk is in jail in Mill River, California, and that she also needs help. Spenser and Hawk pursue the Costigans and free Susan. Susan returns to therapy to regain her independence, and then she is reunited with Spenser.

SMALL VICES

In *Small Vices* (1997), the lawyers who defended Ellis Alves, a black rapist and general bad guy, think that he may have been framed for the murder of Melissa Henderson, a white coed. The law firm of Rita Fiore hires Spenser to investigate the case and see if it should be reopened. The title is taken from William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (pr. c. 1605-1606):

Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:
Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.

The vices in this case are not small. Spenser discovers that the facts of the murder were covered up to protect Melissa's rich-kid, tennis-star boyfriend. His adoptive and very affluent family hires a hit man to assassinate Spenser. After a brush with death and long rehabilitation, Spenser returns to even the score with his assassin and arrange for justice.

Jean R. Brink

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SPENSER SERIES: 1974-1980 • *The Godwulf Manuscript*, 1974; *God Save the Child*, 1974; *Mortal*

Stakes, 1975; *Promised Land*, 1976; *The Judas Goat*, 1978; *Looking for Rachel Wallace*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Early Autumn*, 1981; *A Savage Place*, 1981; *Surrogate: A Spenser Short Story*, 1982; *Ceremony*, 1982; *The Widening Gyre*, 1983; *Valediction*, 1984; *A Catskill Eagle*, 1985; *Taming a Sea-Horse*, 1986; *Pale Kings and Princes*, 1987; *Crimson Joy*, 1988; *The Early Spenser*, 1989; *Playmates*, 1989; *Stardust*, 1990

1991-2006 • *Pastime*, 1991; *Double Deuce*, 1992; *Paper Doll*, 1993; *Walking Shadow*, 1994; *Thin Air*, 1995; *Chance*, 1996; *Small Vices*, 1997; *Sudden Mischievous*, 1998; *Hush Money*, 1999; *Hugger Mugger*, 2000; *Potshot*, 2001; *Widow's Walk*, 2002; *Back Story*, 2003; *Bad Business*, 2004; *Cold Service*, 2005; *School Days*, 2005; *Hundred-Dollar Baby*, 2006

JESSE STONE SERIES: *Night Passage*, 1997; *Trouble in Paradise*, 1998; *Death in Paradise*, 2001; *Stone Cold*, 2003; *Sea Change*, 2006; *High Profile*, 2007

SUNNY RANDALL SERIES: *Family Honor*, 1999; *Perish Twice*, 2000; *Shrink Rap*, 2002; *Melancholy Baby*, 2004; *Blue Screen*, 2006; *Spare Change*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Poodle Springs* (with Raymond Chandler), 1989; *Perchance to Dream: Robert B. Parker's Sequel to Raymond Chandler's "The Big Sleep,"* 1991

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Wilderness*, 1979; *Love and Glory*, 1983; *All Our Yesterdays*, 1994; *Gunman's Rhapsody*, 2001; *Double Play*, 2004; *Appaloosa*, 2005

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Edenville Owls*, 2007

NONFICTION: *The Personal Response to Literature*, 1971 (with others); *Sports Illustrated Training with Weights*, 1973 (with John R. Marsh); *Order and Diversity: The Craft of Prose*, 1973 (with Peter L. Sandberg); *Sports Illustrated Weight Training*, 1974 (with Marsh); *Three Weeks in Spring*, 1978 (with Joan Parker); *The Private Eye in Hammett and Chandler*, 1984; *Parker on Writing*, 1985; *A Year at the Races*, 1990 (with Parker); *Spenser's Boston*, 1994 (with Kasho Kamugai); *Boston: History in the Making*, 1999

EDITED TEXTS: *The Personal Response to Literature*, 1970 (with others); *Order and Diversity: The*

Craft of Prose, 1973 (with Peter L. Sandburg); *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 1997

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James, Dean, and Elizabeth Foxwell. *The Robert B. Parker Companion*. New York: Berkley Books, 2005. Comprehensive work contains plot summaries, a biography of Parker, lists of characters, and information on Spenser's Boston.

Keating, H. R. F. *Writing Crime Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. British crime writer analyzes the genre and discusses Parker as heir to Chandler.

Parker, Robert B., and Anne Ponder. "What I Know

About Writing Spenser Novels." In *Colloquium on Crime: Eleven Renowned Mystery Writers Discuss Their Work*, edited by Robin W. Winks. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986. Revises and expands an article that appeared in *The Armchair Detective* in 1984. In-depth discussion of Spenser and the philosophical underpinning of his world.

Schmid, George. *Profiling the American Detective: Parker's Prose on the Coded Game of Sleuth and Rogue, and the Tradition of the Crime Story*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. An examination of Parker's detective fiction and how it fits into the genre.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. Rev. ed. New York: Viking, 1985. Historical study of the detective story with comments unsympathetic to Parker.

Winks, Robin W. *Modus Operandi: An Excursion into Detective Fiction*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1982. Appreciative study and defense of detective fiction as literature. Describes the evolution of Parker's Spenser. Calls attention to *Mortal Stakes* and *Promised Land*.

IAIN PEARS

Born: Coventry, England; August 8, 1955

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy; police procedural, thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jonathan Argyll, 1990-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JONATHAN ARGYLL is a British art historian, professor, and somewhat less than successful art dealer who lives in Rome. Along with General Taddeo Bottando and Flavia di Stefano of the Italian National Art Theft Squad, he tracks down stolen paintings. He is also romantically involved with Flavia.

CONTRIBUTION

Iain Pears, in his Jonathan Argyll series, introduces the mystery reader to the world of art collecting and art theft. It is a world populated by art historians, collectors, and dealers who are often less than scrupulous; thieves who are willing to murder to obtain valuable paintings; and the Italian National Art Theft Squad, which is beset by never-ending bureaucratic problems and politics, making recovery of stolen art difficult. The novels form a subgenre of their own: the art-history mystery. Pears's mysteries appeal to a wide variety of readers. They combine elements of the police procedural, the amateur sleuth novel, the thriller, and the cozy in an entertaining yet erudite narrative. The Jonathan Argyll series foreshadows Pears's volu-

minous historical mystery *An Instance of the Fingerpost* (1998). Filled with complex plots, likable characters, various cultural settings, and a light ironic tone, Pears's mystery novels have earned him recognition as an international best-selling author.

BIOGRAPHY

Iain George Pears was born in Coventry, England, in 1955. He received his education at Wadham College of Oxford University, where he completed a doctorate in art history. Pears enjoyed a varied career working as an art historian, a journalist, and a television consultant before becoming a writer. He worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation in both England and Germany. From 1982 to 1990 he lived and worked in Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States as a correspondent for the international news agency Reuters. These experiences provided him with a broad knowledge of topics from financial activities to sports. In addition, they served as a sort of writing apprenticeship, training him to gather information and immediately turn it into written text to meet the deadlines faced by a news reporter. Writer's block has not been a problem for Pears. Living in these diverse countries, Pears developed an appreciation for cultural differences and a particular fondness for Italy, which became the major setting of his Jonathan Argyll mysteries.

In 1987, Pears became a Getty Fellow in the Arts and Humanities at Yale University. While in residency there, he completed the book he was writing about eighteenth century British art. In 1988, he published *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1690-1768*. The erudite and well-researched book was well received in the intellectual community and has often been referenced in subsequent works on art and cultural history.

By 1990, Pears had left his position as a correspondent for Reuters and was writing fiction full time. Combining his expertise in art and his predilection for Italy, he completed his first mystery, *The Raphael Affair* (1990), which launched the popular Jonathan Argyll series. Pears's art-history mysteries immediately enjoyed success among mystery readers and received praise from critics of the mystery genre. Drawing on

his ability to avoid writer's block that he acquired as a news correspondent, he added five more mysteries to the series by 1996.

Pears then became interested in writing a historical novel. Fascinated by the similarities that he found between the period of the Restoration in England and his own time as well as the differences, he chose to set his novel in Oxford, England, in 1663, the height of the Restoration. The novel *An Instance of the Fingerpost*, published in 1998, was a best seller, was translated into several foreign languages, and brought him international renown. In 1999, he received the Martin Beck Award from the Swedish Academy of Detection. In 2000, Pears returned to his mystery series and wrote a seventh book in which he brought to a conclusion the theme of the Italian National Art Theft Squad but not the series. The last pages of the novel suggest new possibilities of a less official nature for Jonathan Argyll, Flavia di Stefano, and General Taddeo Bottando. Still intrigued by the myriad possibilities of the historical novel, Pears wrote another nonseries historical work, *The Dream of Scipio* (2002), a complex novel set in three different centuries. In 2005, he published *The Portrait*.

Pears says that his writing has been influenced by many different writers, including British novelist Lawrence Sanders, French novelist Marguerite Yourcenar, art historian Erich Gombrich, and French detective novelist Georges Simenon.

ANALYSIS

Complexity is the term that best describes Iain Pears's writing. Although Pears has not written any theory of the novel, he is intensely interested in the elements of the novel—character, structure, setting, voice, and plot—and in the ways in which they can be used to create complex, multilayered narratives.

Pears uses a standard plot structure. He proposes a mystery to be solved and then recounts events leading to its resolution, yet he uses various devices to obscure answers and to create confusion. Subplots abound in his novels. In the Jonathan Argyll series, there is always an art theft and more often than not a murder to be solved. In addition to this main plot, Argyll is constantly burdened with career problems. Bottando is

having his usual problems with the bureaucracy, and Flavia and Argyll are trying to find time for each other. Pears adds another dimension to his series as a result of this multiplot structure. Although the series is referred to as the Jonathan Argyll series and Argyll is a principal character, he is not really the only principal character. From Argyll's arrest and initial contact with General Bottando and Flavia in *The Raphael Affair*, the three characters form a triumvirate that creates a multicharacter protagonist. Argyll provides the expertise in art necessary to solve the crimes, General Bottando the police procedural knowledge and skill in handling the corrupt political system under which they work, and Flavia the practical investigation techniques and legwork.

Pears's characters are also complex and multifaceted. Many of them are not what they at first appear to be. As the plots unfold, surprising facts are revealed about the characters, but the characters themselves remain believable. For example, Mary Verney, the likable art thief who appears in a number of the mysteries, including *Giotto's Hand* (1994) and *The Immaculate Deception* (2000), is the best example of this technique. Pears also creates what might be called "false characterization" through the description of characters by other characters. In *The Immaculate Deception*, Elena F. is described as a former terrorist capable of the worst atrocities by two of the individuals Flavia interviews in her investigation. On talking with Elena, Flavia instinctively feels that the woman is not as she has been described. Thus, Pears creates another mystery within the mystery.

Pears explores the many possibilities of narration in his novels. He uses primarily third-person narration, which gives him ample opportunity for description. Dialogue plays a significant role in his mysteries, as it affords him the opportunity to multiply the levels of narration. These narrators are usually unreliable and further complicate the solving of the mystery.

The majority of the Jonathan Argyll series novels take place in Italy, primarily in Rome. Pears's familiarity with and love of Rome and Italy, coupled with the importance of art in Italian culture, make this the ideal setting for the series. Pears's sensitivity to cultural differences and attention to authenticity of detail give the

settings of his novels a place of almost equal importance with the characters. This is particularly true in *Giotto's Hand*. In this novel, Argyll conducts part of the investigation in a small village in England. Local customs and ways significantly affect how he proceeds.

Pears's novels are permeated with an irony that ranges from light humorous satire to the philosophical. In *Death and Restoration* (1996), he satirically portrays police procedure as Flavia assigns the new recruit Giulia to the surveillance of Mary Verney. However, much of the irony in Pears's work is more philosophical and leads toward a question found in his *The Dream of Scipio*. Given the complexity of life and the rarity of times when a totally right answer can be found, which is the better choice: to act or to opt out?—this is the question hinted at in the Jonathan Argyll novels and fully proposed in this novel.

THE RAPHAEL AFFAIR

The Raphael Affair is the first novel in the Jonathan Argyll series. Here the reader is introduced to General Taddeo Bottando, to Flavia di Stefano, and to Jonathan Argyll. Pears devotes a considerable amount of the novel to developing the characters. He carefully delineates the relationship that exists between General Bottando and Flavia. Both of them love Rome and prefer life there to anywhere else. The general, who is almost sixty years old, is set in his ways, skeptical, and very good at dealing with the Italian bureaucracy. He admires Flavia and has a high opinion of her ability. Flavia is hardworking yet at times flippant and almost always rebellious.

Argyll—brash, English, and a graduate student in art history—becomes involved in their search for a lost painting by the happenstance of his false arrest. Consequently, Argyll becomes unofficially a consultant to the Italian National Art Theft Squad and finds himself becoming romantically involved with Flavia.

GIOTTO'S HAND

Giotto's Hand, the fifth novel in the Jonathan Argyll series, gives an in-depth look at police procedures as Bottando's competency as head of the Italian National Art Theft Squad is challenged by his colleague Corrado Argon. The portrayal of Bottando presenting his defense reveals Pears's skill in developing characters.

Set in Rome, Florence, and a small village in England, the novel also contains an interesting depiction of local color. Argyll finds life in the small English village vastly different from that in Rome. Complex plots and unreliable narrator Mary Verney play important roles in the novel. The end of the novel takes a philosophical twist as Argyll is confronted with a situation in which there is no totally right decision that he can make. In *The Dream of Scipio*, Pears returns to this philosophical problem and develops it extensively.

THE IMMACULATE DECEPTION

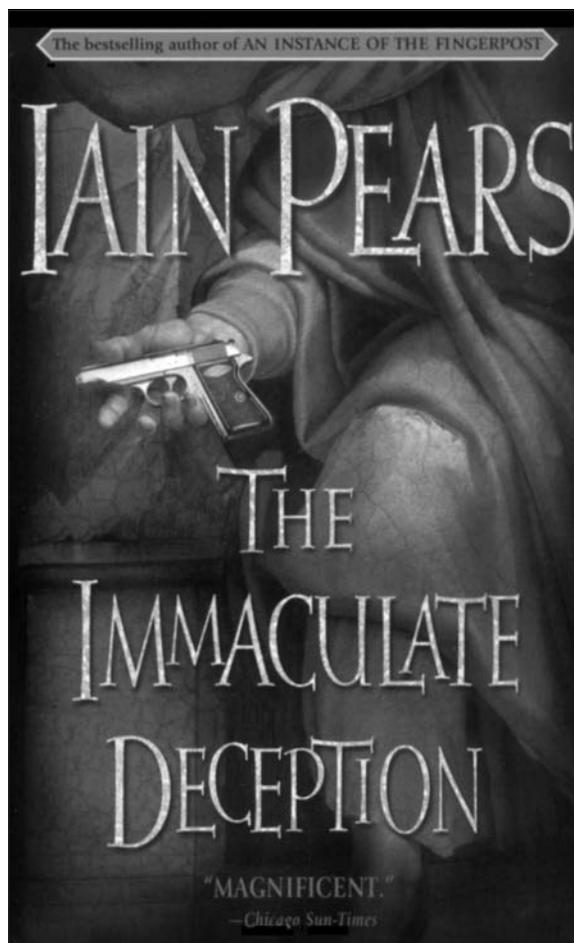
The seventh novel of the Jonathan Argyll series, *The Immaculate Deception*, brings the series to an apparent close but leaves open the possibility for it to continue. At the end of the novel, neither General Bottando nor Flavia is still connected with the Italian National Art Theft Squad. General Bottando has re-

tired. Flavia, who has married Argyll, is expecting a baby and has taken a payout and left the squad. However, Argyll is already proposing the possibility that they continue to recover stolen paintings, but as private investigators working for individual collectors. Therefore, the possibility of Pears sharing more adventures of the intrepid threesome with his readers remains.

In this novel, Pears also plays with the reader as he presents facts that tend to mislead the reader into believing that General Bottando may not have been the law-abiding police official he has appeared to be. Wanting to identify the artist of a painting Bottando received as a retirement present, Argyll discovers some very disturbing facts about the painting. Even more suspicion is aroused when Flavia and Argyll find General Bottando, who simply disappeared after his retirement, sitting on the veranda of art thief Mary Verney's Italian villa. Throughout the series, Mary Verney has been a very perplexing character. Although she is admittedly a thief and has even committed murder, she is likable and introduces the idea that often there is no totally morally right decision possible. Mary reveals that she and General Bottando have shared a long romantic involvement that began at the time of her first theft. Bottando had been sent to England as part of an Italian National Art Theft Squad investigating the theft. She also justifies her own activities in that she stole only from those who could afford to lose valuable property. She explains that the valuable painting in Bottando's apartment was a gift from her that she had bought for him.

AN INSTANCE OF THE FINGERPOST

An Instance of the Fingerpost is rich with details of life in 1660's London. The judicial system, the medical profession, the importance of religion, the inns, the university system, and the fairs are all meticulously described. Historical and erudite, the novel holds the reader's attention just by its immense amount of detail and description, but the novel is also a multilayered, multifaceted murder mystery. Murder has been committed, but what are the facts? Pears uses four narrators in the novel: Marco da Cola, who identifies himself as an Italian and a physician; Jack Prescott, the son of a traitor who fled to escape execution; Dr. John Wallis, a mathematician and cryptographer; and An-



thony Wood, a mild-mannered Oxford antiquarian. Each narrator recounts the details of the murder of Dr. Robert Grove, but each account is significantly different. Although all the narrators are convincing, three of them turn out to be unreliable. Marco da Cola not only is unreliable as a narrator but also has misrepresented himself as a physician: He is actually a priest. The ending of the novel is unexpected and takes the reader by surprise. Pears also uses this technique of the surprise ending in his Jonathan Argyll series.

Shawncey Webb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JONATHAN ARGYLL SERIES: *The Raphael Affair*, 1990; *The Titian Committee*, 1991; *The Bernini Bust*, 1992; *The Last Judgment*, 1993; *Giotto's Hand*, 1994; *Death and Restoration*, 1996; *The Immaculate Deception*, 2000

NONSERIES NOVELS: *An Instance of the Fingerpost*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Dream of Scipio*, 2002; *The Portrait*, 2005

NONFICTION: *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1690-1768*, 1988

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Coale, Sam. "Books: A Painter, a Critic, and Some Cruel Truths." Review of *The Portrait*, by Iain Pears. *Providence Journal*, May 1, 2005, p. E07. A favorable review of a work about a painter seeking revenge who invites an art critic to his place and paints

his portrait. This suspenseful tale shares qualities with Pears's mystery works.

Dirda, Michael. "The Final Deduction." Review of *An Instance of the Fingerpost*, by Iain Pears. *Washington Post*, March 8, 1988, p. X01. Reviewer praises the historical mystery, calling it an imaginative, original intellectual thriller.

Heller, Prudence. Review of *The Titian Committee*, by Iain Pears. *The Plain Dealer*, February 2, 1994, p. 9F. Review of this Argyll book about the death of a member of the Titian Committee finds the characters and depiction of Venice interesting and the pace fast-moving.

Ott, Bill. Review of *The Immaculate Deception*, by Iain Pears. *Booklist* 102, no. 17 (May 1, 2006): 12. A favorable review of this book in the Argyll series that notes that although the characters are bound together by their dislike of institutions, they are not cynical and are able to enjoy life, which livens the series.

Palmer, Alan. *Fictional Minds*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004. Discusses use of situated identity in *Giotto's Hand*.

Pears, Iain. *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1690-1768*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988. Gives insights into the development of the world of art collecting, which Pears portrays in his Argyll series. Considers the art market, auctions, dealers, and collectors.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on historical crime fiction as well as one on mystery and detective fiction, providing perspective for understanding Pears's novels.

GEORGE P. PELECANOS

Born: Washington, D.C.; February 18, 1957

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nick Stefanos, 1992-

Dimitri Karras and Marcus Clay, 1996-

Derek Strange and Terry Quinn, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

NICK STEFANOS, an electronics salesman, is the main character in three of George Pelecanos's first four books and figures prominently in several others. Popularly considered Pelecanos's alter ego, Nick transforms from angry punk to amateur sleuth to disillusioned drunk. Nick is the typical tough Pelecanos hero.

DIMITRI KARRAS and MARCUS CLAY are at the center of Pelecanos's District of Columbia quartet, although the series focuses on Dimitri. In the first novel, Dimitri is born to Peter Karras, a Greek American and World War II veteran. A small-time pot dealer in the second, Dimitri teams with African American Marcus Clay, Vietnam vet and the owner of Real Right record store. By the third novel, Dimitri has been a teacher and is a cocaine user who works for Marcus. In the fourth, Dimitri is in his fifties, and his five-year-old son, Jimmy, has been killed by a robber's getaway car.

DEREK STRANGE is an aging private detective and TERRY QUINN is a former police officer who left the force under controversial circumstances. Like so many of Pelecanos's characters, Strange and Quinn are defined by the music they listen to, the films they watch, and the books they read. African American Strange prefers Sergio Leone Westerns and Ennio Morricone scores, while Irish American Quinn devours Westerns by Elmore Leonard and Ron Hansen and listens to albums by Bruce Springsteen and Steve Earle. Strange and Quinn are, like Karras and Clay, an excellent vehicle for Pelecanos—who is haunted by the racial divide in Washington, D.C.—to further explore the issue of race.

CONTRIBUTION

Equally influenced by punk music, the highly stylized action films of the 1960's and 1970's, and writers of noir fiction, George P. Pelecanos has lifted the hard-boiled genre to new heights. Early in his career, he announced that his goal was to take what he had learned from hard-boiled masters such as Dashiell Hammett, Jim Thompson, and David Goodis and mix it with what he had learned from the punk-music scene (namely bands such as Husker Du, Fugazi, and the Replacements) that swept through the District of Columbia in the 1980's to update the hard-boiled genre to encompass modern urban concerns. Having been successful in this regard, Pelecanos's other major contribution to current crime literature is his crisp dialogue (heavily influenced by the crime novels of Elmore Leonard) that captures the various voices of the District of Columbia's mean streets spanning the last hundred years. Pelecanos strips clean the language and expertly adopts the voices of private investigators, police officers, gangsters, members of street gangs, and—above all—working-class people, those who live on the knife edge between the dark abyss of themselves and the dark abyss of humanity. Pelecanos has been branded the “coolest writer in America,” and he is widely acknowledged as a modern master of the hard-boiled genre. He has received praise for each of his novels and continues to be well received by his contemporaries, including Jonathan Lethem, Dennis Lehane, Stephen King, Daniel Woodrell, and Vicki Hendricks.

BIOGRAPHY

George P. Pelecanos grew up in the Mount Pleasant area of Washington, D.C., and in Silver Spring, Maryland. The son of Greek immigrants, he began working at a young age at his father's lunch counter. Marked by a strong work ethic that he attributes to his Greek American roots, Pelecanos worked at a variety of jobs—stock boy, shoe salesman, bartender, consumer electronics salesman, and film producer—before becoming a full-time writer. He received a bachelor's degree in film studies in 1980 from the University of Maryland.



George Pelecanos. (Theo Maschas/Odyssey Magazine/
Courtesy, Little, Brown and Company)

While studying at the University of Maryland, Pelecanos took a class on hard-boiled detective fiction that changed the course of his life. Being exposed to writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler instilled in him a love of the genre that would lay the groundwork for his literary career. It would also leave him with a voracious appetite for books, as his professor, Charles Misch, got him into the habit of reading at least two books a week. Like so many of his characters, Pelecanos often, in interviews, riffs on his favorite books of the moment, bringing up key works by contemporaries such as Vicki Hendricks and Daniel Woodrell and classics by David Goodis and Newton Thornburg. His early life is marked by a vibrant love of film and music, two other media that have served to shape his life and career.

At the age of thirty-one, Pelecanos quit his well-paying general manager job with appliance dealer

Bray & Scarff and pursued writing full time. The loosely autobiographical *A Firing Offense* (1992) was his first book. Pelecanos sent the completed manuscript to only one publisher—St. Martin's Press—and though it was a year before he heard back, the book was accepted for publication. After this initial success, he continued to publish books at the rate of about one a year. He began to receive wide recognition in the mid-1990's, as books such as *The Big Blowdown* (1996) and *The Sweet Forever* (1998) won for him prestigious awards. During this time, Pelecanos also worked as a film producer for Circle Releasing, a company best known for producing the early films of Joel and Ethan Coen. In 2002, Pelecanos began working as a story editor/writer for David Simon's Home Box Office series *The Wire* (began in 2002), gaining even more critical acclaim.

ANALYSIS

Pelecanos has been haunted by an incident in which he accidentally shot a good friend in the face with his father's .38 special at the age of seventeen. His precise and evocative exploration of violence has defined his work from the start. He is concerned primarily with working-class and lower-class inhabitants of Washington, D.C.; with children whose consciences have been deformed by society; and with broken men and women in desperate need of atonement and some sort of human communion. He is a master at capturing the various voices of District of Columbia inhabitants—punks, loners, gangbangers, workaholics, alcoholics, drug addicts, and pretty much anyone whose voice has been lost in the mess of the city. His books are never concerned with mere social criticism, but Pelecanos is surely intent on telling the stories of the capital city's million sinners. Never writing mere tales of detection, he simply sets the oldest hard-boiled stories of them all—Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, stories about hard falls from grace, about sin and redemption—in his city, a place that he knows inside out.

Like Ernest Hemingway and Elmore Leonard, Pelecanos is a clean and precise writer who chooses his words carefully. His language not only makes his work accessible to the masses but also is a reaction against often stilted “high literature.” Above all, Pele-

canos is concerned with the sounds and rhythms of American speech, with the language of the streets, and with the dangerous and the damned. He has no interest in the academy, instead concerning himself with autodidacts, with those who have been baptized by fire.

Similarly, the Pelecanos hero, like the Hemingway hero, must operate under extreme conditions and must perform his or her duties with grace under pressure. He or she must be able to take punishment. Consider Pete Karras in *The Big Blowdown*. His sins lead him to be wounded horribly. He never complains about it, though the quality of his life seriously deteriorates after his grievous wounding. The only thing he can do is to make one last decent gesture, a gesture that shows the goodness of which he is capable. In Karras's case (as in the case of many hard-boiled heroes), he saves a prostitute from a life ruled by heroin and nasty pimps. The Pelecanos hero must also hold fast to his or her work, friends, and loved ones. Like Mark Twain's Huck Finn, Pelecanos's exemplars are sound of heart even when their consciences falter, and they exhibit physical durability, always maintaining a hard-boiled pose. On the other hand, criminals and other antiexemplars in the Pelecanos universe are marked by their inhumanity, phoniness, or sloppy sentimentality.

The definition of hard-boiled in the Oxford English Dictionary is "hardened, callous; hard-headed, shrewd." This is a fine rundown of Pelecanos's work. His fiction, no matter what else it is, is certainly not soft. He is not concerned with softness and sentimentality, which are equated with weakness. He is wholly concerned with toughness, with maintaining a tough pose even if in a broken, battered condition.

A FIRING OFFENSE

Pelecanos's first novel, *A Firing Offense*, introduces young Nick Stefanos, who weaves his way through Pelecanos's District of Columbia for years to come. A consumer electronics salesman, Stefanos is disturbed by the disappearance of Jimmy Broda, a stock boy who has fallen in with some local toughs. Stefanos, his life in disarray, applies for a private investigator's license and attempts to find the lost boy. Like many of Pelecanos's protagonists, Nick is perched on the edge of madness, one step away from turning into the sort of bad man that he despises. What

keeps him from crossing the line is concentrating his energy on doing one good thing. In this case, it is finding and helping young Jimmy Broda. *A Firing Offense* is not Pelecanos's best work, but—as his first—it is a brilliant introduction to the dark and deadly District of Columbia that continues to serve as his muse.

THE BIG BLOWDOWN

The Big Blowdown is perhaps Pelecanos's most ambitious crime novel. It tells the story of Pete Karras, the father of Dimitri Karras, who figures prominently in the next three books of the District of Columbia quartet. Pete grows up in the District of Columbia during Prohibition, fights in World War II, and comes back home badly in need of a job. His buddy Joey Recevo, an unlikely friend to the son of Greek immigrant parents, gets him work as an enforcer for a local mob boss. When the mob boss turns on Karras because he is not tough enough on Greeks in the neighborhood, he is beaten close to the point of death while Recevo watches. Disabled by this incident, Karras limps through the streets of the District of Columbia, defeated. He fathers Dimitri, treats his wife poorly (often cheating on her with a mistress), and works as a short-order cook at a lunch counter, depressed by his station in life. In short, Karras is the perfect hard-boiled hero, a broken man with one last shot at redemption.

Redemption comes in the form of Lola Florek, a small-town girl from Pennsylvania who has found out the hard way about the District of Columbia's seedy underbelly. Having fallen into a life of drugs and prostitution, Lola is searched out by her brother, Mike, a naïve kid focused on saving his sister. Enter Lola's only hope: Pete Karras. Morally torn, spiritually broken, and resigned to live with the consequences of his poor choices, Karras devotes himself to helping Mike track down Lola, to doing one good final thing.

SHAME THE DEVIL

Its title taken from a Robin Trower song, *Shame the Devil* (2000) is the fourth book in the District of Columbia quartet. Here, Pelecanos switches gears and begins the novel with a violent heist scene in which Jimmy Karras, Dimitri's five-year-old son, is accidentally killed. *Shame the Devil*, unlike Pelecanos's earlier novels, begins with a horrific act and deals with

the fallout from the tragedy. Nick Stefanos, back as a major character, finds a broken-down Karras a job as a dishwasher. The novel brings the quartet full circle, as a violent shootout brings readers back to the landscape of *The Big Blowdown*, and the histories of the Karras and Stefanos families come together in a thunderclap.

RIGHT AS RAIN

In *Right as Rain*, Pelecanos was aiming at something markedly different from his earlier novels: a hard-boiled urban Western that would put a spotlight on the racial divide in Washington, D.C. Derek Strange, an African American former police officer turned private investigator, and Terry Quinn, an Irish American former police officer turned bookstore employee, prove to be the perfect pair of protagonists by which Pelecanos can explore the issue of race. Strange is hired by Leona Wilson, the mother of an African American police officer shot by Terry Quinn in his last tragic act as an officer. Now working at a secondhand bookstore, Quinn is haunted by his mistake. Strange interviews him, and they form the unlikeliest of investigative partnerships. More than that, they become fast friends, and their relationship is at the center of Pelecanos's next two books, *Hell to Pay* (2002) and *Soul Circus* (2003).

DRAMA CITY

In *Drama City* (2005), Pelecanos moves away from his principal series characters to tell the story of Lorenzo Brown, a good-hearted former convict turned street investigator for the Humane Society. Lorenzo, like the typical Pelecanos hero, is trying to reform, to atone for his past sins. Surrounded by people whose despair has transformed into full-fledged violence, Lorenzo walks a fine line between atonement and falling back into his old habits. Figuring prominently into the story is Lorenzo's parole officer, Rachel Lopez, who is a dedicated to her job but also attracted to an alternate lifestyle that finds her drinking excessively at dive bars and having casual sex with strangers. As usual, Pelecanos moves back and forth between these stories at a breakneck pace, bringing them together in the violent final act.

William Boyle

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NICK STEFANOS SERIES: *A Firing Offense*, 1992; *Nick's Trip*, 1993; *Down by the River Where the Dead Men Go*, 1995

DIMITRI KARRAS AND MARCUS CLAY SERIES: *The Big Blowdown*, 1996; *King Suckerman*, 1997; *The Sweet Forever*, 1998; *Shame the Devil*, 2000

DEREK STRANGE AND TERRY QUINN SERIES: *Right as Rain*, 2001; *Hell to Pay*, 2002; *Soul Circus*, 2003; *Hard Revolution*, 2004

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Shoedog*, 1994; *Drama City*, 2005; *The Night Gardener*, 2006

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Daly, Sean. "Heavy Hitter: George Pelecanos Puts More Punch into Capital Crime." *Book Magazine*, 14 (January/February 2001): 18-20. An exploration of Pelecanos's hard-hitting prose.

Fierman, Daniel. "D.C. Confidential: Mystery Writer George Pelecanos Breaks Out of Washington's Mean Streets." *Entertainment Weekly*, 643 (March 8, 2002): 36-38. Explores Pelecanos's success on the eve of the release of *Hell to Pay*. Fierman also wrote an exceedingly positive review of *Drama City* for *Entertainment Weekly* in 2005.

Greenman, Ben. "Washington Wizard." *New Yorker*, 78 (April 8, 2002): 90-92. A useful overview of Pelecanos's career from 1992 to 2002.

Hachette Book Group. George Pelecanos. <http://www.hachettebookgroupusa.com/features/george-pelecanos/>. Pelecanos's publisher offers an official Web site for the author. Provides a brief biography, several interviews, and informal essays by Pelecanos on his favorite music, films, and literature.

Palmer, John-Ivan. "Roaches Ate My Face, Hard-Boiled Crime Novelist George Pelecanos." *Your Flesh Quarterly* 34 (1996): 55-61. An article on Pelecanos by the world's fastest and funniest hypnotist.

HUGH PENTECOST

Judson Pentecost Philips

Born: Northfield, Massachusetts; August 10, 1903

Died: Sharon, Connecticut; March 7, 1989

Also wrote as Philip Owen; Hugh Philips

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

George Crowder, 1961-1990

Pierre Chambrun, 1962-1988

Peter Styles, 1964-1982

John Jericho, 1965-1970

Julian Quist, 1971-1987

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GEORGE CROWDER, a once-noted county attorney, left his home and career after discovering that he had prosecuted an innocent man. Ten years later he returned to his hometown and built a cabin on Lakeview Mountain. There he lives a rustic life with his dog, Timmy, and teaches the lore of the woods to his nephew, Joey. His skills (in and out of the woods), his wisdom, and his kindness make him a hero to Joey and a central figure in the Lakeview community.

SHERIFF RED EGAN is part of the local law enforcement in Lakewood and is a friend to Crowder, who often helps him in seeking justice.

PIERRE CHAMBRUN is the resident manager of New York City's top luxury hotel, the Beaumont. A resistance fighter with the French in Paris during World War II and a noted gourmet, Chambrun presides over a diverse staff and clientele.

PETER STYLES, a writer for *Newsview* magazine, devotes his life to fighting injustice and the senseless violence of the modern world. Violence became a part of his life when his father burned to death and he himself lost a leg in a car crash deliberately caused by thrill-seeking youths—and, again, when his wife (whose first husband was murdered by fanatics) was killed by terrorists. His job takes him all over the world, crusading against the terror he has experienced.

FRANK DEVERY, Styles's publisher and editor, is an old friend of Pierre Chambrun.

JOHN JERICHO uses his skills as a painter to illustrate people's inhumanity to others. Six feet, six inches tall and 240 pounds, Jericho sports a flaming red beard (matching his red Mercedes), making him a highly visible figure whether fighting in a special commando troop in Korea or traveling throughout the world. His moving paintings convey a message of concern to the world and illustrate his private crusade for lost causes. When not traveling, Jericho lives in a Greenwich Village studio.

JULIAN QUIST, the glamorous, handsome head of a public relations agency, moves among the gilded rich and is often present when murder strikes. His instinct for derring-do is shared by his associates.

MARK KREEVICK, lieutenant of the Manhattan Homicide Squad and Quist's close friend, believes in preventing crime rather than simply apprehending criminals. He often works with Quist.

CONTRIBUTION

Hugh Pentecost created a world of characters who, to his wide readership, are as familiar in their personalities and relationships as old friends. His characters are generally affluent, physically striking, urbane, intelligent, and articulate. Most of his series are set in New York City, with the specific setting featured in one series likely to appear peripherally in another. When the action called for a rural environment, Pentecost chose the vicinity of Lakeview—located in a New England state sometimes, though not always, identified as Connecticut. The issues treated in Pentecost's work are usually defined in terms of right and wrong (with occasional moralizing—against drugs, for example), and although nice people sometimes die, virtue triumphs in the end. The writing is clear, the characters are both believable and likable, the plots are deviously complex, and the solutions seem both inevitable and surprising. Pentecost published his first short story in 1923, and by 1936 he had begun the prolific output of novels that, though unlikely to become literary classics, clearly contribute to the mystery and detective genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Hugh Pentecost was born Judson Pentecost Philips in Northfield, Massachusetts, on August 10, 1903. His father, Arthur Philips, was an opera singer and his mother, Fredericko Pentecost, was an actress. A great-uncle, the original Hugh Pentecost, was a criminal lawyer in New York City at the start of the twentieth century. Educated in England and the United States, Pentecost received a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University in 1925. He began his career as a writer while still in school, selling the first story he ever wrote, "Room 23," to *Flynn's* during his junior year in college. He was employed as a reporter by the *New York Tribune* in 1926 and simultaneously wrote stories for a variety of magazines, ranging from *Black Mask* to *Collier's* and *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

In addition to his constant productivity as a writer, Pentecost followed a variety of other careers. From 1949 to 1956 he served as co-owner and editor of the *Harlem Valley Times* (Amenia, New York). He also served as a political columnist and book reviewer on the *Lakeville Journal* (Lakeville, Connecticut). In 1951, he was married to the actress Norma Burton. Their son completed his family, which included one daughter and two sons from a previous marriage. Pentecost served as founder and director of the Sharon Playhouse (Sharon, Connecticut) from 1951 to 1972. He also worked as a radio talk-show host for WTOR in Torrington, Connecticut, from 1970 to 1976. All these experiences find their way into Pentecost's mystery plots.

Widely respected by his peers, Pentecost served as president of the Mystery Writers of America. In 1973 (fifty years after his first published work), Pentecost received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award. In 1982, he was again honored, as the recipient of the Nero Wolfe Award. In addition to his many novels and short stories, Pentecost wrote scripts for both radio and television. He died in March, 1989.

ANALYSIS

Hugh Pentecost, whether writing under his given name or one of his pseudonyms, was one of the United States' most prolific mystery writers. The sheer volume of his work gives evidence to a highly disciplined

approach to writing. His diverse and imaginative plots are always precisely structured, are more than adequately believable, and conclude with a solution that is both reasonable and consistent with the characters developed in the novel.

When asked how he created plots for so many novels, Pentecost replied:

It has been said that there are only thirty-six dramatic situations, only about half of which are not too raunchy to use. . . . The only variation any writer has is the people he writes about. There are endless variations in people. . . . The name of the game is people, and they are endlessly rewarding, never uninteresting, and where everything begins and ends.

Indeed, Pentecost's characters are what give his novels their appeal; his books escape being mere literary froth by the unique quality of the people they describe.

QUIST, CHAMBRUN, AND STYLES

Few readers could fail to be intrigued by the debonair style of Julian Quist, the knowledge and power of Pierre Chambrun, or the passion (with its hint of suffering) of Peter Styles. For those who return repeatedly to Pentecost's mysteries, the comfortable familiarity of these and other main characters heighten the drama of the stories. Correctly assuming that readers of one series are likely to become readers of other series as well, Pentecost occasionally intermingles his series characters. Because many of his novels are set in New York City, the Hotel Beaumont is likely to appear in novels other than the Pierre Chambrun series. The same police officials investigate murders in many of the novels, assisted by first one and then another of the amateur sleuths.

Given Pentecost's focus on high society, it is not surprising that the locale and characters occasionally overlap from series to series. Julian Quist, himself comfortably affluent and widely recognized by the press of New York, in his public relations work serves aristocrats and those in the glamorous entertainment industry, people who can afford the services of his firm. The Hotel Beaumont caters to the rich and to the international membership of the United Nations delegates. Only the wealthy can afford the paintings of John Jericho, and Peter Styles's press credentials give

him access to the world of economic and political power. George Crowder, though a resident of a smaller town, is recognized as one of its leaders and, while choosing to live alone in a cabin, moves with ease among the upper classes of Lakeview. Mystery novels, it has been said, are a source of escape from the realities of daily life; it seems appropriate that the escape Pentecost offers is among the wealthy, who, indeed, are not like the rest of us.

MURDER IN LUXURY

Although Pentecost seldom exposes his readers to the underclass of society, he does open the door to the world of violence that lies just beyond the edges of civilized life. Although often the murderer is the nearest and dearest of the victim, just as often the violence is nonpersonal—terrorism, for example, which is all the more frightening because there is no rational explanation for the selection of its victims and, therefore, no way to protect against its violence. As Pentecost wrote in *Murder in Luxury* (1981), one

can't eliminate greed, or jealousy, or a passion for revenge, or the impulse to treachery or betrayal in the individual man or woman. And so, as in every other place on earth, these ugly psychoses disrupt men's efforts to live peaceful and orderly lives.

Pentecost's mysteries are, above all, pleasant entertainment. There is violence, but the descriptions are seldom so gory as to upset the reader. There is always some hint of romance (especially among the principal series characters), but there is no explicit sex to distract from the mystery or offend the puritanical.

Because Pentecost wrote so many novels, his oeuvre is of uneven quality. He has been praised for his clean, hard prose and his ingenious story lines, which move at a brisk pace. His style, however, has been criticized as "stolid," and his plots called "unconvincing." His novels are somewhat dated, drawing, as they do, from current events. Furthermore, some of the characters are described in terms of their physical resemblance to popular film and television figures—a practice that also dates the novels. Yet it is the verdict of his readers that is most valid—and their support has sustained Pentecost through what must surely be one of the longest careers on record. He wrote for the en-

joyment of his readers. With more conversation than description and more action than analysis, Pentecost's works have attracted a loyal cadre of readers.

In short, Pentecost was an able storyteller. He provided the reader with interesting plots, attractive characters, and believable solutions, in which the guilty are duly caught and punished. There is suspense in the identification and pursuit of the guilty, but the reader soon realizes that all will end well in Pentecost's well-structured world.

Carlanna L. Hendrick

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LUKE BRADLEY SERIES: *Cancelled in Red*, 1939; *The Twenty-fourth Horse*, 1940; *I'll Sing at Your Funeral*, 1942; *The Brass Chills*, 1943

GEORGE CROWDER SERIES: *Choice of Violence*, 1961; *The Copycat Killers*, 1983; *Murder Sweet and Sour*, 1985; *Death by Fire*, 1986; *Pattern for Terror*, 1990

PIERRE CHAMBRUN SERIES: *The Cannibal Who Overate*, 1962; *The Shape of Fear*, 1964; *The Evil That Men Do*, 1966; *The Golden Trap*, 1967; *The Gilded Nightmare*, 1968; *Girl Watcher's Funeral*, 1969; *The Deadly Joke*, 1971; *Birthday, Deathday*, 1972; *Walking Dead Man*, 1973; *Bargain with Death*, 1974; *Time of Terror*, 1975; *The Fourteen Dilemma*, 1976; *Death After Breakfast*, 1978; *Random Killer*, 1979; *Beware Young Lovers*, 1980; *Murder in Luxury*, 1981; *With Intent to Kill*, 1982; *Murder in High Places*, 1983; *Remember to Kill Me*, 1984; *Murder Round the Clock*, 1985; *Nightmare Time*, 1986; *Murder Goes Round and Round*, 1988

PETER STYLES SERIES (AS JUDSON PHILIPS): *The Laughter Trap*, 1964; *The Black Glass*, 1965; *The Twisted People*, 1965; *The Wings of Madness*, 1966; *Thursday's Folly*, 1967; *Hot Summer Killing*, 1968; *Nightmare at Dawn*, 1970; *Escape a Killer*, 1971; *The Vanishing Senator*, 1972; *The Larkspur Conspiracy*, 1973; *The Power Killers*, 1974; *Walk a Crooked Mile*, 1975; *Backlash*, 1976; *Five Roads to Death*, 1977; *A Murder Arranged*, 1978; *Why Murder?*, 1979; *Death Is a Dirty Trick*, 1980; *Death as the Curtain Rises*, 1981; *Target for Tragedy*, 1982

JOHN JERICHO SERIES: *Sniper*, 1965; *Hide Her*

from *Every Eye*, 1966; *The Creeping Hours*, 1966; *Dead Woman of the Year*, 1967; *The Girl with Six Fingers*, 1969; *A Plague of Violence*, 1970

JULIAN QUIST SERIES: *Don't Drop Dead Tomorrow*, 1971; *The Champagne Killer*, 1972; *The Beautiful Dead*, 1973; *The Judas Freak*, 1974; *Honeymoon with Death*, 1975; *Die After Dark*, 1976; *The Steel Palace*, 1977; *Deadly Trap*, 1978; *The Homicidal Horse*, 1979; *Death Mask*, 1980; *Sow Death, Reap Death*, 1981; *Past, Present, and Murder*, 1982; *Murder Out of Wedlock*, 1983; *Substitute Victim*, 1984; *The Party Killer*, 1985; *Kill and Kill Again*, 1987

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS JUDSON PHILIPS): 1936-1950 • *Red War*, 1936 (with Thomas M. Johnson); *The Death Syndicate*, 1938; *Death Delivers a Postcard*, 1939; *Murder in Marble*, 1940; *Odds on the Hot Seat*, 1941; *The Fourteenth Trump*, 1942; *Cat and Mouse*, 1944; *The Dead Man's Tale*, 1945; *Memory of Murder*, 1947 (novelettes); *Where the Snow Was Red*, 1949; *Shadow of Madness*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Chinese Nightmare*, 1951; *Lieutenant Pascal's Taste in Homicide*, 1954; *The Assassins*, 1955; *The Obituary Club*, 1958; *Killer on the Catwalk*, 1959; *The Lonely Target*, 1959; *The Kingdom of Death*, 1960; *Whisper Town*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Murder Clear, Track Fast*, 1961; *The Deadly Friend*, 1961; *A Dead Ending*, 1962; *The Dead Can't Love*, 1963; *The Tarnished Angel*, 1963; *Only the Rich Die Young*, 1964 (as Pentecost)

1971-1984 • *Die After Dark*, 1976; *The Day the Children Vanished*, 1976; *Murder as Usual*, 1977; *Mystery at a Country Inn*, 1979 (as Owen); *The Price of Silence*, 1984

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Secret Corridors*, 1945; *Death Wears a Copper Necktie, and Other Stories*, 1946; *Around Dark Corners*, 1970

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *Lonely Boy*, pr. 1954; *The Lame Duck Party*, pr. 1977

NONFICTION: *Hold 'Em Girls: The Intelligent*

Woman's Guide to Men and Football, 1936 (with Robert W. Wood, Jr.)

EDITED TEXT: *Cream of the Crime*, 1962

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Axel-Lute, Melanie. Review of *Past, Present, and Murder*, by Hugh Pentecost. *Library Journal* 107, no. 21 (December 1, 1982): 2271. This Julian Quist series mystery looks at a case in which one of his PR firm's partners disappears after the woman he is engaged to is raped and murdered. A traditional whodunit.

Bertens, Hans, and Theo D'haen. *Contemporary American Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Wide-ranging study of the contemporary scene in American crime fiction that provides perspective on Pentecost's work.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Comprehensive overview of the development of crime fiction in the twentieth century helps place the nature and importance of Pentecost's distinctive contributions.

Pentecost, Hugh. Foreword to *Cream of the Crime: The Fifteenth Mystery Writers of America Anthology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962. Pentecost's foreword to this anthology of detective fiction demonstrates the types of writing he values in others and gives clues to his own writing process.

_____. Interview in *The Armchair Detective*. 13 (1980): 425-430. This brief interview discusses Pentecost's life and his mystery and detective works.

_____. Interview in *Writer's Digest*. May, 1981, pp. 14-15. A brief interview that sheds light on Pentecost's work, characters, and concerns.

Rawlinson, Nora, and Barbara Hoffert. Review of *Pattern for Terror*, by Hugh Pentecost. *Library Journal* 114, no. 16 (October 1, 1989): 1680. Reviewer find this George Crowder series book to have plenty of action and good settings.

THOMAS PERRY

Born: Tonawanda, New York; August 7, 1947

Type of plot: Thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

The Butcher's Boy, 1982-

Jane Whitefield, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE BUTCHER'S BOY is an unremarkable man, who is in his mid-thirties when first introduced and in his mid-forties in his next appearance. He could be mistaken for a college professor, but in reality he is an almost totally amoral, affectless professional hit man.

JANE WHITEFIELD is a "guide" who helps people remove themselves from desperate situations, installing them in new identities. She is tall, with long, black hair, the daughter of a Senecan father and an Irish American mother. She is particularly adept at reading the signs around her, whether those in a crowded airport or in her own dreams.

CONTRIBUTION

Thomas Perry began his career writing thrillers about flawed heroes engaged in sometimes less-than-legal schemes and missions, who appear sympathetic only because their opponents are more morally reprehensible than they are. His best works in this vein are the two novels in the Butcher's Boy series about a professional hit man. His later works, his most successful and popular novels, are those in a series about a Native American woman, Jane Whitefield, who helps make victimized people "disappear." Whitefield is a capable, believable, and sympathetic hero who resorts to force only when necessary and uses her intelligence and culture to defeat her foes.

Perry's later novels have been uneven because he has eschewed a series hero and his protagonists are sometimes bystanders who are drawn into investigating a mystery by their characters or circumstances. However, Perry remains a master at structure, pacing, constructing believable plots, and creating sympathetic and plausible characters.

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Edmund Perry was born on August 7, 1947, in Tonawanda, New York, an area that became the setting for his Jane Whitefield series. He is the son of Richard Perry, a superintendent of schools, and Elizabeth Perry, an English teacher. He attended Cornell University, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1969, and received a doctorate in English literature from the University of Rochester. He was a member of the Air National Guard.

After his studies, Perry worked for a year as a commercial fisherman before working in higher education, first as assistant to the provost of the College of Creative Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara from 1975 to 1980. There he met his second wife, Jo Anne Lee, also a writer with a doctorate in English, whom he married in 1980; they have two daughters, Alix and Isabel. He then became assistant coordinator of the general education program at the University of Southern California. His third attempt at writing a novel, *The Butcher's Boy*, was published in 1982. The book won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1983 and a silver medal from the Commonwealth Club of California the same year. His next novel, *Metzger's Dog* (1983), was named a *New York Times* notable book for 1984.

In 1984, Perry began to work in television as both a producer and a writer. Although he worked mainly for the light detective series *Simon and Simon* (1981-1988), he also wrote for *Twenty-one Jump Street* (1987-1991) and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994). He and his wife cowrote some episodes, including "Reunion" for *Star Trek*, but when their first daughter was born in 1989, Perry's wife decided to stay at home to raise her, and Perry resolved to become a full-time novelist.

Perry's first novel about Jane Whitefield led to a series, and these books, like many of Perry's other novels, have been optioned for films. Of Perry's later, nonseries novels, *Pursuit* (2001) won the Gumshoe Award for 2002.

ANALYSIS

Thomas Perry's fiction usually involves stretching one element of the thriller novel—the chase—into the mainspring and focus of his plots. The hunted and the hunter can also change roles, sometimes unknown to each other and perhaps even to the reader. In his early works, it is sometimes difficult, but never totally impossible, to tell the good characters from the bad.

The main device that Perry uses to distinguish his protagonists from his villains in his early novels is to change the point of view from the main character to another character, often filling in that character's back story, but never at a length that significantly retards the action. Thus we learn that the person whom the main character is going to kill or cause to die is even more worthless than the often amoral protagonist. For example, as the Butcher's Boy, Perry's first main character, moves across the United States, killing off various syndicate bosses so that he can survive, readers learn that his victims often need eliminating. The Butcher's Boy's lack of a proper name through his first novel reinforces reader identification, and his back story inspires sympathy: Taken in by an older professional assassin, Eddie Mastrewski, whose cover is his butcher shop, the boy can react only as Eddie taught him. The Boy has his own primitive sense of justice: When the syndicate in Buffalo kills an old man who helps people disappear because he tried to help the Boy, he avenges the old man by killing his assassins and their superior, to pay off a debt, as he calls it.

Perry's next major character, Jane Whitefield, proved to be his most popular. Some critics have attributed this popularity to a supposed deliberately calculated appeal to politically correct shibboleths, such as Jane's ethnicity and her gender, but as a character, she feels authentic, plausible, and sympathetic. Her Native American heritage is an outgrowth of her growing up in the area of New York in which Perry grew up. Jane's Deganawida seems very close to Perry's Tonawanda. Her motivations for becoming a guide fit in with her heritage and her own sense of justice, and she relies on her skills of observation rather than on superior firepower or violence, which she employs only when necessary. Perry also skillfully weaves in Senecan legends and history to support the

narrative, and Jane must be as skillful in interpreting her own dreams as she is in her observation of her surroundings.

It could be argued that Perry's need to make Jane a believable heroine weakened the later novels in this series. Jane is devoted to her calling, but not enough that she would give up a chance at domestic happiness, so when she receives a marriage proposal, she accepts. Her marriage means she must gradually withdraw from her life as a guide and that her motivations for helping victims in her third, fourth, and fifth novels are more tenuous than those in the first two, which are also more effective as novels because their villains are stronger. *Shadow Woman* (1997), the third Jane Whitefield novel, is not significantly weaker than the first two novels because the villains are mirror images of Jane, but their involvement with her husband is less credible. In *The Face-Changers* (1998), she becomes a guide at the request of her husband, whose mentor has been falsely accused of murder, and her opponents are shadowy and amorphous until the end. *Blood Money* (1999), the fifth novel in the series, is even less believable, both in her reasons for helping the victims and in the schemes they all concoct to foil the villains—who are virtually the entire American Mafia. Perry wisely chose to give Jane a sabbatical after this novel.

Perry's later novels involve him in the problem of maneuvering a somewhat naïve yet good-hearted character to solve a mystery or uncover a criminal scheme, as happens in *Dead Aim* (2002) when a businessman investigates why a girl committed suicide, and in *Death Benefits* (2001), in which a newly hired worker at an insurance company must discover why a coworker with whom he was in love has been murdered. Often, the less experienced character is aided by a veteran, and usually less scrupulous, partner, as happens in *Death Benefits*, *Pursuit*, and *Nightlife* (2006), even when the less experienced character is connected to or involved in law enforcement, as in the last two titles. Whatever the initial premise, Perry is an expert at easing readers into a willing suspension of disbelief, with his control of narrative viewpoint and talent for creating interesting and credible secondary characters. His skill at constructing plots and situations usually means the level of disbelief is never high from the start.

SLEEPING DOGS

At the beginning of *Sleeping Dogs* (1992), the second novel about the professional hit man, the Butcher's Boy has been retired for ten years, living in England under the name Michael Schaeffer and having an affair with an upper-class Englishwoman. When an attempt is made on his life by an American mafioso who recognizes him, Schaeffer embarks on a killing spree, changing his name as he travels across the United States. Once again, as in *The Butcher's Boy*, Justice Department investigator Elizabeth Waring is enlisted by her benighted bosses to figure out what is happening.

The hallmarks that made Perry's debut novel so successful remain: believable action, sympathetic quarry and pursuer, and accurate snapshots of the various portions of the United States (and England) that his characters travel through. The novel emphasizes two points. First, both the Butcher's Boy and his Mafia opponents initially misunderstand each other's motives. Schaeffer believes that a coincidental sighting and attack on him is the result of a deliberate assignment, so he goes across the United States, killing the underbosses and bosses who he believes are responsible, resulting in a grisly comedy of errors. Second, Schaeffer's view of America is colored by his ten years' absence, so that he is almost a tourist in his own country, who must re-educate himself on how to survive and attack.

The person with the clearest understanding of the plot is, again, Waring, but even she makes a crucial error in judgment that proves nearly fatal. The Butcher Boy's confrontation with Waring at the end of the novel is not as innocent as the one that concludes *The Butcher's Boy*, and while Schaeffer remains a somewhat sympathetic character, his motivations for restraining himself, self-centered as they are, make him less likable.

DANCE FOR THE DEAD

The second Jane Whitefield novel, *Dance for the Dead* (1996), begins almost in medias res, as Jane attempts to save a young boy from predators who are trying to claim his inheritance, and the plot never lets up from that point. The novel features a character who is perhaps Perry's finest creation as a villain: the omi-

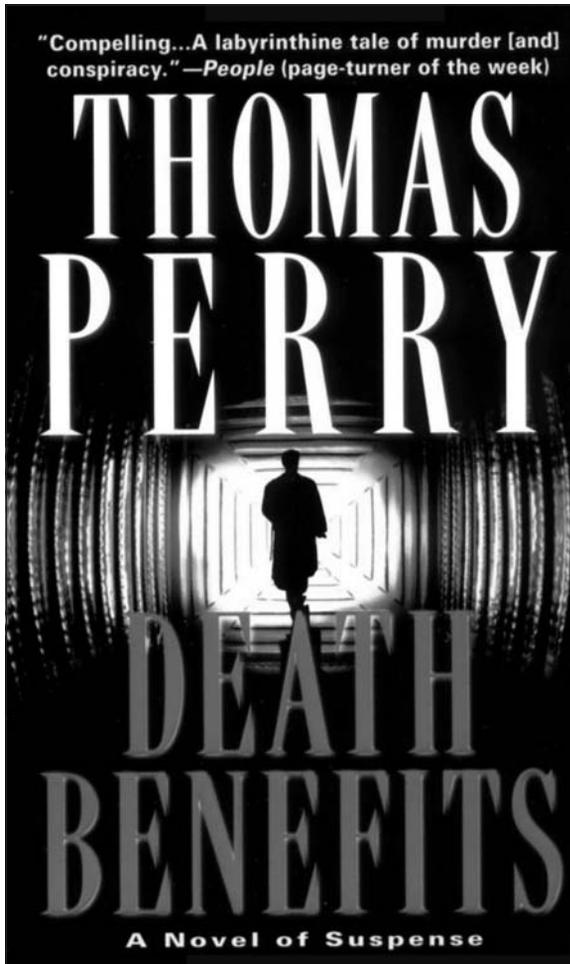
nously named Barraclough (whose name is often misheard as "Bearclaw"), a former police officer turned security specialist who uses his position to find weak criminals or victims to bleed of their stashes or inheritances. He is all appetitive brutality, the personification of the Senecan deity Hanegoategeh, the destroyer. As such, he is Jane's worthiest opponent, for she is the representative of Hanegoategeh's brother, Hawenneyu, the creator and nurturer.

Barraclough's crimes are suitably savage, and the justice that Jane metes out to him is highlighted by a change in point of view at the end of the novel as Barraclough pursues Jane through a deserted industrial area. Once again, Perry uses this narrative device to make his villains appear even worthier of punishment and to show the perception in the villain that the hunter has become the hunted as well as to sustain suspense. The morality implicit in the Whitefield novels is also made explicit when Jane asks the judge who is hearing the case of the boy she rescues whether he wants to be the person who helped the boy, or the person who did not. In Perry's novels, morality is the sum of a series of such choices.

DEATH BENEFITS

Death Benefits, Perry's first after the fifth book in the Jane Whitefield series, was published in 2001, the same year as *Pursuit*, which suggests that Perry was perhaps eager to explore other types of thriller plots. In this one, a young actuarial examiner for a well-established insurance company, John Walker, is enlisted by an outside expert, Max Stillman, to discover why Ellen Snyder, with whom Walker fell in love during their training sessions, disappeared after apparently arranging a multimillion-dollar swindle. During their investigation, Walker learns that he is not the type of person who can spend his career in an office cubicle; Stillman offers Walker a glimpse of the freedom that Walker never knew he wanted. Such freedom comes with a price: When Walker is forced to kill an attacker, he realizes that the action changes not only his future but also his past.

The novel's weakness is the introduction of Walker's love interest, a woman who works for a computer hacker whom Stillman employs for information. She fits in thematically, in that she has already em-



braced the type of career that Walker wants, but she also seems like an amor ex machina when she pursues Walker to join him in bed. The novel's strengths include the reality of its plotting; Stillman is no Holmesian expert and at one point complains that they have no plan and are just reacting to their circumstances. Another is the villains, who are as ruthless as any Jane Whitefield eludes, and are also original in conception, so that the climax of the novel involves a confrontation and chase of such breadth that it is claustrophobic, yet almost as American as apple pie.

William E. Laskowski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

THE BUTCHER'S BOY SERIES: *The Butcher's Boy*, 1982; *Sleeping Dogs*, 1992

JANE WHITEFIELD SERIES: *Vanishing Act*, 1995; *Dance for the Dead*, 1996; *Shadow Woman*, 1997; *The Face-Changers*, 1998; *Blood Money*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Metzger's Dog*, 1983; *Big Fish*, 1985; *Island*, 1987; *Death Benefits*, 2001; *Pursuit*, 2001; *Dead Aim*, 2002; *Nightlife*, 2006; *Silence*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

TELEPLAYS: *Simon and Simon*, 1984-1989

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ELIZABETH PETERS

Barbara G. Mertz

Born: Canton, Illinois; September 29, 1927

Also wrote as Barbara Mertz; Barbara G. Mertz;
Barbara Michaels

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jacqueline Kirby, 1972-

Vicky Bliss, 1973-

Amelia Peabody, 1975-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JACQUELINE KIRBY is a middle-aged librarian who uses her sharp brain and lethal handbag in solving mysteries. Her glasses slide down her nose and her copper-colored tresses fall down in moments of excitement. She enters each story with some academic swain but leaves with another man, usually the police officer.

VICKY BLISS is a tall, blond art historian with a keen sense of humor and a healthy interest in men. Drawn into mysteries by her work at a Munich museum, she solves them with intelligence, cunning, and breaking and entering, rescuing herself and often the hero.

SIR JOHN SMYTHE is the *nom de guerre* of Vicky's lover, an English art thief of good family. He claims to be a coward but comes through when needed. He disappears at the end of every mystery, only to embroil Vicky in another scam in the next.

AMELIA PEABODY is an independent, wealthy Victorian Englishwoman. When traveling to Egypt, she falls in love with the country, pyramids, and Egyptologist Radcliffe Emerson, whom she marries. Armed with an irrepressible faith in her medical and detective abilities (as well as a steel-shanked parasol and a pistol), she manages everyone and everything. Passionately fond of her husband and sensible of her son's shortcomings, she comments acerbically on Victorian mores and solves mysteries by leaping to conclusions based on intuition, blithely changing her theories as they become untenable.

CONTRIBUTION

Barbara G. Mertz uses her tremendous energy to write in two opposing genres, mystery and detective fiction (as Elizabeth Peters) and gothic romance (as Barbara Michaels). The bridge between Mertz's alter egos is her knowledge of history, especially that of ancient Egypt. Her nonseries Peters titles are essentially historical romances hung on suspense plot lines. Her reputation as a mystery writer rests on her three detective series, particularly on the Amelia Peabody books.

In Peters's series characters, she has created three distinctly different heroines, each educated, independent, and driven by curiosity as much as by a sense of justice. At one end of the spectrum there is Jacqueline Kirby, a university librarian who takes love where she finds it but does not allow herself to be defined by romantic entanglements. At the other end is Amelia Peabody (later Emerson), whose Egyptologist husband regards her as his equal (while the reader and Amelia know that she is his superior). The intermediate stage is occupied by Vicky Bliss, for whom Peters has invented Sir John Smythe, a delightful but unsuitable lover who disappears at the end of each book, thus relieving Vicky of the customary denouement of marriage and leaving her free to play the field.

Although sex and violence are never too far away, these soft-boiled sleuths remain unruffled by either. Peters's detectives appeal to cozy mystery fans, who do not mind a little hot sex in the interest of relieving the tensions that naturally build during the course of investigating murder. Exotic settings, unlooked for chivalry, unladylike derring-do from mothers and librarians, and a good dose of historical adventure have built for Peters a devoted readership. Jacqueline, Amelia, and Vicky have also bolstered the ranks of women on the crime-fighting side of crime fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Peters was born Barbara Louise Gross on September 29, 1927, in Canton, Illinois, the daughter of Earl Gross and Grace (Tregellas) Gross. She at-

tended the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, where she studied Egyptology. Peters received a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1947 and a master of arts degree in 1950, the same year she married Richard R. Mertz. She completed her doctorate in 1952 with a dissertation titled "Certain Titles of the Egyptian Queens and Their Bearing on the Hereditary Right to the Throne." Following a pattern typical of her generation, Peters worked after marriage as a typist and secretary before having a baby. She followed her husband to various cities in the United States and abroad, cities that she would later use as settings in her fiction both as Elizabeth Peters and as Barbara Michaels.

Under her own name, Peters published two popular books about Egypt, one in 1964 and another in 1966; her first Barbara Michaels book was published in 1966. When her editor suggested that she write more light-hearted books about modern heroines using exotic locales, she borrowed the names of her two children, Elizabeth and Peter, to form her new pseudonym. A true storyteller, she has produced at least a book per year. Peters was divorced in 1969. Her two-hundred-year-old stone house outside Frederick, Maryland, reportedly houses cats, dogs, antiques, and a ghost.

A former president of the American Crime Writers League, Peters has been a member of the editorial board of *The Writer*, the editorial advisory board of *KMT, A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt*, and the board of governors of the American Research Center in Egypt. In 1989, Hood College named her an honorary Doctor of Human Letters. In 1990, she won the Agatha for best novel for *Naked Once More* (1989), and in 1998 the Mystery Writers of America named her a Grand Master.

ANALYSIS

By the time Barbara Mertz began writing as Elizabeth Peters, her talents as a spinner of romances were already well developed. Writing her dissertation had taught her to handle a long manuscript. In the late 1950's, she and her husband, Richard R. Mertz, collaborated on several thrillers; although these early works were never published, they served as an apprenticeship in form, plotting, and character development. Her first published novel was a gothic romance, *The*

Master of Black Tower (1966; as Barbara Michaels).

Soon afterward Peters's editor suggested that she write the contemporary romances she later published under the pseudonym Barbara Michaels. In these books she successfully managed the transition from the gothic to a lighter style while retaining her mastery of the romance, manipulating and expanding the form but retaining its major elements and adapting them to modern settings. She also began to shed the love-as-goal central theme in favor of justice as prime mover and catalyst for adventure, mystery, and suspense.

Peters asserted that the "softer" mysteries written from a female point of view are as valid as the more violent thrillers written from a male point of view. As a scholar, Peters places truth before all else, so a major theme in her books is the conflict between superstition and reason, with reason winning every time. Despite their comic elements, both Amelia Peabody and her husband, Emerson, are true turn-of-the-century logical positivists in their rational, secular, scientific mind-set. Emerson is anticlerical and democratic, and Amelia, while firmly believing that if God exists, he is an Englishman, is nevertheless a feminist and an egalitarian (both radical positions for a nineteenth century Englishwoman), believing in the value of education as a means of producing a new and better society. Emerson's strictures on archaeological method show the scientific mind at work, bringing order and method to this new field, and his slanderous comments on his colleagues reflect accurately relations between early (and present-day) Egyptologists.

Peters did more than draw on her archaeological knowledge to create the Amelia Peabody novels, her most popular series. Though wholly her own, with complex personalities, Peters's characters are loosely based on historical figures. Radcliffe Emerson is similar in many ways to the early Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie—both are handsome, dark-haired, and bearded, with amazing energy, competitive spirits, quick tempers, and apt appellations bestowed by Egyptian workers: "Father of Curses" for Emerson and "Father of Pots" for Petrie.

Amelia has a namesake in Amelia B. Edwards, a Victorian woman who wrote the travel diary *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*. She lends Amelia Peabody her

taste for adventure and her eccentricity, as well as the nickname of one of Edwards's friends, "Sitt Hakim," or "Lady Doctor." Another of Amelia's spiritual forebears is Lady Hilda Petrie, wife of Sir Flinders. Hilda was also a scholar who enjoyed the archaeological life and was, like Amelia, unstoppable in her investigations. Actual historical figures make brief appearances throughout the series, lending verisimilitude—a few of these include E. A. Wallis Budge, the keeper of the Egyptian collection at the British Museum and Emerson's professional rival, and James E. Quibell, who requests medicine for Petrie's party during a documented historical occurrence. The excavation sites and travel routes are so well detailed that Amelia's adventures may be followed on a map or excavation guide. Finally, Amelia's voice and writing style are a perfect match for the journals, diaries, and letters of Victorian women travelers, with the original historical spellings of Arab and Egyptian names intact.

Between 1972 and 1975, Peters established three series characters through whom she could explore a second theme, that of the autonomous female, a woman whose happiness is not conditional on capturing a man. Independent women in the early 1970's were widely considered pathetic, if not desperate, or worse, sexually aberrant. With the characters of Jacqueline Kirby, Vicky Bliss, and Amelia Peabody Emerson, Peters developed three variants of the independent woman, at the same time bringing changes on the romance form by creating heroines for whom marriage and monogamy are not life's most important issues. At the same time, she avoided the rape solution common to romances, in which the strong-minded heroine is overcome by superior force.

JACQUELINE KIRBY SERIES

All Peters's heroines are committed to some abstract value, whether it be truth, scholarly integrity, or Jacqueline Kirby's simple belief that murder is wrong. That is why her heroines, even the least experienced, must solve the problem that the book presents, no matter what the danger. University librarian Jacqueline Kirby, who first appears in *The Seventh Sinner* (1972), is decidedly independent. A mature woman with two children in their early twenties, she makes no mention of the children's father. During the course of the se-

ries, she exhibits several personas. As the stereotypical librarian, with her long copper hair snatched back in a tight bun and a pair of glasses perched precariously on her nose, she is the no-nonsense professional; with her hair flowing down her back and her voluptuous body clad in an emerald silk pants suit, flirting with some male target, she is a version of her era's Total Woman.

Jacqueline's sharp mind is furnished with a mixed bag of information that she uses to unravel the mystery, elucidating it in the library at the end of the book. Her trademark is a large handbag containing a faintly satirical variety of useful objects. The purse itself often comes in handy as a weapon. Another constant is that she enters the action with an academic swain but leaves the party with a debonair police officer, proving herself to be as attractive to men of action as she is to men of intellect. She is pointedly autonomous by choice.

Jacqueline is not only independent, indeed she is cynical and hard-nosed, willingly placing herself and others in jeopardy to solve the mystery. In her, Peters has developed a woman with a tough mind and high standards who is, nevertheless, extremely sexy. Peters uses the series to criticize the classical mystery form; more specifically, in *The Murders of Richard III* (1974), she draws on her knowledge of Ricardian scholarship to provide a corrective to Josephine Tey's uncritical *The Daughter of Time* (1951).

Although the Jacqueline Kirby books are basically classically plotted mysteries, their plots revolve around private vices and satirize petty human pretensions. *The Murders of Richard III* makes fun of the antiquarian defenders of Richard, *Die for Love* (1984) mocks a convention of romance writers in New York, and in *The Seventh Sinner* plagiarism motivates murder in a Roman art institute.

VICKY BLISS SERIES

Peters's second series heroine, Vicky Bliss, is an art historian, a woman who finds men drawn to her for all the wrong reasons. She is not above breaking and entering in pursuit of the solution to the mystery, which she explains in classic fashion in the last chapters. Vicky Bliss pursues the Schliemann treasure in Bavaria in *Trojan Gold* (1987), a pre-Viking chalice in Sweden in *Silhouette in Scarlet* (1983), and an art forgery ring in Rome in *Street of the Five Moons* (1978).

What is unique to the Bliss series is the slim, blond, English jewel thief and confidence man Sir John Smythe, who first appears in *Street of the Five Moons*. Smythe commonly avoids violence by withdrawing from the action, but when Vicky is involved, he cannot choose that option but must stand and fight. In an inversion of the typical romance plot, Bliss usually rescues Sir John as they solve the mystery. After several romantic interludes, he disappears, leaving Vicky to resolve the mystery on her own, only to appear in the next book, to her mingled delight and disgust. The love-hate relationship between the two adds tension and spice to the plots.

In Smythe, Peters has developed the perfect foil and demon lover for an autonomous woman. Because marriage was the implicit goal of any sympathetic heroine in the 1970's, when the series began, Vicky might have been expected to face another of the era's emerging social questions: the two-career problem. Peters, however, does not impose on her sleuth the burden of giving up crime fighting so that her husband can have a fulfilling career as a jewel thief. Instead, she makes him a bit of a slippery cad, thereby sustaining the romantic tension from novel to novel without endowing Vicky with false hopes or an inclination to pine.

AMELIA PEABODY SERIES

Peters develops her final variation of the autonomous female character in Amelia Peabody in *Crocodile on the Sandbank*. This series, unlike the others, is written in the august and convoluted prose common to Victorian novels and is at once a crashingly good high romance and a satire so delicious that large portions of it beg to be read aloud. Using the style and plot devices of the gothic romance in the Peabody series, Peters combines the theme of marriage between a man and a woman who are equals in every way with an investigation into the conflict between faith and reason in which the ghosts and walking mummies are explained rationally as the concoctions of the villains.

Although Peters bowed to her publisher's requests for more "sensational" titles for several of the earlier Peabody books (*The Curse of the Pharaohs*, 1981, and *The Mummy Case*, 1985), the series later followed her original artistic intent of using lines from Egyptian literature that have symbolic significance for the story at hand. The titles thus add a further element to the mys-

tery, as readers seek the source of the quotation and consider its relevance.

CROCODILE ON THE SANDBANK

In *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, Peters uses stock characters such as the Plain Jane, the Innocent Heiress, the Irascible Grandfather, the Wicked Cousin, the Faithless Lover, the Poor-But-Honest Hero, and the Bad-Tempered-But-Lovable Older Man and stock situations such as the midnight elopement and the missing will, but she infuses new vitality and a large dose of humor into a plot that is as old as the Egyptian tombs in which it is set. With wicked wit, Peters brings her fast-paced novel crashing to a highly satisfying conclusion: the unmasking of the wicked and married bliss for both pairs of lovers.

THE CURSE OF THE PHAROHS

The arrival of a son in *The Curse of the Pharaohs* completes the Emerson family. Walter Peabody Emerson, called "Ramses" because of the resemblance of his profile to that pharaoh's, is the perfect academic offspring—"catastrophically precocious," long-winded, and nearly always right. Amelia sees Ramses through the unsentimental eye with which she views the universe, recognizing his strengths (he is very bright and always obedient) and weaknesses (he would get dirty in a vacuum and has a fine Jesuitical mind that allows him to escape parental prohibitions). She addresses him as if he were an adult. Ramses allows Peters to comment acerbically on children and domesticity.

Amelia is not only the central character but also the engine that makes everything work. While she loves her husband and son passionately, she sees them with a clear eye and manages them firmly, Emerson with sex and Ramses with direct orders. She also manages everything else. Her excursions into detecting lead the couple into deadly peril, from which Ramses has lately taken to rescuing them, once from being immured in a flooded tomb (*The Mummy Case*) and once from a cellar in the decaying castle of a depraved aristocrat (*The Deeds of the Disturber*, 1988).

NONSERIES NOVELS

Peters' nonseries novels are more grounded in the romance tradition. Her female characters tend to be young, often students, and make errors in judgment that lead to danger. The prize for unraveling the mystery is

the love of the hero and sometimes the added bonus of giving up her work to join in his. Allure, sexual sophistication, and a somewhat inferior intelligence quotient are generally assigned to bad women. Male characters are assigned to each heroine in pairs, though only one may turn out to be a villain. Because Peters's main themes in these novels have to do with the individual struggle for self-definition and love, she focuses her plots on matters of private rather than public morality.

In all her novels, Peters uses her historical training to create realistic plots that involve genuine historical problems or artifacts. For added romance, she locates the stories in glamorous foreign cities or at archaeological sites and exploits her special knowledge to provide verisimilitude in the story line. In *The Jackal's Head* (1968), model Althea Tomlinson discovers the secret of her father's death as well as the lost tomb of Nefertiti in Egypt. Undergraduate Carol Farley journeys to Mexico and falls in love with pyramids while searching for her runaway father and helping to break a drug ring in *The Night of Four Hundred Rabbits* (1971). D. J. Abbott, a graduate student in anthropology, discovers human remains along with mammoth bones in Arizona in *Summer of the Dragon* (1979).

PETERS'S CHARACTERS

Peters sees the exotic locales and sophisticated people in her stories through mildly Puritan and very American eyes. The foreign city is a place of excitement, danger, and decadence, where the heroine must fight to protect her values and virtue. People of wealth or good family who do not also work for a living are soft and corrupt. The villain is often a suave and superficially attractive aristocrat, while the hero is a hard-working American who is knowledgeable but uncorrupted by foreign ways.

Peters's heroines, however, are not Puritans. They regard sex as a normal human instinct and enjoy it, or expect to enjoy it. Love is distinguished from sex and is an irrational but pleasant state achieved only with the right man. Its arrival is sudden, unbidden, and final. Jacqueline Kirby's rejection of love's final solution to her problems and Vicky Bliss's half love for her disappearing jewel thief do not invalidate this generalization but point up the independence of the two women and keep the reader turning the pages to find

out whether this time it will be different. If it is, it will be the men who change, and the characters will be promoted to the bliss of an equal relationship like that enjoyed by the Emersons.

Peters has frequently commented in articles and interviews about her series characters. While some mystery authors have found series characters limiting, Peters sees the special requirements of a series character as both challenging and, in some ways, freeing. The challenge comes from the need to reintroduce the characters each time without boring continuing readers, as well as having to discard otherwise worthwhile plots that are not right for a particular character. Peters has solved the latter problem by alternating work among three different series and her nonseries fiction as Barbara Michaels.

The rewards for Peters are worth the effort: Within a series, characters can truly grow and develop, providing greater interest for readers and an opportunity for ongoing craftsmanship for the author. *The Crocodile on the Sandbank* is set in 1884-1885, and the series continues through the turn of the century, World War I, and the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922. The Emersons meet, marry, rear a son from precocious child to secret agent (*The Golden One*, 2002), and become grandparents even as Howard Carter snatches from their grasp the greatest archaeological discovery of the twentieth century (*Tomb of the Golden Bird*, 2006).

Peters's style is light and breezy. Her heroines, even the youngest, have a humorous attitude toward the world, and have, or gain, a wry self-knowledge. Her more mature heroines have a sharp eye for hypocrisy and a cynical wit that makes the exposition and the dialogue crackle. With all of its violence and corruption, Peters's world is an essentially rational and happy one in which the evildoer has produced an imbalance. Her heroines use their intelligence and courage to correct that imbalance and live happily ever after.

Marilynn M. Larew

Updated by C. A. Gardner and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JACQUELINE KIRBY SERIES: *The Seventh Sinner*, 1972; *The Murders of Richard III*, 1974; *Die for Love*, 1984; *Naked Once More*, 1989

VICKY BLISS SERIES: *Borrower of the Night*, 1973; *Street of the Five Moons*, 1978; *Silhouette in Scarlet*, 1983; *Trojan Gold*, 1987; *Night Train to Memphis*, 1994

AMELIA PEABODY SERIES: *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, 1976; *The Curse of the Pharaohs*, 1981; *The Mummy Case*, 1985; *Lion in the Valley*, 1986; *The Deeds of the Disturber*, 1988; *The Last Camel Died at Noon*, 1991; *The Snake, the Crocodile, and the Dog*, 1992; *The Hippopotamus Pool*, 1996; *Seeing a Large Cat*, 1997; *The Ape Who Guards the Balance*, 1998; *The Falcon at the Portal*, 1999; *He Shall Thunder in the Sky*, 2000; *Lord of the Silent*, 2001; *The Golden One*, 2002; *Children of the Storm*, 2003; *Guardian of the Horizon*, 2004; *The Serpent on the Crown*, 2005; *Tomb of the Golden Bird*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Jackal's Head*, 1968; *The Camelot Caper*, 1969; *The Dead Sea Cipher*, 1970; *The Night of Four Hundred Rabbits*, 1971 (also known as *Shadows in the Moonlight*); *Legend in Green Velvet*, 1976 (also known as *Ghost in Green Velvet*); *Devil-May-Care*, 1977; *Summer of the Dragon*, 1979; *The Love Talker*, 1980; *The Copenhagen Connection*, 1982

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS MICHAELS): 1966-1975 • *The Master of Black Tower*, 1966; *Sons of the Wolf*, 1967 (also known as *Mystery on the Moors*); *Ammie, Come Home*, 1968; *Prince of Darkness*, 1969; *The Dark on the Other Side*, 1970; *The Crying Child*, 1971; *Greygallows*, 1972; *Witch*, 1973; *House of Many Shadows*, 1974; *The Sea King's Daughter*, 1975

1976-1985 • *Patriot's Dream*, 1976; *Wings of the Falcon*, 1977; *Wait for What Will Come*, 1978; *The Walker in Shadows*, 1979; *The Wizard's Daughter*, 1980; *Someone in the House*, 1981; *Black Rainbow*, 1982; *Dark Duet*, 1983; *Here I Stay*, 1983; *The Grey Beginning*, 1984; *Be Buried in the Rain*, 1985

1986-1999 • *Shattered Silk*, 1986; *Search the Shadows*, 1987; *Smoke and Mirrors*, 1989; *Into the Darkness*, 1990; *Vanish with the Rose*, 1992; *Houses of Stone*, 1993; *Stitches in Time*, 1995; *The Dancing Floor*, 1997; *Other Worlds*, 1999

NONFICTION (AS BARBARA G. MERTZ): *Tem-*

ples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: The Story of Egyptology, 1964 (revised 1978); *Red Land, Black Land: The World of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1966 (revised 1978); *Two Thousand Years in Rome*, 1968 (with Richard Mertz)

EDITED TEXTS: *Elizabeth Peters Presents Malice Domestic: An Anthology of Original Traditional Mystery Stories*, 1992 (with Martin H. Greenberg); *Amelia Peabody's Egypt: A Compendium*, 2003 (with Kristen Whitbread)

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Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. A good discussion of Peters, with critical commentary on Amelia Peabody, her family and her avocation.

Nichols, Victoria, and Susan Thompson. *Silk Stalkings*. Berkeley, Calif.: Black Lizard, 1988. This critical appraisal of various characters created by women writing in the detective genre devotes an essay to each of Peters's sleuths.

Peters, Elizabeth. AmeliaPeabody.com. <http://www.ameliapeabody.com>. Peters does not have an official Web site, but Amelia Peabody does. This site is not only informative but also attractive and imaginative. Offers an author biography, publication history, and much plot detail.

_____. "PW Talks with Elizabeth Peters." Interview by Jean Swanson. *Publishers Weekly* 248, no. 17 (April 23, 2001): 53. On the publication of *Lord of the Silent*, Peters talks about the Peabody series and her creation of the character Ramses.

Zvirin, Stephanie. Review of *Tomb of the Golden Bird*, by Elizabeth Peters. *Booklist* 102, no. 12 (February 15, 2006): 6. Favorable review of this Peabody series novel that involves the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb. Called a "continuing pleasure."

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Volume 4

Ellis Peters – Israel Zangwill

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Carl Rollyson

Baruch College, City University of New York

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AUTHORS

ELLIS PETERS

Edith Mary Pargeter

Born: Horsehay, Shropshire, England; September 28, 1913

Died: Shropshire, England; October 14, 1995

Also wrote as Jolyon Carr

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; police procedural; thriller; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Felse family, 1951-1978

Brother Cadfael, 1977-1995

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GEORGE FELSE is detective sergeant and later detective chief inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department in Comerford, a provincial town in central England. Felse, is a highly professional and honest police officer. A middle-aged family man, Felse is deeply in love with his wife and devoted to their son. He is dependable, mature, understanding, and reasonable.

BERNARDA "BUNTY" ELLIOT FELSE, the wife of George Felse, was a concert contralto before she married George. Bunty is a loyal and devoted wife and mother. Intelligent, sensitive, and thoughtful, she proves to be shrewd and fearless when she accidentally becomes involved in detection.

DOMINIC FELSE, the son of George and Bunty Felse, matures in the course of the series from a thirteen-year-old boy who discovers the corpse in his father's first murder case to a young Oxford University graduate. Engaging, adventurous, and aware, Dominic figures directly as an amateur detective in several of the novels, and peripherally in the others.

BROTHER CADFAEL, a twelfth century Benedictine monk, is a Welshman in his early sixties. Cadfael fought in the Crusades and had several amatory adventures as a young man before retiring to Shrewsbury Abbey. His youthful experiences gave him an understanding of human nature, and his present work as gardener and medicinal herbalist figures in his detection of criminals.

PRIOR ROBERT, a monk of Shrewsbury Abbey, is around fifty years of age. He is handsome, aristocratic, authoritative, and ambitious. His scheming for power in the abbey sets him at odds with Brother Cadfael and makes him that character's principal foil.

HUGH BERINGAR, sheriff of Shrewsbury, is a bold and keenly intelligent man in his early twenties. He is the friend and principal secular ally of Brother Cadfael and aids him in solving several of his cases.

CONTRIBUTION

Ellis Peters's Felse family series and her chronicles of Brother Cadfael are in the British tradition of detective-fiction writers such as P. D. James and Ruth Rendell. These writers' works, while displaying the careful and suspenseful plotting characteristic of the detective genre, frequently transcend the effect of pure entertainment and share with the traditional "literary" novel the aims of engaging in complex examinations of human character and psychology and achieving thematic depth and moral vision.

Peters herself expressed her dislike for the distinction between detective fiction and serious novels and succeeded in interweaving traditional novelistic materials—love interests, the study of human growth and maturation, the depiction of communities and their politics—with the activity of crime solving. The Brother Cadfael chronicles are her most popular as well as her most impressive achievements, locating universal human situations in the meticulously particularized context of twelfth century England. These novels are masterpieces of historical reconstruction; they present a memorable and likable hero, Brother Cadfael, and a vivid picture of medieval life, in and out of the monastery, in its religious, familial, social, political, and cultural dimensions.

BIOGRAPHY

Ellis Peters was born Edith Mary Pargeter on September 28, 1913, in Horsehay, Shropshire, England, the daughter of Edmund Valentine Pargeter and Edith

Hordley Pargeter. (Ellis Peters is a pen name that she adopted in 1959 after having published numerous books.) She attended Dawley Church of England Elementary School in Shropshire and Coalbrookdale High School for Girls and earned an Oxford School Certificate. She worked as a pharmacist's assistant and dispenser in Dawley from 1933 to 1940. During this time, she also began writing novels on a wide range of historical and contemporary subjects; the first was *Hortensius, Friend of Nero* (1936). From 1940 to 1945, she served as a petty officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service, receiving the British Empire Medal in 1944. During World War II she developed an interest in Czechoslovakia because she was haunted by the Western powers' betrayal of that country at Munich. After the war, she translated many volumes of prose and poetry from the Czech and Slovak and continued writing her own fiction.

Her first detective novel, which she published as Edith Pargeter in 1951, was *Fallen into the Pit*. It initiated a series of thirteen novels featuring the Felse family, a series that continued until 1978. Peters wrote five other detective novels and numerous detective short stories during this period as well. Her interests in music, theater, and art are reflected in several of these works. In 1977, she began publishing the Brother Cadfael novels.

As both Edith Pargeter and Ellis Peters, this writer received much recognition for her work, including the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1963 for *Death and the Joyful Woman* (1961), which was cited as the best mystery novel of the year; the Czechoslovak Society for International Relations Gold Medal in 1968; and the Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger in 1980 for *Monk's-Hood* (1980). She was awarded the Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement in 1993. Peters died on October 14, 1995.

ANALYSIS

Ellis Peters came to detective fiction after many years of novel writing. Disliking the frequently made distinction between detective novels, or "thrillers," as she called them, and serious novels, she stressed that "the thriller is a novel. . . . The pure puzzle, with a cast

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Ellis Peters in 1995. (AP/Wide World Photos)

of characters kept deliberately two-dimensional and all equally expendable at the end, has no attraction for me." Her detective novels bear witness both to her life experiences and to her statements about her art.

Peters was essentially a social novelist. Murder serves as her occasion to dramatize a wide variety of human interactions and motivations in settings that are vividly realized. One might think of an Ellis Peters mystery in terms of a set of concentric circles. At the center is the detective character, usually preoccupied at the beginning of the novel with something other than crime. Frequently, he or she is an amateur who assumes the role of detective only circumstantially. The amateur status of several of her detectives allows Peters to move the narrative comfortably beyond crime into other areas such as love relationships, fam-

ily interactions, and the struggles of adolescents maturing toward self-discovery. Except for *Death Mask* (1959), Peters's detective novels are narrated from a third-person point of view through an anonymous persona. Peters is able to narrow or broaden her perspective with ease, and therefore to present the inner workings of her central characters' minds and to focus on external matters—landscapes, social or historical background, local customs—with equal skill.

The central character is generally carefully placed within the circle of a close family or community that is described in depth. The earlier mysteries often focus on Central Intelligence Division detective sergeant George Felse of Comerford, his wife, Bunty, and their son Dominic. Although George and Dominic are the most actively involved in detection, Bunty too becomes accidentally involved in solving a murder in *The Grass-Widow's Tale* (1968). Peters's later series places its central character, Brother Cadfael, within the twelfth century Benedictine community of monks at the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul in Shrewsbury, England. Although the Felse family series ranges in locale from central England to such places as the Cornish coast, Scotland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and India, the Brother Cadfael novels usually stay within the vicinity of Shrewsbury, allowing Peters to develop her picture of medieval life in great depth.

Beyond these family and community circles, there are larger milieus. For the Felse family, these include a variety of worlds—for example, those of concert musicians, of diplomats, and of professional thieves. Brother Cadfael and his fellow monks live in the Shropshire of the late 1130's and earlier 1140's and frequently find themselves caught in the political strife between Empress Maud and her cousin King Stephen, who contend for the British crown. At other times, the political feuds are more local if not less complex and bitter.

THE GRASS-WIDOW'S TALE

Typically, Peters's detective novels begin at a fairly leisurely pace. In *The Grass-Widow's Tale*, for example, Bunty Felse at the outset is feeling frustrated that her husband and son are going to be absent on her forty-first birthday, doubtful about her identity and accomplishments, and gloomy as she ponders "age, infirmity, and death." The plot of this novel takes many

surprising twists and turns before focusing on the solution of a murder and robbery case, a case that becomes the occasion for Bunty to find renewed meaning in her life and to discover some precious truths about the nature of human love.

A MORBID TASTE FOR BONES

In *A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Mediaeval Whodunnit* (1977), the first chronicle of Brother Cadfael, Peters begins with the background for the Shrewsbury monks' mission to Wales to obtain the bones of Saint Winifred and proceeds to dramatize the initial results of that mission and to establish the novel's major characters and subplots. It is only on page 91 of this 256-page novel that a murder case surfaces.

Once the scenes have been set and the characters established, Peters's detective novels become absorbingly suspenseful and often contain exciting action scenes. *The Grass-Widow's Tale* includes a terrifying episode in which Bunty and her companion, Luke, must fight their way out of a cottage in which they are being held by a gang of ruthless professional criminals who are planning to murder them. *Saint Peter's Fair* (1981), one of the most suspenseful of the Brother Cadfael chronicles, features a remarkable chase-and-rescue sequence.

A highly skillful creator of suspense, Peters proves to be at least as gifted as a student of human character. She has explained her interest in crime novels thus:

The paradoxical puzzle, the impossible struggle to create a cast of genuine, rounded, knowable characters caught in conditions of stress, to let readers know everything about them, feel with them, like or dislike them, and still to try to preserve to the end the secret of which of these is a murderer—this is the attraction for me.

BROTHER CADFAEL

The most successfully realized of Peters's characters is Brother Cadfael, who combines worldly wisdom and experience with moral and spiritual insight. He is a middle-aged man who entered monastic life after fighting for many years in the Crusades. His experiences and travels to such places as Venice, Cyprus, and the Holy Land afforded him a knowledge of human nature unusual in a monk and developed in him

courage and a liking for adventure. He came to know not only the ways of men but also those of women; he has been a lover as well as a warrior, and he readily acknowledges that he committed a fair share of “mischief” as a younger man.

This “mischief” is to be distinguished, however, from evil. Brother Cadfael is essentially a good man. It was the desire to develop his spiritual side that led him to retire to the Benedictine abbey at Shrewsbury, where he has been living as a monk for fifteen years when the chronicles begin.

Cadfael’s experiences of a life of action set him apart from most of the other monks; his experiences as a monk, in turn, set him apart from people living a worldly life. Even his birthplace sets him apart: He is a Welshman in an English monastery. Like many other famous detective heroes, Cadfael is unique in his milieu, a more complete person than his contemporaries. As a man of action, moreover, he shares the abilities, though never the ruthlessness, of hard-boiled detectives, while as a participant in the contemplative life, he bears some resemblance to armchair detectives.

MONK’S-HOOD

At the abbey, Brother Cadfael is in charge of a flourishing garden. He specializes in herbs used for seasoning and medicine. Some of these herbs can be dangerous, and, to Cadfael’s horror, malefactors sometimes steal them from the garden to use them as poisons. Cadfael becomes involved in several of his cases through such circumstances. In *Monk’s-Hood*, for example, he commits himself to solve the murder of Master Bonel, who died after being served a dinner sent from the monastery. The dish proved to be laced with liniment prepared by Cadfael himself and containing monkshood (wolfsbane), a deadly poison.

Cadfael’s garden is a living symbol of the hero himself as well as of the human world around him. Growth takes place there, as it does in human life, growth of things either healthful and nourishing or harmful. Just as Brother Cadfael cultivates, nurtures, and controls his plants, so too does he foster the proper kinds of growth in his community. In a number of the chronicles, Cadfael has a young assistant, a novice monk whom he lovingly guides toward psychological and spiritual maturity. Sometimes this guidance takes

the form of transplanting. In *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, Cadfael recognizes that Brother John lacks a vocation for the monastery and eventually helps him to begin a new life with the woman with whom he falls in love in Wales.

THE DEVIL’S NOVICE

In *The Devil’s Novice* (1983), Cadfael obtains justice for Brother Meriet, a “green boy” who has been banished to the monastery for a crime he did not commit. Cadfael’s detective activities extend the gardening metaphor further—he weeds out undesirable elements in his community and distinguishes the poisonous from the harmless. Cadfael’s herbs are most beneficial as medicinal aids, and he himself is, ultimately, not merely an amateur detective but also a healer of physical, moral, and spiritual maladies.

In his role as healer, Brother Cadfael exemplifies Peters’s principal concerns as a novelist. She has commented, “It is probably true that I am not very good at villains. The good interest me so much more.” Her villains are typically motivated by ambition or greed, dehumanizing vices that lead them to murder and treachery. The element of treachery makes Cadfael’s cases something more than simply puzzles to be solved; it invests them with an enhanced moral dimension. Peters declares that she has “one sacred rule” about her detective fiction, apart from treating her characters “with the same respect as in any other form of novel”:

It is, it ought to be, it must be, a morality. If it strays from the side of the angels, provokes total despair, willfully destroys—without pressing need in the plot—the innocent and the good, takes pleasure in evil, that is unforgivable sin. I use the word deliberately and gravely.

The villains in the Brother Cadfael series characteristically attempt to destroy “the innocent and the good.” Brother Cadfael repeatedly becomes involved in his cases when a young person is unjustly accused of murder. In *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, for example, Engelard, an exiled Englishman in love with the Welsh squire Rhisiart’s daughter, is wrongly thought to have killed Rhisiart, who had opposed Engelard’s suit. The murderer proves instead to be a fanatically ambitious young monk. Brother Cadfael works to prove the innocence of Master Bonel’s stepson Edwin when Bonel

dies of poisoning in *Monk's-Hood*. A complicating motivational force in this novel is the fact that Edwin is the son of Richildis, Cadfael's sweetheart of long ago, whom he has not seen in forty-two years.

**THE LEPER OF SAINT GILES AND
THE SANCTUARY SPARROW**

In *The Leper of Saint Giles* (1981), the lovely Iveta is about to be married by her ambitious and greedy guardians to a man she does not love. When that man's mangled body is found in a forest, the man she loves is accused of the murder, and Brother Cadfael steps in to prove that he is innocent. Cadfael saves Liliwin, a traveling performer who seeks sanctuary at the abbey, and proves his innocence of robbery and murder in *The Sanctuary Sparrow* (1983).

**ONE CORPSE TOO MANY AND SAINT
PETER'S FAIR**

Although threats to innocent young men in the Brother Cadfael chronicles usually take the form of false accusations of crime, threats to innocent young women tend to involve actual or potential entrapments requiring their rescue, as in *One Corpse Too Many* (1979) and *Saint Peter's Fair*. Peters's young female characters are not passive victims, however, but intelligent, persistent, and courageous, and they frequently work with Brother Cadfael in solving his cases. In doing so, these young women are motivated not only by the desire for justice but also by love. Young love, at first thwarted and then fulfilled, is omnipresent in these novels, and Brother Cadfael is its chief facilitator. As surely and steadily as he brings murderers to the bar of justice, he brings lovers to the altar of marriage. The chronicles of Brother Cadfael follow the literary tradition of social comedy: affirming love; thwarting whatever blocks it; reestablishing the social order that has been upset by ambition, greed, and murder; and promoting the continuity of that order in future generations.

Although Edith Pargeter will ever be better known as her alter ego, Ellis Peters, the success of the Brother Cadfael series brought recognition to all of her writings. In 1991 Mysterious Press began reissuing the Felse novels, and these were followed in 1993 by *The Heaven Tree* (1960), *The Green Branch* (1962), and *The Scarlet Seed* (1963) bound as a set and re-

christened the *Heaven Tree* trilogy. Though these historical novels did not enjoy the acclaim of the Brother Cadfael series, they were created with the same eye for detail and filled with the lively atmosphere of medieval Britain.

BROTHER CADFAEL'S PENANCE

The last Brother Cadfael novel, *Brother Cadfael's Penance* (1994) was published a year before the author's death. The venerable series attained even greater fame when the BBC produced several television installments starring Derek Jacobi as Brother Cadfael. The books have also been recorded, and an entire line of Brother Cadfael paraphernalia, including maps, handbooks, needlework, glassware, and numerous trinkets, is available in the United Kingdom and the United States.

To Peters this was all icing on the cake; her goals were purely literary when she was writing her historical characters, "to demonstrate," as Rosemary Herbert wrote in *Publishers Weekly* in 1991, "that people from distant ages can be portrayed with vitality and intimacy." In this, Peters more than succeeded—millions mourned her death at the age of eighty-two and the loss of her extraordinary creations.

Eileen Tess Tyler

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FELSE FAMILY SERIES: *Fallen into the Pit*, 1951 (as Pargeter); *Death and the Joyful Woman*, 1961; *Flight of a Witch*, 1964; *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs*, 1965 (also known as *Who Lies Here?*); *The Piper on the Mountain*, 1966; *Black Is the Colour of My True-Love's Heart*, 1967; *The Grass-Widow's Tale*, 1968; *Mourning Raga*, 1969; *The House of Green Turf*, 1969; *The Knocker on Death's Door*, 1970; *Death to the Landlords!*, 1972; *City of Gold and Shadows*, 1973; *Rainbow's End*, 1978

BROTHER CADFAEL SERIES: *A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Mediaeval Whodunnit*, 1977; *One Corpse Too Many*, 1979; *Monk's-Hood*, 1980; *Saint Peter's Fair*, 1981; *The Leper of Saint Giles*, 1981; *The Virgin in the Ice*, 1982; *The Devil's Novice*, 1983; *The Sanctuary Sparrow*, 1983; *Dead Man's Ransom*, 1984; *The Pilgrim of Hate*, 1984; *An Excellent Mystery*, 1985;

The Raven in the Foregate, 1986; *The Rose Rent*, 1986; *The Confession of Brother Haluin*, 1988; *The Hermit of Eyton Forest*, 1987; *The Heretic's Apprentice*, 1989; *The Potter's Field*, 1990; *The Summer of the Danes*, 1991; *The Holy Thief*, 1992; *Brother Cadfael's Penance*, 1994

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death Mask*, 1959; *The Will and the Deed*, 1960 (also known as *Where There's a Will*); *Funeral of Figaro*, 1962; *The Horn of Roland*, 1974; *Never Pick Up Hitch-Hikers!*, 1976

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Assize of the Dying*, 1958 (as Pargeter)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS PARGETER): 1936-1950 • *Hortensius*, *Friend of Nero*, 1936; *Iron-Bound*, 1936; *The City Lies Foursquare*, 1939; *Ordinary People*, 1941 (also known as *People of My Own*); *She Goes to War*, 1942; *The Eighth Champion of Christendom*, 1945; *Reluctant Odyssey*, 1946; *Warfare Accomplished*, 1947; *By Firelight*, 1948 (also known as *By This Strange Fire*); *The Fair Young Phoenix*, 1948

1951-1970 • *Lost Children*, 1951; *Holiday with Violence*, 1952; *Most Loving Mere Folly*, 1953; *This Rough Magic*, 1953; *The Soldier at the Door*, 1954; *A Means of Grace*, 1956; *The Heaven Tree*, 1960; *The Green Branch*, 1962; *The Scarlet Seed*, 1963

1971-1979 • *A Bloody Field by Shrewsbury*, 1972; *Sunrise in the West*, 1974; *The Dragon at Noonday*, 1975; *The Hounds of Sunset*, 1976; *Afterglow and Nightfall*, 1977; *The Marriage of Meggotta*, 1979

SHORT FICTION: *The Lily Hand, and Other Stories*, 1965 (as Pargeter); *A Rare Benedictine*, 1988; *Feline Felonies*, 1993 (with others)

RADIO PLAY: *The Heaven Tree*, pb. 1973 (as Pargeter)

NONFICTION: *The Coast of Bohemia*, 1950 (as Pargeter); *Shropshire*, 1992 (with Roy Morgan; also known as *Ellis Peter's Shropshire*); *Strongholds and Sanctuaries: The Borderland of England and Wales*, 1993 (with Morgan)

TRANSLATIONS (AS PARGETER): *Tales of the Little Quarter*, 1957 (by Jan Neruda); *A Handful of Linden Leaves: An Anthology of Czech Poetry*, 1958; *Don Juan*, 1958 (by Josef Toman); *The Sorrowful and*

Heroic Life of John Amos Comenius, 1958 (by František Kosík); *The Abortionists*, 1961 (by Valja Stýblová); *Granny*, 1962 (by Božena Nemcová); *The Linden Tree*, 1962 (with others); *Legends of Old Bohemia*, 1963 (by Alois Jirásek); *The Terezin Requiem*, 1963 (by Josef Bor); *May*, 1965 (by Karel Hynek Mácha); *The End of the Old Times*, 1965 (by Vladislav Vancura); *A Close Watch on the Trains*, 1968 (by Bohumil Hrabal; also known as *Closely Watched Trains*); *Report on My Husband*, 1969 (by Josefa Slánská); *A Ship Named Hope*, 1970 (by Ivan Klíma); *Mozart in Prague*, 1970 (by Jaroslav Seifert)

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Greeley, Andrew M. "Ellis Peters: Another Umberto Eco?" *The Armchair Detective* 18 (Summer, 1985): 238-245. Compares Peters's Brother Cadfael to Umberto Eco's William of Baskerville.

Kaler, Anne K., ed. *Cordially Yours, Brother Cadfael*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1998. Compilation of scholarly criticism of the Cadfael novels, including discussions of religion, philosophy, and the study of herbs.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Places Peters within a coherent lineage of great women mystery writers, discussing her relationship to her forebears and followers.

Reynolds, Moira Davison. *Women Authors of Detective Series: Twenty-one American and British Authors, 1900-2000*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001. Examines the life and work of major female mystery writers, including Peters.

Riley, Edward J. "Ellis Peters: Brother Cadfael." In *The Detective as Historian: History and Art in Historical Crime Fiction*, edited by Ray B. Browne and Lawrence A. Kreiser, Jr. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000. Examination of the function and representa-

tion of history in Peters's Cadfael novels. Bibliographic references.

Whiteman, Robin. *The Cadfael Companion: The World of Brother Cadfael*. Rev. ed. London: Little, Brown, 1995. An encyclopedia of the world repre-

sented by the Cadfael stories. Includes entries on the herbs grown and used by the monk-cum-sleuth, as well as on the major characters, locations, and properties of the novels.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Born: Mount Abu, India; November 4, 1862

Died: Broadclyst, Exeter, England; December 29, 1960

Also wrote as Harrington Hext

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John Ringrose, 1925-1926

Avis Bryden, 1932-1933

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN RINGROSE, recently retired from the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, first appears as a central character in *A Voice from the Dark* (1925). Made wiser and cynical by his years with the yard, Ringrose relies on hard-nosed investigation and careful analysis based on fact.

AVIS BRYDEN, born Avis Ullathorne, is a young woman reared in humble surroundings who becomes the mistress of a Devonshire farmer, Peter Bryden, and bears his child.

CONTRIBUTION

Eden Phillpotts's significance in the history of mystery and detective fiction derives largely from his occasional inventiveness in the matter of how fictional crimes are committed and, more important, from his highly detailed and carefully crafted descriptions of southwest England, the setting for most of his work. This area, which includes Dartmoor National Park, contains hundreds of square miles of rolling moorland, within which are mysterious mists, fierce winds, and peaceful villages. His careful evocation of the spirit of this region informs almost all of his fiction.

Phillpotts also achieved some standing in the English literary community for his novels about the moors, and his forays into detective fiction certainly helped to legitimize the genre for many in the English-reading public.

BIOGRAPHY

Eden Phillpotts was born in Mount Abu, India, on November 4, 1862, to Captain Henry Phillpotts, an Indian army officer, and Adelaide Matilda Sophia Waters, whose father worked for the Indian civil service. When he was three years old, his father died, and his mother, barely twenty-one years old, returned to Devonshire, England, taking Eden and his two brothers with her. He was educated at public school in Plymouth, which he left at the age of seventeen for a clerk's job in an insurance firm in London. Phillpotts studied acting for several years in his spare time but decided that he was not suited to it and began trying his hand at writing. By 1890, he had become somewhat successful at marketing some of his writing, and he left his job with the insurance company to become an assistant editor for *Black and White*, a minor periodical. Practice and an enormous creative energy enabled Phillpotts to give up his editorial work and devote himself full-time to writing. He moved from London to Devon, settling first at Torquay, where he spent thirty years. In 1929, he moved to Broadclyst, a town near Exeter, and not far from the Dartmoor National Park. He remained at Broadclyst until his death in 1960.

In 1892, while still in London, Phillpotts was married to Emily Topham. Together they had a son, Henry Eden, born in 1895, and a daughter, Mary Adelaide, born in 1896. Soon after his wife died in 1928, Phill-

potts was married to Lucy Robina Joyce Webb, the daughter of a physician.

During his long life, Phillpotts wrote more than one hundred novels, of which nineteen were tales of mystery and detection. He also wrote some forty-five plays, numerous short stories, verse, and children's literature. In addition, he published essays, travel writing, and memoirs. At his death he also left behind some six thousand letters written during his lifetime.

ANALYSIS

Eden Phillpotts began his novel-writing career with a work of detective fiction—*The End of Life* (1891)—and produced many other detective novels and short stories over the course of the next sixty years. Of the twenty-some works in the detective genre, only *The Grey Room* (1921), “*Found Drowned*” (1931), and *The Red Redmaynes* (1922) have earned much positive critical attention. Never an innovator, Phillpotts brought a solid knowledge of craft and a fine eye for detail to his detective fiction. While some of the plot complications and their resulting denouements stretch credibility to the breaking point, his painstaking delineations of the people and places of the Moorlands give his work a ring of authenticity. In fact, Phillpotts's detective novels are, for the most part, examples of the work of a local colorist whose story lines are really subservient to his celebration of the region.

Southwest England was the area to which Phillpotts's mother brought him from India in 1865, and southwest England, specifically Devon and Cornwall and the area known as Dartmoor, is the place to which he returned when his writing gave him independence. For sixty years, he wrote about the place and its people. Agatha Christie, whose work Phillpotts encouraged when she was very young, dedicated *Peril at End House* (1932) to Phillpotts, whom she called “the Hardy of the Moors.”

The use of setting as a major element in mystery and detective fiction was certainly not a new idea; in the work of writers such as Raymond Chandler, for example, setting can play a major part in shaping the motivation of characters and in establishing tone. In Phillpotts's fiction, however, setting has little impact on the characters. Instead, it is often the subject of long, slow

passages in which the writer rhapsodizes about the physical beauty of a particular place or geographic feature. These passages seldom have anything to do with driving the narrative or complicating the plot. It is as if the writer pauses in mid-story to comment on a matter unrelated to the action. That these passages are carefully written, providing accurate pictures of the region Phillpotts knew so well, does not mitigate their deadening effect on the story itself.

THE THING AT THEIR HEELS

The detectives with whom Phillpotts peopled his novels fall into two rather general categories: those who are inexperienced and given to a number of false starts and those who are much older and much less naïve about the potential for wrongdoing that lies just beneath the surface of many an innocent-looking person. The writer's worldview as evidenced by these creations seems not to differ significantly from the standard values of early twentieth century English society. Villains are villains primarily because of flaws in their characters and not because of flaws in their social environment. Persons whose views differ markedly from those of the majority are suspect. For example, in *The Thing at Their Heels* (1923), which Phillpotts wrote under the pseudonym Harrington Hext, four people are murdered by a clergyman who is a social-reform zealot. The reader soon realizes that the clergyman's views are so far afield from those of his community that he is suspect. Further, Phillpotts's world is one in which hard work, honesty, and thrift are rewarded. Greed of any kind—but particularly the lust for money—is the soil in which evil grows.

THE MARYLEBONE MISER

Solving crimes is not always easy for Phillpotts's detectives. He strews endless numbers of red herrings in their paths, confusing them and many of his readers in the process. Moreover, Phillpotts tries out most of the then-standard conventions in the genre, appearing in the process to be more interested in whether he can use the convention than in its applicability to the tale he is telling. In *The Marylebone Miser* (1926), for example, a Scotland Yard detective named Ambrose and the retired Central Investigations Department man John Ringrose are involved in a locked-room mystery. Yet the focus of the action in this lumbering story is on

murders that occur elsewhere, and the mystery of who killed an old miser in the locked room is left largely unresolved at the end of the novel.

THE GREY ROOM AND THEY WERE SEVEN

Another characteristic of Phillpotts's detective novels is his penchant for inventing bizarre means for committing crimes. In one of his best-known novels, *The Grey Room*, persons who spend the night in a particular bedroom are found dead in the morning. After endless peregrinations and exhaustive analyses of possibilities, Phillpotts finally reveals to his readers that the bed belonged to members of the Borgia family, who used it to murder their enemies by an ingenious method of causing poison to be emitted from the bed covers whenever anyone lay on it for a period of time. Other novels, for example, "*Found Drowned*" and *Monkshood* (1939), feature murderers who use rare and almost impossible-to-detect poisons. In *They Were Seven* (1944), seven people, all cousins, conspire in an unlikely fashion to murder an uncle, but they bungle the attempt. A Scotland Yard detective, no less a bungler, muddles through in the end, but the book contains one improbability after another.

"FOUND DROWNED"

On a few occasions, Phillpotts managed to get most things right and produced work that serious students of the genre have admired. One such example is "*Found Drowned*." Two friends, a small-town police officer and a retired physician, are given depth of character rarely seen in Phillpotts's detective fiction. They exude a certain warmth, and they are not without wit. Phillpotts mixes in popular notions about politics, and he introduces a private investigator to aid the two friends in the resolution of the single murder that occurs in the novel. Shorter than many of his other novels, "*Found Drowned*" is more tightly constructed and is mercifully freer of long-winded passages describing the landscape. His use of rural dialect in contrast with the somewhat stilted speech of the central characters gives the tale another nice touch.

THE RED REDMAYNES

The Red Redmaynes is another Phillpotts novel that, though extraordinarily long, is well controlled. It features an American private detective, Peter Ganns. He is full of idiosyncrasies, but he is equal to the task

at hand: tracking down a villain who is the murderer of the brothers Redmayne. Though the novel is primarily set in Cornwall, the action ranges as far away as Italy, and the suspense is well maintained.

BRED IN THE BONE

Three of Phillpotts's mystery novels featured Avis Bryden, born Avis Ullathorne, who first appears in *Bred in the Bone* (1932). The young woman, the wife of farmer Peter Bryden, meets a police inspector, Victor Midwinter, who is in the area to investigate a murder in which her husband appears to be involved. By the novel's end, Avis has become the instrument of her deranged husband's death, but she has earned the respect of Inspector Midwinter.

Serious students of the genre should be familiar with Phillpotts's fiction because it provides some indication of the wide variety of the sort of detective writing that was being produced in the United States and England during the 1920's and 1930's. For the most part, however, his mystery and detective fiction is unremarkable, and few of his characters remain long with the reader.

Dale H. Ross

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN RINGROSE SERIES: *A Voice from the Dark*, 1925; *The Marylebone Miser*, 1926 (also known as *Jig-Saw*)

AVIS BRYDEN SERIES: *Bred in the Bone*, 1932; *Witch's Cauldron*, 1933; *A Shadow Passes*, 1933

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1891-1920 • *The End of Life*, 1891; *A Tiger's Club*, 1892; *Doubloons*, 1906 (also known as *The Sinew of War*); *The Statue*, 1908; *The Three Knaves*, 1912; *The Master of Merripit*, 1914; *Miser's Money*, 1920

1921-1930 • *The Grey Room*, 1921; *Number Eighty-seven*, 1922; *The Red Redmaynes*, 1922; *The Thing at Their Heels*, 1923 (as *Hext*); *Who Killed Diana?*, 1924; *The Monster*, 1925; *Peacock House*, 1926; *The Jury*, 1927

1931-1940 • "*Found Drowned*," 1931; *A Clue from the Stars*, 1932; *The Captain's Curio*, 1933; *Mr. Digweed and Mr. Lumb*, 1934; *Physician, Heal Thyself*, 1935 (also known as *The Anniversary Murder*); *The Wife of Elias*, 1935; *A Close Call*, 1936; *Lycanthrope*:

The Mystery of Sir William Wolf, 1937; *Portrait of a Scoundrel*, 1938; *Monkshood*, 1939; *Awake Deborah!*, 1940

1941-1959 • *A Deed Without a Name*, 1941; *Ghostwater*, 1941; *Flower of the Gods*, 1942; *The Changeling*, 1944; *They Were Seven*, 1944; *There Was an Old Woman*, 1947; *Address Unknown*, 1949; *Dilemma*, 1949; *George and Georgina*, 1952; *The Hidden Hand*, 1952; *There Was an Old Man*, 1959

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Loup-Garou!* 1899; *Fancy Free*, 1901; *The Transit of the Red Dragon, and Other Tales*, 1903; *My Adventure in the Flying Scotsman: A Romance of London and North-Western Railway Shares*, 1888; *The Unlucky Number*, 1906; *Tales of the Tenements*, 1910; *The Judge's Chair*, 1914; *Black, White, and Brindled*, 1923; *Peacock House, and Other Mysteries*, 1926; *It Happened Like That*, 1928; *Once upon a Time*, 1936

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1891-1900 • *Folly and Fresh Air*, 1891; *Some Every-Day Folks*, 1894; *A Deal with the Devil*, 1895; *Lying Prophets*, 1896; *Children of the Mist*, 1898; *The Human Boy*, 1899; *Sons of Morning*, 1900

1901-1910 • *The Good Red Earth*, 1901 (also known as *Johnny Fortnight*); *The River*, 1902; *The American Prisoner*, 1903; *The Golden Fetich*, 1903; *The Farm of the Dagger*, 1904; *The Secret Woman*, 1905; *The Poacher's Wife*, 1906 (also known as *Daniel Sweetland*); *The Portreeve*, 1906; *The Virgin in Judgment*, 1907 (revised as *A Fight to the Finish*, 1911); *The Whirlwind*, 1907; *The Human Boy Again*, 1908; *The Mother*, 1908; *The Haven*, 1909; *The Three Brothers*, 1909; *The Flint Heart: A Fairy Story*, 1910 (revised 1922); *The Thief of Virtue*, 1910

1911-1920 • *Demeter's Daughter*, 1911; *The Beacon*, 1911; *From the Angle of Seventeen*, 1912; *The Forest on the Hill*, 1912; *The Lovers: A Romance*, 1912; *The Joy of Youth*, 1913; *Widcombe Fair*, 1913; *Faith Tresillion*, 1914; *Brunel's Tower*, 1915; *Old Delabole*, 1915; *The Girl and the Faun*, 1916; *The Green Alleys*, 1916; *The Human Boy and the War*, 1916; *The Chronicles of St. Tid*, 1917; *The Nursery (Banks of Colne)*, 1917 (also known as *The Banks of Colne*); *The Spinners*, 1918; *Evander*, 1919; *Storm in a Tea-*

cup, 1919; *Orphan Dinah*, 1920

1921-1930 • *Eudocia*, 1921; *The Bronze Venus*, 1921; *Pan and the Twins*, 1922; *Children of Men*, 1923; *The Lavender Dragon*, 1923; *Cheat-the-Boys*, 1924; *Redcliff*, 1924; *The Human Boy's Diary*, 1924; *The Treasurers of Typhon*, 1924; *George Westover*, 1925; *A Cornish Droll*, 1926; *Circé's Island, and The Girl and the Faun*, 1926; *The Miniature*, 1926; *Arachne*, 1927; *Dartmoor Novels*, 1927-1928; *The Ring Fence*, 1928; *The Apes*, 1929; *Tryphena*, 1929; *Alcyone: A Fairy Story*, 1930; *The Three Maidens*, 1930

1931-1940 • *Stormbury*, 1931; *The Broom Squires*, 1932; *Nancy Owlett*, 1933; *Minions of the Moon*, 1934; *Portrait of a Gentleman*, 1934; *The Oldest Inhabitant*, 1934; *Ned of the Caribbees*, 1935; *The Owl of Athene*, 1936; *Wood-Nymph*, 1936; *Farce in Three Acts*, 1937; *Dark Horses*, 1938; *Saurus*, 1938; *Tabletop*, 1939; *Thorn in Her Flesh*, 1939; *Chorus of Clowns*, 1940; *Goldcross*, 1940

1941-1957 • *Pilgrims of the Night*, 1942; *A Museum Piece*, 1943; *The Drums of Dombali*, 1945; *Quartet*, 1946; *Fall of the House of Heron*, 1948; *The Waters of Walla*, 1950; *Through a Glass Darkly*, 1951; *His Brother's Keeper*, 1953; *The Widow Garland*, 1955; *Connie Woodland*, 1956; *Giglet Market*, 1957

SHORT FICTION: *Summer Clouds, and Other Stories*, 1893; *Down Dartmoor War*, 1895; *The Striking Hours*, 1901; *Knock at a Venture*, 1905; *The Folk Afield*, 1907; *The Fun of the Fair*, 1909; *The Old Time Before Them*, 1913 (also known as *Told at the Plume*); *Up Hill, Down Dale*, 1925; *The Torch, and Other Tales*, 1929; *Cherry Gambol, and Other Stories*, 1930; *They Could Do No Other*, 1933; *The King of Kanga, and The Alliance*, 1943

PLAYS: 1887-1910 • *The Policeman*, pr. 1887 (with Walter Helmore); *A Platonic Attachment*, pr. 1889; *A Breezy Morning*, pr. 1891; *Allendale*, pr. 1893 (with G. B. Burgin); *The Prude's Progress*, pr. 1895 (revised 1900, with Jerome K. Jerome); *The MacHaggis*, pr. 1897 (with Jerome); *A Golden Wedding*, pr. 1898; *A Pair of Knickerbockers*, pr. 1899; *For Love of Prim*, pr. 1899

1911-1920 • *Curtain Raisers*, pb. 1912; *The Secret Woman*, pb. 1912 (revised 1935); *Hiatus*, pr. 1913; *The*

Carrier-Pigeon, pr. 1913; *The Mother*, pb. 1913; *The Point of View*, pr. 1913; *The Shadow*, pb. 1913; *The Angel in the House*, pr. 1915 (with Basil Macdonald Hastings); *Bed Rock*, pr. 1916 (with Hastings); *The Farmer's Wife*, pb. 1916; *St. George and the Dragons*, pb. 1918 (also known as *The Bishop's Night Off*)

1921-1930 • *The Market-Money*, pb. 1923; *Devonshire Cream*, pr. 1924; *A Comedy Royal*, pb. 1925 (revised 1932); *Jane's Legacy: A Folk Play*, pr. 1925; *The Blue Comet*, pb. 1927; *The Purple Bedroom*, pr. 1926; *Yellow Sands*, pb. 1926 (with Adelaide Eden Phillpotts); *Devonshire Plays*, pb. 1927; *Something to Talk About*, pr. 1927; *My Lady's Mill*, pr. 1928 (with Adelaide Eden Phillpotts); *The Runaways*, pb. 1928; *Three Short Plays*, pb. 1928; *Buy a Broom*, pb. 1929

1931-1949 • *A Cup of Happiness*, pb. 1932; *Bert*, pb. 1932; *The Good Old Days*, pb. 1932 (with Adelaide Eden Phillpotts); *At the 'Bus Stop: A Duologue for Two Women*, pb. 1943; *The Orange Orchard*, pr. 1949 (with Nancy Price)

RADIO PLAYS: *Old Bannerman*, 1938; *Witch's Cauldron*, 1940; *The Tiger's Tail*, 1941; *The Gentle Hangman*, 1942; *Honest to Goodness Noah*, 1943; *Brownberry*, 1944; *The Poetical Gentleman*, 1944; *Hey-Diddle-Diddle*, 1946; *On the Night of the Fair*, 1947; *The Master Plumber*, 1947; *Hunter's Moon*, 1948; *The Orange Orchard*, 1949; *On Parole*, 1951; *Kitty Brown of Bristol*, 1953; *Quoth the Raven*, 1953; *The Laughing Widow*, 1954; *Aunt Betsey's Birthday*, 1955; *The Outward Show*, 1958; *The Red Dragon*, 1959; *Between the Deep Sea and the Devil*, 1960

POETRY: *Up-Along and Down-Along*, 1905; *Wild Fruit*, 1911; *The Iscariot*, 1912; *Delight*, 1916; *Plain Song, 1914-1916*, 1917; *As the Wind Blows*, 1920; *A Dish of Apples*, 1921; *Pixies' Plot*, 1922; *Cherry-Stones*, 1923; *A Harvesting*, 1924; *Brother Man*, 1926; *Brother Beast*, 1928; *Goodwill*, 1928; *A Hundred Sonnets*, 1929; *For Remembrance*, 1929; *A Hundred Lyrics*, 1930; *Becoming*, 1932; *Song of a Sailor Man: Narrative Poem*, 1933; *Sonnets from Nature*, 1935; *A Dartmoor Village*, 1937; *Miniatures*, 1942; *The Enchanted Wood*, 1948

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The White Camel*, 1936; *Golden Island*, 1938

NONFICTION: *In Sugar-Cane Land*, 1893; *My*

Laughing Philosopher, 1896; *Little Silver Chronicles*, 1900; *My Devon Year*, 1903; *My Garden*, 1906; *The Mount by the Way*, 1908; *Dance of the Months*, 1911; *My Shrubs*, 1915; *The Eden Phillpotts Calendar*, 1915; *A Shadow Passes*, 1918; *One Hundred Pictures from Eden Phillpotts*, 1919; *A West Country Pilgrimage*, 1920; *Thoughts in Prose and Verse*, 1924; *A West Country Sketch Book*, 1928; *Essays in Little*, 1931; *A Year with Bisshe-Bantam*, 1934; *A Mixed Grill*, 1940; *From the Angle of 88*, 1951; *One Thing and Another*, 1954

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Dayananda, James Y., ed. *Eden Phillpotts (1862-1960): Selected Letters*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984. Collected personal and professional correspondence of Phillpotts; provides invaluable insights into his life and work.

Girvan, Waveney, ed. *Eden Phillpotts: An Assessment and a Tribute*. London: Hutchinson, 1953. Collection of homages to Phillpotts by his professional admirers.

Hanson, Gillian Mary. *City and Shore: The Function of Setting in the British Mystery*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004. A useful work for contextualizing Phillpotts's distinctive use of the moors of England in his fiction. Bibliographic references and index.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Looks at the history of detective fiction and contains a chapter on classic detective fiction and how it changed that sheds light on Phillpotts's work.

NANCY PICKARD

Born: Kansas City, Missouri; September 19, 1945

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jenny Cain, 1984-

Eugenia Potter, 1993-

Marie Lightfoot, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JENNIFER “JENNY” CAIN is the daughter of Massachusetts clam entrepreneurs, James Damon Cain III and his first wife, Margaret. She earned a master’s degree in business administration from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. A trust fund supplements the income she earns as Port Frederick Civic Foundation director. In her thirties, she balances the complex dynamics presented by her younger sister, parents, friends, coworkers, enemies, husband Geof Bushfield, and his son David Mayer. Although Jenny is from the upper class, she is concerned about the welfare of people in her community. She seeks answers to family secrets that perplex and frustrate her.

EUGENIA “GENIA” POTTER is a widowed chef in her sixties. Originally from Iowa, she lives on a vast Arizona ranch that her husband had bought. Genia’s property also includes a house in Maine, and she often visits family in Rhode Island. She collects and tests recipes, which she shares with friends. An amateur sleuth, she investigates deaths and crimes that occur among relatives and acquaintances or occur at locations where she travels.

MARIE LIGHTFOOT is the pseudonym of a true-crime author who was born in northwestern Alabama and lives in Bahia Beach, Florida. Born to social activists Michael Folletino and Lyda Folletino, Marie was raised by her aunt and uncle with her cousin Nathan after her parents allegedly abandoned her. A journalist, she writes fact-based crime books, earning significant income and fame. Residing in a gated community near the shore, Marie prefers her solitude, although she pursues a relationship with divorced African American state attorney Franklin DeWeese, which of-

ten complicates her life because of their sometimes conflicting professional and personal interests.

CONTRIBUTION

Nancy Pickard was one of the first female mystery writers to introduce feminist elements to traditional cozy mysteries in the early 1980’s, depicting a female amateur sleuth with a career unlike previous female protagonists, who solved mysteries without professional commitments interfering with or benefitting their efforts. In her later works, Pickard has continued creating affluent, savvy protagonists and supporting characters who are educated and experienced in their fields, earn incomes, and contribute to their communities economically and intellectually.

Pickard’s versatile sleuths enable her to incorporate diverse elements to portray autonomous, competent women who can tackle crooks using new resources, such as computing skills, to investigate financial fraud and white-collar crimes. Pickard’s novels preceded mysteries by such authors as Linda Grant, Carolyn Hart, and Joan Hess, who featured corporate or entrepreneurial women sleuths.

Most critics and peers consider Pickard an exemplary mystery author, and her talents have been recognized with numerous awards. In 1986, Pickard’s second novel, *Say No to Murder* (1985), received the initial Anthony Award for best paperback original at the Bouchercon Mystery Convention. Malice Domestic Mystery Convention attendees voted for Pickard’s novel *I.O.U.* (1991) to receive an Agatha Award. That mystery also won a Shamus Award from the Private Eye Writers of America and was a Mystery Writers of America’s Edgar Allan Poe Award nominee. Pickard’s mystery, *The Virgin of Small Plains* (2006), was nominated in 2007 for both Edgar and Agatha best novel awards.

BIOGRAPHY

Nancy Pickard was born Nancy J. Wolfe on September 19, 1945, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Clint Wolfe and Mary Wolfe. As a child, she enjoyed read-

ing Nancy Drew books. After high school graduation in 1963, she enrolled in journalism school at the University of Missouri. When she was a senior, Pickard took a creative writing class. The teacher mocked aloud to the class a short story she had written, inhibiting Pickard from writing additional fiction. She completed a bachelor's degree in 1967.

Pickard reported for *The Squire* in Overland Park, Kansas, then wrote training programs for Western Auto at Kansas City, Missouri, through 1972, before seeking freelance writing assignments. In 1976, she married Guy Pickard and lived on a Flint Hills, Kansas, ranch. By 1981, Pickard had stopped writing freelance articles and turned to fiction. An avid reader, especially of mysteries, she relied on her reading experiences and writing guides rather than formal instruction to create mysteries. She soon sold a short story, "A Man Around the House," to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

During the early 1980's, an editor rejected Pickard's initial novel, saying the manuscript confused her as to whether it was a mystery or romance with suspense. She considered those comments and focused on mystery, resulting in her first published novel, *Generous Death* (1984).

Pickard's son, Nicholas, was born in 1983 (she and her husband later divorced). That year, Pickard read Virginia Rich's mystery, *The Cooking School Murders* (1982), and wrote Rich, who responded, telling Pickard she had a fourth book in progress. After Rich's death in 1985, her husband asked Pickard to complete that author's fourth Eugenia Potter book, *The Twenty-seven-Ingredient Chili Con Carne Murders* (1993), and allowed her to continue the series.

Throughout the 1980's, Pickard wrote mystery novels prolifically. Despite her success with novels and her initial success in the short-story form, she was unable to sell other short stories. At a writer's conference, a speaker emphasized that short stories must include epiphanies. Pickard began applying that revelation to her stories, publishing her work in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Mystery Scene*, *Armchair Detective*, and numerous anthologies. She studied peers' books, especially Sue Grafton's mysteries, to improve her writing techniques. Pickard edited sev-

eral mystery anthologies and contributed a chapter to the serial novel *Naked Came the Phoenix* (2001).

In 1986, Pickard helped establish Sisters in Crime (SIC) and served on that organization's first steering committee. From 1988 to 1989, Pickard presided as SIC president. She also was active in the Mystery Writers of America (MWA), becoming a member of that group's national board. Pickard's experiences on the MWA committee choosing an Edgar Allan Poe Award true-crime book winner resulted in her analyzing those books' structure. Her contemplation served as a catalyst for her trilogy featuring true-crime author Marie Lightfoot.

In 1990, Pickard's favorite Jenny Cain mystery, *Bum Steer*, set on a Kansas ranch, was published. The Kansas City, Kansas, public library presented Pickard its Edgar Wolfe Award in 1997. Pickard collaborated with psychologist Lynn Lott to write *Seven Steps on the Writer's Path: The Journey from Frustration to Fulfillment* (2003), describing her struggles as a writer. Tired of series writing, Pickard wrote *The Virgin of Small Plains*, published in 2006. Pickard has spoken at writers' conferences. She has served on panels at Boucheron, and has led workshops at SIC meetings.

ANALYSIS

Nancy Pickard depicts resourceful, independent female protagonists in her mysteries, emphasizing their intelligence, bravery, and competence. Her characters and plots represent many of the qualities found in innovative mysteries featuring female sleuths and detectives written by female authors including Margaret Maron and Sue Grafton in the 1980's. Pickard's sleuths exemplified similar traits of strength, resilience, and perseverance. Creating appealing narrators, she sought to provide readers with entertainment as well as to offer protagonists with whom they could identify.

Although the structures of Pickard's series varied, her writing style exhibited constants, especially strong voice, effective use of setting, and intricate layers of seemingly unrelated characters and events to hide clues and enable plot twists revealing connections. Her characterizations were strengthened with humor, often dark. Although criticisms of her writing have

noted that her narratives often include too much explanation and that some of her character development is implausible or flat, many reviewers have praised Pickard's ingenious plots and pacing.

Pickard focuses on the theme of family in most of her mysteries. Characters feel compelled to support their relatives emotionally despite deceptions and other wrongdoings inflicted on them. Family is equated with other themes, particularly power and prestige. The absence of strong family ties can be detrimental to characters who lack supporters to defend and protect them. Without an intact family structure, characters struggle against outsiders' biases, often negative or incorrect, which shape public opinion. Varying forms of family, offered by lovers and friends, bolster characters. Family can paradoxically provide characters with safety or weaken them. The theme of disintegration, represented by people falling apart financially or emotionally, intensifies the somber tones of such Pickard novels as *Marriage Is Murder* (1987).

Social issues are important aspects of Pickard's mysteries, often enhancing characterizations and strengthening plots. Pickard became aware of such concerns, particularly mental health, because her grandmother died in a state mental hospital, similar to Jenny's mother dying in a private facility. Coming of age during the 1960's, she witnessed social movements demanding improvements. Her friends participated in assisting abused spouses and indigent people, increasing Pickard's knowledge of how bureaucracy and politics affect services, which provided her details to improve the authenticity of her characters' conflicts. Altruism is present as some characters strive to help people, despite their flaws, reinforcing character development within her novels and throughout her series.

Pickard's settings help reflect her characters' moods and establish tones to alert readers to potentially dangerous situations and people capable of inflicting pain and anguish. Her small communities, in New England and the Midwest, both nurture and stifle characters. The seemingly pleasant ocean community of Port Frederick deceptively contains vengeful residents. The prairie's bleak territory intensifies characters' fears and sense of isolation. Fog rolls across scenes and in people's minds to convey sinister ele-

ments and distortion. Twilight in her novels blinds and confuses people. Snow proves deadly and conceals crimes. Storms and fires obliterate evidence necessary to determine the truth and expose secrets.

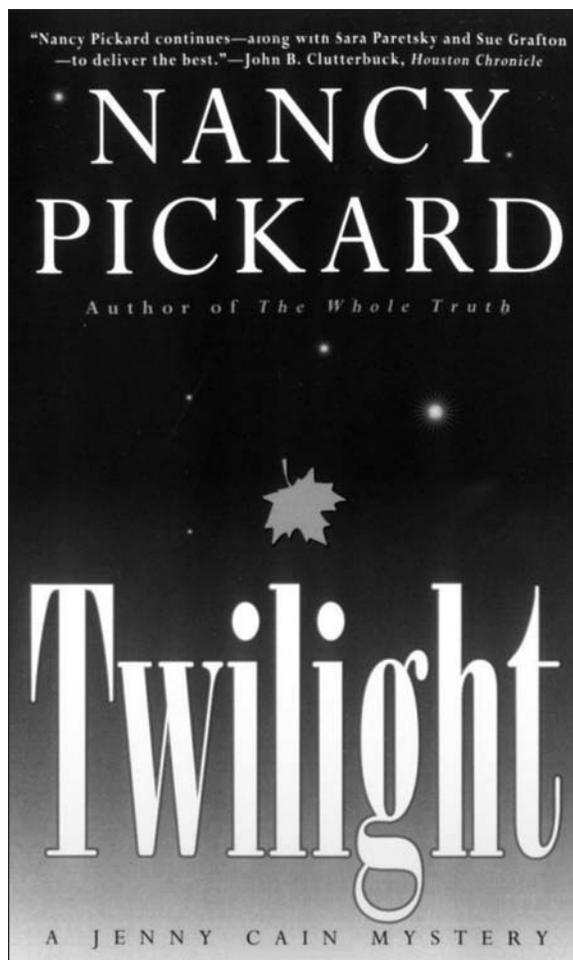
I.O.U.

In *I.O.U.*, commitment to duty and truth guide Jenny Cain, whom Pickard introduced in *Generous Death*, as she grieves after her mother Margaret Cain's death and is confronted by physical and emotional threats. At the cemetery, someone shoves Jenny and murmurs a request for forgiveness. Unsure who spoke to her, she initiates inquiries in an attempt to comprehend what happened to her mother to cause her to become mentally ill and institutionalized in a psychiatric facility. Her mother's emotional collapse occurred just as Jenny's family's business, Cain Clams, declared bankruptcy, terminating the employment on which many Port Frederick residents relied.

Jenny starts with research at the library, applying her business knowledge in her investigation. She interviews her family, including her aloof father, unaware of the impact he has had on the community; colleagues; and friends. Jenny feels accountable to her mother and the community, feeling she owes them a debt that must be repaid through her deeds. As she boldly pushes to determine the truth, Jenny risks agitating enemies and encounters perils, including becoming exhausted and almost suffocating on carbon monoxide in her car. Some people think she has tried to commit suicide, which causes Jenny to question her mental well-being and consider leaving her professional position. Themes of wealth and greed and tones of despair interplay as Jenny reassesses her assumptions regarding familial and community relations, revealing that trusted relatives and friends can be liars and foes.

TWILIGHT

Clarity and transition are the underlying themes of *Twilight* (1995), the tenth Jenny Cain mystery, which resolves many issues present throughout the series. As the Judy Foundation's director, Jenny is planning a fall festival; however, she despairs as she is unable to obtain the necessary insurance coverage and fears that she will run out of time to do so. Antagonists, particularly Peter Falwell, a former employer, enjoy taunting Jenny, saying that the festival will be canceled.



Additionally, Jenny becomes involved in a controversy debating whether a nature trail should be closed because several people, including a young girl, have died at a highway crossing. Enduring angry fundamentalists and environmental protestors who burn her in effigy, Jenny finds comfort in runes that her delivery woman Cleo Talbot interprets for her. Devastating fires and physical attacks, including a brutal assault on David Mayer, Jenny's stepson, and the unresolved insurance dilemma intensify suspense.

Child characters and several adults who interact with Jenny emphasize themes of innocence and vulnerability, while pride and opportunism set the tone for others' hostile actions and deceptions for monetary and egotistical gain. Jenny's family and friendship ties are reinforced, and enemies' true intentions are ex-

posed as transparency and serenity replace the confusion Jenny associates with twilight.

THE TRUTH HURTS

The third volume of Pickard's Marie Lightfoot series, *The Truth Hurts* (2002), explores Marie's past, which the previous books, *The Whole Truth* (2000) and *Ring of Truth* (2001), foreshadowed. Confronted by a tabloid's claim that her parents were racists, Marie is shaken. She is unsure of the truth because her parents abandoned her in 1963 when she was a baby. When she receives threatening e-mails from a man named Paulie Barnes, Marie fearfully submits to his requests to write a book that will feature her murder. Suspense builds as Barnes sends Marie a copy of John MacDonald's *The Executioners* (1958) and mails her an airplane ticket to Birmingham, Alabama, near her hometown of Sebastian. Marie's cousin Nathan arrives in Sebastian, lured there by Barnes, whom Marie desperately is seeking to identify. She questions residents who knew her parents in 1963, gaining self-knowledge and revising her perceptions of civil rights and family history. She discovers and embraces some truths.

The theme of truth resonates in these three books. Structurally, chapters present Marie's published account of a true crime, often manipulating facts to protect people, in past tense; she narrates present-tense sections, divulging her thoughts and what she perceives is true. Characters' misperceptions and paradoxes contribute to plots twists, exposing truths.

THE VIRGIN OF SMALL PLAINS

In *The Virgin of Small Plains*, which takes place in 2004, Abby Reynolds slides into a ditch while driving on an icy road because she had been startled by the sight of her former boyfriend Mitch Newquist's elderly mother wandering through a snowy cemetery near Small Plains, Kansas. Flashing back to 1987, when she was in high school, Abby recalls when her relationship with Mitch abruptly ended. Alternating characters' perspectives reveal what each person experienced seventeen years before: Mitch was at Abby's house when he watched, horrified, while Abby's physician father and the sheriff disfigured a woman's corpse. When Abby went to Mitch's house the next day, he was gone and his parents refused to tell her where he went.

In the Small Plains cemetery where Abby saw Mitch's mother, an unknown girl was buried. Credited with miracles, she has been dubbed the Virgin of Small Plains, and people flock to her grave desiring her help. Abby is determined to identify the girl and mark her grave properly. Shifting between 1987 and 2004, Pickard presents clues about both past and present events. Themes of memory, betrayal, and lost innocence strengthen the plot as Abby deals with Mitch's return. The Kansas prairie personifies this mystery's suspense, enhancing elements of solitude and foreboding. Weather represents perils the characters endure as they encounter deception and violence from people they trust. Like most of Pickard's fiction, fear and terror boil underneath the surface of seemingly innocuous people and places.

Elizabeth D. Schafer

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JENNY CAIN SERIES: *Generous Death*, 1984; *Say No to Murder*, 1985; *No Body*, 1986; *Marriage Is Murder*, 1987; *Dead Crazy*, 1988; *Bum Steer*, 1990; *I.O.U.*, 1991; *But I Wouldn't Want to Die There*, 1993; *Confession*, 1994; *Twilight*, 1995

EUGENIA POTTER SERIES: *The Twenty-seven-Ingredient Chili Con Carne Murders*, 1993; *The Blue Corn Murders*, 1998; *The Secret Ingredient Murders*, 2001

MARIE LIGHTFOOT SERIES: *The Whole Truth*, 2000; *Ring of Truth*, 2001; *The Truth Hurts*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Naked Came the Phoenix*, 2001 (with others); *The Virgin of Small Plains*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Storm Warnings*, 1999

NONFICTION: *Seven Steps on the Writer's Path: The Journey from Frustration to Fulfillment*, 2003 (with Lynn Lott)

EDITED TEXTS: *Nancy Pickard Presents Malice Domestic Three: An Anthology of Original Traditional Mystery Stories*, 1994; *The First Lady Murders*, 1999; *Mom, Apple Pie, and Murder*, 1999

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Dyer, Carolyn Stewart, and Nancy Tillman Romalov, eds. *Rediscovering Nancy Drew*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995. Includes Pickard's essay telling how Nancy Drew books influenced her to write mysteries and her remarks at a conference, describing her experiences writing in the mystery genre.

Hall, Melissa Mia. "Small Miracles." *Publishers Weekly* 253, no. 13 (March 27, 2006): 61. Focusing on *The Virgin of Small Plains*, Pickard answers questions explaining why she wrote that mystery and how the Midwest shaped that novel's imagery and themes.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. An essay featuring Pickard provides brief novel analyses through *But I Wouldn't Want to Die There* and compares her work to mysteries depicting career women.

Marks, Jeffrey. "An Interview with Nancy Pickard." *The Armchair Detective* 26, no. 2 (Spring, 1993): 84-88. Pickard describes how she became a mystery writer, her work habits, social issues concerns, and how her protagonist has changed from her first novel through *I.O.U.*

Shindler, Dorman T. "Nancy Pickard: The Third Stage of Evolution." *Publishers Weekly* 249, no. 31 (August 5, 2002): 48-49. Based on an interview with Pickard, reveals how she perceives her writing changed during three phases of her career, undergoing doubt then confidence to alter and enhance her style and techniques.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; January 19, 1809

Died: Baltimore, Maryland; October 7, 1849

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

C. Auguste Dupin, 1841-1844

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

C. AUGUSTE DUPIN is a young French gentleman of an illustrious family who has been reduced to living on a modest inheritance in Paris. Extremely well-read, highly imaginative, and master of a keen analytical ability, Dupin is the original armchair detective, the progenitor of every amateur sleuth in detective fiction from Sherlock Holmes to the present.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Edgar Allan Poe's career was relatively short, he was the leading figure in the mid-nineteenth century transformation of the legendary tale into the form now known as the short story. Experimenting with many different styles and genres—the gothic tale, science fiction, occult fantasies, satire—Poe gained great recognition in the early 1840's for his creation of a genre that has grown in popularity ever since—the tale of ratiocination, or detective story, which features an amateur sleuth who by his superior deductive abilities outsmarts criminals and outclasses the police.

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” the first works in the Dupin series, created a small sensation in the United States when they were first published. Following fast on these works was “The Gold Bug,” which, although not featuring Dupin, focused on analytical detection; it was so popular that it was immediately reprinted three times. “The Purloined Letter,” the third and final story in the Dupin series, has been the subject of much critical analysis.

BIOGRAPHY

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 19, 1809. When his parents, David Poe, Jr., and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, indigent actors,

died when he was two years old, Poe was taken in by a wealthy tobacco exporter, John Allan. In 1826, Poe entered the University of Virginia but withdrew after less than a year because of debts Allan would not pay. After a brief term in the Army, Poe entered West Point Academy, argued further with Allan about financial support, and then purposely got himself discharged. In 1831, he moved to Baltimore, where he lived with his aunt, Maria Clemm, and her daughter Virginia.

After winning a short-story contest sponsored by a Philadelphia newspaper, Poe was given his first job as an editor on the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond, Virginia. During his two-year tenure, he gained considerable public attention with his stories. With the end of that job, Poe, who had by this time both a new wife (his cousin Virginia) and his aunt to support, took his small family to Philadelphia, where he published some of his best-known works—*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), “Ligeia,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and “William Wilson.”

At this point, Poe discovered a new way to capitalize on his popularity as a critic, writer, and generally respected man of letters. He joined the lecture circuit, delivering talks on poetry and criticism in various American cities. Poe continued to present lectures on literature for the last five years of his life, with varying degrees of acclaim and success, but never with enough financial reward to make his life comfortable. Even the immediate sensation created by his poem “The Raven,” which was reprinted throughout the country and which made Poe an instant celebrity, still could not satisfy the need for enough funds to support his family.

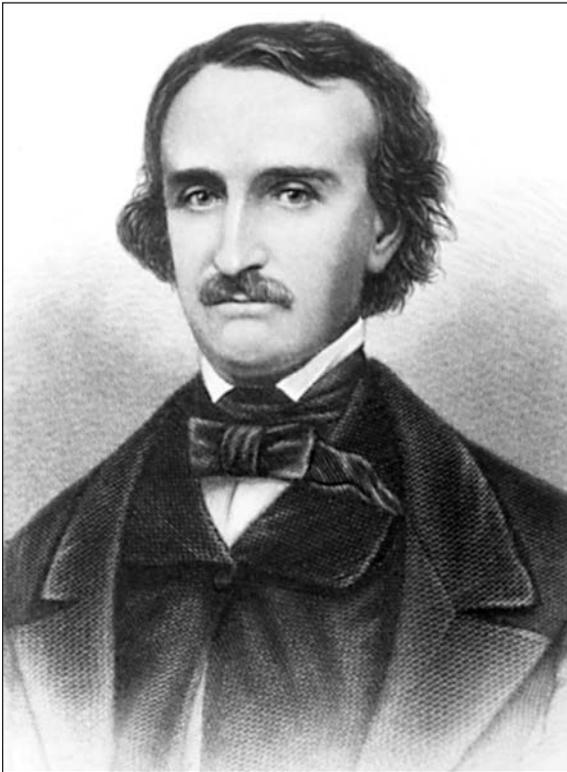
On a trip from Richmond to New York, Poe, a man who could not tolerate alcohol, stopped in Baltimore and began drinking. After he was missing for several days, he was found on the street, drunk and disheveled. Three days later, he died of what was diagnosed as delirium tremens.

ANALYSIS

Although Edgar Allan Poe is credited as the creator of the detective story and the character type known as

the amateur sleuth, C. Auguste Dupin and his ratiocinative ability were clearly influenced by other sources. Two probable sources are Voltaire's *Zadig: Ou, La Destinée, Histoire orientale* (1748; *Zadig: Or, The Book of Fate*, 1749) and François-Eugène Vidocq's *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté jusqu'en 1827* (1828-1829; *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827*, 1828-1829). Poe mentions *Zadig* in "Hop-Frog" and thus most likely knew the story of *Zadig's* ability to deduce the description of the king's horse and the queen's dog by examining tracks on the ground and hair left on bushes. He also mentions Vidocq, the first real-life detective, in "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" as a "good guesser," but one who could not see clearly because he held the object of investigation too close.

Poe's creation of the ratiocinative story also derives from broader and more basic interests and sources. First, there was his interest in the aesthetic theory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, heavily indebted to nineteenth century German Romanticism. In several of



Edgar Allan Poe. (Library of Congress)

Poe's most famous critical essays, such as his 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and his theoretical articles, "Philosophy of Composition" in 1846 and "The Poetic Principle" in 1848, Poe develops his own version of the theory of the artwork as a form in which every detail contributes to the overall effect. This organic aesthetic theory clearly influenced Poe's creation of the detective genre, in which every detail, even the most minor, may be a clue to the solution of the story's central mystery.

The development of the mystery and detective genre also reflected the influence of gothic fiction. The gothic novel, based on the concept of hidden sin and filled with mysterious and unexplained events, had, like the detective story, to move inexorably toward a denouement that would explain all the previous puzzles. The first gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), with its secret guilt and cryptic clues, was thus an early source of the detective story.

A third source was Poe's fascination with cryptograms, riddles, codes, and other conundrums and puzzles. In an article in a weekly magazine in 1839, he offered to solve any and all cryptograms submitted; in a follow-up article in 1841, he said that he had indeed solved most of them. Although Poe demonstrated his skill as a solver of puzzles in many magazine articles, the most famous fictional depiction of his skill as a cryptographer is his story "The Gold Bug."

"THE GOLD BUG"

William Legrand, the central character in "The Gold Bug," shares some characteristics with Poe's famous amateur sleuth, Dupin. Legrand is of an illustrious family, but because of financial misfortunes, he has been reduced to near poverty. Although he is of French ancestry from New Orleans, he lives alone on an island near Charleston, South Carolina. In addition, like Dupin, he alternates between melancholia and enthusiasm, which leads the narrator (also like the narrator in the Dupin stories) to suspect that he is the victim of a species of madness.

The basic premise of the story is that Legrand is figuratively bitten by the gold bug after discovering a piece of parchment on which he finds a cryptogram with directions to the buried treasure of the pirate Captain Kidd. As with the more influential Dupin stories,

“The Gold Bug” focuses less on action than on the explanation of the steps toward the solution of its mystery. To solve the puzzle of the cryptogram, Legrand demonstrates the essential qualities of the amateur detective: close attention to minute detail, extensive information about language and mathematics, far-reaching knowledge about his opponent (in this case Captain Kidd), and, most important, a perceptive intuition as well as a methodical reasoning ability.

Poe’s famous gothic stories of psychological obsession, such as “The Black Cat,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and “Ligeia,” seem at first glance quite different from his ratiocinative stories of detection. In many ways, however, they are very similar: Both types depend on some secret guilt that must be exposed; in both, the central character is an eccentric whose mind seems distant from the minds of ordinary men; and both types are elaborate puzzles filled with clues that must be tied together before the reader can understand their overall effect.

“THE OBLONG BOX”

“The Oblong Box” and “Thou Art the Man,” both written in 1844, are often cited as combining the gothic and the ratiocinative thrusts of Poe’s genius. The narrator of “The Oblong Box,” while on a packet-ship journey from Charleston, South Carolina, to New York City, becomes unusually curious about an oblong pine box that is kept in the state room of an old school acquaintance, Cornelius Wyatt. In the course of the story, the narrator uses deductive processes to arrive at the conclusion that Wyatt, an artist, is smuggling to New York a copy of Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper” done by a famous Florentine painter.

When a storm threatens to sink the ship, Wyatt ties himself to the mysterious box and, to the horror of the survivors, sinks into the sea with it. Not until a month after the event does the narrator learn that the box contained Wyatt’s wife embalmed in salt. Although earlier in the story the narrator prided himself on his superior acumen in guessing that the box contained a painting, at the conclusion he admits that his mistakes were the result of both his carelessness and his impulsiveness. The persistent deductive efforts of the narrator to explain the mystery of the oblong box, combined with the sense of horror that arises from the image of the

artist’s plunging to his death with the corpse of his beautiful young wife, qualifies this story, although a minor tale in the Poe canon, as a unique combination of the gothic and the ratiocinative.

“THOU ART THE MAN”

“Thou Art the Man,” although often characterized as a satire of small-town life and manners, is also an interesting but minor contribution to the genre. The story is told in an ironic tone by a narrator who proposes to account for the disappearance of Mr. Barnabus Shuttleworthy, one of the town’s wealthiest and most respected citizens. When Shuttleworthy’s nephew is accused of murdering his uncle, Charley Goodfellow, a close friend of Shuttleworthy, makes every effort to defend the young man. Every word he utters to exalt and support the suspected nephew, however, serves only to deepen the townspeople’s suspicion of him.

Throughout the story, Goodfellow is referred to as “Old Charley” and is praised as a man who is generous, open, frank, and honest. At the story’s conclusion, he receives a huge box supposedly containing wine promised him by the murdered man before his death. When the box is opened, however, the partially decomposed corpse of Shuttleworthy sits up in the box, points his finger at Goodfellow, and says, “Thou art the man!” Goodfellow, not surprisingly, confesses to the murder.

Although the basic ironies of Charley’s not being such a “good fellow” after all and of his efforts to have the nephew convicted even as he pretended to have him exonerated are central to the story’s plot, the final irony focuses on the means by which Goodfellow is made to confess. It is Goodfellow’s frankness and honesty that causes the narrator to distrust him from the beginning and thus find the corpse, stick a piece of whale bone down its throat to cause it to sit up in the box, and use ventriloquism to make it seem as if the corpse utters the words of the title. The tale introduces such typical detective-story conventions as the creation of false clues by the criminal and the discovery of the criminal as the least likely suspect.

“THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE”

It is in the C. Auguste Dupin stories, however, that Poe develops most of the conventions of the detective

story, devices that have been used by other writers ever since. The first of the three stories, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” is the most popular because it combines horrifying, seemingly inexplicable events with astonishing feats of deductive reasoning. The narrator, the forerunner of Dr. Watson of the Sherlock Holmes stories, meets Dupin in this story and very early recognizes that he has a double personality, for he is both wildly imaginative and coldly analytical. The reader’s first encounter with Dupin’s deductive ability takes place even before the murders occur, when he seems to read his companion’s mind by responding to something that the narrator had only been thinking. When Dupin explains the elaborate method by which he followed the narrator’s thought processes by noticing

small details and associating them, the reader has the beginning of a long history of fictional detectives taking great pleasure in recounting the means by which they solved a mystery.

Dupin’s knowledge of the brutal murder of a mother and daughter on the Rue Morgue is acquired by the same means that any ordinary citizen might learn of a murder—the newspapers. As was to become common in the amateur-sleuth genre, Dupin scorns the methods of the professional investigators as being insufficient. He argues that the police find the mystery insoluble for the very reason that it should be regarded as easy to solve, that is, its bizarre nature; thus, the facility with which Dupin solves the case is in direct proportion to its apparent insolubility by the police.



This first illustration of Auguste Dupin appeared in an English edition of Edgar Allan Poe’s works published in London in 1851. Here, Dupin listens to the prefect of police explaining the case of the missing Marie Rogêt.

The heart of the story focuses on Dupin's extended explanation of how he solved the crime rather than on the action of the crime itself. The points about the murder that stump the police—the contradiction of several neighbors who describe hearing a voice in several foreign languages, and the fact that there seems to be no possible means of entering or exiting the room where the murders took place—actually enable Dupin to master the case. He accounts for the foreign-sounding voice by deducing that the criminal must have been an animal; he explains the second point by following a mode of reasoning based on a process of elimination to determine that apparent impossibilities are in fact possible. When Dupin reveals that an escaped orangutan did the killing, the Paris prefect of police complains that Dupin should mind his own business. Dupin is nevertheless content to have beaten the prefect in his own realm; descendants of Dupin have been beating police inspectors ever since.

“THE MYSTERY OF MARIE ROGÊT”

“The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” although it also focuses on Dupin's solving of a crime primarily from newspaper reports, is actually based on the murder of a young girl, Mary Cecilia Rogers, near New York City. Because the crime had not been solved when Poe wrote the story, he made use of the facts of the case to tell a story of the murder of a young Parisian girl, Marie Rogêt, as a means of demonstrating his superior deductive ability.

The story ostensibly begins two years after the events of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” when the prefect of police, having failed to solve the Marie Rogêt case himself, worries about his reputation and asks Dupin for help. Dupin's method is that of the classic armchair detective; he gathers all the copies of the newspapers that have accounts of the crime and sets about methodically examining each one. He declares the case more intricate than that of the Rue Morgue because, ironically, it seems so simple.

One of the elements of the story that makes it less popular than the other two Dupin tales is the extensive analysis of the newspaper articles in which Dupin engages—an analysis that makes the story read more like an article critical of newspaper techniques than a narrative story. In fact, what makes Poe able to propose a

solution to the crime is not so much his knowledge of crime as his knowledge of the conventions of newspaper writing. In a similar manner, it was his knowledge of the conventions of novel writing that made it possible for him to deduce the correct conclusion of Charles Dickens's novel *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of '80* (1841) the previous year when he had read only one or two of the first installments.

Another aspect of “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” that reflects Dupin's deductive genius and that has been used by subsequent detective writers is his conviction that the usual error of the police is to pay too much attention to the immediate events while ignoring the peripheral evidence. Both experience and true philosophy, says Dupin, show that truth arises more often from the seemingly irrelevant than from the so-called strictly relevant. By this means, Dupin eliminates the various hypotheses for the crime proposed by the newspapers and proposes his own hypothesis, which is confirmed by the confession of the murderer.

Although “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” contains some of the primary conventions that find their way into later detective stories, it is the least popular of the Dupin narratives not only because it contains much reasoning and exposition and very little narrative but also because it is so long and convoluted. Of the many experts of detective fiction who have commented on Poe's contribution to the genre, only Dorothy L. Sayers has praised “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” calling it a story especially for connoisseurs, a serious intellectual exercise rather than a sensational thriller such as “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.”

“THE PURLOINED LETTER”

Professional literary critics, however, if not professional detective writers, have singled out “The Purloined Letter” as the most brilliant of Poe's ratiocinative works. This time, the crime is much more subtle than murder, for it focuses on political intrigue and manipulation. Although the crime is quite simple—the theft of a letter from an exalted and noble personage—its effects are quite complex. The story depends on several ironies: First, the identity of the criminal is known, for he stole the letter in plain sight of the noble lady; second, the letter is a threat to the lady from whom he stole it only as long as he does nothing with

it; and third, the Paris Police cannot find the letter, even though they use the most sophisticated and exhaustive methods, precisely because, as Dupin deduces, it is in plain sight.

Also distinguishing the story from the other two is Dupin's extended discussion of the important relationship between the seemingly disparate talents of the mathematician and the poet. The minister who has stolen the letter is successful, says Dupin, for he is both a poet and a mathematician. In turn, Dupin's method of discovering the location of the letter is to take on the identity of a poet and mathematician, thus allowing him to identify with the mind of the criminal. The method follows the same principle used by a young boy Dupin knows of who is an expert at the game of "even and odd," a variation of the old game of holding an object behind one's back and asking someone to guess which hand holds the prize. The boy always wins, not because he is a good guesser but because he fashions the expression on his face to match the face of the one holding the object and then tries to see which thoughts correspond with that expression.

The various techniques of deduction developed by Poe in the Dupin stories are so familiar to readers of detective fiction that to read his stories is to be reminded that very few essential conventions of the genre have been invented since Poe. Indeed, with the publication of the Dupin stories, Poe truly can be said to have single-handedly brought the detective story into being.

Charles E. May

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, 1840; *The Prose Romances of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1843; *Tales*, 1845; *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1976 (Stuart Levine and Susan Levine, editors)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, 1838

PLAY: *Politian*, pb. 1835-1836

POETRY: *Tamerlane, and Other Poems*, 1827; *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*, 1829; *Poems*, 1831; *The Raven, and Other Poems*, 1845; *Eureka: A*

Prose Poem, 1848; *Poe: Complete Poems*, 1959; *Poems*, 1969 (volume 1 of *Collected Works*)

NONFICTION: *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1948; *Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1965; *Essays and Reviews*, 1984

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1902 (17 volumes); *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1969, 1978 (3 volumes)

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May, Charles E. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction*. Boston: Twayne, 1991. An introduction to

Poe's short stories that attempts to place them within the nineteenth century short narrative tradition and within the context of Poe's aesthetic theory. Suggests Poe's contributions to the short story in terms of his development of detective fiction, fantasy, satire, and self-reflexivity.

Peeples, Scott. *Edgar Allan Poe Revisited*. New York: Twayne, 1998. An introductory critical study of selected works and a short biography of Poe. Includes bibliographical references and index.

Perry, Dennis R. *Hitchcock and Poe: The Legacy of Delight and Terror*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2003. This work discusses the thematic and stylistic parallels between Alfred Hitchcock's film and Poe's

writing, both in general terms and through comparisons of specific works. Bibliographic references and index.

Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998. A comprehensive biography of Poe, with a new introduction by Shawn Rosenheim, is devoted to fact and describes how Poe's life and legend were misconstrued by other biographers.

Sova, Dawn B. *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File, 2001. A thorough guide to the life and works of Poe.

JOYCE PORTER

Born: Marple, Cheshire, England; March 28, 1924

Died: On a flight to England from China; December 9, 1990

Types of plot: Police procedural; espionage; thriller; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Wilfred Dover, 1964-1980

Eddie Brown, 1966-1971

Constance Morrison-Burke, 1970-1979

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

WILFRED DOVER, detective chief inspector of Scotland Yard, is a grotesque caricature of the yard stereotype. This inept detective is obese, stupid, and petty.

SERGEANT MACGREGOR, dapper and competent, serves as Dover's foil.

EDMUND "EDDIE" BROWN, a secret agent, is as much a threat to the British intelligence service as he is to Soviet intelligence. Ineffectual and unattractive, his efforts to penetrate Soviet security are laughable at best.

THE HONOURABLE CONSTANCE ETHEL MORRISON-BURKE, or the HON-CON, a private investigator, became a detective because nothing else satisfied her desire to be active. As a gentlewoman of independent

means, the Hon-Con has the time and money to pursue her hobby. Her tactlessness and incompetence, however, short-circuit her achievements.

MISS JONES is the Hon-Con's patient and long-suffering confidant.

CONTRIBUTION

Joyce Porter's ten Inspector Dover novels, four Eddie Brown novels, and five Morrison-Burke novels lampoon the genres of police procedural, international thriller, and private investigator. Although the books generally follow the rules of each genre, the main character in each series is a spoof of the usual hero. Porter delighted in ridiculing pompous human behavior, and she excelled at poking fun at various elements in society as well as at august public institutions. Porter's novels utilize straightforward crime/spy stories as their backdrop, but her humorous jabs at officiousness provide the reader with an alternative to the standard offerings of the genres.

BIOGRAPHY

Joyce Porter was born on March 28, 1924, in Marple, Cheshire, England, the daughter of Joshua Porter and Bessie Evelyn (née Earlam) Porter. She was edu-

cated at the High School for Girls in Macclesfield, Cheshire, and at King's College in London, where she received a bachelor of arts degree with honors in 1945. She served in the Women's Royal Air Force between 1949 and 1963, attaining the rank of flight officer. While in the air force, Porter learned Russian, as she had a special interest in Russian history, especially the czarist period. She toured the Soviet Union by car in 1964.

In 1963, Porter became a full-time writer. She once said that she "began writing in order to be able to retire from [the] Air Force," and that she continued to write "because it is easier than work." She later commented that she tried "to write books that will while away a couple of hours for the reader—and make as much money as possible for me." In her writing, she used outrageously humorous "heroes" who are the very antithesis of the protagonists of such crime and mystery novelists as Frederick Forsyth, Ian Fleming, or P. D. James. Porter's series characters are all unimaginative, bumbling, and unattractive people who, if they solve their cases, do so despite themselves, not because of their insight and abilities. In addition to her novels, Porter wrote many short stories for magazines such as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. She died on a flight home from China in 1990.

ANALYSIS

The novels of Joyce Porter are humorous jabs at three of the most popular genres of modern fiction: the police procedural, the international thriller, and the private-investigator novel. In her work, the common thread is human behavior reduced to absurdity. Her heroes are ludicrous antitheses of what the reader has come to expect in these genres.

Porter's most infamous character is Wilfred Dover, detective chief inspector of Scotland Yard. Dover is described in the following fashion:

His six-foot-two frame was draped, none too elegantly, in seventeen and a quarter stone [241 pounds] of flabby flesh. . . . Round his thick, policeman's neck . . . a thin, cheap tie was knotted under the lowest of his double chins. . . . Dover's face . . . was large and flabby like the rest of him. Only the details—nose, mouth and eyes—

seemed out of scale. They were so tiny as to be almost lost in the wide expanse of flesh. . . . His hair was thin and black and he had a small black moustache of the type that the late Adolf Hitler did so much to depopularize.

DOVER THREE

In *Dover Three* (1965), when it is suggested that Dover be given a case, the assistant commissioner of New Scotland Yard says, "I thought I told you to get rid of that fat, stupid swine months ago!" "I've tried, sir," replies his subordinate unhappily, "but nobody'll have him." With a primary character such as this, the reader knows immediately that Scotland Yard's reputation is in dire straits.

Dover's career, as chronicled by Porter, is always set in wretched locales far from metropolitan London. New Scotland Yard wants Dover as far away as he can be sent. He is assigned missions no one else would want. Once on the scene of the crime, Dover invariably finds miserable weather and terrain. When unattractive characters and bizarre crimes are added to the plot, the reader is quite aware that little good can possibly come from such a situation. Throughout the series, Dover's assistant, Sergeant MacGregor, provides the obligatory straight character, but MacGregor's solid procedures are always sacrificed to Dover's animalistic behavior. Inevitably, Dover's bowels or personal pique interrupt reasoned efforts to solve crimes. While on a case, Dover meets characters who are driven by the same passions that drive him—greed, petty revenge, or hatred. He does usually solve his cases, though in unorthodox and malevolent fashion.

Porter frequently twists her endings to absurd degrees. Dover may solve a case but ignore justice, for example, because of his prejudices. In *Dover Three*, while far from home, Dover dawdles in solving a case until after his hated sister-in-law has finished her visit to his home, for he knows that an early resolution to the crime would result in another confrontation at home. He selects as his culprit an aggressive upper-class woman to whom he has taken an immediate and intense dislike. During his train trip home, the real culprit confesses to Dover and then commits suicide. Dover chooses to ignore the confession. In *Dover Goes to*

Pott (1968), Dover decides that an individual whom he despises must be the guilty party. As events transpire, the suspect is indeed found to be guilty, but Dover's handling of the case virtually ensures his going free.

DOVER ONE

Most of the characters in Porter's novels are easy-to-dislike caricatures. In *Dover One* (1964), it is not only the detective who is obnoxious but also the victim, whom the reader meets only through the descriptions by other characters in the novel. A less likable victim cannot be imagined: fat, ugly, promiscuous, stupid, and an extortionist. Yet Dover solves the case, in his usual unorthodox fashion. In a typical Porter twist, the victim is discovered dismembered in the murderer's freezer. In this first novel, Dover, through a mighty leap of the imagination, chooses a suspect who is actually guilty. Other Dover novels have the detective confronted with bizarre murder and mutilation cases; a simple, uncomplicated murder is not for Dover. Porter indulges herself in long digressions on Dover's unhygienic habits and internal disorders, evidently preferring such comic essays to tightly reasoned unravelings of crimes.

NEITHER A CANDLE NOR A PITCHFORK

Porter's other characters, while not as well known, are just as ludicrous. Secret Agent Eddie Brown is sent by the British intelligence service on assignments to dangerous foreign locales, but he is a foil and a dupe rather than a superspy. One comic scene in *Neither a Candle Nor a Pitchfork* (1969) has Eddie in female disguise warding off amorous advances by a lesbian Russian official. Later, Eddie's attempt to attack a prison—a scene that might have constituted the climax of a conventional spy novel—degenerates into a pathetic joke. Indeed, the Eddie Brown novels leave the reader believing that Soviet officialdom is roughly equivalent to English officialdom. Porter hopes that the reader will ask, if that be true, how many other parallels might be drawn.

Heroines are also given an opportunity to perform in Porter's novels. Her third series character is the Honourable Constance Ethel Morrison-Burke (the Hon-Con), a gentlewoman of independent means. She becomes a detective because she is bored, her boundless energy unsatisfied by "usual" feminine activities such as calisthenics. The Hon-Con is tactless, shortsighted,

and quite naïve. Although she is frequently foolish, she is shown to be not quite the fool that most people believe her to be. Her shortcomings, however, do leave her frustrated and unsatisfied.

Porter's statement that her work is designed to "while away a couple of hours for the reader" certainly defines her style. She did not intend for her work to be incisive or insightful. Rather, she made use of the simplest form of satire: caricature. She was not interested in character development, and her characters are little more than line drawings (fat and bumbling though they may be). Her plots are also simple, and the humor usually focuses on the overtly crude and grotesque rather than on subtleties. Thus, her work is ideal for those who wish to escape for a few hours. In this regard, Porter accomplished her stated purpose.

William S. Brockington, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR WILFRED DOVER SERIES: *Dover One*, 1964; *Dover Three*, 1965; *Dover Two*, 1965; *Dover and the Unkindest Cut of All*, 1967; *Dover Goes to Pott*, 1968; *Dover Strikes Again*, 1970; *It's Murder with Dover*, 1973; *Dover and the Claret Tappers*, 1977; *Dead Easy for Dover*, 1978; *Dover Beats the Band*, 1980

EDDIE BROWN SERIES: *Sour Cream with Everything*, 1966; *The Chinks in the Curtain*, 1967; *Neither a Candle Nor a Pitchfork*, 1969; *Only with a Barge-pole*, 1971

CONSTANCE MORRISON-BURKE SERIES: *Rather a Common Sort of Crime*, 1970; *A Meddler and Her Murder*, 1972; *The Package Included Murder*, 1975; *Who the Heck Is Sylvia*, 1977; *The Cart Before the Crime*, 1979

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NOVEL: *No Easy Answers*, 1987

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MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

Born: Romines Mills, West Virginia; April 19, 1869

Died: Clarksburg, West Virginia; June 23, 1930

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; historical; espionage; police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Randolph Mason, 1896-1908

Uncle Abner, 1911-1918

M. Jonquelle, 1913-1923

Sir Henry Marquis, 1915-1920

Captain Walker, 1920-1929

Colonel Braxton, 1926-1930

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

RANDOLPH MASON is an aristocratic New York City lawyer and omniscient, shadowy force. A recluse, he serves only clients who come to him as a last resort; they receive counsel that, taking advantage of legal loopholes, urges them to unethical if not criminal acts. Later, mellowing, he restricts his practice to unfortunate victims of the legal system.

UNCLE ABNER, a cattle rancher and outdoorsman on the old Virginia frontier, is a middle-aged, fatherly protector and wise philosopher. He involves himself directly in the resolution of rural crime and mystery. His analyses rest solidly on superior ratiocination, biblical ethics, and the law and spirit of the American constitution.

M. JONQUELLE, the préfet of police in Paris and an international cop, travels to London, Washington, D.C., and other locales to uncover acts of crime or espionage that imperil international security.

SIR HENRY MARQUIS, the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, is a renowned criminologist and master of abstruse knowledge. He wins battles of wits with archcriminals whose espionage or criminal activities might otherwise have international consequences.

CAPTAIN WALKER, the chief of the United States Secret Service, as a youth pursued a life of crime. As chief, he records or resolves cases renowned because of the bizarre, unforeseen ends to which evil comes.

COLONEL BRAXTON is a mature Virginia lawyer whose country-town wisdom, gained from life and knowledge of the law, leads him successfully through courthouse dramas that unravel criminal acts.

CONTRIBUTION

Melville Davisson Post's crime and detective fiction followed basic conventions of the puzzle mystery. Like Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Post's series characters generally repudiate tough-guy violence in favor of detached, superior rationality to pierce the mystery and restore social order. Post wrote short fiction for a variety of popular magazines. Although often using the inflated language of melodrama, his stories nevertheless evoked horror and suspense and convincingly used surprise endings. Through the use of series characters, he sought to give novelistic continuity and organic form to published collections of stories, which first appeared separately in family magazines; most of his fiction underwent that transformation. A superlative entertainer, Post would have been quite comfortable writing scripts for presentation on radio, film, or television.

BIOGRAPHY

Melville Davisson Post was born on April 19, 1869, into a prosperous landed family that took pride in its participation in the American Revolution and the development of West Virginia. Post grew up knowing horses, cattle, the outdoors, frontier character, folklore, and traditional values. This knowledge provided him with literary matter and the youth's perspective he used in many of his narratives.

After completing a law degree at the University of West Virginia in 1892, Post started a short-lived career in law and politics; this activity gave him the knowledge of legal subtleties on which his first series depended. The success of his series encouraged him to move away from the law and to continue the development of series detective stories. He developed six different series protagonists between 1896 and 1930; during that time, his fiction appeared in such magazines as *Pearson's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Metro-politan*, *Hearst's*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*.

Post and his wife, Ann, lived fashionably, enjoying the activities of resort life at Bar Harbor and Newport and their frequent European travels. Their lifestyle engendered the international perspective and flair for the exotic that appears in the Sir Henry Marquis and M. Jonquelle series, as well as the nostalgic return to the past of the West Virginia hill country in the Uncle Abner and Colonel Braxton series.

World War I saw the Posts return to live outside Clarksburg, West Virginia, in a house called The Chalet, built in the design of Swiss Alpine houses and furnished with pieces from their European travels. There, Post maintained a polo ground and ponies. After the death of his wife in 1919, Post traveled less but continued to write fiction. He died in Clarksburg on June 23, 1930, from injuries sustained in a fall from a horse.

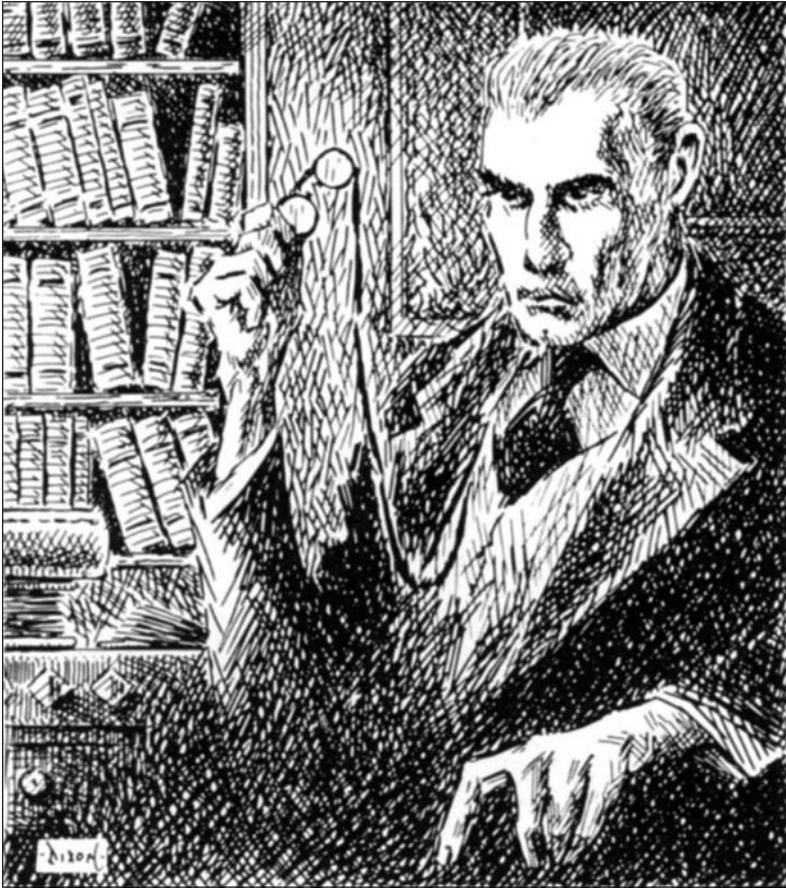
ANALYSIS

In the introduction to his first series collection, *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason* (1896), Melville Davisson Post established his fiction's fundamental characteristics. There he pointed out the writer's obligation as an entertaining "magician" to relieve the audience from the tedium of the commonplace. Post saw little contradiction between that charge and adherence to the puzzle-mystery convention as established by Poe and Doyle, for the puzzle is the universal paradigm of the human encounter with experience: "The human mind loves best the problem." Every new generation has a fresh experience of the puzzle of meaning lying beneath the surface.

Post found novelty variously. He adapted puzzle-mystery conventions to the new generation of American readers who, as he did, remembered the agrarian past and looked forward to the future. Often, the narrative point of view belongs to an adolescent male who seeks meaning by observing the mature male (the detective); Post's fiction often synthesizes the initiation story and the mystery plot. The author also sought novelty by finding ever more ingenious ways to move toward unsuspected and satisfying resolutions.

THE STRANGE SCHEMES OF RANDOLPH MASON

In *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*, Post collected stories marked by novel changes on the



Post's unethical attorney, Randolph Mason.

puzzle-mystery conventions. The series character lives an aristocratic, solitary existence in private apartments, tended only by his man-of-all-work, Courtland Parks. Although Mason's grossness of feature may suggest (to those who do not know him) craftiness, cynicism, and even brutality, seen truly, it is a face of "unusual power"—of mind, not body, for Mason suffers from an enervating illness that makes him unfit for ordinary life and forces his withdrawal from the world (as Poe's Dupin and Doyle's Holmes are monkish intellectuals). Yet as a lawyer of extraordinary intellect, Mason's shadowy influence on New York City society is felt. All Post's series detectives are variations on such characters of remote mental power.

Further reflecting convention, Mason's relation to his man Parks is like that between the rationally superior detective and his inferior confidant. Parks becomes

the physical agency of Mason's mind; he communicates the lawyer's advice to clients and checks on the progress of events. Unlike Dupin's nameless confidant and Holmes's Watson, however, Parks is not of the same social class as Mason. Nor does he engage in familiarities with his master as Bunter does with Lord Peter Wimsey in Dorothy L. Sayers's detective fiction. Finally, he is not in the muscular mode of Rex Stout's Archie Goodwin, who with detective Nero Wolfe is a later variation on the mind-body division of labor.

Beyond these developments, Post served the principle of variety by introducing a shocking deviation in *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*, for his Mason becomes the mastermind behind shady if not criminal conspiracies. As a preface, each story cites case law, with brief explanations, showing how justice may be evaded, and the stories

serve as dramatic illustrations. The author's justification for writing stories that seem to condone corruption of the law is artful and complex as well as (one suspects) an unsubtle defense of sensationalism. Post's own legal experience had shown him that moral law and statute law were not synonymous and that the war of life generated battles in the courts between equally bad men who corrupted the law in self-interest. It is therefore the writer's obligation, according to Post, to warn "the friends of law and order" through such instructive narratives as those in *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*.

THE MAN OF LAST RESORT AND THE CORRECTOR OF DESTINIES

Despite Post's stated purpose, the Mason stories fail to rise above the flatness of stereotype and the turpitude of melodrama. The second Mason collection,

The Man of Last Resort: Or, The Clients of Randolph Mason (1897), continues in much the same vein as *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*. In *The Corrector of Destinies* (1908), Post rehabilitates Mason. He recovers “from his attack of acute mania” and now works “to find within the law a means by which to even up and correct every manner of injustice.” Despite their weaknesses, the stories gained an audience for Post, encouraging him to write full time. The stories possess strengths: the persuasive evocation of terror and suspense and an economy of style that moves plot toward direct resolutions.

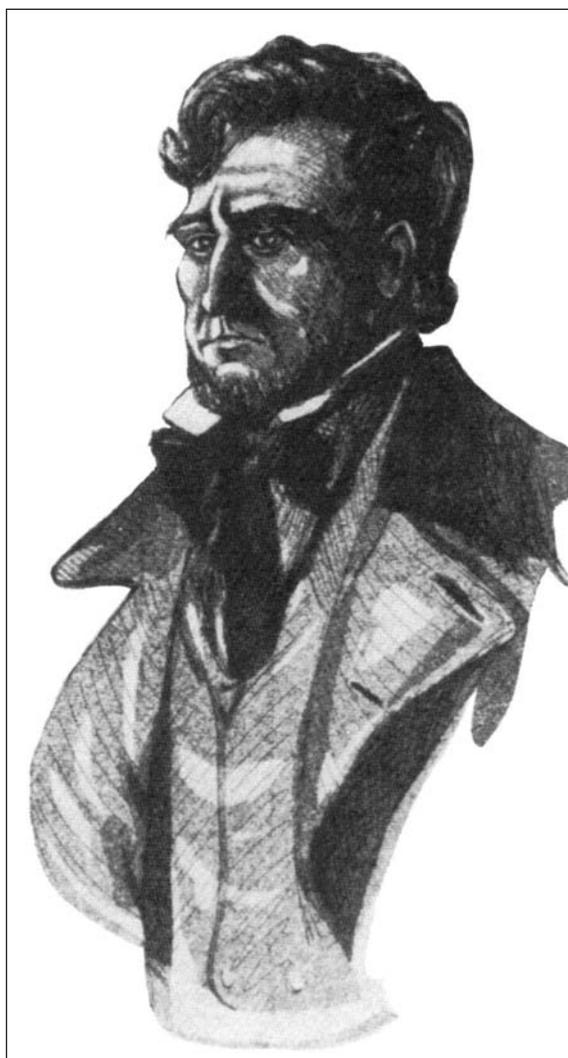
Ten years separated the last Mason collection and the first Uncle Abner collection. During the interim, Post wrote two novels about the West Virginia hill country that do not belong to the detective genre, *Dwellers in the Hills* (1901) and *The Gilded Chair* (1910); a novel of mystery fantasy, *The Nameless Thing* (1912); and short detective fiction for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Metropolitan*, *Pictorial Review*, *Illustrated Sunday Magazine*, and *Redbook*. These stories were later collected and published as *Uncle Abner*; *Master of Mysteries* (1918).

UNCLE ABNER, MASTER OF MYSTERIES

As Charles A. Norton has shown, *Uncle Abner*; *Master of Mysteries* received critical praise on its publication and has continued to do so. The series represents Post’s most successful writing in the detective-fiction genre, for it unites themes and characters about which the writer felt deeply with tightly controlled and persuasive narrative techniques. Separately, the stories possess the inner vitality of this organic unity; together, they achieve the effect of novelistic continuity—the effect for which Post always worked when he collected his various short-fiction series into single volumes. Nowhere did he achieve that end so well as in *Uncle Abner*; *Master of Mysteries*.

A single narrative point of view helps unify the stories. The adolescent Martin observes and reports on the events in which his Uncle Abner (a self-designated detective) and his confidant Squire Randolph are central. In the boys’ adventure novel *Dwellers in the Hills*, Post had developed a similar character in its protagonist, Quiller. Because his older brother is bedridden, the child Quiller is given the task of herding cattle to

market to fulfill a contract, despite the forestalling violence of rival herdsmen. Quiller is knowledgeable about horses and cattle but feels threatened by the opaqueness of the natural and human worlds. He is attracted to the perception of physical nature as mystery (Post tellingly introduces the folklore of powerful creatures who control the forests and rivers) and is kept from knowledge of human nature because the adults of his world do not explain the tensions lying beneath the surface (rivalries between and within families over wealth, passion, and violence; the weakness of law on the frontier; the secrets of human sexuality).



Melville Davison Post's cattle rancher and amateur detective Uncle Abner of the antebellum South.

Like Quiller, young Martin of *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries* seeks understanding and lives in an anxiety born of ignorance. The physical positions Post assigns to Martin further suggest the character's fear and longing: He peeps from lofts and through windows and overhears from porches and behind hedgerows the deeds and words of Uncle Abner.

Although his character may derive from the superdetective of remote intellectual superiority, Abner's fullness of character comes from the way in which Post defines the cattleman-detective in the complex matrix of his culture. Abner believes in personal courage, the demystification of experience through common sense, the providential ordering of history, adherence to the Judeo-Christian ethic, and the progress of the American system toward justice. Post's success in showing rather than telling about Uncle Abner is largely a product of the narrative viewpoint; the boy Martin looks, listens, and records but does not explain beyond his understanding.

Yet the stories also benefit richly from the control of style. The writing is simple, direct, without Post's habitual excess of melodramatic language. Nevertheless, it is poetic and redolent of atmosphere, the product of complexly related, antithetical images: supernaturalism and naturalism, mystery and knowledge, terror and safety. The narratives move surely, economically from the firmly established snarl of complication to the snap of release.

The relation of ideal to real justice seems central to the detective's work. In the service of the ideal, he may sacrifice the real, as in "An Act of God," which tells of the revenge exacted by a circus performer whose daughter has been impregnated and abandoned by a cattle shipper named Blackford. The circus artist carries out Blackford's murder, making it seem accidental, and it is legally adjudged "an act of God." Seeing through the ruse, Uncle Abner confronts the performer and analyzes the crime. In view of Blackford's evil and the fact that the performer's granddaughter would be left alone and impoverished if he were charged, however, Abner chooses to leave the case in God's hands.

Nevertheless, Abner always works to unite the ideal with the real, as "The Wrong Hand" shows. Martin has been sent on an errand from which he is returning late

because his horse has broken a shoe. He meets Uncle Abner, on his own private mission; because of the deepening winter night and threatening weather, Abner takes his nephew in charge. They enter the house of a man named Gaul, widely known because of his hunchback and bitterness. One wife went mad; another was found by Abner's drovers "on a summer morning[,] swinging to the limb of a great elm that stood before the door, a bridle-rein knotted around her throat and her bare feet scattering the yellow pollen of the ragweed."

Post shades in details masterfully. The unnatural Gaul sits before the fireplace with a cane that has a gold piece in its head so his "fingers might be always on the thing he loved." The grotesque recognizes Martin's fear but reassures him by asserting that he has no wish to frighten children, that it was "Abner's God" who twisted his body. Gaul and Abner talk about the marketing of cattle, a seemingly ordinary conversation, but one in which the hunchback's hate, self-pity, paranoia, and greed are revealed. The storm grows more severe, the rain turning into "a kind of sleet that rattled on the window-glass like shot," while the wind "whooped and spat into the chimney." When the conversation turns to religion and Gaul begins to blaspheme, Abner tells Martin that he must go to sleep. The boy is wrapped in his uncle's greatcoat; feigning obedience, Martin watches and listens from his hiding place. He senses his uncle's grave intention.

A terrible death has recently occurred in Gaul's house. His brother was found dead, having apparently killed himself with a knife. Gaul, rather than the victim's own children, has received the inheritance. Having examined the body of evidence the judicial committee used to make the finding of suicide, Abner knows that Gaul has murdered his own brother.

In the subtle interrogation Martin overhears from the greatcoat, Uncle Abner seeks a confession from Gaul through innocent, circular, philosophical questioning. It is the pattern Post assigns to Uncle Abner in other of the series stories. Abner intends to right Gaul's injustice to his brother's children as well as see that the man is charged with murder. Outlining the clues, he comes at last to the fact that a bloody handprint on the dead brother's right hand came from a right hand, a clear impossibility, unless a murderous

second party was present. His resistance broken, Gaul confesses to the murder and agrees to sign over the deed of inheritance to his brother's children. At dawn, uncle and nephew ride away,

with the hunchback's promise that he would come that afternoon before a notary and acknowledge what he had signed; but he did not come—neither on that day nor on any day after that.

When Abner went to fetch him he found him swinging from his elm tree.

LATER WORKS

In some individual stories that followed this series, Post achieved again the superiority of the Uncle Abner stories, though never with consistency. One reason for his lack is that he did not often work again with the synthesis of boy's adventure, detective story, and regional history that sparked *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries*. In the magazine fiction and collections that followed, the author introduced four series detectives (Sir Henry Marquis, M. Jonquelle, Captain Walker, and Colonel Braxton) and continued to enjoy a success based on his control of suspenseful narrative. Yet all the detectives are really only one character: the intelligent, remote, resourceful, highly placed police official. The arena is national and international life. The detective works behind the scenes through disguise and secret conspiracy. In "The House by the Loch" (a Sir Henry Marquis story), Post achieved the richness of the Uncle Abner stories, largely by resorting again to a child narrator. In *Walker of the Secret Service* (1924), the opening six stories return to the point of view of a boy, a naïve narrator who recounts his abortive criminal career under the guidance of two failed train robbers. Seeking unity, Post makes an improbable biographical connection between the boy of these stories and the Captain Walker of the remainder. Despite such lapses, however, as an entertainer, Post rarely failed.

Bill Brubaker

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

RANDOLPH MASON SERIES: *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*, 1896; *The Man of Last Resort: Or, The Clients of Randolph Mason*, 1897; *The Corruptor of Destinies*, 1908

UNCLE ABNER SERIES: *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries*, 1918; *The Methods of Uncle Abner*, 1974

M. JONQUELLE SERIES: *Monsieur Jonquelle, Prefect of Police of Paris*, 1923

SIR HENRY MARQUIS SERIES: *The Sleuth of St. James's Square*, 1920; *The Bradmoor Murders*, 1929 (also known as *The Garden in Asia*)

CAPTAIN WALKER SERIES: *Walker of the Secret Service*, 1924

COLONEL BRAXTON SERIES: *The Silent Witness*, 1930

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Nameless Thing*, 1912; *The Mystery at the Blue Villa*, 1919; *The Revolt of the Birds*, 1927

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Gilded Chair*, 1910; *The Mountain School-Teacher*, 1922

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NONFICTION: *The Man Hunters*, 1926

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JEAN POTTS

Born: St. Paul, Nebraska; November 17, 1910

Died: New York, New York; November 10, 1999

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Between 1943 and 1975, Jean Potts published fifteen novels, fourteen of which are within the realm of mystery and detective fiction. Few of them even remotely resemble the classic whodunit. Potts started writing crime novels at a time when the general style of the genre was undergoing a transformation toward a more realistic approach. Instead of dealing with police procedure, courtroom trials, or private investigators, Potts found her brand of realism by focusing on a close-knit band of characters face to face with a murder—real, imaginary, or impending.

Curiously, the physical act of the crime itself and how it is committed is incidental to almost all the plots. More than one "mystery" unfolds without a murdered victim. Vital to the plots, on the other hand, is the psychology of the characters and their interactions. There is no omniscient narrator, no one point of view, no hero or villain. Several points of view, each one justifiable, are presented simultaneously. The denouement is almost a studied anticlimax. Any of the characters may end up guilty without eliciting the reader's surprise. In Potts's novels, both judgment and punishment come from within the guilty; the judicial system is given no role.

BIOGRAPHY

Jean Catherine Potts spent most of her early life in her home state, completing her education at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, then starting her career as a journalist in Nebraska. The lure of freelance writing took her to New York, where she made her home. Little of her private life is known.

Potts's first novel was *Someone to Remember*, published by Westminster Press in Philadelphia in 1943. It was eleven years before her second novel, *Go, Lovely Rose* (1954), was published. A crime novel, *Go, Lovely Rose* won for her the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1955. After 1954 she published a novel every year until 1958. Her mystery-writing career of twenty-one years yielded fourteen novels and three short stories published in magazines.

In June, 1988, admitting that her literary career "seems to have run out of steam," Potts said that her only output after 1975 was two stories in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*—"In the Absence of Proof" in July, 1985, and "Two on the Isle" in January, 1987. An English firm, Chivers Press, accepted two of her books, *Go, Lovely Rose* and *Home Is the Prisoner* (1960), for reprinting in 1988. Potts died in New York in 1999.

ANALYSIS

Go, Lovely Rose started Jean Potts's career as a mystery writer with an Edgar Allan Poe Award. It is, perhaps, the only novel in her corpus that has all the

ingredients of a conventional whodunit. A murder begins the plot, a range of suspects are introduced and brought together, and a police officer and detective are on the chase, taking statements, asking questions, and “going by the book of police procedure.” Still, even in this first effort, almost all the ideas and innovations that made her contribution to the genre so distinctive are present in embryonic form.

THE DIEHARD

Straying more than slightly from the rules in that first crime novel, Potts achieved that special voice writers strive for surprisingly early in her career. By the time her third crime novel, *The Diehard* (1956)—a murder mystery without an actual murder—was published, she had discarded even the pretense of following the prescribed rules that made a mystery novel in the eyes of purist readers and writers. The question in *The Diehard* is not who did it but who could have done it—and nobody does it. Thus, *The Diehard* constitutes an outworking of one of Potts’s theories on her genre: that the thought is the crime and that a murder committed in the mind alone often has consequences as serious as those of an actual killing. The intention or even the desire to do away with someone makes a character as culpable as the hand that fires a gun.

Like *The Diehard*, *Home Is the Prisoner* pursues another angle of the idea of a mystery without a murder to precipitate it. *The Man with the Cane* (1957) differs from the concept in a minor way: The victim is almost a total stranger who is introduced to most of the characters only after his murder. *The Evil Wish* (1962), another variation on the same theme, develops a concept that was casually introduced in *Go, Lovely Rose* and *The Diehard*—what Potts christened a “left-over murder.”

Other devices and motifs link the novels written between 1965 and 1975. Career connections replace the lifelong small-town bonds of the earlier plots. Anonymous parts of New York City or a strange resort environment become the backdrop, replacing the familiarity of a suburban hamlet where everybody knows everybody else. A faceless, impersonal voice of an unnamed detective replaces the identifiable “friendly neighborhood policeman,” though these official characters are equally unimportant to the real working of the plot.

There is murder committed toward the beginning of these later novels, and the murderer is almost invariably a woman with an obsessive, irrational love for her husband (*The Footsteps on the Stairs*, 1966, and *An Affair of the Heart*, 1970) or her son (*The Only Good Secretary*, 1965, and *The Troublemaker*, 1972).

All fourteen novels have some things in common. There is always a small community of people, with each individual inextricably tied to the crime in one way or another, each contributing to and being affected by the psychological anguish caused by the crime (regardless of whether it has been committed), each having to shoulder his or her share of the total guilt even as collectively they piece together fragmentary clues and pronounce judgment on the actual act. In itself, the act is not important, and neither is justice by law. Suicide, insanity, and a total indifference to any punishment the legal system can impose on them are the only way Potts’s criminals can react to the crimes they commit, because justice does not come down on them impersonally: It originates in the crime itself and in the very motive behind it.

Psychologically, the novels become progressively more complicated and introspective in both characterization and action. The private worlds within the minds of the people Potts creates become the real focus of the novels. It is the internal world of a character that causes the normally mundane external world of a community to disintegrate. Shorn of this psychological complexity, her plots would seem bare and inadequate. *Home Is the Prisoner*, for example, is the story of an ex-convict who returns home to avid speculation on the part of the people who have known him all of his life, while in *The Man with the Cane* the corpse of a stranger triggers the curiosity of a normally apathetic community. All physical acts of aggression are either catalyst or solution and fade into inconsequence. Physical violence, if there is any, is restricted to the crime, its gruesome details glossed, and sometimes a suicide in the end (also underplayed and generally out of sight), or as in several novels, a small fistfight at some point.

THE EVIL WISH

Mental violence, on the other hand, abounds, kept a malicious, malevolent secret under the gentlest or the

most sensible exterior. Potts points out, time and again, that even ordinary people with the most uneventful existences are capable of heinous crimes. Doll-like, docile women who chatter away inconsequentially throughout their sheltered lives—Lucy Knapp in *The Evil Wish*, Barbara in *The Man with the Cane*, Thelma Holm in *The Footsteps on the Stairs*—are found to possess hidden reserves of the most uncompromising determination and capacity for cruelty. Lovable, responsible men, pillars of small-town goodness, are driven to murder because of emotional pressure. Everybody, Potts seems to say, every face in the world, can harbor a criminal. Her novels' action and drama stem from the psychological complexities of the minds of her characters, all very human, very flawed, and totally credible. In one of her most intriguing psychological studies, *The Evil Wish*, two sisters wish their father dead and plan his murder meticulously, only to have their plans thwarted but their wish fulfilled when their father, Dr. Knapp, obligingly dies in an accident. The consciences of the sisters are then burdened with a "left-over murder," their guilt growing while the desire to see their plan through is left unsatisfied. They are killers without a crime to justify the guilt they feel, and the mental state resulting from this turmoil destroys their lives and eventually forces them to become each other's murderer.

Although her characters are trapped into facing the consequences they bring on themselves, Potts is not beyond playing occasional psychological games with her readers. Readers of *The Diehard*, for example, find themselves waiting almost impatiently for the unnatural death of Lew Morgan to occur, for they are privy to the information that all but one of the major characters are out to kill him. In the end, Lew dies in an accident caused, ironically, by the only person who wished him alive, and the reader is left burdened with the uncomfortable weight of an impossibly ambiguous truth: No one in the novel kills Lew Morgan, yet everyone does.

This kind of mental realism, this internalized action and characterization, became Potts's hallmark and is perhaps the most important factor in the literary success of her novels, lending them a several-layered, multifaceted psychological depth that is rare in crime fiction. Potts has the brilliant talent of revealing both appearance and reality with simple, economical

strokes. There are no extensive descriptions, explanations, or justifications, only the characters revealed through their own thought processes. There are no "good" or "bad" characters; rather, Potts's protagonists are fully fleshed-out human beings with weaknesses and strengths. Marcia Knapp in *The Evil Wish*, an otherwise intelligent and pragmatic woman, has a tendency toward alcoholism; Judge McVey (*Home Is the Prisoner*), an upright, honest man, is revealed to be a coward; Fern Villard (*The Only Good Secretary*), efficient and charming, is driven by pathological avarice.

Potts's characters indulge in trivial eccentricities, petty secrets and obsessions, gossiping, blackmailing, pathetic attempts to seem younger, lying—behavior that shows them to be less than wholesome but makes them wholly credible. Her novels are full of people who are simultaneously attractive and repulsive. The reader cannot help but understand them, think their thoughts with them, pity and forgive them; nevertheless, an emotional distance is always maintained between reader and character. There is never any question of self-identification or empathy with a Potts character on the part of the reader. Potts achieves this distance simply by presenting several points of view, with different characters picking up the telling of the tale at irregular intervals, sharing their personal points of view, introspections, and interactions. Each character has firm convictions and an individual set of questions and answers. The reader is thus involved with several different opinions and people and is forced to change his own mind several times. Eventually, a process of elimination leaves only two or three central characters whose accounts can be tentatively accepted—a far cry from a consistent, omniscient narrative voice presenting a single, authoritative version of an event.

Though each character in a Jean Potts novel is undeniably an individual, there is a limited range of types to which most of them conform. Her women fall for the most part under three categories. There is the matter-of-fact, likable, do-gooder type with a sensible head on her shoulders—Mary Walsh in *An Affair of the Heart*, Rachel Buckmaster or Myra Graves in *Go, Lovely Rose*, Margaret Robinson in *The Troublemaker*,

and “Hen” in *The Man with the Cane*. Then there are Barbara (*The Man with the Cane*), Lucy Knapp (*The Evil Wish*), and Thelma Holm (*The Footsteps on the Stairs*)—fragile, nervous, sheltered escapists who refuse to face reality and prefer to drown all ugliness in bright chatter. Finally, Potts creates worldlywise career women who can absorb and accept all aspects of life with the indifference that comes with jaded knowledge. Marcia in *The Evil Wish*, Fern in *The Only Good Secretary*, and Enid Baxter in *The Footsteps on the Stairs* can outdrink and outphilander any man.

The men, similarly, could be divided into three classifications, starting with responsible, upright, honest men such as Hugh in *Go, Lovely Rose*, “Mack” in *Home Is the Prisoner*, and Val Bryant in *The Man with the Cane*. Another type would be the charming, arrogant, superficial character who remains likable despite his blatant flaws—Gordon Llewellyn in *The Evil Wish*, Dr. Craig in *Go, Lovely Rose*, Kirk Banning in *An Affair of the Heart*, and Lew Morgan in *The Diehard*. Finally, there is the man who is a failure, despite unusual intelligence, because of a lack of motivation or a fondness for alcohol: Archie O’Brien in *The Only Good Secretary* and Martin Shipley and Vic Holm in *The Footsteps on the Stairs*.

Apart from these identifiable types, Potts liberally peppered her novels with colorful eccentrics such as Gladys Popejoy (*The Only Good Secretary*), who is sure that germs that spread “Diseases” are waiting to catch her unprepared in a bus or at the office, or the homosexual Teddy (*An Affair of the Heart*), who flutters around nervously and cannot resist malicious digs at others, even his friends.

Any one of these characters might be the victim and anyone the killer. They are all suspects and sleuths by turn. Their interactions make for remarkably lifelike unlikelihoods. Friendship and hostility between Potts’s characters are marked by the strange complexity of reality. Antagonists in a Potts novel often cannot help liking each other. Martin Shipley and Vic Holm understand each other instinctively, just as Marcia Knapp and Chuck Llewellyn do. Each can see the other’s unsavory side and identify with it. Suspicion and trust go hand in hand where these pairs are concerned, because though a bond of affection and concern ties them together they

can never give up the individual convictions that created the original antagonism.

The narrow, humdrum existences of Potts’s characters are inevitably and irreparably distorted by crimes of emotion, misdeeds motivated by an obsessive, misguided love for father, spouse, or child. Potts always focused on the elemental emotion of love, which, in her opinion, is more treacherous than any hatred or selfish need could be.

Potts’s awareness of love’s pitfalls creates a distinctive kind of crime fiction. In her novels, life does not simply return to normal after the crime is solved and justice served. The reason for that lies in the motivation for the crime and the deep emotions it stirs in each of the characters. Those who had wanted to kill but could not are racked by guilt. Even the relatively innocent will forever carry painful memories. As for the murderers, once they have accomplished the deed to which their tortured desires drove them, the only thing left to desire is death.

Ravinder Kaur

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Go, Lovely Rose*, 1954; *Death of a Stray Cat*, 1955 (also known as *Dark Destination*); *The Diehard*, 1956; *The Man with the Cane*, 1957; *Lightning Strikes Twice*, 1958 (also known as *Blood Will Tell*); *Home Is the Prisoner*, 1960; *The Evil Wish*, 1962; *The Only Good Secretary*, 1965; *The Footsteps on the Stairs*, 1966; *The Little Lie*, 1968; *The Trash Stealer*, 1968; *An Affair of the Heart*, 1970; *The Troublemaker*, 1972; *My Brother’s Killer*, 1975

OTHER MAJOR WORK

NOVEL: *Someone to Remember*, 1943

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and critic reviews Potts's novels about an attempt to atone for an accidental killing.

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DOUGLAS PRESTON and LINCOLN CHILD

DOUGLAS PRESTON

Born: Cambridge, Massachusetts; May 20, 1956

LINCOLN CHILD

Born: Westport, Connecticut; October 13, 1957

Types of plot: Master sleuth; psychological; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Special Agent Pendergast, 1995-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALOYSIUS PENDERGAST is a mysterious Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent originally from New Orleans who suddenly appears on the scene knowing more than he should know and refusing to take no for an answer. Tall, extremely thin, but muscular, he has whitish blond hair, pale blue eyes, and an extremely pale complexion that make him easily noticed. He always wears well-tailored, black wool suits. His fund of general knowledge is no less than encyclopedic, and his ability to disguise himself is phenomenal. He possess an undeniable charisma that appeals to most of the characters with whom he comes in contact, but he is vulnerable and haunted by the mental and emotional instability that is his legacy from both sides of his family.

VINCENT D'AGOSTO is a dedicated police officer. A hard worker, he has total belief and faith in Pendergast, even though that faith costs him a relationship with a woman who is extremely important to him. Vin-

cent is middle-aged and is just getting back into shape after a period of letting himself go physically. For a while he left police work to write detective novels, but he is reestablishing himself in police work. Basically a good person, he is a good police officer and detective.

BILL SMITHBACK, a writer-journalist, is a perpetually loose cannon. If there is somewhere he should not be, he will be there. If there is a wrong time to approach a subject, Smithback will find it. He is brash, abrasive, and somewhat uncouth, but he still possess a kind of naïve charm. However, expensive Italian suits cannot make a silk purse of a sow's ear, and Smithback has a way to go before he becomes generally acceptable. He is, though, thoroughly dedicated and devoted to Pendergast. Smithback seems to be nearly killed every time he appears in a book.

CONTRIBUTION

Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child have written more than ten books as a team and are enjoying great success in the process. Even though they claim not to have seen each other face to face for ten years, their perfection of the collaboratory process is an inspiration to other aspiring collaborators, especially because each author also writes individually. Although these solo novels have some of the trademark action and suspense of the collaborations, there does not seem to be quite as much richness and layering as there is when the two minds are applied to a project. Preston has explained that phenomenon by saying that their

minds just happen to be “twisted” in the same way. That may be, but the two men still experience differences and disagreements while working on a project.

Preston and Child both bring ideas and suggestions for books to the table and collaborate on projects that appeal to both of them equally strongly. Preston’s *The Codex* (2004) and Child’s *Utopia* (2002) were both projects rejected by the other partner. After a thorough discussion of concepts, Child makes a chapter outline. Preston takes the outline and writes the book. Child edits and rewrites. Then, Preston takes that draft and works through it again. This is the pattern that the two of them have followed since the beginning of their partnership.

In the course of their collaboration, Preston and Child are creating a mythology based on character exchanges within their various novels. William Smithback, in addition to the Pendergast books, is also a character in *Thunderhead* (1999). A character in *The Ice Limit* (2000) also appears in *Book of the Dead* (2006). Interesting characters reappear from novel to novel in both series and nonseries novels. Like Special Agent Aloysius Pendergast, Preston and Child have a great fund of general knowledge and many special interests to draw on for their books. They can write with authority about many subjects and have practical experience in most areas of science and technology. This special knowledge results in the production of some outstanding techno-thrillers grounded in detective fiction. Working in the arena of classic imagery and plot, the two men are strongly influenced by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, and Edgar Allan Poe.

BIOGRAPHY

Douglas J. Preston was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1956 and grew up in Wellesley. Douglas and his two brothers, Richard and David, lived a rough-and-tumble boy’s life, losing fingertips and teeth with joyous abandon and entertaining various friends and neighbors. Douglas attended Pomona College in Claremont, California, and studied a wide range of subjects before he eventually settled on a major in English literature. After graduation, Preston worked with the Museum of Natural History in New York City as editor, writer, and director of special events. He also free-

lanced, writing articles about the progress of the museum, and taught writing at Princeton.

Luckily, he gave in to an invitation to write about the museum in *Dinosaurs in the Attic: An Excursion into the American Museum of Natural History* (1985). The invitation to write was extended by a young editor at St. Martin’s Press named Lincoln Child. Preston took Child for a midnight tour of the museum, and that experience became the basis for *Relic* (1995). In 1986, Preston moved to Santa Fe, where after a period of time, he wrote *Cities of Gold: A Journey Across the American Southwest in Pursuit of Coronado* (1992) and became interested in the history and legends of the southwest. Preston later moved to the coast of Maine. He and his wife, Christine, have three children. Like Agent Pendergast, Preston claims kinship with a number of famous and infamous relatives.

Lincoln B. Child was born in Westport, Connecticut, in 1957. Although his family moved away before he reached his first birthday, he still regards it as his hometown. He acquired an interest in writing early on and majored in English in college. After graduation he secured a job as an editorial assistant at St. Martin’s Press, where he worked his way up to full editor. He worked on more than a hundred books and collected several anthologies of ghost tales that more or less established a horror division at the press. In 1987, Child left St. Martin’s and went to work doing highly technical computer jobs. After *Relic* was a success, he quit his job. He settled in New Jersey with his wife and daughter. A list of his interests would parallel those of Agent Pendergast—probably because Lincoln firmly believes in that bit of writer’s advice to write about what one knows.

ANALYSIS

Neither Douglas Preston nor Lincoln Child likes to categorize their work. They feel that literature is too “genrecized” already and that what is important is for them to enjoy what they write and try to introduce readers to new jobs, places, and disciplines. Their novels combine so many elements and influences that they are nearly impossible to classify.

In *Relic*, Preston and Child introduced the notion of a museum as a bizarre microcosm of the world at

large. Given the erudition of the New York Natural Museum of History, the nature of its exhibits, its labyrinthine passages, and its scientific equipment, the potential for a tale of horror and mad scientists as in the 1953 film *House of Wax* not only existed but also virtually begged to be brought to life. At the same time that Preston and Child were thinking about a museum mystery, a Holmesian figure presented himself to the authors in the person of Special Agent Aloysius Pendergast. According to Preston and Child, he sprang, Athena-like, fully formed into their minds. Within the Diogenes trilogy (*Brimstone*, 2004, *Dance of Death*, 2005, and *Book of the Dead*, 2006) there seems to be a Sherlock Holmes/Moriarty—Holmes/Mycroft reference at work. The rivalry between Special Agent Pendergast and his criminal brother Diogenes Pendergast is so intense that readers begin to think about their own familial relationships. Diogenes Pendergast is a totally evil literary character who reminds readers that, undoubtedly, several criminal masterminds like Diogenes have existed in real life.

Although the authors have suggested that *The Cabinet of Curiosities* (2002), a Pendergast novel, could be considered a nonseries novel, in actuality, it is *Still Life with Crows* (2003) that might fit in that category, as it takes place in the Midwest and away from New York and the museum. *Relic* and its successor, *Reliquary* (1997), are obviously related, a fact denoted by the titles: A reliquary is a place or thing designed to hold and protect relics, and what is a museum but a very large reliquary? In that sense, a cabinet of curiosities—holding a collection of rare and valuable things as it does—is also a reliquary. In some of the books, the museum is never far away from the consciousness of the characters, and in others the scene changes and becomes worldwide, offering the solution of one riddle while presenting the detective with another in the style of Dan Brown's books about ancient mysteries. The mysteries of Preston and Child are, however, not that ancient, even if they sometimes seem to be. Their books are immediate life-or-death mysteries on behalf of characters that readers have come to know and to like.

Preston and Child have developed complex plots in which they leave the actions of one character to begin

another chapter dealing with the progress of a different character whose actions seem to have nothing to do with the plot. In this way, the suspense is advanced, only to come to a jarring halt when a dead end appears or a promising lead fails to pay off. Nothing is ever simple in a Preston and Child book, and always, as the book develops, a psychological element begins to surface.

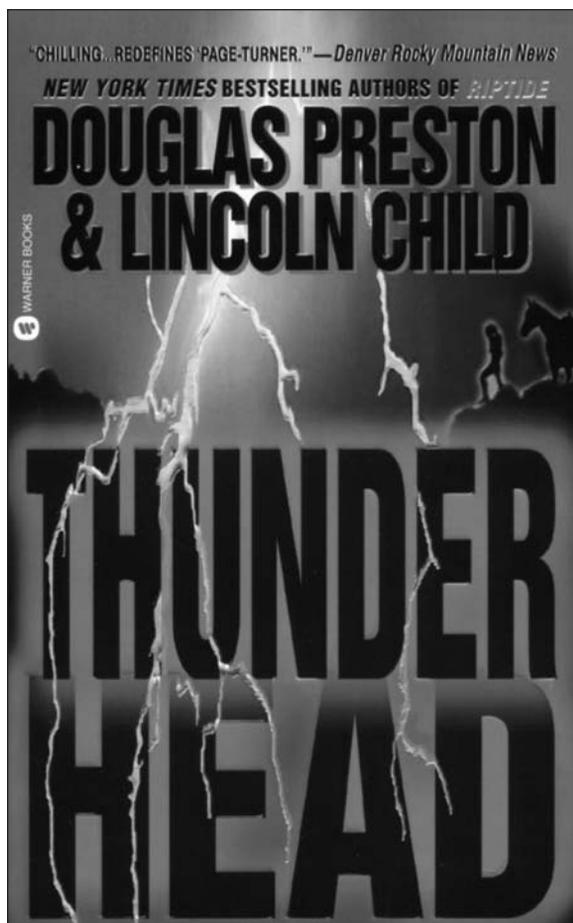
RELIC

Without a doubt, the major character of *Relic* is the museum, in all of its aspects: as a building, as an organization, as an institution. Shirley Jackson used the device of place as character to devastating advantage in *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and so have Preston and Child in *Relic*. From the first murder, the whole impetus of the book becomes an imperative to save the museum.

The coincidence of the emergence of a monster with the creation of the new Superstition exhibit is so stunning in its visual, emotional, and intellectual content and so technically cutting-edge in its presentation that it is literally calculated to shock museum patrons into reaching for their checkbooks to help fund the museum. In the course of touring the museum and seeing the behind-the-scenes work that goes into mounting new exhibits and keeping the institution meaningful and vital to a changing society, the readers also learn some unfortunate truths about the personalities involved. Even doctors of various sciences, the best and brightest of their kind, are not above cheap, petty competition for grants to back up or extend their own research interests, and in most cases, those research projects have less to do with improving the world than they do with advancing the career and reputation of the individual. To catch the monster, the combined talents of Smithback, Margo Green, Agent Pendergast, and Vincent D'Agosto are required. Although Pendergast plays a small role, he did capture some attention in this book, and D'Agosto and Smithback made their own impressions. Green returns to the museum in later books.

THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

The Cabinet of Curiosities, part of the Pendergast series, focuses on gruesome discoveries in the basement of a New York building that once housed a col-



lection of curiosities. In this work, Preston and Child unravel a bit more of the mystery surrounding the Pendergast family. It seems that Special Agent Pendergast is the family oddball, a lawman in a family in which criminal lunacy is prevalent. He entered his profession because of his need to combat his family, especially his younger brother, Diogenes.

In this novel, the demolition of an old building opens an underground charnel house: catacombs where the skeletons of numerous young people from the beginning of the twentieth century are found. Readers are reminded that the Museum of Natural History is also a charnel house: a place where the remains of both animal and human dead are kept and exhibited. The concepts of the museum, the charnel house, and the cabinet of curiosities all relate to the mysterious mansion on Riverside Drive, which houses a cabinet of curiosities,

but the cabinet is only one of many. Actually, the entire mansion is an extended cabinet of curiosities and a charnel house as well, entombing a living person in the house for nearly a hundred years. The extension of the museum metaphor throughout this work is a brilliant concept on the part of the authors.

THUNDERHEAD

In *Thunderhead*, a nonseries novel, Nora Kelly is leading an expedition in search for the origins of the Anasazi, and journalist Bill Smithback is traveling along to record her findings. In later novels, both of these characters are absorbed into the museum framework of the Pendergast series. Perhaps one of the most outstanding aspects of the novels of Preston and Child is the research that goes into their work. Preston has written several *New Yorker* articles on the subject and has followed some of the trails and passages that Kelly and Smithback travel in the work. Within the works of Preston and Child, there is almost always a breathtaking array of facts that are illumined by the imagination of these two men.

H. Alan Pickrell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

AGENT PENDERGAST SERIES: *Relic*, 1995; *Reliquary*, 1997; *The Cabinet of Curiosities*, 2002; *Still Life with Crows*, 2003; *Brimstone*, 2004; *Dance of Death*, 2005; *Book of the Dead*, 2006; *Wheel of Darkness*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Mount Dragon*, 1996; *Riptide*, 1998; *Thunderhead*, 1999; *Ice Limit*, 2000

NONSERIES NOVELS (BY PRESTON): *The Codex*, 2004; *Tyrannosaur Canyon*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS (BY CHILD): *Utopia*, 2002; *Death Match*, 2004; *Deep Storm*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL (BY PRESTON): *Jennie*, 1994

NONFICTION (BY PRESTON): *Dinosaurs in the Attic: An Excursion into the American Museum of Natural History*, 1986; *Cities of Gold: A Journey Across the American Southwest in Pursuit of Coronado*, 1992; *Talking to the Ground: One Family's Journey on Horseback Across the Sacred Land of the Navajo*, 1995; *The Royal Road: El Camino Real from Mexico*

City to Santa Fe, 1998 (with Christine Preston and Jose Antonio Esquibel)

EDITED TEXTS (BY CHILD): *Dark Company: The Ten Greatest Ghost Stories*, 1983; *Dark Banquet: A Feast of Twelve Great Ghost Stories*, 1985; *Tales of the Dark*, 1987 (3 volumes)

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Preston, Douglas, and Lincoln Child. *The Book of the Dead*. New York: Warner Books, 2006. In a "Note to the Reader," Preston and Child offer suggestions about in what order their books should be read.

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_____. Official Web site: Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. <http://www.prestonchild.com>. On their

official Web site, Preston and Child offer biographies, future plans, selections from their works, reviews, comments, and answers to fans' questions about their work and their viewpoints.

_____. "PW Talks with Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child: The Joys of Fictional Collaboration." Interview by Leonard Picker. *Publishers Weekly* 253, no. 10 (May 15, 2006): 46. Short interview concentrates on the development of the character Aloysius Pendergast.

Stableford, Brian. "Introduction." In *Cyclopedia of Literary Places*, edited by Kent Rasmussen. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem Press, 2003. Stableford discusses purposes and uses of setting within literary works. Settings are especially important to the work of Preston and Child in that their settings nearly become characters. This introduction informs the reader of why the authors are so very setting-specific.

J. B. PRIESTLEY

Born: Bradford, Yorkshire, England; September 13, 1894

Died: Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England; August 14, 1984

Also wrote as Peter Goldsmith

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage

CONTRIBUTION

J. B. Priestley's seven crime novels, including one written with Gerald Bullett, are, compared to the bulk of his published work, a minute part of the Priestley canon. Each of the novels exists independently of the others, and each is an unrepeated foray into crime fiction. The central characters are not detectives or professional police officers; they are medical doctors, artists, newspapermen, and trained professional people who are very good at their chosen work. Something piques their interest—a patient goes missing, a scientist disappears, an experiment is stolen—and they turn their obvious mental powers to the task. The books

themselves, as might be expected from one of the twentieth century's most prolific dramatists, read like scripts for stage and screen, and their visual impact is strong. Priestley's sly wit, his socialistic philosophy, and his stagecraft mark the novels and give them the easy progress of well-written works. At the same time, in all of his crime novels, Priestley takes a cold and dispassionate look at his society and finds it less than perfect.

BIOGRAPHY

John Boynton Priestley was born on September 13, 1894, in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, the son of a schoolmaster. He was educated in the Bradford schools and at Trinity College of the University of Cambridge. He served with the Duke of Wellington's and Devon regiments from 1914 to 1919. He was graduated from Trinity College with honors in English literature, political science, and modern history. He married Patricia Tempest, with whom he had two daughters, in 1919;

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

J. B. Priestley in 1958. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Mary Wyndham Lewis, with whom he had three more daughters and a son, in 1926; and Jacquetta Hawkes, the writer and his sometime collaborator, in 1953.

He began his writing career at sixteen, contributing articles to London and provincial newspapers. He went to London in 1922 and established himself as a reviewer, critic, and essayist; in addition, he published two or three books a year, including studies of the work of George Meredith and Thomas Love Peacock for the English Men of Letters series, a history of the English novel, and other works. By 1930, he had established a strong reputation both in England and the United States through his novels, including *Angel Pavement* (1930), which falls loosely into the category of crime fiction. His work during this period was a

mixture of personal history and social criticism.

In 1932, he wrote *Dangerous Corner*, a highly successful drama that launched him on a new career, one that occupied much of his time from then on. Among other activities, he served as the director of Mask Theatre in London; the United Kingdom delegate and chairman to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's International Theater Conferences in Paris (1947) and Prague (1948); the chairman of the British Theatre Conferences; the president of the International Theatre Institute; and on the National Theatre Board. He was a regular contributor to *New Statesman* and broadcast uplifting commentaries for the British Broadcasting Corporation during World War II; these broadcasts were published

as *Britain Speaks* (1940) and *Postscripts* (1940) and earned for him the unofficial title “the voice of the common people of Great Britain.”

Priestley traveled extensively in the United States and spent two winters in Arizona. Despite his criticism—and he freely criticized everything—Priestley was fond of the United States and probably knew as much about its history and literature as did any modern English novelist.

Priestley was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1930, the Ellen Terry Award in 1948, and honorary degrees from the University of St. Andrews, the University of Birmingham, the University of Bradford, and Trinity College. He was awarded the Order of Merit in 1977. In 1978, he moved, appropriately, to Stratford-upon-Avon. He died on August 14, 1984, one month short of his ninetieth birthday.

ANALYSIS

J. B. Priestley’s early novel *Benighted* (1927), published in the United States as *The Old Dark House* (1928), was more of a gothic horror story than a detective story, and *I’ll Tell You Everything* (1932), written with Gerald Bullett, was an early spoof of the cloak-and-dagger tale then gaining in popularity. It was with his last three crime novels, *Saturn over the Water: An Account of His Adventures in London, South America, and Australia* by Tim Bedford, *Painter* (1961), *The Shapes of Sleep: A Topical Tale* (1962), and *Salt Is Leaving* (1966), that Priestley hit his peak as a detective-fiction writer.

SATURN OVER THE WATER

Saturn over the Water is a good book and much more of a mystery than the earlier novels. It owes something to Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach* (1957) and has delicious reflections of John Buchan’s *The Power-House* (1916), *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), and his neglected *The Courts of the Morning* (1929). Tim Bedford, a successful painter, promises his dying cousin Isabel Frame that he will find her estranged and missing husband, Joe, and tell him that she still loves him. It is a soap-opera opening to a nicely constructed and skillfully plotted novel of intrigue, travel, and involvement with a secret organization. This group is busily plotting to force the Northern Hemisphere to destroy itself through

biological and atomic warfare, leaving the cabal, whose sign is Saturn over the water, free to create a new and better world in their own image in South America, Australia, and Africa.

Bedford’s only clue to the whereabouts of the missing scientist, Joe Frame, is the hastily scribbled list of names, places, and things in his last letter, posted from Chile. He is intrigued by the mystery, especially when he identifies one of the names as that of another English scientist, Frank Semple. Semple had worked with Frame at the Arnaldos Institute in Peru and had returned home psychotic and had committed suicide. Bedford travels from London to New York, then to Peru, Chile, and Australia, each stop identifying more of Frame’s list and bringing him into contact with shadowy people who will ultimately play major roles in the solution of the mystery. Bedford, unknown to himself, is in reality a pawn in a power struggle, the catalyst the opponents of the cabal have needed to bring the global plot to an unsuccessful conclusion.

Similar to Richard Hannay’s foes in *The Thirty-nine Steps* and *The Power-House*, the opponents in *Saturn over the Water* are men with superhuman intellects, men capable of exerting powerful influence over lesser minds. Using the concept of the astrological changing of the ages, Priestley matches the Saturnians against those under the sign of Uranus, the peaceful ones.

As Bedford makes his journey, Priestley makes use of his stops to comment on the neo-Nazi mentality, the threat of communism, the misuse of technology, and the strange world of the arts. Although Priestley himself espoused Fabian socialism, he despised Marxist principles, instead identifying himself as anticonservative politically.

The characters here are not as exhaustively drawn as those in *Angel Pavement*, but the reader does get to know them well enough for their motivations to be acceptable, at least for the more realistic of them. Other characters, especially as the novel nears its end, seem fantastic: Mrs. Biro, the clairvoyant; Major Jorvis, the Australian police officer through whose form the Saturn superintellect works; and Pat Daily, an apparent drunken junk dealer who is in fact the Old Astrologer of the Mountain and the “force” representing the Uranian side of the new age. As the novel ends, the reader

is pleased to find that Tim Bedford and Rosalia Arnaldos, the granddaughter of the founder of the institute and the Saturn cabal, have married. She has inherited the institute and Arnaldos's vast fortune, and together they dedicate their resources to the betterment of humankind. Still, the reader is left with the uneasy feeling that although a battle has been won, the war is far from over.

THE SHAPES OF SLEEP

The Shapes of Sleep is considered by many to be Priestley's best work in the genre, although *Salt Is Leaving* has its champions. Ben Sterndale, a forty-two-year-old freelance journalist, is hired by a friend, an advertising executive, to locate and recover a mysterious piece of green paper that has been stolen. Sterndale has only a list of names of those who visited the office the day the paper disappeared with which to work. He begins his search, unaware of the import of the missing paper, which is part of an experiment in subliminal mind altering, designed for use not only in marketing but also, and more important for the story, in political propaganda.

Sterndale's search takes him to the Continent; in and out of the clutches of Eastern and Western espionage agents; through late-night forays in breaking and entering, into romantic trysts with secret agents; and on journeys by car, train, and boat to arrive somewhere and do something before someone else arrives and does something less pleasant. His role is that of an amateur James Bond, and he falls into and somehow escapes from one dangerous situation after another until everything falls into place. Priestley's usual concerns are present. He uses the book to poke fun at the deadly serious espionage services of both sides, at the ultrajingoism of people involved in that type of activity, at the social situations that give rise to "sides" competing for the minds of humankind, and at the powers that control the political machines on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The Shapes of Sleep is a suspenseful, rapidly moving book with realistic action (so far as the secret services are concerned), enough danger to whet the reader's interest, and a surprise ending that justifies the novel's existence. The characters and their actions are presented in a typically strong Priestley dramatic form. It would make a fine film.

SALT IS LEAVING

Salt Is Leaving would also make a satisfactory film or even a stage play. Lionel Humphrey Salt ("Call me Salt when you're tired of doctoring me") has given up his medical practice in the depressed and depressing town of Birkden after seven years. He yearns to move on, to the south of France and then possibly to Africa or India, where he apparently lived for some time. He delays his departure out of concern for a patient, Noreen Wilks, who has been missing for three weeks. Salt's concern is centered on his interest in kidney diseases, Noreen's rare chronic nephritis, and her failure to renew the prescription needed to keep her alive. His search involves him with the world of Sir Arnold Donnington—the industrialist who owns United Fabrics and, through his company, the town of Birkden—and with Maggie Culworth, whose father has also disappeared. Maggie works in her father's bookstore in nearby Henton, her place of refuge after several years and a disastrous romance in London. All she knows is that her father took the 1:35 bus to Birkden and that a letter from a Peggy Pearson, written on stationery from the Lyceum Cinema in Birkden, has come to her father. Maggie goes to Birkden and meets Salt.

Because there is no obvious crime, the police are not eager to help Salt in his search for Noreen, who is described by Superintendent Hurst as "just another of these little fly-by-nights." As the story develops, the reader learns that Noreen knows Culworth; that Noreen has been having an affair with Sir Arnold's son, Derek; that Derek has accidentally killed himself while cleaning a gun at five in the morning; that Worsley Place, next to the United Fabrics Club, has been used as a romantic trysting place by Noreen and Derek; that Noreen is Culworth's child from a romance during World War II; that Sir Arnold is desperately trying to cover up everything that concerns his son; and that Culworth has suffered a concussion at Worsley Place and is under sedation at a private home. As the story progresses, the relationship between Salt and Maggie, at first an uneasy truce, begins to develop into a romance, culminating in their planning to leave together at the end to find whatever happiness the world has to offer elsewhere.

Two other characters contribute to prolonging the

mystery: Sir Arnold's daughter Erin, full of barbiturates, alcohol, and misplaced sexual drives, and Jill Frinton, a "hostess" at the United Fabrics Club. At the end, Salt, Maggie, her brother Alan, and Jill confront Sir Arnold with the truth, and the mystery is solved. Salt and company agree to keep silent about the truth in return for Sir Arnold's agreement to their terms.

The story is a good one and well written. The characters are believable and realistically motivated. Priestley here, as elsewhere, uses his novel as a means of looking askance at social problems and conditions he does not like. The high-handed industrialist who controls a town through his wealth and power is revealed in a most unfavorable light. The plight of those who must work under less than desirable conditions comes under scrutiny. Even those who seem to have some power within the structure are belittled, because they do nothing without the approval of Sir Arnold. The everyday lives of Salt's patients, mostly drawn from the lower and depressed side of Birkden, are given in such a way as to elicit sympathy.

Priestley's work in the detective-fiction genre is short on bulk, but his political theories and beliefs, his socialistic leanings, his practical but utopian ideals, are easily found in his novels. As a technician, Priestley is sharp, oriented toward the stageability of his product, and a careful constructor of plot and character. His novels read easily and command the respect and attention of the reader.

William H. Holland, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Benighted*, 1927 (also known as *The Old Dark House*); *I'll Tell You Everything*, 1933 (with Gerald Bullett); *The Doomsday Men: An Adventure*, 1938; *Blackout in Gretley: A Story of—and for—War-time*, 1942; *Saturn over the Water: An Account of His Adventures in London, South America, and Australia* by Tim Bedford, Painter, 1961; *The Shapes of Sleep: A Topical Tale*, 1962; *Salt Is Leaving*, 1966

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Adam in Moonshine*, 1927; *Farthing Hall*, 1929 (with Hugh Walpole); *The Good Companions*, 1929; *Angel Pavement*, 1930; *Faraway*, 1932;

Wonder Hero, 1933; *They Walk in the City: The Lovers in the Stone Forest*, 1936; *Let the People Sing*, 1939; *Daylight on Saturday: A Novel About an Aircraft Factory*, 1943; *Three Men in New Suits*, 1945; *Bright Day*, 1946; *Jenny Villiers: A Story of the Theatre*, 1947; *Festival at Farbridge*, 1951 (also known as *Festival*); *Low Notes on a High Level: A Frolic*, 1954; *The Magicians*, 1954; *The Thirty-first of June: A Tale of True Love, Enterprise, and Progress in the Arthurian and Ad-Atomic Ages*, 1961; *Sir Michael and Sir George: A Tale of COMSA and DISCUS and the New Elizabethans*, 1964 (also known as *Sir Michael and Sir George: A Comedy of New Elizabethans*); *Lost Empires: Being Richard Herncastle's Account of His Life on the Variety Stage from November, 1913, to August, 1914, Together with a Prologue and Epilogue*, 1965; *It's an Old Country*, 1967; *The Image Men: "Out of Town" and "London End,"* 1968; *The Carfitt Crisis*, 1975; *Found, Lost, Found: Or, The English Way of Life*, 1976; *My Three Favorite Novels*, 1978

SHORT FICTION: *The Town Major of Miracourt*, 1930; *Going Up: Stories and Sketches*, 1950; *The Other Place, and Other Stories of the Same Sort*, 1953; *The Carfitt Crisis, and Two Other Stories*, 1975

PLAYS: 1931-1940 • *The Good Companions*, pr. 1931, pb. 1935 (adaptation of his novel; with Edward Knoblock); *Dangerous Corner*, pr., pb. 1932; *The Roundabout*, pr. 1932, pb. 1933; *Laburnum Grove*, pr. 1933, pb. 1934; *Eden End*, pr., pb. 1934; *Cornelius*, pr., pb. 1935; *Duet in Floodlight*, pr., pb. 1935; *Bees on the Boat Deck*, pr., pb. 1936; *Spring Tide*, pr., pb. 1936 (with George Billam); *I Have Been Here Before*, pr., pb. 1937; *People at Sea*, pr., pb. 1937; *Time and the Conways*, pr., pb. 1937; *Music at Night*, pr. 1938, pb. 1947; *Mystery at Greenfingers*, pr., pb. 1938; *When We Are Married*, pr., pb. 1938; *Johnson over Jordan*, pr., pb. 1939; *The Long Mirror*, pr., pb. 1940

1941-1950 • *Goodnight, Children*, pr., pb. 1942; *They Came to a City*, pr. 1943, pb. 1944; *Desert Highway*, pr., pb. 1944; *How Are They at Home?*, pr., pb. 1944; *The Golden Fleece*, pr. 1944, pb. 1948; *An Inspector Calls*, pr. 1946, pb. 1947; *Ever Since Paradise*, pr. 1946, pb. 1950; *The Linden Tree*, pr. 1947, pb. 1948; *The Rose and Crown*, pb. 1947 (one act); *Home Is Tomorrow*, pr. 1948, pb. 1949; *The High*

Toby, pb. 1948 (for puppet theater); *The Plays of J. B. Priestley*, pb. 1948-1950 (3 volumes); *Summer Day's Dream*, pr. 1949, pb. 1950; *Bright Shadow*, pr., pb. 1950; *Seven Plays of J. B. Priestley*, pb. 1950

1951-2001 • *Dragon's Mouth*, pr., pb. 1952 (with Jacquetta Hawkes); *Treasure on Pelican*, pr. 1952, pb. 1953; *Mother's Day*, pb. 1953 (one act); *Private Rooms*, pb. 1953 (one act); *Try It Again*, pb. 1953 (one act); *A Glass of Bitter*, pb. 1954 (one act); *The White Countess*, pr. 1954 (with Hawkes); *The Scandalous Affair of Mr. Kettle and Mrs. Moon*, pr., pb. 1955; *These Our Actors*, pr. 1956; *The Glass Cage*, pr. 1957, pb. 1958; *A Severed Head*, pr. 1963, pb. 1964 (with Iris Murdoch; adaptation of Murdoch's novel); *The Pavilion of Masks*, pr. 1963; *An Inspector Calls, and Other Plays*, pb. 2001

SCREENPLAY: *Last Holiday*, 1950

POETRY: *The Chapman of Rhymes*, 1918

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Snoggle*, 1972

NONFICTION: 1922-1930 • *Brief Diversions: Being Tales, Travesties, and Epigrams*, 1922; *Papers from Lilliput*, 1922; *I for One*, 1923; *Figures in Modern Literature*, 1924; *Fools and Philosophers: A Gallery of Comic Figures from English Literature*, 1925 (also known as *The English Comic Characters*); *George Meredith*, 1926; *Talking: An Essay*, 1926; *Open House: A Book of Essays*, 1927; *The English Novel*, 1927, 1935, 1974; *Thomas Love Peacock*, 1927; *Apes and Angels: A Book of Essays*, 1928; *Too Many People, and Other Reflections*, 1928; *English Humour*, 1929, 1976; *The Balconinny, and Other Essays*, 1929 (also known as *The Balconinny*, 1931)

1931-1940 • *Self-Selected Essays*, 1932; *The Lost Generation: An Armistice Day Article*, 1932; *Albert Goes Through*, 1933; *English Journey: Being a Rambling but Truthful Account of What One Man Saw and Heard and Felt and Thought During a Journey Through England During the Autumn of the Year 1933*, 1934; *Four-in-Hand*, 1934; *Midnight on the Desert: A Chapter of Autobiography*, 1937 (also known as *Midnight on the Desert: Being an Excursion into Autobiography During a Winter in America, 1935-1936*, 1937); *Rain upon Godshill: A Further Chapter of Autobiography*, 1939; *Britain Speaks*, 1940; *Postscripts*, 1940 (radio talks)

1941-1950 • *Out of the People*, 1941; *Britain at War*, 1942; *British Women Go to War*, 1943; *The Man-Power Story*, 1943; *Here Are Your Answers*, 1944; *The New Citizen*, 1944; *Letter to a Returning Serviceman*, 1945; *Russian Journey*, 1946; *The Secret Dream: An Essay on Britain, America, and Russia*, 1946; *The Arts Under Socialism: Being a Lecture Given to the Fabian Society, with a Postscript on What Government Should Do for the Arts Here and Now*, 1947; *Theatre Outlook*, 1947; *Delight*, 1949

1951-1960 • *Journey Down a Rainbow*, 1955 (with Jacquetta Hawkes); *All About Ourselves, and Other Essays*, 1956; *The Writer in a Changing Society*, 1956; *The Art of the Dramatist: A Lecture Together with Appendices and Discursive Notes*, 1957; *The Bodley Head Leacock*, 1957; *Thoughts in the Wilderness*, 1957; *Topside: Or, The Future of England, a Dialogue*, 1958; *The Story of Theatre*, 1959; *Literature and Western Man*, 1960; *William Hazlitt*, 1960

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1971- 1977 • *Over the Long High Wall: Some Reflections and Speculations on Life, Death, and Time*, 1972; *Victoria's Heyday*, 1972; *The English*, 1973; *A Visit to New Zealand, Particular Pleasures: Being a Personal Record of Some Varied Arts and Many Different Artists*, 1974; *Outcries and Asides*, 1974; *The Happy Dream: An Essay*, 1976; *Instead of the Trees*, 1977 (autobiography)

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Argues that the prolific writer has been denied his proper niche by critics who do not deal fairly with those who write for a wide, general audience.

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Klein, Holger. *J. B. Priestley's Fiction*. New York: P. Lang, 2002. Massive, eight-hundred-page study of Priestley's entire fictional output, including all of his mystery novels. Bibliographic references and index.

BILL PRONZINI

Born: Petaluma, California; April 13, 1943

Also wrote as Russell Dancer; Robert Hart Davis; Jack Foxx; Romer Zane Grey; William Jeffrey; Rick Renault; Alex Saxon

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nameless Detective, 1969-

Carmody, 1970-

Quincannon and Carpenter, 1985-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE NAMELESS DETECTIVE is a private eye who was with the San Francisco Police Department for fifteen years. About forty-seven years old at the start of the series, Nameless has aged through the years, and,

by 1988, is actively considering retirement. He is sloppy, moderately overweight, unmarried, and concerned both with his health and with being loved. By 2006, he is husband and father and mentor to two protégés. His real obsessions, however, are collecting pulp magazines and trying to make the world a better place.

LIEUTENANT "EB" EBERHARDT, a detective for the San Francisco Police Department at the outset of the series, is Nameless's closest friend and has appeared in all the series' novels and most of the stories. The two met as trainees at the police academy. Nameless turns to Eb for help, whether working on a case or working through a personal problem. Eb eventually joins Nameless as a partner in his agency after retiring from the police department.

CARMODY is an international dealer in “legal and extralegal services and material” who occasionally does detective work. An American, he lives in isolation on the Spanish island of Majorca. He is the flinty, silent type, with a good tan and green eyes; he smokes thin black cigars and drives a 911-T Porsche Targa.

JOHN FREDERICK QUINCANNON, a former Secret Service agent and reformed alcoholic, works as a detective in San Francisco of the 1890’s. He would like to form a sexual relationship with his partner, Sabina Carpenter, but she dodges his advances.

SABINA CARPENTER is a widow and a former Pinkerton Agency detective. Equal to Quincannon’s witty banter, she teams up with him to solve a variety of “impossible” crimes.

CONTRIBUTION

Bill Pronzini’s Nameless detective novels move the hard-boiled detective genre toward a new kind of authenticity. To the unsentimental realism of Dashiell Hammett, the descriptive power of Raymond Chandler, and the psychological depth of Ross Macdonald, all meant to transcend the artificial atmosphere of the traditional English detective story, Pronzini adds attention to everyday human problems—emotional as well as physical. Nameless struggles with health concerns of varying seriousness and also spends a modest but significant portion of his narrative seeking stable female companionship. He ages and on occasion gets depressed. In short, Nameless is revealed in a way that would be utterly foreign to a character such as Hammett’s Sam Spade or Chandler’s Philip Marlowe.

Pronzini also seeks heightened authenticity, largely shedding the tough-guy image associated with the hard-boiled genre. To be sure, Nameless is tough. He doggedly seeks the truth and unhesitatingly puts himself into risky situations. Nameless eschews violence and sarcasm, however, and he is willing, at least occasionally, to wear his heart on his sleeve. Indeed, Nameless does nothing to hide the fact that he cares about people and is generally sympathetic. He cultivates a good working relationship with the police and with few exceptions stays on the right side of the law. Pronzini also occasionally works in some of the banality and drudgery involved with real-life private investigation.

All this is mixed in with some of the more classic hard-boiled elements: twisting plots, sparsely furnished offices, feverish pace, compelling descriptions of California settings (though Nameless does occasionally leave the state, pursuing one case in Europe), and a hero so dedicated to his vocation that he will often go without sleep and will sometimes work without fee. In addition, the very namelessness of Pronzini’s detective harks back to Hammett’s Continental Op. It is, in fact, the blend of old with new that makes Pronzini’s series unique.

Pronzini does not merely build on the work of Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald. Through Nameless’s love of the pulps, the reader is reminded that many fine writers have helped shape and promote the hard-boiled genre—a significant bibliographic contribution on Pronzini’s part.

Pronzini is also a widely read author of Westerns. As one of the industry’s busiest anthologists, Pronzini has promoted short-fiction writers in several genres. He has edited more than one hundred collections and written extensively about Westerns and crime fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

William John Pronzini was born on April 13, 1943, in Petaluma, a small town north of San Francisco, to Joseph Pronzini and Helen Gruder Pronzini. Joseph Pronzini was a farmworker. The younger of two children, Bill was reared in Petaluma, where he attended the local schools. He wrote his first novel at the age of twelve. In high school, he began collecting pulp magazines. It was at this point that Pronzini did his first professional writing, working as a reporter for the Petaluma *Argus Courier* from 1957 to 1960. After attending Santa Rosa Junior College for two years, Bill refused a journalism scholarship to Stanford University, choosing instead to become a freelance fiction writer. During the early years of his writing career, Bill supplemented his income by working at various times as a newsstand clerk, warehouseman, typist, salesperson, and civilian guard with the marshal’s office.

Pronzini married Laura Patricia Adolphson in May, 1965. The following year, he sold his first story, “You Don’t Know What It’s Like,” to the *Shell Scott Mys-*

tery Magazine. Pronzini was divorced in 1967. His writing career flourished, however, and he had short stories published in a variety of pulp magazines. One product of this period was his unnamed detective: *The Snatch*, published in 1971, was Pronzini's first novel featuring Nameless. Pronzini moved to Majorca in 1971. There he met Brunhilde Schier, whom he married in 1972. They lived in West Germany before moving to San Francisco in 1974. Their marriage ended, and in 1992 Pronzini married author Marcia Muller.

Pronzini has become one of the most prolific authors of his time, producing more than seventy-five novels and hundreds of stories in a variety of genres: detective, Western, and science fiction. In addition to those works published under his own name, Pronzini has written novels and short stories using the pseudonyms Jack Foxx, Alex Saxon, and Russell Dancer. He has also been a prolific collaborator, working with such authors as Barry N. Malzberg, Jeffrey M. Wallman, Michael Kurland, Collin Wilcox, and Marcia Muller. In addition to his writing, Pronzini has edited a number of books in the mystery, Western, and science-fiction fields.

Pronzini's quantitative achievements have been augmented by qualitative ones. Although he has yet to achieve the high literary acclaim accorded Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald, he is greatly respected by his fellow writers of mysteries. His novels *The Stalker* (1971) and *A Wasteland of Strangers* (1997) were nominated for Edgar Awards, as were his short stories "Strangers in the Fog" and "Incident in a Neighborhood Tavern" and two nonfictional works, *Gun in Cheek: A Study of "Alternative: Crime Fiction"* (1982) and *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction* (1986, with Marcia Muller). *A Wasteland of Strangers* was nominated for the best crime novel of 1997 by the International Association of Crime Writers. He received the Grand Prix de la Littérature Policière in 1989 for *Snowbound* (1974) and Shamus Awards from the Private Eye Writers of America for his novels *Hoodwink* (1981) and *Booby-trap* (1998) and his short story "Cat's Paw." The Private Eye Writers of America awarded Pronzini with the Eye, a lifetime achievement award, in 1987, and in 2005, he and Marcia Muller received a lifetime

achievement award from the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention.

ANALYSIS

Although Bill Pronzini has produced stories and novels at a truly enviable pace, both he and his critics have accorded the Nameless series a special status. First, it is clear that Pronzini identifies strongly with the Nameless detective. Indeed, this is one reason his hero has remained without a name. Second, the Nameless series has been recognized as marking the literary high point of Pronzini's career. It is this body of work for which Pronzini will probably be remembered, for the Nameless series has staying power derived both from its faithfulness to the well-hallowed tradition of the hard-boiled detective story and from its innovations and freshness within that tradition.

The hard-boiled detective story goes back to the 1920's, when Hammett, taking advantage of the flourishing trade in pulp magazines and the stylistic trends of the times, almost single-handedly established a new subgenre of popular fiction. Drawing on his experience as a Pinkerton's detective, Hammett brought a new realism and depth to crime fiction while holding to the constraints of the pulp market. These constraints dictated plenty of action and consummate directness of expression. The result was a hybrid literary form with elements of both high and low art—something roughly akin, both conceptually and chronologically, to the Marx brothers' *A Night at the Opera* (1935). The hard-boiled genre expanded quickly and profusely. As Pronzini and others have remarked, numerous authors, some well known, others relatively obscure, though often talented, went on to produce notable works within it. In addition, the genre was a natural for films and later for television. The action-oriented, economic prose and crisp dialogue of hard-boiled stories translated readily to both the large and the small screen, resulting in classic films such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and popular television programs such as *Peter Gunn* (1958-1961), *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), and *Spenser: For Hire* (1985-1988). In short, the hard-boiled detective became a significant mythic figure in American culture, one that, for all its very considerable international appeal, remains as distinctly American as jazz.

Why has the hard-boiled detective had so broad and lasting an appeal? This type of detective has been likened to a modern-day knight, defending the weak, seeking truth, and striving for justice in ways that legal authorities cannot or will not duplicate. Put another way, the hard-boiled detective is an independent agent who acts as he does because it is right, not for material gain or out of blind allegiance to a cause, and who is willing to face stiff opposition in the name of principle. The hard-boiled detective is a person of action, a doer, living up to the dictates of a demanding personal code; therefore, this type of detective must not only pass up wealth and other modern measures of "success" but also risk grave personal danger. It is this precarious existence that dictates that the detective be a loner; privation and danger are the crosses to bear and are not readily transferable to loved ones and other intimates.

THE NAMELESS DETECTIVE

Pronzini's Nameless series consciously carries on this tradition both stylistically and substantively. Using the genre's classic, first-person narrative, lean prose, and crisp dialogue, Pronzini portrays Nameless as being nearly everything the detective as modern-day knight is supposed to be. Nameless helps the weak, at times working without pay to do so. For example, in the early stories "It's a Lousy World" and "Death of a Nobody," Nameless takes up the causes of a former convict and a derelict, both of whom have been killed. There are no wealthy relatives footing the bill, thus no hope for a paycheck. Yet Nameless follows through, simply because he cares about the sanctity of every human life, not merely those for whom a fee can be collected. He also cares about the quality of each life, a characteristic that leads his friend Eb to call him a social worker. Beyond this universal compassion lies a hunger for truth in all of its complexity (as opposed to mere appearances) and for thoroughgoing justice (rather than the rough equivalent provided by law). To pursue these goals, Nameless must devote himself single-mindedly to his investigations, wading through a sea of lies, warding off threats, and ignoring weariness to the point of exhaustion. Nameless does all this and more in the name of a higher code, a modern form of chivalry aimed at making the world a better place in which to live.

Nevertheless, the Nameless series does more than simply pay homage to the hard-boiled genre; it adds a new twist or two to the tradition. Drawing on the model of Thomas B. Dewey's detective, "Mac," Pronzini has aimed for a new kind of authenticity, eschewing the more superficial and fantastic elements of the genre. Nameless starts off his literary existence middle-aged and paunchy, anything but the romanticized figure often presented, particularly in screen variations of the hard-boiled tradition. Nor is Nameless always wildly successful in his endeavors: He is sometimes mistaken about things and sometimes used.

In a more conspicuous break with the hard-boiled tradition, Nameless is far less private about the details of his life and his needs than are most of the classic hard-boiled characters. Nameless has a long-running, close friendship with a San Francisco cop named Eberhardt. He also has had two enduring relationships with women—first with Erica Coates, who turns down Nameless's proposal because of his line of work, and later with Kerry Wade, although a bad first marriage keeps Kerry from marrying Nameless. In addition, the reader is given details of Nameless's state of physical well-being that the Continental Op or Sam Spade would never have dreamed of sharing. These run the gamut from Nameless's bouts with heartburn to a tumor and the possibility of lung cancer. (It is the later that induces Nameless to quit smoking.)

In addition to these very human insights, Pronzini's hero is much less prone to play the tough guy. Nameless rarely breaks the law or engages in violence. Indeed, he almost always refuses to carry a gun, especially later in the series, and he throws the only gun he owns into the ocean in *Dragonfire* (1982).

Pronzini's quest for heightened authenticity (or what one pair of critics has called "unromanticized realism") has been additionally enhanced in three specific ways that deserve to be noted. First, by making Nameless a collector of pulp magazines and an expert on the hard-boiled genre in particular, Pronzini has not merely been autobiographical. He has also moved his hero one step away from the fictional world toward the world of the reader. The pulps are real. Though the stories in the pulps are fictional, these fictions are read and collected by real people. Nameless reads and col-

lects these works. Therefore, Nameless is (or, at least, seems) more real.

Second, Pronzini has preserved continuity between the stories and novels of the series, leaving situations hanging and having Nameless and Eb age somewhat realistically from work to work. Both characters have changing relationships with the opposite sex and both experience career shifts. Like everyone, Nameless and his friend must deal with the trials, tribulations, and occasional comforts of the human life-cycle.

Third, Pronzini twice has collaborated with other authors of detective fiction to produce works that provide mutual validation for the main characters involved. Nameless does not exist merely in the minds of Pronzini and his readers. He also cohabits San Francisco with Collin Wilcox's Lieutenant Frank Hastings and Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone. In something akin to the way governments extend or deny one another diplomatic recognition, these authors have brought their fictional characters closer to life through these collaborations, making them more authentic in the process. The result has been the creation of a unique character and series in the hard-boiled tradition as well as the emergence of a significant audience for Pronzini's Nameless stories and novels.

A final comment or two should be added regarding the anonymity of Pronzini's best-known character, particularly since it may seem difficult to find a connection between this aspect of Pronzini's series and his quest for authenticity. It could be argued that the reality of Pronzini's character is best preserved by not tying him down to a name that can easily be proved fictional. Yet Nameless apparently owes his condition to two factors largely separate from the quest for authenticity: serendipity and the close identification of Pronzini with his character.

Pronzini claims no profound goal in leaving his hero nameless—merely that no name suited the man: "Big, sort of sloppy Italian guy who guzzles beer, smokes too much and collects pulp magazines. What name fits a character like that? Sam Spadini, Philip Marlozzi?" Additionally, Pronzini admits that his character is autobiographical, reflecting his own perceptions and reactions:

Nameless and I are the same person; or, rather, he is an extrapolation of me. His view of life, his hang-ups and weaknesses, his pulp collecting hobby—all are essentially mine. . . . So, even though I can't use it, his name is Bill Pronzini.

Indeed, when Pronzini's hero is referred to in one of the sections of *Twospot* (1978), a collaborative effort with Collin Wilcox, he is called "Bill." Thus, while the situation does not handicap the series—some readers are even intrigued by it—the precise meaning of the hero's anonymity is unclear and possibly not very important. Indeed, it seems ironic to be told the details of Nameless's life, where he lives (the upstairs apartment of a Victorian house in Pacific Heights), whom he sees, how he amuses himself, and yet never learn his name. Whether this irony is intended is left unclear.

The Nameless Detective series is arguably the longest currently running series in the genre. Noted from the beginning for its signature tone of sadness, Pronzini's alter ego has aged along with him. By 2006's *Mourners*, Nameless has a wife named Kerry (who is holding somewhat aloof) and an adopted daughter, Emily. He has two junior associates, Tamara and Jake, with troubles of their own and no lack of clients.

In the mid-1980's, Pronzini allowed his love of the Western genre—he has edited dozens of Western anthologies and collections—to spill over into his mystery writing with the invention of two new series characters. John Quincannon and his partner (and unrequited love interest) Sarah Carpenter are detectives working in San Francisco of the 1890's. Chiefly they solve locked-room mysteries and other "impossible" crimes, although they do encounter the occasional six-gun or thrown punch. Though the series has not progressed very far, it has achieved critical acclaim. One critic wrote that the historical setting contains "some of the most elaborate landscapes since those of Arthur Morrison in the 1890's," adding of the Delta region of the Sacramento River east of San Francisco that "this watery region is marked as being peculiarly Pronzini's own. J. G. Ballard has suggested that delta regions represent the unconscious, a sort of living map of the interior landscape of part of the human mind." The story "Burgade's Crossing," for example, involves a

search of the landscape for the possible site of a pre-meditated murder, so that the setting itself almost acts as a character.

Whether this series will be developed to the extent of the Nameless Detective series remains to be seen. With or without a name, Pronzini's detective does achieve a significant level of authenticity and freshness. Joining the ranks of today's liberated men, Nameless is unafraid to cry or communicate his emotional needs, fears, and concerns. He is willing to confess his desire to be loved and to have at least a few close friends. Nameless provides an alternative to the tough-guy private eyes of old.

Ira Smolensky and Marjorie Smolensky

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NAMELESS DETECTIVE SERIES: 1971-1980 • *The Snatch*, 1971; *The Vanished*, 1973; *Undercurrent*, 1973; *Blowback*, 1977; *Twospot*, 1978 (with Collin Wilcox); *Labyrinth*, 1979

1981-1990 • *Hoodwink*, 1981; *Dragonfire*, 1982; *Scattershot*, 1982; *Bindlestiff*, 1983; *Casefile*, 1983; *Double*, 1984 (with Marcia Muller); *Nightshades*, 1984; *Quicksilver*, 1984; *Bones*, 1985; *Deadfall*, 1986; *Shackles*, 1988; *Jackpot*, 1990

1991-2006 • *Breakdown*, 1991; *Epitaphs*, 1992; *Quarry*, 1992; *Demons*, 1993; *Hardcase*, 1995; *Sentinels*, 1996; *Spadework: A Collection of "Nameless Detective" Stories*, 1996; *Illusions*, 1997; *Boobytrap*, 1998; *Crazybone*, 2000; *Bleeders*, 2002; *Scenarios: The "Nameless Detective" Casebook*, 2003; *Spook*, 2003; *Nightcrawlers*, 2005; *Mourners*, 2006

CARMODY SERIES: *A Run in Diamonds*, 1973; *Carmody's Run*, 1992

QUINCANNON AND CARPENTER SERIES: *Quincannon*, 1985; *Carpenter and Quincannon, Professional Detective Services*, 1998; *Quincannon's Game*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1971-1980 • *The Stalker*, 1971; *Panic!*, 1972; *The Jade Figurine*, 1972 (as Foxx); *Snowbound*, 1974; *Dead Run*, 1975 (as Foxx); *Freebooty*, 1976 (as Foxx); *Games*, 1976; *The Running of Beasts*, 1976 (with Barry N. Malzberg); *Acts of Mercy*, 1977 (with Malzberg); *Wildfire*, 1978 (as Foxx); *Night Screams*, 1979 (with Malzberg)

1981-1990 • *Masques*, 1981; *Gun in Cheek*, 1982; *Day of the Moon*, 1983; *The Eye*, 1984 (with John Lutz); *Son of Gun in Cheek*, 1987; *The Lighthouse*, 1987 (with Muller); *Firewind*, 1989; *The Hangings*, 1989

1991-2004 • *Stacked Deck*, 1991; *The Tormentor*, 1994; *With an Extreme Burning*, 1994; *Blue Lonesome*, 1995; *A Wasteland of Strangers*, 1997; *Nothing but the Night*, 1999; *In an Evil Time*, 2001; *The Alias Man*, 2004

SHORT FICTION: *A Killing in Xanadu*, 1980; *Graveyard Plots: The Best Short Stories of Bill Pronzini*, 1985; *Small Felonies: Fifty Mystery Short Shorts*, 1988; *Criminal Intent I: All New Stories*, 1993 (with Muller and Ed Gorman); *Duo*, 1998 (with Muller); *Sleuths*, 1999; *Night Freight*, 2000; *Oddments: A Short Story Collection*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Prose Bowl*, 1980 (with Malzberg); *The Cambodia File*, 1980 (with Jack Anderson); *The Gallows Land*, 1983; *Starvation Camp*, 1984; *Prime Suspects*, 1987 (with Martin H. Greenberg); *Suspicious Characters*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Horse Soldiers*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Last Days of Horse-Shy Halloran*, 1987; *The Gunfighters*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *The Dying Time*, 1999 (as Saxon); *The Crimes of Jordan Wise*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *The Best Western Stories of Bill Pronzini*, 1990; *All the Long Years: Western Stories*, 2001; *Coyote and Quarter-Moon*, 2006

NONFICTION: *Gun in Cheek: A Study of "Alternative" Crime Fiction*, 1982; *San Francisco*, 1985 (with Larry Lee, Mark Stephenson, and West Light); *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*, 1986 (with Marcia Muller); *Son of Gun in Cheek*, 1987; *Six-Gun in Cheek: An Affectionate Guide to the "Worst" in Western Fiction*, 1997

EDITED TEXTS: 1976-1980 • *Tricks and Treats*, 1976 (with Joe Gores; also as *Mystery Writers Choice*); *Dark Sins, Dark Dreams*, 1977 (with Malzberg); *Midnight Specials*, 1977; *Shared Tomorrows: Collaboration in SF*, 1979 (with Malzberg); *Werewolf*, 1979; *Bug-Eyed Monsters*, 1980 (with Malzberg); *Mummy!*, 1980; *The Edgar Winners*, 1980; *Voodoo!*, 1980

1981-1985 • *Creature!*, 1981; *The Arbor House Necropolis*, 1981; *The Arbor House Treasury of Horror and the Supernatural*, 1981 (with Malzberg and Greenberg); *Specter!*, 1982; *The Arbor House Treasury of Great Western Stories*, 1982 (with Greenberg); *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulps*, 1983; *The Web She Weaves*, 1983 (with Muller); *Child's Ploy*, 1984 (with Muller); *The Best Western Stories of Wayne D. Overholser*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Steve Frazer*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Lawmen*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Mystery Hall of Fame*, 1984 (with Charles G. Waugh and Greenberg); *The Outlaws*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Western Hall of Fame*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *Witches' Brew*, 1984 (with Muller); *A Treasury of Civil War Stories*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *A Treasury of World War II Stories*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Baker's Dozen: Thirteen Short Espionage Novels*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Chapter and Hearse: Suspense Stories about the World of Books*, 1985 (with Muller); *Dark Lessons: Crime and Detection on Campus*, 1985 (with Muller); *Kill or Cure: Suspense Stories about the World of Medicine*, 1985 (with Muller); *Murder in the First Reel*, 1985 (with Waugh and Greenberg); *Police Procedurals*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *She Won the West: An Anthology of Western and Frontier Stories by Women*, 1985 (with Muller); *The Cowboys*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Deadly Arts*, 1985 (with Muller); *The Ethnic Detectives: Masterpieces of Mystery Fiction*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Second Reel West*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Warriors*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Wickedest Show on Earth: A Carnival of Circus Suspense*, 1985 (with Muller); *Woman Sleuths*, 1985 (with Greenberg)

1986-1990 • *101 Mystery Stories*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Best of the West: Stories That Inspired Classic Western Films*, 1986-1988 (3 volumes; with Greenberg); *Great Modern Police Stories*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Locked Room Puzzles*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Mystery in the Mainstream: An Anthology of Literary Crimes*, 1986 (with Greenberg and Malzberg; also known as *Crime and Crime Again: Mystery Stories by the World's Greatest Writers*); *The Railroaders*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *The Steamboaters*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *The Third Reel West*, 1986

(with Greenberg); *Wild Westerns: Stories from Grand Old Pulps*, 1986; *Manhattan Mysteries*, 1987 (with Carol-Lynn Rössel Waugh and Greenberg); *Prime Suspects*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Lewis B. Patten*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Cattlemen*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Gunfighters*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Horse Soldiers*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Uncollected Crimes*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Cloak and Dagger: A Treasury of Thirty-five Great Espionage Stories*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Criminal Elements*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Homicidal Acts*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Lady on the Case*, 1988 (with Muller and Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of Private Eye Stories*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *The Texans*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Felonious Assaults*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *More Wild Westerns*, 1989; *The Arizonans*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Frank Bonham*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Loren D. Estelman*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Californians*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of World War II Stories*, 1989; *Christmas Out West*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *New Frontiers*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Ryerson Johnson*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *The Northerners*, 1990 (with Greenberg)

1991-2001 • *The Best Western Stories of Les Savage, Jr.*, 1991; *The Montanans*, 1991 (with Greenberg); *Combat!: Great Tales of World War II*, 1992 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Ed Gorman*, 1992 (with Greenberg); *In the Big Country: The Best Western Stories of John Jakes*, 1993 (with Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of Short Crime Novels*, 1996 (with Greenberg); *American Pulp*, 1997 (with Gorman and Greenberg); *Detective Duos*, 1997 (with Muller); *Hard-Boiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories*, 1997 (with Jack Adrian); *Under the Burning Sun: Western Stories by H. A. DeRosso*, 1997; *Renegade River: Western Stories by Giff Cheshire*, 1998; *The Best of the American West: Outstanding Frontier Fiction*, 1998 (with Greenberg); *Heading West: Western Stories by Noel M. Loomis*, 1999; *Pure Pulp*, 1999 (with Gorman and Greenberg); *Riders of the Shadowlands*, 1999; *War Stories*, 1999 (with Greenberg); *Tracks in the Sand*, 2001

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MANUEL PUIG**Juan Manuel Puig**

Born: General Villegas, Argentina; December 28, 1932

Died: Cuernavaca, Mexico; July 22, 1990

Type of plot: Psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Manuel Puig's contribution to the mystery and detective genre is limited to a single novel, *The Buenos Aires Affair: Novela policial* (1973; *The Buenos Aires Affair: A Detective Novel*, 1976). A member of the literary avant-garde as well as a pop novelist, Puig mixed high and low culture in his fiction and rejected the dismissal of popular literature, such as detective fiction, as subliterate.

Each of Puig's novels can be identified with one or more genres of popular writing: serial melodrama, sci-

ence fiction, screenplay, and detective fiction. His use of these various genres shifted between parody and emulation. *The Buenos Aires Affair*, for example, combines a playful attitude toward the conventions of the detective novel with an earnest desire to present a spectacle and to communicate directly with a mass audience. In adapting the detective novel to his use, Puig commented that it was the ideal form for his proposed theme of contained violence. Nevertheless, his use of the genre was decidedly self-critical and experimental in the manner of Jorge Luis Borges or Alain Robbe-Grillet.

BIOGRAPHY

Manuel Puig was born on December 28, 1932, in the small town of General Villegas in the Argentine

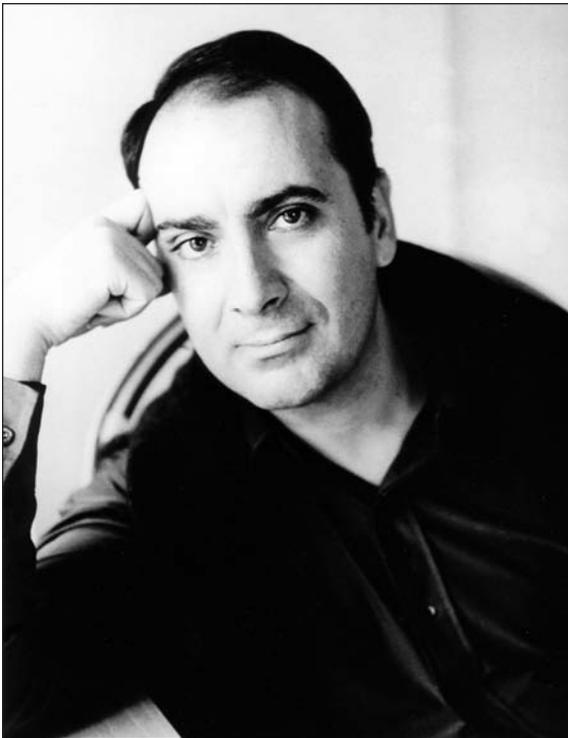
Pampas. According to his own account, the provincial elevation of machismo and authority made his daily existence extremely unpleasant in his youth, so that he sought escape by going to the movie theater. Puig's childhood immersion in the Hollywood superproductions of the 1930's and 1940's became a powerful influence in his life and work.

In 1951, Puig left the provinces to begin his studies at the university in Buenos Aires, expecting the big city to resemble Hollywood. Disappointed by reality, he left Argentina for Italy on a grant to study cinematography in 1956. In Italy he pursued his dream of working in the film industry, acting as an assistant director at Cinecittà in Rome until 1962. During this time, however, he became disillusioned with life on the set and began his first novel, *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968; *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, 1971), in part to express his disenchantment. As Puig later explained, that novel was an attempt to discover why he suddenly found himself at the age of thirty without a career or money and with the knowledge that his life's vocation was a sham. From that time onward, the be-

trayal of reality by illusion and the seduction of the individual by popular culture would be constant themes in his writing.

From 1964 until 1967, Puig worked as a clerk at Kennedy Airport in New York while he finished *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*. Following its publication, he returned to Buenos Aires and began a second novel, *Boquitas pintadas* (1969; *Heartbreak Tango*, 1973). His return to his home country was short-lived. Following the banning in Argentina of his third novel, *The Buenos Aires Affair*, Puig spent three years in exile in Mexico and then returned to New York in 1976. At that time he published what is perhaps his best-known work, *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976; *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, 1979). He later collaborated with director Hector Babenco on a film adaptation that premiered in 1985. He remained in exile for the rest of his life. Puig continued to write novels, plays, and screenplays, and his work has been translated into fourteen languages.

In 1989, Puig moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico. The following summer he underwent emergency surgery for an inflamed gallbladder and died shortly afterward.



Manuel Puig. (© Jerry Bauer)

ANALYSIS

Manuel Puig was not, strictly speaking, a mystery and detective novelist. His modus operandi was consistently more or less to usurp some popular genre for each of his novels. In *Heartbreak Tango*, he used the serialized melodrama, in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the screenplay. Even as he plundered the artifacts of mass culture, Puig's attitude toward popular culture was deeply ironic. It is this obvious ambivalence that made him one of the most self-conscious of twentieth century writers.

THE BUENOS AIRES AFFAIR

Consequently, Puig's use of the police-novel format for *The Buenos Aires Affair*, his third novel, reflects a sincere interest in the genre yet simultaneously permits him to parody its conventions. The result is an interesting amalgamation of pop fiction and the avant-garde. In reviewing the novel for *The New York Times Book Review*, Robert Alter called it a "sustained bravura performance by a writer keenly conscious of how both the novel as a literary form and the kinds of peo-

ple who are its best subjects have been caught up in the clichés of popular culture.”

Puig initially chose to write the book as a detective novel because he had already selected the themes he wanted to treat—repressed sexuality and contained violence. He believed that the narrative structure typical of detective literature would facilitate his project. In fact, the conventions of detective writing were particularly well suited to his undertaking. First, the rules of the genre are very well defined. Puig had only to subtitle his book “detective novel” to activate an entire set of expectations in readers. Second, the detective novel appeals to those who read critically and enjoy filling in missing details and information. Puig’s narrative technique has always required such readers.

Puig’s critics have often compared his technique to the neorealism of the French New Novelists. Puig was generally quick to deny any literary influence and to insist that the cinema had a greater impact on his work. Specifically, he mentioned Alfred Hitchcock as a major influence on *The Buenos Aires Affair*. The majority of Puig’s novels are attempts to render in prose reality as it might be seen by a camera’s eye—that is, with distortions, omissions, and plenty of room for an audience to draw false conclusions. This coincides with the efforts of the New Novelists to record reality in an objective fashion, without commentary or interpretation in the text, much as a camera would. It is the same nonintrusive style of writing that French critic Roland Barthes has called “zero degree writing.” The technique in itself creates mystery, and Puig’s fiction has much in common with works by New Novelists Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor that have been classified as detective fiction.

The classic detective story has well-defined rules of functioning. Generally, the whodunit begins with a crime, preferably a murder. The story, then, involves a detective’s reconstruction of the event from available clues to unmask the perpetrator of the crime. The text moves toward a solution while at the same time postponing that solution through a series of false leads and delays. It is this process of discovery, rather than the answer to the problem or the identity of the criminal, that forms the body of the book. The detective, not being omniscient, must piece together his solution

through careful observation of evidence found at the scene of the crime as well as from eyewitness accounts that are necessarily fragmented and sometimes unreliable. Puig’s fiction works in a similar manner, often requiring readers to supply connections and interpretations.

In *The Buenos Aires Affair*, Puig uses a variety of narrative techniques. There is no consistent narrative voice or point of view, and there is no detective other than the reader. Sometimes a dispassionate third-person narrator catalogs objects in a room, listing, for example, the sharpest object, the most expensive objects, metal objects, and the like. At other times, an omniscient narrator lays bare the hearts and minds of the characters, revealing their dreams and sexual fantasies. The novel is itself a process of investigation and a constant reminder of the ambiguity of life, the complexity of character, the ultimate inaccessibility of reality. This philosophy of fiction is central to Puig’s work and has its origins, for him, in film technique. The notion that some points of view are more privileged than others, just as some witnesses are more reliable than others, is also implicit in detective fiction.

As a master of the occluded narrative, Puig conceals and withholds information throughout the novel. In one chapter, he records one side (all that a casual observer would realistically hear) of a phone conversation in a police station, and he includes fragments of the newspaper articles the character is reading. He also offers a shorthand transcription of another telephone conversation. While the message of the transcription seems apparent, the missing words create ambiguity.

Thus, the importance of point of view is demonstrated: Reality is fragmented and open to interpretation. Reading a novel by Puig is essentially detective work. He presents information in a manner that requires readers to piece together the truth from the available clues, and this process often leads them to mistaken conclusions. Puig has used this technique consistently in his fiction. It also commonly occurs in detective fiction: In the process of discovering the solution to the problem, the readers and the detective pursue a number of false leads as they uncover the missing links that will allow all the clues to make sense. Puig, too, lures the readers into erroneous conclusions.

Clearly, in its very nature, the detective-story format lends itself to Puig's project. Its conventions are helpful to him; in fact, they provide a justification, more or less, for his customarily inventive method of telling a story. However, Puig goes beyond using the rules of the genre: He draws readers' attention to the fact that there are elaborate rules dictating how they read. By revealing to readers their own reading processes, Puig shows them how much they can be deceived by all manner of fictions. By the end of the novel, readers discover that the murder they thought they were witnessing at the start did not take place.

The Buenos Aires Affair begins with what can easily be construed as a crime. A mother discovers her daughter's absence from the house they are sharing and notes certain signs of intrusion. In the subsequent chapter, Puig describes an ominous scene in which a woman—gagged, very still and pale, and missing an eye—is lying on a bed. A man dressed in a towel is standing over her. Although the details are vague, and the narrator does note that there is no sign of violence, readers will construe this scene as typical of the scene of the crime in the whodunit. Having shown readers the anticipated "crime," the narrator then predictably flashes back to reconstruct the events leading up to it and re-create the lives of the presumed female victim and male perpetrator.

At this point, the novel shifts to a style that has been called pop Freudianism. In an exercise in psychoanalysis at once serious and parodic, it relates how both "victim" and "criminal" suffer from sexual disorders originating in a missing parent and exacerbated by a damaging sexual experience. The woman appears to enjoy abusive sex; the man needs to be the abuser. The characters are ideally cast for their respective roles. Clearly, this is a crime waiting to happen.

There is an element of the thriller here too, as Tzvetan Todorov defines it. The man has committed a previous, undiscovered murder (or so he thinks, although the victim's death is not verified). In this case, just the right set of circumstances combine with his psychosis to produce violent results—violence that suggests the possibility of a future episode. The novel is sustained by the readers' suspense as they await the eruption of the projected violence that will fully ex-

plain the mysterious scene at the beginning.

As Puig leads up to the reenactment of the murder the readers believe has occurred, he endeavors to justify it in psychoanalytical terms. When at length the narrative returns to the scene with which it began, the perspective is much more informed. As it turns out, the man has lured the woman to his apartment to pretend to another woman that he is going to murder her to displace her suspicion that he murdered the original victim (who may or may not be dead), as he has partially confessed to her.

Unlike the typical whodunit, the novel returns to its starting point not so that the detective can disclose his ingenious solution to the crime but so that Puig can reveal to readers how they have been duped. Anticipating a murder, readers create one from the textual fragments supplied, or from the gaps within the text. They then proceed to read the psychological case histories as means of discovering how or why the crime occurred. In the process, they discover instead the conventions by which they read detective fiction (or any fiction, for that matter). As the scene of the supposed murder comes to a close, the proposed victim sleeps, while the would-be criminal departs and kills himself by driving too fast. His case history concludes with a clinical, pseudoscientific autopsy report.

Finally, and typically, it is the relationship between the text and the reader, together with the reading activity itself, that becomes the focus of the novel. By tricking readers into misreading a series of textual clues and activating a set of extratextual expectations, Puig managed to reveal the betraying power of fictions. This was the central theme in *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, in which he explored his personal sense of having been a victim of cinematic illusions. Present in all Puig's work, this theme is echoed in *The Buenos Aires Affair*. The characters, as their lives are depicted, fall prey to the illusions perpetrated by popular culture. Lest readers judge them too harshly for their weakness, however, Puig showed how easily the readers themselves are deceived by a fictional construct and fall for all the clichés of the detective novel. In doing so, Puig criticized yet affirmed the value of popular culture.

Barbara L. Hussey
Updated by Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *The Buenos Aires Affair: Novela policial*, 1973 (*The Buenos Aires Affair: A Detective Novel*, 1976)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *La traición de Rita Hayworth*, 1968 (*Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, 1971); *Boquitas pintadas*, 1969 (*Heartbreak Tango*, 1973); *El beso de la mujer araña*, 1976 (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, 1979); *Pubis angelical*, 1979 (English translation, 1986); *Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas*, 1980 (*Eternal Curse on the Reader of These Pages*, 1982); *Sangre de amor correspondido*, 1982 (*Blood of Requited Love*, 1984); *Cae la noche tropical*, 1988 (*Tropical Night Falling*, 1991)

PLAYS: *Bajo un manto de estrellas*, pb. 1983 (*Under a Mantle of Stars*, 1985); *El beso de la mujer araña*, pb. 1983 (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, 1986; adaptation of his novel); *Misterio del ramo de rosas*, pb. 1987 (*Mystery of the Rose Bouquet*, 1988)

SCREENPLAYS: *Boquitas pintadas*, 1974 (adaptation of his novel); *El lugar sin límites*, 1978 (adaptation of José Donoso's novel)

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Q

QIU XIAOLONG

Born: Shanghai, China; 1953

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chief Inspector Chen, 2000-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHIEF INSPECTOR CHEN CAO is in charge of investigating politically sensitive cases for the Shanghai Police Bureau. In his mid-thirties and already an important cadre, he has an understated manner, discretion, and integrity. These help him solve difficult cases without upsetting the Communist Party, which rules China. He is also a celebrated poet and translator with an interest in American literature. His dedication to work leaves him with little time for his personal life and romance, much to the annoyance of his mother, who expects him to marry and start a family.

CONTRIBUTION

Literary reviewers greeted Qiu Xiaolong's Chief Inspector Chen novels with warmth, albeit more for their setting and literary texture than for their plots. Before the first in the series, *Death of a Red Heroine*, appeared in 2000, relatively few novels in English dealt with the changes taking place in the People's Republic of China in the 1990's from a Chinese point of view. Accordingly, Qiu's descriptions of his native Shanghai piqued the interest of critics and readers alike. The novels reveal a exuberant nation in transition from a largely closed, state-controlled economy and society to a much more open, capitalistic society. They also portray the conflicts between the Communist Party and the new openness and between traditional Chinese values and the modern mania for material wealth.

Although some reviewers found Qiu's English prose style somewhat stilted and his text burdened

with explanations of Chinese culture, many cited the freshness of his writing. It was said to bring an engaging realism to his characters and convey much vivid information about such matters as Chinese cuisine and architecture. Moreover, critics considered his inclusion of Chinese and English poetry as innovative, moving, and evocative in establishing the intellectual milieu of Shanghai. *Death of a Red Heroine* was awarded the 2001 Anthony Award for Best First Mystery and named one of the year's best five political novels by *The Wall Street Journal* and one of the ten best books by National Public Radio in 2000.

BIOGRAPHY

Qiu Xiaolong was born in the Chinese port city of Shanghai in 1953, just four years after the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China. A shop owner, Qiu's father was classified as a capitalist during China's massive internal restructuring, the Cultural Revolution (1969-1976), and forced to write a "confession." Because his father had undergone eye surgery and was temporarily unable to see, Qiu wrote the confession for him, joking later that it was the beginning of his writing career. At the age of sixteen, Qiu suffered a serious case of bronchitis. It kept him bedridden at home while most of his classmates were sent away for re-education under the Educated Youths Going to the Countryside program. While reading to amuse himself, he developed a serious interest in writing. In 1977 he began studying English and entered the East Chinese Normal University. He subsequently studied at the Chinese Academy of Social Science, earning a master's degree in Western literature.

In the early 1980's Qiu became an assistant research professor at the Shanghai Academy of Social Science. He began writing poetry and stories in Chinese and

translated English and American literature, including the works of T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, Joseph Conrad, William Faulkner, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound. After winning awards for both his translations and his own poetry, he became a member of the Chinese Writers' Association. In 1986 he traveled to the United States for the first time, attending the third Chinese American Writers' Conference. He returned in 1988 to study for a doctorate at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, on a Ford Foundation grant. The next year the Chinese government suppressed a student rebellion in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, an act that profoundly disturbed Qiu. He decided to defect and remained in St. Louis, where he was joined by his wife, Wang Lijun; they have a daughter, Julia.

Qiu became a college instructor, teaching Chinese language and literature, and a writer. He also translated Western crime fiction into Chinese and Chinese poetry into English. He published *Treasury of Chinese Love Poems: In Chinese and English* in 2003. The same year his first book of English poetry, *Lines Around China* (2003), appeared and earned for him a Missouri Arts Council Writers' Biennial Award. He told an interviewer that he began writing fiction about his homeland to explore the changing conditions in Shanghai during the 1990's. It was not his initial intention to write a mystery story. That it turned into one, sold well, was translated into ten languages, and resulted in demands for sequels from his publisher astonished him. He continues to write poetry and fiction. Known for his self-deprecating manner and sense of humor, Qiu has maintained contact with China, periodically returning to Shanghai to renew his acquaintance with its food, literary culture, and evolving society.

ANALYSIS

Qiu Xiaolong's mystery novels are set and thematically centered in Shanghai in the 1990's, when the nation was making a swift transition from a centrally planned economy to an open marketplace based on capitalism. Although the novels are not told exclusively from the point of view of Chief Inspector Chen Cao, he is the primary means by which Qiu exposes the deep turmoil of that transition. The fictional detective serves as a alter ego for the author, whose concern

for his hometown informs nearly all of his writing. However, as Qiu insisted to interviewers, Chen differs markedly in character from him. In fact, Qiu remarked that he does not much care for his protagonist. Chen is loosely based on a friend of Qiu, a literature student who became a police officer. Like modern China, Chen makes his uncertain way in life by struggling with fundamental contradictions. From these contradictions emerge the specific themes of the Chen series.

Chen is dutiful and loyal. He values his relations to those around him, especially his partner, Detective Yu Guangming; Yu's father, Old Hunter; and Yu's wife, Peiqin. Accordingly, he is modest and generous, but his high rank means he must often keep information from them and expose them to dangers during the course of his investigations for the special cases squad of the Shanghai Police Bureau. In that position he is a Communist Party member, and his first loyalty requires him always to act in the "interest of the party." His job is politically delicate in that he must solve cases even when the solutions might expose the party to internal or international criticism, and yet he must prevent such exposure. Moreover, Chen's dedication to his job brings him into unintentional conflict with his mother, for whom he maintains a deep devotion, as Chinese traditional values require. His mother wants him to marry and produce grandchildren, but he lacks both the time for romance and the inclination to dwell on his own desires.

Nowhere does the conflict between traditional values and modern life become more evident than in Chen's dealings with corruption. Corruption permeates Qiu's novels, reflecting the widespread pursuit of selfish interest by government leaders, bureaucrats, and businesspeople at all levels in China. In *A Case of Two Cities* (2006), in the course of investigating a scandal involving Xing Xing, a businessman made wealthy through his connections to high-ranking party members, Chen discovers that the Communist Party wishes to make the businessman a scapegoat, punishing him but not changing the underlying corruption. He finds that corruption goes beyond the party, being ingrained in Chinese society. The characters in *A Case of Two Cities* speak of a "white way" and a "black way" to accomplish nearly every public action—the officially approved or legal means

in contrast with the underground, black-market way, often involving bribery. Chen himself engages in corrupt practices because of his loyalty to friends. For example, he uses his clout as a chief inspector to get a job as a traffic monitor for his partner's father, Old Hunter, a retired police officer who cannot survive on his pension. He also does favors for several businessmen who help him, at least one of whom has connections to organized crime.

As Qiu vividly shows, the white-way and black-way conflict arises from the rapid economic and social change in China. The oldest generation, represented by Old Hunter, spent their lives with an "iron rice bowl" economy, guaranteed a job and health care from cradle to grave. The Communist Party taught them to believe that everyone should receive equal treatment. The liberalizing economic policies of Deng Xiaoping changed that. Proclaiming that it is "glorious to be wealthy," Deng encouraged entrepreneurship and capitalism. It bewildered the older generation, but many of those who grew up during and after the Cultural Revolution, like Chen, seized on any opportunity to grow rich. Many became wealthy, and their free spending drove up prices in urban China so that those dependent on the old system could not handle the cost of living in Shanghai. They sank into poverty, and an economic gap was created between young and old and between country people and city people. As one character bitterly quips in *A Case of Two Cities*, "The gap between rich and poor is really like that between cloud and clod." Just to survive, many poor must resort to the black way to get the food and services they need.

Qiu finds a spiritual vacuum in post-Maoist China. The values of loyalty to the state, mass political action, and contentment with an equal share are obsolete. Partly it is the lingering trauma from the Cultural Revolution that is responsible. The deprivations and turmoil of that era left the young, like Qiu, longing for security and liberties. The moribund efforts to sustain the old communist values are symbolized in *Death of a Red Heroine* by a young woman who is named a National Model Worker at a time when the distinction no longer means much. In the place of the communist values, Qiu writes, have come rampant materialism and the scramble for money and social advantages. This covetousness disillusioned Chen and many like

him, who still owe their careers to the autocratic but increasingly venal one-party system. Moreover, many Chinese grew increasingly enamored of Western culture and material goods in the 1990's. Chen is among them. Not only does he like American poetry, but he moves, albeit slowly, toward a romance with an American U.S. marshal, Katherine Rohn, his occasional partner in *A Loyal Character Dancer* (2002) and *A Case of Two Cities*.

Chen follows the advice of his father, a Confucian scholar, to negotiate among his conflicting interests: A man must recognize what he can do and what he cannot do. Chen resolves to persevere in trying to bring as much justice for the poor and victimized as the party will allow, whatever the personal cost to him.

DEATH OF A RED HEROINE

Death of a Red Heroine focuses on a beautiful young clerk, honored as a National Model Worker, who is found murdered in Shanghai in 1990. Chief Inspector Chen investigates her murder, following an elaborate sequence of shadowy clues and revelations until he discovers that the culprit appears to be the pampered son of a high-ranking Communist Party official and therefore untouchable for political reasons. Chen sees the case as the slaying of a proletariat hero by a corrupt member of the oligarchy. Despite the pressure on Chen to end the investigation, he arrests the young man, who is tried and executed the same day. The scandal besmirches but does not damage the party, and Chen earns a reputation as a trustworthy law enforcement official.

A LOYAL CHARACTER DANCER

In *A Loyal Character Dancer*, Chief Inspector Chen teams with Inspector Catherine Rohn of the U.S. Marshal Service to track down the missing wife of a witness in an important international case involving the smuggling of illegal workers to the United States. Their investigation uncovers unsettling connivance between police officers and gangsters, witnesses the aftermath of injustices wrought by the Cultural Revolution, and reveals a government both reluctant to expose its own corruption but eager to appear cooperative in international affairs. Chen and Rohn become close friends and are on the verge of an affair when she must return to the United States as the fugitive has

been located because of Chen's spectacular hunches and imperturbable diligence.

WHEN RED IS BLACK

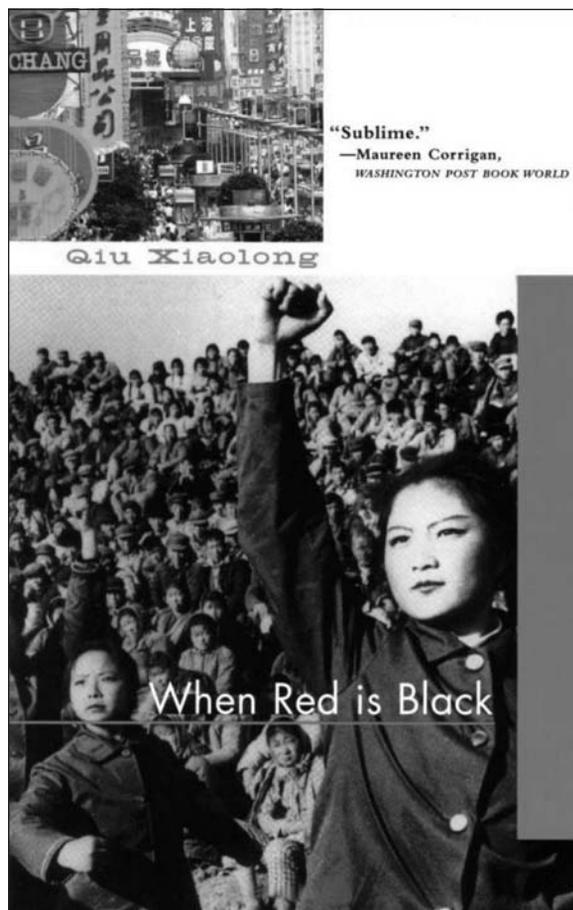
When an internationally known dissident writer, Yin Lige, is murdered in her shabby apartment in *When Red Is Black* (2004), people suspect that the murder was politically motivated. Chief Inspector Chen's squad is called in to catch the murderer without embarrassing the party. While Chen is on leave (to translate a business brochure to make money to pay for his mother's medical care), Detective Yu does the footwork, but Chen remains the strategist of the investigation. The team not only finds the murderer but also discovers that Yin's reputation is based on plagiarism from a book by her teacher and lover, a famous but denounced professor who died during the Cultural Revolution. The case highlights a scar left by the fanatical Red Guard that dominated the era, the government's

continued suppression of literature for tenuous political reasons, and the entanglement of quid pro quo friendships that Chen needs to solve the mystery.

A CASE OF TWO CITIES

In *A Case of Two Cities*, Chief Inspector Chen pursues a fugitive from a corruption scandal, Xing Xing, a wealthy businessman whose political connections reach to the Politburo itself. Chen can conduct his investigation only when he is given carte blanche by the head of the Party Central Committee for Discipline. As he closes in on the solution, however, some people in the party hierarchy become alarmed. They deflect Chen by sending him to the United States as the head of a writers' delegation. Detective Yu continues the investigation in China while Chen manages to track down Xing in Los Angeles with the help of his friend Catherine Rohn of the U.S. Marshal Service. Chen arrests Xing, but at a high cost: Two people close to Chen are murdered, and he himself is targeted. Xing is punished, but high-level corruption appears untouched. The party wants the appearance of battling corruption, but nothing more—a source of self-doubt and chagrin to Chen. The novel ends with several themes unresolved, including the reignited love interest with Rohn. Despite his uneasiness in his job and the danger to him, Chen resolves to persevere.

Roger Smith



PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHIEF INSPECTOR CHEN SERIES: *Death of a Red Heroine*, 2000; *A Loyal Character Dancer*, 2002; *When Red Is Black*, 2004; *A Case of Two Cities*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

POETRY: *Lines around China*, 2003

TRANSLATIONS: *Shu qing shi ren Yezhi shi xuan*, 1986 (of the lyric poetry of William Butler Yeats); *Lida yu tian e*, 1987 (of "Leda and the Swan" and other poems by William Butler Yeats); *Treasury of Chinese Love Poems: In Chinese and English*, 2003; *Evoking Tang: An Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, 2007

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Chi, Pang-Yuan, and David Der-Wei Wang. *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century:*

A Critical Survey. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. Fifteen essays on modern literature in Taiwan and mainland China, including an examination of the post-Maoist literature frequently referred to in Qiu's novels.

Cummins, Caroline. "Qiu Xiaolong and the Chinese Enigma." *January Magazine* (November, 2002).

This article discusses Qiu's background and attitudes about China, the origin and character of Inspector Chen, and Qiu's purposes in writing.

French, Howard. "For Creator of Inspector Chen, China Is a Tough Case to Crack." *The New York Times*, April 7, 2007, p. A4. In this profile of Qiu, the author describes his upbringing and reflects on China and his work.

Kinkley, Jeffrey C. "Chinese Crime Fiction." *Society* 30, no. 4 (May-June, 1993): 51-62. An overview

article about the origin of Chinese mystery narratives, the difficulties of writing them in China, and typical themes. Sheds light on Qiu's work.

_____. *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000. Kinkley recounts the rise of crime fiction in China following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, tracing both its native forebears and its borrowings from Western literature. Helps place Qiu's fiction.

Zhao, Henry Y. H. "The River Fans Out: Chinese Fiction Since the Late 1970's." *European Review* 11, no. 2 (May, 2003): 193-209. A review of post-Mao fiction in general, arguing that the utilitarian, political nature of fiction before 1989 changed during the 1990's to an appreciation of literature for its own sake. Provides context for Qiu's work.

ELLERY QUEEN

AUTHORS

Frederic Dannay (Daniel Nathan; 1905-1982) and Manfred B. Lee (Manford Lepofsky; 1905-1971); Avram Davidson (1923-1993); Richard Deming (1915-1983); Edward D. Hoch (1930-); Stephen Marlowe (Milton Lesser; 1928-); Talmage Powell (1920-2000); Theodore Sturgeon (Edward Hamilton Waldo; 1918-1985); Jack Vance (John Holbrook Vance; 1916-)

Also wrote as Barnaby Ross

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Ellery Queen, 1929-1971

Drury Lane, 1932-1933

Tim Corrigan, 1966-1968

Mike McCall, 1969-1972

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ELLERY QUEEN, a mystery writer and an amateur sleuth, is single and lives with his father in New York City. In his mid-twenties when the series begins, he is

middle-aged by its close and has lost much of the effete brittleness of character that marked his earliest appearances. Brilliant and well-read, he has a restless energy and a sharp grasp of nuance and detail that he brings to bear on the crimes he investigates—and later records in murder mystery form. He is sometimes deeply affected by the cases on which he works and often blames himself for failing to arrive at a quicker solution.

INSPECTOR RICHARD QUEEN, Ellery's father, is a respected member of the New York Police Department. A longtime widower, fond of snuff, he lives with his adored son, whom he often consults on particularly difficult cases. A kindly man who is nevertheless tough and persistent in his pursuit of the truth, he enjoys an affectionate, bantering relationship with Ellery.

DJUNA, the Queens' young houseboy and cook, appears regularly throughout the earlier books in the series. A street waif when he is first taken in by Inspector Queen, he takes charge of the two men's Upper West Side apartment while still a teenager. Bright, slight of

build, and possibly a Gypsy by birth, he is tutored and trained by Ellery and his father and greatly admires them both.

CONTRIBUTION

The novels and short stories of Ellery Queen span four decades and have sold more than 150 million copies worldwide, making Queen one of the mystery genre's most popular authors. (For the sake of clarity and simplicity, "Ellery Queen" will be referred to throughout this article as an individual, although the name is actually the pseudonym of two writers, Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee, and several other writers who worked with them.) Queen is both the author and the leading character in his novels.

Queen's early novels are elaborate puzzles, carefully plotted and solved with almost mathematical logic and precision. They represent a style of detective fiction that flourished in the 1920's, and Queen's contributions have become classics of the form. As the series progressed and Queen developed as a character, the books improved in depth and content, sometimes incorporating sociological, political, or philosophical themes. Their settings range from New York to Hollywood to small-town America, and each is examined with perceptive intelligence. In several of the series' later books, Queen abandons outward reality for the sake of what Dannay termed "fun and games," letting a mystery unfold in a setting that is deliberately far-fetched or farcical.

Queen's novels and stories are also famed for several key plot devices that have become trademarks of his style. Among them are the dying message (a clue left by the victim to the killer's identity), the negative clue (a piece of information that should be present and is notable by its absence), the challenge to the reader (a point in the story at which Queen addresses the reader directly and challenges him to provide the solution), and the double solution (in which one, entirely plausible solution is presented and is then followed by a second, which offers a surprising twist on the first).

Queen's contributions to the field of mystery and detection are not limited to his novels and short stories. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, begun in 1941, remains one of the world's leading mystery pub-

lications, printing stories by a wide range of authors, while Queen the detective has also been the hero of a long-running radio series, *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* (1939-1948), and several television series, the first of which aired in 1950. In addition, Queen founded the Mystery Writers of America and edited dozens of mystery anthologies and short-story collections.

BIOGRAPHY

The two men who together invented the Ellery Queen persona were Brooklyn-born cousins, Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee. In reality, their famous alter ego is a pseudonym for two pseudonyms: Dannay was born Daniel Nathan, while Lee's real name was Manford Lepofsky. Both were born in 1905, and both attended Boys' High School in Brooklyn. Lee went on to receive a degree from New York University in 1925,



Frederic Dannay. (Library of Congress)

where he pursued what was to be a lifelong interest in music. In 1942, Lee married actress Kaye Brinker, his second wife, with whom he had eight children—four daughters and four sons. Dannay was married three times: in 1926 to Mary Beck (who later died), with whom he had two sons, in 1947 to Hilda Wisenthal (who died in 1972), with whom he had one son, and in 1975 to Rose Koppel.

During the 1920's, Dannay worked as a writer and art director for a New York advertising agency, while Lee was employed, also in New York, as a publicity writer for several film studios. In 1928, the two cousins began collaborating on a murder mystery, spurred on by a generous prize offered in a magazine detective-fiction contest. The two won the contest, but the magazine was bought by a competitor before the results were announced. The following year, however, Frederick A. Stokes Company, the publishing house cosponsoring the contest, published the cousins' novel, *The Roman Hat Mystery* (1929), and Ellery Queen was born.

By 1931, Dannay and Lee were able to quit their jobs and devote themselves completely to their writing, producing one or two books a year throughout the 1930's. During this period, the pair also wrote briefly under the name Barnaby Ross, publishing the four books that make up the Drury Lane series, *The Tragedy of X* (1932), *The Tragedy of Y* (1932), *The Tragedy of Z* (1933), and *Drury Lane's Last Case* (1933). The bulk of their energy, however, was directed toward Queen, and the series flourished. Queen's stories were a regular feature in many magazines of the period, and their popularity brought Dannay and Lee to Hollywood, which would later serve as the setting for several of their books.

It was also during the 1930's that Queen began making appearances on the lecture circuit, and Dannay and Lee's background in advertising and publicity came into play. It was virtually unknown in the early stages of their career that Queen was actually two men, and the cousins perpetuated their readers' ignorance by sending only Dannay, clad in a black mask, to give the lectures. Later, Lee would also appear, as Barnaby Ross, and the pair would treat audiences to a carefully planned "literary argument" between their two fictional creations. It was not until the cousins first

went to Hollywood that the world learned that Ellery Queen was actually Dannay and Lee.

During the 1940's, Dannay and Lee produced fewer books and stories, choosing instead to devote themselves to their weekly radio show, *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, which ran until 1948. In 1941, the pair also created *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, with Dannay serving as the principal editor. Their collaboration continued throughout the 1950's and 1960's as they produced more Queen novels and stories, edited numerous anthologies and short-story collections, and cofounded the Mystery Writers of America. Dannay also wrote an autobiographical novel, *The Golden Summer* (1953), under the name Daniel Nathan. In 1958, they published *The Finishing Stroke*, a book intended as the last Queen mystery, but they returned to their detective five years later and eventually produced seven more Queen novels, the last of which, *A Fine and Private Place*, appeared in 1971, the year of Lee's death. Dannay continued his work with the magazine until his own death eleven years later.

Among the critical acclaim and wide array of awards Dannay and Lee received were numerous Edgar Allan Poe awards and a Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1961 and a place on a 1951 international list of the ten best active mystery writers. Throughout their long partnership, the pair, who bore a remarkable resemblance to each other and often finished each other's sentences in conversations, steadfastly refused to discuss the details of their collaboration. The division of labor between them, in terms of plotting, characterization, and editing, remains unknown.

It is known, however, that during Lee and Dannay's lifetimes, their pseudonym became a household name, and numerous mystery novels by Ellery Queen were published by other writers under Lee's or Dannay's supervision. This type of collaboration began in the early 1940's with novelizations of filmscripts. Eventually, two new series characters were introduced under Queen's name: Tim Corrigan and Mike McCall. Some of the authors who wrote as Ellery Queen have been identified: Avram Davidson, Richard Deming, Edward D. Hoch, Stephen Marlowe, Talmage Powell, Theodore Sturgeon, and Jack Vance.

ANALYSIS

Like Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen was a master of intricate plotting. From the very first of the Queen novels, *The Roman Hat Mystery*, his cases are cunningly devised puzzles that the reader must work to assemble along with Queen. Unlike some practitioners of the art, Queen is a believer in fair play; all the pieces to his puzzles are present, if the reader is observant enough to spot them. One of the features of many of the books is Queen's famous "challenge to the reader," in which the narrator notes that all the clues have now been presented and diligent mystery lovers are invited to offer their own solutions before reading on to learn Queen's. The mysteries abound with misdirections and red herrings, but no vital clue is ever omitted or withheld—although arcane bits of knowledge are sometimes required to reach the proper solution.

THE EARLY QUEEN BOOKS

In Queen's earliest books, all of which sport "nationality" titles such as *The Egyptian Cross Mystery* (1932) or *The Chinese Orange Mystery* (1934), the clever plotting is often at the expense of character development (as is also true of Christie). The Ellery Queen featured in these novels is a rather cool, bloodless character—an assessment shared by at least one half of the writing partnership that created him. According to Francis M. Nevins, Jr., in his later years, Lee was fond of referring to the early Queen as "the biggest prig that ever came down the pike." It is an accurate description, and one that the Queen sought to change later in his career.

Queen appears in the early books as a brilliant, self-absorbed gentleman sleuth, complete with pince-nez and a passion for rare books. As the series progressed, he slowly grew into a character of some depth and feeling, although he never reached the level of three-dimensional humanity achieved by Dorothy L. Sayers in her development of Lord Peter Wimsey. Indeed, Wimsey is an apt comparison for Queen; both are gentleman sleuths with scholarly interests who begin their fictional careers more as caricatures than characters. Yet Sayers fleshed out her detective so successfully in the following decade and a half that Wimsey's emotional life becomes a central feature in several of her later novels. Queen, on the other hand, is

humanized and sketched in without ever becoming a truly compelling figure apart from his dazzling crime-solving talents.

Character development aside, however, Queen's mysteries employ several ingenious recurring plot devices that have become trademarks of the series. Chief among these is the "dying message," in which the victim somehow provides a vital clue to his killer's identity, a ploy that would play an important part in many of the series' later books. It first appeared in *The Tragedy of X*, a Drury Lane novel originally written under the name Barnaby Ross and later reissued with Ellery Queen listed as the author. *The Scarlet Letters* (1953) features one of the most gripping examples of the device, as a dying man leaves a clue for Ellery by writing on the wall in his own blood. *The Roman Hat Mystery* contains another important trademark, the "negative clue," in this case a top hat that should have been found with the victim's body but is missing. The negative clue exemplifies Queen's skills as a detective: He is able to spot not only important evidence at the scene but also details that should have been present and are not.

THE FINISHING STROKE

Another familiar motif in Queen's stories is a carefully designed pattern of clues, sometimes left deliberately by the murderer, which point the way to the crime's solution. *The Finishing Stroke* contains a superb example of the technique in its description of a series of odd gifts left on the twelve days of Christmas for the murderer's intended victim (although the fact that a knowledge of the Phoenician alphabet is necessary to arrive at the solution may strike some readers as unfair). Several of the plots, including those of four back-to-back novels, *Ten Days' Wonder* (1948), *Cat of Many Tails* (1949), *Double, Double* (1950), and *The Origin of Evil* (1951), hinge on a series of seemingly unrelated events, with the murderer's identity hidden within the secret pattern that connects them.

CAT OF MANY TAILS

Several of Queen's books also contain "double solutions," with Queen providing an initial, plausible solution and then delving deeper and arriving at a second, correct conclusion. This device brings added suspense to the stories, as well as opening the door to the realm of psychological detection into which Queen

sometimes ventures. In *Cat of Many Tails*, Queen's initial conclusion, plausible except for one small detail, is forced on him by a guilt-stricken suspect who is attempting to shield the true murderer. A similar situation arises in *And on the Eighth Day* (1964), when Queen is deliberately misled—this time by a suspect with noble motives—into providing an incorrect solution that leads to a man's death.

The psychological motivations of his characters play an increasingly important part in Queen's books as the series progresses. One of the author's favorite ploys is the criminal who uses other characters to carry out his plans, a situation that occurs in *Ten Days' Wonder*, *The Origin of Evil*, and *The Scarlet Letters*. In these cases, Queen is forced to look beyond the physical details of the crime and search for insight into the mind of the murderer. Often the quarry he seeks is toying with him, taking advantage of the knowledge that Queen is his adversary to tease him with clues or lead him astray. At the close of both *Ten Days' Wonder* and *Cat of Many Tails*, Queen is overcome with guilt, blaming himself for not solving the cases more quickly and possibly preventing further deaths. Indeed, *Cat of Many Tails* opens with Queen so shattered by his confrontation with Diedrich Van Horn, the villain of *Ten Days' Wonder*, that he has given up sleuthing altogether—until his father's pleas draw him into a suspenseful serial killer case.

The filial relationship between Ellery Queen and Inspector Richard Queen plays a far greater part in the series' earlier books than it does in later ones. Queen and his father share a Manhattan apartment located on West Eighty-seventh Street (the site of New York's famous Murder Ink bookstore), and Inspector Queen's long career with the police force provides an entrée for Ellery Queen to many of his cases. The two are devoted to each other, and the inspector's admiration for his son's brilliant detective powers knows no bounds. Eventually, however, Queen the author may have believed that he had exhausted the possibilities of the father-son crime-solving team, for Ellery's later cases tend to occur away from home.

CALAMITY TOWN

A wider variety of settings for his books also gave Queen the opportunity to work a thread of sociological

observations throughout his later stories. *Calamity Town* (1942) is set in the small community of Wrightsville (also the setting for *Double, Double*), and Queen colors his story with details of small-town life. Queen knew that there is a particular horror inherent in crimes that shatter an apparently tranquil and unspoiled community. Yet urban crimes have their own form of terror, one that Queen examines in *Cat of Many Tails* as the serial killer strikes seemingly random victims and brings New York City to the brink of panic and chaos. The action shifts from Greenwich Village and Times Square to Harlem and the Upper East Side as Queen searches for the thread that links the victims' lives. In other Queen novels, Hollywood comes under close scrutiny, sometimes with bemused humor and amazement (*The Four of Hearts*, 1938) or contempt for its greed and power-seeking (*The Origin of Evil*).

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

The Origin of Evil is also representative of the forays into philosophy and religion that Queen undertakes on occasion. This story, whose title is a play on Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), explores humankind's innate capacity for evil. Religious philosophy is given an interesting twist in *And on the Eighth Day*, in which Ellery stumbles on a lost desert community and is taken by its inhabitants to be a prophet whose coming had been foretold to them. Although he believes that their reaction to him is based on a series of misunderstandings and coincidences, he finds that his presence among them has indeed come at a crucial time, and the fulfillment of their ancient prophecy unfolds before his eyes. One chapter, in a clear biblical reference, consists simply of the sentence "And Ellery wept."

Ellery Queen's novels and stories are mysteries with classic components: a murder, a set of clues, a group of suspects, and a gifted detective capable of assembling a revealing picture out of seemingly unrelated facts. Queen's long career as a writer gave him the opportunity to play with the mystery genre, exploring a wide range of settings and themes as he took his character from a "priggish" youth to a more satisfyingly three-dimensional middle age. Yet Queen's enduring popularity remains grounded in those classic

elements, and his work stands as proof that there are few things that will delight a reader like a baffling, carefully plotted mystery.

Janet E. Lorenz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ELLERY QUEEN SERIES: 1929-1940 • *The Roman Hat Mystery*, 1929; *The French Powder Mystery*, 1930; *The Dutch Shoe Mystery*, 1931; *The Egyptian Cross Mystery*, 1932; *The Greek Coffin Mystery*, 1932; *The American Gun Mystery*, 1933 (also known as *Death at the Rodeo*, 1951); *The Siamese Twin Mystery*, 1933; *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1934; *The Chinese Orange Mystery*, 1934; *The Spanish Cape Mystery*, 1935; *Halfway House*, 1936; *The Door Between*, 1937; *The Devil to Pay*, 1938; *The Four of Hearts*, 1938; *The Dragon's Teeth*, 1939 (also known as *The Virgin Heiresses*, 1954); *The New Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1940

1941-1960 • *Calamity Town*, 1942; *There Was an Old Woman*, 1943 (also known as *The Quick and the Dead*, 1956); *The Case Book of Ellery Queen*, 1945; *The Murderer Is a Fox*, 1945; *Ten Days' Wonder*, 1948; *Cat of Many Tails*, 1949; *Double, Double*, 1950 (also known as *The Case of the Seven Murders*, 1958); *The Origin of Evil*, 1951; *Calendar of Crime*, 1952; *The King Is Dead*, 1952; *The Scarlet Letters*, 1953; *QBI: Queen's Bureau of Investigation*, 1954; *Inspector Queen's Own Case*, 1956; *The Finishing Stroke*, 1958

1961-1971 • *The Player on the Other Side*, 1963 (wr. by Sturgeon based on a detailed outline by Dannay); *And on the Eighth Day*, 1964 (wr. by Davidson based on a detailed outline by Dannay); *Queens Full*, 1965; *The Fourth Side of the Triangle*, 1965 (wr. by Davidson based on a detailed outline by Dannay); *A Study in Terror*, 1966 (novelization of the screenplay; also known as *Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper*, 1967); *Face to Face*, 1967; *QED: Queen's Experiments in Detection*, 1968; *The House of Brass*, 1968 (wr. by Davidson based on a detailed outline by Dannay); *The Last Woman in His Life*, 1970; *A Fine and Private Place*, 1971

ELLERY QUEEN SERIES (EDITED AND SUPERVISED BY LEE): *Ellery Queen, Master Detective*,

1941 (novelization of the screenplay by Eric Taylor; also known as *The Vanishing Corpse*); *The Penthouse Mystery*, 1941 (novelization of a screenplay by Taylor); *The Murdered Millionaire*, 1942 (novelization of the radio play); *The Perfect Crime*, 1942 (novelization of a screenplay by Taylor); *Beware the Young Stranger*, 1965 (by Powell)

DRURY LANE SERIES (AS BARNABY ROSS): *The Tragedy of X*, 1932; *The Tragedy of Y*, 1932; *The Tragedy of Z*, 1933; *Drury Lane's Last Case*, 1933; *The XYZ Murders*, 1961 (omnibus)

TIM CORRIGAN SERIES (EDITED AND SUPERVISED BY LEE): *Where Is Bianca?*, 1966 (by Powell); *Who Spies, Who Kills?*, 1966 (by Powell); *Why So Dead?*, 1966 (by Deming); *How Goes the Murder?*, 1967 (by Deming); *Which Way to Die?*, 1967 (by Deming); *What's in the Dark?*, 1968 (by Deming; also known as *When Fell the Night*)

MIKE MCCALL SERIES (EDITED AND SUPERVISED BY LEE): *The Campus Murders*, 1969 (by Gil Brewer); *The Black Hearts Murder*, 1970 (by Deming); *The Blue Movie Murders*, 1972 (by Hoch; edited and supervised by Dannay)

NONSERIES NOVELS (EDITED AND SUPERVISED BY LEE): *The Last Man Club*, 1940 (novelization of radio show); *Dead Man's Tale*, 1961 (by Stephen Marlowe); *Death Spins the Platter*, 1962 (by Deming); *Kill as Directed*, 1963; *Murder with a Past*, 1963 (by Powell); *Wife or Death*, 1963 (by Deming); *Blow Hot, Blow Cold*, 1964; *The Four Johns*, 1964 (by Vance; also known as *Four Men Called John*); *The Golden Goose*, 1964; *The Last Score*, 1964; *A Room to Die In*, 1965 (by Vance); *The Copper Frame*, 1965 (by Deming); *The Killer Touch*, 1965; *Losers, Weepers*, 1966 (by Deming); *Shoot the Scene*, 1966 (by Deming); *The Devil's Cook*, 1966; *The Madman Theory*, 1966 (by Vance); *Guess Who's Coming to Kill You?*, 1968

OTHER NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Golden Summer*, 1953 (as Nathan); *The Glass Village*, 1954; *Cop Out*, 1969 (by Dannay and Lee); *Kiss and Kill*, 1969

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *Danger, Men Working*, c. 1936 (with Lowell Brentano)

RADIO PLAY: *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1939-1948

SCREENPLAY: *Ellery Queen, Master Detective*, 1940 (with Taylor)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (AS ELLERY QUEEN, JR.): *The Black Dog Mystery*, 1941; *The Green Turtle Mystery*, 1941; *The Golden Eagle Mystery*, 1942; *The Red Chipmunk Mystery*, 1946; *The Brown Fox Mystery*, 1948; *The White Elephant Mystery*, 1950; *The Yellow Cat Mystery*, 1952; *The Blue Herring Mystery*, 1954; *The Mystery of the Merry Magician*, 1961; *The Mystery of the Vanished Victim*, 1962; *The Purple Bird Mystery*, 1965; *The Silver Llama Mystery*, 1966

NONFICTION: *The Detective Short Story: A Bibliography*, 1942; *Queen's Quorum: A History of the Detective-Crime Short Story As Revealed by the 106 Most Important Books Published in This Field Since 1845*, 1951 (revised 1969); *In the Queen's Parlor, and Other Leaves from the Editors' Notebook*, 1957; *Ellery Queen's International Case Book*, 1964; *The Woman in the Case*, 1966 (also known as *Deadlier than the Male*, 1967)

EDITED TEXTS: 1938-1950 • *Challenge to the Reader*, 1938; *101 Years' Entertainment: The Great Detective Stories, 1841-1941*, 1941 (revised 1946); *Sporting Blood: The Great Sports Detective Stories*, 1942 (also known as *Sporting Detective Stories*); *The Female of the Species: The Great Women Detectives and Criminals*, 1943 (also known as *Ladies in Crime: A Collection of Detective Stories by English and American Writers*); *Best Stories from "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1944; *The Adventures of Sam Spade, and Other Stories*, 1944 (by Dashiell Hammett; also known as *They Can Only Hang You Once*); *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1944; *Rogues' Gallery: The Great Criminals of Modern Fiction*, 1945; *The Continental Op*, 1945 (by Hammett); *The Return of the Continental Op*, 1945 (by Hammett); *Hammett Homicides*, 1946 (by Hammett); *The Queen's Awards*, 1946-1959; *To the Queen's Taste: The First Supplement to "101 Years' Entertainment," Consisting of the Best Stories Published in the First Five Years of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1946; *Dead Yellow Women*, 1947 (by Hammett); *Dr. Fell, Detective*, 1947 (by John Dickson Carr); *Murder by Experts*,

1947; *The Case Book of Mr. Campion*, 1947 (by Margery Allingham); *The Department of Dead Ends*, 1947 (by Roy Vickers); *The Riddles of Hildegard Withers*, 1947 (by Stuart Palmer); *Cops and Robbers*, 1948 (by O. Henry); *Nightmare Town*, 1948 (by Hammett); *Twentieth Century Detective Stories*, 1948 (revised 1964); *The Creeping Siamese*, 1950 (by Hammett); *The Literature of Crime: Stories by World-Famous Authors*, 1950 (also known as *Ellery Queen's Book of Mystery Stories*); *The Monkey Murder, and Other Hildegard Withers Stories*, 1950 (by Palmer)

1951-1970 • *Woman in the Dark*, 1952 (by Hammett); *Mystery Annals*, 1958-1962; *Ellery Queen's Anthology*, 1959-1973; *A Man Named Thin, and Other Stories*, 1962 (by Hammett); *To Be Read Before Midnight*, 1962; *Mystery Mix*, 1963; *Double Dozen*, 1964; *Twelve*, 1964; *Lethal Black Book*, 1965; *Twentieth Anniversary Annual*, 1965; *All-Star Lineup*, 1966; *Crime Carousel*, 1966; *Poetic Justice: Twenty-three Stories of Crime, Mystery, and Detection by World-Famous Poets from Geoffrey Chaucer to Dylan Thomas*, 1967; *Mystery Parade*, 1968; *Minimysteries: Seventy Short-Short Stories of Crime, Mystery, and Detection*, 1969; *Murder Menu*, 1969; *Murder—In Spades!*, 1969; *Shoot the Works!*, 1969; *The Case of the Murderer's Bride, and Other Stories*, 1969 (by Erle Stanley Gardner); *Grand Slam*, 1970; *Mystery Jackpot*, 1970; *P as in Police*, 1970 (by Lawrence Treat)

1971-1980 • *Headliners*, 1971; *The Golden Thirteen: Thirteen First Prize Winners from "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1971; *The Spy and the Thief*, 1971 (by Hoch); *Ellery Queen's Best Bets*, 1972; *Mystery Bag*, 1972; *Amateur in Violence*, 1973 (by Michael Gilbert); *Christmas Hamper*, 1974; *Crookbook*, 1974; *Aces of Mystery*, 1975; *Kindly Dig Your Grave, and Other Stories*, 1975 (by Stanley Ellin); *Masters of Mystery*, 1975; *Murdercade*, 1975; *Crime Wave*, 1976; *Giants of Mystery*, 1976; *Magicians of Mystery*, 1976; *Champions of Mystery*, 1977; *Faces of Mystery*, 1977; *How to Trap a Crook and Twelve Other Mysteries*, 1977 (by Julian Symons); *Masks of Mystery*, 1977; *Searches and Seizures*, 1977; *Who's Who of Whodunits*, 1977; *A Multitude of Sins*, 1978; *Japanese Golden Dozen: The Detective Story World in Japan*, 1978; *Napoleons of Mystery*, 1978; *The Supersleuths*, 1978; *Scenes of the Crime*,

1979; *Secrets of Mystery*, 1979; *Wings of Mystery*, 1979; *Circumstantial Evidence*, 1980; *Veils of Mystery*, 1980; *Windows of Mystery*, 1980

1981-1984 • *Crime Cruise Round the World*, 1981; *Doors to Mystery*, 1981; *Eyes of Mystery*, 1981; *Eye-witnesses*, 1981; *Book of First Appearances*, 1982 (with Eleanor Sullivan); *Maze of Mysteries*, 1982; *Lost Ladies*, 1983 (with Sullivan); *Lost Men*, 1983 (with Sullivan); *The Best of Ellery Queen*, 1983; *Prime Crimes*, 1984 (with Sullivan)

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duced under that name in the context of mystery and detective fiction generally and discussing their place in the canon.

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Keating, H. R. F., ed. *Whodunit? A Guide to Crime, Suspense, and Spy Fiction*. London: Windward, 1982. Keating's short entry on Ellery Queen contains some useful biographical information but has little in the way of literary criticism.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Malmgren discusses Queen's *Halfway House* and *The House of Brass*, alongside many other entries in the mystery and detective genre. Bibliographic references and index.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel, a History*. London: Faber and Faber, 1972. Symons's history of the detective story includes several pages on Ellery Queen in the chapter entitled "The Golden Age: The Thirties."

PATRICK QUENTIN

Richard Webb and Hugh Wheeler

RICHARD WEBB

Born: England; 1901

Died: Place unknown; probably 1965 or 1970

Also wrote as Q. Patrick (with Mary Louise Aswell, Martha Mott Kelley, and Wheeler); Jonathon Stagge (with Wheeler)

HUGH WHEELER

Born: London, England; March 19, 1912

Died: Pittsfield, Massachusetts; July 27, 1987

Also wrote as Q. Patrick (with Webb); Jonathan Stagge (with Webb)

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Peter Duluth, 1936-1954

Lieutenant Timothy Trant, 1937-1959

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PETER DULUTH is a theatrical producer who solves crimes to straighten out his own life. In the first book of the series, he is in an asylum because of alcoholism brought on by the death of his first wife. He meets his future wife at the asylum and investigates a murder there.

LIEUTENANT TIMOTHY TRANT, on two occasions involved in cases with Duluth, is an elegantly dressed police detective. The son of a physicist, he was graduated from Princeton University and became a lawyer. He abandoned that profession to become a detective because “murderers, while fascinating at any stage of their careers, were particularly fascinating while they were still at large.”

CONTRIBUTION

The authors who used the pseudonyms Patrick Quentin, Q. Patrick, and Jonathan Stagge moved the fair-play, challenge-to-the-reader tradition away from the chess-problem story. In many of their novels, the focal character is not a detective solving the crime for intellectual or professional satisfaction but rather someone caught in the mesh of circumstance who must discover the guilty party to save himself or someone he loves. In some of the stories, especially those of the middle and later 1930's, the challenge is to discover not only who committed the crime but also who will eventually solve it. Few other authors dared to try a “least-likely detective” gambit.

BIOGRAPHY

Unfortunately, little is known of the life of one of the authors who contributed to the books published under the pseudonym Patrick Quentin. The main figure in the early books of the collaboration was Richard Wilson Webb, who had been born in England in 1901. He later moved to the United States and became an executive in a pharmaceutical company. In 1931, with Martha Mott Kelley, he wrote a mystery novel titled *Cottage Sinister*. They choose the nom de plume Q. Patrick because, Webb explained, *Q* is “the most intriguing letter of the alphabet” and “Patrick” combined their nicknames, “Patsy” and “Rickie.” After the next book, Kelley left the collaboration, and Webb used the Q. Patrick name himself for *Murder at Cambridge*. Webb then found a new collaborator in Mary Louise Aswell. Aswell worked with Webb on two succeeding Q. Patrick detective novels.

In 1936, Webb found a third coauthor in Hugh Callingham Wheeler. Born in London in 1912, Wheeler had been educated at Clayesmere in Dorset, and in

1932 he received a bachelor's degree from the University of London. Together, Webb and Wheeler produced a detective novel with a public-school background, *Death Goes to School* (1936). Although continuing to write as Q. Patrick, they began to write books under two additional pseudonyms, Patrick Quentin and Jonathan Stagge.

Around 1952, Webb retired from the collaboration because of ill health, and Wheeler retained the Patrick Quentin name. In 1961, he began a new career as a dramatist. After 1965, when his final mystery novel was published, he concentrated solely on his stage work, often in association with Stephen Sondheim and Hal Prince, and with his Tony-winning scripts for such musical successes as *A Little Night Music* (pr. 1973), *Candide* (pr. 1973), and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (pr., pb. 1979), he became one of the most successful figures in the American theater. He died on July 27, 1987, at the age of seventy-five.

ANALYSIS

The first five Q. Patrick novels, written by Richard Webb either alone or with Martha Mott Kelley or Mary Louise Aswell, are typical Golden Age mysteries of the 1930's, with intricate plots and fair-play clueing. Nevertheless, some of the Q. Patrick books—most notably, the first Webb-Wheeler collaboration, *Death Goes to School*—feature a gimmick that had been rarely used by earlier writers. Not only do the books unmask the least likely suspect, but also they frequently are constructed around trying to identify the least likely detective. In the usual detective novel, the reader knows quite early which character is the detective, whether amateur or professional. In a Q. Patrick story of this period, and in some of the early Patrick Quentin and Jonathan Stagge tales as well, the sleuth can turn out to be almost anybody. At times, the reader is fooled when the person who seems to be investigating the crime is identified at the end of the story as the guilty person; occasionally, the chief suspect turns out to be the detective. Indeed, because Webb and his coauthors so frequently hid the genuine roles of their characters, readers familiar with these works almost automatically distrust anyone who seems to be a detective or is helping the narrator unravel the mystery.

A PUZZLE FOR FOOLS

With the publication of *A Puzzle for Fools* in 1936 under the new pseudonym of Patrick Quentin, Webb and Wheeler began their most important and popular series of detective novels. Eventually, the series protagonist, theatrical producer Peter Duluth, would be featured in nine novels and one short story, and two of the novels would be adapted as feature-length films. The first Duluth book is notable for its imaginative setting, an asylum for wealthy patients suffering from relatively minor mental disorders. When murder occurs, however, it seems obvious that one of the patients has a problem that is not so minor. Peter Duluth, who has lost his wife in a fire, is in the sanatorium recovering from alcoholism. Questions of what is real and what is imagined, of who is sane and who is mad, make this novel a memorable opening for the Duluth series.

For both *A Puzzle for Fools* and its notable successor, *Puzzle for Players*, published two years later, Quentin borrowed a technique from the hard-boiled private-eye writers: The story is told in breezy, colloquial prose by the narrator-detective, and the events are sordid. Unlike such detectives as Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, however, Duluth cannot remain a detached investigator. In almost all the Duluth novels, Peter has to stay one step ahead of the police to save himself or someone he loves. Clear examples of Quentin's approach to the mystery novel can be found in *Puzzle for Players*.

PUZZLE FOR PLAYERS

Puzzle for Players is a carefully constructed murder mystery aimed at fooling both neophyte mystery fans and jaded readers who believe that they can always identify the murderer. Quentin provides clues (involving brothers and plastic surgery) that allow expert mystery fans to identify, wrongly, an unlikely suspect as the killer. The real murderer is an even less likely suspect. Duluth, who narrates the story, looks on the murders not as crimes to be solved but as threats to his happiness. After the events in *A Puzzle for Fools*, Duluth has begun to revive his career by producing a new play, *Troubled Waters*. He is in love with Iris Pattison, one of the characters in the earlier book, who is beginning her career as an actress in Duluth's play. His psychoanalyst,

Dr. Lenz, has forbidden him to wed her until he has proved for six months that he has regained his emotional stability. Thus, when a series of strange events occur at the Dagonet Theater, they threaten Duluth's comeback as well as his marriage plans.

The Dagonet is a decrepit, rat-filled theater, watched over by an ancient caretaker whose wife hanged herself in a dressing room there almost forty years earlier. One of the actors in Duluth's play claims to see a ghost, and another actor dies of a heart attack after announcing that the same ghost walked out of a mirror toward him. Though Duluth suspects foul play, he refuses to call in the police because he does not want the opening of the play to be delayed. The cast is dominated by emotional crosscurrents. The playwright is being blackmailed by his own uncle. An aging character actress is in love with the leading man, an Austrian refugee, but he does not notice her. To make matters worse, the leading lady hates the Austrian. Meanwhile, the leading lady's former husband, whom she has divorced because he abused her, blackmails Duluth into allowing him to join the cast by threatening to tell the police about the strange events at the Dagonet.

Even when one of the actors is murdered inside a coffin that is an important prop in the play, Duluth's sole concern is to make the play a success. He tortures himself by making a list of "REASONS WHY TROUBLED WATERS CAN'T CONCEIVABLY SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY." When the police arrive on the scene, he does his best to convince Inspector Clarke that the murder is merely an accidental death. The cast generally supports Duluth; one of the characters complains that the play is not getting a "very even break. . . . How about the policeman, Clarke? I didn't trust him. He's too bright. He suspects something, doesn't he?" Two-thirds of the way through the book, the production is near collapse, and Duluth laments, "I'm not directing a Broadway production. I'm directing the Sino-Japanese war." Finally, he succumbs to the temptation he has been fighting through most of the novel: He goes out and gets drunk. He is dragged back to the show just in time for the denouement. Iris, meanwhile, has taken advantage of his condition to trick him into a marriage ceremony, and his psychoanalyst, Dr. Lenz, kindly as-

sure him that one drunken episode is acceptable. Even at the conclusion, Duluth is more interested in the success of *Troubled Waters* than in the mundane problem of whodunit. Indeed, he has to be reminded that it makes a difference “which member of your company is going to be arrested.”

The plot elements given above are typical of the Peter Duluth series. Quentin usually tries to create an unusual or self-contained world, such as that of the theater, as the milieu for the murder. Whatever the setting, Peter Duluth is normally faced with threats to his happiness. Almost never does he have the same goals as the police, and often he is engaged in outright obstruction of justice. Occasionally, the reader may sympathize with the official police: “Of course I see your point,” Inspector Clarke says to Duluth in exasperation. “You’re scared we’ll close the show if we find out too much. Even so, are you sure you’re being smart? You’d look pretty funny if you had a third accidental death around here, wouldn’t you?”

PUZZLE FOR PUPPETS AND PUZZLE FOR WANTONS

The contrast between the manner of telling and the grimness of the events, which plays a part in *Puzzle for Players*, is even more obvious in Duluth’s next adventures, *Puzzle for Puppets* (1944) and *Puzzle for Wantons* (1945). Reviewers praised the novels for their wacky comedy and witty dialogue, yet the stories themselves involve such unamusing matters as serial murder. The relationship between Peter and Iris Duluth was clearly influenced by the Mr. and Mrs. North novels by Frances Lockridge and Richard Lockridge, although Iris is not a scatterbrain like Pamela North (Gracie Allen played Mrs. North in a 1941 motion picture). In these books and all the later Quentin novels, there is a strong undercurrent of sexual tension, not only between Peter and Iris but also among many of the other characters. It is this tension that, despite Quentin’s wisecracking style, gives the books their drive.

PUZZLE FOR FIENDS

In the succeeding Quentin books, Duluth is faced with crises in his relationships with Iris and other women. In *Puzzle for Fiends* (1946), he suffers from amnesia and is attracted to one of the female characters—but in spite of his mental state, he is still able to

tell the story in the first person. In *Puzzle for Pilgrims* (1947) and *Run to Death* (1948)—the latter probably the best of the later novels in the series with its combination of hunter-and-hunted with fair-play clueing—the Duluths try to deal with their collapsing marriage.

BLACK WIDOW AND MY SON, THE MURDERER

Quentin let Duluth catch his breath for four years before having him face another crisis in *Black Widow* (1952); in that novel, Peter becomes the chief suspect when the body of a pregnant woman is found in his apartment. Fortunately, Lieutenant Timothy Trant, who has solved cases in earlier books published under the pseudonym Q. Patrick, helps Duluth extricate himself from the situation. In the final novel of the series, *My Son, the Murderer* (1954), written by Wheeler alone, the protagonist is Peter’s brother, Jake, who faces a crisis typical of the Duluth family: He tries to prove that, in spite of all appearances, his son is innocent of murder. To do so, he must outwit Lieutenant Trant.

This outline of the Duluth novels makes the series sound like a soap opera, and when the books are read in quick succession, it does seem difficult to believe that one family could have been faced with so many disasters connected with so many murders. This may be the reason that Wheeler’s later books, also published under the Quentin pseudonym, do not have a series character as the protagonist, although three of the novels enlist Lieutenant Trant to help solve the mystery. Nevertheless, all these books continue the Duluth tradition in which the main character struggles to free himself from a web of circumstances. Sometimes, as in *The Man with Two Wives* (1955), the hero—if he can be called that—helps to create the situation by his own actions. At other times, in an almost Hardy-esque way, the gods of chance seem to have decided capriciously to lay traps for the main characters.

Douglas G. Greene

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PETER DULUTH SERIES: *A Puzzle for Fools*, 1936; *Puzzle for Players*, 1938; *Puzzle for Puppets*, 1944; *Puzzle for Wantons*, 1945 (also known as *Slay the Loose Ladies*); *Puzzle for Fiends*, 1946 (also known as *Love Is a Deadly Weapon*); *Puzzle for Pilgrims*, 1947 (also known as *The Fate of the Immodest*)

Blonde); *Run to Death*, 1948; *Black Widow*, 1952 (also known as *Fatal Woman*)

DR. HUGH WESTLAKE SERIES (AS STAGGE): *Murder Gone to Earth*, 1936 (also known as *The Dogs Do Bark*); *Murder or Mercy*, 1937 (also known as *Murder by Prescription*); *The Stars Spell Death*, 1939 (also known as *Murder in the Stars*, 1940); *Turn of the Table*, 1940 (also known as *Funeral for Five*); *The Yellow Taxi*, 1942 (also known as *Call a Hearse*); *The Scarlet Circle*, 1943 (also known as *Light from a Lantern*); *Death My Darling Daughters*, 1945 (also known as *Death and the Dear Girls*, 1946); *Death's Old Sweet Song*, 1946; *The Three Fears*, 1949

LIEUTENANT TIMOTHY TRANT SERIES: *Death for Dear Clara*, 1937 (as Patrick); *Death and the Maiden*, 1939 (as Patrick); *My Son, the Murderer*, 1954 (by Wheeler as Quentin; also known as *The Wife of Ronald Sheldon*); *The Man with Two Wives*, 1955; *Shadow of Guilt*, 1959; *Family Skeletons*, 1965

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Cottage Sinister*, 1931 (Webb with Martha Mott Kelley as Patrick); *Murder at the Women's City Club*, 1932 (Webb with Mary Louise Aswell as Patrick; also known as *Death in the Dovecote*, 1934); *Murder at Cambridge*, 1933 (Webb as Patrick; also known as *Murder at the Varsity*); *S. S. Murder*, 1933 (Webb with Aswell as Patrick); *The Grindle Nightmare*, 1935 (Webb with Aswell as Patrick; also known as *Darker Grows the Valley*, 1936); *Death Goes to School*, 1936 (as Patrick); *File on Claudia Cragge*, 1937 (as Patrick); *The File on Fenton and Farr*, 1937 (as Patrick); *Return to the Scene*, 1941 (as Patrick; also known as *Death in Bermuda*); *The Follower*, 1950; *Danger Next Door*, 1951 (as Patrick); *The Man in the Net*, 1956; *Suspicious Circumstances*, 1957; *The Green-Eyed Monster*, 1960

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Ordeal of Mrs. Snow, and Other Stories*, 1961

OTHER MAJOR WORKS (WHEELER)

NOVEL: *The Crippled Muse*, 1951

PLAYS: *Big Fish, Little Fish*, pr., pb. 1961; *Look! We've Come Through!*, pr. 1961, pb. 1963; *Rich Little Rich Girl*, pr. 1966, pb. 1967 (adaptation of the play by Miguel Mihura and Alvaro de Laiglesia); *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, pr. 1966, pb. 1967 (adaptation

of the novel by Shirley Jackson); *A Little Night Music*, pr. 1973 (music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; adaptation of the film by Ingmar Bergman); *Candide*, pr. 1973 (music by Leonard Bernstein, lyrics by Richard Wilbur; adaptation of the novel by Voltaire); *Irene*, pr. 1973 (with Joseph Stein; music by Harry Tierney, lyrics by Joseph McCarthy; adaptation of the play by James Montgomery); *Truckload*, pr. 1975 (music by Louis St. Louis, lyrics by Wes Harris); *Pacific Overtures*, pr. 1976 (with John Weidmann; music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim); *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, pr., pb. 1979 (music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; adaptation of the play by C. G. Bond); *Silverlake*, pr. 1980 (music by Kurt Weill; adaptation of a libretto by Georg Kaiser); *The Student Prince*, pr. 1980 (music by Sigmund Romberg; adaptation of a libretto by Dorothy Donnelly)

SCREENPLAYS: *Five Miles to Midnight*, 1962 (with Peter Viertel); *Something for Everyone*, 1969; *Cabaret*, 1972; *Travels with My Aunt*, 1973 (with Jay Presson Allen); *A Little Night Music*, 1977; *Nijinsky*, 1980

TELEPLAY: *The Snoop Sisters*, 1972 (with Leonard B. Stern)

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Shibuk, Charles. Review of *Puzzle for Fiends*. *The Armchair Detective* 13 (Winter, 1980): 75. Review of a Peter Duluth book in which the main character has amnesia. This look back at an earlier work allows for an examination of its staying power.

_____. Review of *Puzzle for Pilgrims*. *The Armchair Detective* 13 (Spring, 1980): 135. A review of a Peter Duluth series book in which the Duluths struggle in their marriage. Shibuk assesses the work's ability to withstand the "test of time" and its enjoyability for later audiences.

R

ANN RADCLIFFE

Ann Ward

Born: London, England; July 9, 1764

Died: London, England; February 7, 1823

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Ann Radcliffe, who created a readership for moralizing tales of terror and horror, influenced not only a host of forgotten imitators but also several great writers of the Romantic period and a number of later nineteenth century novelists. Radcliffe refined the crude sensationalism of the gothic novel so that it became a vehicle for sensibility, the sublime, and the picturesque. In place of fast-paced and blood-spattered action, Radcliffian gothic characteristically created psychological tension and suspense, while avoiding the incredible. Though retaining many conventional props of the gothic novel, Radcliffe minimized their significance, being more concerned with moral tests for her heroines. She also enriched her narratives with landscape descriptions.

BIOGRAPHY

Little is known for certain about Ann Radcliffe's life. She was born Ann Ward on July 9, 1764, in London, the daughter of a successful haberdasher. In 1772, her family moved to Bath, where she may have attended a school for young ladies operated by the novelist Sophia Lee.

In 1787 she married William Radcliffe, a parliamentary reporter and later the owner-editor of the *English Chronicle*. Though childless, the marriage appears to have been happy, and William encouraged her writing. In 1794, the couple made a tour of the Continent, and she published a report of their travels in 1795.

By the time Radcliffe's third novel was published, in 1791, she had attained a vast popularity, but although

she was the leading modern novelist, she lived out of the public eye. At the height of her career, she decided to publish no more novels, possibly because she objected to the resulting notoriety. In addition, her imitators had added a strain of sensuality to their fiction antipathetic to her. Having by now received a legacy that made her financially independent, she could afford to stop writing. In 1816, however, she published a volume of poems. Radcliffe died on February 7, 1823.

ANALYSIS

The novel was a young genre, not yet a century old, when Ann Radcliffe began writing. She modified both its structure and its themes and established the gothic novel (the novel with a quasi-medieval setting) as a popular form. The first gothic novel, Hugh Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), had fused medieval chivalry and the ghost story, creating a fast-paced, incredible tale that drips with blood as it piles shock on shock. In Radcliffe's more leisurely novels, which blend the gothic with the sentimental, the psychological effects of incidents take precedence over action. Her own distinctive version of the gothic novel, moralistic and rationalist, requires that sensitive heroines show their worth by their behavior during suspenseful ordeals whose mysteries prove to be rationally explicable. Radcliffe considerably developed the principle of suspense, adapting the techniques of drama to fiction more completely than had yet been achieved in the novel. Moreover, a precursor to the Romantics, she laced her prose with poetry, her own and others', and she transformed the natural landscape into an appropriate setting for her tales.

THE CASTLES OF ATHLIN AND DUNBAYNE

In Radcliffe's first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), an unsuccessful, amateurishly plot-



Ann Radcliffe.

ted tale centered on a hero in the sixteenth century Scottish Highlands, she had not yet found her distinctive style, though she had found her favorite, if not invariable, time setting: the sixteenth century. More important, the book's conclusion, exalting the eventual triumph of virtue in a universe ruled by divine goodness, anticipated the characteristic moral tone of her mature fiction. In the typical Radcliffe novel, a beautiful but solitary and eminently virtuous maiden undergoes persecutions amid picturesque and usually gothic surroundings, whether castle, abbey, or convent. Each time this heroine is about to reach safety, she is thrust back into danger by new ordeals. Finally, wiser for her

experiences, she is rescued and marries the man she loves.

Not only does virtue, like love, triumph, but reason does as well. In the final pages of the novel, mysteries are solved—though many have already resolved themselves along the way. As one critic has aptly remarked, the appeal of Radcliffe's books is

not intellectual but emotional. The reader is not invited to unpick a knot, but to enjoy the emotion of mystery; the knot, indeed, is not unpicked at all; at the appointed hour an incantation is breathed over it, and it dissolves.

GASTON DE BLONDEVILLE

Only in Radcliffe's posthumously published *Gaston de Blondville* (1826) does an unexplained knightly ghost, returned to bring his murderer to justice, form the pivot of the plot. With its twelfth century setting, this story is told as a medieval legend rather than as a gothic fiction of supernatural terror and suspense.

A SICILIAN ROMANCE

A Sicilian Romance (1790), the first of the novels written in her characteristic mode, illustrates Radcliffe's typical plotline. The heroine, Julia, kept secluded in a castle where mysterious lights are seen in a deserted wing, is burdened with not only a licentious stepmother but also a tyrannical marquess of a father. The marquess proposes to marry her to an evil duke instead of to her beloved. Persuaded by her brother Ferdinand and her lover Hippolitus to flee, after a desperate midnight flight through secret, underground chambers, Julia is overtaken and imprisoned; she manages to flee again to a nunnery, which the marquess besieges. In the ensuing complications, Ferdinand and Hippolitus rescue and re-rescue Julia. Finally, Julia finds her mother, supposedly dead but in fact imprisoned by her father, in a subterranean dungeon (hence the apparently supernatural lights). When her stepmother poisons the marquess and commits suicide, Julia and Hippolitus finally wed.

Radcliffe's plotting would become more polished in later novels, inviting a readier suspension of disbelief. Even in this early novel, however, emphasis falls not on events but on their effects on characters, on the psychological torments created, especially the fear of

what may happen next. Having discovered certain valuable techniques, she would perfect them in subsequent novels.

Characteristically, Radcliffe arouses fear by making use of suggestion: the sound of haunting music on the midnight air, a vanishing light, the shadow of a figure, a pregnant sigh, and the like. Night, desolation, and gloom proliferate. Versed in the aesthetic theories of her time, such as Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), she assumes that terror, not horror, expands the soul toward the sublime, and she combines terror with beauty. This combination is achieved partly through scene painting—besides crumbling gothic castles, she delights in natural landscapes, a delight rare in the eighteenth century novel. In her books, pastoral scenes, towering mountaintops touched with moonlight, the distant surge of the sea, gusts of wind, and moving clouds are everywhere. An index to the characters' moral status is their responsiveness to the natural scene. The wicked are impervious to its sublime beauties; the good are immediately responsive.

Radcliffe also makes terror more agreeable by refracting her tales through the mind of a young girl, one who is not only hypersensitive to the atmosphere of her surroundings but also subject to imagining that she has witnessed supernatural events. Thus, the reader participates in the action only indirectly, through the heroine, instead of being exposed directly to any horrors. (Servants and male characters are also used to articulate superstitious fancies, though ordinarily figuring much less prominently.) The irrationality of such imagination is exposed and censured.

THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST

Although Radcliffe insisted that her heroines—and readers—ultimately remain rational beings, there is nevertheless some fascination with the twilight side of human nature as well. Thus, in her third novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), the persecuted and lonely heroine, Adeline, discovers her true identity while living in a ruined abbey, where she dreams of being pursued through darkened corridors and finding a dying man in a coffin. Her dream becomes reality when the secret door that she finds leads her deeper into the building and down into a chamber. Here a

prisoner who expected to be murdered had composed a manuscript, which she reads with pity and terror. Later, the writer proves to have been Adeline's real father. Like Julia's discovery of her lost mother in *A Sicilian Romance*, such situations resonate with unconscious parental images, though Radcliffe chooses not to explore the psychological implications of her imagery.

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

Most of the supernatural effects in Radcliffe's novels prove to be mere fancies created by the heroine's own trembling sensibilities or else deliberate impostures staged by villains for their own benefit; the actually horrible is a rare event that occurs offstage, if at all. Thus, the reader is perpetually being titillated and then reassured. In Radcliffe's fourth and most famous novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for example, when heroine Emily St. Aubert is taken to the grim castle of Udolpho in the Italian Apennines by her aunt's new husband, the villainous Montoni, she is soon affrighted by the worm-eaten corpse she sees there—but the corpse proves to be only a wax image. When Montoni locks up his shrewish wife in a tower because she refuses to sign over her property to him, Emily assumes after finding a trail of blood that he has had her killed; in reality, her aunt dies of natural causes, though her death is brought on by Montoni's harsh treatment. Emily also assumes that the scheming Montoni murdered the previous owner of the castle, a woman who disappeared mysteriously many years before. Later, Emily discovers that the woman is living in a convent in France under an assumed name—and was herself a murderess.

Emily is in constant terror for her life and her honor while held captive in Udolpho, but she is never injured (no Radcliffe heroine is ever raped). She even escapes with two servants for another round of adventures in France. When one of these servants mysteriously disappears from a locked chamber that supposedly harbors a ghost, it turns out that he was only carried away through a secret door by robbers who had been using that wing of the castle to store their loot. Moreover, when members of the castle family accidentally fall into the robbers' hands, the servant is conveniently present to help them escape.

Radcliffe's techniques answer to her sense of existence: Her universe is a rational one presided over by a benevolent God. As Radcliffe states in the penultimate paragraph of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, "though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and . . . innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!" According to her philosophy, the reader enjoys shivers of suspense and touches of terror but should carry away no disquieting thoughts from her books.

Radcliffe is inventive in her mysteries and resourceful in resolving them, but the heart of her mature novels lies elsewhere. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also illustrates her thematic concerns. Amid its gothic trappings, it is a *bildungsroman*, portraying three stages in the growth of its heroine and three corresponding settings in France and Italy.

Emily has been reared by her father at an idyllic estate in southern France to have high ideals and active and generous sensibilities. She is cast out of her Eden and into the world of evil and self-interest, first in sophisticated Venice and then at the gloomy castle of Udolpho. Though her aunt has torn the orphaned Emily away from her true love and callously subjected her to Montoni's villainies at Udolpho, Emily refuses to harden her heart; she tries at some risk to succor her aunt. Strong-minded like all Radcliffe heroines, she never collapses into self-pity or misanthropy under her own trials. Nevertheless, Emily errs not only in imagining ghosts but also in attributing to Montoni a more sinister personality than he actually has; he is not the monster her imagination creates.

Having escaped his clutches and returned to France for the final stage of her education, Emily discovers certain important family secrets, although some have an unexpected twist. For example, plentiful hints lead the reader to assume that Emily will discover her true mother to have been her father's mysterious lover; in fact, the miniature her father has preserved proves only to have been of Emily's aunt. More important thematically, Emily overcomes her severest trial not in contending with any mystery but in acknowledging the moral shortcomings of her lover (who has impetuously gambled away his good name during her ab-

sence) without losing her love for him. Recognizing that he is only rash and generous rather than dissolute, she marries him. She has learned through her experiences to maintain her ideals but temper them to the reality of the fallen world, relegating evil to its ordinary human manifestations.

THE ITALIAN

The Mysteries of Udolpho is generally considered Radcliffe's best novel, despite its diffuseness and repetitious incidents, but her fifth novel, *The Italian: Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), contains her most interesting characterization of a villain. Schedoni is a morose monk, taciturn, enigmatic, and with a secret sin in his past. Unlike other Radcliffe characters, who are free of inner conflict, this ambitious and murderous Iago, whose malignity seems assured and who reputedly can see only evil in human nature, falls prey to his conscience on the point of the murder that would have realized his worldly desires. When he afterward recognizes the intended victim as his long-lost daughter (though later he will be proved wrong), he displays inchoate but touching paternal feelings. The allegedly supernatural also plays very little part in this book, which contains far more dialogue than earlier novels, though the superstitious dread of Catholicism that pervades its imaginative scenes of the Inquisition yields an atmosphere just as foreboding. In this last of the novels published during her lifetime, Radcliffe demonstrated anew her versatility for turning suggestive terror into pleasurable, suspenseful fiction.

Harriet Blodgett

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, 1789; *A Sicilian Romance*, 1790; *The Romance of the Forest*, 1791; *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794; *The Italian: Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents*, 1797; *Gaston de Blondville*, 1826

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

POETRY: *The Poems of Ann Radcliffe*, 1816; *St. Alban's Abbey*, 1826

NONFICTION: *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany*, 1795

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IAN RANKIN

Born: Cardenden, Fife, Scotland; April 28, 1960

Also wrote as Jack Harvey

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Rebus, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR REBUS is a tough-guy loner who smokes and drinks too much. He has a family but rarely leads a family life. However, like the traditional detective, Rebus will not rest until he has solved the crime, which often means coming into conflict with Edinburgh's power class and his superiors at work. He

does not care who he offends, and his dogged pursuit of truth establishes his integrity.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Ian Rankin's Inspector John Rebus owes something to the detectives in the hard-boiled school of mystery fiction, he has none of the romantic aura that imbues characters like Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade or Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. Rebus is the epitome of the detective as demotic hero. He is an ordinary man whose humor is his saving grace. Rankin's emphasis on the Edinburgh locale, attention to the city's class structure, and willingness to develop several plot strands at once are a deviation from the

melodrama of most mystery and detective fiction. Rankin's aim is not so much to create mysteries per se but to use the genre of detective fiction as a vehicle for a realistic appraisal of society and modern manners. Like Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse, Rankin's Inspector Rebus is an odd man out, although the Oxford-educated Morse has none of Rebus's working-class alienation.

Rankin does not like neatly tied up plots—a hallmark of mystery and detective fiction. Crimes are solved but only up to a point; in other words, not all the guilty parties are punished or even exposed. Indeed, the solution of one crime in a Rebus mystery often leads to the discovery of crimes elsewhere. Old cases get opened, which often means that the detective has to confront the mistakes of his past. The sociology and psychology of crime intersect in ways that Rebus can hardly apprehend.

Rankin's *Black and Blue* (1997) was nominated for an Edgar and won a Gold Dagger Award from the Crime Writers' Association (CWA). He won a Macallan Award (now CWA Short Story Award) in 1996 for "Herbert in Motion" and received the Edgar Award for *Resurrection Men* (2002) in 2004. In 2005 Rankin received the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière for *Dead Souls* (1999) and the Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement from the Crime Writers' Association.

BIOGRAPHY

Ian Rankin grew up in Cardenden, Fife, Scotland, where he attended the local comprehensive school. He describes a rather bleak town in the midst of an economic downturn when the coal mines closed. As a young boy, Rankin developed his own imaginative

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Ian Rankin. (Courtesy, Little Brown and Company)

world in compensation for the grim reality of his immediate surroundings. He majored in English and earned a master of arts degree with honors at the University of Edinburgh. When he began writing fiction, he abandoned his plans to attain a doctorate in the modern Scottish novel.

Rankin began by writing comic books, then poetry and short stories while working as a journalist and book reviewer in London. After a period of living in the French countryside, which included employment as a swineherd, he turned a long story into a novel, *The Flood* (1986), the story of a young man growing up in Fife but dreaming of moving to Edinburgh.

Rankin's lifelong love of American fiction and film

led him to crime stories. Inspector Rebus appears in Rankin's second novel, *Knots and Crosses* (1987). Rankin learned police procedure by interviewing and accompanying Edinburgh detectives. However, he emphasizes that his main interest is in modern Scotland, not in the mystery genre itself. Clearly his novels acquire their authenticity through his evocative descriptions of the city and countryside. Rankin regards Edinburgh, with its dour Calvinist history, as a wonderful setting for crime novels. He calls it a perfect place for conspiracies because of its much darker view of the world than that of other Scottish cities.

Rankin's interest in music is evident in many of his novels. As a young boy he wrote song lyrics, and he briefly played in a punk band, the Dancing Pigs, in the 1970's. Songs from the period are often referred to in his novels and become a way of characterizing Rebus as a man somewhat out of place in contemporary Edinburgh, where although the nature of police work is changing, it remains basically the same for the nuts-and-bolts detective.

Rebus reflects Rankin's working-class background, and Rebus's friends, like Rankin's early ones, tend to go into occupations like law enforcement or the army when the closing of the mines damaged the local economy.

The first Rebus novel was not a success, and Rankin turned to the spy story, publishing *The Watchman* (1988), set in London. After trying other kinds of novels, Rankin took a friend's advice and returned to writing about Rebus. However, he found he needed another outlet and, using the name Jack Harvey, began producing novels that he describes as "airport thrillers." *Blood Hunt* (1995), for example, deals with a transnational corporation that is poisoning the food supply. Such thrillers, Rankin has said, demand more research because readers want to know far more details than he has to supply in the Rebus novels, which focus more on character than on forensics.

ANALYSIS

Inspector John Rebus is a relentless detective with no time for police department politics or respect for the power types he encounters. He pursues crime, and that means he is rarely tactful—indeed he is sometimes

barely polite when he confronts complacency, cover-ups, and other forms of resistance to his investigations.

Rebus is in his mid-thirties when he first appears in *Knots and Crosses* and ages over the course of the series. Retirement age for Edinburgh police is fifty-five, and Rankin has said that means the series will have to end in another three to five novels. The ending of the series is important because it points to Rankin's achievement: He has not created a fantasy figure, a character that could go on in some timeless fashion solving crimes. Rebus is aware that he is aging, and by his mid-forties he is already considering whether he should give up the job, which for him is all-consuming.

Words such as "poetic prose" and "gritty realism" have been used to describe Rankin's work, but there is also Rebus's sly sense of humor, which emerges in the later novels. Rebus gets better at repartee as the man becomes the job, so to speak. Regardless of whom Rebus is interviewing, he remains the same man, refusing to be unduly deferential to authority figures or diplomatic with his colleagues.

KNOTS AND CROSSES

In *Knots and Crosses*, Rebus is introduced as a former army man, divorced and recovering from a nervous breakdown, trying to rebuild his life while serving on the Edinburgh police force. The army had seemed a good solution for a young man who did not want to go to college but felt he had no future in a small Scottish town devastated by the closing of the coal mines. These basic details of Rebus's life figure in several of Rankin's novels, serving as a key to the detective's character. Detective work is as close to a métier as he is ever likely to get. It is also an escape from army regimentation, although working in a city police force inevitably means he will have to deal with bureaucrats and careerists. He does so grudgingly.

When several young girls are murdered in Edinburgh, Rebus calls on newspaper reporter Jim Stevens and another friend. The murders remind Rebus of a childhood trauma he has repressed. The novel's plot becomes an intricate puzzle (Rebus, as Rankin has pointed out, means picture puzzle).

HIDE AND SEEK

In *Hide and Seek* (1991), male prostitutes are the victims. Reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The*

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), this mystery calls on Rankin's considerable knowledge of literature. Some kind of satanic cult seems to be involved in a complex interplay of milieus that includes Edinburgh drug culture. Complicating Rebus's investigation is a cast of two-faced characters. Their duplicity emphasizes the good/evil, Jekyll/Hyde axis on which this novel rotates. As is often the case in the Rebus novels, crimes are not viewed in isolation but rather as symptoms of a corrupt society, not to mention a sickness that strikes deeply into the human soul.

BLACK AND BLUE

In *Black and Blue*, a serial killer is at large, although he seems to be a copycat, duplicating murders committed thirty years earlier in Edinburgh. Rebus, however, is preoccupied with another old case: Did Rebus's partner frame Lenny Spaven for a murder he did not commit? Even worse, on assignment in Aberdeen while attempting to determine whether Spaven's claim of innocence is credible, Rebus runs afoul of police who not only thwart his investigation but also begin to treat him as a suspect when the copycat killer strikes again. Rebus's penchant for going off on his own is partly what makes him a target, but his independence is precisely what allows him to find clues that other conventional cops are in no position to detect. Complicating Rebus's investigation is the original serial killer, who is out to snuff his imitator.

Rankin's handling of police and criminals at cross purposes with each other and the rest of the world reaches a crescendo in this novel. Its scope and depth mark an advance over earlier novels in the series.

DEAD SOULS

The title of the tenth Inspector Rebus novel, *Dead Souls*, suggests the cumulative impact of the crimes and corruption the inspector has investigated. The toll on him has been tremendous. His daughter Sammy is in a wheelchair, run down in connection with a crime Rebus investigated. He is drinking heavily, and the romance in his life has been soured by his surly, brooding behavior.

In a dark mood already, Rebus is stunned when a fellow police officer, Jim Margolies, apparently commits suicide. Margolies seemed Rebus's opposite: an officer who got along with everyone and was superb at

his job as well. Why would this man throw himself off a cliff? No one seems to have a clue, not even Margolies's wife, who just wants Rebus to stop asking questions.

Rebus makes matters even worse for himself when he leaks to the press that a pedophile has been released and placed in an Edinburgh housing project. The subsequent uproar has made Rebus's boss angry and in no mood to follow the inspector's lead in investigating a child abuse case at the Sheillion children's home.

Next, a former high school sweetheart, Janice Mee, contacts Rebus about her missing son. She arouses romantic feelings at a time when he already seems unable to cope with his shaky career and personal problems. However, finding Janice's son helps him to focus, and her obvious romantic interest in Rebus buoys him, even though she is married to one of Rebus's high school friends—clearly Janice's second choice.

The frustrating cases pile up, and then Cary Oakes, a devilishly clever serial killer, returns to Edinburgh after serving a fifteen-year sentence in an American prison. Oakes taunts Rebus and the Edinburgh police force, teases a journalist who thinks he can turn Oakes's story into a best-selling book, and continues a killing spree that has its roots in his own childhood abuse.

The crossing plotlines emphasize Rankin's continuing view that crime does not exist in a vacuum and that the nature of crime is not only individual but also communal—a problem for society to solve that goes far beyond apprehending criminals.

THE NAMING OF THE DEAD

The seventeenth Rebus novel, *The Naming of the Dead* (2007), is set in Scotland during the Group of Eight (G8) world summit. In this overtly political novel, Rebus collides with the aptly named Commander Steelforth, in charge of G8 security. Rebus is called to Edinburgh Castle, where Ben Webster, a Scottish member of Parliament, has fallen over a wall to his death. Is it an accident, suicide, or murder? Steelforth treats the matter as merely a security problem and refuses to cooperate with Rebus, who finds his access to information (such as security camera tapes) blocked. Rebus refuses to consider the political implications of this shocking incident and has to find ways to work around Steelforth.

Even Rebus's boss wants to delay an investigation

until the summit is over. However, Rebus, a stickler for police procedure, pursues the case and eventually has a showdown with Steelforth that illuminates the nature of a world in which the detective can be only partially effective. Rather than diminishing Rebus's stature, this novel enhances it because he pursues his cases even though the punishment may not fit the crime and the establishment will not honor his mission. Rebus the realist does the best job he can, leaving open at least a quest for the truth that the higher-ups have attempted to quash.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR REBUS SERIES: *Knots and Crosses*, 1987; *Hide and Seek*, 1991; *Strip Jack*, 1992; *Wolfman*, 1992 (also known as *Tooth and Nail*, 1996); *The Black Book*, 1993; *Mortal Causes*, 1994; *Let It Bleed*, 1995; *Black and Blue*, 1997; *The Hanging Garden*, 1998; *Death Is Not the End*, 1998; *Dead Souls*, 1999; *Set in Darkness*, 2000; *The Falls*, 2001; *Resurrection Men*, 2002; *A Question of Blood*, 2004; *Fleshmarket Close*, 2004 (also known as *Fleshmarket Alley*, 2005); *The Naming of the Dead*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Flood*, 1986; *Watchman*, 1988; *Westwind*, 1990; *Witch Hunt*, 1993 (as Harvey); *Bleeding Hearts*, 1994 (as Harvey); *Blood Hunt*, 1995 (as Harvey); *The Beggar's Banquet*, 2002

SHORT FICTION: *A Good Hanging, and Other Stories*, 1992

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Bradford, Richard. *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publish-

ing, 2007. Discusses the Rebus novels as one of the mainstays of contemporary British fiction along with those of P. D. James, Colin Dexter, and Ruth Rendell, among others. Bradford notes Rebus's depressive personality and his penchant for heavy drinking but also Rankin's superb evocation of the seedy side of Edinburgh life.

Mullan, John. *How Novels Work*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Contains illuminating, if brief, comments on Rankin's novels. Rankin's use of literary epigraphs, for example, is a witty way for his more sophisticated readers to puzzle through the solutions to the crimes Rebus is investigating.

Rankin, Ian. Ian Rankin. <http://www.ianrankin.net>. This author's Web site includes news items (such as exhibitions of his work), new audio editions of his books, dramatic (television) adaptations of his work, and an interview of the author.

_____. *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey*. London: Orion Publishing, 2005. Evocative black-and-white photographs of buildings and places by Trish Malley and Ross Gillespie are accompanied by Rankin's text detailing Rebus's history, the origins of other fictional characters, and Rankin's biography. Part memoir, part travel guide, this volume is a good introduction to the Rebus series.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Explores Rebus's antiauthoritarian attitudes, comparing him to other detectives such as James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux, even as Rebus "serves the interests of the dominant social order." Even though Rebus's interests in politics are marginal, his actions help restore the political balance of society.

ARTHUR B. REEVE

Born: Patchogue, New York; October 15, 1880

Died: Trenton, New Jersey; August 9, 1936

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Craig Kennedy, 1910-1936

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CRAIG KENNEDY, a professor of chemistry at an unnamed New York City university, uses the tools of science to solve mysteries and confront crimes committed with scientific devices. He treats most of his clients, as he treats his cases, with scientific detachment.

WALTER JAMESON, a journalist with the *New York Star*, narrates most of the Kennedy stories. He and Kennedy were college roommates and still share an apartment. His air of perpetual astonishment at his colleague's ability makes him the perfect foil.

INSPECTOR BARNEY O'CONNOR, who rises to the rank of first deputy commissioner of the New York Police Department as a result of Kennedy's successes, consults the professor on a regular basis.

CONTRIBUTION

The twenty-six books about scientific detective Craig Kennedy were once among the most popular detective stories by an American writer, with sales of two million copies in the United States alone. Arthur B. Reeve was popular primarily because of his emphasis on the use of the latest scientific devices to solve mysteries. Reeve was not one to waste time on deeply etched characters; he focused instead on an imaginative rendition of a scientific marvel—the Maxim silencer, an oxyacetylene blowtorch, the Dictaphone, the seismograph, liquid rubber to conceal fingerprints—with which the crime was committed or by means of which Kennedy could solve the mystery. The very reason for Reeve's popularity in the years before World War I, his topicality, dates the stories and makes him a largely forgotten author.

Reeve's straightforward, journalistic style, combined with a lively imagination and an ability to tell a

good story in spite of his cardboard characters, makes the earliest episodes readable and entertaining, despite his scientific marvels having become commonplace. The emphasis on topicality makes them documents for the social scientist rather than the literary critic.

BIOGRAPHY

Arthur Benjamin Reeve was born in Patchogue, New York, on October 15, 1880, the son of Walter Franklin Reeve and Jennie Henderson Reeve. Having been graduated from Princeton University in 1903, he attended New York Law School but never finished, preferring journalism instead.

Reeve became assistant editor of the magazine *Public Opinion*, contributing articles on science. On January 31, 1906, he married Margaret Allen Wilson of Trenton, New Jersey; they had three children, two sons and a daughter. He continued writing articles on topics such as politics, crime, science, farming, social conditions, and sports. In later years, he became a specialist in growing dahlias.

Reeve's first Kennedy story was rejected by several magazines before being accepted by the editor of *Cosmopolitan*, where it appeared in the December, 1910, issue; this publication marked the beginning of a long series of monthly appearances of Kennedy stories in the Hearst magazines.

Fascinated with the technology of the motion picture, Reeve wrote a series of fourteen interconnected stories that became one of the most successful early silent film serials, *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914). It resulted in two sequels, for a total of thirty-six episodes. Reeve wrote screenplays for several other serials and features, including three starring Harry Houdini.

Although Kennedy was not as popular after the war, Reeve continued to find a market for him in the pulp magazines. In 1926, he published a Kennedy novel entitled *Pandora*, then turned his typewriter to the service of society with articles on crime prevention and a radio series on the topic in 1930-1931. In 1935, he covered the Lindbergh kidnapping trial for a Philadelphia newspaper.

Encouraged by the renewed interest in his character and a film serial based on his 1934 novel *The Clutching Hand*, Reeve wrote another Kennedy novel, *The Stars Scream Murder* (1936). It was Kennedy's last case. Reeve died in Trenton, New Jersey, of complications brought on by an asthmatic and bronchial condition, on August 9, 1936.

ANALYSIS

Arthur B. Reeve may have borrowed the idea of using a word-association test in "The Scientific Cracksman" (in *The Silent Bullet*, 1912) from "The Man in the Room" (in *The Achievements of Luther Trant*, 1910, by Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg), but the emphasis differs. Reeve's success with Craig Kennedy went far beyond anything his predecessors had achieved. Within a few months, Kennedy the scientific detective was a household name, and his creator was hard put to keep up with the demand for his adventures.

In less than a decade, Reeve turned out enough material to make a twelve-volume collected edition of his books not only feasible but a marketable commodity as well. A few decades later, Craig Kennedy would be forgotten, but during the years between 1910 and 1920, he was the best-selling fictional detective in the United States, considered by his publisher (especially for advertising purposes) the American Sherlock Holmes.

The secret of Reeve's success lay in his timing; his emphasis on the latest scientific discoveries in an age that took pride in progress; and the appearance of the stories in one of the most popular magazines of the day, one part of the publishing empire of William

Randolph Hearst. Although Reeve wrote ten novels about Kennedy, it is in the short form that the writer's skill as a storyteller lies. Although the series spanned two and a half decades in publication, it is the earlier stories that retain the greatest interest—as reflections of a vanished period in American society as well as examples of an earlier mode of detective fiction.

To keep up with the demand for stories about Kennedy, Reeve often reused ideas and even recycled actual episodes that had appeared in earlier stories. Short stories were often expanded to fit a longer format, and stories that had appeared in magazines were often rewritten for book publication with characters altered and situations reversed. Some of this recycling was the



Arthur B. Reeve. (Library of Congress)

result of contractual obligations, but some was simply a matter of expedience. Reeve was a one-man fiction factory with insufficient raw materials.

Reeve may not have described Kennedy's physical appearance, but there was no doubt in anyone's mind what he looked like. Will Foster's illustrations made it obvious that the professor of chemistry at an unnamed university (apparently intended to be Columbia) was clean-cut, square jawed, and stocky. Walter Jameson, his reporter friend who narrated the stories, was slight of build with fine features. Beyond that, it was up to the readers to form their own images.

In the early period, a Craig Kennedy story was as ritualistic as any in the Holmes canon. Each story opens in Kennedy's laboratory in the chemistry building on the campus of the university or in the apartment he shares with Jameson. Enter the client or Inspector Barney O'Connor to present a problem to Kennedy and ask for his help. Kennedy may suggest that the case should be easy to solve simply because it seems so extraordinary. This is quite in keeping with one of Holmes's own patterns of reasoning.

The crime is usually murder committed in unusual circumstances. A young couple is found dead with no discernible means or motive to be found. There are so few suspects that the focus is not so much on who did it as on how the crime was committed and the motive. The motive is often apparent, since there is only one logical individual who benefits. Each story contains two scientific devices, one used to commit the crime and one to solve the mystery. Kennedy discovers the first through his own wide knowledge of scientific matters, but he creates the second in his laboratory, often concealing its nature and significance until the end of the story.

It was this element, the scientific device, which was responsible for Reeve's great popularity. Kennedy's basic theory was that science could be applied to the detection of crime just as it could trace the presence of a chemical or locate a germ. Ballistics, voice-prints, the use of film cameras to record crimes in progress, the identification of the typewriter used by comparing the alignment of the letters, and Dictaphones are only some of the devices that Kennedy uses to combat crime. Yet the novelty wore off, much

of it quickly became outdated, and even more novel devices had to be described in subsequent stories. Some of this is sufficiently representative of the period for the stories to have acquired a significance as social history.

If some of the descriptions of the scientific principles and marvels seem vague and insubstantial, verisimilitude is nevertheless established by the offhand references to authorities who have performed similar experiments or published papers on the same topic. Occasionally, Kennedy will read aloud from an account in a newspaper that supports his own thesis. The press's well-known reputation for objectivity adds the required substance to this hitherto unfamiliar scientific theory.

The series' decline in quality is easy to follow. Reeve's popularity was often in inverse ratio to the quality of his writing and his ingenuity. Eventually, his popularity waned, the response of a fickle public that always demanded the new and novel. Reeve was able to ring the changes on his own formula with success only for a decade.

Reeve's best stories were produced between 1910 and 1918 for *Cosmopolitan* and *Hearst's International Magazine*. Not uniform in quality, they nevertheless convey an inventiveness and an ability to tell a good story, no matter how improbable the premise, producing in the reader that necessary and traditional willing suspension of disbelief.

The decline began even before this era was ended, with the novelizations of the film serials that starred Pearl White. It continued into the novels, which replaced science with psychoanalysis. (Reeve did utilize psychology in the short stories as well, but not to the extent that he did in his novels.) The decline continued in the thematic groups of short stories in the 1920's, through his stories for a juvenile audience (*The Boy Scouts' Craig Kennedy*, 1925; *The Radio Detective*, 1926), and ended in his attempts to rekindle an interest in his hero shortly before his own death. The ideas and their execution are weak and lack the ingenuity of the early years.

Although Reeve's first two Kennedy books are clearly collections of short stories, subsequent titles are more subtle about their content. Not only has the origi-

nal magazine sequence been altered, but also Reeve edited the original texts so that the collection appeared to be a novel in appearance if not in fact. *The Dream Doctor* (1914) consists of twelve short stories, but they are divided into twenty-four chapters, with the second story beginning a few pages before the end of the second chapter, thus leading into the third chapter. A similar subterfuge occurs in *The War Terror* (1915), although the twelve stories are divided into thirty-six chapters—roughly three chapters to one episode, with a few sentences added where necessary to accomplish the transition. *The Social Gangster* (1916) was the last group of short stories collected in this manner.

THE DREAM DOCTOR

The Dream Doctor was the first of Reeve's attempts to group his stories thematically. As with the others—*The Fourteen Points: Tales of Craig Kennedy, Master of Mystery* (1925) and *Craig Kennedy on the Farm* (1925), for example—the premise is promising, but the results are unsatisfactory. The idea in *The Dream Doctor* of having Jameson assigned by his editor to report on Kennedy's activities for a month is stronger than the theme of *The War Terror*, in which the war plays a part in only one of the episodes.

ELAINE DODGE TRILOGY

The episodes in the trilogy about Elaine Dodge—*The Exploits of Elaine* (1915), *The Romance of Elaine* (1916), and *The Triumph of Elaine* (1916)—seem embarrassingly melodramatic beside the earlier stories. The difference between the two groups may be one of degree, but the Elaine sequence seems more blatantly exaggerated. Written to promote three Pathé film serials, these are not cliffhangers, in which the audience awaits the next episode to learn the resolution of the previous one, but a series of interconnected episodes, each complete in itself, designed to advance the overall story line. (The American edition of *The Romance of Elaine* contains a truncated version of the second and third serials; the British edition contains the complete serial. The third serial was also published complete only in the British edition.) Craig Kennedy's encounters with a masked archvillain, an Asian mastermind, a foreign spy, and a romantic alliance contrast strangely with his earlier dealings with financiers, Russian émigrés, and debutantes. Yet this film version,

with the great detective portrayed on the screen by Arnold Daly, is the one many people recall when the name Craig Kennedy is mentioned.

A close reading of the text reveals that Reeve borrowed from himself in preparing these episodes for the screen. The termite that eats through the top of the safe in the initial episode of *The Exploits of Elaine* ("The Clutching Hand") came from "The Diamond Maker"; the discussion of tire tracks and fingerprints as means of identification in the third episode ("The Vanishing Jewels") is taken from "The Scientific Cracksman." Both of these earlier stories are in *The Silent Bullet* (1912).

THE FILM MYSTERY

Reeve's interest in motion pictures continued beyond these serial adventures of his hero. He wrote screenplays for several other films and based a 1918 pulp magazine serial ("Craig Kennedy and the Film Tragedy") on his own experiences in the film world. Published as a book three years later (*The Film Mystery*, 1921), it is more interesting for its portrayal of the methods of making silent films than as a detective story.

Following a period of decline in the quality of his work as well as in the popularity of Kennedy, Reeve was persuaded by Leo Margulies, a pulp magazine editor, to let another writer adapt some of his old, unsold Kennedy stories for the pulp market of the 1930's. As a result, four novellas by Ashley T. Locke appeared in *Popular Detective* from 1934 to 1935 and were collected under the title *Enter Craig Kennedy* in 1935. Reeve had hopes for Kennedy's renewed success, if only the right format could be found.

Nostalgia for the golden age of the serials made him revive his archvillain, the Clutching Hand (who had not died in 1915), for a 1934 novel. A new film serial followed in 1936.

Having retained creative control, Reeve wrote a new Kennedy novel in which the detective tried to determine the value of astrology in solving the mystery. The results were inconclusive, and the contest between science and pseudoscience was ruled a draw. Readers of 1936 were more sophisticated than those of 1910, and the novel was not a success.

Reeve's real contribution to the detective story lies

in his portraits of the scientific marvels of his day, the social settings, and the relationships between rich and poor, banker and burglar, society matron and ingenue, which live in his simple prose. Craig Kennedy still represents the science of detection as it was understood in a less sophisticated world.

J. Randolph Cox

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CRAIG KENNEDY SERIES: 1911-1920 • *The Poisoned Pen*, 1911; *The Silent Bullet*, 1912 (also known as *The Black Hand*); *The Dream Doctor*, 1914; *The Exploits of Elaine*, 1915; *The Gold of the Gods*, 1915; *The War Terror*, 1915 (also known as *Craig Kennedy, Detective*); *The Ear in the Wall*, 1916; *The Romance of Elaine*, 1916; *The Social Gangster*, 1916 (also known as *The Diamond Queen*); *The Triumph of Elaine*, 1916; *The Adventuress*, 1917; *The Treasure Train*, 1917; *The Panama Plot*, 1918; *The Soul Scar*, 1919

1921-1936 • *The Film Mystery*, 1921; *Craig Kennedy Listens In*, 1923; *Atavar: The Dream Dancer*, 1924; *Craig Kennedy on the Farm*, 1925; *The Boy Scouts' Craig Kennedy*, 1925; *The Fourteen Points: Tales of Craig Kennedy, Master of Mystery*, 1925; *Pandora*, 1926; *The Radio Detective*, 1926; *The Kidnap Club*, 1932; *The Clutching Hand*, 1934; *Enter Craig Kennedy*, 1935; *The Stars Scream Murder*, 1936

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Constance Dunlap, Woman Detective*, 1913; *Guy Garrick*, 1914; *The Master Mystery*, 1919; *The Mystery Mind*, 1921

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Tarzan the Mighty*, 1928 (serial)

SCREENPLAYS: *The Exploits of Elaine*, 1914 (with Charles William Goddard); *The New Exploits of Elaine*, 1915; *The Romance of Elaine*, 1915; *The Hidden Hand*, 1917 (with Charles A. Logue); *The House of Hate*, 1918 (with Logue); *The Carter Case*, 1919 (with John W. Grey); *The Grim Game*, 1919 (with Grey); *The Master Mystery*, 1919 (with Logue); *The Tiger's Trail*, 1919 (with Logue); *One Million Dollars Reward*, 1920 (with Grey); *Terror Island*, 1920

(with Grey); *The Mystery Mind*, 1920 (with Grey); *The Clutching Hand*, 1926; *The Radio Detective*, 1926; *The Return of the Riddle Rider*, 1927; *Unmasked*, 1929 (with others)

NONFICTION: *The Golden Age of Crime*, 1931

EDITED TEXT: *The Best Ghost Stories*, 1930

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KATHY REICHS

Born: Chicago, Illinois; 1950

Also wrote as K. J. Reichs; Kathleen J. Reichs

Types of plot: Police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Temperance Brennan, 1997-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

TEMPERANCE “TEMPE” BRENNAN, a forensic anthropologist, is single-minded in her pursuit of answers and unapologetically matter of fact, which often puts her in harm’s way. Like her creator, Tempe divides her time between the United States and Canada, teaching and consulting on forensic anthropology. Her character, immediately appealing, develops in the series as details of her background are revealed. The reader gradually learns that Tempe is a recovering alcoholic; is estranged from her husband; worries about her winsome daughter Katy, who is in college; has a quirky sister, “Harry,” whose son is troubled; and has a growing (and mutual) affection for Andrew Ryan. Tempe is driven and professional, sympathetic to the victims, unconventional in her social interactions, lacking in political savvy (and with no desire to acquire any), and all too oblivious of the danger in which she immerses herself when she takes her inquiries out of the forensics lab.

CONTRIBUTION

Sometimes dubbed the “next Patricia Cornwell,” Kathy Reichs writes books that are as much about the science of forensics as the fiction of mystery. Her efforts as a mystery writer are an extension of her successful career as a forensic anthropologist. The immediate popular appeal of her first novel, *Déjà Dead* (1997), was based on a fascinating character being placed in menacing, primitive situations. There is no doubt that timing was also a factor—the successes of mystery writer Patricia Cornwell and later *CSI* (began in 2000) and other mystery and television series dealing with forensic science showed a growing interest in this subject among members of the public.

Reichs had written extensively before penning *Déjà*

Dead, but only articles in scientific journals and forensic science textbooks. Her first serious venture into fiction, *Déjà Dead* was immediately recognized by the publishing community as a success, earning a \$1.2 million two-book deal with Scribner after a bidding war at the Frankfurt Book Fair and later winning the Arthur Ellis Award for best first novel.

USA Today suggested that Reichs was making more money writing about what she did as a forensic anthropologist than actually doing her job. Two years later, her second novel was also well received, and she began writing books at the rate of one per year. Her books have been translated into more than thirty languages and consistently make *The New York Times* best-seller list.

BIOGRAPHY

Kathleen Joan Reichs was born in 1950 in Chicago. Because Reichs writes about what she knows, it is likely that her character, Tempe Brennan, draws largely from the personality and experiences of her creator, but little is known about Reich’s personal life. Reichs makes a concerted effort to keep the details of her life private, bristling at questions about her age and about her family and displaying a determination to keep her husband and three grown children out of the public eye. She may have developed this attitude for security reasons before becoming a popular author, when her work as a forensic anthropologist could have made her the focus of unwanted attention from the media or criminals while working on highly controversial and dangerous cases.

Reichs was one of four daughters. Her mother was a musician with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and her father was a manager in the food industry. As a child, Reichs was always interested in science, although she did try her hand at writing when she was nine, authoring two books, according to the *Independent*: “One was a mystery and one was a romance and both were hideous.”

At the age of nineteen, she married an attorney, Paul A. Reichs, while pursuing a bachelor’s degree in

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Kathy Reichs. (AP/Wide World Photos)

anthropology from American University. She graduated in 1971 and went on to Northwestern University, where she received her master's degree in 1972 and her doctorate in 1975, both in physical anthropology with an emphasis on bio-archaeology, and wrote a dissertation titled "Biological Variability and the Howell Phenomenon: An Interregional Approach."

Reichs began her career as an academician in the study and examination of very old remains, teaching at Northern Illinois University, University of Pittsburgh, and Concordia University. Ultimately, while teaching at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, she found herself drawn to a more real-world application of her knowledge when the police showed up with bones. She continued to teach full-time and investigate as many as eighty cases per year. She began consulting as a forensic anthropologist for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in North Carolina in 1985, receiving her Diplomate American Board of Forensic Anthropology the following year.

In 1989, Reichs went to Montreal on the National Faculty Exchange to teach at Concordia and McGill and consult for the Laboratoire de Sciences Judiciaires

et de Médecine Légale for the province of Quebec. She has kept this appointment, dividing her time between Quebec and North Carolina.

Reichs has appeared as an expert witness in multiple trials and testified before the United Nations Tribunal on Genocide in Rwanda. She has assisted Clive Snow in an exhumation in the area of Lake Atitlán in the highlands of southwest Guatemala. She was also a member of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team assigned to assist at the World Trade Center disaster in 2001. She was engaged to identify the remains of dead soldiers from World War II, including the remains from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. She has

also weighed in on controversial cases covered by the media, appearing on a panel of experts on *Larry King Live* (began in 1985) discussing the disappearance of Natalee Holloway. In addition, she has published in numerous scientific journals and monographic collections.

ANALYSIS

In Kathy Reichs's mystery novels, it is undeniably true that art imitates life: Science and fiction are inextricably intertwined, just as they are in the author's life, and details in the novels come from cases in which she was involved or ones that caught her attention through the media. Reichs's writing graphically reveals the very elemental and gruesome elements of her real-life work as a forensic anthropologist, pairing an engaging and unselfconscious character with an expertise in the science and technological methods that are critical to finding the answers and solving the mystery. Reichs was quoted as saying that the appeal of forensic anthropology was that it bought the science and the mystery together.

Reichs's work is as much defined by her choice of

venue as by her lead characters, graphic descriptions, and twisted plots: Montreal and North Carolina provide dynamic backdrops for the twists of plot and escapades of Tempe Brennan. Reichs peppers the text with French and regional idioms to set the scene, an effort that is fairly effective for an audience ignorant of the language and culture but somewhat annoying to those who may be more familiar with them. Tempe's fictional résumé reads like a duplicate of Reichs's own experience, and the character's attributes come from the author herself. In fact, it is difficult to separate where the personality of Tempe ends and that of Reichs begins. Reichs says that her friends tell her that Tempe talks like her and that her abrasiveness and tendency to be a smart aleck are traits that the author possesses. However, the author says that Tempe's personal life is not like her own.

Reichs often focuses on the scientific details, emphasizing the process in a clinical way. The grotesque, gory detail in some forensic novels is muted in those of Reichs; however, she includes a lot of scientific details regarding bone measurement, analysis of blood spatter, cut marks, bite marks, the life cycle of bugs and carrion, degradation of body tissue and fatty acids, and DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid).

DÉJÀ DEAD

In her first novel, *Déjà Dead*, Reichs introduces Temperance Brennan, a self-contained, smart, and well-connected forensic anthropologist. Tempe's initial involvement in a seemingly straightforward case becomes much more, through Tempe's own tenacity and extreme coincidence (both of which come to be signatures in Reichs's novels). Tempe meets her match in a couple of police detectives: Andrew Ryan, to whom she is strongly attracted, and Claudel, whom she finds as annoying as Andrew is appealing.

Tempe immediately identifies the victim and, within days, stumbles on three other victims that she contends were all killed by the same person. Where others might be content to contain their involvement to the lab, she plays an active part in the investigation. She even goes with police to a suspect's residence and participates in chasing him through the city; however, the suspect gets away.

The story comes to a climax when she discovers

that the man whom the police have in custody could not be the killer because his bite marks do not match the killer's and she is attacked by the real killer. A fight ensues, and she disables the killer but not before he fairly incapacitates her as well.

As with most of Reichs's novels, the plot for *Déjà Dead* was taken from a real-life case: Serge Archambault killed two women, then used one of his victim's bank cards, which enabled the police to track the transaction and arrest him. He later confessed to killing a third victim, dismembering her, and burying the parts in five different locations. Reichs described the case in an interview with the Home Box Office (HBO), relating the details of the dismemberment and how she helped with the identification of the suspect:

It [the dismemberment] was quite unique and showed a lot of skill going directly into the joints. I was able to say you're looking for someone who knows something about anatomy—an orthopedic surgeon or butcher. And it turned out he was a butcher.

DEATH DU JOUR AND DEADLY DECISIONS

Death du Jour (1999) was also based on reality, using a number of details from deaths surrounding the Solar Temple cult. Reichs interweaves this plotline with an account of the research into a woman recommended for sainthood, an investigation taken from Reichs's own experience when the Catholic Archdiocese of Quebec asked Reichs to help confirm that the remains interred as Jeanne Le Ber were actually her. *Deadly Decisions* (2000) unveiled the world of gang wars, biker culture, and violence committed for profit, a criminal activity then gaining notoriety in the news.

FATAL VOYAGE

Fatal Voyage (2001) borrowed another story from the headlines, introducing the story of a college soccer team killed in the mysterious crash of a plane. Tempe is distraught when she arrives at the scene and discovers that her daughter might have been on the plane. She quickly discovers that her daughter is safe and sound with a friend, but her peace of mind is soon disturbed when Andrew Ryan turns up at the scene and informs her that his partner was on the plane, escorting a witness. When sorting out the wreckage and the body parts from that disaster, Tempe unearths an anom-

aly, a foot near the crash site that does not belong to anyone on the plane.

When the foot mysteriously disappears, Tempe is suddenly under fire and her competence is questioned. As she pursues her inquiry about the missing foot, she comes across some sort of lair with mysterious images and names of ancient bloodthirsty figures from myth and folklore. When one of her colleagues is killed, she becomes more determined to find out what it all means.

Ultimately, Tempe learns that there is a perversion of a gentleman's club, modeled on a Hellfire Club, operating in the area. They are responsible for a number of disappearances over the years as part of their sacrificial rituals. In an effort to bring the details to light, Tempe faces off with a murderer who has no compunction about killing to keep this secret society safe.

GRAVE SECRETS

Human rights is the main theme in *Grave Secrets* (2002), making it obvious that Reichs puts a lot of herself into her work and a lot of her work into her art, not just the situations that Tempe is embroiled in but also the emotional reaction to these situations and the commitment to find answers to put the dead to rest and to ease the pain of the living. This is evident in the dedication: "For the innocents: Guatemala, 1962-1996; New York, New York; Arlington, Virginia; Shanksville, Pennsylvania; September 11, 2001. I have touched their bones. I mourn for them."

Tempe is sifting through remains in Guatemala, assisting the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala with the recovery and identification of remains of those who "disappeared" during the civil war from 1962 to 1996. The plot then takes a turn when remains are found in a septic tank; police suspect the remains are connected with a serial killer and may belong to one of four missing young women, among them the Canadian ambassador's daughter. Then a colleague, mistaken for Tempe, is shot and injured. Tempe fights bureaucracy, corruption, ego, and a bout of food poisoning to get at the truth.

OTHER WORKS

Bare Bones (2003) looks at the victims of drug smuggling and animal poaching, and although it follows the same formula as Reichs's other works, it is more mundane. *Monday Mourning* (2004) also is a

little tepid in comparison with Reich's other novels. Tempe unearths the bodies of three murdered women buried in the basement of a pizza parlor. *Cross Bones* (2005) was a bit of a departure from the previous Temperance Brennan novels, as it took place in the Middle East. It has been likened to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), no doubt because of the secondary plot revolving around the family of Jesus. The novel has an entirely different ambience, probably because Reichs has attempted to create a sense of place, much as she does with her settings in Montreal and North Carolina. *Break No Bones* (2006) is set in North Carolina, where a televangelist is a major contributor to a free clinic whose patients are turning up dead, missing organs.

The popularity of Reichs's work has led to a television series, *Bones* (began in 2005), based on the character of Temperance Brennan as well as the work and experiences of the author herself. Reichs consults for the series, in which Tempe works by day as a forensic anthropologist and writes novels as Kathy Reichs. The characters in the television show, however, bear little resemblance to the characters in her books other than sometimes having the same names.

Wendi Arant Kaspar

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

TEMPERANCE BRENNAN SERIES: *Déjà Dead*, 1997; *Death du Jour*, 1999; *Deadly Decisions*, 2000; *Fatal Voyage*, 2001; *Grave Secrets*, 2002; *Bare Bones*, 2003; *Monday Mourning*, 2004; *Cross Bones*, 2005; *Break No Bones*, 2006; *Bones to Ashes*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Hominid Origins: Inquiries Past and Present*, 1983; *Forensic Osteology: Advances in the Identification of Human Remains*, 1986

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.kathyreichs.com Author's Web site includes brief biographical information, a curriculum vitae, a list of her fiction (with plot summaries and first chapters), and an overview of forensic science.

Stanford, Peter. "Ice Queen of Crime." *The Independent*, July 21, 2006, p. 20. A comparison and discussion of Kathy Reichs and Patricia Cornwell.

Wayman, E. R. "Forensic Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 4 (August, 2006): 567. Profile of Reichs that looks at her career and how she uses her knowledge in her writing.

Wecht, Cyril H., and John T. Rago, eds. *Forensic Science and Law: Investigative Applications in Criminal, Civil, and Family Justice*. Boca Raton, La.: CRC/Taylor & Francis, 2006. An explanation by a leading forensic expert of how the science is used in the legal system. Provides a perspective on the real-life world of forensic science and also on Reichs's work.

HELEN REILLY

Helen Kieran

Born: New York, New York; 1891

Died: Albuquerque, New Mexico; January 11, 1962

Also wrote as Kieran Abbey

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector McKee, 1930-1962

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHRISTOPHER MCKEE, a Scot who heads the Manhattan Homicide Squad, relies on his intuitive powers, keen observation, and ability to reason logically to solve his cases. He is a tough but fair person who if necessary will use bullying tactics to get information from a suspect. He admires attractive women but does not ignore them in his search for the guilty.

CONTRIBUTION

When Helen Reilly began writing detective stories in the 1930's, most female writers followed the Had-I-But-Known style. In this type of plot, a young woman unwittingly becomes involved in a romance with a handsome but evil man. The author usually tells the story from the woman's point of view. Reilly wanted none of this. Instead, she wrote police procedurals, giving a detailed and realistic picture of a homicide squad in operation. Her female characters are not "flighty young things" but rather mature, competent persons. Reilly has been recognized by Howard Haycroft, an authority on the detective story, as one of the most important mystery writers of the 1930's.

BIOGRAPHY

Helen Reilly was born in New York City in 1891. Her father was John Michael Kieran, the president of

Hunter College, and her brother, John Kieran, produced the famous *Information Please* series, a radio program that showcased his encyclopedic learning. Helen married Paul Reilly, an artist and cartoonist, in 1914, before she completed her degree from Hunter. The couple had four daughters, two of whom, Ursula Curtiss and Mary McMullen, followed in their mother's footsteps as mystery writers. (Her brother also wrote a mystery.)

At the urging of her lifelong friend, William McFee, an eminent author, Reilly began writing detective stories. Almost all of her stories feature Inspector McKee and follow the formula of a detailed presentation of a homicide investigation, told from the point of view of the police. It is easy to understand Reilly's reason for writing this way—her stories were major successes. She wrote thirty-three mysteries in her thirty-year career, as well as three others under the pen name Kieran Abbey. The leading magazines of the time that published popular fiction, such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, often featured her work. She served as president of the Mystery Writers of America in 1953.

She lived in Connecticut for a number of years; this state is the setting of *Certain Sleep* (1961). After her husband died in 1944, she returned to New York. Although she eventually moved from New York City to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to live with her daughter Ursula Curtiss and the latter's family, she always considered herself a native New Yorker. She died on January 11, 1962, continuing to write almost to the end of her life.

ANALYSIS

According to Ursula Curtiss, Helen Reilly was formed by her early life in New York City. It is in fact her knowledge of the city that lay behind two of the main features of her novels. First, she displayed a thorough understanding of the Manhattan Homicide Squad. It was her expertise in this area that enabled her to achieve success as an author of police procedurals. Her acquaintance with the city, however, was by no means confined to its seamy side. Her background was upper class, and her novels often display her insider's grasp of the workings of New York high society. Al-

though her style lacked the unusual qualities of her plots, it nevertheless was brisk and efficient.

Modern popular mystery writers such as Elmore Leonard and John D. MacDonald are often tough and hard-boiled. In contrast with Victorian figures such as Arthur Conan Doyle, whose "scientific" detection carefully avoided much contact with actual criminals, these writers stress the sordid; in the modern school, there is no battle of the giants in the style of Sherlock Holmes against Professor Moriarty.

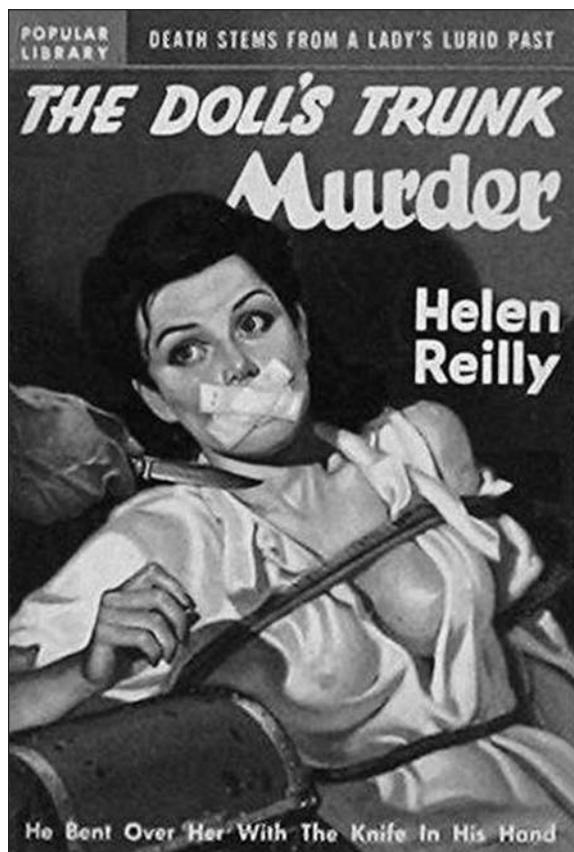
Readers of Dashiell Hammett will not need to be told that detective fiction's change from romance to realism began early. Although Hammett is the most famous of all writers of realistic detective fiction, he was not the only pioneer of this genre. Reilly, though she lacked the master touch of Hammett, exercised great influence on subsequent detective fiction through her extensive knowledge of police methods of investigation.

How carefully Reilly studied police procedure is obvious from an examination of her early novel *File on Rufus Ray* (1937). Here photographs of the actual evidence found by the police and used as exhibits are included in the book. Included are telegrams, a button inadvertently left at the murder scene, photographs of suspects, and a small packet of cigarette ashes. The reader is invited to follow along with the police as they proceed to the solution.

Reilly was not the only writer of the 1930's who did things like this: Several "crime kits," for example, were issued by the popular British writer Dennis Wheatley at roughly the same time. Reilly's police stories, however, differed entirely from Wheatley's. He was a "classic" writer, stressing pure deduction and bizarre details in the commission of the crime.

Reilly, on the other hand, was grimly realistic. Her Inspector McKee operates not through inspired hunches and supernatural powers of deduction but through hard work and persistent intelligence. Unlike detectives such as Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, whose "little grey cells" operate in sovereign indifference to those of anyone else, McKee does not do the job alone.

Quite the contrary, one of the realistic features of Reilly's stories is her constant emphasis on teamwork. McKee, though clearly first among equals, does not



solve his cases by himself. He discusses his solutions with Dr. Fernandez, the assistant medical examiner. On McKee's staff are Lucy Sturm, a nurse and undercover agent, and Officer Pierson, an accurate observer. Probably the most significant of McKee's assistants is Detective Todhunter, an unassuming person who is nevertheless a skilled detective.

Each of these persons is characterized briefly in a few bold strokes: Anyone who has read several of Reilly's McKee series novels will get a good picture of the team in action. Although her portrayal of these characters aided her in the factual approach to crime solving she was trying to achieve, she sometimes took a good thing too far. All of her McKee novels feature the same cast of police characters—they sometimes appear mere formulas repeated by rote.

Police work as Reilly describes it differs in many more ways from the methods of the great intuitive detectives such as Poirot and Holmes. On more than one

occasion, force as well as intelligence is required to solve the case. Reilly's novels were written long before the *Miranda* decision and the modern emphasis on the rights of accused criminals. A key aspect of police work as Reilly tells the tale involves rousting the suspects and subjecting them to persistent, third-degree questioning. In *Certain Sleep*, for example, McKee does not let the fact that a suspect lies wounded in a hospital bed stop him from securing a confession. Although some of McKee's methods would probably get him into trouble with the modern United States Supreme Court, he does not employ brutality and is presented as a very sympathetic character.

Reilly's knowledge of police procedure was acquired in the same way she presented crimes as being solved: through detailed study. She was on excellent terms with the Manhattan Homicide Squad about which she wrote, and she was one of the few people not employed in police work who had access to its files. A number of her stories were in fact based on real cases. Regardless of whether a novel followed the details of an actual case, it always adhered to true-to-life police methods. *File on Rufus Ray* was unusual in the extent to which Reilly was prepared to go to give her readers a taste of an actual case. Her later novels did not offer a grasp of the evidence in so literal a way, because the expense involved proved too much for her publishers. This setback did not stop her from continuing her production of police procedurals; she wrote twenty-five more after *File on Rufus Ray*.

LAMENT FOR THE BRIDE

The fact that Reilly emphasized the grinding, day-to-day character of a police investigation, avoiding its glamour, did not at all imply that her work avoided the upper classes. Quite the contrary, most of her novels involved crimes committed by the rich or socially prominent. As one might anticipate from her attitude to police work, her perception of these people was grimly realistic. Often, as with the business executive Howard Fescue in *Lament for the Bride* (1951), members of this class are presented as ruthlessly grasping for money and power. Reilly here relied once more on personal knowledge. She came from an upper-class family herself and was the daughter of the president of Hunter College. She does not, like Edith Wharton, de-

scribe the intricacies of New York society with full attention to every nuance. She nevertheless writes from real knowledge, and her treatment of the rich accordingly avoids the error of many popular novelists, who present them as virtual dwellers on a different planet.

Realism rather than fantasy has so far been claimed to be the leitmotif of Reilly's way of writing mysteries. This thesis receives reinforcement from another basic building block of her stories—her portrayal of women. Her heroines are not gossamer creatures who fall in love with the first handsome man to bestow a smile on them. Like Reilly herself, these women are fully competent. In *Lament for the Bride*, Judith Fescue is genuinely in love with Horace Fescue. She is far from unmindful, however, of his great wealth, and the reader quickly gathers that financial security was a reason for her marriage.

Reilly was well aware that in contrast to storybook romances, women as well as men frequently are capable of attraction to more than one person. As Judith Fescue attempts to deal with the kidnapping of her husband, she finds herself becoming increasingly interested in Charles Darlington, a family friend. When, at the novel's close, she is compelled to face some unpleasant truths about her husband, she does not collapse into hysterics or fall into a faint, as a Christie heroine would do. She calmly faces facts and departs with Charles.

CERTAIN SLEEP

Reilly's attitude toward her female characters remained constant to the end. In *Certain Sleep*, one of her last two novels, Jo Dobenny, a young career woman, finds herself involved in a complicated plot. An heiress has died through carbon-monoxide poisoning; a chief suspect turns out to be her former fiancé. Once more, the heroine does not become hysterical and leave the solution of her troubles to her friends of the opposite sex. She ably assists in her vindication and that of her one-time fiancé as well. At the book's close, it is strongly implied that the two of them will resume their relationship.

The weaknesses of Reilly's approach are also in evidence in this novel. "Realistic" plots, with their stress on detail, carry with them the danger of overemphasis on items of minor importance. In *Certain Sleep*,

the plot turns on a complicated will, the provisions of which are presented in tedious fullness. No doubt realistic, but also more than slightly wearying.

Further, Reilly sometimes went to extreme lengths in her repetition of a winning recipe. One of the clues that enables McKee to discover the culprit in *Certain Sleep* is a cigarette left at the scene of the heiress's demise. As one recalls *File on Rufus Ray*, one cannot help wondering whether Reilly had a "thing" about ashes. Again, one of Jo Dobenny's romantic interests is named Charles; this time, however, unlike the Charles of *Lament for the Bride*, the heroine does not select him. Reilly's proved record of success led her to repeat detailed clues and names from book to book—surely a mistake.

More important than her minor failings, however, is the fact that Reilly's fiction, however much it followed a formula, gained justifiable attention. Her style, while not remarkable, was a good instrument for her purposes. She spent little time on description of anything other than evidence relevant to the case. She devoted scant attention to detailed characterization, except for her female leads. Even here, her view of character comes through the action presented rather than through descriptive passages or interior monologue. Much of the normal Reilly mystery takes place in dialogue: Her characters tend to speak in short exclamations.

All in all, Helen Reilly, though not a major writer, contributed significantly to the evolution of the detective story. Her early use of the police procedural has established for her a secure reputation.

Bill Delaney

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR MCKEE SERIES: 1930-1940 • *The Diamond Feather*, 1930; *Murder in the Mews*, 1931; *McKee of Centre Street*, 1934; *The Line-Up*, 1934; *Dead Man Control*, 1936; *Mr. Smith's Hat*, 1936; *All Concerned Notified*, 1939; *Dead for a Ducat*, 1939; *Death Demands an Audience*, 1940; *Murder in Shinbone Alley*, 1940; *The Dead Can Tell*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Mourned on Sunday*, 1941; *Three Women in Black*, 1941; *Name Your Poison*, 1942; *The Opening Door*, 1944; *Murder on Angler's Island*,

1945; *The Silver Leopard*, 1946; *The Farmhouse*, 1947; *Staircase 4*, 1949; *Murder at Arroways*, 1950

1951-1962 • *Lament for the Bride*, 1951; *The Double Man*, 1952; *The Velvet Hand*, 1953; *Tell Her It's Murder*, 1954; *Compartment K*, 1955 (also known as *Murder Rides the Express*); *The Canvas Dagger*, 1956; *Ding, Dong, Bell*, 1958; *Not Me, Inspector*, 1959; *Follow Me*, 1960; *Certain Sleep*, 1961; *The Day She Died*, 1962

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Thirty-first Bullfinch*, 1930; *Man with the Painted Head*, 1931; *The Doll's Trunk Murder*, 1932; *File on Rufus Ray*, 1937; *Run with the Hare*, 1941 (as Abbey); *And Let the Coffin Pass*, 1942 (as Abbey); *Beyond the Dark*, 1944 (as Abbey)

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Huang, Jim, ed. *They Died In Vain: Overlooked, Underappreciated, and Forgotten Mystery Novels*. Carmel, Ind.: Crum Creek Press, 2002. Reilly is among the authors discussed in this book about mystery novels that never found the audience they deserved.

Reynolds, William. "Seven 'Crimefiles' of the 1930's: The Purest Puzzles of the Golden Age." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 1 (Fall/Winter, 1980): 42-53. Includes Inspector McKee in a list of Golden Age genre-defining puzzles and the detectives who solved them.

RUTH RENDELL

Born: London, England; February 17, 1930

Also wrote as Barbara Vine

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Wexford, 1964-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

REGINALD WEXFORD is a middle-aged family man with two grown-up daughters. Despite his stolid appearance, he is an intuitive police inspector who works as much by empathy and by understanding the reasons behind a crime as by reason and procedure. His intuition often leads him to persevere with a case despite false leads or no evidence. He is well-read and often finds clues in the literature he reads.

MICHAEL BURDEN, Wexford's assistant detective,

by contrast, dresses neatly and tries to follow police procedure. He lacks Wexford's culture, but learns to be more sympathetic to the human follies and foibles that he encounters on a regular basis.

CONTRIBUTION

Ruth Rendell moved both the detective and suspense genres toward serious fiction, as did Wilkie Collins in the nineteenth century. She does this not only with her well-crafted style but also with her concern for psychological analysis of both the criminal mind and the investigator's mind, often also encompassing the victim's mind. She structures her plots and subplots using a sophisticated parallelism, and there is a keen awareness of the context of literature within the plotting. There is, in other words, a conscious literariness as well as a conscious crafting in her fiction. Her awareness of contemporary British culture and its



Ruth Rendell. (Courtesy, Random House)

crosscurrents melds strongly with concrete description and accurate characterization. In achieving this, Rendell has shown younger writers the demands of the genre and how it can be developed.

BIOGRAPHY

Ruth Barbara Rendell was born Ruth Barbara Grasemann, the only daughter of two teachers, Arthur Grasemann, and his Swedish wife, Ebba Elise Kruse Grasemann. Although her parents shared an interest in literature and the arts, their relationship was fraught, causing their lonely daughter to escape into an imaginative world. She had been born in an outer suburb of London, then moved farther out to Loughton, Essex, at the age of seven. She attended the local high school and, after graduating, decided to pursue journalism rather than attend a university.

Rendell worked for some years on local newspapers but felt increasingly restricted by the medium.

When she had to report on an after-dinner speech at a local tennis club, she wrote up the whole speech without attending, only to find later that the speaker had dropped dead half way through it. Needless to say, she resigned. She met a fellow journalist, Don Rendell, and they married in 1950. She left journalism altogether in 1953 to raise her son, Simon. She then began writing fiction, as much for her own amusement as anything, also extending her own education. She unsuccessfully submitted several short stories for publication. When she submitted a comic novel, an editor responded, asking her to turn it into a detective novel. Thus, in 1964, emerged Inspector Wexford.

Rendell immediately began developing Inspector Wexford as a series, but at the same time began writing suspense novels about ordinary people caught up in extraordinary inner compulsions and situations, the first one of which was published in 1965 as *To Fear a Painted Devil*. She wrote, and has continued to write, prolifically, alternating detective and suspense novels. In 1975, her marriage fell apart, and she and her husband were divorced; however, by 1977 they had reconciled and remarried. Rendell received an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America for the short story "The Fallen Curtain" in 1975 and for "The New Girlfriend" in 1984, the 1976 Gold Dagger for fiction for *A Demon in My View* (1976), and the 1981 Arts Council National Book Award for genre fiction for *The Lake of Darkness* (1980). About this time, she and her husband purchased a fifteenth century cottage in Suffolk. This became her preferred place to write, though she also retained a place in London.

As Rendell's reputation grew on both sides of the Atlantic, she decided to start a third group of novels under the pen name of Barbara Vine, being her middle name plus the family name of a grandmother. These novels were also suspense novels but more historical, more exploratory of the tensions between culture and heredity, the past and the present—and also somewhat longer and a more demanding read. The first of these, *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, appeared in 1986. At this time, the Inspector Wexford novels were becoming somewhat of a chore for Rendell, written for popular demand. The novels became the basis for a successful television series starring George Barker.

Further recognition came in a series of literary awards. From the Crime Writers' Association, Rendell received Gold Daggers in 1987 for *A Fatal Inversion* and in 1991 for *King Solomon's Carpet* and a Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement in 1991. She was also awarded a Companion of the British Empire (CBE) in 1996, and the next year was created Baroness Rendell of Babergh, partly through her political involvement in a number of causes, to sit as a Labour peer in the House of Lords. She was named a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America in 1997.

ANALYSIS

The novels by which Ruth Rendell is best known are the Inspector Wexford series. These are set in the fictional town of Kingsmarkham, in the south of England. Wexford lives with his wife, Dora, and has two grown-up daughters. The elder of the daughters, Sylvia, along with her two daughters, moves back home after separating from her husband. Inspector Wexford is assisted by Michael Burden. Over the course of the series, both men earn promotions. The series develops the characters of the two men and their relationship with each other. At times, their families become involved in the plots.

One of the features of all Ruth Rendell's fiction is the use of parallel plots. At first, the plots appear unrelated, but gradually similarities emerge, and at certain crucial points, the plots actually cross. Sometimes both plots involve murder, but sometimes one plot centers on personal happenings in the lives of the two police officers in the Wexford series or other happenings in the victim's family. There is a marked degree of literary allusion, too, and sometimes the parallelism comes from literature. For this, Wexford needs to be a well-read man, which he is.

Later Wexford novels take on more social and political issues, overlaying the psychological and personal ones. Rendell deals with racism (*Simisola*, 1994), feminism (*An Unkindness of Ravens*, 1985), and ecological issues (*Road Rage*, 1997), though never taking a strong political stance in any of her novels. In fact, Rendell has been labeled antifeminist by some critics. Wexford himself goes through changes, suffering a heart attack, disillusionment, and an at-

tempted seduction. His own experiences make him more understanding of the perpetrators' motives.

In the suspense novels, written both as Rendell and as Vine, a somewhat different scenario emerges. The police novels have a sense of order and a return to normality at their conclusions; the suspense novels have no such normative presence. Instead, perfectly normal people on the outside commit crimes of great passion and violence, often out of sexual obsessions. The novels develop an understanding of why they committed such apparently out-of-character crimes. The point of view varies, there being no central organizing police consciousness: Sometimes it is of the perpetrator, sometimes objective, sometimes multiple. Rendell is willing to leave many of her novels open-ended; others have a circular form.

FROM DOON WITH DEATH

From Doon with Death (1964) was the first of Rendell's novels to be published and the first of more than twenty Inspector Wexford books. The murder victim is a very ordinary former schoolteacher, Margaret ("Minna") Parsons, married to an equally ordinary husband. Rendell shows that in the past of even the most ordinary person can lie great passion, here revealed as the lesbian passion of "Doon," a former schoolfriend, now apparently well-married, though the marriage turns out to be sexless. At first Inspector Wexford cannot see that Doon could be a woman and gets caught up in the various adulterous relationships of the characters. Finally the discovery of old photos and letters and the correct interpretation of various literary clues and allusions lead to the correct solution. Wexford emerges as an interesting central character, though it took Rendell several more books to develop Burden and the two men's relationship.

A SLEEPING LIFE

In *A Sleeping Life* (1978), the victim is in some ways quite similar to Margaret Parsons. Rhoda Comfrey is middle-aged, unmarried, and plain. Why should anyone want to murder her? Her only acquaintance appears to be an unlikely one, a successful novelist called Grenville West. The arrival of Sylvia, Wexford's older daughter and somewhat of a feminist, leads to a number of arguments, during one of which Wexford has to think of the possibility of women be-

ing truly successful only when disguised as men. He realizes Parsons and West are one and the same person. He goes on to find out that someone else who had fallen in love with West has made the same discovery. The murder is the result of thwarted passion, after all. Themes of appearance and reality, as well as feminist themes, mark the novel, as does Wexford's sympathy with both the victim and the perpetrator.

THE BRIDESMAID

The Bridesmaid (1989) is one of Rendell's suspense thrillers. The central characters are Philip Wardman and Senta, a beautiful schizophrenic woman. Wardman seems to be the model of respectability, living in an unmarried household composed of mother and sisters. However, Senta, in the form of a statue, becomes an embodiment of the ideal female with whom Wardman is obsessed. Senta herself is mentally sick and has already killed a former lover. She enters into a murder pact with Wardman, her part of which she fulfills. The novel closes as he realizes just what Senta has done and what he, too, has done, as they wait for their arrest. The novel explores, as do many others by Rendell, the powers of the subconscious that can no longer be contained by the outer forms of respectability.

THE KEYS TO THE STREET

To some, *The Keys to the Street* (1996) is unsatisfactory and incomplete. To others, it is one of her most complex works, with the lack of completion a deliberate postmodern statement. It is symbolic in a Dickensian sense, in that an area of London, Regent's Park, is taken and its various aspects symbolized as aspects of modern urban life. The interweaving paths represent the plotlines of the characters' lives; the iron railings and gates, the exclusion and boundaries between one social class and another. The serial killing of a number of homeless men on these railings is less important than the hidden lives of those who frequent the park. One of these is Roman, who has "killed off" his former life and chosen to be a vagrant but then protects a young woman being stalked by a former abusive lover. Only the reader is aware of their real interconnectedness, again, as in a Charles Dickens novel.

A DARK-ADAPTED EYE

A Dark-Adapted Eye is the first of the Barbara Vine novels. It shows Rendell's thesis that the past often is

much more powerful than the present in determining people's perceptions. A woman has been hanged for murdering her niece. Thirty-five years later, another niece tries to reconstruct the story as a piece of journalism. She has eyewitness statements and faded photos from which to work. The only way reality can be reconstructed is in a sort of jigsaw puzzle, as the reconstruction needs multiple viewpoints and interpretations.

David Barratt

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR WEXFORD SERIES: *From Doon with Death*, 1964; *A New Lease of Death*, 1967 (also known as *Sins of the Fathers*, 1970); *Wolf to the Slaughter*, 1967; *The Best Man to Die*, 1969; *A Guilty Thing Surprised*, 1970; *No More Dying Then*, 1971; *Murder Being Once Done*, 1972; *Some Lie and Some Die*, 1973; *Shake Hands Forever*, 1975; *A Sleeping Life*, 1978; *Means of Evil*, 1979; *Put On by Cunning*, 1981 (also known as *Death Notes*, 1981); *The Speaker of Mandarin*, 1983; *An Unkindness of Ravens*, 1985; *The Veiled One*, 1988; *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, 1992; *Simisola*, 1995; *Road Rage*, 1997; *Harm Done*, 1999; *The Babes in the Wood*, 2002; *End in Tears*, 2005

NONSERIES NOVELS: *To Fear a Painted Devil*, 1965; *Vanity Dies Hard*, 1966 (also known as *In Sickness and in Health*); *The Secret House of Death*, 1968; *One Across, Two Down*, 1971; *The Face of Trespass*, 1974; *A Demon in My View*, 1976; *A Judgement in Stone*, 1977; *Make Death Love Me*, 1979; *The Lake of Darkness*, 1980; *Master of the Moor*, 1982; *The Killing Doll*, 1984; *The Tree of Hands*, 1984; *Live Flesh*, 1986; *Talking to Strange Men*, 1987; *Heartstones*, 1987; *The Bridesmaid*, 1989; *Going Wrong*, 1990; *The Crocodile Bird*, 1993; *The Keys to the Street*, 1996; *A Sight for Sore Eyes*, 1998; *Thornapple*, 1998; *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me*, 2001; *The Rottweiler*, 2003; *Thirteen Steps Down*, 2004; *The Water's Lovely*, 2006; *The Thief*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS VINE): *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, 1986; *A Fatal Inversion*, 1987; *The House of Stairs*, 1988; *Gallowglass*, 1990; *King Solomon's Carpet*, 1991; *Asta's Book*, 1993 (also known as *Anna's Book*); *No Night Is Too Long*, 1994; *The Brimstone Wedding*, 1995; *In the Time of His Prosperity*,

1995; *The Chimney-sweeper's Boy*, 1998; *Grasshopper*, 2000; *The Blood Doctor*, 2002; *The Minotaur*, 2005

SHORT FICTION: *The Fallen Curtain, and Other Stories*, 1976; *The Fever Tree, and Other Stories*, 1982; *The New Girlfriend, and Other Stories of Suspense*, 1985; *Collected Short Stories*, 1987; *The Copper Peacock, and Other Stories*, 1991; *Blood Lines: Long and Short Stories*, 1996; *Piranha to Scurfy, and Other Stories*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Ruth Rendell's Suffolk*, 1989 (with Paul Bowden); *Undermining the Central Line*, 1989

EDITED TEXTS: *Dr. Thorne*, 1991 (by Anthony Trollope); *The Reason Why: An Anthology of the Murderous Mind*, 1995

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writer for our paranoid times." Contains list of works through 1999.

Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an essay that discusses Rendell's work and her life and their interactions.

Munt, Sally R. *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel*. London: Routledge, 1994. Tries to place Rendell in the feminist debate over this genre. Munt poses a number of crucial questions about the genre as a whole and why it has been so much used in antiestablishment writing.

Reynolds, Moira Davison. *Women Authors of Detective Series: Twenty-one American and British Authors, 1900-2000*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001. Examines the life and work of major female mystery writers, including Rendell.

Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. London: Palgrave, 2001. This is the best introduction to Rendell. Rowland covers forty-two novels by various crime writers, putting them within the context of their lives and culture. She examines the drift toward the gothic as well as toward feminist stances. An interview with Rendell is included.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. London: Viking, 1985. An overall survey of the genre, but pp. 177-180 give a detailed critique of Rendell's place in the wider picture.

JOHN RHODE**Cecil John Charles Street****Born:** Place unknown; 1884**Died:** Eastbourne, Sussex, England; December 8, 1964**Also wrote as** Miles Burton; F.O.O.; I.O.; Cecil Waye**Types of plot:** Amateur sleuth; private investigator; thriller**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Lancelot Priestley, 1925-1961

Desmond Merrion and Henry Arnold, 1930-1960

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DR. LANCELOT PRIESTLEY, a great ratiocinator in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes, solves his cases by analysis rather than investigation and relies on others to bring him the facts for analysis. An academic chemist by training, he is retired from the academic life before the series begins. No wife is mentioned in the series, although a daughter, April, appears in the first book, *The Paddington Mystery* (1925).

JIMMY WAGHORN, honest, easygoing, and fair, rises rapidly through the ranks of the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, eventually becoming a superintendent. Only once (in *Twice Dead*, 1960) does he solve a case without being given at least a strong hint from Priestley, but he is far from being the sort of official bungler encountered by Sherlock Holmes or Philo Vance.

DESMOND MERRION is a private detective and a more active participant in his cases than is Priestley. In Miles Burton's World War II novels, Merrion becomes an intelligence agent. Although married, Merrion spends long periods away from home investigating crimes. Mrs. Merrion has an active role in some of the novels of this series (for example, *Heir to Murder*, 1953, *Murder in Absence*, 1954, and *Found Drowned*, 1956), but like Superintendent Waghorn's wife, Diana, in the later books of the Priestley series, she is all talk without insight.

INSPECTOR HENRY ARNOLD is a more active police

detective than either of Priestley's superintendents, and he and Merrion are more active partners in unmasking criminals. Merrion and Arnold have an engaging relationship that involves constant bickering and differences of opinion but with an underlying mutual respect.

CONTRIBUTION

The detective novels written by Cecil John Charles Street under the pseudonym John Rhode are books of detective reasoning almost to the exclusion of action. The murder has usually been committed before the book begins. Dr. Lancelot Priestley solves the crime by deductive logic on the basis of information brought to him by his friends at Scotland Yard. He frequently gives Scotland Yard hints that open the appropriate lines of investigation. In his day, Rhode was often cited as one of the leading figures of British detective fiction, but he has not retained his popularity from the Golden Age quite so well as some of the others. His greatest achievement is in meticulously observing the rules of fair play even in the most complex situations involving arcane knowledge.

The books that Street wrote under the name Miles Burton are in general regarded as weaker than those he wrote as Rhode. Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor suggest, however, that the Burton books "tend to be wittier and less dependent on mechanical devices, as well as more concerned with scenery and character. They are often less solid, too, the outcome being sometimes pulled out of a hat rather than demonstrated." Another difference is that Merrion and Arnold operate in the country, while Priestley is an urbane Londoner.

BIOGRAPHY

John Rhode, born as Cecil John Charles Street and also known as John Street, was extremely reticent about his private life. He refused to be listed in *Who's Who*, and many reference works do not give the exact date of his birth or death (several are in error about the

year of his death). An indication of how secretive a person Street was and how carefully he separated his various personalities is the fact that he used the title *Up the Garden Path* for both a Burton book published in 1941 and a Rhode book published in 1949. He even invented a fictitious year of birth for Burton, whose books he never admitted were his. He is said to have been a career officer, a major, in the British army and a field officer in both World War I and World War II. Awarded the Order of the British Empire, he also received a Military Cross, a fairly high distinction. Street's firsthand experience of war may perhaps even be credited with directing him to literary pursuits because his first few books were studies of gunnery and a war novel (*The Worldly Hope*, 1917) published under the pseudonym F.O.O. (for Forward Observation Officer) while World War I was still being fought. Curiously, no trace of Street appears in *Quarterly Army List* of this period or of later periods. Immediately after the war, he tried his hand at thrillers before launching his two highly successful series. Between the wars, Street was stationed in Ireland and Central Europe, and while maintaining a steady production of two novels a year in each of his series, he also published a number of political works that grew out of his firsthand experience. His intelligence experience during World War II was put to use in such Desmond Merrion novels of the war years as *Up the Garden Path* and *Situation Vacant* (1946). He continued to write at a steady pace into his seventies and died at a hospital near his Seaford home in Sussex.

ANALYSIS

The John Rhode novels are essentially locked-room mysteries. Rhode did not practice the hermetically sealed locked-room mystery of John Dickson Carr, however, so the device is primarily useful for circumscribing the incidents of the story. Understanding how the murderer had access to the victim is usually less the focus of interest than is the cause of death. Rhode was a master at finding unusual causes of death and was particularly adept at developing new variations on poisoning. Rhode is also justly famous for the atmospheric presentation of special settings such as the antique car rally of *The Motor Rally Mystery*

(1933) and the séances of *The Claverton Mystery* (1933).

THE MURDERS IN PRAED STREET

Both Ellery Queen and Melvyn Barnes have singled out *The Murders in Praed Street* (1928) as one of Rhode's best books because it shows how the story of serial killings can avoid monotony. Barzun and Taylor, on the other hand, criticize the book because Priestley blunders conspicuously into the action of the case, getting himself nearly gassed in the process. If not necessarily better, Priestley is certainly more characteristic (and Rhode is more comfortable) when he has ceased such active participation in cases.

DEATH IN HARLEY STREET

A good example of Rhode at his best and an excellent illustration of his method of fair play is *Death in Harley Street* (1946). The death mentioned in the title has already occurred before the story opens. The police have dismissed as a rather bizarre accident the death of Dr. Richard Knapp Mawsley, who seems to have injected himself with a fatal dose of strychnine. Someone might have entered the consulting room after hours, but it is hardly credible that Mawsley would have accepted an injection of strychnine without putting up a struggle. From the police description of the scene and of the events leading up to Mawsley's death, Priestley is able to posit the existence of a missing letter and hypothesize (accurately, as it develops) its contents. This dazzling demonstration of his reasoning powers is a red herring, however, for it supports the theory of suicide, which is no more accurate than the official coroner's verdict of accidental death. Early in the book, Priestley theorizes that this case must be a special instance of a violent death that cannot be explained as suicide, as accident, or as murder. While the police are pursuing missing wills and the whereabouts of the butler on his night out, Priestley uncovers a secret relationship based on facts and attitudes from Mawsley's past that are clearly indicated to the reader. Priestley's theory of the special nature of this death is vindicated at last when he administers a poison to himself to prove how the death occurred. Most readers will be less fastidious about terminology than Priestley and will count the final explanation as indicating murder, however subtle the guise.

THE DR. LANCELOT PRIESTLEY SERIES

The Priestley series evolves in several ways over its thirty-six-year span. Superintendent Hanslet of the earlier novels retires, and the younger, more energetic, and somewhat more naïve Jimmy Waghorn replaces him and later rises to the rank of superintendent himself. On the other hand, this change of personnel does not alter Priestley's working procedures. In addition, his Saturday dinners continue to be attended by Hanslet and Waghorn. These dinners are also attended by Dr. Mortimer Oldland in the later books. The primary way the books change is that Priestley becomes a more sedentary person over time. Like Nero Wolfe, he seldom leaves home in these later books. Because he was already elderly at the start of the series, this is hardly surprising, but he reveals his true character when he ceases pursuing facts entirely and participates in the cases only as a disinterested analyst. A third way in which the books in this series change is, unfortunately, that after World War II they become somewhat more mechanical and less imaginative.

It is often remarked that Rhode had no gift for characterization; Nicholas Blake has called Rhode's characters ciphers. Although Priestley is allowed as a grand exception to the generalization, there are problems of two sorts with this appraisal. The type of mystery that Rhode wrote is concerned primarily with an intellectual puzzle. Well-rounded characterization is not merely unnecessary, it is inappropriate. The unimportance of characterization to the form in which Rhode was working is perhaps indicated by the inconsistencies in the names of some of his major continuing characters. Dr. Oldland witnesses a will as Sidney Oldland in *The Claverton Mystery*, but his given name appears to be Mortimer in *Death at Breakfast* (1936). Even Priestley himself absentmindedly initials a note to his secretary with "J. P." in *The Ellerby Case* (1926). Although the character of Superintendent Hanslet appears throughout the series, his given name is never revealed. Within the limitations of his genre, however, Rhode's characterizations are more than competent. Except for a few later books in which he is clearly not writing up to his best standard (for example, *The Fourth Bomb*, 1942; *By Registered Post*, 1953; and *The Fatal Pool*, 1960), the characterizations are various and have a realistic proba-

bility in context. No murderer is ever, for example, revealed as having committed his crime because of secret passions about which the reader could not have known anything.

On the other hand, the characterization of Priestley is not well rounded, nor could it have been. Priestley is not so much a character as a symbol for rational deduction. What seem at first glance to be quirks of character prove on analysis to be part of the theory of detection embodied by the books. For example, Priestley's cavalier willingness to let some criminals get away with murder is really Street's comment on the art of John Rhode rather than Rhode's comment on the morals of Lancelot Priestley. Street does not mean that it ought to be possible to get away with murder, but in fact it is often possible to do so in the real world. When Priestley dismisses the murderer at the end of *Death in Harley Street* with the bland advice that he "not carry [his] experiments in toxicology any further," Rhode is acknowledging that it would be extremely difficult to convict the guilty party in this case, and Street is allowing the reader the pleasure of being an aesthetic observer of the ethical dilemma. No comment on the real world is intended.

Priestley's occasional regret at the passing of the old order is, like his willingness to allow an artful murderer to get away with his crime, less personal characterization than a necessary part of the nostalgia of the puzzle mystery as a genre. As David I. Grossvogel has said of Agatha Christie's first readers, Rhode's first readers wished to "purchase at the cost of a minor and passing disturbance the comfort of knowing that the disturbance was *contained*, and that at the end of the story the world they imagined would be continued in its innocence and familiarity." As with Christie, this tenuous keeping of sordid realities at arm's length could not survive the devastations of World War II, as Rhode's uncertain tone and inconsistent performance in the novels of the 1950's testify.

When the setting is outside London, Priestley can receive only occasional reports on the progress of a case. When this is so, as in *Death of a Godmother* (1955), the fact that the brief scenes in which he appears are intrusive also helps rebut the familiar understanding of Priestley as a triumph of characterization.

Priestley is a brilliant idea, but he is a triumph of plot and point of view, not of characterization.

In addition to the more than six dozen novels about Priestley, there are three short stories, "The Elusive Bullet," "The Vanishing Diamond," and "The Purple Line," the first two written for original anthologies. "The Elusive Bullet" is the only work in which Priestley gets kissed (he does offer a deathbed kiss of peace in *Tragedy on the Line*, 1931), and even here he is only being thanked for resolving a case.

THE SECRET OF HIGH ELDERSHAM

The Desmond Merrion and Henry Arnold series by Miles Burton was an attempt by Rhode to be more lighthearted. Although for the most part he succeeded, the general standard of the series falls somewhat behind that of the Priestley books. One of the best novels in this series is the first, *The Secret of High Eldersham* (1930). This tale of witchcraft, murder, and smuggling shows a nice balance of action and analysis. Merrion meets his wife in this story, but Inspector Arnold has yet to appear.

OTHER WORKS

Despite Rhode's association with puzzle mysteries both as Rhode and as Burton, he began his career in detective fiction as Street with a number of thrillers, *A.S.F.: The Story of a Great Conspiracy* (1924), *The Double Florin* (1924), and *The Alarm* (1925). Barzun and Taylor note *A.S.F.* as a particularly effective 1920's thriller in its depiction of the cocaine traffic. Rhode's reticence about his personal life extended to his craft as a writer. The appendix to *The Floating Admiral* (1931), which was written a section at a time by the members of the Detection Club, includes the solution each writer had in mind at the time he wrote his section, but Rhode gives a straightforward summary of his solution without theoretical asides. His book-length study of a real murder in *The Case of Constance Kent* (1928) is highly regarded for its elucidation of the case, but it offers no insight into Rhode's workings as a mystery writer. He did, however, provide a useful history of the Detection Club in the introduction to an anthology called *Detective Medley* (1939).

Only one mystery novel by Rhode or Burton has been made into a film. In 1936, *The Murders in Praed Street* became *Twelve Good Men* under the direction

of Ralph Ince. The film stars Henry Kendall, Nancy O'Neil, Joyce Kennedy, and Percy Parsons. The writers Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat did an excellent job of providing a clear and suspenseful screenplay, yet Priestley does not appear, a testament perhaps to the extent to which he is an observer of rather than a participant in the main action of the novels in which he appears.

Edmund Miller

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LANCELOT PRIESTLEY SERIES: 1925-1930 • *The Paddington Mystery*, 1925; *Dr. Priestley's Quest*, 1926; *The Ellerby Case*, 1926; *The Murders in Praed Street*, 1928; *Tragedy at the Unicorn*, 1928; *The Davidson Case*, 1929 (also known as *Murder at Bratton Grange*); *The House on Tollard Ridge*, 1929; *Peril at Cranbury Hall*, 1930; *Pinehurst*, 1930 (also known as *Dr. Priestley Investigates*)

1931-1940 • *The Hanging Woman*, 1931; *Tragedy on the Line*, 1931; *Dead Men at the Folly*, 1932; *Mystery at Greycombe Farm*, 1932 (also known as *The Fire at Greycombe Farm*); *The Claverton Mystery*, 1933 (also known as *The Claverton Affair*); *The Motor Rally Mystery*, 1933 (also known as *Dr. Priestley Lays a Trap*); *The Venner Crime*, 1933; *Poison for One*, 1934; *Shot at Dawn*, 1934; *The Robthorne Mystery*, 1934; *Hendon's First Case*, 1935; *Mystery at Olympia*, 1935 (also known as *Murder at the Motor Show*); *The Corpse in the Car*, 1935; *Death at Breakfast*, 1936; *In Face of the Verdict*, 1936; *Death in the Hop Fields*, 1937 (also known as *The Harvest Murder*); *Death on the Board*, 1937 (also known as *Death Sits on the Board*); *Proceed with Caution*, 1937 (also known as *Body Unidentified*); *Invisible Weapons*, 1938; *The Bloody Tower*, 1938 (also known as *Tower of Evil*); *Death on Sunday*, 1939 (also known as *The Elm Tree Murder*); *Death Pays a Dividend*, 1939; *Death on the Boat-Train*, 1940; *Murder at Lilac Cottage*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Death at the Helm*, 1941; *They Watched by Night*, 1941 (also known as *Signal for Death*); *The Fourth Bomb*, 1942; *Dead on the Track*, 1943; *Men Die at Cyprus Lodge*, 1943; *Death Invades the Meeting*, 1944; *Vegetable Duck*, 1944 (also known as *Too Many Suspects*); *The Bricklayer's Arms*, 1945

(also known as *Shadow of a Crime*); *Death in Harley Street*, 1946; *The Lake House*, 1946 (also known as *The Secret of the Lake House*); *Death of an Author*, 1947; *Nothing but the Truth*, 1947 (also known as *Experiment in Crime*); *The Paper Bag*, 1948 (also known as *The Links in the Chain*); *The Telephone Call*, 1948 (also known as *Shadow of an Alibi*); *Blackthorn House*, 1949; *Up the Garden Path*, 1949 (also known as *The Fatal Garden*); *Family Affairs*, 1950 (also known as *The Last Suspect*); *The Two Graphs*, 1950 (also known as *Double Identities*)

1951-1961 • *Dr. Goodwood's Locum*, 1951 (also known as *The Affair of the Substitute Doctor*); *The Secret Meeting*, 1951; *Death at the Dance*, 1952; *Death in Wellington Road*, 1952; *By Registered Post*, 1953 (also known as *The Mysterious Suspect*); *Death at the Inn*, 1953 (also known as *The Case of the Forty Thieves*); *Death on the Lawn*, 1954; *The Dovebury Murders*, 1954; *Death of a Godmother*, 1955 (also known as *Delayed Payment*); *The Domestic Agency*, 1955 (also known as *Grave Matters*); *An Artist Dies*, 1956 (also known as *Death of an Artist*); *Open Verdict*, 1956; *Death of a Bridegroom*, 1957; *Robbery with Violence*, 1957; *Death Takes a Partner*, 1958; *Licensed for Murder*, 1958; *Murder at Derivale*, 1958; *Three Cousins Die*, 1959; *The Fatal Pool*, 1960; *Twice Dead*, 1960; *The Vanishing Diary*, 1961

DESMOND MERRION AND INSPECTOR HENRY ARNOLD SERIES (AS BURTON): 1930-1940 • *The Secret of High Eldersham*, 1930 (also known as *The Mystery of High Eldersham*); *The Menace on the Downs*, 1931; *The Three Crimes*, 1931; *Death of Mr. Gantley*, 1932; *Death at the Cross-Roads*, 1933; *Fate at the Fair*, 1933; *Tragedy at the Thirteenth Hole*, 1933; *The Charabanc Mystery*, 1934; *To Catch a Thief*, 1934; *The Devereaux Court Mystery*, 1935; *The Milk-Churn Murders*, 1935 (also known as *The Clue of the Silver Brush*); *Death in the Tunnel*, 1936 (also known as *Dark Is the Tunnel*); *Murder of a Chemist*, 1936; *Where Is Barbara Prentice?*, 1936 (also known as *The Clue of the Silver Cellar*); *Death at the Club*, 1937 (also known as *The Clue of the Fourteen Keys*); *Murder in Crown Passage*, 1937 (also known as *The Man with the Tattooed Face*); *Death at Low Tide*, 1938; *The Platinum Cat*, 1938; *Death Leaves No Card*, 1939; *Mr.*

Babbacombe Dies, 1939; *Death Takes a Flat*, 1940 (also known as *Vacancy with Corpse*); *Mr. Westerby Missing*, 1940; *Murder in the Coalhole*, 1940 (also known as *Written in Dust*)

1941-1950 • *Death of Two Brothers*, 1941; *Up the Garden Path*, 1941 (also known as *Death Visits Downspring*); *This Undesirable Residence*, 1942 (also known as *Death at Ash House*); *Dead Stop*, 1943; *Murder, M.D.*, 1943 (also known as *Who Killed the Doctor?*); *Four-Ply Yarn*, 1944 (also known as *The Shadow on the Cliff*); *The Three-Corpse Trick*, 1944; *Early Morning Murder*, 1945 (also known as *Accidents Do Happen*); *Not a Leg to Stand On*, 1945; *Situation Vacant*, 1946; *The Cat Jumps*, 1946; *A Will in the Way*, 1947; *Heir to Lucifer*, 1947; *Death in Shallow Water*, 1948; *Devil's Reckoning*, 1948; *Death Takes the Living*, 1949 (also known as *The Disappearing Parson*); *Look Alive!*, 1949; *A Village Afraid*, 1950; *Ground for Suspicion*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Beware Your Neighbor*, 1951; *Murder Out of School*, 1951; *Murder on Duty*, 1952; *Heir to Murder*, 1953; *Something to Hide*, 1953; *Murder in Absence*, 1954; *Unwanted Corpse*, 1954; *A Crime in Time*, 1955; *Murder Unrecognized*, 1955; *Death in a Duffle Coat*, 1956; *Found Drowned*, 1956; *The Chinese Puzzle*, 1957; *The Moth-Watch Murder*, 1957; *Bones in the Brickfield*, 1958; *Death Takes a Detour*, 1958; *A Smell of Smoke*, 1959; *Return from the Dead*, 1959; *Death Paints a Picture*, 1960; *Legacy of Death*, 1960

NONSERIES NOVELS: *A.S.F.: The Story of a Great Conspiracy*, 1924 (also known as *The White Menace*); *The Double Florin*, 1924; *The Alarm*, 1925; *Mademoiselle from Armentières*, 1927; *The Hardway Diamonds Mystery*, 1930 (as Burton); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Murder at the Moorings*, 1932 (as Burton); *Ask a Policeman*, 1933 (with others); *Drop to His Death*, 1939 (with Carter Dickson; also known as *Fatal Descent*); *Night Exercise*, 1942 (also known as *Dead of the Night*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Worldly Hope*, 1917 (as F.O.O.)

NONFICTION: *The Making of a Gunner*, 1916 (as F.O.O.); *With the Guns*, 1916 (as F.O.O.); *The Admin-*

istration of Ireland, 1921 (as I.O.); *Ireland in 1921*, 1922 (as Street); *Hungary and Democracy*, 1923 (as Street); *Rhineland and Ruhr*, 1923 (as Street); *East of Prague*, 1924 (as Street); *The Treachery of France*, 1924 (as Street); *A Hundred Years of Printing: 1795-1895*, 1927 (as Street); *Lord Reading*, 1928 (as Street); *Slovakia Past and Present*, 1928 (as Street); *The Case of Constance Kent*, 1928 (as Street); *President Masaryk*, 1930 (as Street; also known as *Thomas Masaryk of Czechoslovakia*)

EDITED TEXTS: *Detective Medley*, 1939 (as Street; also known as *Line-Up: A Collection of Crime Stories by Famous Mystery Writers*)

TRANSLATIONS (AS STREET): *French Headquarters: 1915-1918*, 1924 (by Jean de Pierrefeu); *Vauban: Builder of Fortresses*, 1924 (by Daniel Halévy); *The Life and Voyages of Captain Cook*, 1929 (by Maurice Thiéry; also known as *Captain Cook: Navigator and Discoverer*)

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Barnes, Melvyn. "John Rhode." In *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, edited by John M. Reilly. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Combined biography, bibliography, and criticism of Rhode and his works.

Barzun, Jacques, and Wendell Hertig Taylor. *A Catalogue of Crime*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. List, with commentary, of the authors' choices for the best or most influential examples of crime fiction; provides perspective on Rhode's works.

Cuppy, Will. Introduction to *World's Great Detective Stories: American and English Masterpieces*, edited by Will Cuppy. Cleveland: World, 1943. Rhode is included in this anthology of detective fiction by recognized masters in the genre, and the introduction justifies his inclusion in their rarefied company.

Knight, Stephen Thomas. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. This work looks at the history of the detective novel, containing a chapter on club-puzzle forms, which includes locked-room mysteries such as those of Rhode.

Routley, Erik. *The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story: A Personal Monograph*. London: Gollancz, 1972. Idiosyncratic but useful discussion of crime fiction in terms of nominally puritanical ideology; sheds light on Rhode's work.

Steinbrunner, Chris, and Otto Penzler, eds. "John Rhode." In *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Examines Rhode's distinctive contribution to genre fiction.

CRAIG RICE

Georgiana Ann Randolph

Born: Chicago, Illinois; June 5, 1908

Died: Los Angeles, California; August 28, 1957

Also wrote as Ruth Malone; Daphne Sanders; Michael Venning

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; amateur sleuth; psychological; comedy caper; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

John J. Malone, 1939-1967

Melville Fairr, 1942-1944

Bingo Riggs and Handsome Kusak, 1943-1958

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JOHN JOSEPH MALONE is a Chicago criminal lawyer whose idea of dressing up involves changing his necktie and brushing the cigar ashes from his suit front. When not in his office, he may be found in Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar, drinking rye with a beer chaser.

JAKE JUSTUS, a press agent turned saloon owner (having won it on a bet), stays barely sober and barely free of the law in spite of (or because of) his friendship with Malone.

HELENE BRAND JUSTUS, Jake's wife, is a wealthy heiress, a stunning blonde with a patrician beauty, who has an ability to drive men mad with her driving—and a knack for keeping her husband and Malone one step ahead of the law.

DANIEL VON FLANAGAN is an Irish cop who is only trying to do his duty. He has two goals in life: not to be stereotyped as an Irish cop (the “von” was added to his name legally) and to retire “next year” so that he will never have to deal with Malone and the Justuses again.

BINGO RIGGS, who works as a street photographer, is short and skinny, with sandy hair, a sharp, thin face, and a gleam in his eye that no one notices.

HANDSOME KUSAK, Bingo's partner and a professional photographer, is six feet, one inch tall with wavy, dark hair. He never forgets a fact, and he recites his knowledge frequently. Kusak and Bingo become detectives in spite of themselves and with no professional training whatsoever.

CONTRIBUTION

In less than two decades, Craig Rice successfully overturned many of the time-honored traditions of the detective story in most of her twenty-eight books. (The number is an estimate because some may have been ghostwritten for her.) In a genre in which death can be a game of men walking down mean streets unafraid to meet their doom, she wrote of men whose fearlessness came from a bottle—from several bottles, in fact—and made it seem comical. At heart, the drinking in her books is the social drinking of Mr. and Mrs. North or Topper.

Rice's blend of humor with homicide and mirth with mayhem works because her stories have a foundation in a realistic crime situation. Eventually the situation reaches a point at which readers must laugh or lose their minds. Crime, Rice insists, is not funny, but her characters are funny by contrast because of their reactions and because they closely resemble characters in the screwball comedies of the 1930's. Eternally optimistic, they never take themselves any more seriously than is called for. Her style allies her more with Damon Runyon than with Dashiell Hammett. A unique and original writer, Rice has never been imitated successfully.

BIOGRAPHY

Georgiana Ann Randolph was born in Chicago on June 5, 1908, the daughter of Harry Moschlem “Bosco” Craig and Mary Randolph Craig. Her father was an itinerant artist, her mother the daughter of a Chicago physician. Accounts differ on her correct surname. Her most famous pen name combines her father's last name and the last name of his brother-in-law and sister with whom she lived, Mr. and Mrs. Elton Rice.

Educated by her uncle and in a Jesuit missionary school, Rice developed a dislike of conformity and at the age of eighteen began earning a precarious living in the Chicago literary world. She succeeded because of her versatility; she took on jobs as a crime reporter, a radio and motion-picture script writer, and publicity manager for Gypsy Rose Lee and a group of traveling wrestlers, as well as working as a general freelance writer.

Rice was married at least four times, to Arthur John Follows, a newspaperman named Arthur Ferguson, H. W. DeMott, Jr., and a writer named Lawrence Lipton, not necessarily in that order. Her children, Nancy, Iris, and David, appear as characters in her semiautobiographical novel, *Home Sweet Homicide* (1944). The children spent much of their time in boarding schools while their mother wrote at home in Santa Monica, California. Her husband at the time, Lawrence Lipton, worked in an office in Los Angeles.

Rice's first detective novel, *Eight Faces at Three* (1939), took her nearly two years to write. The first chapter was easy enough, but she had trouble getting beyond its intriguing problem. She claimed that she never understood how she did it, but the character of the hard-drinking, womanizing John J. Malone succeeded with the public and appeared in several subsequent novels.

Reportedly an expert marksman, cook, and grower of prize gardenias, Rice enjoyed life enormously. Nevertheless, in spite of fame and financial rewards (she was the first mystery writer to appear on the cover of *Time*), she found meeting deadlines increasingly difficult. The drinking that she made amusing in print was not amusing in her own life. On August 28, 1957, she died of an overdose of barbiturates and alcohol.

ANALYSIS

Craig Rice used a number of pseudonyms in her career as a mystery writer. As Michael Venning or Daphne Sanders, she could produce certain types of stories unlike those the public came to associate with the name Craig Rice. Less light-hearted, these stories constitute serious character portrayals accompanied by psychological insight.

Even the titles she ghosted for Gypsy Rose Lee (*The G-String Murders*, 1941; *Mother Finds a Body*, 1942) and George Sanders (*Crime on My Hands*, 1944) were written to satisfy reader expectation of the public persona of those entertainers. In each instance, the author on the title page serves as the detective in the story as well.

With few exceptions (principally *Telefair*, 1942, also published as *Yesterday's Murder*), the "Craig Rice" style is unmistakable, with its light and clean prose. There is an underlying seriousness (the situation is always a serious matter to her characters), but the story is told in a manner that reveals the comic side of life.

Rice claimed not to be aware of what she was doing in the detective novel or of how she was doing it. In two pieces on the craft of mystery writing ("It's a Mystery to Me" and "Murder Makes Merry"), she contends that if she really did know what made her mystery novels funny or how to find the solution to an intriguing problem she would be wealthy. She appears to have followed the system of putting a clean sheet of paper in the typewriter and typing until she reached the end of the manuscript, making it all up as she went—no outlines, no list of characters with thumbnail descriptions next to the names, not even a note about the solution. Some writers, she admits, begin with the ending and then write what leads up to it, but she never found this method to work for her.

Actually, Rice probably knew very well what she was doing, but the subconscious, creative method worked so well for her that she decided not to tamper with it by analyzing it. This casual approach to discussing her craft fit the type of novel she wrote; she had been a public relations manager, after all, and her instincts served her well.

The situations in her best works are unusual enough to attract the attention of the reader from the

first and to remain in the memory afterward. The victim is found in a room in which the clocks have all stopped at three o'clock; a murder committed on a crowded street corner goes unnoticed; a murder victim's clothes vanish on the way to the morgue; a murderess on death row threatens to haunt the people who had sent her to jail.

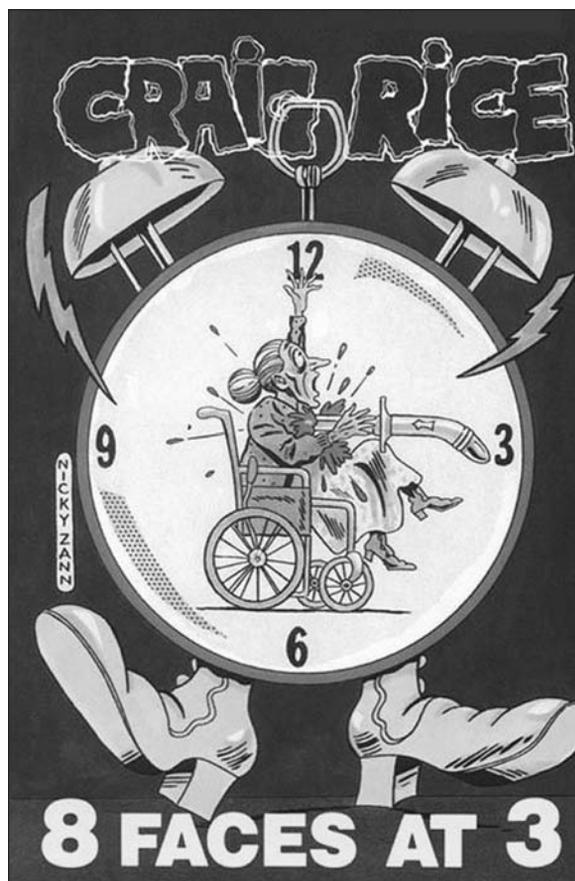
Still, a clever situation or plot device is not enough to hold the reader through a series of books without interesting characters. It is in the portrayal of memorable characters, particularly that of John J. Malone, that Rice excels. Take one criminal lawyer, dress him in expensive suits, give him a thirst for good liquor and an appreciation for women and good cigars, and mix well. In the process, make him careless about money and where he leaves the ashes from his cigars. To top it off, give him the instinct of a gambler without his luck. The result is a description of John J. Malone of Chicago, Illinois.

In many ways Craig Rice's method was to take the traditional stereotypes and clichés of the mystery field and reverse them or hold them up to ridicule. Malone becomes a parody of the hard-boiled detective, with his penchant for rye, his habit of keeping a bottle in his filing cabinet under such imaginative categories as "Confidential" and "Unsolved Cases," and the frequency with which he finds himself in a strange place with no memory of how he arrived there. His invariable solution is to repair to the nearest bar or other watering hole, perhaps his favorite, Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar, and drink until he reconstructs the general condition he was in at the time.

Malone is chronically broke or in search of his retaining fee, playing poker to recoup his losses from the last game, and getting Joe diAngelo to extend him credit for drinks, even to the point of advancing him cash. Maggie O'Leary, his secretary, knows that any expenses on a case will come out of her pocket, assuming that she has been paid that month.

THE FOURTH POSTMAN

Rice's 1948 novel, *The Fourth Postman*, rings the changes on a number of detective-fiction traditions, from the upper-class family of eccentrics to the serial murders. The novel opens with a brief chapter from the point of view of the unknown murderer that sets a



tone of tragic suspense. The victim is not identified as a postal carrier (unless the description of his brisk walk and cheerful whistle makes his identity clear). The sudden cut to a dialogue between John J. Malone and Captain Daniel von Flanagan, who never wanted to be a police officer and so resents being a stereotypical Irish cop that he changed his name, alters the mood but continues the suspense. It is this juxtaposition of moods—from murder to farce—that keeps the reader engrossed.

Why would anyone want to kill a postman? Malone offers his answer: to avoid getting bills in the mail—a simple, direct, human reason with which anyone can identify. Still, three postal carriers? In the same alleyway, near the Fairfaxx mansion? There must be a connection.

The chief suspect is the gentle, wealthy, and eccentric Rodney Fairfaxx. (The Fairfaxx family added the

extra *x* to their name to avoid being confused with a notorious individual of the same name.) Rodney is still waiting for a letter from his sweetheart, Annie Kendall, who went to England on the *Titanic* thirty years earlier and never returned; he labors under the illusion that she is still in England. Rodney is so obviously not guilty that von Flanagan is certain of his guilt, and the family retains Malone to defend him (though they forget to pay his retaining fee).

There are members of the Fairfaxx family who have better motives for the crime than Rodney. Malone sets out to sort them out and in so doing meets his friends from earlier stories, Jake and Helene Justus. The Justuses do not play as large a role in *The Fourth Postman* as they do in some of the other books, but they are appropriate to the situation nevertheless.

Jake is soon relegated to the sidelines by a case of the chickenpox. His discovery of his ailment and the confusion over the proper way of applying cocoa butter is related in as hilarious a scene as one could wish. (The stray dog Malone acquires and insists on referring to as a rare Australian beer hound has a preference for having it spread on toast.)

Jake's dazed condition as a result of his illness makes it plausible that he should stumble out of bed, disguise himself as a masked bandit to conceal his identifying facial spots, call a cab, and find the hammer that served as the murder weapon. Given that premise, it becomes equally plausible (and humorous) that at a dramatic climax Helene should find him back in bed, clutching the hammer.

It is determined that this is the real murder weapon and not the hammer wielded by the sinister Karloffian butler Huntleigh when he nailed Malone by his Capper and Capper suit to the cellar wall. The "real" hammer becomes a vital piece of evidence and as useful as the information Malone and Helene gather when they visit Uncle Ernie Fairfaxx in the hospital. Uncle Ernie has been hit by a brick wall (he says) in the same alley where the postal carriers were killed. It is impossible to paraphrase adequately Rice's depiction of the scene in which Malone, Helene, and Uncle Ernie share the bottle of Bushmill's Irish whiskey that came in the bottom of the traditional basket of hospital fruit. It would be an equal disservice to the author's inventive-

ness to say too much about the disappearance and re-appearance of Jake Justus.

As is to be expected in a Craig Rice novel, the clues are distributed fairly throughout the story, and short-range deductions carry the reader along until the final solution is achieved. Throughout, along with running gags such as the questions Malone is asked about the breed of his dog, are gentle philosophical statements, such as Uncle Ernie's comments about the differences among the rich, the poor, and those in between. Meanwhile, the mysteries, large and small—who killed whom, and who is really whom—are sorted out as well.

Malone receives a check for ten thousand dollars, so that for once in his life he is able to pay his bill at Joe the Angel's City Hall Bar. Ironically, no one, not even gambling chief Max the Hook, will cash the check or even advance him any money on it, for it is signed by Rodney Fairfax, and anyone can attest that Rodney Fairfax is crazy.

When Craig Rice died in 1957 she left a legacy of detective fiction that has seldom been equaled. At least three writers made the attempt to continue her principal series. In 1960, Laurence Mark Janifer published a novel about John J. Malone titled *The Pickled Poodles: A Novel Based on the Characters Created by Craig Rice*. It is possible that he was responsible also for the posthumous *But the Doctor Died* (1967), which was copyrighted by "Followes, Atwill and Ferguson" (names suggestive of at least two of Rice's former husbands).

PEOPLE VS. WITHERS AND MALONE

More straightforward are the admitted collaborations between Craig Rice and Stuart Palmer, in which Rice supplied the ideas and Palmer polished the final manuscripts: six short stories written for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in which Palmer's character, Hildegard Withers, meets Rice's John J. Malone. Two of the six were written entirely by Palmer following Rice's death, with plots based on suggestions in her letters. Allowed complete freedom with the character, Palmer framed each story from Malone's point of view to the extent that Miss Withers's contribution seems almost secondary. Published over a period of thirteen years, from 1950 to 1963, the stories were col-

lected as *People vs. Withers and Malone* in 1963.

The April Robin Murders (1958), left unfinished at Rice's death, was completed by Ed McBain to make the Bingo Riggs and Handsome Kusak series into a trilogy. Stylistically, there is no indication of where Craig Rice left off and Ed McBain began.

After her death, it was revealed that she had served as a ghostwriter for burlesque queen Gypsy Rose Lee and (in collaboration with Cleve Cartmill) for George Sanders. There have been other suggestions that, pressed to meet deadlines that continued to elude her, she employed ghostwriters herself on some of her own work, in particular for the short fiction for *Manhunt*, *The Saint Detective Magazine*, and *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* that appeared in the 1950's.

That she may have left behind mysteries of mis-attributed authorship is of less significance than the legacy of solid work signed Craig Rice. She may have claimed not to understand her own craft, but the series of novels and short stories (*The Name Is Malone*, 1958) about her Chicago lawyer give the lie to that. In successfully blending humor and detection she created much memorable entertainment that can withstand repeated readings.

J. Randolph Cox

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JOHN J. MALONE SERIES: *Eight Faces at Three*, 1939 (also known as *Death at Three*); *The Corpse Steps Out*, 1940; *The Wrong Murder*, 1940; *The Right Murder*, 1941; *Trail by Fury*, 1941; *The Big Midget Murders*, 1942; *Having Wonderful Crime*, 1943; *The Lucky Stiff*, 1945; *The Fourth Postman*, 1948; *Mrs. O'Malley and Mr. Malone*, 1951; *Knocked for a Loop*, 1957 (also known as *The Double Frame*); *My Kingdom for a Hearse*, 1957; *The Name Is Malone*, 1958; *People vs. Withers and Malone*, 1963 (with Stuart Palmer); *But the Doctor Died*, 1967

MELVILLE FAIRR SERIES (AS VENNING): *The Man Who Slept All Day*, 1942; *Murder Through the Looking Glass*, 1943; *Jethro Hammer*, 1944

BINGO RIGGS AND HANDSOME KUSAK SERIES: *The Sunday Pigeon Murders*, 1942; *The Thursday Turkey Murders*, 1943; *The April Robin Murders*, 1958 (with Ed McBain)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The G-String Murders*, 1941 (ghostwritten for Gypsy Rose Lee; also known as *Lady of Burlesque* and *The Strip-Tease Murders*); *Mother Finds a Body*, 1942 (ghostwritten for Gypsy Rose Lee); *Telefair*, 1942 (also known as *Yesterday's Murder*); *To Catch a Thief*, 1943 (as Sanders); *Crime on My Hands*, 1944 (with Cleve Cartmill; ghostwritten for George Sanders); *Home Sweet Homicide*, 1944; *Innocent Bystander*, 1949

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Once upon a Time, and Other Stories*, 1981 (with Stuart Palmer)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAY: *Miracle at Midnight*, n.d.

SCREENPLAYS: *The Falcon's Brother*, 1942 (with Stuart Palmer); *The Falcon in Danger*, 1943 (with Fred Niblo, Jr.)

NONFICTION: *Forty-five Murderers: A Collection of True Crime Stories*, 1952

EDITED TEXT: *Los Angeles Murders*, 1947

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Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Contains a short biography and an analysis of Rice's work. Notes the alcohol that permeated her work and her life.

Dueren, Fred. "John J. Malone (and Cohorts)." *The Armchair Detective* 8 (1974/1975): 44-47. Profile of several of Rice's most famous characters.

Grochowski, Mary Ann. "Craig Rice: Merry Mistress of Mystery and Mayhem." *The Armchair Detective* 13 (1980): 265-267. Celebration of Rice's use of humor in her crime fiction.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Contains an essay on the life and works of Rice.

Marks, Jeffrey A. *Who Was That Lady? Craig Rice: The Queen of the Screwball Mystery*. Lee's Summit, Mo.: Delphi Books, 2001. Primarily a biography of the novelist, delving into her rather dark life, which contrasts notably with the tone of her fiction; secondary attention is paid to the fiction itself.

Moran, Peggy. "Craig Rice." In *And Then There Were Nine: More Women of Mystery*, edited by Jane S. Bakerman. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. Study of the life and work of Rice, who is discussed alongside Margery Allingham and Patricia Highsmith, among other famous "women of mystery."

"Mulled Murder, with Spice." *Time* 47 (January 28, 1946): 84, 86, 88, 90. Rice is featured on the cover of this issue of *Time*—the first mystery author ever to receive a cover story in the magazine.

PHIL RICKMAN

Born: Lancashire, England; date unknown

Also wrote as Will Kingdom; Thom Madley

Types of plot: Thriller; psychological; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Reverend Merrily Watkins, 1998-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MERRILY WATKINS is an Anglican priest who comes to the small village of Ledwardine as parish priest and

later becomes a "deliverance consultant," or exorcist, for the diocese of Hereford. A single mother, widowed at a young age, Merrily struggles to prove herself as an attractive woman in a traditionally male domain. Merrily is an unabashed nicotine addict who often questions herself as a priest, mother, and woman, lending her character an appealing realism and vulnerability.

JANE WATKINS, Merrily's resourceful, independent, and often rebellious teenage daughter, is initially skeptical about church matters and her mother's decision to enter the priesthood, but she discovers a spiri-

tual sensitivity in herself, a quality her mother shares. Her adolescent growing pains are rendered without apology, making Jane a strong character some readers love but others hate.

LOL ROBINSON is a melancholy, sensitive songwriter and musician, the former head of a briefly popular rock band, Hazey Jane. Lol came to Ledwardine to escape his past; deeply depressed after his girlfriend leaves him for the local squire, he begins a tentative relationship with Merrily.

CONTRIBUTION

Phil Rickman began his career as a novelist with *Candlelight* (1991) and *Crybbe* (1993), novels that mixed Celtic and British mythology with supernatural elements and a strong regional flavor. His effective use of supernatural suspense led him to be typed as a horror writer, a label he has worked to change. Although his early work was sometimes compared to that of Stephen King and ghost-story writer M. R. James, Rickman told interviewer David Mathew that he did not identify himself as a horror writer nor did he feel that he really fit into any other category, genre, or sub-genre. His first five novels, from *Candlelight* to *The Chalice* (1997), mixed folklore, history, and mysticism, providing subtle chills rather than the fantastic events and outright gore that had come to dominate the horror genre. Although these novels were moderately successful, most critics agree that with *The Wine of Angels* (1998), his first Merrily Watkins mystery, Rickman found his true voice.

The Merrily Watkins books can be classified as crime novels because the investigation of a crime, usually murder, features prominently in most of the novels, but they also allow Rickman to explore mythology, religion, gender and sexuality, rural life, and the conflicts between natives and outsiders and between tradition and change in modern-day Britain. In *The Wine of Angels*, the persecution for witchcraft of a seventeenth century vicar who may or may not have been gay leads to conflicts and resentments within present-day Ledwardine. *A Crown of Lights* (2001) finds Merrily caught in the middle of a conflict between neopagans and Christians, while *The Smile of a Ghost* (2005) uses medieval Ludlow Castle, a real-life castle on the Welsh

border, as the setting for mysterious suicides and a possible haunting. In *The Prayer of the Night Shepherd* (2004), Merrily's daughter Jane takes a job at Stanner Hall, a hotel on the Welsh border in a village that may have been the model for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902-1902). Despite the presence of ghosts and other mysterious forces, Rickman's novels achieve a strong sense of realism through their lifelike and vivid depictions of landscape and people along the rural border of England and Wales.

BIOGRAPHY

Philip Rickman was born in Lancashire, England, a county infamous for its seventeenth century witch trials. His interest in writing began as a child, with "mysteries, spy stories—whatever I was into at the time." At the age of eighteen, he managed to get a job at a newspaper and began a successful career in journalism, eventually writing and producing pieces for Radio Wales and the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) Radio 4. A documentary he wrote and presented, *Aliens*, won the Wales Current Event Affairs Reporter of the Year award in 1987. The program, about the rise in English people moving to Wales, drawn by cheap land, and their not always warm reception by Welsh natives, was the inspiration for Rickman's first novel, *Candlelight*, published in 1991 after several publishers rejected it for not fitting their template of a horror novel. In an interview originally published in *The New Writer*, Rickman said that one publisher turned the book down because of its humorous passages: horror novels were not supposed to be funny. With the encouragement of writer and editor Alice Thomas Ellis, Rickman published *Candlelight* to mostly good reviews.

Crybbe, Rickman's first novel to be released in the United States (as *Curfew*), was a more explicitly spooky work that took a satirical look at New Age devotees who come to a sleepy village determined to unlock its ancient magic, not understanding that some elemental forces are best left contained. His second novel was successful enough for Rickman to devote most of his time to fiction, and three more supernatural novels followed: *The Man in the Moss* (1994), inspired when Rickman's wife, Carol, suggested he do a

book about bog bodies; *December* (1994), a ghost story involving the murder of John Lennon; and *The Chalice* (1997), which drew on some of Rickman's earlier research on the search for the Holy Grail.

Tired of having his complex works classed as horror, Rickman began work on a story he thought would be closer to one of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple books than to a novel by Anne Rice. Rickman's the Reverend Merrily Watkins was originally conceived as a supporting character, but she soon took over his imagination and his new novel, *The Wine of Angels*. Rickman told *Counterculture* magazine that he conceived of a plot that contained supernatural elements but could also be resolved in the real world. As he wrote, Rickman realized that he had created something unique.

Although other authors such as Ellis Peters had used the device of a clerical sleuth, no character quite like Merrily Watkins—a woman vicar and professional exorcist who also investigates crimes—had ever been seen before. Both critics and readers gave Merrily a warm welcome, and Rickman found himself the creator of a successful mystery series, turning out books at the rate of about one per year. Rickman has said he plans to stay with the Merrily character, but at the same time is experimenting with other genres of fiction. He has written two mystery novels under the Will Kingdom pseudonym, both featuring a police detective, and in 2006 he published his first young-adult novel, *Marco's Pendulum*, as Thom Madley.

Rickman has said that while fiction writing is his main avocation, he never formally quit journalism and still produces radio programs and the occasional newspaper piece. Most notably, he has worked as writer and presenter of *Phil the Shelf*, a book program for BBC Radio Wales. The author's Web site describes it as an irreverent and sometimes controversial program with author interviews and discussions of popular and genre fiction.

ANALYSIS

Phil Rickman's novels create a fictional world that might, in another writer's hands, be called cozy. His stories are set in rural villages where everybody knows everybody else and in quaint old towns rich in history,

with castles and cathedrals and humorously gruff local characters. The author subverts this pretty picture, however, sometimes with murder and supernatural dread and sometimes by a realistic depiction of the animosity between the romantic views of visitors and newcomers and the more practical attitude of the local people. His use of detail to build a credible, fully imagined background makes the intrusion of the supernatural more disturbing because what happens does not take place in some fantasy world but in a real place. Rickman's journalism background is evident in the research he does for each book; as a whole, his work provides a wealth of information about paranormal phenomena, traditional English and Welsh folklore, pagan beliefs, the workings of the Anglican church, and what Rickman calls "earth-mysteries," formations such as Stonehenge.

In an interview, Rickman discussed his approach to the occult as simply another aspect of real life. When he writes about the paranormal, he does not treat it as fantasy or even horror. He uses a basis of documentary realism to write about the work of exorcist-priest Merrily and the politics involved with her job, although he admits that Merrily's real-life equivalent would not be involved in as many criminal investigations as she is.

CRYBBE

Crybbe is probably the most successful of Rickman's early novels and was the first to be released in the United States. According to the author, his American publishers renamed the novel *Curfew* because they thought Americans would not know how to pronounce the original title. In retrospect, he said, he felt that *Curfew* was a better title. In many ways, this nonseries novel is a precursor to the Merrily Watkins series: It is set in a village not far from Ledwardine, features a clerical hero, and marks the first appearance of Gomer Parry, local contractor.

Crybbe, an isolated village between England and Wales, has been left to itself for centuries, and most who live there follow the old traditions, such as the nightly ringing of the church bell marking curfew, without question. When a millionaire record producer, inspired by the writings of a local paranormal investigator, comes to town with a plan to make Crybbe a New Age mecca, ancient forces begin to stir. Faye Morrison, a reporter stranded with her vicar father in

Crybbe, does some digging into the sinister origins of village traditions. Rickman uses real folklore elements—"ley-lines" around the town, marked by ancient, Stonehenge-like rock formations—and creates a convincing sense of enclosure and paranoia. *Publishers Weekly* praised *Curfew* for its stylish treatment of occult themes.

THE WINE OF ANGELS

The Wine of Angels marks the first appearance of Merrily Watkins. In this novel, she is not yet a diocesan deliverance consultant and is still finding her way as a priest, struggling with a crisis of faith, a rebellious daughter, and a seemingly haunted house. It does not help that within her first few weeks as priest in charge of Ledwardine, an old village that some newer residents are trying to develop as a tourist site, she witnesses a gruesome apparent suicide and faces sexism from parishioners and outright hostility from James Bull-Davies, heir to the local manor. While Merrily struggles with nightmares and horrific visions, her fifteen-year-old daughter Jane has a mystical experience in the apple orchard and takes up with Lucy Devenish, an eccentric shopkeeper rumored to be a bit of a witch. Then Colette Cassidy, the wild daughter of a newcomer family, goes missing, and Merrily finds herself in the midst of murder and mysteries both ancient and modern.

The novel draws on traditional folklore regarding fairies, apples, and cider but places these topics in a modern setting, with a satirical subplot about the appropriation of the past. Controversy erupts when a gay playwright champions the cause of a seventeenth century cleric charged with witchcraft, deciding, on no particular evidence, that homophobia was the true reason for his persecution. Gomer Parry, a "digger-driver" and contractor in Ledwardine, muses on the sanitizing of the village, with art galleries where slaughterhouses once stood and gourmet restaurants instead of rough-and-tumble pubs.

The Wine of Angels, named for Ledwardine's famous apple cider, introduces Lol Robinson, a troubled singer-songwriter (his idol is suicidal musician Nick Drake) trying to escape his past. He becomes a romantic interest for Merrily as the series develops. Jane, though sometimes a trial to her mother, emerges as a

strong and sensible character who helps Merrily unravel the town's mysteries. Gomer, transplanted from Crybbe, offers his unique perspective on local goings-on. Merrily spends much of the novel racked by self-doubt, but she emerges as a compassionate and determined woman, a spiritual leader strong enough to face the challenges her future position as exorcist will demand.

THE PRAYER OF THE NIGHT SHEPHERD

At some point, every mystery writer must address the long shadow of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and *The Prayer of the Night Shepherd* is Rickman's nod to Sherlock Holmes. In this novel, Merrily Watkins's sixth outing, Rickman explores the possibility that the origin for Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was not Dartmoor but Herefordshire on the Welsh border. Ben Foley, a television producer, hosts murder-mystery weekends at Stanner Hall, an old mansion turned hotel. Proving his theory that Doyle's hound was based on a local legend of a black dog that presaged death will be a sure path to profit, Foley thinks, but others are not so sure of his methods.

When Jane Watkins, now seventeen, gets her first job at Stanner Hall, Merrily becomes drawn into a real-life mystery involving an ancient family curse, a medieval exorcism, and the potentially dangerous Sebbie Dacre, an alcoholic landowner with a bad temper and a worse family history.

In an afterword, Rickman describes how his research for a BBC radio program called *The Return of the Hound* led to the writing of *The Prayer of the Night Shepherd*. The setting details and the legends of the hound are drawn from his reading and interviews with area residents. Adding to the novel's sense of realism are photos of Herefordshire landmarks and quotations from Ella Mary Leather's *The Folk-Lore of Herefordshire* (1912) interspersed with the text. The various plot threads are woven together seamlessly, and many reviewers called *The Prayer of the Night Shepherd* Rickman's best work yet.

Kathryn Kulpa

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

REVEREND MERRILY WATKINS SERIES: *The Wine of Angels*, 1998; *Midwinter of the Spirit*, 1999;

A Crown of Lights, 2001; *The Cure of Souls*, 2001; *The Lamp of the Wicked*, 2003; *The Prayer of the Night Shepherd*, 2004; *The Smile of a Ghost*, 2005; *The Remains of an Altar*, 2006; *The Fabric of Sin*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Candlelight*, 1991; *Crybbe*, 1993 (also known as *Curfew*); *The Man in the Moss*, 1994; *December*, 1994; *The Chalice*, 1997; *The Cold Calling*, 1998 (as Will Kingdom); *Mean Spirit*, 2001 (as Kingdom)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Marco's Pendulum*, 2006 (as Madley)

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Humphreys, Simon. Review of *The Remains of an Altar*, by Phil Rickman. *Mail on Sunday*, December

31, 2006, p. 60. Review of a Merrily Watkins book that praises the work, although the reviewer would have preferred the action to be centered on Merrily rather than on her daughter.

Rickman, Phil. Phil Rickman: Mystery upon Mystery. <http://www.philRickman.co.uk>. Phil Rickman's official Web site contains a biography, descriptions and reviews of all his books, and information on the *Phil the Shelf* radio program. Especially useful are the author's comments on the background of his works.

Savill, Richard. "The Dubious Pedigree of the Baskerville Hound." *The Daily Telegraph*, June 1, 2004, p. 5. Savill looks at Rickman's claim that Sherlock's hound may have originated in a local legend concerning Black Vaughn of Kington and his dog.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Provides chapters on mystery and detective fiction and on the crime thriller that enable the reader to place Rickman's works within the genre and see where they differ.

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

Mary Roberts

Born: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; August 12, 1876

Died: New York, New York; September 22, 1958

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Miss Pinkerton, 1914-1942

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HILDA "MISS PINKERTON" ADAMS, is a trained nurse, who is single, sensible, intelligent, and strong-willed. Twenty-nine in her first appearance and thirty-eight by the last, she often attends the bedside of prominent citizens who suffer illness or nervous collapse after a robbery, murder, or family crisis.

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR PATTON, the police detec-

tive who gave Miss Pinkerton her nickname, depends on her keen ability to observe.

CONTRIBUTION

In a 1952 radio interview, Mary Roberts Rinehart said that she had helped the mystery story grow up by adding flesh and muscle to the skeleton of plot. Beginning at the height of the Sherlock Holmes craze, Rinehart introduced humor and romance and created protagonists with whom readers identified. Thus, the emotions of fear, laughter, love, and suspense were added to the intellectual pleasure of puzzle tales. *The Circular Staircase* (1908) was immediately hailed as something new, an American detective story that owed little to European influences and concerned

characteristically American social conditions.

Rinehart's typical novel has two lines of inquiry, often at cross purposes, by a female amateur and by a police detective. The woman, lacking the resources and scientific laboratories to gather and interpret physical evidence, observes human nature, watches for unexpected reactions, and delves for motive. The necessary enrichment of background and characterization forced the short tale (which was typical at the turn of the century) to grow into the detective novel. Critics sometimes patronize Rinehart as inventor of the Had-I-But-Known school of female narrators who withhold clues and stupidly prowl around dark attics. Her techniques, however, were admirably suited to magazine serialization. In addition to its influence on detective fiction, Rinehart's work led to the genre of romantic suspense.

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Roberts Rinehart, born Mary Roberts, was reared in Pittsburgh. Her father was an unsuccessful salesman, and her mother took in roomers. At fifteen, Mary was editing her high school newspaper and writing stories for *Pittsburgh Press* contests. In 1893 she entered nurse's training at a hospital whose public wards teemed with immigrants, industrial workers, and local prostitutes. In 1895 her father committed suicide. Mary Roberts completed her training and, in April, 1896, married a young physician, Stanley Rinehart.

In the next six years she had three sons, helped with her husband's medical practice, and looked for a means of self-expression. By 1904 she was selling short stories to *Munsey's Magazine*, *Argosy*, and other magazines. *The Circular Staircase* was published, and



Mary Roberts Rinehart. (Library of Congress)

The Man in Lower Ten (1909) became the first detective story ever to make the annual best-seller list.

In 1910-1911, the Rineharts traveled to Vienna so that Stanley Rinehart could study a medical specialty. During the next few years, Rinehart wrote books with medical and political themes. When war broke out, she urged *The Saturday Evening Post* to make her a correspondent. In 1915 reporters were not allowed to visit the Allied lines, but Rinehart used her nurse's training to earn Red Cross credentials. She examined hospitals, toured "No Man's Land," and interviewed both the king of Belgium and the queen of England.

Her war articles made Rinehart a public figure as well as a best-selling novelist. She covered the political conventions of 1916 (taking time out to march in a women's suffrage parade) and turned down an offer to edit *Ladies' Home Journal*. In 1920 two plays written with Avery Hopwood were on Broadway. *The Bat* had an initial run of 878 performances and eventually brought in more than nine million dollars. Rinehart lived in Washington, D.C., during the early 1920's. In 1929 two of her sons set up a publishing firm in partnership with John Farrar. Annual books by Mary Roberts Rinehart provided dependable titles for the Farrar and Rinehart list.

Rinehart moved to New York in 1935, following her husband's death in 1932, and continued an active life. Eleven of her books made best-seller lists between 1909 and 1936. The comic adventures of her dauntless never-married heroine Tish had been appearing in *The Saturday Evening Post* since 1910. During the 1930's, she also produced an autobiography, wrote the somber short fiction collected in *Married People* (1937), and underwent a mastectomy. In 1946 Rinehart went public with the story of her breast cancer and urged women to have examinations. Her last novel was published in 1952, although a story in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1954 neatly rounded out the half century of detective writing since her poem "The Detective Story"—a spoof of the Sherlock Holmes craze—appeared in *Munsey's Magazine* in 1904. She died in 1958.

ANALYSIS

Mary Roberts Rinehart significantly changed the form of the mystery story in the early years of the twen-

tieth century by adding humor, romance, and the spine-chilling terror experienced by readers who identify with the amateur detective narrator. Borrowing devices from gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and from sensational fiction of the 1860's, Rinehart infused emotion into the intellectual puzzles that dominated late nineteenth and early twentieth century magazines. By securing identification with the central character, she made readers share the perplexity, anxiety, suspense, and terror of crime and detection. Because she did not deal in static cases brought to a master detective for solution but rather with stories of ongoing crime, in which the need for concealment escalates as exposure approaches, the narrator almost inevitably becomes a target and potential victim.

Rinehart's typical mystery has two investigators. One is a professional detective and the other a female amateur who narrates the story. All the important characters must be sufficiently developed so that the amateur can make deductions by watching their emotional responses and penetrating their motives. Rinehart's books also include both romance (sometimes between the two detectives) and humor. *The Man in Lower Ten*, her first full-length mystery, was intended as a spoof of the pompous self-importance with which Great Detectives analyzed clues.

Like many readers, Rinehart used mysteries for escape; the "logical crime story," she wrote, "provided sufficient interest in the troubles of others to distract the mind from its own." On the wards of a busy urban hospital she had seen "human relations at their most naked." In writing, however, she "wanted escape from remembering" and therefore chose "romance, adventure, crime, . . . where the criminal is always punished and virtue triumphant."

She saw the mystery as "a battle of wits between reader and writer," which consists of two stories. One is known only to the criminal and to the author; the other is enacted by the detective. These two stories run concurrently. The reader follows one, while "the other story, submerged in the author's mind [rises] to the surface here and there to form those baffling clews." In "The Repute of the Crime Story" (*Publishers Weekly*, February 1, 1930), Rinehart outlined the "ethics" of crime writing. The criminal

should figure in the story as fully as possible; he must not be dragged in at the end. There must be no false clues. . . . Plausibility is important, or the story may become merely a “shocker.” The various clues which have emerged throughout the tale should be true indices to the buried story, forming when assembled at the conclusion a picture of that story itself.

In most of Rinehart’s mysteries the “buried story” is not simply the concealment of a single crime. Also hidden—and explaining the criminal’s motives—are family secrets such as illegitimacy, unsuitable marriages, or public disgrace. This material reflects the sexual repression and social hypocrisy embodied in Victorian culture’s effort to present an outward appearance of perfect respectability and moral rectitude. Rinehart forms a bridge between the sensational novels of the 1860’s, which had used similar secrets, and the twentieth century psychological tale. Clues locked in character’s minds appear in fragments of dream, slips of the tongue, or inexplicable aversions and compulsions. In a late novel, *The Swimming Pool* (1952), the amateur detective enlists a psychiatrist to help retrieve the repressed knowledge. Even in her earliest books Rinehart used Freudian terminology to describe the unconscious.

Rinehart’s stories typically take place in a large house or isolated wealthy community. In British mysteries of the interwar years, a similar setting provided social stability; in Rinehart, however, the house is often crumbling and the family, by the end of the tale, disintegrated. The secret rooms, unused attics, and hidden passageways not only promote suspense but also symbolize the futile attempt of wealthy people to protect their status by concealing secrets even from one another. These settings also allow for people to hide important information from motives of privacy, loyalty to friends, and distaste for the police. In the Miss Pinkerton series (two stories published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1914, a collection of short fiction published in 1925, novels dated 1932 and 1942, and an omnibus volume published under the title *Miss Pinkerton* in 1959), Inspector Patton uses nurse Hilda Adams as an agent because when any prominent family is upset by crime, “somebody goes to bed, with a trained nurse in attendance.”

Relations between the professional detective and the female amateur—who is generally an intelligent and spirited single woman in her late twenties or early thirties—are marked by mutual respect and friendly sparring. Rinehart was not ignorant of scientific methods; her medical training made her perfectly comfortable with physiological evidence and the terminology of coroners’ reports. The official detective discovers physical clues and uses police resources to interview witnesses and tail suspects. Yet, as the narrator of *The Circular Staircase* says, “both footprints and thumbmarks are more useful in fiction than in fact.” The unofficial detective accumulates a separate—and often contradictory—fund of evidence by observing people’s reactions, analyzing unexpected moments of reticence, understanding changes in household routine, and exploring emotional states. The official detective enlists her aid, but she may conceal some information because she senses that he will laugh at it or because she is afraid that it implicates someone about whom she cares. She ventures into danger to conduct investigations on her own partly because she wants to prove the detective wrong and partly because of her own joy in the chase.

Although she wrote several essays on the importance to women of home and family life, Rinehart was an active suffragist and proud of having been a “pioneer” who went into a hospital for professional training at a time “when young women of my class were leading their helpless protected lives.” In her work, Rinehart used women’s “helplessness” and repression as a convincing psychological explanation for failure to act, for deviousness, and even for crime. In *The Circular Staircase*, a young woman complains of the humiliation of being surrounded by “every indulgence” but never having any money of her own to use without having to answer questions. The sexual repression and social propriety of women forced to depend on relatives for support because class mores prohibit their employment breed bitterness and hatred. Rinehart’s explicit yet empathetic exploration of motives for crime among women of the middle and upper classes is a marked contrast to the misogyny of the hard-boiled school.

THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

The innovations of Rinehart's formula were almost fully developed in her first published book, *The Circular Staircase*. The wry tone, the narrator's personality, the setting, and the foreshadowing are established in the opening sentence:

This is the story of how a middle-aged spinster lost her mind, deserted her domestic gods in the city, took a furnished house for the summer out of town, and found herself involved in one of those mysterious crimes that keep our newspapers and detective agencies happy and prosperous.

Rachel Innes shares certain traits with Anna Katharine Green's Amelia Butterworth—both are inquisitive single women of good social standing—but Rinehart's humor, her economical and spirited narration, and her ability to manage multiple threads of a complex plot made an instant impact on reviewers.

The house that Rachel Innes rents is a typical Rinehart setting with its twenty-two rooms, five baths, multiple doors, French windows, unused attics, and a circular staircase off the billiard room that was installed apparently so licentious young men could get up to bed without waking anyone. In addition, the electric company that serves the remote locale regularly shuts down at midnight. Before many days have passed, Rachel Innes is awakened by a gunshot at three o'clock in the morning and discovers, lying at the bottom of the circular staircase, the body of a well-dressed gentleman whom she has never seen before.

The romantic complications that shortly ensue confound the mystery. Rachel Innes's nephew and niece (Halsey and Gertrude) are both secretly engaged, and each has some possible provocation for having murdered the intruder. Fear that her nephew or niece might be involved gives Rachel Innes a reason to conceal information from the detective,

Jamieson. At the same time, some of the evidence that seems to point toward Halsey or Gertrude arises from their attempts to preserve the secrecy of their romantic attachments.

There are actually two "buried stories" in *The Circular Staircase*, although both Jamieson and Innes believe that they are on the track of a single criminal. The "outcroppings" that provide clues toward the solution of one mystery therefore lay false trails for the other. One involves a secret marriage, an abandoned child, and a vengeful woman; the other is a banker's scheme to stage a fake death so that he can escape with the proceeds of an embezzlement. The ongoing efforts to conceal the second crime lead to further murders, and then to Halsey's disappearance. That is a significant emotional shift; the tale now concerns not only the process of detection but also the threat of danger to characters about whom the reader cares. Rinehart orchestrates the suspense with additional gothic elements, a midnight disinterment, and a climax in which Innes is trapped in the dark with an unknown villain in a secret chamber that no one knows how to enter. The identification of reader with detective and the sure-handed manipulation of suspense and terror are hallmarks of the Rinehart style (and of a great many subsequent thrillers).



Illustration by artist Henry Raleigh for the Saturday Evening Post publication of Rinehart's "Amazing Interlude" in 1918. (Library of Congress)

The competition between the female amateur and the male professional is to some degree a conflict between intuitive and rational thinking. While Jamieson accumulates physical evidence and investigates public records, Innes listens to the tones that indicate concealment, understands when people are acting against their will, and believes her senses even when they seem to perceive the impossible. At one point her nephew says, "Trust a woman to add two and two together, and make six." She responds,

If two and two plus X make six, then to discover the unknown quantity is the simplest thing in the world. That a household of detectives missed it entirely was because they were busy trying to prove that two and two make four.

Both the suspense and the humor are heightened by Rinehart's facility with language. Her use of a middle-aged never-married woman's genteel vocabulary to describe crime, murder, and terror is amusing, and her ease with other dialects and with the small linguistic slips that mar a banker's disguise in the role of a gardener show the range of her verbal resources.

AN INFLUENTIAL WRITER

In a later generation, when some of Rinehart's innovations had been incorporated in most crime fiction and others had given rise to the separate genre of romantic suspense, critics of the detective story frequently wrote condescendingly of her as the progenitor of the Had-I-But-Known school of narration. The device grew from the demands of magazine writing; only two of Rinehart's mysteries had their initial publication in book form. When writing serials, she pointed out, each installment "must end so as to send the reader to the news stand a week before the next installment is out." The narrator's veiled reference to coming events arouses suspense and maintains the reader's anxious mood.

Rinehart began writing mysteries two years after *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-1902) was published; she was already well established by the heyday of British classical detection, published throughout the hard-boiled era, and was still writing when Ian Fleming started work on the James Bond books. By the time Rinehart died, her books had sold more than

eleven million copies in hardcover and another nine million in paperback. The bibliographical record presents some problems. Rinehart identified seventeen books as crime novels; in these, the central action is an attempt to discover the causes of a murder. Almost all of her fiction, however, combines romance, humor, violence, and buried secrets, and paperback reprints often use the "mystery" label for books that Rinehart would not have put into that category. There are also variant British titles for some books and a number of omnibus volumes that collect novels and short stories in various overlapping configurations.

Sally Mitchell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MISS PINKERTON SERIES: *Mary Roberts Rinehart's Crime Book*, 1925; *Miss Pinkerton*, 1932 (also known as *Double Alibi*); *Haunted Lady*, 1942; *Miss Pinkerton*, 1959

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Circular Staircase*, 1908; *The Man in Lower Ten*, 1909; *The Window at the White Cat*, 1910; *Where There's a Will*, 1912; *The Case of Jennie Brice*, 1913; *The After House*, 1914; *Sight Unseen*, and *The Confession*, 1921; *The Red Lamp*, 1925 (also known as *The Mystery Lamp*); *The Bat*, 1926 (with Avery Hopwood); *Two Flights Up*, 1928; *The Door*, 1930; *The Album*, 1933; *The Wall*, 1938; *The Great Mistake*, 1940; *The Yellow Room*, 1945; *The Swimming Pool*, 1952 (also known as *The Pool*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Alibi for Isabel*, and *Other Stories*, 1944; *Episode of the Wandering Knife: Three Mystery Tales*, 1950 (also known as *The Wandering Knife*); *The Frightened Wife*, and *Other Murder Stories*, 1953

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *When a Man Marries*, 1909; *The Secret of Seven Stars*, 1914; *K*, 1915; *Long Live the King!*, 1917; *The Amazing Interlude*, 1918; *Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave*, 1918; *Dangerous Days*, 1919; *A Poor Wise Man*, 1920; *The Truce of God*, 1920; *The Breaking Point*, 1921; *Lost Ecstasy*, 1927 (also known as *I Take This Woman*); *The Trumpet Sounds*, 1927; *This Strange Adventure*, 1929; *Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk*, 1933; *The State Versus Elinor*

Norton, 1933 (also known as *The Case of Elinor Norton*); *The Doctor*, 1936; *The Curve of the Catenary*, 1945; *A Light in the Window*, 1948

SHORT FICTION: *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry*, 1911; *Tish*, 1916; *Bab: A Sub-Deb*, 1917; *Love Stories*, 1919; *Affinities, and Other Stories*, 1920; *More Tish*, 1921; *Temperamental People*, 1924; *Tish Plays the Game*, 1926; *The Romantics*, 1929; *Married People*, 1937; *Tish Marches On*, 1937; *Familiar Faces: Stories of People You Know*, 1941; *The Best of Tish*, 1955

PLAYS: *A Double Life*, pr. 1906; *Seven Days*, pr. 1907 (with Avery Hopwood); *Cheer Up*, pr. 1912; *Spanish Love*, pr. 1920 (with Hopwood); *The Bat*, pr. 1920 (with Hopwood); *The Breaking Point*, pb. 1922

SCREENPLAY: *Aflame in the Sky*, 1927 (with Ewart Anderson)

NONFICTION: *Kings, Queens, and Pawns: An American Woman at the Front*, 1915; *Through Glacier Park: Seeing America First with Howard Eaton*, 1916; *The Altar of Freedom*, 1917; *Tenting Tonight: A Chronicle of Sport and Adventure in Glacier Park and the Cascade Mountains*, 1918; *Isn't That Just like a Man!*, 1920; *The Out Trail*, 1923; *Nomad's Land*, 1926; *My Story*, 1931 (revised as *My Story: A New Edition and Seventeen New Years*, 1948); *Writing Is Work*, 1939

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DuBose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Describes the life of Rinehart and provides critical comment on her work.

Fleenor, Julian E., ed. *The Female Gothic*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1983. Places Rinehart's work within the centuries-old gothic tradition.

Huang, Jim, ed. *They Died In Vain: Overlooked, Underappreciated, and Forgotten Mystery Novels*. Carmel, Ind.: Crum Creek Press, 2002. Rinehart is among the authors discussed in this book about mystery novels that never found the audience they deserved.

MacLeod, Charlotte. *Had She But Known: A Biography of Mary Roberts Rinehart*. New York: Mysterious Press, 1994. This biography of Rinehart concentrates on the extent to which her later career as an influential author was an unpredictable swerve in the road of what began as a fairly conventional life.

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

Born: Brest, Finistère, France; August 18, 1922

Types of plot: Metaphysical and metafictional parody; espionage; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Alain Robbe-Grillet enjoyed immediate success in the French literary community. He received a literary prize for each of his first two novels and was referred to as one of the most talented and interesting of the young novelists who were experimenting with the novel form. However, his novels were not praised by everyone. The traditionalist literary critics, who insisted that novels should contain all the elements that made a work a novel in the nineteenth century, had little praise for his work. For them, the novel structure (plot, character, description, and narrative chronology), had been well defined by the realist writers, and contemporary novelists had only to follow the model. Although the jury for the Prix des Critiques awarded Robbe-Grillet their prize for *Le Voyeur* (1955; *The Voyeur*, 1958), some members of the jury expressed reservations about calling the work a novel. The critics employed by the newspapers and the reading public found his novels difficult and unreadable.

Robbe-Grillet published a number of articles in newspapers and magazines in an attempt to convince his detractors that his works were readable novels. The articles changed few opinions but placed him at the head of the movement for the creation of the New Novel (*le nouveau roman*). Although he had no intention of setting forth a theory of the novel, the articles that contained his ideas about the novel form did precisely that in the eyes of the literary critics, whether they were favorable to him or not. Thus he disseminated not only the theoretical basis for the New Novel but a definition of the novel as a genre.

Because many of Robbe-Grillet's novels contain elements of the mystery and detective genre, particularly espionage, murders, and murder investigations, Robbe-Grillet in reinventing the novel has enlarged the scope of mystery and detective fiction by adding greater complexity to it and by creating multilayered,

multifaceted texts that are themselves mysteries to be solved.

BIOGRAPHY

Alain Robbe-Grillet was born on August 18, 1922, in Brest, Finistère, France. He received his early education at the lycée Buffon in Paris, the lycée in Brest, and the lycée Saint Louis in Paris. Growing up in a family of scientists and engineers, he chose to study mathematics and biology. In 1944 he graduated from the Institut National d'Agronomie with a degree in agricultural engineering. During World War II, he was sent to Germany to work in a tank factory. He was an engineer at the Institut National de la Statistique in Paris from 1945 to 1948. Then from 1949 to 1951 he was an agronomist with the Institut des Fruits et Agrumes Coloniaux in Morocco, in French Guyana, in Martinique, and in Guadeloupe, where he was involved in the supervision of banana plantations.

In 1951, Robbe-Grillet suffered from ill health. While recuperating, he wrote *Les Gommages* (1953; *The Erasers*, 1964). With the publication of this novel, he began a new career as a writer. Although *The Erasers* was his first published novel, it was not the first novel that he had written. In 1949, while working in his sister's biology laboratory, he had written *Un Régicide* (1978; a regicide). This novel was not published until 1978. *The Erasers* brought him considerable attention from the literary community and recognition as one of the major new authors whose works were referred to as the New Novel. In 1954, *The Erasers* received the Prix Fénélon. The following year, Robbe-Grillet published *The Voyeur*, for which he received the Prix des Critiques, and became a literary consultant for the French publishing house Les Editions de Minuit. He remained in this capacity through 1985. On October 23, 1957, he married Catherine Rstakian, a film and theater actress.

In spite of Robbe-Grillet's insistence that he was a writer and not a theoretician of the novel, he came to play an ever more important role in the controversy between the traditionalists, who insisted that novels

must use the conventions established by the novelists of the nineteenth century, and the New Novel writers who believed the novel must be reinvented or die from stagnation. Robbe-Grillet continued to write novels, publishing *La Jalousie* (*Jealousy*, 1960) in 1957 and *Dans le Labyrinthe* (*In the Labyrinth*, 1960) in 1959.

In 1961, Robbe-Grillet embarked on yet another career when he was asked to write the screenplay for a film to be directed by Alain Renais. The result of their collaboration was the film *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961; *Last Year at Marienbad*). Robbe-Grillet, fascinated by film as an art form, felt compelled to direct a film as well as write the screenplay for it. Between 1963 and 1968, he wrote and directed three black-and-white films: *L'Immortelle* (1963; *The Immortal One*), *Trans-Europ-Express* (1966), and *L'Homme qui ment* (1968; *The Man Who Lies*).

In 1963, still insisting that he did not have a theory of the novel, Robbe-Grillet published *Pour un nouveau roman* (*For a New Novel*, 1965), a collection of

essays exploring his own view of the novel and critically applying these ideas to several contemporary novels. In 1965, he published *La Maison de rendez-vous* (English translation, 1966), a novel influenced by his work in film. From 1966 to 1968, he served as a member of the Haut-Comité pour la Défense et l'Expansion de la Langue Française.

During the 1970's, Robbe-Grillet was primarily involved in filmmaking. He spent 1980 to 1988 as the director of the Centre de la Sociologie de la Littérature at the University of Brussels. At this time, he began writing a three-volume imaginary autobiography, which he did not finish until 1994. He also taught and lectured at several university campuses, among them New York University and Washington University. In 1981, working with Yvonne Lenard, he wrote a mystery story for use in teaching intermediate French entitled "Le Rendez-vous" (the meeting). Robbe-Grillet considers this work, which he had to create while respecting the restriction of a progressive presentation of French grammar, a significant part of his work and an excellent introduction to his writing. *Djinns* (English translation, 1982) a novel written the same year and similar in plot and narrative, received the Prix Mondello. Some twenty years passed before the publication of his next novel, *La Reprise* (2001; *Repetition*, 2003).

On March 25, 2004, Robbe-Grillet was elected to the Académie Française. He has also been awarded the honorific titles of officer of the Legion of Honor, officer of the Ordre National du Mérite, and officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He has been recognized for his innovative work in film writing and directing and as the major author in the New Novel genre.

ANALYSIS

Alain Robbe-Grillet's writing is best described as experimental narrative. Believing that the novel as a genre was doomed to die from stagnation, he set about reinventing the novel. To achieve this goal, he rejected the conventions of traditional realism and permitted himself to subvert the narrative structure.

The traditional novel relies heavily on plots that, although they may digress or lead to surprise endings, are logical. Robbe-Grillet's plots not only lack logic

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Alain Robbe-Grillet in 1966. (AP/Wide World Photos)

but often evaporate as the novel unfolds. A murder is mentioned, or the possibility that a murder was committed is suggested, but it may be simply left at that, or a number of conclusions may be proposed, or the character who is dead or is not really dead may appear again. This occurs in slightly different fashion in both *The Erasers* and *La Maison de Rendez-vous*.

The characters in novels traditionally have pasts and usually futures. The author provides the reader with psychological insights into the characters' behavior. Robbe-Grillet's characters exist only within the immediate reality of the novel. He portrays his characters through their perception of objects and events that they see. The characters may have multiple names such as the spy in *Repetition*, or may be identified by only an initial.

Traditional narrators are for the most part reliable, although they may be biased or opinionated. Robbe-Grillet's narrators are not reliable. Robbe-Grillet moves at times from one narrator to another without indicating the change. He shifts his narrative from first person to third or from third person to first without any identifiable transition. By doing this, he leaves the reader unsure if there is one narrator or multiple narrators.

In the traditional novel, description creates a cultural, social, or historical milieu in which the story unfolds. Objects often add an emotive aspect to the story; for example, an old abandoned house may have a sinister appearance. Robbe-Grillet insists on the elimination of all descriptions of objects that invest them with human characteristics or attributes or any mythic symbolism. He uses description only to describe exactly what is perceived. Meticulous, repetitive, at times even tedious, descriptions of objects create the reality of the novel, which is a reality of things.

In the traditional novel, the story unfolds in a chronological order. It may contain flashbacks or dream sequences, but they are presented in such a way that the reader does not lose track of the chronology of the story. Robbe-Grillet totally subverts chronological order in his novels as he folds his story back on itself, shifts the narrative from the past to the present to dreams, and changes how the story happens or may have happened. The mystery and detective genre, which traditionally has relied so very much on plot

and characters as well as other traditional elements of narrative structure, provides an excellent opportunity for the subversion of that structure.

JEALOUSY

In *Jealousy*, Robbe-Grillet fully explores the subversion of characterization. Set on a banana plantation in the tropics, it is a story of suspicion and jealousy. A husband suspects his wife of being involved in a love affair with their neighbor.

There are three characters in the novel. The jealous husband has no name, no physical description, and no physical presence except for that indicated by the description of the number of chairs on the verandah or the number of place settings on the table. The wife is referred to only by the initial A. She is frightened of centipedes. The description of the centipede on the wall is constantly repeated in the novel. The description of the neighbor, Franck, killing the centipede is also repeated with minor variations. It is this centipede, not the characters, that remains in the reader's mind.

The husband, in the manner of a detective, observes A and Franck through the window blinds (in French *jalousie*). Robbe-Grillet uses the double meaning of the word to confuse the sense of the novel. Is it the story of jealousy caused by knowledge of a real love affair and observed through the window blinds? Or is it the story of a man's jealousy based on his perception of events observed through a window blind? Is the story real or is it a fantasy? The story itself remains an unsolved mystery.

LA MAISON DE RENDEZ-VOUS

La Maison de Rendez-vous opens with a first-person narration about women's flesh and its importance in the narrator's dreams. Moving through a number of sadomasochistic-erotic images, the narrative becomes a description of the events, places, and characters who will be involved in the murder of Edouard Manneret or in the play about the death of Edouard Manneret. Set in Hong Kong, the novel shifts back and forth from images of a Eurasian girl in a clinging satin dress leading or being led by a large black dog, to images of the city's filthy streets and the illiterate sweepers who clean them, to images of the garden statuary, the buffet, and the clientele at the Blue Villa owned by Lady Ava.

The novel contains what could be termed multiple plots except none of the so-called plots continue to a logical conclusion. They rather remain descriptions repeated over and over again, sometimes in exactly the same way, sometimes with minor changes. Many of the characters have a multiplicity of names or means of identity. Sir Ralph is also referred to as the American, as Johnson, as the tall man talking to the red-faced man, and as Jonstone. The happenings that make up the events of the novel are also the fictional events of the plays presented by Lady Ava at the Blue Villa.

With its repeated descriptions of characters, events, objects, and places, the "story" of the novel continually folds back on itself to start off in a different direction, only to once again fold back and begin again. Near the end of the book, Lady Ava and Sir Ralph discuss the murder of Edouard Manneret. At first the reader believes that they will explain and solve the murder, but as the discussion continues it becomes obvious that what is taking place is a discussion of numerous ways that a writer might create a story about a murder.

By distorting the components of the narrative structure of the novel, particularly of the mystery novel, Robbe-Grillet denies the reader entry into an orderly prefabricated reality. The reader is led into an interactive participation with the author in the creation of the reality of the novel.

Shawncey Webb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Les Gommés*, 1953 (*The Erasers*, 1964); *Le Voyeur*, 1955 (*The Voyeur*, 1958); *La Jalousie*, 1957 (*Jealousy*, 1960); *Dans le Labyrinthe*, 1959 (*In the Labyrinth*, 1960); *La Maison de Rendez-vous*, 1965 (English translation, 1966); *Projet pour une révolution à New York*, 1970 (*Project for a Revolution in New York*, 1972); *Un Régicide*, 1978; *Djinns*, 1981 (English translation, 1982); *La Reprise*, 2001 (*Repetition*, 2003)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *La Belle Captive*, 1983 (*The Beautiful Captive*, 1983); *Topologie d'une cité fantôme*, 1976 (*Topology of a Phantom City*, 1977); *Souvenirs du triangle d'or*, 1978 (*Memories of the Golden Triangle*,

1984); *Le Miroir qui revient*, 1984 (*Ghosts in the Mirror*, 1988); *Angélique ou l'Enchantement*, 1987; *Les Derniers jours de Corinthe*, 1994

SHORT FICTION: *Instantanés*, 1962 (*Snapshots*, 1965)

SCREENPLAYS: *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* 1961 (*Last Year at Marienbad* 1962); *L'Immortelle* 1963 (*The Immortal One*, 1971); *Trans-Europ-Express*, 1966; *L'Homme qui ment*, 1968 (*The Man Who Lies*, 1968); *L'Eden et après*, 1970 (*Eden and Afterwards*, 1970); *N a pris des dés*, 1971; *Glissements progressifs du plaisir*, 1973 (*The Successive Slidings of Pleasure*, 1974); *Le Jeu avec le feu*, 1975 (*Playing with Fire*, 1975); *La Belle Captive*, 1983 (*The Beautiful Prisoner*, 1983); *Taxandria*, 1994; *Un bruit qui rend fou*, 1995 (*The Blue Villa*, 1995); *C'est Gradiva qui vous appelle*, 2002 (*It's Gradiva Who Is Calling You*, 2006)

NONFICTION: *Pour un nouveau roman*, 1963 (*For a New Novel*, 1965); *Rêves des jeunes filles*, 1971 (*Dreams of a Young Girl*, 1971); *Construction d'un temple en ruines à la Déesse Vanadé*, 1975; *Le Rendez-vous*, 1981; *Le Voyageur, essais et entretiens*, 2001

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PETER ROBINSON

Born: Castleford, Yorkshire, England; March 17, 1950

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chief Inspector Alan Banks, 1987-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CHIEF INSPECTOR ALAN BANKS is somewhat of an anachronism on the London police force. He is an outsider and a rebel, more leftist than the typical officer. He cuts corners and defies authority but gets the job done. When he is reassigned to a more bucolic part of the country, Yorkshire, he brings his peccadilloes with him, falling into the same patterns of stress while continuing methodically and patiently to solve the puzzle of who did what to whom. He is intelligent, insightful, sometimes moody, grumpy, and even melancholic. He can be hard to work for, but few have serious complaints. He understands the frailties of both the victims and victimizers because he himself can be weak. He enjoys spending hours in the pub with his favored single malt scotch, smoking the cigarettes he is trying so hard to give up. His other constant comfort is music. His shaky marriage eventually ends in divorce; although he is uncomfortable in relationships, women love him.

CONTRIBUTION

Nearly every published work by Peter Robinson has been on a best-seller list or earned some sort of recognition. Robinson received an Arthur Ellis Award

for best short story in 1990 for "Innocence"; Arthur Ellis awards in 1990 and 1991 for *The Hanging Valley* (1989) and *Past Reason Hated* (1991); an Author's Award from the Foundation for the Advancement of Canadian Letters in 1995 for *Final Account* (1994); an Arthur Ellis Award in 1996 for *Innocent Graves* (1996); and the Barry Award in 1999, the Anthony Award in 2000, Sweden's Martin Beck Award in 2001, and the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière in 2001 for *In a Dry Season* (1999). His novel *Cold Is the Grave* (2000) won an Arthur Ellis Award in 2000 as well as the Palle Rosen Krantz Award for the Danish edition. His short stories have won the Ellis, the Edgar, the Macavity, and other honors. He has been translated into more than fifteen languages. He creates dignified yet riveting, mostly gore-free tales with a concentration on both the key characters and the intriguing landscape, in the manner of his inspiration, writer Ruth Rendell. He wanted, he says, to write social and psychological crime novels to gain insight into society and individuals and to investigate crimes in a particular region, in his case, Yorkshire, which he adds, is actually the main character of his series.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter Eliot Robinson was born in Castleford, Yorkshire, England, on March 17, 1950, to Clifford Robinson, a photographer, and Miriam Jarvis Robinson. There were not many books in his boyhood home, reading being a luxury for hard-working people, but he was encouraged to use the library. The family did not have a television set until Robinson was the age of

twelve, so he turned to radio and films to find wonderful adventure stories. One of his earliest memories is of his mother reading *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877) to him at bedtime. He also remembers filling his notebooks with illustrations drawn from the tales of Robin Hood, William Tell, and King Arthur. He began writing poetry while still young, liking its structure and form, but grew bored and began experimenting with longer narrative works. The transition to fiction was easy.

In 1974, after earning his bachelor's degree with honors in English literature from the University of Leeds, Robinson moved to Canada in hopes of studying creative writing under Joyce Carol Oates at the University of Windsor. His short-story and poetry submissions apparently did not impress Oates sufficiently, and he failed to gain admittance into her creative writing classes. However, two months into the semester, after hearing Robinson read some of his latest works, Oates asked why he was not studying with her. He explained and she declared him ready. Her tutelage was key in Robinson's development as a writer. She gave direction but not too much, pointing out weaknesses as well as strengths, always expecting her students to fix the problems themselves, while being true to their own voices. He earned his master's degree in 1975.

Teaching positions were not readily available in England, jobs having grown even more scarce after Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979, so Robinson returned to Ontario and entered the doctoral program at York University, earning his doctorate in 1983. By that time, he and his lawyer wife, Sheila Halladay, had settled into permanent residence in the Beaches area of Toronto, and he had begun teaching college composition and literature classes. By the late 1990's, he was able to devote full time to his writing.

Robinson's interest in the mystery genre came as a surprise because he had never read, much less written, in that form. However, during a summer visit in Yorkshire, Robinson picked up one of the many books his father had been enjoying in his retirement, and he was fascinated, recognizing the potential for his own writing. He devoured works by Raymond Chandler and Georges Simenon, then published his first Chief Inspector Alan Banks novel, *Gallow's View*, in 1987.

Although all of Robinson's works are set in Yorkshire, he finds it difficult to write about the area while he resides there. He suspects that this difficulty stems from the fact that as a young writer he lacked the confidence to enter the world of letters in a country with a prevailing class distinction, one that was more prevalent then. At the time, members of the working class simply were not expected to assume themselves capable of entering into a higher station in life, and they mostly stayed within the confines of what had been handed to them. Rather than try to buck the traditional system, the young Robinson decided he needed the aesthetic distance of Canada for his writing. He began spending his time divided between the two countries, returning to Yorkshire to reacquaint himself with the sounds, the smells, and the people who populate his novels. Although Canadians also tend to dismiss genre fiction, Robinson has been able to adopt a bemused attitude. Though he seldom makes the best-seller listings of major prestigious publications, he has a broad audience and has gained the respect of Italians, Americans, and Germans. However, he admits to still harboring a fear that one day he will be found out and will wind up "working at the yeast factory or the frozen food plant in Leeds."

ANALYSIS

Most of Peter Robinson's novels are set in the fictional market town of Eastvale, in Yorkshire. His detective, Chief Inspector Alan Banks, formerly of the Metropolitan Police Service in London, has taken a job in a presumably quieter place with less prevalent and dramatic crime. Banks learns immediately that the job pressures are just as great despite the tranquil setting. Instead of having time to reflect on his life and to recoup from the hectic, fast-paced existence that threatened to unnerve him, he finds himself again at the core of turbulence and in the midst of bad people who do bad things as well as essentially good people who are driven to commit criminal acts.

Robinson's stories usually start with a corpse found in some distinctive part of the Yorkshire countryside or its environs. Then Inspector Banks goes to work, using his journalistic approach to crime solving, which seeks the answers to the five *w*'s and an *h*: who,

what, when, where, why, and how. Banks methodically delves into the dead person's past, learning all he can about friends, family, neighbors, and the tenor of the times. He walks the streets, visits homes, confers with colleagues, and frequents the pubs with the locals. Many a clue emerges from a night of sampling local brews and old favorites. Banks's cases are solved—although not all the criminals are always brought to justice—in jigsaw fashion, with starts and misses until the final pieces fit together.

Robinson says that he used to think quite a bit of his personality was reflected in Alan Banks until he began a closer examination of the inspector. Although, for example, they share the same interests in music, they went on separate paths in their late teens. In one of many revealing interviews, Robinson makes it clear that Banks has become a living entity. The author says that, in contrast to Banks, he is not as “temperamentally suited to deal with the officiousness” of such people as Bank's superior Detective Chief Inspector Jeremiah Riddle. If Robinson were involved in a conflict with his supervisor, he would most likely quit the job. He concedes that Banks is “more physically astute, . . . [a] little scrapper, . . . not afraid of getting down and dirty.”

Robinson admits that he hates violence and gore, which perhaps accounts for his declining of invitations to sit in on autopsies to add greater authority to his writing. Most of the novels' despicable acts occur off-stage. He does not believe that a graphic accounting of bloody acts is always necessary; however, when he feels that it is essential for the plot, he does not spare the details.

THE HANGING VALLEY

In *The Hanging Valley*, Robinson describes a gruesome scene involving the discovery of the body of a murder victim, hidden by rocks, with the head smashed beyond recognition, infested with maggots, and surrounded by flies. Robinson describes the corpse's face gone but moving, the “flesh . . . literally crawling,” the maggots “wriggling under his clothes [making] it look as if the body were rippling like water in the breeze.” Robinson felt that these details were integral to the plot and used his narrative skills to bring the moment to disgusting life. In a less repulsive pas-

sage, one very telling of the essence of British life, he describes the typical English breakfast, consisting of “two fried eggs, two thick rashers of Yorkshire bacon, Cumberland sausage, grilled mushrooms and tomato, with two slices of fried bread to mop it all up.” This repast was preceded by grapefruit juice and cereal and followed by toast and marmalade.

IN A DRY SEASON

In the novel *In a Dry Season*, Robinson excels in conveying the stunning bucolic environs while uncovering nasty little secrets. He also delves deeply into his protagonist's personality and his recurrent bouts of depression. This time, Inspector Banks is going through a serious midlife crisis: His wife has divorced him for a younger man, his son is dropping out of college to become a rock musician, his antagonistic superior Detective Chief Inspector Riddle has taken him off the active force and assigned him a desk job in the equivalent of police Siberia. As Banks struggles to understand his deep depression, he gains a kind of self-awareness that may not significantly alter his bouts of melancholia but will help him regain the confidence to go on to new tasks. He is asked to lead an investigation with another police force outcast, Detective Sergeant Annie Cabbot, in a case that the London division thinks of as a joke. His nemesis, Chief Inspector Riddle, hopes that an ages-old crime in the remote Yorkshire Dales, which took place in a period when few murders and no missing persons were reported, will herald the end of Banks's career and will show him that, at fifty, he is too old. The assignment will intrigue any mystery lover—to identify the bones uncovered when a drained reservoir reveals the remains of an old village. A critic credits Robinson with a work that “stands out for its psychological and moral complexity, its startling evocation of pastoral England, and its gritty compassionate portrayal of modern sleuthing.” Robinson nicely interweaves two periods—wartime and modern Yorkshire.

PIECE OF MY HEART

Each novel in the series brings new personal and professional challenges for Inspector Banks. *Piece of My Heart* (2006) opens the day after Britain's first outdoor rock concert in 1969, featuring the wildly popular Mad Hatters. During the cleanup of the grounds, a dead woman is discovered bundled up in a sleeping

bag. An investigation fails to yield the identity of her killer. Thirty-five years later, Banks is called on to investigate another, presumably unrelated murder, of a journalist writing a piece on the Mad Hatters. Similarities soon become apparent as the detective's work begins spanning the decades. Again Robinson uses the compelling device of exploring one period in history and another in recent times and bringing both together in a logical, believable resolution. Here Robinson is able to indulge his love of rock music, re-creating the mood of the past and the tenor of the present without a hint of bifurcation.

ALAN BANKS

The character of Alan Banks has evolved over the years. Each new case takes more of a toll on him. He has become more introspective and allows the reader glimpses into his past that help explain why he is the way he is. In later novels, he has a darker view of the world. Unlike Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, static protagonists who can be relied on to systematically solve crimes without any substantial changes to their personae, Banks is a modern detective and develops as an ordinary person would do. Banks's evolving personality appears to appeal to the readers of the series, as the correspondence Robinson receives generally asks what will happen to Banks rather than questions about his plots.

When readers ask if Banks will ever settle down and find happiness, Robinson says he doubts that it is in Banks's nature to embrace the day, but who knows? He likes to throw situations at Banks to see how he will handle them. He claims to have even been surprised by the divorce, especially with the twist of his wife leaving for someone younger. He says that he is writing about a man who just "happens to work as a policeman, and about the things that happen to him as he grows older." He gets an idea and begins writing, not knowing where the story will go. He puts the character first and lets the plot develop because he believes that the plot stems from the main character. Possibly the key to the success of the series is that Banks is a kind of Everyman, with the same temptations, subject to the vagaries of life, which include losing power as he ages and having to settle for less.

Robinson does not want to be viewed as anything other than a writer of crime fiction. He says that when a work of crime fiction is described as a "literary thriller" or being a novel that "transcends the genre," he feels that such language is condescending, as if being crime fiction were not enough.

Gay Pitman Zieger

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR BANKS SERIES: *Gallow's View*, 1987; *A Dedicated Man*, 1988; *A Necessary End*, 1989; *The Hanging Valley*, 1989; *Past Reason Hated*, 1991; *Wednesday's Child*, 1992; *Final Account*, 1994; *Innocent Graves*, 1996; *Dead Right*, 1997 (also known as *Blood at the Root*); *In a Dry Season*, 1999; *Cold Is the Grave*, 2000; *Aftermath*, 2001; *The Summer that Never Was*, 2003 (also known as *Close to Home*); *Playing with Fire*, 2004; *The First Cut*, 2004; *Strange Affair*, 2005; *Piece of My Heart*, 2006; *Friend of the Devil*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Caedmon's Song*, 1991; *No Cure for Love*, 1995

SHORT FICTION: *Not Safe After Dark, and Other Stories*, 1998

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

POETRY: *With Equal Eye*, 1979; *Nosferatu*, 1981

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SAX ROHMER

Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward

Born: Birmingham, Warwickshire, England;
February 15, 1883

Died: London, England; June 1, 1959

Also wrote as Michael Furey

Type of plot: Thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Fu Manchu, 1912-1959

Gaston Max, 1915-1943

Morris Klaw, 1918-1919

Daniel "Red" Kerry, 1919-1925

Paul Harley, 1921-1922

Sumuru, 1950-1956

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

FU MANCHU, a brilliant Mandarin Chinese who used his criminal organization, the Si-Fan, in various attempts to conquer the world, was to millions of readers the symbol of the "Yellow Peril" that faced the Western world. Instead of hordes of Asiatic invaders, however, Rohmer utilized exotic locations, devices, and people to create an atmosphere of fear, dread, and doom. Fu Manchu was always defeated, but always just barely.

CONTRIBUTION

Although only one-quarter of Sax Rohmer's mystery novels and collected stories feature the insidious Fu Manchu, it is that character who guaranteed Rohmer's fame and success as a mystery writer. Although

he neither invented the genre of the thriller nor created the "Yellow Peril" plot, it was he who combined the two aspects most successfully during the first half of the twentieth century. The stories of Fu Manchu appeared over the course of five decades, which is strong evidence that Rohmer's creation was popular throughout most of his writing career. Fu Manchu himself underwent a gradual metamorphosis, changing from, in 1912, a self-serving villain to, by the late 1940's, an anticommunist. The character appeared on radio, in film, and on television. Fu Manchu was also the pattern for many other evil Asian geniuses in popular culture.

Although Rohmer's major contribution to the writing of mystery fiction is a villain, his detectives do deserve some mention. Fu Manchu's worthy adversary was usually Sir Denis Nayland Smith or a similar type who had lived in the East and had studied the techniques of Asia. The stories themselves are in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes, wherein the brilliant Holmes/Smith matches wits with the equally brilliant Moriarty/Fu Manchu. Similarly, the stories are recorded by an associate, Dr. Petrie, who plays the role of the bumbling Dr. Watson. Over his long writing career Rohmer used many other detectives and villains. None, however, is as memorable as Fu Manchu.

BIOGRAPHY

Sax Rohmer was born Arthur Henry Ward on February 15, 1883, in Birmingham, England. He was the

only child of William Ward, an office clerk, and Margaret Furey Ward, an alcoholic homemaker. With his father working long hours and his mother usually in an alcoholic daze, the young Ward was left to develop in his own way. Fortunately, he became a voracious reader, although his reading was chiefly confined to popular novels and to works on the bizarre and foreign. His formal schooling began at the age of nine; he was an unremarkable student, leaving school sometime in the early 1900's. That he was different from other students is evidenced by his decision, in his late teens, to drop his middle name and to adopt the name of Sarsfield (from an ancestor) in its stead. His interests left him ill prepared for bureaucratic work, and he failed the British civil service examination. He then became a bank clerk.

It was soon obvious that Ward had little interest in the mundane world of finance, and his career in banking was quite brief. He was far more interested in hypnotism, the occult, and archaeology. He turned to writing, becoming a reporter for a weekly newspaper. He also submitted short stories to various popular journals of the day and had his first stories accepted in 1903. Ward soon adopted the pen name Sax (Saxon for blade) Rohmer (for roamer). At first he used it only as his byline; later he used it in his personal life as well. Rohmer met and was married to Rose Elizabeth Knox in 1909; they were to have no children.

As a journalist, Rohmer was assigned to cover the Limehouse area of London, a section notorious for its criminal activities. It was this contact that led to his writing several episodic short stories that he published in 1912 and 1913 in *The Story-Teller*, a cheap British thriller magazine. These were soon collected and published as *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913). Further serializations resulted in two more novels, and Rohmer's popularity soared. Rohmer was read on both sides of the Atlantic, as his books were, from the beginning, published both in Great Britain and in the United States. He was soon able to retire from his reporting career and become a full-time writer.

For the next forty-odd years, Rohmer published prolifically, averaging a novel and several short stories per year. He spent most of his writing life in London and New York City, finally moving to New York City

after World War II. He also traveled extensively to provide himself with details for his novels and stories. Sadly, Rohmer was never an astute businessman. He was often cheated on contracts, but he rarely chose to enter into litigation. Indeed, on one occasion in the early 1950's, Rohmer actually signed away the rights to all of his work—past, present, and future. Only after an extensive legal battle, and at enormous cost, was he able to regain his own property. In 1959, he became ill with influenza, which was followed by complications. He was determined to return to England. There he died on June 1, 1959.

ANALYSIS

The London of 1900 was the trading center of the world and the capital of a large empire focused on Asia. East London, an area composed primarily of docks, wharves, sailors' bars, and working-class slums, was where this international community was centered. It was there that Sax Rohmer's writing career began. His job was to report on the criminal elements in the Limehouse area of East London. There he had the opportunity to meet the prototypes of the characters who were to populate his novels. He also witnessed, at first hand, the frightening settings for many of his novels. What set Rohmer apart was his ability to blend his reportorial observations with his skill as a thriller writer.

THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU-MANCHU

Although Rohmer's first published short story appeared in 1903, it was not until 1912 that his archvillain was introduced. "The Zayat Kiss," published in October, 1912, in *The Story-Teller*, introduced Dr. Fu Manchu, the evil Asian genius, to the British thriller-reading public. Over the next ten issues a series of adventures pitted Fu Manchu against the forces of good, each adventure ending with the Chinese villain on the verge of victory. Finally, in the tenth episode, the sinister Mandarin was vanquished. In 1913, the serialized adventures were collected into a book, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*, and published in both Great Britain and the United States.

Over the next four years two more episodic thrillers were serialized, then published in book form. Rohmer grew weary of the doctor and had the archfiend

killed at the end of *The Si-Fan Mysteries* (1917). Thirteen years later, however, Rohmer resurrected his villain; using the same formula as before, he published seven new Fu Manchu novels in eleven years. It was during this period that Rohmer was most popular. These later novels differed from the earlier ones in several ways; in particular, they dealt less with the Yellow Peril and more with the themes of the 1930's. Following World War II, Rohmer published three more Fu Manchu novels, the last of which appeared in the year of his death, 1959.

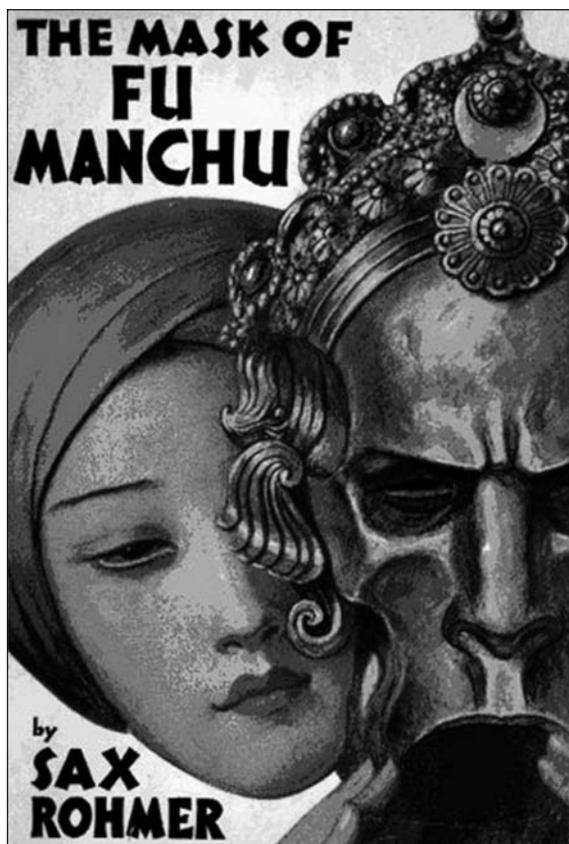
THE ASIAN MENACE, VIVIDLY DESCRIBED

Sax Rohmer's success may be attributed, at least in part, to his very simple formula for writing. First, his plots were never too complex for the average reader. The English-language reading public of that day feared that Asians, through numbers alone, could someday overwhelm Western civilization. If those hordes ever acquired Western technological superiority, it was thought, they would swarm over the West even sooner. As a journalist in an era of sensational journalism, Rohmer was well aware of the success of Yellow Peril stories. Hordes of Asians, however, would make for complicated stories. Rohmer chose instead to use one man to symbolize the Asian menace.

Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like [William] Shakespeare and a face like Satan . . . Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present . . . Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.

Rohmer endowed this embodiment of Asian evil with a brilliant mind, one capable not only of using Eastern cunning but also of understanding Western science. This was an easily understandable threat. Rohmer was to change this villain's interests, but the villain was a constant.

A second part of the formula was vivid description. Rohmer's extensive reading provided him with numerous exotic curiosities for his background detail. His lifelong interest in and study of the Far East gave him an intimate knowledge of Asian exotica. He filled secret



The fifth novel in Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu series, The Mask of Fu Manchu, concerns the Chinese criminal mastermind's acquisition of relics, including an armor mask, that had belonged to the thirteenth century Mongol emperor Genghis Khan.

rooms with incense, low teakwood tables, and lacquered cabinets. His work as a journalist in London had introduced him to the threatening locales of so many of his works. Fog-shrouded streets, rat-infested wharves, seedy bars, and opium dens provided the backdrop for many of Rohmer's plots. The characters who populated these environs were also drawn from his study. He once declared, "I made my name on Fu Manchu because I know nothing about the Chinese," adding "I know something about Chinatown." Although the first statement may have been true (he filled his stories with racial stereotypes), Rohmer did know how to create colorful characters. In his stories, sailors and thugs jostle one another with a polyglot array of Asian threats. Taken as a whole, Rohmer's works provided his readers with access to places about which they could only

dream. He painted pictures for his readers.

Rohmer's success also rested on thrilling action. Although his plots are rarely plausible, the action never ceases. Strange drugs, venomous animals, Burmese dacoits, and other dastardly things appear in rapid succession. Death or narrow escape occurs on almost every page. Only through skill, much luck, and many adventures are the schemes of Dr. Fu Manchu foiled. Rohmer himself did not create the thriller genre; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle pioneered it in the late nineteenth century. Rohmer simply added a few twists of his own. Rohmer's sleuths were less intelligent but more dogged than Holmes. More important, his sleuths underwent far more exciting chases and adventures than did Holmes.

In another way, Rohmer reversed the formula, shifting emphasis to the villain: Although rarely seen in the books, Dr. Fu Manchu is always the focal point. Furthermore, Fu Manchu usually failed because of the ineptitude of his minions, especially his female (usually beautiful) operatives who fell in love with the wrong person. (This is yet another difference; Rohmer used a love element to titillate his audience.) Rohmer's formula was used with great success by many other authors throughout the first half of the twentieth century. One need only note the success of the Flash Gordon series character Ming the Merciless for a parallel.

PRESIDENT FU MANCHU AND EMPEROR FU MANCHU

Rohmer's plots reflected his times. He was never so tightly bound by a formula that he could not meet the interests of his readers. When Dr. Fu Manchu was first introduced, he was evil incarnate. The early novels reflected the nationalism, the xenophobia, and the white man's racism of the immediate pre-World War I era. The novels of the 1930's were different, dealing with political activities of that turbulent era. *President Fu Manchu* (1936) portrayed the Chinese menace as the power behind a demagogic American presidential candidate. *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1939) had him fighting Fascism and deposing Rudolf Adlon (Adolf Hitler). Also in the 1930's, Fu Manchu, while still Asian, became more of a supercriminal than the personification of the Yellow Peril. Fascism was more to be feared than

the Chinese, who, after all, were fighting the Japanese. After World War II Fu Manchu returned as an anticommunist. In *Emperor Fu Manchu* (1959) he strived to rid his homeland of the communists who were destroying "his" China. Although these plots date the stories, it can be seen that Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels are a barometer of certain public opinions during the twentieth century. His popularity was a measure of what the public wanted to read.

OTHER SERIES

In addition to the highly successful Fu Manchu series, Rohmer utilized many other characters. A series of five Sumuru novels (1950-1956) featured a female villain. Although the Sumuru books were mildly popular, Rohmer dropped her to return to Fu Manchu. Earlier in his career, he had written several books featuring the psychic detective Morris Klaw. In *Brood of the Witch Queen* (1918), *The Quest of the Sacred Slipper* (1919), and *The Dream-Detective* (1920), Klaw solved bizarre cases by using his psychic powers. Another detective used by Rohmer was Gaston Max, who fought supercriminals in *The Yellow Claw* (1915), *The Golden Scorpion* (1919), and *The Day the World Ended* (1930) or Axis agents in *Seven Sins* (1943). Paul Harley appeared in *Bat-Wing* (1921) and *Fire-Tongue* (1922), and Chief Inspector Daniel "Red" Kerry was featured in *Dope* (1919) and *Yellow Shadows* (1925).

Rohmer is best remembered for a villain, Fu Manchu. His plots were simple, full of action, and thrilling. He cannot be considered a great or innovative writer, but he was a good teller of tales. His stories reflected his times, and his work was popular because his audience, which was by no means intellectual, identified with what it read.

William S. Brockington, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FU MANCHU SERIES: *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu*, 1913 (also known as *The Insidious Fu Manchu*); *The Devil Doctor*, 1916 (also known as *The Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu*); *The Si-Fan Mysteries*, 1917 (also known as *The Hand of Fu-Manchu*); *Daughter of Fu Manchu*, 1931; *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, 1932; *Fu Manchu's Bride*, 1933 (also known as *The Bride of Fu Manchu*); *The Trail of Fu Manchu*,

1934; *President Fu Manchu*, 1936; *The Drums of Fu Manchu*, 1939; *The Island of Fu Manchu*, 1941; *Shadow of Fu Manchu*, 1948; *Re-Enter Fu Manchu*, 1957; *Emperor Fu Manchu*, 1959; *The Wrath of Fu Manchu, and Other Stories*, 1973

GASTON MAX SERIES: *The Yellow Claw*, 1915; *The Golden Scorpion*, 1919; *The Day the World Ended*, 1930; *Seven Sins*, 1943

MORRIS KLAW SERIES: *Brood of the Witch Queen*, 1918; *The Quest of the Sacred Slipper*, 1919; *The Dream-Detective*, 1920

DANIEL "RED" KERRY SERIES: *Dope*, 1919; *Yellow Shadows*, 1925

PAUL HARLEY SERIES: *Bat-Wing*, 1921; *Fire-Tongue*, 1922

SUMURU SERIES: *Nude in Mink*, 1950 (also known as *Sins of Sumuru*); *Sumuru*, 1951 (also known as *Slaves of Sumuru*); *The Fire Goddess*, 1952 (also known as *Virgin in Flames*); *Return of Sumuru*, 1954 (also known as *Sand and Satin*); *Sinister Madonna*, 1956

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Sins of Séverac Bablon*, 1914; *The Green Eyes of Bâst*, 1920; *Grey Face*, 1924; *Moon of Madness*, 1927; *She Who Sleeps*, 1928; *The Emperor of America*, 1929; *Yu'an Hee See Laughs*, 1932; *The Bat Flies Low*, 1935; *White Velvet*, 1936; *Egyptian Nights*, 1944; *Hangover House*, 1949; *Wulheim*, 1950; *The Moon Is Red*, 1954

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Exploits of Captain O'Hagan*, 1916; *Tales of Secret Egypt*, 1918; *The Haunting of Low Fennel*, 1920; *Tales of Chinatown*, 1922; *Tales of East and West*, 1932; *Salute to Bazarada, and Other Stories*, 1939; *Bimbâshi Barûk of Egypt*, 1944; *The Secret of Holm Peel, and Other Strange Stories*, 1970

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *The Orchard of Tears*, 1918

PLAYS: *Round in Fifty*, pr. 1922 (with Julian and Lauri Wylie); *The Eye of Siva*, pr. 1923; *Secret Egypt*, pr. 1928; *The Nightingale*, pr. 1947 (with Michael Martin-Harvey)

NONFICTION: *Pause!*, 1910; *The Romance of Sorcery*, 1914

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LAURA JOH ROWLAND

Born: Harper Woods, Michigan; 1953

Type of plot: Historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sano Ichirō and Lady Reiko, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SANO ICHIRŌ begins as a thirty-year-old *yoriki*, or senior police commander, in the service of Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi in 1689. His unconventional, intelligent, and ethical approach to solving crimes earns him promotion to *sōsakan-sama*, most honorable investigator of events, situations, and people. In this position he solves eight more cases until he is promoted (ahistorically) to the position of *sobayōnin*, or grand chamberlain, in 1694. Operating at the highest level of government, he remains an independent-minded detective.

UEDA REIKO marries Sano at the beginning of his fourth case. The daughter of a judge, Reiko rejects a traditional female role. Moved by a strong desire for justice, especially for women, she deeply involves herself in her husband's cases and, in many instances, proves instrumental in solving them. Her complex character and ongoing development threaten to eclipse Sano in more than one case.

CONTRIBUTION

In Sano Ichirō and his wife, Lady Reiko, Laura Joh Rowland has created a multidimensional detective couple who have propelled her series to a long and sustained life. Rowland attracts readers who savor both historical mysteries and good old-fashioned detective work. Her mysteries live off her meticulous historical research, which brings to life Japan's seventeenth century Genroku era, and her keen understanding of humanity's weaknesses and its penchant for crime and political intrigue, which are mediated by the desire of a few good persons to see justice prevail. One of Rowland's key achievements is that she makes her characters, from a geographically and chronologically remote past, become so familiar and feel so real that critics enthused that Sano has more in common with

Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade than with a costumed warrior of times past.

Throughout her crime series, Rowland carefully develops her central cast of characters, beginning with Sano and Reiko. By having Sano move up the ranks, she is able to create mysteries with ever larger social and political ramifications. Similarly, the amazing development of Lady Reiko has fascinated Rowland's appreciative and steadily growing readership.

The existence of the magical in Rowland's world, with villains felling their opponents through arcane mystic martial arts skills, does not distract from the reality of her crime-solving characters, who are caught in the nets and restraints of a deeply stratified society where a false step may mean instant death. In each novel, the stakes are raised to the utmost for Sano and Reiko, yet they have been able to extricate themselves, often at a price, from all the traps laid for them by their nefarious adversaries.

BIOGRAPHY

Laura Joh Rowland was born in Michigan, the third generation of Chinese and Korean immigrants. Initially, she followed her family's tradition of studying for a career in education or the sciences, earning a bachelor's in microbiology and a master's degree in public health from the University of Michigan and working almost twenty years in her field. When she and her husband, Marty Rowland, an environmental scientist and political activist, moved to New Orleans in 1981, she began yearning for a creative outlet while working for the city's public health office and later for Lockheed Martin at a National Aeronautics and Space Administration facility as a quality engineer. Her fondness for her father's classic English and American mysteries propelled her to start writing. To make her mark in the mystery market and to realize her Asian heritage, Rowland decided to set her crime fiction in seventeenth century Japan. The period appealed for its combination of social tension and individual aspirations, its distance from modern scientific crime solving (which would favor a classical detective ap-

proach), and its thoroughly Asian setting.

After abandoning two projects, Rowland got a break when an editor at Random House showed interest in her novel *Shinjū* (1994). The manuscript and its sequel were auctioned off for a hundred thousand dollars, going to Random House. Both *Shinjū* and its sequel, *Bundori* (1996), captured American readers, who took to samurai detective Sano Ichirō and his fight to defend justice within the military dictatorship of early Tokugawa Japan. This success enabled Rowland to continue her long-running series.

In *The Concubine's Tattoo* (1998) Rowland decided to put a female partner at Sano's side, his loyal wife, Lady Reiko. Earlier hints that a high-class prostitute or a mysterious female Ninja might win Sano's affections were stilled.

Rowland's next four mysteries put the detective couple through an amazing array of complex crime situations. Her fiction explored male-female relations both in Tokugawa Japan and in the timeless realm of psychological realism, probing issues of trust, dependency, and mutual love. With *The Samurai's Wife* (2000), Rowland proved to be at the height of her craft.

Perhaps to give Sano room for growth, Rowland decided on the historically inaccurate move of having his long-time adversary, *sobayōnin* (grand chancellor) Yanagisawa, exiled in 1694. Sano is appointed to the office vacated by Yanagisawa at the end of his ninth adventure, *The Perfumed Sleeve* (2004).

As the series progressed, Rowland's fictional universe of Japan's Genroku era became so familiar to her readers that she spent less time on explanatory passages. In the murder case in *Red Chrysanthemum* (2006), as Sano and Reiko rush to save their lives by proving their own innocence, seventeenth century Edo (Tokyo) is described as matter of factly as if it were modern Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles. The focus in this novel is on the crime, not the background. Rowland's characters ring true, and her setting adds to, rather than detracts from, the compelling crimes of passion at the heart of her mysteries.

ANALYSIS

When Laura Joh Rowland decided to write mysteries, she deliberately chose a historical period. Driven

to write novels in the style of classical detective stories where good sleuthing makes all the difference and looking for an exciting setting where both crime and justice could flourish, she settled on late seventeenth century Japan. It was a time of strictly set and enforced social standards, in some ways similar to Victorian England, and gave rise to imaginative criminals and colorful renegades.

In creating her hero, Sano Ichirō, Rowland took advantage of the period's emphasis on an active police force to ensure the peace of the Tokugawa shogunate. Rowland's mysteries take on a unique dimension from the precarious balance between actual police work, in the modern sense of upholding order in a burgeoning metropolis where citizens of many classes compete and private desires clash, and the political dimension of police as upholders of an authoritarian regime.

Beginning with her debut novel, *Shinjū*, Rowland successfully overcame key challenges of the historical mystery genre. She escaped the temptation to bog down the plot with too many historical details and managed to create a sympathetic yet still believable historical protagonist. An utterly historically correct rendering of the actual thoughts, actions, and beliefs of a bygone era in a foreign country always risks alienating, if not offending, modern American readers. Examples of historically accurate details that might offend in Rowland's case include a samurai's explicit permission to strike down any offending peasant and then-prevailing attitudes toward women and the less privileged.

It is to Rowland's credit that she has managed to bridge successfully the gap between the mind-set of the past and the present and, in her protagonists, has developed characters who gain and maintain the sympathy of her readers. In her second novel, *Bundori*, Rowland presents readers with the samurai code, which because of emphasis on the samurai's absolute, unquestioning loyalty and obedience to his lord is likely to strike modern American readers as questionable if not absurd, but she endows Sano with sufficient iconoclastic characteristics to gain readers' sympathy and an understanding for his culturally prescribed position.

In *The Concubine's Tattoo*, Rowland took the inspired step of placing at Sano's side his young wife, Lady Reiko. An exceptional and utterly unconventional

woman who defies traditional historical restraints on a noble woman of the Genroku era, Reiko almost steals the show from Sano in *Black Lotus* (2001) and *The Dragon King's Palace* (2003). Readers may get the impression that Reiko's character is the more dynamic of the two. Her independence is unusual for the period, yet within the realm of the possible.

What distinguishes Rowland's series is that the prime characters develop in time, create a family, and advance in their careers. They are not the timeless detectives of American crime classics whose lives change little from case to case. Soon after their marriage, Sano and Lady Reiko have a son.

Just as her series appeared to lose steam, Rowland decided on the bold stroke of changing history: Sano and Reiko's longtime adversary, Grand Chamberlain Yanagisawa, is exiled, and Sano occupies his office at the end of *The Perfumed Sleeve*. Although this may be as odd as having Philip Marlowe replace a disgraced J. Edgar Hoover as the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it gave Rowland's series a fresh impetus.

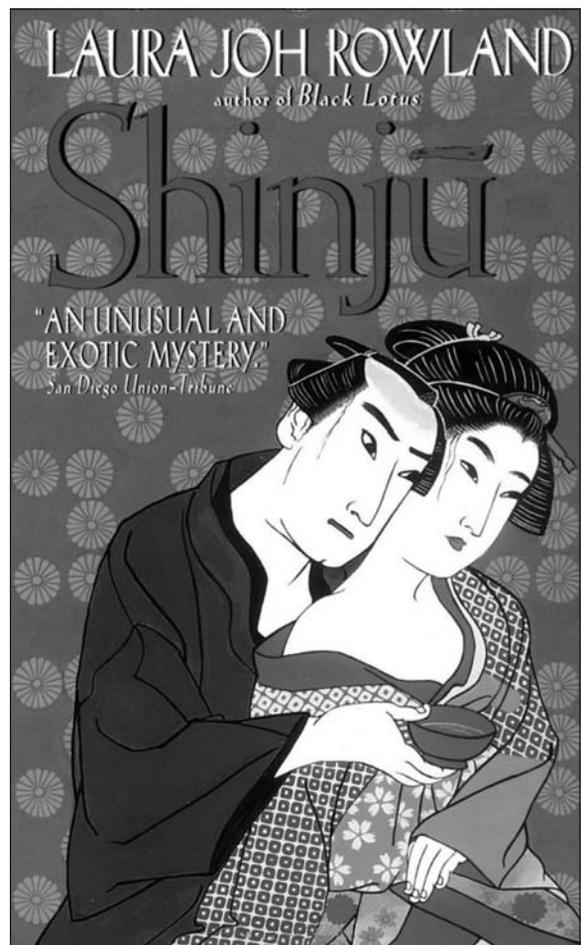
Stylistically, Rowland's Sano Ichirō and Lady Reiko mysteries follow a set pattern. All the novels open with a decisive account of the crime that sets the investigation in motion. Reiko favors investigations regarding women and Sano pursues villains in his official position. The time line for solving the crime is generally shortened by political ploys on the part of Sano and Reiko's adversaries intended to cause the shogun to disgrace the idiosyncratic couple, raising the personal stakes at every turn of their inquiries. Rowland's mysteries often incorporate supernatural beliefs of the era and treat them as real, such as an acolyte's power to kill by will alone. There is also a strong emphasis on physical combat at the end of the story, when Rowland's mysteries enter the realm of a martial arts novel. Sexuality, particularly deviant sexuality such as pederasty, forced sex, and exotic sexual predilections, feature strongly and are described in rather explicit terms.

Solving a case often brings more of an ominous foreboding to Sano and Reiko than a final resolution. This is, of course, what propels the series forward. Another trademark of Rowland is her successful creation of strong secondary characters such as Sano's loyal as-

sistant Hirata. These characters are consistently developed throughout the series and given a genuine life, for example, having a wife and children of their own. A persistent figure serving as lodestar is the historical, homosexual shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, whom Sano serves and who has always rewarded him in the end.

SHINJŪ

Rowland's acclaimed first mystery, *Shinjū*, begins with the discovery of a dead couple, an apparent double love suicide, or *shinjū*, the subject of many Japanese plays and novels. Young Sano Ichirō, who has just been appointed a senior police commander through the patron of his family, refuses to stop investigating the case as is expected of him. His dogged pursuit of the truth, which points at murder, quickly



makes him run afoul of his police superiors as well as his bemused patron and father.

Indicative of his unconventional thinking and his dedication to finding the truth, Sano takes recourse in the forensic wisdom of Dr. Ito Genboku, who has been demoted to work at Edo jail for taking an interest in the forbidden Western medical sciences. When Sano learns that the couple was murdered as he suspected, he launches an inquiry that points to a plot by twenty-one nobles, including the brother of the murdered woman.

Saving the shogun after a dramatic sword battle with the insurgents earns Sano his new position of *sōsakan-sama*, most honorable investigator of events, situations, and people.

BUNDORI

In *Bundori*, Sano's case features a deranged man who kills his victims so that he can sever their skulls and nail them to a wooden board in the fashion that samurai used to prepare their war trophies. This ancient custom, described, for example, in the Japanese classic *Heike monogatari* (wr. thirteenth century C.E.; *The Tale of the Heike*, 1918-1921) and featured in Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's novel *Bushōkō hiwa* (1931-1932 serial; 1935; *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*, 1982) is an odd anachronism in Sano's seventeenth century.

Great tension derives from Sano's psychological grappling with the samurai warrior code, or Bushido. The code requires unquestioning obedience to one's superior, even if that person is despicable. Thus at the climax of the novel, Sano saves his sworn arch-enemy, jealous Grand Chancellor Yanagisawa, during the climactic battle with the deranged murderer aboard a seagoing vessel.

RED CHRYSANTHEMUM

Red Chrysanthemum, Rowland's eleventh mystery, reveals her storytelling at its finest and challenges her detective duo to the utmost. After Sano's marriage to Lady Reiko in *The Concubine's Tattoo*, which delves into the realm of forbidden love and establishes Yanagisawa as a moral monster who survives by virtue of his political power, Reiko's crime-solving skills are tested further in *The Samurai's Wife*. Out of sympathy for a woman suspect, Reiko commits a serious error of judgment in *Black Lotus* that nearly gets her killed at the hands of a vicious cult leader. *The Red Chrysan-*

themum places Sano and Reiko in deepest peril. At the beginning, five-months pregnant Reiko is discovered naked, atop the castrated and murdered body of Lord Mori, lying in his own blood with a blood-drenched chrysanthemum. The question as to how she got there is answered in the fashion of multiple, contradictory narratives consciously modeled after Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's short story "Yabu no naka" (1922; "In a Grove," 1952) that was made into Akira Kurosawa's famous film *Rashōmon* (1950).

Even though the mysterious circumstances of the crime cause each character to distrust each other, in the end, Sano and Reiko's love and their dedication to justice solve the case. The case leaves Sano a much more cynical character than ever before. Rowland hints at future complications born out of political intrigues, ending this novel, as she does others, with suggestions of future adventures.

R. C. Lutz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SANO ICHIRŌ AND LADY REIKO SERIES: *Shinjū*, 1994; *Bundori*, 1996; *The Way of the Traitor*, 1997; *The Concubine's Tattoo*, 1998; *The Samurai's Wife*, 2000; *Black Lotus*, 2001; *The Pillow Book of Lady Wisteria*, 2002; *The Dragon King's Palace*, 2003; *The Perfumed Sleeve*, 2004; *The Assassin's Touch*, 2005; *Red Chrysanthemum*, 2006; *The Snow Empress*, 2007

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J. K. ROWLING

Joanne Kathleen Rowling

Born: Yate, South Gloucestershire, England; July 31, 1965

Also wrote as Newt Scamander; Kennelworthy Whisp

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; horror; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Harry Potter, 1997-2007

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HARRY POTTER, the central character in all seven novels, is a powerful wizard who was orphaned in infancy and raised by nonmagical relatives who never told him the truth about his origins. After reaching the age of eleven, he enters a school for wizards and gradually learns about his powers and his destiny to fight the immensely powerful and evil Lord Voldemort. Most of the series' storylines revolve around his quests to answer questions about himself and Voldemort.

RON WEASLEY is Harry's classmate and best friend. A member of a large wizarding family and the son of a Ministry of Magic official, he helps introduce Harry to the world of magic and assists him in his struggles against Voldemort.

HERMIONE GRANGER, another of Harry's class-

mates and close friends, is a brainy and studious girl who repeatedly uses her book learning and intelligence to help Harry in his quests.

ALBUS DUMBLEDORE is the grandfatherly and good-humored headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and the only wizard whom Voldemort fears. He serves as Harry's mentor throughout the series but occasionally behaves in ways that Harry cannot fully understand and makes serious mistakes. One of the many mysteries in the series is the full extent of Dumbledore's knowledge about Harry and Voldemort.

LORD VOLDEMORT, originally named Tom Riddle and also known as the Dark Lord, is Harry's archenemy and the principal villain throughout the series. Harry's central mission is to combat Voldemort's quest to rule the wizarding world and use his great magical powers for evil. Voldemort's powers appear to be limitless, but he is eventually defeated by gaps in his knowledge.

CONTRIBUTION

J. K. Rowling became an internationally known writer after the 1997 release of her first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (also known as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*). The Cinderella-

like tale of an ordinary boy who discovers he has magical powers captured the imagination of adults as well as children, and the book soared to the top of international best-seller lists. Rowling was credited by teachers, parents, and librarians with motivating even the most reluctant students to read. Six more titles followed: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). Each successive book became more popular than the previous one in the seven-book series.

Although Rowling's novels take place in the parallel world of Hogwarts and other magical locations, her young characters are similar to contemporary teenagers. They study, flirt, play sports, gossip, and date. They also wield considerable power that can transform reality in an instant. Following the arc of the hero's journey, Harry struggles to come of age as a wizard and an adult. In each novel, he must solve a mystery, which leads him to a deeper understanding of his mission to vanquish the evil Lord Voldemort.

BIOGRAPHY

Joanne Kathleen Rowling was born in Yate, South Gloucestershire, England, on a July 31, the same date on which her fictional Harry Potter was born. Her father, Peter Rowling, worked on airplane engines for Rolls Royce. Her mother, Ann, died in 1990 of multiple sclerosis.

From an early age, Rowling loved to write stories. When she was six, she wrote her first book, *Rabbit*, a story about a sick rabbit and the visitors who came to cheer him up. When her family moved to Tutshill in South Wales, she attended Wyedean School and College. She then attended the University of Exeter, where she studied French and the classics. She also spent a year studying in Paris. After graduating, she worked as a researcher and secretary for Amnesty International. During this period she commuted by train between Manchester and London and began formulating a story about a young boy who discovers that he has magical powers. When she was twenty-six, she quit her job and went to Portugal to teach English as a

second language. In 1992, she married journalist Jorge Arantes; they had a daughter, Jessica, the following year. Their marriage was troubled and was dissolved that same year.

Rowling returned to Great Britain and settled near Edinburgh, Scotland. She completed her first Harry Potter book in 1994 while she was unemployed and living on welfare. She sent the manuscript of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to several publishers, who rejected the work. Finally in 1997, Bloomsbury published the book in England to rave reviews. A year later, the book was published in the United States by Scholastic under the title *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The novel became an international publishing sensation and won several awards, including the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize and the British Book Award for Children's Book of the Year. In 1999,



J. K. Rowling. (Richard Young/ Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, the third book in the series, again received the Nestlé Smarties Prize, as well as the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year award in 2000. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* earned the W. H. Smith People's Choice Award in 2003, and *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* was named British Book Awards Book of the Year in 2006. The much-anticipated final installment, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was released in 2007.

Many of the books in the series have been adapted to film. Rowling has also published two spin-off volumes based on books mentioned in the Potter novels, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001) and *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001).

In addition to the awards her books have garnered, Rowling herself has been the recipient of many honors. She holds honorary degrees from Dartmouth College in the United States, and the University of Exeter, University of St. Andrews, Napier University, and University of Edinburgh in Great Britain. In 2001, she was awarded the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth for her contributions to children's literature, and in 2002, she became a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Rowling settled in Scotland with her second husband, Dr. Neil Murray, whom she married in 2001, along with her children, Jessica, David, and MacKenzie.

ANALYSIS

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels are similar in construction to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. To solve the mysteries at the heart of each story, Harry, Ron, and Hermione, the three principal characters, act as amateur sleuths who sift through clues and puzzles to eliminate suspects and identify actual wrongdoers. The books require careful reading, as seemingly insignificant phrases and sentences often turn out to be major clues. Throughout each narrative, Rowling presents several possible solutions to the mystery, which frequently lead the characters to draw false conclusions based on circumstantial evidence. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione act on their incorrect assumptions, they discover that things

are rarely as they seem and that their mistaken conclusions have blinded them to the truth.

In general, each Potter novel follows a set formula. At the beginning of each book, Harry is living with his nonmagical ("muggle") aunt, uncle, and cousin, the Dursleys, during his summer vacations. In the fall, Harry returns to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There he, Ron, and Hermione become involved in increasingly dangerous adventures that lead them to new revelations concerning the series' central villain, Lord Voldemort, and his plans to dominate the wizarding and muggle worlds. The climax of each story occurs when Harry and Voldemort—or one of the latter's Death Eaters—engage in a dramatic confrontation. Following Harry and Voldemort's altercations, the school's headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, reveals to Harry more about his family history, as well as the possible outcome of his inevitable final battle with Voldemort. When the school year ends, Harry returns to the home of his muggle relatives until the next term begins.

The overall story arc does not change from book to book, and plots of the individual novels are intricate and multilayered. Magical objects, characters, and places mentioned only briefly in one book may play a major role in another. As the characters mature, the plots become more weighty. Over the course of the series, the children deal with life and death issues, the ups and downs of adolescence, and the pain of loss.

The final chapters of traditional mysteries tie up loose ends. Although Rowling follows that custom in each of her novels, she also leaves important questions unanswered or poses new ones that she addresses in later books. Volumes in the series as a whole can be viewed as individual chapters in a larger story that poses a number of central questions: What is the true relationship between Harry and Voldemort? Which of them will be victorious? Are certain major characters truly what they seem? Interconnections among the novels maintain suspense from book to book until the final resolution is reached in the seventh novel.

HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

Laying the intricate groundwork for the succeeding six books, the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, introduces Harry as an eleven-year-

old orphan who does not realize he is a wizard. Although a nonentity in the muggle world that he shares with his nasty aunt, uncle, and cousin, he is famous in the parallel wizarding world because he survived Lord Voldemort's murderous attack that killed his mother and father when he was an infant. During that attack, Voldemort's curse left a lightning-bolt scar on Harry's forehead. The battle also robs Voldemort of his body and most of his power. A wraith of his former self, he goes into hiding for years. It is unclear why Harry did not perish with his parents, and the mystery surrounding his survival is explored in subsequent books.

The philosopher's stone, a magical object that bestows immortality on its owner, leads Harry to his second encounter with Lord Voldemort ten years after his parents' deaths. When Harry arrives at Hogwarts, he and his new friends, Ron and Hermione, learn that the stone is hidden somewhere on school grounds and that Voldemort's followers need it to restore Voldemort to his full power. When Harry overhears Professors Snape and Quirrell discussing how to get past a giant three-headed dog guarding the entry to a subterranean room, he concludes that Snape wants Quirrell to steal the stone for Voldemort. To stop Quirrell, Harry, Ron, and Hermione must decipher various clues and puzzles and play their way across a huge chessboard populated by living pieces. Their quest ultimately leads Harry to Quirrell, whose own body hosts the disembodied Voldemort. Harry learns that Snape was actually trying to talk Quirrell out of stealing the stone. Snape remains an ambiguous character throughout the series; it appears that he hates Harry for reasons left unexplained until later volumes; however, he shields him from harm.

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

In the second volume, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Rowling reveals more about Lord Voldemort's background and how he and Harry are connected. When Harry returns to Hogwarts, he hears sinister voices announcing that someone will be killed. He also sees a message scrawled across a wall proclaiming that the Chamber of Secrets has been opened and witnesses the results of attacks that leave some students in a petrified state. The Chamber of Secrets

can only be opened by the heir of Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of Hogwarts. Suspicion for the attacks falls on Harry because he can speak to snakes, a dark arts trait he shares with Voldemort. His classmates wonder if he is a dark wizard in disguise.

Meanwhile, Harry finds an enchanted diary written by Tom Riddle, a student at Hogwarts fifty years earlier. The diary reveals that the Chamber of Secrets was opened when Riddle attended the school. In the diary, Riddle vows to catch the person who opened the chamber and accuses a large boy who is raising a huge spider. Harry recognizes that that boy is his friend Hagrid, the good-natured but simple-minded Hogwarts game keeper. The picture Riddle paints of Hagrid's supposed transgression is deliberately deceptive, portraying Hagrid as the villain and Riddle as the conscientious student. Harry, Ron, and Hermione cannot believe that Hagrid would practice dark magic.

After Hermione goes to the library to seek information, she is found petrified. Ron and Harry later discover that her stiff hand holds a piece of paper with information on a basilisk, a giant serpent that can kill by gazing into its victim's eyes. This information enables Harry and Ron to gain entrance to the chamber to look for Ginny, Ron's younger sister. Harry finds her on the floor with the ghostly image of Tom Riddle beside her. Riddle admits that he, not Hagrid, opened the chamber fifty years earlier and that he has possessed Ginny to open the chamber again. He also reveals that he is the heir of Slytherin and will become Lord Voldemort. When Harry kills the basilisk and destroys the diary, Riddle's apparition fades away. The narrative culminates with the destruction of the diary, but it plays an important part in solving a mystery of a later book.

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

The primary mystery of the third novel, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, is the identity of a man named Sirius Black, whom Harry and the Dursley family learn from television news has escaped from prison. When Harry leaves the Dursleys' house, he sees a large black dog. The animal seems to be a portent of death. Eventually, Harry discovers that Sirius Black escaped from Azkaban, the wizard prison, and may have been responsible for betraying Harry's par-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Emma Watson (left) has played Hermione Granger, Daniel Radcliffe (center) has played Harry Potter, and Rupert Grint (right) has played Ron Weasley in all the films adapted from J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels. (Courtesy, Warner Bros.)

ents to Voldemort. Sirius's name is significant because Rowling's ingenious choice of names is one way she inserts clues into her narratives. Drawing on Greco-Roman myth, as well as the Anglo-Saxon and French languages, she creates names that hint of the characters' secret traits, identities, and motivations. For example, the last name of Draco Malfoy, Harry's arch-enemy classmate at Hogwarts, means "bad faith." "Voldemort" means "flight of death" in French, an evident allusion to Voldemort's quest for immortality. Black's first name derives from the name of the double star known as the Dog Star in the constellation Sirius. Black is eventually revealed to be an animagus, a wizard who can transform himself into an animal, in this case a large black dog.

Remus Lupin, the seemingly even-tempered defense against the dark arts teacher in the third novel, provides a counterpoint to Black's threatening presence. Lupin's name also reflects a secret aspect to his personality. He is a werewolf, which makes him an outcast even within the wizarding community. He takes a fatherly interest in Harry, however, and acts as his protector and mentor.

As the story progresses, Harry eventually has an opportunity to kill Black and avenge his parents. However, Lupin intercedes and explains that Black, Harry's father, and a boy named Peter Pettigrew—all animagi—were his best friends in school and roamed with him when he became a wolf during the full moon. The surprising revelation that Sirius Black was actually the best friend of Harry's father, James, and is Harry's godfather casts the frightening appearances of the black dog in a new light. Black was trying to protect Harry, not kill him. Another shocking disclosure is that Peter Pettigrew has been masquerading as Ron's rat, Scabbers, to spy on the trio for Voldemort.

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, when Harry, Ron, and Hermione return to school for their fourth year, Dumbledore announces that a contest among three schools of magic—the Triwizard Tournament—will be held at Hogwarts. An object called the Goblet of Fire selects one champion from each school to compete in the tournament's three highly dangerous tasks. Contestants must be seventeen, the age at which witches and wizards are considered adults. After the goblet selects Cedric Diggory as the Hogwarts champion, Fleur Delacour as the Beauxbatons Academy champion, and Victor Krum as the Durmstrang Institute champion, it unexpectedly spits out a fourth name—that of the underage Harry Potter. The primary mystery in the novel centers on who entered Harry's name in the goblet.

As Harry prepares for the tournament, he is helped by Mad Eye Moody, the new defense against the dark arts teacher, who frequently sips something from a mysterious hip flask. The first task requires the champions to capture golden eggs from dragons. The second task requires the champions to rescue persons they love from the bottom of a deep lake. Harry does

well at both tasks. The third task requires the champions to make their way through a booby-trapped maze to reach the Triwizard Cup. When Harry and Cedric reach the cup at the same time, they agree to seize it together. The cup turns out to be a portkey that magically transports them to a graveyard. There they are met by Peter Pettigrew, who carries a deformed infant that is actually Voldemort. Voldemort has Diggory killed immediately; Pettigrew binds Harry and bleeds him and cuts off his own hand. In a frightening resurrection scene involving Harry's blood and Pettigrew's blood, Voldemort rises from a large cauldron in possession of his full powers.

In a dramatic confrontation scene, Voldemort and Harry duel, but their wands lock in an unyielding connection neither of them understands. When Harry breaks the link, he grabs Cedric's body and uses the portkey to return to Hogwarts. There, Mad Eye Moody takes him to his office and reveals that he is actually a servant of Voldemort impersonating the real Moody by sipping a potion that has transformed his appearance. He also admits putting Harry's name in the goblet and helping to engineer Harry's path to the portkey and Voldemort.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is a pivotal book in the series. This novel, more than the previous three, points to a deep link between Voldemort and Harry, raises new questions about their connections, and foreshadows the deaths of major characters.

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

At the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Dumbledore reassembles the Order of the Phoenix, a group of witches and wizards who fought Voldemort the first time he rose to power. In the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Sirius Black offers his home at 12 Grimmauld Place in London to the order for its headquarters, while the Ministry of Magic publicly denies that Voldemort is alive and silences all those who insist that he has returned. Because Dumbledore refuses to follow the ministry's orders, a senior ministry official, Delores Jane Umbridge, is made the new defense against the dark arts teacher at Hogwarts, where she spies for the ministry. Umbridge's instruction is so inadequate that Hermione persuades Harry to

teach his classmates how to repel attacks by dark wizards. About thirty students, calling themselves Dumbledore's Army, meet in the school's Room of Requirement, despite Umbridge's ban on students meeting in groups without her authorization.

Meanwhile, Harry experiences severe pain in his scar and suffers from recurring nightmares. In one disturbing dream, he enters a snake's body and attacks Ron's father near the entrance to the ministry's Department of Mysteries. In another dream, Harry sees Sirius being tortured at the ministry. Harry, Ron, Hermione, and three other students fly to the ministry to rescue Sirius. However, Voldemort, who is finally aware of the mental connection he shares with Harry, has tricked Harry into thinking Sirius is in danger, and his Death Eaters await in ambush. Voldemort seeks a particular prophecy in the Department of Mysteries, and Harry is the only one who can retrieve it for him. When Harry and his friends engage the Death Eaters in battle, other members of the Order of the Phoenix join the fray, and Sirius is killed in the fighting. Dumbledore and Voldemort duel, but Voldemort flees.

After Dumbledore and Harry return to Hogwarts, Dumbledore apologizes to Harry for having kept information from him. He also tells Harry that the prophecy Voldemort sought foretold the birth of a boy who would vanquish him, and that neither Voldemort nor the unnamed boy could live while the other survived. Furthermore, Dumbledore tells Harry that the reason he must stay with the Dursleys during the summer is because his aunt is a blood relative. The family relationship draws on deep magic that protects Harry from Voldemort's attacks.

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

After Voldemort's assault on the ministry, both the wizarding and muggle worlds are turned upside down. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, dementors, the spectral guardians of Azkaban that are now under Voldemort's control, roam freely, while Death Eaters wreak havoc in both worlds. The situation at Hogwarts has also changed. Severus Snape has finally become professor of defense against the dark arts. Dumbledore is often away from the school, strong spells protect the grounds, and aurors trained to com-

bat dark magic stand watch. An ominous tone pervades the book, but it is the first in which Voldemort himself does not appear. The novel does, however, offer more of Voldemort's history, exploring the psychology of evil that motivates him.

Through pensieve sessions with Dumbledore, Harry learns that he and Tom Riddle share similar backgrounds. Both are of muggle and wizard ancestry, both were orphaned at an early age, and both possessed magical skills beyond their years at similar ages. Their major difference is that Harry's parents loved him, and his mother's love still shields him from Voldemort's attacks. Because Voldemort never experienced love, he cannot understand the reason for Harry's continued survival.

Dumbledore is ever ready to give people a second chance, but his trust in Snape is puzzling. Snape was once a Death Eater, and his loyalty to Dumbledore is suspect throughout the series. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Snape kills Dumbledore. His apparent betrayal seems firmly to place him among Voldemort's cadre of loyal followers. However, the murder scene contains hints that he is acting in concert with Dumbledore: Dumbledore's plea, "Please, Severus," is ambiguous and is an example of Rowling's propensity for narrative misdirection. If Snape is truly Dumbledore's man, does he really kill him, or will Dumbledore rise again?

Another central mystery in the novel concerns horcruxes, magical storage receptacles in which dark wizards hide part of their souls to attain immortality. If a horcrux is destroyed, its dark wizard dies. Voldemort has created seven horcruxes—one of which remains unknown even to him—leaving an eighth piece of his soul in his newly formed body. By the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, two horcruxes have been destroyed—Tom Riddle's diary, which first appeared in the second book, and Marvolo Gaunt's ring, which appears in the sixth book. After the publication of this sixth book, speculation was rife among readers arguing that Harry's scar is a sign that Voldemort unintentionally made Harry himself into a horcrux when he was a baby. The quest to discover which objects are horcruxes and how to destroy them continues in the seventh and final novel.

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

During the interval between publication of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, fans and critics alike were consumed with curiosity about several questions raised in the previous books. Which characters will die and which will survive? Is Snape good or evil? Where are the horcruxes? What are the "deathly hallows"? Is Harry a horcrux? Will Voldemort ultimately be defeated?

The plot of the seventh novel revolves around two quests: Harry, Ron, and Hermione's search for the missing horcruxes and their search for three magical objects known as the deathly hallows. The latter comprise the stone of resurrection, the cloak of invisibility, and the elder wand, which together are believed to conquer death. Originally belonging to the Peverell brothers, the hallows were passed down as family heirlooms. Harry's father left him the invisibility cloak, which originally belonged to Ignotus Peverell. Marvolo Gaunt's ring, inherited by Voldemort through Cadmus Peverell, qualifies not only as a horcrux but also as one of the hallows because it is set with the stone of resurrection. At the beginning of the seventh novel, Harry is in possession of the invisibility cloak, and the ring has been destroyed (although its stone is missing), but the whereabouts of the elder wand is a mystery.

The book opens with Harry's departure from the Dursleys' home with an Order of the Phoenix guard. Shortly after they take flight, they are attacked by Death Eaters, who kill Mad Eye Moody and Harry's pet owl, Hedwig. After spending the rest of the summer with Ron Weasley's family, Harry begins his journey with Ron and Hermione to find the horcruxes and the deathly hallows. Their search takes them to Sirius's Grimmauld Place house, whose house elf helps them retrieve the third horcrux, which is later destroyed by Ron. After the three friends are captured by Bellatrix Lestrange, Sirius's Death Eater cousin, Lestrange's behavior leads them to believe that the fourth horcrux is hidden in her vault in Gringott's bank. The trio breaks into the bank and steals the cup. Meanwhile, Voldemort momentarily drops his mental guard and inadvertently reveals to Harry that a fifth horcrux is at Hogwarts.

Alberforth Dumbledore, the brother of the dead

headmaster, helps Harry and his friends sneak into the school, where a monumental battle between Voldemort's forces and those of the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army commences. As the battle rages, Harry, Ron, and Hermione find the next object, Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem, in the Room of Requirement. However, Draco Malfoy and his henchmen, Crabbe and Goyle, are there to oppose them. During a scuffle, Crabbe botches a powerful spell, killing himself and destroying the diadem.

Harry again connects to Voldemort's mind and sees Voldemort and Snape at the Shrieking Shack. When the three friends reach the shack, Voldemort is gone after attacking Snape, who lies dying on the floor. Snape gives Harry his memories, which answer many important questions raised throughout the series. For example, Snape loved Harry's mother throughout his life, and Dumbledore trusted him because of his ability to love. Also, Gaunt's ring infected Dumbledore with a slow-working but fatal curse, and Dumbledore arranged for Snape to kill him to prevent Draco Malfoy from killing him under Voldemort's orders. Finally, Harry himself is indeed a horcrux and Voldemort cannot die while Harry remains alive.

These facts make it appear that both Voldemort and Harry would have to die. However, in the first of two battles between Voldemort and Harry, one of Voldemort's curses stuns Harry so severely that it rids him of the piece of Voldemort's soul that had resided in him since he was an infant. Harry feigns death until he meets Voldemort again in the great hall of Hogwarts. In a dramatic confrontation, Voldemort is vanquished and Harry survives.

Pegge Bochynski

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HARRY POTTER SERIES: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 1997 (also known as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, 1998); *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, 1998; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, 1999; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, 2000; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2003; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, 2005; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, 2001 (as Scamander); *Quidditch Through the Ages*, 2001 (as Whisp)

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S

SAKI

Hector Hugh Munro

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Died: Beaumont Hamel, France; November 14, 1916

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological; horror

CONTRIBUTION

Hardly any of Saki's short stories, which fill five volumes, can be regarded as works of detective fiction in the more limited sense of the term. Many of his brilliantly crafted, deeply sarcastic pieces, however, deal with the criminal impulse of humankind. In direct contrast to the classic hero of detective fiction, who tries to restore order by abolishing the chaos let loose by antisocial impulses, Saki's mischievous protagonists arrive on the scene to wreak havoc on victims who have invited their tormentors out of folly or a streak of viciousness of their own. Nevertheless, Saki's insistence on a masterfully prepared surprise ending demonstrates the closeness in form of his short stories to detective fiction as this genre was understood by its fathers, preeminently Edgar Allan Poe. Moreover, as powerful elements in a poignant satire on society, Saki's criminal protagonists can claim descent from the heroes of Restoration playwrights William Congreve and William Wycherley and precede some of the post-hard-boiled detectives such as Douglas Adams's Dirk Gently.

BIOGRAPHY

Saki was born Hector Hugh Munro on December 18, 1870, in Akyab, Burma, the third child of Major Charles Augustus Munro and his wife, Mary (née Mercer) Frances. Saki's mother would die in pregnancy two years later. Brought to Great Britain by their father, Hector and his siblings were reared by two

rather repressive aunts until Major Munro resigned his commission and took his children on extended tours through Europe to further their education; this period marked the end of Hector's time at one of Great Britain's upper-class public schools.

During this time, the Munros liked to stay in Davos, Switzerland; it was there that the boy made the acquaintance of the writer John Addington Symonds, a man whose homosexual orientation the adult Munro would share. At twenty-three, Munro served for a short time as a military police officer in Burma before malaria brought him back to Great Britain, where he set up bachelor's quarters in London.

Munro published his first book, *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, in 1900, yet readers delighted much more in his political satires, which featured an Alice in Wonderland who encountered modern political figures. Accompanied by the drawings of F. Carruthers Gould, *The Westminster Alice* (collected in 1902) made famous its creator, who took the pen name of Saki from the boyish cupbearer to the gods of Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859) and would continue to write all of his fiction under this pseudonym.

In 1902, Saki served as correspondent for the conservative London newspaper *Morning Post* and saw the Balkans, Russia, and France before he retired to London after the death of his father in 1908. As Saki, he steadily wrote his short stories for publication in British magazines and enjoyed such a success among his exclusive readership that his stories were collected in book form in 1910 and 1911. A year later, Saki's novel *The Unbearable Bassington* (1912) appeared, and another novel followed, *When William Came* (1913).

At the height of his fame for his short fiction and while he was working on a play, World War I broke



H. H. Munro, better known as Saki, a name he borrowed from the cupbearer to the gods in Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859).

out. Saki volunteered for military service. Refusing an officer's commission or a "safe" position, Munro fought in France and was killed in action during the Beaumont-Hamel offensive on November 14, 1916.

Two further collections of Saki's criminous short stories and other works were posthumously published; one, *The Square Egg* (1924), contains work written in the trenches on the Western Front. A revival of Saki's work took place in the 1920's, and stories such as "Sredni Vashtar" have been continuously in print.

ANALYSIS

Saki came to the short story as a satirist and never averted his eye from the darker side of human nature, a place where not only social ineptness, pomposity, and foolishness are rooted but criminality as well. Saki's

first works of fiction, collected in *Reginald* (1904), are short sketches featuring a rakish but keen observer of the follies of his upper-middle-class London society. As a prototype of later narrator-protagonists, Reginald is something like a witty and caustic Socrates of the salon, whose passion to expose the foibles of his dim-witted and obnoxiously stupid contemporaries is reflected in much of Saki's fiction.

REGINALD IN RUSSIA

Saki's criminous short stories—the first collection of which, *Reginald in Russia* (1910), plays off the fame of the early protagonist—follow suit. In their aim to ridicule, and often to punish, self-imposing and occasionally tyrannical victims, Saki's stories exploit plots crafted by a masterful imagination; they often read like gigantic, fiendishly designed practical jokes, with varying degrees of realism.

"SREDNI VASHTAR"

"Sredni Vashtar" (in *The Chronicles of Clovis*, 1911) features one such cruel and fantastic scheme. The boy Conradin is afflicted with a forbidding aunt who gets perverse pleasure from closing off all avenues of play from her ward. His only undisturbed space is a small shed in which he keeps a hen and a caged "polecatferret" named Sredni Vashtar, for an Asian deity. The boy has devised a cult around Sredni Vashtar. After his aunt breaks into the shed and removes the hen, Conradin prays to his other playmate: "Do one thing for me, Sredni Vashtar." The wish is never made explicit, but after the aunt breaks in a second time, Conradin chants to his deity until the ferret emerges, "a long, low, yellow-and-brown beast, with eyes a-blink at the waning daylight, and dark wet stains around the fur of jaws and throat." When the aunt is discovered dead, the boy calmly prepares some toast for himself in obvious satisfaction.

"TOBERMORY"

As in this tale, in which the divine ferret acts out the boy's fantasy of revenge, Saki gives animals uncanny power, and they act to expose the worst in their human counterparts. In "Tobermory," also in *The Chronicles of Clovis*, a dignified tomcat is taught human language and, to the horror of a house party, freely divulges compromising personal information that he had overheard. The humans' response is instant

and malicious: Tobermory is to be poisoned. Their decision is described as if the guests were plotting the murder of a human. By a typical quirk of fate, Saki saves Tobermory from poison by having him die in dignified battle with another tomcat; his owners demand recompense from his adversary's masters.

Because his fiction always succeeds in bringing forth the worst in people, be it greed, tyranny, or selfishness, Saki has himself been accused of inhumanity. A more intent look at the reasons for his deep sarcasm cannot fail to establish that the cruelty of his stories is the cruelty of the well-to-do society around him, the greed and vice of which stir his disgust and in turn impel him to put much of what he sees and feels on paper in ironic form, adding a dash of the exotic and supernatural to his often-murderous fiction. As to Saki's motives for presenting his society with his work, one might echo Clovis Sangrail on his ideas for "The Feast of Nemesis" (in *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, 1914): "There is no outlet for demonstrating your feelings towards people whom you simply loathe. That is really the crying need of our modern civilization."

In a society where a faux pas could literally annihilate a person's social position, leaving him a choice only of internal or external exile, a man such as Saki (excolonial, homosexual) must have felt some of the shady morality, hypocrisy, and bigotry behind the façades of respectability. Yet Saki never outwardly shocks or lectures his audience. His wit is so fine and his irony so subtle that he always remains the gentleman in his fiction. Sexuality is never really exposed, and social or political radicalism is absent from the work of the staunch conservative Saki. Yet he triumphs by giving his readers an exquisitely crafted inside view of members of a social class who stood on top of their world before the war destroyed everything forever.

"THE PEACE OF MOWSLE BARTON"

It is appropriate that an author who could write the story "Birds on the Western Front" (in *The Square Egg*), in which the horror of trench warfare is brought home via a tranquil description of how the feathery folk have adjusted to "lyddite and shrapnel and machine-gun fire," should use a pond in a forest to evoke the most chilling scene of horror in his fiction. In "The Peace of Mowsle Barton" (in *The Chronicles of*

Clovis), city-weary Crefton Lockyer has retired to a remote spot in the country only to discover himself at the center of a feud between witches. Gazing at a small pool, he witnesses the evil effect of a spell of one of the rival hags. Saki's description of the drowning ducks is terrifyingly uncanny; the reader is captured in a pastoral world gone to hell, where the most basic and thus most trusted assumptions about the world have so suddenly disappeared that one can only feel the silent terror of a perversely defamiliarized universe:

The duck flung itself confidently forward into the water, and rolled immediately under the surface. Its head appeared for a moment and went under again, leaving a train of bubbles in its wake, while wings and legs churned the water in a helpless swirl of flapping and kicking.

If such a scene captures the essence of witchcraft—the sudden and magic performance of a practical joke on the beliefs of humankind about what can and what cannot happen in the world—then Saki has just demonstrated another aspect of his fascination with "what if" and "how to get back at" something or somebody.

In its exploration of the art of cynically humorous revenge, Saki's fiction delights in the idea of negative endings triggered by quirks of fate. Unlike traditional detective stories, in which the master sleuth comes up with an idea at the eleventh hour or cracks the case on the final page, Saki's stories often thrive on the prevention of exactly such a fortunate occurrence.

"LOST SANJAK"

The jailed protagonist of "Lost Sanjak" (in *Reginald in Russia*) is one such butt of a murderous joke by the forces of fate. On the eve of his execution, this slighted Don Juan confesses the bizarre story of his life to a chaplain. Rejected by a married woman and determined to disappear from the known world, the narrator exchanges clothes with a major of the Salvation Army, whom a road accident has left an unidentifiable corpse. In a turn of fate that is characteristic of Saki's world, the corpse is mistaken for the young gentleman's, and the hunt is on for the Salvationist, who has been observed at the scene of the "crime." The relations of the Salvationist attest his "depraved youth," and when captured, the man fails an absurd

test to prove his identity by trapping himself in his own designs: Having tried to impress his love by posing as an expert on the Balkans, he cannot locate the city of Novibazar and is duly condemned. Guardedly, the chaplain looks up the city after the execution, and his reason for doing so not only compromises this man of God as a potential adulterer but also betrays the text's general feeling toward the morals of humankind: "A thing like that," he observed, "might happen to any one."

There is a strong undercurrent of feeling in Saki's fiction that certain behavior on the part of the victim justifies criminal action by the clever ones who seize the opportunity for a trick. In "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger" and "The Secret Sin of Septimus Brode" (both in *The Chronicles of Clovis*), the pompous characters of the titles have to pay off the person who gets behind their schemes. Thus, blackmail appears to be the correct social behavior toward vain people who cannot bear that ignominious facts about themselves should be made known.

"THE UNREST-CURE"

The complacent who dare to complain stupidly about their lot without really desiring change, and who will fail bitterly when tested, are another butt of criminal jokes. In "The Unrest-Cure" (in *The Chronicles of Clovis*), Clovis Sangrail challenges a man bored by his tranquil life. Impersonating a bishop's secretary, he arrives at J. P. Huddle's house supposedly a few hours ahead of his master. He tricks the oafish Huddle into believing that the bishop has set up quarters in Huddle's library and is planning a massacre; the man falls for the outlandish lie and spends a frightful night, definitely "cured" of his restlessness.

"THE SHEEP" AND "THE GALA PROGRAMME"

Saki's fascination with the idea of revenge has led some critics to label him a misanthrope whose thirst for vengeance ignores the lessons humanity has learned since William Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (pr. c. 1600-1601); indeed, critics have had trouble with stories such as "The Sheep" (in *The Toys of Peace*, 1919), in which a dog involuntarily prevents the rescue of an obnoxious blunderer and, for that feat, becomes the narrator's most cherished friend. Nevertheless, in a turn of fate that Saki would

have appreciated, critics have generally failed to bewail the uncensored atrocity in "The Gala Programme" (in *The Square Egg*), in which a fictitious Roman emperor finds out that the best way to hold chariot races at his coronation ceremony without interference from female protesters (*suffragetae*) is to feed them to the wild beasts that were supposed to be the second part of the festivities.

"GABRIEL-ERNEST," "THE SHE-WOLF," AND "LAURA"

The supernatural is an integral part of Saki's imagination. It is most powerfully used as part of a clever revenge or joke plot, and it is indicative of the quality and range of Saki's mind that his stories vary in the degree to which the reader is to take the unreal as real. In "Gabriel-Ernest" (in *Reginald in Russia*), a landlord encounters a real werewolf on his territory; his foolhardiness in wanting to believe in the rational reasons for the disappearance of a miller's baby only leads to the death of another infant by the fangs of the boy-werewolf. "The She-Wolf" (in *Beasts and Super-Beasts*), however, mirrors the theme when party guests play an elaborate joke on a braggart who professes knowledge of magical powers yet is quite unable to change a wolf (supposedly the hostess) "back" into her human shape. "Laura" (from the same collection) is the synthesis of Saki's treatment of the unreal. Days before her death, Laura confides her wish to be reborn as an otter; when this comes true, she is hunted to death after wreaking havoc on her old human opponents. Yet she is again reincarnated as a Nubian boy to continue her pranks on the adversaries, who have gone to Egypt to relax after the mischief she has caused. Again, the joke, with all of its nasty effects, is on the self-satisfied.

"LOUIS"

Saki's short fiction succeeds thanks to its unique mixture of satire, high comedy of manners, mystery and horror, and psychological insight into the minds and world of the bygone Edwardian era. As cynical antidetective fiction, it reverses the quest to reinstate order; Saki is more impressive in his portraiture of humans than many of the classic authors of the genre, who give their readers a fair share of the horrible in human nature yet insist on a conformist and pacifying

“happy ending.” Saki does not allow his reader to settle back into the armchair with the sense that once again virtue has triumphed; instead, one is shown the underlying forces that motivate people to evil, and one is coaxed into admiration for Saki’s clever doers of mischief. Like the protagonist of “Louis” (in *The Toys of Peace*), whose sister finally delivers him from his wife’s schemes, the reader might come to admire those clever perpetrators, as does the husband here: “Novels have been written about women like you,” said Strudwarden; “you have a perfectly criminal mind.” This, however, is too sinister a response to such a gift as Lena Strudwarden’s.

R. C. Lutz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHORT FICTION: *Reginald in Russia*, 1910; *The Chronicles of Clovis*, 1911; *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, 1914; *The Toys of Peace*, 1919; *The Square Egg*, 1924

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Unbearable Bassington*, 1912; *When William Came*, 1913

SHORT FICTION: *Reginald*, 1904; *The Short Stories of Saki* (H. H. Munro) Complete, 1930

PLAYS: *Karl-Ludwig’s Window*, pb. 1924; *The Death-Trap*, pb. 1924; *The Square Egg, and Other Sketches, with Three Plays*, pb. 1924; *The Watched Pot*, pr., pb. 1924 (with Cyril Maude)

NONFICTION: *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, 1900; *The Westminster Alice*, 1902

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Byrne, Sandie. “Saki.” In *British Writers: Supplement VI*, edited by Jay Parini. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2001. Includes discussion of Saki’s short fiction, its influence, and its historical and cultural importance.

Gillen, Charles H. *H. H. Munro (Saki)*. New York:

Twayne, 1969. A comprehensive presentation of the life and work of Saki, with a critical discussion of his literary output in all of its forms. Balanced and readable, Gillen’s work also contains an annotated bibliography.

Lambert, J. W. Introduction to *The Bodley Head Saki*. London: Bodley Head, 1963. A perceptive, concise, and persuasive review of Saki’s work. Written by a biographer who enjoyed a special and productive working relationship with Saki’s estate.

Langguth, A. J. *Saki*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981. Probably the best biography, enriching an informed, analytical presentation of its subject with a fine understanding of Saki’s artistic achievement. Eight pages of photos help bring Saki and his world to life.

Munro, Ethel M. “Biography of Saki.” In *The Square Egg and Other Sketches, with Three Plays*. New York: Viking, 1929. A warm account of the author by his beloved sister, who shows herself deeply appreciative of his work. Valuable for its glimpses of the inner workings of Saki’s world and as a basis for late twentieth century evaluations.

Queenan, Joe, ed. *The Malcontents: The Best Bitter, Cynical, and Satirical Writing in the World*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002. This anthology of cynicism and satire includes the editor’s commentaries on each author; five of Saki’s stories are featured.

Salemi, Joseph S. “An Asp Lurking in an Apple-Charlotte: Animal Violence in Saki’s *The Chronicles of Clovis*.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 26 (Fall, 1989): 423-430. Discusses the animal imagery in the collection, suggesting reasons for Saki’s obsessive interest in animals and analyzing the role animals play in a number of Saki’s major stories.

Spears, George J. *The Satire of Saki*. New York: Exposition Press, 1963. An interesting, in-depth study of Saki’s wit, which combines careful textual analysis with a clear interest in modern psychoanalysis. The appendix includes four letters by Ethel M. Munro to the author, and the bibliography lists many works that help place Saki in the context of the satirical tradition.

JAMES SALLIS

Born: Helena, Arkansas; December 21, 1944

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Lew Griffin, 1992-2001

John Turner, 2003-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LEWIS "LEW" GRIFFIN is an African American man from rural Arkansas who left for New Orleans at the age of sixteen. Sometimes employed as a detective, he usually becomes involved in investigations, such as finding a missing person, through the network of people he knows or has helped before. Griffin is physically tough but has some psychological flaws. He has trouble maintaining relationships with women and is an alcoholic, although he mostly controls his drinking. He is highly literate, a part-time writer with a strong interest in classical music and the blues.

JOHN TURNER is a country boy from Crowley's Ridge, which lies in eastern Arkansas. He fought in Vietnam and later became a police officer in Memphis. He was involved in a shooting and was sent to prison, where he earned a master's in psychology. After serving almost ten years, he was released and became a therapist. Although successful, he burned out after six years and retired to the country near his childhood home.

CONTRIBUTION

One of James Sallis's major contributions has been his ability to combine hard-boiled and noir elements with literary-quality characterizations and elegant prose. Although often identified as mysteries, Sallis's intensely introspective novels are only loosely plotted around some puzzle and are primarily explorations of character and the meaning of experience.

Sallis is also notable for being one of the first white authors to explore in depth the life of an African American protagonist (Lew Griffin). On occasion, Sallis has been criticized for writing so intimately of the African American experience, but he grew up in an area that

was 70 percent African American and learned at first-hand about the lives of poor and rural blacks in the South. He has also made a long-term study of Chester Himes (1909-1984), the African American author of nine detective novels and an influence on Sallis's hard-boiled fiction. In Sallis's books, Griffin is treated neither stereotypically nor overly sympathetically, but with absolute realism as a complex, flawed individual. The character was initially modeled on the life of Himes but has developed to include aspects of many men that Sallis has known, from blues musicians to intellectuals, from family men to petty criminals.

BIOGRAPHY

James Sallis was born December 21, 1944, in Helena, Arkansas, which sits on Crowley's Ridge on the banks of the Mississippi River. The nearest big city is Memphis, about seventy miles away. Helena, a river port, lies in mostly rural Phillips County, one of the poorest areas in the United States. Sallis protects his privacy, but some sources list his parents as Chappelle Horace Sallis and Mildred C. Liming Sallis. He has an older brother, John Sallis, who has a doctorate in philosophy and is widely published in his field.

When Sallis was growing up in Helena, the city was 70 percent African American and had a reputation as a gathering place for delta blues musicians such as Sonny Boy Williamson and Roosevelt Sykes. It was also a highly conservative town, however, noted for the dramatic contrast between the abject poverty of many inhabitants and the wealth of others. Sallis used his childhood experiences to develop the Lew Griffin character.

As a child, Sallis was a voracious reader and knew that he wanted to write. His first love was poetry, although he also was interested in music. Helena was not easy to escape, but Sallis earned a scholarship to Tulane University in New Orleans, where he had his first success as a writer of short stories. New Orleans also became a spiritual home for Sallis, and he has returned several times to live there for brief periods.

Sallis left Tulane without finishing his degree, then

attended the University of Iowa for a short time before leaving to write on his own. He met Michael Moorcock, who invited him at the age of twenty-one to move to London and become fiction editor for *New Worlds*, a seminal science-fiction magazine of the period. While in England, Sallis's first book was published, a short-story collection entitled *A Few Last Words* (1970).

After *New Worlds* folded, Sallis returned to the United States. With markets for short fiction hard to find, he turned to nonfictional works about music, writing *The Guitar Players: One Instrument and Its Masters in American Music* (1982) and editing *Jazz Guitars: An Anthology* (1984). He also gave guitar-playing lessons and played string instruments with various club bands while living in such cities as New Orleans, New York, Boston, and Fort Worth, Texas. In 1992, Sallis's first novel, *The Long-Legged Fly*, was published. This, the first Lew Griffin book, earned Sallis critical acclaim and spawned a series. Sallis has averaged less than one novel a year since 1992, but he has also released several collections of his stories and poetry and has written a number of nonfictional works.

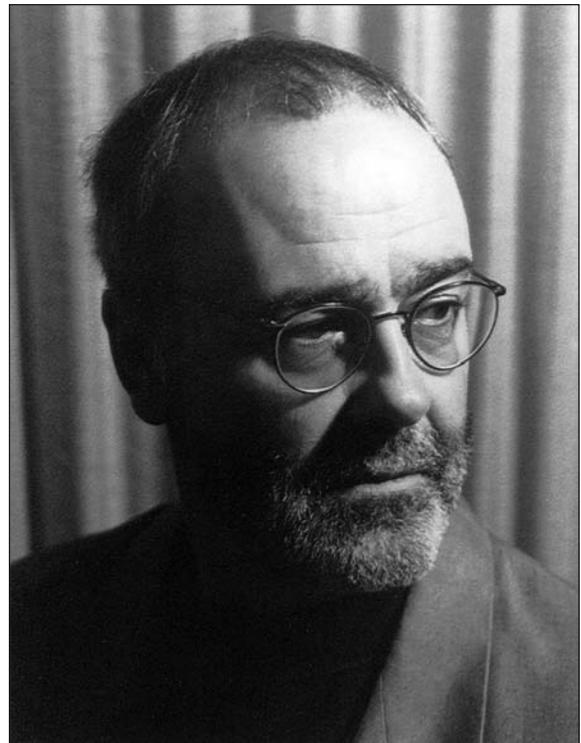
In addition to his roles as musician, music teacher, and writer, Sallis has taught creative writing, worked as a screenwriter and translator, and even served as a respiratory therapist. His writing spans just as wide a range. Besides literary, mystery, and science-fiction novels, he has published poetry, essays, book reviews, biographies, musicologies, and French translations. He has been nominated for the Nebula Award for one of his short stories and for the Anthony, Edgar, Shamus, and Gold Dagger awards in mystery. Sallis has been married three times. He moved to Phoenix, Arizona, with his third wife, Karyn, in 1999.

ANALYSIS

James Sallis has carved a niche for himself as a literary novelist with the ability to cross over to genre writing, especially mysteries. His books work consistently as entertainment, yet are filled with word play and complex characters that even the most sophisticated reader can appreciate. A lifelong lover of music, Sallis writes with a spontaneous and inventive style similar to the playing styles of his favorite jazz and blues musicians.

His plots are minimal and his stories are almost always told in nonlinear form. It seems clear that Sallis believes this to reflect the realistic, if meandering, course of actual life. Sallis's essay "Where I Live," from the collection *Gently into the Land of the Meateaters* (2000), expresses the writer's attitude perfectly. He is little interested in plot and traditional forms of narration but is much more drawn toward works that have a unique voice.

Physical location also plays an exceptionally important role in Sallis's work, especially in his two series. Both Griffin and Turner are from rural Arkansas, specifically from the Helena area, which is where Sallis grew up. Griffin flees that world for New Orleans, and it is clear from *Gently into the Land of the Meateaters*, especially an essay entitled "Gone So Long," that Sallis did the same thing in leaving Helena for Tulane University. Sallis hated the casual racism and abject poverty that he saw growing up, and leaving Helena for cosmopolitan New Orleans was his way of both escaping and protesting those inequities. His Lew



James Sallis. (© Ingrid Shults/Courtesy, Walker & Company)

Griffin mysteries were certainly a way of dealing with such experiences and were best told through the point of view of an African American protagonist. It is notable that John Turner, the white protagonist of his second series, also leaves the rural South for the city—Memphis—but then returns to the same country that he once fled. Through Turner, Sallis is, at least metaphorically, returning home.

Another characteristic of Sallis's writing is his frequent and playful use of literary and musical references. In one sentence he may reference a European poet who is obscure to most readers in the United States; in another he alludes to hard-boiled American writers such as Jim Thompson or David Goodis. He mixes quotes from blues musicians with those from country stars. This reflects the enormous range of Sallis's reading and musical experiences and his ability to make meaningful connections between diverse lives and viewpoints.

Some critics dislike the relentless connectivity of Sallis's work, perhaps because many of the allusions are not familiar to them. For many readers, however, the allusions create a fleeting familiarity, a feeling of near revelation, as if they have just made a connection that deepens their understanding of the world. The Lew Griffin series is particularly rich with such connections, but it reflects perfectly the character of the narrator, Griffin. Griffin is much like Sallis. He is a self-taught writer with a huge interest in music. The references come naturally to Griffin because they reflect how he understands his world. This is a near-seamless meld of character and author.

Sallis's improvisational style, especially his nonlinear storytelling, also draws occasional criticism. This style of presentation does require work from the reader, but there is always a logical pattern in the way the story proceeds. For example, in *Cypress Grove* (2003), the first John Turner mystery, the chapters alternate. Turner is shown in real time in chapter 1; chapter 2 explores the past. In *Ghost of a Flea* (2001), the sixth Griffin novel, the nonlinear portion of the work "bookends" the rest. The first chapter and last two chapters are told by Griffin's son, David, out of sequence to the remainder of the tale.

Like the best literary fiction, Sallis's work can be

read on two levels. On the first level, he tells an interesting story, albeit focused more on character than plot. The second level requires effort from the reader. There is meaning, but it must be extracted through critical reading. Perhaps it is best to read each Sallis work twice, once for story and mood, and again for the deeper meaning.

GHOST OF A FLEA

Ghost of a Flea is the sixth and final Lew Griffin mystery. It begins with Griffin's death, although the reader does not know this until the last two chapters, when the opening scene is revisited to show that Griffin's son, David, is narrating. It is unusual for mystery writers to kill their main characters, but little about the Griffin series is typical. Even the way Griffin dies defies the conventions of the hard-boiled genre. Sallis's hero does not go out with guns blazing; he dies in his bed, from the aftermath of a stroke. It is a fitting end, however, for a series that consistently shaped the genre into new forms.

THE TURNER MYSTERIES

Cypress Grove is the first John Turner mystery, published two years after Sallis ended the Lew Griffin series. It was not clear even to Sallis whether *Cypress Grove* would begin a new series, or whether it would be another nonseries novel like those he had been writing since the mid-1990's. Something in the character caught the interest of both Sallis and his readers, however, and a second Turner book, *Cripple Creek*, appeared in 2006. The ending of the second book seems to cement Sallis's plans for a series.

John Turner—though his first name is almost never used and appears only on the last page of the second book of the series—is similar to Lew Griffin in some important ways and different in others. Turner is white but comes from the same part of rural Arkansas as Griffin does. Like Griffin, Turner listens to classical and blues music, but he does not appear to know as much about those forms. Turner is widely read but not interested in writing and not as engulfed in literature as Griffin. Accordingly, the Turner books are not as saturated with literary allusions. This makes them more accessible to general readers but may disappoint those who enjoyed wrestling with Sallis's literary references in the Griffin books. Finally, Turner is not as

driven by internal anger as was Griffin. This is probably meant to reflect the different childhood experiences of blacks and whites in the rural South.

DRIVE

Drive (2005) may well be Sallis's most accessible novel, although it is more a novella in length. It was named one of the top ten books of the year by *Entertainment Weekly* and has generated considerable Internet discussion. *Drive* is a noir thriller featuring a character known only as Driver. As a child, Driver watches his mother cut his criminal father's throat with a knife. At the age of sixteen, Driver leaves a thank-you note to his foster parents, takes the family car, and heads to California. He becomes a stunt driver, and his skill behind the wheel leads to a second life driving getaway cars in robberies. A robbery goes wrong and some mobsters come after Driver.

Drive is different in many ways from Sallis's previous novels. The pace is faster, the plot tighter, although it is certainly not a plot-driven novel. The character Driver is also a departure for Sallis. Driver is uneducated and not much of a reader or music buff. He is certainly street wise and very tough. Staying true to the character, Sallis uses few literary allusions in *Drive*, but in keeping with his attitude toward traditional narrative, he still employs nonlinear storytelling techniques as he moves between present and past.

Charles A. Gramlich

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LEWIS "LEW" GRIFFIN SERIES: *The Long-legged Fly*, 1992; *Moth*, 1993; *Black Hornet*, 1994; *Eye of the Cricket*, 1997; *Bluebottle*, 1999; *Ghost of a Flea*, 2001

JOHN TURNER SERIES: *Cypress Grove*, 2003; *Cripple Creek*, 2006

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Death Will Have Your Eyes*, 1997; *Drive*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Renderings*, 1995

SHORT FICTION: *A Few Last Words*, 1970; *Limits*

of the Sensible World, 1994; *Time's Hammers: Collected Stories*, 2000; *A City Equal to My Desire*, 2004; *Potato Tree*, 2007

POETRY: *Sorrow's Kitchen*, 2000; *Black Night's Gonna Catch Me Here: Selected Poems, 1968-1998*, 2001

NONFICTION: *The Guitar Players: One Instrument and Its Masters in American Music*, 1982; rev. ed., 1994; *Difficult Lives: Jim Thompson, David Goodis, Chester Himes*, 1993; rev. ed., 2000; *Gently into the Land of the Meateaters*, 2000; *Chester Himes: A Life*, 2000

TRANSLATIONS: *Saint Glinglin*, 1993 (by Raymond Queneau); *My Tongue in Other Cheeks: A Selection of Translations*, 2003

EDITED TEXTS: *The War Book*, 1969; *The Shores Beneath*, 1971; *Jazz Guitars: An Anthology*, 1984; *The Guitar in Jazz: An Anthology*, 1996; *Ash of Stars: On the Writings of Samuel R. Delany*, 1996

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_____. The James Sallis Web Pages. <http://www.jamessallis.com>. Sallis's official Web site is a very good resource with a lot of information on his life and works and numerous links to other sources.

Silet, Charles L. P. *Talking Murder: Interviews with Twenty Mystery Writers*. Princeton, N.J.: Ontario Review Press, 1999. Contains a Sallis interview entitled "To New Orleans with Love." Concerns mostly his New Orleans period.

LAWRENCE SANDERS

Born: Brooklyn, New York; March 15, 1920

Died: Pompano Beach, Florida; February 7, 1998

Also wrote as Lesley Address

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; espionage; amateur sleuth; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Edward X. Delaney, 1970-1978

Peter Tangent, 1976-1978

Commandment, 1978-1991

Archy McNally, 1992-1997

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

EDWARD X. DELANEY is a retired chief of detectives of the New York City Police Department. Known as "Iron Balls" among longtime departmental members, he is in his mid-fifties. A man of uncompromising integrity who revels in the smallest investigative details, Delaney is well-read, enjoys food enormously, possesses a sardonic sense of humor, and can laugh at himself. He insists that reason must prevail and maintains that his work as a police detective helps to restore a moral order quickly falling into ruins.

PETER TANGENT is a quasi investigator in West Africa for an American oil company. Although not heroic himself, he is capable of recognizing and admiring heroism in others. Initially he comes to West Africa as an exploiter of the political chaos there, but by coming to know a genuine native hero, he loses some of his cynicism.

CONTRIBUTION

The range of Lawrence Sanders's novels covers the classic police procedural, the private investigator, the amateur sleuth, the hard-boiled, and the espionage genres. He made some distinctive contributions to detective fiction by crossing and combining the conventions of the police procedural with those associated with the private investigator and/or the amateur sleuth. By synthesizing these genres, he was able to expand his areas of interest and inquiry, blending the seasoned perceptions of the professional with the original per-

ceptions of the amateur. While working within the tradition of both Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, Sanders added technical innovations of his own, notably in *The Anderson Tapes* (1970), an entire novel created out of a Joycean montage gleaned from police reports, wiretaps, and listening devices.

Sanders became a best-selling novelist with this first book and remained so with each subsequent novel. Most important, however, is the complexity of the characters he added to detective fiction. They are mature, multifaceted, and perplexing. His heroes probe their criminals with a Dostoevskian level of insight rare in popular crime fiction. Unlike any other practitioner of the genre, Sanders unashamedly took as the principal content in his two major series the most basic ethical and moral precepts of a Judeo-Christian society: the deadly sins and the commandments. He also explored in great depth the qualities that the pursued and the pursuer secretly share.

BIOGRAPHY

Lawrence Sanders was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1920, and was reared and educated in the Midwest, specifically Michigan, Minnesota, and Indiana. He was graduated from Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, earning a bachelor's degree in literature in 1940. The literary allusions in Sanders's works attest his formal education. It was the encouragement of a ninth-grade English teacher, however, that caused him to entertain seriously the notion of becoming a professional writer. The English teacher published in the school paper a book review written by the young Sanders; once he saw his byline in print, he knew that he wanted to be a writer.

After four years in the United States Marine Corps, from 1943 to 1946, Sanders returned to New York City and began working in the field of publishing. He worked for several magazines as an editor and as a writer of war stories, men's adventure stories, and detective fiction. He eventually became feature editor of *Mechanix Illustrated* and editor of *Science and Mechanics*. Utilizing information that he had gained in

the course of editing articles on surveillance devices, Sanders wrote *The Anderson Tapes*, an audaciously innovative first novel for a fifty-year-old man—and one that foreshadowed the Watergate break-in.

Since 1970, the year in which *The Anderson Tapes* was published, Sanders produced novels at the rate of one or more per year. His first novel made him wealthy enough to devote himself full-time to his own writing. Most of his crime novels were best sellers, and several of them were made into successful films. Sanders died in Florida in 1998; however, the Archy McNally series continues under the authorship of Vincent Lardo.

ANALYSIS

Some of Lawrence Sanders's early works were collected in a book titled *Tales of the Wolf* (1986). These stories were originally published in detective and men's magazines in 1968 and 1969 and concern the adventures of Wolf Lannihan, an investigator for International Insurance Investigators, or Triple-I. Wolf Lannihan is a hard-boiled detective who describes women in terms of their sexual lure ("She was a big bosomy Swede with hips that bulged her white uniform") and criminals by their odor ("He was a greasy little crumb who wore elevator shoes and smelled of sardines"). Like Chandler's Philip Marlowe, he keeps a pint of Jim Beam in the bottom drawer of his desk for emergencies. These stories follow the pattern of the classic hard-boiled, hard-drinking, irreverent loner who punches his way out of tight spots. While weak on originality, they do have their witty moments and can be read today as parodies of the hard-boiled style of writing popular in the 1930's.

THE ANDERSON TAPES

It was, however, the first novel that Sanders wrote, *The Anderson Tapes*, that brought him success as a writer of detective fiction. He had blue-penciled other writers for twenty-odd years as an editor for pulp and science magazines and churned out adventure stories at night during that time. In despair over the abominable writing he was editing, he determined to write an innovative detective novel. *The Anderson Tapes* became an immediate best seller and was made into a film starring Sean Connery.

Sanders talked about his method of composition in

several articles, and the outstanding characteristic of his comments and advice is utter simplicity. Having started out in the 1960's writing gag lines for cheese-cake magazines and fast-paced formula fiction for men's adventure magazines, war magazines, and mystery pulps, he became adept at writing tight, well-plotted stories to hold the reader's attention:

When you're freelancing at seventy-five dollars a story, you have to turn the stuff out fast, and you can't afford to rewrite. You aren't getting paid to rewrite. You can't afford to be clever, either. Forget about how clever you are. Tell the damn story and get on with it. I know a guy who kept rewriting and took eighteen years to finish a novel. What a shame! It was probably better in the first version.

Sanders's views about the writer's vocation were refreshingly democratic and pragmatic. He insisted that anyone who can write a postcard can write a novel:

Don't laugh. That's true. If you wrote a postcard every day for a year, you'd have 365 postcards. If you wrote a page every day, you'd have a novel. Is that so difficult? If you have something to say and a vocabulary, all you need is a strict routine.

THE FIRST DEADLY SIN

Sanders's next novel was *The First Deadly Sin* (1973), and it was an even bigger success than *The Anderson Tapes*. Some critics believe it to be his masterpiece because it possesses in rich and varied abundance all the literary devices, techniques, and characters that his readers have come to expect. Although Captain Edward X. Delaney was first seen in the second half of *The Anderson Tapes*, as he took absolute charge of an invading police force, in *The First Deadly Sin*, the reader sees him as a complete character in his home territory. A commanding presence, he is a mature, complex man who understands clearly the viper's tangle of administrative and political infighting. He has operated within the labyrinthine organization of the police force for many years and become a captain, though not without making some uncomfortable compromises.

The key to understanding Edward X. Delaney is the quotation from Fyodor Dostoevski's *Besy* (1871-1872; *The Possessed*, 1913) that Sanders plants in *The*

First Deadly Sin: "If there was no God, how could I be a captain?" Delaney is tortured by the possibility of a world without meaning, and he yearns for an earlier, innocent world that has deteriorated into a miasma of demolished orders and become an existential nightmare in which no authority exists except the law itself. He views himself as a principal agent of this last remaining order, the law. The fallen world he inhabits is very much a wasteland, fragmented by corruption, chaos, and evil. For Delaney, evil exists and is embodied in criminals who break the law. He lives next door to his own precinct on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He cannot separate his integrity from his life as an officer of the law: They are one. Without a god or an order outside himself, Delaney cannot be a captain because the order necessary to create and enforce such hierarchical categories no longer exists. In an earlier time, he might have become a priest, but he realizes that the Church too has fallen victim to bureaucratic chaos and corruption.

Delaney must attend to the smallest details because they may become the keys to solving the mystery, to revealing its order. Delaney possesses an essentially eighteenth century mind; he believes that when one accumulates enough details and facts, they will compose themselves into a total meaningful pattern: Everything must cohere. His work provides the facts and, therefore, controls and determines the outcome. It is that control that gives his life and work meaning. Without it, his world remains an existential void.

Edward X. Delaney is not, however, a dreary thinking machine; he possesses an incisive sense of humor about others and himself. He can be refreshingly sardonic, especially when his wife, Monica, points out his little quirks. A firm believer in women's intuition, Delaney asks her advice when he finds himself hopelessly mired in the complications of a particularly elaborate series of crimes, such as the serial murders of both *The First Deadly Sin* and *The Third Deadly Sin* (1981). It is both the human and the professional Chief Delaney that Gregory McDonald parodies in several of his crime novels. In these parodies, he takes the form of Inspector Francis Xavier Flynn of the Boston Police Department, a resourceful, civilized, and impudent supercop.

First Deputy Commissioner Ivar Thorsen, known

as the Admiral, appears in all the *Deadly Sin* novels, serving to call Delaney to adventure. Perpetually beleaguered, he furnishes, as he sips Delaney's Glenfiddich, three key ingredients to assure Delaney's success: a description of the complexities of the crime, an analysis of the political pressures deriving from the inability of the New York City Police Department to solve the crime, and protection for Delaney so that he may bring his peculiar and sometimes questionable procedures into play (thus circumventing the bureaucratic barriers that hamper the investigation). Abner Boone, Delaney's psychologically wounded protégé, appears in most of the *Deadly Sin* novels. He is described as horse-faced, with a gentle and overly sensitive temperament. He can sympathize with Delaney because they are both disillusioned romantics (Delaney lost his innocence when he saw a German concentration camp in 1945). Delaney trusts Boone because he is without cynicism, and there is nothing he detests more than cynicism and its source, self-pity.

Many of the women in Sanders's novels are either castrating bitch goddesses or nourishing mother types. Celia Montfort, in *The First Deadly Sin*, provides the narcissistic Daniel Gideon Blank with what he perceives as a conduit to the primal, amoral energies of primitive man; through Celia, Daniel, who has become a Nietzschean superman, is relieved of any guilt for his actions. Bella Sarazen, whose name embodies her pragmatic and warlike sexuality, performs any act if the price is right in *The Second Deadly Sin* (1977). The promiscuously alcoholic but loving Millie Goodfellow in *The Sixth Commandment* (1978) helps the equally alcoholic but clever field investigator Samuel Todd uncover the rotten secrets of Coburn, New York, a dying upstate hamlet steeped in paranoia and guilt.

THE THIRD DEADLY SIN AND THE FOURTH DEADLY SIN

Of the four major villains in these novels, two are women. Zoe Kohler's first name, which is derived from the Greek word meaning "life," ironically defines her function throughout *The Third Deadly Sin*. Although a victim of Addison's disease, she moves throughout the novel as the castrating goddess par excellence, luring her victims to hotel rooms, exciting them with the promise of sexual ecstasy, and then slashing their sex-

ual organs to pieces with a knife. She, like Daniel Blank, is one of Sanders's Midwest monsters, victims of the kind of sexual and emotional repression that only the Puritan Midwest can produce. Zoe Kohler's psychological and physical illnesses have produced in her a maniacal lust turned upside down, a classic form of sexual repression whose cause is rejection and whose manifestation is vengeful behavior of the most violent kind. The other female villain, the psychologist of *The Fourth Deadly Sin* (1985), suffers no physical illness that exacerbates her emotional condition. Rather, her anger, which is the fourth deadly sin, is a response to her husband's extramarital affair. She is a privileged, wealthy, highly educated woman who knows exactly what she is doing; her crime is all the more heinous because it is premeditated.

The most frightening villain in all Sanders's crime novels, however, is Daniel Gideon Blank; he is also the author's most complex, believable, and magnificently malignant character. He is taken directly from the Old Testament and Dante's *Inferno*. His first name, Daniel, comes from the Hebrew word meaning "God is my judge," certainly an ironic choice of name because Daniel Blank commits numerous murders throughout the novel. Blank's middle name, Gideon, refers to a famous Hebrew judge and literally means "a warrior who hews or cuts down his enemies." The last name of Sanders's antihero suggests the empty, impotent, and gratuitous nature of the murders he commits.

Blank is an Antichrist figure, Christ become Narcissus—not the Man for Others who sacrifices himself for the salvation of humankind, but the man who sacrifices others for his own salvation, to fill in the Blank, as it were. He identifies himself as "God's will" and calls himself "God on earth," particularly at the orgasmic moment of the actual sinking of his weapon into a hapless victim's skull. He identifies himself with the computer he brings with him to his new job and states, "I am AMROK II." A true narcissist, Daniel Blank, by identifying himself as AMROK II, sets himself up as both the founder of a church, Jesus Christ, and Peter, whose name means "rock" and who was designated by Christ to be the Church's first leader.

The key to Delaney's genius as an investigator can be found in examining his relationship with the crimi-

nals themselves. It is a complex relationship that entails serious psychological risks for him because the pursued and the pursuer secretly share some key characteristics. Toward the end of *The First Deadly Sin*, Delaney writes an article on this Dostoevskian theme:

It was an abstruse examination of the sensual . . . affinity between hunter and hunted, of how, in certain cases, it was necessary for the detective to penetrate and assume the physical body, spirit and soul of the criminal in order to bring him to justice.

Needless to say, Delaney's wife gently persuades him not to publish it, because he, like Daniel Blank, has been tempted into the destructive element and risks losing himself in it.

Sanders is one of the finest American writers of detective fiction. His style resonates not only with the snappy dialogue of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett but also with the long, balanced sentences of the most accomplished American and British classic writers, such as Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner. His moral enigmas evoke the persistently tormenting conflicts of a Charles Dickens or a Fyodor Dostoevski. Like all serious writers, Sanders was disturbed by important questions. He could evoke and sustain, as few modern writers can, a deeply disturbing sense of sin and courageously plunged into an exploration of the lines between guilt and innocence, responsibility and victimization, heredity and environment. He resisted easy answers to complex situations, entering fully into each case. In trying to determine when human beings become morally responsible and, therefore, guilty of crimes, he struggled alongside his characters. Sanders was one of the most important and innovative writers of crime fiction in the twentieth century.

Patrick Meanor

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

EDWARD X. DELANEY SERIES: *The Anderson Tapes*, 1970; *The First Deadly Sin*, 1973; *The Second Deadly Sin*, 1977; *The Third Deadly Sin*, 1981; *The Fourth Deadly Sin*, 1985

PETER TANGENT SERIES: *The Tangent Objective*, 1976; *The Tangent Factor*, 1978

COMMANDMENT SERIES: *The Sixth Commandment*, 1978; *The Tenth Commandment*, 1980; *The Eighth Commandment*, 1986; *The Seventh Commandment*, 1991

TIMOTHY CONE SERIES: *The Timothy Files*, 1987; *Timothy's Game*, 1988

ARCHY McNALLY SERIES: *McNally's Luck*, 1992; *McNally's Secret*, 1992; *McNally's Risk*, 1993; *McNally's Caper*, 1994; *McNally's Trial*, 1995; *McNally's Puzzle*, 1996; *McNally's Gamble*, 1997; *McNally's Dilemma*, 1999 (with Vincent Lardo); *McNally's Folly*, 2000 (with Lardo); *McNally's Chance*, 2001 (with Lardo); *McNally's Dare*, 2003 (with Lardo); *McNally's Bluff*, 2004 (with Lardo)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Tales of the Wolf*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Pleasures of Helen*, 1971; *Love Songs*, 1972; *The Tomorrow File*, 1975; *The Marlow Chronicles*, 1977; *Caper*, 1980 (as Andress); *The Case of Lucy Bending*, 1982; *The Seduction of Peter S.*, 1983; *The Passion of Molly T.*, 1984; *The Loves of Harry Dancer*, 1986; *Capital Crimes*, 1989; *Dark Summer*, 1989; *Stolen Blessings*, 1989; *Sullivan's Sting*, 1990; *Private Pleasures*, 1994; *The Adventures of Chauncey Alcock*, 1997 (with others); *Guilty Pleasures*, 1998; *Guilty Secrets*, 1998

NONFICTION: *Handbook of Creative Crafts*, 1968 (with Richard Carol)

EDITED TEXT: *Thus Be Loved*, 1966

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Cops, Crooks, and Cannibals Captured Popular Fiction. New York: Random House, 2007. Section on Sanders hails the originality of *The First Deadly Sin*, which Anderson says is one of the first modern thrillers.

Bertens, Hans, and Theo D'haen. *Contemporary American Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Wide-ranging study of the contemporary scene in American crime fiction; helps place Sanders's varied body of work within its larger milieu.

Kuhne, David. *African Settings in Contemporary American Novels*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999. Work discusses the use of Africa as a setting in American novels and examines *The Tangent Objective* and *The Tangent Factor*.

Nelson, William. "Expiatory Symbolism in Lawrence Sanders' *The First Deadly Sin*." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 1 (Fall/Winter, 1980): 71-76. Discusses the nature of redemption, both as plot device and as thematic consideration, in Sanders's novel.

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Weeks, Linton. "Ghost Writers in the Sky: A Popular Author's Death No Longer Means the End of a Career." *Washington Post*, August 6, 1999, p. C01. Weeks looks at *McNally's Dilemma*, which was written after Sanders's death, and discusses the trend in which publishers continue to release ghost-written books after the death of a popular author such as V. C. Andrews.

SAPPER

Herman Cyril McNeile

Born: Bodmin, Cornwall, England; September 28, 1888

Died: West Chiltington, Sussex, England; August 14, 1937

Also wrote as H. C. McNeile

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Bulldog Drummond, 1920-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

CAPTAIN HUGH "BULLDOG" DRUMMOND, formerly an officer in the British army who served in World War I, finds himself at loose ends after the war and begins taking on investigative cases. Drummond typifies the kind of gentleman sleuth so popular in England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Educated at the right schools and connected with the right people.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Sapper's character Bulldog Drummond was extremely popular in novels and on the stage in the 1920's, in the 1930's and 1940's Drummond was best known through film and radio. In the transition from novels to radio and film, Drummond was transformed from a somewhat snobbish retired British officer to a suave gentleman. Indeed, most Americans who remember Bulldog Drummond will not remember him from the novels, which were read primarily in England.

Bulldog Drummond was a continuation of the tradition of the gentleman sleuth, called in by clients or friends to solve a murder, disappearance, or robbery—all in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes. In fact, Sapper's fiction was a mainstay of *The Strand* magazine, the same magazine where the Holmes stories regularly appeared. Fast-paced and well-plotted, Sapper's novels were aimed at the same public that took to the Holmes series. Today this kind of entertainment seems tame, and the social prejudices of those days, very prominent in the Drummond novels, are judged unacceptable by many critics.

BIOGRAPHY

Sapper was born Herman Cyril McNeile in Bodmin, Cornwall, England, on September 28, 1888. He was the son of a naval officer, Captain Malcolm McNeile, who was once governor of the Royal Naval Prison at Lewes. His mother was Christiana Mary Sloggett. Educated at Cheltenham College, McNeile went on to officer school at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich. In 1907, he joined the Royal Engineers (from which he adopted the pen name Sapper, a slang word for a military engineer). Promoted to captain in 1914, McNeile served in World War I from 1914 to 1918 and was awarded the Military Cross.

In 1919, McNeile retired from the service with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Not wanting to take up a mundane profession, he began writing for a living. He had already published several books and articles on the war, but it was not until 1920, when *Bull-Dog Drummond: The Adventures of a Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull* appeared, that he had his first success. This success was so great that a dramatized version of the book quickly went on the boards the following year (with Gerald du Maurier playing Drummond) and later played in New York.

McNeile reaped the rewards of his lucrative invention, and new Drummond books appeared almost annually. When the first film with the Drummond character was released in the early 1920's, another source of income was opened, and it proved to be a rich one. Some twenty films later, Drummond had been played by Ronald Colman, Ralph Richardson, John Howard, Tom Conway, Ron Randell, and even Walter Pidgeon. As a result of these films, and the books, McNeile became a wealthy man.

McNeile was married to Violet Baird, the daughter of Scottish boxing patron Arthur Sholto Douglas, and had two sons. Aside from his very successful career as a writer, McNeile lived a quiet life. However, he had not escaped from his experiences in the Great War: He died, from complications resulting from his war injuries, on August 14, 1937.

ANALYSIS

British adventure fiction is full of retired captains and colonels, but the most successful of them all was Bulldog Drummond, the former captain who returns from World War I to find a new career as a private sleuth. Sapper, who had written several fictional works based on his experiences in the trenches, patterned Drummond partly on himself and partly on his friend Gerard Fairlie, who in fact carried on the series after 1937. (The new series continued until 1954; most of the seven novels written by Fairlie were not published in the United States.)

CHALLENGE

Sapper wrote a brisk, accomplished prose, with few frills. He had no pretensions as an author, and there are those who believe that his first Drummond novel is his best. Nevertheless, his last novel, *Challenge* (1937), contains the standard ingredients of plot and style and may serve as a model. There is fast-paced dialogue, very little descriptive prose, and a wide range of characters. Sapper's plots are lively, and there is very little cogitating over a cup of tea. Although his prose was close to that of the pulp writers, it was definitely a notch above it. The style is clean and strongly influenced by American popular fiction. Note this dialogue from *Challenge*:

"Come on, Captain Talbot," cried Molly. "If we stop here talking all night, their meeting will be over."

"Dash it, Molly," said Algy. "I *don't* like it."

"Dry up," she laughed. "Now what are you going to do?" She turned to the soldier.

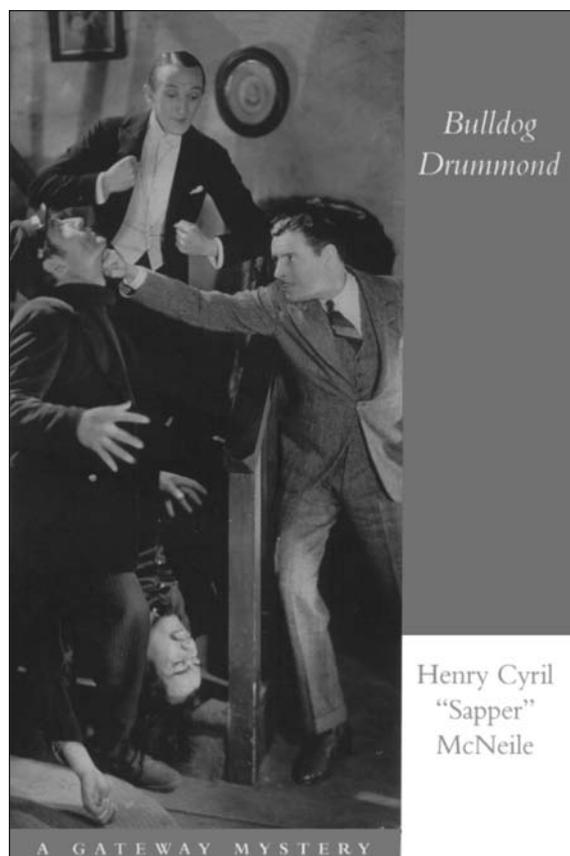
"Go with you and show you the room. Then lurk round a corner out of sight, but within hearing. And if anything happens, just give a call and I'll be with you."

This dialogue from Sapper's last Drummond novel shows a strong American influence ("Dry up") as well as a traditional British touch ("Dash it"). To some readers, the mixture seems odd; to others, who do not take their detective fiction so seriously, it adds interest. At any rate, Sapper tried to blend modern American slang with traditional British expressions. Indeed, Sapper could not and did not want to escape the British tradition of good schools, good breeding, and decent behavior.

BULLDOG DRUMMOND

Above all, one must understand that Sapper was writing for a British audience, for whom the gentleman sleuth was a beloved figure. From Sherlock Holmes to Sexton Blake and Lord Peter Wimsey, the detective with a "good background" has always been popular. This detective often has a sidekick, a Dr. Watson; in Bulldog Drummond's case, it was Ronald Standish—whom Sapper featured in several novels—as well as Algy Longworth and James Denny. His sidekick serves, in most cases, as an admirer and supporter. In *Challenge*, Standish tells another character, "You can take it from me that there is generally a reason for everything that Drummond does."

Perhaps one reason for Bulldog Drummond's popularity was that the detective did not flaunt his background, except to show a fondness for the military and



Ronald Colman played Bulldog Drummond in a 1929 film adaptation of Sapper's novel and reprised the role five years later in *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back*.

officers (honorable British officers, that is). Drummond's business was to solve the crimes put before him, and he wasted little time with salon chitchat. Sapper learned this lesson from *The Strand*, where the editors insisted on straightforward fiction.

Another aspect of Bulldog Drummond that appealed to his fans was his steely determination to get the job done. He had little patience for the slowness of the police, because he generally believed that they did little more than get in his way. Drummond cut through red tape and solved mysteries. It was this perhaps more than any other quality that made Drummond so attractive.

Yet one must never forget that, as Colin Watson maintains in his book *Snobbery with Violence* (1972), "Bulldog Drummond was a melodramatic creation workable only within a setting of melodrama." Many of the novels have pulpish plots featuring international conspiracies and fiendish villains. These are the materials of a bygone fiction, a fiction that championed such figures as the Shadow, Fu Manchu, and Charlie Chan, to name a few. Thus, Drummond ceased to have much appeal after World War II, save as a film detective who was clearly too suave to be pursuing mad scientists and international criminals.

There is yet another feature of the Drummond novels of the 1920's and 1930's that dates them badly. Captain Drummond reflected the prejudices of his age. In Sapper's novels and stories, foreigners are always comic characters—or sinister ones. Derogatory terms such as "wops" and "dagoes" appear in the novels. The French are excitable and cry out "*Mon dieu!*" and the Germans are swinish and dull ("a heavy-jowled German looked up sullenly").

Again, the difference between the Drummond of films and radio and the Drummond of fiction is instructive. As played by Tom Conway and Walter Pidgeon in films, Drummond is more at home in the salon than on a fast car chase after a sinister villain. He is sophisticated and intelligent—not at all like the Drummond of fiction, who resembles a hearty kind of hero, a Captain Midnight or Doc Savage. The Drummond of fiction, who talks of "wogs" and "Frogs," is remarkably different from the suave Drummond of the films, who is more comfortable in a tuxedo than in tweed.

Many critics have tried to deal with the social implications of detective fiction, especially how it reveals the psychology of the audience. George Orwell, in his essay "Raffles and Miss Blandish," sought to relate the modern crime novel, with its sex and sadism, to the change in public mores. He found that the character Raffles (created by E. W. Hornung) reflected an old-fashioned admiration of British readers for the "better classes." Colin Watson goes as far as to say that the readers of gentleman-sleuth novels are inherently snobs, at least in their secret hearts. Why else would one want to read about an improbable gentleman detective who outwits master criminals every time?

The Bulldog Drummond of fiction is less of a snob than others of his kind. He is happy to deliver a left hook to a deserving villain, rather than, in the manner of Holmes, to deliver him to the police. He is far more ready to take on a gang of criminals bare-handed, as in *Challenge*, where he taunts his attackers, "Come on, you spawn. . . . Or are you still afraid?"

It is primarily Drummond's determination, his decency, his sense of devotion to law and order, that made him appealing to a broad audience. His honesty and courage were always contrasted with the qualities of the villains he faced, international criminals such as Carl Peterson. Peterson is unscrupulous, Drummond is honorable; Peterson is a cold-blooded murderer, Drummond prefers a left to the jaw; Peterson has a gang of criminals, Drummond has only his sidekicks, good men but men who are often bested by the villains. In short, Drummond is a man who can be admired by those from ages ten to seventy.

No one can possibly take the Bulldog Drummond novels as anything more than popular entertainment. While the hero's long reign in print can be called a success of sorts, the social importance of the Drummond saga is no weightier than that of the Shadow or Charlie Chan. The transformation that took place when the character of Drummond was transmuted in films and on the radio is another story.

Philip M. Brantingham

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BULLDOG DRUMMOND SERIES: *Bull-Dog Drummond: The Adventures of a Demobilized Officer Who*

Found Peace Dull, 1920; *Bulldog Drummond*, 1921 (with Gerald du Maurier); *The Black Gang*, 1922; *The Third Round*, 1924 (also known as *Bulldog Drummond's Third Round*); *The Final Count*, 1926; *The Female of the Species*, 1928 (also known as *Bulldog Drummond Meets the Female of the Species*); *Temple Tower*, 1929; *The Return of Bulldog Drummond*, 1932 (also known as *Bulldog Drummond Returns*); *Knock-out*, 1933 (also known as *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back*); *Bulldog Drummond at Bay*, 1935; *Bulldog Jack (Alias Bulldog Drummond)*, 1935 (with J. O. C. Orton and Gerard Fairlie); *Bulldog Hits Out*, 1937 (with Fairlie); *Challenge*, 1937

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Mufti*, 1919; *Jim Maitland*, 1923; *Jim Brent*, 1926; *Tiny Carteret*, 1930; *The Island of Terror*, 1931 (also known as *Guardians of the Treasure*); *Ronald Standish*, 1933

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1926; *The Message*, 1926; *The Rout of the Oliver Samuelsons*, 1926; *The Rubber Stamp, and A Matter of Voice*, 1926; *The Taming of Sydney Marsham*, 1926; *Three of a Kind, and The Haunting of Jack Burnham*, 1926; *A Hundred Per Cent*, 1927; *An Act of Providence*, 1927; *Billie Finds an Answer*, 1927; *Dilemma*, 1927; *Once Bit, Twice Hit*, 1927; *Relative Values*, 1927; *The Diamond Hair Slide*, 1927; *The Undoing of Mrs. Cransby*, 1928; *A Question of Mud*, 1929; *The Hidden Witness*, 1929

1931-1933 • *The Great Magor Diamond, and The Creaking Door*, 1931; *The Haunted Rectory*, 1931; *The Missing Chauffeur*, 1931; *The Brides of Mertonbridge Hall*, 1932; *Uncle James's Golf Match*, 1932; *The Man in Yellow, and The Empty House*, 1933

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DOROTHY L. SAYERS

Born: Oxford, England; June 13, 1893

Died: Witham, Essex, England; December 17, 1957

Types of plot: Master sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Lord Peter Wimsey, 1923-1937

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LORD PETER WIMSEY, a wealthy aristocrat, is an Oxford graduate, book collector, wine connoisseur, and lover of fast cars, cricket, and crime. Though he gives the appearance, particularly in the early novels, of being a foppish playboy, his flippancy masks intelligence, conscience, and sensitivity.

BUNTER, an imperturbable, supremely competent manservant, served under Wimsey in World War I, then became his valet, bringing his master through a war-induced breakdown. His skills range from photographing corpses and cooking superb meals to extracting crucial evidence from cooks and housemaids over tea in the servants' quarters.

CHIEF INSPECTOR CHARLES PARKER, a Scotland Yard detective, is Lord Peter's friend and later his brother-in-law. He provides a calm, rational balance to Wimsey's flamboyant personality.

HARRIET VANE, the detective novelist with whom Lord Peter falls in love as he saves her from the gallows in *Strong Poison* (1930). Independent, capable, and proud, she refuses to marry him until she is convinced that their marriage can be an equal partnership.

CONTRIBUTION

Dorothy L. Sayers never considered her detective novels and short stories to be truly serious literature, and once Lord Peter Wimsey had provided a substantial income for her, she turned her attention to religious drama, theology, and a translation of Dante's *La divina commedia* (c. 1320; *The Divine Comedy*, 1802). Yet she wrote these popular works with the same thoroughness, commitment to quality, and attention to detail that infuse her more scholarly writings. Her mystery novels set a high standard for writers who followed her—and

there have been many. Her plots are carefully constructed, and she was willing to spend months, even years, in researching background details. What gives her works their lasting appeal, however, is not the nature of the crimes or the cleverness of their solutions. Readers return to the novels for the pleasure of savoring Sayers's wit, her literary allusions, the rich settings, the deftly developed characters, and, above all, her multi-talented aristocratic sleuth, Lord Peter Wimsey. Blending the conventions of detective fiction with social satire and unobtrusively interweaving serious themes, she fulfilled her goal of making the detective story "once more a novel of manners instead of a pure crossword puzzle."

BIOGRAPHY

Dorothy Leigh Sayers was born in Oxford, England, on June 13, 1893, the only child of the Reverend Henry Sayers, headmaster of the Christ Church Choir School, and his talented wife, Helen Leigh Sayers. When Dorothy was four, the family moved to the fen country immortalized in *The Nine Tailors* (1934), and there she was educated by her parents and governesses. By the time she entered the Godolphin School in Salisbury in 1909, she was fluent in French and German and an avid reader and writer. Her life as a pampered only child did not, however, prepare her well to fit in with her contemporaries, and she found real friends only when she entered Somerville College, Oxford, in 1912. There she participated enthusiastically in musical, dramatic, and social activities and won first-class honors in French. She was among the first group of women granted degrees in 1920.

After leaving Oxford in 1915, she held a variety of jobs, finally settling at Benson's Advertising Agency in London as a copywriter. Shortly after she joined Benson's, she began work on her first detective novel, *Whose Body?* (1923). Following its publication, she took a leave of absence from her work, ostensibly to work on a second book but in reality to give birth to a son out of wedlock. One of her biographers, James Brabazon, has identified her child's father as a



Dorothy L. Sayers. (Library of Congress)

working-class man to whom she may have turned in reaction to a painful affair with the writer John Cournos.

She placed her son in the care of a cousin, returned to work, and two years later married Captain Oswald Arthur “Mac” Fleming, another man who shared almost none of her intellectual interests. Fleming, a divorced journalist, suffered throughout most of their married life from physical and psychological damage resulting from his service in World War I. She and Fleming informally adopted her son in 1934, but the boy continued to live with her cousin, and she never told him that he was her own child.

In this decade of personal stress, Sayers’s career as a detective novelist was taking shape. By 1937 she had published more than a dozen books and was recognized as one of England’s best mystery writers. In the last twenty years of her life, she devoted her energies to becoming an articulate spokeswoman for the Church of England and a respected Dante scholar. She did not quite abandon her earlier pursuits, maintaining a strong interest in the Detection Club, which she had helped found in 1930. She died in 1957.

ANALYSIS

In her introduction to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror* (1928-1934), Dorothy L. Sayers writes that the detective story “does not, and by hypothesis never can, attain the loftiest level of literary achievement. . . . It rarely touches the heights and depths of human passion.” It is, she adds,

part of the literature of escape, and not of expression. We read tales of domestic unhappiness because that is the kind of thing which happens to us; but when these things gall too close to the sore, we fly to mystery and adventure because they do not, as a rule, happen to us.

Clearly, she cherished no ambition of finding literary immortality in the adventures of Lord Peter Wimsey. Nevertheless, she brought to the craft of writing detective fiction a scholar’s mind and a conviction that any work undertaken is worth doing well, qualities that have won acclaim for her as one of the best mystery writers of the twentieth century.

Her biographers have suggested that the impetus for her writing of mystery stories was economic. Still financially dependent on her parents in her late twenties, she began work on *Whose Body?* in 1921 as one last effort to support herself as a writer. In a letter to her parents, she promised that if this effort were unsuccessful, she would give up her ambitions and take a teaching position—not a career she coveted. Her choice of this genre was a sensible one for her purposes. Mysteries were enormously popular in England and America in the 1920’s and 1930’s, and by 1937, when Lord Peter Wimsey made his last major appearance, her twelve detective novels and numerous short stories had guaranteed her a substantial income for the rest of her life.

Having chosen her form, Sayers entered on her task with diligence, studying the work of the best of her predecessors, particularly Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Wilkie Collins. She applied her academic training to the genre, its history, its structures, and its compacts with its readers. Her efforts were so successful that only a few years after the publication of her first novel she was asked to edit a major anthology of detective stories and to write an introduction that is both a short history of the genre and an analysis of its major characteristics.

Sayers's work is not, on the surface, especially innovative. Particularly in her early work, she used the popular conventions of the form—mysterious methods of murder, amoral villains, and the clever amateur detective in the tradition of C. Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, and E. C. Bentley's Philip Trent. From the beginning, however, she lifted the quality of the mystery novel. First, as critic and detective novelist Carolyn Heilbrun (Amanda Cross) notes, "Miss Sayers wrote superbly well." A reader can open her books to almost any page and find lines that reflect her pleasure in a well-turned phrase. She enjoyed experimenting with different types of styles, even imitating Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) by using letters to tell the story in *The Documents in the Case* (1930; with Robert Eustace).

Sayers was a skillful creator of plots, adhering firmly to the "fair play" she describes in her introduction to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror*: "The reader must be given every clue—but he must not be told, surely, all the detective's deductions, lest he should see the solution too far ahead." Her adherence to this principle is especially clear in her short stories, both those featuring Wimsey and those involving her second amateur detective hero, Montague Egg. Egg, a traveling salesman of wine and spirits, is a master interpreter of the hidden clue and another delightful character, though the stories about him tend to be more formulaic than the Wimsey tales.

Sayer's full-length novels are unusual in the variety of crimes and solutions they depict. She never fell into a single pattern of plot development, and in fact she argued that a successful mystery writer cannot do that, for each work arises out of a different idea, and each idea demands its own plot: "To get the central idea is one thing; to surround it with a suitable framework of interlocking parts is quite another. . . . idea and plot are two quite different things." The challenge is to flesh out the idea in a suitable sequence of events and to develop characters in ways that make these events plausible.

The character most crucial to the effectiveness of the mystery novel is, naturally, that of the detective. Sayers developed Lord Peter Wimsey gradually over the fifteen years in which she wrote about him. In his first appearances he is a rather stereotypical figure,

comprising elements of Trent, Holmes, and P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, the quintessential "silly-ass-about-town." In his first case, he greets the discovery of a body in a bathtub, clad only in a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses, with gleeful enthusiasm. Sayers herself might later have considered him too gleeful; as she wrote in her introduction to *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror*, "The sprightly amateur must not be sprightly all the time, lest at some point we should be reminded that this is, after all, a question of somebody's being foully murdered, and that flippancy is indecent."

At the beginning of his career, Wimsey is distinguished chiefly by superficial attributes—wealth; an aristocratic upbringing; interest in rare books, wine, and music; skill in languages; arcane knowledge in a variety of fields; and the services of the unflappable Bunter. Although the early Wimsey is, in Margaret



The first illustration of Lord Peter Wimsey, drawn by John Campbell for Pearson's Magazine in 1926.

Hannay's words, something of a "cardboard detective," nevertheless there are in him elements that allowed Sayers to "humanize him" in her later works. He is shown in *Whose Body?* and *Unnatural Death* (1927) to have moments of self-doubt as he contemplates his responsibility for actions that follow on his intervention into the crimes. His moral sensitivity is also revealed in his sympathetic response to the irritating but understandable war victim George Fentiman in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928), who so bitterly resents his dependence on his wife. The later Lord Peter retains the ability to "talk piffle" as a mask to cover his intelligence, but his detecting is now seen not as an amateur's game but as work in service of truth. His stature is also increased by his work for the Foreign Office, which sends him out to exercise his conversational skills as a diplomat.

STRONG POISON

As Sayers acknowledges in her essay "Gaudy Night," in which she discusses the composition of the novel of the same name, Peter's growth came largely in response to the creation of Harriet Vane in *Strong Poison*. Sayers invented Harriet, she confessed, with the idea of marrying him off before he consumed her whole existence. When she came to the end of the novel, however, her plan would not work. "When I looked at the situation I saw that it was in every respect false and degrading; and the puppets had somehow got just so much flesh and blood in them that I could not force them to accept it without shocking myself." The only solution, she decided, was to make Peter "a complete human being, with a past and a future, with a consistent family and social history, with a complicated psychology and even the rudiments of a religious outlook." In the novels written after 1930, Wimsey becomes wiser, more conscious of the complexities of human feelings, less certain of the boundaries of good and evil. As he becomes a more complex figure, the novels in which he appears begin to cross the border between the whodunit and the novel of manners.

Another major factor in Sayers's success as a mystery writer was her ability to create authentic, richly detailed settings for her work. "Readers," she says in "Gaudy Night,"

seem to like books which tell them how other people live—any people, advertisers, bell-ringers, women dons, butchers, bakers or candlestick-makers—so long as the detail is full and accurate and the object of the work is not overt propaganda.

She alludes here to the three novels many readers consider her best—*Murder Must Advertise* (1933), *The Nine Tailors*, and *Gaudy Night* (1935). In each she drew on places and people she knew well to create worlds that her readers would find appealing.

MURDER MUST ADVERTISE

From her nine years as copywriter with Benson's, Sayers created Pym's Publicity in *Murder Must Advertise*. There is an aura of verisimilitude in every detail, from the office politics to the absurd advertisements for "Nutrax for Nerves" to the Pym's-Brotherhood annual cricket match. Sayers even borrowed Benson's spiral iron staircase as the scene of Victor Dean's murder, and she drew on her own successful "Mustard Club" campaign for Wimsey's brilliant cigarette-advertising scheme, "Whiffle your way around Britain."

THE NINE TAILORS

Sayers set *The Nine Tailors* in a village in the fen country much like the parish in which her father served for most of her childhood and adolescence. The plot depends heavily on the practice of bell ringing, which Sayers studied for two years before she completed her novel. Her account of the mechanics of draining the fen country and the attendant dangers of flooding shows equally careful research. Many of the greatest delights of the book, however, lie in the evocation of village life, epitomized in the final scene, in which the inhabitants of Fenchurch St. Paul have taken refuge from the floodwaters in the hugh church:

A curious kind of desert-island life was carried on in and about the church, which, in course of time, assumed a rhythm of its own. Each morning was ushered in by a short and cheerful flourish of bells, which rang the milkers out to the cowsheds in the graveyard. Hot water for washing was brought in wheeled waterbutts from the Rectory copper. Bedding was shaken and rolled under the pews for the day. . . . Daily school was carried on in the south aisle; games and drill were organized in the Rectory garden by Lord Peter Wimsey; farmers attended to their cattle; owners of poultry brought the eggs to a

communal basket; Mrs. Venables presided over sewing-parties in the Rectory.

The mystery plot is here grounded in a world of rich and poor, old and young, that seems to go on beyond the confines of the novel.

GAUDY NIGHT

For some readers the most interesting community of all those that Sayers depicted is Shrewsbury College, the setting for *Gaudy Night*—one of the first works of a still-popular type of detective fiction, the university mystery. Shrewsbury is closely modeled on Somerville, where the author spent three of the most personally rewarding years of her life. Although her picture of life in the Senior Common Room did not win universal approval from her Somerville acquaintances, she captured brilliantly the camaraderie and rivalries of the educational institution, the dedication of committed teachers to their students and their scholarly disciplines, and the undergraduates' struggle to deal with academic and social pressures.

THE CHARACTERS

Sayers's settings come to life chiefly through their inhabitants, many of whom have little to do with the solution to the mystery but much to do with the lasting appeal of the works. Every reader has favorite characters: old Hezekiah Lavender, who tolls the passing of human life on the venerable bell Taylor Paul; Tom Puffett, the loquacious chimney sweep in *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937); Ginger Joe, the young fan of fictional detective Sexton Blake who provides Wimsey with an important clue in *Murder Must Advertise*; Miss Lydgate, the kindly scholar in *Gaudy Night*. These characters are often seen most vividly through their own words. Lord Peter's delightful mother, the Dowager Duchess of Denver, is instantly recognizable for her stream-of-consciousness conversation, dotted with malapropisms that cover underlying good sense. Wimsey's indefatigable never-married investigator, Miss Climpson, is best known through her self-revelatory letters, which are as full of italics as Queen Victoria's diaries:

My train got in quite late on Monday night, after a *most dreary* journey, with a *lugubrious* wait at *Preston*, though thanks to your kindness in insisting that I should travel *First-class*, I was not really at all tired! Nobody

can realise what a *great* difference these extra comforts make, especially when one is *getting on* in years, and after the *uncomfortable* traveling which I had to endure in my days of poverty, I feel that I am living in almost *sinful* luxury!

Of Wimsey himself, Carolyn Heilbrun wrote, "Lord Peter's audience, if they engage in any fantasy at all about that sprig of the peerage, dream of having him to tea. They don't want to *be* Lord Peter, only to know him, for the sake of hearing him talk." It might even be said that good conversation finally brings Peter and Harriet Vane together, for it is talk that establishes their mutual respect, allowing them to reveal their shared commitment to intellectual honesty and their mutual conviction that husband and wife should be equal partners.

Taken as a whole, the conversations of Sayers's characters dazzle readers with the skill and erudition of their author, who reproduces the voices from many levels of English society while keeping up a steady stream of allusion to works as diverse as Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan, and the adventures of fictional character Sexton Blake.

WOMEN AND WORK

Although Sayers's brilliant handling of plot, character, setting, and dialogue would probably have made her novels classics in the genre without additional elements, these works are also enriched by serious themes that preoccupied her throughout her career: the place of women in society, the importance of work, and the nature of guilt and innocence.

The works show a recurrent concern with the problems of the professional woman searching for dignity and independence in a man's world. Sayers embodies these concerns in such characters as Ann Dorland in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Marjorie Phelps, Sylvia Marriott, and Eiluned Price in *Strong Poison*, Miss Meteyard in *Murder Must Advertise*, and especially Harriet Vane, the character who most resembles her author. Wimsey is attractive to all these women not so much for his undeniable sex appeal as for his taking them seriously as human beings. If Sayers can be said to have fallen in love with her detective,

as many have suggested, it is surely this quality that she found most appealing. She argues passionately in her lecture *Are Women Human?* (1971) that women should be treated as individuals, not as members of an inferior species:

“What,” men have asked distractedly from the beginning of time, “what on earth do women want?” I do not know that women, *as* women, want anything in particular, but as human beings they want, my good men, exactly what you want yourselves: interesting occupation, reasonable freedom for their pleasures, and a sufficient emotional outlet. What form the occupation, the pleasures and the emotion may take, depends entirely on the individual.

As this quotation suggests, Sayers’s concern with the place of women in society is closely related to her belief that each person needs to find his or her own proper work and do it well. This idea, later to be the major theme of her religious drama *The Zeal of Thy House* (pr. 1937) and her theological volume *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), is central to the action of *Gaudy Night* and to the development of Peter and Harriet’s relationship. The plot of this novel arises out of a young scholar’s suppression of evidence that would invalidate the argument of his master’s thesis, an action whose discovery led to his professional disgrace and eventually to his suicide. His wife sets out to avenge his death on the female scholar who discovered his fraud. Although Sayers does not deny the moral ambiguities in the situation, she makes it clear that fraudulent scholarship is no minor matter. One must do one’s work with integrity, regardless of personal considerations.

Acting on this conviction, Lord Peter urges Harriet to “abandon the jig-saw kind of story and write a book about human beings for a change,” even if it means confronting painful episodes from her past. When she responds, “It would hurt like hell,” he replies, “What would that matter, if it made a good book?” She interprets his respect for her work as respect for her integrity as a human being and moves a step closer to accepting his proposal of marriage.

GOOD AND EVIL

The issue of guilt and innocence—more fundamentally, of good and evil—is handled more obliquely. As R. D. Stock and Barbara Stock note in their essay “The

Agents of Evil and Justice in the Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers,” the nature of the criminals changes during the course of the author’s career. In most of the early novels the criminal is a cold, heartless villain, quite willing to sacrifice others for his or her own goals. In the later works, however, the author shows her readers a world in which guilt and innocence are less clear-cut. The victims, such as Campbell in *The Five Red Herrings* (1931) and Deacon in *The Nine Tailors*, are thoroughly unsympathetic figures. Their killers are seen not as monsters but as human beings caught in circumstances they are not strong enough to surmount. In *The Nine Tailors* the murderers are the bells, inanimate objects controlled by individuals who share in the guilt of all humanity. This novel reflects Sayers’s conviction, stated in *The Mind of the Maker*, that “human situations are subject to the law of human nature, whose evil is at all times rooted in its good, and whose good can only redeem, but not abolish, its evil.”

By moving away from “the jig-saw kind of story” to deal with issues of moral and intellectual complexity, Sayers was enlarging the scope of her genre but also testing its limits. One of the great appeals of detective stories, she once wrote, is that they provide readers who live in a world full of insoluble problems with problems that unfaillingly have solutions. Her last works still provide answers to the questions around which her plots revolve: Who killed the man whose body was found in Lady Thorpe’s grave? Who was disrupting Shrewsbury College? Who murdered Mr. Noakes? These solutions do not, however, answer all the questions raised: What are one’s obligations to other human beings, even if they are wrongdoers? When does one become a contributor to the development of another’s guilt? What are the moral consequences of solving crimes? It is not surprising that she felt the need to move on to literary forms that would allow her to deal more directly with these issues, though there are many readers who wish she had continued to let Lord Peter and Harriet explore them.

By the time Sayers ended Wimsey’s career with several short stories written in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, she had left an indelible mark on the twentieth century detective story. Her world of aristocrats and manservants, country vicars, and villages in

which everyone had a place and stayed in it, was vanishing even as she wrote about it; Wimsey tells Harriet at one point, "Our kind of show is dead and done for." Yet her works continue to appeal to large numbers of readers. Why? Some readers simply desire to escape the problems of the present—but the secret of Sayers's popularity surely goes beyond that. Her reputation rests partly on her superb handling of language, her attention to details of plot and setting, her humor, and her memorable characters. Yet it is ultimately those elements that push at the boundaries of the detective stories that have kept her works alive when those of many of her popular contemporaries have vanished. She left her successors a challenge to view the mystery novel not simply as entertainment (though it must always be that) but also as a vehicle for both literary excellence and reflection on serious, far-reaching questions.

Elizabeth Johnston Lipscomb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LORD PETER WIMSEY SERIES: *Whose Body?*, 1923; *Clouds of Witness*, 1926; *Unnatural Death*, 1927 (also known as *The Dawson Pedigree*); *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, 1928; *Lord Peter Views the Body*, 1928; *Strong Poison*, 1930; *The Five Red Herrings*, 1931 (also known as *Suspicious Characters*); *Have His Carcase*, 1932; *Murder Must Advertise*, 1933; *Hangman's Holiday*, 1933; *The Nine Tailors*, 1934; *Gaudy Night*, 1935; *Busman's Honeymoon*, 1937; *In the Teeth of the Evidence, and Other Stories*, 1939; *Striding Folly*, 1972; *Lord Peter*, 1972 (James Sandoe, editor)

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pb. 1937; *The Devil to Pay, Being the Famous Play of John Faustus*, pr., pb. 1939; *Love All*, pr. 1940; *The Just Vengeance*, pr., pb. 1946; *The Emperor Constantine*, pr. 1951 (revised as *Christ's Emperor*, 1952)

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STEVEN SAYLOR

Born: Port Lavaca, Texas; March 23, 1956

Also wrote as Aaron Travis

Type of plot: Historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Roma Sub Rosa (Secret Rome), 1991-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

GORDIANUS THE FINDER is a citizen of the ancient Roman Republic with a knack for solving puzzles. Relentless in his pursuit of the truth, he often puts his

own personal quest for answers above his clients' objectives.

CONTRIBUTION

Along with British novelist Lindsey Davis, who first introduced her comic detective, Marcus Didius Falco, in 1989, and John Maddox Roberts, whose investigator, Decius Caecilius Matellus the Younger, made his first appearance in print in 1990, Steven Saylor is part of a small cadre of modern mystery writers who have chosen to set their narratives in the world

of ancient Rome. Unlike the work of Davis and Roberts, however, the novels and short stories of Saylor are perhaps less dependent on the clever sleuthing of their fictional protagonist and more focused on the recovery of a palpable, visitable past.

Saylor asserts that his work is dominated not by Gordianus the Finder but by the historical figures who populate his narratives. Critics seem to agree that the author's greatest strength is his successful evocation of the tumultuous years of the last century B.C.E. In recreating the ancient world, however, Saylor is not content to adopt, without question, generally accepted interpretations of historical events; on the contrary, he is adept at exploring plausible alternative explanations for why some larger-than-life personages, such as Catilina or Julius Caesar, made some of their pivotal decisions. In so doing, Saylor often draws parallels to the social and political forces operative in modern times.

Saylor's fiction has been translated into more than a dozen languages, and his novels have been short-listed for prestigious literary prizes, including the Ellis Peters Historical Dagger Award from the Crime Writers' Association.

BIOGRAPHY

Steven Warren Saylor was born in Port Lavaca, Texas, on March 23, 1956, and grew up in the small town of Goldthwaite. His parents divorced when he was quite young; his two siblings, Gwyn and Ronny, and he were raised by their mother, who did secretarial work to make ends meet. Saylor credits his mother, Lucy, with instilling in the family a solid sense of self-worth. In particular, she emphasized academic achievement. As a consequence, by the time that they graduated from high school, all three Saylor children earned grants and loans to attend college.

During Saylor's formative years in the hill country of Texas, he strove to conform to external expectations. He got good grades, played trumpet in the school band, got a part-time job at the local supermarket, and dated girls. All the while, however, he harbored a secret that he was not willing to divulge until he moved one hundred miles away from home to attend the University of Texas in Austin in 1974. In Austin, which Saylor has described as an oasis in a desert

of intolerance, Saylor felt comfortable enough to embrace his sexuality. At the age of nineteen, he found his life partner, Richard Solomon; the two moved in together as a gay couple.

In 1978, Saylor graduated from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in history with honors, and in 1980, he and Solomon moved to San Francisco. For more than ten years thereafter, he worked as a freelance writer and magazine and newspaper editor. It was during this period that he began writing erotic fiction under the pseudonym of Aaron Travis. Saylor credits his first visit to Italy in 1987 with re-igniting his longstanding interest in the ancient world. When he returned to San Francisco after this trip, he decided to write a murder mystery set in Rome before the days of the empire.

The success of Saylor's first novel, *Roman Blood*, in 1991 allowed him to devote himself to writing fiction. The Roma Sub Rosa (secret Rome) series of historical mysteries that evolved from the publication of that first novel permitted Saylor and Solomon to buy a house in Berkeley, California. The series also solidified his credentials as a classicist, and Saylor has been called on to speak to academic audiences and appear on television documentaries (History Channel) to offer expert commentary on topics related to the classical world.

In addition to his mysteries set in ancient Rome, Saylor has published two books with Texas settings: *A Twist at the End: A Novel of O. Henry* (2000), set partially in Austin in 1885 when the city was rocked by a series of serial murders, and *Have You Seen Dawn?* (2003), a contemporary suspense novel set in a small town like the one in which he was raised.

ANALYSIS

Gordianus the Finder, characterized by one of his enemies as a man of "no ancestry at all, a dubious career, and most irregular family," would appear, at first blush, to be an odd choice for the protagonist of a historical novel. This choice seems particularly odd for Steven Saylor because of his decision to focus on the last three decades of the Roman Republic when various politicians, often representatives of the noblest families, vied for supremacy. However, by virtue of

the fact that he has no pedigree and hence no class loyalties, Gordianus can move freely among competing parties in search of the answers to problems that vex some of the key figures of his time.

Gordianus's "dubious career"—finding the truth without prejudice—is made possible because ancient Rome had no police force by modern standards. Thus, his career as a private detective often involves Gordianus in matters of considerable public import, from the moment in *Roman Blood* when he is hired by Cicero to investigate matters related to the great orator's first court case to the time in *The Judgment of Caesar: A Novel of Ancient Rome* (2004) when he is charged by Caesar to discover who might have tried to poison him at a key moment in his Egyptian campaign. By virtue of his unusual profession, Gordianus, an ordinary citizen during extraordinary times, can move easily across social strata and bear witness, from more than one perspective, to some of the key events in a momentous period in world history.

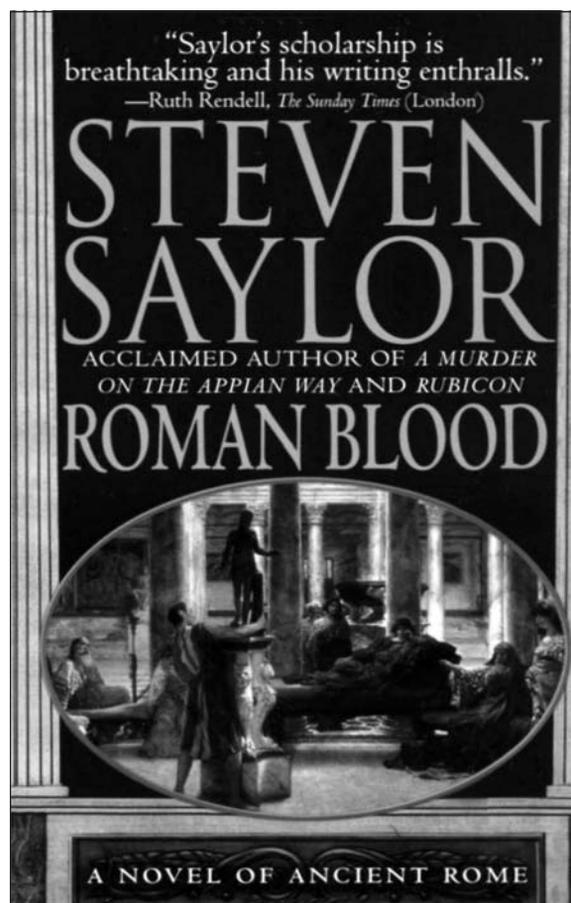
The reader's interest in Gordianus transcends his roles as detective and reader's stand-in. Over multiple volumes, Gordianus accumulates an "irregular family" that calls into question standard definitions of the term. His half-Egyptian, half-Jewish wife, Bethesda, was once his slave and concubine; his son and junior partner, Eco, was once a street orphan abandoned by his mother as a consequence of her witnessing a brutal murder. In conservative circles in ancient Rome and in modern times, family values have often been used as a justification for intolerance of domestic arrangements that do not match some rigid prescription. Set against the often dark consequences of the real-life blood ties that figure so prominently in many of the novels—the feuding, blue-blooded Claudii in *Catiline's Riddle* (1993) or the treacherous royal siblings of the House of Ptolemy in *The Judgment of Caesar*—Gordianus's hand-selected family shines.

The three elements of Saylor's formula for success are creating a character that serves as an eyewitness to history, giving that character an interesting puzzle to solve, and allowing that character to make a family of his own choosing. All three elements engage the reader's interest and sustain that interest from book to book.

ROMAN BLOOD

In *Roman Blood*, the first novel of the Roma Sub Rosa series, Steven Saylor establishes the formula that he successfully applies to each book. He provides his fictional protagonist with a mystery to unravel and, in so doing, makes him a convincing player at a critical point in the history of ancient Rome. Inspired by his reading of Michael Grant's book *Murder Trials* (1975), a translation of selected speeches by Marcus Tullius Cicero, Saylor involves Gordianus the Finder in the real-life public defense by Cicero, the famous orator and statesman, of the patrician Sextus Roscius, who stands accused of hiring someone to kill his father.

As the novel begins, Gordianus is thirty, and he has already established his investigative credentials and his reputation for integrity. Hoping to make his mark on the public stage, Cicero hires Gordianus to help him find the evidence that he needs to turn an appar-



ently hopeless case of parricide into a judicial victory. During the course of his investigation, Gordianus turns up some interesting facts, some of which shed light on political corruption during the last days of the constitutional dictatorship of the Roman general Sulla. The latter figure makes a brief but memorable appearance near the end of the novel when he passes judgment on Gordianus's chosen profession and the sometimes unsavory consequences of his inquiries. Sulla refers to Gordianus as a dog, the "kind that goes about digging up bones that other dogs have buried."

Gordianus also expands his unorthodox family when he gives shelter to the orphaned Eco, whose mother witnessed the murder that sets the plot in motion. This simple act of kindness toward a stranger stands in sharp contrast to the larcenous and even murderous practices that characterize the relations of those connected by blood.

CATILINA'S RIDDLE

The riddle referred to in the title of *Catilina's Riddle*, the longest novel in the series, involves the truth behind one of the most interesting figures in the history of early Rome, the populist politician Lucius Sergius Catilina. Was he the principal conspirator behind a plan to overthrow the Roman government by force or was he a man driven to desperate measures by a calculated campaign to defame his reputation and subvert his democratic motives?

Propositioned once again by Cicero, this time to offer his newly acquired farm as a place of sanctuary to Catilina and to report back anything that might be useful, Gordianus reluctantly finds himself attracted to the charismatic, if not seductive, figure. Gordianus also finds that he and his family reside at the epicenter of another crisis, both personal and public. On the local level, he must discover the source of a series of headless bodies found on his land and contend with the animosity of yet another patrician family who will stop at nothing in their maintenance of privilege. On a larger scale, he bears witness to history, from the moment of Catilina's electoral defeat in 64 B.C.E. to the fateful Battle of Pistoria in 62 B.C.E.

Like most of the other Roma Sub Rosa narratives, this novel gives Gordianus the opportunity to act on two stages. There is the private mystery centered on the

farm that he has inherited from a wealthy friend and confidant; the key to untying the knots of this conundrum is a classic device of mystery fiction: The villain is most likely to be the least suspected person. There is also Cicero's very public campaign to expose Catilina's conspiracy. It is the fictional linkage between Gordianus and Catilina during this fateful moment in the life of the Roman Republic that may very well be the heart of the book, for it affords Saylor the opportunity to ponder the motivation of one of the most controversial figures in ancient history. Many critics consider this novel to be a high point in the series.

THE JUDGMENT OF CAESAR

In *The Judgment of Caesar*, Gordianus escorts his wife, Bethesda, to her native Egypt in his quest for a cure for her at yet another critical turning point in world history, the first meeting of Caesar and Cleopatra. Because of his role as inadvertent witness to the assassination of Pompey the Great, Caesar's great rival for domination of the Mediterranean, Gordianus becomes an involuntary guest at the royal palace in Alexandria, where he soon finds himself embroiled in the deadly rivalry between the queen of Egypt and her royal brother, Ptolemy XIII, as they contend for Caesar's political alliance and personal affection.

Once again Gordianus's private life and the course of history intersect as he must solve the mystery of who tried to poison Caesar, who has just arrived in Egypt, a once great power that has now become little more than a protectorate of Rome. Because one of the suspects is Meto, the adopted son of Gordianus, his family loyalties are engaged; and once again, the Finder's familial devotion stands in sharp contrast to that of those with royal blood, especially the contentious members of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Yet, despite his misgivings that with the passage of time he has lost his edge, Gordianus solves the puzzle, thanks to his characteristically open mind and open heart.

In this novel, as in *Catilina's Riddle*, much of the interest in the narrative comes from Saylor's decision to recreate a pivotal point in history from the perspective of someone who did not carry the day. Like Catilina, Ptolemy XIII remains a figure of scholarly conjecture because his early death gave his rivals free rein to spin the tale of his failure. Saylor, on the other

hand, tries to give voice to history's losers in order to paint a more complete picture of their place in history. Therefore, in *The Judgment of Caesar*, the author devotes as much attention to Ptolemy as he does to his sister Cleopatra, and he tries to flesh out the triangle of ambition and seduction of which Caesar and the two royal siblings form the three points.

S. Thomas Mack

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROMA SUB ROSA SERIES: *Roman Blood*, 1991; *Arms of Nemesis*, 1992; *Catiline's Riddle*, 1993; *The Venus Throw*, 1995; *A Murder on the Appian Way*, 1996; *The House of the Vestals: The Investigations of Gordianus the Finder*, 1997; *Rubicon*, 1998; *Last Seen in Massilia*, 2000; *A Mist of Prophecies*, 2002; *The Judgment of Caesar: A Novel of Ancient Rome*, 2004; *A Gladiator Dies Only Once: The Further Adventures of Gordianus the Finder*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Beast of Burden*, 1993 (as Travis); *Big Shots*, 1993 (as Travis); *Slaves of the Empire*, 1996 (as Travis); *A Twist at the End: A Novel of O. Henry*, 2000; *Have You Seen Dawn?*, 2003; *Roma: A Novel of Ancient Rome*, 2007

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ANTHONY SHAFFER

Born: Liverpool, England; May 15, 1926

Died: London, England; November 6, 2001

Also wrote as Peter Anthony (joint pseudonym with Peter Shaffer)

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy; private investigator; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

A longtime admirer of the classical mystery story in the tradition of Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, and Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Shaffer won lasting fame for his popular and wildly successful satirical send-up of the cozy genre, *Sleuth* (pr., pb. 1970). The play, which ran for more than twenty-three hundred

performances in London's West End, and for more than two thousand performances on Broadway, garnered a Tony Award and an Edgar Award for the best play of 1970. The film of the play, for which Shaffer wrote the screenplay, also won an Edgar Award and secured Oscar nominations for both principal actors Michael Caine and Laurence Olivier (Olivier won a New York Critics' award for his role). *Sleuth* has been called one of the best examples of the comedy-thriller ever written.

Shaffer, who despite the enthusiastic reception of *Sleuth* never achieved quite the level of name recognition as his twin brother Peter Shaffer (author of such works as *Amadeus*, 1980; *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, 1964; and *Equus*, 1973), nonetheless became quite respected for his film work with director Alfred Hitchcock. He won Edgar Awards for his screenplays of *Frenzy* (1972) and *Death on the Nile* (1978). Shaffer also won the Grand Prix from the Oxford and from the Miami film festivals for the screenplay of his own play *Absolution* (1978), and won the Grand Prix for his film script of the critically acclaimed play he cowrote with Robin Hardy, *The Wicker Man* (1973).

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Joshua Shaffer was born the twin brother of fellow writer (later Sir) Peter Levin Shaffer on May 15, 1926, in Liverpool, England. They were the sons of Jewish estate agent Jack Shaffer and Reka Fredman Shaffer. The family moved to London in 1936, where the twins won scholarships to St. Paul's school, which, following the German blitz of World War II, was moved to Berkhamsted. For three years late in the war and in the early postwar period (1944-1947), both brothers, in lieu of military service, worked as Bevin Boys (essential workers in service to the country, named for the program organizer, Ernest Bevin, minister of labor under Prime Minister Winston Churchill), as coal-mine conscripts in Kent and Yorkshire.

After finishing their national obligation, Anthony and his brother both attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where they coedited the student publication *Grantha* and cowrote detective stories for publication in various periodicals. Both graduated in 1950, Anthony majoring in law, Peter in history. Anthony

Shaffer was married for the second of three times to former model Carolyn Soley, with whom he had two daughters. In 1951 he began practicing as a barrister, specializing in divorce work. That same year, he and his brother collaborated on the first of three mystery novels in the classical tradition, published under the joint pseudonym Peter Anthony: *Woman in the Wardrobe* (1951), *How Doth the Little Crocodile?* (1952), and *Withered Murder* (1955). For some six years, beginning in the mid-1950's, Anthony Shaffer served as book reviewer for *London Mystery Magazine*.

Dissatisfied with the income he earned as a lawyer, Shaffer left the legal profession to become an advertising copywriter with Pearl & Dean, a firm that produced most of the film trailers in the United Kingdom. In 1960 Shaffer established his own production company, Hardy Shaffer Associates, which focused on television commercials. Encouraged by his brother, who was already achieving success as a playwright, Shaffer wrote his first play, *The Savage Parade* (pr. 1963), based on the kidnap from Argentina and trial in Israel of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann. Produced in 1963, the play closed after one night.

During the late 1960's, Shaffer experimented with LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), an experience that inspired him to quit advertising in favor of writing plays full time. His next effort was the Tony and Edgar Award-winning work with which his name has been indelibly linked: the clever thriller *Sleuth*. Though Shaffer wrote other plays that are still produced to this day—including *Murderer* (pr. 1975), and *The Case of the Oily Levantine* (pr. 1977; revised as *Whodunnit*, pb. 1983)—after the success of *Sleuth*, he became associated with Alfred Hitchcock. For the renowned director, he wrote screenplays for such films as *Frenzy* (1972), *Death on the Nile* (1978), and *Evil Under the Sun* (1982). Shaffer also wrote screenplays for *The Wicker Man* (1973), *Masada* (1974), and *The Moonstone* (1975). Shaffer's only other novel, *Absolution* (1979), was an adaptation of his earlier screenplay of the same name.

After the early 1980's, Shaffer's output diminished. He cowrote the screenplay for *Appointment with Death* (1988) and developed the story for *Sommersby* (1993), an update of *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1982). His

last published work was a memoir, *So What Did You Expect?* (2001).

Shaffer, who was married since 1985 to his third wife, actress Diane Cilento, died at the age of seventy-five on November 6, 2001.

ANALYSIS

From the beginning of his writing career, in collaboration with his twin brother Peter Shaffer, Anthony Shaffer was known for his keen ear for dialogue. The brothers' three out-of-print mystery novels (*How Doth the Little Crocodile?*, *Woman in the Wardrobe*, and *Withered Murder*), written between 1951 and 1955 under the joint pseudonym Peter Anthony, were all standard entries in the cozy genre: typical drawing-room mysteries with intriguing character types put through their paces in the course of a convoluted plot. The protagonist in the first two novels, an abbreviated series called *Murder Revisited*, was gifted amateur detective Mr. Verity, who assisted the police with unusual cases. The hero of the third novel, *Withered Murder*, was another flamboyant, eccentric master detective, Mr. Fathom. Although the books are otherwise nothing special, it is the characters' speeches that make the novels stand out: wry, sardonic, and urbanely acerbic. His facility for putting witty words into the mouths of characters marks all of Anthony Shaffer's later work.

Shaffer's first published play, *The Savage Parade* (pr. 1963, revived as *This Savage Parade*, pr. 1982), like much of his work, deals with issues beneath the surface of the story. A controversial thriller in which Rudolf Bauer, a Nazi officer, is captured in South America and transported to Tel Aviv to face trial, *The Savage Parade* dramatically examines the concepts of faith, justice, and morality while making the case that Israel has fascist leanings similar to the Third Reich.

The smash hit *Sleuth* is at its core a study of the experience of age versus the enthusiasm of youth. A revenge comedy-tragedy, the play also deals with the competitive nature of players who turn games into deadly serious business, with the disparity between the aristocracy and common folk, with the bitterness of the pure-blood native-born toward ethnic immigrants, and with the difference between appearance and reality.

The latter theme, naturally enough, crops up fre-

quently in Shaffer's plays and screenplays for Hitchcock: without deception and misdirection there would be little mystery in his crime stories. In the film *Frenzy*, for example, the hot-tempered Richard Blaney appears to be a vicious psychosexual serial killer. In the play *Murderer*, main character Norman has apparently killed his girlfriend Millie—but is she really dead? In *Absolution*, Catholic schoolboy Benjie Stanfield falsely confesses to the murder of Blakey, a wanderer he has befriended. In Shaffer's four adaptations for Hitchcock—*Murder on the Orient Express*, 1974; *Death on the Nile*; *Evil Under the Sun*; and *Appointment with Death*—he worked from material provided by the mistress of deception, Agatha Christie.

Sexuality, of a normal or abnormal mature, also factors in much of Shaffer's work. It provides the tension between the two characters in *Sleuth*, who were both involved with the same woman. It is a driving force in *The Wicker Man*, and it permeates the psychosexual thriller *Frenzy*.

Though not a prolific writer by modern standards, Shaffer's theatrical output is a triumph of quality over quantity.

SLEUTH

Shaffer's acknowledged masterpiece, *Sleuth*, made into a critically acclaimed film in 1972 starring Sir Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine, in two acts details a battle of wits between aging aristocrat Andrew Wyke, a successful cozy mystery writer, and a youthful commoner, the half-Italian, half-Jew Milo Tindle—originally Tindolini—who owns a modest travel agency (he is transformed into a hairdresser in the film). The game-loving Wyke invites Tindle to his country manor ostensibly for a conference regarding his spendthrift wife, Marguerite, with whom Milo is having a torrid affair. Outwardly, Wyke, who has a Finnish mistress, Tea, is concerned that Tindle will be unable to provide for Marguerite's ostentatious lifestyle, and that he will be stuck with her once the romance has run its course.

The battle lines are drawn early: to Wyke, everything is a game, ripe for humorous riposte, while Tindle is in deadly earnest. Wyke is scornful of the younger man's background and profession. Tindle is likewise scornful of Wyke's occupation and proves himself capable of puncturing the writer's inflated ego.

ANDREW: (Speaking of his alleged sexual prowess) . . . I'm pretty much of a sexual athlete.

MILO: I suppose these days you're concentrating on the sprints rather than the long distance stuff.

Once the preliminaries are out of the way, Wyke convinces Tindle to steal a box of valuable jewelry that can be fenced on the European continent to produce the wherewithal to provide for Marguerite; Wyke meanwhile will collect the insurance. Andrew concocts an elaborate scheme supposedly for the benefit of investigators, which entails Milo dressing in a clown's costume to carry out the break-in. At the crucial moment, Andrew reveals a game within a game: he produces a pistol and tells Milo that he is going to kill him; as a homeowner preventing a burglary, he will get away with murder. When Milo asks why he is doing it, Andrew bursts out viciously:

ANDREW: I hate you. I hate your smarmy, good-looking Latin face and your easy manner. . . . I hate you because you are a culling spick. A wop—a not one-of-me . . .

This humiliating complication sets off a series of increasingly elaborate twists, turns, and one-upmanship as the plot winds relentlessly to its surprising and suspenseful conclusion. Toward the end of the play, Milo, the put-upon dupe, makes the following observation, which forms the thesis of the work:

MILO: Take a look at yourself, Andrew, and ask yourself a few simple questions about your attachment to the English detective story. Perhaps you might come to realize that the only place you can inhabit is a dead world—a country house world where peers and colonels died in their studies; where butlers steal the port, and pert parlor maids cringe, weeping malapropisms behind green baize doors. It's a world of coldness and class hatred, and two-dimensional characters who are not expected to communicate; it's a world where only the amateurs win, and where foreigners are automatically figures of fun. To be *puzzled* is all. . . . To put it shortly, the detective story is the normal recreation of snobbish, outdated, life-hating, ignoble minds . . .

THE WICKER MAN

Cowritten with Robin Hardy (who directed the film), *The Wicker Man* is a thriller with erotic and mythical undertones. The plot concerns protagonist Neil

Howie (played in the film by Edward Woodward), a police sergeant of the make-believe West Highland constabulary in Scotland, who receives a message telling him that a girl, Rowan Morrison—whose snapshot is enclosed—has disappeared on Summerisle, an obscure island beyond the Outer Hebrides. When Howie travels to the island to investigate the claim, he discovers a community of modern pagans (led on celluloid by Christopher Lee). The cult members believe in reincarnation, worship the sun, and perform sexual rituals to appease nature. These practices contrast sharply with the beliefs of Howie, a devout Christian, who is both shocked at the pagans' uninhibited behavior and simultaneously drawn to one of the earthy and attractive female practitioners of the cult.

During his investigation, Howie receives conflicting accounts of the missing girl: Some deny knowledge of her while others affirm she was there but has died. Howie uncovers evidence that suggests Rowan was, or is to be, a human sacrifice intended to ensure fertile crops. He dresses in disguise to attend a pagan May Day celebration but finds too late that the letter he received was the opening gambit in an elaborate ploy to bring him to the island for the cult's nefarious purposes.

A chilling, suspenseful, yet plausible examination of age-old Celtic beliefs flourishing in modern society, *The Wicker Man* and its horrific, yet inevitable, finale linger long in the memory. A 2006 remake of the film—though considerably different in a number of key aspects—starred Nicolas Cage.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Woman in the Wardrobe*, 1951 (as Anthony); *How Doth the Little Crocodile?*, 1952 (as Anthony); *Withered Murder*, 1955 (as Anthony); *The Wicker Man*, 1978 (with Robin Hardy; novelization of screenplay); *Absolution*, 1979 (novelization of screenplay)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *The Savage Parade*, pr. 1963 (revised as *This Savage Parade*, pr. 1982); *Sleuth*, pr., pb. 1970; *Murderer*, pr. 1975; *The Case of the Oily Levante*,

pr. 1977 (revised as *Whodunnit*, pb. 1983); *Widow's Weeds: Or, For Years I Couldn't Wear My Black*, pr. 1977

SCREENPLAYS: *Play with a Gypsy*, 1970; *Black Comedy*, 1970 (adapted from the play by Peter Shaffer); *Cry of the Penguins*, 1971 (adapted from a Graham Billing story, re-released as *Mr. Forbush and the Penguins*, 1971); *Frenzy*, 1972 (adapted from the Arthur La Bern novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square*); *Sleuth*, 1973 (adapted from the author's play); *The Wicker Man*, 1973; *The Goshawk Squadron*, 1973; *Masada*, 1974; *Murder on the Orient Express*, 1974 (adapted from the novel by Agatha Christie); *The Moonstone*, 1975; *Death on the Nile*, 1978 (adapted from the novel by Agatha Christie); *Absolution*, 1978; *Evil Under the Sun*, 1982 (adapted from the novel by Agatha Christie); *Appointment with Death*, 1988 (co-written with Peter Buckman and Michael Winner, adapted from the novel by Agatha Christie); *Sommersby*, 1993 (co-writer of story, adapted from the 1982 French film *The Return of Martin Guerre*)

NONFICTION: *So What Did You Expect?*, 2001

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Hewes, Henry. "The Theater: Two Can Play at a Game." *Saturday Review* 53, no. 48 (November 28, 1970): 6. A highly favorable review of the produc-

tion of *Sleuth*, starring Anthony Quayle and Keith Baxter, which points out the "cat-and-mouse by-play in which comedy and terror fluctuate," and which notes the author's clever criticisms of a number of British institutions.

Kalem, T. E. Review of *Sleuth*, by Anthony Shaffer. *Time*, November 23, 1970, 100. A highly favorable review of the stage version of *Sleuth*, which points out its satirical nature in which the author gives vent to anti-British sentiments, and calls the work one of the best plays of its genre.

Kerr, Walter. Review of *Whodunnit*, by Anthony Shaffer. "Stage View: A Parody That Fizzles, a Drama That Baffles." *The New York Times*, January 9, 1983, p. H5. This is an unfavorable review of Shaffer's *Whodunnit*, which is deemed "flat and stale," a condition that is blamed more on the producer than the author.

Lewis, Paul. "Anthony Shaffer, Seventy-five, Author of Long-Running 'Sleuth' Dies." *New York Times*, November 12, 2001, p. F7. Obituary of Shaffer notes his greatest hit, *Sleuth*, and describes his background and relationship to Peter Shaffer.

Newsweek, 66, no. 12 (September 21, 1970): 104-105.

This is a brief recap of the forthcoming theatrical season, mentioning Anthony Quayle's re-creation of his London role in Shaffer's *Sleuth*, opening at the Music Box.

Shaffer, Anthony. *So What Did You Expect?* London: Picador, 2001. Shaffer's memoir takes him from childhood through his days as a lawyer to his success with *Sleuth* and beyond.

GEORGES SIMENON

Born: Liège, Belgium; February 13, 1903

Died: Lausanne, Switzerland; September 4, 1989

Also wrote as Christian Brulls; Georges Sim

Types of plot: Police procedural; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Maigret, 1930-1972

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JULES MAIGRET is chief inspector of the Police Judiciaire (the French equivalent of Scotland Yard). He is about forty-five in most of the stories, although there are a few that look forward to his retirement or backward to his first cases. He and his self-effacing, intuitively understanding wife have no children, their one daughter having died in infancy. His approach is to penetrate the particular world of each event, getting to know the causative factors and interrelationships among those involved; he often feels a strong bond with the criminals, so that when he brings them to justice he is left with ambivalent feelings.

CONTRIBUTION

Georges Simenon's extremely prolific writing career provided fans of the *roman policier* with a number of unrelated crime novels marked by extreme fidelity to detail and with the series featuring Inspector Maigret. The novels featuring Maigret represent a fusion of the American detective story tradition with French realism. The stories are somewhat reminiscent of the American hard-boiled school, particularly the works of Ross Macdonald, in the lack of sentimental justice and in the often-fatalistic plots in which "old sins cast long shadows" and bring about current tragedies. The psychological realism of the more tightly drawn Maigret characters, however, is more reminiscent of François Mauriac or Julien Green. Moreover, the conclusions are usually less devastating than those of the hard-boiled mysteries, and there is often an element of muted optimism in the Maigret novel.

Critical circles have long argued whether Simenon's detective stories are more than genre pieces and ap-

proach literature. His many other novels use the same devices and express the same themes as his Maigret stories: the desire for home and the impossibility of finding it, the destructive potency of the past, the futility of flight, and the fatal seductiveness of illusion. His major contribution consists of the vividly drawn, almost symbiotic relationship between criminal and inspector—and the portrait of Maigret himself as he enters into the scene of each event pertaining to the crime, his vision informed by the French maxim *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner* (to understand all is to forgive all).

BIOGRAPHY

Georges Joseph Christian Simenon was born on February 13, 1903, in Liège, Belgium. His father, Désiré Simenon, was an accountant from a solid petit bourgeois background; his mother, Henriette Brull, came from a family known for financial instability and social snobbery. The contrast between his paternal and maternal families preoccupied Simenon and often figures in his stories, which tend to idealize the petit bourgeois life and cruelly satirize the pretentious social climbers of the upper-middle class.

Simenon's family was never well-off, and his education was interrupted by the need to earn money when he learned (at the age of sixteen) that his father was seriously ill. After failing at two menial jobs, he became a cub reporter, at which he was an immediate success. While working at a newspaper and frequenting a group of young artists and poets, he wrote his first novel, *Au pont des arches* (1921), at the age of seventeen. In 1920 he became engaged to Regine Renchon and enlisted in the army; in 1922 he went to Paris, and he was married the following year. At this time he was writing short stories for Paris journals with amazing rapidity; he wrote more than one thousand stories over the next few years. For two years he was secretary to two young aristocrats, and through them, especially the second, the marquess de Tracy, he made literary connections. In 1924 he began writing popular novels at an incredible rate. The first, a romance titled *Le Roman d'une dactylo* (1924; the novel

of a secretary), was written in a single morning. Simenon ordinarily spent three to five days writing a novel; he was once hired to write a novel in three days before the public in a glass cage, but the publisher who set up the stunt went bankrupt before the event. In 1929 he wrote his first Maigret, *Pietr-le-Letton* (1931; *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett*, 1933; also known as *Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, 1963); Maigret was an instant success.

In 1939 Simenon's son Marc was born, but his marriage was already in trouble, partly because of his rapacious womanizing (in later life, in a typical Simenon embellishment, he claimed to have had sexual relations with ten thousand women). In the 1940's he traveled to the United States, where he lived for ten years in relative contentment, adding to his repertoire of atmospheres. In 1949 he was divorced from Regine; the day after the divorce was finalized he married Denyse Ouimet, with whom the couple had been traveling. That year his second son, Johnny, was born to

Denyse. He and Denyse had two more children, Marie-Georges (born in 1953) and Pierre (born in 1959, after their return to Europe). He received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1966.

Denyse's alcoholism led to their separation and a bitter literary attack on Simenon in her memoirs, *Un Oiseau pour le chat* (1978). Because it vilified the father adored by Marie-Georges, the book contributed to her depression and suicide in 1978. After her death, Simenon was wracked by guilt and memorialized his daughter in *Mémoires intimes* (1981; *Intimate Memoirs*, 1984), "including Marie-Jo's book," drawing in part on notes, diaries, letters, and voice recordings that Marie-Georges left behind. Though scandal resulted from the revelation that her suppressed incestuous love for her father may have led to her death, a potentially greater scandal was itself suppressed by Denyse's lawyers, who recalled the books to censor the story of Marie-Jo's sexual abuse by her mother at the age of eleven. Unable to reconcile with Denyse, Simenon would live out the rest of his days with his Italian companion Teresa Sburelin.

For most of Simenon's writing life he produced from one to seven novels a year, writing both Maigrets and serious novels. In 1973 he decided to stop producing novels, and after that time he wrote only autobiographical works, including the controversial *Intimate Memoirs*.

ANALYSIS

Georges Simenon began his writing career with romances, envisioning an audience of secretaries and shop girls, but he soon began to imagine another kind of mass audience and another genre. He began writing short thrillers in his early twenties, and one of these, *Train de nuit* (1930), featured a police officer named Maigret, although this Maigret was only a shadow character. The full embodiment of Maigret came to Simenon all at once after three glasses of gin on a summer afternoon:

As Simenon walked, a picture of his principal character came to him: a big man, powerful, a massive presence rather than an individual. He smoked his pipe, wore a

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Georges Simenon in 1981. (AP/Wide World Photos)

bowler hat and a thick winter coat with a velvet collar (both later abandoned as fashions in police clothing changed). But he did not see his face. *Simenon has never seen the face of Jules Maigret*. "I still do not know what his face looks like," he says. "I only see the man and his presence."

THE STRANGE CASE OF PETER THE LETT

The first Maigret, *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett*, was begun the next day, finished within a few more days, and promptly sent to Fayard, Simenon's publisher. Yet it was not the first Maigret to appear; Simenon rapidly wrote four more, so that five Maigret novels appeared almost simultaneously and established this popular new detective firmly in the French mind.

Inspector Maigret of the Police Judiciaire is the idealized father figure whose life in many ways reflects that of Désiré Simenon. Born into a petit bourgeois household, he has the close tie to the land and the contentment in small pleasures of the senses associated with petit bourgeois life. He enjoys his pipe and the air on a clear Paris day and the meals prepared for him by his wife, a self-effacing woman whose almost wordless sympathy is equaled in detective fiction only by that of Jenny Maitland. Saddened by his intuitive understanding of the underside of life (and also by the death of his only child—which puts him in the class of the wounded detective), he desires to bring about healing more than to bring criminals to justice. Because his personal desires do not always merge with his professional duties, he is sometimes unhappy about the results of his investigations.

Maigret's method is intuitive rather than ratiocinative, which places him outside the locked-room armchair-detective school. Indeed, Maigret often says, "I never think." He means that he feels and senses instead of figuring, and he arrives at his intuitions by immersing himself completely in the milieu of the crime. As he becomes more and more involved with the figures of the incident, he learns to think as they do, and the truth emerges. It is ironic that although the Maigret books followed one another with such astonishing rapidity, there is no classic Maigret plot. Although usually the criminal is caught and brought to justice, occasionally he escapes. Now and then he is punished

despite Maigret's deep regrets, and at least once the wrong man is executed. The stories do not provide the archetypal pleasure of the Agatha Christie type of plot, in which the villain is caught and the society thus purged. Rather, there is often a sense of the relativity of innocence and guilt, and the inescapability of evil. Moreover, it is somewhat misleading to think of the novels as police novels, for Maigret is often fighting the system as well as the criminals. Hampered by bureaucratic shackles and a superior (Judge Comelieu) who represents reason over intuition and head over heart, Maigret is pressed from both sides in his effort to provide some healing for the fractured human beings he encounters.

MAIGRET RETURNS

What makes the Maigrets a momentous departure from the traditional realm of the detective story, though, is not the characterization of Maigret, however intriguing he may be. It is their realism, built on intensely observed detail and grounded in a rich variety of settings, from the locks along the Seine to the countryside of the Loire valley. The stories enter into particular trades and professions, always describing by feel as well as by sight, so that the reader has a sense of having been given an intimate glimpse into a closed world. Even in *Maigret* (1934; *Maigret Returns*, 1941), the novel that was intended to conclude the series, the details of the retirement cottage are so subtly and lovingly sketched that readers automatically make the comparison between the country life and the Paris to which Maigret is driven to return by the pressure of events. Simenon was a newspaperman par excellence and his powers of observation and description are his genius. In the context of the novels, the details of weather, dress, and furniture acquire symbolic significance. It is this evocative use of the concrete that raises the Maigrets from the genre and makes them, like Graham Greene's thrillers, literature.

The first batch of Maigrets consisted of nineteen novels written over four years, from 1930 to 1934, and ending with *Maigret Returns*, which is atypically set in Maigret's retirement years. It would seem that Simenon had decided to leave Maigret to cultivate his garden. Simenon then wrote a number of other novels, some of which received critical acclaim. André Gide

was one of the writer's greatest fans, especially appreciating the nondetective novels; what he found to be Simenon's most compelling quality applies to the Maigrets as well as the other novels. Gide credited Simenon with "a striking, haunting vision of the lives of others in creating living, gasping, panting beings." Other fans bemoaned the lack of new Maigrets; one even sent a cable to the Police Judiciaire reporting that Maigret was missing. Indeed, Simenon was publicly so involved with Maigret that he could not leave him long in his garden; in 1939, the writer began the second series of novels concerning the popular detective. He continued writing Maigrets along with his other stories until he finally stopped writing novels altogether in the early 1970's.

The non-Maigret novels with which he interspersed the Maigrets had many of the characteristics of the detective story, except that usually there was little (if any) focus on detection. These are psychological crime novels somewhat similar to the non-Inspector Wexford novels of Ruth Rendell: The character of the criminal is dissected, his effect on others is analyzed, and an ironic discrepancy develops between his self-image and the way he is perceived. The atmosphere tends to be colder and more clinical because of the absence of the father figure, Maigret. Ironically, the theme in these stories is often the need for warmth, identification, and family.

THE LODGER

Perhaps typical of the non-Maigret is *Le Locataire* (1934; *The Lodger*, 1943), a story of a homeless Jew who impulsively commits a casual and brutal murder and then finds a home in a boardinghouse. The atmosphere of the boardinghouse—its standard decor, its trivial and yet telling conversations—is so perfectly portrayed that it is easy to connect this pension with Simenon's mother's experience taking in roomers. The focus of the story is the myth of home with which the exiled Elie comforts himself, a myth that has a dimension of truth. Even when caught (the police are in the background, and readers barely encounter them but do see the results of their investigations), Elie is followed by the dream of home he has invented, as the owner of the boardinghouse goes to see Elie off on the convict ship.

Criminals notwithstanding, these novels are not fully realized detective stories, because the discovering or unraveling aspect is missing (as well as the complementary balance between investigator and culprit, who in the Maigrets are often something like father and errant son). These other novels are more like case studies that underscore the unpredictability of the human animal in the most extreme circumstances. The Maigret addict who is also a general detective-story fan may be unable to make the transition.

The second Maigrets did not begin appearing until 1942, when four of them appeared in rapid succession to launch the new series. Many of these new Maigrets do not contain the detective's name in the title, causing some confusion among Maigret fans and those who would choose only Simenon's non-Maigret novels. Much critical discussion has focused on the differences between the new and the old series, but in fact the later Maigrets are not substantially different from the early ones, although it might be argued that they show more careful attention to plot and that they have a higher proportion of main characters who are *ratés*—failures—of one sort or another. One unarguable difference, too, is that they reflect Simenon's American experience, even going so far as to introduce an American police officer who serves as foil and apprentice to Maigret.

SIMENON AND GRAHAM GREENE

Considering the mixture of detective novels and other novels, as well as the characteristic Simenon plots and themes in both, it is worth comparing the French novelist with Graham Greene, who also wrote a mixture of thrillers and literary novels and dealt with the same materials in both. The French failures in the Maigrets correspond with Greene's seedy British types. The themes of flight, of the need to escape self, of intuitive penetration of the darkness of human existence are parallel. Both authors use precise, concrete details to communicate a moral ambience. An important difference is that Greene's Catholic underpinnings are not present in Simenon's novels, or at least are not immediately evident. Some critics have claimed to see them, and Simenon, who claimed agnosticism, has conceded that there may be something to the religious claims made for his work.

The reliable character of Maigret carries Simenon's detective novels even when their plots fail. Fatherly, reflective, Maigret makes the reader believe that justice will be done if it is humanly possible—a qualification that sets these novels apart from the Golden Age detective stories by such writers as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, in which justice is always done. In the typical Maigret, the detective is filling his pipe at the beginning of the story and looking out his office window at some unpleasant manifestation of Paris weather when the case begins. He consults his officers, the same characters briefly but effectively sketched in novel after novel: the young Lapointe, whom Maigret fathers (and calls by the familiar *tu*); the Inspector's old friend Janvier; the miserable Lognon who is like Eeyore in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), always feeling abused and neglected; and others. (Sometimes the inspector is at home, asleep, when the call comes—and his wife has everything ready for his departure before he hangs up.) Throughout the investigation, he orders some characteristic drink (different drinks for different cases) at various cafés, while Mme Maigret's cassoulets or tripes go cold at home. (Some of Maigret's favorite dishes make the American reader's hair stand on end.) When the criminal is finally apprehended and his confession recorded, Maigret often goes home to eat and to restore himself in the comfort of his wife's silent sympathy. The reader is always Maigret for Maigret's little idiosyncrasies and for those of the other recurrent characters; thus, the ritual is enacted successfully even if there is some standard deviation from the typical plot, such as the escape of the criminal or a final sense that justice was not quite done.

Despite the pleasant familiarity of the characters and the archetypal paternalism of the inspector, style and theme give the Maigret novels depth. The smallest observations—how a prostitute's face looks when dawn comes in the course of questioning, what is in an aggressively house-proud bourgeoisie's kitchen, what the nightclub owner's wife does each night to prepare for the club's opening—are so convincingly portrayed that the reader feels that he too is penetrating into the mystery. The mystery is the secret of the human heart, as it is in Graham Greene's novels. Simenon's style is not hard-boiled, nor is it overly descriptive. It is evoca-

tive and direct—a few words, a detail, a snatch of dialogue carry multiple suggestions. A half sentence may intimate an entire complex relationship between a husband and wife. The recurrent weather details make the reader gain a sense of the atmosphere. Simenon's details not only are visual but also appeal to the other senses, particularly the tactile. The reader feels on his own skin the fog that is blurring Maigret's vision; he too glories in the occasional clear day. Simenon's use of the concrete is not unlike Colette's; indeed, this famous celebrant of the sensual was Simenon's adviser and friend.

As has been suggested, the flaw in the Maigret story is most often the plot; Simenon claimed to give little attention to plotting, and even not to know how a story would end until he had finished it. Nevertheless, his best plots are psychological tours de force. The unveiling of character is steady throughout the series of events; readers sense the intuitive rightness of Maigret's insights, and, at the end, they find that the motive meshes with the deed.

MAIGRET IN MONTMARTRE

Not all of his stories, however, afford this sense of closure. *Maigret au "Picratt's"* (1951; *Maigret in Montmartre*, 1963) is a case in point. In this story the focus is on the victim, a twenty-year-old nightclub stripper who becomes after her death a fully realized character, through the course of the investigation. She is given a subtle case-study history and a network of believable motivations, and through analysis of her life Maigret is able to identify her killer. Yet this killer remains a shadow character himself, and therefore the final scenes in which the police track him down are somewhat anticlimactic. One expects some final revelation, some unveiling of the killer's nature, but none is forthcoming.

Other stories, such as *Maigret et Monsieur Charles* (1972; *Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, 1973), focus on both criminal and victim, so that the conclusion has no (or at least fewer) loose ends. It is indeed rare that the plot of any Maigret is itself particularly compelling. Plot is a function of character in Simenon's works, and the success or failure of plot hinges on the adequate development and believable motivation of the people involved. The early Maigrets, such as *Le*

Charretier de la "Providence" (1931; *The Crime at Lock 14*, 1934; also known as *Maigret Meets a Milord*, 1963), are particularly susceptible to weakness in plot. This story gives an intriguing, provocative picture of a criminal in whom the reader somehow cannot quite believe.

No one, however, reads Maigrets for the plot. They are read for character, for atmosphere, for the ritual of detection, for the more subtle benefits of this genre of literature, including no doubt the values Aristotle found in tragedy: the purging of pity and fear. Simenon's true genius lay in his merging of French realism with the traditional detective story, with the effect that the detective-story understanding of justice is modified to an ideal that is appropriate for life in the real world. Justice in the Maigret stories is not a negative, fatalistic force, as it usually is in the stories of the hard-boiled school (some of which have no winners in the end except the investigator, and all he has gained is the sad truth). Nor is justice the inexorable working out of divine retribution as it is in the Golden Age stories, in which evil is purged and the innocent are left ready to begin new lives. Rather, Simenon's world is a complex and ambiguous place where evil and good are closely related and cannot always be separated. There is still, however, a chance for purgation and rededication, usually supplied by the intuitive researches of that archetypal father figure, Inspector Maigret.

MAIGRET AND MONSIEUR CHARLES

The last Maigret, *Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, appeared in 1972; after that, Simenon announced that he would write no more novels. *Maigret and Monsieur Charles* is a subtle psychological study of an unhealthy relationship. This story, satisfying on levels of plot, character, and theme, makes an appropriate farewell to Maigret. The hundreds of Maigret novels and short stories Simenon wrote over a period of forty years will continue to appeal not only to detective-story fans but also to those readers attracted to evocative description and intrigued by the darker side of human experience.

Janet McCann

Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR MAIGRET SERIES: 1931-1940 •

Pietr-le-Letton, 1931 (*The Strange Case of Peter the Lett*, 1933; also known as *Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, 1963); *M. Gallet, décédé*, 1931 (*The Death of Monsieur Gallet*, 1932; also known as *Maigret Stone-walled*, 1963); *Le Pendu de Saint-Pholien*, 1931 (*The Crime of Inspector Maigret*, 1933; also known as *Maigret and the Hundred Gibbets*, 1963); *Le Charretier de la "Providence,"* 1931 (*The Crime at Lock 14*, 1934; also known as *Maigret Meets a Milord*, 1963); *La Tête d'un homme*, 1931 (*A Battle of Nerves*, 1939); *Le Chien jaune*, 1931 (*A Face for a Clue*, 1939; also known as *Maigret and the Yellow Dog*, 1987; also known as *The Yellow Dog*, 1940); *La Nuit du carrefour*, 1931 (*The Crossroad Murders*, 1933; also known as *Maigret at the Crossroads*, 1964); *Un Crime en Hollande*, 1931 (*A Crime in Holland*, 1940); *Au rendez-vous des terreneuves*, 1931 (*The Sailors' Rendezvous*, 1940); *La Danseuse du Gai-Moulin*, 1931 (*At the "Gai-Moulin,"* 1940); *La Guinguette à deux sous*, 1931 (*The Guinguette by the Seine*, 1940); *Le Port des brumes*, 1932 (*Death of a Harbour Master*, 1941); *L'Ombre chinoise*, 1932 (*The Shadow in the Courtyard*, 1934; also known as *Maigret Mystified*, 1964); *L'Affaire Saint-Fiacre*, 1932 (*The Saint-Fiacre Affair*, 1940; also known as *Maigret Goes Home*, 1967); *Chez les Flamands*, 1932 (*The Flemish Shop*, 1940); *Le Fou de Bergerac*, 1932 (*The Madman of Bergerac*, 1940); *Liberty Bar*, 1932 (English translation, 1940); *L'écluse numéro un*, 1932 (*The Lock at Charenton*, 1941); *Maigret*, 1934 (*Maigret Returns*, 1941)

1941-1950 • *Cécile est morte*, 1942; *Les Caves du Majestic*, 1942; *La Maison du juge*, 1942; *Signé Picpus*, 1944 (*To Any Lengths*, 1958); *L'Inspecteur cadavre*, 1944; *Les Nouvelles Enquêtes de Maigret*, 1944 (*The Short Cases of Inspector Maigret*, 1959); *Félicie est là*, 1944; *La Pipe de Maigret*, 1947; *Maigret se fâche*, 1947; *Maigret à New York*, 1947 (*Maigret in New York's Underworld*, 1955); *Maigret et l'inspecteur malgraceux*, 1947 (translated in *Maigret's Christmas*, 1951); *Les Vacances de Maigret*, 1948 (*Maigret on Holiday*, 1950; also known as *No Vacation for Maigret*, 1953); *Maigret et son mort*,

1948 (*Maigret's Special Murder*, 1964); *La Première Enquête de Maigret*, 1949 (*Maigret's First Case*, 1958); *Mon Ami Maigret*, 1949 (*My Friend Maigret*, 1956); *Maigret chez le coroner*, 1949 (*Maigret at the Coroner's*, 1980); *Maigret et la vieille dame*, 1950 (*Maigret and the Old Lady*, 1958); *L'Amie de Mme Maigret*, 1950 (*Madame Maigret's Own Case*, 1959; also known as *Madame Maigret's Friend*, 1960)

1951-1955 • *Un Noël de Maigret*, 1951 (*Maigret's Christmas*, 1951); *Les Mémoires de Maigret*, 1951 (*Maigret's Memoirs*, 1963); *Maigret au "Picratt's,"* 1951 (*Maigret in Montmartre*, 1954); *Maigret en meublé*, 1951 (*Maigret Takes a Room*, 1960); *Maigret et la grande perche*, 1951 (*Maigret and the Burglar's Wife*, 1969); *Maigret, Lognon, et les gangsters*, 1952 (*Inspector Maigret and the Killers*, 1954; also known as *Maigret and the Gangsters*, 1974); *Le Révolver de Maigret*, 1952 (*Maigret's Revolver*, 1956); *Maigret et l'homme du banc*, 1953 (*Maigret and the Man on the Bench*, 1975); *Maigret a peur*, 1953 (*Maigret Afraid*, 1961); *Maigret se trompe*, 1953 (*Maigret's Mistake*, 1954); *Maigret à l'école*, 1954 (*Maigret Goes to School*, 1957); *Maigret et la jeune morte*, 1954 (*Maigret and the Dead Girl*, 1955); *Maigret chez le ministre*, 1954 (*Maigret and the Calame Report*, 1969); *Maigret et le corps sans tête*, 1955 (*Maigret and the Headless Corpse*, 1967); *Maigret tend un piège*, 1955 (*Maigret Sets a Trap*, 1965)

1956-1960 • *Un échec de Maigret*, 1956 (*Maigret's Failure*, 1962); *Maigret s'amuse*, 1957 (*Maigret's Little Joke*, 1957); *Maigret voyage*, 1958 (*Maigret and the Millionaires*, 1974); *Les Scrupules de Maigret*, 1958 (*Maigret Has Scruples*, 1959); *Maigret et les témoins récalcitrants*, 1959 (*Maigret and the Reluctant Witnesses*, 1959); *Une Confiance de Maigret*, 1959 (*Maigret Has Doubts*, 1968); *Maigret aux assises*, 1960 (*Maigret in Court*, 1961); *Maigret et les vieillards*, 1960 (*Maigret in Society*, 1962)

1961-1965 • *Maigret et le voleur paresseux*, 1961 (*Maigret and the Lazy Burglar*, 1963); *Maigret et les braves gens*, 1962 (*Maigret and the Black Sheep*, 1976); *Maigret et le client du samedi*, 1962 (*Maigret and the Saturday Caller*, 1964); *Maigret et le clochard*, 1963 (*Maigret and the Bum*, 1973); *La Colère de Maigret*, 1963 (*Maigret Loses His Temper*, 1964);

Maigret et le fantôme, 1964 (*Maigret and the Apparition*, 1975); *Maigret se défend*, 1964 (*Maigret on the Defensive*, 1966); *La Patience de Maigret*, 1965 (*The Patience of Maigret*, 1966)

1966-1972 • *Maigret et l'affaire Nahour*, 1966 (*Maigret and the Nahour Case*, 1967); *Le Voleur de Maigret*, 1967 (*Maigret's Pickpocket*, 1968); *Maigret à Vichy*, 1968 (*Maigret in Vichy*, 1969); *Maigret hésite*, 1968 (*Maigret Hesitates*, 1970); *L'Ami de l'enfance de Maigret*, 1968 (*Maigret's Boyhood Friend*, 1970); *Maigret et le tueur*, 1969 (*Maigret and the Killer*, 1971); *Maigret et le marchand de vin*, 1970 (*Maigret and the Wine Merchant*, 1971); *La Folle de Maigret*, 1970 (*Maigret and the Madwoman*, 1972); *Maigret et l'homme tout seul*, 1971 (*Maigret and the Loner*, 1975); *Maigret et l'indicateur*, 1971 (*Maigret and the Informer*, 1972); *Maigret et Monsieur Charles*, 1972 (*Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, 1973)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1925-1935 • *L'Orgueil qui meurt*, 1925; *Nox l'insaisissable*, 1926; *Aimer, mourir*, 1928; *Une Femme à tuer*, 1929; *Pour venger son père*, 1931; *Marie-Mystère*, 1931; *Le Rêve qui meurt*, 1931; *Baisers mortels*, 1931; *Le Relais d'Alsace*, 1931 (*The Man from Everywhere*, 1941); *Victime de son fils*, 1931; *Âme de jeune fille*, 1931; *Les Chercheurs de bonheur*, 1931; *L'Épave*, 1932; *La Maison de l'inquiétude*, 1932; *Matricule 12*, 1932; *Le Passager du "Polarlys,"* 1932 (*The Mystery of the "Polarlys,"* 1942; also known as *Danger at Sea*, 1954); *La Figurante*, 1932; *Fièvre*, 1932; *Les Forçats de Paris*, 1932; *La Fiancée du diable*, 1933; *La Femme rousse*, 1933; *Le Château des Sables Rouges*, 1933; *Deuxième Bureau*, 1933; *L'Âne Rouge*, 1933 (*The Night-Club*, 1979); *La Maison du canal*, 1933 (*The House by the Canal*, 1948); *Les Fiançailles de M. Hire*, 1933 (*Mr. Hire's Engagement*, 1956); *Le Coup de lune*, 1933 (*Tropic Moon*, 1942); *Le Haut Mal*, 1933 (*The Woman in the Gray House*, 1942); *L'Homme de Londres*, 1934 (*Newhaven-Dieppe*, 1942); *Le Locataire*, 1934 (*The Lodger*, 1943); *L'Évasion*, 1934; *Les Suicidés*, 1934 (*One Way Out*, 1943); *Les Pitard*, 1935 (*A Wife at Sea*, 1949); *Les Clients d'Avrenos*, 1935; *Quartier Nègre*, 1935

1936-1940 • *Les Demoiselles de Concarneau*, 1936 (*The Breton Sisters*, 1943); *45° à l'ombre*, 1936;

Long Cours, 1936 (*The Long Exile*, 1982; *L'Évadé*, 1936 (*The Disintegration of J. P. G.*, 1937); *L'Île empoisonnée*, 1937; *Seul parmi les gorilles*, 1937; *Faubourg*, 1937 (*Home Town*, 1944); *L'Assassin*, 1937 (*The Murderer*, 1949); *Le Blanc à lunettes*, 1937 (*Talatala*, 1943); *Le Testament Donadieu*, 1937 (*The Shadow Falls*, 1945); *Ceux de la soif*, 1938; *Les Trois Crimes de mes amis*, 1938; *Chemin sans issue*, 1938 (*Blind Alley*, 1946); *L'Homme qui regardait passer les trains*, 1938 (*The Man Who Watched the Trains Go By*, 1945); *Les Rescapés du Télémaque*, 1938 (*The Survivors*, 1965); *Monsieur la Souris*, 1938 (*The Mouse*, 1950); *Touriste de bananes: Ou, Les Dimanches de Tahiti*, 1938 (*Banana Tourist*, 1946); *La Marie du port*, 1938 (*A Chit of a Girl*, 1949; also known as *The Girl in Waiting*); *Le Suspect*, 1938 (*The Green Thermos*, 1944); *Les Sœurs Lacroix*, 1938 (*Poisoned Relations*, 1950); *Le Cheval Blanc*, 1938 (*The White Horse Inn*, 1980); *Chez Krull*, 1939 (English translation, 1966); *Le Bourgemestre de Furnes*, 1939 (*Burgomaster of Furnes*, 1952); *Le Coup de vague*, 1939; *Les Inconnus dans la maison*, 1940 (*Strangers in the House*, 1951); *Malempin*, 1940 (*The Family Life*, 1978)

1941-1945 • *Cour d'assises*, 1941 (*Justice*, 1949); *La Maison des sept jeunes filles*, 1941; *L'Outlaw*, 1941 (*The Outlaw*, 1986); *Bergelon*, 1941 (*The Delivery*, 1981); *Il pleut, bergère . . .*, 1941 (*Black Rain*, 1949); *Le Voyageur de la Toussaint*, 1941 (*Strange Inheritance*, 1950); *Oncle Charles s'est enfermé*, 1942 (*Uncle Charles Has Locked Himself In*, 1987); *La Veuve Couderc*, 1942 (*Ticket of Leave*, 1954; also known as *The Widow*, 1955); *La Vérité sur Bébé Donge*, 1942 (*I Take This Woman*, 1953; also known as *The Trial of Bébé Donge*); *Le Fils Cardinaud*, 1942 (*Young Cardinaud*, 1956); *Le Rapport du gendarme*, 1944 (*The Gendarme's Report*, 1951); *Le Fenêtre des Rouet*, 1945 (*Across the Street*, 1954); *L'Âiné des Ferchaux*, 1945 (*Magnet of Doom*, 1948)

1946-1950 • *Les Noces de Poitiers*, 1946; *Le Cercle des Mahe*, 1946; *La Fuite de Monsieur Monde*, 1945 (*Monsieur Monde Vanishes*, 1967); *Trois Chambres à Manhattan*, 1947 (*Three Beds in Manhattan*, 1964); *Au bout du rouleau*, 1947; *Le Clan des Ostendais*, 1947 (*The Ostenders*, 1952); *Lettre à mon*

judge, 1947 (*Act of Passion*, 1952); *Le Destin des Malou*, 1947 (*The Fate of the Malous*, 1962); *Le Passager clandestin*, 1947 (*The Stowaway*, 1957); *Pédigree*, 1948 (English translation, 1962); *Le Bilan Malétras*, 1948; *La Jument perdue*, 1948; *La Neige était sale*, 1948 (*The Snow Was Black*, 1950; also known as *The Stain in the Snow*, 1953); *Le Fond de la bouteille*, 1949 (*The Bottom of the Bottle*, 1954); *Les Fantômes du chapelier*, 1949 (*The Hatter's Ghosts*, 1956); *Les Quatre Jours du pauvre homme*, 1949 (*Four Days in a Lifetime*, 1953); *Un Nouveau dans la ville*, 1950; *Les Volets verts*, 1950 (*The Heart of a Man*, 1951); *L'Enterrement de Monsieur Bouvet*, 1950 (*The Burial of Monsieur Bouvet*, 1955)

1951-1955 • *Tante Jeanne*, 1951 (*Aunt Jeanne*, 1953); *Le Temps d'Anaïs*, 1951 (*The Girl in His Past*, 1952); *Une Vie comme neuve*, 1951 (*A New Lease on Life*, 1963); *Marie qui loche*, 1951 (*The Girl with a Squint*, 1978); *La Mort de Belle*, 1952 (*Belle*, 1967); *Les Frères Rico*, 1952 (*The Brothers Rico*, 1967); *Antoine et Julie*, 1953 (*The Magician*, 1955); *L'Escalier de fer*, 1953 (*The Iron Staircase*, 1963); *Feux rouges*, 1953 (*The Hitchhiker*, 1955); *Crime impuni*, 1954 (*The Fugitive*, 1955); *L'Horloger d'Everton*, 1954 (*The Watchmaker of Everton*, 1955); *Le Grand Bob*, 1954 (*Big Bob*, 1954); *Les Témoins*, 1954 (*The Witnesses*, 1956); *La Boule noire*, 1955; *Les Complices*, 1955 (*The Accomplices*, 1964)

1956-1960 • *En cas de malheur*, 1956 (*In Case of Emergency*, 1958); *Le Petit Homme d'Arkangelsk*, 1956 (*The Little Man from Archangel*, 1966); *Le Fils*, 1957 (*The Son*, 1958); *Le Nègre*, 1957 (*The Negro*, 1959); *Strip-tease*, 1958 (English translation, 1959); *Le Président*, 1958 (*The Premier*, 1966); *Le Passage de la ligne*, 1958; *Dimanche*, 1958 (*Sunday*, 1960); *La Vieille*, 1959 (*The Grandmother*, 1980); *Le Veuf*, 1959 (*The Widower*, 1961); *L'Ours en peluche*, 1960 (*Teddy Bear*, 1971)

1961-1965 • *Betty*, 1961 (English translation, 1975); *Le Train*, 1961 (*The Train*, 1964); *La Porte*, 1962 (*The Door*, 1964); *Les Autres*, 1962 (*The House on the Quai Notre-Dame*, 1975); *Les Anneaux de Bicêtre*, 1963 (*The Patient*, 1963; also known as *The Bells of Bicêtre*, 1964); *La Chambre bleue*, 1964 (*The Blue Room*, 1964); *L'Homme au petit chien*, 1964

(*The Man with the Little Dog*, 1965); *Le Petit Saint*, 1965 (*The Little Saint*, 1965); *Le Train de Venise*, 1965 (*The Venice Train*, 1974)

1966-1972 • *Le Confessionnel*, 1966 (*The Confessional*, 1968); *La Mort d'Auguste*, 1966 (*The Old Man Dies*, 1967); *Le Chat*, 1967 (*The Cat*, 1967); *Le Déménagement*, 1967 (*The Move*, 1968; also known as *The Neighbors*); *La Prison*, 1968 (*The Prison*, 1969); *La Main*, 1968 (*The Man on the Bench in the Barn*, 1970); *Il y a encore des noisetiers*, 1969; *Novembre*, 1969 (*November*, 1970); *Le Riche Homme*, 1970 (*The Rich Man*, 1971); *La Disparition d'Odile*, 1971 (*The Disappearance of Odile*, 1972); *La Cage de verre*, 1971 (*The Glass Cage*, 1973); *Les Innocents*, 1972 (*The Innocents*, 1973)

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NONFICTION: *Le Roman de l'homme*, 1958 (*The Novel of Man*, 1964); *Quand j'étais vieux*, 1970 (*When I Was Old*, 1971); *Lettre à ma mère*, 1974 (*Letter to My Mother*, 1976); *Mémoires intimes*, 1981 (*Intimate Memoirs*, 1984); *Mes Apprentissages: Reportages, 1931-1946*, 2001

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MAJ SJÖWALL and PER WAHLÖÖ

MAJ SJÖWALL

Born: Stockholm, Sweden; September 25, 1935

PER WAHLÖÖ

Born: Göteborg, Sweden; August 5, 1926

Died: Malmö, Sweden; June 22, 1975

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Martin Beck, 1965-1975

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MARTIN BECK, a member and eventually the head of the Stockholm homicide squad, is tall, reserved, and sometimes melancholy. Fortyish and unhappily married when the series begins, Beck is intelligent, painstaking, patient, and conscientious. He is a skilled police detective who is often troubled by the role that the police play in Swedish society.

LENNART KOLLBERG, Beck's colleague and closest friend, is good natured, stocky, and a devoted family man. A pacifist by nature, his growing disillusionment with changes in the police system after its nationalization in 1965 eventually leads him to resign.

GUNVALD LARSSON, a member of the Stockholm homicide squad, is tall, brawny, taciturn, cynical, and often short-tempered. Unmarried and a loner, he is fastidious in his dress and efficient in the performance of his job. He is a hardworking professional with little time for interpersonal relationships.

FREDRIK MELANDER, originally a homicide-squad detective, later transferred to the burglary and violent crimes division. Married and a father, he is valued by his colleagues for his computer-like memory and is notorious for his frequent trips to the men's room.

EINER RÖNN, a member of the homicide squad, is an efficient but unremarkable detective. Rarely promoted, he is one of Gunvald Larsson's few friends.

CONTRIBUTION

The ten novels in the Martin Beck series, written by husband-and-wife team Per Wahlöö and Maj Sjöwall,

chronicle the activities of the Stockholm homicide squad from 1965—the year in which the Swedish police force was nationalized—to 1975. Conceived as one epic novel, Beck's story was written and published at the rate of one installment per year—documenting the exact happenings of the years in which they were composed, down to flight numbers and departure times, political events, and the weather.

The books trace the changes in the police force and its relationship to Swedish society as well as the personal lives of the homicide detectives themselves. Marked by dry humor and painstaking attention to detail, they capture both the interplay among the principal characters and the exhaustive amounts of routine research that go into solving a crime. Writing in a detached, clinical style, Sjöwall and Wahlöö paint a portrait of Sweden in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a bourgeois welfare state in which crime is steadily on the rise and the police are seen increasingly by the public as tools of the government rather than as allies of the people. Using the crime novel as a mirror of the ills of the socialist state, Sjöwall and Wahlöö transformed the genre into a vehicle for addressing wrongs, rather than diffusing social anxiety. Until their work, the police procedural had been little appreciated in Sweden; the Beck series influenced Swedish successors such as K. Arne Blom, Olov Svedelid, Kennet Ahl, and Leif G. W. Persson to adopt a similar approach of social awareness.

BIOGRAPHY

Per Wahlöö was born Peter Fredrik Wahlöö on August 5, 1926, in Göteborg, Sweden, the son of Waldemar Wahlöö and Karin Helena Svensson Wahlöö. He attended the University of Lund, from which he was graduated in 1946, and began a career as a journalist. Throughout the 1950's, Wahlöö wrote about criminal and social issues for several Swedish magazines and newspapers before publishing his first novel, *Himmelsgetan*, in 1959. Also deeply involved in left-wing politics, Wahlöö was deported from Francisco Franco's Spain in 1957 for his political activities.

Before his success as coauthor of the Martin Beck books, Wahlöö's published novels were translated into English under the name Peter Wahlöö. Like the Beck books, Wahlöö's other novels are chiefly concerned with philosophical and sociological themes, examining through fiction the relationship of people to the society in which they live. Wahlöö is the author of two detective novels—*Mord paa 31: A vaanningen* (1964; *Murder on the Thirty-first Floor*, 1966; filmed as *Kamikaze 1989* in 1984) and *Staalspraanget* (1968; *The Steel Spring*, 1970)—featuring Chief Inspector Jensen, a police detective in an unnamed, apathetic northern country clearly intended as a bleak projection of Sweden's future. Wahlöö also wrote scripts for radio, television, and film, and translated some of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct novels into Swedish.

Maj Sjöwall (sometimes transliterated as Sjoewall) was born in Stockholm, Sweden, on September 25, 1935, the daughter of Will Sjöwall and Margit Trobaeck Sjöwall. After studying journalism and graphics in Stockholm, she became both a magazine art director and a publishing-house editor.

While working for magazines published by the same company, Sjöwall and Wahlöö met and found their social views closely matched. Married in 1962, they composed a monumental outline for the Beck series, conceived as a single epic three hundred chapters long, divided into ten books for the sake of convenience. Sitting across the dining room table from each other, they simultaneously wrote alternate chapters while their children (Lena, Terz, and Jens) slept.

Perhaps because of journalistic backgrounds that fostered spare, disciplined writing with precise details, their styles meshed seamlessly. The couple shared a desire to use the format of the detective novel to examine deeper issues within Swedish society; Wahlöö said they intended to "use the crime novel as a scalpel cutting open the belly of the ideologically pauperized and morally debatable so-called welfare state of the bourgeois type." The first Martin Beck novel, *Roseanna* (English translation, 1967), appeared in 1965. Sjöwall and Wahlöö collaborated on other projects as well, including a comparison of police methods in the United States and Europe and the editing of the literary magazine *Peripeo*. Maj Sjöwall is also a poet.

The Martin Beck series was published and acclaimed in more than twenty countries, garnering such awards as the Sherlock Award from the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* in 1968, the Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America in 1971, and the Italian Gran Giallo Città di Cattolica Prize in 1973, all for *Den skrattande polisen* (1968; *The Laughing Policeman*, 1970). The novel was filmed in 1973, with its setting transposed to San Francisco. *Den vedervardige mannen fran Saffle* (1971; *The Abominable Man*, 1972) was filmed as *The Man on the Roof* in 1977. Six books were adapted for television in Sweden.

Wahlöö died of pancreatic disease on June 22, 1975. Afterward, Sjöwall wrote one other novel, *Kvinnan som liknade Garbo* (1990), coauthored with Tomas Ross.

ANALYSIS

The ten novels that constitute the Martin Beck series represent a remarkable achievement in the realm of mystery and detective fiction. Begun in 1965 and completed in 1975, the year of Per Wahlöö's death, the books chronicle a decade in the lives of the members of the Stockholm Police homicide squad, focusing primarily on detective Martin Beck, who becomes the head of the squad by the end of the series. The nationalization of the Swedish police force in the early 1960's—an event to which Sjöwall and Wahlöö refer in *Polismordaren* (1974; *Cop Killer*, 1975) as the creation of a state within the state—led the couple to plan a series of ten books that would reflect the changes taking place in Swedish society. Using crime as the basis for their examination, they planned the books as one continuous story told in ten segments, each of which constitutes a separate novel, with characters who recur throughout the series and whose lives change as it progresses.

In choosing the crime novel as the setting for their study, Sjöwall and Wahlöö selected a medium that would allow their characters to interact with all strata of Swedish society, and the cases in the Martin Beck books involve criminals and victims who are drug addicts, sex murderers, industrialists, tourists, welfare recipients, members of the bourgeoisie, and—in a plot that eerily foreshadowed subsequent events—the Swedish prime minister. The police force in most coun-

tries, perhaps more than any other group, deals directly with the end result of social problems, both as they affect the social mainstream and as they relate to those who fall through society's cracks, and the crimes that form the plots of the Beck novels are often a direct outgrowth of existing sociological conditions.

ROSEANNA AND THE TERRORISTS

The arc that the series follows moves from fairly straightforward, although horrifying, murders and sex crimes to cases that increasingly reflect the growing violence in most Western societies throughout the 1960's and early 1970's. The first book in the series, *Roseanna*, details the squad's efforts to track down the lone, disturbed murderer of a young American tourist, and the final entry, *Terroristerna* (1975; *The Terrorists*, 1976), finds the detectives attempting to thwart the plans of an international assassin during the visit of a right-wing American senator. (The fact that both characters are Americans is almost certainly intentional, as

the books often make mention of the level of crime and the availability of guns in the United States, which is seen as a cautionary model of an excessively violent society.)

The decaying relationship between the police and Swedish society is depicted in the series as an outgrowth of the role the nationalized police force came to play in Sweden's bureaucratic welfare society. This position is outlined in the final pages of *The Terrorists* by Martin Beck's closest friend, Lennart Kollberg, who has left the force: "They made a terrible mistake back then. Putting the police in the vanguard of violence is like putting the cart before the horse." Kollberg's comment puts into words the implied criticism throughout the series of the use of police violence to combat rising social violence.

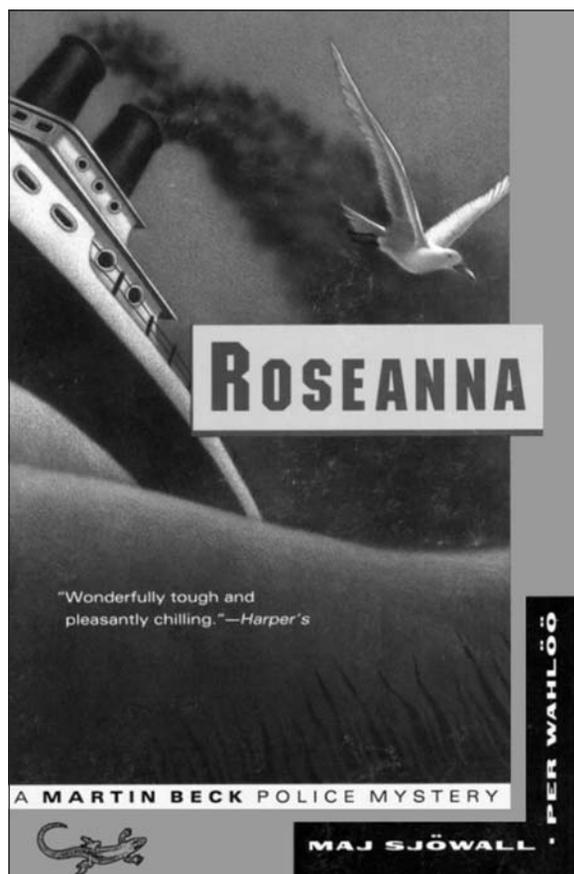
MURDER AT THE SAVOY

The source of that violence is seen by Sjöwall and Wahlöö as a by-product of Western economic systems. In the same book, another character remarks, "For as long as I can remember, large and powerful nations within the capitalist bloc have been ruled by people who according to accepted legal norms are simply criminals." In the series' sixth book *Polis, polis, potatismos!* (1970; *Murder at the Savoy*, 1971), the murder of a wealthy business executive and arms trafficker is traced to a former employee who lost his job, his home, and his family as a result of the executive's ruthless policies. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the crime has removed a despicable man from the world, although his "work" will be carried on by his equally unsavory associates. The book ends with Martin Beck unhappy in the knowledge that the man he has caught will spend years in prison for murdering a corrupt man whose callousness Beck despises. As Kollberg notes near the end of *The Terrorists*, "Violence has rushed like an avalanche throughout the whole of the Western world over the last ten years." The book ends with the former police detective playing the letter X in a game of Scrabble and declaring, "Then I say X—X as in Marx."

THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN AND

THE LOCKED ROOM

The climate of the 1960's, with its antiwar protests and generation-based schisms, also fuels the negative view of the police. In *The Laughing Policeman*,



Beck's teenage daughter, Ingrid, tells him that she had once boasted to her friends that her father was a police officer, but she now rarely admits it. The general mood of the 1960's, combined with the easy availability of drugs and the growing number of citizens living on social welfare rolls, places the police more and more often at odds with ordinary men and women. Sometimes driven by desperation, these citizens commit crimes that were once the province of hardened criminals: A young mother robs a bank in *Det slutna rummet* (1972; *The Locked Room*, 1973); a middle-class teenage boy in *Cop Killer* becomes the object of a man-hunt after a crime spree leads to a police officer's death; and a naïve young girl living on the fringes of society shoots the prime minister in *The Terrorists*.

Yet the corruption filtering down through Swedish society from its upper echelons also leaves its peculiar mark on those crimes that have always been associated with the general populace, infecting their modus operandi with a shocking disregard for justice and human life. In *The Laughing Policeman*, a successful businessman who murdered his lover twenty-five years earlier shoots all the passengers on a city bus because two of them have knowledge that might expose him.

COP KILLER

Cop Killer offers a variation on this theme, with its story of a wealthy man who murders his mistress in the manner of a sex crime to throw suspicion on a man once convicted of a similar offense. In both cases, the perpetrators' only thoughts are to protect themselves—and the comfortable lives they have built within their communities—and they do so at a terrible cost to all notions of justice and the sanctity of human life.

Sjöwall and Wahlöö use not only their plots but also their characters in their dramatization of the changes in Swedish society during the period covered by the series. Beck, a tall, reserved, often melancholy man whose years of police work have not impaired his ability to judge each victim and each criminal individually, is the central figure. The moral complexities of his work often trouble Beck—a fact reflected in his sour stomach and slight stoop—yet he carries on in his profession, seeking a philosophical middle road that will allow him to reconcile those aspects of the job that he abhors with those that he believes fulfill a useful so-

cial function. Over the course of the series, his marriage worsens, he separates from his wife, his relationship with his daughter strengthens, and he falls in love with Rhea Nielsen, a good-humored earth mother of a woman whose cooking and companionship go a long way toward improving Beck's personal life—and digestion.

Beck's friend and colleague, Lennart Kollberg, also serves as a barometer for the times. Unlike Beck, Kollberg is happily married—he fathers two children during the series—and possessed of a far more effusive personality. The course that Kollberg's professional life will follow is set in motion during *Roseanna*, the series' first book, when he shoots and kills a man. The event has a profound effect on him, and he becomes the most outspoken opponent of the increasing use of police violence throughout the books. In defiance of police regulations, Kollberg afterward refuses to carry a loaded gun, and his growing dissatisfaction with the role of the police in society finally culminates in his resignation at the end of the ninth book, *Cop Killer*. He appears in *The Terrorists* as a fat, contented househusband, minding his children while his wife happily pursues a career.

The remaining recurring characters in the series appear primarily in their professional capacities and are used by Sjöwall and Wahlöö to round out the homicide squad and reflect the interplay of personalities that exists in any working situation. Individuals come and go within the structure of the squad: Fredrik Melander is transferred to another division; an ambitious young detective named Benny Skacke opts for a transfer to Malmö after a mistake that nearly costs Kollberg his life; detective Åke Stenström is among those murdered on the bus in *The Laughing Policeman*; and his girlfriend, Åsa Torell, joins the force as a reflection of the changing role of women during the 1960's and 1970's. (The ebb and flow within the force is also carried over into the outside world, with characters who figured in earlier cases reappearing later in the series.) Beck has an amiable, ongoing association with Per Månsson, his counterpart in Malmö.

THE ABOMINABLE MAN

All these characters serve to illustrate the wide range of personality types who choose police work as

a career—a theme that takes a dark turn in *The Abominable Man*, when a former police officer turns murderer and sniper after his wife dies in the custody of a corrupt and sadistic officer. The tragic motive that lies at the heart of *The Abominable Man* has its roots in the psychological makeup of both the killer and his first victim, a crucial point throughout the Martin Beck series. For Sjöwall and Wahlöö, psychological traits are often inextricably bound to sociological forces. In the case of *The Abominable Man*, police corruption perpetuated the career of the sadistic officer whose actions drove his future murderer to the brink of madness. The books delve deeply into the social and psychological factors that set the stage for each crime.

The Martin Beck books fall under the heading of police procedurals, and Sjöwall and Wahlöö's writing style has the clinical, matter-of-fact tone of tough journalistic reporting. The series is characterized by an exceptionally thorough attention to detail that reflects the painstaking process of sifting through vast amounts of information and leaving no lead uninvestigated. Cases often hinge on a remembered shred of evidence or an incorrectly recalled detail, and the role that luck and happenstance sometimes play is never ignored. Sjöwall and Wahlöö frequently present interviews and confessions in the form of typed transcripts, and the books' descriptions are both vivid and utterly unsensationalized.

Given the serious nature of the series' themes and the somber tone of its individual plots, the books' considerable wit and humor come as a pleasant surprise. Droll asides and dryly ironic exchanges of dialogue alleviate the atmosphere of Scandinavian gloom that permeates the novels, with flashes of humor becoming more frequent as the writers progress further into the series and develop a surer grasp of their themes and characters. *The Locked Room* contains a comically executed SWAT-style raid that could easily have been lifted from a Keystone Kops film, and there are sly references throughout the series to the characters' reading preferences, which run to Raymond Chandler and Ed McBain. (In one of the final books, Beck is referred to in a newspaper article as "Sweden's Margret.") The dour, dismally unphotogenic Gunvald Larsson is also a recurring source of amusement as his

picture finds its way into the newspaper several times—with his name always misspelled.

Best among the series' running jokes, however, are two radio patrolmen named Kristiansson and Kvant, memorable solely for their inexhaustible capacity for bungling. They are the bane of Larsson's existence as they mishandle evidence, lose suspects, and even catch a murderer while answering nature's call in the bushes of a city park. Nothing in the lighthearted manner in which they are portrayed prepares the reader for the shock of Kvant's death by sniper fire in *The Abominable Man*. He is replaced in the next book by the equally inept Kvastmo, but the effect of his shooting brings home the degree to which Sjöwall and Wahlöö have successfully created a world that mirrors real life—a world in which crime and violence can alter the course of a human life in an instant. The role that the police should play in such a world is a complex issue, and it constitutes the heart of Sjöwall and Wahlöö's work.

Janet E. Lorenz

Updated by C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHIEF INSPECTOR JENSEN SERIES (BY WAHLÖÖ): *Mord paa 31: A vaaningen*, 1964 (*Murder on the Thirty-first Floor*, 1966; also known as *The Thirty-First Floor*); *Staalspraanget*, 1968 (*The Steel Spring*, 1970)

MARTIN BECK SERIES: *Roseanna*, 1965 (English translation, 1967); *Mannen som gick upp in rök*, 1966 (*The Man Who Went Up in Smoke*, 1969); *Mannen på balkongen*, 1967 (*The Man on the Balcony*, 1968); *Den skrattande polisen*, 1968 (*The Laughing Policeman*, 1970); *Brandbilen som försvann*, 1969 (*The Fire Engine That Disappeared*, 1970); *Polis, polis, potatismos!*, 1970 (*Murder at the Savoy*, 1971); *Den vedervardige mannen från Saffle*, 1971 (*The Abominable Man*, 1972); *Det slutna rummet*, 1972 (*The Locked Room*, 1973); *Polismordaren*, 1974 (*Cop Killer*, 1975); *Terroristerna*, 1975 (*The Terrorists*, 1976)

NONSERIES NOVELS (BY WAHLÖÖ): *Lastbilen*, 1962 (*The Lorry*, 1968; also known as *A Necessary Action*); *Uppdraget*, 1963 (*The Assignment*, 1965); *Generalerna*, 1965 (*The Generals*, 1974)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Himmelsgeten*, 1959 (by Wahlöö; revised as *Hoevdingen*, 1967); *Vinden och regnet*, 1961 (by Wahlöö); *Kvinnan som liknade Garbo*, 1990 (by Sjöwall, with Tomas Ross)

SHORT FICTION: *Det vaexer inga rosor paa odenplan*, 1964

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- Hausladen, Gary. *Places for Dead Bodies*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. This study of the settings of mystery and detective novels includes a section on the Stockholm of Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö.
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GILLIAN SLOVO

Born: Johannesburg, South Africa; March 15, 1952

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator; courtroom drama

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kate Baeier, 1984-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

KATE BAEIER, a Lithuanian Jew from Portugal, where her father is a leading general, left that country when she was eighteen and moved to London, where she seems perfectly at home. Little is made of her foreign background, except that people have difficulty with her name. She begins the series as a freelance

journalist, solving crimes on the side, but she eventually sets up a detective agency, only to return to journalism. Initially, she is seriously involved with a single father, but he dies.

CONTRIBUTION

In the 1980's, Gillian Slovo became one of a growing number of female mystery novelists writing about young female detectives. However, her detective, Kate Baeier, is rare among these characters because she is not only a feminist but also a socialist. The result is a detective series in which, at least initially, politics comes to the fore and the characters earnestly discuss such things as the relation between the personal and

the political. As the series progresses, the politics tend to fade away and even to be renounced at times, creating a somewhat disorienting effect, but what remains constant is the portrayal of Kate as a loner in a hostile universe.

Slovo's most successful crime novel, *Red Dust* (2000), goes beyond the Kate Baeier series by successfully merging political and personal themes. In it Slovo moves away from hard-edged politics to explore the subtleties of South African society. *Red Dust* retains the crime novel form and carries readers along through the deft plotting Slovo learned while producing the Kate Baeier novels, but it aims at deeper things than plot and is more successful than the series novels in attaining them.

BIOGRAPHY

Gillian Slovo was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, on March 15, 1952, to two leading members of the antiapartheid movement: Joe Slovo, leader of the banned South African Communist Party and chief of the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), and Ruth First, a radical journalist and university lecturer. The family went into exile in London in 1964, and Slovo attended the University of Manchester, graduating in 1974 with a bachelor's degree in the history and philosophy of science. She later worked as a journalist and television producer in England.

In 1982 Slovo's mother, then working in Mozambique, was murdered by agents of the South African government. Slovo later wrote that her novel *Ties of Blood* (1989), her first work set in South Africa, was inspired by thoughts she had while standing at her mother's graveside. Nevertheless, Slovo's first three novels, all in the Kate Baeier series, are set in London, though the initial entry, *Morbid Symptoms* (1984), does focus on characters involved in South African politics. Slovo's attention began to shift more toward Africa in the 1990's. She published *The Betrayal*, a thriller about an ANC member, in 1991, and in 1993 she wrote *Façade*, a novel about a London woman trying to discover the truth about her mother's death, which also mentions Africa. Of the two Kate Baeier series novels published in the 1990's, *Close Call* (1995) contains references to Africa.

In 1997, Slovo published *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country*, her best-selling memoir about her parents, their involvement in the antiapartheid movement, and her relationship with them, including the difficulty of having parents whose devotion to a cause reduced the amount of time they could spend with their children. In 2000, Slovo returned to fiction, producing *Red Dust*, a highly acclaimed courtroom drama set in postapartheid South Africa. It won the Radio France International Prize for Literature in 2001 and was made into a film starring Hilary Swank in 2004.

Saying that she might have written her last book about South Africa, Slovo in 2004 published a highly regarded historical epic, *Ice Road*, set in the Soviet Union in the 1930's and 1940's. *Ice Road* was short-listed for England's prestigious Orange Prize in 2004. Also in 2005 Slovo collaborated with Victoria Brittain on *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom*, a play documenting human rights abuses at the American detention camp in Guantanamo Bay.

ANALYSIS

The very title of Gillian Slovo's first novel, *Morbid Symptoms*, indicates the special nature of her Kate Baeier detective series. As Kate explains, the phrase is a quotation from Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher, and refers to the minor problems at the end of an era, in this case the capitalist era. Kate is a socialist detective, opposed to capitalism, the rich, the police, and the apartheid leaders of South Africa. She is also a feminist and thus at odds with most of the men she encounters, especially white men and police officers. Kate's feminism is shared by female detectives in other series of the 1980's, notably those by Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky, but her radical socialism sets her apart.

In the first four books of the series Kate encounters agents of the apartheid South African government; a landlord who violates the fire codes, causing death and injury; oppressed black Londoners who start to organize to overcome their oppression; victims of a fraudulent pension scheme benefiting businessmen and investors; and a host of brutal police officers. On the surface Kate and her author seem left wing and liberated, clearly on the side of the oppressed and against

the forces of capitalism. However, as Sally Munt notes in her study of feminism and the crime novel, the Kate Baeier novels pull in conflicting directions and may not be as liberated as they seem. Munt points especially to the position of Kate's black assistant, Carmen, who is very competent and industrious and is portrayed in a positive light but remains, by her own choice, in a subordinate position.

In addition, some of the left-wing politics seems merely tacked on, as when in *Death by Analysis* (1986) Kate approvingly takes note of Irish hunger strikers who have no real role in the plot. Indeed, many of the plots focus on personal rather than political issues, and in *Death by Analysis* the whole issue of the relationship between the personal and the political is uneasily discussed by various characters and is exemplified by the fact that Kate has been in therapy and is not entirely happy that the result of the therapy was to turn her away from changing the world in order to focus on her psyche. A major theme of this novel is the passing of the revolutionary moment. Characters talk nostalgically of the radical 1960's but keep reminding themselves that it is now the 1980's and revolution is out of style. In *Morbid Symptoms*, those who have remained on the radical left are portrayed for the most part as preoccupied with petty infighting among themselves, and in the end the true villain turns out to be not the so-called real enemy, the South African security forces, but a member of one of the left-wing groups.

Although the overt thrust of the novels is to attack authority and privilege and to side with the oppressed and with radical political groups, there is an undercurrent flowing in the opposite direction, so much so that in *Catnap* (1994), Carmen accuses Kate of having switched sides. Even as early as in *Death by Analysis*, Kate feels she is stuck on the black-white divide, not truly able to side with the black victims with whom she sympathizes. She also begins to develop self-doubts. In *Death Comes Staccato* (1987), she twice calls herself a failure as an investigator, and at the end she fingers the wrong suspect for the crime. In *Catnap* she feels incompetent, blames herself for a break-in, and even gets lost in a library.

Kate has lost her boyfriend, Sam, in *Catnap*. Sam was one of the few good men in the novels, gentle and

supportive, just the sort of man a feminist might love, but as early as the opening pages of *Morbid Symptoms* Kate seems vaguely dissatisfied with him. In *Death by Analysis* she is leaping out of his arms, and in *Death Comes Staccato* she flirts with someone else and almost lets herself be seduced. Morag Shiach, in her article on female detectives, notes that they often have boyfriends who turn out to be too safe and weak, and she singles out Sam as an example of one who in the end provokes such dissatisfaction that he has to go.

Throughout the Kate Baeier series, Slovo seems to be struggling with the relationship between the personal and the political, and trying to get away from a fairly extreme political viewpoint. In the first three books she seems on one level strongly attached to that viewpoint, but conflicting views somehow emerge as well. In the fourth and fifth books, *Catnap* and *Close Call*, she seems at times to be renouncing her old views, but at other times reasserts them, shuttling back and forth in a confused way. When Slovo leaves Kate Baeier behind and focuses on the politics of South Africa in *Red Dust*, she achieves her greatest success, combining personal and political into one organic whole based on a much more subtle understanding of both politics and human nature.

CATNAP

Catnap, which appeared after a seven-year hiatus in the Kate Baeier series, marks a shift in form. After three whodunits in which Kate is hired to solve murders, this time Kate herself is endangered in a Dick Francis-style thriller. Returning to London after five years away as a war correspondent, Kate finds herself almost constantly under attack, first by muggers, then by someone who breaks into her house and seems to be stalking her, and later by several other characters in the book. Much of the politics of the earlier Kate Baeier books disappears in *Catnap*, and surprisingly some of the villains (the muggers) turn out to be black. However, this book resembles the earlier ones in that it depicts Kate as living in a bleak and hostile universe full of angry, violent men.

CLOSE CALL

Close Call begins in an unprecedented way for Kate. She is back in journalism interviewing a police officer and discovers that he is sensitive, heroic, and

compassionate. She keeps expecting some hidden rage to erupt out of him, which would be typical of the police in the earlier Kate Baeier books, but it never does. The result is that she begins to feel that she is wrong about everything. When she visits this officer's wife, she expects to find a submissive woman oppressed by her husband, but that turns out not to be true either.

In this book Slovo introduces Kate's father, a Portuguese general who, like Slovo's own father at the time, is dying. Kate is estranged from her father, but he keeps on reaching out to her in the friendliest way, and she eventually begins to think she has been wrong about him or that he has changed from the unscrupulous manipulator he used to be.

Kate starts dating a police officer and encounters other apparently friendly police officers. In the first part of the book, the only villains seem to be women. A nasty female police officer threatens her, and an annoying and foolish activist from a rape center pesters her. Kate feels like killing this activist and does smash a vase of hers. Later Kate becomes physically violent with a female police officer. This violence on Kate's part is quite unusual. In the earlier books, Kate does nothing violent; it is the men she encounters who are violent. In this book, however, everything seems turned around. The men are nice, the women are violent, and the message seems to be to reject the viewpoint of the earlier novels.

Everything reverts to normal at the end, however. Some of the nice police officers turn out to be corrupt, Kate's father turns out to be his old manipulative self, and Kate ends up distrusting her police officer boyfriend. The novel's message is therefore ambiguous.

RED DUST

Red Dust is a more complex novel. Instead of being caught in the middle of contradictory feelings, in this novel Slovo seems to be the master of them. She sensitively portrays the attitudes of several of her characters, abandoning the first-person point of view she used throughout the Kate Baeier series to enter the minds of several different characters, including two white South African police officers.

Instead of portraying the police as mindless brutes, Slovo depicts them as complex human beings. She also explores the internal contradictions of two black

African characters who in earlier books she might simply have portrayed as heroes. There is also a subtle depiction of the complicated relationship between a young prosecutor and her aging mentor and between the mentor and his wife.

The story focuses on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in postapartheid South Africa. Black Africans are in control and whites are being held to account for the crimes of apartheid. The Africans are holding a series of amnesty hearings at which whites can be pardoned in return for full confessions.

The heroine of the novel is Sarah Barcant, a white South African who has emigrated to the United States, where she has become a successful and powerful prosecuting attorney in New York. She is summoned back to her hometown in South Africa to help with one of the amnesty hearings, in the course of which she helps solve the mystery of the disappearance of one black activist. The main focus of the hearing, however, is on the torture of another black activist, who is present to confront his old torturer. The novel skillfully presents the intimate relationship between the torturer and his victim, entering the minds of both to depict the psychology of torture.

At the end of the novel some of the old Slovo emerges, with the torturer suddenly denounced as a monster and Sarah making a brief rant against men. For the most part, however, this novel works as both a courtroom drama with a mystery to be solved and the psychology of a crime to be laid bare and as a subtle presentation of the complexities of postapartheid politics and the difficulties inherent in pursuing truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Sheldon Goldfarb

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KATE BAEIER SERIES: *Morbid Symptoms*, 1984; *Death by Analysis*, 1986; *Death Comes Staccato*, 1987; *Catnap*, 1994; *Close Call*, 1995

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Betrayal*, 1991; *Red Dust*, 2000

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Ties of Blood*, 1989; *Façade*, 1993; *Ice Road*, 2004

PLAY: *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom*, pb. 2005 (with Victoria Brittain)

NONFICTION: *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country*, 1997

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Munt, Sally R. *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel*. London: Routledge, 1994. Discusses feminism and socialism in various female crime writers, including Slovo. Focuses on racial issues, including the role of Carmen in the early books in the Kate Baeier series. Indexed.

Shiach, Morag. "Domesticating the Detective." In *Women Voice Men: Gender in European Culture*, edited by Maya Slater. Exeter, England: Intellect, 1997. Discusses the home life of female detectives in fiction, including Kate Baeier's relationship with her boyfriend.

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Winston, Robert P. "Gillian Slovo." In *Great Women Mystery Writers, Classic to Contemporary*, edited by Kathleen Gregory Klein. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Compares Slovo to Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton. Discusses the political aspects of her early novels. Provides biographical information.

JULIE SMITH

Born: Annapolis, Maryland; November 25, 1944

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rebecca Schwartz, 1982-

Paul McDonald, 1985-

Skip Langdon, 1990-

Talba Wallis, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

REBECCA SCHWARTZ is a San Francisco lawyer and an ardent feminist, but she is also the daughter of a prominent lawyer and a woman with some decidedly conventional attitudes about romantic relationships. The conflicts Schwartz faces in trying to succeed in a patriarchal profession allow for the exploration of contemporary social issues within the framework of the mystery novel.

PAUL McDONALD, Rebecca's friend, works as a journalist and freelance writer in the San Francisco Bay area while struggling to become a successful mystery novelist.

SKIP LANGDON, daughter of a prominent New Orleans physician, has turned her back on high society to become a police detective. Partly because her height and weight keep her from fitting the stereotype of the debutante-turned-demure-matron, she feels alienated from the people in the social circles in which she was raised and more at home among the artists and oddballs of the city's French Quarter, where she chooses to live. Not given to following rules or taking orders, she nevertheless manages to parlay her associations with the city's elite to help solve crimes in a city plagued by racism, sexism, hedonism, cronyism, and outdated beliefs involving class structure.

TALBA WALLIS is a talented computer nerd who moonlights as a poet and entertainer. She has changed

her given name, Urethra, to Talba, a shortened version of her stage name, the Baroness de Pontalba. After stumbling into a career as a private investigator, she manages to combine her technological skills with her brash approach to life in a way that lets her solve cases by cutting through individual prejudices and institutional bureaucracy but that often frustrates those who care for her, including her mother, her boss, and her boyfriend.

CONTRIBUTION

From the publication of her first mystery, *Death Turns a Trick*, in 1982, Julie Smith displayed her ability to create suspenseful narratives while entertaining readers with her tongue-in-cheek assessment of the contemporary social scene. In addition to satisfying the intellectual curiosity of those who enjoy a good “whodunit,” the books featuring Rebecca Schwartz and Paul McDonald exposed the vulnerable underside of the supposedly carefree San Francisco singles lifestyle in the 1980’s.

Beginning with the publication of *New Orleans Mourning* (1990), the novels set in the Crescent City reflect Smith’s development as a literary artist. Like her contemporary James Lee Burke, she makes exceptionally good use of the south Louisiana setting as a means of communicating insights into human character and social relationships. An admirer of William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams, Smith incorporates elements of southern Gothic in her character portraits while maintaining exceptional command over her intricate and well-developed plots. Through the stories of her two female protagonists from New Orleans, one a member of high society who feels alienated from her peers, the other a young African American, Smith is able to examine issues that remain problematic for American society, specifically sexism and racism. Her finest works demonstrate that it is possible to construct a sophisticated novel of social commentary within the framework of the detective thriller.

BIOGRAPHY

Julie Smith was born November 25, 1944, in Annapolis, Maryland, where her father was stationed during World War II. Malberry Smith, a lawyer, and his wife Claire Tanner Smith, a school counselor, moved

the family to Savannah, Georgia, after the war. Julie Smith grew up there, leaving in 1962 to attend the University of Mississippi, where she majored in journalism. After graduating in 1965, Smith moved to New Orleans and talked her way into a job as a reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. A year later she left for San Francisco, landing a position at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where she worked for more than a decade. Intent on pursuing a career as a fiction writer, she wrote dozens of stories and drafted several novels while holding down her job as a reporter. In 1979 she and two friends started Invisible Ink, an editorial consulting firm. Smith stayed with the firm for three years until her first novel, *Death Turns a Trick*, was published in 1982.

Buoyed by her success, Smith determined to write full time, and over the next eight years she published five novels set in San Francisco, three featuring feminist lawyer Rebecca Schwartz and two showcasing Schwartz’s friend Paul McDonald, a struggling mystery writer. In 1990, Smith chose a new location for her fiction, and for her first novel about New Orleans, *New Orleans Mourning*, she received the 1991 Edgar Award for best novel—the first time this award had gone to a female novelist since 1956. Although Smith published two more novels featuring Rebecca Schwartz, after 1990 the city of New Orleans became her principal métier, and novels about Detective Skip Langdon began appearing regularly. In the eighth Langdon novel, *Eighty-two Desire*, Smith introduced Talba Wallis, a computer whiz turned private detective, who would become the main character in a new series initiated by *Louisiana Hotshot* in 2001.

In the mid-1990’s Smith married business entrepreneur Lee Pryor and moved to New Orleans. Intent on assisting other authors who were struggling as she had to establish careers, she created a Web-based course in writing to help them master the basics of their craft. In an example of life following art, after relocating to New Orleans, Smith took the necessary steps to become a licensed private investigator.

ANALYSIS

On first reading, the most notable quality in Julie Smith’s novels is the attention she gives to plotting.

Her novels are well-made mysteries, in which information subtly inserted early in the work takes on importance as her detectives draw closer to discovering the perpetrator of the crimes they have set out to solve. Like any good mystery writer, Smith provides a sufficient number of red herrings and false leads to keep her detective busy and her readers guessing about the identity of the murderer. What emerges on careful reading of Smith's novels, however, is an appreciation for her use of setting and characterization. Not only are her descriptions of places deftly drawn, but also in the New Orleans novels especially, they are integral to the larger story she wishes to tell. Smith's major characters—Rebecca Schwartz, Skip Langdon, and Talba Wallis—are multidimensional, evolving slowly through each novel in the series in which they are featured. Through them Smith explores a network of personal and social relationships that offers readers a window on contemporary life that extends beyond the intellectual pleasures derived from solving the mystery around which each novel is organized.

DEATH TURNS A TRICK

Smith's first detective novel, *Death Turns a Trick*, introduces readers to Rebecca Schwartz, a self-described Jewish feminist lawyer living in San Francisco. Schwartz is thrust into the role of detective when she discovers a woman dead in her apartment. The young woman is no stranger, however; Schwartz had met her earlier in the evening, at a house of prostitution where Schwartz was attending a risqué party. Because the principal suspect is Schwartz's boyfriend—who is the brother of the victim—complications are manifold as she sets out to defend her lover by finding his sister's killer.

Smith employs a chatty first-person style in presenting the story, allowing her main character to speak directly to readers. She also demonstrates exceptional ability in providing a considerable amount of background information about Schwartz, her family, and her circle of friends. Combining elements of the conventional romance novel with those of the mystery, Smith manages to interest readers not only in the hunt for the killer but also in the personal life of the protagonist. The novel offers a tongue-in-cheek critique of feminism, celebrating its strong points but lampoon-

ing its more excessive qualities, which Smith evidently considers to be barriers to healthy relationships between men and women.

HUCKLEBERRY FIEND

In *Huckleberry Fiend* (1987), Smith's second novel featuring Paul McDonald, her only male sleuth, the journalist and would-be novelist is called on by a friend to help locate a valuable manuscript: the missing sections of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). McDonald follows leads that take him to the haunts of several noted collectors, including a famous romance novelist, an enterprising book dealer, and a business tycoon with unusual habits for acquiring unique art objects. Traveling from his native Oakland, California, to Mississippi and Virginia City, Nevada, to track down leads, McDonald ends up endangering not only himself, but also his lover and the friend for whom he is trying to recover the manuscript, as more than one person seems bent on keeping him from discovering what happened to the holograph of Twain's masterpiece. The somewhat surprising denouement allows Smith's amateur sleuth to demonstrate not only his skills at detection and deduction but also his ability to understand and appreciate the vagaries of the publishing business. Although the focus throughout is on McDonald's efforts to locate the manuscript, Smith is able to weave into the tale some interesting literary tidbits about Twain's career and to explore the psyche of collectors, a curious breed of individuals whose love of art and literature drives their actions in strange, often unpredictable ways.

NEW ORLEANS MOURNING

The event that sets in motion the action of *New Orleans Mourning* is certainly out of the ordinary: Chauncey St. Amant, king of Carnival, is shot as he rides in the Krewe of Rex parade on Mardi Gras day. Because the victim is high profile and high society, the New Orleans police reach outside the detective ranks for help. Officer Skip Langdon, raised among the city's social elite, knows the family and many others who travel in their circle. Though Langdon's family has virtually disowned her for having become a police officer, she is still able to use friendships forged in her youth at exclusive private schools and clubs to help in the search for the killer. She discovers that St. Amant



and his immediate family have kept dark secrets for two decades, and as she gets closer to the truth, she finds her own life in danger. Nevertheless, she pursues her leads doggedly, assisted by a California filmmaker in town for the Mardi Gras who takes an amorous interest in her. When she exposes the killer, however, she learns just how influential the rich and powerful are in New Orleans; a convenient lie is accepted by the authorities so that reputations can be preserved.

In this Skip Langdon mystery, Smith demonstrates that she is a master at capturing setting and making it integral to her story. New Orleans comes to life on the pages of her novel, as Langdon's investigation leads her to explore some of the city's storied neighborhoods and interact with a number of the unusual types who make the city unique. Additionally, Smith displays a decided

advance in characterization from her previous novels. Not only is Langdon a woman trying to succeed in a profession normally populated by men but, decidedly tall and a bit overweight, she is also presented as someone having to fight against a number of social stereotypes. Similarly, members of the St. Amant family, to all appearances both financially and socially successful, are carefully delineated to illustrate the dysfunctions beneath the veneer of gentility. Smith carefully blends humor and pathos to reveal something about the cronyism, sexism, and racism that underlies the social structure of the metropolis.

LOUISIANA BIGSHOT

In *Louisiana Bigshot* (2002), the opening scene of Smith's second novel featuring Talba Wallis, the self-styled poet and computer expert receives her private investigator's license, making her a fully qualified associate in Eddie Valentino's agency. Almost immediately she becomes involved in solving the murder of a friend and fellow poet from a small town outside Baton Rouge. Wallis's discovery regarding her friend's past puts her, her boss, and their families in danger from the henchmen of a powerful Louisiana politician who wants to keep the secrets of the past buried forever.

Like Smith's other Talba Wallis novels, *Louisiana Bigshot* is a study of complex human relationships, revealing depths of character not often associated with detective fiction. For example, while she searches for her friend's killer, Wallis is also working to learn the identity and whereabouts of her half sister, the child of the father who abandoned Wallis and her mother when Talba was a young girl. Smith devotes considerable space to examining Wallis's rocky relationships with her mother and her boyfriend, who is also an estranged father. As an African American woman trying to make a living as a private investigator, Wallis struggles gallantly to overcome longstanding barriers erected on racist and sexist ideologies. The novel also hints at the nature of politics in Louisiana, where cronyism and corruption dominate the political climate and where those in power are not above breaking the law to remain in office.

MEAN WOMAN BLUES

In *Mean Woman Blues* (2003), the ninth of her Skip Langdon novels, Smith presents a constantly develop-

ing protagonist who has grown in stature within her profession and has matured in her personal life. The novel brings back one of Langdon's recurring nightmares: the sociopath Errol Jacomine, who had disappeared for years but who resurfaces in a rather fantastic way as a televangelist in Dallas. Jacomine is bent on gaining revenge against the woman who destroyed his criminal network, and while Langdon is occupied searching for a ring of thieves stealing cemetery statuary, Jacomine makes his move against her. The complicated plot brings Langdon in contact with Jacomine's younger son Isaac, who has rejected his father's lifestyle and values and takes her to Dallas, where in a showdown with Jacomine she watches as he becomes the victim of revenge at the hands of two of his wives. More a detective thriller than a mystery, *Mean Woman Blues* showcases Smith's ability to analyze her characters' motivations and dramatize a variety of male-female relationships. The novel also explores family bonds, a common theme in Smith's work.

Laurence W. Mazzeno

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

REBECCA SCHWARTZ SERIES: *Death Turns a Trick*, 1982; *The Sourdough Wars*, 1984; *Tourist Trap*, 1986; *Dead in the Water*, 1991; *Other People's Skeletons*, 1993

PAUL McDONALD SERIES: *True-Life Adventure*, 1985; *Huckleberry Fiend*, 1987

SKIP LANGDON SERIES: *New Orleans Mourning*, 1990; *The Axeman's Jazz*, 1991; *Jazz Funeral*, 1993; *New Orleans Beat*, 1994; *House of Blues*, 1995; *The Kindness of Strangers*, 1996; *Crescent City Kill*, 1997; *82 Desire*, 1998; *Mean Woman Blues*, 2003

TALBA WALLIS SERIES: *Louisiana Hotshot*, 2001; *Louisiana Bigshot*, 2002; *Louisiana Lament*, 2004; *P.I. on a Hot Tin Roof*, 2005

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *I'd Kill for That*, 2004 (coauthor)

SHORT FICTION: *Mean Rooms: A Short Story Collection*, 2000

EDITED TEXT: *New Orleans Noir*, 2007

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MARTIN CRUZ SMITH

Born: Reading, Pennsylvania; November 3, 1942

Also wrote as Nick Carter; Jake Logan; Martin

Quinn; Simon Quinn

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Roman Grey, 1971-

Nick Carter, 1972-

The Inquisitor, 1974-

Arkady Renko, 1981-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ROMAN GREY, a Gypsy antique dealer in his early thirties, lives in New York City. Grey (or Romano Gry—his Gypsy name) walks the line between Gypsy and *gaja* (non-Gypsy). Dating a *gaja* woman and trusted by a *gaja* police officer, he works on criminal cases for Gypsy honor.

FRANCIS XAVIER “THE INQUISITOR” KILLY is a lay brother of the Vatican’s Militia Christi and a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent. A shrewd investigator, he combines physical skill with intellect to maneuver his way through church politics and international crises.

ARKADY RENKO is a dedicated Russian detective who wore his Soviet identity as a badge of honor until the rise of glasnost threw the country into turmoil. Despite personal tragedies and political disorder, Renko is a dogged investigator willing to put his life on the line for duty and honor.

CONTRIBUTION

Martin Cruz Smith’s novel *Gorky Park* (1981), his most important work, showcases his power to create believable characters within the mystery genre. The hero of *Gorky Park*, Arkady Renko, is the prototypical investigator—intelligent, cynical, beleaguered by a cheating wife and cheating superiors—who is proud to be Russian. The villain, American John Osborne, is slippery and homicidal. Smith’s ability to make the murderous KGB officer Pribluda more sympathetic than the privileged Osborne proves his skill with plot and character-

ization. For the most part, Smith’s language is compact, page-turner prose. He generally describes the grotesque—such as the dwarf Andreev in *Gorky Park* and the bat caves in *Nightwing* (1977)—without relying on metaphor. Smith is notable as well for his ability to paint a convincing portrait of societies and institutions, such as the bureaucracy in *Gorky Park*, and of the dynamic between a couple, such as the relationship between Anna Weiss and Joe Pena in *Stallion Gate* (1986). He has contributed to an understanding of humans’ relationship to other animals with the mythic interaction between man and animal depicted in *Nightwing*, *Gorky Park*, and *Gypsy in Amber* (1971).

BIOGRAPHY

Martin Cruz Smith, born Martin William Smith on November 3, 1942, in Reading, Pennsylvania, is the son of John Calhoun, a musician, and Louise Lopez Smith, an American Indian rights activist. Smith was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964 with a bachelor of arts degree and then worked as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Daily News* in 1965. He was employed by Magazine Management from 1966 to 1969. On June 15, 1968, he married Emily Arnold, a chef.

In 1970, he published his first novel, *The Indians Won*, which was reviewed in science-fiction journals. From 1970 through 1976, he wrote and published many mystery and adventure novels under various pseudonyms. Written under the name Martin Smith, *Gypsy in Amber* and *Canto for a Gypsy* (1972) indicate his fascination with mismatched partners, a motif that resurfaces in *Gorky Park*. *Gypsy in Amber* earned a nomination by the Mystery Writers of America as the best first mystery novel of 1971.

In 1973, Smith spent two weeks in the Soviet Union researching a book that was to include a Soviet detective working with an American detective to solve a murder. Refused permission to return to the Soviet Union, he did further research by interviewing Soviet émigrés about life in their homeland.

Smith’s Inquisitor series, published in 1974-1975 under the name of Simon Quinn, was received with

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Martin Cruz Smith in 1999. (AP/Wide World Photos)

considerable interest. His first substantial success as a writer, however, occurred in 1977 with the publication of *Nightwing*. This book was nominated by the Mystery Writers of America for the 1978 Edgar Allan Poe Award. In 1977, Smith also had his middle name legally changed from William to Cruz, his maternal grandmother's first name.

The success of *Nightwing* allowed Smith to focus on completing his Russian mystery, *Gorky Park*, which was published in 1981. The popularity of *Gorky Park* enabled Smith to spend the next five years researching and writing his novel about the Manhattan Project test site in New Mexico, *Stallion Gate*, published in 1986.

ANALYSIS

Martin Cruz Smith's novels keep the reader turning the pages quickly. His sentences are most often short and emphatic, with repetition and parallelism as important devices. For example, Arkady Renko considers the nature of American John Osborne:

Arkady felt cold, as if the windows had opened. Osborne was not sane, or not a man. If money could grow bones and flesh it would be Osborne. It would wear the same cashmere suit; it would part its silver hair the same way; it would have the same lean mask with its expression of superior amusement.

Smith achieves success as a writer not through flamboyant style but by placing his protagonists in situations that require them to confront their own codes of ethics. A natural storyteller, he explores people's relationship with their culture. The couples in his books, lovers as well as detective partners, are most real when they are downcast and threatened by the powers that be. Smith's strengths lie in his ability to portray people's responses to crisis—including their frustration, weakness, and cynicism.

Smith works best within the police procedural formula. Smith often uses mismatched partners to investigate a crime. The partners in the Gypsy series are Roman Grey and Harry Isadore, the New York Police Department's expert on Gypsies. Isadore "may still be a sergeant at forty-nine" but can deliver "a lovely lecture on Gypsies at City College." The almost trusting relationship between Grey and Isadore, hindered only by Isadore's occasional unfulfilled threat to arrest Grey, leads the reader to respect the partners in the Gypsy series and see their work as complementary. In *Nightwing*, however, the partners are a bat killer, Hayden Paine, and an Indian deputy, Youngblood Duran, whose relationship is stormy, marked by death threats backed up by loaded guns. Paine has been hired by leaders of a Navajo reservation to locate the source of an outbreak of the plague. Duran is investigating the death of an Indian medicine man who was apparently killed by a wild animal. Both investigations lead to one source: vampire bats that carry bubonic plague. The partners meet for the last time in the middle of the Painted Desert and then seek the bat cave together. The partners' antagonism gives way in the end to Duran's memorializing Paine as a hero for his extermination of the bats.

In *Gorky Park*, Smith was able to create detective partners who are combative and cooperative in a much more satisfying fashion. These investigators, the Rus-

sian Arkady Renko and the American James Kirwill, initially threaten each other. Whereas in *Nightwing* the threat begins with tense but quiet accusation, in this novel, Renko and Kirwill first meet at the scene of the murder in Gorky Park, where Kirwill comes close to killing Renko. Their fistfight, which Renko loses, is followed by Kirwill's shooting at Renko:

When Arkady stepped forward, the hand lowered. He saw a barrel. The man aimed with both hands the way detectives were trained to fire a gun, and Arkady dove. He heard no shot and saw no flash, but something smacked off the ice behind him and, an instant later, rang off stones.

As Renko continues his investigation, he in turn nearly kills the American:

Arkady wasn't aware of raising the makeshift gun. He found himself aiming the barrel at a point between Kirwill's eyes and pulling the trigger so that the doubled rubber band and plunger started to move smoothly. At the last moment he aimed away. The closet jumped and a hole two centimeters across appeared in the closet door beside Kirwill's ear. Arkady was astonished. He'd never come close to murdering anyone in his life, and when the accuracy of the weapon was considered he could as easily have killed as missed. A white mask of surprise showed where the blood had drained around Kirwill's eyes.

Now the partners are even: Each has nearly shot the other. The symmetry in physical risk between the two culminates in Kirwill's death at John Osborne's hand; just as Renko was stabbed in Moscow, so is Kirwill stabbed in New York. In New York, the partners have been able to overcome their differences and work together to net Osborne.

Smith's partner theme extends from mismatched working partners to mismatched lovers and to a partnership between humans and animals. In his works, Smith creates a universe that places humans in a mythic relationship with animals.

ROMAN GREY SERIES

Mismatched lovers are sources of conflict in the Roman Grey series. Roman Grey's love for a non-Gypsy, Dany Murray, offends other Gypsies, who often accuse him of being Anglicized by her. His coop-

eration with Sergeant Isadore further provokes the Gypsies' ire. As a Gypsy colleague says to Grey in *Canto for a Gypsy*, "Each day I see you are more with them than us. First the girl and then the police. Maybe you want to be the first Gypsy in their heaven?"

These mismatched lovers undergo trials by fire in their relationship. Grey envisions his love leaving him because she will not be able to fit in with his Gypsy life, particularly during a trip through Europe:

She wouldn't break during the first month . . . because she had determination. But determination would only take her so far. Her fascination of Rom would turn to disgust. Their car would carry the stench of sweat and anger. She wouldn't fight, she would just go home. Roman knew it as certainly as he knew at this moment she couldn't believe it would ever happen.

Here Grey's dilemma with a non-Gypsy lover is apparent: Either he gives up his travels as a Gypsy (which is tantamount to giving up life as a Gypsy) or he loses the woman he loves.

In *Gypsy in Amber*, the confrontation between good and evil (Roman Grey and Howard Hale) is mediated by a sacrificed goat. Indeed, the goat strikes the final blow:

Howie still looked like a broken bust put back, subtly, completely ruined. Roman pulled the goat out of his arms. Its absence left two spongy holes in Howie's chest where its horns had cradled. The animal's gold, gun-slit eyes caught the first light of day as it broke over the pines.

"Howie sacrificed himself," Hillary said.

The goat, which has been tied on Grey's back, for much of the final battle between Howie and Grey, has shielded Grey from death many times and in the end is a sacrificial animal, archetypal figure of early Western mythology.

NIGHTWING

Suspicion and mistrust between ethnic groups is also evident in *Nightwing*, only this time the protagonist's group is the Hopi Indians. Youngblood Duran must endure racist comments directed toward his white lover, Anne Dillon; other Indians tell him she is interested in him only for sex. The racist preoccupation with "sex with the savage" also figures in *Stallion*

Gate, in which the mismatched couple, like the couple in *Nightwing*, begin with sex and then fall in love. In both instances, Smith portrays the man as the more romantic and vulnerable of the lovers.

Leaving on a trip is central to the plot of *Nightwing* and, as in the Roman Grey book, is a test of love. Early in the novel, Anne Dillon tells Youngblood Duran, the deputy investigating the death of the medicine man, that she will soon be leaving the reservation and that she wants him to come with her; he refuses to leave. After he finds her nearly dead in the desert, however, the only survivor of the group of desert campers, he declares, "My reservation days are over and I'm going to join the living. I finally figured it out. You're my ticket from here because I love you enough to be where you are, wherever that is." The relationship that began as a strong sexual attraction endures and grows, culminating with the pair riding off together at the end of the book, like the lovers in *Canto for a Gypsy*.

The sacrificial relationship between animal and man is further explored in *Nightwing*, only here the man sacrifices himself to the animal. Hayden Paine describes a symbiosis between the vampire bat and Central American Indian civilizations:

"The vampire lives off large mammals that sleep in herds. It lives off cattle and horses. There weren't any cattle and horses in the New World until the Spanish brought them. What do you think the vampires lived on before then? Name me the one large American mammal that slept together in herds, or villages."

A light-headed sensation came over Anne.

"You mean, people?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean. People. Which is why all the old vampire roosts were found next to villages. Of course, we can only speculate on the details of this relationship. Whether one vampire colony would establish territoriality over a particular village and defend its feeding ground against other colonies."

Paine points out that what man gained from this relationship was a god. He speculates on the meaning of religious sacrifice for the Central American Indian tribes. Paine's obsession with the vampire bat reflects the intricacy of humans' relationship with animals; in Paine's case, killing the animals meant killing himself.

GORKY PARK

Vulnerability and romance are shared by the mismatched lovers in *Gorky Park*, Irina Asanova and Arkady Renko. The crucial difference between them is that Renko is Russian, but Irina, though born in the Soviet Union, refuses to be Russian. Renko's involvement with Irina is highly dangerous because she is a dissident whose principal goal is to emigrate. Their attraction, like that of Smith's other couples, is intensely physical and develops from sex to love.

In *Gorky Park*, however, though the lovers pass their test, they are not given a happily-ever-after ending. After Renko and Asanova have endured KGB questioning regarding the months during which Renko was recovering from his stab wound, the couple is together in New York City. Asanova has acted as Osborne's lover so that Osborne would bring Renko to New York. The mark of her love for Renko is not, however, prostituting herself for him; she had already prostituted herself to get out of the Soviet Union. The test of her love, instead, is her willingness to go back with him, as she first asserts in New York and reaffirms in their final words to each other:

She took a dozen steps. "Will I ever hear from you?" She looked back, her eyes haggard and wet.

"No doubt. Messages get through, right? Times change."

At the gate she stopped again. "How can I leave you?"

"I am leaving *you*."

The words "Times change" suggest that there may be for this couple some hope for the future. Most of Smith's mysteries end with some expression of hope of a future together for the mismatched couple.

The relationship between man and animal is further explored in *Gorky Park*, in which the caged sables being smuggled to America become a metaphor for an ironic and perverse sort of freedom. The three murder victims in *Gorky Park* were caring for and helping to smuggle sables; the victims were living in a shack, their own cage, feeding the other caged victims. Renko considers the pathos in their circumstances as he investigates the crime. In the end, Renko cannot shoot the sables that have been smuggled to America.

Just as he frees Irina Asanova, he ends by freeing the sables, once again meting out justice.

Much loved by readers, Arkady Renko returned in a number of bestselling adventures. Renko is at sea, literally, on a Russian fishing vessel in *Polar Star* (1989), and he explores the seamy underbelly of postcommunist Moscow in *Red Square* (1992). However, the Renko in *Havana Bay* (1999) is a shadow of his former self and intent only on dying. While trying to kill himself, he is attacked and instinctively fights back, only to regret his natural response to self-preservation. When asked to locate an old friend, the reluctant hero travels to Cuba and is immersed in intrigue—enough to keep his suicidal thoughts at bay. The corrupt, burgeoning wealthy class of *Red Square* has fully matured into the uniquely Russian world of oligarchs in *Wolves Eat Dogs* (2004). The apparent suicide of one of these new capitalist princes leads Renko from a pile of salt in the dead man's closet to the dead zone of Chernobyl.

A stickler for research, Smith finds inspiration for his characters and the predicaments in which he sets them in landscapes that resonate with cultural and historical importance. Although Smith has never been at a loss to find ample material in contemporary Russia, he has also set his detectives to work in wartime Japan and Manchuria in *December 6* (2002), in New Mexico for the Manhattan Project in *Stallion Gate*, and in a dismal Victorian mining town in the north of England in *Rose* (1996). Whether writing about a Russian investigator or Gypsy antique dealer, the CIA or the KGB, Los Alamos or Moscow, Smith, dubbed the “mastercraftsman of the good read,” by Tony Hillerman, continues to deliver in the new millennium.

Janet T. Palmer

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROMAN GREY SERIES: *Gypsy in Amber*, 1971; *Canto for a Gypsy*, 1972

NICK CARTER SERIES (AS CARTER): *The Inca Death Squad*, 1972; *The Devil's Dozen*, 1973

INQUISITOR SERIES (AS SIMON QUINN): *The Devil in Kansas*, 1974; *His Eminence, Death*, 1974; *The Last Time I Saw Hell*, 1974; *Nuplex Red*, 1974;

The Human Factor, 1975; *Last Rites for the Vulture*, 1975; *The Midas Coffin*, 1975

ARKADY RENKO SERIES: *Gorky Park*, 1981; *Polar Star*, 1989; *Red Square*, 1992; *Havana Bay*, 1999; *Wolves Eat Dogs*, 2004

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Analog Bullet*, 1972; *Code Name: Werewolf*, 1973; *Nightwing*, 1977; *Overture to Death*, 1986; *Stallion Gate*, 1986; *Rose*, 1996; *December 6*, 2002 (also known as *Tokyo Station*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Indians Won*, 1970; *Ride for Revenge*, 1977 (as Logan)

EDITED TEXT: *Death by Espionage: Intriguing Stories of Betrayal and Deception*, 1999

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Smith, Martin Cruz. “Escape: Tales from My Travels—Martin Cruz Smith, Shadows of Chernobyl.” Interview by Carl Wilkinson. *The Observer*, April 10, 2005, p. 24. Interview discusses Smith's travels to the Soviet Union in 1973 to research *Gorky Park* and his later visits to Chernobyl.

Wroe, Nicholas. “Saturday Review: Profile—Crime Pays.” *The Guardian*, March 26, 2005, p. 20. This substantial profile of Smith looks at his background, how he got started in writing, his early series, his decision to write about the Soviet Union and how his publishers initially were not interested in *Gorky Park*, and his subsequent writing career. Notes how his works about Russia provide a short history of the changes that have taken place in that nation.

STEPHEN SOLOMITA

David Cray

Born: New York, New York; November 29, 1943

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; hard-boiled; thriller; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Stanley Moodrow, 1988-
Julia Brennan, 2001-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

STANLEY MOODROW is a former New York Police Department officer turned private eye. A large man (six foot six, 250 pounds), Moodrow joined the force during the 1950's and spent thirty-five years as an officer on the Lower East Side before retiring in disgust at the futility of trying to stop crime. A persistent investigator, he still lives in the neighborhood of his former beat with girlfriend Betty Haluka, a feisty Legal Aid lawyer.

LIEUTENANT JULIA BRENNAN is a detective with Manhattan North Homicide, part of the New York City Police Department. A self-confident, ambitious woman, Julia is essentially a good, proactive person in a tough job, though she acts hardboiled. After dealing all day with mostly male subordinates who are hostile toward a female boss, she often unwinds with her daughter, Corry, and her uncle, Robert Reid.

CONTRIBUTION

Stephen Solomita has proven to be a prolific and versatile writer since his first mystery novel, *A Twist of the Knife*, featuring police officer (later private eye) Stanley Moodrow, appeared in 1988. His work ranges from the extremely gritty and hard-boiled crime story, such as *Keeplock* (1995), which is told from the point of view of a former convict, to the softer, more traditional mystery, such as *Dead Is Forever* (2004), which concerns the exploits of a wealthy, aristocratic private investigator in the tradition of C. Auguste Dupin or Philo Vance.

A *New Yorker* through and through, Solomita's particular strength is in depicting the city and its multifari-

ous denizens. He is especially adept at sketching street people—prostitutes, pimps, bums, and other assorted lowlifes—and has an ear well tuned to the rhythm and vocabulary of dialogue as it issues from the mouths of people from the dregs to the pinnacles of society.

A critical favorite among fellow hard-boiled writers, Solomita typically receives positive reviews in both domestic and international venues; however, whether as Solomita or David Cray, he has yet to become a household name among general crime readers. *Forced Entry* (1990), the fourth novel in his Stanley Moodrow series, was selected an Editor's Choice at *Drood Review*. The seventh entry in the series, *Damaged Goods* (1996), was nominated for the Hammett Prize, an award from the North American Branch of the International Association of Crime Writers.

BIOGRAPHY

Stephen E. Solomita was born on November 29, 1943, in New York City and raised with a brother and two sisters in the city's environs. He was the son of auto parts warehouseman Ernest Solomita and commercial artist Evelyn Klein Solomita. An eager reader, during his early teenage years he knew he wanted to be a writer and began publishing essays and stories in the Bayside High School literary magazine and in other periodicals. Following graduation, Solomita attended Queens College in the early 1960's as a literature major but did not graduate. He afterward worked at a variety of jobs, including a stint at his father's warehouse, while occasionally publishing stories and researching subjects of interest that would later figure in his fiction. He was particularly fascinated by the history of the New York Police Department and the criminal justice system.

In 1983, Solomita bought a taxi medallion and drove a cab in New York City for twelve hours per day for several years. This experience allowed him to closely observe passengers, gave him an unparalleled feel for the geography of the city, and provided a plethora of material for his fiction. Fearful that he would end

up killing someone or being killed in his dangerous occupation, Solomita quit piloting taxis in favor of the safer, if less secure, task of writing.

Solomita's first mystery was the initial novel in his hard-boiled series focusing on New York City police officer, later private eye, Stanley Moodrow. *A Twist of the Knife* was optioned for a film that was never made. For a number of years, Solomita produced novels in the Moodrow series, the work for which he is probably best known, on an almost yearly basis with such entries as *Force of Nature* (1989), *Bad to the Bone* (1991), and the Hammett Award-nominated *Damaged Goods*. Much of the authentic feel of the series comes from the author's long-standing friendships with active and retired police officers.

In 1995, with the release of the nonseries thriller *Keeplock*—for which Solomita interviewed dozens of former convicts to gain information about the psychology of incarceration—he began publishing novels under the pseudonym David Cray, a pen name intended for work of a slightly less hard-boiled nature, written to accommodate the changing tastes of the reading public. Other novels under the Cray byline include two featuring New York detective Julia Brennan (*Little Girl Blue*, 2002, and *What You Wish For*, 2002), and such nonseries efforts as *Bad Lawyer* (2001) and *Dead Is Forever*.

Solomita has been married twice: His first marriage ended in divorce, and his second wife is deceased. He has one son, now in his thirties. Solomita settled in New York City, near the Lower East Side of Manhattan, an ethnically diverse area with a long and colorful history that figures prominently in much of his fiction.

ANALYSIS

Stephen Solomita knows and obviously has great affection for New York City and its residents. He lovingly describes local landmarks, particularly in his home territory of the Lower East Side, but he is also well versed in the unique qualities of boroughs throughout the sprawling metropolis, from Yonkers to Brooklyn, and from Manhattan to Montauk Point at the eastern extreme of Long Island. Solomita understands the pulse of the city whether detailing rush-hour traffic jams or late-night parties.

Solomita's characters range across the social scale, but he holds a particular fondness for ordinary people: hardworking shopkeepers, cynical bartenders, and crime-weary police officers. His heroes and villains are drawn from all ethnic types—haughty white people, devout Orthodox Jews, rapping African Americans, Italian restaurateurs, Irish toughs, and Russian mobsters. Characters, particularly in Moodrow novels, speak an authentic patois, full of ungrammatical street slang, crude humor, and profanity, sprinkled with colorful expressions in native tongues.

Plots in Solomita's novels cover the full gamut of criminal behavior: rape, murder, kidnapping, drug dealing, and spousal and child abuse. Thematically, the author is an advocate for law and order. Crimes—often shown to be the result of bad upbringing, the pressures of society, unfair happenstance, or just plain evil lurking in the hearts of men and women—typically do not go unpunished.

Stylistically, Solomita writes straightforward prose without much reliance on literary devices; his characters carry the story. While there is occasional humor, mostly in the form of salty exchanges, and now and then a simile to fix an image in the reader's mind, the narrative usually moves forward without many side trips. Most of his works are written in third person. In structure, they typically begin with a dramatic incident or a crisis situation that sets the story in motion, and Solomita is skilled at inventing obstacles for protagonists that increase anxiety and tighten suspense. Although the majority of his work is decidedly hard-boiled, especially the Moodrow series and nonseries novels like *Keeplock*, the author is not afraid to experiment with a lighter tone, as in *Dead Is Forever*. Solomita's best novels are those closest to his own first-hand knowledge—which portray the sights, sounds, and smells of the street while they deal with crimes that affect the reader at gut level.

BAD TO THE BONE

In *Bad to the Bone*, Connie Alamare, a wealthy romance novelist, hires private eye Stanley Moodrow to investigate the circumstances behind the comatose condition of her daughter Florence "Flo" Alamare and to retrieve her grandson. Flo was a bonding mother to children—including her own son, Billy—born at a

Lower East Side pseudo-religious cult and commune called Hanover House. The commune, under the leadership of sinister Davis Craddock, on the surface is an organization that remolds society's misfits into productive citizens. However, it is actually a front for the distribution of a new, potentially lethal designer drug called PURE, which is ten times as addictive as heroin. In the course of setting up and protecting the clandestine drug operation, Craddock and his minions resort to kidnapping, sexual orgies, child abuse, and murder. Once the manufacture and distribution of PURE is under way, Craddock intends to take the millions gained from the sale of the drug and flee to South America.

Using resources from his lifetime of law enforcement and relying on his former partner Jim Tilley for inside information, Moodrow probes for legal weak spots in the commune's defenses and slowly closes in on Craddock. Tension mounts as Moodrow's girlfriend, Betty Haluka, goes underground as a potential commune member at Hanover House, is exposed, and is held for ransom.

Told in third person from several points of view, including that of villain Craddock (who keeps a journal of his misdeeds), *Bad to the Bone* begins slowly as setting, characters, and situation are established. Suspense builds inexorably and the pace quickens to an exciting, white-knuckle finale.

KEEPLOCK

A tough-as-nails nonseries novel, *Keeplock* is a first-person story of career criminal and longtime drug user Peter Frangello, now in his late thirties and newly released on parole from the maximum-security Cortlandt Correctional Facility.

Unwilling to do more time after narrowly avoiding a nasty assassination attempt, Frangello is buffeted between several powerful forces. The parole system places him in a halfway house in a run-down area of New York City, where he is surrounded by criminal temptations. A group of former inmates enlists him to participate in a supposedly foolproof armored car robbery, planned to coincide with the pope's visit so police forces will be preoccupied with security issues. A pair of detectives of questionable morality browbeat the former convict into snitching on his prison buddies so that the lawmen can prevent the planned crime and

win accolades. A former girlfriend humiliated by being imprisoned in association with the crime that led to Frangello's most recent incarceration—a robbery during which he stole a ring that he gave to her—still has feelings for her man. Peter himself is torn by contradictory emotions: He wants to go straight, but after a lifetime of crime, fears he is too set in his ways to ever change.

Profane and violent, hard-boiled and unforgiving, *Keeplock* is populated with a cast of well-drawn characters who speak the language of the streets. As complications mount, Peter twists and turns among loyalties to his prison mates, to his girlfriend, and to himself, and the tension ratchets up as the moment for the heist draws closer. Will he go through with the robbery, thereby risking death? Will he betray his buddies and incur their vengeance? Will the police keep their promises? Will Peter survive against impossible odds? A fast-paced thriller that examines many facets of criminal behavior under a microscope, *Keeplock* has the ring of absolute authenticity.

BAD LAWYER

In *Bad Lawyer*, former mob lawyer Sid Kaplan has fallen from the heights, thanks to alcohol and drug addiction, and after a year of rehabilitation is piecing his life and practice together. With the assistance of alcoholic former police officer Caleb Talbot and former prostitute and heroin addict Julia Gill—two people Kaplan rescued on his way up—the lawyer takes on a new case. Priscilla “Prissy” Sweet has been accused of the murder of her abusive, drug-dealing African American husband, Byron, a crime that causes a sensation in the New York media because of its interracial nature and practically guarantees Kaplan new business, if he can get the woman off. However, Kaplan, who despite his past history has a strong moral sense, is not sure Priscilla should be set free, because she has lied about a number of key points. Worse, her lies concerning a suitcase full of drug money set vicious dealers on the people to whom Kaplan is closest, initiating a wave of violence that leaves death and destruction in its wake.

A hard-boiled courtroom procedural in first person, *Bad Lawyer* is populated with Solomita's usual cast of unusual, true-to-life, morally ambiguous char-

acters. The novel provides intriguing, authentic insights into the workings of the justice system and portrays the media as vulturelike, greedy for details to feed to the masses of readers held in thrall by bloody crimes.

DEAD IS FOREVER

Despite its noir-themed title, *Dead Is Forever* is more soft- than hard-boiled. Protagonist Philip Beckett is a wealthy wastrel, the scion of a multimillionaire industrialist, and a product of Choate, Harvard, and the Wharton School of Business. In his early thirties, of average height and weight, and inconspicuous except for the expensive clothing he invariably wears, Philip has turned his back on the family business. Philip, who survives mainly on a trust fund, worked for a security company before becoming a licensed private eye, and for large fees, he performs discreet services for upper-class clients.

In *Dead Is Forever*, Philip's cold-hearted, ambitious sister Regina hires the dilettante private eye to investigate a family affair. Their chubby, homely cousin Audrey is married to a charming but destitute Italian count, Sergio D'Alesse, who has a gambling problem: He is forty thousand dollars in arrears to con man Gaetano Carollo, known as "Gentleman John" Carroll, and the Beckett family refuses to bail him out of debt any longer. Philip investigates, and complications ensue, including the murder of Count D'Alesse, which precipitates several other offstage murders.

Dead Is Forever is an odd novel: too hard-edged to be called a cozy but too rose-tinted, thanks to the hero's book-long affair with corporate lawyer Magdalena "Maggie" Santos, to be categorized as a thriller. Told in first person and populated with Solomita's typical cast of intriguing secondary characters from the seedy side of the street, the novel has few outright action sequences between long, involved scenes in which dialogue dominates. The complicated plot requires some knowledge of the stock market and legal issues. The denouement is reminiscent of traditional mysteries, where the detective gathers primary suspects in the drawing room to eliminate them one by one before naming the culprit. Although Solomita may be credited for his innovation in attempting to blend various subgenres into a unified whole, the ulti-

mate effect is a failed experiment that is neither clue-laden enough to please traditional fans nor tough enough to satisfy noir readers.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

STANLEY MOODROW SERIES: *A Twist of the Knife*, 1988; *Law According to Moodrow*, 1989; *Force of Nature*, 1989; *Forced Entry*, 1990; *Bad to the Bone*, 1991; *A Piece of the Action*, 1992; *Damaged Goods*, 1996

JULIA BRENNAN SERIES (AS CRAY): *Little Girl Blue*, 2002; *What You Wish For*, 2002

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Good Day To Die*, 1993; *Last Chance for Glory*, 1994; *Keeplock*, 1995 (as Cray); *Poster Boy*, 1998; *Trick Me Twice*, 1998; *No Control*, 1999; *Bad Lawyer*, 2001 (as Cray); *Partners*, 2004 (as Cray); *Dead Is Forever*, 2004 (as Cray)

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Fletcher, Connie. Review of *Little Girl Blue*, by Stephen Solomita. *Booklist* 98, no. 5 (November 1, 2001): 461. This is a favorable review of a Julia Brennan series novel about child slavery and pedophilia. The critic praises the accuracy of procedural details and plot twists, and Solomita's ability to show the human side of a professional police officer.

Kirkus Reviews. Review of *Bad Lawyer*, by Stephen Solomita. 68, no. 23 (December 1, 2000): 1631. A favorable review in which the critic notes that the story concerning the efforts of fallen lawyer Sid Kaplan and his assistants to defend accused murderer Priscilla Sweet is "refreshing" and "unsentimental."

Needham, George. Review of *Keeplock*, by Stephen Solomita. *Booklist* 91, no. 10 (January 15, 1996): 898. In this favorable review, the critic mentions that the title is a prison term referring to a convict locked in a cell all day and notes that the novel's finale is reminiscent of the ending of the 1932 Paul Muni film *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Damaged Goods*, by

Stephen Solomita. 242, no. 47 (November 20, 1995): 68. This is a favorable review of the sixth Moodrow novel, in which the detective, now past sixty years of age, is hired to find a kidnapped four-year-old girl. The critic called the novel “piercing urban melancholy.”

Stasio, Marilyn. “Crime: A Twist of the Knife.” Review of *A Twist of the Knife*, by Stephen Solomita. *The New York Times Book Review*, December 11, 1988, p. 34. This is a mostly favorable review of Solomita’s first published novel, which introduces Stanley Moodrow. While the author is praised for

his relentless plot—which involves the detective tracking down terrorists who killed his girlfriend—the critic cautions about the extreme violence.

Wilkins, Mary Frances. Review of *What You Wish For*, by Stephen Solomita. *Booklist* 99, no. 8 (December 15, 2002): 737. This favorable review of *What You Wish For* mentions the plot—a Brennan investigation into the death of an aging, wealthy woman while the lieutenant pursues a relationship with a former police officer—and praises the gritty story in which it is difficult to tell heroes from the villains.

MICKEY SPILLANE

Frank Morrison Spillane

Born: Brooklyn, New York; March 9, 1918

Died: Murrells Inlet, South Carolina; July 17, 2006

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Mike Hammer, 1947-1984

Tiger Mann, 1964-1966

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MIKE HAMMER, a New York City private investigator, is in his mid-twenties and has just returned from World War II as the series opens. Thereafter, he ages gradually to about forty. Irresistible to sexually aggressive women, he remains unmarried. Tough, crusading, and violent, with a simplistic personal sense of justice, he pursues murderers and the organizations shielding them on their own ground and with their own tactics.

VELDA, Hammer’s sexy secretary, is also a private investigator. She serves as his surrogate mother and mistress and is one of the few people whom he loves and trusts.

CAPTAIN PATRICK CHAMBERS, a New York City homicide detective, is a foil for Hammer as well as a friend who, though bound to rules and regulations, understands and generally assists him.

CONTRIBUTION

Mickey Spillane was a phenomenon of popular culture. His twenty-three novels, particularly the Mike Hammer titles, had international sales of more than 225 million copies. Of the top ten best-selling fictional works published between 1920 and 1980, seven were Spillane’s, and in the detective-fiction genre few have exceeded his sales. Spillane can attribute part of his popularity to having created in Mike Hammer the quintessential avenger-crusader. Criminal cases in which Hammer becomes involved are personal. Usually the slaying of an old buddy or of a small-timer whom he has encountered and liked prompts him to saddle up, lock, and load. His vengeance is violent, direct, and—compared to that dispensed by the courts—swift. A raw, hangman’s justice is realized—illegally, but not without some assistance from the law. Readers are also treated to whole squads of sexually uninhibited women who find Hammer, or his counterparts in other books, Tiger Mann or Gillian Burke, irresistible.

The appeal of Spillane’s novels lies in their blunt-force narration, the hero’s direct assault on his enemies, and sexual encounters that were, in their time, shocking for their brutishness and frequency. Spillane’s loose plotting, scant characterizations, and vio-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Mickey Spillane at his home in 2001. (AP/Wide World Photos)

lent resolutions have a comic book's color and directness, allowing readers to vicariously indulge in personally exacting justice without the niceties of due process. He popularized pulp fiction in a way it had not been popularized previously, in fact almost single-handedly driving the phenomenal growth of the paperback original and gaining an audience that included those who did not generally read books and those who read lots of books—they all read Mickey Spillane.

BIOGRAPHY

Mickey Spillane was born Frank Morrison Spillane on March 9, 1918, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of an Irish bartender. He grew up, by his own report, in one of the tougher neighborhoods of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Little is known about his early schooling. In the mid-1930's he attended Kansas State College, hoping eventually to study law. During the summers, he was captain of the lifeguards at Breezy Point, Long Island.

In 1935, when Spillane was seventeen years of age, he began selling stories to the pulps. He was able to

pay his college tuition by writing for radio and by writing comic books. (He claimed to have been one of the originators of the Captain Marvel and Captain America comics, which enjoyed enormous popularity in the 1930's and 1940's.) During World War II, he served in the United States Army Air Force, training cadets and in time flying fighter missions. After the war, he briefly worked as a trampoline artist for Barnum and Bailey's circus.

Spillane's success as a writer really began in 1947, with the publication of what remains his most popular book, *I, the Jury*. In 1952, after publishing half a dozen additional titles, he was converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Almost a decade passed before the release of *The Deep* (1961), considered by many to be his finest novel. His last book, *Black Alley* (1996) concluded a half-century-long career. Though Spillane wrote his books in a matter of weeks, or even days, and only when he needed money (a claim intended to deflect criticism with perfect indifference), he could never be accused of "cranking them out"; he wrote fewer than twenty-five novels in fifty years, a relatively modest number for a writer in this genre, and always managed to infuse the formula with the vitality of a righteous and unrestrained rage and a wildly original outcome.

Divorced from his first wife, Spillane married a woman much his junior, Sherri Malinou—a model whom he had met when she posed for the cover of one of his books—in 1965. Along with producer Robert Fellows, Spillane formed an independent film company in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1969 for the filming of features and television productions, while continuing his other writing. Mike Hammer's adventures were depicted in several films of the 1950's, as well as in a television series. Spillane cowrote the screenplay for—and even starred as Mike Hammer in—*The Girl Hunters*, a 1963 film. Later incarnations of Mike Hammer have included a syndicated television series.

Spillane received the lifetime achievement award from the Private Eye Writers of America in 1983 and the Edgar Allan Poe Grand Master award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1995—almost fifty years after the publication of *I, the Jury*. The belated award came near the end of a lifetime of blithely dismissing critics, who for decades had been practically

unanimous in disparaging Spillane's artless, primary-palette prose. He routinely neutralized vitriolic reviews by pigeonholing his own work as "chewing gum" fiction and "garbage, but good garbage," and deferring to American taste as evidenced by his royalty checks.

Spillane remarried in 1983, to Jane Rodgers Johnson. He moved to Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina, in 1954. Though his home for more than thirty years was destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, he remained a resident in that beach town until his death from pancreatic cancer in 2006.

ANALYSIS

Those critics who did not dismiss Mickey Spillane out of hand generally reacted to him caustically. It has been pointed out that his novels debase women, reducing them to sex objects, and frequently evil ones at that. Spillane's handling of sex, stripped of any tenderness, intimacy, or romance, was perceived by many to be pornographic. The violence and gore hurled at the reader have been condemned as gratuitous and revolting. His plots have been deemed shaky, his characterizations thin, his dialogue wooden. In sum, by these criteria, comparisons with the classic writers in his field—Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, or Ross Macdonald—simply fail.

Nevertheless, Spillane's novels entertain with a frankness and a ferocity that only a literary killjoy could fail to appreciate. They do so without lengthy setups, lyrical embroidery, or brainteasers. They play on basic human instincts and prejudices, the kind of soldier's rage that results in atrocity in the real world but finds its deserving target unflinchingly in the unstoppable force of Mike Hammer. What Spillane's novels lack in craftsmanship, they amply make up for in vitality.

THE MIKE HAMMER SERIES

Mike Hammer is a tough private eye, a loner who before the bottom of page 2 in any volume of the series is confronted with a killing that has personal meaning to him. In *I, the Jury*, Hammer's wartime buddy and best friend, Jack Williams, has been shot by a .45 and left to die slowly, crawling before his executioner. In *Vengeance Is Mine!* (1950), Chester Wheeler, Hammer's casual drinking companion, is murdered while he and Hammer, dead drunk, share the same bed. In

Survival . . . Zero! (1970), Lippy Sullivan, a petty pickpocket whom Hammer knew, calls him while dying with a knife in his back. Such murders invariably launch Hammer's personal crusade to locate the slayer and avenge the death.

The ubiquitous Captain Patrick Chambers, Hammer's detective friend and sometime backup, always warns Hammer to stay off the case, taking the role of society's spokesperson calling for an orderly investigation within the law. The rules are stated, however, only to alert the reader to the fact that they are about to be broken. Soon Pat and Hammer, in leapfrog fashion, are finding and sharing clues. Pat genuinely sympathizes with Hammer and uses him to advance the case in the hope of reaching the culprit before Hammer does, but his actions are implicit acknowledgment that corruption, bureaucratic mismanagement, and public apathy make true justice impossible to attain except outside the law.

As the pursuit progresses, Hammer uncovers (and dispatches) a ring of conspirators—"a meal," Hammer calls it, and the killer "dessert." In *One Lonely Night* (1951), Hammer seeks a killer who is linked to the Communist Party of America; in *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952), the Mafia lurks, pulling the strings. In *The Girl Hunters* (1962), the killer's shield is an international terrorist organization, as it is also in *Survival . . . Zero!* In *The Big Kill* (1951), Hammer stands against an extensive blackmail ring.

An antiorganizational, antiauthoritarian bias is only one of many prejudices that are expressed by Hammer (or Johnny McBride, Tiger Mann, or Gill Burke). Hammer detests New York City, "fat, greasy" lecherous businessmen, "queers," "Commies," district attorneys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), counterespionage agencies, pimps, punks, hoods, drug dealers, modern robber barons, most police officials, and skinny women. He is a bundle of postwar suspicions and hatreds. He is a veteran (one suspects a case of post-traumatic stress, a disorder familiar to but unnamed by Spillane's early readers), with a deep respect for bravery, kindness, and loyalty—qualities that tend to get people killed in Hammer's world.

In pursuit of his enemies, Hammer (and Spillane's other heroes) becomes a one-man war wagon, armed

with Old Testament injunctions—particularly “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” In *One Lonely Night* his urge to kill is so powerful that a terrified woman whom he has rescued from a rapist leaps off a bridge to her death after she sees the lust for killing in his face. Later, in the same book, he butchers a number of political radicals with an FBI machine gun. With his “rod,” he lays open the jaw of another enemy, breaks his teeth, and kicks them down his throat. In *My Gun Is Quick* (1950), he takes Feeney Last’s head “like a sodden rag and smashed and smashed and smashed and there was no satisfying, solid thump, but a sickening squashing sound that splashed all over me.” The greatest cruelties are reserved for prime objects of Hammer’s revenge. Unlike the hero avengers in the detective fiction of Chandler and Hammett, who generally leave final vengeance to the cops or to the intervention of fate, Spillane’s avengers attend personally to their usually grisly executions. Thus, William Dorn and Renee Talmadge, the principal villains of *Survival . . . Zero!*, their backs against the wall, are persuaded by Hammer that he is going to blow them away with his trademark .45. The prospect terrifies them into swallowing cyanide capsules—only to be shown by a jeering Hammer that his gun is empty. Berin-Grotin, the villainous head of a prostitution ring in *Vengeance Is Mine!*, finally trapped beneath a burning beam and painfully being consumed by the fire, is told that as soon as a fireman comes through the window to rescue him—if he is not already dead by then—Hammer will blow his head off. Hammer’s dispatching in *I, the Jury* of Charlotte Manning, the gorgeous psychiatrist turned dope-ring leader and the slayer of his best friend, is classic. Cornered at last, she strips naked to distract him from the murder weapon nearby. Once in love with her, now unmoved, he shoots her in the belly.

Pain and unbelief.

“How c-could you?” she gasped.

I had only a moment before talking to a corpse, but I got it in.

“It was easy,” I said.

WOMEN AND SEX

The myriad women encountered by Hammer in the course of his crusades are invariably busty, leggy, gor-



Mickey Spillane was often accused of depicting women as sex objects in his books.

geous, and sexually well-primed. Though he is described as scarred and ugly, Hammer’s wild brown-green Irish eyes and his air of violence and power prove overwhelmingly attractive to a parade of beautiful women. Spillane depicts for his readers a continuous striptease, a procession of women putting on and taking off clothes, lounging in provocative poses, and making themselves utterly available to Hammer. Yet the stereotyping of female sexual displays and the movement of voluptuous women in and out of Hammer’s range are less important than Spillane’s reliance—as humanist critic John Cawelti suggests—on violence for his chief stimulus. It is the imminent capacity of Spillane’s heroes for violence, after all, not

their looks or lines, that attracts women in the first place: the same deadliness that terrifies the villains.

Spillane's crusaders, in any event, are usually ambivalent about women. His female characters are either sex objects—prostitutes, lovers, or temptresses or, like Velda, alternately jealous and tolerant aides-de-camp. There is no way of knowing whether Spillane purposefully pandered to certain audiences with what many critics consider his chauvinism and degradation of women. There is no doubt, however, that the “manly” behavior of his protagonists—and the preening vanity of his villains—reflected one widespread view of men's relations with women.

PERIOD PIECES

In comparison to many late twentieth century best sellers, with their anatomization of sex and liberal use of crude, graphic language, Spillane seems almost quaint. Profanity is fairly rare in his works; sex is not comparably explicit. Drugs do not constitute an amusing recreation; indeed, they are treated as debilitating, ultimately deadly (although there is cultural acceptance of drinking and smoking). Written for the adult postwar generation, Spillane's novels are now period pieces. Mike Hammer, for example, is often short of “dough,” “jack,” or “long green.” He “picks” a “rod” and drives a “jalopy.” For him and other of Spillane's avengers, the “monikers” assigned to women are “girlie,” “sugar pie,” “broad,” “babe,” “kitten,” “pet,” and “kid.” Hard-boiled as they are, they say “wow,” “swell,” “yup,” “bub,” “boy oh boy,” “okeydoke,” “jeez,” and “pal.” “Punks” get “plugged” or “bumped off” with “slugs” before they are “dumped.” In this, he is not so different from Hammett or Chandler. Spillane, however, continued writing into the 1990's with few concessions to the contemporary sense of cultural verisimilitude. In *Black Alley*, Hammer was still calling people “kid.”

BLACK ALLEY

Time, however, can force certain concessions even from Mike Hammer. The catalyst for action in *Black Alley*, Spillane's last novel, as in *I, the Jury*, his first, is the murder of an old army buddy. Though the formula is essentially the same, the hard-boiled hero has melted just a bit: He admits to liking Richard Wagner's music and confesses to Velda that she's the one. In addition, his usual methods are hampered by the fact that

he has been seriously wounded. No longer able to beat things out of people, he must actually follow clues. Moreover, on doctor's orders, he cannot consummate his relationship with Velda. Many fans were disappointed that the aging private investigator (a quick finger count puts Mike and Velda in their seventies) was finally slowed by a mere gunshot to the chest.

By the time of Spillane's death, critical reaction to his work was warming. His enormous influence on the genre and on the publishing industry was being recognized, and the taint of “popular taste” was wearing off. Spillane's style, which Hammett and others had perceived as uncrafterlike, was in fact perfectly suited to the first-person narration of the brutish, artless Mike Hammer. Sam Spade might have paused for the *mot juste*, but for Mike, “squash,” “smash,” and “thump” were good enough. The British *Guardian* newspaper (without a whiff of condescension) asserted in its obituary of Spillane that, despite having long lost the ability to shock, he was nevertheless the best-selling novelist of the twentieth century.

Clifton K. Yearley

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan, Jessica Reisman,
and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MIKE HAMMER SERIES: *I, the Jury*, 1947; *My Gun Is Quick*, 1950; *Vengeance Is Mine!*, 1950; *One Lonely Night*, 1951; *The Big Kill*, 1951; *Kiss Me, Deadly*, 1952; *The Girl Hunters*, 1962; *The Snake*, 1964; *The Twisted Thing*, 1966; *The Body Lovers*, 1967; *Survival . . . Zero!*, 1970; *Mike Hammer: The Comic Strip*, 1982-1984; *The Killing Man*, 1989; *Black Alley*, 1996; *The Mike Hammer Collection*, 2001 (2 volumes)

TIGER MANN SERIES: *Day of the Guns*, 1964; *Bloody Sunrise*, 1965; *The Death Dealers*, 1965; *The By-Pass Control*, 1967

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Long Wait*, 1951; *The Deep*, 1961; *The Delta Factor*, 1967; *The Erection Set*, 1972; *The Last Cop Out*, 1973; *Something's Down There*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *Me, Hood!*, 1963; *Return of the Hood*, 1964; *The Flier*, 1964; *Killer Mine*, 1965; *The Tough Guys*, 1969; *Tomorrow I Die*, 1984; *Together We Kill*, 2001; *Primal Spillane*, 2003

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAY: *The Girl Hunters*, 1963 (adaptation of his novel; with Roy Rowland and Robert Fellows)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Day the Sea Rolled Back*, 1979; *The Ship That Never Was*, 1982

EDITED TEXTS: *Murder Is My Business*, 1994 (with Max Allen Collins); *A Century of Noir: Thirty-two Classic Crime Stories*, 2002 (with Collins)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Byline: Mickey Spillane*, 2004 (Max Allan Collins and Lynn F. Myers, Jr., editors)

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Collins, Max Allan, and James L. Traylor. *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984. Discusses Hammer's controversial appeal in detail. Collins was an early champion of Spillane and has done much to rehabilitate the author's critical reputation.

Haut, Woody. *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War*. New York: Serpent's Tail, 1995. Discusses Spillane's antileftist appeal. This somewhat older work supplements the more recent *Gumshoe America*.

Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Spillane receives considerable attention in Knight's chapter "The American Version," in which he describes the influence of the pulps and early hard-boiled detective fiction on the genre.

McCann, Sean. *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. Places Spillane amid sociopolitical movements democratizing but degenerating American culture. Hammer is seen as embodying American

rugged individualism at a time when patriotism and hard justice were being subverted by liberalism.

McLellan, Dennis. "Mickey Spillane, 1918-2006: A Simple Plot—Violence, Sex, and Royalty Checks." *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2006, p. A1. Obituary of Spillane looks at his background and early comic book writing and traces his evolution as a writer. Notes his reported indifference to critics and his devotion to his fans. Although he reportedly was a tough guy when young, Spillane's conversion to the Jehovah's Witness faith made him a much mellowed man.

"Mickey Spillane." *The Times*, July 19, 2006, p. 55. This obituary of Spillane discusses his immense popularity and his lack of critical acclaim. Covers his background, his motivation to write, his speed of writing, and his divorces.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Devotes a full chapter to the private eye. Hammer is described as "unidimensional" and a product of Cold War ideology.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contrasts Mike Hammer with other private eyes of the period, particularly Philip Marlowe. Scaggs calls Hammer one of the "anti-intellectual" private-eye heroes, able to inflict and endure incredible physical punishment, and compares the urban setting of such characters with the lawless frontier of the American West.

Spillane, Mickey. *Byline: Mickey Spillane*. Edited by Max Allan Collins and Lynn F. Myers, Jr. New York: Crippen and Landru, 2005. A collection of very early Spillane short pieces. The critical commentary is by Collins and Myers, both longtime champions of Spillane.

MICHELLE SPRING

Born: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; 1951

Also wrote as Michelle Stanworth

Types of plot: Private investigator; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Laura Principal, 1994-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

LAURA PRINCIPAL is a former academic who has become a skilled private investigator with her professional and personal partner, Sonny Mendlowitz. Principal is a strong, intelligent, and independent heroine, who displays feminist leanings yet shows compassion toward the peculiarities of human nature.

CONTRIBUTION

Michelle Spring began her writing career with *Every Breath You Take* (1994), which introduces Laura Principal as private investigator, and followed it with four other novels that are concerned with Principal's forays into crimes in and around Cambridge, England. Her sixth book, *The Night Lawyer* (2006), a suspense novel, dispenses with Principal and focuses on the efforts of Eleanor Porter to become strong and independent.

Most readers find Spring's Laura Principal series well crafted, readable, and imbued with a strong sense of place. Spring places Principal, a contemporary woman and a former history professor, confidently in Cambridge, where she moves through an intricate plot realistically searching for answers. Her compelling investigations, which make the most of the English countryside in and around Cambridge, have been compared to those of Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse in Oxford. Like Morse, Principal's investigations frequently uncover the dark side of existence beneath a cultured, refined facade.

For her first novel, Spring was nominated and short-listed for two awards, but for *In the Midnight Hour* (2001), she was awarded the Arthur Ellis award, given by the Crime Writers of Canada for the best novel of the year. She is one of six novelists who make up the Unusual Suspects, a group of mystery writers who enter-

tain audiences in Britain, Canada, the United States, and Europe with their commentaries on crime fiction. Spring was selected by the London *Times* as one of the twentieth century's one hundred masters of crime.

BIOGRAPHY

Michelle Spring was born Michelle Stanworth in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1951. She was raised in Victoria on Vancouver Island and began reading Nancy Drew books at the age of six while she was ill with tuberculosis. While she was quarantined in the hospital, Stanworth's father stole up the fire escape with food and books for her to read. When she was eight, she fainted from the pure excitement of reading a mystery, and was forbidden by her mother to read crime stories. However, as an adolescent, her interest in crime deepened with reading the works of authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Daphne du Maurier, Shirley Jackson, Dashiell Hammett, and Patricia Highsmith.

In 1969, Spring moved to England, later becoming a professor of sociology at East Anglia University. In her career in the classroom, which spanned more than twenty-five years, she pioneered the somewhat radical investigation (at that time) into the inequity of teaching based on the gender of students. Her investigation revealed that elementary school teachers were more attached to their male students and were more concerned with them and their abilities than they were with their female students. She discussed the findings and implications of her research in a book on gender and schooling. She later authored feminist books about reproductive technologies and political implications, and coauthored an introductory sociology textbook. Spring has also lectured in the social and political sciences at Cambridge University.

While at East Anglia University, Spring had tried repeatedly to write a more serious book but was unable to get started. However, she was stalked by one of her students, who became violent, and soon after, even as she was about to give up the idea of writing, the first chapter of *Every Breath You Take* fairly wrote itself.

Surprised that she was writing a detective novel, she came to understand her need to write about the traumatic stalking episode and her need to write stories as a means of coping with the violence in the world. She wrote *Every Breath You Take* using the name of Michelle Spring and was pressed by her publisher to write a series.

ANALYSIS

Michelle Spring's private detective novel follows the example of Sue Grafton, whose books feature female private investigator Kinsey Millhone, rather than that of hard-boiled writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Spring's writing is more "soft-boiled," and her series' main character, Laura Principal, a former academic turned private investigator, runs Aardvark Investigations with her professional and personal partner, Sonny Mendlowitz. Mendlowitz is in charge of the London office, while Principal runs the Cambridge branch.

In many ways, Principal is a woman of the 1990's in that she struggles to balance her life between sleuthing and spending time with her long-time friend, librarian Helen Cochrane, and her lover Mendlowitz, who has two young sons. Principal, an intense and thorough investigator, and Cochrane are co-owners of Wildfell Cottage, a remote spot the two visit occasionally on weekends to wind down from work. She shares a flat with Mendlowitz when in London, and he frequently visits her flat in Cambridge. She plays the saxophone, exercises regularly, and is in good condition.

Laura Principal is not based on any individual nor on Spring herself. Principal is athletic, is an excellent driver, and is fairly capable of taking care of herself. Spring has carefully created an admirable female private investigator who is seldom judgmental, is unwilling to jump to conclusions, and whose generous spirit allows her to look for the good in everyone.

EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE

Spring's first novel, *Every Breath You Take*, introduces Laura Principal, who investigates the murder of art teacher Monica Harcourt, who had bought a third-part ownership of Wildfell but was bludgeoned to death before she could move in. Principal sifts through possible motivations of those who knew Harcourt and

finds none. As she perceives the villain is a man who had stalked Harcourt, she understands the danger she and Cochrane are in because of their friendship with Harcourt. Harcourt was killed by an unstable man who had erroneously presumed her to be a lesbian.

Principal is a well-developed character who lures the reader in to discover her thoughts and inclinations as she conducts her investigation. Essentially an introduction to Principal, the first-person narrative provides insight into Principal's mind, her values, and her past, particularly the protracted painful period during her father's slow death that continues to haunt her.

The story of a stalker, *Every Breath You Take* progresses through Principal's tracking and confronting suspects about histories, alibis, or secrets as she places her own life in danger through her doggedness in following clues or her instincts. Although she ferrets out suspects who appear to be the stalker/killer, the villain turns out to be an unsuspected and unknown person, with the chilling undertone being maintained until the very end.

RUNNING FOR SHELTER

Spring's second novel in the series, *Running for Shelter* (1996), moves between the decadent, London rich and the illegal migrant workers who exist in near forced-slavery conditions. A West End producer who has hired Principal to solve a series of backstage thefts inadvertently introduces her to Maria Flores, a Filipina domestic who asks for Principal's help in collecting money owed her by a former employer. When Flores goes missing and the producer denies any knowledge of her, Principal becomes embroiled in the cruelty and violence dealt the undocumented workers who live in the posh homes of the rich.

Spring's meticulously plotted story carries readers along with Principal's observations and speculations as well as the opportunity to explore treatment of migrant workers afforded her by the search for the missing girl. Principal's character becomes honed with each additional novel; Spring shapes her to be a person whom readers can admire or emulate. Spring is committed to the inclusion of social problems in each book and usually focuses on the dark underside of the lives of privileged persons.

NIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN

Spring's third detective novel, *Nights in White Satin* (1999), pursues the subject of prostitution at Cambridge and college girls who sometimes become enmeshed in it. The work reflects Spring's knowledge of the history of prostitution in Cambridge in the nineteenth century and the antagonism it generated between the university and the town and more specifically the dark side still present underneath the genteel exterior.

Aardvark Investigations is enlisted to provide security for the May Ball at St. Johns College, and Principal is later hired to find a missing student who was last seen at the ball. The situation is soon complicated by the death of the senior tutor, whose head is shattered by a cricket bat, shortly after he suggests to Principal that the missing student may have been entangled in prostitution.

Nights in White Satin is Spring's most complex book, as it takes many plot twists while sustaining facts about the victim as well as the police investigation and maintaining suspense that keeps readers interested. The book has a layered feel in that it explores relationships between academic and town elements that involve economic standing and generational differences. The book also has a ghostly aspect in that Cambridge's past is interwoven with the plot to ensure connections between the past and present.

IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

Spring's fifth entry in the series, *In the Midnight Hour*, concerns a famous explorer and his wife who visit Principal's house asking, "Have you ever lost a child?" They proceed to engage her to discover if the sixteen-year-old musician they have befriended is indeed their son, who disappeared on a beach at the age of four. However, Principal is instructed by the father that she should not "heavy" the young man and should only look into his background.

During the course of the investigation, Principal becomes friends with all members of the household, meaning, of course, that they all become suspects at one time or another. The large family provides various plot complications as Spring's menacing undertone reaches a level as distinct as the family's emotional violence. Also, as the bleak landscape of the English north Norfolk coast reflects a pain that has never dis-

appeared, the psychological suspense continues until the last shred of mystery is coaxed out.

In the Midnight Hour explores the unrelieved agony of parents whose child has disappeared and the corrosive secrets each family member has harbored for years. Spring moves toward the discovery of a destructive pattern of abuse with a confidence that belies her own preoccupation with her father's death.

THE NIGHT LAWYER

In The Night Lawyer, Spring created a nonseries book about the efforts of Eleanor Porter to become a calm, strong, invulnerable person. Recovering from a breakdown because of dependency on her married lover who opted to stay with his wife, she has lost weight, joined a karate club, moved into her own house, and taken a job as a night lawyer who ensures the validity of the articles printed in the paper.

Porter is a petite woman who has turned to karate to keep fear at bay. The fierceness with which she throws herself into fitness training, her work, and her activities is all aimed at quelling painful memories of having accidentally killed her father years ago. However, Porter becomes aware that she is being stalked, is methodically bullied by her neighbor's boyfriend and his thug buddies, and finds herself being drawn back into her married lover's latest ruse—and throughout, she is fighting desperately against her vulnerability.

Spring excels at depicting the creepy feeling of Porter being watched and her private space being violated. She describes Porter's house being broken into, her bed being slept in, her sense of an unseen presence in her garden, and the prickly sensation up her spine when she briefly glimpses her stalker. Spring recounts the deadening fear Porter endures while walking home alone from work late at night. Little by little, Spring escalates the suspense, pushing Porter closer to the edge of insanity until the final showdown.

Mary G. Hurd

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

LAURA PRINCIPAL SERIES: *Every Breath You Take*, 1994; *Running for Shelter*, 1996; *Standing in the Shadows*, 1998; *Nights in White Satin*, 1999; *In the Midnight Hour*, 2001

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Night Lawyer*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS**NONFICTION (AS STANWORTH):**

Gender and Schooling: A Study of Sexual Divisions in the Classroom, 1981; *Women and The Public Sphere: A Critique of Sociology and Politics*, 1984 (with Japanet Siltanen); *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood and Medicine (Feminist Perspectives)*, 1987; *Introductory Sociology*, 2002 (with others)

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Beard, Mary. Review of *Nights in White Satin*, by Michelle Spring. *Times Literary Supplement*, July 16, 1999, p. 23. Beard compares Spring's novel of Cambridge's scandalous decadence with the depiction of Oxford's "dispassionate" quality by Colin Dexter (creator of Inspector Morse) and finds her lacking.

Block, Allison. Review of *The Night Lawyer*, by Michelle Spring. *Booklist* 103, no. 2 (September 15, 2005): 33. Review praises Spring for her characterization, particularly of Eleanor Porter, but criticizes the lack of suspense.

Dubose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell

Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. Provides information on more than one hundred women writers, with especially good coverage of Patricia Highsmith, whom Spring admires.

Klett, Rex E. Review of *Every Breath You Take*, by Michelle Spring. *Library Journal* 199, no. 4 (March 1, 1994): 123. Brief article, interesting because of its sharp criticism of Spring's narrative and faulty plot construction.

Stazio, Marilyn. "Crime." Review of *Nights in White Satin*, by Michelle Spring. *The New York Times Book Review*, July 11, 1999, p. 29. Stazio's review praises Spring's ability to use a beautiful setting that conceals an ugly interior.

Unusual Suspects. The Unusual Suspects. <http://www.unusualsuspects.co.uk>. Web site maintained by crime writers in the Unusual Suspects, of which Spring is a member. She discusses her beginning as a writer, her main character, Principal, and the development of her plots.

DANA STABENOW

Born: Anchorage, Alaska; March 27, 1952

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Kate Shugak, 1992-
Liam Campbell, 1998-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

KATE SHUGAK is a five-foot-tall Aleut who was once an investigator for the Anchorage district attorney's office. When the series starts, she lives in a cabin without electricity or running water on a 160-acre homestead in a fictional national park based on Wrangell-St. Elias National Park in Alaska. She inherited the place from her parents, and her only companion is Mutt, a female half-wolf, half-husky. Her ac-

quaintances, friends, and lovers include miners, hunters, trappers, fishermen, bush pilots, park rangers, police officers, and petty criminals. She has relatives nearby but prefers to avoid them.

LIAM CAMPBELL is an Alaska state police officer. Although he was an Air Force brat, he is afraid of flying, much to the disgust of his pilot father, a colonel still on active duty. His life is a mess at the start of the series. His son was killed and wife put in a coma by a drunk driver; he was demoted after an entire family died on his watch; and he feels guilty that, shortly before the auto accident in which his wife was injured, he had fallen in love with another woman.

CONTRIBUTION

Dana Stabenow won critical and commercial success with her first mystery novel, *A Cold Day for Mur-*

der (1992), which won the 1993 Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for best original paperback. The novel was innovative in two ways. First, it is set in Alaska, which is almost a character in its own right and, as Jack London showed, is almost creative in the many ways its environment can kill people. Although Stabenow is not the first mystery writer to use Alaska as a setting, she is the most popular of a new group of Alaska-based mystery writers, the first of whom was Sean Hanlon, who published *The Cold Front* in 1989.

Second, the main character, Kate Shugak, is both a female detective and a Native American. Neither concept is original. Female detectives are at least as old as Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, and there were Native American detectives even before Tony Hillerman began to write his many books featuring Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn and Sergeant Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police. Along with Jean Hager and her Molly Bearpaw series, Stabenow is one of the first mystery writers to combine the two groups into one detective.

BIOGRAPHY

Dana Helen Stabenow was born in Anchorage, Alaska, on March 27, 1952. Her grandfather was the first DC-3 pilot for Alaska Airlines. She grew up on a seventy-five-foot fish tender named the *Celtic* in Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound and lived with her mother, Joan Perry Barnes, who was a deckhand. Her mother, an avid reader, could bake bread, skin and butcher a moose, pluck and cook ducks, and help maintain and run a fishing boat. Stabenow's earliest memory is of her mother reading the story of Snow White to her, and Stabenow learned to read before entering kindergarten. She read all the Nancy Drew books in the local library's collection in about a month; however, it was Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951) that hooked Stabenow on the mystery genre. She graduated from Seldovia High School in 1969 while working part-time for an air taxi service. Then she put herself through college working as an egg grader, bookkeeper, and expeditor for Whitney-Fidalgo Seafoods in Anchorage. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks in 1973.

After graduation, Stabenow backpacked around Europe for four months. After her return, she worked in public relations for Alyeska Pipeline at Galbraith Lake and later for British Petroleum at Prudhoe Bay. In 1982, she enrolled in the University of Alaska-Anchorage's master of fine arts program, from which she graduated in 1985. She began to write seriously at this time. She sold her first novel, *Second Star* (1991), to Ace Science Fiction in 1990. It was the first of three books in her Star Svendsdotter series, set in the near future when people are moving off the planet.

In 1991, Laura Anne Gilman, Stabenow's editor at Ace, learned that she had an unsold two-hundred-page mystery novel that she had written two years earlier. After reading the manuscript, Gilman agreed to publish *A Cold Day for Murder* and offered Stabenow a contract for three books featuring Kate Shugak as the main character. When Gilman moved to another publisher, Stabenow started the Liam Campbell series. In 2006, she published her first thriller, *Blindfold Game*. To collect background information, Stabenow spent sixteen days on board the Coast Guard cutter *Alex Haley* on patrol in the Bering Sea. She became president of the Alaska chapter of Sisters in Crime and has written the travel column for *Alaska* magazine.

ANALYSIS

Like Dorothy L. Sayers, Dana Stabenow regards the mystery novel as a kind of fantasy in which good always wins out over evil and all mysteries are solved by the end of the book. This is generally true of Stabenow's fiction. She tends to portray law enforcement officers in a positive light. They have flaws, but with few exceptions, they are honest and always want to do the right thing. She portrays her detectives as loners who often have problems with their relationships.

KATE SHUGAK SERIES

The Kate Shugak series originated when Stabenow visited an aunt who was moving from Wrangell-St. Elias National Park to take a job elsewhere. Stabenow tried to imagine what kind of person would want to live in the park and decided to write about an Aleut whose family had been displaced by the Japanese occupation of the islands of Kiska and Attu during World War II and forced to move to the interior of Alaska.

She named the female protagonist Kate, after Katherine, an Aleut who was her best friend as a child. She then met a number of people who made negative comments about the National Park Service, which provided her a plot involving the murder of a park ranger.

At the beginning of *A Cold Day for Murder*, the first book in the series, Kate Shugak is angry at the world. She has a severe scar where a child molester stabbed her, and she resigned from her position as an investigator a year before. In one scene, Kate attacks Jack Morgan, her former boss and occasional lover. The series continues for several books before she learns to accept who and what she is. Her relatives regard her as strange for wanting to live in the wilderness rather than with them in the village of Niniltna (population around four hundred) twenty-five miles away, but she is angry at them, too. In *Blood Will Tell* (1996), she is dragged, kicking and screaming, into Native American politics when someone starts to mur-

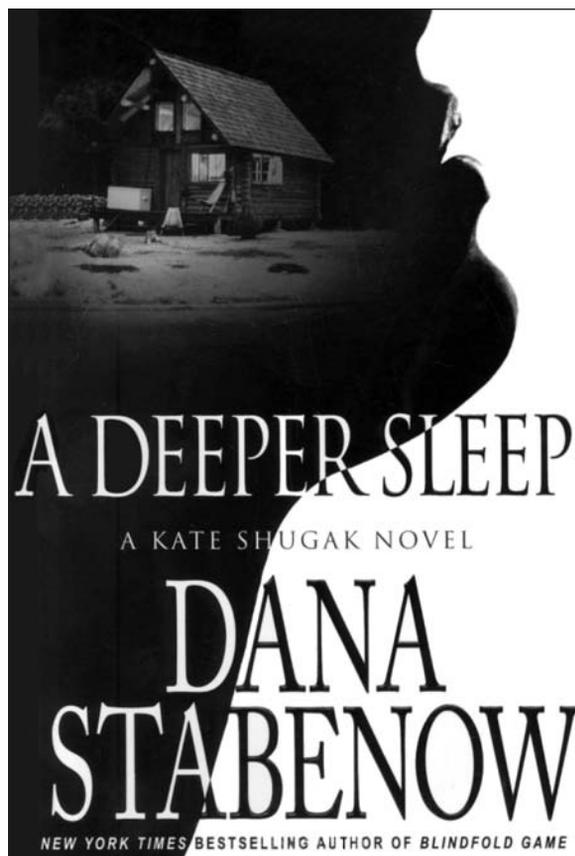
der the members of the Niniltna Native Association board of directors. In *Breakup* (1997), she becomes a tribal leader. In *The Singing of the Dead* (2001), Shugak is head of security for a political campaign when staff members start to turn up dead.

LIAM CAMPBELL SERIES

Stabenow originally considered creating a series around Jim “Chopper Jim” Chopin, a state police officer who is a recurring character in the Kate Shugak series and one of Kate’s lovers. However, the publishing rights to the character were held by Berkeley, and Laura Anne Gilman, the editor who had requested the new series, had moved to ROC/Dutton. So Stabenow created a new character, Liam Campbell, based on a state trooper who was responsible for the deaths of three people in one of the national parks. In the first book in the series, *Fire and Ice* (1998), Campbell is demoted and posted to the fishing village of Newenham (population two thousand) as punishment for his negligence in allowing five people to die of exposure.

Shugak and Campbell differ in many ways. The most obvious is their gender. Shugak is an Alaska native whose family has been in Alaska for centuries; Campbell moved there as an adult. Campbell tends to become involved in more action than Shugak does. For example, in *So Sure of Death* (1999), Campbell jumps out of a Super Cub airplane in flight while chasing a four-wheel all-terrain vehicle driven by the novel’s villain. Campbell is also involved in more sexual encounters as he is a good-looking, highly masculine officer who would not be out of place in a genre romance. Although Shugak loves Jack Morgan, their relationship is strictly on her own terms. Campbell, on the other hand, is not in control of his relationship with Wy Janet Chouinard, a female bush pilot. Finally, Shugak is more of an outlaw, and Campbell more of a straight arrow. In *Blood Will Tell*, for example, Shugak commits identity theft against Jack Morgan’s former wife and breaks into the office of a prominent Anchorage attorney; Campbell would never break the rules like that.

In *Better to Rest* (2002), Campbell has the opportunity to return to Anchorage from his exile and advance up the ranks of the state police but has to decide between Wy Janet, who does not want to move from New-



enham, and his career. Her family is from the area, and she has an adopted son Tim, whom she would prefer to raise in a small town. In this novel, Stabenow uses multiple points of view, although all of the point-of-view characters live in Newenham.

BLINDFOLD GAME

Blindfold Game (2006), a thriller, is not part of either the Shugak or Campbell series. Much of the story is set in Alaska and the surrounding waters, but the action also takes place in Thailand, Hong Kong, North Korea, London, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Russia. In *Blindfold Game*, terrorists set off a bomb in Thailand and seek to explode a “dirty” nuclear bomb in Anchorage by firing a short-range missile from a hijacked freighter. However, killing thousands of people is only a means to their end, as their ultimate goal is to provoke a war between the United States and North Korea.

The female protagonist is Lieutenant Commander Sara Lange, executive officer on the Coast Guard cutter *Sojourner Truth*. The cutter normally patrols the Northern Pacific and the Bering Sea between Alaska and Siberia looking for Russian trawlers fishing illegally, protecting legal fishing boats from organizations such as Greenpeace, and rescuing victims of storms and other accidents. Lange is married to Hugh Rincon, who was her high school sweetheart in Alaska, but is now an analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Langley, Virginia. Their long separations have put a strain on their relationship, and they are contemplating divorce.

The villains are two North Korean brothers Ja Yong-bae, aka Smith, and Ja Bae-ho, aka Jones; a half-Norwegian half-Chinese maritime shipping expert named Mr. Noortman; and a Chinese pirate named Fang. Noortman and Fang already have a business relationship in which Noortman identifies ships for Fang to hijack. Hugh discovers their plot from a CIA informer, but his superiors do not believe him, because they are focused on Arab, not Asian, terrorists. Luckily for Hugh, he finds an ally in Kyle Chase, a friend from high school who is now a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent based in Anchorage.

Thomas R. Feller

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

KATE SHUGAK SERIES: *A Cold Day for Murder*, 1992; *A Fatal Thaw*, 1992; *Dead in the Water*, 1993; *A Cold-Blooded Business*, 1994; *Play With Fire*, 1995; *Blood Will Tell*, 1996; *Breakup*, 1997; *Killing Grounds*, 1998; *Hunter’s Moon*, 1999; *Midnight Come Again*, 2000; *The Singing of the Dead*, 2001; *A Fine and Bitter Snow*, 2002; *A Grave Denied*, 2003; *A Taint in the Blood*, 2004; *A Deeper Sleep*, 2007

LIAM CAMPBELL SERIES: *Fire and Ice*, 1998; *So Sure of Death*, 1999; *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, 2000; *Better to Rest*, 2002

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Blindfold Game*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Second Star*, 1991; *A Handful of Stars*, 1994; *Red Planet Run*, 1995

EDITED TEXTS: *The Mysterious North*, 2002; *Alaska Women Writers*, 2003; *Wild Crimes*, 2004; *Powers of Detection*, 2004

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- Doran, Leslie. “Dana Doubles the Trouble: Stabenow Busy with Two Series.” *Denver Post*, December 12, 2004, p. F12. Profile of Stabenow looks at how she juggles writing two series, her Web site, her writing process, and changes in the series content.
- La Plante, Jane. Review of *The Singing of the Dead*, by Dana Stabenow. *Library Journal* 126, no. 8 (May 1, 2001): 132. This review praises the novel, in which Kate protects senatorial candidate Anne Gordaoff, for including a debate about fishing and hunting rights without going overboard and criticizes the novel for its predictability and lack of suspense.
- Lindsay, Elizabeth Blakesley. *Great Women Mystery Writers*. 2d ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007. Contains an entry on Stabenow that examines her life and writings.
- Lindsey, Beth. Review of *Blindfold Game*, by Dana Stabenow. *Library Journal* 131, no. 1 (January,

2006): 102-103. This review praises Stabenow for her skill in evoking a setting, strong characterization, and ability to create suspense in this thriller about Asian terrorists.

O'Brien, Sue. Review of *A Deeper Sleep*, by Dana Stabenow. *Booklist* 103, no. 4 (October 15, 2006): 33. Review of a Kate Shugak novel in which she is determined to find evidence to convict Louis

Deem, a dangerous local man. Reviewer praises the plot and characterization as well as the descriptions of the Alaskan wilderness and Native American customs.

Stabenow, Dana. The Official Dana Stabenow Web Site. <http://www.stabenow.com>. The author's official Web site contains information about her books, upcoming works, blogs, and links for fans.

VINCENT STARRETT

Born: Toronto, Ontario, Canada; October 26, 1886

Died: Chicago, Illinois; January 4, 1974

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Jimmie Lavender, c. 1925-1944

Walter Ghost, 1929-1932

Riley Blackwood, 1935-1936

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JAMES E. "JIMMIE" LAVENDER and his friend CHARLES "GILLY" GILRUTH share many features with another (and much more famous) pair made up of private detective and friend: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Like Arthur Conan Doyle's duo, Lavender and Gilly share a suite of rooms, and like Holmes, Lavender is a pipe smoker, extremely confident, generous, and given to logical deductions based on acute observations. A final similarity is that Gilly—like Watson before him—is, more or less, merely the detective's unintelligent but stalwart foil.

WALTER GHOST is a New York bibliophile and polyhistor who speaks a dozen languages ("including the Scandinavian"). Ghost is not a detective ("Heaven forbid!"); he is simply good at figuring out mysteries. Otherwise, he is a "great human being, a man like Shakespeare, a grand guy." He is also curiously ugly. Despite this promising introduction, Ghost emerges from the pages of the books of which he is the star as a bland logician.

DUNSTAN MOLLOCK, his friend and foil, is a mys-

tery writer and the creator of the Lavender stories. He has been described as simply inept.

RILEY BLACKWOOD represents Starrett's last attempt at creating a new, American Sherlock Holmes. If Lavender and Ghost are vague, Blackwood is downright washed out.

CONTRIBUTION

To mystery enthusiasts, Vincent Starrett's main claim to fame is not his own detective fiction. Starrett is known as the "biographer" of Sherlock Holmes. He was a founding member of the Baker Street Irregulars (named for the occasional helpers of Holmes), a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of England, and the author of the highly acclaimed *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1933). In this volume, the author examines at leisure, and with a healthy dose of tongue in cheek, various aspects of the life and times of the great (and, so it seems, in the end only barely fictional) English detective and his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Starrett's own contributions to the mystery genre are thin and fall squarely into the category of Doyle imitations. He even went so far as to publish a novella featuring the Holmes-Watson team, *The Unique Hamlet: A Hitherto Unchronicled Adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes* (1920). Starrett's own greatest gift as a mystery writer was a talent for decent plots.

BIOGRAPHY

Vincent Starrett was born as Charles Vincent Emerson Starrett in Toronto, Canada, on October 26,

1886, the first of four sons born to Robert Starrett and Margaret (née Deniston Young) Starrett. The family moved to Chicago in search of better fortunes when Vincent was only four. Before the move, the boy had already become fascinated with books. This bibliophilism had been fostered in a bookstore managed by his maternal grandfather, John Young. Frequent visits to his native Canada kept the boy in contact with both his beloved grandfather and the books of which Starrett eventually came to be a collector.

Young Starrett attended public schools in Chicago until, at the age of seventeen, he dropped out of his final year of high school. After an aborted trip to the headwaters of the Amazon and brief experience in various menial jobs, he set out for London as a deckhand on a cattle boat. Rescued from starvation by the Salvation Army, he managed eventually to get back to Chicago and settle down to a life of journalism. His dream had been to be a serious writer; practicality suggested the steady income for working for a newspaper. Starrett worked as a cub reporter at the Chicago newspaper *Inter-Ocean* for a year before moving on to the *Chicago Daily News*. Here he became the star crime writer and made some important literary friends, such as Ben Hecht and Carl Sandburg, who were also young striving writers at the time.

In 1909, Starrett was married to Lillian Hartsig, a striking redhead with a talent for the piano and a bent for sociability. Starrett's biographer, Peter A. Ruber, suggests that the marriage was not a very successful one because Lillian did not share Vincent's literary and intellectual tastes. Whatever the truth is, the marriage lasted for fifteen years, until 1924.

During his years at the *Chicago Daily News*, Starrett covered the Mexican-American War for a year, and he began an extracurricular career writing articles about his favorite writers. In 1917, he decided that he was ready to embark on a literary career of his own and left the newspaper. While writing poetry that he had to pay to have published (in a volume uniting the works of five aspiring poets), Starrett made a scant living writing stories for various magazines, including mystery pulps. Economy soon forced him back into journalism. He did another five-year stint coediting the Chicago suburban weekly *The Austinite*.

In 1920, two books by Starrett were published: *The Unique Hamlet: A Hitherto Unchronicled Adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes*, a Sherlock Holmes spoof, and *Ambrose Bierce*. In 1924 followed a first collection of short stories, *Coffins for Two*, a mixture of mysteries and black-humor tales. Starrett's first mystery novel was *Murder on "B" Deck*, which was published in 1929. This book was initially planned as a Jimmie Lavender mystery, but problems in the execution led to the elimination of Lavender and the introduction of Walter Ghost. The novel, written in two months, was immediately accepted for publication and was successful, both commercially and critically. This led to a second Ghost-Mollock book, *Dead Man Inside* (1931), which was also moderately successful. Starrett was now established as a mystery writer.

The apogee of Starrett's career was the publication of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* in 1933. This book brought him international fame and such notices as this one from the *New York Herald-Tribune*: "One seems to hear experts on either side of the Atlantic smacking their lips at each sniff at the table of contents."

Starrett received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award in 1958 and was elected president of that organization in 1961. He died in Chicago in 1974, at the age of eighty-seven.

ANALYSIS

Although Vincent Starrett wrote prolifically in the mystery genre, he spent much of his life wishing that he could afford to do otherwise. He produced hundreds of stories for pulp magazines simply to support himself. His great loves were literary biography and poetry, areas in which he was not very successful. He did, however, have a real admiration for Doyle and his fictional creation Sherlock Holmes and wrote all of his successful mystery fiction in the style of Doyle, featuring Holmes and Watson imitations.

Starrett wrote highly stylized prose, prose that did not even suggest reality. His is a special-purpose prose that creates a special-purpose universe: one in which interesting mysteries can be presented and resolved in a direct—and ever so slightly ironic—way. The characters who inhabit his stories and plots are not living,

breathing people; they are fictional people who wear the costumes needed to present an interesting criminal puzzle. The deaths are theater deaths—slightly amusing and unreal. The reader half expects the victims to climb out of the coffins and graves after the denouement to take a bow with the rest of the cast.

“OUT THERE IN THE DARK”

Starrett is also a very efficient writer. He gets to the point (murder, theft) quickly. The plot is never slowed down by description and psychological intricacies. There are no psychological gradations in the Starrett universe; there are simply good people and bad people. The good are either detectives or victims, the bad are crooks. There are wily crooks and dull-witted crooks, but, basically, a crook is a crook. Such Lavender stories as “Out There in the Dark” and “The Woman in Black” are typical: Good people are threatened and sometimes killed by bad people, yet the reader is not encouraged to feel any real compassion for the murder victim. The servant with the broken skull in “Out There in the Dark” is merely a necessary plot-pawn, not a human being whose life is brutally abrogated. The star is the detective, and the emphasis is on his intellectual contortions to earn the right to receive applause in the end for a job well done.

The focus of Starrett’s novels and stories is on plot—and only plot. There is very little characterization. Often, characters are not even described; their appearance and emotions do not matter, for their sole purpose is to carry the plotline, like tin soldiers who fall in the line of duty or move mechanically as the plot dictates. The effect is often entertaining, but never captivating. For the reader, it is difficult to become involved—except as he would in a mathematical problem. Starrett’s stories can seem a bit sparse, a bit schematic. Yet Starrett is a deft creator of plots, very satisfying plots of the kind that evolve slowly, adding piece after piece after tiny piece of information until the picture is complete.

THE END OF MR. GARMENT AND THE UNIQUE HAMLET

Most of Starrett’s works are set close to home. In *The End of Mr. Garment* (1932), a novelist is murdered en route to a meeting with a group of his peers. In *The Unique Hamlet*, Holmes and Watson are un-

earthed (although it must be acknowledged that Starrett never thought that they died, as is clear to anyone who has read his Holmes biography) to solve a mystery involving a lost *Hamlet* quarto (dated 1602) with a personal dedication by “Wm. Shakespeare.” In this work the *dramatis personae* are book collectors, like Starrett himself, and he pokes good-humored fun at the practitioners of his own beloved hobby. Several of the Lavender stories involve journalists and book collectors. Starrett’s detectives are all bibliophiles or literary scholars, and their foils are mystery writers (such as Dunstan Mollock) or recorders of their detective friend’s accomplishments (such as Gilly). One has a sense that the author wrote his tales with a wry smile.

From the above, it will be clear that Starrett did not have a social vision, at least not one he cared to express in his mystery fiction. The universe emerging from Starrett’s tales is one without a social milieu. Real life never intrudes into the plots.

A comparison of Starrett and his beloved Doyle, which seems natural and obvious, shows the former to be a pale imitation of the latter. Doyle’s stories are tantalizingly, sometimes vibrantly full of social reality, a social reality that seeps into the separate universe of Holmes and Watson whenever the door is opened to let in a client. Outside that cozy little nest of male bonding and eccentric tranquillity is a London teeming with people, milling around in the mud and the fog. These people are grouped in social classes, they hate, love, and fight, and they have real blood pumping through (and sometimes out of) their veins. When their problems become unmanageable, when the social rules can no longer contain them, they come to Sherlock Holmes and ask him to solve the problem, restore order, and set the world aright again.

Such is not Starrett’s universe. By comparison it is sterile. His nests of male bonding are not pockets of peace that a world in turmoil can come to in an emergency: They are the reason the rest of the world exists. The people and their actions only have the function of presenting the necessary problems for the brilliant detective to solve. The result is that what seemed natural and not in need of explanation in Doyle—the two men who share a suite of rooms—becomes somewhat preposterous in Starrett. One wonders why Jimmie Lav-

ender and Gilly share an apartment. One wonders if there is any reason other than that Holmes and Watson did.

“THE WOMAN IN BLACK”

A key aspect of mystery fiction is the opposition between right and wrong, between society and individual, between law and the lawbreaker. In Starrett’s fiction, however, this opposition is never compelling; he merely pays lip service to morality, law, and the restoration of the world to an acceptable order. There are “happy” endings, to be sure—the crime is solved—but the point is not justice, or punishment of the guilty; it is to show off the brainpower of the detective. Starrett’s endings are perfunctory, schematic, unimaginative. In the short story “The Woman in Black,” for example, the attractive young couple are happy in the end, the villain is beaten up, and the detective moves on to the next case. This is the formula of the oldest tales: young lovers united, the bad guy given a whipping. Starrett’s justice is personal and private, not a social matter.

Sometimes Starrett’s plots, like those of Doyle before him, verge on the amoral. The crime is solved, but the criminal is not brought to justice. In Doyle the dilemma is resolved satisfactorily: Holmes and his arch-enemy, the formidable Professor Moriarty, are each other’s *raison d’être*. Holmes cannot be happy in a universe that does not include the master of evil, Moriarty. The opposition becomes one between good and evil as human constants. Moriarty is the metaphor for all that is frail and evil in humanity—for the devil himself. The universe created by Doyle is a dualistic one, sharing with the Gnostic universe the idea that light and darkness, good and evil are eternal mutually dependent principles. In Doyle, the two forces merge to create a Hegelian synthesis: Below the level of eternal principles, a form of justice and morality can exist that pertains to the lives of ordinary people. In Starrett’s oeuvre the philosophical level is missing. When the two criminals who plan the crime in “Out There in the Dark” escape, never to be found or brought to justice, it seems simply amoral. The simple, stupid worker is caught and fried in the electric chair, while the upscale, educated, white-collar criminals get away.

The absence of justice is not necessarily a sign of

an amoral author. It can be a sign of an author commenting negatively on a society that does not value justice highly or values it only selectively. In other words, the fictional criminal’s walking away from the crime unscathed could represent a form of social criticism. Starrett, however, is not interested in crime as a social phenomenon, nor in justice as a moral issue. He is interested in crime solely as an intellectual mind game.

In the late twentieth century, Starrett has been forgotten as a mystery writer. The reason could be a combination of the factors outlined above. Great mysteries that live on, those of Doyle and Ross Macdonald, for example, are more than plots in costume; they introduce real people worth caring about and are rich repositories of social history. Starrett was not original enough and did not create characters and situations that were significant enough to transcend their creator and his time. The mysteries he wrote are pleasing but forgettable.

Starrett’s one living legacy is the scholarly and entertaining *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, which, despite its excessive hero worship, remains interesting reading as a study of the life and creative processes behind a fictional character who has become part of the symbolic and conceptual universe of readers in the Western world.

Per Schelde

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JIMMIE LAVENDER SERIES: *The Case Book of Jimmie Lavender*, 1944

WALTER GHOST SERIES: *Murder on “B” Deck*, 1929; *Dead Man Inside*, 1931; *The End of Mr. Garment*, 1932

RILEY BLACKWOOD SERIES: *The Great Hotel Murder*, 1935; *Midnight and Percy Jones*, 1936

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Laughing Buddha*, 1937 (also known as *Murder in Peking*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Unique Hamlet: A Hitherto Unchronicled Adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes*, 1920; *Coffins for Two*, 1924; *The Blue Door*, 1930; *The Quick and the Dead*, 1965

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Seaports in the Moon: A Fantasia on Romantic Themes*, 1928

SHORT FICTION: *Snow for Christmas*, 1935

POETRY: *Rhymes for Collectors*, 1921; *Ebony Flame*, 1922; *Banners in the Dawn*, 1923; *Flames and Dust*, 1924; *Fifteen More Poems*, 1927; *Autolycus in Limbo*, 1943; *Sonnets, and Other Verse*, 1949

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Great All-Star Animal League Ball Game*, 1957

NONFICTION: *Arthur Machen: A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin*, 1918; *The Escape of Alice: A Christmas Fantasy*, 1919; *Ambrose Bierce*, 1920; *A Student of Catalogues*, 1921; *Buried Caesars: Essays in Literary Appreciation*, 1923; *Stephen Crane: A Bibliography*, 1923; *Ambrose Bierce: A Bibliography*, 1929; *Penny Wise and Book Foolish*, 1929; *All About Mother Goose*, 1930; *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 1933 (revised 1960); *Oriental Encounter: Two Essays in Bad Taste*, 1938; *Persons from Porlock*, 1938; *Books Alive*, 1940; *Bookman's Holiday: The Private Satisfactions of an Incurable Collector*, 1942; *Books and Bipeds*, 1947; *Stephen Crane: A Bibliography*, 1948 (with Ames M. Williams); *Best Loved Books of the Twentieth Century*, 1955; *Book Column*, 1958; *Born in a Bookshop: Chapters from the Chicago Renaissance*, 1965; *Late, Later, and Possibly Last: Essays*, 1973; *Sincerely, Tony/Faithfully, Vincent: The Correspondence of Anthony Boucher and Vincent Starrett*, 1975

EDITED TEXTS: *In Praise of Stevenson*, 1919; *Men, Women, and Boats*, 1921 (by Stephen Crane); *The Shining Pyramids*, 1923 (by Arthur Machen); *Et Cetera: A Collector's Scrap Book*, 1924; *Sins of the Fathers, and Other Tales*, 1924 (by George Gissing); *Fourteen Great Detective Stories*, 1928; *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets, and Other Stories*, 1933 (by Crane); *A Modern Book of Wonders: Amazing Facts in a Remarkable World*, 1938; *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, 1940 (with others); *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, 1941 (by Charles Dickens); *World's Great Spy Stories*, 1944; *The Moonstone*, 1959 (by Wilkie Collins)

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Murphy, Michael, ed. *Starrett vs. Mahen: A Record of Discovery and Correspondence*. St. Louis, Mo.: Autolycus Press, 1977. Collected letters between Starrett and fellow author Arthur Machen, revealing the personal approach of each man to the craft of writing.

Nieminski, John, and Jon L. Lellenberg, eds. "Dear Starrett—", "Dear Briggs—": *A Compendium of Correspondence Between Vincent Starrett and Gray Chandler Briggs, 1930-1934, Together with Various Appendices, Notes, and Embellishments*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1989. Collects letters between the two men, especially those focused on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and the Baker Street Irregulars.

Ruber, Peter. *The Last Bookman: A Journey into the Life and Times of Vincent Starrett, Author, Journalist, Bibliophile*. New York: Candlelight Press, 1968. Biography of the author, combined with tributes in various forms—both prose and poetic—by several of Starrett's friends and colleagues.

_____, ed. *Arkham's Masters of Horror: A Sixtieth Anniversary Anthology Retrospective of the First Thirty Years of Arkham House*. Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House, 2000. Includes a horror tale by Starrett, as well as notes by Ruber on the historical importance of the tale.

Starrett, Vincent. *Born in a Bookshop: Chapters from the Chicago Renaissance*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965. Autobiographical look at the author's experience of his hometown; provides insight into the influence of Chicago on his life and writing.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; November 13, 1850

Died: Vailima, near Apia, Samoa; December 3, 1894

Types of plot: Historical; horror; psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Robert Louis Stevenson must be seen as an unknowing progenitor of the mystery and detective genre. He was essentially a Romantic writer attempting to be taken seriously in a mainstream literary world caught up in the values of realism and naturalism. As a Romantic writer, he strongly affirmed the preeminent right of incident to capture the reader's attention. He countered Jane Austen's polite cup of tea with Dr. Jekyll's fantastic potion; he left the discreet parsonage to others, while he explored the mysteries of Treasure Island; he eschewed the chronicling of petty domestic strife and struck out instead to write about, not the uneventful daily life of ordinary men, but rather their extraordinary daydreams, hopes, and fears.

Stevenson also insisted on the importance of setting to a narrative. As he writes in "A Gossip on Romance," "Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder." The creation of atmosphere has been an important element in mystery fiction since Edgar Allan Poe first had his amateur French sleuth Monsieur Dupin investigate the murders in the Rue Morgue. The rugged Spanish Sierras of Stevenson's "Olalla" are, in their own way, as unforgettable as the Baker Street lodgings of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

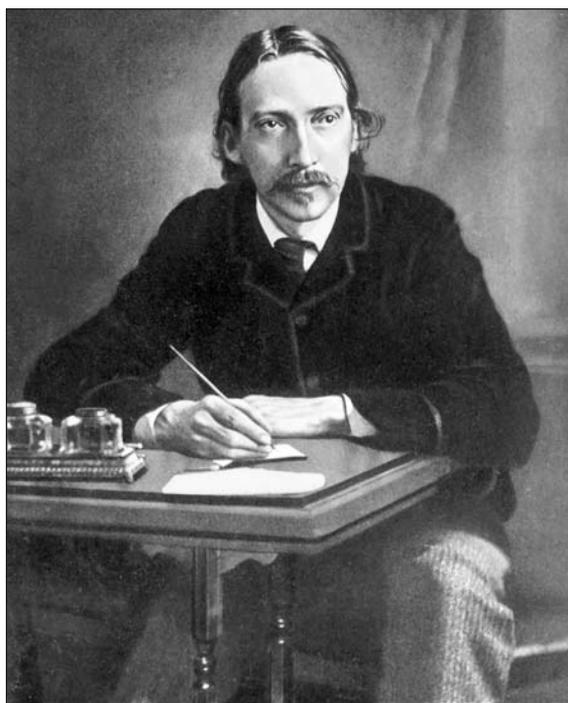
Stevenson also had a profound interest in psychology. His emphasis on the criminal's motivation, rather than on his identity, clearly presages the method of much modern, post-Freudian, mystery-suspense fiction. In Stevenson's "Markheim," the reader witnesses a murder early in the story and has no doubt about the identity of the murderer; the interest lies in the murderer's motivation, in his emotional and intellectual response to his crime. In terms of plotting, setting, and characterization, Stevenson is a master of all

the elements that became so important to the development of the mystery and detective genre.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Louis Stevenson is one of those intriguing writers, like Oscar Wilde, whose life often competes with his works for the critics' attention. He was born Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson on November 13, 1850, in Edinburgh. He was the only child of Thomas Stevenson and Margaret Isabella (née Balfour) Stevenson. His father, grandfather, and two uncles were harbor and lighthouse engineers who had hopes that Stevenson would follow in their profession. Stevenson, however, was a sickly child whose interest in lighthouses was of the romantic, rather than the structural, sort. Although he studied engineering, and then law, to please his family, it was apparent early that he was destined to become a writer.

Stevenson chose his companions from among the writers and artists of his day, such as William Ernest



Robert Louis Stevenson. (Library of Congress)

Henley, Sidney Colvin, and Charles Baxter. One friend, Leslie Stephen, editor of *Cornhill* magazine, published some of his early essays. His first book, *An Inland Voyage* (1878), was not published until he was twenty-eight years old.

While studying art in France, Stevenson fell in love with Fanny Van de Grift Osborne, who returned reluctantly to her San Franciscan husband, Samuel C. Osborne, in 1878. Stevenson pursued her to the United States, and after her divorce in 1880, they were married. Unfortunately, Stevenson's tubercular condition was a constant difficulty for him; thus, the couple spent the first ten years of their marriage trying to find a congenial climate within easy reach of Edinburgh. That took the Stevensons to the great spa towns of Hyères, Davos, and Bournemouth—places of refuge where he wrote his first novel, *Treasure Island* (1881-1882), as well as *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), *Kidnapped* (1886), and his first world-renowned work, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

In 1887, Stevenson's father died, setting him free to search the globe for a safe harbor. First, he went to Saranac Lake in New York for a cure that appeared to arrest his disease, then on to San Francisco, from which he began his South Seas cruise on the *Casco*. His eighteen months on the high seas took him to Tahiti, Australia, Hawaii, and finally his beloved Samoa. In 1889, Stevenson bought property that he named Vailima on a little island called Upolu and settled down to the most creative days of his life. It was there that he composed the compelling fragment *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), which most critics consider to be his most masterful piece of prose. He also fought hard for the political rights of the Samoans, who grieved after his death of a cerebral hemorrhage, on December 3, 1894, as fully as those who understood that the Western world had lost one of its finest writers.

ANALYSIS

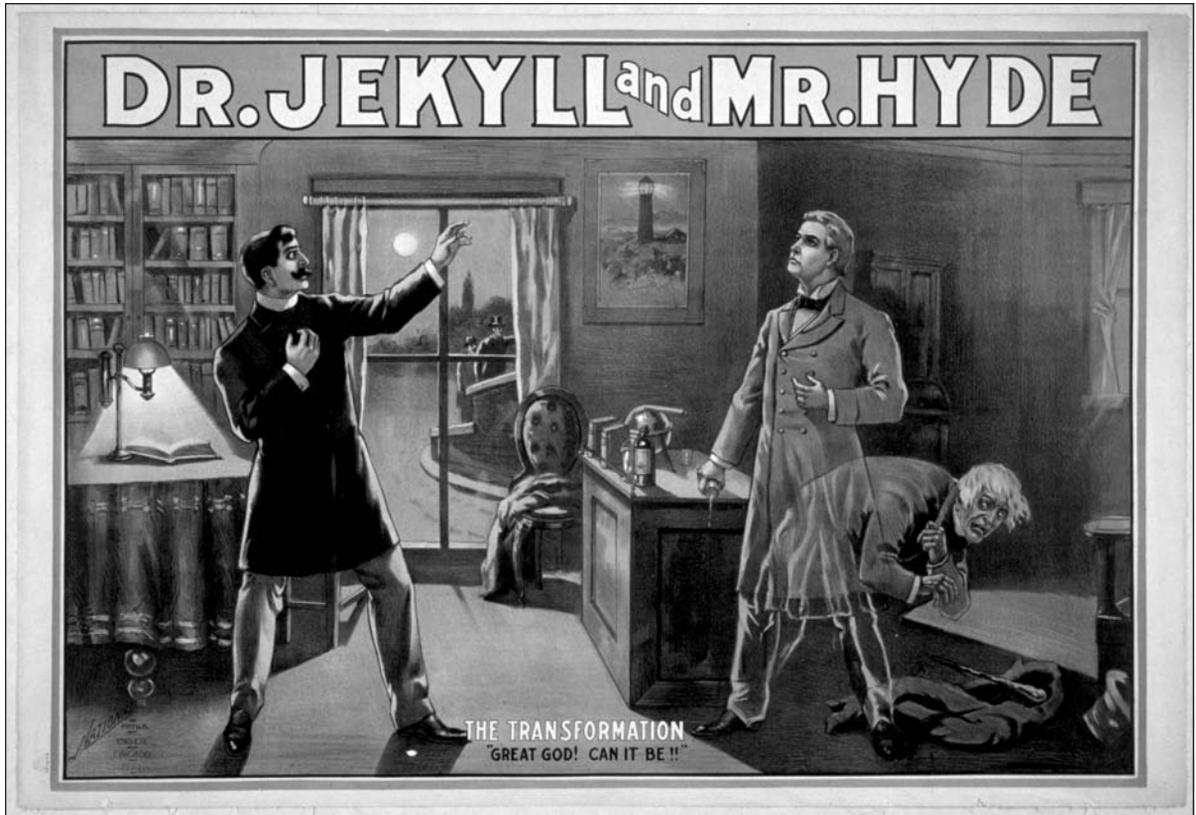
Probably the best known of Robert Louis Stevenson's mature works is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It has, in Western culture, somewhat the stature of a number of other supernatural tales with archetypal plots, such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's

Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Readers unfamiliar with the novel, or even Stevenson's authorship of it, can still recount in fairly accurate detail the lineaments of the plot. The work's tremendous popularity undoubtedly has much to do with the aspects of action, character, and setting that now characterize so many mystery and detective novels.

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Mr. Hyde's notorious crimes include trampling an innocent little girl in the street and leaving her to suffer unaided, bludgeoning to death an old man of considerable reputation, supposedly blackmailing the kindly benefactor Dr. Jekyll, and committing a variety of unnameable sins against propriety and morality, the likes of which were best left to the Victorian imagination. Stevenson's Hyde is as dark a character as any who ever stalked the streets of London, and his outward appearance creates disgust wherever he goes. No one could fault *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for a lack of incident. In describing action, Stevenson is evocative, not explicit. His writing is reminiscent of the somewhat abstract style of Henry James in his psychological thriller *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). That is not really surprising, because the two men had a deep respect for each other's work.

Although there is no detective per se in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, there is the lawyer Mr. Utterson, whose curiosity, aroused by the strange stipulations of Dr. Jekyll's will, prompts him to attempt to solve the mystery of Mr. Hyde. Stevenson believed that the reader is most contented when he thoroughly identifies with the characters in a story. It is impossible not to empathize with the rational, but rather pedestrian, Mr. Utterson as he wrestles with a reality too bizarre for him to comprehend. Mr. Utterson serves the essential function, so ably executed by Dr. Watson throughout the Sherlock Homes series, of providing a defective intelligence who moves the story forward, while always keeping the suspense at a nearly unbearable pitch. This thrusting of ordinary people into extraordinary circumstances has also become a mainstay of the modern mystery and detective genre.



Poster for T. Russell Sullivan's 1887 play, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, showing the transformation of Jekyll into Hyde. (Library of Congress)

Stevenson's skill in explicating psychological motivation is so strong that the reader even finds himself forcibly identifying with Dr. Jekyll and his evil alter ego, or *doppelgänger*, Mr. Hyde. It is a well-known hallmark of later mystery fiction to find something noble, or at least exceptional, in the criminal mind, but it was still a novelty in 1886. Writers of the late twentieth century have asked, quite frequently, as Peter Shaffer does in his psychological mystery play *Equus* (pr. 1973), which is more to be admired—a banal normalcy or an exhilarating and unique madness. (Victorians were more likely to see the answer to this question as obvious.)

Although Stevenson was a tremendous Romantic in terms of plot and character, he had a rare gift for the realistic rendering of setting. Just as later mystery writers are scrupulous about forensic detail, Stevenson was a passionate observer and recorder of nature and cityscapes. He even put forth the paradoxical idea, in

an essay entitled "The Enjoyment of Unpleasant Place," that given enough time, all settings, even the most inhospitable, could yield a measure of understanding and contentment. A good example of Stevenson's style and attention to salient detail is this short description of the back entrance to Dr. Jekyll's laboratory:

The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop on the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Any number of Stevenson's other works can also be studied as precursors to the mystery and detective genre, because even while he might be working within the rubric of the boys' adventure story or the gothic tale,

his fundamental interest in vigorous action, strong character delineation, and detailed settings creates the kind of suspense one associates with mystery and detective fiction.

TREASURE ISLAND

For example, *Treasure Island* is full of adventure, which in another setting might be called crime. There are shootings, stabbings, and treachery enough for even the most lurid-minded reader. With the shipwrecks, the malaria, and the harshness of the elements, a tale full of incident emerges. There is also no dearth of mystery: What is the meaning of the black spot? Who is the mysterious blind man? Where is Treasure Island? How do the men aboard the *Hispaniola* find the liquor to get drunk? Who is the "man of the island"? What eventually becomes of Long John Silver?

Long John Silver, the opportunistic but charming pirate, is one of Stevenson's most captivating rogues. Perfectly motivated by enlightened self-interest, his shifts of loyalty almost inevitably move the plot. One identifies with him as surely as one identifies with the spry, touchingly adolescent protagonist. As for setting, one does not even need the supplied treasure map to amble competently, though mentally, around the island. Yet attention must be paid, because without a strong sense of place the mysteries of the island would remain inexplicable.

In *Treasure Island*, as in most of his other works, Stevenson is unusually modern in giving away the ending of the story at the outset, so that the focus of the reader's suspense is not specifically on the denouement but on the nature of the events leading up to it. The reader knows, for example, from the first page, that Jim Hawkins will survive and attain the hidden treasure, because Hawkins is clearly retelling the tale of *Treasure Island* from the vantage of his secure future. The reader also knows in the short story "Markheim" that Markheim is the man who murdered the antique dealer, although the reader is encouraged to be curious about why he committed the murder. In both cases Stevenson maintains suspense, not around the questions of whether the treasure will be found or whether Markheim is the killer but around the questions of how the treasure will be found and at what human cost and why Markheim kills the antique dealer

and at what spiritual price. This preoccupation with process and psychology, rather than brute facts, is a characteristic of much modern mystery and detective writing, as can be seen quite clearly in many of Alfred Hitchcock's films.

Stevenson's works, like those of Edgar Allan Poe, were often dismissed and undervalued in the 1920's and 1930's. Certainly *Treasure Island* suffers if compared with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick: Or, The Whale* (1851), "Markheim" may well seem a poor thing next to Fyodor Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886), and "Olalla" pales beside Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's story "Carmilla." Yet to have written works that bear comparison with all these classics is by no means a small accomplishment. Such has been the plight of many writers in the mystery and detective genre, to have been the beloved of the common reader during their lives and to have their work criticized by academics after their deaths.

"A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT"

Any reader who wants to assure himself of Stevenson's excellent style has only to read a passage of his description, such as this view of Notre Dame on a winter's night in Paris from Stevenson's first published story, "A Lodging for the Night":

High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

There is no question that this is a setting that cries out for a mystery, not for a garden party.

Stevenson's "shilling shockers" and boys' adventures clearly boast intricate and eventful plots, psychologically authentic characterizations, and powerfully observed and conveyed settings. Clearly, Stevenson's fiction was an important precedent to work carried on in the twentieth century by other popular and talented writers in the mystery/detective genre.

Cynthia Lee Katona

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Treasure Island*, 1881-1882 (serial; 1883, book); *The Dynamiter*, 1885; *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886; *The Master of Ballantrae*, 1889; *The Wrong Box*, 1889; *The Wrecker*, 1892 (with Lloyd Osbourne); *The Body Snatcher*, 1895; *The Suicide Club*, 1895

SHORT FICTION: *The New Arabian Nights*, 1882; *More New Arabian Nights*, 1885; *The Merry Men, and Other Tales and Fables*, 1887

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Prince Otto*, 1885; *Kidnapped*, 1886; *The Black Arrow*, 1888; *Catriona*, 1893; *The Ebb-Tide*, 1894 (with Lloyd Osbourne); *Weir of Hermiston*, 1896 (unfinished); *St. Ives*, 1897 (completed by Arthur Quiller-Couch)

SHORT FICTION: *Island Nights' Entertainments*, 1893

PLAYS: *Deacon Brodie*, pb. 1880 (with William Ernest Henley); *Admiral Guinea*, pb. 1884 (with Henley); *Beau Austin*, pb. 1884 (with Henley); *Macaire*, pb. 1885 (with Henley); *The Hanging Judge*, pb. 1887 (with Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson)

POETRY: *Moral Emblems*, 1882; *A Child's Garden of Verses*, 1885; *Underwoods*, 1887; *Ballads*, 1890; *Songs of Travel, and Other Verses*, 1896

NONFICTION: *An Inland Voyage*, 1878; *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*, 1878; *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, 1879; *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881; *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, 1882; *The Silverado Squatters: Sketches from a Californian Mountain*, 1883; *Memories and Portraits*, 1887; *The South Seas: A Record of Three Cruises*, 1890; *A Footnote to History*, 1892; *Across the Plains*, 1892; *Amateur Emigrant*, 1895; *Vailima Letters*, 1895; *In the South Seas*, 1896; *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to His Family and Friends*, 1899 (2 volumes), 1911 (4 volumes); *The Lantern-Bearers, and Other Essays*, 1988

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Bloom, Harold, ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Chelsea House, 2005. Compilation of critical essays on Stevenson's fiction, ranging in focus from the dialectic between realism and romance to Stevenson's attitude toward professionalism in authorship.

Callow, Philip. *Louis: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001. An engaging biography that draws on the work of other biographers to present for the general reader a cohesive life of the novelist.

Chesterton, G. K. *Robert Louis Stevenson*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927. An older but distinguished critical study of Stevenson that is still highly regarded for its insights, as well as for its wit and lucidity.

Hammond, J. R. *A Robert Louis Stevenson Companion: A Guide to the Novels, Essays, and Short Stories*. London: Macmillan, 1984. The first three sections cover the life and literary achievements of Stevenson and contain a brief bibliography that lists and describes his short stories, essays, and smaller works. The fourth section critiques his novels and romances, and the fifth is a key to the people and places of Stevenson's novels and stories.

McLynn, Frank. *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 1993. Traces Stevenson's career, noting the malignant influence of his wife and stepson and concluding that Stevenson "is Scotland's greatest writer of English prose."

Reid, Julia. *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Study of the role of science, especially the theory of evolution, both in Stevenson's works and in the fin-de-siècle culture that produced them.

Sapostnik, Irving S. *Robert Louis Stevenson*. New York: Twayne, 1974. A useful critical survey of

Stevenson's major works. Saposnik's volume is the best starting point for serious study of Stevenson's fiction. Supplemented by a helpful annotated bibliography.

Wright, Daniel L. "'The Prisonhouse of My Disposition': A Study of the Psychology of Addiction in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." *Studies in the Novel* 26 (Fall, 1994): 254-267. Argues that the story is a

portrait of a subject whose aggregate pre-addictive personality disorders reveal a substantial number of risk factors associated with high receptivity to addictive behavior; claims that the story is not just a quaint experiment in gothic terror but Victorian literature's premiere revelation, intended or not, of the etiology, character, and effects of chronic chemical addiction.

MARY STEWART

Mary Florence Elinor Rainbow

Born: Sunderland, Durham, England; September 17, 1916

Type of plot: Thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Mary Stewart is the preeminent writer of the romantic thriller. She raised the standard of the genre partly by innovations in character, moving beyond the convention of the helpless heroine that dominated romantic fiction in the mid-1950's; she created charming, intelligent, capable young women with whom the reader could identify. She also discarded the convention of the hero's casual and uncaring attitude toward violence. Her heroines and heroes are ordinary people, not especially endowed with courage or heroism, who are thrust into dangerous and challenging situations in which they must make choices. Other qualities of her work that have made her one of the best-selling novelists in the world include an elegant and graceful style and the use of attractive, authentic settings, usually in Europe.

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Stewart was born Mary Florence Elinor Rainbow on September 17, 1916, in Sunderland, County Durham, England. Her father, Frederick A. Rainbow, was a clergyman, and her mother, Mary Edith Rainbow, came from a family of New Zealand missionaries. Stewart was one of three children. When she was

seven, the family moved to the mining village of Shotton Colliery in County Durham, and Stewart attended a number of different schools before going to Durham University in 1935. At university, she became president of the Women's Union and of the Literary Society; she was graduated in 1938 with a first-class honors degree in English.

In 1939, she received a diploma in the theory and practice of teaching. She then taught at a school in Middlesborough, in northern England, before becoming head of English and classics at Worcester School, in the Midlands. In 1941, she received an master of arts degree from Durham University and was appointed assistant lecturer in English; during the last years of World War II, she served part-time in the Royal Observer Corps.

In 1945, Stewart married Frederick Henry Stewart, who at the time was a lecturer in geology at Durham University. From 1948 until 1956, she continued her work as lecturer at the university, but on a part-time basis, and she also taught at St. Hild's Teacher Training College in Durham. In 1956, she gave up teaching to concentrate on her writing. She had been writing stories and poems since she was a child, and during her teaching career her poems had been published in the *Durham University Journal*. She started her first novel with no thought of publication, but her husband persuaded her to submit the manuscript to a publisher. *Madam, Will You Talk?* was published in 1955, and Stewart's literary

career had begun. The Stewarts then moved from Durham to Edinburgh, where Frederick Stewart had been appointed professor of geology at the university. Between 1955 and 1984, Stewart published nineteen novels, including three for children. In 1960 she was the runner-up for the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award. She received the Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1996.

ANALYSIS

Mary Stewart's comments on her own work in an article published in *The Writer* in 1970 provide an illuminating account of her development and her principal concerns as a novelist. Her first five novels she describes as "exploratory," for she was experimenting with a variety of different forms. *Madam, Will You Talk?* is a chase story with all the traditional elements of the thriller. The plot, which hinged on a series of improbable coincidences, was woven around the theme of a "fate-driven love, self-contained, all-else-excluding." *Wildfire at Midnight* (1956) is a classic detective story, the writing of which, she says, honed certain technical skills. Nevertheless, she was impatient and dissatisfied with the necessary emphasis on plot rather than character and disliked the conventional detective story, in which "pain and murder are taken for granted and used as a parlor game." In *Thunder on the Right* (1957) she experimented for the first and only time with a third-person rather than first-person narrator. In spite of the limitations a first-person narrator imposes in some areas (detailed description can be given, for example, only of events in which the narrator is a direct participant), Stewart came to prefer it because of the "vividness, personal involvement and identification" that it makes possible. Stewart's skillful handling of this form of narration so as to evoke these responses in her readers contributes in no small measure to her popularity.

Perhaps the hallmark of Stewart's fiction can be found in her description of what she was attempting in her first five novels. They were

a deliberate attempt . . . to discard certain conventions which seemed . . . to remove the novel of action so far from real life that it became a charade or a puzzle in

which no reader could involve himself sufficiently really to care. I tried to take conventionally bizarre situations (the car chase, the closed-room murder, the wicked uncle tale) and send real people into them, normal everyday people with normal everyday reactions to violence and fear; people not "heroic" in the conventional sense, but averagely intelligent men and women who could be shocked or outraged into defending, if necessary with great physical bravery, what they held to be right.

NINE COACHES WAITING

These concerns are readily apparent in her fourth and fifth novels, *Nine Coaches Waiting* (1958) and *My Brother Michael* (1960). *Nine Coaches Waiting* is a gothic tale, designed as a variation on the Cinderella story. Young Linda Martin accepts a post as English governess to the nine-year-old Comte Philippe de Valmy, at a remote chateau in High Savoy. She falls in love with the boy's cousin, Raoul de Valmy, but comes to suspect that he is part of a plot against the boy's life. Faced with the choice between love and duty—which Stewart has identified as the main theme of the novel—she puts the boy's welfare first, while hoping against hope that her lover is innocent. Her virtue wins its inevitable reward; in the denouement, the wicked uncle, who is behind the plot, shoots himself, and Cinderella gets her Prince Charming. Although the plot is fragile, Stewart cleverly maintains the suspense with a mix of familiar elements: surprise revelations, sudden and unexpected confrontations, a search—during which the hardly-daring-to-breathe heroine comes within a whisker of being discovered—and a chase. Some ingenious variations include a sleepwalking villainess unconsciously revealing her guilt à la Lady Macbeth, and a romantic red herring in the form of a tall, attractive Englishman who befriends the heroine early in the novel—but who never comes as prominently into the story as the reader, cunningly tricked by Stewart, expects. Linda herself is a typical Stewart heroine. She is modest, tactful, and considerate, possesses integrity but is not a prig (she is capable of some white lies), is vulnerable and understandably frightened at what she has got herself into, but is also resourceful and capable, fully prepared to do what the situation demands of her.

MY BROTHER MICHAEL

A similar description could be applied to Camilla Haven, the heroine of *My Brother Michael*. Her self-deprecating sense of humor, revealed early in the novel by her alarming incompetence behind the wheel of an unfamiliar car in an unfamiliar country, quickly endears her to the reader. Caught up in a series of dangerous events in Delphi, she rises to the occasion not without self-doubt but also with considerable bravery.

Her companion, Simon Lester, is a typical Stewart hero. He first meets Camilla when he takes over the wheel of her car and gets her out of a difficult driving situation (difficult for her, that is—Stewart's men are always superb drivers). Simon possesses an easy, relaxed self-confidence, a quiet strength, competence, and great determination. He stays cool under pressure and rarely betrays much excitement or emotion.

In her article for *The Writer*, Stewart remarks that she had become tired of the convention under which the romantic hero was “unthinkingly at home with violence,” and such a description could certainly not be applied to Simon. The violence in which he becomes involved is forced on him; he is a schoolmaster who teaches classics, so that violence is hardly his natural mode of operation. Stewart also comments that she rejected the concept of the hero as a social misfit, a type that was becoming fashionable at the time (she was referring to the literary movement embodied in the so-called Angry Young Men of the 1950's in Great Britain). On the contrary, Simon Lester, like all of her heroes, is unfailingly polite, courteous, and chivalrous, amply possessed, as Stewart put it, of “the civilized good manners that are armour for the naked nerve.” He also embodies the common sense and “liberal ideas” that Stewart admires. The latter can be seen, for example, in his reflective comment on the odd ways of the Greek peasantry: “I think that most things can be forgiven to the poor.” It is one of the most memorable lines in any of Stewart's novels.

My Brother Michael was inspired by Stewart's first visit to Greece, and a large part of the novel's appeal lies in the richly evoked setting of Delphi. In this passage, for example, Stewart re-creates the landscape around Parnassus in elegant, meandering rhythms and poetic images:

All along the Pleistus—at this season a dry white serpent of shingle beds that glittered in the sun—all along its course, filling the valley bottom with the tumbling, whispering green-silver of water, flowed the olive woods; themselves a river, a green-and-silver flood of plummy branches as soft as sea spray, over which the ever-present breezes slid, not as they do over corn, in flying shadows, but in whitening breaths, little gasps that lift and toss the olive crests for all the world like breaking spray. Long pale ripples followed one another down the valley.

The setting is not merely adornment; Stewart uses it to create an atmosphere of a land still populated by the ancient gods, whose presence can be felt by those of subtle sense and pulse. Here is Apollo's temple:

From where we were the pillars seemed hardly real; not stone that had ever felt hand or chisel, but insubstantial, the music-built columns of legend: Olympian building, left floating—warm from the god's hand—between sky and earth. Above, the indescribable sky of Hellas; below, the silver tide of the olives everlastingly rippling down to the sea. No house, no man, no beast. As it was in the beginning.

Classical allusions abound throughout the narrative; Stewart expects her reader to recognize them, and they are an integral part of plot and theme. Indeed, the climax of the plot comes when Camilla discovers a statue of Apollo, untouched and unseen for two thousand years. The theme of the novel has similarities with Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (458 B.C.E.; trilogy translated in 1777 as *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides*); the name of Orestes, the avenger of a murdered relative, is invoked on more than one occasion as Simon Lester is forced into avenging the murder of his brother, an event that had taken place fifteen years previously. Violent events in the past cast long shadows over the present, but the Furies are eventually satisfied.

THIS ROUGH MAGIC

The formula that worked so well in *My Brother Michael* was repeated, with different ingredients, in *This Rough Magic* (1964), which has proved to be one of Stewart's most popular novels. Four million copies were sold over the decade following its publication.

Instead of Delphi, the setting is the island of Corfu, and the literary allusions are not to the classics but to William Shakespeare. The opening gambit is familiar: the heroine on holiday in an exotic clime. True to type, Lucy Waring is young and middle-class, modest enough to blush but spirited enough to tackle a villain. Stewart, as always, knows how to lead her reader astray: Once more there is a romantic red herring, a tall English photographer, who this time turns out to be the villain, whereas the likeliest candidate for villain eventually wins the lady's hand.

The strength of the novel lies in the characters, who are well drawn, if not in great depth, a strong plot with plenty of twists and surprises, a careful building of suspense, and the usual exciting (and violent) climax. The novel's charm lies in its setting, its wealth of incidental detail—ranging from the habits of dolphins to local folklore about Corfu's patron saint—and the ingenious way in which Stewart weaves Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (pr. 1611) into the fabric of the story. The theory of one of the characters, a retired actor famous for his role as Prospero, is that Corfu is the magic island depicted in *The Tempest*, and allusions to the play crop up on every other page. Stewart may be writing popular fiction, but her readers are certainly at an advantage if they are literate; the allusions are not limited to *The Tempest* but include *King Lear* (pr. c. 1605-1606), *Much Ado About Nothing* (pr. c. 1598-1599), and William Congreve's Restoration drama *The Way of the World* (pr., pb. 1700). (An amusing example occurs in the 1965 book *Airs Above the Ground*, in which an ignorant mother prattles about a passage in the Bible, which she cannot quite remember, about a thankless child being sharper than a serpent's tooth—actually an image from *King Lear*.)

TOUCH NOT THE CAT

Literary allusions also enrich *Touch Not the Cat* (1976), one of Stewart's best novels, a sophisticated, cleverly plotted gothic mystery that holds its interest until the end and never slackens pace. The action takes place in an old moated grange in the Midlands that belongs to the Ashleys, a venerable English family with a historical pedigree going back to Tudor times and beyond. The plot is set in motion by a cryptic message from a dying man (Stewart employed a similar device

in *My Brother Michael*), which leads the heroine, Bryony Ashley, on a trail of clues leading to valuable old books, Roman villas, surprise inheritances, and the unmasking of treacherous cousins. Juxtaposed to the main narrative are a series of brief flashbacks to a tragic love affair involving one of the Ashley ancestors, which eventually turns out to have a vital bearing on the present. The story also includes the novel device of telepathic lovers, a device that Stewart handles convincingly, with subtlety and insight. As usual, she erects a smokescreen to throw the reader off the romantic trail. It is all told with Stewart's customary grace and economy of style.

LATER NOVELS

Stewart's later novels, *Thornyhold* (1988), *The Stormy Petrel* (1991), and *Rose Cottage* (1997), are less gripping fare than her fiction of the 1950's and 1960's. Stewart returns to England for her settings, and continues her formula of a young woman encountering a strange new home and stranger family or neighbors, but these are drawn in pastels rather than the vivid colors of the Continent, true cozies and rarely thrilling. Her light, fluent prose is always a pleasure to read, and it is with some justice that her novels have been hailed as "genuine triumphs of a minor art."

Bryan Aubrey

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Madam, Will You Talk?*, 1955; *Wildfire at Midnight*, 1956; *Thunder on the Right*, 1957; *Nine Coaches Waiting*, 1958; *My Brother Michael*, 1960; *The Ivy Tree*, 1961; *The Moon-Spinners*, 1962; *This Rough Magic*, 1964; *Airs Above the Ground*, 1965; *The Gabriel Hounds*, 1967; *The Wind off the Small Isles*, 1968; *Touch Not the Cat*, 1976; *Thornyhold*, 1988; *The Stormy Petrel*, 1991; *Rose Cottage*, 1997

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Crystal Cave*, 1970; *The Hollow Hills*, 1973; *The Last Enchantment*, 1979; *The Wicked Day*, 1983; *The Prince and the Pilgrim*, 1995

RADIO PLAYS: *Call Me at Ten-Thirty*, 1957-1958; *Lift from a Stranger*, 1957-1958; *The Crime of Mr. Merry*, 1957-1958; *The Lord of Langdale*, 1957-1958

POETRY: *Frost on the Window, and Other Poems*, 1990

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Little Broomstick*, 1971; *Ludo and the Star Horse*, 1974; *A Walk in Wolf Wood*, 1980

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Zimmer Bradley and Steve Lawhead.

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Newquist, Roy. *Counterpoint*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964. This book of interviews includes one with Stewart discussing her approach to writing and the significance of her fiction.

Wiggins, Kayla McKinney. "'I'll Never Laugh at a Thriller Again': Fate, Faith, and Folklore in the Mystery Novels of Mary Stewart." *Clues* 21, no. 1 (Spring-Summer, 2000): 49-60. Detailed thematic study of Stewart's thrillers.

FRANK R. STOCKTON

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; April 5, 1834

Died: Washington, D.C.; April 20, 1902

Also wrote as Paul Fort; John Lewees

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; private investigator

CONTRIBUTION

Although Frank R. Stockton is virtually unknown today, he was so greatly esteemed in his own era that American librarians in the 1890's reported only Mark Twain and F. Marion Crawford as more in demand. A 1928 list of great books included Stockton's as among the two hundred best worldwide, an 1899 poll by *Literature* ranked him fifth among the writers of his day (ahead of Henry James and Bret Harte), and noted writers and critics have sung his praises, among them Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edmund Gosse, Robert Browning, Gertrude Stein, Maurice Sendak, and Edmund Wilson. Stockton's *The Adventures of Captain Horn* (1895) outsold all other American novels the year of its first printing, and his story "The Lady, or the Tiger?" continues to be read.

A prolific popular writer, Stockton paved the way for others in a variety of areas. As Henry L. Golemba notes, his children's stories foreshadowed those of Mark Twain, his fairy tales influenced Maurice Sendak, his experimentation with point-of-view narration inspired Gertrude Stein's technique, and his stories about the complexities and frustrations of ordinary middle-class life anticipated the stories of James Thurber, just as his anti-imperialist and antiwar sketches anticipated Leonard Holton's *The Mouse That Roared* (1955). Some have called him the first American science-fiction novelist, and others have praised his multidimensional depictions of the frustrations of the late nineteenth century woman seeking self-fulfillment. Some of his stories were precursors of the inverted detective story, and his originality in handling ratiocination and in reversing traditional formulas of the genre paved the way for later writers.

BIOGRAPHY

Francis Richard Stockton was born on April 5, 1834, in Philadelphia, the third child of Emily Hepzi-

both Drean and William Smith Stockton, one of what would be a family of six children in addition to his father's seven children by a previous marriage. His mother was a school administrator and his father a conservative religious writer. Stockton was born with one leg shorter than the other, an infirmity that kept him out of the Civil War. His family was torn by divided loyalties during the war. Frank sympathized with the South and privately printed "A Northern Voice Calling for the Dissolution of the Union," but his aged father, a fire-and-brimstone Methodist, was an avid abolitionist. Ironically, the father's self-righteousness drove his younger sons to the opposite extreme: They became the community pranksters, and Frank in particular became so disenchanted with his father's stern faith that he turned to an absurdist's view of universal chaos.

Stockton attended public schools in Philadelphia, wrote some juvenile poetry, and won a prize in a story contest. After graduation from high school in 1852, he became a wood engraver and draftsman, though he kept up his literary interests as a member of the Foren-

sic and Literary Circle. He began writing magazine stories for children and then humorous novels, stories, and sketches. During this period, he focused mainly on fairy tales, but eventually he progressed to more realistic stories, yet ones infused with elements of fancy. In September, 1855, his first published story, "The Slight Mistake," appeared in the *Philadelphia American Courier*, and his second, "Kate," in the *Southern Literary Messenger*.

On April 30, 1860, Stockton was married to Marian (Mary Ann) Edwards Tuttle, a teacher, and he established an engraving office in New York. After his father's death he turned to journalism, freelancing for several newspapers and periodicals. He joined the staff of *Hearth and Home* in 1869, and the editorial staff of *Scribner's Monthly* (later *Century*) in 1872.

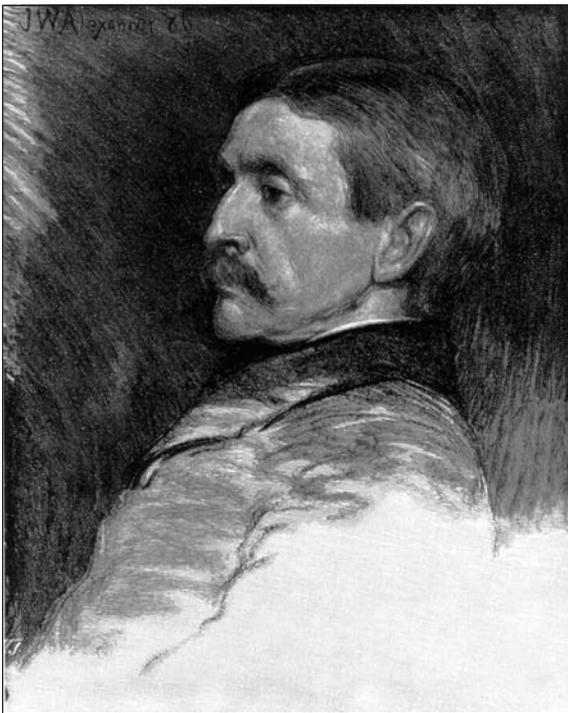
Serving as assistant editor for *St. Nicholas* from 1873 to 1881 opened new doors for Stockton, and offered him the chance to reconsider his own efforts. Consequently, he began to write longer works, producing his first novel, *What Might Have Been Expected*, in 1874. When he was struck by blindness in 1876, he began to consider an alternative future. By 1878 it was clear that his vision was permanently impaired, despite recuperative trips to Virginia, Florida, and Nassau, so Stockton retired.

After a two-year stint in Europe, Stockton produced "The Lady, or the Tiger?" the success of which encouraged him to become a full-time author of short stories and novels. Ironically, however, that very success made it more difficult for him to publish for a while, for editors returned manuscripts with the comment that they failed to maintain the high standards the public demanded after "The Lady, or the Tiger?" Nevertheless, three collections of short stories published in 1884 led many to consider Stockton the leading American humorist of the 1880's.

In April, 1902, Stockton was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage during a National Academy of Sciences banquet in his honor; he died a few days later. Mark Twain was one of the mourners at his funeral.

ANALYSIS

Indifferent to literary movements and unconfined by traditional genre divisions, Frank R. Stockton



Frank R. Stockton. (Library of Congress)

wrote delightful tales that mix romance, adventure, satire, fairy tale, intrigue, and derring-do. These stories were best when his imagination was not tied down by geographical or historical circumstances (more than half of his tales are set at sea) but could freely range in a mixed world of fantasy and reality. Their basic pattern, no matter what the dominant genre, is parody through inverting convention. Only a handful contain elements of mystery and detection, but because of Stockton's popularity and his innovative tinkering with formulas, these few are significant.

Although he wrote a number of novels, Stockton's forte was the short story, of which he wrote hundreds, and even his novels actually consist of short episodes bound together into longer units. All are characterized by the Stockton formula: what Martin I. J. Griffin calls "the calm, realistic recital of absurdity." Stockton describes the most amazing or ludicrous adventures and the most frightening horrors with a serene objectivity, a plain matter-of-factness, and the most ordinary with such a sense of wonder and intrigue that one's expectations are continually reversed. His fairies enter the human domain like wary strangers in a strange land, so that the real world partakes of the fanciful and the fantastic, while his descriptions of fairyland infuse it with realism. His ghosts are haunted by their human counterparts, and his stolid middle-aged women are drawn into incredible adventures. Mixing the normal and the incongruous, his narrator usually recites events in so detached and distant a manner that the passionate seems dispassionate, the heroic ordinary, the complex simple.

"STRUCK BY A BOOMERANG"

Stockton's one tale of ratiocination, "Struck by a Boomerang," approaches the murder mystery in a typically skewed fashion. Reuben Farris has been murdered, and the narrator, a reclusive lawyer, sets out to detect the murderer by collecting incontrovertible evidence and presenting it logically. What he discovers is that there is a large amount of circumstantial evidence that indicates that he himself is the murderer. Luckily, he is saved by the timely confession of the true murderer, but he has learned the hard way how misleading circumstances can be. He concludes:

I have had very good success in the law, but for some years I never pressed an investigation, never endeavored to find out the origin of some evil action, without stopping to consider whether it might not be possible that under some peculiar circumstances, and in some way I did not understand at the time, I might not be the man I was looking for, and that the legal blow I was about to deliver might not be turned, boomerang-like, on my astonished self.

While satirizing the unquestioning self-assurance of a Sherlock Holmes, Stockton questions the legal system and the reliance on circumstantial evidence to win a conviction.

"THE LADY, OR THE TIGER?"

Although Stockton has only one real tale of detection, some of his other works contain intriguing elements of that genre. The most famous of these is "The Lady, or the Tiger?" Persuaded to prepare a story to read at a literary party, Stockton wrote "The King's Arena" but could not complete it to his satisfaction in time. Toying with it, he could not decide how to conclude it; after rewriting the ending five times, he finally left the solution open-ended. He published it as what is now known as his classic riddle story, "The Lady, or the Tiger?" It is the story of a handsome youth whose love for a king's daughter leads the king to condemn him to a choice of two doors, behind one of which lies a ferocious, bloodthirsty tiger that will most certainly eat him, behind the other a beautiful young woman who will be his willing and joyous bride. After a night of anguished consideration, the king's daughter, having bribed a guard for the secret of the doors, firmly directs her beloved to the door on the right, but the reader is left to unravel the psychology of her choice. Would she rather have her handsome young man alive, but in the arms of a rival, or dead, and safely hers for eternity? Stockton spends two sentences on her fears about "the cruel fangs of the tiger" and two paragraphs on her deliberations about the other door, emphasizing her "hot-blooded, semi-barbaric" nature, her gnashing of teeth and tearing of hair, her dreams of her young lover's "start of rapturous delight" on viewing her rival, her "despairing shriek" at the thought of their nuptials.

“THE DISCOURAGER OF HESITANCY”

To thousands of letters begging an answer, Stockton finally replied, “If you decide which it was—the lady, or the tiger—you find out what kind of a person you are yourself.” Later, the pleas of readers still desperate for a final answer led to “The Discourager of Hesitancy” in *The Christmas Wreck, and Other Stories* (1886), but therein Stockton merely poses another question: whether the lady who smiles or the lady who frowns at the handsome prince is the king’s choice for his bride, a choice he must duplicate or go to his death. The impact of Stockton’s “The Lady, or the Tiger?” is clear from the fact that twenty-five thousand copies of it were sold by 1891. Critics still speak of it as “a great link in the development of the short story.”

Stockton’s story typifies his most intriguing characteristics: the difficulty of labeling his works in traditional ways, the ambiguity that teases and challenges readers, the realistic detail coupled with elements of fantasy, the deep-rooted cynicism beneath a surface idealism. Its concern with the choice between love and jealousy, self-sacrifice and blind possessiveness gives it a universality that has made it endure.

“WHAT I FOUND IN THE SEA”

Another tale, involving greed, betrayal, and attempted murder, takes place on the high seas. In “What I Found in the Sea,” a former sailor, John Gayther, tells of his near demise. His ship having run aground on some unknown obstacle, Gayther constructs a glass box through which to view the damage, only to discover a Spanish galleon and an English ship, sunk during a sea battle and now forever locked in combat in a watery grave. Curious, Gayther explores the ruined vessels in a diver’s suit while his fellow sailors repair their boat. On finding a treasure in sixteenth century gold coins, he makes a secret agreement with the captain for the crew, the captain, and Gayther to mark the location and share the wealth. A passenger, a villainous stockbroker, suspects however, that he is missing out on a treasure; having watched shipboard movements “like a snake watching a bird,” he cuts the line and hose on the diver’s suit the next time Gayther is underwater. When Gayther finds an ingenious way to survive (breathing “the air of the sixteenth century”), the stockbroker tries to stir the crew against him. Stockton lightens this story of the

way greed drives a man to madness, treachery, and murder by focusing on the peculiar psychological transformation wrought in Gayther by the preserved air from more reckless, swashbuckling days.

THE STORIES OF THE THREE BURGLARS

The Stories of the Three Burglars (1889), a novellette, portrays three burglars caught by means of wine into which a powerful narcotic has been placed; in an attempt to account for their presence in a strange house, each tells an ingenious but unconvincing tale. Through such stories, Stockton satirizes realists such as Stephen Crane, who insisted that art mirror firsthand experience. At the same time he sets forth a middle-class view of society, with the rich equated with oppressors and socialist attempts to organize the poor denounced as forms of burglary.

THE LATE MRS. NULL

The Late Mrs. Null (1886), a romance, involves an investigation and disguise, with a cautious young lover, Lawrence Croft, trying to determine the character of his rival, one Junius Keswick, whose previous engagement to Croft’s beloved had been broken by his aunt, Mrs. Keswick. Croft hires Annie Peyton, an employee of a New York information agency, to undertake the investigation for him. To facilitate the performance of her job, she disguises herself as “Mrs. Null,” for as a married woman she can “go where she pleases and take care of herself.” Mrs. Keswick proves to be a terrible, vengeful woman who drove her husband to suicide and unrelentingly harried her childhood lover until he agreed to marry her, only for the pleasure of castigating him mercilessly at the altar and humiliating him in front of family and friends by refusing to continue with the marriage rites. “Mrs. Null,” in turn, is full of dash, spirit, and bravery. She cannot reconcile the feuding families, but she does prove fully capable of determining her own fate and fulfilling her contract. She teaches her employer the importance of both emotion and intellect in human relationships. A minor novelty in the book is the introduction of the anti-detective squad, a group of private citizens who have taken it on themselves to counter the efforts of detectives worldwide and who, for an appropriate sum, will undertake to divert and mislead whatever detectives are pursuing the payee.

Five thousand copies of this story sold the first day and more than twenty thousand within five months. In it, Stockton brought together the elements of a potential detective story but avoided using detection as his final approach. Nevertheless, his portrait of a young, active woman, intelligent, perceptive, and capable, paved the way for the modern female detective. Though marriage eventually becomes Annie Peyton's goal, throughout the story she proves her ability to thrive and to conduct her investigations without male assistance. Indeed, in his excellent work on Stockton, Henry Golemba comments, "I know of no American writer who investigates the question of women's liberation in so many permutations who has been as summarily neglected as Stockton."

ARDIS CLAVERDEN

Ardis Claverden (1890), whose plot features a lynching, the burning of a house and a barn, horse theft, a murder, and two hangings, focuses on a woman who beneath a bland, conventional exterior proves somewhat sinister and destructive, driven by dark, overpowering psychological forces. Riding a hot-blooded horse at top speed makes her feel wild and free, especially when she has just stolen back her lover's horse from thieves, and bringing two men to the gallows exhilarates her even more.

"THE KNIFE THAT KILLED PO HANCY"

"The Knife That Killed Po Hancy" further exemplifies Stockton's interest in the darker forces that may possess a human being. Therein an effete, civilized lawyer accidentally cuts himself with a knife stained with the blood of a Burmese robber chieftain, Po Hancy, and finds himself first displaying that long-dead man's uncivilized physical abilities and then his primitive passions. He plots burglaries, considers murder, and finds uncontrollable impulses waging war against his own better self. Humankind's cruel and inhuman designs are examined in other of Stockton's works, particularly in descriptions of the fury of a lynch mob such as that in *Amos Kilbright: His Adscititious Experiences, with Other Stories* (1888) or in tales of ruthless pirates.

Stockton has been praised for his psychological sense, particularly for his understanding of how to depict for children the realities adults must face and how to involve adults in the escapist fantasies of youth, for

his treatment of middle-aged women, and for his colorful but sympathetic depiction of southern blacks. In the history of detective fiction he is best known for his competent female investigator, Mrs. Null, for his reversal of Holmesian logic, and for his teasing ending to "The Lady, or the Tiger?"—an ending that forces the reader to play detective.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Late Mrs. Null*, 1886; *The Stories of the Three Burglars*, 1889; *Ardis Claverden*, 1890

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1874-1890 • *What Might Have Been Expected*, 1874; *Rudder Grange*, 1879; *A Jolly Fellowship*, 1880; *The Story of Viteau*, 1884; *The Transferred Ghost*, 1884; *The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine*, 1886; *The Hundredth Man*, 1887; *The Dusantes: A Sequel to "The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine,"* 1888; *Personally Conducted*, 1889; *The Great War Syndicate*, 1889

1891-1900 • *The House of Martha*, 1891; *The Squirrel Inn*, 1891; *Pomona's Travels*, 1894; *The Adventures of Captain Horn*, 1895; *Captain Chap: Or, The Rolling Stones*, 1896; *Mrs. Cliff's Yacht*, 1896; *The Buccaneers and Pirates of Our Coasts*, 1898; *The Girl at Cobhurst*, 1898; *The Great Stone of Sardis: A Novel*, 1898; *The Associate Hermits*, 1899; *The Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander*, 1899; *The Young Master of Hyson Hall*, 1899; *A Bicycle of Cathay: A Novel*, 1900

1901-1927 • *Kate Bonnet: The Romance of a Pirate's Daughter*, 1902; *The Captain's Toll-Gate*, 1903; *The Lost Dryad*, 1912; *The Poor Count's Christmas*, 1927

SHORT FICTION: *The Floating Prince, and Other Fairy Tales*, 1881; *Ting-a-Ling Tales*, 1882; *The Lady, or the Tiger?, and Other Stories*, 1884; *A Christmas Wreck, and Other Stories*, 1886; *Amos Kilbright: His Adscititious Experiences, with Other Stories*, 1888; *The Rudder Grangers Abroad, and Other Stories*, 1891; *The Clock of Rondaine, and Other Stories*, 1892; *The Watchmaker's Wife, and Other Stories*, 1893; *Fanciful Tales*, 1894; *A Chosen Few*, 1895; *New Jersey: From the*

Discovery of the Scheyichbi to Recent Times, 1896; *Stories of New Jersey*, 1896 (also known as *New Jersey*); *A Story-Teller's Pack*, 1897; *Afield and Afloat*, 1900; *John Gayther's Garden and the Stories Told Therein*, 1902; *The Magic Egg, and Other Stories*, 1907; *Stories of the Spanish Main*, 1913; *Best Short Stories*, 1957

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Ting-a-Ling*, 1870; *Roundabout Rambles in Lands of Fact and Fancy*, 1872; *Tales Out of School*, 1875; *The Bee-Man of Orn, and Other Fanciful Tales*, 1887; *The Queen's Museum, and Other Fanciful Tales*, 1906

NONFICTION: *A Northern Voice Calling for the Dissolution of the Union of the United States of America*, 1860; *The Home: Where It Should Be and What to Put in It*, 1872

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Novels and Stories of Frank R. Stockton*, 1899-1904 (23 volumes)

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Golemba, Henry L. *Frank R. Stockton*. Boston: Twayne, 1981. Part of Twayne's United States Authors series, this extended examination of Stockton and his art includes an introductory bibliography and chronological investigation of Stockton's works. Golemba also suggests reasons for Stockton's neglect, in relation not only to the works themselves but also to the history of publishing and literary criticism over the last hundred years. Contains a select bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

Griffin, Martin I. J. *Frank R. Stockton*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939. This biography gathers together details of Stockton's life—many taken from original sources—and shows the relationship between his life and his works. In the discussion of Stockton's work, however, plot summary dominates over critical interpretation. Includes a bibliography.

Hall, Ernest Jackson. *The Satirical Element in the American Novel*. Reprint. New York: Haskell House, 1969. Brief monograph on American satire emphasizes Stockton's place in the development of the satirical novel.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The Origins of the American Detective Story*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Study of the beginnings and establishment of American detective-fiction conventions, focusing especially on the replacement of the police by the private detective and the place of forensic science in the genre. Provides perspective on Stockton's writings.

Vedder, Henry C. *American Writers of Today*. Boston: Silver Burdett, 1894. This analysis of American writers includes a twelve-page chapter on Stockton and his work. Offers interesting insights and a flavor of the times in which Stockton wrote. Vedder gives considerable attention to Stockton's originality and droll humor.

REX STOUT

Born: Noblesville, Indiana; December 1, 1886

Died: Danbury, Connecticut; October 27, 1975

Types of plot: Master sleuth; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Nero Wolfe, 1934-1985

Tecumseh Fox, 1939-1941

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

NERO WOLFE is a private detective and recluse who is often goaded into taking on cases by desperate clients. Wolfe is fat (nearly three hundred pounds), intellectual, and something of a romantic. He is a theoretician and tactician; he knows how to manipulate circumstances and make the most of the evidence that his chief assistant hands him.

ARCHIE GOODWIN is Wolfe's chief assistant, alter-

ego, and narrator of all the Wolfe novels. He is lean, well built, and practical. He and Wolfe make an unbeatable—if often irritable—team. He is a shrewd observer and researcher; he finds the facts.

TECUMSEH FOX, more physically active than Nero Wolfe, operates out of his large farm in Westchester County that his neighbors call the Zoo. He is a daring private detective and breaks the law if he believes that a client's case is at stake.

CONTRIBUTION

Next to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin may be the most memorable detective team in the history of the murder mystery genre. For more than forty years Stout was able to sustain his series of Nero Wolfe novels and short stories with amazing verve and consistency. Goodwin is the hard-boiled detective, ferreting out facts and collecting information from unusual sources. He brings the world to the contemplative, isolated Wolfe, who rarely leaves his home on business. He is the great mind secluded in his large, three-story brownstone on West Thirty-fifth Street in New York City. Without Goodwin, Wolfe would have to deal with the world much more directly; his mind would be cluttered with minutiae. With Goodwin as his detail man, Wolfe manages to hew his cases into a pleasing, aesthetic shape. When he solves a crime, he has simultaneously unraveled a mystery and tied up many loose ends that have bothered Goodwin and the other characters. As Wolfe suggests in several of the novels, he is an artist. He lives quietly and in virtual solitude, for that is his way of imposing his vision on the world. On those rare occasions when he is forced to leave his house, he as much as admits that sometimes the order he would like to bring to things is threatened by a chaotic and corrupt society he only momentarily manages to subdue.

BIOGRAPHY

Rex Todhunter Stout was born on December 1, 1886, in Noblesville, Indiana, to John Wallace Stout and Lucetta Todhunter Stout. The next year his family moved to Kansas, where he grew up in Wakarusa and Bellview as the sixth of nine children. He lived on a

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Rex Stout (standing) at a Mystery Writers of America party in 1960. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

farm, which he remembered fondly in later years, while his father became superintendent of schools in Shawnee County. John Wallace Stout seems to have been a fair-minded parent as well as a great disciplinarian and fearful authority figure. Lucetta Todhunter Stout was a highly intelligent but rather reserved person who did little to encourage her children. As a result, her son Rex learned to rely on his own resources at a very early age.

John Wallace Stout owned more than one thousand books, all of which his son had read by the age of eleven. Rex Stout was a precocious student, a spelling champion, and an avid reader of poetry with a prodigious memory. His father was involved in politics, which became one of the future novelist's lifelong interests. The Stout family's theatricals, composed and performed at home, made Rex Stout a self-assured speaker and debater. It is not hard to see this background reflected in the duels of wit between the characters in his detective novels.

In his youth, Stout was a great traveler, a sailor, a self-made businessman, and a freelance writer before publishing his first Nero Wolfe novel in 1934. He turned to mystery writing after a respectable but undistinguished effort to write fiction that would compete in seriousness with the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, and the other great twentieth century modernist writers. Before the Wolfe series, his modestly successful novels explored complex psychological themes and human characters. Yet through the evolution of the Nero Wolfe series, with its repeating characters and themes, he was able to approach a complex interpretation of human nature.

Very active in World War II as a propagandist for the American government, a controversial supporter of the Vietnam War, and a staunch opponent of J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation, Stout was himself a complex man. His fierce interests in politics and society are apparent in the Nero Wolfe series—although his main character is far more aloof from current affairs than Stout ever was. In 1959, he received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America. Rex Stout died in October, 1975.

ANALYSIS

In Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter," the model for much of modern detective fiction, M. Auguste Dupin solves a mystery by cerebration; that is, he persistently thinks through the circumstances of the case, questioning the motives of the culprit and putting himself in the criminal's place so that he can reenact the conditions of the crime. Dupin rarely leaves his room, for he works by ratiocination—Poe's term for the detective's cognitive ability to catch and to outwit the guilty party. Dupin is a man of thought, not a man of action. He is also something of a mystery himself, a remote figure whom his assistant and interlocutor (also the narrator of the story) has trouble fathoming. Dupin, in short, is the cultivated, urban intellectual who prevails in an environment that values strength of mind and mental resourcefulness. "The Purloined Letter," then, is as much about the narrator's fascination with the detective's mind as it is about catching the villain.

NERO WOLFE SERIES

Nero Wolfe is a direct descendant of Dupin. He hates to leave his house on West Thirty-fifth Street in New York City. Except in extremely rare instances, all appointments with clients are in Wolfe's brownstone. The detective has traveled widely—he even owns a house in Egypt—but it is a principle with him not to leave home on business. Archie Goodwin—Wolfe's sidekick, detail man, inquisitor, and protector—is the legman, the detective's link with the outside world. Goodwin prefers to believe that Wolfe is lazy; that is the reason the detective refuses to budge from his lair. Wolfe is sedentary, but his lack of physical exercise is more than a quirk. As his name Nero suggests, he has tyrannically created his own empire out of his towering ego. A man so bent on enjoying his own pleasures (chiefly a greenhouse with three hundred orchids and gourmet meals served by his live-in cook), to the exclusion of all others, has the perfect personality to pit against the egos of criminals, confidence men, and murderers. Wolfe knows what human greed means. He himself works for high fees that support his sybaritic existence.

Wolfe is wedded to his daily routines: breakfast at eight in his bedroom, two hours with his orchids from nine to eleven, office hours from eleven to quarter past one, then lunch and more office hours until four, after which he devotes two more hours to his orchids. Dinner is at half past seven. Goodwin knows better than to disturb the detective when he is working with his flowers, and only emergencies interrupt the other parts of the fixed schedule. This profound sense of order, of instituting a household staff that caters to his habits, is what motivates Wolfe to apprehend murderers—those disrupters of a peaceful and harmonious society. As his last name suggests, he is also a predator. Killers must be caught in Nero Wolfe novels, because they ultimately threaten his own safety; they sometimes intrude into his Manhattan brownstone or violate the lives of others in ways that offend Wolfe's belief (never stated in so many words) that urban man has a right to organize his life in a highly individual, even eccentric, manner. Caring so passionately about his own security, Wolfe is moved to take on cases where another's well-being is menaced.

Although there are significant female characters in

the Nero Wolfe series, their values, characters, and concerns are never central. Wolfe himself is leery of women, especially younger ones. At the conclusion of *In the Best Families* (1950), it is a joke to Goodwin that a woman has finally got close enough to Wolfe to make him smell of perfume. Goodwin is a chauvinist. He can be rather condescending with women. Occasionally, as in *And Be a Villain* (1948), a female character becomes the focal point of the story. In general, however, the power and fascination of Stout's fictional world is male.

Almost every Wolfe novel has this continuing cast of characters: Goodwin (who often has to spur Wolfe into action), Fritz (Wolfe's brilliant, conscientious cook in charge of pleasing his palate every day), Theodore (the orchid nurse), and Saul Panzer, Fred Durkin, and Orrie Cather (Wolfe's operatives, called in to help research and waylay suspects). Inspector Cramer of the New York Police Department is Wolfe's competitor, sometimes his ally, depending on the nature of the case and on whether Wolfe has information that will help the police and encourage them to tolerate his investigations. Wolfe has contact with a newspaperman, Lon Cohen, who passes along tips to Goodwin or plants items in the press at Wolfe's behest. Wolfe's organization of his household and his talent for manipulating the press and the police also speak to his consummate talents as a modern, urban detective.

It is indicative of the strengths of the Nero Wolfe series that the first novel, *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), and the last published before his death, *A Family Affair* (1975), are considered to be among Stout's best work. Every novel is characterized by Goodwin's exasperated familiarity with Wolfe's idiosyncrasies. Somehow Stout is able to create, almost immediately, the illusion of an ongoing world outside the particular novel's plot. Instead of explaining Wolfe's routine with his flowers, for example, Goodwin simply alludes to it as a habit. Gradually, in the course of the novel, brief and recurrent references to the routine are so embedded in the narrative that the presumption of a real world is easily assimilated. Indeed, the solving of a crime becomes inherently fascinating because it is contrasted implicitly with Wolfe's thoroughly regularized agenda. In other words, the detective must settle

the case to preserve his deeply domestic order.

And Be a Villain, for example, begins with Goodwin filling out Wolfe's income tax forms: "For the third time I went over the final additions and subtractions on the first page of Form 1040, to make good and sure." It is typical of Stout to start a book in the middle of some action. In this case, the way Goodwin does Wolfe's income tax not only suggests his meticulous technique but also introduces the importance of money in the detective's world. He usually works only when he is forced to replenish the income he spends so extravagantly. "To make good and sure" is also characteristic of Goodwin's clipped speech. He never says more than really needs to be said. He works for Wolfe because he is efficient and accurate. He is by nature a man who wants to get things right—whether it is adding up figures or finding the real murderer.

And Be a Villain is the first novel of the Zeck trilogy—arguably the finest work in the Nero Wolfe series. Certainly the trilogy is representative of the series, and in its depiction of society, human character, and politics it demonstrates some of the most ambitious work ever attempted by a detective story writer. In the Zeck trilogy, Stout exploits and expands the strengths of the murder mystery genre to a point beyond which the genre cannot go without forsaking the conventions of the plot and of the detective's own personality.

AND BE A VILLAIN

In *And Be a Villain*, Wolfe is hired to investigate the murder of Cyril Orchard, the publisher of a horse-racing tip sheet, who is murdered in sensational fashion. He is the victim of a poison that is put into a soft drink whose makers sponsor a popular radio show. Nearly all concerned with the show are suspects. Wolfe has to work hard to get them to tell the truth, since they conceal evidence embarrassing to the show's star, Madeleine Fraser. At first, this cover-up obscures the true nature of the case, for what Wolfe learns is that Fraser gets indigestion from her sponsor's beverage. On the live program she has always had a taped bottle filled with cold coffee to simulate the soft drink. Someone switched bottles, however, and Orchard drank what turned out to be the poisoned potion. The suspicion, then, is that Fraser was the true

target of the poisoner. Not until Wolfe happens to read a newspaper account of the death of Beulah Poole, publisher of an economic forecasting tip sheet, does he realize that some larger conspiracy is at work and that Orchard was indeed the intended murder victim.

Behind the scenes of the Zeck trilogy is the mastermind, Arnold Zeck, who calls Wolfe to persuade him to drop the case. It seems Wolfe has stumbled on a scam involving blackmail of prominent professionals and businessmen who are forced to take out expensive subscriptions to the tip sheets. Zeck is a very powerful, ruthless, and corrupt figure who buys politicians and poses as a philanthropist. In the event, Wolfe solves the crime and apprehends the murderer without having to confront Zeck. The implication, however, is that Wolfe dreads the day when he will have to battle Zeck. It will mean a revolution in his own life, including his departure from his beloved brownstone to bring his adversary down. Worse than that, Wolfe implies, he may not be successful.

THE SECOND CONFESSION

Each novel in the Zeck trilogy brings Wolfe closer to the confrontation with absolute evil. Striking in all three novels is Wolfe's admission that his triumphs are momentary and local. The very model of the self-sufficient, impregnable detective, Wolfe suddenly seems incredibly vulnerable—really a very insignificant figure when matched against Zeck's crime empire. When one of Zeck's minions, Louis Rony, is murdered and Wolfe refuses to stop his investigation in *The Second Confession* (1949), Zeck has his men machine-gun Wolfe's rooftop orchid greenhouse. That is a shocking invasion of Wolfe's domain. Although it is not the first time that Wolfe has suffered intrusions, Zeck has a societal organization—virtually a government unto itself—that could very well obliterate the detective. For much of the novel Rony has been suspected of being a secret Communist Party member; originally Wolfe was engaged to expose Rony's true political affiliations. Yet, as in *And Be a Villain*, the plot becomes much more complex, more disturbing. Rony, it is learned, was a party member and a Zeck operative, a kind of double agent. Wolfe again escapes a showdown with Zeck once this fact is known, since Zeck apparently believes that Rony betrayed him.

IN THE BEST FAMILIES

Finally, in *In the Best Families*, Wolfe is driven underground, for he has come too close to the center of Zeck's operations. In the previous two novels, Zeck has warned Wolfe to be careful, while expressing the highest admiration for Wolfe's techniques. After all, Wolfe has also built up an intricate if much smaller organization. Like Zeck, he is one of a kind. Like Zeck, he is rarely seen outside his headquarters. The difference between the two men is that Zeck wants to penetrate society from within. He wants to control the most important political and financial institutions; he wants to make them perfect extensions of his will. Wolfe, on the other hand, exploits society only to the extent necessary to foster his deeply personal desires. He is as selfish and egotistical as Zeck, but he recognizes the rights and responsibilities of other individuals and organizations. For Zeck there can be only one organization, his own. Wolfe, however, happily pays his income tax and cooperates with the police when they can help him or lies to them when it is necessary to solve a case. Yet he has a sense of limits. His logic of organization turns inward, toward his own appetites, his own home. Zeck, on the other hand, would make the world his oyster if he had a chance.

Wolfe knows all these things about Zeck, so in the final volume of the trilogy he challenges Zeck on his own territory. Wolfe flees his brownstone, surfaces in California, loses more than one hundred pounds, slicks back his hair, grows a beard, talks through his nose, and is unrecognizable as himself. He works up a scam that fits him solidly into Zeck's organization. Like Poe's detective, Wolfe puts himself in the villain's place. Wolfe must make himself over and actually commit crimes to catch a criminal.

The Zeck trilogy is a powerful political and ethical statement, and yet it never loses its focus as detective fiction. Zeck is still the personal symbol of corruption as he would be in a Dashiell Hammett novel—to name another important model for detective fiction. Wolfe immediately gains ten pounds after successfully penetrating Zeck's organization and bringing down its master. He has gone through an agony of self-denial to get Zeck and rejects Goodwin's notion that he should stay in shape. Wolfe must return to fatness, for he has

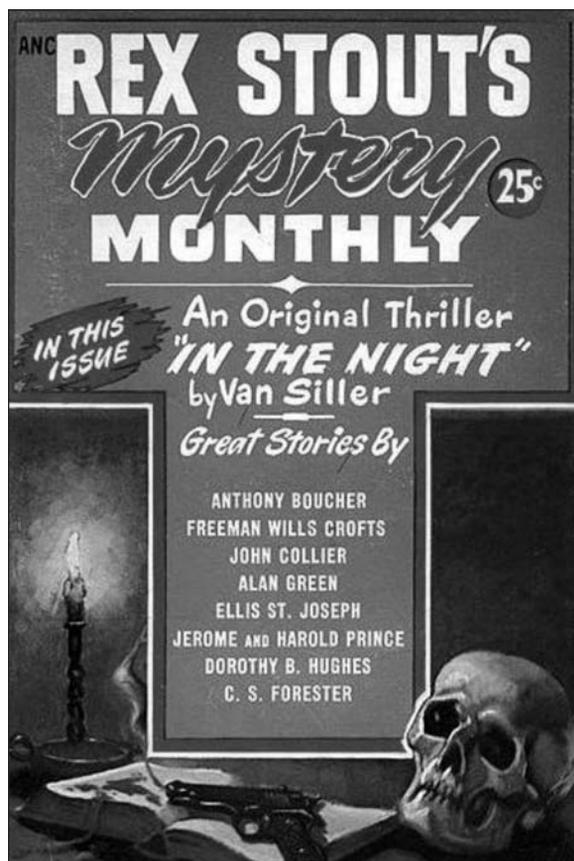
come perilously close to destroying his own identity. In earlier novels it has been enough for Wolfe to outwit his opponents, to absorb their psychology and turn it against them. Here he does that, but much more. In the Zeck trilogy he must follow a policy. He must be political if he is to destroy not only the man but also his empire. David R. Anderson is right. At heart, Wolfe is a romantic who shies away from a society that cannot fulfill his aesthetic and moral craving for perfection. Knowing how decadent life is “out there,” he must create a world of his own that is as flawless as he can make it.

The Zeck trilogy represents the middle period of the Nero Wolfe series. As Anderson also notes, the trilogy represents a “rite of passage” for Goodwin and Wolfe. Zeck has been their greatest challenge, and through him they have learned just how dependent

they are on each other. When Wolfe flees his home in *In the Best Families* without a word to his partner, Goodwin feels abandoned but easily supports himself as a detective. Yet he continues to wonder whether Wolfe will reappear and is gratified when the detective surfaces and clues Goodwin into his plan to topple Zeck. The fact is that without Wolfe, Goodwin’s work would be lucrative but unimaginative. Without Goodwin, Wolfe has been able to plan his plot against Zeck, but he cannot execute it. The loner—and he is incredibly alone during the months he works at penetrating Zeck’s organization—cannot ultimately exist alone. The shock of separation, Anderson observes, is what eventually reunites this quarrelsome partnership. Inspector Cramer predicts in *In the Best Families* that Zeck is out of reach. That would be true if Goodwin and Wolfe did not know how to trust each other. In the reconciliation of opposites evil cannot triumph. Zeck has failed to divide and conquer Wolfe’s world—although one of the many amusing ironies in this novel occurs when Wolfe (pretending to be Roeder, a Zeck operative) hires Goodwin to do a job for Zeck.

For all the routine of Wolfe’s life, there is considerable variety in the series. Although he constantly affirms that he does not leave home on business, for example, there are several instances in the series when he does. In spite of their close, daily association Wolfe still does things that surprise Goodwin. That is perhaps the freshest aspect of the Wolfe novels when they are considered in terms of the murder mystery genre. Each novel repeats the central facts about Wolfe and his entourage without becoming tiresome. In the Nero Wolfe series, invention and convention are complementary qualities. They are what makes the series cohere. A man of the most studied habits, Nero Wolfe knows when it is crucial that he break the pattern.

Carl Rollyson



During the mid-1940's, at the height of Rex Stout's popularity, a new mystery magazine was launched to capitalize on his name.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NERO WOLFE SERIES: 1934-1940 • *Fer-de-Lance*, 1934 (also known as *Meet Nero Wolfe*); *The League of Frightened Men*, 1935; *The Rubber Band*, 1936 (also known as *To Kill Again*); *The Red Box*, 1937 (also known as *The Case of the Red Box*); *Too Many Cooks*, 1938; *Some Buried Caesar*, 1939 (also

known as *The Red Bull*); *Over My Dead Body*, 1940; *Where There's a Will*, 1940

1941-1950 • *Black Orchids*, 1942 (also known as *The Case of the Black Orchids*); *Not Quite Dead Enough*, 1944; *The Silent Speaker*, 1946; *Too Many Women*, 1947; *And Be a Villain*, 1948 (also known as *More Deaths than One*); *The Second Confession*, 1949; *Trouble in Triplicate*, 1949; *In the Best Families*, 1950 (also known as *Even in the Best Families*); *Three Doors to Death*, 1950

1951-1960 • *Curtains for Three*, 1951; *Murder by the Book*, 1951; *Triple Jeopardy*, 1952; *Prisoner's Base*, 1952 (also known as *Out Goes She*); *The Golden Spiders*, 1953; *The Black Mountain*, 1954; *Three Men Out*, 1954; *Before Midnight*, 1955; *Might as Well Be Dead*, 1956; *Three Witnesses*, 1956; *If Death Ever Slept*, 1957; *Three for the Chair*, 1957; *And Four to Go*, 1958 (also known as *Crime and Again*); *Champagne for One*, 1958; *Plot It Yourself*, 1959 (also known as *Murder in Style*); *Three at Wolfe's Door*, 1960; *Too Many Clients*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Final Deduction*, 1961; *Gambit*, 1962; *Homicide Trinity*, 1962; *The Mother Hunt*, 1963; *A Right to Die*, 1964; *Trio for Blunt Instruments*, 1964; *The Doorbell Rang*, 1965; *Death of a Doxy*, 1966; *The Father Hunt*, 1968; *Death of a Dude*, 1969

1971-1985 • *Please Pass the Guilt*, 1973; *A Family Affair*, 1975; *Death Times Three*, 1985

TECUMSEH FOX SERIES: *Double for Death*, 1939; *Bad for Business*, 1940; *The Broken Vase*, 1941

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Hand in the Glove*, 1937 (also known as *Crime on Her Hands*); *Mountain Cat*, 1939; *Red Threads*, 1939; *Alphabet Hicks*, 1941 (also known as *The Sound of Murder*)

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Justice Ends at Home, and Other Stories*, 1977

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Her Forbidden Knight*, 1913; *A Prize for Princes*, 1914; *Under the Andes*, 1914; *The Great Legend*, 1916; *How Like a God*, 1929; *Seed on the Wind*, 1930; *Golden Remedy*, 1931; *Forest Fire*, 1933; *O Careless Love!*, 1935; *Mr. Cinderella*, 1938

NONFICTION: *The Nero Wolfe Cook Book*, 1973 (with others)

EDITED TEXTS: *The Illustrious Dunderheads*, 1942; *Rue Morgue No. 1*, 1946 (with Louis Greenfield); *Eat, Drink, and Be Buried*, 1956 (also known as *For Tomorrow We Die*)

MISCELLANEOUS: *Corsage*, 1977

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Barzun, Jacques. "Rex Stout." In *A Jacques Barzun Reader: Selections from His Works*, edited and with an introduction by Michael Murray. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. Essay on Stout by a noted philosopher and social theorist.

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Calif.: Borgo Press, 1995. Useful bibliography of Stout's novels that provides descriptions and analysis of each one.

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Borgo Press, 1991. A book-length study of the Nero Wolfe series, noting the development of the characters over successive novels and the importance of both novels and characters to the detective genre.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Born: Elizabeth, New Jersey; October 4, 1862

Died: Newark, New Jersey; May 10, 1930

Also wrote as Horatio Alger, Jr.; Captain Ralph Bonehill; Allen Chapman; Louis Charles (joint pseudonym with Louis Stratemeyer); Oliver Optic; Roy Rockwood; E. Ward Strayer; Arthur M. Winfield

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Rover Boys, 1899-1926

Bobbsey Twins, 1904-1980

Dave Porter, 1905-1919

Tom Swift, 1910-1941

Ruth Fielding, 1913-1934

Hardy Boys, 1927-

Nancy Drew, 1930-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

THE ROVER BOYS, Dick, Tom, and Sam, are cadets at Putnam Hall military academy. Between classes, activities, and solving mysteries, the boys also spend time with their sweethearts, who attend a nearby girls' school.

THE BOBBSEY TWINS are two sets of fraternal twins: Freddy and Flossie are four years old while Bert and Nan are eight. Because their father travels a great deal, so does the family. The older twins frequently discover mysteries to solve.

DAVE PORTER is a manly youth who is well liked at his boarding school although he is often called away to experience mysterious adventures in different settings.

TOM SWIFT is a young genius and master of inven-

tions. Popular around town, Tom is devoted to his ailing father and Tom's sweetheart, Mary. He must be ever vigilant to guard his inventions from industrial pirates.

RUTH FIELDING is a young orphan in the care of her uncle. She is extremely intelligent and talented at solving mysteries.

THE HARDY BOYS, Frank and Joe, are the sons of internationally famous detective Fenton Hardy. Athletic and intelligent, the boys hope to follow in their father's footsteps.

NANCY DREW is the teenage daughter of prominent attorney, Carson Drew. Nancy is a great help to her father and frequently solves his cases for him.

CONTRIBUTION

Edward Stratemeyer began his writing career as an author of dime novels. He wrote many novels under many different names. His imagination was so vast that he had no time to write every book his mind could conceive. When he left dime novels to write juvenile mystery fiction, he had real success with the Rover Boys series. From his experience with dime novels, Stratemeyer knew that it was important to include a bit of mystery in most books. He also created a template for his juvenile leading characters. The youngsters are usually orphans, semi-orphans, or else the children of extremely hands-off parents. The result is that the boys and girls are independent, responsible, resourceful, and self-possessed, the kind of young person Stratemeyer described as "wide awake." These young people are propelled into the discovery and the solving of mysteries by a series of extraordinary coincidences.

Stratemeyer ensured reader involvement by creating fast-paced action and ending nearly every chapter with a cliffhanger.

When Stratemeyer realized that he would never be able to write all the books that he wanted to write, he created his syndicate sometime around 1910. The syndicate was much like the fiction factory of nineteenth century French novelist Alexandre Dumas, *père*. Stratemeyer would generate an idea for a book or a series, work up relatively detailed outlines, and pay authors to write the books using house names (Carolyn Keene, Franklin W. Dixon, Victor Appleton). The authors were paid a lump sum for each book, signed over the rights, and promised never to reveal that they had written a book as one of the house names.

Stratemeyer also conceived the idea of the breeder set of books. The first three volumes of a new series appeared at the same time. That way the series momentum was established, and readers did not have to wait a year to buy a new volume in a series that they had enjoyed. His sales ideas were based on selling books for fifty cents per book and making his profit on volume rather than price.

BIOGRAPHY

Edward Stratemeyer was born on October 4, 1862, to German émigrés Henry Julius Stratemeyer and Anna Stratemeyer. Anna was the widow of George, Henry's brother, and had three sons with him. After Anna and Henry married, they had three children together; Edward was the youngest. It seems that all the siblings were artistically gifted in some way, but they lived very normal, if slightly privileged, lives. Edward grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where his father owned and operated a tobacco store. The family was comfortable, cultured, and completely apolitical. The Stratemeyer boys worked in their father's store.

Edward Stratemeyer was educated in public schools. He once told a friend that he had known from the age of six that he wanted to be an author. He graduated from Elizabeth High School as valedictorian of his class of three. After high school, he received some private tutoring while working in his brother's tobacco store and writing for story papers. In 1889, with "Victor Horton's Idea," Stratemeyer crossed the bridge from

sensationalist literature to a more respectable kind. He moved the family home to Newark, New Jersey, and in 1891, he married Magdalene "Lenna" Van Camp. Though Lenna was an invalid, she helped edit Stratemeyer's books.

Soon after his marriage, Stratemeyer went to work freelancing for Street and Smith Publishers, and from that experience, he learned much about the management and organization of his future syndicate. However, Stratemeyer's greatest accomplishment would prove to be Harriet, his elder daughter, who was born on December 11, 1892. Edna, his second daughter, was born on May 19, 1895.

Sometime around 1905, Stratemeyer began implementing the organization of his syndicate by hiring authors to turn his outlines into complete books under the house names that belonged to the syndicate: Victor Appleton, Franklin W. Dixon, Carolyn Keene, Alice B. Emerson, and Laura Lee Hope. Stratemeyer is generally credited with the writing of the Rover Boys (as Arthur M. Winfield) and the Dave Porter series as well as many other series outside the mystery and detective genre; however, the Bobbsey Twins, Tom Swift, Ruth Fielding, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew series are all series that he created rather than actively wrote. Early on, Stratemeyer hired Lilian Garis, an established newspaper writer who was also writing girls' books. She wrote the Motor and Radio Girls series as Margaret Penrose, and continued to work for the syndicate for many years, alternating that output with books of her own. Howard Garis, her husband, originator of the Uncle Wiggly series, also wrote for the syndicate, penning some of the Bomba books, some of the Tom Swift books, and also some of the Bobbsey Twin books, on which Lilian also worked. Both of the Garis children also wrote for Stratemeyer: Cleo Garis wrote the Arden Blake series and Roger Garis wrote the X Bar X Boys series as James Cody Ferris. In the family biography, Roger Garis later recalled that the family members wrote so many books for so many different series that none of them could remember exactly which ones they had written. Leslie McFarlane, a Canadian newsman and radio writer wrote for several syndicate series before being assigned the Hardy Boys series.

Stratemeyer decided to hire Mildred Wirt Benson, one of the first graduates of the new school of journalism at the University of Iowa and assigned her to the Ruth Fielding series (written as Alice B. Emerson), which was just winding down. He liked her work and assigned Benson to a new girls' series that he was developing. The Nancy Drew breeder set appeared in 1930, just days before Stratemeyer died. It was Benson, writing as Carolyn Keene, who created the character and personality of snappy and slightly sassy Nancy Drew, even though later on, Stratemeyer's daughter Harriet Stratemeyer Adams would insist that she had created Nancy.

Harriet Stratemeyer Adams and Edna Stratemeyer inherited the syndicate when their father died. They intended to sell it, but in the midst of the Great Depression, there was no one to buy it, and there was no one with their father's imagination and foresight. Adams assumed the reins of the organization and wrote outlines for books as her father had. During the 1950's, Harriet undertook the task of rewriting all the titles in the Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, and Bobbsey Twins series to modernize them. Therefore, in many ways, Harriet did write the Nancy Drew books. After she died in 1982, the syndicate was sold to Simon & Schuster publishers.

ANALYSIS

Edward Stratemeyer used the techniques he developed while writing dime novels to perfect the construction of juvenile mystery fiction. His leading characters were derived from the leading characters in fairy tales and projected a universal appeal because of the essential familiarity of their types (Jung's universal archetype theory). His plots were built on action and strengthened with cliff-hanging suspense with an overabundance of coincidence rather than applied detection, deduction, or induction. In thirty-one years, Stratemeyer managed to create five extremely successful juvenile mystery series that have become embedded in American popular culture. The Rover Boys, Tom Swift, the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew are cultural icons and centers of controversy, just as Stratemeyer was controversial.

Critics of juvenile fiction have accused Stratemeyer of sensationalism, lack of realism, and the re-

peated use of similar characters and plots. Teachers, librarians, and the Boy Scouts of America attacked his books. The consensus seemed to be that it was impossible to write as much as Stratemeyer did and still write well. However, Stratemeyer wrote well enough to capture the imaginations of his readers. He chose his syndicate writers based on who best could communicate the excitement he hoped to promote and best express the character he hoped to create. If he, and later, daughter Harriet, found an author to be unsatisfactory, that author was not invited to work for the syndicate again.

THE BOBBSEY TWINS SERIES

Although Howard Garis and Lilian Garis, writing as Laura Lee Hope, worked on the later volumes of this series, the greatest mystery of all about the Bobbseys remains unsolved. The 1904 publication date of the first book in the series is a year or so in advance of estimated dates for the syndicate organization, so who wrote the book? If, as Stratemeyer's daughter said, Stratemeyer, himself, wrote the book, it would be the only book for very young children that he ever attempted, even though he, presumably, outlined succeeding volumes. Because the publishing world was glutted with "tots" series, the syndicate was content with the Bobbsey Twins until 1952 when Harriet introduced the Happy Hollisters series by Jerry West (Andrew Svenson). The idea seemed to be to create an audience for a mystery series by developing an audience for mysteries, and the Bobbsey Twins solved mysteries, beginning with tracking down the identity of a ghost in the first volume. After 1943, the series was devoted to solving mysteries and was popular enough to outlast its competition, and even after it was discontinued in 1979, it went immediately into reprints and a new format. Writers who wrote novels in the series include Elizabeth Ward, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, Andrew Svenson, Jane Dunn, Grace Grote, Nancy Axelrod, Mary Donahoe, Patricia Doll, Bonniel Weston, and Margery Howard.

THE TOM SWIFT SERIES

This third volume of the 1910 breeder set, *Tom Swift and His Airship: Or, The Stirring Cruise of the Red Cloud*, demonstrates Stratemeyer's fondness for using names to describe personalities. Tom was quick

on the uptake and quick to seize on opportunities. This series by Victor Appleton, a house name, was the syndicate's science series. Authors received anywhere from \$75 to \$125 to write syndicate volumes. For the first Swift novels, author Howard Garis received \$75 each, which seems a small return on volumes that may well have sold 15 million copies. Stratemeyer would insist, however, that the arrangement was only fair, since he, as entrepreneur, took all the risks and every investment came from his own pocket.

Howard Garis was born in Binghamton, New York, in 1873 and was living near the Stratemeyer family in Newark when Stratemeyer approached him about writing the stories. Out of deference to Howard's experience and expertise as a writer, Stratemeyer gave Howard more freedom to create than was usual, and over the next thirty to thirty-five stories (through 1941), Tom Swift invented nearly everything there was to invent. Tom is everything every young man should be: bright, devoted to family, honest, patriotic, and hard-working. Somehow, Tom, who was schooled at home, has absorbed chemistry, physics, higher math, engineering, drafting, and architecture without ever attending college. More important, and by way of a lesson to his readers, Tom never gives up. No matter how bad things are, Tom never says "Uncle," and this positive attitude takes him through the roughest of times.

Garis took the whole concept of inventing very seriously, and so did James Duncan Lawrence, who, from 1954 to 1971, wrote thirty-three volumes of the Tom Swift, Jr., series as Victor Appleton II. In this series, Tom was framed for a bank robbery and forced to track down the robbers to prove his innocence. Still, no matter how wealthy or famous Tom became, he remained essentially the same boyish, eager youngster that everyone admired. Most important, Tom loves what he does and has a wonderful time doing it. The Tom Swift series continued from 1981 to 1984, when the series setting was outer space, then 1991 to 1993, when the series reverted to its science and technology emphasis, which also was the focus of the latest series begun in 2006.

THE HARDY BOYS SERIES

Although some critics dismissed the Hardy Boys series by Franklin W. Dixon, which began with *The*

Tower Treasure (1927), as updated Rover Boys tales, the appearance of the juvenile mystery series coincided with the emergence of American detective fiction for adults. The Philo Vance and Ellery Queen mysteries as well as the classic *Black Mask* pulp magazine helped to confirm an American taste for detection. Sons of famous detective Fenton Hardy, Frank and Joe are ages sixteen and fifteen respectively when they are introduced. Later on, they age appropriately to the point where they can operate vehicles legally but not enough to graduate from high school. (In one volume, they were getting ready for college the next year, but in the succeeding volume, they were back in high school . . . and never left.) It has been said that, of necessity, detective fiction is formulaic in nature, and juvenile detective fiction is no exception. The gimmick for the Hardys is coincidence and regular cliff-hangers. Like Tom Swift and other boy heroes before them, Frank and Joe are tributes to the wide-awake American boy. At the conclusion of each book, the boys receive the congratulations of adults who have been unable to accomplish what the boys did, and many of those congratulating adults are eating a healthy helping of crow. Leslie McFarlane, a popular and well-respected newspaperman, was assigned the Hardy Boys series, and he conceived the characters and his descriptions from scenes of his boyhood. Later on, McFarlane said that he came to dread writing new installments because the series never seemed to go anywhere and the characters did not develop or change.

THE NANCY DREW SERIES

When the Nancy Drew series by Carolyn Keene debuted in 1930 with *The Secret of the Old Clock*, there was no pure mystery series featuring a girl in the juvenile market. These books were celebrations of liberated American girlhood before the actual liberation of women. Nancy, depicted on the original dust covers of the books by artist Russell Tandy, is the epitome of the flapper with cloche hat, neck scarf, high-heeled shoes, and shorter skirt. Mildred Wirt Benson was the ideal choice to author the Drew series. Other writers who wrote as Carolyn Keene include Walter Karig, Leslie McFarlane, James Duncan Lawrence, Nancy Axelrod, Priscilla Doll, Charles Strong, Alma Sasse, Wilhelmina Randkin, George Waller, Jr., and Margaret

Schert. Benson was something of an iconoclast and worked as a newspaperwoman. By writing for the syndicate, she was able to support herself, her daughter, and her disabled husband. She brought her own self-assurance, confidence, and no-nonsense attitude to the character of Nancy without diminishing Nancy's own femininity. In the first book of the series, Nancy, convinced that she is in the right, steals an old clock to obtain the will left inside it. From the 1980's on, there have been many testimonies from former Drew readers as to the positive effect that the series had on them, their attitudes, and awareness of being women.

H. Alan Pickrell

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ROVER BOYS SERIES (AS WINFIELD): 1899-1910 • *The Rover Boys and School: Or, The Cadets of Putnam Hall*, 1899; *The Rover Boys on the Ocean: Or, A Chase for Fortune*, 1899; *The Rover Boys in the Jungle: Or, Stirring Adventures in Africa*, 1899; *The Rover Boys Out West: Or, The Search for a Lost Mine*, 1900; *The Rover Boys on the Great Lakes: Or, The Secret of the Island Cave*, 1901; *The Rover Boys in the Mountains: Or, A Hunt for Fun and Fortune*, 1902; *The Rover Boys on Land and Sea: Or, The Cruises of Seven Islands*, 1903; *The Rover Boys in Camp: Or, The Rivals of Pine Island*, 1904; *The Rover Boys on the River: Or, The Search for the Missing Houseboat*, 1905; *The Rover Boys on the Plains: Or, The Mystery of Red Rock*, 1906; *The Rover Boys in Southern Waters: Or, The Deserted Steam Yacht*, 1907; *The Rover Boys on the Farm: Or, Last Days at Putnam Hall*, 1908; *The Rover Boys on Treasure Isle: Or, The Strange Cruise of the Steam Yacht*, 1909; *The Rover Boys at College: Or, The Right Road and the Wrong*, 1910

1911-1920 • *The Rover Boys Down East: Or, The Struggle for the Stanhope Fortune*, 1911; *The Rover Boys in the Air: Or, From College Campus to Clouds*, 1912; *The Rover Boys in New York: Or, Saving Their Father's Honor*, 1913; *The Rover Boys in Alaska: Or, Lost in the Fields of Ice*, 1914; *The Rover Boys in Business: Or, The Search for the Missing Bonds*, 1915; *The Rover Boys on a Tour: Or, Last Days at Brill College*, 1916; *The Rover Boys at Colby Hall:*

Or, The Struggles of the Young Cadets, 1917; *The Rover Boys on Showshoe Island: Or, The Old Lumberman's Treasure Box*, 1918; *The Rover Boys Under Canvas: Or, The Mystery of the Wrecked Submarine*, 1919; *The Rover Boys on a Hunt: Or, The Mysterious House in the Woods*, 1920

1921-1926 • *The Rover Boys in the Land of Luck: Or, Stirring Adventures in the Oilfields*, 1921; *The Rover Boys at Big Horn Ranch: Or, The Cowboys' Double Roundup*, 1922; *The Rover Boys at Big Bear Lake: Or, The Camps of the Rival Cadets*, 1923; *The Rover Boys Shipwrecked: Or, A Thrilling Hunt for Pirates' Gold*, 1924; *The Rover Boys on Sunset Trail: Or, The Old Miner's Mysterious Message*, 1925; *The Rover Boys Winning a Fortune: Or, Strenuous Days Afloat and Ashore*, 1926

DAVE PORTER SERIES: *Dave Porter at Oak Hall: Or, The Schooldays of an American Boy*, 1905; *Dave Porter in the South Seas: Or, The Strange Cruise of the Stormy Petrel*, 1906; *Dave Porter's Return to School: Or, Winning the Medal of Honor*, 1907; *Dave Porter in the Far North: Or, The Pluck of an American Schoolboy*, 1908; *Dave Porter and His Classmates: Or, For the Honor of Oak Hall*, 1909; *Dave Porter at Star Ranch: Or, The Cowboy's Secret*, 1910; *Dave Porter and His Rivals: Or, The Chums and Foes of Oak Hall*, 1911; *Dave Porter on Cave Island: Or, A Schoolboy's Mysterious Mission*, 1912; *Dave Porter and the Runaways: Or, Last Days at Oak Hall*, 1913; *Dave Porter in the Gold Fields: Or, The Search for the Landslide Mine*, 1914; *Dave Porter at Bear Camp: Or, The Wild Man of Mirror Lake*, 1915; *Dave Porter and His Double: Or, The Disappearance of the Basswood Fortune*, 1916; *Dave Porter's Great Search: Or, The Perils of a Young Civil Engineer*, 1917; *Dave Porter Under Fire: Or, A Young Army Engineer in France*, 1918; *Dave Porter's War Honors: Or, At the Front with the Flying Engineers*, 1919

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

BOUND TO SUCCEED SERIES: *Richard Dare's Venture: Or, Striking Out for Himself*, 1894 (revised 1899); *Oliver Bright's Search: Or, The Mystery of a Mine*, 1895 (revised 1899); *Bound to Be an Electrician: Or, Franklin Bell's Road to Success*, 1897; *To*

Alaska for Gold: Or, The Fortune Hunters of the Yukon, 1899

SHIP AND SHORE SERIES: *The Last Cruise of the Spitfire: Or, Luke Foster's Strange Voyage*, 1894; *Reuben Stone's Discovery: Or, The Young Miller of Torrent Bend*, 1895; *True to Himself: Or, Roger Strong's Struggle for Place*, 1900

OLD GLORY SERIES: *Under Dewey at Manila: Or, The War Fortunes of a Castaway*, 1898; *A Young Volunteer in Cuba: Or, Fighting for the Single Star*, 1898; *Fighting in Cuban Waters: Or, Under Schley on the Brooklyn*, 1899; *Under Otis in the Philippines: Or, A Young Officer in the Tropics*, 1899; *The Campaign of the Jungle: Or, Under Lawton Through Luzon*, 1900; *Under MacArthur in Luzon: Or, Last Battles in the Philippines*, 1901

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE SERIES: *On to Peking: Or, Old Glory in China*, 1900; *Under the Mikado's Flag: Or, Young Soldiers of Fortune*, 1904; *At the Fall of Port Arthur: Or, A Young American in the Japanese Navy*, 1905; *Under Togo for Japan: Or, Three Young Americans on Land and Sea*, 1906

COLONIAL SERIES: *With Washington in the West: Or, A Soldier Boy's Battles in the Wilderness*, 1901; *Marching on Niagara: Or, the Soldier Boys of the Old Frontier*, 1902; *At the Fall of Montreal: Or, A Soldier Boy's Final Victory*, 1903; *On the Trial of Pontiac: Or, The Pioneer Boys of the Ohio*, 1904; *The Fort in the Wilderness: Or, The Soldier Boys of the Indian Trails*, 1905; *Trail and Trading Post: Or, The Young Hunters of the Ohio*, 1906

PAN-AMERICAN SERIES: *Lost on the Orinoco: Or, American Boys in Venezuela*, 1902; *The Young Volcano Explorers: Or, American Boys in the West Indies*, 1902; *Young Explorers of the Isthmus: Or, American Boys in Central America*, 1903; *Young Explorers of the Amazon: Or, American Boys in Brazil*, 1904; *Treasure Seekers of the Andes: Or, American Boys in Peru*, 1907; *Chased Across the Pampas: Or, American Boys in Argentina and Homeward Bound*, 1911

LAKEPORT SERIES: *The Boat Club Boys of Lakeport: Or, The Water Champions*, 1908; *The Football Boys of Lakesport: Or, More Goals Than One*, 1909; *The Automobile Boys of Lakeport: Or, A Run for Fun and Fame*, 1910; *The Aircraft Boys of Lake-*

port: Or, Rivals of the Clouds, 1912

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Fighting for His Own: Or, The Fortune of a Young Artist*, 1897; *Shorthand Tom: Or, The Exploits of a Young Reporter*, 1897; *The Young Auctioneers: Or the Polishing of a Rolling Stone*, 1897; *The Minute Boys of Lexington*, 1898; *An Undivided Union*, 1899 (as *Optic*; with William Taylor Adams); *Fortune Hunters of the Philippines: Or, The Treasure of the Burning Mountain*, 1900 (as Charles); *The Land of Fire: Or, Adventures in Underground Africa*, 1900 (as Charles); *Between Boer and Briton: Or, Two Boys' Adventures in South Africa*, 1900 (also known as *The Young Ranchman: Or, Between Boer and Briton*, 1920); *American Boys' Life of William McKinley*, 1901; *Two Young Lumbermen: Or, From Maine to Oregon for Fortune*, 1903; *Joe the Survivor: Or, The Value of a Lost Claim*, 1903; *American Boys' Life of Theodore Roosevelt*, 1904; *Larry, the Wanderer: Or The Rise of a Nobody*, 1904; *Joe the Hotel Boy: Or, Winning Out by Pluck*, 1906 (as Alger); *Ben Logan's Triumph: Or, The Boys of Boxwood Academy*, 1908 (as Alger); *Defending His Flag: Or, A Boy in Blue and a Boy in Gray*, 1907; *First at the North Pole: Or, Two Boys in the Arctic Circle*, 1909 (also known as *The Young Explorers: Or, Adventures Above the Arctic Circle*, 1920); *Making Good with Margaret*, 1918 (as Strayer)

RISE IN LIFE SERIES (AS ALGER): *Out for Business: Or, Robert Frost's Strange Career*, 1900; *Falling in with Fortune: Or, The Son of a Soldier*, 1901; *Nelson the Newsboy: Or, Afloat in New York*, 1901; *Jerry the Backwoods Boy: Or, The Parkhurst Treasure*, 1904; *Lost at Sea: Or, Robert Roscoe's Strange Cruise*, 1904; *From Farm to Fortune: Or, Nat Nason's Strange Experience*, 1905; *The Young Book Agent: Or, Frank Hardy's Road to Success*, 1905; *Randy of the River: Or, The Adventures of a Young Deck Hand*, 1906

FLAG OF FREEDOM SERIES (AS BONEHILL): *When Santiago Fell: Or, The War Adventures of Two Chums*, 1899 (also known as *For His Country: Or, The Adventures of Two Chums*, 1920); *A Sailor Boy with Dewey: Or, Afloat in the Philippines*, 1899 (also known as *Comrades in Peril: Or, Afloat on a Battleship*, 1920); *Off for Hawaii: Or, The Mystery of a*

Great Volcano, 1899 (also known as *The Young Pearl Hunters: Or, In Hawaiian Waters*, 1920); *The Young Bandmaster: Or, Concert, Stage, and Battlefield*, 1900; *Boys of the Fort: Or, A Young Captain's Pluck*, 1901 (also known as *Boys of the Fort: Or, True Courage Wins*, 1920); *With Custer in the Black Hills: Or, A Young Scout Among the Indians*, 1902 (also known as *On Fortune's Trail: Or, The Heroes of the Black Hills*, 1920)

MEXICAN WAR SERIES (AS BONEHILL): *For the Liberty of Texas*, 1900; *With Taylor on the Rio Grande*, 1901; *Under Scott in Mexico*, 1902

FRONTIER SERIES (AS BONEHILL): *With Boone on the Frontier: Or, The Pioneer Boys of Old Kentucky*, 1902 (*Boys of the Wilderness: Or, Down in Old Kentucky*, 1932); *Pioneer Boys of the Great Northwest: Or, With Lewis and Clark Across the Rockies*, 1904 (also known as *Boys of the Great Northwest: Or, Across the Rockies*, 1932); *Pioneer Boys of the Gold Fields: Or, The Nugget Hunters of '49*, 1906 (also known as *Boys of the Gold Fields: Or, The Nugget Hunters*, 1932)

BOY HUNTERS SERIES (AS BONEHILL): *Four Boy Hunters: Or, The Outing of the Gun Club*, 1906; *Guns and Snowshoes: Or, The Winter Outing of the Young Hunters*, 1907; *Young Hunters of the Lake: Or, Out with Rod and Gun*, 1908; *Out with Gun and Camera: Or, The Boy Hunters in the Mountains*, 1910

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS BONEHILL): *Gun and Sled: Or the Young Hunters of Snow-Top Island*, 1897; *Young Oarsmen of Lakeview: Or, The Mystery of Hermit Island*, 1897; *The Rival Bicyclists: Or, Fun and Adventures on the Wheel*, 1897; *Leo the Circus Boy: Or, Life Under the Great White Canvas*, 1897; *Young Hunters in Puerto Rico: Or, The Search for a Lost Treasure*, 1900; *Three Young Ranchmen: Or, Daring Adventures in the Great West*, 1901; *The Boyland Boomer: Or, Dick Arbuckle's Adventures in Oklahoma*, 1902; *The Young Naval Captain: Or, the War of All Nations*, 1902; *Neka, the Boy Conjuror: Or, A Mystery of the Stage*, 1902; *Lost in the Land of Ice: Or, Daring Adventures Around the South Pole*, 1902; *The Tour of the Zero Club: Or, Adventures amid Ice and Snow*, 1902; *The Island Camp: Or, The Young Hunters of Lakeport*, 1904 (also known as *The*

Gun Club Boys of Lakesport: Or, The Island Camp); *The Winning Run: Or, The Baseball Boys of Lakeport*, 1905 (also known as *The Baseball Boys of Lakeport: Or, The Winning Run*)

PUTNAM HALL SERIES (AS WINFIELD): *The Putnam Hall Cadets: Or, Good Times in School and Out*, 1901 (also known as *The Cadets of Putnam Hall: Or, Good Times in School and Out*, 1921); *The Putnam Hall Rivals: Or, Fun and Sport Afloat and Ashore*, 1906 (also known as *The Rivals of Putnam Hall: Or, Fun and Sport Afloat and Ashore*, 1921); *The Putnam Hall Champions: Or, Bound to Win Out*, 1908 (also known as *The Champions of Putnam Hall, Or, Bound to Win Out*, 1921); *The Putnam Hall Rebellion: Or, The Rival Runaways*, 1909 (also known as *The Rebellion at Putnam Hall: Or, The Rival Runaways*, 1921); *The Putnam Hall Encampment: Or, The Secret of the Old Mill*, 1910 (also known as *Camping Out Days at Putnam Hall: Or, The Secret of the Old Mill*, 1921); *The Putnam Hall Mystery: Or, The School Chums' Strange Discovery*, 1911 (also known as *The Mystery at Putnam Hall: Or, The School Chums' Strange Discovery*, 1921)

NONSERIES NOVELS (AS WINFIELD): *The School-days of Fred Harley: Or, Rivals for All Honors*, 1897; *The Missing Tin Box: Or, The Stolen Railroad Bonds*, 1897; *Poor but Plucky: Or, The Mystery of a Flood*, 1897; *By Pluck, not Luck: Or, Dan Granbury's Struggle to Rise*, 1897; *Larry Barlow's Ambition: Or, The Adventures of a Young Fireman*, 1902; *Bob the Photographer: Or, A Hero in Spite of Himself*, 1902; *Mark Dale's Stage Adventures: Or, Bound to Be an Actor*, 1902; *The Young Bank Clerk: Or, Mark Vincent's Strange Discovery*, 1902; *The Young Bridge-Tender: Or, Ralph Nelson's Upward Struggle*, 1902; *A Young Inventor's Pluck: Or, The Mystery of the Wellington Legacy*, 1902

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Rehak, Melanie. *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005. Tells the story of how Stratemeyer's daughter Harriet and Mildred Wirt Benson developed the character Nancy Drew.

JEAN STUBBS

Born: Denton, Lancashire, England; October 23, 1926

Types of plot: Historical; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector John Lintott, 1967-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

INSPECTOR JOHN LINTOTT, retired after forty years at Scotland Yard, is now an occasional private investigator. Wherever he travels, Lintott carries with him the values of his humble origins, including a belief in marital fidelity, a dislike of pretension, and a loathing for those who bully the weak and helpless.

CONTRIBUTION

Midway in her writing career, Jean Stubbs wrote two historical thrillers; in each of them, retired Scotland Yard inspector John Lintott is persuaded to undertake a private investigation. Although she then left the genre to write a historical saga, Stubbs is notable for her unique mixture of genres in novels that are variously called historical romantic mysteries, historical thrillers, and historical mystery stories. These two books are also memorable in that by placing the conservative, down-to-earth Inspector John Lintott in ex-

otic surroundings, Stubbs uses the private investigator format for ironic social commentary in the tradition of the naïve fictitious foreign observer. The mixture fascinated readers; the fact that Stubbs then abandoned her unique format is a matter for regret.

BIOGRAPHY

Jean Stubbs was born on October 23, 1926, in Denton, Lancashire, England. She was educated at the Manchester High School for Girls and later at the Manchester School of Art, which she attended from 1944 to 1947. A marriage, which ended in divorce, produced two children: a son, Robin, and a daughter, Gretel Sally. Aside from her love of writing, Stubbs also enjoys art, spending time with her family and cooking.

Before settling on a career as a writer, Stubbs was an artist, an actress, and a concert pianist. She published several short stories, reviews, and articles in various periodicals before her career as a novelist. She received the Society of Authors' Tom Gallon Award in 1964 for her short story "A Child's Four Seasons." Stubbs did not gain real literary recognition until the publication of her first novel, *The Rose-Grower* (1962), the first in her historical romance series, the Howarth Chronicles, which she later claimed had been written on the subway. It was not until 1974 that she

turned to the mystery format in *The Painted Face*, and after *The Golden Crucible* in 1976, she abandoned that genre for a successful family-saga series.

ANALYSIS

During the twelve years between the publication of her first novel and the publication of *The Painted Face* in 1974, Jean Stubbs developed the interests that in retrospect seem naturally to have led her to the genre of the historical mystery thriller. After three realistic works and a utopian novel, she ventured into a combination of history and crime with *My Grand Enemy* (1967), which tells the story of Mary Blandy, who was hanged in 1752 for poisoning her father and who may well have been merely the tool of the man she loved. Although critics considered that the book had fallen short of high drama, it was praised for its factual accuracy and for its re-creation of the period in which it was set. Although not a conventional mystery and crime writer, Stubbs adjusted the genre to suit her particular interests. Her works have earned wide acclaim for their meticulous historical detail and their imaginative and suspenseful plots.

THE CASE OF KITTY OGILVIE

After a biographical novel about Eleanora Duse, Stubbs once again ventured into the history of crime with *The Case of Kitty Ogilvie* (1970). In this historical novel, Stubbs proves that Ogilvie was indeed cleverly framed, as the supposed murderess had insisted. Stubbs's interpretation is supported by Ogilvie's mysterious escape from prison, which may well have been made possible by respectable friends who knew that she had been wronged but could not prove it. The poignant prison scene in which Ogilvie must bid farewell to her baby, who she senses will not live long in the care of a hired nurse, is one of the most effective pieces of writing that Stubbs has produced. Because by that point in the book she had convinced her readers of Ogilvie's innocence, it is also clear that here, as perhaps in the Blandy story, Stubbs was beginning to explore her concern with feminine vulnerability.

DEAR LAURA

The theme of vulnerability emerged again in the gothic novel *Dear Laura* (1973) set in the nineteenth century. Although the wife in the novel is foolish, she

does not deserve a husband so tyrannical or a life so grim. With this work, Stubbs once again proved that she had learned how to handle intense emotion and to maintain suspense until the last page. These skills were to stand her in good stead when she at last turned to historical mysteries, *The Painted Face* and *The Golden Crucible*.

THE PAINTED FACE

Although it is generally agreed that *The Painted Face* lacks the depth of *The Golden Crucible*, the two books share a number of characteristics. In both cases, the setting is the early twentieth century: *The Painted Face* takes place in 1902, *The Golden Crucible* in 1906. Furthermore, in both novels the down-to-earth, meat-and-potatoes Inspector Lintott is removed from his normal surroundings and forced to solve a mystery in an alien, exotic place. To him, the Paris of *The Painted Face* is just as exotic as the San Francisco of the Barbary Coast period to which he travels in *The Golden Crucible*.

Although both books begin with a riddle, only in the first has there been a death, and that is not suspected to have been murder. Twenty years after a railway accident in France, in which his half sister was supposedly killed, a well-to-do English artist wishes to learn more about her fate. The second novel begins with the question of a wealthy American's motivations in attempting to hire the inspector to trick the famous magician Felix Salvador, but the crucial mystery is the disappearance of the magician's sister, Alicia, which occurs almost two weeks later. The injury of Bessie Lintott, which follows, is only briefly a mystery; when the inspector is boldly told that it was designed to intimidate him into dropping his inquiries into Alicia's kidnapping, he acquires a personal reason to follow those responsible—to San Francisco or to the ends of the earth. In both novels, the fact that the victims have been vulnerable females both motivates Lintott to leave his comfortable fireside to take the case and, as far as the structure of the book is concerned, intensifies the suspense inherent in the chase.

If feminine vulnerability is important to the plot, it is also an important theme in both books. The characters can be divided into three groups. First, there are those who are worldly, sophisticated, and corrupt. It is

from this group and from their hirelings that the bullies and criminals are drawn. Their antagonist is Inspector Lintott, who has the help both of the person who hired him and of other well-intentioned people who become his friends. The purpose of his efforts is the protection of the third kind of character, the innocent women who are so easily victimized in the male-dominated society of which Stubbs writes.

Stubbs, however, makes her categories somewhat more complex by presenting Lintott himself as a proponent of the ancient pattern of male domination. His argument is clearly stated: Because of the superior physical power of men, women must be protected; that is why they have fathers, brothers, and husbands. In his own case, the system works well; evidently Lintott's wife, Bessie, considers the right to vote far less important than the power she holds in the family, power that arises partly from her husband's respect and concern for her as a woman. Lintott's daughter, however, who appears in both novels, is another matter. Because she has been jailed as a suffragette, her decent but old-fashioned husband has booted her out until she agrees to mend her ways; she has returned to her parents' home, where she is argumentative and unhappy. Although at first Lintott sympathizes in principle with his son-in-law, by the end of *The Golden Crucible* he has seen enough unhappy marriages and tyrannical husbands to be open-minded about his daughter's complaints; finally, he realizes that her rebellion arose from real mistreatment.

If Inspector Lintott is an embodiment of middle-class conservatism, at least he exemplifies the best of his class. Although he is unsophisticated, he is not stupid; although he is restrained and respectful in demeanor, he is not cowardly. It is satisfying to watch as the pretentious and wealthy who have consistently mocked and underrated him at last come to respect him and even to fear him.

THE GOLDEN CRUCIBLE

The title of Stubbs's second mystery, *The Golden Crucible*, is appropriate both to her plot and to her theme. It is taken from a poem in which America is called a golden crucible, a melting pot, but because most of the action of this story takes place in San Francisco, a city at least partially built by gold, and because

the story ends with the fire and earthquake, in which the character of the city's residents is cruelly tested, the title has a very specific application. In personal terms, San Francisco is also the testing place of Inspector Lintott and his daughter, who must pit their virtue against the evil schemes of Bela Barak, whose wealth and power have enabled him to have Bessie Lintott run down, to terrify his own wife, and to kidnap the fragile Alicia, transport her from England to San Francisco, and there hold her hostage.

Despite the luxury that might have tempted another man on the long trip to San Francisco, Lintott holds to his values. He packs cheap linen and stout boots, nothing for show, and on the boat he takes an economy ticket. Although sometimes his dogged frugality is comic, it is this steadfastness that enables him to resist the temptations of Barak, who could buy a lesser man.

Lintott's success lies in finding Alicia and exposing the villains; his daughter's is subtler but not less real. Separated from her stingy husband, she is exposed to the world of fine dresses and first-class hotels. For a time, she fancies herself in love with her employer, the magician Felix Salvador, who has introduced her to high life so that as his supposed assistant she can more effectively help her father. By the end of the novel, she has her own reward, and it is not dependent on the love of Felix or anyone else. Resisting the temptations of riches, adventure, and passion, she has found that she is as brave and strong as any man, and with that discovery, she has banished her querulous, quarrelsome, and secretly uncertain former self forever.

The themes that Stubbs had touched on in the earlier books, such as the vulnerability of women in a male-dominated world, are fully realized in *The Golden Crucible*. In both of the books about historical crimes, the theme of justice is important, and particularly so because there was a strong possibility that the central character had been wrongly condemned. In *The Painted Face*, once it is obvious that the painter's half sister might still be alive, both the painter and the inspector fear that her loss of identity might have condemned her unjustly to a life of ignorance or even to a loss of virtue. In this book, however, there is no real villain; instead, the sister is the victim of understand-

able human frailties, combined with the element of chance that is a part of every life. In *The Golden Crucible*, the lines of good and evil are clearly drawn. The question is whether the villains will be subject to private revenge, as Salvador would wish, or to the system of public justice to which Lintott has devoted his life. In the end, although Lintott discovers the truth, it is divine retribution, in the form of the earthquake and fire, which destroys the forces of evil, while at the same time it kills the innocent—including the fragile Alicia, whose kidnapping had begun Lintott's quest.

Stubbs has been justly praised for her success in evoking the San Francisco of 1906 in this novel, particularly in her account of the earthquake and fire at the conclusion of the book. Here she abandons the sometimes baroque descriptions and the appropriately formal dialogue of her earlier passages for a slangy, staccato style—full of expostulations, shouts, and warnings—that masterfully captures the atmosphere of the moment.

The historical mystery is a difficult genre because it adds the complexity of a mystery plot to the already exacting demands of a historical novel for factual accuracy and for the believable re-creation of the patterns of thought and dialogue of a past era. Although in her first historical mystery Stubbs was not able to integrate these elements fully and therefore produced a somewhat cerebral work, in her second book in this genre she lived up to all the possibilities of style, plot, and theme of which her earlier works had suggested she was capable. Readers must regret the fact that after *The Golden Crucible*, Stubbs turned away from the genre and instead began to produce her family saga, which though highly praised by reviewers, is not, after all, a mystery.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman
Updated by Philip Bader

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR JOHN LINTOTT SERIES: *My Grand Enemy*, 1967; *The Case of Kitty Ogilvie*, 1970; *Dear*

Laura, 1973; *The Painted Face*, 1974; *The Golden Crucible*, 1976

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Rose-Grower*, 1962; *The Travellers*, 1963; *Hanrahan's Colony*, 1964; *The Straw Crown*, 1966; *The Passing Star*, 1970 (also known as *Eleanora Duse*); *An Unknown Welshman*, 1972; *Kit's Hill*, 1978 (also known as *By Our Beginnings*); *An Imperfect Joy*, 1981 (also known as *The Ironmaster*); *The Vivian Inheritance*, 1982; *The Northern Correspondent*, 1984; *A Lasting Spring*, 1987; *Like We Used to Be*, 1989; *Light in Summer*, 1991 (also known as *Summer Secrets*); *Kelly Park*, 1992; *Family Games*, 1994; *The Witching Time*, 1998; *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, 2004

TELEPLAY: *Family Christmas*, 1965

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EUGÈNE SUE

Born: Paris, France; January 20, 1804

Died: Annecy, France; August 3, 1857

Types of plot: Historical; private investigator; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Eugène Sue's most famous novels, *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-1843; *The Mysteries of Paris*, 1843-1846), was the first novel to present a realistic portrait of the criminal underworld of Paris. Modeled on members of a Parisian criminal gang on trial for murder, Sue's characters spoke the slang and displayed the callous attitudes of hardened criminals. Criminal activity was linked to social and economic conditions; Sue argued that many virtuous people became criminals as a result of their unfortunate circumstances. Sue also portrayed crime in more conventional terms, however, because some of his characters were morally vicious while the most virtuous could never be tempted into crime, no matter how desperate their circumstances. Sue's hero, Prince Rodolphe of Gerolstein, displayed characteristics common to latter-day detective heroes. Standing out in sharp contrast to his setting, he roamed the streets of Paris seeking to alleviate the misery that might cause the virtuous poor to fall.

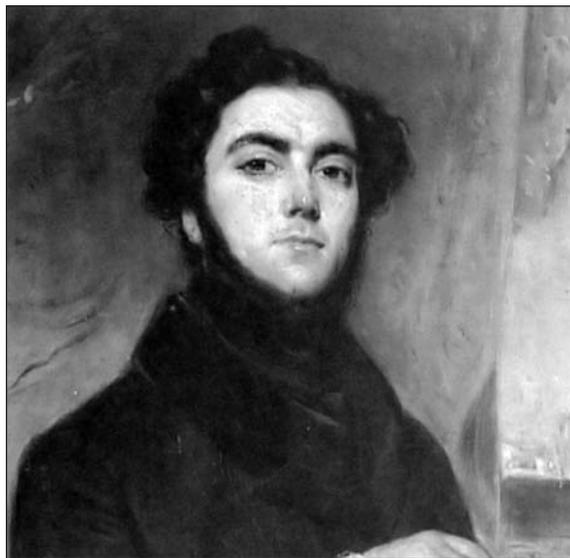
BIOGRAPHY

Eugène Marie-Joseph Sue was born Marie-Joseph Sue on January 20, 1804, in Paris, the son of Jean-Joseph Sue, an eminent medical practitioner, and Marie Sophie Derilly. He was named for his godmother, Josephine Bonaparte, but soon adopted the name of his godfather, Josephine's son, Eugène de Beauharnais. The Sue family was a dynasty of eminent and wealthy physicians. Sue, one of four children, rebelled early in his life against the expectation that he would become a doctor and his father's colleague. He was a miserable student; when apprenticed to his father's hospital in Paris, he devoted much of his time to playing practical jokes. Sue's father found him more distant posts in a hospital in Toulon during a military campaign and in the royal navy for six years. Sue drew on the exotic locales he visited in writing his earliest works.

In 1825, Sue—who did not consider himself a serious writer—wrote his first work, a play, to gain the attention of an attractive actress. Returning to Paris in 1829, he began writing adventure stories for the popular press. After his father's death in 1830, Sue, a confirmed bachelor, lived extravagantly, dissipating his inheritance until he was financially ruined in 1836.

That year marked a turning point in his life, for his friends interested him in the problems of social reform. The publication of *The Mysteries of Paris* made him a best-selling novelist and a hero of the working classes. After the Revolution of 1848, Sue, then a Fourierist, was elected to the National Assembly. He attended conscientiously but spent most of his time writing and correcting the work that totally absorbed him in his last years, *Les Mystères du peuple: Ou, Histoire d'une famille de prolétaires à travers les âges* (1849-1857; *The Mysteries of the People*, 185?, 1867). Arrested in 1851 and released in 1852, Sue went into political exile in Savoy, leaving his property behind and refusing to support the new regime, which continued to harass him.

Sue died on August 3, 1857, in Annecy, Savoy, of nervous disorders exacerbated by stress and fatigue,



Eugène Sue.

leaving behind an enormous corpus of fiction, drama, and political essays.

ANALYSIS

Eugène Sue was one of the most widely read and praised writers of his day, not only in France but also throughout Europe, England, and the United States. His work is no longer read, except for historical interest, because his lack of attention to style—which he believed was unimportant—and the length of his novels make excessive demands on the reader's patience. Yet his development as a writer traced an interesting course. At first, he wrote because literature was amusing and lucrative; later, he became increasingly serious about the importance of his work as a vehicle of social reform, a means to transform the consciousness of all classes. He believed that "if the rich only knew," they would act to correct the injustice and misery that existed in their society. Sue's early reputation was that of a dandy who wrote each new chapter only after putting on a fresh pair of yellow gloves. Most of his novels were first published in installments in the popular press; he drew a large readership for his early historical romances in the manner of Sir Walter Scott and for novels of maritime adventures that earned for him the title "the French Cooper." *Plik et Plok* (1831), *Atar-Gull* (1831; *Atar Gull: A Nautical Tale*, 1846), *La Salamandre* (1832; *The Salamander*, 1844), *La Vigie de Koat-Vën* (1833; *The Temptation; Or, The Watch Tower of Koat-Vën*, 1845), and *La Courcaratcha* (1832-1834) were early successes. These works, although not mystery stories, employed a fantastic realism like that of Charles Dickens, emphasizing the evil and bizarre side of human nature. Sue often investigated the relationship between good and evil, even in a novel of society such as *Mathilde: Mémoires d'une jeune femme* (1841; *Matilda: Or, The Memoirs of a Young Woman*, 1843), which explored one of his favorite themes, the ability of the wicked to manipulate the virtuous.

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

There is no doubt that Sue's reputation as a mystery writer rests on his most famous work, *The Mysteries of Paris*. This novel, published in installments during 1842-1843, took France, Europe, and then the rest of the world by storm. It also makes clear Sue's

strengths as a novelist: his ability to create numerous unforgettable characters, to create elaborate but interlocking narratives, and to fashion from so many individual stories a portrait of an entire society. He showed how all lives were interconnected by coincidence, concealed interests, and secrets hidden in the past. The novel was translated as it was being written. The word "mystery" caught the attention of readers; soon, many similarly titled works appeared. Every city had its "mysteries" as writers everywhere capitalized on the appeal of Sue's title.

The Mysteries of Paris was the first novel to use the criminal underworld of a modern urban city as its setting. Sue's dedication to realism turned his novel into an extensive catalog of the crimes and criminals existing in Paris at that time. Sue had read earlier novels presenting brief portrayals of criminal characters, as well as the nonfictional memoirs of François-Eugène Vidocq, former head of the Paris police. Sue, however, was the first writer to present a detailed study of the criminal world in all of its horror, ruthlessness, and poverty. His interest in the criminal class probably stemmed from an interest in poverty as the cause of crime and from the suggestion that he explore social diseases in a manner similar to that of a physician observing physical diseases. Sue was looking for a new subject for a novel, and his attention was drawn to a famous criminal trial of 1839, in which a gang of thieves and prostitutes was tried for the murder of several merchants. Clearly, the accused served as prototypes for Sue's characters, who lived in the same neighborhood, drank in the same taverns, spoke in the same criminal slang, and displayed the same matter-of-fact attitude toward their crimes. Sue warned his readers that they would enter regions as uncivilized and barbaric as the Indian-inhabited forests of North America. The Parisian savages were the former convicts, thieves, and murderers living hidden in the midst of a great city. The reader would "penetrate into horrible and unknown regions"; he would meet "hideous and frightening types, swarming in unclean sewers like reptiles in a swamp." The physical setting of the criminal neighborhood of Paris, "a labyrinth of hidden, narrow, and twisting streets," became a metaphor for the unfathomable secrets of the human soul. Sue used the

word “mysteries” in this larger sense of the unknown; he used it in other titles also, but in this novel, the mysteries or secrets often were hidden crimes.

The novel’s hero, Prince Rodolphe of Gerolstein, expiates his guilt by attempting to aid worthy individuals whose desperate circumstances might tempt them into crime or make them victims of unscrupulous men and women. He is a secret benefactor who shows how social consciousness and money could improve overall social conditions. To help those in distress, Rodolphe assumes a variety of disguises and gathers information via methods employed by modern operatives.

At the novel’s beginning he is disguised as a young artisan. He enters the criminal quarters of Paris in search of François Germain, who has disappeared mysteriously. Germain’s father, a member of a gang, placed his son inside a banking house to help with a robbery. After discovering these plans, François fled in desperation. He has apparently gone into hiding, but his mother, a friend of Rodolphe, now fears for his life.

Rodolphe is superior to his adversaries and willing to defend those who need help. In the opening scenes, which introduce many of the novel’s main characters, Rodolphe is halted in his mission by a “damsel in distress,” a young prostitute who has been nicknamed Fleur de Marie (Mary’s Flower) because of her virginal appearance (her name means “virgin” in criminal slang). Le Chourineur (the Stabber) has demanded repayment of money from Fleur de Marie; he threatens to kill her when she cannot pay and tries to defend herself. Rodolphe intervenes, and the ensuing fight with Le Chourineur proves Rodolphe’s mettle. He is no coward, never hesitating when threatened with physical violence. His constant companion, Sir Walter Murph, later explains why he is so successful:

Crabb de Ramsgate taught you boxing, Lacour of Paris taught you the use of the cane and French boxing, and out of curiosity criminal slang; the famous Bertrand taught you fencing, and you often were better than your teachers when matched against them. You kill swallows in flight with a pistol, you have muscles of steel, even though you are slender and elegant.

Rodolphe is clearly a match for all the criminals of Paris. He easily defeats Le Chourineur, and through

his generosity and compassion gains the man’s undying loyalty. Le Chourineur saves Rodolphe’s life on more than one occasion, sacrificing his own life in the end.

After their fight, Rodolphe and Le Chourineur, along with Fleur de Marie, retreat to the tavern of the Ogresse, a spot frequented by criminals and the very poor. Fleur de Marie and Le Chourineur both tell their stories, and Rodolphe resolves to help them. A typical narrative pattern is established here: Numerous flashbacks and inserted narratives prevent the main story from progressing very quickly, even though the main events of the plot span a relatively short period of time.

In the tavern, Rodolphe encounters the Maître d’école (the Schoolmaster), an archcriminal later revealed to be the father of the missing François. He also meets the latter’s companion, a hag nicknamed La Chouette (the Owl). La Chouette recognizes Fleur de Marie as a child once left in her care. She swears to take revenge on the beautiful Fleur de Marie, who had fled her abuse. Typically, François, Fleur de Marie, and other characters are constantly threatened with destruction and can continue to survive only through desperate escapes.

These scenes also demonstrate the way in which Sue brings together characters unknowingly related through their pasts. Rodolphe takes Marie to a model farm he has established, placing her in the care of Madam Georges, the mother of François. Here Marie should have been safe from further harm, but she is kidnaped as part of a plot against Rodolphe by Sarah Mac-Grégor. Sarah had once been married to Rodolphe, but his father had had the marriage annulled, and she hopes to gain him back. The child from this marriage, long thought to be dead, turns out to be Fleur de Marie. Most novelists would have made this mystery the center of their plot, but Sue characteristically rejects the simple solution. He reveals the secret to his readers early, because it is only one situation of interest. After seeing its dramatic possibility and its obvious conclusion, he moves on to other narratives and returns to Fleur de Marie’s story only periodically, interlacing it with other narrative threads in unexpected ways. Sue’s imagination is so fertile that he disdains the obvious and seeks the complex. Fleur de Ma-

rie is pursued first by La Chouette and Maître d'école on Sarah's behalf and later by the agents of the hypocritical notary Jacques Ferrand, who had hidden her for Sarah. Ferrand wants to conceal the evidence of his crime. Having declared the child dead, he now attempts to murder the young woman.

Meanwhile, Rodolphe, still seeking François, moves into a boardinghouse at No. 17 rue de Temple, François's last known address. Here Sue introduces another cluster of characters, placing them in the environment of the real criminals of the 1839 trial. Rodolphe believes that one resident, the beautiful and hardworking Rigolette (the Laugher), knows the whereabouts of François—as indeed she does. Rigolette is also a former friend of Fleur de Marie, and she serves to connect many of the characters in the story. The boardinghouse draws together the fates of several characters. The poverty-stricken but honest Morel family, living in the garret, is also persecuted by the hypocritical and miserly Ferrand. Sue uses the Morels' situation to demonstrate his own social theory: Society should eliminate crime by rewarding virtue, a method that would be more effective than punishing crime. "Spies for Virtue" (a phrase and concept he borrows from Napoleon Bonaparte's memoirs) should reward the virtuous poor with money. Sue theorizes that a better standard of living would prevent crime more effectively than the threat of imprisonment and would be less expensive. Rodolphe, whose mission is to spy out virtue, becomes the Morels' secret benefactor.

Besides the criminals of the tavern and the boardinghouse, Sue introduces other members of the criminal class. When Fleur de Marie is incarcerated in Saint-Lazare, a women's prison, Sue paints a detailed picture of several inhabitants and tells their histories. One inmate's lover is the only honest member of a criminal family of several generations. Sue presents a study of this family, the Martials, whose criminality he contrasts with the poverty and the honesty of the Morels. François Germain meets a member of the Martial family when he is imprisoned at the Force, the maximum-security prison for men. Double-crossed by the master criminal of Paris, Nicholas Martial is imprisoned with fellow members of Paris's toughest underworld gang. François also meets the master storyteller

Pique-Vinaigre (Sharp Vinegar), whose tale "Coup-en-deux" (Cut-in-Two) resembles Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Because Poe's tale was not published in France until 1846, however, it is unlikely that Sue borrowed from this story.

At the novel's end, the moral order is restored: The wicked die, the virtuous characters are rewarded. The master criminal of Paris turns out to be a police informer. Rodolphe and Fleur de Marie, the latter now a princess, return to Gerolstein. Yet the court of Gerolstein is abstract and unreal when contrasted to the earthy vitality of criminal Paris.

Although Sue's later novels are thematically connected to *The Mysteries of Paris*, he never again focused on the criminal class of Paris or the city's pervasive atmosphere of crime. From his point of view, perhaps, he had thoroughly explored this subject. The highly popular *Le Juif errant* (1844-1845; *The Wandering Jew*, 1868), his next novel, and *The Mysteries of the People*, his final major work, are much more political in their concerns.

In the twentieth century, the melodramatic novels of Sue have fallen out of favor with the reading public. Nevertheless, while reading his best novels, especially *The Mysteries of Paris*, readers will still find themselves caring about his characters. Sue's novels are full of color, drama, and suspense. From his dedicated humanitarian vision and commitment to social change emerges a complete and complex tableau of mid-nineteenth century Paris. His creation of a criminal urban landscape shaped the literary landscapes of many other writers, including Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire, and Fyodor Dostoevski. After Sue, the city was the natural environment of criminal characters.

Marilyn Rye

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Les Mystères de Paris*, 1842-1843 (*The Mysteries of Paris*, 1843)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Plik et Plok*, 1831; *Atar-Gull*, 1831 (*Atar Gull: A Nautical Tale*, 1846); *La Salamandre*, 1832 (*The Salamander*, 1844); *La Courcaratcha*, 1832-

1834; *La Vigie de Koat-Vën*, 1833 (*The Temptation; Or, The Watch Tower of Koat-Vën*, 1845); *Latréaumont*, 1838 (English translation, 1845); *Jean Cavalier*, 1840 (*The Protestant Leader*, 1849); *Mathilde: Mémoires d'une jeune femme*, 1841 (*Matilda: Or, The Memoirs of a Young Woman*, 1843); *Le Juif errant*, 1844-1845 (*The Wandering Jew*, 1868); *Les Mystères du peuple: Ou, Histoire d'une famille de prolétaires à travers les âges*, 1849-1857 (*The Mysteries of the People*, 185?, 1867)

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JULIAN SYMONS

Born: London, England; May 30, 1912

Died: Kent, England; November 19, 1994

Types of plot: Inverted; psychological

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chief Inspector Bland, 1945-1949

Francis Quarles, 1961-1965

Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole, 1994-1996

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHIEF INSPECTOR BLAND is an appropriately named police investigator, who is not impressive or even confidence inspiring at his first appearance. Subsequent appearances, however, prove him to be capable and efficient, even if unimaginative.

FRANCIS QUARLES is a private investigator who sets up his practice shortly after World War II. Large of build and flamboyantly dandyish of costume, Quarles

masks his efficiency and astuteness behind deceptively languorous behavior.

DETECTIVE CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT HILARY CATCHPOLE is a virtuous, compassionate, middle-class police investigator. Happily married to a jovial wife, Catchpole represents the stalwart hero of the people, the prototypical “good man.”

CONTRIBUTION

Julian Symons produced a body of crime fiction that moved beyond genre formulas with its emphasis on the artistic representation of a particular worldview, its exploration of the human psyche under stress, and its ironic commentary on a world in which the distinctions between the lawbreaker and the forces of law frequently blur into uselessness. Symons viewed the crime novel as a vehicle for analysis of the effects of societal pressures and repressions on the individual. Symons mainly concentrated on psychological crime novels that delineate what he called “the violence that lives behind the bland faces most of us present to the world.” Typically, his characters were ordinary people driven to extreme behavior, average citizens caught in Hitchcockian nightmares; the focus was on the desperate actions prompted by the stresses of everyday life. Symons expanded the limits of the crime novel, proving through his work that a popular genre, like orthodox fiction, can serve as a vehicle for a personal vision of Western society gone awry, of human lives in extremis.

Any assessment of Symons’s contribution to crime literature must include mention of his two histories of the genre: *The Detective Story in Britain* (1962) and *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (1972, revised 1985; also known as *Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*). In both of these works, Symons detailed what he perceived to be a shift in both popularity and emphasis in the genre from the elegantly plot-driven classic detective story of the Golden Age of the 1920’s and 1930’s to the more psychologically oriented crime novel with its emphasis on character and motivation.

BIOGRAPHY

Julian Gustave Symons (the name rhymes with “women’s”) was born on May 30, 1912, in London,

the last child in a family of seven. His parents were Minnie Louise Bull Symons and Morris Albert Symons, but Julian never learned his father’s original name or nationality. A seller of secondhand goods until World War I brought him profits as an auctioneer, the elder Symons was a strict Victorian-era father.

As a child, Julian Symons suffered from a stammer that placed him in remedial education despite his intelligence. Although he overcame his speech problems and excelled as a student, Symons nevertheless ended his formal education at the age of fourteen and began an intense program of self-education that encompassed all that was best in literature. Symons worked variously as a shorthand typist, a secretary in an engineering firm, and an advertising copywriter and executive, all in London, before he became established as an important and prolific writer of crime fiction.

At first glance, Symons’s literary career appears to fall rather neatly into two distinct and contradictory phases: radical poet in the 1930’s and Tory writer of crime fiction. A founder of the important little magazine *Twentieth Century Verse* and its editor from 1937 to 1939, Symons was one of a group of young poets who in the 1930’s were the heirs apparent to Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden. Before the outbreak of World War II, Symons was already the author of two volumes of poetry and was acquiring a reputation as an insightful and astute literary critic.

In 1941, Symons married Kathleen Clark; they had two children, Sarah and Maurice. From 1942 to 1944, Symons saw military service in the Royal Armoured Corps of the British army. A major turning point in Symons’s career was the publication of his first crime novel, *The Immaterial Murder Case* (1945). Originally written as a spoof of art movements and their followers, this manuscript had languished in a desk drawer for six years until Kathleen encouraged him to sell it to supplement his wages as a copywriter.

The success of this and the novel that followed, *A Man Called Jones* (1947), provided Symons with the financial security he needed to become a full-time writer and spend time on books that required extensive research. With his fourth novel, *The Thirty-first of February* (1950), Symons began to move away from the classic detective forms to more experimental ap-

proaches. He supplemented his freelance income with a weekly book review column, inherited from George Orwell, in the *Manchester Evening News* from 1947 to 1956. Through the years, he also wrote reviews for the *London Sunday Times* (1958-1968), served as a member of the council of Westfield College, University of London (1972-1975), and lectured as a visiting professor at Amherst College, Massachusetts (1975-1976).

A cofounder of the Crime Writers' Association, Symons served as its chair from 1958 to 1959. That organization honored him with its Crossed Red Herrings Award for best crime novel in 1957 for *The Colour of Murder*, a special award for *Crime and Detection* in 1966, and the Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement in 1990. Symons also served on the board of the Society of Authors from 1970 to 1971, succeeded Agatha Christie as president of the Detection Club from 1976 to 1985, and presided over the Conan Doyle Society from 1989 to 1993. The Mystery Writers of America honored him with the Edgar Allan Poe Award for *The Progress of a Crime* in 1961, a Special Edgars Award for *Bloody Murder* in 1973, and the Grand Master Award in 1982. The Swedish Academy of Detection also made him a grand master in 1977; he won the Danish Poe-Kluhben in 1979, and was named a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1975. His final novel, *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel*, appeared in 1996—two years after his death.

ANALYSIS

Although Julian Symons's intricately crafted crime novels have their roots in the classic detective tradition, they also represent his lifelong fascination with genre experimentation, with moving beyond the confines of the tightly structured detective story that provides, through a sequence of cleverly revealed clues, an intellectually satisfying solution to a convoluted crime puzzle. In *Bloody Murder*, Symons has made clear the distinctions he draws between the detective story and the crime novel. To Symons, the detective story centers on a great detective in pursuit of a solution to a crime, generally murder. Major emphasis is placed on clues to the identity of the criminal; in fact, much of the power of the detective story derives from the author's clever manipulation of clues and red her-

rings. Typically, the British detective story is socially conservative, set in a rural England that still reflects the genteel lifestyle of a bygone age. The crime novel, by contrast, generally has no master detective, but rather probes the psychology of individuals who have been driven by their environment—usually urban or suburban—to commit crimes or to become victims. Quite often the crime novel is critical of the social order, especially of the ways in which societal pressures and institutions gradually and inexorably destroy the individual.

CHIEF INSPECTOR BLAND

Although Symons began his career with three formula detective novels featuring Chief Inspector Bland of the slow but adequate methodology, he soon abandoned both the form and the icon for the more ambitious project of using crime literature as social criticism. Nevertheless, these three early novels manifest in embryonic form the themes that dominate Symons's later fiction: the social personas that mask the true identity and motivations of an individual, the games people play to keep their masks in place, and the social pressures that force those masks to fall away, leaving the individual vulnerable and uncontrollable. In fact, masks and game playing are the dominant motifs in Symons's fiction, functioning at times as metaphors for escape from the more unpleasant realities of existence. About his decision to move beyond the series detective, Symons said, "if you want to write a story showing people involved in emotional conflict that leads to crime, a detective of this kind is grit in the machinery."

In Symons's crime novels, the central focus is frequently on individuals who are driven to violent behavior by external forces over which they have—or believe they have—no control. "The private face of violence fascinates me," Symons acknowledged in an interview. More specifically, Symons is intrigued by the violence inherent in suburban dwellers, in respectable middle-class people who commute daily to numbingly dull jobs and return home to stiflingly placid homes and families in cozy English neighborhoods. Not for Symons the placid world of the English village with its hollyhocks and quaint cottages and population of genial eccentrics. His is the world of the ordinary and the average, at home and in the workplace; he delineates the sameness

of the workaday routine and the anonymity of the business world that neatly crush the individuality out of all but the most hardy souls, that goad the outwardly sane into irrational and destructive actions. Symons has commented that in his work he consciously uses acts of violence to symbolize the effects of the pressures and frustrations of modern urban living. How these pressures result in bizarre and uncontrollable behavior is sharply described in *The Tigers of Subtopia, and Other Stories* (1982), a collection of stories about the latent tiger buried in the most innocuous of suburban denizens, about submerged cruelty and violence released by seemingly inconsequential everyday occurrences.

Nearly all Symons's characters disguise their true selves with masks, socially acceptable personas that hide the tigers inside themselves, that deny the essential human being. The early work *A Man Called Jones* unravels the mystery surrounding a masked man who calls himself Mr. Jones. Bernard Ross, prominent member of Parliament in *The Detling Murders* (1982), once was Bernie Rosenheim. May Wilkins in *The Colour of Murder*, anxious to hide the existence of a thieving father and an alcoholic mother, takes refuge behind a forged identity as a nice young married woman who gives bridge parties and associates with the right sort of people. Adelaide Bartlett (*Sweet Adelaide*, 1980) plays the part of an adoring and dutiful wife even after she has murdered her husband. In *The Gigantic Shadow* (1958; also known as *The Pipe Dream*), the mask is literal and very public. Disguised as "Mr. X—Personal Investigator," Bill Hunter, a popular television personality, conceals the fact that he is really O'Brien, a onetime prison inmate. When his charade is exposed and he loses his job, he becomes Mr. Smith, with disastrous consequences. False identities are important to *The Paper Chase* (1956; also known as *Bogue's Fortune*), *The Belting Inheritance* (1965), and *The Man Whose Dreams Came True* (1968). Many of Symons's protagonists masquerade behind aliases: Anthony Jones as Anthony Bain-Truscott or Anthony Scott-Williams, Arthur Brownjohn alias Major Easonby Mellon, Paul Vane as Dracula. Each of these characters is forced at some point to come to terms with one of the truths of Symons's world: The person behind the mask cannot—

must not—be denied, and role-playing cannot be continued indefinitely. Person and persona must be integrated, or face destruction.

To maintain the fictions of their public personas, Symon's characters often play elaborate games with themselves and with others. Lenore Fetherby (*The Name of Annabel Lee*, 1983), in an effort to acquire irrefutable proof that she is her sister Annabel Lee, sets up a complicated trans-Atlantic charade in which she (as Annabel) has an intense affair with a bookish American professor who can be relied on to remember his only romance. May Wilkins (*The Colour of Murder*) pretends to outsiders that her marriage is the perfect union of two ambitious young people. Determined to make his way in a class-dominated society, Bernard Ross (*The Detling Murders*) disguises his Jewish ancestry by concocting an appealingly down-to-earth background as the son of immigrant farmers in America. For others, games are safety mechanisms that allow people to cope with the tensions and insecurities of urban existence. Mrs. Vane (*The Players and the Game*, 1972), bored and disillusioned by the failure of her marriage, takes refuge in endless bridge games. Bob Lawson works out his frustrations through visits to a prostitute who pretends to be a physician and subjects him to the various indignities of physical examinations.

THE COLOUR OF MURDER

Frequently, the game playing takes on the more dangerous aspect of fantasy in which a character convinces himself of the truth of some impossible scenario and proceeds to live his life as though the fantasy were reality. Such is John Wilkins's problem in *The Colour of Murder*. Convincing himself, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that Sheila Morton nurses a secret passion for him, Wilkins forces his way into her company, even intruding on her vacation at a seaside resort. Consequently, he is convicted of her murder by a jury that, in an ironic parallel of his refusal to see the obvious vis-à-vis Sheila's feelings about him, chooses to misapprehend the clues and to believe Sheila's murder to be the result of Wilkins's thwarted passion.

SWEET ADELAIDE AND THE PLAYERS AND THE GAME

For many characters, fantasy has more than one function. Not only does it enable the dreamer to exist

comfortably within the mask, but also it becomes an avenue of escape from everyday monotony or an intolerable situation. Immersed from childhood in a fantasy about her aristocratic forebears and her true position in society, Adelaide Bartlett (*Sweet Adelaide*) imagines herself too refined and too delicate for the grocer she is forced to marry. Her dreams of a pure love that permits only celibate relationships between the sexes lead her first to fantasize a chaste affair with a young minister, then to escape to monastic weekends alone at a seaside resort, and finally to murder the man whom she regards as a importunate, oversexed clod of a husband. Paul Vane of *The Players and the Game* has a fully realized fantasy life. As Vane, he is the efficient and respectable director of personnel of Timbals Plastics; as Dracula, he keeps a diary in which he records his alternative life. Ultimately, Dracula intrudes on Vane's life; fantasy and reality collide. The results are tragic for both identities.

DEATH'S DARKEST FACE

Symons would play on the theme of identity from a different angle in some of his final works. In *Death's Darkest Face* (1990), a fictional version of Symons himself is asked to evaluate the progress of an unsuccessful investigation, and the intersection of the author's life with fiction lends belief to fictional characters who are in reality just so much paper—another series of masks.

PLAYING HAPPY FAMILIES AND A SORT OF VIRTUE

In his final two novels, *Playing Happy Families* (1994) and *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel* (1996), Symons once again takes up the series detective, this time with an amused affection that makes Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole much more sympathetic to the reader than Symons's earlier investigators. Though Catchpole is a model of the virtuous police officer, his aspirations, foibles, and failings are all too human—he is a hero, but not the elevated supersleuth of Golden Age detective fiction. *A Sort of Virtue* provided Symons a last chance to comment on larger social issues. Catchpole's proffered epitaph, "He had a sort of virtue," stands in for Symons's final comment on human nature—"an ever-surprising mixture of virtue and vice, in which the most realistic

aspiration for heroes is simply to do more good than harm."

Throughout many of Symons's novels, his characters live within a stifling, inhibited society in which conformity and bland respectability are prized, and individuality has no place. Progress has created a mechanical world of routine, populated by automatons engaged in the single-minded pursuit of material and social success. Spontaneity, creativity, and play are discouraged by a moralistic society that has room only for those whose behavior is "suitable." The result is the tightly controlled public personas that mask all individual preferences and needs, personas that ultimately become operative not only in the professional life but also at home.

For many of Symons's characters, role-playing or an active fantasy life often begins as a harmless activity that serves to relieve the stresses induced by society's demands and restrictions. In a number of instances, however, the games and the fantasies gradually begin to take precedence over real life, and the individual begins to function as though the imaginary life were real. Tragedy often ensues. Symons has pointed out that all human beings can be broken under too much pressure; his characters—especially those whose energies are devoted to maintaining two separate identities, and who crack under the strain of the effort—prove the truth of that observation. The quiet average neighborhood in a Symons novel seethes with malevolence barely concealed by civilized behavior.

In the Symons crime novel, violence is not an irregularity as it so often is in the classic detective story. Violence—physical, psychological, moral, spiritual—is inherent in the society that suppresses and represses natural actions and desires. Behind the stolid facades of suburban houses, beneath the calm faces of workaday clones, hides the potential for irrationality and violence, denied but not obliterated. "The thing that absorbs me most," says Symons, "is the violence behind respectable faces." In his novels, it is the assistant managers and personnel directors and housewives—good, solid, dependable people—whose carefully designed masks crumple and tear under the pressures of life. Violence erupts from those of whom it is least expected.

In short, the concerns of crime writer Symons were the same concerns addressed by mainstream fiction. Symons portrayed microcosms of Western civilization in decay; he described a world in which the individual has no place, communication is impossible, acceptable behavior is defined by a society determined to eliminate all rebellion against the common standard. He examined the fate of those who will not or cannot conform, and he laid the blame for their tragedies on an environment that shapes and distorts the human psyche into an unrecognizable caricature of humanity.

Like those writers who have earned their reputations in the literary mainstream, Symons created a body of work that embodies a distinctive view of life, a concern with the effects of society on the fragile human psyche, and a realistic portrayal of the alienation and frustration of individuals in late twentieth century England, still struggling to regain a sense of equilibrium decades after World War II. His characters, like so many in twentieth century fiction, are fragmented selves who acknowledge some facets of their identities only in fantasy or role-playing and who otherwise devote all of their energies to repressing their less socially acceptable personas. As a writer of crime fiction, Symons opened up innumerable possibilities for innovation and experimentation in the genre; as a serious writer and critic, he brought to a popular form the serious concerns and issues of the twentieth century novel at its best.

E. D. Huntley

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and C. A. Gardner

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHIEF INSPECTOR BLAND SERIES: *The Immaterial Murder Case*, 1945; *A Man Called Jones*, 1947; *Bland Beginning*, 1949

FRANCIS QUARLES SERIES: *Murder! Murder!*, 1961; *Francis Quarles Investigates*, 1965

DETECTIVE CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT HILARY CATCHPOLE SERIES: *Playing Happy Families*, 1994; *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel*, 1996

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1950-1960 • *The Thirty-first of February*, 1950; *The Broken Penny*, 1953; *The Narrowing Circle*, 1954; *The Paper Chase*, 1956 (also known as *Bogue's Fortune*); *The Colour of Murder*,

1957; *The Gigantic Shadow*, 1958 (also known as *The Pipe Dream*); *The Progress of a Crime*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Killing of Francie Lake*, 1962 (also known as *The Plain Man*); *The End of Solomon Grundy*, 1964; *The Belting Inheritance*, 1965; *The Man Who Killed Himself*, 1967; *The Man Whose Dreams Came True*, 1968; *The Man Who Lost His Wife*, 1970

1971-1980 • *The Players and the Game*, 1972; *The Plot Against Roger Rider*, 1973; *A Three-Pipe Problem*, 1975; *The Blackheath Poisonings*, 1978; *Sweet Adelaide*, 1980

1980-1992 • *The Detling Murders*, 1982 (also known as *The Detling Secret*); *The Name of Annabel Lee*, 1983; *The Criminal Comedy of the Contented Couple*, 1985 (also known as *A Criminal Comedy*); *Criminal Acts*, 1987; *Did Sherlock Holmes Meet Hercule . . .*, 1988; *The Kentish Manor Murders*, 1988; *Death's Darkest Face*, 1990; *Portraits of the Missing: Imaginary Biographies*, 1992; *Something Like a Love Affair*, 1992; *The Advertising Murders*, 1992

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Julian Symons Omnibus*, 1967; *How to Trap a Crook and Twelve Other Mysteries*, 1977; *The Great Detectives: Seven Original Investigations*, 1981; *The Tigers of Subtopia, and Other Stories*, 1982; *The Man Who Hated Television, and Other Stories*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

RADIO PLAYS: *Affection Unlimited*, 1968; *Night Ride to Dover*, 1969; *The Accident*, 1976

SCREENPLAY: *The Narrowing Circle*, 1955

TELEPLAYS: *I Can't Bear Violence*, 1963; *Miranda and a Salesman*, 1963; *The Witnesses*, 1964; *Curtains for Sheila*, 1965; *The Finishing Touch*, 1965; *Tigers of Subtopia*, 1968; *The Pretenders*, 1970; *Whatever's Peter Playing At*, 1974

POETRY: *Confusions About X*, 1939; *The Second Man*, 1943; *A Reflection on Auden*, 1973; *The Object of an Affair, and Other Poems*, 1974; *Seven Poems for Sarah*, 1979

NONFICTION: 1950-1960 • A. J. A. Symons: *His Life and Speculations*, 1950; Charles Dickens, 1951; Thomas Carlyle: *The Life and Ideas of a Prophet*, 1952; Horatio Bottomley, 1955; *The General Strike:*

A Historical Portrait, 1957; *The One Hundred Best Crime Stories*, 1959; *A Reasonable Doubt: Some Criminal Cases Re-examined*, 1960; *The Thirties: A Dream Revolved*, 1960 (revised 1975)

1961-1970 • *The Detective Story in Britain*, 1962; *Buller's Campaign*, 1963; *England's Pride: The Story of the Gordon Relief Expedition*, 1965; *Crime and Detection: An Illustrated History from 1840*, 1966 (also known as *A Pictorial History of Crime*); *Critical Occasions*, 1966

1971-1980 • *Between the Wars: Britain in Photographs*, 1972; *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 1972 (revised 1985, also known as *Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*); *Notes from Another Country*, 1972; *The Tell-Tale Heart: The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1978; *Conan Doyle: Portrait of an Artist*, 1979; *The Modern Crime Story*, 1980

1981-1994 • *Critical Observations*, 1981; *Tom Adams' Agatha Christie Cover Story*, 1981 (with Tom Adams; also known as *Agatha Christie: The Art of Her Crimes*); *Crime and Detection Quiz*, 1983; *Dashiell Hammett*, 1985; *Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939*, 1987; *Oscar Wilde: A Problem in Biography*, 1988; *The Thirties and the Nineties*, 1990; *Criminal Practices: Symons on Crime Writing 60's to 90's*, 1994

EDITED TEXTS: *An Anthology of War Poetry*, 1942; *Selected Writings of Samuel Johnson*, 1949; *Selected Works, Reminiscences, and Letters*, 1956 (by Thomas Carlyle); *Essays and Biographies*, 1969 (by A. J. A. Symons); *The Woman in White*, 1974 (by Wilkie Collins); *Selected Tales*, 1976 (by Edgar Allan Poe); *The Angry Thirties*, 1976; *Verdict of Thirteen: A Detection Club Anthology*, 1979; *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 1981 (by Arthur Conan Doyle); *New Poetry 9*, 1983; *The Penguin Classic Crime Omnibus*, 1984; *The Essential Wyndham Lewis, An Introduction to His Work*, 1989

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- Herbert, Rosemary. *The Fatal Art of Entertainment: Interviews with Mystery Writers*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994. Lengthy interview with Symons discusses crime writers from Charles Dickens to modern writers such as Elmore Leonard and Symons's personal history and his writing habits.
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- Pritchard, William H. "The Last Man of Letters: Julian Symons." In *Talking Back to Emily Dickinson and Other Essays*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998. An essay in praise of Symons, emphasizing his career as both writer and critic.
- Walsdorf, Jack, and Kathleen Symons, eds. *Julian Symons Remembered: Tributes from Friends*. Council Bluffs, Iowa: Yellow Barn Press, 1996. Another homage to Symons, collecting memories of the author from those who knew him personally.
- Walsdorf, John J., and Bonnie J. Allen. *Julian Symons: A Bibliography with Commentaries and a Personal Memoir*. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 1996. Combines the tribute form with critical writings on Symons's work and a bibliography of his publications.

T

PACO IGNACIO TAIBO II

Francisco Ignacio Taibo Mahojo

Born: Gijón, Asturias, Spain; January 11, 1949

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Héctor Belascoarán Shayne, 1976-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HÉCTOR BELASCOARÁN SHAYNE, a half-Basque and half-Irish man, gave up his wife, engineering job, and comfortable life to become a private investigator when he was thirty years old. He shares a low-rent Mexico City office with a plumber, a sewage specialist, and an upholsterer. An insomniac, existentialist, and anarchist, Belascoarán has an unhealthy curiosity that leads him into trouble. He doggedly pursues oddball cases that typically connect to shady businessmen, to tuggish law enforcement officers, and ultimately to slimy representatives of the Mexican government. In noir-flavored, surrealistic investigations, Belascoarán sometimes guns down bad guys and seldom comes away unscathed: He loses an eye, gains scars, acquires a limp, and is even apparently killed. However, popular demand brought the detective back to life to carry on in later novels. Like his creator, the antiheroic Belascoarán is a chain-smoker and cola addict.

CONTRIBUTION

Paco Ignacio Taibo II first captured Mexican readers' imaginations with private detective Héctor Belascoarán Shayne. He then increased his popularity with series and nonseries crime novels that push the boundaries of the genre, using multiple viewpoints, bending reality, drawing mysteries around historical figures and incidents, and exposing the effects of corruption. Taibo's first novel featuring Belascoarán, his icono-

clastic investigator, was published in 1976, and he has continued to produce novels in this series. The eighth novel in the series, *Muertos incómodos* (2005; *The Uncomfortable Dead: What's Missing Is Missing*, 2006) represents a true novelty in literature. Featuring Belascoarán in alternating chapters, *The Uncomfortable Dead* is a collaborative effort between Taibo and the masked Chiapas guerrilla known only as Subcomandante Marcos. Serialized in *La Jornada*, the novel prompted a 20 percent rise in the Mexico City leftist newspaper's circulation and cemented Taibo's reputation as one of the world's most inventive, articulate and risk-taking crime writers.

Taibo, a naturalized Mexican citizen since 1980, has become one of Mexico's most popular authors and received many literary awards for both his fiction and nonfiction. He won the 1982 Grijalbo Prize for his creative account of the 1968 massacre, *Heroes convocados: Manual para la toma del poder* (1982; *Calling All Heroes: A Manual for Taking Power*, 1990), and took the National History Prize for his narrative history *Los Bolshhevikis: Historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México 1919-1925* (1986). Taibo also won Dashiell Hammett Awards for the best crime novel in Spanish for *La vida misma* (1987; *Life Itself*, 1994), *Cuatro Manos* (1990; *Four Hands*, 1994), and *La bicicleta de Leonardo* (1993; *Leonardo's Bicycle*, 1995); the International Planeta Prize for the best historical novel in 1992; and the Bancarella Prize for his fictionalized biography of Che Guevara in 1998. A global best-selling author for more than thirty years—his books are sold in more than twenty countries—Taibo has made inroads into the American mystery community because of translations of a few of his novels beginning in the early 1990's. The majority of his works, however, are not yet available in English.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Paco Ignacio Taibo II in 2004. (AP/Wide World Photos)

BIOGRAPHY

Paco Ignacio Taibo II was born Francisco Ignacio Taibo Mahojo on January 11, 1949, in Gijón, Asturias, Spain, into a family of working-class anarchists. He is the son of late journalist, novelist, and biographer Paco Ignacio Taibo and Maricarmen Taibo. In 1958, the elder Taibo and his family fled from the fascism of Francisco Franco's regime and settled in Mexico.

Inspired by his father, young Taibo—an avid reader who decided as a child to become a writer—studied literature, sociology, and history, immersing himself in the colorful and violent past of his adopted homeland. In the late 1960's, Taibo became caught up in Mexico's latest political upheaval. He was forever after radicalized by the student protest movement of 1968, which ended abruptly just before the start of the 1968 Olympics when police and military forces fired on unarmed demonstrators in Mexico City's Tlatelolco section, killing dozens and wounding hundreds of youths.

In 1969, Taibo started working as a journalist and

wrote fiction and nonfiction—especially historical essays—in his spare time. A tireless political activist and union organizer, he served as editor of the newspaper *Revista de la Semana*, and the magazines *Bronca* and *Enigma* and contributed articles to such anthologies as *Nacimiento de la memoria* (1971). He married Paloma Saiz in 1971; they had one daughter, Marina. He began teaching in the mid-1970's at the National School of Anthropology and History at the National Independent University of Mexico in Mexico City, and from 1985 to 1989 at the University of Mexico campus in Azcapotzalco.

The prolific Taibo has created a flood of prose, publishing short stories, essays, novels, biographies, and other nonfiction. He gained almost instant recognition in Latin America with his tough, slyly anti-government Héctor Belascoarán Shayne novels. Most of the entries in the series have made Latin American best-seller lists, and the enthusiasm for his evocative style has spilled over into Taibo's other works.

Taibo has also written, directed, and produced for Mexican television and film, adapting many of his own works—including *Cosa fácil* (1977; *An Easy Thing*, 1990) and *Algunas nubes* (1985; *Some Clouds*, 1992)—for the screen. He directed, edited, and wrote for a comic-book history of Mexico (1981-1982). In the 1990's, Taibo was an official in the administration of radical reformer Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano.

Taibo has for many years served as president of the International Association of Writers of Detective Stories. In the early 1990's, he founded the noir fiction and film festival, *Semana Negra*, in Gijón, Spain, and annually organizes the ten-day event.

ANALYSIS

Historian and novelist Paco Ignacio Taibo II is a rare breed: a critically acclaimed mystery writer who is equally well respected for his staunch political and social commitment. He has embraced the culture of Mexico with the fervor of a native. Much of his work, both fiction and nonfiction, reflects Taibo's love-hate relationship with the sprawling, polluted, crime-ridden—yet ancient, cosmopolitan, and vibrant—megapolis that is Mexico City. He appreciates the Mexican landscape and climate as well as the history, energy, and diversity of the inhabitants that is the country's soul. However, he abhors the corruption that lies in the heart of the city. The corruption, according to Taibo, is the result of revolutionary turmoil that evolved into a modern civil dictatorship in the form of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), a party that, under several names, has exercised political power in Mexico for more than seventy years, sometimes resorting to violence and fraud. This has been part of Taibo's underlying message since 1976, when he began using fiction to illustrate the causes and effects of past and present crimes involving the government.

Independent detective Héctor Belascoarán Shayne, introduced to Mexico in *Días de combate* (1976) and to the English-speaking world in the translation of the second entry of the series, *An Easy Thing*, is Taibo's most famous creation. Inspired by the heroes of American and Latin American hard-boiled novels, Belascoarán has the introspection of Philip Marlowe, the toughness of Mike Hammer, and the detecting skills of

Sam Spade. However, this private eye has a distinctively Latino outlook and style as he walks the mean streets of exotic Mexico City. A Don Quixote in a rumpled trench coat, Belascoarán tilts at windmills, knowing it is an impossible task, but hoping to get in a few good charges before he is knocked down for good.

Taibo himself has been a memorable character in several of his novels: He appears as Paco Ignacio in *Some Clouds*. His alter ego, popular crime writer José Daniel Fierro, is a protagonist in *Life Itself* and *Leonardo's Bicycle*. Historical persons from the past—Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata Salazar, Leonardo da Vinci—often figure prominently in the stories of Taibo, who manages to make anachronisms plausible as he erases boundaries between supposition and truth and between fiction and fact.

Taibo's mysteries, both series and nonseries, offer considerably more than simple whodunits. His language is concise and economical, with linguistic pyrotechnics used sparingly, yet the tales are rich with allusion and full of quotable observations about the human condition from a fatalist's point of view. His descriptions are as sharp as snapshots. His characters, flawed like real humans, step breathing from the page. Dialogue crackles with authenticity, peppered with slangy street lingo, local references, profanity, and coarse humor. Plots are multilayered, with complications piled on complications. Things are seldom as they seem at first, and there are no tidy solutions at the end of the story. Violence is sudden and brutal, often instigated by minions of the multiple public or private police forces at the beck of the government—and is responded to in kind by protagonists who must react in deadly fashion and without hesitation to stay alive.

The notion of contradiction has informed Taibo's crime fiction from the start and has only become more prevalent over time. Taibo plays off various aspects of contrast: union workers versus capitalists, rich versus poor, comedy versus tragedy, past versus present, gut reaction versus intelligence, tenderness versus violence, and reality versus illusion. A constant theme is waste: human waste, wasted lives, and lost opportunities.

Praised for his fresh, innovative Mexican approach to the mystery genre and for his distinctive voice, the playful, impish, unabashedly antiauthoritarian Taibo is

an unpredictable experimenter with style and form. His literate mysteries incorporate mythology, incidents from the past, historical personages, radical politics, extreme violence, and slapstick humor, thereby standing convention, categorization, and reality on their heads.

AN EASY THING

Private detective Héctor Belascoarán Shayne in *An Easy Thing* deals with the death of his mother while simultaneously investigating three separate cases. In the first case, a man in a cantina asks the private eye to look into the rumor that revolutionary Emiliano Zapata Salazar did not die in 1919 but is still, at the age of ninety-seven, alive and living in a cave. The second case involves a former pornographic film star, now a television actress, who hires the detective to prevent her seventeen-year-old daughter from committing suicide. The third case revolves around a murder at a factory, in which union workers are unjustly implicated.

Told from a world-weary, Chandler-like point of view, *An Easy Thing* provides all the elements expected in a hard-boiled mystery novel. There are regular doses of violence, sex, crime, and punishment, plus dabs of low politics and high-flown philosophy that produce a unique brand of hard-boiled noir, Mexican-style.

THE SHADOW OF THE SHADOW

In *Sombra de la sombra* (1986; *The Shadow of the Shadow*, 1991), which takes place in Mexico City in the 1920's, four domino-playing friends—crime reporter Pioquinto Manterola, seedy lawyer Alberto Verdugo, aspiring poet and advertising jingle-writer Fermin Valencia, and Chinese-Mexican radical and labor organizer Tomás Wong—are ensnared in several complex mysteries that turn violent. The characters individually and collectively untangle various threads of a plot skillfully woven around an actual incident: the secret Mata Redonda Plan, whereby Mexican army officers in collusion with American politicians and oil companies mounted a phony insurrection in exchange for a large cash payoff. The United States responded with Marines to protect American interests, which resulted in American companies controlling the Mexican oil industry until it was nationalized in 1938.

LIFE ITSELF

José Daniel Fierro is a popular crime novelist in his fifties who lives in Mexico City, first with his wife,

and after his divorce, by himself. In the first of two outings (*Life Itself*), the chain-smoking, cola-guzzling Fierro steps away from the typewriter to accept a job as police chief of fictional Sana Ana—where the last two chiefs were assassinated—on the theory that he is too famous to be killed. Assisted by a corps of deputies with Keystone Cops tendencies, Fierro dodges bullets while investigating two murders: a beautiful blond American found stabbed in a church and an albino felon who is shot at the circus. The cases turn increasingly bizarre as they unfold in a detective story that is by turns ironic, violent, and humorous.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HÉCTOR BELASCOARÁN SHAYNE SERIES: *Días de combate*, 1976; *Cosa fácil*, 1977 (*An Easy Thing*, 1990); *No habrá final feliz*, 1981 (*No Happy Ending*, 1993); *Irapuato mi amor*, 1984; *Algunas nubes*, 1985 (*Some Clouds*, 1992); *Regreso a la misma ciudad y bajo la lluvia*, 1989 (*Return to the Same City*, 1996); *Sueños de frontera*, 1990 (*Frontier Dreams*, 2002); *Muertos incómodos*, 2005 (*The Uncomfortable Dead: What's Missing Is Missing*, 2006; with Subcomandante Marcos)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1982-1990 • *Heroes convocados: Manual para la toma del poder*, 1982 (*Calling All Heroes: A Manual for Taking Power*, 1990); *Sombra de la sombra*, 1986 (*The Shadow of the Shadow*, 1991); *De paso*, 1986 (*Just Passing Through*, 2000); *La vida misma*, 1987 (*Life Itself*, 1994); *Palidas banderas*, 1987; *Fantasmas nuestros de cada día*, 1988; *Sintiéndolo que el campo de batalla . . .*, 1989; *Amorosos fantasmas*, 1990; *Cuatro Manos*, 1990 (*Four Hands*, 1994)

1991-2006 • *Desvanecidos difuntos*, 1991; *El hombre de los lentes oscuros de llama Domingo y se llama Raul*, 1991; *La lejanía del tesoro*, 1992; *De cuerpo entero*, 1992; *Cuevas-Taibo, mano a mano*, 1993; *La bicicleta de Leonardo*, 1993 (*Leonardo's Bicycle*, 1995); *Nomás los muertos están bien contentos*, 1994; *Que todo es imposible*, 1995; *Ernesto Guevara: También conocido como el Che*, 1996 (*Gue-*

vara, *Also Known as Che*, 1997); *Máscara Azteca y el Doctor Niebla (después del golpe)*, 1996; *Mi amigo Morán*, 1998; *El camino de María*, 1998; *Primavera pospuesta*, 1999; *Así es la vida en los pinches Trópicos*, 2000; *Retornamos como sombras*, 2001 (*Returning as Shadows*, 2003); *Fuga, hierro y fuego*, 2006; *Siempre Dolores (byblos narrativa)*, 2006

SHORT FICTION: *Doña Eustolia blandió el cuchillo cebollero y otras historias*, 1984; *El regreso de la verdadera araña y otras historias que pasaron en algunas fábricas*, 1988

SCREENPLAYS: *Adios, amor*, 1973; *Días de combate*, 1982; *Amorosos fantasmas*, 1994; *Algunas nubes*, 1995

NONFICTION: 1979-1985 • *Historia general de Asturias, tomos 7 & 8*, 1978, 1979; *La huelga de los sombrereros*, 1980; *Asturias 1934*, 1980; *México, historia de un pueblo*, 1980-1982; *La gran huelga del verano de 20 en Monterrey*, 1980; *El primer primero de mayo en México*, 1981; *El primer primero de mayo en el mundo*, 1982; *El socialismo en un solo puerto*, 1983 (also known as *Las dos muertes de Juan Escudero*, 1989); *Memoria roja. Luchas sindicales de los años 20*, 1984 (with Rogelio Viccaíno); *Bajando la frontera*, 1985; *Octubre 1934, cincuenta años para la reflexión*, 1985 (coauthor); *Danzón en Bellas Artes*, 1985; *Pistolero y otras reportajes*, 1985 (with others)

1986-1995 • *Los Bolshevikis: Historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México 1919-1925*, 1986; *Ataca Oaxaca*, 1987; *Pascual décimo round*, 1988; *Santa Clara, la batalla del Che*, 1989; 68, 1991; *El caso Molinet*, 1992; *Adiós, Madrid*, 1993; *Cardenas de cerca: una entrevista biografica*, 1994; *El año en que estuvimos en ninguna parte: (La guerrilla Africana de Ernesto Che Guevara)*, 1994

1996-2006 • *El general orejón ese*, 1997; *Insurgencia mi amor*, 1997; *Cuentos policíacos mexicanos*, 1997; *Arcángeles: Doce historias de revolucionarios herejes del siglo XX*, 1998; *Olga Forever*, 1998; *Pancho Villa: Una biografía narrativa*, 2006 (*Pancho Villa: A Narrative Biography*, 2007)

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AKIMITSU TAKAGI

Seiichi Takagi

Born: Aomori, Japan; September 25, 1920

Died: Tokyo, Japan; September 9, 1995

Types of plot: Police procedural; amateur sleuth; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Daiyu Matsushita and Kyōsuke Kamizu, 1948-1960

Saburō Kirishima, 1964-1988

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CHIEF INSPECTOR DAIYU MATSUSHITA is a highly regarded member of the Tokyo police force. In his inaugural case, Daiyu welcomes his brother Kenzo into his home following the younger man's release from military service.

KENZO MATSUSHITA is a World War II veteran and amateur sleuth. Frequently he calls on his older brother, an actual detective, for assistance in solving the troubling crimes he encounters, beginning with the death by dismemberment of his tattooed lover. Kenzo is more naïve and trusting than his older brother, on whom he relies for guidance.

KYŌSUKU KAMIZU is a young genius, a master of six languages, a student at Tokyo University, and an accomplished amateur sleuth who assists the Matsushita brothers in their investigations of mysterious deaths. He is a recurring character in a number of Matsushita novels.

STATE PROSECUTOR SABURŌ KIRISHIMA, an intelligent and discerning man, is respected by his detective colleagues. Most impressively, Kirishima possesses an aptitude for determining with precision the guilt or innocence of a suspect.

CONTRIBUTION

One of Japan's leading writers of detective and espionage fiction, Akimitsu Takagi garnered both popular success and critical acclaim during his lifetime. His intricate and cleverly plotted police procedurals are favorites of fans of the genre. Critics applaud his cre-

ation of psychologically intriguing human beings, whether the characters he presents are the victims, the criminals, or the investigators. Additionally, Takagi expanded the form and focus of the Japanese detective novel to more closely parallel contemporary life. He was among the first Japanese authors to write a novel in the financial-fiction genre. His varied repertoire includes historical thrillers, industrial crime fiction, and courtroom dramas.

Equally important are Takagi's portrayals of Japan and its citizens in the postwar era and in the decades of recovery, the 1950's and 1960's. Takagi's cityscapes provide an image of a culture and a people in transition. In several works featuring State Prosecutor Saburō Kirishima, the courtroom becomes a microcosm of Japanese culture, a place where concerns about changing values and ethics, innovations in business and industry, and tensions between generations and between genders can be voiced, if not necessarily resolved.

The growing appeal of Takagi's novels among English-language readers bodes well for additional translations of his detective novels, which range from police procedurals to accounts of industrial espionage. Critics have compared Takagi's work favorably to that of another master of Japanese detective fiction, Seichō Matsumoto, the popular author of *Ten to sen* (1958; *Points and Lines*, 1970) and *Suna no utsuwa* (1961; *Inspector Imanishi Investigates*, 1989).

BIOGRAPHY

Akimitsu Takagi was born Seiichi Takagi in Aomori, Japan, on September 25, 1920. After completing secondary studies at Daiichi High School, he attended Kyoto Imperial University, majoring in metallurgy. Employed by Nakajima Aircraft, Takagi lost his job because of the ban on military industries imposed by the Allies following their victory over Japan at the end of World War II.

When a fortune-teller revealed to Takagi that his future career was in fiction, not metals, he began to write detective novels. A man of reason even at the age

of twenty-eight, he sought expert advice to confirm the seer's prediction. Takagi sent the manuscript of his first novel, *Irezumi satsujin jiken* (1948; *The Tattoo Murder Case*, 1998), to Edogawa Ranpo, a popular and respected Japanese writer of mysteries. On Ranpo's recommendation, the novel was published. As was foretold, Takagi's initial detective novel received positive reviews.

After the success of *The Tattoo Murder Case*, Takagi continued the series featuring Chief Inspector Daiyu Matsushita, a member of the Tokyo police force. These novels are set in the era immediately following World War II, and on occasion, historical incidents (such as the firebombing of Tokyo) feature in the plot. Characters in Takagi's later works, including novels in the Saburō Kirishima series, continue to reflect their creator's personal interest in legal matters. Takagi was a self-educated authority on the law, and most of his protagonists are either detectives (amateur or professional) or public prosecutors.

Recognition of his work arrived early for Takagi. In 1949, while still in his twenties, he won the Mystery Writers of Japan Award for *The Tattoo Murder Case*; however, it was not until the 1965 publication of *Mik-*

kokusha (1965; *The Informer*, 1971), based on an actual incident of sabotage in Japan's manufacturing sector, that he was elevated to a position among Japan's elite writers of detective fiction. Consequently, his previously published novels, which had been successful in their own right, again found their way to the best-seller lists.

Takagi suffered a stroke in 1979 but continued to write and publish works of fiction into the late 1980's. His final years were spent in declining health; by 1990 additional strokes had ended his writing career. He died in Tokyo in 1995.

ANALYSIS

Akimitsu Takagi's writing style is terse, reflecting a Japanese sensibility in both its reserved use of dialogue and its reliance on minimalist description. However, his concise style of writing should not be construed as dispassionate, as certain critics have called it. Takagi's most memorable characters, Kenzo Matsushita in *The Tattoo Murder Case* and Etsuko Ogata in *Zero no mitsugetsu* (1965; *Honeymoon to Nowhere*, 1995), ache with suffering on learning that their lovers have been murdered. The emotions of the bereaved are often conveyed to readers through what is not explicitly expressed. Despite the very modern circumstances of their pain, Takagi's characters are steeped in traditional Japanese behaviors that require them to constrain their words and emotions; their suffering seeps out despite their efforts at containment. The restraint the author exercises in his use of language serves to intensify his characters' miseries even as the objects of their desires are forever removed from their embraces.

A typical Takagi novel intentionally mirrors in its structure and style the tension that existed in Japanese society from the late 1940's through the 1960's. The traditions and social customs associated with a culture as venerable as Japan's inevitably came into conflict with the rapid changes the country faced after its defeat in World War II. First Japan recovered from the devastation the war had wrought; then it rebuilt itself into a modern industrial power. Takagi personalizes this broad conflict between tradition and change by reconfiguring its scale; in his novels it is individual men and women who struggle against imposing soci-



Akimitsu Takagi. (Kamakura Museum of Literature)

etal forces in a more localized venue. Issues of identity within the community emerge as the new men and women of Japan question what it means to be a citizen in the modern era. Depending on the novel in which they appear, those individuals might be on the side of the law or the very criminals the investigator seeks.

A recurring motif in Takagi's novels is the individual's search for romantic fulfillment in a sterile society. Men and women are depicted as equally infused with sexual passions, and erotic subtexts permeate most of the plots. However, there are few fulfilled characters in his novels because their passions frequently get mixed up with their (or others') criminal pursuits, resulting in the loss of the desired object. The prospect of better futures for most of Takagi's characters is bleak, even for those who remain standing at the close of various novels. Neither the resolution of a mystery nor the administration of justice can alleviate the weight of the pessimism that pervades his writing.

Although scholars have commented favorably on Takagi's innovations in style, format, subject, and character, he is not without detractors. Critics cite his overreliance on stock generic devices, such as his fondness for puzzles, coincidences, dead ends, and sensationalistic story lines, as evidence that Takagi is not as original a fabricator of detective fiction as his reputation suggests. Others criticize Takagi's tendency to introduce third parties late in his novels. Typically these characters use extraordinary methods to resolve the mysteries that have frustrated others. The boy genius character in *The Tattoo Murder Case* is a prime example of this particular tendency and yet it is worth noting that this same novel merited its author the Mystery Writers of Japan Award within a year of its publication.

THE TATTOO MURDER CASE

The Tattoo Murder Case is a classic of Japanese fiction and the first of Takagi's novels to be translated into English. Not surprisingly, it is his most popular novel among English-speaking readers. Set in late 1940's Tokyo during the aftermath of the Japanese defeat at the end of the World War II, *The Tattoo Murder Case* features as its chief investigators two recently reunited brothers, Kenzo and Daiyu Matsushita. Newly released from military service, the younger sibling, twenty-nine-year-old Kenzo, joins his older brother,

Chief Inspector Daiyu Matsushita, in Tokyo. A criminal investigator with the local precinct, Daiyu allows his younger brother to accompany him on missions.

Kenzo's ambition is to transfer his training as a military medic to a position on the police force, but he is distracted by a beautiful woman. He begins an illicit affair with Kinue Nomura, a tattoo artist's daughter and a mobster's mistress. Kinue is an illustrated woman. Thanks to her father's deft hands, her body displays a one-of-a-kind design that holds numerous men, including Kenzo, enthralled. Among her admirers is Professor Hayakawa, alias Dr. Tattoo, whose macabre collection of ornamented skins retrieved from the bodies of the dead is well known among the investigators. Body art plays a role in this police procedural, which provides a fascinating glimpse into a deviant strain of Japanese art and culture. Though tattooing was illegal and socially taboo in postwar Japan, the practice was continued in secret. Tattoo artists had a loyal clientele, chiefly composed of mob bosses and prostitutes. The tattoos described in the novel are based on symbols drawn from Japanese mythology and provide important clues to the motives and the means of the killer of Kinue.

To resolve the case, the brothers require the skills of a third detective, the hyperintelligent prodigy Kyōsuke Kamizu. In the final section of the novel, Kamizu provides the answer to the riddles posed by this case: How did the limbs and head of Kinue end up locked inside a room with no apparent exit and what became of her tattooed torso? He solves the puzzle in a fastidious and timely manner, one reminiscent of the detective maneuverings of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and his legendary gray matter.

THE INFORMER

Culled from newspaper accounts of an actual case of industrial espionage, *The Informer* became Takagi's most popular novel in Japan. The novel begins from the perspective of Shigeo Segawa, a young Tokyo stockbroker caught making illegal trades, and charts his downward spiral. When Segawa's acquaintance, Mikio Sakai, agrees to hire the young man despite his previous dismissal, the new employee soon finds himself working not as a salesman, the advertised position, but as an industrial spy. Segawa sets aside his initial moral qualms and soon becomes implicated in escalating acts

of criminal activity, including sabotage. When his employer's financial target, Shoichi Ogino, is killed, Segawa emerges as the lead suspect in an investigation headed by Saburō Kirishima, a state prosecutor. When Kirishima enters the plot, the novel's point of view shifts from Segawa to that of the prosecutor. *The Informer* offers a compelling case study of a businessman so desperate to attain economic security that he risks things more dear than money. Takagi wrote a number of novels that center on economic crimes, but critics consider *The Informer* the best of them.

HOONEYMOON TO NOWHERE

Despite her realization that she is growing older and could become a burden to her family, a lawyer's daughter refuses the suitor her parents offer her in Takagi's *Honeymoon to Nowhere*. Initially, Etsuko Ogata reasons that the man, a junior member of her father's firm, would be a good provider. Though at first she is inclined to acquiesce to her parents' wishes, her heart demands passion and overrules logic. Emboldened, she defies her parents and finds her own prospective mate, Yoshihiro Tsukamoto, an industrial management professor. She fakes a pregnancy to gain her shocked parents' permission to wed Tsukamoto. They wed, but after Tsukamoto receives a telephone call on their wedding night, he flees the nuptial chamber and does not return. When his body is recovered the following day, the mysterious circumstances of his death set the stage for a courtroom drama orchestrated by State Prosecutor Saburō Kirishima. The prosecutor must search through a jumble of evidence and discard several red herrings before he is able to identify the guilty suspect from among a cadre of likely candidates. By novel's end he successfully identifies the killer, whose envy and avarice have arrayed the new bride in the clothes of mourning.

Dorothy Dodge Robbins

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DAIYU MATSUSHITA AND KYŌSUKU KAMIZU SERIES: *Irezumi satsujin jiken*, 1948 (*The Tattoo Murder Case*, 1998); *Nōmen satsujin jiken*, 1949; *Jubaku no ie*, 1949; *Yō no yado*, 1949; *Waga ichi kō jidai no hanzai*, 1951; *Jingisu kan no himitsu*, 1958; *Hitoari*, 1959; *Hakuchū no shikaku*, 1960

SABURŌ KIRISHIMA SERIES: *Kenji Kirishima Saburō*, 1964; *Mikkokusha*, 1965 (*The Informer*, 1971); *Zero no mitsugetsu*, 1965 (*Honeymoon to Nowhere*, 1995)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Hakai saiban*, 1961; *Yamataikoku no himitsu*, 1973; *Kodai ten'nō no himitsu*, 1986; *Shichifukujin satsujin jiken*, 1987; *Kamen yo saraba*, 1988

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION:

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PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; May 18, 1909

Died: Boston, Massachusetts; January 9, 1976

Also wrote as Freeman Dana; Alice Tilton

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Asey Mayo, 1931-1951

Leonidas Witherall, 1937-1944

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ASEY MAYO, an amateur sleuth, is a Cape Cod native and an all-around handyman. Of indeterminate age, between thirty-five and seventy years old, he evolves from a handyman in corduroys and a Stetson to the chairman of Porter Motors Company. Known for his physical and mental prowess, Asey charms everyone involved in his cases.

LEONIDAS WITHERALL, an amateur sleuth, is a teacher and later a headmaster and the owner of Meredith Academy, a private boys' school. He is a scholarly, witty, and proper old gentleman whose looks earn for him the name "Bill Shakespeare." An author of detective novels, he prefers to be left alone but is always getting involved in the zany escapades of his family and friends.

CONTRIBUTION

Phoebe Atwood Taylor wrote some thirty detective novels, which have been praised for their historical verisimilitude. Her books about detective Asey Mayo demonstrate her intimate knowledge of the charm and liveliness of Cape Cod communities such as Quanomet, Weesit, and Wellfleet. Taylor does not depict her setting as the famed summer resort it is but rather reveals the Yankee charm of the people of Cape Cod, who live there after the tourists are gone. The dialogue and glimpses of daily life are distinctively Yankee.

Many of Taylor's works move at a brisk pace; there are chases on foot and by motor vehicles, and the detective solves the case in only a day or two. Humor is also a notable element of many of Taylor's mysteries, especially in the stories featuring Leonidas Witherall,

the detective-hero of the novels that Taylor wrote under the pseudonym Alice Tilton. The pace of Taylor's novels, combined with a variety of farcical situations, places her mysteries in both the Golden Age of mystery writers, of which Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh were a part, and the 1930's era of screwball film comedies.

BIOGRAPHY

Phoebe Atwood Taylor was born in Boston on May 18, 1909. Her parents were natives of Cape Cod and descendants of the Mayflower Pilgrims; her father was a physician. Taylor attended Barnard College, was graduated in 1930, and immediately returned to Boston to live and write. She married a Boston surgeon, also named Taylor, and lived in the Boston suburbs of Newton Highlands and Weston. The Taylors also maintained a summer home in Wellfleet, Cape Cod.

Taylor's literary debut was in 1931, with the publication of *The Cape Cod Mystery*. It sold more than five thousand copies, a huge number of sales for a first mystery. Over the next twenty years, Taylor was to write and publish roughly thirty detective novels, quite an accomplishment considering her harried schedule. She wrote between twelve midnight and three in the morning, "after housekeeping all day." She claims to have written all of her novels "beginning three weeks before the deadline for the novel to be delivered to the New York publishers." Her Leonidas Witherall novels appear to describe the author's own life, as the detective endures a barrage of telegrams from his publisher and struggles to meet his deadlines.

Although Taylor's last detective novel was published in 1951, her popularity with readers did not diminish, and many of her books have been reprinted in both hardback and paperback editions. Taylor died of a heart attack in Boston on January 9, 1976.

ANALYSIS

Phoebe Atwood Taylor has been described as the "essential New England mystery writer," and from her first novel, *The Cape Cod Mystery*, she earned such

acclaim. Taylor's novels betray her New England roots in numerous ways. Many of the settings are in Cape Cod towns, usually described as resort areas, such as Wellfleet and Weesit. In the Asey Mayo novels, tourists must constantly be kept away from the scene of the crime. Yet the principal characters are not tourists at all: They are genuine New Englanders, who populate the towns beyond the tourist season. Taylor does not delve intimately into the lives of these individuals; instead, she reveals an intimate knowledge of general life on the Cape. Her characters all speak with a broad *a* (a point she endlessly emphasizes), and they often have Pilgrim or Puritan ancestors. Yet few of her characters boast of "old money"—most either have just managed to survive the Depression or have ingeniously grown rich despite the odds of the time.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CAPE COD PLAYERS

The Depression is but one of the historical interests in Taylor's mystery novels. While she never mentions the Depression directly, she candidly reveals its consequences. In *The Mystery of the Cape Cod Players* (1933), Taylor writes of a troupe composed of actors, a magician, and a puppeteer. This group of rather odd characters have chosen their current roles only because they lost their previous jobs. Taylor never directly mentions the Depression as the cause of their hard luck, but the many intimations of the current difficulties allow the reader to link the poor state of these strolling players to the Depression. In the same novel, a wealthy widow is also affected by the near collapse of the company that her husband left her. The company was all that remained of what must have been a much greater fortune.

Taylor never seems to leave any of her characters untouched by the current state of the country. The best example of this is with the work of her favorite detective, Asa Alden "Asey" Mayo. Asey was involved in both world wars. Although he often says that he spent World War I peeling potatoes on a ship, it is revealed that Asey worked on secret tank plans for the Porter Motors Company. Although the tanks never went into production during World War I, they were later produced during World War II. When Asey was not solving a case during World War II, he spent all of his time living at the Porter plant, developing the tanks. Taylor

ultimately reveals to her readers that Asey won a medal for his work on the Porter miracle tank, the Mark XX. Other characters in Taylor's novels contribute to the war effort as well. For example, in *The Perennial Boarder* (1941), Jennie Mayo, the wife of Asey's cousin Sylvanus "Syl" Mayo, busied herself with jujitsu, a commando training course, and target practice with the Women's Defense Corps. Also, Syl joins the navy during World War II.

The narrow focus of many of Taylor's novels heightens their geographic and historical verisimilitude. Xenophobia is a common element throughout Taylor's works, as many of the Cape natives sorely distrust outsiders. In *The Mystery of the Cape Cod Players*, an old hermit, Harm, welcomes to his house only those whom he knows and trusts. When Asey and Syl drive up to Harm's shack, Harm allows only Asey to get out of the car, and he speaks only to him. Syl notes, "Harm'd have made for me if I'd stepped out of this car, but he likes Asey."

THE CRIMSON PATCH

The Crimson Patch (1936) focuses on a problem with outsiders. The natives of Skaket do their best to run a new family out of town by accusing them of being immoral. For the natives, the word "immoral" takes on an unmistakable Puritanical connotation. Taylor's novels also tell of Yankees' occasional racism.

Of all the New England elements in Taylor's novels the most significant are the characterizations of her detectives. Asey Mayo is described through the eyes of an outsider in *The Crimson Patch* as "tall, lean faced, blue eyed, he looked exactly as Myles had fondly imagined all Cape Codders would look, and as, to his intense disappointment, they had not." Indeed, Asey Mayo is the consummate Cape native, with his broad *a* and his New England *r* (pronounced "ah"). Although it is not mentioned in the earlier novels, Asey owns a two-story house on the beach, with its own wharf. His knowledge of the sea is remarkable, and he had spent many years as a sailor before he began his business of solving mysteries.

Asey Mayo is originally introduced by Taylor as what the critics dubbed "the hayseed Sherlock." In the first few novels, Asey is simply Bill Porter's hired hand, a man who can, seemingly, do anything. By *Death*

Lights a Candle (1932), Taylor reveals that Porter has left Asey a large sum of money, even though his appearance speaks otherwise (he was known for his corduroys, flannel shirt, and Stetson hat cocked sideways on his head). By Taylor's last novel, *Diplomatic Corpse* (1951), Asey is chairman of the Board of Porter Motors and sports a business suit and a yachting cap. Yet Asey's wealth never keeps him from doing what he enjoys. He often works odd jobs, as a carpenter, as a cook, and—above all else—as an excellent mechanic. His roadster, given to him by Bill Porter, is the fastest, sleekest car on the Cape. Many times that car is instrumental in solving a mystery. Although Asey may appear as a hayseed detective, it is exactly that quality that enables him to gather so many clues and fit them together to discover the murderer.

COLD STEAL

Taylor's other detective, Leonidas Witherall, takes on a totally different New England appearance. He is not at all the small-town Cape Cod native; his home is Boston and its suburbs. His appearance and personality are not at all as charming and comfortable as Asey Mayo's; instead, he is a proper, quaint, and witty old gentleman. Taylor describes Witherall as an odd sort who is first a teacher, then later headmaster and owner of Meredith Academy, a private boys' school. In *Cold Steal* (1939), Taylor tells the reader that Witherall's looks—he is “an elderly man with a small pointed beard”—have earned for him the nickname “Bill Shakespeare,” for he resembles Shakespeare so closely “that it seemed as if some library bust or engraved frontispiece had come suddenly to life.” Witherall also has a keen mind, never missing the slightest oddity or clue.

Leonidas Witherall was significant for Taylor not so much as a detective—the novels involving him are not as good as those about Asey Mayo—but rather for his transparent character: He was the picture of Taylor in her own stories. Witherall writes detective novels, but he can never measure up to the feats of his heroes. He is often harried by his publishers to meet demands and deadlines. In *Cold Steal*, Witherall notes that “he had written three Haseltine books a year for so many years that he automatically wrote about the daring lieutenant whether he meant to or not.” Certainly from

1931 to 1951 Taylor's life paralleled that of her creation, Witherall.

HUMOR AND WOMEN

One might consider Taylor's works to be detective comedies, as each novel has numerous farcical aspects. In *The Cape Cod Mystery*, Asey Mayo identifies the murderer of a popular novelist as the three-hundred-pound widow of a Boston minister; she delivered a deathblow to the writer with an advance copy of his own latest book, a sensational account of her husband's life. Often Asey points to the humor in his fellow New Englanders' behavior and thoughts. No one seems to think logically but Asey, adding much to the fun of Taylor's novels. The escapades of Leonidas Witherall are even more ludicrous. He deals with unlikely murder weapons, unlikely murderers, and many friends and family who try to play detective along with him but prove to be of little help. It has been said that Taylor's novels require “a massive suspension of disbelief.”

The women in Taylor's novels often appear as strong characters, well able both to witness a murder and to help solve it. Women in Taylor's novels own their own businesses and are successful in a variety of fields. They are sometimes as strong as men physically, and more often than not they are much smarter. Several of Taylor's early novels are narrated by elderly women who help to solve the mysteries they recount. One must credit Taylor for the confidence she demonstrated in the ability of women throughout her novels.

ASEY MAYO

Asey Mayo, like many other detectives (excepting the hard-boiled variety), has his share of helpers in solving his mysteries. Besides the variety of bright women who lend their aid, two men in particular stand out as important characters in several novels. In *Death Lights a Candle*, Asey mentions his cousin, but he does not appear until Taylor's next novel, *The Mystery of the Cape Cod Players*, and then he is introduced as Sylvanus Mayo. Syl is a short man with a walrus mustache who always runs and is constantly out of breath. Inevitably, he finds the clue that Asey sends to him to discover, and he claims that any item can be found if one can put oneself in its place and figure out what it would do next. Asey never pretends to understand Syl's style of retrieval, but he attributes Syl's ability to

his addiction to detective stories. Syl plays his largest role in *Deathblow Hill* (1935), and from there his character fades until he is only mentioned in the World War II novels as being in the navy.

The other prominent aide to Asey is Doc Cummings, who first appears in *The Tinkling Symbol* (1935). In the early novels, Doc's main tasks are examining the body and attending to fainting women. Later, however, he is given more significant duties by Asey. Doc thoroughly enjoys stalling and leading on Lieutenant Hanson of the state police, and Asey utilizes Doc not only in this way but also to deter others. Occasionally Doc is asked to check out someone's story or to offer his opinion about any possible suspects. Doc's assessment of the suspects, however, is never correct.

Even with all the available help, only Taylor's detectives are capable of piecing together the clues ("clues," as Taylor always writes) and revealing the culprit. They engage in all possible tactics, most of which are common to detective stories, to catch the murderer. The detectives usually find themselves involved in high-speed car or boat chases, mysterious escapades on trains, and chases on foot through backwoods, suburban streets, parking lots, and snow-covered fields. Both detectives have remarkable physical stamina, but Asey is by far the most astounding in physical abilities. As Taylor reveals more and more about Asey throughout her many novels about him, he comes to be somewhat of a superman. He is a superb mechanic and driver, an excellent cook, an expert with guns and knives, a fleet runner, and an able fighter. Although Asey Mayo is endowed with near-superhuman qualities, Leonidas Witherall should not be slighted. He, too, has great stamina for an elderly gentleman, and his endurance through all the circumstances of his investigations is worthy of note.

The style of Taylor's writing matches the breathless style of her detectives. She takes her readers on a race through the one or two days necessary for her detectives to solve the mystery. She rarely leaves time for long descriptions or involved intimate details, and her detectives can summarize events and circumstances usually in less than five minutes. Although Taylor's work has been criticized as mechanical, she is perhaps

better described as efficient, even thrifty. She writes what needs to be known and sums up the facts in a tidy manner at the end. Even so, Taylor's novels do not lack the suspense and daring of any good detective novel. Admittedly, the Witherall novels lack the style of the Asey Mayo novels and sometimes seem to gloss over the details necessary for the solution of the mystery, yet even in these books Taylor always manages to maintain the reader's interest. Writers such as Charlotte MacLeod, Lucille Kallen, and Jane Langton trace their roots to Taylor, the quintessential New England mystery writer.

JoAnne C. Juett

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ASEY MAYO SERIES: *The Cape Cod Mystery*, 1931; *Death Lights a Candle*, 1932; *The Mystery of the Cape Cod Players*, 1933; *Sandbar Sinister*, 1934; *The Mystery of the Cape Cod Tavern*, 1934; *Deathblow Hill*, 1935; *The Tinkling Symbol*, 1935; *Out of Order*, 1936; *The Crimson Patch*, 1936; *Figure Away*, 1937; *Octagon House*, 1937; *Banbury Bog*, 1938; *Murder at the New York World's Fair*, 1938; *The Anulet of Gilt*, 1938; *Spring Harrowing*, 1939; *The Criminal C.O.D.*, 1940; *The Deadly Sunshade*, 1940; *The Perennial Boarder*, 1941; *The Six Iron Spiders*, 1942; *Three Plots for Asey Mayo*, 1942; *Going, Going, Gone*, 1943; *Proof of the Pudding*, 1945; *Punch with Care*, 1946; *The Asey Mayo Trio*, 1946; *The Iron Claw*, 1947 (also known as *The Iron Hand*); *Diplomatic Corpse*, 1951

LEONIDAS WITHERALL SERIES: *Beginning with a Bash*, 1937; *The Cut Direct*, 1938; *Cold Steal*, 1939; *The Left Leg*, 1940; *The Hollow Chest*, 1941; *File for Record*, 1943; *Dead Ernest*, 1944

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DARWIN L. TEILHET

Born: Wyanette, Illinois; May 20, 1904

Died: Palo Alto, California; April 18, 1964

Also wrote as Theo Durrant; William H. Fielding; Cyrus Fisher

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; espionage; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

St. Amand, 1931

Baron von Kaz, 1935-1940

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

GEORGE TALMONT MARIA ST. AMAND of the Sûreté, the detective in Teilhet's first book, *Murder in the Air* (1931), is demoniacal in intelligence and appearance. He is tall and has a yellow, cadaverous face with drooping eyelids and a fierce mustache, like cat's whiskers. In *Death Flies High* (1931), St. Amand's given names are changed to Jean Henri, but otherwise he remains the same Satanic investigator.

BARON FRANZ MAXIMILIAN KARAGOZ UND VON KAZ, Teilhet's second series detective, once headed the Vienna police department, but because of a failed attempt to restore the Austrian monarchy, he has come to America to make a living as a detective. He is proud of his Habsburg von Kaz heritage and denies the influence of the Gypsy imagination contributed by his Karagoz ancestors. His only weapon is a green umbrella that has a sword concealed in its handle and that is weighted so that the baron can throw it like a club.

CARYL MIQUET, a member of a wealthy family in

Hawaii, is a major suspect in the first Baron von Kaz book. The remaining books in the series chronicle the baron's courtship of and eventual marriage to Caryl.

CONTRIBUTION

Darwin L. Teilhet used the classical, fair-play form of the detective story in ways that had rarely been successful with earlier authors. Like some later writers, he based his first books on current events and issues, and thereby produced *The Talking Sparrow Murders* (1934), the greatest detective novel (and one of the most powerful novels in any genre) about the Nazi takeover of Germany. Unlike most mystery writers of the 1930's, who were political and social conservatives, Teilhet throughout his life was a liberal, a fact that adds a special flavor to his books, especially those about Baron von Kaz. In these novels, he includes acute criticisms of overzealous patriotism in the United States as well as attacks on anti-Semitism. The baron, moreover, is probably the most convincing of all humorous detectives. His constant pride lands him in difficulties, but the reader sympathizes with him. The reader understands why he acts as he does, and his foibles are amusing because, though exaggerated, they are human.

BIOGRAPHY

Darwin LeOra Teilhet was born on May 20, 1904, in Wyanette, Illinois, of French Catholic stock. While a teenager, he visited the Correze section of France

and worked as a juggler in a French circus. He also worked briefly on the Paris edition of *The New York Herald Tribune*. He was educated at Drake University, the Sorbonne in Paris, and Stanford University, where he met Hildegard Tolman. They were married on October 28, 1927. His first two books, *Murder in the Air* and *Death Flies High*, had good reviews and good sales, but Teilhet was unsure of his path as a writer. He took a job with the N. W. Ayers Company as a copywriter, and for the next three years he concentrated on writing magazine articles and reviews. In 1934, however, he completed his best book, *The Talking Sparrow Murders*. The same year, James Poling of the Crime Club (Doubleday's mystery imprint) asked Teilhet to write detective novels with a memorable protagonist. The result was Baron von Kaz. Around 1936, Teilhet became executive assistant to the president of Dole Pineapple in Hawaii; the second Baron von Kaz novel, *The Feather Cloak Murders* (1936), has a Hawaiian setting and lists as its authors Darwin and Hildegard Teilhet. Later Teilhet books might be attributed to either or both Teilhets, but with one or two exceptions they were collaborative efforts.

During World War II, Teilhet was an intelligence officer in Great Britain and the United States. Meanwhile, under his own name he wrote adventure stories, two of which were serialized by *The Saturday Evening Post*. Under Hildegard's name, the Teilhets wrote espionage thrillers. For a short while in the 1940's, Teilhet taught a journalism course at Stanford and he was a consultant for various film producers. One of his nonmystery novels, *My True Love* (1945), was filmed by Universal in 1952 as *No Room for the Groom*. During the 1950's, he concentrated on historical novels; *The Mission of Jeffery Tolamy* (1951) is a historical espionage story. Teilhet's final book, completed shortly before his death in 1964, was *The Big Runaround*, a thriller based on industrial spying.

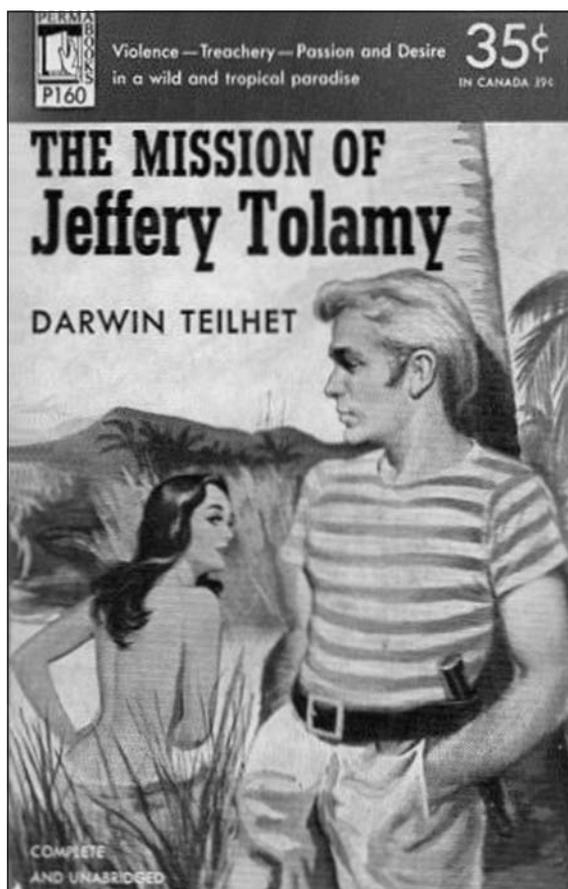
ANALYSIS

When Darwin L. Teilhet's first book, *Murder in the Air*, was published, *The New York Herald Tribune* recommended the book "for fans who like their news stories done into fiction." The novel was based on the 1928 disappearance of the Belgian financier Alfred

Lowenstein from a small airplane over the English Channel. Though eventually Lowenstein's body was discovered in the channel, Teilhet developed a far more elaborate plot involving the impossible vanishing of a man from a locked plane in midair.

THE TALKING SPARROW MURDERS

This interest in current events as sources of fiction led to Teilhet's most important novel, *The Talking Sparrow Murders*, published in 1934. At a time when most novelists, whether writers of mysteries or mainline fiction, looked on Adolf Hitler as merely a German nationalist bent on redressing the inequities of the Treaty of Versailles, Teilhet was almost alone in understanding the terror that the Nazis were creating. He had spent 1928 and 1929 in Heidelberg, and his impressions of what was happening have all the vividness of a young man's views. What he felt was not only the terror of the times but also the sadness of the loss of a great past.



Later, in explaining why he introduced controversial themes into his stories, Teilhet said that a writer must “have something deep in [himself] and . . . the need to express it. They say that applies to the important novels, to the big serious efforts and it may be true, too, I wouldn’t know. Perhaps it can apply to anything a man feels he has to write. . . .” Teilhet believed that he had to write about the rape of the Germany he loved, and he did it in a formal detective story.

The Talking Sparrow Murders, which takes place in Heidelberg, begins with an extraordinary mystery. How can a sparrow talk, and why is the man who reported the loquacious bird immediately murdered? Mystery follows mystery, not only of sudden death but also of the man who solemnly bows to a pine tree. Yet, unlike writers who used bizarre events primarily to create interest on the part of the reader, Teilhet writes of talking sparrows and other strange phenomena to introduce the theme of the story: that Heidelberg is a part of a world going mad. The Nazis are consolidating their power, and the left wing responds with equally irrational violence. How can rational detection, indeed how can humane people, exist in such a situation? Herr Polizeidirector Kresch attempts to unravel the mysteries, but one of the major suspects is the head of the local branch of the Nazi Party. Teilhet’s point is that people must remain human even if ultimately they cannot control what is happening. Teilhet did not look on fictional murder as merely providing an intellectual puzzle. Witness the opening to the chapter titled “The Live Cat and the Dead Jew,” which must be quoted in order to understand the depth of Teilhet’s anger:

It was a dead Jew, all right. . . . Most of the man’s body was a pulp of cloth and blood with a great gaping place where the cat had been at him after the Nazis finished. . . . They had thoughtfully burned the swastika sign on the Jew’s forehead before finishing with him and tossing him out in the Friedrichsallee as one of their amusing little signs of the cultural revival of Germany.

Except for the mark on the forehead and a bruise below the right eye, the Jew’s face had not been touched; it was strong and intelligent, with a sensitive nose and a firm mouth flicked up at the corner by a fi-

nal frozen grimace of agony or, perhaps, the last physical indication of a refusal to be either humiliated or frightened by torture. . . . From somewhere in the distance a clock struck out mellowly and with a curiously haunting sadness, as if it were a relic of a long forgotten past, two hours in the morning.

Such passages were strong stuff in the detective novel of the 1930’s; indeed, they would be strong stuff in novels of any time—not merely because of the repressed brutality of the language but also because, by setting the Nazi murder against a Heidelberg symbolized by the bells of an ancient clock, Teilhet shows that Nazism and fascism are modern evils, evils of propaganda and technology and hatred directed by party and state.

It is remarkable that Teilhet uses such elements to develop the plot of a fair-play detective novel. The incident of the dead Jew foreshadows a later episode in which the narrator reads a newspaper that reports three other murders. Two of the victims are named Rosenkrantz and Jacobson: “You can tell by their names what happened to them. . . . Jews attacked by the righteous Nazis.” The third victim however, has the good German name Schmitz, and because he was killed near the site of the talking sparrow, his death proves to be connected with the mystery.

Teilhet’s narrative style in *The Talking Sparrow Murders* is unusual. Occasionally the colorfulness of his prose becomes what Bill Pronzini, in reference to a later Teilhet book, calls “overripe,” but generally it is vivid and precise. The narrative viewpoint is often unexpected. The book is told in the first person by William Tatson, an American engineer living in Germany. In one scene, Tatson contrasts the unreal gaiety of a nightclub with violence of the Nazi takeover—something that would be done later in the film *Cabaret* (1972). Tatson is attacked by Willi, a homosexual Brownshirt. Playing up to Willi’s sexual interest in him, Tatson lures him to an empty room and knocks him out. Instead of describing these events directly, Tatson suddenly tells the reader that he is back in the hall remembering what has happened. No mention is made of the precise occurrences. The result is a feeling of surrealism that contributes to the sense of irrationality of the events.

The Talking Sparrow Murders was a great popular success in 1934. Dorothy L. Sayers described it as having “a queerness and fancifulness which slightly suggest the work of another American mystery writer, John Dickson Carr.” Still, the very immediacy of the book meant that its vogue would not last, and it was only in the 1980’s, with the interest in the events leading to the Holocaust, that the book had its first paperback printing.

THE TICKING TERROR MURDERS

Teilhet’s next mystery novel, *The Ticking Terror Murders* (1935), features Baron Frank Maximilian Karagoz und von Kaz, one of the few successful humorous detectives in fiction. Creating a comic sleuth is not easy, for it is difficult to maintain the balance between the amusing eccentricities of the sleuth and the fundamental seriousness of the detection. Baron von Kaz is different because the reader comes to understand why he acts as he does. The baron is imperfect; he is frequently laughable; but he has the reader’s sympathy and, by the final book in the series, the reader’s respect and affection.

The baron is not one of the infallible detectives who dominated mystery fiction of the 1930’s. His pride in his ancient Habsburg ancestry contrasts with his impetuous situation. He has had to leave Austria after involvement in a failed monarchist coup, and now he has to make a living by his wits in what he considers the uncivilized United States. He tries to impress the unsophisticated Americans by quoting Latin tags, which he has memorized for the occasion. His pride constantly gets him into difficulties, and it is only his imagination—which he distrusts—that helps him solve crimes.

THE FEATHER CLOAK MURDERS

It took Teilhet a while to develop the baron’s character. In the first book of the series, the baron is too bumbling to be acceptable as someone who can actually solve crimes. The second book, *The Feather Cloak Murders*, which Teilhet wrote in collaboration with his wife, Hildegard, is much more successful. The setting, Hawaii in the 1930’s, is carefully realized, and the baron is a much more sympathetic character. His love affair with Caryl Miquet makes the reader sympathize with him, and though he still has the foibles and foolish pride of the earlier book, he has be-

come a character with unsuspected depths. For example, when young Billy McKay is badly injured by the murderer, the baron does not try to preserve clues or interview the boy. Instead, he tenderly carries him to the house while soothing him with an old German prayer. Unfortunately, the solution to the mystery is not entirely satisfying. It depends on a suspect’s acting in an unconvincing way and on some tiny points of evidence that even the most attentive reader will miss.

THE CRIMSON HAIR MURDERS

The next novel about the baron, *The Crimson Hair Murders* (1936), does not further develop the baron’s character, though judged purely as a fair-play detective novel, it is an extraordinary performance. It is full of traps for experienced readers of detective fiction, as Darwin and Hildegard Teilhet carefully lead them to identify, wrongly, a least likely person as the culprit. The book begins on a ship off the coast of Mexico and ends with a chase across the newly constructed Golden Gate Bridge, two unexpected plot twists, and the baron’s fingering the murderer from a hospital bed.

THE BROKEN FACE MURDERS

For a book that in many ways summarizes Teilhet’s contributions to the detective novel, the final Baron von Kaz novel, *The Broken Face Murders* (1940), should be examined. The story harks back to the theme of *The Talking Sparrow Murders*. The baron has been in Vienna but was too late to prevent the Nazi takeover of his country or the execution of his friend Solomon Gruenstein, who has been killed “for no other reasons than that his nose was hooked and he worshiped as his ancestors had in the Jewish faith.” When the baron returns to America to marry Caryl Miquet, he finds that the town where he plans to spend his honeymoon is dominated by an occult society called the Atlanticians, which is a front for an American anti-Semitic movement. This organization of “real Americans” does not “have much hankering for foreigners. Mostly they’re against Jews and Communists.” The sheriff warns the baron that “it’d break my heart . . . if some of those fellers got the idea you were a subversive influence or had a lot of Jewish blood in you. You were over there fighting for some of those Jews, I hear.” Once again, Teilhet has stretched the usual limits of the fair-play detective novel to include controversial ideas.

Teilhet sugarcoats his message by keeping the comedy in the foreground. Many of the scenes are hilarious, especially when the baron's plans for his wedding night are continually interrupted. Yet, although he is still amusing, the baron has grown as a character. In contrast to the earlier personality, who depends on his self-protecting pride, the baron is no longer sure of himself. To his utter mortification, one of the suspects calls him "Baron von Kazy-Wazy," and a character named Bunny comes to understand the baron better than he does himself. Baron Franz Maximilian Karagoz und von Kaz is, Bunny realizes, "a Harlequin of jests and moods and mercurial changes. . . . This brave baron, this man of steel and sawdust, generous yet cruel, with some wisdom, and overmuch fanfarades, was born out of his time." Thus Bunny and the reader gain "a better comprehension of this man . . . touched more with sympathy and affection than amusement."

Teilhet wrote many books from 1940 until his death in 1964, including romances, spy thrillers, historical novels, and sardonic studies of modern life, and he received all the attention of a successful writer—paperback reprints, book-club editions, film adaptations, and serials in popular magazines. But his major contributions to the detective and mystery story had been made during the 1930's. In *Baron von Kaz*, he created the only humorous detective whose character has depth and complexity, and he used the fair-play, formal detective novel as a vehicle to protest against what the fascists—both in Germany and in America—were bringing to the world. No other mystery writer had the combination of storytelling ability and political sensitivity to do as well.

Douglas G. Greene

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ST. AMAND SERIES: *Murder in the Air*, 1931; *Death Flies High*, 1931

BARON VON KAZ SERIES: *The Ticking Terror Murders*, 1935; *The Feather Cloak Murders*, 1936 (with Hildegarde Tolman Teilhet); *The Crimson Hair Murders*, 1936 (with Hildegarde Tolman Teilhet); *The Broken Face Murders*, 1940 (with Hildegarde Tolman Teilhet)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Talking Sparrow Mur-*

ders, 1934; *Hero by Proxy*, 1943; *Odd Man Pays*, 1944; *The Double Agent*, 1945; *The Fear Makers*, 1945; *The Rim of Terror*, 1950; *The Marble Forest*, 1951 (with others); *The Mission of Jeffery Tollamy*, 1951; *The Unpossessed*, 1951; *Take Me as I Am*, 1952; *The Big Runaround*, 1964 (also known as *Dangerous Encounter*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Bright Destination*, 1935 (also known as *Bells on His Toes*, 1936); *Journey to the West*, 1938 (also known as *Tough Guy*, *Smart Guy*, 1939); *Trouble Is My Master*, 1942; *Retreat from the Dolphin*, 1943; *My True Love*, 1945; *Something Wonderful to Happen*, 1947; *The Happy Island*, 1950; *Steamboat on the River*, 1952; *Beautiful Humbug*, 1954; *The Lion's Skin*, 1955; *The Road to Glory*, 1956

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Skwee-Gee*, 1940 (with Hildegarde Teilhet); *Ab Carmody's Treasure*, 1948; *The Avion My Uncle Flew*, 1948; *The Hawaiian Sword*, 1956

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_____. Introduction to Teilhet's *The Talking Sparrow Murders*. New York: International Polygonics, 1985. Introduction to a reprint edition of Teilhet's mystery set in Nazi Germany discusses its relationship to history and topical fiction, as well as to the mystery and detective genre.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Very useful overview of the history and parameters of the crime-fiction genre; helps place Teilhet's work within that genre.

Teilhet, Darwin L. "How Some Adventure Stories Are and Are Not Written." *The Writer* 57 (June, 1944): 167-169. Brief piece by Teilhet that provides insight into his writing process and his thoughts about the craft of fiction.

JOSEPHINE TEY

Elizabeth Mackintosh

Born: Inverness, Scotland; June 25, 1896 or 1897**Died:** London, England; February 13, 1952**Also wrote as** Gordon Daviot**Types of plot:** Police procedural; cozy**PRINCIPAL SERIES**

Alan Grant, 1929-1952

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

ALAN GRANT, a Scotland Yard police detective, is a shrewd reader of human faces who relies on his "flair," an ingenious, intuitive knack for solving cases. Although he makes mistakes, his intelligence sets him apart from most fictional police detectives, who lack his imagination, initiative, and cosmopolitan outlook.

SERGEANT WILLIAMS, Grant's sidekick, furnishes Grant with detailed information gleaned from his meticulous investigations.

CONTRIBUTION

Although Alan Grant is a recurring character in Josephine Tey's detective novels, he is not always the main character. As in *To Love and Be Wise* (1950), he may be introduced at the beginning of a novel but not figure prominently until a crime has been committed. In *The Franchise Affair* (1948), he plays only a minor role. Tey is exceptional in not following the conventional plots of mystery and detective stories. She is more interested in human character. Grant is important insofar as he comes into contact with murder victims and suspects, but usually the human scene is fully described before Grant appears. Consequently, Tey's novels never seem driven by a mere "whodunit" psychology. She is interested, rather, in human psychology as it is revealed in the commission of a crime, a disappearance, or a case of imposture. Often readers who do not like the conventions of detective stories like Tey because her novels seem organic; that is, they grow out of what is revealed about the characters. If Tey writes mysteries, it is because human character is a mystery.

BIOGRAPHY

Josephine Tey was born Elizabeth Mackintosh in Inverness, Scotland, where she attended the Royal Academy and studied the humanities. After she was graduated, she continued course work in physical culture at the Anstey Physical College and taught the subject for several years in English schools. She gave up teaching in 1926 to look after her invalid father at their family home. As Gordon Daviot, she wrote novels, short stories, and plays. Her greatest success in the theater came with the production of *Richard of Bordeaux* (pr. 1932), based on the life of Richard III and starring John Gielgud.

In private life, Tey seemed to have few interests besides horse racing and fishing, both of which figure in her fiction. In a letter to a fellow mystery writer, she confessed that she did not read many mysteries. She was a very shy woman with few close friends. She granted no press interviews. It was characteristic of her to have lived with her fatal illness for a year before her death without telling anyone about it. She never married. The strongest women in her fiction are single, and her detective, Alan Grant, is a bachelor who shares many of his creator's interests, including a devotion to the theater.

ANALYSIS

Josephine Tey's first detective novel, *The Man in the Queue* (1929), introduced Alan Grant of Scotland Yard. Grant is a man with considerable style. As later novels indicate, he is regarded as somewhat suspect at the Yard because of his "flair." He might be just a bit too intelligent. His superiors fear that his wit may cause him to be too ingenious, to make too much of certain evidence with his fancy interpretations. Indeed, in *The Man in the Queue*, Grant's brilliance almost does lead him to the wrong conclusion. Some reviewers thought that Tey spent too much time conveying the mental processes of her detective. A greater fault of her first detective novel, however, is the stabbing of the man in the queue—which is done in public

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Josephine Tey in 1934. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

in a crowded line of people. Reviewers wondered why the man did not cry out. None of Tey's subsequent detective novels depends on gimmickry, however, and with the exception of *The Daughter of Time* (1951), Grant's thoughts are not the focus of the narrative.

The Man in the Queue also introduced Grant's sidekick, Sergeant Williams. As in the classic detective story, Williams plays a kind of Dr. Watson to Grant's Sherlock Holmes. Grant, however, is much more appreciative of Williams, his detail man, than Holmes is of Watson. Grant relies on Williams for meticulous investigations and often goes over the details to be sure that he (Grant) has not missed anything. In other words, Williams is no mere sounding board, even if he worships Grant as his hero.

BRAT FARRAR

Except for *A Shilling for Candles* (1936), Tey wrote no Alan Grant novels in the 1930's, as though to prevent him from dominating her fiction. *Brat Farrar* (1949) is about an impostor who claims to be the heir

to a huge family fortune. The heir is presumed to have committed suicide as a young boy, although the boy's body was never found. In a riveting narrative, Tey achieves the astonishing feat of getting readers to identify with the impostor, Brat Farrar, while deepening the mystery of how the heir actually met his death. As in several other novels, she raises intriguing questions about human identity, about how human beings take on roles that can both obscure and reveal reality.

TO LOVE AND BE WISE

Similarly, in *To Love and Be Wise*, an Alan Grant novel, the question at first seems to be what happened to Leslie Searle, an American photographer who has befriended an English family. He disappears on an outing with Walter Whitmore, an English radio personality who is suspected of doing away with Searle because of Searle's involvement with Whitmore's fiancée. By the time Grant becomes deeply involved in the case, the novel is half over and the reader's interest is increasingly focused on exactly who Leslie Searle was. How is it that he insinuated himself into the lives of an English family? What was there about him that made him so appealing? Grant has to pursue these questions before finally realizing that Leslie Searle is not the victim but the perpetrator of a crime.

THE DAUGHTER OF TIME

The most celebrated Alan Grant novel is *The Daughter of Time*. Grant is laid up with an injury in the hospital. He asks his close friend, the actress Martha Hallard (another regular character in the Grant series), to bring him a set of prints. Among other things, Hallard supplies him with a print of the portrait of Richard III that is on display at the National Gallery in London. Grant is stunned that Richard's keenly intelligent and compassionate face is nothing like the villain portrayed by Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More. With the assistance of an American student, Grant engages in a full-scale research project to exonerate Richard III from the charge of murdering the princes in the Tower and of being the most villainous king in English history.

The Daughter of Time has been extravagantly praised as a tour de force, a unique combination of the detective story and a work of history. It has also been disdained as a prejudiced book that libels historians for supposedly blackening Richard's name based on

insufficient or biased evidence. It is true that Tey does not offer all the evidence that has been used to confirm Richard's guilt. Worse, the novel has internal flaws. For a novelist who was usually so perceptive about human character, Tey saw only the bright side of Richard's public character and did not make allowances for the brutal age in which he lived, an age in which struggles for the throne often led to bloodshed. In Tey's favor, however, the conventions of the mystery and detective genre may also be held accountable: The form mandates that a criminal be caught. If Richard III is not the villain, then Henry VII must be. Tey's detective amasses a case against Richard's successor. Historians have other options and have conducted much closer studies of Richard III's England than can be permitted in a detective novel. Most readers have found *The Daughter of Time* to be an invigorating work of fiction, particularly appealing for the unusual interpretation of historical events, whatever credence one gives to that interpretation.

The real strength of *The Daughter of Time* lies in Tey's emphasis on Grant as an interpreter of the evidence. Although he attacks historians, his methods are not out of line with what R. G. Collingwood has recommended in *The Idea of History* (1946). In fact, Collingwood invents a detective story to explain how a historian interprets evidence. Even if Grant makes the wrong judgments of history, the important thing is that he is not content to look at secondary sources—that is, other histories of Richard III. Instead, he consults the records and documents produced during Richard's brief reign. Grant tries to use his experience as a detective, his ability to read human faces, to interpret Richard's life and work. Grant asks hard questions. He actively investigates the historical evidence and does not rely on authorities. Tey shrewdly gets readers to identify with Grant by having him slowly discover the evidence and then put it to the test of his formidable skepticism.

THE SINGING SANDS

The Daughter of Time is different from the other Grant novels in that Grant displays more confidence than he does elsewhere. In the other novels he has definite mental and physical weaknesses. Something in the English climate makes him snuffle. In *The Singing Sands* (1952), he retreats to the Scottish highlands to

steady himself; in pursuit of a murderer, he is also on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Yet is it his very vulnerability that helps him to identify with others and to see his way through to the solution of his cases.

Much of the beauty of Tey's writing derives from her love of the English and Scottish countryside. When things go awry in this charming, family-oriented world, it is absolutely imperative that the detective restore equilibrium. The scenes in *The Singing Sands* of Grant fishing in Highland streams remain vivid long after the plot of the novel is forgotten. In *Brat Farrar*, which is not part of the Grant series, Tey makes an impostor her main character and makes his identification with an English family and its home such a powerful theme that it becomes imperative that the criminal somehow be able to redeem himself—which he does by discovering the real murderer of the twin whom he has impersonated.

One of the common pitfalls of serial detective fiction is that it can become routinized and thus predictable, the detective employing the same set of gestures and methods that have proved effective and popular in previous novels. This is never so with Tey. Each case confronting Grant is unique, and he must fumble to discover the appropriate technique. Circumstances always influence the way Grant handles a case. In spite of his prodigious mental gifts, he is not presented as a great detective who is the equal of every mystery. He profits from lucky accidents, from the suggestions of others, and from the mistakes of criminals. As a result, the reader's interest is drawn to Grant's character as well as the mysteries he is trying to solve.

It is striking what a clean, highly individualized world Tey presents in her detective fiction. There are relatively few murders and gruesome incidents. The police and the other institutions of society are never seen as corrupt. Rather, it is human character that is crooked or degenerate. In other words, Tey's crimes become moral but never sociological problems. She is a keen observer of society but shies away from generalizations about class and economic structure.

MISS PYM DISPOSES

Given a sufficient interest in crime, an amateur can become a detective. Such is the case in *Miss Pym Disposes* (1946). Set in a physical education college, this

novel draws on Tey's own experience. Miss Lucy Pym is a best-selling author. She has also been a schoolmistress and now finds herself teaching temporarily at a girls' school. When she prevents a girl from cheating on an exam, she is compulsively drawn into a murder and devises an extralegal punishment for the criminal that leads to disaster. The novel is a brilliant attack on the high-and-mighty detectives who dispense their own brand of justice and are contemptuous of the police. Given the destructive way Miss Pym disposes of her case, it is no wonder that Tey did not follow this very popular novel with a sequel. Tey rejected the notion that a detective can solve case after case neatly and efficiently. As a result, she only wrote eight mystery and detective novels; each one had to be unique, and each successive novel was as carefully devised as the previous one.

During Tey's lifetime, two of her works (*A Shilling for Candles*, *The Franchise Affair*) were turned into films. The former served as the basis for Alfred Hitchcock's *Young and Innocent* (1937). *Brat Farrar*, however, was the subject of two adaptations, first as a television movie for the British Broadcasting Corporation, and then as part of the network's perennially popular *Mystery!* series.

Though Tey died in the mid-twentieth century, her works were still in print at the turn of the century. Her crowning achievement, *The Daughter of Time*, which had been recorded for posterity by Derek Jacobi, had been digitally remastered and released in late 2000. Few mystery writers, past or present, have written with such diversity or originality; Tey's small body of work has more than withstood the test of time.

Carl Rollyson

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and

Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

ALAN GRANT SERIES: *The Man in the Queue*, 1929 (as Daviot; also known as *Killer in the Crowd*); *A Shilling for Candles*, 1936; *The Franchise Affair*, 1948; *To Love and Be Wise*, 1950; *The Daughter of Time*, 1951; *The Singing Sands*, 1952

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Miss Pym Disposes*, 1946; *Brat Farrar*, 1949 (also known as *Come and Kill Me*)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS (AS DAVIOT): *Kif: An Unvarnished History*, 1929; *The Expensive Halo*, 1931; *The Privateer*, 1952

PLAYS (AS DAVIOT): *Richard of Bordeaux*, pr. 1932; *Queen of Scots*, pr., pb. 1934; *The Laughing Woman*, pr., pb. 1934; *The Stars Bow Down*, pr., pb. 1939; *Leith Sands, and Other Short Plays*, pb. 1946; *The Little Dry Thorn*, pr. 1947; *Valerius*, pr. 1948; *Dickon*, pb. 1953; *Plays*, pb. 1953-1954; *Sweet Coz*, pb. 1954

RADIO PLAYS (AS DAVIOT): *Leith Sands*, 1941; *Mrs. Fry Has a Visitor*, 1944; *The Three Mrs. Madderleys*, 1944; *Remember Caesar*, 1946; *The Pen of My Aunt*, 1950; *The Pomp of Mr. Pomfret*, 1954; *Cornelia*, 1955

NONFICTION (AS DAVIOT): *Claverhouse*, 1937

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ROSS THOMAS

Born: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; February 19, 1926

Died: Santa Monica, California; December 18, 1995

Also wrote as Oliver Bleeck

Types of plot: Espionage; amateur sleuth; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Mac McCorkle and Mike Padillo, 1966-1990

Philip St. Ives, 1969-1976

Artie Wu and Quincy Durant, 1978-1992

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MAC MCCORKLE, the undescribed viewpoint character, is probably in his late thirties as the McCorkle and Padillo series begins. With Mike Padillo, he runs a saloon first in Bonn and then in Washington, D.C. Mac's Place features high prices, low lights, and honest drinks. A typical understated American, Mac was behind the lines in Burma during World War II and can handle himself in a fight when necessary. His bonding to his partner and his commitment to finishing the dirty work so that he can return to drinking motivate his actions.

MIKE PADILLO, half-Estonian and half-Spanish, with a facility for languages and violence, is blackmailed into military intelligence during World War II and into working for an unnamed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) competitor after the war. All he wants is

to run a good saloon, but Mac's Place provides his cover as well. Cynical and suspicious, he wants to come in out of the cold but is not allowed to do so. His relationship with Mac is a tribute to male bonding.

PHILIP ST. IVES is a former newspaper columnist who has a wide acquaintance with shady characters. He uses that knowledge to act as a go-between in ransoming stolen objects, in the process finding himself obliged to solve the crimes involved, although he is loyal to the criminals until they deceive him in some way.

MYRON GREENE is St. Ives's attorney and accountant. A corporate lawyer with a taste for flashy clothes and cars, he would not be caught dead trying a case in court but revels in his connection to the seamy life through St. Ives. Cases usually come in through Greene.

ARTIE WU is more than six feet tall and weighs nearly 250 pounds. The illegitimate son of the illegitimate daughter of the last Manchu emperor and semiserious claimant to the throne, he met Quincy Durant in an orphanage, and they have been partners in crime ever since. An expert in classical con games, he is the planner of the pair. He is married, with two sets of twins.

QUINCY DURANT, tall, thin, and nervous as a coiled spring, is the action man, although his talent as a planner of con games is not to be despised either. His love life usually complicates things.

OTHERGUY OVERBY is so called because when the gaff is blown, it is always “the other guy” who is left holding the bag. An experienced con man, Otherguy gives the impression he might sell out the partnership, but he never quite does.

CONTRIBUTION

Ross Thomas made the dark side of the worlds of politics, finance, and espionage as familiar to readers as the headlines in their daily newspapers. Crossing the mean, dark streets lined with executive suites and using the eye of a reporter and the tongue of an adder with a malicious sense of humor, he made the reader feel like an eavesdropper in the halls of power, often using the inside political manipulator as hero. As Oliver Bleek, Thomas invented a new occupation for amateur sleuth Philip St. Ives. As a professional go-between, St. Ives dabbled in crimes ranging from art theft to Cold War double-crosses.

BIOGRAPHY

Ross Elmore Thomas was born on February 19, 1926 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to J. Edwin Thomas and Laura (née Dean) Thomas. He began his education as a thriller writer while a reporter on the *Daily Oklahoman* in his hometown before serving as a U.S. Army infantryman in the Philippines during World War II. After he graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1949, he directed public relations for the National Farmers Union and later for the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Thomas managed election campaigns in the United States for two union presidents, for a Republican Senate nominee and for a Democratic governor of Colorado. Interestingly, he also advised an African leader who was running for the post of prime minister in Nigeria, though without success.

Thomas covered Bonn, Germany, for the Armed Forces Network in the late 1950's, and served as a consultant/political mastermind to the United States government from 1964 to 1966 before publishing his first thriller, *The Cold War Swap* (1966), a book that won the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1967. In 1974, he married Rosalie Appleton. He always cast a cynical eye on institutions

and society at home and abroad, dissecting both with the wit of a morgue attendant and a wiretapper's ear for dialogue. *Briarpatch* (1984) won Thomas another Edgar Award in 1985, and *Chinaman's Chance* (1978) was selected by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association as one of the One Hundred Favorite Mysteries of the Century. Thomas served a term as president of the Mystery Writers of America. Thomas died in 1995 in Santa Monica, California.

ANALYSIS

If Ross Thomas needed any apprenticeship in writing fiction, he served it during his year as reporter, public relations man, and political manager. His first novel, *The Cold War Swap*, was published three years after John le Carré's pathbreaking *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) captured the attention of readers by inverting the morality of the espionage novel. In his first offering, Thomas showed that he was already a master of the Hobbesian world of espionage double-cross, where every man is against every other, the only rule is survival, and the agents from both sides are more sympathetic characters than their masters. His hero, Mike Padillo, is a fully “amortized agent”—the agency's investment in him has long since paid off handsomely. He is to be traded to the Soviets for a pair of gay National Security Agency defectors. His triumph, if it can be called that, is in carrying out his mission without falling into the hands of either side.

Thomas's universe is not the weary world of fallen empire inhabited by Le Carré's neurasthenic heroes but the permanently rotten one invented by the creators of the hard-boiled American detective. In it, few men (and fewer women) are loyal, everything is for sale, and everything is connected—in the worst possible way. His men are professionals whose only pride is in their professionalism and their survival. They survive because a few people have followed E. M. Forster's advice to remain loyal to their friends rather than to their nation, or because they can buy aid from those who have no loyalties. Heroes cannot reform Thomas's world, but the quick or the unprincipled can manipulate it, briefly, in pursuit of the ancient triad of money, power, and sex.

CAST A YELLOW SHADOW AND THE SINGAPORE WINK

Thomas's area of specialization was the world of the double-cross—espionage, politics, and the con game. His viewpoint characters are men of a certain age and experience who can handle themselves in the boardroom, battle, or boudoir. Journalists, former spies, and political insiders, his heroes come in two kinds, those who, like the cowboy, do not go looking for trouble, and those who, like the private eye, do—for money. Those who do not go willingly into trouble have to be blackmailed into doing the job, and their only recompense is money, lots of it, and peace and quiet until the next time. In *Cast a Yellow Shadow* (1967), Mike Padillo agrees to assassinate the prime minister of a white-ruled African nation after Mac's wife is kidnapped. In *The Singapore Wink* (1969), Edward Cauthorne, former Hollywood stuntman and current dealer in vintage cars, agrees to go to Singapore to locate a man for the mob after several of his cars are vandalized. Hoods have also crushed the hands of Sidney Durant, his twenty-year-old body man, by repeatedly slamming a car door on them.

Those who do go willingly into trouble include con men Artie Wu and Quincy Durant, go-between Philip St. Ives, and a miscellaneous crew of journalists and political consultants whose job descriptions cannot be easily distinguished from those of the con men. The professionals cannot be distinguished in their expertise from the amateurs either, and the survival of all depends on quick reflexes fueled by low cunning, inside knowledge, and lashings of untraceable money.

Thomas invents female characters who are as capable of violence, lust, greed, and chicanery as the men; they may be physically weaker, but they make up for it. Although they are usually subsidiary characters in the typical women's roles of secretary or assistant, there are exceptions. Georgia Blue (*Out on the Rim*, 1987) is a former Secret Service agent who has a role equal to the men's in persuading the Filipino revolutionary to retire to Hong Kong, and Wanda Gothar (*The Backup Men*, 1971) is an experienced member of a family that has been involved in espionage since the Napoleonic era. If the women are older, they are capable of the exercise of power, such as Gladys Citron

(*Missionary Stew*, 1983), West Coast editor of a *National Enquirer*-type newspaper and former Office of Strategic Services officer decorated personally by Charles de Gaulle for killing three dozen Germans. Realistically, most of the older women exercise power as wives or widows, and they do it by manipulation, at which they are as adept as the men around them. All Thomas's characters like sex the way they like food or drink.

THE SEERSUCKER WHIPSAW

Perhaps because southerners have traditionally had verbal skills that take them into politics, or because Thomas is from the edge of the South, many of his political characters are convincing southern gothics whose careers would enliven the duller work of academic sociology. The seersucker-suited Clinton Shartelle, hired to manage the political campaign of the African chief Sunday Akomolo in *The Seersucker Whipsaw* (1967), describes his life in Denver to his associate, Peter Upshaw:

I lived here in a house with my daddy and a lady friend from 1938 to 1939. Not too far from that ball park which is—you might have noticed—a somewhat blighted area. It was a plumb miserable neighborhood even then. I was sixteen-seventeen years old. My daddy and I had come out here from Oklahoma City in the fall driving a big, black 1929 LaSalle convertible sedan. We checked in at the Brown Palace and my daddy got himself a lease on a section of land near Walsenburg, found himself a rig and crew, and drilled three of the deepest dry holes you ever saw.

Shartelle's story goes on for several pages, and before he has finished, Thomas has involved the reader in a three-dimensional character whose childhood has produced a man of flexible morals with a gift of gab that could charm a sheriff bent on eviction or an outraged creditor. He is a man drawn to political manipulation just as naturally as steel filings are drawn to a magnet.

The minor characters Thomas creates are as fully drawn as the major ones. The reader comes to understand them as clearly as he understands his own quirky relatives. The reader can never tell, however, whether the cab driver whose long life story Thomas relates will take his tip and disappear from the pages of the book, or

whether he will play a larger part of the story. The characters are so engaging in their frankly seamy humanity that the reader is simply happy to meet them, even if only briefly. Certain minor character types, such as the Village Wise Man or Fixer, reappear in successive books. One of the Fixer types is David "Slippery" Slipper, white-haired and seventy-five, who

had been, at various times, a New Deal White House aide, or to hear him tell it, "Harry Hopkins's office boy"; a spy of sorts for the wartime Office of Strategic Services; a syndicated columnist (121 daily newspapers); a biographer of the iron-willed Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas Brackett (Czar) Reed; an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture (six months); a deputy Undersecretary of the Interior (ninety days); ambassador to Chad (one year, "the longest year of my life," he later said); and for the past fifteen years a political fixer and consultant who charged outrageous fees for his sensible, hardheaded advice.

After several more detailed paragraphs about Slippery, Thomas has him tell the hero to drop his investigation and he disappears forever from *Missionary Stew*. These categories are not exclusively male. Señora Madelena de Romanones plays both the Village Wise Woman and Fixer characters in *Cast a Yellow Shadow*.

THE MORDIDA MAN AND OUT ON THE RIME

Thomas's spies and spymasters are painted as ridiculous and two-faced. The reader can never tell who is on which side, as even the hero is not always committed to conventional morality. The double-crosses come fast and furious, and the reader will always be wise to expect one more, unless he has just read the last line of the book. Thomas's male characters like fast, expensive cars, exotic weapons, and fast, exotic women. When he is setting up the story, Thomas can "tell the tale" better than any con man alive. His political manipulators are heroes as often as they are villains, and his union officials are simply normal men with a normal lust for power and money, not Working Class Heroes or Red Revolutionaries. In fact, his revolutionaries are normal men with normal lusts. The Libyans in *The Mordida Man* (1981) finally accept revenge when they cannot obtain the return of a kidnapped terrorist, and, in *Out on the Rim*,

the aging Filipino rebel Alejandro Espiritu becomes so power-mad that he executes his own nephew without remorse, allowing Wu and Durant to carry out their mission to remove him (and keep a large portion of the money they were supposed to have used to bribe him).

Thomas has a crime reporter's eye for concrete details such as the exact age of a building (and often its history), the number of steps in a flight of stairs, and the number of an airline flight and the precise number of minutes takeoff is delayed. This use of detail creates a sense of reality so palpable that the reader can almost taste the dirt on the cement. Thomas's style, directly descended from the colorful speech of the oral tradition, is so wry and amusing that he makes the reader regret the homogenization of American English by television announcers and bureaucratic memorandum writers. His dialogue is realistic, and conversation between male friends, such as McCorkle and Padillo or Wu and Durant, is as elliptical as the exchange of a couple who have been married for fifty years.

Thomas takes his plots from the front pages of the daily papers, using his experience to invent an inside story that is more treacherous than reality. In *Yellow-Dog Contract* (1976), political campaign manager Harvey Longmore comes out of retirement to investigate the disappearance of a nationally known union leader. *The Porkchoppers* (1972) investigates a crooked, no-holds-barred union election. In *The Mordida Man*, the president's brother, a slick political manager, has been kidnapped by the Libyans. In *Out on the Rim*, Wu and Durant become entangled in the guerrilla war in the Philippines; with an immediacy unmatched by the experts who write for the op-ed pages, Thomas depicts the violence and corruption that plague that former American colony.

THE PHILIP ST. IVES BOOKS

When Thomas writes as Oliver Bleeck, his voice is more serious, and the Philip St. Ives stories are closer to classical mysteries, but the characters are as closely observed and as colorful as they are in the Ross Thomas books. The crime situations allow him to include overweight, overworked, and underpaid cops, whose lives are as disorderly as they are human, and St. Ives is more nearly a hard-boiled, if amateur, detective, whose own

life in a seedy New York residence hotel is not any more orderly than anybody else's. He is as competent and as tricky as Thomas's other heroes, but his soul is darker than the souls of the enthralling manipulators who find real joy—and profit—in the tawdry world around them.

In his books, Thomas has invented a complex world of greed, lust, and chicanery where inside knowledge and money are the only security, a world of betrayal where the quick and flexible may, for a while, stay alive, find a good woman, and come out a bit ahead—and maybe even get in a few licks for the good guys in the process.

Marilynn M. Larew
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MAC McCORKEL AND MIKE PADILLO SERIES:

The Cold War Swap, 1966 (also known as *Spy in the Vodka*); *Cast a Yellow Shadow*, 1967; *The Backup Men*, 1971; *Twilight at Mac's Place*, 1990

PHILIP ST. IVES SERIES: *The Brass Go-Between*, 1969; *Protocol for a Kidnapping*, 1971; *The Procane Chronicle*, 1971 (also known as *The Thief Who Painted Sunlight and St. Ives*); *The Highbinders*, 1974; *No Questions Asked*, 1976

ARTIE WU AND QUINCY DURANT SERIES: *China-man's Chance*, 1978; *Out on the Rim*, 1987; *Voodoo, Ltd.*, 1992

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Seersucker Whipsaw*, 1967; *The Singapore Wink*, 1969; *The Fools in Town Are on Our Side*, 1971; *The Porkchoppers*, 1972; *If You Can't Be Good*, 1973; *The Money Harvest*, 1975; *Yellow-Dog Contract*, 1976; *The Eighth Dwarf*, 1979; *The Mordida Man*, 1981; *Missionary Stew*, 1983; *Briarpatch*, 1984; *Spies, Thumbsuckers, Etc.*, 1989; *The Fourth Durango*, 1989; *Ah, Treachery*, 1994

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAY: *Hammett*, 1983 (with Dennis O'Flaherty and Thomas Pope)

NONFICTION: *Warriors for the Poor: The Story of VISTA*, 1969 (with William H. Crook); *Cop World: Inside an American Police Force*, 1985

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Hiss, Tony. "Remembering Ross Thomas." *The Atlantic Monthly* 278, no. 5 (November, 1996): 117. Tribute to the late author by a writer known for his biographies and social commentary.

Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Reality of Espionage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, a former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares fictional spies to actual intelligence agents. Gives perspective to Thomas's writing, although he is not directly discussed.

Kelly, R. Gordon. *Mystery Fiction and Modern Life*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998. Examines the parallels between real life and detective fiction. Contains brief analysis of Thomas's work.

Roth, Marty. *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. A post-structural analysis of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction. Examines 138 short stories and works from the 1840's to the 1960's. Mentions Thomas and helps place him in context.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Contains a chapter on crime thrillers that sheds light on Thomas's work.

JIM THOMPSON

Born: Anadarko, Oklahoma Territory; September 27, 1906

Died: Hollywood, California; April 7, 1977

Types of plot: Inverted; hard-boiled; psychological

CONTRIBUTION

Jim Thompson brought a level of psychological realism to crime novels seldom achieved by writers in that or any other genre. He explored the criminal mind in chilling and powerful first-person narrations, presenting the ordinary world through the eyes of brutal and brutalized killers to whom commonplace morality and rules of behavior do not apply. Thompson's killers tell their stories and describe their savage behavior without entirely losing the reader's sympathy and understanding, yet Thompson did not justify or excuse his criminals because of their warped environments, nor did he maintain the reader's sympathy by providing his killers with unusually despicable victims. He achieved something much more difficult: He persuasively presented a world that causes readers to suspend their ordinary moral judgments as too simplistic and abstract to apply to the margins of society inhabited by his characters.

BIOGRAPHY

Jim Thompson's childhood was quite unconventional, according to his wife, Alberta. Born James Myers Thompson, he grew up in Oklahoma, Texas, and Nebraska, where his brilliant and charismatic but erratic father first triumphed and then hit the bottom in one career after another, finally going bankrupt in oil after having made millions. Jim Thompson shared his father's brilliance and his inability to establish order in his life. While still in high school, he began his long struggle with alcohol, despairing at the meaninglessness of life and generating a self-destructive rage at the stupidity and parochialism of society around him.

He attended the University of Nebraska for a few years and married Alberta there in 1931. To feed his wife and three children during the Great Depression, he worked in hotels, oil fields, collection agencies, and

vegetable fields. He had had his first story published at the age of fifteen and earned extra money by writing true-crime stories, character sketches, and vignettes of his experiences with the down-and-out people around him. His appointment in the late 1930's as director of the Oklahoma Writers Project inspired him to break into the larger publishing world. He wrote two excellent novels, *Now and on Earth* (1942) and *Heed the Thunder* (1946), but despite praise from critics, neither book sold. Thompson worked on several major newspapers and briefly served as editor-in-chief of *Saga* magazine.

In 1949 he wrote his first mystery, *Nothing More than Murder*. It was followed by a string of mysteries, written rapidly and in streaks: Twelve books appeared between 1952 and 1954.

Hindered by alcoholism and never financially secure, Thompson always tapped the writing markets available to him. In the 1950's he collaborated on two screenplays for films directed by Stanley Kubrick, *The Killing* (1956) and *Paths of Glory* (1957), and wrote for several television series. He lived for his writing, Alberta said, and after strokes ended that part of his life, he deliberately starved himself to death, by her account. At the time of his death—April 7, 1977—none of his books was in print in the United States.

Yet Thompson was not forgotten. Several films were made from his books, including *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) in 1976, *The Getaway* (1959) in 1972, *Série Noire* in 1979 (based on the novel *A Hell of a Woman*, 1954), *Coup de Torchon* in 1981 (based on the novel *Pop. 1280*, 1964), *After Dark, My Sweet* (1955) in 1990, *The Grifters* (1963) in 1990, and *Hit Me* in 1996 (based on the novel *A Swell-Looking Babe*, 1954). In the 1980's, publishers began reprinting Thompson's works. They found a market among those who remembered his paperback originals and among members of a new generation who responded to his nihilistic vision of life. Ten years after Thompson's death, most of his novels were back in print, and many of his more famous works remained in print in the twenty-first century.

ANALYSIS

Diversity of themes and settings characterizes Jim Thompson's paperback originals. He wrote fictionalized autobiography, explored the unstable, high-pressure world of confidence rackets, and used the hard-boiled crime style to write black comedy, including a comic masterpiece, *Pop. 1280*.

Thompson's crime novels also take up diverse social themes. As John Steinbeck described the plight of Okies forced off their land and surviving through hard work and strength of character, the Oklahoma-born Thompson portrayed another class of southwestern people, often long detached from the land, living by their wits and luck on the margins of society. In terse paragraphs he described the social and economic impact of soil erosion, the betrayal of the people by railroad corruption, the shenanigans of corrupt politicians, and the human costs of the communist witch-hunt of the 1950's. He explored the constricted lives of sharecroppers and the plight of Indians (*Cropper's Cabin*, 1952), the disease of alcoholism (*The Alcoholics*, 1953), and the source and nature of black rage (*Nothing but a Man*, 1970; *Child of Rage*, 1972).

THE KILLER INSIDE ME

Thompson's reputation and rediscovery rests above all on his unparalleled ability to portray a killer's mind, often in powerful first-person narrations by a disintegrating criminal personality. Deputy Sheriff Lou Ford, who narrates *The Killer Inside Me*, stands out from the people around him only because he is friendlier and nicer. His quiet, smiling exterior masks inner rage:

I've loafed around the streets sometimes, leaned against a store front with my hat pushed back and one boot hooked back around the other.

Hell, you've probably seen me if you've ever been out this way—I've stood like that, looking nice and friendly and stupid, like I wouldn't piss if my pants were on fire. And all the time I'm laughing myself sick inside. Just watching the people.

Ford, a brilliant young man hiding behind a mask of bland, cliché-spouting stupidity, knows that he is sick. He gently explains to a young delinquent whom he has befriended and is preparing to kill that straight society, while tolerating terrible social injustices, has no place

for people like the young man, who commit minor transgressions:

They don't like you guys, and they crack down on you. And the way it looks to me they're going to be cracking down harder and harder as time goes on. You ask me why I stick around, knowing the score, and it's hard to explain. I guess I kind of got a foot on both fences, Johnnie. I planted 'em there early and now they've taken root, and I can't move either way and I can't jump. All I can do is wait until I split. Right down the middle. That's all I can do.

Ford describes the widening split within him. He does not carry a gun: "People are people, even when they're a little misguided," he says. "You don't hurt them, they won't hurt you. They'll listen to reason." Reason vanishes, however, when he goes to the home of Joyce Lakeland, a pretty young woman engaged in minor prostitution. He tells her to keep her hustling low-key or leave town; she hits him; he beats her unconscious but, once awake, she responds to him sexually, pulling him into a sadomasochistic relationship.

As Ford is drawn to her again and again, he feels "the sickness" returning. He had been sexually abused as a child and had himself molested young girls, for which his brother had been blamed and imprisoned. Now as the sickness returns, he struggles to hold himself together. "I knew she was making me worse; I knew that if I didn't stop soon I'd never be able to. I'd wind up in a cage or the electric chair." He finally (apparently) beats Joyce to death, a crime that sets off a chain of events forcing him to kill person after person, including his longtime sweetheart. The sickness gains increasing control. A drifter threatens to expose him: "I grinned, feeling a little sorry for him. It was funny the way these people kept asking for it. . . . Why'd they all have to come to me to get killed? Why couldn't they kill themselves?" In the end, he deliberately walks into a trap and brings his story to a powerful, fiery climax:

Yeah, I reckon that's all unless our kind gets another chance in the Next Place. Our kind. Us people.

All of us that started the game with a crooked cue, that wanted so much and got so little, that meant so good and did so bad.

POP. 1280

Thompson explored the criminal mind in other books. In *Pop. 1280*, Nick Corey, high sheriff of a county in a Southern state, tells his story. The sheriff's job allows him to pursue his favorite activities: eating, sleeping, and bedding women. The voters ask little from him except that he entertain them with his bland ignorance. They enjoy making fun of him, thinking that he is too stupid to understand. As an election approaches, however, some voters want action. Nick begins to clean things up in his own way, first offhandedly shooting a couple of pimps who were making a nuisance of themselves, then engaging in a string of murders to hide his crime. In the end, Nick decides that he is probably Christ, sent by God to "promote" sinners to Glory by killing them.

The disturbing element in Thompson's work comes partly because it rings true; it explains the newspaper stories of bland, quiet people who turn into serial killers. Thompson's world is frightening also because he has a peculiar ability to describe the mind of brutal killers while retaining the reader's sympathy for them. They are victims themselves, sometimes brutalized as children, sometimes racked by alcoholism and poverty, sometimes, as in the case of Lou Ford, losing a desperate struggle to hold onto mental stability. All live in a world that has given little but suffering to them or their victims.

There is no moral center in the world Thompson presents. Concepts of right and wrong are not applicable; platitudes about crime not paying are meaningless. The moral structure that adequately guides most people through life seems shallow and remote in Thompson's world; simple problems of surface morality are not what his characters confront. Psychiatrists cannot understand people such as him, Lou Ford says:

We might have the disease, the condition; or we might just be cold-blooded and smart as hell; or we might be innocent of what we're supposed to have done. We might be any one of those three things, because the symptoms we show would fit any one of the three.

Insanity, guilt, and innocence dissolve into the same behavior.

AFTER DARK, MY SWEET AND THE GETAWAY

Thompson does not relieve the reader's fear by bringing in detectives to tidy matters up and reestablish moral norms. Nor does he use love or friendship to lighten the world his characters inhabit. The love that William "Kid" Collins feels for Fay Anderson in *After Dark, My Sweet* (1955) requires him, a mentally unstable former boxer, deliberately to provoke Fay into killing him; only in that way can he save her. In *The Getaway*, Carter "Doc" McCoy and Carol McCoy, who love each other and are married, commit robbery and murder and make a run across the United States for the Mexican border. Their love is eroded by the knowledge that if extreme conditions have pushed them into killing once, they can kill again, even each other. At the end, figuratively, perhaps literally, in Hell, each is trying to kill the other to avoid being killed.

A BLEAK WORLD

The world sketched by Thompson is bleak, marked by random violence and undeserved suffering. Life reminds Kid Collins of a concrete pasture: "You keep going and going, and it's always the same everywhere. Wherever you've been, wherever you go, everywhere you look. Just grayness and hardness, as far as you can see." Perhaps, Lou Ford hopes, there will be something better in the Next Place, but there seems little promise of that. God is not dead, says the young black man, Allen Smith, in *Child of Rage*:

Madmen never die. . . . He is still in business on the same old corner. I have seen him there myself, showering riches on rascals, and tendering dung and piss to widows and orphans and stealing pennies from blind men. . . . The Lord . . . is patently as nutty as a god-damned bedbug.

The power of Thompson's writing, whether he is portraying the bleak world of a disintegrating personality or the black comedy of a con man pursuing his swindle, comes from his simple, direct narration. Even in his third-person stories, he keeps the focus so tightly bound to the central character's viewpoint that the external world is warped into a personal vision. Thompson experimented with shifting viewpoints in some novels. In *The Criminal* (1953) and *The Kill-Off* (1957), he uses multiple first-person narrators. In *A Hell of a Woman*,

multiple narrative comes from different parts of Frank "Dolly" Dillon's disintegrating personality, with two endings of the novel interchanging line by line, describing Dolly's castration in one and his suicide in another.

Thompson wrote rapidly, polishing page by page as he wrote, and his publisher Arnold Hano recalls that he found it difficult to rewrite. Sometimes he was so drained by the end of a book that he tacked on a hasty conclusion simply to get it over with. If some endings are weak, others are extraordinarily strong: Mafia hit man Charles "Little" Bigger longing for death as his lover hacks him to pieces (*Savage Night*, 1953); the disintegration of Dolly Dillon's life in drugs, alcohol, and insanity; the violent and sad end of Lou Ford, who seeks death to end his sickness; the hell in which Doc and Carol McCoy find themselves; the melancholy of a brooding Nick Corey, who, having come to view himself as Jesus Christ carrying out God's will by killing sinners, confesses, in the last line, "I don't no more know what to do than if I was just another lousy human being!"

William E. Pemberton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1949-1960 • *Nothing More than Murder*, 1949; *Cropper's Cabin*, 1952; *The Killer Inside Me*, 1952; *Bad Boy*, 1953; *Recoil*, 1953; *Savage Night*, 1953; *The Alcoholics*, 1953; *The Criminal*, 1953; *A Hell of a Woman*, 1954; *A Swell-Looking Babe*, 1954; *Roughneck*, 1954; *The Golden Gizmo*, 1954; *The Nothing Man*, 1954; *After Dark, My Sweet*, 1955; *The Kill-Off*, 1957; *Wild Town*, 1957; *The Getaway*, 1959

1961-1988 • *The Transgressors*, 1961; *The Grifters*, 1963; *Pop. 1280*, 1964; *Texas by the Tail*, 1965; *Ironside*, 1967; *South of Heaven*, 1967; *The Undefeated*, 1969; *Nothing but a Man*, 1970; *Child of Rage*, 1972; *King Blood*, 1973; *The Ripoff*, 1985; *Fireworks: The Lost Writings of Jim Thompson*, 1988

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Now and on Earth*, 1942; *Heed the Thunder*, 1946

SCREENPLAYS: *The Killing*, 1956 (with Stanley Kubrick); *Paths of Glory*, 1957 (with Kubrick and Calder Willingham)

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Horsley, Lee. *The Noir Thriller*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Scholarly, theoretically informed study of the thriller genre. Uses Thompson extensively, covering a dozen of his novels, from *Nothing More than Murder* to *Child of Rage*.

McCauley, Michael J. *Jim Thompson: Sleep with the Devil*. New York: Mysterious Press, 1991. McCauley calls Thompson "America's greatest noir writer" and endeavors to explain how he achieved that lofty status.

Pepper, Andrew. *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Examination of the representation and importance of various categories of identity in mainstream American crime fiction. Sheds light on Thompson's work.

Polito, Robert. "Jim Thompson: Lost Writer." In *Fireworks: The Lost Writings of Jim Thompson*. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1988. Discussion of unpublished and otherwise "lost" manuscripts and what they add to Thompson's oeuvre.

_____. *Savage Art: A Biography of Jim Thompson*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. Massive, comprehensive biography of Thompson, his work, and both his public and private lives. Bibliographic references and index.

Sallis, James. *Difficult Lives: Jim Thompson, David Goodis, Chester Himes*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Gryphon Books, 1993. Brief monograph comparing the works of three hard-boiled writers.

Yarbrough, Trisha. "Jim Thompson's Rural Pulp Fiction." In *Dark Alleys of Noir*, edited by Jack O'Connell. Vashon Island, Wash.: Paradoxa, 2002. Looks at Thompson's relatively unusual choice to set pulp tales outside the big city.

CHARLES TODD

Born: Place and date unknown

Type of plot: Historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Inspector Ian Rutledge, 1996-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR IAN RUTLEDGE is a haunted, shell-shocked World War I veteran of the western front in France who has returned to his prewar position at Scotland Yard. His senior officer, Superintendent Bowles, keeps dispatching him to cases all over the British Isles.

SUPERINTENDENT BOWLES is an insecure, risen-through-the-ranks police officer who resents the influx of university-trained new blood at Scotland Yard and takes credit for the accomplishments of his subordinates to advance his own career.

CONTRIBUTION

Even though they are Americans, like Elizabeth George and Martha Grimes, the authors who use the pen name Charles Todd write mysteries set in Great Britain with British police officers and characters. The anonymous mother-and-son team who write as Todd established their credentials beginning with *A Test of Wills* (1996), which follows the series' central character as he restarts his career as an inspector at Scotland Yard. Severely shell-shocked during his tour of duty in France during World War I, Inspector Rutledge suffers from hearing the voice of Hamish MacLeod, a Scottish corporal under his command whom Rutledge had executed for refusing to obey an order, an order Rutledge knew was going to be suicidal to his men. Todd's skill in incorporating MacLeod's monologues into the fabric of Rutledge's suffering and the details of the plots gives this series a psychological dimension often missing in series crime fiction.

The setting—Great Britain in the immediate aftermath of the war—allows Todd to explore the historical period and the changes brought about by the upheaval of the war and its impact on not only the returning soldiers but also the civilian population. The accuracy of

the series' historical detail, the nuances of the characters' speech as well as their emotional depth, make the novels remarkable, especially given that they are written by two American authors.

BIOGRAPHY

Charles Todd is the pseudonym of a mother-and-son mystery writing team (Caroline Todd and Charles Todd) who have so closely guarded their privacy they have not revealed their actual names or their residences, except to say that they live on the East Coast. Even their joint authorship was not acknowledged until the year 2000, around the publication of their fourth novel, *Legacy of the Dead*.

The genesis for the series came from their travels throughout England and to the battlefields of France. The character Ian Rutledge came about simply because they wanted to create a character they themselves would like reading about. Rutledge is a little like two other characters who also experienced lingering postwar trauma, Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey and Agatha Christie's Captain Hastings. The immediate postwar setting provided an opportunity to examine the past and to make the past and present overlap, reflecting the authors' interest in history. Besides, they have said that they had an uncle/great uncle who flew in World War I, and he aroused an interest in the period. The academic training of the authors who write as Todd also helped to shape the novels. The mother was an undergraduate English and history major and has a graduate degree in international relations, and the son has studied communications and culinary arts and history, especially the American Civil War and both world wars.

The publication of the first Todd novel came about quite by accident when the mother-and-son team sent a copy of *A Test of Wills* to St. Martin's. The publisher accepted the manuscript and the book did well enough for it to solicit another. The team has continued to produce novels in the Ian Rutledge series and also wrote a nonseries novel.

The mother-and-son team's books have garnered an impressive listing of awards and nominations. For

example, their first Ian Rutledge novel was nominated for a John Creasey Award, an Edgar, an Anthony, and an Independent Mystery Booksellers Association Dilys Award, and it won the Barry Award from *Deadly Pleasures* magazine. Subsequent novels in the series also have garnered nominations and awards.

ANALYSIS

Ian Rutledge is a university-trained police officer who volunteered for service at the beginning of World War I, referred to as the Great War in Britain. Somewhat miraculously, he survives the horrors of the western front although he loses both his idealism and his will to live. During the Somme offensive in 1916 he is given a routine assignment to destroy a machine gun emplacement, and his corporal, Scot Hamish MacLeod, refuses to lead his men over the top to attack the Germans. A good and loyal soldier until then, MacLeod explains that he can no longer willingly order his men to certain death. Because he refused an order in combat, MacLeod is sentenced to immediate execution by Rutledge, and at dawn the next day a firing squad carries out the order. Rutledge dispatches the coup de grâce. Seconds later he and his men are hit by an artillery shell, burying him alive. When he is dug out, he is suffering from shell shock and is sent home. His sister, Frances, removes him from a military hospital to a private clinic, where through the understanding care of a clinic doctor, Rutledge begins his long road to recovery.

After Rutledge's discharge, he returns to Scotland Yard, the only occupation at which he thinks he is good. There, under the ever-watchful eye of Chief Superintendent Bowles, who both hates him and fears him because of his university education and war service, Rutledge is given a series of risky, potentially career-stalling assignments aiding various murder investigations outside London to induce him to crack under the strain or to embarrass him into resigning because of his incompetence. Bowles's machinations play on Rutledge's insecurities about regaining the prewar detective skills he fears he may have lost because of his precarious mental condition. His recurring memories of the war and its horrors are often triggered by inconsequential daily events or smells or

sounds, and more frighteningly by the sound of Hamish MacLeod's voice, which can echo in his mind at any time, frequently at very awkward moments. The voice of MacLeod sometimes serves as a moral guide or as a cautionary reminder and also acts as a foil for Rutledge's intuition.

The mother-and-son team known as Charles Todd set each of the first ten Rutledge novels in a different part of Great Britain, always outside London, usually in a village or small town or some rather remote rural location. Although Todd moves the settings of the novels around in this way, the locales do tend to be rather the same. Hamlets with close-knit inhabitants, often related by blood or marriage; ancient feuds that bring past slights or injuries into the present; and locals who distrust the outsider, the "man from London," who has been sent to interfere in their lives. The distrust of outsiders is usually personified by the local chief constable, who feels Rutledge's presence to be an intrusion into his turf. Also in each of the novels, no matter where it is set, the presence of the war is pervasive in the wounded servicemen, the suffering and loss of those whose loved ones did not return, and in the lingering memories of wartime privations and the scourge of the plaguelike influenza pandemic that followed the war.

The novels in this series are paradigmatic English (and Scottish) village mysteries, all held together by the troubled and likable Scotland Yard Inspector Ian Rutledge, who in spite of his war-induced injuries, struggles to bring order amid murder and to discover the truth of not only the crimes he undertakes to solve but also of the human condition.

A TEST OF WILLS

The Rutledge novels are set a month apart, beginning in June, 1919, when Rutledge returns to Scotland Yard in *A Test of Wills*. Still recovering from months of hospitalization and rejection by his fiancé, Jean, who could not cope with his shattered mind, Rutledge is sent to Upper Streetham in Warwickshire to investigate the shooting death of Colonial Harris, veteran of the Boer and the Great War, who apparently had no enemies in the world. His struggle to keep his madness and claustrophobia under control contend with his gradually strengthening sense of professional competence.

WINGS OF FIRE

In *Wings of Fire* (1998), Rutledge has not only survived his initial test but also managed to solve a tricky mystery, so in July, Bowles sends Rutledge off to Cornwall to examine the death of three members of a distinguished local family, one of whom was a major English poet and wrote understandingly about the war under the pseudonym of O. A. Manning. Quoting her poems becomes a recurring motif in the later novels. By the second book in the series, Todd had established the format of the novels to come. Rutledge arrives as a stranger in a tight-knit community, makes himself unpopular by interrogating everyone, tacking from interview to interview, and casting suspicion widely, only to wrap up the mystery at the very end of the case and book, often arresting someone only tangentially suspected throughout the book.

SEARCH THE DARK

In late August, Rutledge is dispatched to Dorset, Thomas Hardy country, in *Search the Dark* (1999), where he conducts an investigation that involves the family of a famous local politician. Putting Rutledge in socially or politically tricky situations is one of Bowles's stratagems for getting him off the force and for freeing himself from the danger of being shown up as a pettifogging bureaucrat. Bowles consistently believes that he is throwing Rutledge to the wolves, only to discover that Rutledge is smarter than he is and has more contacts in high places. This novel begins with a case of murder and some missing children but the initial cause for Rutledge's arrival turns out to be of secondary interest to a broader investigation into a long-buried mystery.

LEGACY OF THE DEAD

Legacy of the Dead (2000) might well serve as the title for this entire series as each of the novels resurrects not only Rutledge's dead, MacLeod and the other soldiers who perished in the trenches, but also secrets from the past, most of them believed to be dead and buried. In September, Rutledge finds himself traveling to Scotland in search of Lady Maud Gray's rebellious missing daughter. As he crisscrosses the country, he reopens old scars, especially when MacLeod's fiancé, Fiona MacDonald, who has named her child after Rutledge, becomes one of the suspects for the murder of

the missing woman. A bit more of Rutledge's past is revealed through his godfather, David Trevor, whose son was lost in the war. Although the murder investigation is centered in the small town of Duncarrick, Rutledge ranges across Scotland from Edinburgh in the east to Glasgow and Glencoe in the west. As in the other novels, the mystery contains bits of history, this time about Hadrian's Wall and the Battle of Glencoe. At the novel's conclusion, Rutledge is shot and badly wounded.

WATCHERS OF TIME

By October, in *The Watchers of Time* (2001), Rutledge is still recovering from his wounds but is feeling confined by his sister's ministrations. "Auld Bowles," as MacLeod calls Bowles, will not let the detective rest. He sees an opportunity to destroy Rutledge in his weakened condition, so he sends him to East Anglia, where Rutledge begins to search for the murderer of the local priest in an ancient seacoast town. In all the novels of the Ian Rutledge series, there are characters who mirror or reflect various of the central character's neuroses. In this case it is a woman who survived the sinking of the *Titanic* and experiences the same survival guilt as does Rutledge. The usual characters abound: Aside from the clergy, both Catholic and Church of England, there is the local gentry, Lord Sedgwick, whose garden contains Egyptian baboon statues called the Watchers of Time, again another apt title for the whole series.

A FEARSOME DOUBT

A Fearsome Doubt (2002) takes place in Kent in November. Rutledge is sent to look into the death of three former soldiers, all of whom are amputees. He has been reexamining one of his old cases because he suspects he may have gotten it wrong and sent an innocent man to his death. This case, of course, helps resurrect his own guilt about MacLeod and the other men whom he sent to their deaths. All throughout the series MacLeod is a constant presence in Rutledge's consciousness and interrupts his thoughts to question his motives or remind him of his past. The reexamined case is another reminder of Rutledge's remaining uncertainties. The novel also includes a bit of backstory about his wartime experiences, particularly in the immediate aftermath of his shell-shock disorientation

when for a brief time he wandered behind German lines. Todd likes to work with multiple story lines, which help to keep the series fresh: the quaint village life and its folk—the vicar, local general practitioner, and the constable—are disrupted by the outsider and are further disrupted by intrusive secondary plots. With multiple plots, the cases can be broadened in more ways.

A COLD TREACHERY

Cold is the operative word in December in the Lake District in *A Cold Treachery* (2005), when Rutledge, along with the rest of the inhabitants of Urksdale village, becomes trapped by a winter snowstorm. Rutledge, there to investigate the murder of a family of five from which only a single boy escaped, becomes attracted to one of the possible suspects. Half a year and the gradual strengthening of Rutledge's psyche have enabled him to rid himself of his sense of failure over his fiancé's departure; his allowing himself to become attracted is a significant development in his character. Each of the books has an attractive, if often damaged, woman toward whom Rutledge could exhibit some interest, but in this case he admits to being interested. Also by now Rutledge is beginning to catch on to Superintendent Bowles's tactics for getting him to self-destruct.

A LONG SHADOW

The supernatural appears in *A Long Shadow* (2006) as Rutledge escapes from a séance during a New Year's Eve party to which he has accompanied his sister Frances. Séances, which claim to provide a means of contacting the dead, became fashionable right after the war when so many people were in mourning. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle became one of many who fell under the spell of the séance while searching for a way to contact his dead son. The idea of the haunted follows Rutledge to the small village of Dudlington in Northamptonshire, where the local constable has been shot with an arrow near Frith's Wood, haunted from ancient times by the ghosts of the Saxons slaughtered there by invaders. Something else is happening as well, and Rutledge is being followed by someone who is planting engraved machine-gun shell casings in his rooms, and the stalking turns violent when someone starts shooting at Rutledge. His inspection of the crime by the woods turns

into an ancillary case—the search for a girl missing for three years and feared dead in the spirit-infested woods.

A FALSE MIRROR

A False Mirror (2007) takes place in late February and early March, 1920. While Rutledge and Scotland Yard are looking for the Green Park murderer in London, former civil servant Matthew Hamilton is nearly beaten to death on the beach near his home along the south coast near Devon. Then former lieutenant Stephen Mallory takes the injured man's wife hostage in their house and requests that former fellow officer Rutledge be sent down to take over the investigation into the assault on Hamilton. The village of Hampton Regis then become the site for another of the murder investigations carried out by Rutledge, the outsider from London, still a fragile war victim haunted by MacLeod, a superior police officer, and the bane of Superintendent Bowles's existence.

Charles L. P. Silet

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

INSPECTOR IAN RUTLEDGE SERIES: *A Test of Wills*, 1996; *Wings of Fire*, 1998; *Search the Dark*, 1999; *Legacy of the Dead*, 2000; *Watchers of Time*, 2001; *A Fearsome Doubt*, 2002; *A Cold Treachery*, 2005; *A Long Shadow*, 2006; *A False Mirror*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Murder Stone*, 2003

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Cogdill, Oline H. "Haunted Hero in a Bygone Era." Review of *Legacy of the Dead*, by Charles Todd. *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, November 5, 2000, p. 13F. Favorable review praises the novel for examining the war's effects on soldiers and for its depiction of the changes that were occurring in England at the time.

Kinsella, Bridget. "A Mystery Behind a Mystery Is Revealed." *Publishers Weekly* 247, no. 37 (September 11, 2000): 24-25. On the publication of the fourth novel in the Rutledge series, it was revealed that Charles Todd was not a single person, but a mother-and-son collaboration. The mother revealed herself to be Caroline Todd, also a pseudonym, but disclosed little else.

Todd, Charles. Charles Todd, Best Selling Mystery Author. <http://www.charlestodd.com>. Official Web site for mother-and-son team writing as Charles Todd. Provides information on the novels as well as a biography that provides motivation for writing and general biographical details, but no specifics. Identifies the mother as Caroline Todd, but the ve-

racity of the name is in doubt. The pair attend book signings and sign as "Charles Todd." Contains links to Internet interviews.

_____. "Past Mysteries." *The Armchair Detective* 30, no. 2 (Spring, 1997): 176-184. Todd discusses the historical mystery.

Winks, Robin W. "The Historical Mystery." In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks and Maureen Corrigan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998. This comprehensive discussion of the historical mystery was written by a historian and contains a perspective from outside the mystery field. Sheds light on Todd's work.

LILLIAN DE LA TORRE

Lillian de la Torre Bueno McCue

Born: New York, New York; March 15, 1902

Died: Colorado Springs, Colorado; September 13, 1993

Also wrote as Lillian Bueno McCue

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Dr. Sam Johnson, 1946-1987

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SAM JOHNSON, detective, is based on the eighteenth century writer and lexicographer of that name. Ungainly, shortsighted, and marked by scrofula, but physically and mentally vital, he outwits the malefactors who cross his path.

JAMES BOSWELL, "with a swart complexion, a long nose, and black hair tied back in the latest mode," records the adventures of Johnson. A lawyer by profession, Boswell exhibits in these stories the same mixture of naïveté, vanity, and curiosity that he displayed in life.

CONTRIBUTION

Using real crimes and criminals as the basis of fiction is a well-established literary device, as works such as the anonymous *The Tragedy of Mr. Arden of Feversham* (1592), Henry Fielding's *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743, 1754), and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" demonstrate. No one, however, had considered using a historical figure to solve these crimes before Lillian de la Torre recruited Samuel Johnson as a private investigator. Combining her extensive knowledge of eighteenth century British literature and history with the conventions of the classic detective story, de la Torre produced more than thirty enjoyable short stories. Nevertheless, her purpose went beyond mere entertainment; as a self-described "histo-detector," she solved mysteries that puzzled contemporaries and eluded historians. Although most of her serious histo-detecting was reserved for nonfictional, book-length works, some of her short stories also reveal how actual crimes might have been committed.

BIOGRAPHY

The daughter of José Rollin de la Torre Bueno and Lillian Reinhardt Bueno, Lillian de la Torre was born in New York City on March 15, 1902. After receiving her associate's degree from the College of New Rochelle in 1921, she began teaching high school in New York (1923-1934). At the same time, she pursued graduate studies, specializing in the eighteenth century, and earned master's degrees from Columbia University and Radcliffe College.

After her marriage to George S. McCue in 1932, de la Torre moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where her husband began a twenty-seven-year tenure in the English department of Colorado College. De la Torre also taught for a few years at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs before becoming a full-time histo-detector. Her first published story, "Dr. Sam: Johnson, Detector," later retitled "The Great Seal of England," is based on the actual disappearance of the seal from Lord Chancellor Edward Thurlow's house on March 23, 1784; de la Torre's solution appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* for November, 1943, and most of her subsequent accounts of Sam Johnson's investigations into the real and imagined crimes of eighteenth century England have first been printed in that periodical. Occasionally, her interest has led to more extensive treatment: *Elizabeth Is Missing* (1945), her first book, suggests what happened to Elizabeth Canning, a servant who disappeared for four weeks in January, 1753. *The Heir of Douglas* (1952) attempts to determine the rightful claimant to the vast Douglas estates and so resolve a case that bedeviled the Scottish courts for seven years in the 1760's, and *The Truth About Belle Gunness* (1955) examines the fate of this notorious murderess, who disappeared in 1908.

De la Torre's interest in amateur theatricals led first to performances as "Mama" in *I Remember Mama* and "Mrs. Cady" in *Beggar on Horseback*, then to plays that extended the scope of her histo-detection to figures such as Lizzie Borden. A pair of biographies (on the Jacobite Flora Macdonald and the actress Sarah Siddons), two cookbooks, a volume of poetry, and various articles round out a career that has earned for her widespread recognition. She received awards from *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* (1953) and the Colo-

rado Authors' League (1953-1957), was nominated in the best fact crime category by the Mystery Writers of America in 1956 for "The Truth About Belle Gunness," and served as president of that organization (1979). She also received the Medal of Distinction in the Fine Arts from the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce (1980).

ANALYSIS

On the dust jacket of *Elizabeth Is Missing*, Lillian de la Torre commented, "I have been a student of the eighteenth century for seventeen years, and a detective-story fan for longer than that. It was inevitable that the lines would cross." Yet the conjunction occurred by accident. Even as a child she had been fascinated with mystery and detective fiction. Her father, himself a fan of the genre, owned a rich collection that included the works of Émile Gaboriau, Jacques Futrelle, and Arthur Conan Doyle; at the age of nine, de la Torre began devouring these and similar works, and she never stopped. Her husband was far less enthusiastic. As she recalled in a lecture in 1973, "'Boo!' he would say. 'Detectives! What a bunch! Cute brides! Bald Belgians! Quaint old ladies! Roly-poly Chinamen! Next thing you know there'll be a police dog.'" De la Torre defended her reading preferences, arguing that mysteries could be legitimate literary art if the main characters were "solid and three-dimensional, like—like Dr. Samuel Johnson and James Boswell in Boswell's great biography."

Whether the decision to pursue this idea was the inevitable consequence of lifelong interests or the fortuitous outcome of a domestic dispute, the result was a happy one. That most famous of detective duos, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson, were themselves modeled on the historical Johnson and Boswell, the one a brilliant and eccentric analyst, the other a devoted but often dull-witted recorder. Holmes even refers to Watson as his Boswell. Returning to the originals of this fictional pair was sensible, given de la Torre's knowledge of and interest in their era.

The 1940's were particularly propitious for this undertaking, as Yale University began publishing Boswell's recently discovered manuscripts, thus placing the biographer and his subject in the news. Moreover,

the eighteenth century offered a perfect period for detective fiction. The first expert witness appeared in court in 1698. In 1770, footprints in the snow were first matched with the shoes that made them. The first detected use of prussic acid as poison came thirteen years later. The novelist Henry Fielding and his blind half brother, Sir John Fielding, organized a rudimentary police force, the Bow Street Runners, with the means of detecting crimes and their perpetrators.

Samuel Johnson was caught up in these developments. According to Boswell, he spent an entire winter listening to Saunders Welch, Sir John Fielding's assistant, examine suspects. Occasionally, he was more than a spectator. When James Macpherson claimed to have discovered ancient Gaelic verses by Ossian, Johnson correctly declared them forgeries, just as he later recognized that the supposed fifteenth century works of Thomas Rowley were the product of the young Thomas Chatterton. In 1762, he helped investigate the case of the "Cock-Lane Ghost": According to William Parsons, who lived in Cock Lane, Smithfield, Fanny Lynes's ghost was trying to reveal, through Parsons's eleven-year-old daughter, that she had been poisoned by her brother-in-law. In 1762, in "Account of the Detection of the Imposture in Cock-Lane," Johnson exposed the fraud.

De la Torre used such episodes for her stories. "The Manifestations in Mincing Lane," for example, is based on the Cock-Lane Ghost; "The Missing Shakespeare Manuscript" deals with literary forgery. In some instances the mysteries are real: The Great Seal of England actually did disappear from the Lord Chancellor's house; Elizabeth Canning did vanish for four weeks ("The Disappearing Servant Wench"), the Duchess of Kingston was tried for bigamy ("Milady Bigamy"), William Henry Ireland did manufacture a number of Shakespearean manuscripts.

"THE MONBODDO APE BOY" AND "PRINCE CHARLIE'S RUBY"

Other tales build on Johnson's experiences and opinions. James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, anticipated Charles Darwin's belief that humans had undergone a process of evolution. Although Johnson disliked both Darwin the man and his theories, Boswell arranged for the two to meet in Scotland. In "The Monboddo Ape

Boy," de la Torre creates a pair of confidence men who try to exploit Monboddo's interest in feral children as evidence supporting his assumptions about evolution, and she then shows Johnson foiling the plot during his visit. "Prince Charlie's Ruby" uses Johnson's excursion to the Isle of Skye to see Flora Macdonald, the Jacobite heroine who hid Bonny Prince Charlie after the debacle of Culloden, as the basis of an adventure much like that of Holmes and the six busts of Napoleon Bonaparte.

ATTENTION TO HISTORY

Still other stories develop from eighteenth century life and customs. "The Tontine Curse" imagines multiple murders committed to collect on a form of life insurance. At the birth of their children, a group of parents would each invest a sum in the funds, the principal and interest to go to the last surviving member of the group. Both the Hosyer tontine and Johnson's involvement in such a case are fictional, but the practice is authentic and invited homicidal thoughts, if not actions. De la Torre's knowledge of eighteenth century stagecraft informs "The Banquo Trap" and "The Resurrection Men." The latter, published in *The Return of Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector* (1984), also reflects the practice of grave robbing to supply cadavers for autopsies, and "The Blackamoor Unchain'd," from the same collection, considers the plight of slaves in England during the age of Johnson.

To help create the atmosphere of the period, de la Torre adopts the spellings and phrases of the day: "cloathes," "pye," "enthusiastick," "topick," "screaming," "eight-and-twenty days." She uses only words that were extant in the eighteenth century, a practice requiring much checking in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The real-life Johnson never used a simple word when he could find a hard one, so de la Torre has her character use "mendacious invention" for "lie," "aerostatick globe" for "balloon." Although she reveals an ear and eye for eighteenth century diction and orthography in her re-creation of speech, she makes her language even more authentic by inserting dialogues taken directly from Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* (1791) and other sources and by introducing similar period pieces. "The Disappearing Servant Wench," for example, opens by quoting the actual broadside an-

nouncing that Elizabeth Canning had vanished. The story also contains excerpts from testimony in the case and contemporary pamphlets relating to it. To heighten verisimilitude, *Elizabeth Is Missing* and *Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector* (1946) are set in modified Caslon, a popular eighteenth century typeface; the title pages present a mixture of italic and roman characters—another characteristic of the period—and, like so many title pages of the time, hers offer a veritable summary of the book's contents.

Like the language and the main characters, the settings are authentic. Mrs. Winwood's boudoir in "The Triple-Lock'd Room" is furnished in Chinese Chipendale, all the vogue in 1775 when the adventure supposedly occurs, and on her marquetry table lies a book printed in black-letter, or Gothic, type, suggesting the beginning of the revival of interest in things medieval. Sally Hosyer ("The Tontine Curse") sleeps with her sister in a canopy bed; both the sharing of sleeping accommodations and the tester are typical of the age.

"THE VIOTTI STRADIVARIUS"

The stories thus offer entertainment as period pieces, but they also adhere to the rules of modern mysteries, observing Emily Dickinson's injunction: "The truth must dazzle gradually." "The Viotti Stradivarius" first creates the setting of the crime, a soiree at the home of the noted eighteenth century musicologist and friend of Johnson, Dr. Charles Burney. Present are the Bettses, father and son, violin makers; Polly Tresilian, Burney's pupil, with her jeweler father and his apprentice, Chinnery; the Italian prodigy Giovanni Battista Viotti; Prince Orloff of Russia and his two Cossack guards; Charles Burney and his novelist daughter, Fanny; and Boswell and Johnson. During the evening, Orloff's diamond, worth 200,000 rubles, and Viotti's priceless violin disappear, and Johnson must deduce the identity of the thief or thieves. Tresilian and Chinnery are logical suspects because of their profession, as are the Bettses because of theirs. Because Viotti is a stranger to the company and refuses to play, he might be a thief masquerading as the virtuoso. Orloff himself might have substituted a piece of glass for the diamond to collect insurance. By dismissing some possibilities as illogical and testing other hypotheses, Johnson finds the missing objects and the culprit.

"MURDER LOCK'D IN"

"Murder Lock'd In," the opening story in *The Return of Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector*, uses another classic device, the homicide—in this case triple homicide—within a locked room. Aware that she is writing for a twentieth century audience familiar with the use of string to lock doors from the outside, de la Torre dismisses this option; when the watchman, Jona Mudge, tries to show how this trick works, it fails. Johnson must then determine how the murderer did effect his (or her) entrance and exit; relying on Holmes's dictum, "when one has eliminated all impossibilities, then what remains, however improbable, must be the truth," he finds the killer. Yet he maintains the suspense by accusing someone he knows is innocent to trick the guilty party into confessing.

Modern, too, is de la Torre's sympathy with the criminal. The killer in "Murder Lock'd In" is sent to Bedlam rather than the gallows. "Milady Bigamy" reverses the court's decision and finds the duchess innocent; the thief in "The Viotti Stradivarius" is never exposed; Johnson pleads for the forger in "The Missing Shakespeare Manuscript." Johnson himself was compassionate, maintaining a household of homeless, impoverished people, and he worked diligently to save the life of the convicted forger William Dodd. Whether Johnson would have been pleased with the insanity defense (not in fact introduced until the next century) is uncertain.

"THE TONTINE CURSE"

More disturbing aesthetically are the limits of the short story, which task even Agatha Christie. Nineteen deaths in about as many pages in "The Tontine Curse" seem excessive and implausible, even though de la Torre kills off groups of children at a time. Suspicion barely has time to build before it is removed when Johnson must quickly sort through a large number of suspects, and there is little time to mislead the reader with red herrings. No one checks on whether Prince Orloff owns the diamond he says he has lost or whether he recently insured it at Lloyd's. Has he recently suffered financial setbacks that might make the theft of the diamond convenient? "The Viotti Stradivarius" hints at Hindu thieves but does little with them for want of space. Even in book-length mysteries,

most of the characters remain shadowy; in short stories, they lack the personality that would make them logical or illogical suspects.

De la Torre was therefore most effective when she challenged the reader to discover not who committed a crime but rather where an object has been concealed (as in "Prince Charlie's Ruby") or how a crime has been committed despite careful observation, as in "The Frantic Rebel" or "The Triple-Lock'd Room." Nevertheless as Johnson observed of dictionaries and watches, "the worst is better than none," and de la Torre's best, unlike these other two objects, "go quite true." De la Torre's mysteries provide an excursion into another era. Reading them before a fire with a glass of Johnson's much-loved "poonch" in hand, one may journey back in time. In her writings, the eighteenth century lives, with its elegance, culture, and crime, its Chippendale chairs and open sewers. Perhaps the chief charm of her work, however, lies in discovering not how different the past and its people are but how little the world and human nature have changed.

Joseph Rosenblum

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DR. SAM JOHNSON SERIES: *Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector*, 1946; *The Detections of Dr. Sam Johnson*, 1960; *The Return of Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector*, 1984; *The Exploits of Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector*, 1985

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAYS: *Goodbye, Miss Lizzie Borden*, pr., pb. 1948; *Cheat the Wuddy*, pr. 1948; *Remember Constance Kent*, pr. 1949; *The Sally Cathleen Clain*, pr. 1952; *The Coffee Cup*, pb. 1954; *The Queen's Choristers*, pr. 1961; *The Jester's Apprentice*, pr. 1962; *The Face on the Bar-Room Floor*, pr. 1964; *The Stroller's Girl*, pr. 1966

POETRY: *Stars*, 1982 (as McCue)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The White Rose of Stuart*, 1954; *The Actress*, 1957

NONFICTION: *Elizabeth Is Missing*, 1945; *The Sixty Minute Chef*, 1947 (as McCue; with Carol Traux); *The Heir of Douglas*, 1952; *The Truth About Belle Gunness*, 1955; *The New Sixty Minute Chef*, 1975 (as McCue; with Carol Traux)

EDITED TEXTS: *Villainy Detected*, 1947

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Browne, Ray B., and Lawrence A. Kreiser, Jr., eds. *The Detective as Historian: History and Art in Historical Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000. Anthology devoted to analysis of the representation of history and the history of representation within historical crime fiction. Provides perspective on de la Torre.

Hoch, Edward D. "A Mirror to Our Crimes." *The Armchair Detective* 12 (Summer, 1979): 282-283. Comments on the use and portrayal of real crimes in detective fiction; sheds light on de la Torre's works.

Johnsen, Rosemary Erickson. *Contemporary Feminist Historical Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Provides a useful overview of the genre, as well as a detailed analysis of de la Torre's literary descendants.

Peters, Ellis. Foreword to *Historical Whodunits*, edited by Mike Ashley. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1997. The author of the Cadfael mysteries provides commentary on the genre of the historical whodunit and on de la Torre's place in that genre.

Purcell, James Mark. "Lillian de la Torre, Preliminary Bibliography: Blood on the Periwigs." *Mystery Readers Newsletter* 4 (July/August, 1971): 25-27. Bibliography of the author's works through 1971.

LAWRENCE TREAT

Lawrence Arthur Goldstone

Born: New York, New York; December 21, 1903

Died: Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts; January 7, 1998

Also wrote as Lawrence A. Goldstone

Types of plot: Private investigator; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Carl Wayward, 1940-1943

Mitch Taylor, Jub Freeman, and Bill Decker,
1945-1960

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

CARL WAYWARD, a psychology professor specializing in criminology, becomes involved in murder cases as a consultant but quickly takes charge. He is in his thirties, and he is married during the course of the series. An intellectual, he is motivated by the challenge of matching wits with criminals and utilizing his expertise.

MITCH TAYLOR is a typical big-city cop, mainly interested in avoiding trouble, bucking for promotion, and living simply with his wife and children. He is proud of his uniform and has a sense of duty but is not above minor graft and avoiding work whenever possible.

JUB FREEMAN, who sometimes teams up with Taylor, is a "new type" of cop whose passion is scientific detection. He is married during the course of the series. In his forays into the field to gather evidence, he displays a certain gaucheness in dealing with the public.

LIEUTENANT BILL DECKER, in charge of the Homicide Division, knows how to handle cops—with a pat on the back and a kick in the pants. He lets his officers break rules and cut corners when necessary. Decker was the prototype of hundreds of tough-talking, hard-driving fictional successors.

CONTRIBUTION

Lawrence Treat is generally regarded as the father of the police procedural, that subgenre of detective fiction that emphasizes the realistic solution of mysteries

through routine police methods, including dogged interrogations, stakeouts, tailings, and utilization of the technology of the police laboratory. Treat established some of the conventions of the police procedural that have appeared almost unfailingly in novels in this category ever since. Among them is the convention of the cop who is unable to maintain a normal family life because his work requires irregular hours and alienates him from everyone except other cops. Another convention is the theme of rivalry and tension within the law enforcement agency, caused by many different personalities trying to win glory and avoid blame. Finally, there is the convention of the police officer being a hated outsider, lied to, ridiculed, maligned, and occasionally made the target of attempted seduction. These conventions have become familiar not only in police procedural novels but also in motion pictures about police officers and in many popular television series.

BIOGRAPHY

Lawrence Treat was born Lawrence Arthur Goldstone on December 21, 1903, in New York City (he changed his name legally in 1940). He had an excellent education, obtaining a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1924 and a law degree from Columbia University in 1927.

Treat practiced law for only a short time. For many years he had wanted to write, and he was writing poetry while still in law school. He had practiced law for only three months when his firm broke up in 1928, and the partners gave him ten weeks' salary (three hundred dollars). He determined to devote his time to writing. He went to Paris, wrote poetry and worked at odd jobs, and roomed with an old camp counselor and his wife in Brittany. Treat soon came to realize that even if he were a much better poet, he would still be unable to make a living at that craft. A mystery magazine he picked up in a Paris bookstore changed his career. Treat's earliest contributions to mystery fiction were picture puzzles, some of which were collected in *Bringing Sherlock Home* (1930).

After returning to the United States, he married Margery Dallet in June, 1930. During the 1930's, a period of frustration and indecision, he began writing for pulp mystery magazines (he wrote about three hundred short stories and twenty novels during his lifetime). His marriage to Margery ended in divorce in 1939. During a period of frustration and indecision, he discovered the world of detective magazines and reasoned that his legal background and literary interests made him well qualified to succeed in that field. He learned his trade by writing one story per day for a solid month.

Treat's early detective novels featuring the highly intellectual and academically oriented Carl Wayward were well written and received favorable reviews. Yet they were stuck in the conventional mold of the British or classic mystery and did not represent a significant contribution to the genre. During the latter years of World War II, he met two laboratory researchers who stimulated him to take a fresh approach. He also took a seminar in police supervisory work and became acquainted with many working police officers. This experience led to his publication in 1945 of "*V*" as in *Victim*, the first police procedural ever written.

Treat published hundreds of short stories in such magazines as *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. While living in Yorktown Heights, New York, he taught mystery writing at Columbia University, New York University, and elsewhere. He married Rose Ehrenfreund in 1943; they moved to Martha's Vineyard in 1972.

He received two Edgar Allan Poe Awards, the first in 1965 for "*H* as in Homicide" (1964), and the second in 1978 for *The Mystery Writer's Handbook* (1976) from the Mystery Writers of America, of which he was both a founder and a president.

ANALYSIS

Lawrence Treat received a much better education than the typical mystery writer, and the positive and negative effects of it are evident in his writings. His first mystery novels feature Carl Wayward, a college professor with marked tendencies toward social and intellectual snobbishness. Wayward is not exactly an

amateur sleuth, the favored protagonist of the classic school of mystery fiction; he specializes in criminology, which gets him involved in cases as a consultant, not unlike the great Sherlock Holmes. Yet Wayward seems to be perpetually on sabbatical, and his supposed knowledge of criminology rarely surfaces during his investigations. He is indistinguishable from the typical amateur sleuth, who takes up investigations out of idle curiosity or sympathy for someone involved and whose immensely superior intellect enables him to make fools of the bumbling police.

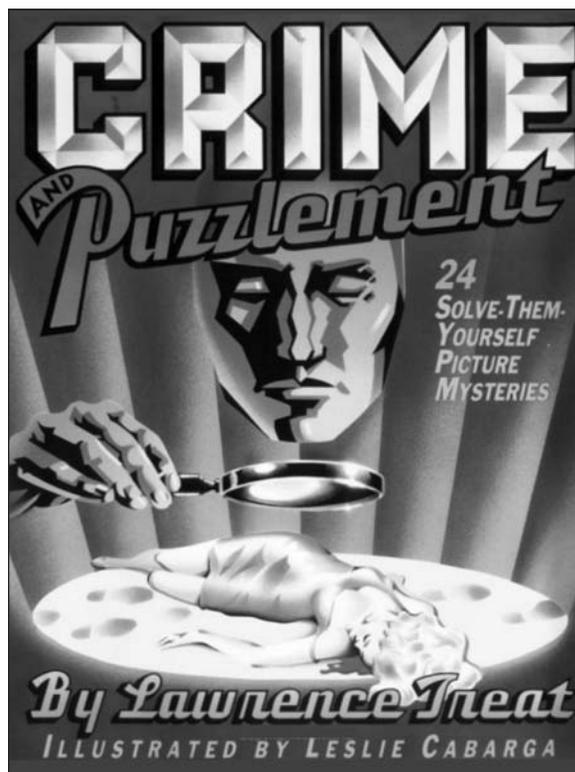
"H" AS IN HANGMAN

"*H*" as in *Hangman* (1942) is probably the best and most characteristic of the four Carl Wayward novels. It is set in Chautauqua, the famous resort founded in the nineteenth century to bring enlightenment to the masses. Wayward is there to lecture on criminal psychology; his professional contempt for this system of popular adult education is such, however, that it is difficult for the reader to understand why he has chosen to participate at all. Most of the principal characters are American equivalents of the upper- and upper-middle-class types found in typical British mysteries of the classic school, such as those of Agatha Christie. They lounge on porches sipping tea and lemonade, discussing highbrow subjects or gossiping rather viciously about absent acquaintances. The few who are not being supported by relatives or inherited property are vaguely involved in "stocks and bonds" or some other elitist occupation that pays well without demanding much of their attention. Wayward himself is able to spend most of his time leaning against something with his left hand in the side pocket of his tweed jacket. It is a closed environment, the sine qua non of the classic school, which conveniently limits the number of suspects to a manageable handful of known and socially acceptable individuals when the first murder is committed.

The victim, an elderly music professor who has been a leader in the Chautauqua movement for decades, is found hanged in the bell tower shortly after he or his murderer has alerted the whole community that something dastardly was afoot by playing the bells at an ungodly hour. The carillon performer did not choose anything vulgar such as "Pop Goes the

Weasel” but played a portion of “Ase’s Death” from Edvard Grieg’s *Peer Gynt Suite* (1867). Instead of a rope, the dead man was hanged with a cello string. Such “smart aleck kills,” which Raymond Chandler reviled, are characteristic of the classic school of detective fiction. The leisure-class characters, the circumscribed setting in which the soon-to-be suspects are almost formally introduced, the tidbits of culture and arcane information, the gothic overtones of the modus operandi, and the incompetent sheriff who begs Wayward for help are some of the features that mark the Wayward novels as derivative ventures. They also strike the reader as an excessive display of knowledge.

Treat’s Wayward novels show intelligence and literary talent. He had started with aspirations to write poetry and quality mainstream novels and, like Ross Macdonald in later years, had had to step down in class for pragmatic reasons. Critics recognized the quality of his writing and praised his Wayward novels.



In addition to his mystery novels, Treat also wrote several books for children in which readers are challenged interpret clues in pictures to solve mysteries.

Nevertheless, he dropped his intellectual hero unceremoniously in 1943; two years later, he produced a mystery novel that not only represented a quantum leap forward in his writing career but also became a landmark in the genre.

“V” AS IN VICTIM

“V” *as in Victim*, published in 1945, is regarded as the first police procedural. It is such a dramatic departure from the Wayward novels that it seems not to have been written by the same person. Set in the heart of Manhattan, it conveys a feeling not unlike that of the noir literature and films that had been flourishing during the war years. As in many of the novels by Cornell Woolrich, the people in “V” *as in Victim* seem dwarfed and intimidated by their towering, dehumanized environment. Treat’s language, too, departed radically from the gracefully turned phrases in the Wayward books: His police procedurals sound American rather than Anglophilic. A few elitist characters remain, but now they seem to be living on borrowed time. They have discovered adultery and dry martinis.

It is interesting to speculate on what factors could have caused such a remarkable change in the whole approach of a writer. Treat has not discussed this subject in print, but clues can be garnered from his books, facts of his personal life, and the period during which he matured as a writer. He went through a divorce; then there was the war. He was not personally involved, but there are many indications in his books, notably in “H” *as in Hunted* (1946), that as a sensitive, artistic person he was strongly affected by reports of the atrocities that were perpetrated in Europe and Asia during those fateful years. Treat was undoubtedly influenced by the Black Mask school of writers, including Dashiell Hammett. Motion pictures must have been another influence: They became more proletarian and less elitist during the war years and have remained so ever since. There was the beginning of the so-called white flight from the big cities that would undermine the tax base and result in physical and moral deterioration. There was the influx of minorities, all suspicious, hostile, and alienated in the minds of many white Americans. Big cities in the United States were becoming sinister places. All these undercurrents of change can be felt in “V” *as in Victim*, published in

that historic year of 1945, when Germany surrendered and atom bombs were dropped on Japan.

One of the positive effects of Treat's extensive formal education was his intellectual discipline. When he decided to write a realistic novel about working police officers, he went about it with a thoroughness worthy of another lawyer-mystery writer, Erle Stanley Gardner. Treat's exposure to real hard-nosed officers in the precinct station, in the laboratories, in the field, and after hours in the taprooms undoubtedly had a strong influence on his writing. He also did much academic-type research. In his preface to *The Mystery Writer's Handbook* (1976), he reveals his wide knowledge of the literature covering various aspects of the crime field, including law, forensic medicine, ballistics, and fingerprinting. Carl Wayward may have been a criminologist in name, but his creator actually became one. Because "*V*" as in *Victim* was to have such an important influence, it was fortunate for the development of this subgenre that Treat was a learned and conscientious practitioner of his craft.

There was an inherent contradiction within the police procedural from its very beginnings. Treat wanted to create realistic officers going about their work in a realistic manner, but at the same time he wanted to retain the traditional element of mystery—that is, the process of discovering who among a limited cast of clearly established characters committed a particular crime. In reality, many crimes are never solved or even investigated but merely documented; the records are then held in open files until someone informs or confesses. Police officers do not have the luxury of working on only one case at a time, like the private eye or amateur sleuth. They are often yanked off one case and assigned to another because there are too many murderers and not enough detectives. In the process of tailing a suspect or questioning informants, police officers may come on a different crime that will lead them off on a tangent. Furthermore, there is no such thing as a limited cast of interrelated suspects in a city of millions of strangers. Any attempt to impose artificial boundaries around an urban crime would only lead to absurdity.

"H" AS IN HUNTED AND LADY, DROP DEAD

Treat recognized these problems and tried various means to get around them without giving up the tradi-

tional mystery. In "*H*" as in *Hunted*, for example, his focal character is a man who was imprisoned and tortured by the Nazis and who has come back to New York to confront the coward who betrayed him. Jub Freeman becomes involved because he is a boyhood friend of the protagonist, but by focusing on a civilian, Treat is able to limit his story to a single mystery and a single cast of suspects.

Unfortunately, this approach weakens the book as a police procedural and makes it more like a Cornell Woolrich-type novel of private vengeance. In *Lady, Drop Dead* (1960), the feckless Mitch Taylor is involved in the story, but the protagonist is a private detective, which makes this police procedural veer dangerously close to being a private-eye novel reminiscent of Raymond Chandler.

Eventually, Treat moved his three sustaining characters, Taylor, Freeman, and Decker, out of New York, evidently hoping that the traditional mystery element in his plots would seem less incongruous in a smaller city. Yet though you can take a writer out of New York, you cannot always take New York out of a writer. Treat's unidentified city seems like an older and less hectic New York but is still too big and impersonal to provide a comfortable home for the apparatus of the traditional British mystery yarn. *Lady, Drop Dead*, the last of the Taylor/Freeman/Decker series, still reads like a set piece. Its limited cast of suspects is assembled in a classic finale so that the real murderer—who is the one the reader most suspected simply because he is the one who seemed least likely—can break down and unburden his conscience with a detailed confession.

The police procedural has evolved and proliferated since *Lady, Drop Dead* was published in 1960, but Treat did not participate in its development. His formal education may have saddled him with too much esteem for tradition and thus been an inhibiting factor. His police procedurals, like his Carl Wayward novels, seem to belong to an older, safer, much slower-moving world, but he deserves great credit for having originated this fascinating form of mystery fiction.

Bill Delaney

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CARL WAYWARD SERIES: “B” as in *Banshee*, 1940 (also known as *Wail for the Corpses*); “D” as in *Dead*, 1941; “H” as in *Hangman*, 1942; “O” as in *Omen*, 1943

MITCH TAYLOR, JUB FREEMAN, AND BILL DECKER SERIES: “V” as in *Victim*, 1945; “H” as in *Hunted*, 1946; “Q” as in *Quicksand*, 1947 (also known as *Step into Quicksand*); “T” as in *Trapped*, 1947; “F” as in *Flight*, 1948; *Over the Edge*, 1948; *Big Shot*, 1951; *Weep for a Wanton*, 1956; *Lady, Drop Dead*, 1960

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Run Far, Run Fast*, 1937 (as *Goldstone*); *The Leather Man*, 1944; *Trial and Terror*, 1949; *Venus Unarmed*, 1961

OTHER SHORT FICTION: “P” as in *Police*, 1970

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *You’re the Detective!*, 1983

NONFICTION: *Bringing Sherlock Home*, 1930; *Crime and Puzzlement: Twenty-four Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1981-1982, 1988, 1991, 1993; *The Clue Armchair Detective: Can You Solve the Mysteries of Tudor Close?*, 1983 (with George Hardie); *Crimes to Unravel*, 1988

EDITED TEXTS: *Murder in Mind: An Anthology of Mystery Stories by the Mystery Writers of America*, 1967; *The Mystery Writer’s Handbook*, 1976 (with Herbert Brean); *A Special Kind of Crime*, 1982

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Dove, George N. *The Police Procedural*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1982. One of the first major studies of the subgenre pioneered by Lawrence Treat.

“Lawrence Treat, Ninety-four, Prolific Mystery Writer.” *The New York Times*, January 16, 1998, p. B11. Obituary of Treat details his contributions to mystery and detective fiction.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *The American Police Novel: A History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2003. Traces the evolution of the police procedural and Treat’s influence on the subgenre. Bibliographic references and index.

Reitz, Caroline. *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004. This study of Victorian crime fiction should be read as a prehistory of the American police procedural; shows the state of narrative conventions inherited by Treat and throws his contribution into greater relief.

Vicarel, Jo Ann. *A Reader’s Guide to the Police Procedural*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1995. Geared to the mainstream reader, this study introduces and analyzes the police procedural form. Provides a perspective on Treat’s work.

Washer, Robert. Review of “P” as in *Police*, by Lawrence Treat. *The Queen Canon Bibliophile* 3 (April, 1971): 18. Review of Treat’s collection of short crime fiction.

PETER TREMAYNE

Peter Berresford Ellis

Born: Coventry, Warwickshire, England; March 10, 1943

Also wrote as Peter Berresford Ellis; Peter MacAlan

Types of plot: Historical; amateur sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sister Fidelma, 1993-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

SISTER FIDELMA is a seventh century Irish nun, daughter of a former king of Cashel and sister to the current ruler. A *dálaigh*, or advocate of the Irish law courts, she has the power to gather evidence, ascertain whether a crime has been committed, and identify the criminal. She is a highly educated and strong-willed

individual capable of answering the call to investigate mysteries at home and abroad.

BROTHER EADULF, a young Saxon monk, begins a professional collaboration with Fidelma early in the series. As the series progresses, he and Fidelma develop a close friendship and finally a love relationship that leads to marriage and parenthood. The relationship, which Fidelma has trouble balancing with her professional life, causes turbulence throughout the series.

COLGÚ, the brother of Sister Fidelma and son of former Muman king Fáilbe Fland mac Aedo, ascends to the throne of Cashel, seat of Muman. At times he is nothing more than part of Fidelma's background; in other books he plays an important role within the plot, either as an active participant or in his role as king, initiating or being the object of actions that ultimately involve his sister.

CONTRIBUTION

Before turning to the mystery genre as Peter Tremayne, Peter Berresford Ellis had written dozens of books, primarily biographical and critical works under his own name or fiction (principally war and fantasy novels) under pseudonyms. Although respected as a scholar in England and Ireland, he did not win wide international popularity until he embarked on his Sister Fidelma series in 1993 with four short stories introducing the Irish nun.

The Fidelma stories introduced the author, as Peter Tremayne, to an international audience. The Fidelma series proved especially popular in the United States, where the International Sister Fidelma Society was established in 2001. The society publishes a magazine, *The Brehon*, about the author and Fidelma-related matters. In September, 2006, Féile Fidelma, the first international conference on the Sister Fidelma stories, was held at Cashel, Ireland.

The Sister Fidelma stories occupy a unique position in mystery writing with their seventh century Irish setting, detailed historical context, reflections of early Irish Christianity, and a protagonist who seems both historically credible and engagingly modern in her attitudes and attributes.

An occasional reviewer has complained that Tremayne idealizes early Celtic society, but most critical

responses have been positive. On the whole, the historical dimensions of the stories have been viewed as accurate and important to the success of the series.

BIOGRAPHY

Peter Tremayne was born Peter Berresford Ellis on March 10, 1943, in Coventry, Warwickshire, England, to Alan J. Ellis and Eva Daisy Randell Ellis. Peter most likely inherited his interest in writing from his father, a journalist who began his career writing for the Cork *Examiner* and also wrote for the pulp market. The family's extensive Celtic ancestry may have contributed to Ellis's lifelong interest in Celtic history and culture.

Ellis earned a bachelor's degree with first-class honors and a master's degree, both in Celtic studies, at the Brighton College of Art and University of East London. He initially chose a career in journalism, starting as a junior reporter for the weekly *Brighton Herald* in 1960. He became deputy editor of the *Irish Post* in 1970 and editor of *Newsagent & Bookshop* in 1974. In 1966, he married Dorothea P. Cheesmur.

Ellis published his first book, *Wales—A Nation Again! The Nationalist Struggle for Freedom*, in 1968. The book, which recounts Wales's struggles for freedom, previewed its author's lifelong interest in Celtic political, historical, and cultural matters. Those interests continued to appear in several books that he wrote in the 1970's.

By 1975, Ellis had established himself as primarily a professional writer rather than a journalist. He continued to write extensively on Celtic culture, including *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic Society and Literature* (1996), which reflects the scholarship on Celtic women that Ellis would also draw on for his Sister Fidelma mysteries. Biographical works, including accounts of the lives of the British adventurers and popular writers Henry Rider Haggard, Captain W. E. Johns, and Talbot Mundy (William Gribbon), undoubtedly helped him learn how to create a fully realized character who could retain the readers' interest.

Ellis began his career as a novelist in the 1970's, writing principally horror and fantasy novels and short stories under the pseudonym Peter Tremayne. These forays into popular literature included three *Dracula*

novels and the Lan-Kern trilogy. In addition to other novels in the horror and fantasy genres, Ellis, under the pseudonym Peter MacAlan, published eight adventure novels primarily set in World War II, beginning with *The Judas Battalion* (1983) and concluding with *The Windsor Protocol* (1993).

By 1993, Ellis, as Peter Tremayne, was ready to embark on still another genre, the mystery novel, which would bring him to a far larger audience than had his previous writings. He published four short stories featuring Sister Fidelma. The London publisher Headline then offered a three-book contract for novels starring the mystery-solving nun. The first book of the series, *Absolution by Murder: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, appeared in 1994. Since 1994, his writing has primarily consisted of scholarly studies of Celtic culture and the Sister Fidelma stories.

ANALYSIS

Peter Tremayne's Sister Fidelma stories depend for their success on several elements: a fully realized heroine, a historical context that permits her to function as both a religious person and a detective, and mysteries that engage the reader as they attract the interest of Fidelma. The Sister Fidelma stories typically integrate these elements effectively.

Tremayne persuasively depicts the substantial rights accorded Irish women in the seventh century. Fidelma's education at the bardic school at Tara to the level of *anruth*, one degree below the highest level possible, and her profession as a *dálaigh*, or advocate, of the Brehon Court thus appear convincing within the narratives and also give her access to the world of crime. Contributing to Fidelma's ability to move freely at the highest levels of Irish society is her royal status as a sister to the Muman king, Colgú.

Although a nun, Fidelma is sexually experienced, acknowledging in *Shroud for the Archbishop: A Sister Fidelma Mystery* (1995) a number of earlier affairs. In *Act of Mercy: A Celtic Mystery* (1999), she encounters her first lover, and throughout the series, she progresses in her relationship with Brother Eadulf from partner in solving crimes to friend, lover, wife, and mother of Eadulf's child. All of this is possible for Fidelma because the seventh century Celtic church, as

the stories often remind readers, did not require celibacy for religious vocations.

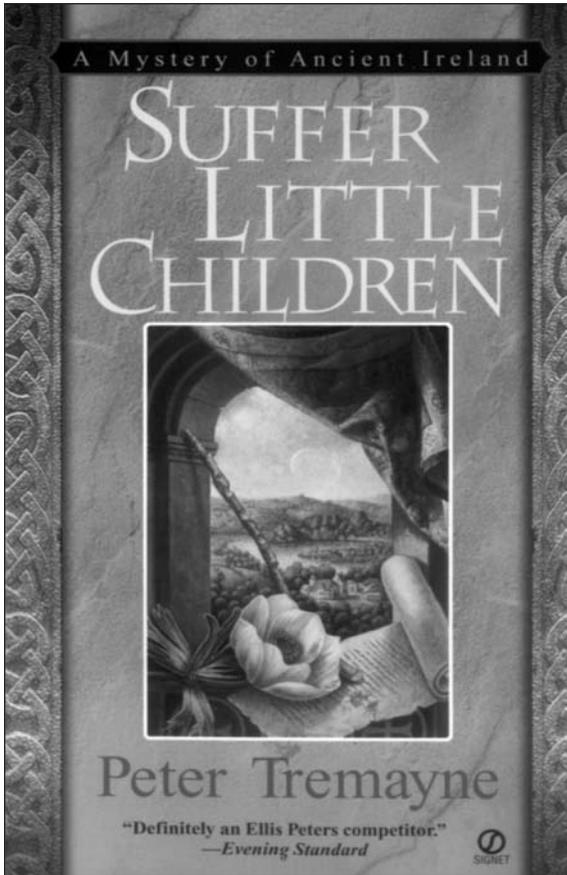
In an age not far removed from the pre-Christian world of Druids and in which many remnants of the old ways still persisted, Fidelma is very much a transitional woman. In at least two novels (*Shroud for the Archbishop* and *Suffer Little Children: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1995), for example, she practices *dercad*, the ancient Druidic form of meditation. In addition, she eschews the type of individual confession to a priest favored by the Roman church, instead taking a soul-friend, or *anamchara*, who serves as her confidant, spiritual guide, and personal confessor.

Tremayne's use of historical events, including the Synod of Whitby (664), and depiction of such seventh century cultural artifacts as beehive huts, the clepsydra (a water clock), hanging leather satchels used for storing manuscripts in monastery libraries, and texts written in the Ogham alphabet add to the appeal of the Fidelma stories.

The mysteries confronting Sister Fidelma challenge her intellectually and often place her in physical danger. Brother Eadulf assists Fidelma but inevitably proves far less perceptive than she. Fidelma's recognition of the uncomfortable position in which her superior talents place Eadulf contributes to the psychological realism that characterizes the account of their relationship. Once Fidelma and Eadulf have a son, she also recognizes her ambivalence toward the maternal role, which gets in the way of her original love, the law. These internal conflicts help readers to see in Fidelma not only as a seventh century woman but also as a woman of their own time.

ABSOLUTION BY MURDER

The first Sister Fidelma novel, *Absolution by Murder*, is set during the Synod of Whitby that Oswy, king of Northumbria, called in 664 to settle disputes between the Roman and Celtic churches. Several murders occur during the gathering, and Fidelma, a member of the Celtic delegation, answers Oswy's request to solve them. She reluctantly agrees to Oswy's suggestion that she work with the Saxon Brother Eadulf to give a greater sense of impartiality to the investigation, beginning a relationship that continued throughout the series.



Fidelma carries out her sleuthing amid a number of other historical personages who, along with the synod itself, create a pattern of historical context and verisimilitude that Tremayne followed throughout the series.

The novel also established Tremayne's practice of linkage between novels. The immediate plot of a specific novel is brought to a definitive resolution through Fidelma's investigative efforts, but typically the conclusion also leads the reader to anticipate what will come next. In this first novel, Brother Wighard appears as the designated successor to the current archbishop of Canterbury, but in the second novel, *Shroud for the Archbishop*, Wighard is murdered. At the end of the first book, Fidelma receives word that she is to go to Rome on behalf of her religious order, therefore making her available to be called on to solve the mystery when Wighard is killed.

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

Suffer Little Children moves the personal story of Sister Fidelma forward at the same time that she solves yet another crime, in this case the murder of a highly respected scholar named Dacán, which could embroil her home kingdom of Muman in a serious dispute with the kingdom of Laigin. The king of Muman is dying of the yellow plague (later known as yellow fever) and has instructed Fidelma's brother, Colgú, his successor, to send for her to investigate the murder.

The novel continues Tremayne's practice of informing the reader about life in Celtic Ireland, including an explanation of how a king as well as his successor, known as the *tánaiste*, was chosen. Fidelma's investigation at the abbey of Ros Ailithir, site of the murder, leads her to the library where Dacán had spent much of his time and provides readers with information on the making and storing of books as well as on the Ogham alphabet in which texts were written on wooden wands.

The novel establishes the close bond between brother and sister that will be evident throughout the series. The absence of Brother Eadulf from the book allows readers to focus on the sibling relationship, although Eadulf returns to Fidelma's life in the next novel, *The Subtle Serpent: A Sister Fidelma Mystery* (1996).

ACT OF MERCY

Act of Mercy finds Fidelma in a period of uncertainty. She is questioning her feelings about Eadulf and her role as a nun. To sort out her feelings, she goes on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Saint James in present-day Spain.

Onboard the ship carrying Fidelma to the continent, she discovers that a murder has been committed, one that she resolutely sets out to solve. Also on the voyage is Cian, who years before had seduced the young Fidelma and then abandoned her. As a psychological exploration of Fidelma, the novel is especially interesting and marks a critical juncture in her life. She is able to see Cian for what he now is and bring closure to that period of her life. As she acknowledges to herself that Cian no longer has any hold on her, she thinks of Eadulf and realizes that in some way he has been with her on her entire voyage.

At that moment, Fidelma reads a message that has

come from her brother urging her quick return to Cashel. Eadulf has been arrested and charged with murder. Fidelma does hurry back in the next novel, *Our Lady of Darkness: A Novel of Ancient Ireland* (2000). Her rescue of Eadulf will propel the two together, although Fidelma will still have many moments of uncertainty regarding their relationship.

Edward J. Rielly

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SISTER FIDELMA SERIES: *Absolution by Murder: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1994; *Shroud for the Archbishop: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1995; *Suffer Little Children: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1995; *The Subtle Serpent: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1996; *The Spider's Web: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1997; *Valley of the Shadow: A Sister Fidelma Mystery*, 1998; *The Monk Who Vanished: A Celtic Mystery*, 1999; *Act of Mercy: A Celtic Mystery*, 1999; *Our Lady of Darkness: A Novel of Ancient Ireland*, 2000; *Hemlock at Vespers: Fifteen Sister Fidelma Mysteries*, 2000; *Smoke in the Wind*, 2001; *The Haunted Abbot*, 2002; *Badger's Moon*, 2003; *Whispers of the Dead: Fifteen Sister Fidelma Mysteries*, 2004; *The Leper's Bell: A Novel of Ancient Ireland*, 2004; *Master of Souls*, 2006; *A Prayer for the Damned*, 2006; *An Ensuing Evil and Others: Fourteen Historical Mystery Stories*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: 1977-1985 • *Dracula Unborn*, 1977 (also known as *Bloodright: Memoirs of Mirceas, Son of Dracula*); *The Hound of Frankenstein*, 1977; *The Revenge of Dracula*, 1978; *The Vengeance of She*, 1978; *The Ants*, 1979; *The Curse of Loch Ness*, 1979; *The Fires of Lan-Kern*, 1980; *Dracula, My Love*, 1980; *Zombie!*, 1981; *The Return of Raffles*, 1981; *The Morgow Rises!*, 1982; *The Destroyers of Lan-Kern*, 1982; *The Buccaneers of Lan-Kern*, 1983; *Snowbeast!*, 1983; *The Judas Battalion*, 1983 (as MacAlan); *Raven of Destiny*, 1984; *Kiss of the Cobra*, 1984; *Airship*, 1984 (as MacAlan); *Swamp!*, 1985; *Angelus!*, 1985

1986-1993 • *Kitchener's Gold*, 1986 (as MacAlan); *Trollnight!*, 1987; *Nicor!*, 1987; *The Rising of the Moon: A Novel of the Fenian Invasion of Canada*, 1987 (as Ellis); *The Valkyrie Directive*, 1987 (as

MacAlan); *The Doomsday Decree*, 1988 (as MacAlan); *Ravenmoon*, 1988 (also known as *Bloodmist*); *Island of Shadows*, 1991; *The Windsor Protocol*, 1993 (as MacAlan); *Dracula Lives!*, 1993

SHORT FICTION: *My Lady of Hy-Brasil, and Other Stories*, 1987; *Aisling, and Other Irish Tales of Terror*, 1992

NONFICTION (AS ELLIS): 1968-1980 • *Wales—A Nation Again! The Nationalist Struggle for Freedom*, 1968; *The Creed of the Celtic Revolution*, 1969; *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820*, 1970 (with Seumas Mac a'Ghobhainn); *The Problem of Language Revival*, 1971 (with Mac a'Ghobhainn); *A History of the Irish Working Class*, 1972; *The Cornish Language and Its Literature*, 1974; *The Boyne Water: The Battle of the Boyne, 1690*, 1976; *The Un-Dead: The Legend of Bram Stoker and Dracula*, 1977 (with Peter Haining); *A Voice from the Infinite: The Life of Sir Henry Rider Haggard, 1856-1925*, 1978

1981-1990 • *By Jove, Biggles! The Life of Captain W. E. Johns*, 1981 (with Piers Williams); *The Last Adventurer: The Life of Talbot Mundy, 1879-1940*, 1984; *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology*, 1987; *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 B.C.-51 A.D.*, 1990

1991-1999 • *A Guide to Early Celtic Remains in Britain*, 1991; *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, 1992; *Celt and Saxon: The Struggle for Britain, A.D. 410-937*, 1993; *The Celtic Dawn: A History of Pan Celticism*, 1993; *The Druids*, 1994; *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic Society and Literature*, 1996; *Celt and Greek: Celts in the Hellenic World*, 1997; *The Ancient World of the Celts*, 1998; *Celt and Roman: The Celts of Italy*, 1998; *The Chronicles of the Celts: New Tellings of Their Myths and Legends*, 1999; *Erin's Blood Royal: The Gaelic Noble Dynasties of Ireland*, 1999

EDITED TEXT: *Irish Masters of Fantasy*, 1979 (also known as *The Wondersmith, and Other Macabre Tales*)

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Chadwick, Nora. *The Celts*. Rev. ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. A study of the history and culture of the Celts by one of the greatest Celtic schol-

ars; originally published in 1971, the book is still considered a masterpiece of Celtic history. Useful for background information on the Sister Fidelma stories.

The International Sister Fidelma Society. <http://sisterfidelma.com>. Contains considerable information about Tremayne, Sister Fidelma, and the historical setting for the stories, as well as in-depth interviews.

Luehrs, Christiane W., and Robert B. Luehrs. "Peter Tremayne: Sister Fidelma and the Triumph of Truth." In *The Detective as Historian: History and Art in Historical Crime Fiction*, edited by Ray B. Browne and Lawrence A. Kreiser, Jr. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000. Examines the Sister Fidelma stories within their historical setting and is more

critical of Tremayne than are most critics and reviewers, seeing him as too partisan an advocate for Celtic culture. Illustrations, indexed.

Mathews, Caitlín. *The Elements of the Celtic Tradition*. Boston: Element Books, 1991. Includes readable and succinct accounts of elements of Celtic culture, including many depicted in the Fidelma stories, such as the Ogham alphabet, Celtic Christianity, and the concept of the soul-friend. Illustrations, indexed.

Rielly, Edward J. "Sister Fidelma: A Woman for All Seasons." *The Brehon: Journal of the International Sister Fidelma Society* 3, 2 (May 2004): 3-13. An analysis of Sister Fidelma as both a credible seventh century heroine and a twenty-first century woman.

ELLESTON TREVOR

Trevor Dudley-Smith

Born: Bromley, Kent, England; February 17, 1920

Died: Cave Creek, Arizona; July 21, 1995

Also wrote as Mansell Black; Trevor Burgess; T. Dudley-Smith; Trevor Dudley-Smith; Roger Fitzalan; Adam Hall; Howard North; Simon Rattray; Warwick Scott; Caesar Smith; Leslie Stone

Types of plot: Espionage; hard-boiled; psychological; private investigator; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hugo Bishop, 1951-1957

Quiller, 1965-1996

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HUGO BISHOP, lay analyst, gentleman detective, and chess enthusiast, plays a fast game of life and death among the beautiful, the rich, and the decadent, assisted by his secretary Miss Gorringe. Bishop studies people and relationships as closely as he studies the moves on his chessboard. His detached yet inquisitive nature elic-

its confidences, but Bishop is wise enough to realize that the truth lies hidden. Where others see the crowd with a floodlight, he claims to "use a spotlight" to "see the individual in clear focus." As a consequence, he is quick to note the out-of-character, a clue to hidden realities. Under the pen name H. B. Ripton, he writes exhaustive theses on human behavior.

QUILLER is a British "shadow executive," employed by a secret government bureau to handle situations so sensitive that they do not exist officially. An infiltrator who, after refusing military service, helped European Jews escape Nazi concentration camps, Quiller is an adept troubleshooter. He is also a formidable linguist, a karate expert, a practitioner of Zen mind control, a jet pilot, and a paranoid cynic (he has to be to survive). A loner who avoids the risks of associates, Quiller is sharp-tongued, suspicious, and abusive of all but the true professional. In effect, Quiller is defined only in terms of his work and needs danger and challenge to confirm his identity and to make life endurable.

CONTRIBUTION

Elleston Trevor wrote approximately one novel per year from 1943 to the late 1980's, under many pseudonyms. It was, however, the best seller *The Berlin Memorandum* (as Adam Hall, 1965; also known as *The Quiller Memorandum*) that brought him international acclaim. It won for him the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1966 and the French Grand Prix Littérature Policière, was filmed by Twentieth Century Fox (1966), and was later made into a British Broadcasting Corporation television series; it has been cited as a definitive example of the realistic Cold War espionage novel. Trevor made psychoanalysis a central concern of his detective and espionage fiction, and he explored deep-seated motives, needs, and compulsions that compel action at odds with the rational and conscious mind. He preferred to investigate people under pressure, driven by external and internal forces, and to focus on the animal instincts of the pursued.

The espionage novels, in the tradition of John le Carré and Len Deighton, explore double agency—the motives, the tensions, the psychological complexities, and the fears of the clandestine life. They focus on the professional agent as a highly competent expert at survival, a tough-minded antihero beset by secret conspiracies within his own organization. At its best, the detail in Trevor's novels creates the illusion of documentary, while the attitudes of the heroes—at times flippant, at times downright bitter and irreverent toward authority—reflect the *Weltanschauung* of the Cold War period.

BIOGRAPHY

Elleston Trevor was born Trevor Dudley-Smith on February 17, 1920, in Bromley, Kent, the son of Walter Smith and Florence (née Elleston) Smith. Educated at Yardley Court Preparatory School and Sevenoaks School, Kent, Trevor was an apprentice race car driver from 1937 to 1938, but with the outbreak of World War II joined the Royal Air Force and served as a flight engineer from 1939 to 1945. He turned to full-time writing in 1946, and in 1947 married Jonquil Burgess, with whom he had one son, Peregrine Scott, who would serve as his literary manager. Before turning to the genre that made him famous, Trevor initially

focused on wartime stories about Dunkirk and other key historical events.

Trevor and his family lived in Spain for a time and then in France from 1958 to 1973. In 1973 they moved to the United States, where they lived in Fountain Hills, Arizona. Trevor's interests included chess, travel, designing model airplanes, and astronomy, with the latter helping him "to keep a sense of perspective." Trevor published novels for adults and adolescents as well as plays and stories. When asked his reason for writing, he first replied, "Complete inability to do anything else," later adding, "I don't know." Finally, he answered that it certainly was not to escape life, which he found "too darned interesting," but maybe it was to "escape some imprisoning memory of infancy . . . such as we all have deep in the subconscious." The Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University, houses an Elleston and Jonquil Trevor Collection, but post-1980 materials are located at Arizona State University.

ANALYSIS

Elleston Trevor was intrigued with the psychology of a mind under pressure, of men forced to the edge physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Trevor's early works frequently include Freudian psychoanalysis of everything from male-female driving patterns and responses to war-induced stress syndrome. *A Blaze of Roses* (1952), for example, sensitively traces the roots of psychosis: how the private horror of a long-term fantasy romance exposed as illusion drives a meek and mild man to turn arsonist and embark on a wild flight to Tangiers with police in hot pursuit. *The Billboard Madonna* (1960), in turn, is typical in its compelling analysis of the effects of guilt on a hit-and-run driver, who pushes himself to the brink of total nervous collapse in his attempt to expiate his guilt.

THE THETA SYNDROME AND THE SIBLING

All Trevor's work questions the human response to shock and trauma and the psyche that provokes the response. In *The Theta Syndrome* (1977), the victim of one murderous attack is so terrified that she literally cannot breathe and, while in a coma, develops telekinetic and telepathic abilities to project her fears, while in *The Sibling* (1979), a story of sibling rivalry and reincarnation, an innocent youth must face the re-

ality of her brother's insanity and his incestuous and murderous intent. Trevor's detective Hugo Bishop argues,

Human beings are never straight. . . . Our minds are spirals, curves, zigzags, circles—because before we can get anything straight in them, something gets in the way: a prejudice, a principle, a fear, a doubt, an inhibition. . . . Most of the time we don't even realize why we do things, and say things.

QUILLER

Trevor's Quiller series observes Quiller in extreme situations: flying a Russian MiG into a trap behind Soviet lines; being attacked by a cocaine-crazed murderer; and parachuting into the Libyan desert with a small nuclear device that he must detonate to destroy British-manufactured nerve gas. In every case Quiller continually analyzes his own neurophysiology, receiving instant feedback from his various body parts under stress and sending internal commands to control their function ("shuddup stomach," "hands grip like claws"). He tries to separate his mind from the pain and to remain objective in the most subjective of circumstances, as he feeds his internal computer the complex information necessary to make the intuitive leap in decision making that will mean the difference between life and death. Trevor relishes including physiological explanations of the functioning of brain and body under stress and using terms such as "retrogressive amnesia," "isolation factors," "alpha waves," and "guilt-transference."

To delve into this psyche, Trevor depended on either a first-person narrative or a third-person omniscient narrative that focuses on the inner thoughts or reactions of two or three main characters. The first-person narrators often engage in a stream-of-consciousness internal dialogue that reveals to the reader what the speaker hides even from himself, while the third-person narrators are as terse and controlled as an Ernest Hemingway hero.

DIALOGUE AND IMAGERY

Trevor reveled in including lengthy passages of dialogue in foreign languages, particularly German, to give the reader a sense of realism, of alien culture, and of competence. He skips about in time as one would if following the memories of a fallible narrator and fre-

quently speeds up or telescopes time in accordance with the psychological situation of his characters. Often he takes one step back for every two steps forward. Sometimes the action seems to occur in slow motion, with several pages devoted to the passage of seconds, and other times, as in the following example from *The Sinkiang Executive* (1978), it races forward to its inescapable outcome:

The gun had slid across one of the Chinese rugs and she wrenched herself free and got halfway there before I caught her again and threw her against the settee and went for the gun myself and got it and hit the magazine out and slipped it into my pocket and kicked the gun hard and send it spinning across the floorboards . . . as she came at me with her nails.

Trevor's imagery grows out of a Darwinian view of nature, tooth and claw. The cat that toys coquettishly with men at the beginning of a Hugo Bishop story proves a lethal cheetah at the end. Quiller is the ferret, put down the hole to initiate a chase that will expose the enemy but that might cost Quiller his life: "An agent is sent like a ferret into a hole and he is not told if there is a dog at the other end." Trevor records actions he finds "natural for a hunted creature," such as instinctively making for the middle of a field or for the deeper cover of the furrows. Trevor's narrators inevitably explore the way instinct interacts with reason to give a desperate man the same edge as a wild animal—a wild figuring of the odds and then a sudden rush based on instinct alone.

Trevor's depiction of the police varies. In the espionage novels the police are often incompetent, unable to deal with the competition of trained assassins and competent operatives. In the pursuit novels the police are relentless, organized, methodical; their patterns are mechanical and hence often inescapable. In fact, at times they prove overzealous and jump to an erroneous interpretation of the facts, mistaking arson committed for personal reasons for carefully calculated sabotage and limited blackmail for political kidnapping.

THE BERLIN MEMORANDUM

Trevor usually included arresting studies of the inner workings of a large organization: a major advertising firm that depends on the strengths and weaknesses

of a handful of men to keep it solvent, a scientific project with carefully constructed safeguards that a single member can undermine, a think tank that leaks word of a nonexistent ultimate weapon and then must bear the earth-shattering consequences, a government bureau whose members reflect the cold, calculated policies necessitated by its prime directive. The description of "The Bureau" in *The Berlin Memorandum* is typical: "a government department" whose "nihilistic status" casts a "creeping blight over the people who work here, . . . rootless souls." The directors are all cold-hearted and ruthless, characterized by "the non-committal eyes, the sharp nose, the lopsided jaw and the go-to-hell line of the mouth."

Through his focus on governments and organizations, Trevor explored how far governments and individuals are willing to go to defend their political or social views and how easily conflicting motives and failures of understanding can lead to catastrophe. In *Deathwatch* (1984), a Moscow-produced lethal genetic virus used by a Kremlin power broker to make the world safe for communism leads to a countdown to nuclear destruction.

Trevor's depiction of the truly hard-boiled hero focuses on his ability to inflict and receive superhuman punishment and is directly related to the author's interest in human psychology and in the interaction of animal instinct and rational logic. Quiller might be exposed to cyanide fumes, crash in a high-speed chase, be ejected from an exploding jet, be concussed by a grenade, or be shot with a dart gun, but he forges ahead, transforming the assignment from a single impossible act to a full-scale impossible operation. The minds of Trevor's heroes, whether hard-boiled supermen or average nonentities, grow clinically detached under pressure, calculate risks and potential actions at incredible speeds (three-second decisions), and then respond instinctively despite the calculations. As Quiller says, "By the time you'd been a few years at it you could handle pretty well anything because your mind turned into a computer, scanning the data and keeping you out of trouble."

VIOLENCE

Part of what creates the hard-boiled effect is Trevor's close focus. A description of a physical confronta-

tion might involve as many as nine pages of meticulous detail of characters gouging, punching, and hammering—for example, of Quiller barely hanging on to the undercarriage of a speeding car or inching up a narrow broom closet to escape detection. Even in the more gentlemanly Bishop series the details of a fist-fight or of a brutal crash are enumerated meticulously. As LeRoy Panek writes in *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980* (1981), Trevor's goal is "to bring violence home to his readers." Whether he is describing the mutilated body of an accident victim or a fight to the death between operatives, the images of violence are intensely vivid:

Fingers at his face, scrambling blindly, live things, live weapons, *move faster*, digging, clawing in the night, in the dark, *this is the way*, feeling the soft flesh, hooking down, hooking down deep, his body shifting, *yes*, his arm lifting to—*don't let him*—lifting to stop my fingers. . . . I . . . brought a series of eye-darts against his face and felt him jerk and swung a wedge-hand across his throat. . . . I paralysed the nerves in the bicep with a centre-knuckle . . . and drove the wedge-hand down with all the strength that was in me and felt the vertebrae snap and the head come forward . . . He didn't move.

The effect of such detail is that the reader shares the terror, the paranoia, and the physical discomfort of being set up, being up on the run, being hunted, being interrogated, being physically abused. In other words, such explicit violence creates suspense, tension, and the illusion of realism.

THE NINTH DIRECTIVE

The detail may also be technical. For example, consider the description of a 561 Husqvarna in *The Ninth Directive* (1966):

. . . a .358 Magnum center-fire, with a three-shot magazine, 25½ inch barrel, hand-checked walnut stock, corrugated butt-plate and sling swivels. The fore-end and pistol grip are tipped with rosewood. The total weight is 7¾ pounds and the breech pressure is in the region of 20 tons p.s.i., giving a high muzzle velocity and an almost flat trajectory with a 150-grain bullet.

Panek believes that such technical detail and the focus on "humanistic psychology" do not fuse well with an

adventure tale of what he calls “a cybernetic man,” but it is exactly this fusion that creates a typical Trevor novel. When it works well, it is stunning, as in *The Sinkiang Executive*’s terse but fascinating technical description of a military briefing session on how to cross Soviet airspace.

Despite the predictability of the pattern in Trevor’s work, there is always enough variety to keep the reader guessing. The changes in setting, with their well-defined topicality (Bangkok, Cambodia, the Sino-Russian border, Germany, the Amazon, the Sahara), create new situations of terrain and culture; so too do the individual natures of the assignments. The suspense always builds and the action overwhelms: car, boat, and submarine chases, the running of blockades, narrow escapes on or under water, aerial combat, and threats from individuals, groups, and machines. Pursuit is vital to a Trevor plot. It is the combination of fast action, psychological analysis, and Cold War cynicism that has earned for Trevor a permanent place in detective and espionage fiction.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HUGO BISHOP SERIES (AS HALL IN UNITED STATES, AS RATTRAY IN GREAT BRITAIN): *Knight Sinister*, 1951; *Queen in Danger*, 1952; *Bishop in Check*, 1953; *Dead Silence*, 1954 (also known as *Pawn in Jeopardy*); *Dead Circuit*, 1955 (also known as *Rook’s Gambit*); *Dead Sequence*, 1957

QUILLER SERIES (AS HALL): *The Berlin Memorandum*, 1965 (also known as *The Quiller Memorandum*); *The Ninth Directive*, 1966; *The Striker Portfolio*, 1968; *The Warsaw Document*, 1970; *The Tango Briefing*, 1973; *The Mandarin Cypher*, 1975; *The Kobra Manifesto*, 1976; *The Sinkiang Executive*, 1978; *The Scorpion Signal*, 1979; *The Sibling*, 1979; *The Peking Target*, 1981; *Quiller*, 1985; *Quiller’s Run*, 1988

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1943-1950 • *Over the Wall*, 1943 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *Double Who Double Crossed*, 1944 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *The Immortal Error*, 1946; *Escape to Fear*, 1948 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *Now Try the Morgue*, 1948 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *Chorus of Echoes*, 1950; *The Mystery of the Missing Book*, 1950 (as Burgess)

1951-1960 • *Dead on Course*, 1951 (as Black); *Image in the Dust*, 1951 (as Scott; also known as *Cockpit*); *Redfern’s Miracle*, 1951; *Sinister Cargo*, 1951 (as Black); *Tiger Street*, 1951; *A Blaze of Roses*, 1952 (also known as *The Fire-Raiser*); *The Domesday Story*, 1952 (as Scott); *Shadow of Evil*, 1953 (as Black); *The Passion and the Pity*, 1953; *Naked Canvas*, 1954 (as Scott); *Steps in the Dark*, 1954 (as Black); *The Big Pick-Up*, 1955; *The Gale Force*, 1956; *The Killing Ground*, 1956; *Heat Wave*, 1957 (as Caesar Smith); *The Pillars of Midnight*, 1957; *Dream of Death*, 1958; *Silhouette*, 1959; *The V.I.P.*, 1959; *Murder by All Means*, 1960; *The Billboard Madonna*, 1960; *The Mind of Max Duvine*, 1960

1961-1970 • *The Burning Shore*, 1961 (also known as *The Pasang Run*); *The Volcanoes of San Domingo*, 1963 (as Hall); *The Flight of the Phoenix*, 1964; *The Second Chance*, 1965; *Weave a Rope of Sand*, 1965; *The Shoot*, 1966; *A Blaze of Arms*, 1967 (as Fitzalan); *A Place for the Wicked*, 1967; *The Freebooters*, 1967; *Bury Him Among the Kings*, 1970

1971-1985 • *Expressway*, 1973 (as North); *The Paragon*, 1975 (also known as *Night Stop*); *Blue Jay Summer*, 1977; *Seven Witnesses*, 1977; *The Theta Syndrome*, 1977; *The Damocles Sword*, 1981; *The Penthouse*, 1983; *Deathwatch*, 1984; *Northlight*, 1985 (as Hall)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Elleston Trevor Miscellany*, 1944

PLAYS: *The Last of the Daylight*, pr. 1959; *A Pinch of Purple*, pr. 1971; *A Touch of Purple*, pr. 1972; *Just Before Dawn*, pr. 1972

SCREENPLAY: *Wings of Danger*, 1952 (with John Gilling and Peckham Webb)

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *Animal Life Stories: Rippleswim the Otter, Scamper-Foot the Pine Marten, Shadow the Fox*, 1943-1945; *Into the Happy Glade*, 1943 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *By a Silver Stream*, 1944 (as T. Dudley-Smith); *Deep Wood*, 1945; *Wumpus*, 1945; *Heather Hill*, 1946; *More About Wumpus*, 1947; *Badger’s Beech*, 1948; *The Island of the Pines*, 1948; *The Secret Travellers*, 1948; *The Wizard of the Wood*, 1948; *Where’s Wumpus?*, 1948; *A Spy at Monk’s Court*, 1949 (as Burgess); *Badger’s Moon*,

1949; *Ants' Castle*, 1949; *Challenge of the Firebrand*, 1951; *Mole's Castle*, 1951; *Secret Arena*, 1951; *Sweethallow Valley*, 1951; *The Racing Wraith*, 1953 (as Burgess); *Forbidden Kingdom*, 1955; *Badger's Wood*, 1958; *Green Glades*, 1959; *The Crystal City*, 1959; *Squirrel's Island*, 1963

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- East, Andy. *The Cold War File*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1983. Examines the representations of espionage in Cold War fiction and of the Cold War in espionage stories; provides context for understanding Trevor's novels.
- Hitz, Frederick P. *The Great Game: The Myth and Re-*

ality of Espionage. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Hitz, the former inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, compares famous fictional spies and spy stories to real espionage agents and case studies to demonstrate that truth is stranger than fiction. Helps place Trevor's work within the genre.

- Panek, LeRoy. "Adam Hall." In *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981. Scholarly study of British espionage thrillers written by a major critic in the academic study of mystery and detective fiction look at Trevor, writing as Adam Hall.
- Penzler, Otto, ed. "Quiller." In *The Great Detectives*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Argues for including Trevor's mysterious Quiller among the espionage genre's "great detectives."

MARGARET TRUMAN

Mary Margaret Truman

Born: Independence, Missouri; February 17, 1924

Types of plot: Psychological; police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Capital Crimes, 1980-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MACKENZIE "MAC" SMITH and ANNABEL SMITH are a pleasant, urbane, and sophisticated lawyer couple. Mac, a former criminal attorney, is now a George Washington University law professor. Annabel, a former divorce attorney, now owns an upscale art gallery in the fashionable Georgetown district of Washington, D.C. The couple try to fathom some of the crimes that cross their paths and thereby become amateur sleuths.

CONTRIBUTION

In her mystery novels, Margaret Truman has given the world a close and private look into the sleaze of

Washington Beltway politics. Her Capital Crimes mystery novels are set mostly in Washington, D.C., often at familiar sites, such as the White House, the Kennedy Center, agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and major parks. Truman also uses sites of historic significance such as Ford's Theatre and Union Station. For more than a quarter of a century, at a pace of about a book per year, she has been producing these tales of violence and mayhem, mostly involving individuals in high places or those connected with them. Truman highlights the wheelings and dealings of politicians and other powerful people and explores their secret agendas.

BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Truman, also known by her married name, Margaret Truman Daniel, was born Mary Margaret Truman on February 17, 1924, in the heart of the Midwest, in Independence, Missouri. Her father,

Harry S. Truman, a Democrat, became the thirty-third president of the United States on the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt on April 12, 1945. Her mother was Elizabeth “Bess” Virginia Wallace Truman. Margaret attended public school in her hometown but also Gunston Hall, a girls’ boarding school in Washington, D.C., winning prizes for her mastery of English and Spanish. She majored in history and international relations and earned a bachelor’s degree from George Washington University in 1946, studying piano and voice on the side. Her father was also an amateur pianist and would often accompany her singing.

From 1947 to 1954, Margaret Truman performed as a coloratura in programs featuring operatic arias and light classics on the stage, radio, and television. Her reviews were mixed. She also did some summer stock acting. On April 21, 1956, she married *New York Times* reporter and later editor E. Clifton Daniel, Jr., at Trinity Episcopal Church in Independence, becoming Mary Truman Daniel. Her husband died in 2000. The couple had four sons—Clifton, William, Harrison, and Thomas—born between 1957 and 1966.

Truman became fairly well known in the literary world by publishing some girlhood recollections in 1956 but especially because of the biographies of her father in 1972 and her mother in 1986. Eventually, she wrote books on White House First Ladies, pets, and the history of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and its inhabitants. Although she had long been an avid reader of mystery novels, her initiation into the genre was the result of a casual conversation with her publisher.

Truman launched her Capital Crimes series mystery novels in 1980 with the best-selling *Murder in the White House* and followed it with many other volumes. Considering that she once remarked that writing was the hardest and most exacting career she had ever had, her literary output has been remarkable. Her honors include honorary degrees from Wake Forest University (1972), from her alma mater George Washington University (1975), and Rockhurst College (1976). She is a trustee of the Harry S. Truman Institute and of George Washington University and has held various directorships. She has also won other forms of recognition such as the selection of her *Murder in Georgetown* (1986) by the Mystery Guild.

ANALYSIS

Margaret Truman’s inside knowledge of life in the corridors of power and privilege are evidenced in many of her books. Such familiarity gives her stories of misdeeds in high places crucial realism, at times making the reader wonder if her writing is indeed totally fiction. This is especially true in the age of investigative reporting, when disclosures of scandals among those in power are commonplace. Truman understands Washington and its players and how in their political lives, which can make for strange bedfellows, these powerful people can cut deals even—or especially—in the midst of mayhem. Truman’s distaste of chicanery and hypocrisy and moral dishonesty sounds genuine. Her strength lies in her attention to detail, especially about local landmarks and legends in Washington. She depicts these with precision, providing her readers with a sense of space that many recognize. For instance, in *Murder in the White House*, to guarantee authenticity, Truman scrutinized the floor plans of the White House where she had spent seven years of her life. Such attention to detail, however, has also been criticized as overkill. Some critics have wondered why it is necessary to describe so many meals and drinks at specific restaurants and bars visited by some of the characters in her novels when these details are irrelevant to the story line.

The plots engaging Truman’s characters are often complicated and at times fast-moving. In this way, Truman’s style is reminiscent of that of Agatha Christie. There are usually false leads pointing to the wrong suspect, and the issue is often confused among the usually large cast of characters. Although Truman’s nonfictional biographies are generally considered by her critics to be graceful, simple, warm, genuine, and modest, suggesting an author from middle America barely affected by the rest of the world, some of her writing in the mystery novels has been characterized as lacking polish. She views the political leaders, bureaucrats, diplomats, and others in high places with a cynical eye, and this, together with her emphasis on authenticity, may redeem any stylistic shortcomings she may have.

MURDER IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Murder in the White House, the initial novel in Truman’s Capital Crimes series, was financially success-

ful and has more than a million copies in print. The story, set in Truman's onetime home, is about the murder of Lansard Blaine, the corrupt secretary of state who is found strangled to death in the family quarters of the White House. Because Blaine had been a shady businessman, a powerful politician, and a womanizer, there are many suspects. Blaine may have been removed from circulation by one of his known lady friends, by an agent of a foreign power, or even by someone highly placed in the White House given the personal and political scandals involving presidential family members and staff in the book. The ending holds a surprise for the readers.

MURDER AT FORD'S THEATRE

The setting of *Murder at Ford's Theatre* (2002) is the theater where President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. In an alley behind the theater, the body of Nadia Zarinski, an attractive woman who worked for Virginia senator Bruce Lerner and a part-

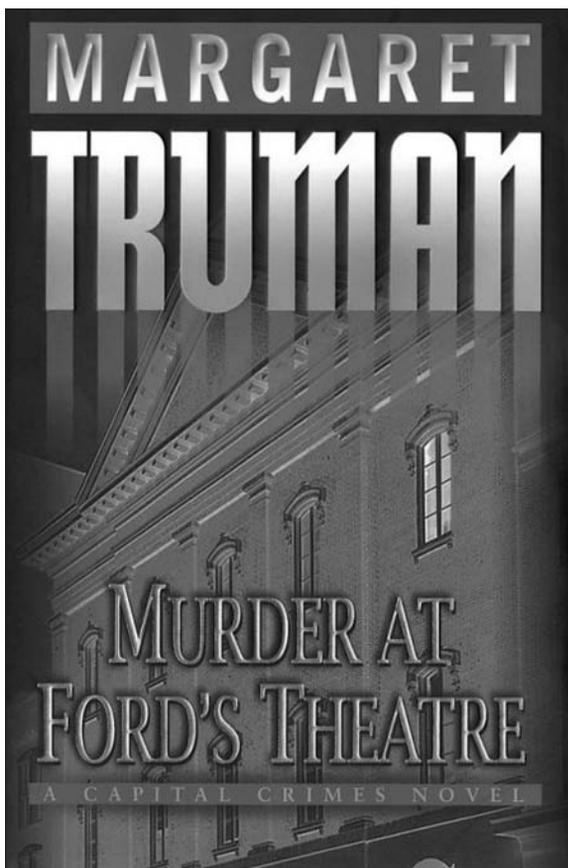
time volunteer intern at the theater, is discovered. On digging into her life, two detectives find a growing cast of suspects, beginning with the senator himself. The rumor is that he—among many others—had had sexual encounters with Nadia. The senator's former wife is Clarise Emerson, producer/director at Ford's, whose nomination to head the National Endowment for the Arts is threatened by the scandal. Jeremiah Lerner, the aimless hot-headed son of the Lerner family, was also one of Nadia's lovers. When Jeremiah is arrested for the murder, his mother, Clarise, enlists her friend Mackenzie Smith and his law partner to defend her son. As usual, several of the characters had good reason to murder the victim. Again, Truman provides a surprise ending.

MURDER AT UNION STATION

In *Murder at Union Station* (2004), the twentieth mystery novel in Truman's Capital Crimes series, an aging former New York City mafioso, Louis Russo, has just returned from a witness protection program that had initially led him to Mexico and then to Israel. He boards a train from Newark International Airport to Washington, where he is to testify at a hearing chaired by arch-conservative Senator Karl Widmer of Alaska. Russo was allegedly the hit man turned government informer whom the former head of the CIA, now United States president Adam Parmele, had contracted to assassinate a Central American head of state. Widmer intensely dislikes the liberal Parmele.

Russo's defense lawyer, Frank Marienthal, had introduced the Mafia man to his son, Richard Marienthal, an aspiring writer working on a book based on Russo's life. Senator Widmer intends to use the draft of this book—as well as the interview tapes in the writer's possession—at the impending hearing. The senator's objective is to derail the president's plan for a second term. However, Russo is gunned down immediately on arrival at the railroad station in Washington. The killer, a well-dressed biracial man, soon turns up dead in a Washington park.

Before it is all over, the Washington Metropolitan Police, the CIA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the White House, as well as Senator Widmer and his adviser in Congress, all get involved in the unfolding of the two crimes. The complicated plot involves



many characters, many scenes, and many venues before it draws to a conclusion.

MURDER AT THE OPERA

In *Murder at the Opera* (2006), Charise Lee, a young Asian Canadian soprano at the Washington National Opera, is barely known to the public until the aspiring singer is found stabbed backstage during a rehearsal. Truman's sleuths, Mackenzie Smith and Annabel Smith, are strongly urged by the opera's board to unmask the killer. They are assisted by a former homicide detective and an opera fan. Soon they find themselves among a cast of suspects with all sorts of scores to settle. What they uncover is an increasingly complex case reaching beyond Washington to a shady world of informers and terrorists. The climax occurs on a fateful night at the opera attended by the president of the United States.

Peter B. Heller

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CAPITAL CRIMES SERIES: *Murder in the White House*, 1980; *Murder on Capitol Hill*, 1981; *Murder in the Supreme Court*, 1982; *Murder in the Smithsonian*, 1983; *Murder on Embassy Row*, 1984; *Murder at the FBI*, 1985; *Murder in Georgetown*, 1986; *Murder in the CIA*, 1987; *Murder at the Kennedy Center*, 1989; *Murder at the National Cathedral*, 1990; *Murder at the Pentagon*, 1992; *Murder on the Potomac*, 1994; *Murder at the National Gallery*, 1996; *Murder in the House*, 1997; *Murder at the Watergate*, 1998; *Murder at the Library of Congress*, 1999; *Murder in Foggy Bottom*, 2000; *Murder in Havana*, 2001; *Murder at Ford's Theatre*, 2002; *Murder at Union Station*, 2004; *Murder at the Washington Tribune*, 2005; *Murder at the Opera*, 2006; *Murder on K Street*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SHORT FICTION: *Margaret Truman: Three Complete Mysteries*, 1994

NONFICTION: *Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story* (with Margaret Cousins), 1956; *White House Pets*, 1969; *Harry S. Truman*, 1972; *Women of Courage*, 1976 (with Thomas Fleming); *Bess W. Truman*, 1986; *First Ladies: An Intimate Group Portrait of White House Wives*, 1995; *The Presidents's House: A*

President's Daughter Shares the History and Secrets of the World's Most Famous Home, 2003

EDITED TEXTS: *Letters from Father: The Truman Family's Personal Correspondence*, 1981; *Where the Buck Stops: The Personal and Private Writings of Harry S. Truman*, 1989

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1983, p. 2. Review provides a sociological and moralistic spin, speculating on whether the bad people in the story are typical of the age and consequently are where the country may be heading.

Zvirin, Stephanie. Review of *Murder at the Washington Tribune*, by Margaret Truman. *Booklist* 102,

no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 71-72. This reviewer says that Truman's twenty-first mystery involving the death of a *Tribune* reporter found strangled in a closet in the newsroom falls flat but offers a strong portrait of a middle-aged veteran police reporter forced to face the fact that his life is unraveling.

SCOTT TUROW

Born: Chicago, Illinois; April 12, 1949

Also wrote as L. Scott Turow; Scott F. Turow

Types of plot: Thriller; police procedural; courtroom drama

CONTRIBUTION

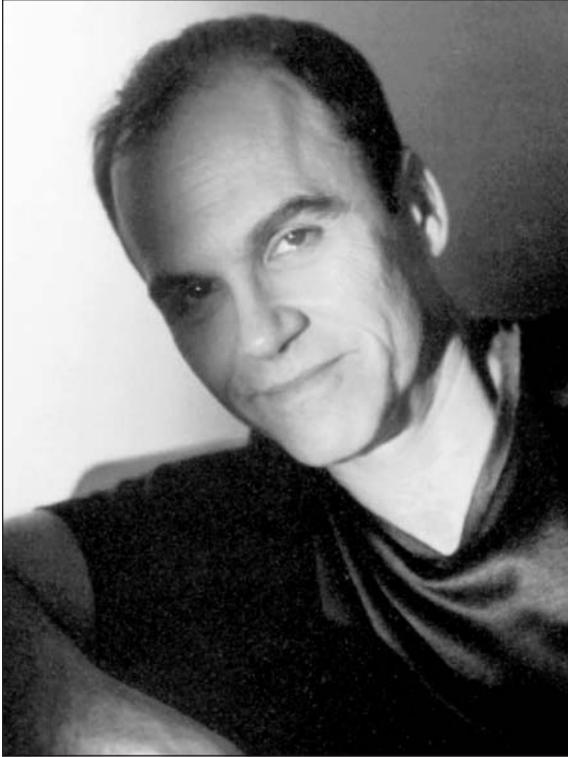
Scott Turow has drawn extensively on his experience as a practicing attorney in Chicago to create mystery and suspense novels that meet the standards of serious fiction. His dramatic and gripping plots incorporate the profound meditations of an insider on the incongruities of the American legal system, while presenting human nature in all its complexity. Though many novels in this genre have aimed primarily to entertain, Turow insists that his works abide by the Aristotelian dictum to instruct as well as entertain. Besides the law, Turow's main source of artistic inspiration has been great literature that follows this dictum. Although justice may or may not be served in his legal thrillers, in a broader sense the works portray the search for individual redemption and collective healing.

An amalgam of the practical, the gritty, and the philosophical, Turow's work has influenced contemporaries such as Steve Martini and relative newcomers such as Kermit Roosevelt. As an attorney, he served on a commission that reviewed the administration of capital punishment in Illinois, leading Governor George Ryan to declare a moratorium on executions in that state. Turow recorded the evolution of his own thought on the issue in a nonfiction work, *Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty* (2003).

BIOGRAPHY

Scott Turow was born in Chicago on April 12, 1949, to David D. Turow, a physician, and Rita Pastron Turow, a writer. He grew up in Chicago and later in the affluent suburb of Winnetka, Illinois. From both parents he inherited a strong work ethic and powerful ambition. They expected him to become a physician like his father, but from a very early age he dreamed of being a writer. He edited his school newspaper and avidly read the authors who were to influence his own thought and work: Charles Dickens, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Saul Bellow, whom he considered the voice of his parents' generation. After high school, he enrolled as an English major at Amherst College. He began writing fiction, publishing short stories in literary periodicals such as the *Transatlantic Review*. After earning a bachelor's degree from Amherst in 1970, Turow attended the Stanford University Creative Writing Center for two years on an Edith Mirrielees Fellowship. On April 4, 1971, he married Annette Weisberg, an artist; the couple has three children.

While enrolled at Stanford, Turow worked on a novel about Chicago to be called *The Way Things Are*. However, one publisher after another rejected the manuscript, leading Turow to doubt his prospects as an author. He decided to pursue a legal career, entering Harvard Law School in 1975. However, he never abandoned writing, even temporarily, though at this point he saw it as a "private passion" rather than a career. He later recounted his law school experiences in a nonfiction book published in 1977 as *One L: An Inside*



Scott Turow.

Account of Life in the First Year at Harvard Law School. While capturing the manic quality of life in law school, the book also assesses how well law school actually prepares its students for issues encountered in the practice of law. In time, many law professors would recommend the book to young people considering a legal career.

Turow received a juris doctor degree in 1978 and worked as an assistant United States attorney in Chicago until 1986. While in Chicago, he prosecuted several widely publicized corruption cases, including a tax-fraud indictment against the state attorney general. Turow also was lead prosecutor in a federal case known as Operation Greylord, initiated to combat judicial corruption in Illinois.

All the while, Turow kept notebooks of ideas for the fiction he was writing on the side. Increasingly, these notebooks described corrupt officials and backbiting lawyers. He shelved a literary manuscript he had begun in favor of a story about an attorney in a bribery case. He had to borrow time from other en-

deavors to work on his fiction, until his wife, Annette, persuaded him in 1986 to resign from the U.S. Attorney's Office and focus on the book. First, however, he joined the Chicago law firm of Sonnenschein, Carlin, Nath & Rosenthal as a partner and immediately went on leave to complete his manuscript.

The resulting novel, *Presumed Innocent*, was published in 1987 by Farrar, Straus after a furious bidding war. Turow signed with Farrar in part because it was the only firm that had encouraged him as a writer in his days at Amherst. *Presumed Innocent* received the Silver Dagger Award from the Crime Writers' Association in 1988 and remained a best seller for forty-three weeks, selling four million paperback copies. A 1990 film adaptation was among the ten top-grossing films of that year. That year, Turow published his second novel, *The Burden of Proof*, and his photograph was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, which described him as the "Bard of the Litigious Age." In 1999, *Time* named Turow's *Personal Injuries* Best Fiction Novel. Turow received the Heartland Prize in 2003 for *Reversible Errors* (2002) and the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award in 2004 for *Ultimate Punishment*.

Although many of his books have become best sellers and several have won literary awards, Turow has continued the practice of law, setting aside mornings to write at home. He has worked pro bono in many cases, including one in 1995 in which he obtained the release of Alejandro Hernandez, who had spent eleven years on death row for a murder he did not commit.

ANALYSIS

Scott Turow has said that he found much popular literature "just plain dumb," while literary fiction was either inaccessible or uninteresting. He wrote *Presumed Innocent* in the belief that he could make the book "an island in between." In his view of human nature, he has also sought a middle ground. The 1960's were instrumental in shaping his initial idealism and making him aware of crushing social problems. The eight years he spent as a prosecutor further shaped his view of the law and of human nature. No longer totally a child of the Aquarian age, he confronted the truth

that “there are some people who are incorrigibly evil.” However, he does not believe in Original Sin, holding instead that humans are maimed by early experience. As one defense attorney in *Reversible Errors* declares, “There’s just no point in giving up on a human being.”

A consistent theme in Turow’s work is that a human being has many sides and many motives. A criminal, like Robbie Feaver in *Personal Injuries* (1999), may commit crimes to provide for a troubled family. Prosecutors, like Stan Sennett in the same novel, may have admirable goals along with overbearing zeal. The tension between opposing traits in single characters is a large factor in the believability of Turow’s stories.

When Turow began writing, he saw himself as a writer who practices law, but he has come to see himself as a lawyer who writes books. He notes that his legal experience has provided him with material for fiction even as it has required him to become adept at a kind of courtroom storytelling. He contends that prosecutors in particular, because they bear the burden of proof, must present a case through various witnesses just as an author tells a story through characters. Like a traditional story, the prosecutor’s case must have a moral—the verdict requested of the jury.

Turow believes that, like himself, the American populace underwent a disillusioning experience in the 1970’s. It was the Watergate scandal that engendered close scrutiny of the legal profession (and incidentally increased public interest in the genre of legal thrillers). President Richard Nixon’s administration included many officials who, though trained in the law, faced indictment and prison terms as a result of the break-in and subsequent cover-up. Paradoxically, although individual attorneys and judges were no longer seen as models of integrity, it was in the courts that major questions of ethical and moral value were being decided.

Turow’s works are the products of a discerning mind, trained in law and literature, at pains to sift out various orders of truth. Generally, though certainly not always, the truth revealed in court serves justice in the strictest sense, but the truth of the system’s human participants cannot be contained in this frame of reference. With a perspective gained from eight years as a prosecutor, Turow has said that everyone in his stories is guilty of something, making the court system an

“awkward” device for finding the whole truth. He adds, “It’s the inability of the laws and institutions to accommodate these fine differences in people that has always provided a theme for me.”

PRESUMED INNOCENT

Turow’s first novel, *Presumed Innocent*, is a strong statement about the varieties of truth. In a large midwestern city, prosecuting attorney Carolyn Polhemus has been brutally murdered, and deputy prosecutor Rusty Sabich is assigned to investigate. With his boss, the district attorney, campaigning feverishly for reelection, the pressure is on to solve the case before voting day—and before Rusty’s adulterous affair with the victim is exposed. Suddenly, however, Rusty is taken off the case and is himself charged with the murder. Through the long, bitter trial that ensues, prosecution and defense distort the meaning of evidence to win the case, until the reader wonders whether public institutions have any real interest in, or are capable of, finding the truth. Ultimately, long after Rusty has been exonerated, the real culprit is revealed by extralegal means—someone whose identity throws an ironic light on the title *Presumed Innocent*. Rusty believes it imperative to conceal the culprit’s identity to protect his loved ones, and he lives with the guilty knowledge that his own actions triggered the events leading to the murder.

THE BURDEN OF PROOF

Although Turow has not used series characters, he does feature some characters in more than one story, as might be expected from his consistent use of a fictitious midwestern locale, Kindle County, as his setting. The action in *The Burden of Proof* begins when Sandy Stern (the brilliant defense attorney from *Presumed Innocent*) finds his beloved wife dead by her own hand. His agonized search for the reasons leads him into a tangled web of circumstance and guilt. Meanwhile, Sandy’s chief client, Dixon Hartnell, an unscrupulous commodities trader, is targeted for federal indictment. Sandy has shielded the man—but added to his own torment—out of family loyalty, for Dixon is married to Sandy’s sister. As he struggles with new revelations of family intrigue and insider stock trading, Sandy realizes the extent of the secret existence his wife had led. Spectacular courtroom scenes, a mark of the legal thriller, are contrasted with the pro-

found private tragedy that Sandy uncovers, making this novel an excellent example of the middle ground Turow has sought between entertaining fiction and serious, meditative literature.

THE LAWS OF OUR FATHERS

Turow has said that 1960's produced both an idealized sense of human nature and the gang-ridden housing projects of later decades. His visits to the projects in the late 1980's while doing pro bono legal work shocked him profoundly as he encountered firsthand the desperation of the black urban poor. The plot of *The Laws of Our Fathers* (1996) weaves together two legacies from the 1960's: the projects and the common pasts of several Kindle County figures, including Judge Sonia "Sonny" Klonsky, a major character from *The Burden of Proof*.

A seemingly random drive-by shooting near a housing project takes the life of a state senator's former wife. The senator has long been acquainted with Judge Klonsky, who is assigned to preside over the murder case. Soon, questions of justice and equity appear to be made moot by the extraordinary animosity focused on the judge by her enemies, who are determined to cause her downfall. As the case develops, more acquaintances from the years of Vietnam-era protests—including an old boyfriend of Sonia's and a prominent and vocal black defense attorney—become involved, and the characters relive that era in their thoughts while the story reveals what, individually and collectively, they have since become.

The black defense attorney, Hobie Tuttle, has a nearly archetypal backstory: He had a somewhat privileged childhood and young manhood (like Turow), later participated in the Black Power movement, and still later achieved an uneasy success as a defense attorney. Turow describes Hobie as one of his favorite characters, combining basic decency with outstanding ingenuity. A scene that combines riveting courtroom drama with deep meditation on the social issues underlying the story is Hobie's cross-examination of another compelling black character, "Hardcore" Trent, a dope dealer and leader of a housing-project gang, who is a key prosecution witness. With understatement, Turow notes that Hardcore is "not a nice guy," yet in the author's hands, Hardcore is not just a simplistically drawn villain. A

common 1960's complaint was that government institutions were an inadequate response to the complexities of human life, and in this novel Turow strongly suggests that the complaint still applies.

PERSONAL INJURIES

Critics and lawyers alike have praised the authentic tone of *Personal Injuries*, inspired by Turow's experience in Operation Greylord, the judicial bribery case. The central character is Robbie Feaver, a prominent personal-injury attorney who bribes judges with funds from a secret bank account. The Federal Bureau of Investigation discovers Robbie's crimes and induces him to entrap corrupt officials via a concealed microphone while arranging more payoffs. Robbie is a con artist with a heart of gold, devoted to his dying wife; he commits his crimes partly to foot her medical bills. He is also a philanderer, but the female undercover agent supervising his case is unreceptive to his charms. Much of the story's drama is in the mutual probing of these two complex and enigmatic personalities.

Though more of a procedural story than a legal thriller, *Personal Injuries* avoids the flat characterizations of a predictable genre novel. Turow accomplishes this by showing the characters in all their complexity and frailty, arousing compassion even for the troubles they have brought on themselves.

Thomas Rankin

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Presumed Innocent*, 1987; *The Burden of Proof*, 1990; *Pleading Guilty*, 1993; *The Laws of Our Fathers*, 1996; *Personal Injuries*, 1999; *Reversible Errors*, 2002; *Limitations*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVEL: *Ordinary Heroes*, 2005

NONFICTION: *One L: An Inside Account of Life in the First Year at Harvard Law School*, 1977; *Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty*, 2003

EDITED TEXTS: *Guilty as Charged: A Mystery Writers of America Anthology*, 1996 (also known as *Guilty as Charged: The Penguin Book of New American Crime Writing*, 1996); *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 2006

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Turow: A Critical Companion. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005. A well-researched chronicle of Turow's progress from struggling writer to widely read and respected author of legal thrillers. Provides plot analysis and character descriptions for Turow's books through *Reversible Errors*. Includes a bibliography of his works and books and articles written about him.

- Murphy, Stephen M. *Their Word Is Law: Bestselling Lawyer-Novelists Talk About Their Craft*. New York: Berkley Books, 2002. Includes an interview with Turow that provides firsthand information about his development as a writer, his experiences in the practice of law, and the relationship between his legal and authorial practices.

MARK TWAIN

Samuel Langhorne Clemens

Born: Florida, Missouri; November 30, 1835

Died: Redding, Connecticut; April 21, 1910

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; inverted

CONTRIBUTION

Mark Twain is best known as the author of the quintessentially American novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), the work from which, in Ernest Hemingway's judgment, all modern American writing derives and in which neither mystery nor detection plays any significant role. Of the novel's two murders, one, Pap Finn's, is quickly disposed of in the final page and the other, Huck's feigning his own death, is, for all the brilliance of the plan and the psychological resonance of the symbolic act of self-destruction, little more than the means by which Twain keeps his plot moving.

Because *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is in many ways not only Twain's finest work but also his most representative, it may appear that he holds little claim to a place in the history of mystery and detective fiction. Twain, however, demonstrated a deep interest in these particular literary forms over the course of his entire ca-

reer. From the inquest in "Petrified Man" to his purest and most complete venture into the field, *Tom Sawyer; Detective* (1896), he adapted the conventions of these literary subgenres to his own purposes, aesthetic, and financial needs. His forays into mystery and detective fiction may therefore best be classified according to form and function: satirizing the forms themselves and certain social conditions, capitalizing on already popular (and therefore potentially profitable) literary formulas, and finding an appropriate vehicle for those melodramatic climaxes of which he was perhaps overfond. Not surprisingly for a writer who generally wrote without any plan in mind and whose episodic works often appear innocent of both plot and structure, the formal constraints of detective and mystery writing often proved too confining for Twain. However, for a writer obsessed with the question of mistaken identity, mystery and detective fiction held a certain attraction. Indeed, mistaken identity plays a central role in his posthumously published short story *A Murder, a Mystery, and a Marriage* (2001), which might be best seen as a parody of detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri. Four years later, his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, the fictionalized St. Petersburg of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Dawson's Landing of *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). As a youth, Twain learned the printer's trade, but in 1857 he fulfilled his boyhood dream of becoming a steamboat pilot, which he describes in "Old Times on the Mississippi" (1876) and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). After the Civil War (1861-1865) ended commercial steamboat traffic on the Lower Mississippi River, he spent the next five years (1861-1866) as a miner and journalist in California and the Nevada Territory, an experience he later recounted in the highly fictionalized *Roughing It* (1872). It was during this period that he first used the pseudonym Mark Twain (a nautical term for two fathoms of water).

With the publication of "Jim Smiley and His Frog" (later republished as "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County") in New York's *The Saturday Press* in 1865, Twain came to national attention, not as a serious, respectable writer, however, but as a southwestern humorist. He traveled to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), lectured widely, and in 1867 he toured the Mediterranean and Holy Land, culling material for his masterwork of American-style humorous irreverence, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869).

Twain's marriage to Olivia Langdon, the daughter of a New York coal baron, in 1870, had a double effect. It not only provided him with the emotional and social stability he craved but also further accentuated the division in his own personality, the split between the frontier humorist whose work and person were not tolerated in polite company and the serious writer who longed for literary and social acceptance. Continuing to mine his own experiences for literary material, Twain produced his two best-known works, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. His business ventures during the 1880's and early 1890's, such as the formation of his own publishing firm, Charles L. Webster and Company, and his obsession with new inventions, especially the Paige automatic typesetter, brought about his bankruptcy in 1894.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Mark Twain. (Library of Congress)

From mid-1895 to mid-1896, Twain went on a lecture tour around the world in order to pay off his creditors in full. His behavior was a matter of personal obligation rather than legal necessity. Although by 1904 he was once again prosperous and celebrated, the memory of the earlier bankruptcy and the deaths of his wife and daughter darkened his final years and caused him to accentuate the pessimistic strain that had never been very far from the surface of even his most humorous work. His gloom, in particular his growing belief that human life was entirely determined and as entirely devoid of meaning, led him to suppress certain works that he believed were too shocking for publication and to leave others, including his "mysterious stranger" manuscripts, unfinished. "The Lincoln of our literature," as his friend William Dean Howells called him, died on April 21, 1910.

ANALYSIS

As Mark Twain explains in his essay "How to Tell a Story," the art of the humorous tale relies more on how a story is told than what it tells, on its manner rather than its matter. Nowhere is this distinction clearer than in those Twain stories that depend heavily

on mystery and detection, in which these literary forms meet Twain's particular use of southwestern humor and the oral tradition. In "A Ghost Story," for example, the particularly clumsy ghost of a petrified man known as the Cardiff Giant learns from the tale's narrator that he has been mistakenly haunting a plaster cast of himself on display in New York rather than the actual petrified figure on exhibit in Albany.

"THE GREAT LANDSLIDE CASE"

In another short piece, "The Great Landslide Case," a tall tale in *Roughing It*, Twain works a variation on the familiar squatter-and-the-tenderfoot plot. The tenderfoot in this instance is General Buncombe, the recently appointed United States attorney general to the Nevada Territory. Buncombe readily agrees to represent Dick Hyde, who seeks to "evict" Tom Morgan, whose farm has slid from the side of the mountain and now lies atop Hyde's farm to a depth of thirty-eight feet. The judge rules against Hyde, claiming that he has been deprived of his farm by a "visitation of God! And from this decision there is no appeal." Although Hyde may dig his farm out, if he so chooses, Buncombe is furious. His anger is so intense that it takes two months for him to realize that he has been the butt of the town's vast joke.

"A DYING MAN'S CONFESSION"

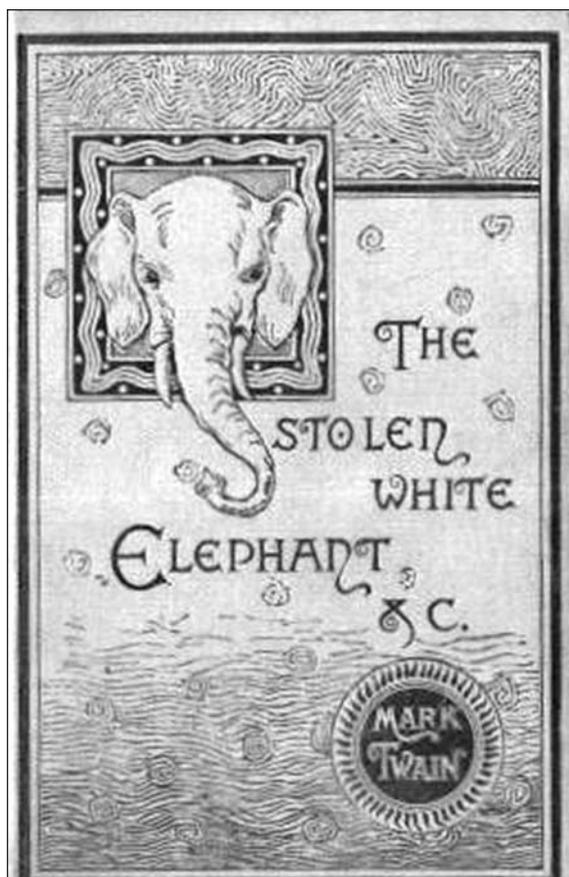
Similarly structured but more intricately involved in its telling and less obvious in its humor, "A Dying Man's Confession," a story in *Life on the Mississippi*, is a tale-within-a-tale. The long inside narrative takes the form of a dying man's confession. Ritter, nightwatchman in a German charnel house, recounts to the frame tale's narrator the murder of his wife and child and how he tracked down the murderer and his accomplice (using the then-new science of fingerprinting) and took his revenge, only to discover years later that he has murdered the wrong man. As nightwatchman, Ritter has the satisfaction of seeing the right man die after having twice risen from the dead—once as a result of Ritter's mistake and again in the charnel house where the bodies of the dead are briefly kept to ensure that no one is buried alive. Against this grisly background, Twain sets the additional tale of Ritter's efforts to locate the murderer's secret loot and give it to the son of the man he mistakenly killed so many years ago. Ritter succeeds in

finding where the money has been hidden—in Napoleon, Arkansas—and charges the frame tale's narrator with securing it for the murdered man's son.

Only as this "double-barreled" story draws to its close does the reader learn that he is Twain's victim. Aboard a Mississippi steamboat, the narrator finishes telling Ritter's tale to his two listeners; together they decide to split the money among themselves and, after much thought, to send the son "a chromo" (that is, a chromolithograph, an inexpensive colored picture). At this point, they (and the reader) learn that the town they seek has been swept away by one of the river's sudden shifts. The story's joke—or its "nub," as Twain termed it—is on them and, naturally, the reader.

"THE STOLEN WHITE ELEPHANT"

Twain's overturning or inverting of the conventions of mystery and detective fiction to suit the needs of his comic style and vision reaches a more satiric pitch in



(Arkent Archive)

works such as “The Stolen White Elephant” and *A Double-Barrelled Detective Story* (1902). Like “The Great Landslide Case,” the former story quickly telegraphs its comic intentions and settles down to the task at hand: ridiculing detective fiction in general and police detectives in particular. The police inspector’s “instinct” triumphs over all the facts, including the discovery of the elephant, now dead, in the basement of police headquarters.

A DOUBLE-BARRELLED DETECTIVE STORY

First published in 1902, *A Double-Barrelled Detective Story* is a more intricately written burlesque. Far from being “probably the worst story Mark Twain ever wrote,” as Everett Emerson has claimed, it provides some of the best evidence of Twain’s parodic mastery of late nineteenth century detective fiction as practiced by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Twain does not merely switch from the serious to the ludicrous, from convention to parody, or from mimetic illusion to the reader’s disillusionment but oddly switches back and forth, repeatedly winning back the gullible reader’s credence despite repeated flights into parodic absurdity. What begins as a rather compelling tale of offense taken and revenge given is soon doubled, with the second story quickly turning into farce. The vehicle of the wife’s revenge on her husband is a son who literally rather than metaphorically embodies the traits of a bloodhound and who eventually discovers that he has been “hounding” the wrong man. Twain adds story to story, mystery to mystery until the original—and by this point virtually forgotten—narrative of the wife’s revenge is at last resolved, with no thanks due either to the bloodhound son or Sherlock Holmes, whose arrival in a Nevada mining camp is simply one of the story’s absurd givens. That Holmes becomes an accessory to murder at one point and at another accuses an innocent man of the deed on the basis that he is left-handed makes clear Twain’s attitude toward Doyle’s “pompous sentimental ‘extraordinary man’ and his cheap and ineffectual ingenuities.”

As a committed realist, Twain had as little patience for the implausibilities of Doyle’s stories and the posturings of that sham genius, Sherlock Holmes, as he had for the narrative inconsistencies he found in

James Fenimore Cooper’s fiction. He preferred the competence and common sense displayed by Tom Sawyer—not the character in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, who prefers romance to reality, but the title character of his own earlier *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and of the later *Tom Sawyer, Detective*. The contrast in the structure of these two works and the relative greatness of the one coupled with the general obscurity of the other show the difficulty that a writer of Twain’s temperament and writing habits might have in attempting to write a detective story. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, nearly one-third of the novel goes by before Tom and Huck witness the event that evokes most of the novel’s most interesting action: Injun Joe’s murder of Dr. Robinson and his blaming an unsuspecting Muff Potter. The internal conflict between the boys’ fear of Injun Joe and their pangs of conscience as they witness the wrong man on trial culminates in Tom’s heroic courtroom testimony (immediately followed by Injun Joe’s escape). Another third of the novel then transpires before Twain resumes this narrative line and ends his novel on a note of high adventure that, like the plots of many of Twain’s longer works, is as contrived as those discoveries of Sherlock Holmes that Twain loved to pillory.

TOM SAWYER, DETECTIVE

As *A Double-Barrelled Detective Story* constitutes one side of Twain’s double-barreled response to the Holmes mania, *Tom Sawyer, Detective* represents the other. It is Twain’s fullest and most serious attempt to capitalize on Holmes’s popularity while managing to restrain both his satiric impulse and his own wayward imagination. It is, with “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg” (another of his longer though still not novel-length works), one of Twain’s most tightly plotted and narrowly focused works, and perhaps for that reason one of his least successful and in many ways least representative. Read in the context of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, it seems slight; read as detective fiction, however, it takes on considerable power.

The narrator of *Tom Sawyer, Detective* is Huck Finn, not the Huck Finn who narrated his own earlier adventures and whose vernacular language and perspective play such an important role in that book, but a

boy version of Dr. Watson to Tom Sawyer's Sherlock Holmes. Although the setting is that of the end of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—the Phelps farm in Arkansas, about one year later—the plot is drawn from Steen Steenson Blicher's Danish murder mystery *Praesten i Vejlbj* (1829; *The Parson at Vejlbj*). As Blicher weaves together his American materials and his Danish source, Twain weaves two stories of theft, murder, and revenge into a single mystery that points all too clearly to Tom's gentle but recently deranged Uncle Silas Phelps, whose delusions cause him to become his own worst accuser. Silas's lawyer is, like Wilhelm Meidling in Twain's later "The Chronicle of Young Satan" thoroughly incompetent. Proving Silas's innocence falls therefore entirely on Tom, whose legal status in the trial Twain takes pains to authenticate according to Arkansas law. Twain proves equally determined to demonstrate that the proof of Silas's innocence and therefore the solution to the mystery depends on nothing more than Tom's ability to see what is before him and to draw the simple conclusions that anyone (not simply a Sherlock Holmes) can draw—that, for example, a certain gesture may identify a man better than his clothing, hairstyle, or other physical description. What characterizes Tom Sawyer, detective, is therefore not any supernatural powers or intellectual genius but his native intelligence coupled with a very human desire for attention and fame and, like his creator, his love of melodrama.

Like the arrival of mysterious strangers in many of Twain's novels and stories, melodramatic courtroom scenes play an important role in several of his works: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Tom Sawyer, Detective*; "The Chronicle of Young Satan"; *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896); "The Great Landslide Case," in which the judicial process is burlesqued; *The Gilded Age* (1873), where it is made the vehicle for scathing social satire; and most significant, *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

THE TRAGEDY OF PUDD'NHEAD WILSON

If *Tom Sawyer, Detective* stands as Twain's most complete and most consistent work of detective fiction, then *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* stands as the work in which Twain makes the most interesting use of mystery and detection. In it, Twain transfers his

own interest in scientific and pseudoscientific theories and inventions to David Wilson, a lawyer, whose intelligence, irony, and interest in palmistry and the new science of fingerprinting mark his distance from the other citizens of Dawson's Landing, where the shams and superstitions of the Cavalier South continue to reign. Thematically, the novel concerns the triumph of science over superstition, the modern over the medieval. More specifically, Twain uses fingerprinting not merely to expose the real murderer, but, more important, to expose the baselessness of the southern myth of the inherent supremacy of the white race.

Throughout his career, and in his later writings in particular, Twain makes clear his belief that no human trait is inherent, that everything is the result of training. Thus, in the novel's climactic courtroom scene, Wilson demonstrates not only that the murderer is Tom Driscoll but also that Tom is not the heir of the First Families of Virginia tradition. He is rather a black slave reared, which is to say trained, as a white man after being switched in the cradle with the child who is the rightful heir but who is now an illiterate black slave, again a result of training. (As for any difference in color, Twain points to the reality of miscegenation in southern life.) After suffering the town's jokes for twenty years, Wilson triumphs, as does the scientific spirit he represents. There is, however, little reason for the reader to rejoice, as there is in "Tom Sawyer, Detective," for while evil does not triumph, neither does good. What emerges is that sense of irony and cynicism that Wilson shares not only with his maker, Twain, but also with his progeny: the hard-boiled detectives of a later literary generation.

Robert A. Morace

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 1894; *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, 1896; *A Double-Barrelled Detective Story*, 1902; *Simon Wheeler, Detective*, 1963 (Franklin R. Rogers, editor); *A Murder, a Mystery, and a Marriage*, 2001 (Roy Blount, Jr., editor)

SHORT FICTION: *The Stolen White Elephant, and Other Stories*, 1882

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Gilded Age*, 1873 (with Charles Dudley Warner); *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1876; *The Prince and the Pauper*, 1881; *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884; *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, 1889; *The American Claimant*, 1892; *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, 1894; *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, 1896; *Extracts from Adam's Diary*, 1904; *A Horse's Tale*, 1906; *Eve's Diary, Translated from the Original Ms*, 1906; *Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*, 1909; *The Mysterious Stranger*, 1916 (revised as *The Chronicle of Young Satan*, 1969, by Albert Bigelow Paine and Frederick A. Duneka); *Report from Paradise*, 1952 (Dixon Wecter, editor); *Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts*, 1969 (William M. Gibson, editor)

SHORT FICTION: *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches*, 1867; *Mark Twain's (Burlesque) Autobiography and First Romance*, 1871; *Mark Twain's Sketches: New and Old*, 1875; *Punch, Brothers, Punch! and Other Sketches*, 1878; *Merry Tales*, 1892; *The £1,000,000 Bank-Note, and Other New Stories*, 1893; *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg, and Other Stories and Essays*, 1900; *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule*, 1905; *The \$30,000 Bequest, and Other Stories*, 1906; *The Curious Republic of Gondour, and Other Whimsical Sketches*, 1919; *The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain*, 1957 (Charles Neider, editor); *Letters from the Earth*, 1962; *Selected Shorter Writings of Mark Twain*, 1962; *Mark Twain's Satires and Burlesques*, 1967 (Franklin R. Rogers, editor); *Mark Twain's Which Was the Dream? and Other Symbolic Writings of the Later Years*, 1967 (John S. Tuckey, editor); *Mark Twain's Hannibal, Huck and Tom*, 1969 (Walter Blair, editor); *Mark Twain's Fables of Man*, 1972 (Tuckey, editor); *Life as I Find It*, 1977 (Neider, editor); *Early Tales and Sketches*, 1979-1981 (2 volumes; Edgar Marquess Branch and Robert H. Hirst, editors)

PLAYS: *Colonel Sellers*, pr., pb. 1874 (adaptation of his novel *The Gilded Age*); *Ah Sin*, pr. 1877 (with Bret Harte); *Is He Dead? A Comedy in Three Acts*, pb. 2003 (Shelley Fisher Fishkin, editor)

NONFICTION: *The Innocents Abroad*, 1869; *Rough-*

ing It, 1872; *A Tramp Abroad*, 1880; *Life on the Mississippi*, 1883; *Following the Equator*, 1897 (also known as *More Tramp Abroad*); *How to Tell a Story, and Other Essays*, 1897; *My Début as a Literary Person*, 1903; *What Is Man?*, 1906; *Christian Science*, 1907; *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, 1909; *Mark Twain's Speeches*, 1910 (Albert Bigelow Paine, editor); *Europe and Elsewhere*, 1923 (Paine, editor); *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, 1924 (2 volumes; Paine, editor); *Mark Twain's Notebook*, 1935 (Paine, editor); *Letters from the Sandwich Islands, Written for the Sacramento Union*, 1937 (G. Ezra Dane, editor); *Mark Twain in Eruption*, 1940 (Bernard DeVoto, editor); *Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown*, 1940 (Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane, editors); *Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks*, 1949 (Wecter, editor); *The Love Letters of Mark Twain*, 1949 (Dixon Wecter, editor); *Mark Twain of the Enterprise: Newspaper Articles and Other Documents, 1862-1864*, 1957 (Henry Nash Smith and Frederick Anderson, editors); *Traveling with the Innocents Abroad: Mark Twain's Original Reports from Europe and the Holy Land*, 1958 (Daniel Morley McKeithan, editor; letters); *Mark Twain-Howells Letters: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William D. Howells, 1872-1910*, 1960 (Smith and William M. Gibson, editors); *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 1961 (Neider, editor); *Mark Twain's Letters to His Publishers, 1867-1894*, 1967 (Hamlin Hill, editor); *Clemens of the Call: Mark Twain in San Francisco*, 1969 (Edgar M. Branch, editor); *Mark Twain's Correspondence with Henry Huttleston Rogers, 1893-1909*, 1969 (Lewis Leary, editor); *A Pen Warmed-Up in Hell: Mark Twain in Protest*, 1972; *Mark Twain's Notebooks and Journals, 1875-1879* (3 volumes); *Mark Twain Speaking*, 1976 (Paul Fatout, editor); *Mark Twain Speaks for Himself*, 1978 (Fatout, editor); *Mark Twain's Letters, 1888-2002* (6 volumes; Edgar Marquess Branch, et al, editors); *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography: The Chapters from the "North American Review," 1890* (Michael J. Kiskis, editor); *Mark Twain's Aquarium: The Samuel Clemens Angelfish Correspondence, 1905-1910*, 1991 (John Cooley, editor); *Mark Twain: The Complete Interviews*, 2006 (Gary Scharnhorst, editor)

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Writings of Mark Twain, 1822-1925* (37 volumes); *The Portable Mark Twain,*

1946 (Bernard De Voto, editor); *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, and Essays, 1853-1891*, 1992 (Louis J. Budd, editor); *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, and Essays, 1891-1910*, 1992 (Budd, editor)

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- Horn, Jason Gary. *Mark Twain: A Descriptive Guide to Biographical Sources*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1999. Richly annotated bibliography of nearly three hundred books and other sources on Mark Twain, including many works of criticism.
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ARTHUR W. UPFIELD

Born: Gosport, Hampshire, England; September 1, 1888

Died: Bowral, New South Wales, Australia; February 13, 1964

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Napoleon “Bony” Bonaparte, 1929-1966

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR NAPOLEON “BONY” BONAPARTE of the Queensland Police is half white and half Aborigine. Bony has a master’s degree from Brisbane University; he combines Western intelligence with an Aboriginal instinct. Married to a half-caste, Marie, he has three sons. Handsome and a fine dresser, he can assume various identities to solve a mystery. Bony is respectful of the police, as he is of his suspects. He is characteristically patient, working at a snail’s pace to unravel the most difficult of crimes.

CONTRIBUTION

Arthur W. Upfield’s originality comes mainly from two sources. One is his firsthand acquaintance with the whole of the Australian landscape, not only the towns, lakes, deserts, and mountains but also the infinite variety of fauna and flora that populate the continent. His readers can draw a map of Australia and place a particular crime. Upfield had Ernest Hemingway’s eye for detail and could bring alive the smallest incident peculiar to a certain area. Second is his vivid, totally believable characterization of Napoleon Bonaparte, who appears in most of his more than thirty novels. Bony can assume various characters, from swagman to deep-sea fisherman, depending on the place, to “get his man.” He also understands the different cultures in Australia and can mediate between them to re-

store order. Critics see the Americans James Fenimore Cooper and Herman Melville as models for Upfield’s humanism, symbolism, and rhetorical skills.

BIOGRAPHY

Arthur William Upfield was born on September 1, 1888, in Gosport, England, to James Oliver Upfield and Annie Barmore Upfield, who ran a drapery business. The eldest of five sons, he was reared largely by his grandmother and her two sisters. Suffering from bronchitis, he was often confined to bed, where he learned to read voraciously, and at sixteen he had written the first of three novels.

Upfield’s father wanted his son to be a real estate surveyor, but when Arthur failed the test, he sent the boy to Australia. Though he started working on a farm, and then as a hotel cook, Upfield finally achieved his dream as a boundary rider along the fences of a huge sheep farm in Momba, Victoria, an experience that gave him firsthand knowledge of Australia’s bush country and its abundant wildlife.

Overcome by loneliness, the young man returned by bike with his dog to New South Wales, where he exchanged his bike for a boat to pursue an idyllic existence on the Darling River. His traveling, as well as his experiences as a cattle drover, rabbit trapper, and horse trainer, enabled him to meet many of the strange characters he would describe in his novels.

In 1915, Upfield was married to a nurse, Anne Douglas, and had a son, Arthur Douglas, though his marriage soon failed. He joined the Australian Imperial Force in 1924, serving for five years in Gallipoli, the Egyptian desert, and France. Again he returned to Australia to trap and mine, concluding, “my life was influenced by sheep, cattle, riding camels, war, women, gold, opals, delirium tremens, and, fortunately, Mary.”

Mary and Angus owned a sheep farm, and virtually

became Upfield's parents. They encouraged him to write what eventually became his first "Bony" novel, *The Barrakee Mystery* (1929). Most important, however, was Leon Wood, a trapper who, according to Upfield, "taught me to read the Book of the Bush. He revealed the eternal war within himself, as an example to me."

Apart from his novels, Upfield wrote articles on the topography and history of Australia, publishing some before World War I in the London *Daily Mail*. In the 1920's he also wrote stories for *Novel Magazine* and various articles for *Wide World Magazine*. He was elected justice of the peace in 1935, and in 1948 headed a party of experts on a six-thousand-mile expedition to northern and western Australia for the Australian Geographic Society.

Upfield died in Bowral, New South Wales, on February 13, 1964, at the age of seventy-five. Between 1929 and his death in 1964 he completed more than thirty novels. J. L. Price and Dorothy Strange completed and revised his final work, *The Lake Frome Monster* (1966).



Arthur W. Upfield.

ANALYSIS

As an adolescent living with his grandmother in England, Arthur W. Upfield, under the name "Arker-William" Upfield, wrote several lengthy manuscripts—his unpublished Yellow Peril series. After his father sent him to Australia, he wandered the continent for twenty years doing odd jobs before attempting his first serious novel, *The Barrakee Mystery*, at the instigation of friends. The book lacked focus, however, so Upfield attempted a straight thriller, *The House of Cain* (1928), but his characters were still flat and the theme melodramatic. Then, while working as a cook at Wheeler's Well in New South Wales, Upfield stopped to talk to Leon Wood, a tracker with whom he had spent five months patrolling hundreds of miles of fence as a boundary rider. This incident enabled Upfield to give focus and direction to his life as a crime and mystery writer.

THE BARRAKEE MYSTERY

Wood's father was white and his mother Aborigine. Intelligent and widely read, he gave Upfield a copy of a biography of Napoleon Bonaparte. Using Leon as a model, Upfield then created the main protagonist for most of his thirty-odd novels, Detective Inspector Napoleon "Bony" Bonaparte of the Queensland Police. Upfield then rewrote *The Barrakee Mystery* around Bony, and his career as a mystery writer began. Bony would be his detective hero, and the Australian landscape he knew so well would constitute the background for his entire fictional world.

Upfield, who claimed Hemingway as his favorite author, was fascinated by everything he saw, and he saw the whole of Australia. In *Bony and the White Savage* (1961) and *The Widows of Broome* (1950), he wrote about western Australia; he wrote about an area near the Northern Territory in *The Will of the Tribe* (1962), Queensland in *The Bone Is Pointed* (1938), and many sites in and around New South Wales, including the ocean off the southeastern coast in *The Mystery of Swordfish Reef* (1939). Upfield's style reflects Hemingway's simple vocabulary and sense of the concrete world. Of Upfield Betty Donaldson says, "When he describes a forest fire we can feel the heat, hear the crackle of the flames and sense the terror and desperation of the fleeing animals."

Though he works within the conventions of the classical detective story, which require certain presuppositions about society, law, and morality that are distinctively English, Upfield introduces a certain originality into the genre by examining the relationship between different cultures. In Australia these are the modern, urban culture of the coastal regions, the white culture of the Outback (diverse in national backgrounds), and the ancient Aboriginal culture in various stages of assimilation into the dominant white culture.

In Upfield's novels, Detective Napoleon Bonaparte mediates the interaction of these cultures. Himself a half-caste, he is able to represent the customs, beliefs, and powers of Aboriginal culture. Yet as the agent of a national police authority, Bony also represents the thrust of modernization with its centralized authority, bureaucratic administration, and hierarchy of educated expertise. He uses his Aboriginal intuition and civilized authority to penetrate the truth of crime and restore the harmony of society disrupted by violence.

As a detective writer, Upfield is less a social novelist than one rooted in nature, and critics compare his literary skills to those of Cooper and Melville because the natural world, so vast and powerful, must somehow be transcended or overcome. Like Cooper's Natty Bumppo, Bony represents the best in the primitive and civilized worlds, but unlike Cooper's mythic hero, Bony is real, down-to-earth, as arrogant as he is sensitive to others. Upfield lacks the full epic range of Melville, but he approaches such a scope through his use of the Australian terrain, and, like Ishmael, Bony is a humanist in his knowledge of and respect for all peoples. Upfield's rhetorical skills are not unlike Melville's in *Moby Dick* (1851), for his taste for similes and extended metaphors gives his work unmistakable intensity and depth. Like Melville, Upfield is also a symbolist, applying symbolism to both the civilized world, through the airplane in *Bushranger of the Skies* (1940), and the natural landscape, in novels such as *The Beach of Atonement* (1930), *Death of a Lake* (1954), and *The Mountains Have a Secret* (1948).

BONY BUYS A WOMAN

Among Upfield's novels, one of the most successful is *Bony Buys a Woman* (1957), set in the very heart of Australia near Lake Eyre, sixty miles wide and one

hundred miles long. The book centers on the murder of a white woman, Mrs. Bell, and the abduction of her daughter Linda, who is taken to the center of the dried-up lake by Ole Fren Yorky. It begins:

The day was the 7th of February, and it was just another day to Linda Bell. Of course, the sun was blazing hot at six in the morning, another morning when the wind sprang up long before six and was a half-gale when the sun rose. It sang when crossing the sandy ground, roared farewell as it sped through the line of pine trees guarding the Mount Eden homestead from the sprawling giant called Lake Eyre.

Here the writing, with the introduction of a child and the music of the wind near a small city in the outback, is (like Hemingway's) simple and direct. Yet through personification and metaphor—the wind “sprang up” and “roared” as the trees guard the supposedly paradisaical town from a “sprawling giant”—the author also hints at the terror to come. Before long Upfield will bring that dead lake alive, personifying local windstorms, called “willi-willies,” as a way of populating this desert area; then he makes the area the center of the action symbolic of the tenuous condition of humankind.

Yorky, who retreats with Linda to an island in the middle of dried-up Lake Eyre, called “The Sea That Was,” is unaware that he has been framed and remains loyal to the murderer. The Aborigines under King Canute will not pursue Yorky because of their loyalty to him, a “white blackfeller,” and their regard for the child. Bony in detective-like fashion examines all the clues (such as artificial footprints) and asks pertinent questions to determine that Yorky is not guilty, but his true genius comes from his ability to represent the white notion of justice while relating to all races, thus penetrating the complex of loyalties that shield the murderer. Old King Canute, with his childlike dialogue, attitude, and storytelling, is an interesting parallel to the young Linda Bell, whose presence pervades the novel. Bony, himself part Aborigine, identifies with Canute as Natty Bumppo does with the Indians in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*; he speaks Canute's simple language, negotiating forty plugs of tobacco for Yorky's daughter as his gift to her lover, Charlie.

She, in turn, helps Bony communicate with Yorky on the island. Then the ground begins to move under their feet, and they are “pinned like specimens” by the real murderer about to erase all the evidence of his guilt.

In the tradition of Melville, Upfield is able to turn that ground into a metaphor for life itself, and the lake bottom takes on the significance of Melville’s sea. Says Yorky:

Yair, that’s it. I’ve never seen it before, but the abos have a name for it. It’s a low sort of swell and the sun’s glinting on it along one slope, like a water wave. Old Canute told me about it. The water keeps pushing into the mud, and instead of running over the top of the mud, it comes up from under.

With crows and swooping eagles overhead, the whole situation resembles a Greek play—Euripides torn by the Furies, but Bony, never losing control, maintains his identity with others as well as his individual optimism:

You and I are merely animated shells crammed with fears, inhibitions, humility and pride. What white people might name courage is in us instinctive revolt against the abyss for ever opening at our feet. We must not fail. We dare not think of failure. So we must go on, even if we have to travel right across this abominable lake.

Here Upfield gives the terrain semiepic scope, while Bony, again instinctively in tune with the environment and the Aboriginal temperament, uses his modern psychological skills and characteristic determination to move forward.

The lake, therefore, is central to the drama, and takes on moral and mythical significance integrated with the movement of the story. It is a landscape, however, that is always related to the ingenuity of the central character—a character who never acts alone. Presently, Charlie (who made dolls for Linda) appears to help Bony “bonk” the murderer, much as Yorky’s daughter helped him relate to Yorky; the marriage of these two “abos” signals the restoration of order in the end. Thus Bony, loving yet firm, understanding yet decisive, is able to mediate between the races, expose the criminal, and restore the fragile fabric of society threatened by the murder. Indeed, through this half-

caste detective, Upfield balances the old with the young, the primitive with the modern, and communal living with individual action in a moving and convincing story of the Australian Outback—far removed from civilization, but somehow symbolic of life in the twentieth century.

Thomas Matchie

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE SERIES: *The Barrakee Mystery*, 1929 (also known as *The Lure of the Bush*); *The Sands of Windee*, 1931; *Wings Above the Diamantina*, 1936 (also known as *Winged Mystery* and *Wings Above the Claypan*); *Mr. Jelly’s Business*, 1937 (also known as *Murder Down Under*); *Wind of Evil*, 1937; *The Bone Is Pointed*, 1938; *The Mystery of Swordfish Reef*, 1939; *Bushranger of the Skies*, 1940 (also known as *No Footprints in the Bush*); *Death of a Swagman*, 1945; *The Devil’s Steps*, 1946; *An Author Bites the Dust*, 1948; *The Mountains Have a Secret*, 1948; *The Bachelors of Broken Hill*, 1950; *The Widows of Broome*, 1950; *The New Shoe*, 1951; *Venom House*, 1952; *Murder Must Wait*, 1953; *Death of a Lake*, 1954; *Cake in a Hat Box*, 1954 (also known as *Sinister Stones*); *The Battling Prophet*, 1956; *The Man of Two Tribes*, 1956; *Bony Buys a Woman*, 1957 (also known as *The Bushman Who Came Back*); *Bony and the Black Virgin*, 1959; *Bony and the Mouse*, 1959 (also known as *Journey to the Hangman*); *Bony and the Kelly Gang*, 1960 (also known as *Valley of Smugglers*); *Bony and the White Savage*, 1961 (also known as *The White Savage*); *The Will of the Tribe*, 1962; *Madman’s Bend*, 1963 (also known as *The Body at Madman’s Bend*); *The Lake Frome Monster*, 1966 (with J. L. Price and Dorothy Strange)

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The House of Cain*, 1928; *The Beach of Atonement*, 1930; *A Royal Abduction*, 1932; *Gripped by Drought*, 1932

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V

JONATHAN VALIN

Born: Cincinnati, Ohio; November 23, 1948

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Harry Stoner, 1980-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HARRY STONER, a private investigator, is a Vietnam War veteran and a lifelong resident of Cincinnati, where he was for a time attached to the office of the district attorney. At the beginning of the series, he is thirty-seven years old and single. While he is often annoyed by the smugness of what he calls the Cincinnati Puritans, he admits that he is a moralist, so angered by the drug-ridden, brutal society of the 1980's that he often runs deadly risks to protect its victims.

CONTRIBUTION

Like his predecessors Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, Jonathan Valin has created a hard-living, wisecracking, but essentially admirable private investigator. Valin's Harry Stoner solves mysteries that the police are unable or reluctant to handle, often because the wrongdoers—though not always wealthy or influential themselves—have links to the rich and powerful. In the tradition of Hammett and Chandler, Valin writes in a straightforward, colloquial style. Like the earlier writers of the hard-boiled school, he is compassionate toward characters who despite their human frailties, occasionally rise to heights of courage and concern. Valin differs from the earlier writers of this school in his greater emphasis on sexual perversion, drug addiction, and graphic, sadistic violence. Clearly, he sees these elements as characteristic of the decadent, corrupt American society of the 1980's and 1990's, in which Harry Stoner must wage his lonely wars. Popularly and critically acclaimed for his fic-

tion—winning a Shamus Award for *Extenuating Circumstances* (1989), garnering a Shamus nomination for *Second Chance* (1991), and named top vote-getter in an informal 2006 *Rap Sheet* poll asking which series readers would most like to see continued—Jonathan Valin has since 1995 eschewed fiction for nonfiction. Currently a contributing editor to *The Absolute Sound*, an audiophile periodical, Valin is considered an authority on contemporary upper-range stereo equipment and on classical musical recordings.

BIOGRAPHY

Jonathan Louis Valin was born on November 23, 1948, in Cincinnati, where he has spent most of his life. His parents were Sigmund Valin and Marcella Fink Valin. Valin married poet Katherine Brockhaus in 1971. He was educated at the University of Chicago, where he received a masters of arts in 1974. Following two years as a lecturer in English at the University of Cincinnati (1974-1976), he pursued doctoral studies and taught creative writing at Washington University in St. Louis (1976-1979).

After winning the 1978 Norma Lowry Memorial Fund Prize for his short story, "Replay," Valin became a full-time writer. He published his first two mystery novels—*The Lime Pit* and *Final Notice*—in 1980. Both books, like all of Valin's novels, concerned former police officer turned private detective Harry Stoner. Modeled on such hard-boiled private eyes as Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, and Lew Archer, Stoner is based in Cincinnati. More than simply a wisecracking tough guy, Stoner is a sensitive music-loving loner who typically takes on cases involving missing persons or suspicious deaths, often becoming entangled in middle-class family relationships that have fragmented.

The Stoner novels, thanks to their action-packed, often violent plots, complex characters, and well-drawn

settings in and around Cincinnati, gained a loyal readership. Valin responded by adding to the series on a regular basis, releasing *Dead Letter* (1981), *Day of Wrath* (1982), and *Natural Causes* (1983). After a hiatus of several years, the author again continued the series with *Life's Work* (1986), and added five more entries, including the Shamus Award-winning *Extenuating Circumstances*, the Shamus-nominated *Second Chance*, and *Missing* (1995). During the same time period, Valin also contributed "Malibu Tag Team" to the anthology *Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe* (1988) and "Loser Takes All" to *The Armchair Detective* (1991).

In the early 1990's, Valin began moving away from the detective novel—he felt he had begun to repeat himself and had nothing new to add to the private investigator genre—and toward a different longtime interest, music. This is reflected in *The Music Lovers* (1993) and in the nonfictional book he released in the same year: *Living Stereo: The RCA Bible, a Compendium of Opinion on RCA Living Stereo Records*, considered the definitive guide to the Living Stereo classical recordings made between 1958 and 1964.

In the mid-1990's, Valin fully committed to his new fascination by cofounding a magazine devoted to music criticism and stereo equipment reviews, *Fi* (short for hi-fi). The magazine lasted four years, then Valin became senior writer and executive editor for *The Absolute Sound*, frequently contributing reviews of high-end audio equipment for that magazine and reviews of sophisticated video equipment for its companion publication, *The Perfect Vision*. He also occasionally writes for "Cincinnati CityBeat" a column describing attractions in the Queen City, and wrote the foreword for Thomas R. Schiff's *Panoramic Cincinnati* (1999), describing 360-degree photos of the city taken with a Hulcherama panoramic camera. Valin has stated that he does not plan to return to detective Harry Stoner, despite winning a *Rap Sheet* online poll as the mystery writer readers would most like to continue an established series.

ANALYSIS

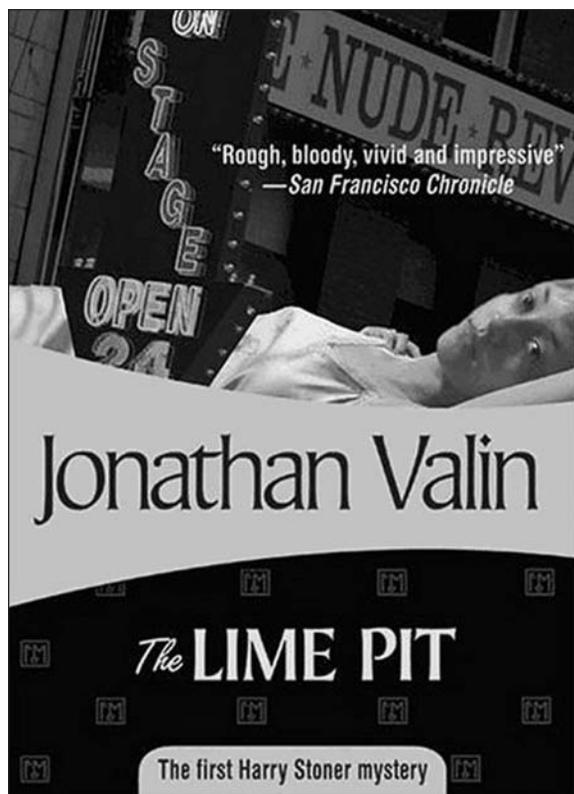
Unlike more leisurely traditional mysteries, Jonathan Valin's hard-hitting mystery-adventure stories do not begin with the exploration of character or the creation of atmosphere. Instead, they jump into action al-

most immediately when private investigator Harry Stoner is hired for a specific task, usually finding a missing person or investigating a death.

Although Stoner accepts whatever case is offered, he is often suspicious of the person who hired him, and his suspicions often prove to be justified. In *The Lime Pit*, for example, Hugo Cratz telephones to ask Stoner to look for his little girl. Charitably, Stoner agrees, but instead of a child, the missing girl proves to be a prostitute with dangerous associates. In *Final Notice*, *Dead Letter*, *Natural Causes*, and *Life's Work*, it is prosperous, respectable individuals who hire Stoner: a librarian, a scientist, a corporate representative, and a professional football executive. As Stoner soon discovers, however, none of these clients has told him the complete truth; one, the scientist in *Dead Letter*, is a Machiavellian villain who intends to use Stoner to cover up past misdeeds and to facilitate future murders.

Realizing that even his employers have not leveled with him, Stoner remains skeptical of everyone he interviews, because he is intent on deducing the truth and because his own survival depends on it. If he trusts the wrong person, he may be led into a trap. In *Fire Lake* (1987), Stoner trusts and helps a former college roommate, Lonnie "Jack" Jackowski—now a psychologically unstable drug addict, with criminal connections—and nearly loses his life.

In all Valin's mysteries, his detective's relationship with a woman helps build and sustain suspense. By nature, Stoner is chivalrous. Sometimes he is called a male chauvinist by liberated women such as young Kate Davis (*Final Notice*), who eventually must admit that she can use Stoner's help and that her brown belt in karate may not be enough to protect her from a well-armed psychopathic killer. Stoner worries about her, and he worries even more because she is impulsive, inexperienced, and unlikely to spot a trap. In *Dead Letter*, much of the suspense involves Sarah Lovingwell, whose insistence that her scientist father is a murderer naturally arouses Stoner's protective instincts. However, he cannot believe both Sarah's story and the well-respected professor's plausible account of Sarah's emotional instability. To arrive at the truth, Stoner must suppress his own chivalric instincts. At the end of the book, although he has exposed the vil-



lainous professor, Stoner has lingering doubts about Sarah—he is certain she outsmarted him.

Valin's readers and critics praise the realism of his settings. Although all of his novels are set partially or wholly in Cincinnati, in each Valin creates a different environment, varying from the library setting of *Final Notice* and the football locker rooms and bars of *Life's Work* to the sordid haunts of pimps, prostitutes, and addicts in *The Lime Pit* and *Fire Lake*.

When Valin takes his detective from the slums to the luxurious homes and offices of his employers and their friends, the description of setting becomes ironic, since some of the rich and powerful are deeply involved in criminal activities, often drug related. The furniture may be different, but the corruption is the same. To discover the secret of that corruption and with it the secret of the murder, Stoner must resist the trappings of wealth, just as he must resist the blandishments of beautiful but evil women.

Though Stoner is a large, imposing specimen, there is a David-and-Goliath element in all his adventures:

He must always face superior forces—officials, police officers, businessmen, drug lords, and their minions. When such Goliaths arrange the elimination of the little people who get in their way, Stoner must avenge the victims. In *The Lime Pit*, it is a young girl casually killed in a sexual orgy; in *Natural Causes*, it is a Mexican mother and child tortured and knifed. Whenever someone defenseless suffers, Stoner becomes a killing machine.

Most of Valin's characters, however, are ordinary people, neither all good nor all bad. Although Jackowski of *Fire Lake* is a junkie and a thief, even the wife who kicked him out knows that he is too gentle to have committed murder. In *Life's Work*, a hostile, brutal football player becomes Stoner's friend and dies in a heroic attempt to rescue a fellow player. Although one police officer in that novel is evil, recurring character Lieutenant Al Foster is a decent man; George DeVries, of the district attorney's office, though corrupt, is often helpful to Stoner.

Much as Stoner loathes the sadistic characters he encounters—whom he kills without compunction—he reserves hatred for the manipulators behind the sadists. When he confronts them, Stoner is capable of a merciless execution, as when he shoots Red Bannion and lets him burn in the dramatic finale of *The Lime Pit*.

The graphic descriptions of violence in Valin's novels may prove too much for squeamish readers. Yet Valin has a sense of humor—in *Life's Work*, he describes a preacher: "Like most evangelists, he looked as if he'd been dressed by his mother." Because all the novels are written in first person, it is the sensitive, observant Stoner who comments on society, who notices, for example, that the relatively innocent drug-sharing friendships of the 1960's no longer exist. Drug lords of the 1980's have their addicts trained to kill on command, Stoner muses in *Fire Lake*. There are no friendships in the biggest business in the United States.

In the corrupt society of Valin's novels, Stoner constantly tries to resist evil, both in his violent world and within himself. His code is simple: He will protect the weak; he will be true to friends; and he will seek the truth and conceal it only when telling it would harm the innocent. Although he has no objection to casual

sex, he never treats partners with contempt, and it is clear that he continues to hope for a permanent relationship. Against the background of decadence, greed, and violence, Stoner carries Valin's central theme: Even in modern society, good people can and must defy the evil that surrounds them.

NATURAL CAUSES

Natural Causes is Valin at his best. Like his other novels, it begins in Cincinnati when Jack Moon, a representative of a soap company that sponsors television shows, hires Stoner. In the initial scene, a major Valin theme is suggested. Although the soap company emphasizes the purity of its product and its image, its sponsored television show deals with alcoholics, drug addicts, and nymphomaniacs. Stoner is hired to look into the death of the chief writer of the popular serial *Phoenix*—a death that occurred, ironically, when the victim, Quentin Dover, was taking a shower.

As Stoner investigates, he finds things are not squeaky clean in the kingdom of soap. Dover's wife is a brainless, promiscuous alcoholic, who sold her self-respect for a luxurious lifestyle. A brilliant writer, Dover was addicted to alcohol and drugs, and there are rumors he had become incapable of writing and was facing termination. Dover's business associates in Los Angeles, apparently concerned and compassionate, testify against one another in their greed and ruthless pursuit of power.

If illusion is the stuff of soap operas, lies are the tool of their makers, indeed, of everyone in Southern California, Valin suggests. Police officer Sy Goldblum is typical. He looks like a film-star version of a police officer, but he is not who he seems to be. He started life as Seymour Wattle from Butte, Montana, and took a Jewish name hoping it would help him in Los Angeles. Sy is helpful to Stoner, but only when the fee is set in advance; as Sy's callous description of the dead body indicates, he has neither compassion nor interest in justice. His only motivation for finding the person responsible for Dover's death is the money he can make by helping Stoner.

Another reflection of the theme of illusion and deception is the fact that Dover always lied about his past—he never told the same story twice. To the detective, trying to arrive at the truth, Dover's habit of

making his own history as fictional as the scripts he outlined makes the investigation difficult: Dover's deliberate concealment of the activities of his final weekend only makes it harder for Stoner to solve the mystery of his death.

In this novel, Valin again dramatizes his belief that cold-blooded, prosperous leaders of society are willing to victimize the poor and unknown. Dover became involved in large-scale drug operations because he had gone dry as a writer and preferred to risk the lives of unimportant people than reduce his own standard of living. He was willing to join the drug trade to get a manuscript he could pretend to have written. As a result of his actions, one Hispanic family is murdered, and a ranch foreman faces imprisonment. At the end of the novel, the evil deeds of the wealthy hypocrites have been exposed, with Stoner acting as the instrument of justice; as in other Valin novels, they have been killed, committed suicide, or face prison terms.

Nevertheless, there is only an approximation of justice. Too many innocent people, such as Maria Sanchez and her child, have died along the way, and too many individuals who are basically decent, such as the ranch foreman and Jack Moon, are punished out of proportion to their offenses.

Finally, even Stoner himself must live with guilt, for in *Natural Causes* many of the deaths that occur are a direct result of his investigations. In an imperfect world, Valin believes, the burden of evil falls on the innocent and the helpless, on the well meaning and the bumbling, as well as on the evildoers themselves. Burdened with guilt, Stoner can only reiterate his belief that hidden evil breeds more evil than exposed evil and that he is the agent of truth, no matter the risk, no matter the loneliness, no matter the grimness of his later recollections. Within the conventions of the hard-boiled private investigator novel, Valin has constructed works that have a tragic dimension.

MISSING

In *Missing*, Valin returns to familiar themes: a missing person with a past and secrets that must be uncovered to reveal the truth. In this case, it is Mason Greenleaf who has disappeared, and his lover, Cindy Dorn, hires the detective to find him. Greenleaf is a well-respected teacher who happens to be bisexual,

and his history is tainted by a disputed soliciting charge and littered with gay former partners. When Greenleaf turns up dead in a sleazy hotel several days later, an apparent suicide, Stoner embarks on an investigation that leads him into the twilight world of closeted homosexuals, corrupt homophobic police officers, and the plague of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In the course of his work, Stoner bonds with Cindy, and though the results of the case are ultimately inconclusive, the detective finds redemption for his own past misdeeds—and possibly love—in the arms of a good woman.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman
Updated by Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HARRY STONER SERIES: *The Lime Pit*, 1980; *Final Notice*, 1980; *Dead Letter*, 1981; *Day of Wrath*, 1982; *Natural Causes*, 1983; *Life's Work*, 1986; *Fire Lake*, 1987; *Extenuating Circumstances*, 1989; *Second Chance*, 1991; *The Music Lovers*, 1993; *Missing*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Living Stereo: The RCA Bible, a Compendium of Opinion on RCA Living Stereo Records* (1993)

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_____. "Crime." Review of *Natural Causes*, by Jonathan Valin. *The New York Times Book Review*, September 4, 1983, p. 20. A mixed review of *Natural Causes* in which the novel—concerning the detective's investigation into the death of an employee at a large corporation—while praised for its many passages of realistic and biting dialogue, is criticized for its lack of flow and labored effort.

DeAndrea, William L. *Encyclopedia Mysteriosa: A Comprehensive Guide to the Art of Detection in Print, Film, Radio, and Television*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994. Provides brief entries on Jonathan Valin and his best-known creation, private detective Harry Stoner.

Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. This examination of the development of the hard-boiled detective provides background for understanding Valin's Harry Stoner.

Pronzini, Bill, and Marcia Muller, eds. *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. Contains a favorable review of *Natural Causes*, a novel that demonstrates why Valin is considered one of the best of the contemporary private eye writers.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *Missing*, by Jonathan Valin. 241, no. 49 (December 5, 1994): 69. The reviewer praises the work for its unexpected solution and particularly evocative portrait of the victim and the circumstances of his life but takes Valin to task for his writing, which is sometimes plodding.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *The Music Lover*, by Jonathan Valin. 240, no. 6 (February 8, 1993): 79. A favorable review that centers on the author's interests in rare recordings and high-end stereo systems; the fast-paced plot contains a wealth of audio lore for aficionados and offers a powerful conclusion.

JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING

Born: Rotterdam, the Netherlands; February 12, 1931

Type of plot: Police procedural

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Amsterdam Police, 1975-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

HENK GRIJPSTRA, an adjutant in the Amsterdam homicide division, is married but unhappy with his nagging wife, who has become fatter and fatter in their many years of marriage. An experienced big-city cop, he manages to get his suspects to reveal information. Polite but persistent, he looks on himself not only as a detective who protects the innocent but also as a public servant.

RINUS DE GIER, a detective sergeant and Grijpstra's partner, is younger and unmarried. In his well-tailored blue denim suit, he represents the rising generation in the Amsterdam police department. Although he is a romantic who loves music and is susceptible to the charms of young women, he prefers to live alone with his cat.

THE COMMISSARIS, or inspector, the oldest member of the group, is a highly experienced and kindly detective. He suffers from very painful arthritis, but this does not prevent him from flying off to Italy to question a suspect when he considers it necessary.

CONTRIBUTION

Janwillem van de Wetering is far more interested in character than in plot, and his perception of the criminals and the life around him is tempered by his Zen Buddhist experience. Thus, he brings a new dimension to the fiction of crime and detection. More than other writers in this genre, he also has a sense of place, and he conveys to the reader a feeling for Amsterdam. At the same time, he is a realist, and if he admires the beauties of the city's canals, he makes no secret of the fact that there often is garbage and filth floating in them. In keeping with his interest in the mental, rather than the physical, excitement of the mystery story, he

has a keen sense of psychology and an understanding of dreams.

BIOGRAPHY

Janwillem van de Wetering was born on February 12, 1931, in Rotterdam, Netherlands, the son of Jan Cornelius van de Wetering, a businessman, and Catherine van de Wetering. He studied at the Delft Institute of Technology, the College for Service Abroad, Cambridge University, and the University of London. In 1954, he was married to Edyth Stewart-Wynne, from whom he was later divorced. He was married to Juanita Levy in December of 1960; a daughter, Thera, was born to them.

Van de Wetering spent more than fifteen years of his life as a businessman, beginning as a salesperson for Dutch companies in South Africa in 1952. Then, in 1958, he became a layperson in a Zen monastery in Kyoto, Japan, for a year. This put an end to what he has described as the "beatnik sort of life" that he had earlier led. In 1959, he returned to his business career, serving as the manager of a company in Bogotá, Colombia, until 1962; later he worked in Lima, Peru. He also worked as a real estate salesperson in Brisbane, Australia. After returning to the Netherlands in 1965, he became manager of the family textile business, which had been failing, and restored it to profitability. As an alternative to military service, he joined the Amsterdam Reserve Police, where he rose from the rank of patrol officer to sergeant. Van de Wetering has made very good use of his Amsterdam police experience. Almost all of his novels are set in Amsterdam, and as he has admitted, "All my novels are built on police reports."

In 1975, van de Wetering left Amsterdam for Maine. He joined a Buddhist group in New England, remaining a member until 1980. He has contributed to several magazines in the United States and the Netherlands and has also written plays for Dutch television. Both *Tumbleweed* (1976) and *Outsider in Amsterdam* (1975) have been produced as films.

ANALYSIS

Janwillem van de Wetering launched his literary career with two autobiographical nonfictional books, written in Dutch and published in Amsterdam. Both were later translated into English and were published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin, which eventually produced the American editions of almost all of his books. *De lege spiegel: Ervaringen in een Japans Zenklooster* (1971; *The Empty Mirror: Experiences in a Japanese Zen Monastery*, 1973) and *Het dagende niets* (1973; *A Glimpse of Nothingness: Experiences in an American Zen Community*, 1975) are accounts of van de Wetering's study of Zen.

OUTSIDER IN AMSTERDAM

In 1975, he began his Amsterdam police series with *Outsider in Amsterdam*, one of his best novels. Sergeant de Gier and Adjutant Grijpstra are summoned to one of the seventeenth century gabled houses that line the canals of central Amsterdam and give the city so much of its charm and beauty. De Gier admires the graceful old architecture and deplors the ugly buildings of a later period. The house to which they have been summoned was once owned by a respectable gentleman of the merchant class. Now, however, it has a body hanging in it.

As the detectives get to work, their characters are revealed, and even the secondary characters come to life. Unlike some writers of detective fiction, van de Wetering does not use much violence. His characters can cope with it when they must, but they do not go out of their way to seek it. Although dogged and relentless, like most of their counterparts in the genre, these detectives are also very human, with distinctive personalities. According to one critic, who quotes from an interview with van de Wetering,

They're comfortable people to be around, these policemen, all of them readier to discuss life than to pull the trigger, but each with distinctive traits of character. De Gier, a sensitive fellow with a passion for music and cats, is, says de Wetering, "What I would like to be." The less imaginative Grijpstra? "Me again—my solid Dutch side."

Van de Wetering is also an observant critic of society, though not a solemn one, for wit, irony, and humor enliven his style. The house ostensibly belongs to a quasi-

religious group, a kind of commune, but the manager of it, now dead, had turned it into a profitable drug-distribution center. As the murder investigation proceeds, van de Wetering hurls barbs at drugs and drug dealers, the underground economy and businessmen who declare only part of their income, and hippies and the founders of communes and new societies. De Gier, for example, is angered by the discovery of young addicts who have been pushed into degradation and self-destruction. Lured by easy profits, a bright university student has set up an "antiques" business, which de Gier correctly identifies as a front for a drug-wholesaling operation. Sneering at de Gier's low salary, the former student offers him a job. In their exchange, van de Wetering portrays two very different worlds in conflict. After the drug wholesaler offers a percentage of the profits, saying, "You could make more on one deal, a deal taking a few weeks, than you are now making in a year," de Gier rejects the entire idea. He responds, "Drugs mean the end of everything. . . . It was the end of China before the communists solved the problem. Drugs mean dry earth, dust storms, famine, slaves, bandit wars."

Early in their investigation, Grijpstra and de Gier find out that the dead manager, who was a stingy man, had been exploiting the young people who lived and worked in the house and were members of his religious society. His financial adviser, who was also lending him the money for his drug operations, is an elegant, prosperous, and respected certified public accountant. Both detectives are aware of the privileged position of such a professional in modern society: "He is a man trusted by the establishment. Whatever he says is believed and the tax inspectors talk to him as equal to equal." Another brushstroke completes the ironic portrait:

His smile glinted in the dark room. Grijpstra studied the smile for a moment. Expensive teeth. Eight thousand guilders perhaps? Or ten thousand? The false teeth looked very natural, each individual tooth a work of art, and the back teeth all of solid gold.

Aside from the three Amsterdam detectives, the most interesting character in the novel is the actual outsider in Amsterdam, the black man who opens the door for Grijpstra and de Gier when they first respond to the call for police assistance. He is a Papuan, and his name

is Jan Karel van Meteren; the assonance with the name of his creator is probably no coincidence. Near the end of the book, van Meteren is identified as the killer. A loyal Dutch soldier and a police officer, he was also a victim of post-World War II political changes:

Here you laugh about the royal family perhaps, the crown is a symbol, a symbol of the past they say, but to us in New Guinea the queen was holy. We saluted every time we passed her portrait. Religion and the law are very close. I still think the queen is a sort of saint. I cried when I saw her in the street. She was all I had when I left my island. But nobody wanted me when I came to the Hague to ask for the queen's orders. I showed them my medals and my papers. They were polite and patient, but they had no time for me. I was a strange black fellow from far away. With a Dutch passport.

In the end, van Meteren escapes, but nobody is really upset about it. In the words of the commissaris, "Van Meteren is a policeman, a real policeman. I kept on having the idea that he was one of us, even after he had been arrested. . . . And if you think that someone belongs to you, that he is part of the same group, you don't pay special attention to him." Van Meteren is an honest and very competent man, proud of having been both a soldier and a police officer. The real scoundrels have all been arrested, and even the dead man had been a scoundrel. This is not the only mystery by van de Wetering in which a killer is allowed to go unpunished. It is all tied up with the author's study of Zen and his view of the world. The commissaris, oldest and highest ranking of the three detectives and a wise and kind-hearted man, suggests that van Meteren may find a little island where he can spend his life in meditation.

THE BLOND BABOON

The Amsterdam detectives are part of a paramilitary organization and a hierarchical social group—as is evident in many of the things they do and in the customs they observe. When they meet in the office of the commissaris in *The Blond Baboon* (1978), for example, Grijpstra sits in the "chair of honor, a heavy piece of furniture capped by wooden lions' heads." Cardozo, a young new detective, sits "on a hard-backed chair"; he is the lowest-ranking member of the group. During the conference, the commissaris asks his more senior

men for their ideas on the case, then says, "I am not asking you, Cardozo, I will ask you in a few years' time. That doesn't mean I don't value your opinion but it has to be formed first."

There is intraservice rivalry as well as cooperation. When de Gier takes a flying leap into the Amstel River while pursuing a suspect attempting to escape in a boat, Grijpstra radios the water police, who soon pick them up; the water police even have spare dry clothes, which they keep for such emergencies. The water sergeant and Grijpstra admire de Gier in his new uniform. Grijpstra says, "I prefer the gold trim to our silver. Why do the water police have gold trim anyway?" The water sergeant responds, "Because gold is noble and so are we. . . . The water may be polluted these days, but it can never be as dirty as the shore."

Although most of van de Wetering's novels are set in the Netherlands, specifically in Amsterdam, many international influences can be felt and seen. Many Asians, New Guineans, and Middle Easterners have settled in the country, and American dropouts and hippies hang around the squares and canals. Indeed, the adventurous spirit of the seventeenth century merchants can still be found in the neighborhood where the South American streetbird (actually a type of vulture) belonging to a black witch doctor flies undisturbed, accompanied by a small, domestic cat.

THE MAINE MASSACRE AND THE JAPANESE CORPSE

Not all the books are confined to the Netherlands. Part of *The Blond Baboon* takes place in Italy, and *The Maine Massacre* (1979) is set in the United States, where the commissaris has gone to help his widowed sister dispose of her husband's estate so that she can return to Amsterdam. Although the commissaris does not wish to admit his frailties, his men are worried; de Gier accompanies his superior to protect him. Once there, they discover that several people living on an isolated peninsula have died, leaving their homes to be destroyed by fire and the weather. *The Japanese Corpse* (1977) takes place mainly in Amsterdam, but part of it has a Japanese setting, and much of the background material "came from Tokyo police files." There is a scene in the novel in which the head of a Japanese gang, the daimyo, gives a party for the commissaris who, he

believes, is the leader of a rival gang. The party leads not to a confrontation but to a discussion of *jin-gi*, an ancient Chinese idea “that two men can only truly meet after they’ve destroyed their own desires.” The commissaris, who is a seeker of truth, both physical and philosophical, enjoys his encounter with the daimyo.

Van de Wetering’s cops and crooks are not simply “good guys” and “bad guys”; they are ordinary men drawn from the world of reality. They work hard but enjoy having dinner together in inexpensive Chinese restaurants. Aware of the beauties of the city of Amsterdam and of nature, they are also sensitive to one another’s feelings. Yet they do not take themselves too seriously, for they are aware that they are servants of the Dutch people.

The commissaris sums it up for de Gier in *The Blond Baboon*:

“The turtle is fine. I saw him trying to plow through the rubbish in the garden this morning. The garden is covered with broken branches and glass and the garden chairs of the neighbors, but the turtle just plows on. He looked quite cheerful, I thought.”

“Maybe he’ll be reincarnated as a police detective.”

The commissaris touched de Gier’s sleeve. “He has the right character.”

Seymour L. Flaxman

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

AMSTERDAM POLICE SERIES: *Outsider in Amsterdam*, 1975; *The Corpse on the Dike*, 1976; *Tumbleweed*, 1976; *Death of a Hawker*, 1977; *The Japanese Corpse*, 1977; *The Blond Baboon*, 1978; *The Maine Massacre*, 1979; *The Mind-Murders*, 1981; *De Kat van Brigadier de Gier*, 1983 (*The Sergeant’s Cat, and Other Stories*, 1987); *The Streetbird*, 1983; *De ratelrat*, 1984 (*The Rattle-Rat*, 1985); *De zaak Ijsbreker*, 1985 (*Hard Rain*, 1986); *Just a Corpse at Twilight*, 1994; *The Hollow-Eyed Angel*, 1996; *The Perfidious Parrot*, 1997; *The Amsterdam Cops: Collected Stories*, 1999

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Butterfly Hunter*, 1982; *Murder by Remote Control*, 1984 (with Paul Kirchner); *Seesaw Millions*, 1988; *Judge Dee Plays His Lute: A Play and Selected Mystery Stories*, 1997

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Inspector Saito’s Small Satori*, 1985

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: *Little Owl: An Eightfold Buddhist Admonition*, 1978; *Hugh Pine*, 1980; *Bliss and Bluster: Or, How to Crack a Nut*, 1982; *Hugh Pine and the Good Place*, 1986; *Hugh Pine and Something Else*, 1989

NONFICTION: *De lege spiegel: Ervaringen in een Japans Zenklooster*, 1971 (*The Empty Mirror: Experiences in a Japanese Zen Monastery*, 1973); *Het dagende niets*, 1973 (*A Glimpse of Nothingness: Experiences in an American Zen Community*, 1975); *Robert van Gulik: His Life, His Work*, 1998; *Afterzen: Experiences of a Zen Student out on His Ear*, 1999

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_____. “Reality in a Zen Monastery.” In *Adventures with the Buddha: A Personal Buddhism Reader*, edited by Jeffery Paine. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005. Autobiographical reflections on author’s experience of the nature of the real; provides insights into his attitude toward literary representation.

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S. S. VAN DINE

Willard Huntington Wright

Born: Charlottesville, Virginia; October 15, 1888

Died: New York, New York; April 11, 1939

Type of plot: Master sleuth

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Philo Vance, 1926-1939

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PHILO VANCE, a debonair, aristocratic, brilliant amateur sleuth is a dilettante whose one passion is art. He is also well versed in psychology, skilled at sports and games, and the author of studies on polo, hieroglyphics, physics, criminology, Florentine and Chinese art, Greek drama, and Norwegian fishing. A handsome bachelor, he is thirty-two years old at the beginning of the series. In personality he is reserved, cynical, and whimsical.

S. S. VAN DINE, is a Harvard classmate, attorney, manager of financial and personal affairs, and friend and constant companion of Philo Vance. Like Sherlock Holmes's friend Dr. Watson, Van Dine, self-described as "a commonplace fellow, possessed of a conservative and rather conventional mind," serves as a foil to the brilliant and fascinating Vance, and as narrator of his murder cases.

JOHN F. X. MARKHAM, district attorney of New York, is a longtime friend of Vance, on whom he depends for help in solving difficult cases. His personality is in contrast to Vance's; he is "sternly aggressive, brusque, forthright, and almost ponderously serious." An "indefatigable worker" and "utterly incorruptible," he holds Vance's respect.

ERNEST HEATH, sergeant of the Homicide Bureau, is the man officially in charge of Vance's cases. At first he resents Vance's participation and often he is irritated by his mannerisms, but he comes to respect and admire his abilities. Heath is unimaginative but diligent.

CONTRIBUTION

S. S. Van Dine is a significant figure in the history of detective fiction, both as a theorist and as a practi-

tioner of the genre. As a theorist, he articulated a strict code of "fairness" in the plotting of the detective novel and enunciated important ideas about the nature of the genre's appeal. *The Benson Murder Case* (1926) and *The Canary Murder Case* (1927) attracted a new audience for detective fiction in the United States, bringing it to the attention and serious consideration of intellectual and sophisticated readers and initiating what has come to be known as the Golden Age of American detective fiction. In the 1920's and 1930's, Van Dine's Philo Vance novels were the most widely read detective stories in the United States. They inspired thirty-one motion pictures, filmed between 1929 and 1947, and a popular weekly radio series, *Philo Vance*, during the 1940's.

BIOGRAPHY

S. S. Van Dine was born Willard Huntington Wright on October 15, 1888, in Charlottesville, Virginia, the son of Archibald Davenport Wright and Annie Van Vranken Wright. (Wright adopted his pen name, based on Van Dyne—an old family name—and the abbreviation of "steamship," when he turned to writing detective fiction.) Van Dine attended St. Vincent College, Pomona College, and Harvard University and also studied art in Munich and Paris. In 1907, he became a literary and art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. During his distinguished career in this field, Van Dine published books on art, literature, philosophy, and culture. Also in 1907, he married Katharine Belle Boynton; they had one daughter and were divorced in 1930. He later married Eleanor Pulapaugh.

From 1912 to 1914, Van Dine edited *The Smart Set*, a sophisticated New York literary magazine, to which he attracted important new authors. He continued his career as critic and journalist until 1923, when a demanding work schedule caused his health to deteriorate. Confined to bed with a heart ailment for more than two years and forbidden by his physician to do any serious work, he spent his convalescence assembling and analyzing a two-thousand-volume collection

of detective fiction and criminology. These activities inspired him to write a detective novel of his own. As S. S. Van Dine, he submitted to a publisher thirty thousand words of synopsis plans for three novels. The expanded draft of the first plan appeared in 1926 as *The Benson Murder Case*. This novel introduces Philo Vance, the hero of the most popular American detective series in its day. Van Dine also wrote several short detective films for Warner Bros. from 1931 to 1932 (their titles and exact dates are not known).

The twelve Philo Vance novels brought wealth to their heretofore debt-ridden author, enabling him to cultivate a luxurious lifestyle comparable to that of his fictional hero. Van Dine lived in a penthouse, delighted in witty and erudite conversation, fine cuisine, costly wines, and elegant clothes, and spent his very large income rapidly; he left an estate of only thirteen thousand dollars when he died on April 11, 1939.

ANALYSIS

The development of S. S. Van Dine's theory and the composition of his early detective novels occurred at the same time—during his two-year convalescence beginning in 1923. Writing under his real name, Van Dine articulated his theory of detective fiction in a detailed historical introduction to his anthology *The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology* (1927). Van Dine's theory underlies "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" (1928), his acerbically witty credo, which, as he affirmed, was "based partly on the practice of all the great writers of detective stories, and partly on the promptings of the honest author's inner conscience." Van Dine's theory is important in its own right as well as in the context of detective writers' concerns about the integrity of the genre during this period. His theory is also borne out to a large degree in the Philo Vance novels, although significant departures from it may be observed.

THE RULES OF DETECTIVE FICTION

In his 1927 introduction, Van Dine begins by distinguishing detective fiction from all other categories of fiction. "Popular" rather than "literary," it is unlike other kinds of popular fiction—romance, adventure, and mystery (that is, novels of international intrigue and suspense)—in that it provides not a passive emo-

tional thrill but an engaging intellectual challenge. Rather than merely awaiting "the author's unraveling of the tangled skein of events," the reader of a detective novel experiences "the swift and exhilarating participation in the succeeding steps that lead to the solution." Van Dine sees the detective novel as unlike "fiction in the ordinary sense." It is an "intellectual game, . . . a complicated and extended puzzle cast in fictional form," and puzzles, he avers, have been humankind's "chief toy throughout the ages." Van Dine likens the detective novel to the crossword puzzle:

In each there is a problem to be solved; and the solution depends wholly on mental processes—on analysis, on the fitting together of apparently unrelated parts, on a knowledge of the ingredients, and, in some measure, on guessing. Each is supplied with a series of overlapping clues to guide the solver; and these clues, when fitted into place, blaze the path for future progress. In each, when the final solution is achieved, all the details are found to be woven into a complete, interrelated, and closely knitted fabric.

All the Philo Vance novels are intricately plotted; several underscore the puzzle element. In *The Bishop Murder Case* (1929), for example, clues to a series of murders include allusions to Mother Goose rhymes, mathematical theories, and chess moves. Vance himself approaches his cases as if they were puzzles or mathematical problems; he is an adherent of "cold, logical exactness in his mental processes."

The solution to be sought in a detective novel, according to Van Dine, is ideally that of a murder: "Crime has always exerted a profound fascination over humanity, and the more serious the crime the greater has been that appeal." He once said that he considered "murder" the strongest word in the English language, and he used it in the title of each of his Philo Vance novels.

For a puzzle to be enjoyable—and solvable—it must be logical and fair. Many of Van Dine's twenty rules address the issue of fairness. For example, "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described" (rule 1); "No willful tricks or deceptions may be placed on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective

himself" (rule 2); "The detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit . . ." (rule 4); "The culprit must be determined by logical deductions—not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession . . ." (rule 5).

Van Dine stresses that the detective writer must be ingenious but never implausible: "A sense of reality is essential to the detective novel." The ideal material for the plot is commonplace, not exotic; the detective writer's task is "the working of familiar materials into a difficult riddle" that, if the reader should go back over the book after reading it the first time "he would find that the solution had been there all the time if he had had sufficient shrewdness to grasp it." The Philo Vance novels meet this criterion, for the most part. Vance typically solves his cases by a process of elimination and through his knowledge, both academic and intuitive, of human psychology.

Although, unlike romances or adventure novels, the detective novel, according to Van Dine, must have only enough atmosphere to establish the "pseudo-actuality" of its plot, setting, as opposed to atmosphere, is crucial:

The plot must appear to be an actual record of events springing from the terrain of its operations; and the plans and diagrams so often encountered in detective stories aid considerably in the achievement of this effect. A familiarity with the terrain and a belief in its existence are what give the reader his feeling of ease and freedom in manipulating the factors of the plot to his own (which are also the author's) ends.

Accordingly, the Philo Vance novels usually feature maps and room diagrams. They also present a fascinatingly detailed picture of upper-class life in New York City in the 1920's and 1930's.

The style of a detective story, according to Van Dine, must aid in creating the sense of reality and verisimilitude; it "must be direct, simple, smooth, and unencumbered." It must be unemotional as well, and thus contribute to what is for Van Dine "perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the detective novel"—unity of mood, a mood conducive to "mental analysis and the overcoming of difficulties." In the Philo Vance novels, accordingly, the author presents himself through the narratorial persona of S. S. Van Dine, the protagonist's

lawyer and companion. The narrator's status as an attorney serves to underscore the importance of logical analysis and objectivity, but his style, especially in the later novels, is frequently mannered and elaborate, and he digresses frequently into lengthy disquisitions, complete with footnotes, about such matters as art, archaeology, music, mathematics, criminology, and religion—typically in their most esoteric manifestations.

Van Dine's recommendations about characterization suggests that he thinks of characters—excluding the detective hero himself—primarily as pieces in a puzzle. Although they must not be "too neutral and colorless" (which would spoil the effect of verisimilitude), the detective writer should avoid delineating them "too fully and intimately." Characters should "merely fulfill the requirements of plausibility, so that their actions will not appear to spring entirely from the author's preconceived scheme." They are not to fall in love, since "the business at hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar" (rule 3); nor are they to belong to "secret societies, camorras, mafias" (rule 13), or, it appears, to be professional criminals, who are the con-



Van Dine's debonair amateur sleuth, Philo Vance.

cern of police departments, “not of authors and brilliant amateur detectives” (rule 17).

Story materials, plot, atmosphere, setting, style, narration, mood, characterization—according to Van Dine’s theory all of these are strictly functional parts of a puzzle to be solved, counters in an exciting mental game. The primary player in this game is the detective hero and, vicariously, the reader. Van Dine’s ideal detective hero stands in contrast to his world. He is singular. In fact, Van Dine rules that “There must be but one detective—that is, but one protagonist of deduction—one *deus ex machina*.” To have more than one detective would be to confuse the reader: “It’s like making the reader run a race with a relay team” (rule 9). The detective is singular, not only in number but, more important, in kind. His brilliance sets him above others, especially the police. Preferably, he is an amateur, and this status divorces him from mundane considerations such as earning a living or gaining a promotion. In Van Dine’s view he is at once godlike, heroic (like Oedipus), wise (“the Greek chorus of the drama”), and fascinating:

All good detective novels have had for their protagonist a character of attractiveness and interest, of high and fascinating attainments—a man at once human and unusual, colorful and gifted.

THE BENSON MURDER CASE

Philo Vance meets these criteria. The opening chapter of the first volume of the series, *The Benson Murder Case*, provides a detailed character portrait of Vance. He is described as “a man of unusual culture and brilliance.” He is learned in psychology and criminology, enjoys music, and has a passion for art; he is an authority on it as well as “one of those rare human beings, a collector with a definite philosophic point of view.” “Unusually good-looking” and in dress “always fashionable—scrupulously correct to the smallest detail—yet unobtrusive,” Vance is skilled in various sports and games: He is an expert fencer, his golf handicap is only three, he is a champion at polo and an “unerring” poker player. An “aristocrat by birth and instinct, he held himself severely aloof from the common world of men.” Vance is a snob both intellectually and socially: “He detested stupidity even more, I believe, than he did vulgarity or bad taste.”

Reactions to Vance over the years have differed widely and range from fascination and adulation to the bemused annoyance of Ogden Nash’s famous lines, “Philo Vance/ Needs a kick in the pance.” In the later novels his mannerisms sometimes seem self-parodic. Although he did not always avoid them, it is evident in the following passage from *The Benson Murder Case* that Van Dine knew the risks he was taking with his characterizations of Vance:

Perhaps he may best be described as a bored and supercilious, but highly conscious and penetrating, spectator of life. He was keenly interested in all human reactions; but it was the interest of the scientist, not the humanitarian. Withal he was a man of rare personal charm. Even people who found it difficult to admire him found it equally difficult not to like him. His somewhat quixotic mannerisms and his slightly English accent and inflection—a heritage of his postgraduate days at Oxford—impressed those who did not know him well as affectations. But the truth is, there was very little of the *poseur* about him.

THE BISHOP MURDER CASE

Van Dine was very interested in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche; in 1915, in fact, he published a book titled *What Nietzsche Taught*. His ideal detective hero bears significant resemblance to the Nietzschean *Übermensch* (literally, “overman”), who, unlike common human beings, has managed to overcome his passions, has genuine style, is creative, and is above ordinary morality. Van Dine’s Philo Vance is a self-professed disciple of Nietzschean philosophy, and in *The Bishop Murder Case* he plays the part of an *Übermensch* when he avoids being murdered by switching poisoned drinks with Professor Bertrand Dillard, the killer he has been investigating. Reproached by the district attorney for taking the law into his own hands, Vance says,

“ . . . I felt no more compunction in aiding a monster like Dillard into the Beyond than I would have in crushing out a poisonous reptile in the act of striking.”

“But it was murder!” exclaimed Markham in horrified indignation.

“Oh, doubtless,” said Vance cheerfully. “Yes—of course. Most reprehensible. . . . I say, am I by any chance under arrest?”

Here Vance does what the author or reader would, perhaps, like to do—deliver justice, not merely to facilitate it through his detection.

Van Dine's theory posits the detective as an alter ego for both author and reader. The detective is

at one and the same time, the outstanding personality of the story, . . . the projection of the author, the embodiment of the reader, . . . the propounder of the problem, the supplier of the clues, and the eventual solver of the mystery.

For Van Dine, then, the detective hero serves the function not only of entertainment but also of wish fulfillment: He satisfies a fantasy about intellectual and moral power. Ultimately and paradoxically, therefore, fictional realism and strict logic serve in Van Dine's theory of detective fiction a compelling fantasy that cannot be satisfied in the real world of human society.

Eileen Tess Tyler

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PHILO VANCE SERIES: *The Benson Murder Case*, 1926; *The Canary Murder Case*, 1927; *The Greene Murder Case*, 1928; *The Bishop Murder Case*, 1929; *The Scarab Murder Case*, 1930; *The Kennel Murder Case*, 1933; *The Casino Murder Case*, 1934; *The Dragon Murder Case*, 1934; *The Garden Murder Case*, 1935; *Philo Vance Murder Cases*, 1936; *The Kidnap Murder Case*, 1936; *The Gracie Allen Murder Case*, 1938 (also known as *The Smell of Murder*); *The Winter Murder Case*, 1939

NONSERIES NOVEL: *The President's Mystery Story*, 1935 (with others)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Man of Promise*, 1916 (as Wright)

SCREENPLAY: *The Canary Murder Case*, 1929 (as Wright, with others)

NONFICTION (AS WRIGHT): *Europe After 8:15*, 1914 (with H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan); *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning*, 1915; *What Nietzsche Taught*, 1915; *The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and Syntax of Aesthetics*, 1916; *The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters, March Thirteenth to March Twenty-fifth, 1916*, 1916;

Informing a Nation, 1917; *Misinforming a Nation*, 1917; *The Future of Painting*, 1923; *I Used to Be a Highbrow but Look at Me Now*, 1929

EDITED TEXTS (AS WRIGHT): *The Great Modern French Stories*, 1917; *The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology*, 1927

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ROBERT H. VAN GULIK

Born: Zutphen, the Netherlands; August 9, 1910

Died: The Hague, the Netherlands; September 24, 1967

Type of plot: Historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Judge Dee, 1949-1968

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

JUDGE DEE, a Chinese district magistrate, is married, with three wives who live together harmoniously, providing the perfect team for his favorite game, dominoes. A fervent Confucian, he administers his many official responsibilities justly, seeking to maintain social order and respect for justice.

MA JOONG, the son of a junk cargo owner, is trained in boxing and intended for a career in the army. Having accidentally killed a cruel magistrate, he is forced to live as a bandit. Fond of women and drink, he is physically fearless but somewhat superstitious.

HOONG LIANG is a servant in the household of Judge Dee's father. He insists on following the judge to the provinces. Completely loyal, he in turn has the complete trust of the judge.

CHIAO TAI, from a good family, was also forced to become a highwayman because of a corrupt official. He offers his services to the judge, stipulating only that he be allowed to resign if he finds the man responsible for the death of his comrades. Intelligent, thoughtful, and shy, he is unlucky in love.

TAO GAN, seeking revenge on the world for the base behavior of his beloved wife, becomes an itinerant swindler. His familiarity with the criminal underworld and his skill with disguises make him an effective fourth assistant. Parsimonious to the extreme, he will scheme for free meals whenever possible.

CONTRIBUTION

Robert H. van Gulik's stories of Judge Dee are fine examples of the historical mystery novel, which recaptures a bygone era even as it tells a good story. Though his stories are fiction, his training as a scholar and a

diplomat enabled him to draw on a vast store of historical material to enrich his mystery novels.

During his diplomatic service in Asian countries, van Gulik noted that even poor translations of Western detective stories were enthusiastically received by Japanese and Chinese readers, so he decided to demonstrate the strong tradition of Chinese detective stories that already existed. He started with a translation of an anonymous eighteenth century novel about Judge Dee, then went on to write several more of his own. He originally wrote them in English, then translated some for serial publication in Japanese journals. Western audiences found them so interesting that he decided to continue writing in English, and he translated his own work. He was thus responsible for introducing the classical Chinese detective story to the West, while the minutiae of the novels and his scholarly notes appended to the novels provide glimpses of the ancient Chinese way of life.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Zutphen, the Netherlands, on August 9, 1910, to Willem Jacobus van Gulik, a physician, and his wife, Bertha de Ruiter, Robert Hans van Gulik displayed an interest in Asian language and culture as a boy. The Chinese inscriptions on his father's collection of porcelain intrigued him, and he started studying Chinese in the Chinatown section of Batavia, Java, where his father was serving in the Dutch army. Back in the Netherlands for his college education, van Gulik took up law and languages at the University of Leiden, adding Japanese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Russian to his list of languages. His thesis, *Hayagriva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse-Cult in China and Japan*, won for him a doctoral degree with honors from the University of Utrecht in 1935. His entry into the Netherlands Foreign Service led to postings in China, India, and Japan. In Chung-king, China, in 1943 he met and married Shui Shih-Fang, with whom he had three sons and a daughter.

Van Gulik's career as a diplomat flourished, bringing him many awards and honors. Despite the constant

moves—which took him to Washington, D.C., the Middle East, Malaysia, Japan, and Korea—van Gulik continued his scholarly activities, researching, translating, editing, and writing. He was a skilled calligrapher—a rare talent for a Westerner—and had some of the other preoccupations of a traditional Chinese gentleman, collecting rare books, scroll paintings, musical instruments, and art objects. Of the breed of scholars who found meaning in small, esoteric subjects, he wrote, for example, two monographs on the ancient Chinese lute, which he himself played, and translated a famous text on ink stones. A talented linguist, historian, and connoisseur, van Gulik published scholarly articles on a variety of topics about traditional Chinese life, ranging from Chinese classical antiquity (c. 1200 B.C.E.-200 C.E.) to the end of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.). It was through his mysteries about Judge Dee that van Gulik popularized the specialized knowledge of Chinese life he had gained. Having finally obtained the post of ambassador from the Netherlands to Japan in 1965, he died two years later of cancer in his homeland, on September 24, 1967.

ANALYSIS

In his brief notes explaining the origins of his collection of short stories, *Judge Dee at Work* (1967), Robert H. van Gulik mused on the importance of each of his three careers: As a diplomat, he dealt with matters of temporary significance; as a scholar, he confined himself to facts of permanent significance; as a mystery writer, he could be completely in control of the facts and give free play to his imagination. It is the interplay of these separate experiences that give van Gulik's Judge Dee novels a distinct position in the genre of historical mystery novels.

DEE GOONG AN

A real historical figure who was politically important during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Judge Dee was more popularly remembered as a folk figure, not unlike the Robin Hood of English folk history. The first appearance in English of the famed detective-magistrate Di Renjie (630-700), was in van Gulik's translation of an anonymous novel of the eighteenth century, *Wu Zetian si da qi an*, published as *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee*

(1949). The success of his translation led van Gulik to write his own stories. Though he drew on his scholarly background and interest in China to find stories, create accurate details, and provide illustrations, the Judge Dee stories are fictional, based on the Chinese form but adapted to Western audiences.

In his translator's preface, van Gulik points out five distinct features of Chinese detective stories. Rather than the cumulative suspense that characterizes Western whodunits, Chinese stories introduce the criminal at the beginning, explaining the history of and the motive for the crime. The pleasure for the reader lies in the intellectual excitement of following the chase. Nor are the stories bound to the realistic: Supernatural elements abound, animals and household items give evidence in court, and the detective might pop into the netherworld for information. Other characteristics have to do with the Chinese love and patience for voluminous detail: long poems, philosophical lectures, and official documents pad the purely narrative, resulting in novels of several hundred chapters; then too, each novel may be populated with two hundred or more characters. Finally, the Chinese sense of justice demands that the punishment meted out to the criminal be described in gruesome detail, sometimes including a description of the punishment the executed criminal receives in the afterlife.

THE CHINESE LAKE MURDERS

These elements are toned down considerably or eliminated entirely in the stories that van Gulik wrote. In *The Chinese Lake Murders* (1960), for example, the first, short chapter is a diary entry by an official who has fallen in love with the woman who is to be a murder victim. It appears to be a confession of sorts, but one that is so intensely brooding, vague, and mystical that its purport becomes clear only toward the end of the story. Van Gulik thus neatly manages to include a convention while adapting it. Similarly, Judge Dee is often confronted with tales of haunted monasteries, temples invaded by phantoms, mysterious shadowy figures flitting in deserted houses, and other supernatural elements. A sensitive person, the judge is also often overcome by an inexplicable sense of evil in certain locations, which prove to be the sites of brutal torture or murder or burial—information revealed only

after the judge has determined the mysteries' solutions. Although his assistants are sometimes spooked by tales of ghosts and spirits, van Gulik portrays his judge primarily as a rational man suspicious of tales of the supernatural, and indeed most of these otherworldly elements prove to be concoctions fashioned by the criminals for their own convenience.

The van Gulik narrative flow is interrupted only by his own maps and illustrations, which are based on but not exact reproductions of Chinese woodblock prints; though a short poem or an official account may occasionally appear, they are strictly related to the story. Van Gulik retains the characteristic of the anonymous eighteenth century Judge Dee novel in telling three separate stories that prove to be related. Though he borrowed freely from his historical research, combining stories from disparate sources, van Gulik's considerable inventiveness and storytelling ability are evident in the way he can maintain the reader's interest in three separate stories. The list of dramatic personae, grouping the characters by story, is provided as a guide and numbers only a dozen or so.

Although the traditional form is skillfully adapted to modern audiences, what remains completely faithful to the original Chinese detective story is the position of the detective figure, who was always a judge. In the pre-communist social structure, the district magistrate had so many responsibilities over the affairs of the citizens in his jurisdiction that his title meant "the father-and-mother official." The term "judge" may therefore sound slightly misleading, for not only did the district magistrate receive reports of crimes, but also he was in charge of investigating them, questioning suspects, making a decision, and sentencing. The wide powers that he wielded are fully delineated in van Gulik's novels. Judge Dee is regularly portrayed presiding over the daily sessions, resplendent in his official dark green robe with a black winged hat, his constabulary with whips and truncheons ready at his command. The habit, startling to twentieth century readers, was to treat anyone who came to the tribunal, defendant and complainant, the same way. Both had to kneel, hands behind them, in front of the judge, who could command his constables to whip or otherwise torture any recalcitrant suppliant. Particularly stubborn or arrogant people,

such as the artist in *The Chinese Maze Murders* (1956), could be beaten into unconsciousness. The Chinese system of justice also required that criminals confess their crimes, even if they had to be tortured into confession, and the forms of death were gruesome. Judge Dee's way of cutting a deal with a criminal sometimes is to offer a more merciful form of death in return for cooperation. People who bore false witness could also be severely punished.

Though he will resort to such powers of his authority when necessary, Judge Dee solves cases because of his careful sifting of evidence, his powers of observation, and his experience and understanding of human nature. A firm upholder of traditional Chinese values, Judge Dee exercises his power wisely. It is the higher purpose of justice that rules his decisions: The main purpose of the law, he realizes, is to restore the pattern disrupted by the crime, to repair the damage as much as possible. So it is that Judge Dee will sometimes start his tenure in a remote district that is in disarray, ruling over a populace made cynical by previous weak or corrupt officials or in the grip of evil men. The process of solving the murder mysteries is intrinsically linked to the process of restoring order and respect for the law and the imperial court.

THE CHINESE GOLD MURDERS

Also typical of the Chinese detective story are the four assistants to the judge, often recruited from the "brothers of the green woods"—that is, bandits. Though his first and most trusted assistant, Sergeant Hoong Liang, is a faithful family retainer who follows the judge to the various outlying provinces in which the judge wants to work, the other three are reformed men. Ma Joong and Chiao Tai are typical of their ilk in that they are honest men who have been forced by circumstances into a life of crime. They meet Judge Dee when they attempt to rob him on the highway (*The Chinese Gold Murders*, 1959). Delighted by this rare opportunity to practice his swordsmanship, Judge Dee pulls out a family heirloom, the legendary sword Rain Dance, and is so annoyed when a group of officers comes to his rescue that he claims the highwaymen as his assistants. The two bandits are so impressed that they ask to be taken into his service. The fourth assistant, Tao Gan, also volunteers to join the judge. In con-

trast to the corrupt officials who caused honest men to become criminals, Judge Dee is thus neatly shown as a just and admirable man. The assistants are very useful in gathering evidence among the populace for the cases, and Judge Dee himself will take to the streets incognito. These reconnoitering missions provide little touches of ribald humor in the novels but also give readers a sense of the very hard life of common people, scrambling for their daily bowl of rice, subject to invasions from the northern borders. After the first five novels, van Gulik decided to simplify the pattern, for a “new” Judge Dee series; he dropped all but one assistant and focused more on character development. In response to popular demand, he brought back Sergeant Hoong, who had been killed in a previous novel.

Other historically accurate characteristics tend to simplify the narrative in predictable ways. Van Gulik toned down the vehement xenophobia of the truly devout Confucianist judge; even so, Judge Dee is openly contemptuous of foreign influences such as Buddhism or Daoism; even when Tatars, Indians, or Koreans are not actually criminals, they are suspect and considered dangerous. He prefers didactic poetry to love songs, and while he may say, in a tolerant spirit, that what people do in the privacy of their own homes is their business, any character who deviates from the norm in his sexual preference or social behavior is suspect.

The author’s scholarly training and interest are evident in other ways. His interest in art is manifest in the number of illustrations that enliven the novels; one, *The Phantom of the Temple* (1966), is based on the Judge Dee strips he created for Dutch and Scandinavian newspapers. One incident reveals the connection between van Gulik’s scholarship and mystery writing. The Japanese publisher of *The Chinese Maze Murders* insisted on an image of a female nude for the cover. Seeking to verify his view that the prudish Confucianist tradition precluded the art of drawing nude human bodies, van Gulik discovered instead that an antique dealer had a set of printing blocks of an erotic album from the Ming period, which in turn led him to publish two scholarly books on the subject of erotic art and sexual life in ancient China. Beyond the care for historical accuracy, however, van Gulik’s interest in art is integrally important in the mystery novels. Paintings

are important as clues; two contrasting pictures of a pet cat and Judge Dee’s careful observation of the position of the sun in each lead him to a solution in *The Haunted Monastery* (1962), for example.

In the context of the Western mystery novel tradition, such features as maps, lists, and illustrations are typical of puzzle-plots. Some of the motifs in the Judge Dee novels may be more familiar to the devotee of the tougher kind of hard-boiled novels, however, such as the distinct misogyny that permeates the novels. The custom of poor families selling daughters to brothels and the reverence for sons over daughters are undoubted, if sad, historical facts. Still, the number of beautiful young women who are kidnapped, locked up, beaten, and otherwise tortured and killed in the course of the novels is cumulatively oppressive. By extension, incestuous and sadomasochist characters appear often.

THE CHINESE NAIL MURDERS

As a detective figure, even with the vast powers he has, Judge Dee is not portrayed solely as the great detective, the brilliantly intuitive crime solver who never falters. In *The Chinese Nail Murders* (1961), he comes perilously close to losing both his job and his head when he orders that a grave be dug up and then cannot find any evidence of murder. In deep despair, he prepares himself for disgrace, saved only by the help of a beautiful woman he has come to admire very much, wistfully recalling his father’s words, that it is very lonely at the top. Such touches of psychological individuality are lightly done. The emphasis on the social role rather than the individual characterizes van Gulik’s style: Phrases such as “the judge barked” and a liberal use of exclamation marks in dialogue suggest the peremptory nature of the detective’s task.

Ever the scholar, van Gulik included a postscript, detailing the origins of his stories, with remarks on relevant Chinese customs. Even without these aids, his Judge Dee stories provide a generalized picture of ancient Chinese life and have repopularized the Chinese equivalent of Sherlock Holmes.

Shakuntala Jayaswal

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

JUDGE DEE SERIES: *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee*, 1949 (translation of

portions of an anonymous eighteenth century Chinese novel; *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*, 1976); *The Chinese Maze Murders*, 1956; *New Year's Eve in Lan-Fang*, 1958; *The Chinese Bell Murders*, 1958; *The Chinese Gold Murders*, 1959; *The Chinese Lake Murders*, 1960; *The Chinese Nail Murders*, 1961; *The Red Pavilion*, 1961; *The Haunted Monastery*, 1962; *The Emperor's Pearl*, 1963; *The Lacquer Screen*, 1963; *The Monkey and the Tiger*, 1965; *The Willow Pattern*, 1965; *Murder in Canton*, 1966; *The Phantom of the Temple*, 1966; *Judge Dee at Work*, 1967; *Necklace and Calabash*, 1967; *Poets and Murder*, 1968 (also known as *The Fox-Magic Murders*)

NONSERIES NOVEL: *Een gegeven dag*, 1963 (*The Given Day*, 1964)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *De nacht van de tijger: Een rechter tie verhaal*, 1963; *Vier vingers: Een rechter tie verhaal*, 1964

NONFICTION: *Hayagriva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse-Cult in China and Japan*, 1935; *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, 1940; *Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute*, 1941; *Pi-Hsi-T' u-K' ao, Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period*, 1951; *De Boek Illustratie in Het Ming Tijdperk*, 1955; *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, 1958; *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 1961; *The Gibbon in China*, 1967

EDITED TEXT: *Ming-Mo I-Seng Tung-Kao-Chan-Shih Chi-K' an*, 1944

TRANSLATIONS: *Urvaci*, 1932; *Mi Fu on Inkstones*, 1938; *T' ang-Yin-Pi-Shih (Parallel Cases from Under the Peartree)*, 1956

MISCELLANEOUS: *The English-Blackfoot Vocabulary*, 1930 (with C. C. Uhlenbeck); *The Blackfoot-English Vocabulary*, 1934 (with C. C. Uhlenbeck); *Ch' un-Meng-So-Yen, Trifling Tale of a Spring Dream*, 1950

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MANUEL VÁZQUEZ MONTALBÁN

Born: Barcelona, Spain; June 14, 1939

Died: Bangkok, Thailand; October 18, 2003

Types of plot: Private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Pepe Carvalho, 1972-2004

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

PEPE CARVALHO is in many respects the alter ego of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, as becomes evident in the course of the series. Although Pepe's biography is sketchy and not always consistent, the reader learns that he has participated in the clandestine resistance against General Francisco Franco, has served a traumatic jail term during the dictatorship, and has worked for the Central Intelligence Agency for four years. Like the author, he was a member of the Catalan Communist Party who later became disillusioned with the role of the party in the democratic reconstruction of Spain. Pepe ages and matures in the course of the series; he becomes more disillusioned and cynical, and he begins to worry about supporting himself in retirement.

CONTRIBUTION

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán was one of the leading Spanish authors and intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century. He was not only a keen observer of Spanish society, particularly during the period of transition from the Franco dictatorship to a modern European democracy, but also a severe critic of modern global politics, economics, and popular culture. His detective series around his alter ego, the private investigator Pepe Carvalho, therefore serves both as a stepping-stone in the development of detective fiction in Spain, more or less nonexistent during the Franco regime, and as an appropriate device for the investigation of modern Spanish social history.

Not surprising considering Vázquez Montalbán's family background, his investigation into Spanish social history was somewhat slanted to the left of the political spectrum, focusing on the mainly clandestine, Franco-fascist pockets still not only in existence but

also very influential in Spanish business and politics during and after the transition. In this respect, the Carvalho series offers a perspective very similar to that of the German detective novel immediately after World War II. In his later works in the Carvalho series, Vázquez Montalbán widened the scope of his detective's investigations, both geographically and thematically, from Spain to all of Europe, until in his last, posthumously published work, *Milenio Carvalho* (2004; the Carvalho millennium), his critical purview included global famine, international terrorism, and the economic devastation of developing countries.

The Carvalho series is thus a fortuitous combination of the best of hard-boiled detective fiction in the mold of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe novels with mainstream political fiction. After brief experiments, Vázquez Montalbán rejected postmodernist metafictional prose techniques for a neorealist approach.

BIOGRAPHY

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán was born on June 14, 1939, in a poor neighborhood of Barcelona, shortly after Francisco Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War. His father, an opponent of Franco, was arrested and sentenced to death when he returned from exile for the birth of his son; this verdict was commuted to a twenty-year sentence in prison, of which he served five years.

During his years at the University of Barcelona, Vázquez Montalbán participated in leftist student organizations and, after transferring to the School of Journalism, joined the Catalan branch of the Spanish Communist Party. After getting married and working as a journalist, he was fired because he did not have the right party affiliation; in 1962 he was arrested for participating in an anti-Franco demonstration in support of striking miners and sentenced to three years in jail, of which he served some eighteen months. During his time in prison, Vázquez Montalbán began to write and to develop his theory of subnormal literature. In the 1960's he worked as an editor for the Larousse encyclopedia and published his first collections of poetry.

In 1969 Vázquez Montalbán became a lecturer in the School of Journalism at the University of Barcelona and published his first collection of short stories. The following year, he published his *Manifiesto subnormal* (subnormal manifesto), which stands at the beginning of what critics have called his subnormal period, characterized by highly experimental prose and poems. His first two Carvalho novels, *Yo maté a Kennedy: Impresiones, observaciones y memorias de un guardaespaldas* (1972; I killed J. F. Kennedy) and *Tatuaje* (1974; tattoos), fall into this category, although the latter is a first step toward a more realistic, popular detective novel modeled on the hard-boiled detective novel and the French roman noir.

After the death of Franco in 1975 and through 1985, Vázquez Montalbán dedicated himself to the development of the Carvalho series, turning it into a portrait of post-Franco Spain from the perspective of a jaded leftist intellectual. Though he continued to write novels and stories about his most popular character, he also worked in several other genres, producing plays, screenplays, lyric poetry, and a prodigious amount of nonfiction, dealing with such topics as critical theory, urban planning, cooking, art history, and globalization. In 1981, he won the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière for *Los mares del sur* (1979; *Southern Seas*, 1986).

Vázquez Montalbán died unexpectedly of a heart attack in the transit lounge of the Bangkok airport on October 18, 2003; he was mourned in Spain and abroad. His last work involving his most famous literary character, Pepe Carvalho, a two-volume novel entitled *Milenio Carvalho*, appeared posthumously, although it had been announced at the end of *El hombre de mi vida* (2000; *The Man of My Life*, 2005). In it, the detective and Biscuter, his longtime secretary, go global in their critical observation of the modern world, with obvious allusions to both Jules Verne's *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (1873; *Around the World in Eighty Days*, 1873) and Miguel de Cervantes's *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615; *The History of the Valorous and Wittie Knight-Errant, Don Quixote of the Mancha*, 1612-1620; better known as *Don Quixote de la Mancha*).

ANALYSIS

The beginning of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's Carvalho series coincides with the beginning of the modern Spanish detective novel and plays a large part in its history. The first novel in the series, *Yo maté a Kennedy*, was not originally intended as the first novel of a series. It was one of the last works of Vázquez Montalbán's so-called subnormal period, characterized by neorealist, postmodernist fiction, which takes its name from the author's *Manifiesto subnormal*, in which he finds that the writer has the subnormal task, particularly in a dictatorial society, of providing a counterbalance to social stability and harmony, which leads to a sense of alienation. This sense of alienation of Vázquez Montalbán's detective hero is very similar to that found in the American hard-boiled detective novels of Raymond Chandler and others. Vázquez Montalbán freely admits to having been inspired by Chandler and his protagonist Philip Marlowe in the creation of Pepe Carvalho and the moral landscape of the series.

While his second novel, *Tatuaje*, still retains some features such as the collage and intertextuality of *Yo maté a Kennedy*, the third novel in the series is the first of what Vázquez Montalbán has called his chronicle novels, a term designed to define his detective's investigations into a historical era—initially that of the transition of Spain from Franquism to democracy and in the later novels the transition from national and regional cultures to the advent of globalization.

Vázquez Montalbán's detective, Pepe Carvalho—his full name is José Carvalho Tourón—was born, like the author's father, in the northwestern Spanish province of Galicia in the little village of Souto and later moved to Barcelona. Pepe is a passionate and expert gourmet cook, and he used to be a voracious reader with a large library, which he now burns book by book in his fireplace. He has frequent love affairs, in addition to his relationship with Charo, his longtime girlfriend, but finds it impossible to commit himself to any stable attachment.

To underline his role as an outsider, Pepe surrounds himself with a group of people who are from the margins of modern Spanish society. His girlfriend Charo is a prostitute; his general factotum and cook is the eccentric Biscuter, who was his cell neighbor during his time in

jail. He also associates with Francisco Melgar, known as Bromuro, a shoeshine man and his main informer, who got his name because he paranoically maintains that the government puts bromide into the public water supply to sedate any urges and desires in the population. Another frequently recurring figure is Inspector Contreras, a Franquist police officer and enemy of Carvalho.

THE ANGST-RIDDEN EXECUTIVE

In *La soledad del manager* (1977; *The Angst-Ridden Executive*, 1990), Pepe Carvalho is hired by the widow of Antonio Jauma to investigate the murder of her husband. The police quickly deduce from some underwear found in his pocket that Jauma was the victim of a sordid love affair; however, Pepe determines that Jauma was silenced because he had discovered financial malfeasance in the multinational company for which he worked. The company had helped finance the 1973 coup in Chile and is diverting funds to neo-fascist groups during Spain's transition.

The investigation of Jauma's murder is also a journey into Pepe's own past as he visits a number of the victim's friends from their time together in the underground struggle at the university fifteen years before. Pepe finds that many of them have left behind their youthful idealism and betrayed their comrades who perished in the fight against tyranny.

This scrutinizing of the past, particularly from the perspective of Pepe's and Vázquez Montalbán's leftist origins, is a constant ingredient in most of the novels in the series. The detective shares much of the author's history as well as his political convictions and his hobbies. Pepe is a gourmet cook and loves wine, sex, and conversations with anyone who interests him. The disillusionment with the betrayal of the working classes in post-Franco Spain has outwardly made him a cynic. However, there is a romantic hidden behind Pepe's cynical exterior; like Chandler's Marlowe he is given to quixotic behavior despite claiming to believe only in his stomach, early in *The Angst-Ridden Executive*. Still, when the murderer offers Pepe a fine and rare bottle of wine, Pepe pours the expensive wine on the equally luxurious carpet. Though not a saint, he is the most trustworthy man on the mean streets of Barcelona.

SOUTHERN SEAS

Southern Seas, the fourth novel in the series, is considered by most readers and critics to be Vázquez Montalbán's best novel in the series. It combines a well-constructed detective plot with a thinly veiled critique of modern Spanish society and still contains many of the more self-consciously literary elements, particularly intertextuality, that are a trademark of the author's early literary output.

In *Southern Seas*, a wealthy Spanish industrialist, who had ostensibly become disillusioned with his life and wanted to move to the South Pacific for spiritual regeneration, is found dead at a construction site. When the police fail to find the murderer, the widow hires Pepe to find out what the dead man had done during his last year, not so much out of love for her dead husband but to protect her inheritance. As usual the investigation of the crime is subordinate to Pepe's wanderings through an urban moral wasteland against the background of a municipal election. His search, aided by some pieces of poetry found on the corpse, takes him to San Magín, a working-class district in the south of Barcelona that the murdered man made a fortune developing years before. To atone for his exploitation of the San Magín district, he had worked incognito as an accountant there and begun a love affair with a working-class girl. He was killed by her stepbrother and dumped in another part of the city. The widow, no longer worried about any danger to her inheritance, keeps the true circumstances of her husband's death from the police and goes on the same trip to the South Pacific that her husband had planned before his murder. Pepe, angry and saddened by her callousness, refuses her invitation to accompany her.

As one would expect from a long series, the later novels become more self-referential and intertextual, reusing characters from previous novels, such as the daughter of the victim in *Southern Seas*, who reappears in *The Man of My Life*.

Franz G. Blaha

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PEPE CARVALHO SERIES: 1972-1980 • *Yo maté a Kennedy: Impresiones, observaciones y memorias de un guardaespaldas*, 1972; *Tatuaje*, 1974; *La soledad*

del manager, 1977 (*The Angst-Ridden Executive*, 1990); *Los mares del sur*, 1979 (*Southern Seas*, 1986)

1981-1990 • *Asesinato en el Comité Central*, 1981 (*Murder in the Central Committee*, 1984); *Los pájaros de Bangkok*, 1983; *A rosa de Alejandría*, 1984; *El balneario*, 1986; *Jordi Anfruns, sociólogo*, 1986; *Aquel 23 de febrero*, 1986; *Desde de los tejados*, 1986; *Cenizas de Laura*, 1986; *Historias de padres e hijos*, 1987; *Historias de fantasmas*, 1987; *Tres historias de amor*, 1987; *Historias de política ficción*, 1987; *Asesinato en Prado del Rey y otras historias sórdidas*, 1987; *El delantero centro fue asesinado al atardecer*, 1988 (*Off Side*, 1996)

1991-2004 • *El laberinto griego*, 1991 (*An Olympic Death*, 1992); *Sabotaje olímpico*, 1993; *El hermano pequeño*, 1994; *Roldán, ni vivo ni muerto*, 1994; *El premio*, 1996; *Quinteto de Buenos Aires*, 1997 (*The Buenos Aires Quintet*, 2003); *El hombre de mi vida*, 2000 (*The Man of My Life*, 2005); *Milenio Carvalho*, 2004 (2 volumes)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *El pianista*, 1985 (*The Pianist*, 1989); *Galíndez*, 1990 (*Galíndez*, 1992); *Autobiografía del general Franco*, 1992; *El estrangulador*, 1994; *O César o nada*, 1998

SHORT FICTION: *Recordando a Dardé y otros relatos*, 1969; *El matarife*, 1986; *Cuarteto*, 1988

PLAY: *Guillermota en el país de las Guillerminas*, 1973

POETRY: *Una educación sentimental*, 1967; *Movimientos sin éxito*, 1969; *Coplas a la muerte de mia tía Daniela*, 1973; *A la sombra de las muchachas sin flor: Poemas del amor y del terror*, 1973; *Praga*, 1982; *Memoria y deseo: Obra poética (1963-1990)*, 1986; *Los alegres muchachos de Atzavara*, 1987; *Pero el viajero que huye*, 1991

NONFICTION: *Informe sobre la información*, 1963; *Manifiesto subnormal*, 1970; *Cronica sentimental de España*, 1971; *¿Qué es el imperialismo?*, 1976; *Barcelonas*, 1987 (revised in 1992); *La literatura en la construcción de la ciudad democrática*, 1998

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Puvogel, Sandra. "Pepe Carvalho and Spain: A Look at Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's Detective Fiction." *Monographic Review/Revista Monográfica* 3, nos. 1-2 (1987): 261-267. A brief essay on the author in the context of Spanish history and culture.

FRANÇOIS-EUGÈNE VIDOCQ

Born: Arras, France; July 24, 1775

Died: Paris, France; May 11, 1857

Type of plot: Police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

François-Eugène Vidocq was the first official detective in the Western world. Having led the life of a vagabond, strolling actor, soldier, robber, gambler, dealer in illicit goods, and convict, he offered his services to the préfet of the brigade of the Sûreté in 1809. Hired as a police spy, he became by 1811 the chief of the detective bureau of the Sûreté that he had organized. Phenomenally successful in his investigations, by the time *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté jusqu'en 1827* (1828-1829; *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827, 1828-1829*) appeared, he had become a legend not only in France but also in England and Germany. His fame spread to the United States. An American edition of his memoirs was published simultaneously in Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1834. Excerpts from the memoirs ran from September to December, 1838, in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, a Philadelphia periodical.

Vidocq's memoirs proved an important stimulus to the development of detective and mystery fiction. They inspired the American writer Edgar Allan Poe to become the "father of the detective story"; it is no accident that Poe set the first bona fide story of this genre, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," in Paris. In this story, Poe refers to Vidocq as "a good guesser" but one who "impaired his vision by holding the object too close." Poe's detective hero C. Auguste Dupin is not modeled on Vidocq but is a mask for Poe himself. Vidocq is represented by the bourgeois, philistine, bureaucratic Préfet G—, the antithesis of Dupin, the titled aristocrat, poet, mathematician, and amateur detective.

Vidocq's success as a detective did not depend on any great power of ratiocination. Instead, it depended on his intimate knowledge of the criminal class. He was also a master of disguise and gifted at extracting information from unsuspecting persons. In his memoirs, he describes his methods of investigation swiftly and forcefully,

sometimes using the argot of the underworld. In addition to Poe's work, Vidocq's influence may be seen in the work of Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Eugène Sue, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Émile Gaboriau, Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, E. W. Hornung, G. K. Chesterton, and Leslie Charteris. The "gentleman-crook" hero of mystery fiction—Leblanc's Arsène Lupin, Hornung's A. J. Raffles, and Charteris's Simon Templar—derived from Vidocq's memoirs.

BIOGRAPHY

François-Eugène Vidocq was born in Arras, France, on July 24, 1775, the son of a baker and his wife. At thirteen, he began learning the baker's trade from his father, starting by delivering bread to customers in the city. A wild youth who loved to indulge himself, he began to steal from his parents. Finally, he absconded with the family savings, planning to flee to the New World. Ironically, he himself was robbed. After suffering a series of misadventures, he returned home to Arras. There, he easily obtained his mother's forgiveness and his father's permission to join the army. He enlisted and served in engagements at Valmy and Jammapes. Returning to Arras in 1794, he married Marie-Anne-Louise Chevalier but soon abandoned her on learning that she was having an affair with another man.

Going to Belgium, Vidocq accepted an officer's commission in the army. Following a quarrel with a fellow officer, he was imprisoned at Lille. In 1796, he was sentenced to eight years of forced labor for complicity in forging an order to release a laborer from imprisonment during the Terror. Vidocq was imprisoned in Bicêtre in 1797. In 1798, he was removed to Brest, from which he soon escaped. Recaptured in 1799, he was incarcerated anew at Bicêtre. Later he was transferred to Toulon, from which he escaped in 1800. There followed a series of adventures, imprisonments, and escapes. When free, Vidocq continued to live among the thieves of Arras, Paris, and the provinces. In 1805, he was divorced from his first wife.

In 1809, Vidocq decided to offer his services to the police. In a report to the chief of the brigade of the

Sûreté, in which he discussed the prevalence of crime in Paris, Vidocq suggested that no one knew criminals so well as one who had been a criminal himself, hinting at his own usefulness at criminal investigation. Neither the préfet of the Parisian police nor the minister of the Police General rejected Vidocq's idea. It was agreed that Vidocq be employed as an undercover agent for the Sûreté. By 1810, he escaped from prison, with the approval of the new préfet, who remained in this post until 1814 and particularly befriended Vidocq. In 1811, Vidocq was officially invested with police powers and appointed chief of the detective division of the Sûreté. By 1817, he had seventeen agents under him and had made 772 arrests, setting a police record. In 1824, the brigade numbered thirty-one agents, including five women. In 1820, Vidocq had married Jeanne-Victoire

Guérin; she died in 1824. Shortly thereafter, he married his cousin, Fleuride Maniez.

By 1827, Vidocq's success and power had gained for him political enemies, forcing him to resign. He bought a paper factory in Saint-Mandé, at which he employed former convicts. This business soon failed, and he turned to writing; his memoirs were published in 1828-1829 and proved to be an immense success. Taking advantage of political turmoil, he returned to his police work in 1831, and he is said to have played an important role in saving Louis-Philippe's throne. The new préfet of the Parisian police proved hostile to Vidocq, however, and faced with this new enmity, he resigned once again from the Sûreté.

During his career, Vidocq formed close friendships with some of the most prominent figures of French literature. By 1832, he had become a friend of Honoré de Balzac and inspired him to create his great fictional character Vaudrin, the master criminal who figures in several volumes of *La Comédie humaine* (*The Comedy of Human Life*, 1885-1893, 1896; best known as *The Human Comedy*, 1895-1896, 1911). Vidocq wrote additional works as well, including *Le Parvoleur: Ou, L'Art de se conduire prudemment en tout pays, notamment à Paris* (1830) and *Les Voleurs: Physiologie de leurs mœurs et de leur langage* (1836). In 1844, he published *Les Vrais Mystères de Paris* and *Quelques mots sur une question à l'ordre du jour: Réflexions sur les moyens propres à diminuer les crimes et les récidives*. In 1845-1846, he published *Les Chauffeurs du nord*, a novel about bandits who terrorized Picardy during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. During this period, Vidocq made trips to Belgium and England. In 1847, his third wife died. In 1848, Vidocq became well acquainted with the poet Alphonse Lamartine and had an interview with Prince Louis-Napoléon, who was to become Napoléon III. In 1849, Vidocq renewed his friendship with Victor Hugo, who began to write *Les Misérables* (English translation, 1862), which was published in 1862. Vidocq died in Paris on May 11, 1857.

ANALYSIS

François-Eugène Vidocq's memoirs may be considered a novelistic autobiography. The central charac-



In 2003, France honored François-Eugène Vidocq with a postage stamp.

ter, Vidocq himself, appears simply as the narrator, "I." The narrator is the only character who appears throughout the work, and his narrative takes him from his birth in Arras, France, in 1775 to his resignation in 1827 as the chief of the detective division of the Sûreté in Paris. For the most part, secondary characters appear only in short scenes, but their significance is always clear. The most important secondary character in the book is the chief of the brigade of the Sûreté when Vidocq joins the force. A model police officer, this man becomes Vidocq's mentor, teacher, and friend.

MEMOIRS OF VIDOCQ, PRINCIPAL AGENT OF THE FRENCH POLICE UNTIL 1827

As his story unfolds, the narrator experiences, at about the age of thirty-five, a complete reversal of character. His many years of imprisonment and association with criminals have finally disgusted him, and he believes that his life up to this point has been wasted. Believing that he must do something to make up for the past, both for himself and for society, he offers his services to the Paris police. When given the opportunity to serve in the Sûreté, he develops a new social consciousness and becomes society's protector.

This transformation of the central character is paralleled by a change in the plot structure. Vidocq's vagabond adventures follow in the tradition of such picaresque novels as *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554; English translation, 1576), Alain-René Lesage's *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715-1735; *The History of Gil Blas of Santillane*, 1716, 1735; better known as *Gil Blas*), and Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751). After the narrator's transformation, however, the plan of action is something entirely new to narrative; it represents the birth of the police procedural—the kind of plot that Poe would satirize when he opposed his amateur detective

Dupin to the official préfet of the Paris police. Given the opportunity to play pursuer rather than pursued, Vidocq zealously attempts to limit crime and contribute to the public welfare, using his past experience.

The most important legacy of Vidocq's memoirs has been the image they have presented of him as the great detective. By 1825, Vidocq had been the chief of the detectives of the Sûreté for fourteen years. During this period, he had established an amazing record as an indefatigable and unbribable crime fighter. Vigorous, broad-shouldered, powerfully built, of medium height, with tousled blond hair and penetrating steel-blue eyes, this man is built for action, whether it be prowling the Paris streets, visiting resorts of ill fame, listening to reports from police spies, or using various names and disguises during his rounds. Gifted with rare intelligence, prodigious memory, keen perception, and no mean acting abilities, he has through experience acquired a comprehensive knowledge of criminal behavior—argot, specialties, and *modi operandi*. A master reader of expressions and body language, he maintains files on criminals and their past



Fanciful depiction of Vidocq's fleeing from a brothel to escape capture by the police from an English edition of Vidocq's memoirs published in 1841.

histories, uses scientific graphology to distinguish forged writing from the authentic, and believes that fingerprints can be used for the identification of people. He possesses an uncanny instinct for ferreting out criminal activities. Altogether, he is a dedicated, relentless, courageous crime fighter. Once he has made an arrest, however, he is not lacking in compassion. He firmly believes that if society would cooperate, most criminals could be rehabilitated. (In real life, Vidocq was often generous in helping former prisoners.)

Because of the fuzzy publication history of Vidocq's memoirs, it is hard to say anything definitive about his style or technique. The text that the world has known is the four-volume edition prepared by editors Émile Morice and Louis L'Héritier de l'Ain, based in turn on the work of the original editor to whom Vidocq had unfortunately entrusted his manuscript. All three editors were unscrupulous. By the time Vidocq realized what they had perpetrated, it was too late: The work was in print in France and translations of it had been published simultaneously in England and Germany. Nevertheless, Vidocq at once engaged Froment, who had been the chief of the brigade of the special cabinet of the préfet of the Parisian police, to prepare for him an edition that would conform to his original intentions. Froment's edition was issued in Paris in 1829 as *Histoire de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté: Écrite d'après lui-même* (the story of Vidocq, chief of the Sûreté, as told by himself). This edition essentially contains the contents of the original manuscript. Yet as Edwin Rich, the English translator of the memoirs, has stated:

Whether the *Memoirs* of Vidocq are genuine or 'spurious' has been a question that has disturbed many critics, who appear to overlook the fact that their value and importance remain exactly the same. . . . The importance of the book . . . depends in no degree on who was the actual author. Ever since this material appeared in print, it has been a source of inspiration.

The memoirs generally contain antiquated references, interpolated passages, and indulgences in verbosity. Nevertheless, the emphasis is placed on descriptions of actions. These descriptions are concerned primarily with the activities of the central character, Vidocq. They are speedy and effective, often develop-

ing a rhythm of suspense and excitement until resolved to the satisfaction of the reader. A typical example occurs when Vidocq is seeking to capture the counterfeiter Watrin. Having learned Watrin's address, Vidocq has hurried to the place and has arrived

just as someone was going out. Persuaded that it was Watrin, I tried to seize him. He escaped me; I dashed after him up the staircase, but, just as I was reaching for him, a kick in my chest sent me down twenty steps. I dashed after him again and with such speed that, to get rid of my pursuit, he was obliged to get into his quarters through a window on the landing. I then knocked on his door and summoned him to open. He refused.

Annette [Vidocq's assistant, an agent of the Sûreté] had followed me. I ordered her to go in search of the police, and, while she went to obey, I imitated the noise of a man going downstairs. Watrin was deceived by this feint, and wanted to assure himself that I had really gone. He put his head out of the window.

That was what I wanted, and I at once grabbed him by the hair. He seized me in the same way, and a fight started. . . . I gathered my strength for a last jerk; already he had only his feet left in the room; another effort and he was mine. I pulled him out vigorously and he fell into the corridor. To deprive him of the shoemaker's knife with which he was armed and drag him outside was the work of a moment.

The development of Vidocq's narrative is essentially ironic. An unprincipled social nonconformist becomes a consistent lawbreaker. He is punished by society, becoming a long-term convict. His failure produces within him a change of attitude toward himself and society. Thus, when given the opportunity, he becomes a lawman and a renowned detective. He transforms his antisocial behavior into something socially productive, exchanges rags for riches, and changes failure into success. The effect of the narrative is the exaltation of the detective as police officer and crime fighter.

Perhaps the greatest of ironies in both the work and the life of Vidocq was that the more successful he became as a detective, the greater was the envy of his colleagues in the police department. They engaged in intrigues against him, even attempting to incriminate him falsely and trying to return him to his former criminal status. Thus, occasionally Vidocq found that he had

more to fear from his lawman peers than from criminals. Inspired by Vidocq, Poe made his detective French and placed him in the city of Paris. In 1841, Paris was the only city in the Western world to have a detective-police organization. Indeed, for thirty years the Sûreté had enjoyed renown for its skill and efficiency in solving crimes and capturing its perpetrators. Yet Poe did not see Vidocq's memoirs as a model for the kind of detective story he envisioned, nor did he consider Vidocq a proper model for his detective. His composition was not to be a loose series of episodes but a tense, concise, unified narrative of detection whose solution was to be reserved for the end. His detective, C. Auguste Dupin, is not a vulgar, middle-class bureaucrat, an unthinking man of action, but a cultured aristocrat, a scholarly recluse, an amateur solver of mysteries, to whom crime is not a social problem but a problem in philosophy and aesthetics. Dupin's cognitive powers make the solution of a murder not only an exercise in the relationship of intuition to logical demonstration but also a creative act whose formal perfection amounts to a fine art. If Poe refrained from exploring the possibilities of the detective-story genre any further, that challenge was taken up by Gaboriau—nevertheless, he remained closer than Poe to Vidocq—and then by Doyle, who extended the work of both Poe and Gaboriau, putting the detective story on the map of popular literature.

Richard P. Benton

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Les Vrais Mystères de Paris*, 1844; *Les Chauffeurs du nord*, 1845-1846

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté jusqu'en 1827*, 1828-1829 (*Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827*, 1828-1829; revised as *Histoire de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté: écrite d'après lui-même*, 1829); *Le Paravoleur: Ou, L'Art de se conduire prudemment en tout pays, notamment à Paris*, 1830; *Les Voleurs: Physiologie de leurs mœurs et de leur langage*, 1836; *Quelques mots sur une question à l'ordre du jour: Réflexions sur les moyens propres à diminuer les crimes et les récidives*, 1844

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- Vidocq, François Eugène. *Memoirs of Vidocq: Master of Crime*. Translated and edited by Edwin Giles Rich. Reprint. Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2003. Vidocq's own account of his life in the Paris underworld, which influenced most great detective-fiction authors of the nineteenth century.

VOLTAIRE

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire

Born: Paris, France; November 21, 1694

Died: Paris, France; May 30, 1778

Type of plot: Amateur sleuth

CONTRIBUTION

Although Voltaire wrote in several different genres, including theater, poetry, and letters, he has remained most famous for the philosophical tales (*contes philosophiques*) that he composed during the last four decades of his lengthy literary career. In such well-structured works as *Zadig: Ou, La Destinée, Histoire orientale* (1748; *Zadig: Or, The Book of Fate*, 1749), *Le Micromégas* (1752; *Micromegas*, 1753), and *Candide: Ou, L'Optimisme* (1759; *Candide: Or, All for the Best*, 1759; also known as *Candide: Or, The Optimist*, 1762; also known as *Candide: Or, Optimism*, 1947), Voltaire described the pernicious effects of social injustice and religious intolerance. Yet these philosophical tales also illustrate the power and limits of both logical and intuitive reasoning. Several critics have properly judged Voltaire to be a precursor to later detective novelists. *Zadig* contains his most significant contribution to the detective genre. In the third chapter, *Zadig* uses deductive reasoning and explains convincingly that tracings left on the sand reveal the recent passing of a limping spaniel bitch and a galloping horse. According to Theodore Besterman in his book on Voltaire, "Sherlock Holmes must have read attentively" this chapter, which demonstrates the usefulness of deductive reasoning in interpreting physical evidence.

BIOGRAPHY

On November 21, 1694, Voltaire was born François-Marie Arouet in Paris, the son of François Arouet and Marie-Marguerite Arouet. ("Voltaire" was a pseudonym first used in 1717.) From 1704 until 1711, he studied in Paris at the Jesuit secondary school of Louis-le-Grand, where he developed a keen interest in the classics and an intense distrust of organized religions. During his literary career, which lasted more than six decades, Voltaire remained a freethinker who

never hesitated to denounce social injustice. His criticism was acerbic and frequently caused problems for him. In 1726, he offended an influential French nobleman, the Chevalier de Rohan, and was imprisoned in the Bastille. He obtained his freedom only by promising to leave France for England, where he would live for almost three years. Following his return to France, he lived with his mistress, Émilie du Châtelet, on her country estate at Cirey in northern Champagne.

After her death in 1749, the disconsolate Voltaire accepted an offer from King Frederick the Great of Prussia that he move to the royal court at Potsdam, just outside Berlin. By 1753, Voltaire had tired of Frederick's benevolent despotism and decided to move to Geneva, where he admired the religious tolerance of this French-speaking city. In 1758, Voltaire purchased a country estate in Ferney, just across the French border from Geneva. Voltaire spent much of the last two decades of his life in Ferney, where he enjoyed his life as a "gentleman farmer" and the companionship of his niece, Mme Denis. During this very creative period, Voltaire wrote several important philosophical tales as well as his influential *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (1764; also known as *La Raison par alphabet* and *Dictionnaire philosophique; A Philosophical Dictionary for the Pocket*, 1765; also known as *Philosophical Dictionary*, 1945, enlarged 1962). In February, 1778, Voltaire made a triumphal return to Paris, where he died on May 30, 1778, at the age of eighty-three.

ANALYSIS

A first reading of *Zadig* may suggest that it is inappropriate to consider this "philosophical tale" an early detective novel. Like most of Voltaire's major works, however, *Zadig* can be interpreted from several different perspectives, and each critical approach enriches the understanding of Voltaire's artistry. Readers who favor sociocriticism have analyzed Voltaire's effective denunciation in *Zadig* of social exploitation, religious hypocrisy, and intolerance. Although Voltaire called *Zadig* an "Oriental story" whose action takes place in



Voltaire. (Library of Congress)

fifteenth century Babylon, in it, he discusses the social problems of his own era, not those of medieval Babylon, about which he and his contemporaries knew very little. In eighteenth century France, true censorship existed; Voltaire himself had been imprisoned twice in the 1720's because of his criticism. The pseudo-Babylonian elements in *Zadig* made it easier for Voltaire to avoid problems with the French police.

ZADIG

The many levels of irony and the refined style in *Zadig* have attracted much critical attention since the eighteenth century, and several scholars have noted that Voltaire's style combines formal eloquence with subtle wit. His arguments are presented in such an aesthetically pleasing and yet unpretentious manner that it seems inappropriate to question his sincerity. His very style creates a favorable impression on his readers. In addition, his consistent understatement and the aesthetic distance that he maintains between his third-person narrative and his fictional characters make his philosophical tale appear objective and thus worthy of serious attention. Moreover, his well-balanced sen-

tences permit and even encourage diverse interpretations. Readers of *Zadig* conclude that Voltaire respects all intellectual freedom; this interpretation leads them to respond favorably to Voltaire's perception of reality.

In the development of the detective genre, *Zadig* is important not because of its well-constructed plot and refined style but rather because it illustrates appropriate ways of explaining perplexing situations. In his influential work *Les Pensées* (1670; *Monsieur Pascal's Thoughts, Meditations, and Prayers*, 1688), Blaise Pascal argued that there existed two major ways of perceiving the world. Those who use purely deductive and logical reasoning practice "l'esprit de géométrie" (the spirit of geometry), whereas those who discover truth intuitively practice "l'esprit de finesse" (the spirit of finesse). Voltaire frequently referred to Pascal's distinction. According to Pascal, each individual uses a unique blend of these two major types of reasoning, and neither "the spirit of geometry" nor "the spirit of finesse" suffices in itself to explain reality. Each person must sense intuitively when it is necessary to resort to deductive reasoning to discover a specific truth. *Zadig* illustrates the usefulness of both "the spirit of geometry" and "the spirit of finesse." Later detective writers could learn from *Zadig*, if not directly from Pascal, that both deductive and intuitive reasoning are essential to any search for truth.

Like such amateur sleuths as G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown and Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, *Zadig* does not seek out opportunities to solve crimes. He is not a professional detective who seeks monetary gain. No one ever questions the sincerity of *Zadig's* motives. If, by chance, someone asks questions about specific crimes, he willingly works to explain logically how things actually happened.

In chapter 2, Voltaire states that *Zadig's* marriage to Azora has serious problems. *Zadig* decides to divorce his wife; this act leaves him with much free time, which he spends studying "the properties of animals and plants." *Zadig* soon acquires objective knowledge, and he is able to recognize "a thousand differences" in nature "where others would see everything as uniform"—he has become an expert in zoology and botany.

Near the palace one day, the queen's eunuch asks *Zadig* if he has seen the royal dog. In reply, *Zadig* ob-

serves that the dog is a small spaniel bitch that limps and has recently given birth to puppies. Although the eunuch assumes that Zadig has seen the animal, Zadig denies it. A few minutes later, court officials come by and inquire about the king's missing horse, which Zadig also describes. Although Zadig states that he has seen neither animal, his audience is unconvinced; he is arrested for stealing both spaniel and stallion.

During his trial, Zadig ably defends himself, explaining that specific tracings on the sand and broken branches in the trees enabled him to determine the physical characteristics of the missing animals. The judges are convinced; because there is no proof that he stole either creature, he is acquitted. This chapter in *Zadig* has influenced later detective writers because it demonstrates that the objective analysis of physical clues can prove innocence or guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Detective writers after Voltaire would strive to develop equally creative and totally logical explanations for perplexing cases.

Not all the characters in this philosophical tale reason as effectively as Zadig. Near the end of the piece, he meets a hermit who practices "the spirit of finesse" in a strange and unpersuasive manner. (The hermit is the antithesis of the reasonable Zadig.) After Zadig and the hermit have spent a pleasant night as guests of a kindly widow, the hermit repays her hospitality by drowning her fourteen-year-old nephew. The hermit justifies this murder by claiming that if this adolescent had lived, he would have strangled his aunt and Zadig within two years. Even after the hermit transforms himself into a winged angel, Zadig refuses to accept the hermit's questionable defense, noting that there was a simple alternative to this murder: "Would it not have been better to have corrected this child and rendered him virtuous rather than drowning him?" Thus, logic discredits all attempts to justify murder.

Although the hermit acted with the purest of intentions, his action is nevertheless criminal. Zadig, like later detectives, understands that people are to be judged by their actions and not by the ingenious explanations they may present in defense of their crimes. Unless the absolute value of each life is accepted, society will soon fall into chaos. Zadig realizes that the hermit is basically a well-intentioned murderer who

used specious reasoning to justify murder.

In his 1972 book *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, Julian Symons perceptively states that although *Zadig* does contain an "ingenious piece of analytical deduction," it is not merely "a crime story." In *Zadig*, Voltaire wrote primarily about the search for happiness in an imperfect world. Zadig, however, is a detective in two ways: He uses deductive reasoning to solve a perplexing case and also recognizes the faulty reasoning of a criminal.

Edmund J. Campion

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *Zadig: Ou, La Destinée, Histoire orientale*, 1748 (originally as *Memnon: Histoire orientale*, 1747; *Zadig: Or, The Book of Fate*, 1749)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Le Micromégas*, 1752 (*Micromegas*, 1753); *Histoire des voyages de Scarmentado*, 1756 (*The History of the Voyages of Scarmentado*, 1757; also known as *History of Scarmentado's Travels*, 1961); *Candide: Ou, L'Optimisme*, 1759 (*Candide: Or, All for the Best*, 1759; also known as *Candide: Or, The Optimist*, 1762; also known as *Candide: Or, Optimism*, 1947); *L'Ingénu*, 1767 (*The Pupil of Nature*, 1771; also known as *Ingenuous*, 1961); *L'Homme aux quarante écus*, 1768 (*The Man of Forty Crowns*, 1768); *La Princesse de Babylone*, 1768 (*The Princess of Babylon*, 1769)

SHORT FICTION: *Le Monde comme il va*, 1748 (revised as *Babouc: Ou, Le Monde comme il va*, 1749; *Babouc: Or, The World as It Goes*, 1754; also known as *The World as It Is: Or, Babouc's Vision*, 1929); *Memnon: Ou, La Sagesse humaine*, 1749 (*Memnon: Or, Human Wisdom*, 1961); *La Lettre d'un Turc*, 1750; *Jeannot et Colin*, 1764 (*Jeannot and Colin*, 1929); *Le Blanc et le noir*, 1764 (*The Two Genies*, 1895); *L'Histoire de Jenni*, 1775; *Les Oreilles du Comte de Chesterfield*, 1775 (*The Ears of Lord Chesterfield and Parson Goodman*, 1826)

PLAYS: 1718-1740 • *Œdipe*, pr. 1718, pb. 1719 (*Oedipus*, 1761); *Artémire*, pr. 1720; *Mariamne*, pr. 1724, pb. 1725 (English translation, 1761); *L'Indiscret*, pr., pb. 1725 (verse play); *Brutus*, pr. 1730, pb.

1731 (English translation, 1761); *Ériphyle*, pr. 1732, pb. 1779; *Zaïre*, pr. 1732, pb. 1733 (English translation, 1736); *La Mort de César*, pr. 1733, pb. 1735; *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, pr. 1734; *L'Échange*, pr. 1734, pb. 1761; *Alzire*, pr., pb. 1736 (English translation, 1763); *L'Enfant prodigue*, pr. 1736, pb. 1738 (verse play; prose translation; *The Prodigal*, 1750?); *La Prude: Ou, La Grandeuse de Casette*, wr. 1740, pr., pb. 1747 (verse play; adaptation of William Wycherley's play *The Plain Dealer*); *Zulime*, pr. 1740, pb. 1761

1741-1750 • *Mahomet*, pr., pb. 1742 (*Mahomet the Prophet*, 1744); *Méropé*, pr. 1743, pb. 1744 (English translation, 1744, 1749); *La Princesse de Navarre*, pr., pb. 1745 (verse play; music by Jean-Philippe Rameau); *Sémiramis*, pr. 1748, pb. 1749 (*Semiramis*, 1760); *Nanine*, pr., pb. 1749 (English translation, 1927); *Oreste*, pr., pb. 1750

1751-1779 • *Rome sauvée*, pr., pb. 1752; *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, pr., pb. 1755 (*The Orphan of China*, 1756); *Socrate*, pb. 1759 (*Socrates*, 1760); *L'Écosaise*, pr., pb. 1760 (*The Highland Girl*, 1760); *Tancrède*, pr. 1760, pb. 1761; *Don Pèdre*, wr. 1761, pb. 1775; *Olympie*, pb. 1763, pr. 1764; *Le Triumvirat*, pr. 1764, pb. 1767; *Les Scythes*, pr., pb. 1767; *Les Guèbres: Ou, La Tolérance*, pb. 1769; *Sophonisbe*, pb. 1770, pr. 1774 (revision of Jean Mairet's play); *Les Pélopidés: Ou, Atrée et Thyeste*, pb. 1772; *Les Lois de Minos*, pb. 1773; *Irène*, pr. 1778, pb. 1779; *Agathocle*, pr. 1779

POETRY: *Poème sur la religion naturelle*, 1722; *La Ligue*, 1723; *La Henriade*, 1728 (a revision of *La Ligue*; *Henriade*, 1732); *Le Mondain*, 1736 (*The Man of the World*, 1764); *Discours en vers sur l'homme*, 1738 (*Discourses in Verse on Man*, 1764); *Poème de Fontenoy*, 1745; *Poème sur la loi naturelle*, 1752 (*On Natural Law*, 1764); *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, 1755, 1762 (*The Maid of Orleans*, 1758; also known as *La Pucelle: Or, the Maid of Orleans*, 1758-1786); *Poème sur la désastre de Lisbonne*, 1756 (*Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake*, 1764); *Le Pauvre Diable*, 1758; *Épître à Horace*, 1772

NONFICTION: *An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France. . . , and Also upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations from Homer Down to Milton*, 1727; *La*

Henriade, 1728 (*Henriade*, 1732); *Histoire de Charles XII*, 1731 (*The History of Charles XII*, 1732); *Le Temple du goût*, 1733 (*The Temple of Taste*, 1734); *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 1733; *Lettres philosophiques*, 1734 (originally published in English as *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 1733; also known as *Philosophical Letters*, 1961); *Discours de métaphysique*, 1736; *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, 1738 (*The Elements of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, 1738); *Discours en vers sur l'homme*, 1738-1752 (*Discourses in Verse on Man*, 1764); *Vie de Molière*, 1739; *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, 1751 (*The Age of Louis XIV*, 1752); *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, 1756, 1763 (*The General History and State of Europe*, 1754, 1759); *Traité sur la tolérance*, 1763 (*A Treatise on Religious Toleration*, 1764); *Commentaires sur le théâtre de Pierre Corneille*, 1764; *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, 1764, enlarged 1769 (also known as *La Raison par alphabet* and *Dictionnaire philosophique*; *A Philosophical Dictionary for the Pocket*, 1765; also known as *Philosophical Dictionary*, 1945, enlarged 1962); *Avis au public sur les paricides imputés aux calas et aux Sirven*, 1775; *Correspondence*, 1953-1965 (102 volumes)

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Works of M. de Voltaire*, 1761-1765 (35 volumes), 1761-1781 (38 volumes); *Candide, and Other Writings*, 1945; *The Portable Voltaire*, 1949; *Candide, Zadig, and Selected Stories*, 1961; *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, 1968-1977 (135 volumes; in French)

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C. E. VULLIAMY

Born: Wales; June 20, 1886

Died: England; September 4, 1971

Also wrote as Anthony Rolls

Type of plot: Inverted

CONTRIBUTION

C. E. Vulliamy is best known for his novels and biographies of the Johnsonian era (the most controversial being a portrait of James Boswell as an opportunist in his friendship with Samuel Johnson), for his *Voltaire*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Wesley, and George Gordon, Lord Byron, and for his articles in *The Spectator*. His mysteries are not as widely known. In the main they are novels of academia (*Don Among the Dead Men*, 1952) or of clergy (*The Vicar's Experiments*, 1932; *Tea at the Abbey*, 1961), though the protagonist may be merely a headmaster or a rector. In Vulliamy's novels, the mystery plot actually serves as the backdrop for mildly satiric treatments of British

society and consequently depends on the techniques that dominate more traditional satiric forms. There is a sense of *reductio ad absurdum* in the portraits of foolish and fallible humanity. Vulliamy's virtue is his vice, with the satiric at its best adding an extra dimension to the mystery genre, but at its worst detracting to such a degree that neither satire nor mystery convinces. Vulliamy employs the conventions of detective fiction but turns them on end, mocking them and, through his reversals and exaggerations, mocking the weaknesses of humanity that necessitate such conventions.

BIOGRAPHY

C. E. Vulliamy, born Colwyn Edward Vullimay in Wales on June 20, 1886, studied art under Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn, Cornwall, from 1910 to 1913. During World War I, he served in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and was stationed in France, Macedonia, and Turkey; he joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers

in 1918, becoming camp commandant of the Twenty-eighth Division Headquarters and later education officer of the division, with a rank of captain. He was married to Eileen Hynes in 1916, and they had a son and a daughter.

After the war, Vulliamy pursued a full-time literary career. He was active in field archaeology, contributed regularly to *The Spectator*, and was a respected historical biographer. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and an active member of the Royal Anthropological Society. His wife died in 1943; he survived her by almost thirty years, dying on September 4, 1971.

ANALYSIS

C. E. Vulliamy's mysteries are all to some degree inverted, and they follow the same general pattern. They begin with a grudge against another person (usually a social parasite who tends toward malicious gossip), a search for a perfect murder method, and a murder attempt (sometimes successful and sometimes not), followed by plans for further crimes, a deterioration of character involving a movement toward insanity, outside intervention, apprehension, a trial scene, a questionable verdict, and an ironic conclusion. This pattern varies slightly from tale to tale—sometimes the trial scene is excluded, sometimes the focus on madness is diminished—but the basic ingredients tend to remain consistent.

The stories reflect a pessimistic view of human nature and a deep-seated contempt for the foolishness of many social types, from Panglossian rectors to pretentious social climbers, from the limited products of public schools to the dim-witted, eccentric lords of the manor. Their characters and style partake of the artificial and exaggerated speech, manners, and sensibilities of some turn-of-the-century works, yet their negative, sometimes black-humor interpretations of human motivations and human behavior seem more modern. In other words, despite their strong sense of place—the English village—these works seem out of time, neither fully Edwardian nor fully modern. Although the narrative voice focuses particularly on the perspective of the villains, the murderers and would-be murderers, the effect is not that of the typical inverted

form, in which the reader shares the perspective and the sensibilities of a first-person narrator. Instead, Vulliamy relies on a third-person omniscient narrative voice, which is distanced from characters and action, as if a superior judge, amused by the comic antics of his inferiors, retold them in such a way as to call attention to their limitations and to prove their inferiority. At his best, Vulliamy's wit is keen and his tales ironic; at his worst, his characterizations are shallow and his narrative is overwrought.

THE VICAR'S EXPERIMENTS AND CAKES FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY

Some consider *The Vicar's Experiments*, an imitation of Francis Iles's mysteries, a "minor masterpiece," for it is written with discipline, the satire and negativism more carefully controlled than in Vulliamy's other works. Usually, however, his plots are only contrived frames on which to hang satire, and as a consequence they sometimes verge on the silly. In *Cakes for Your Birthday* (1959), for example, after a foiled first attempt, the would-be murderers mail arsenic-coated cakes to their intended victim, who passes them on to an aunt who has just informed her of a will leaving her a considerable amount of money. The aunt dies; the intended victim is accused and tried, all the while reveling in her notoriety. Meanwhile, the main engineer of the plot goes slowly mad because he firmly believes that hanging the wrong person would be a miscarriage of justice. No one believes his confession, but a professional criminal, outraged by the ungentlemanly behavior of the accomplices, forces them to confess. The victim, who deserves punishment for her other deeds, though not for murder, is acquitted, but soon thereafter is thrown over a cliff by some unknown party. In *Body in the Boudoir* (1956), there is a coroner's inquest before the results of the autopsy are known, a murder investigation before there is clearly a murder, and a murder weapon (a West African Calabar bean) that boggles the imagination. Clearly, one does not read Vulliamy for plot. Instead it is for what one critic has called "verbal coruscation" and "its glitter of style, now broadly funny, now keenly acidulous."

VULLIAMY'S PET PEEVES

As in *Don Among the Dead Men*, the story of a chemist who discovers a poison that leaves no traces,

Vulliamy uses his plots as excuses to expostulate on his pet peeves. Everyone is subject to attack (sometimes most heavy-handedly), from the all-too-innocent clergyman to the self-made “Carbon King,” from the narrow-minded and befuddled academician to the malicious small-town gossip. It is gossip that disturbs Vulliamy most and is the subject of his most damning attacks in all of his works. In fact, he is highly suspicious of any village organization, from the Red Cross to “Scouts for louts” and “Guides for girlies,” believing that they are all dedicated to the propagation of gossip as if it were a duty required by their association. Male-female relationships also come under heavy attack, with all marriages depicted as a balancing act and all “love” relationships unnatural and exploitative. Lady Ruggerbrace, a minor character in *Body in the Boudoir*, sums up the Vulliamy attitude: “I am never surprised when I hear that a man has made a fool of himself: that is a phenomenon which I observe every day of my life.”

Vulliamy is also highly critical of bad taste, particularly in clothing and in architecture. In many works there is some description of what Vulliamy terms “giving rein to the Free Philistine.” This might involve, for example, wearing a bright yellow tie with polka dots or developing “desirable residences,” made most undesirable by “their pebble-dashed impudence, their green and red tiles, their doubly-damnable sham antiquity and their preposterous gables,” all of which would fill “an intelligent observer with dismay.” It might also involve a delight in the grotesque styles of eighteenth and nineteenth century “antiquities”: “the painted ceilings where tumbling nuditities clustered on swagging clouds . . . the state beds (nurses of nightmares or couches for corpses), the wanton vagaries of rococo stucco . . . the picture galleries—cows by Cuyp, ladies by Lely, doubtful Rembrandts and undoubted Landseers . . . the rowdy-dowdies of Rubens.” A Mr. Fogger, who mistrusts any intelligence not associated with money-making and has a face “red and yellow in patches like the brickwork of his preposterous villa,” is typical of such philistine taste.

The police and professional criminals equally merit attack. Both groups deride bungling amateurs, but in doing so expose their own limitations. The professional robbers and murderers often are graduates of public

schools or even of the University of Oxford, have a set of inviolate principles and inflationary fees, and alternate between rather contrived street talk and informed discussions of dahlias and Pythagorean laws of mathematics. Still, they are hardened criminals and think nothing of murdering for a fee or robbing for pleasure. In turn, the police in a Vulliamy mystery often long for a nice little corpse from a real professional. In *Cakes for Your Birthday*, they rather regret a failed murder, because they consider the would-be victim a “wicked slanderer” whose “obscene repulsive scandals” bring “misery and suspicion into a dozen innocent families” and, worst of all, mix “abominable lies with abominable truth.” Furthermore, they admit that legal remedies often do no good because of “a notable army of liars, fools, and idiots” who cloud the issues and leave the slandered forever tainted. “Cultivate suspicion,” says Inspector Fishbox to Sergeant Applecot, but that motto proves the undoing of many of Vulliamy’s detectives, who suspect far too many for far too little reason.

BODY IN THE BOUDOIR

The inspector in *Body in the Boudoir* is typical. A cheerful cynic, he is a man with a system: Fearful that setting up a theory will lead one to reject all that does not fit, “even to the extent of twisting or fabricating evidence,” he instead considers all possibilities, working out dozens of possible solutions, even the most absurd. The result is much meaningless and non-productive busywork and interminable interviews. He continually dreams up untenable theories about witnesses and draws conclusions on the flimsiest of evidence, all the while calling for neutrality. There is an Inspector Clouseau quality to the bungling. Harboyle metaphorically trips over his feet throughout his investigation. For example, he carries around morgue photographs of a dead girl and then overreacts, suspecting a guilty conscience, when someone shows distress and shock. His ideal is a detective chief superintendent who “wears glasses, quotes poetry, and looks peculiarly innocent,” a man who can move comfortably among the landed gentry as a police spy and hence has “more kills to his credit than anyone else in the whole perishing Force.” Ironically, it is this detective who solves the mystery, not Harboyle, by sketching out a working hypothesis based on the probability of the im-

probable and pursuing it to its fantastic but correct conclusions. In other words, though using the standard ploys of the detective mystery genre, Vulliamy reduces all to the absurd.

WORD PLAY AND COMEDY

Stylistically, Vulliamy's works tend toward the stilted, being at times overly euphuistic, with balanced phrasing, contrived sound combinations, and elaborate sentence construction—a bit too strained, a bit too arch. The result is characters whose speech and acts seem incredible. There are mock sermons, with inflated phraseology and hidebound clichés, sentences of more than two hundred words, and exhortations to action or nonaction, as the case may be. Phrases such as “brittle tinkle of icy drops” and “so furry in winter, so flimsy in summer,” with their heavy assonance, alliteration, and balance, abound, along with aphorisms such as “The dead shot shoots dead.” The better-educated characters quote Homer in Greek and Seneca in Latin; an angry lord towers “in red Homeric wrath among his myrmidons” in *Body in the Boudoir*, and a police dandy lectures from John Dryden's translation of Persius and muses on “the terrible torture of thirst for the naphthaline waters of passion accurst.”

There are comic catalogs, including lists of murder methods and murder weapons: ingestion, penetration, puncture, “deadly dose . . . whiff or prick . . . stealthy stiletto . . . a blow in the bark or a stab in the back,” “a short though heavy bludgeon, truncheon, cudgel, or cosh.” Doctors roll out absurd lists of symptoms: “torticollis, kypchosis, scoliosis, and lordosis.” Characters' names, too, are comically suggestive: Inspector Belching, the Reverend Theophilus Pogge, Sir Bedwith Bathwedder, Millie Peasewillow, Arthur Packett Lollesworth, William Edward Ripsguard, Ethel Meatring Peelyard, Agnes Farrier-Sludge, and Samuel Johnson, the butcher. Miss Wasp, Miss Bickerslow, Mrs. Pigge, and Lily Loveylove behave in accordance with their names, as do the “Old Rotters” of the Rotting Hill public school or the “Coddlers” from Coddlebury College for Women. The marquis of Ruggerbrace has an imposingly majestic figure but suffers from a remarkable “mental torpidity,” while Detective Inspector Harboyle is not as hard-boiled as his name might suggest. Mr. Pukey, of the *Daily Whatnot*, is de-

terminedly obnoxious in his pursuit of a story, while the hateful Misses Waddleboy are “grim images of human decay and of mouldy frustration,” Victorian in sensibilities and social attitudes.

Vulliamy delights in calling attention to phrases that reflect one's values or psychology, as when a mild-mannered gentleman, angered at his daughter's murderer, repeats unhappily, “I would like to flay the bastard alive,” or when a detective talks about getting the murderer “safely to the gallows.” The “grim adverb” makes another's heart turn cold at the thought of describing the entrapment of a suspect “just as a fisherman would speak of bringing a salmon to the gaff or a trout to the net.” There is deflation: “She was a Pardol of Stoke Ampersand, a family at least moderately famous for eleven centuries in the history of Great Britain, if only in footnotes and appendices”; there are mild satiric jibes: “He had learnt many things during his service in the Colonial Office and a truculent indecision was one of them.” Classic British understatement is another favorite comic device; for example, on being told that there is a body in the boudoir and a police inspector at the door, the marchioness of Ruggerbrace remarks, “There seems to be something wrong.” Literary and historical allusions similarly partake of the satiric, as in the comparison of a Captain Bashe to William of Ockham, for both “lived and thought (if that is the word) on the principle of rejecting unnecessary ideas,” a process in which Bashe “succeeded so admirably that he had scarcely any ideas at all.” After a long string of witnesses can remember almost nothing about a murder victim except her melancholy, the lengthy description given by a Miss Bleat is comic in its wealth and precision of detail, from the red agate brooch and unusual blue eyes to the fingernails varnished a pale pink, the lightly penciled eyebrows, and the hair the color of weak tea. Comic, too, is Vulliamy's reliance on the hyperbolic, whereby the trivial acts of trivial minds are blown up out of proportion. Curiosity seekers visiting a castle the day after a murder are described as a highly destructive invading army and their various skirmishes with the residents and staff as full-blown battles.

Vulliamy will delight those who enjoy a heavy dose of debunking, but there is a superficiality to his attacks, for he ignores the deep-seated horrors of hu-

man nature and is content to mock its surface forms: manners, attire, diction, pretension. He is best at a comedy of manners of the sort one finds in *The Vicar's Experiments* and *Don Among the Dead Men*.

Gina Macdonald

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *Clerical Error*, 1932; *Lobelia Grove*, 1932; *The Vicar's Experiments*, 1932; *Family Matters*, 1933; *Scarweather*, 1934; *Don Among the Dead Men*, 1952; *Body in the Boudoir*, 1956; *Cakes for Your Birthday*, 1959; *Justice for Judy*, 1960; *Tea at the Abbey*, 1961; *Floral Tribute*, 1963

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Fusilier Bluf: The Experiences of an Unprofessional Soldier in the Near East, 1918-1919*, 1934; *Edwin and Eleanor: Family Documents, 1854-56*, 1945; *Henry Plumdew: His Memoirs, Experiences, and Opinions, 1938-1948*, 1950; *Jones: A Gentleman of Wales*, 1954; *The Proud Walkers*, 1955

NONFICTION: 1914-1930 • *Charles Kingsley and Christian Socialism*, 1914; *Our Prehistoric Forerunners*, 1925; *Unknown Cornwall*, 1925; *Immortal Man: A Study of Funeral Customs and of Beliefs in Regard to the Nature and Fate of the Soul*, 1926; *The Archaeology of Middlesex and London*, 1930; *Voltaire*, 1930

1931-1940 • *John Wesley*, 1931; *Rousseau*, 1931; *James Boswell*, 1932; *William Penn*, 1933; *Judas Macabaeus: A Study Based on Dr. Quarto Karadyne's Translation of the Ararat Codex*, 1934; *Aspasia: The Life and Letters of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany (1700-1788)*, 1935; *Mrs. Thrale of Streatham: Her Place in the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson and in the Society of Her Time, Her Character and Family Affairs*, 1936; *Royal George: A Study of King George III*, 1937; *Outlanders: A Study of Imperial Expansion in South Africa, 1877-1902*, 1938; *Crimea: The Campaign of 1854-56, with an Outline of Politics and a Study of the Royal Quartet*, 1939; *Calico Pie: An Autobiography*, 1940

1941-1960 • *A Short History of the Montagu-Puffins*, 1941; *The Polderoy Papers*, 1943; *Doctor Philligo: His Journal and Opinions*, 1944; *English*

Letter Writers, 1945; *Ursa Major: A Study of Dr. Johnson and His Friends*, 1946; *Man and the Atom: A Brief Account of the Human Dilemma*, 1947; *Byron, with a View of the Kingdom of Cant and a Dissertation of the Byronic Ego*, 1948; *Prodwit's Guide to Writing*, 1949; *Rocking Horse Journey: Some Views of the British Character*, 1952; *The Onslow Family, 1528-1874, with Some Account of Their Times*, 1953; *Little Arthur's Guide to Humbug*, 1960

EDITED TEXTS: *The Letters of the Tsar to the Tsaritsa, 1914-1917, 1929* (translated by A. L. Hynes); *The Red Archives: Russian State Papers, and Other Documents, 1915-1918, 1929* (translated by A. L. Hynes); *The Anatomy of Satire: An Exhibition of Satirical Writing*, 1950

TRANSLATION: "The White Bull," with "Saul" and Various Short Pieces, 1929 (by Voltaire)

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Erb, Peter C. *Murder, Manners, and Mystery: Reflections on Faith in Contemporary Detective Fiction—The John Albert Hall Lectures, 2004*. London: SCM Press, 2007. Collected lectures on the role and representation of religion in detective fiction; provides perspective on Vulliamy's writings.

Nover, Peter, ed. *The Great Good Place? A Collection of Essays on American and British College Mystery Novels*. New York: P. Lang, 1999. Compilation of essays focused on crime fiction set at college campuses or featuring academic characters; helps readers understand Vulliamy's novels.

Shibuk, Charles. "Notes on C. E. Vulliamy." *The Armchair Detective* 3, 5 (April, 1970; April, 1972): 161, 145. Contains information about the writing of Vulliamy.

_____. Review of *Tea at the Abbey*, by C. E. Vulliamy. *The Armchair Detective* 7 (November, 1973): 55. Review by a fan of the author looks at this novel of the clergy.

W

HENRY WADE

Henry Lancelot Aubrey-Fletcher

Born: Leigh, Surrey, England; September 10, 1887

Died: London, England; May 30, 1969

Types of plot: Police procedural; inverted

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Chief Inspector Poole, 1929-1954

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

JOHN POOLE, chief inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard, belongs to the new breed of police officers, college-educated and police academy-trained. Poole rises through the ranks to become the youngest inspector in the Criminal Investigation Department and eventually its chief. Personally charming and politically radical, Poole is clever, competent, and witty.

CONTRIBUTION

Henry Wade, who has been described as a “staunch advocate of the classical detective story in its purest form,” produced a total of twenty-one novels, some of them in the inverted rather than the classic form. Wade is often compared to Freeman Wills Crofts, but his novels have deeper characterizations and their depiction of police procedure is more realistic. Wade’s novels frequently raise questions about the British legal system, and his strongly developed sense of irony, which seasons most of his work, finds its fullest expression in his criticism of the legal procedure. In his exposure of flaws in the legal system Wade anticipated and influenced a number of later writers. Many of Wade’s novels intersperse social commentary with clues, motives, and suspects, but his novels written between 1947 and 1957 take a particularly close look at the changing values in post-World War II England.

BIOGRAPHY

Henry Wade was born Henry Lancelot Aubrey-Fletcher on September 10, 1887, in Leigh, Surrey, England, the eldest son of Sir Lancelot Aubrey-Fletcher and Emily Harriett Wade Aubrey-Fletcher. (“Henry Wade” was a pen name that he adopted in 1926.) Educated at Eton College and New College, University of Oxford, Wade joined the Grenadier Guards in 1908, serving in the First Battalion until his retirement in 1920. He returned to active duty during World War II (1940-1945). Wade was wounded twice during World War I and was awarded both the Distinguished Service Order and the French Croix de Guerre.

In 1911, Wade was married to Mary Augusta Chilton. They had four sons and one daughter. Mary Augusta died in 1963; in 1965, Wade was married to Nancy Cecil Reynolds.

After retiring from the Grenadier Guards, Wade held a number of positions in Buckinghamshire, including justice of the peace, alderman, and high sheriff. He served as lord lieutenant of Buckinghamshire (the queen’s representative in the county) from 1954 until 1961 and was a lieutenant in the Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms (1956-1957). Wade succeeded to the baronetcy after his father’s death in 1937.

Wade began his career as a writer in 1926 with the publication of *The Verdict of You All*. His 1929 novel, *The Duke of York’s Steps*, introduced Detective Inspector Poole. During a writing career that stretched from 1926 until 1957, Wade produced a total of twenty-one novels (seven featuring Poole) and two collections of short stories, plus one nonfictional work, *A History of the Foot Guards to 1856* (published in 1927 under his own name). Wade’s novels and short stories reflect his extensive experience with police business, as well as his

dissatisfaction with the British legal system and its traditions. Wade's work as a writer was interrupted by World War II, but he resumed writing in 1947 and produced seven novels following the war. He died on May 30, 1969.

ANALYSIS

The Verdict of You All, Henry Wade's first novel, and *The Missing Partners* (1928), his second, have been compared to novels written by Freeman Wills Crofts. Crofts, who is notable for having created one of literature's least colorful detectives, the plodding Inspector French, has been called "the master of timetables and alibis" because of his frequent use of railway timetables—provided as frontispieces in his novels—and seemingly unbreakable alibis that could be broken by clues hidden in the timetables. Wade's emulation of Crofts is most evident in his second novel, *The Missing Partners*, but both this novel and *The Verdict of You All* involve railways and clues in timetables.

Although comparisons between Wade and Crofts are inevitable, there are discernible differences, even in Wade's earliest novels. For one thing, Wade's novels have an authentic ring that is absent from the novels written by Crofts. Unlike Crofts, who knew little about police procedure, Wade could call on his own experiences as high sheriff and justice of the peace for Buckinghamshire when describing police procedure. This expertise gives an authenticity to his accounts of police work that sets him apart, even in his earliest novels. Another thing that sets Wade apart not only from Crofts but also from other writers of detective novels is the manner in which he uses irony in his criticism of the British legal system. Both *The Verdict of You All*, with its trial scene that ends in a questionable verdict, and *The Missing Partners*, in which justice nearly miscarries, raise questions about the entire legal system.

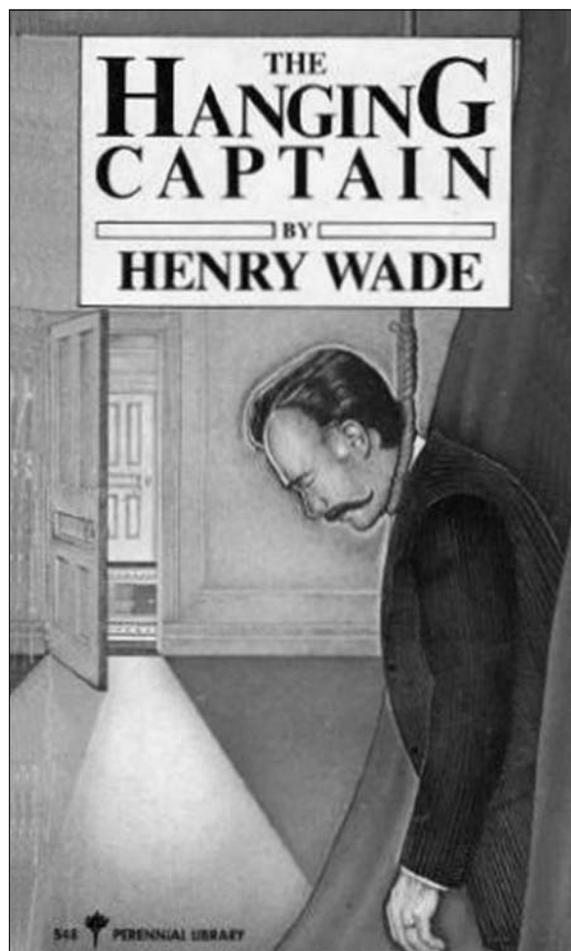
THE DUKE OF YORK'S STEPS

Although Wade's subsequent works reveal his continued indebtedness to Crofts (as well as to other writers in the classic tradition), Wade began to find his own voice in his third novel, *The Duke of York's Steps*. Considered by many to be Wade's best, this novel in-

troduces readers to Inspector John Poole, who would become Wade's most frequently used character.

THE HANGING CAPTAIN

Wade followed *The Duke of York's Steps* with *The Dying Alderman* (1930) and *No Friendly Drop* (1931). *The Hanging Captain* (1932) is the most important novel of this period, not only because it marks the end of what some have called Wade's apprentice period but also because it marks the full flowering of his sense of irony. In *The Hanging Captain* Wade is able to give clear expression to the ironic criticism of the legal system that was latent in his earliest novels. Such criticism became a hallmark of Wade's writing, and it anticipated and influenced the work of writers such as Richard Hull, Cyril Hare, Henry Cecil, Raymond Postgate, Michael Underwood, and Roderic Jeffries.



The Hanging Captain deals with the problem of whether a certain captain has died by his own hand or whether he has been murdered. Once it has been determined that the captain has, in fact, been murdered, Superintendent Dawle, a thorough police officer, suggests to his chief constable, Major Threngood, that the high sheriff should be questioned as a suspect. Like many of the police officials in Wade's novels, Threngood is chief constable purely by virtue of his military rank. Scandalized by Dawle's suggestion, and fearing the uproar that would ensue if it became known that the high sheriff was a suspect, Threngood forbids the questioning. Superintendent Dawle defers to the constable but makes it clear that, in the interest of justice, the sheriff should be questioned. Wade concludes the conversation between Threngood and Dawle with an ironic comment that suggests trenchant questions regarding his country's legal system:

The significant note in the Superintendent's voice brought home to Threngood the responsibility of his position. For the first time since his appointment he realized that his office was something more than an interesting, well-paid job. It might carry with it the difference between life and death, justice and injustice; it was a terrible responsibility.

Wade's censure of certain aspects of the British practice of law and justice is also implicit in the manner in which he brings the *The Hanging Captain* to its conclusion. When it becomes obvious that the questioning of the high sheriff cannot be avoided, Threngood decides to steer clear of responsibility for any scandal: He calls in Scotland Yard. In response, the Yard sends one of its most brilliant young men, Detective Inspector Lott. Lott, who has a low opinion of the rural constabulary, brings to the investigation the best of modern police methods. The reader expects that this representative of all that is modern will solve the case, but in the end it is the careful, rather undramatic work of the uninspired, old-fashioned Superintendent Dawle that brings the killer to justice.

This type of reversal is one of the characteristics of Wade's best novels. In *Mist on the Saltings* (1933), for example, another chief constable with a military title, Major Fennel, describes the sound theorizing of Inspec-

tor Lamming as "special pleading" (that is, contrived). Lamming, as it turns out, is right. Similarly, in *A Dying Fall* (1955), the chief constable, Colonel Netterly, responds condescendingly to Detective-Superintendent Hant's theory, based on solid police work, that Charles Rathlyn has murdered his wife. The irony of this rebuff is revealed in the last sentence of the novel—a sentence that, coming as it does at the end of Wade's next-to-last novel, may express both Wade's frustration with the British legal system and his own answer to the questions raised in his first two books.

After the success of *The Hanging Captain*, Wade turned from straight detective stories to experimentation with other genres. Some critics have commented that Wade liked to challenge himself with new difficulties as he planned each new work. Wade's experimentation led to two collections of short stories: *Policeman's Lot: Stories of Detection* (1933) and *Here Comes the Copper* (1938). It also led him to attempt a project that may have been too great a challenge.

MIST ON THE SALTINGS

Mist on the Saltings, which followed his first collection of short stories, is the result of Wade's attempt to write a novel that would include elements of crime and detection yet would focus on the development of character. The attempt is something of a failure, primarily because Wade lacked the ability to sustain the suspense and develop the novel's numerous sub-themes at the same time. Each time he deals with the novel's marital triangle, for example, suspense evaporates and the pace of the novel slows. The pace is also slowed by Wade's style, which is sometimes forced, stilted, and artificial.

A DYING FALL

This problem with an unwieldy style plagued Wade throughout his career. *A Dying Fall*, for example, is marred by the kind of labored prose illustrated by the following passage:

In the meantime Charles and Anne Rathlyn were in that seventh heaven that is reserved for lovers from whose path insuperable obstacles have suddenly melted away. . . . Further than that, the nebulous plans that they had discussed on that afternoon when they had met in the woods and realised their mutual love had now developed into firm intention.

Wade's best novels are those in which he was able to practice an economy of narration, avoiding the long descriptions that gave him so much trouble. *Mist on the Saltings* fails to achieve that economy and must therefore be judged as one of Wade's least successful works.

CONSTABLE, GUARD THYSELF!

After *Mist on the Saltings*, Wade returned to the straight detective story with *Constable, Guard Thyself!* (1934). This novel, which features Inspector Poole, is a model of the classic detective story. Beginning with the standard accessory, a frontispiece showing the scene of the crime, it moves forward through a jumble of clues and possible motives to a conclusion in the detective-novel tradition. This is not to suggest, however, that the novel is merely a mechanical exercise in detective-story writing. Characteristically, Wade gives *Constable, Guard Thyself!* an added dimension by paying careful attention to characterization and by seasoning his narrative with social commentary.

HEIR PRESUMPTIVE

Perhaps to give himself another challenge, Wade made a dramatic departure from the classic tradition by following *Constable, Guard Thyself!* with an inverted story, *Heir Presumptive* (1935). Inversion is a difficult technique, but Wade masters it in this story of extermination for inheritance. Wade, whose strongly developed sense of irony has been noted, gives the story a wry twist at the end, but one of the outstanding features of *Heir Presumptive* is the way in which he is able to convey the irony involved in the murderous scheming of the heir. This is one of Wade's best novels, even if there is some murkiness surrounding the explanation of the difference between "tail male" and "general entail," two legal terms that are important to the plot.

POSTWAR NOVELS

Wade's writing career was interrupted when he returned to military service at the beginning of World War II. When he resumed writing, it was to revise his last prewar novel, *Lonely Magdalen* (1940), for a 1946 edition. His first postwar novel, *New Graves at Great Norne* (1947), was followed by six more, concluding with *The Litmore Snatch* (1957). Only two novels of this period, *Too Soon to Die* (1953) and *A Dying Fall*, rank with the best of Wade's prewar writing. *New*

Graves at Great Norne is bloodier than most of Wade's novels, and *Diplomat's Folly* (1951), which features no detection, is reminiscent of Crofts. Social commentary, which is always present in Wade's early novels, plays an even greater role in the postwar novels. *A Dying Fall*, in particular, takes a very close look at the changing values, especially among the "horsey set," in postwar England. Many critics believe that Wade's treatment of these changing values may be the best of that of any writer in the field.

Wade retired from writing after publishing his somewhat disappointing last novel, *The Litmore Snatch*, ending a productive career that has earned for him a place among the great writers of detective fiction. Innovative and willing to attempt a variety of genres, Wade produced a body of work distinguished by its plotting, its characterization, its situations, its social commentary, its questioning of the British legal system, and—most of all—its subtle undertones of irony. It is not surprising that *The Times* (London) called Henry Wade "the greatest English writer of detective fiction."

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

CHIEF INSPECTOR JOHN POOLE SERIES: *The Duke of York's Steps*, 1929; *No Friendly Drop*, 1931 (revised 1932); *Constable, Guard Thyself!*, 1934; *Bury Him Darkly*, 1936; *Lonely Magdalen*, 1940 (revised 1946); *Too Soon to Die*, 1953; *Gold Was Our Grave*, 1954

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Verdict of You All*, 1926; *The Missing Partners*, 1928; *The Dying Alderman*, 1930; *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *The Hanging Captain*, 1932; *Mist on the Saltings*, 1933; *Heir Presumptive*, 1935; *The High Sheriff*, 1937; *Released for Death*, 1938; *New Graves at Great Norne*, 1947; *Diplomat's Folly*, 1951; *Be Kind to the Killer*, 1952; *A Dying Fall*, 1955; *The Litmore Snatch*, 1957

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Policeman's Lot: Stories of Detection*, 1933; *Here Comes the Copper*, 1938

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *A History of the Foot Guards to 1856*, 1927

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Hausladen, Gary. *Places for Dead Bodies*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. This study of the settings of mystery and detective novels includes extended discussions of the police procedural subgenre and the specific importance of setting within police procedurals; provides background for understanding the works of Wade.

Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. New

York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Very useful overview of the history and parameters of the crime-fiction genre; helps place Wade's work within that genre.

Shibuk, Charles. "Henry Wade." In *The Mystery Writer's Art*, edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970. Essay devoted to Wade's particular craft, his distinctive style, and their consequences for detective fiction.

Vicarel, Jo Ann. *A Reader's Guide to the Police Procedural*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1995. Geared to the mainstream reader, this study introduces and analyzes the police procedural form, which Wade uses in his novels.

MARTYN WAITES

Born: Newcastle upon Tyne, England; 1963
Types of plot: Hard-boiled; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES
 Stephen Larkin, 1997-
 Joe Donovan, 2006-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS
 STEPHEN LARKIN is a dispirited, world-weary journalist working for a sleazy London tabloid. Given to bouts of self-pity because of his own actions, which cost him his wife and son, he returns at the orders of his boss to his hometown, Newcastle, to report on a series of crimes and their consequences—a mob-style murder and subsequent trial, a pedophilia ring, and child prostitution. He reenters the human race and is redeemed through his work, which often involves physical danger. Though he has different qualities, traits, and motivations, Larkin, who has a strong sense of right and wrong, may be seen as a precursor to investigator Joe Donovan.

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR HENRY MOIR of Newcastle and formerly of Edinburgh, Scotland, like Larkin, has

his own demons, the result of witnessing too much violence and because of a personal loss: His sixteen-year-old daughter, Karen, ran away from home and is lost in the gritty underworld of London.

JOE DONOVAN is a former hotshot investigative reporter for the London *Herald*. Devastated by the disappearance of his six-year-old son, David, during a birthday shopping spree two years earlier, Joe quit his job to search for his boy. Divorced from his wife, Annie, and neglectful of his surviving daughter Abigail, who resents his obsession with her brother, Joe has turned to alcohol to ease the pain of his loss and has suicidal tendencies—until he is revived through the investigative work that is his strength. He is in his thirties, with graying hair and haggard features, and usually dresses casually, in jeans and old T-shirts. He lives alone in a rural area in the north of England in an old house, where he devotes a room to photographs of and clippings relating to his missing son.

CONTRIBUTION
 Martyn Waites has become a leading figure in British neo-noir since the publication of his first novel, *Mary's Prayer*, in 1997. This subgenre consists of ex-

tremely dark, ultraviolent crime fiction influenced by such American writers as James Ellroy, Andrew Vachss, Elmore Leonard, and Walter Mosley; however, the British version of this subgenre is not without faint rays of hope.

Waites has staked out the city of his birth, Newcastle, as his fictional territory. Newcastle, in the northeast of the country in the enclave of Tyne and Wear County, is neither quite English nor quite Scottish and has both a contemporary face and a hidden past. Once a heavy-industrial area, it has become a modern service and call center with many new buildings, yet it retains a shadowy, seedy quayside district full of despair, desolation, and abandoned warehouses. Waites populates that milieu with a cast of colorful characters—criminal perpetrators, victims, crime fighters, and witnesses—whose qualities are neither all good nor all bad. He deals with disturbing social issues in a uniformly blunt and unflinching manner, and his depictions of horrific acts are not for the faint of heart.

Initially a writer with a cult status among cognoscenti, Waites has slowly achieved greater recognition for his work. Reviews of his novels have been overwhelmingly favorable. His *Born Under Punches* (2003) was listed among *January Magazine's* best crime novels of the year. For his body of work, Waites was nominated for the Crime Writers' Association's Dagger in the Library Award. His first entry in the Joe Donovan series, *The Mercy Seat* (2006), was selected as the initial title released by the publisher Pegasus and was nominated for the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger Award.

BIOGRAPHY

Martyn Waites was born in 1963 in Newcastle upon Tyne, England, where he was raised. He grew up reading comic books, particularly enjoying the exploits of Batman, and developed a fondness for crime novels, especially the work of Graham Greene. Following high school, he worked at a variety of occupations—barman, market trader, leather-coat salesman, stand-up comedian, and stagehand at the Playhouse. During his late teens and early twenties, Waites played bass, sang, and wrote songs in several obscure local bands, including Dennis, Pin Up, Tractors Are Go, and the Fire Escape. In the early 1980's, on behalf of

the National Association for Charitable Recycling Organizations (NACRO), he taught drama to teenagers who had broken the law. After two years of service with NACRO at Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution, Waites left for London to study acting. He later served as writer-in-residence at Her Majesty's Prison in Chelmsford.

As an actor, Waites landed a few small roles in such television series as *Spender* (1991-1993), *The New Adventures of Robin Hood* (1997-1998), *Badger* (1999), and *Close and True* (2000). He began writing in the early 1990's and contributed short stories and articles to both print and online publications, including *Bizarre*, *The Big Issue*, and *The Bookseller*. His fiction has appeared in such anthologies as *The Adventure of the Missing Detective: Nineteen of the Year's Finest Mystery and Crime Stories* (2005) and *London Noir* (2006). Waites's first novel, *Mary's Prayer*, a dark-edged thriller involving mobs and featuring tabloid reporter Stephen Larkin, appeared in 1997. Two additional entries in the Larkin series, *Little Triggers* (1998) and *Candleland* (2000), quickly followed.

In 2003, Waites released the first of a pair of dark thriller novels dealing with Britain's "secret history," *Born Under Punches*, a literary crime thriller that shows Stephen Larkin—just one of several central characters—as a young, idealistic journalist investigating an actual historical event, the long, drawn-out miners' strike of 1984. The second, *The White Room* (2004), named one of *The Guardian's* books of the year, also deals with history, focusing on 1960's Newcastle child-killer Mary Bell.

Waites began a new gritty, noir-flavored series, built around psychologically damaged investigative reporter Joe Donovan, in 2006 with the publication of the critically acclaimed *The Mercy Seat*, which was nominated for several major awards. He followed up with *Bone Machine* (2007).

Though writing is now the primary emphasis of Waites's career, drama and acting still consume part of his life. He participated in the 2003 National Film Theater Events: Crime Scene with workshops on "Rogues and Vagabonds" and "Snobbery, Assault, and Battery." He has also given dramatic readings for audio versions of other authors' works. Waites has overseen arts-based

workshops for socially excluded teenagers and adults in South London and in Essex, where he was a fellow at the University of Essex (2006-2007).

ANALYSIS

As Martyn Waites is a product of culturally distinct Newcastle, England, it is not surprising that he writes with a strong sense of place. In all of his books, Newcastle assumes a brooding presence that affects each of the key elements of his fictional work: plot, characterization, dialogue, atmosphere, pace, theme, language, and style.

Waites's plots, which verge on melodrama in their striking contrasts between the heights of good and the depths of evil, typically revolve around the examination of social issues—government and police corruption, unemployment, drugs, the huge chasm between the wealthy and the poor, or the exploitation of mine workers—and their effects on a select group of individuals. Waites does not preach; rather, he demonstrates in shudder-inducing closeups and cringe-worthy vividness how the corrosive influence of poverty breeds crimes and how violence begets violence. Pacing is frequently breathtakingly fast, with disturbing but memorable images piled one on another.

Characterization, reinforced by dialogue that is blunt, brutal, and profane, is a particular Waites strength, thanks in part to his background in acting, a profession in which one must slip into someone else's skin to be believable. His many years of work with both teenage and adult offenders has undoubtedly also given him considerable insight into the workings of criminal minds. Waites is adept at drawing subtly shaded characters across a wide range of behavior. Heroes are severely flawed, often as the result of a traumatic past event, but are redeemed through their all-consuming drive toward a specific goal: the solution of a problem. Villains, no matter how perverted, violent, or nasty, have some small quality that makes them at least slightly sympathetic. It is through the confrontation of these damaged and unpredictable characters that Waites creates tension, conflict, and suspense.

Stylistically, Waites is a study in contrasts. Playing off his pithy, pungent dialogue are descriptive passages that, while lyrical, are nonetheless lean and

stark, with no wasted words. Stories are told in the third person, past tense, often with shifting viewpoints from chapter to chapter and a dearth of gimmicks or literary pyrotechnics to clutter the narrative.

Paying homage to his lifelong love of music and to his brief career as a performing musician, Waites often includes comments on the current pop music scene. The titles of all his fictional works are taken from songs: "Mary's Prayer," for example, was composed by the 1980's Scottish band Danny Wilson; "Little Triggers" is from a Waites favorite, Elvis Costello; "Candleland" is courtesy of Ian MacCulloch; "Born Under Punches" comes from the Talking Heads album *Remain in Light* (1980); and "The White Room" is a 1960's hit by Cream.

BORN UNDER PUNCHES

Born Under Punches describes a real-life 1984 miners' strike in the northeast of Great Britain and the nearly two decades that had passed by the book's publication in 2003. The book focuses on a group of inter-related characters, each somehow connected to the strike: Tony Woodhouse, a professional soccer player with a shady past; thuglike debt collector Tommy Jobson; miner Mick Hutton, who as the strike lengthens grows ever more desperate in his attempts to support his family; young journalist Stephen Larkin, looking to make a name for himself in the news world with an exposé of the conditions that caused the strike; and Stephen's sister, Louise, who is infatuated with Tony. Moving back and forth between 1984 and the present, *Born Under Punches* examines not only the immediate effects of a debilitating work stoppage but also the long-lasting repercussions on those involved.

THE MERCY SEAT

The first in a series of novels featuring Joe Donovan, former investigative reporter for the London *Herald*, *The Mercy Seat* is set in modern Newcastle upon Tyne, Waites's birthplace. The city plays an important role in the novel, serving as both a backdrop for much of the action and as a symbol of the deterioration of modern society. After Joe's six-year-old son, David, disappeared from a department store two years earlier, the reporter began an obsessive search that cost him his job and marriage and left him in despair. He is pulled out of his depression through the visit of former

colleague Maria Bennett, the attractive young editor of the *Herald*, and the newspaper's slimy lawyer, Francis Sharkey. Maria enlists Joe's aid to help find reporter Gary Myers, who has gone missing in the course of investigating a story. If Joe assists, all the newspaper's resources will be placed at his disposal in determining what happened to his son.

Joe accepts the deal and is plunged into a convoluted and deadly game of predator and prey. Gary was working with a corporate scientist, Colin Huntley, who is also missing. A key piece of information, the missing reporter's computer mini-disc, which contains incriminating evidence, is likewise gone, stolen by a slippery fourteen-year-old half-African London street hustler and prostitute, Jamal Jenkins. Jamal, hoping to sell his prize, flees with the disc to Newcastle, pursued by a professional killer called Hammer, a large, muscular man with a shaved head and a tooth into which a sapphire has been set, who can pound nails using just his fist. Hammer is in the employ of Alan Keenyside, a corrupt police officer with a thriving drug trade who perpetrated the incident that propels the story: the brutalization of a band of Travelers (a nomadic group) in exchange for a supposed secret scientific formula that Keenyside hopes to sell to a foreign power. Exposure of Keenyside's illegal activities would cost him his career and all his ill-gained possessions, and the crooked police officer will do anything—including kidnap and murder—to prevent that from happening.

In Newcastle, Jamal falls into the clutches of Father Jack, a grossly obese man who pretends to shelter runaway juveniles but is in reality nothing more than a peddler of their young flesh. Father Jack is being observed and photographed by a pair of private investigators, former police officer Peta Knight and her gay Asian partner, Amar Miah, who hope to gather enough evidence to put Father Jack out of business and gain publicity for their failing private eye business. When Donovan turns up, following Jamal's trail in the course of resurrecting his lost investigative skills, the private investigators form an alliance with him: Joe will help them put Father Jack out of business if they will help him corner Jamal long enough to extract the information he holds that will locate the missing reporter and scientist.

Played out against a nightmarish urban wasteland

of derelict cars, abandoned homes, and rat-infested warehouses, *The Mercy Seat* is a brutal, violent, noir-flavored thriller. Narration, pared to the bone, is crisp, fragmented, and harsh. Dialogue is rough and profane but realistic, spoken by characters who could exist. The story is disturbing, a glimpse of horrific and distasteful things hidden among decay, but necessary. Only through exposure to the full light of day, Waites seems to be saying, does humankind have the chance to end all the nastiness that lurks in the darkness.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

STEPHEN LARKIN SERIES: *Mary's Prayer*, 1997; *Little Triggers*, 1998; *Candleland*, 2000

JOE DONOVAN SERIES: *The Mercy Seat*, 2006; *Bone Machine*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Born Under Punches*, 2003; *The White Room*, 2004

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Douglass, Dave. "Miners Then and Now." Review of *Born Under Punches*, by Martyn Waites. *The Weekly Worker* 487 (July 3, 2003). A mostly favorable review, which praises the author's skill in creating an atmosphere of menace but finds fault with the inconsistency in tone, particularly in sections dealing with the past, which lack the immediacy of those dealing with the present.

Penzler, Otto. "The Mean Streets of Anytown." *The New York Sun*, April 19, 2006. An overview of recent hard-boiled and noir fiction, with particular attention paid to Waites's *The Mercy Seat*.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *The Mercy Seat*, by Martyn Waites. 253, no. 8 (February 20, 2006): 135. This is a starred review of *The Mercy Seat*, which is termed a "beautifully written and constructed thriller" and deemed an outstanding accomplishment, particularly for the first entry in a new series.

Stasio, Marilyn. "Crime." Review of *Candleland*, by Martyn Waites. *The New York Times Book Review*, June 11, 2000, p. 32. In this mostly favorable review, Stasio takes the author to task for the unrelenting violence but praises the novel for its characterizations, dialogue, and the consistency of its dark tone.

Stone, Andrew. "Our Friends in the North." Review of *Born Under Punches*, by Martyn Waites. *Socialist Review*, April 2003. A mostly positive review, crediting the work for its realism, particularly in scenes in which strikers combat the police, but faulting it

for its frequent references to contemporary music and for Waites's gratuitous use of sex as a catch-all metaphor for everything from drug addiction to exploitation.

Williams, Wilda W. "Dark Is the New Cozy: Crime in Translation, the Dominance of Noir, and Conjuring the Paranormal." *Library Journal* 131, no. 6 (April 1, 2006): 36-39. A broad discussion of new entries in the noir genre from around the world, which highlights Waites's *The Mercy Seat*, predicts a bright future for the author, and includes a brief question-and-answer session.

ANN WALDRON

Born: Birmingham, Alabama; December 14, 1924

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

McLeod Dulaney, 2003-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MCLEOD DULANEY is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who is invited to teach a course once a year at Princeton University. Trained as an investigative reporter, she feels compelled to solve mysterious crimes that baffle the police and disrupt the placid life on the Princeton campus.

LIEUTENANT NICK PERRY is a Princeton detective who is called on to investigate cases in which Dulaney becomes involved. Although he objects to her meddling in crime scenes, he also relies on her inquisitive nature and her ability to elicit testimony from witnesses and suspects.

GEORGE BRIDGES, the assistant to the president of Princeton University, provides Dulaney with inside information concerning the crimes that occur on or near campus. Initially involved with Dulaney romantically, he later becomes a friend and sounding board for her speculations about the guilt and innocence of criminal suspects.

CONTRIBUTION

Ann Waldron admits to being inspired by the detective novels of Agatha Christie and Rex Stout. Like Christie's amateur detective Miss Marple, Waldron's McLeod Dulaney has an advantage over professional detectives and police officers in that she can simply follow her intuitions and curiosity. The crimes committed in her community interest her precisely because they touch on her relationships with friends and colleagues. Dulaney differs from Miss Marple in that she is a trained journalist with a tough hide who does not mind being rebuffed by those she wants to interview. Like Stout's Nero Wolfe, Dulaney works best in conversation with others, especially George Bridges, assistant to the president of Princeton, and Lieutenant Nick Perry, both of whom challenge her surmises and also build on her understanding of the cases she is determined to solve.

Dulaney may be an amateur sleuth situated in the comfortable—indeed self-congratulatory—ambiance of an Ivy League institution, but her southern take on her surroundings and years of experience at the *Tallahassee Star* make her a highly alert and shrewd observer of the criminal behavior lurking under the genteel veneer of university life. In other words, she does not take her environment for granted.

BIOGRAPHY

Ann Waldron was born on December 14, 1924, in Birmingham, Alabama, to Eric Watson Waldron, a bookkeeper, and Elizabeth Roberts Wood. Waldron's parents and older sister lived three blocks from the Vine Street Presbyterian Church, where they attended services every Sunday and prayer meetings on Wednesdays. Waldron, still a member of the Presbyterian Church, is a lifelong Democrat whose southern roots are reflected in much of her writing.

Waldron's interest in journalism began when she became coeditor of her high school newspaper and then editor of the *Crimson-White*, the student newspaper at the University of Alabama. After graduating from college in 1945, she worked as a reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution*, where she met Martin Waldron, whom she married on October 18, 1947. The couple raised four children while working on newspapers in Florida and Texas.

When Martin Waldron accepted a *New York Times* offer, the couple settled in Princeton, where Ann Waldron concentrated on raising her family and writing children's books. Soon Waldron was attending classes at Princeton University and working for the school's publications. She interviewed professors and reported on life in Princeton, a valuable experience reflected in her rich evocation of the Princeton milieu in her mystery novels.

When Martin Waldron died in 1981, Ann began working full time for the Princeton *Campaign Bulletin*. An understanding boss allowed her to do library research that led to the publication of her first biography, *Close Connections: Caroline Gordon and the Southern Renaissance* (1987). Acclaim for this biography and another of southern newspaper editor Hodding Carter established Waldron's credentials as a researcher and investigator of lives—not unlike her heroine McLeod Dulaney.

Waldron's work on an unauthorized biography of Eudora Welty perhaps sharpened her sense of the reporter/biographer/crime solver who often has to go against accepted opinion and deal with hostility and rebuffs from establishment figures. Despite her established reputation as a writer on southern subjects, Waldron faced considerable opposition from Welty and her

supporters who wished to nurture a certain myth of the writer. Like Dulaney, whose ability to solve crimes is based on both her empathy for others and her innate inquisitiveness, Waldron persevered, investigating the roots of Welty's personality and creativity.

After writing the Welty book, Waldron wanted a change of pace and turned to mystery writing. Although her turn to mystery novels may seem to mark a departure from her other writings, in fact it represents a return to a first love. She grew up reading the novels of Agatha Christie and Rex Stout, and in 1965 she wrote a mystery novel that she could not get published. In 2003, she published the first novel in the McLeod Dulaney series, *The Princeton Murders*. She has continued to produce novels in this series at the pace of one per year.

ANALYSIS

Ann Waldron's career as a journalist and long association with Princeton has helped her create a remarkable mystery series surrounding McLeod Dulaney, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist who teaches at Princeton University. The Dulaney series bears some resemblance to Agatha Christie's Miss Marple series. However, Dulaney is a harder, tougher version of Miss Marple, partly because of her training as a reporter, and the series departs from the conventions of the cozy mystery in that Dulaney's work, in her unabashed but sometimes clumsy quest to learn the truth about crime, is not always superior to that of Lieutenant Nick Perry. Dulaney can be fooled, be seriously misled, and in one case be downright wrong about the perpetrator of a murder. However, even when she does not solve the crime—and she sometimes puts herself in harm's way because she does not realize who the real murderer is—she creates the conditions that make it possible to solve the murder cases. Dulaney's law-enforcement partner, Nick Perry, seems credible not only as a detective but also as a person with whom Waldron is deeply familiar, probably because the author learned a good deal from talking to police officers while she was a reporter and later in life. Waldron's Princeton experience is most visible in her large cast of supporting characters, including a writer-in-residence, a university president, professors from various depart-

ments, members of the press, and the staff (principally women) who keep the departments running smoothly.

Waldron's personal history is apparent in southerner Dulaney's acute observations on the northern climate and mentality. Another element brought into the novels from Waldron's personal life is her obvious relish for good meals. One of her editors suggested that she append to each novel recipes of the dishes in the meals that Dulaney prepares. These are all dishes, tried and true, that Waldron has made herself. In sum, Waldron has created a series of novels that provide both a cultural and a culinary delight while creating precise evocations of characters and locales that harbor unsuspected opportunities for murder.

THE PRINCETON MURDERS

The first novel in the McLeod Dulaney series, *The Princeton Murders*, has Ann Waldron's amateur sleuth/journalist teaching her first writing course as a visiting professor. New to academia, Dulaney finds the array of characters: a radical feminist, a prickly pan-African studies scholar, a Marxist, a queer theorist—just to mention a few of the memorable members of the supporting cast—almost stupefying in their feuding and preening behaviors. When does eccentricity lead to murder? she wonders. There is no shortage of suspects when Professor Archibald Alexander is found dead, and Dulaney (to the consternation of her academic colleagues) resists the notion that his demise is the result of natural causes.

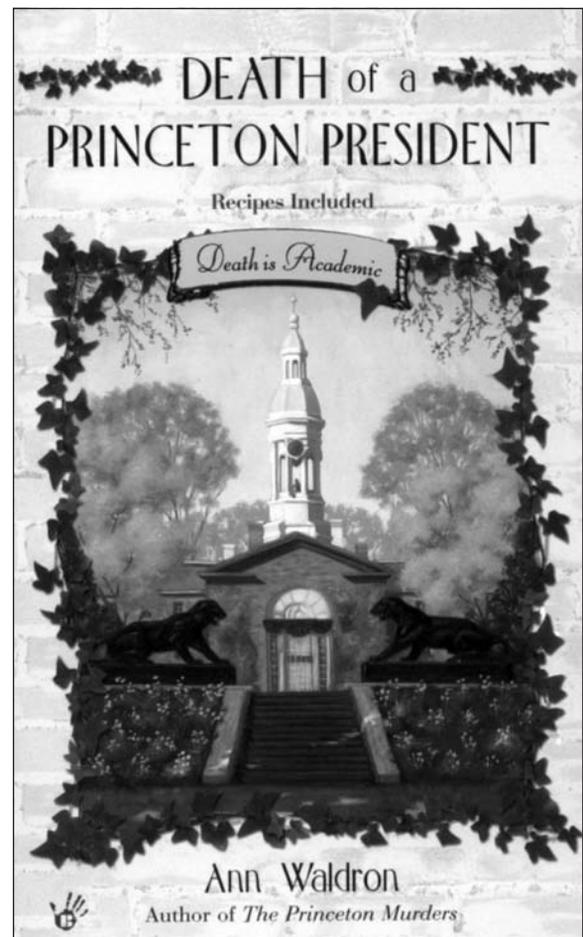
Waldron makes clear at the beginning of this novel that this is not a roman à clef; that is, she has not created characters who are only thinly disguised versions of real people. Instead, she has exploited the Princeton setting itself, the institution's pride in its probity and high standards, to introduce events that challenge the community's belief in its own rectitude. Certainly the world of academic politics is exposed in this novel, but not in a malicious way. Dulaney is bemused with the quirky professors and even develops a certain affection for them. She loves the Princeton milieu, which is palpably evoked in descriptions of restaurants, university buildings, and environs.

In Waldron's mystery series, one murder always begets another, a pattern that is introduced in *The Princeton Murders*.

DEATH OF A PRINCETON PRESIDENT

When the president of Princeton goes missing in *Death of a Princeton President*, no one expects foul play, but leave it to McLeod Dulaney, who finds President Melissa Faircloth dead in a closet in her office. The Princeton provost would prefer to prevent this ghastly turn of events from becoming a huge news story, but Dulaney, a tireless quester after the truth, keeps both the Princeton administration and the police hard at work. As usual, she runs up against Lieutenant Nick Perry, who is conflicted about her efforts. On one hand, he warns her not to interfere with his investigation; on the other, he cannot help but rely on the valuable testimony she is able to elicit from the people she interviews.

Dulaney's life is complicated by a romance with George Bridges, assistant to the president. Although



he admires Dulaney, he also tends to discount her theories about murder and is surprised when her hard work exposes the unseemly side of university life. Indeed, Dulaney puts herself in harm's way by refusing to stop her investigation.

Clarence Brown, a Princeton professor emeritus of classics, observed in the *Trenton Times* that Waldron's evocation of Princeton is one of the great pleasures of the novel even as her believable characters create the sense of intrigue indispensable to a work of mystery fiction. Her deft handling of the plot kept him guessing about the identity of the murderer, spreading "suspicion around in the very best tradition of the whodunit."

UNHOLY DEATH IN PRINCETON

In *Unholy Death in Princeton*, McLeod Dulaney is in Princeton not only to teach a writing course but also to research the life of an abolitionist newspaperman, Elijah P. Lovejoy. While walking along the tow path beside the Delaware and Raritan Canal, she stumbles across a naked corpse in a garment bag. Because she is the one who finds the body, Dulaney becomes a suspect.

The setting for this novel, perhaps the most fascinating of all Waldron's works, is the Princeton Theological Seminary, which Lovejoy attended and where his personal papers are now housed. Waldron recreates the seminary in enticing detail. The personalities of the students and their teachers, the debates over doctrine (how to view the historical Jesus, for example), and the tensions between faith, belief, and scholarship are deftly dramatized.

Waldron, however, does not base her work on actual events or characters, preferring to explore the nexus between individuals and institutions by creating her own characters. The murder victim—in this case a fundamentalist type who angered many of his contemporaries—provides Waldron's detective with a perfect opportunity to explore how issues such as the roles of gays and women in the church might have not only affected merely the life of the institution but also have influenced the motives for murder.

A RARE MURDER IN PRINCETON

In *A Rare Murder in Princeton*, visiting professor McLeod Dulaney is working in the university's rare book collection—a serendipitous result of her meeting

Nathaniel Ledbetter, director of Rare Books and Special Collections.

McLeod is staying with George Bridges, and although their romance is over, they have become fast friends. When Ledbetter comes over for dinner with George and McLeod, he suggests she might be interested in the papers of Henry Van Dyke, a nineteenth century clergyman, novelist, and political figure. Now that she has completed her biography of Lovejoy, she needs a new subject.

Just as McLeod is beginning to work with the 179 boxes of Van Dyke material, however, one of the prime benefactors of Rare Books and Special Collections, Philip Sheridan, is found dead—right in the department. Having met and liked Sheridan, McLeod has trouble understanding why anyone would want to kill him. Even more troubling, the police cannot find a murder weapon or come up with credible suspects.

Lurking in the background is the fact that George Bridges lives in what Ledbetter calls the "murder house." The house used to be owned by longtime Princeton resident Jill Murray, whose murder has never been solved. Although Dulaney does not tie the two murders together, her natural inquisitiveness leads her to explore both the past and present crimes simultaneously.

This time Dulaney makes some rather costly blunders that almost end her life, and yet her very openness—she is far less focused than the professional detective, Nick Perry—ultimately means that she gathers a comprehensive group of suspects and evidence that helps Perry put together a solution to crimes past and present.

THE PRINCETON IMPOSTER

In *The Princeton Imposter*, one of McLeod Dulaney's brightest students, Greg Pierre, is suddenly arrested right before all the students in her class. The stunned visiting professor learns that he is an imposter—a parole breaker whose real name is Bob Billings and who has been convicted of a drug charge in Wyoming.

In spite of much evidence to the contrary and the skepticism of Nick Perry and George Bridges, McLeod sets out to vindicate her student, who tells her he was framed. In surprisingly quick order, she is able to con-

tact one of her former students, who discovers that Greg is indeed telling the truth. Then a student is murdered on campus, and Greg becomes a suspect because the victim was a student from Wyoming who alerted Princeton authorities that Greg was an imposter.

Still believing in her student's innocence, Dulaney forges ahead into the world of chemistry labs and graduate students, the environment in which the murder has been committed. The plot becomes even more complicated when a second student is murdered off campus, and Dulaney begins to suspect that one of the chemistry professors is the culprit.

Believing too strongly in her own surmises, Dulaney almost makes a fatal mistake. In the end, she has to be rescued by a professional. Thus Waldron neatly balances the strengths and weaknesses of the amateur sleuth while paying her respects to the law enforcement personnel she has come to admire while doing her own journalism.

Carl Rollyson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MCLEOD DULANEY SERIES: *The Princeton Murders*, 2003; *Death of a Princeton President*, 2004; *Unholy Death in Princeton*, 2005; *A Rare Murder in Princeton*, 2006; *The Princeton Imposter*, 2007

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The House on Pendleton Block*, 1975; *The Integration of Mary Larkin Thornhill*, 1975; *The Luckie Star*, 1977; *Scaredy Cat*, 1978; *The French Detection*, 1979; *The Bluebury Collection*, 1981; *Claude Monet*, 1991; *Francisco Goya*, 1992

NONFICTION: *Your Florida Government*, 1965

(with Allen Morris); *True or False? Amazing Art Forgeries*, 1981; *Close Connections: Caroline Gordon and the Southern Renaissance*, 1987; *Hodding Carter: The Reconstruction of a Racist*, 1993; *Eudora: A Writer's Life*, 1998

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- Waldron, Ann. Ann Waldron. <http://www.annwaldron.com>. An excellent author's Web site, including an extensive biography, summaries of Waldron's books, a comprehensive interview with the author, and links to other sites.
- _____. "Murder, She Wrote." Interview by Sharon Krengel. *New Brunswick Home News*, March 10, 2004, pp. 6-7. An excellent interview with Waldron, exploring her interest in writing mystery stories, her experience as a journalist and biographer, her work at Princeton University, and how she chooses the settings for her crime novels.
- _____. "Whodunits? Whydoits? Princeton's Ann Waldron Turns, Belatedly, to Mystery Writing." Interview by Clara Pierre Reeves. *The Times of Trenton*, June 5, 2005. An interview focusing on Waldron's decision to write mysteries and set them in Princeton.

EDGAR WALLACE

Born: Greenwich, England; April 1, 1875

Died: Beverly Hills, California; February 10, 1932

Types of plot: Private investigator; police procedural; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Four Just Men, 1905-1928

J. G. Reeder, 1925-1932

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

LEON GONZALEZ, RAYMOND POICCART, GEORGE MANFRED, and MIQUEL THERY constitute the group in the original 1905 work *The Four Just Men*, and three of them reappear in later Four Just Men books. These characters are determined, like the Three Musketeers, to take justice into their own hands.

J. G. REEDER is a more traditional English detective. With his square derby, muttonchop whiskers, tightly furled umbrella, spectacles, large old-fashioned cravat, and square-toed shoes, this elderly gentleman carries a Browning automatic and fears no one, despite a feigned apologetic habit. Claiming that he has a criminal mind and using his power of recollection (and a great collection of newspaper clippings), Reeder has the goods on everyone involved in his specialty—financial-related murder.

CONTRIBUTION

Edgar Wallace's publication of more than 170 books, an impressive list of short stories, comedies, plays, and screenplays—as well as his lifetime career as journalist, correspondent, and editor—marks him as the best-selling English author of his generation and one of the most prolific. Howard Haycraft declared that Wallace's "vast audience gave him an influence, in popularizing the genre, out of all proportion to the actual merit of his writing." He made the thriller popular in book form and on stage and screen, throughout the English-speaking world. Only John Creasey, with his more than five hundred novels, wrote more than Wallace, and perhaps Agatha Christie was the only mystery and detective writer whose novels attracted more readers.

The best of Wallace's detective fiction recounts the cases of Mr. J. G. Reeder, a very British sleuth of valiant courage whose triumphs are won by both chance and deduction. Critics Stefan Benvenuti and Gianni Rizzoni observe that Wallace "concentrated on the extravagant, the exotic, and the freely fantastic, all interpreted in a style derived from the Gothic novel." He steered clear of sex or controversy, but he often challenged the system of justice of his era and pointed to errors in police practices.

BIOGRAPHY

Edgar Wallace was born as Richard Horatio Edgar Wallace on April 1, 1875, in Greenwich, England, the son of Polly Richards and Richard Edgar, unwed members of an acting company. As an illegitimate child, Wallace was placed in the home of George and Millie Freeman in Norway Court, London, where he spent his boyhood as Dick Freeman until he ran away to join the army at the age of eighteen. Like his mother and grandmother, he loved the theater and, without much formal education, learned to read primarily from public library books. He soon was writing verses of his own.

Wallace joined the Royal West Kent Regiment as an enlisted private; in July, 1896, he sailed on a troopship to South Africa. After six years of military service as a hospital orderly, he bought his own discharge and became a celebrated war correspondent in the Boer Wars. Wallace was named to the staff of the London *Daily Mail* and covered the end of the war in South Africa. He married a minister's daughter, Ivy Caldecott, in April, 1901, in Cape Town and at the end of the war returned to make his home in England. The couple had three children before they were divorced in 1919. Soon after, Wallace married his secretary of five years, Violet "Jim" King; in 1923, they had a daughter, Penelope.

Plagued by debts left unpaid in South Africa and new bills accumulating in London, Wallace began writing plays and short stories while serving as correspondent or editor for various newspapers. His lifelong love of gambling at horse racing led him to write

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Edgar Wallace. (AP/Wide World Photos)

and edit several racing sheets, but his losses at the tracks continually added to his debts. Blessed with an indomitable sense of optimism and self-confidence, he drove himself as a writer and established his name as an author. In 1905, Wallace wrote and published his first great novel, *The Four Just Men*. After a series of lawsuits forced the *Daily Mail* to drop him as a reporter, he was able to draw on his experience in the Boer Wars and his assignments in the Belgian Congo, Canada, Morocco, Spain, and London slums, which provided rich material for short stories and novels.

On the advice of Isabel Thorne, fiction editor for Shurey's Publications, Wallace began a series for the *Weekly Tale-Teller* called "Sanders of the River," based on his experiences in the Congo. He was editor of *Town Topics*, a sports weekly, when World War I broke out in 1914. From the second day of the war until the Armistice, for twelve guineas a week, he wrote six daily articles for the *Birmingham Post*, summarizing the war news, which were published in nine volumes under the title *The War of the Nations: A History*

of the Great European Conflict (1914-1919). Using dictation, he increased his writing speed, producing a series of paperback war novels. He also wrote his first motion-picture script, on the life of Edith Cavell, the English nurse who, in 1915, was executed in German-occupied Belgium for aiding the escape of Allied soldiers.

The last ten years of Wallace's life were the most rewarding. Success as a playwright came with the 1926 production of *The Ringer* in London. Numerous plays were produced, many more novels were published, and he continued to edit a Sunday newspaper and write a daily racing column. In 1931, he sailed to the United States to write for film studios in California; there, he collaborated with other writers on a horror film that later became *King Kong* (1933). Suddenly taken ill, he died on February 10, 1932, at the age of fifty-six.

ANALYSIS

Edgar Wallace carved a permanent niche in the early twentieth century development of the mystery and detective novel. His books featured heroes and villains who were accessible to the reading public of his generation. Wallace patriotically upheld the British flag in his own life and in the fictional lives of his detectives. In his novels and stories, those who commit murder die for their crimes.

THE FOUR JUST MEN

The protagonists of *The Four Just Men* (and others in that series) go above the law when justice is not properly meted out by the courts or when the criminal escapes unpunished. These just men are heroes who redress wrongs and often succeed after the authorities have failed. When Wallace capitalized on this theme, his characters were do-gooders of a romantic cut: Right and wrong were clearly distinguished in these works, the heroes of which persevered until good triumphed over evil.

Within the English-speaking world of the 1920's, Wallace became a widely read author; even in postwar Germany, he was hailed for his enormous popularity. Most scholars of detective fiction agree that he was instrumental in popularizing the detective story and the thriller. Libraries had to stock dozens of copies of each

of his best works for decades. Somehow, Wallace was closely in tune with his times and his readers, as Margaret Lane makes clear in her biography of the writer:

“Edgar Wallace,” wrote Arnold Bennett in 1928, “has a very grave defect, and I will not hide it. He is content with society as it is. He parades no subversive opinions. He is ‘correct.’” This was a shrewd observation and was never more plainly demonstrated than by Edgar’s newspaper work during the war. It was not that he feared to cross swords with public opinion; he always, most fully and sincerely, shared it.

Wallace shifted from newspaper writing to writing short stories, novels, and plays after his war experiences in South Africa. His natural ability to describe graphically events for readers of daily papers led to longer feature articles that reflected popular opinion. Thrilled with the sight of his own words in print, driven by debt, and born with a sense of ambition and self-confidence, Wallace struggled to find his literary identity. Overly eager to cash in on his first great mystery thriller, *The Four Just Men*, he published and advertised it himself, offering a reward for the proper solution (which consumed all the income from the novel’s successful sales). By the time *The Four Just Men* appeared, Wallace had developed the technique that would become the hallmark of much of his mystery and detective fiction. His editor had honed his short stories into very salable copy, and his characters had become real people in the minds of British readers. His biographer Margaret Lane summarizes his maturity in style:

He realised, too, that these stories were the best work he had ever done, and that at last he was mastering the difficult technique of the short story. He evolved a favourite pattern and fitted the adventures of his characters to the neat design. He would outline a chain of incidents to a certain point, break off, and begin an apparently independent story; then another, and another; at the crucial point the several threads would meet and become one, and the tale would end swiftly, tied in a neat knot of either comedy or drama.

In 1910, while Wallace wrote and edited racing sheets, he observed legal and illegal activities by the best and the worst characters of the racetrack crowd, activities

that eventually emerged in his mystery fiction. *Grey Timothy* (1913), a crime novel about racing, paralleled two of his mystery books, *The Fourth Plague* (1913) and *The River of Stars* (1913). His more famous *Captain Tatham of Tatham Island* (1909; revised as *The Island of Galloping Gold*, 1916; also known as *Eve’s Island*) also had a racing theme.

Wallace scoffed at critics who declared that his characters were paper-thin; others from more literary and academic circles denounced him for not writing more carefully, with greater depth to his plots and characters. In spite of these criticisms, before World War I Wallace had found his place as a mystery writer: “That is where I feel at home; I like actions, murders, abductions, dark passages and secret trapdoors and the dull, slimy waters of the moat, pallid in the moonlight.”

ON THE SPOT

Many editors and readers believed that Wallace had close ties with the criminal world and that his characters were taken from real life, but according to his daughter-in-law that was not so. Perhaps Al Capone of Chicago (whose home Wallace visited in 1929) came the closest to his vision of the supercriminal. He promptly wrote one of his best plays, *On the Spot* (pr. 1930), about the American gangster. Yet in *People: A Short Autobiography* (1926), Wallace devotes a chapter to his knowledge of criminals and the reasons for their lawbreaking. He declared:

To understand the criminal you must know him and have or affect a sympathy with him in his delinquencies. You have to reach a stage of confidence when he is not showing off or lying to impress you. In fact, it is necessary that he should believe you to be criminally minded.

Whether it was Detective Surefoot Smith, Educated Evans, Carl Rennett, Timothy Jordan, Superintendent Bliss, Inspector Bradley, or Mr. Reeder, Wallace spun his yarns with equal knowledge about the skills, habits, and frailties of both murderers and their detectors.

Various efforts to classify Wallace’s works of mystery and detective fiction have failed, but certain series and types of plot do emerge. The *Four Just Men* series was published between 1905 and 1928. There are the

police novels—including his famous *The Ringer* (1926), *The Terror* (1929), and *The Clue of the Silver Key* (1930)—and the thrillers, such as *The Green Archer* (1923), *The India-Rubber Men* (1929), and the classic *The Man from Morocco* (1926; also known as *The Black*). The J. G. Reeder series, begun in 1925 with *The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder* (also known as *The Murder Book of J. G. Reeder*), was brought to its height with the popular *Red Aces* (1929). Yet many of Wallace's detective stories were short stories that overlapped such categories or were not collected until after his death.

Many of Wallace's works reflect his generation's reluctance to accept the authority of "science." Although other authors after 1910 were incorporating scientific equipment such as lie detectors into their detective works, his London crime fighters used old-fashioned wits instead of newfangled widgets. Although many authors turned to more modern, psychological solutions for murder mysteries, Wallace believed that his readers would be lost in such heavy character analysis; he did not let such new devices spoil the fun. Mr. Reeder relies on his own phenomenal memory (buttressed by musty scrapbooks of murder cases), his incriminating evidence often coming from unsuspecting sources. When he astonishes his superiors of Scotland Yard, his conclusions are based on information found outside the criminal labs. Wallace's haste to write his stories led him to depend on his own fertile mind; seldom did he leave his study to search for more documentary detail.

His readers loved his fantastic and scary secret passages, hiding places, trapdoors, and mechanical death-dealing devices. (He let his imagination roam like that of a science-fiction writer.) The setting for many of his novels was London, which provided a wide variety of suburbs, railroads, and steamship docks through which the underworld characters prowled and detectives searched. Although his work is sometimes marred by sloppy writing, the fast pace of Wallace's stories thrilled his readers to their sudden conclusions—the culprit revealed, arrested, or killed all within the last few pages.

Paul F. Erwin

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FOUR JUST MEN SERIES: *The Four Just Men*, 1905 (revised 1906, 1908); *The Council of Justice*, 1908; *The Just Men of Cordova*, 1917; *Jack o' Judgment*, 1920; *The Law of the Four Just Men*, 1921 (also known as *Again the Three Just Men*); *The Three Just Men*, 1925; *Again the Three Just Men*, 1928 (also known as *The Law of the Three Just Men* and *Again the Three*)

J. G. REEDER SERIES: *The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder*, 1925 (also known as *The Murder Book of J. G. Reeder*); *Terror Keep*, 1927; *Red Aces*, 1929; *Mr. Reeder Returns*, 1932 (also known as *The Guv'nor; and Other Stories*)

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1908-1920 • *Angel Esquire*, 1908; *Captain Tatham of Tatham Island*, 1909 (revised as *The Island of Galloping Gold*, 1916; also known as *Eve's Island*); *The Nine Bears*, 1910 (also known as *The Other Man*, *Silinski*, *Master Criminal*, and *The Cheaters*); *Grey Timothy*, 1913 (also known as *Pallard the Punter*); *The Fourth Plague*, 1913; *The River of Stars*, 1913; *The Man Who Bought London*, 1915; *The Melody of Death*, 1915; *The Clue of the Twisted Candle*, 1916; *The Debt Discharged*, 1916; *The Tomb of Ts'in*, 1916; *Kate Plus Ten*, 1917; *The Secret House*, 1917; *Down Under Donovan*, 1918; *The Man Who Knew*, 1918; *The Green Rust*, 1919; *The Daffodil Mystery*, 1920

1921-1925 • *The Book of All Power*, 1921; *Captains of Souls*, 1922; *Mr. Justice Maxwell*, 1922; *The Angel of Terror*, 1922 (also known as *The Destroying Angel*); *The Crimson Circle*, 1922; *The Flying Fifty-five*, 1922; *The Valley of Ghosts*, 1922; *The Clue of the New Pin*, 1923; *The Green Archer*, 1923; *The Missing Million*, 1923; *Room 13*, 1924; *Double Dan*, 1924 (also known as *Diana of Kara-Kara*); *Flat 2*, 1924 (revised 1927); *The Dark Eyes of London*, 1924; *The Face in the Night*, 1924; *The Sinister Man*, 1924; *The Three Oaks Mystery*, 1924; *A King by Night*, 1925; *Blue Hand*, 1925; *The Daughters of the Night*, 1925; *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 1925; *The Gaunt Stranger*, 1925 (also known as *The Ringer*); *The Hairy Arm*, 1925 (also known as *The Avenger*); *The Strange Countess*, 1925

1926-1930 • *Barbara on Her Own*, 1926; *Penelope of the Polyantha*, 1926; *The Black Abbot*, 1926;

The Day of Uniting, 1926; *The Door with Seven Locks*, 1926; *The Joker*, 1926 (also known as *The Colossus*); *The Man from Morocco*, 1926 (also known as *The Black*); *The Million Dollar Story*, 1926; *The Northing Tramp*, 1926 (also known as *The Tramp*); *The Ringer*, 1926; *The Square Emerald*, 1926 (also known as *The Girl from Scotland Yard*); *The Terrible People*, 1926; *The Yellow Snake*, 1926; *We Shall See!*, 1926 (also known as *The Gaol Breaker*); *Big Foot*, 1927; *Number Six*, 1927; *The Feathered Serpent*, 1927; *The Forger*, 1927 (also known as *The Clever One*); *The Hand of Power*, 1927; *The Man Who Was Nobody*, 1927; *The Squeaker*, 1927 (also known as *The Squealer*); *The Traitor's Gate*, 1927; *The Double*, 1928; *The Flying Squad*, 1928; *The Gunner*, 1928 (also known as *Gunman's Bluff*); *The Thief in the Night*, 1928; *The Twister*, 1928; *The Golden Hades*, 1929; *The Green Ribbon*, 1929; *The India-Rubber Men*, 1929; *The Terror*, 1929; *The Calendar*, 1930; *The Clue of the Silver Key*, 1930; *The Lady of Ascot*, 1930; *White Face*, 1930

1931-1932 • *On the Spot*, 1931; *The Coat of Arms*, 1931 (also known as *The Arranways Mystery*); *The Devil Man*, 1931 (also known as *The Life and Death of Charles Peace*); *The Man at the Carlton*, 1931; *The Frightened Lady*, 1932; *When the Gangs Came to London*, 1932

OTHER SHORT FICTION: 1911-1920 • *Sanders of the River*, 1911; *The People of the River*, 1912; *Bosambo of the River*, 1914; *The Admirable Carfew*, 1914; *Bones, Being Further Adventures in Mr. Commissioner Sanders' Country*, 1915; *The Keepers of the King's Peace*, 1917; *Lieutenant Bones*, 1918; *The Adventures of Heine*, 1919

1921-1925 • *Bones in London*, 1921; *Sandi, The King-Maker*, 1922; *Bones of the River*, 1923; *Chick*, 1923; *Educated Evans*, 1924

1926-1930 • *More Educated Evans*, 1926; *Sanders*, 1926 (also known as *Mr. Commissioner Sanders*); *Good Evans!*, 1927 (also known as *The Educated Man—Good Evans!*); *The Brigand*, 1927; *The Mixer*, 1927; *Again Sanders*, 1928; *Elegant Edward*, 1928; *The Orator*, 1928; *Again the Ringer*, 1929 (also known as *The Ringer Returns*); *Circumstantial Evidence*, 1929; *Fighting Snub Reilly*, 1929; *For Infor-*

mation Received, 1929; *Forty-eight Short Stories*, 1929; *Four Square Jane*, 1929; *Planetoid 127*, 1929; *The Big Four*, 1929; *The Black*, 1929 (revised 1962); *The Cat Burglar*, 1929; *The Ghost of Down Hill*, 1929; *The Governor of Chi-Foo*, 1929; *The Iron Grip*, 1929; *The Lady of Little Hell*, 1929; *The Little Green Men*, 1929; *The Lone House Mystery*, 1929; *The Prison-Breakers*, 1929; *The Reporter*, 1929; *Killer Kay*, 1930; *Mrs. William Jones and Bill*, 1930; *The Lady Called Nita*, 1930

1931-1984 • *Sergeant Sir Peter*, 1932; *The Steward*, 1932; *The Last Adventure*, 1934; *The Undisclosed Client*, 1962; *The Man Who Married His Cook, and Other Stories*, 1976; *Two Stories, and the Seventh Man*, 1981; *The Sooper and Others*, 1984

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Duke in the Suburbs*, 1909; *Private Selby*, 1912; 1925: *The Story of a Fatal Peace*, 1915; *Those Folks of Bulboro*, 1918; *The Books of Bart*, 1923; *The Black Avons*, 1925 (also known as *How They Fared in the Times of the Tudors, Roundhead and Cavalier, From Waterloo to the Mutiny, and Europe in the Melting Pot*)

SHORT FICTION: *Smithy*, 1905 (revised as *Smithy, Not to Mention Nobby Clark and Spud Murphy*, 1914); *Smithy Abroad: Barrack Room Sketches*, 1909; *Smithy's Friend Nobby*, 1914 (also known as *Nobby*); *Smithy and the Hun*, 1915; *Tam o' the Scouts*, 1918; *The Fighting Scouts*, 1919

PLAYS: *An African Millionaire*, pr. 1904; *The Forest of Happy Dreams*, pr. 1910; *Dolly Cutting Herself*, pr. 1911; *Hello, Exchange!*, pr. 1913 (also known as *The Switchboard*); *The Manager's Dream*, pr. 1913; *Whirligig*, pr. 1919 (with Wal Pink and Albert de Courville; also known as *Pins and Needles*); *M'Lady*, pr. 1921; *The Looking Glass*, pr. 1924 (with de Courville); *The Whirl of the World*, pr. 1924 (with de Courville and William K. Wells); *Double Dan*, pb., pr. 1926; *The Mystery of Room 45*, pr. 1926; *The Ringer*, pb. 1926; *A Perfect Gentleman*, pr. 1927; *The Terror*, pb. 1927; *The Yellow Mask*, pr. 1927; *The Flying Squad*, pr. 1928; *The Lad*, pr. 1928; *The Man Who Changed His Name*, pr. 1928; *The Squeaker*, pb. 1928 (also known as *Sign of the Leopard*); *Persons*

Unknown, pr. 1929; *The Calendar*, pr. 1929; *On the Spot*, pr. 1930; *Smoky Cell*, pr. 1930; *The Mouthpiece*, pr. 1930; *Charles III*, pr. 1931; *The Case of the Frightened Lady*, pr. 1931 (also known as *Criminal at Large*); *The Old Man*, pr. 1931; *The Green Pack*, pr. 1932

SCREENPLAYS: *Nurse and Martyr*, 1915; *The Forger*, 1928; *The Ringer*, 1928; *Valley of the Ghosts*, 1928; *Red Aces*, 1929; *Should a Doctor Tell?*, 1930; *The Squeaker*, 1930; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1931 (with V. Gareth Gundry); *The Old Man*, 1931; *King Kong*, 1933 (with others)

POETRY: *The Mission That Failed! A Tale of the Raid, and Other Poems*, 1898; *Nicholson's Nek*, 1900; *War!, and Other Poems*, 1900; *Writ in Barracks*, 1900

NONFICTION: *Unofficial Dispatches*, 1901; *Famous Scottish Regiments*, 1914; *Fieldmarshal Sir John French and His Campaigns*, 1914; *Heroes All: Gallant Deeds of War*, 1914; *The Standard History of the War*, 1914-1916; *The War of the Nations: A History of the Great European Conflict*, 1914-1919; *Kitchener's Army and the Territorial Forces: The Full Story of a Great Achievement*, 1915; *People: A Short Autobiography*, 1926; *This England*, 1927; *My Hollywood Diary*, 1932

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MINETTE WALTERS

Born: Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England;
September 26, 1949

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller

CONTRIBUTION

Minette Walters's psychological thrillers have been compared with those of Agatha Christie, P. D. James, and Ruth Rendell, placing her in the tradition of the English crime novel. Walters is not a series mystery writer; each book stands alone and her novels can be read in any order. Her literary work combines elements of the first-person hard-boiled detective style, the gothic mystery, the feminist desire for strong female characters in the detective tradition, and the epistolary novel. Her novels are character driven, with an emphasis on the character of the victim as well as of the murder suspects and investigator. Motives become more complex as characters' backgrounds are slowly revealed. Readers are kept guessing as the multiple possibilities of who murdered the victim and why emerge through plot twists until the last pages. Walters has been called a master of ambiguity; the motives of the characters are never simple or predictable, and sometimes questions remain even after the end of the book. The dark side of human nature is explored through Walters's characters and plots; readers are uncomfortably aware that murder can be a possible solution to an array of situations. The literary quality of Walters's work has been recognized by a remarkable number of awards in the United States and Great Britain, including the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award for *Fox Evil* (2002) in 2003, and the number of best sellers she has written evidences the appeal of her work to readers.

BIOGRAPHY

Minette Walters was born Minette Caroline Mary Jebb on September 26, 1949, in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, north of London. Her father died when she was young. Her mother supplemented his small pension by painting miniature portraits from photographs and managed to send her three children to good

boarding schools. Walters attended the Godolphin School in Salisbury, a university preparatory school. She spent six months in a volunteer service program in Israel, then attended Durham University, where she majored in French and German literature.

After earning her degree, Walters worked as a magazine journalist and later as an editor of romance fiction. Unhappy with the quality of the manuscripts she was reading, she began to write short romance novels herself, eventually writing more than thirty of them under a pseudonym that she has never revealed. This romance fiction, written to strict guidelines, served as her apprenticeship.

In 1978, Minette married Alexander Walters, a businessman. Their first son, Roland, was born in late 1979, followed by Philip in 1982. Walters was a full-



Minette Walters. (Courtesy, Allen & Unwin)

time homemaker and mother until her youngest son was in school. During this time, she was active in volunteer work and ran for local public office. She also renovated three houses with her husband and has written that do-it-yourself tasks are one of her favorite forms of relaxation.

When Walters returned to writing, she shifted from romance to mystery fiction, a genre she had always enjoyed. She has stated that she admired Agatha Christie, Patricia Highsmith, and Graham Greene, whose characters struggle with eternal truths. From Greene she learned that fiction can be both literary and entertaining. The influence of true crime books also can be seen in her work, reflected in her interests in psychology and criminology

The Ice House (1992), Walters's first published crime novel, was a popular and critical success, winning the British Crime Writers' Association's John Creasey Award for best first crime novel. *The Sculptress* followed in 1993, based on an idea from her experience as a prison visitor. *The Sculptress* won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. Walters's third novel, *The Scold's Bridle* (1994), won the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award. Since then, Walters has been writing at the rate of nearly a book per year, and many of her works have won awards and been on best-seller lists. Her books have been published in thirty-five countries around the world, and her first five books have been adapted for television by the British Broadcasting Corporation. In addition to her full-length crime novels, Walters has published feature articles in magazines, short stories, and two novellas.

Walters moved into an eighteenth century manor in the Dorset countryside with her family. *The Breaker* (1998) and *The Shape of Snakes* (2000) are both set in Dorset, and *The Shape of Snakes* features an eighteenth century farmhouse in need of renovation, reflecting her interest in renovations. Walters continues to be active in volunteer and charitable organizations.

ANALYSIS

Minette Walters's psychological suspense and crime fiction is character driven. In each case, a body is discovered in the first pages of the novel, and the

rest of the novel is spent uncovering the background and circumstances of the murder. The character of the victim is explored along with the character of the suspects and investigators. Motivation, why the murder was committed, is as important as who did it. A long list of possible suspects is revealed through the twists, turns, and revelations of the plot. Walters stated in an interview that she does not necessarily know the identity of the murderer when she begins writing the novel; a number of characters have a motive for the crime. One of the questions Walters explores is why one character was driven to murder as a solution, while other equally motivated characters did not resort to murder.

Other characteristics of a Walters mystery include gruesome, graphic descriptions of the crime scene; themes of prejudice, bigotry, and giving the victim a voice; a love element that explores the fragility of relationships, the struggle for love, and the hard work involved in maintaining a stable relationship; the enclosed and claustrophobic nature of life in the family, the village, or neighborhood, where all involved, not only the victim, may be traumatized by a crime; and the dark side of human nature, the idea that the capability for murder may rest within anyone. Walters also explores form in the crime novel. In addition to traditional narrative, Walters involves the reader in the investigation by including maps, letters, e-mails, records of police interviews, newspaper clippings, and photos without narrative commentary, allowing the reader to interpret the evidence along with the investigator.

THE ICE HOUSE

Walters's first novel, *The Ice House*, has elements of the gothic in its setting, a manor house called Streech Grange. The Grange is owned by Phoebe Maybury, who lives there in isolation with two eccentric female companions. The novel opens with three newspaper clippings referring to the unsolved disappearance of David Maybury ten years earlier. Although a body was never found, the local villagers as well as Detective Chief Inspector George Walsh believe that Phoebe killed her husband. The opening scenes of the narrative focus on a graphic description of a decomposed body found in the cryptlike ice house on the property. The immediate assumption is that the body in the ice house is the missing

David Maybury, but soon the investigation is complicated by the revelation of another missing person, a man whose business failure has cost Phoebe's friend Diana Goode a small fortune. As more possible motivations for murder are revealed, it becomes essential to determine the identity of the body in the ice house. Walsh's determination to prove that Phoebe is guilty of her husband's murder hinders the investigation from the start, so it falls to the moody misogynist Detective Sergeant McLoughlin to probe other possibilities. The idea that police investigations may be flawed runs through several of Walters's books. Two stories unfold simultaneously: the story of what really happened ten years earlier, and the story of the police investigation in the present time.

The claustrophobic, enclosed nature of village life is another theme that first appears in *The Ice House* and reappears in later Walters novels. The locals not only assume that Phoebe killed her husband, generally acknowledged to be a cruel and violent man, but also suspect the three women of being lesbians or witches. Ultimately the identity of the body is revealed, as is the solution to the disappearance of Maybury. The novel ends with the beginning of a love affair between the gruff McLoughlin and suspected lesbian Ann Catrell.

By the end of the gripping novel, with its twists and turns of plot, the reader has been involved in the psychology of vengeance and the nature of loneliness and of friendship and loyalty among the three women, who are protecting Phoebe and her daughter from a secret darker than the possible murder of an abusive husband and father.

THE SCULPTRESS

Minette Walters's second novel, *The Sculptress*, also opens with a crime that has already been committed. A newspaper clipping refers to the murder conviction of Olive Martin, a young woman who has been sentenced to life imprisonment for the brutal murders of her mother and sister. Rosalind "Roz" Leigh, the amateur investigator, is a journalist who has been assigned to write a book about the case. Olive, a grotesquely obese woman, has confessed to the murders but refuses to speak about her motive. Roz, who has recently suffered a great loss followed by depression, must gain Olive's confidence through a series of

prison visits and give the murderer a voice. As the visits proceed, the tables are sometimes turned, and it is Olive who asks the questions, causing Roz to open up and begin to talk about her own life and its disappointments. The psychology of both murderer and investigator are explored.

Themes of loneliness, trust and distrust, truth and lies, and the claustrophobic nature and secrets of family life are woven into the plot as Roz discovers that there was little police investigation surrounding the murders. Thorough police and defense work was neglected because it was a foregone conclusion that Olive was guilty. As Roz begins to unravel Olive's past in an attempt to discover why a young woman who appears sane and intelligent though odd would commit the brutal murder of her mother and sister, she becomes convinced that Olive is innocent. Therefore Roz must find the true murderer, and Olive's motive for confessing to the crime. In the course of her investigation, she interviews a growing number of characters and becomes involved in a relationship with Hal Hawksley, a retired police officer who was the investigator at the scene of the crime. The reader's imagination is engaged as the cast of possible suspects becomes more and more complex.

The ending of the novel is the source of Walters's reputation as a master of ambiguity. Where does fact end and fiction begin? Olive is a skilled manipulator, and while Roz is convinced that Olive is innocent and is able to prove that the police investigation was flawed, she is never able to definitively prove who the true killer is. In the end, Olive is freed, and as she is leaving the prison, there is a look of gloating triumph on her face that causes doubt. Did Olive kill her mother and sister or not?

THE BREAKER

The Breaker is set in Dorset, where Walters makes her home. As the novel opens, the body of a naked woman is found on an isolated beach. The woman has been raped, strangled, and drowned. Her identity must be established and her murderer found. Constable Nick Ingram is the hero of the mystery, a local police officer who knows the people of the community and the tides and waters of the area. Suspects include the drowned woman's husband and a handsome, rather

sleazy, young actor. The cast of characters includes a pair of lonely women, Maggie Jenner and her mother, who have lost their money to the confidence man Maggie married; several police detectives; the severely withdrawn young daughter of the murdered woman; and a number of local characters and suspects. Records of police interviews and psychologists' reports punctuate the traditional narrative. Who murdered the woman and why are not revealed until the last pages of the novel. Themes include loneliness, date-rape drugs, and child abuse as well as psychology and possible motives for the murder, while plot and action are never sacrificed in this best-selling, page-turning thriller.

THE SHAPE OF SNAKES

The Shape of Snakes opens with a twenty-year-old crime. On a rainy night in a London neighborhood, an African Caribbean woman with Tourette's syndrome, known as Mad Annie, died in the gutter. The police dismissed the death as an accident; they concluded that Annie had wandered into the road and was hit by a truck. The first-person narrator, M, was convinced that Annie was murdered and that racism and indifference by the police led to a cover-up of the crime. M's accusations of racism caused the neighbors to harass her into silence, and she and her husband moved abroad shortly after the crime.

Twenty years later, M and her husband have returned to England, and M is determined to seek justice for the murdered woman. Her own motives, however, are complicated. Although she seems to be driven by a desire for justice for Annie, her investigation is just as likely to be motivated by a desire for revenge for how she was treated and her subsequent isolation and depression. The nature of life in an urban neighborhood where everyone knows everyone else's business is painfully probed. Revelations are made about the affairs of a vivid and varied cast of characters through letters, police reports, newspaper clippings, photos, and e-mails in addition to traditional narrative. Themes of silence and isolation are explored until readers hear the voice of the victim at last in the moving letter on the final page. The ending of this original, emotional, and literary mystery is revealing, yet questions remain.

Susan Butterworth

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Ice House*, 1992; *The Sculptress*, 1993; *The Scold's Bridle*, 1994; *The Dark Room*, 1995; *The Echo*, 1997; *The Breaker*, 1998; *The Shape of Snakes*, 2000; *Acid Row*, 2001; *Fox Evil*, 2002; *Disordered Minds*, 2003; *The Devil's Feather*, 2005; *Chickenfeed*, 2006; *The Chameleon's Shadow*, 2007

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The well-written profile of Walters discusses themes and settings of her novels.

Walters, Minette. Minette Walters Official Website. <http://www.minettewalters.co.uk>. Comprehensive and up-to-date information on Walters and her work, including a biography, news, profiles, video clips, and an interactive question-and-answer page. An excellent resource.

JOSEPH WAMBAUGH

Born: East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; January 22, 1937

Types of plot: Police procedural; historical

CONTRIBUTION

Joseph Wambaugh, the Los Angeles police officer who became a best-selling novelist, began writing out of a need to describe the Watts riots of the 1960's from the perspective of the police officers assigned to restore order there. He wanted to describe "what it was like for young men, young policemen, to grow up, on the streets, in that dreadful and fascinating era." The body of his work concerns American police procedure and the lives of those who belong to what has been called the "maligned profession." It is a world of frustrating, counterproductive rules and regulations drawn up by police administrators who have not been on the streets for years, a world where brutality mixes with courage, corruption with dedication, and evil with honor.

Although occasionally criticized for lengthy philosophical discourses and an undeveloped style, Wambaugh is more often praised for thoughtful and realistic storytelling, and he has been regarded as one of the "few really knowledgeable men who try to tell the public what a cop's life is like." Beginning with his first novel, *The New Centurions* (1970), positive popular response has led to the reproduction of Wambaugh's stories in other media such as film, television, and audio cassettes. His police officers were violent, afraid, foul-mouthed, and fallible. "Do you like cops? Read *The*

New Centurions," a *New York Times* reviewer wrote. "Do you hate cops? Read *The New Centurions*."

Critical acclaim for his writing began in 1974, when he received the Herbert Brean Memorial Award for *The Onion Field* (1973), which, according to *The New York Times* reviewer James Conaway, is equal to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966) and placed Wambaugh in the tradition of Theodore Dreiser and James T. Farrell.

Wambaugh's books, gritty, hyperrealistic, and non-linear, typically interweave several story lines at once. His characters are composites of real-life cops and criminals; his dialogue is praised and reviled as "outrageously colorful." What Wambaugh brought to detective fiction was actual life on the beat from a cop's perspective: the gallows humor, the ugliness, the drugs and booze, the boredom and the raw fear. "I didn't realize what I was doing, but I was turning the procedural around," Wambaugh told an interviewer. "The procedural is a genre that describes how a cop acts on the job; I was showing how the job might act on the cop . . . how it worked on his head."

Wambaugh shows that investigations can be mishandled and that police officers, who can be bigots, alcoholics, and hard cases, make bad errors of judgment. However, he believes that most Americans are unwilling to grasp the reality, the human cost, of police work. Wambaugh's books are enormously popular among cops as well as civilian readers because of their accuracy. "Police work is still, in my opinion, the most

emotionally hazardous job on earth,” he said in 2000. “Not the most physically dangerous, but the most emotionally dangerous.”

BIOGRAPHY

The only child of Anne Malloy and Joseph Aloysius Wambaugh, Joseph Aloysius Wambaugh, Jr., was born on January 22, 1937, in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The German surname accounts for one-quarter of his ethnic heritage; the other three-quarters is Roman Catholic Irish. His was a family of hard workers, many of whom labored in the Pittsburgh steel mills.

Wambaugh’s California settings originate in his personal experience. His father had been police chief in East Pittsburgh before the family moved to California in 1951. Three years later, Wambaugh left high school to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. During his service time, in 1956, he and Dee Allsup, his high school sweetheart, were married. They had three children; their son Mark would later die at the age of twenty-one. On Wambaugh’s discharge from

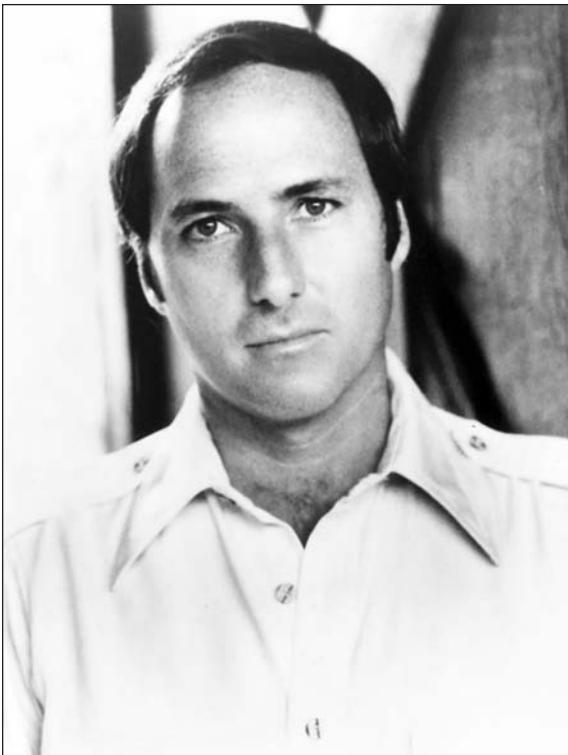
the Marines in 1957, the couple returned to California, where Wambaugh worked at different jobs while earning an associate degree in English from Chaffey College in 1958.

In 1960, Wambaugh graduated from California State College, Los Angeles, with a bachelor’s degree and joined the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) as a burglary detective. However casually he came to police work (he once told an interviewer that he joined the police department because he had “nothing better to do” and because the money was more than he had ever earned), he soon found himself deeply involved. He was a solid, commonsense investigator who cracked more than his share of tough cases. He has said that police work relaxed him and soothed his soul.

Wambaugh began writing after he became involved in helping to control the Watts riot. On August 11, 1965, six days of rioting began in the Watts section of South Central Los Angeles following a routine traffic stop. African Americans were tired of abusive treatment from white police officers in the cities, which included the use of water cannons, clubs, and cattle prods. In the ensuing violence, thirty-four people were killed and 856 injured. Nearly four thousand people were arrested and 209 buildings were destroyed. It was a difficult time for citizens and police alike.

Wambaugh intended to maintain both careers, as writer and police officer, but his status as a “celebrity cop” would not permit that option. In 1973, for example, he was presented with California State University’s first outstanding-alumnus award. Interrupting police calls and visits at the Hollenbeck Station were one problem, but great tension developed from the changed relationships inside the department: “The other cops were starting to treat me differently—sort of like a star—and I couldn’t bear being different.” On March 1, 1974, he left the force.

As production consultant for the television series adapted from his novel *The Blue Knight* (1972), Wambaugh fought to maintain authenticity in the scripts. Indeed, his insistence has become legendary. He filed and won a lawsuit over violations committed against the text when *The Choirboys* (1975) was made into a film. Indeed, his literary career has been plagued with litigation. “I’ve been under continuous litigation for



Joseph Wambaugh. (Library of Congress)

my writing since 1974,” Wambaugh once told an interviewer. “There’s a million ambulance chasers who say, ‘Let’s sue him!’”

The most famous case concerned the murders forming the basis of Wambaugh’s *Echoes in the Darkness* (1987). On September 14, 1994, Philadelphia’s Upper Merion High School principal Jay C. Smith, convicted of the murders of a schoolteacher and her two children, filed suit against Wambaugh, claiming that he had conspired with police investigators to conceal exculpatory evidence and to fabricate evidence linking Smith to the murders, in order to make money from the book and a television miniseries. Smith lost the case, although his conviction was overturned.

After being sued over *The Onion Field*, *Lines and Shadows*, and *Echoes in the Darkness*, Wambaugh swore off writing nonfiction. *The Bleeding* (1989) was the only true-crime book he wrote that was not the subject of a defamation lawsuit. Wambaugh attributed this to the fact that it dealt not with Americans but with an English murder case.

Wambaugh eventually left Los Angeles for a house in Palm Springs and an estate overlooking the San Diego harbor and Coronado Island when he made his fortune with best seller after best seller. In 2004, Wambaugh received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America.

ANALYSIS

It is not the subject matter (crime and police work) or the types of characters (police officers, criminals, and victims) that distinguish Joseph Wambaugh’s books: It is the intimacy he develops between the reader and the police officers. Like a trusted partner, the reader is privy to others’ baser qualities—including vulgarity, bigotry, and cruelty. Yet the reader also comes to know human beings, and that knowledge allows for affection, sometimes admiration, and always a shared fatalism about police work: It is an after-the-fact effort—after the robbery, after the rape, after the child abuse, after the murder.

This fatalistic outlook does not develop from book to book; it is present in full measure from Wambaugh’s first novel:

It is the natural tendency of things toward chaos. . . . It’s a very basic natural law Kilvinsky always said, and only the order makers could temporarily halt its march, but eventually there will be darkness and chaos. . . .

The point is convincingly dramatized through the police confrontations during the 1965 Watts riots.

Even the survivors—those police officers who finish enough shifts to reach retirement and the prized pension—pay with a piece of their souls. The wise Kilvinsky in *The New Centurions* learns all the natural laws and then shoots himself. Bumper Morgan, the blue knight in the book of that title, is the kind of police officer who radicals had in mind when shouting “pig.” He is a fat, freeloading womanizer (teenage belly dancers preferred), and the reader would probably turn away in disgust if, beneath the crudity, loneliness and depression were not detectable.

THE ONION FIELD

Victimization of police officers is one of Wambaugh’s recurring themes. They are victimized by the dislike of those they swear to protect and by the justice system they swear to uphold. Two of his books make this premise particularly convincing. Writing for the first time in the genre of the nonfiction, or documentary, novel, Wambaugh in *The Onion Field* painstakingly reconstructed the 1963 kidnapping of two fellow officers, the murder of one, and the trial that followed. During that trial, the surviving officer became as much a defendant as the two killers.

To Wambaugh’s credit, however, he stays out of the story. Here, for example, are none of the intrusions found in *The New Centurions*. Nowhere does one officer turn to another and inquire about psychological-sociological implications, such as “Gus, do you think policemen are in a better position to understand criminality than, say, penologists or parole officers or other behavioral scientists?” The questions and answers have not disappeared, however. They are simply left either for the reader to ask and answer in the course of reading the book or for one of the force to understand as an integral part of the story. “I don’t fudge or try to make it [a true-crime story] better by editorializing or dramatizing,” Wambaugh said, “I try to be a real investigative reporter and write it as it happened as best I can.”

LINES AND SHADOWS

The realization of Dick Snider in *Lines and Shadows* (1984) is a case in point. After watching San Diego cops chase illegal aliens through the city's San Ysidro section, Snider knows that the crime of illegal entry and the various authorities' efforts to stop it are simply shadows hiding the truth. Illegal entry is, in fact, only about money: "There is not a significant line between two countries. It's between two economies."

In studying so closely the ruined careers, marriages, and lives of the Border Alien Robbery Force, the BARF Squad, as it became known, Wambaugh also provides an explicit answer to a puzzle within all of his books—indeed, to a puzzle about police inside or outside the covers of a book. Why would they want such a job? Wambaugh's answer is that they are caught up as the players in a national myth:

They gave their nightly performance and almost everyone applauded. They did it the only way they knew—not ingeniously, merely instinctively—by trying to resurrect in the late twentieth century a mythic hero who never was, not even in the nineteenth century. A myth nevertheless cherished by Americans beyond the memory of philosophers, statesmen, artists and scientists who really lived: the quintessentially American myth and legend of the Gunslinger, who with only a six-shooter and star dares venture beyond the badlands.

THE GLITTER DOME

Those who recognize the myth and how they have been used by it clearly have great difficulty continuing to play their parts. Yet these are the most likable and most interesting police officers in Wambaugh's fiction—Martin Welborn, for example (*The Glitter Dome*, 1981). He is a ploddingly thorough detective, with a penchant for orderliness in his police work and in his personal life. Glasses in his kitchen cupboard rest "in a specifically assigned position." Drawers display dinner and cocktail napkins "stacked and arranged by size and color." Neither can he leave "out of place" an unsolved case or the memory of a mutilated child. He depends on two universals: People always lie and, with less certainty, the devil exists (because "life would be unbearable if we didn't have the devil, now wouldn't it?"). What happens, then, when one of the

universals is taken away? Yes, people always lie, but there is no evil and, consequently, no good. All that happens happens accidentally. With that realization, detecting who committed a crime and bringing the criminal to justice loses significance. So, too, does life, and Marty Welborn ends his by driving over a mountain cliff as he recalls the one perfect moment in his life. At the time, he had been a young, uniformed police officer, and he had just heard an old cardinal deliver a solemn High Mass. As he kneeled to kiss the cardinal's ring, Welborn saw, in one perfect moment, the old priest's "lovely crimson slippers."

THE BLACK MARBLE

Although Martin Welborn is the totally professional police officer, a winner who nevertheless takes his life, Andrei Milhailovich Valnikov (*The Black Marble*, 1978) is a loser, a "black marble" who endures. Like Welborn, he has his reveries, usually drunken ones, of past-perfect moments. Yet they come from a czarist Russia Valnikov never personally experienced. Such an absence of reality works perfectly with the constant losses in the detective's work. He cannot, for example, find his handcuffs; he gets lost on the streets of Los Angeles; and he is all the more touchingly comical for both the reveries and the misadventures. In Valnikov, Wambaugh demonstrates his ability to develop a memorable character.

THE CHOIRBOYS

As good as Wambaugh is at occasional character development, he is even better at telling amusing stories, as in *The Blue Knight* and *The Black Marble*. *The Glitter Dome*, *The Delta Star* (1983)—which was described by one reviewer as "Donald Westlake meets Ed McBain"—and *The Secrets of Harry Bright* (1985) are also amusing. None of these novels, however, measures up to the humor in *The Choirboys*. All that has been said about Wambaugh's humor in this book is true: It is "sarcastic and filled with scrofulous expletives"; it is "scabrous"; and it is often "intentionally ugly." Indeed, the reader may believe that laughing at *The Choirboys* is giving in to an adolescence long outgrown.

Wambaugh would be offended by none of this. He lists among his literary influences both Joseph Heller and Truman Capote, on one hand, and humorists P. J. O'Rourke and Dave Barry, the Pulitzer-winning hu-

mor columnist, on the other. "I wanted to use the tools of gallows humor, satire, hyperbole, all of that, to make people laugh in an embarrassed way," Wambaugh told an interviewer. "I reread [Heller's] *Catch-22* and [Kurt Vonnegut's] *Slaughterhouse-Five* to see how it was done in war novels. . . . I couldn't find anybody who'd done it in a police novel."

Typical of Wambaugh's humor is Officer Francis Tanaguchi's impression of Bela Lugosi in *The Choirboys*:

For three weeks, which was about as long as one of Francis's whims lasted, he was called the Nisei Nipper by the policemen at Wilshire Station. He sulked around the station with two blood dripping fangs slipped over his incisors, attacking the throat of everyone below the rank of sergeant.

The jokes in *The Choirboys* are sandwiched between a prologue, three concluding chapters, and an epilogue filled with terror and insanity. Wambaugh's novel illustrates well an idea popularized by Sigmund Freud: Beneath a joke lies the most horrific of human fears.

However, Wambaugh's works became more light-hearted following *The Secrets of Harry Bright* (1985). "As I mellowed with age, or got farther from day-to-day police work, I wrote books that were more consciously entertaining," he said. "*Harry Bright* was the exception. I happen to like that book better than any of the other novels, but that one was so dark, I think I had to lighten up, it was all about fathers and sons and death."

His novels of the 1990's were broadly comical—*The Golden Orange* (1990), a tale of an alcoholic cop among the millionaires of the Gold Coast of Orange County; *Fugitive Nights* (1992), in which another alcoholic cop teams up with a female private eye to handle a drug-smuggling case, depending, as one reviewer said, "mostly on vulgar police humor for its laughs;" *Finnegan's Week* (1993), a funny and witty thriller about toxic waste comparable to the works of Carl Hiaasen; and *Floater*s (1996), a romp concerning racing spies, saboteurs, scam artists, and hookers swarming around San Diego Bay, the site of the America's Cup international sailing regatta, into which two Mission Bay patrol-boat cops of the "Club Harbor

Unit" get dragged out of their depth.

Several of Wambaugh's novels were adapted to film. *The New Centurions* (1972) starred George C. Scott; more successful was *The Black Marble*, directed by Harold Becker as a romantic comedy and produced by Frank Capra, Jr., and starring James Woods and Harry Dean Stanton. *The Choirboys* (1977) was disappointingly directed by Robert Aldrich; it is understandable why Wambaugh filed suit when he saw the results. *The Blue Knight* was filmed as a television miniseries of four one-hour installments in 1973; lead actor William Holden and director Robert Butler both received Emmy Awards for their work.

A second *Blue Knight* television movie, filmed in 1975 and starring George Kennedy as seasoned cop Bumper Morgan, served as the pilot for a short-lived television series (1975-1976). *The Glitter Dome* (1985) was filmed for cable television and starred James Garner, John Lithgow, and Margot Kidder. *Fugitive Nights: Danger in the Desert* aired on television in 1993, with Teri Garr as leading lady. The nonfictional novels *The Onion Field* (motion picture) and *Echoes in the Darkness* (made-for-television miniseries re-released as video) were also filmed in 1979 and 1987, respectively. Wambaugh's fast-paced, violent, and funny writing continues to attract the attention of Hollywood.

Wambaugh, however, was dissatisfied with these adaptation projects—except for ones to which he contributed. Television's regular series *Police Story* (1973-1980) was "based on his memoirs" and focused on the LAPD. A particularly interesting project was The Learning Channel's series *Case Reopened*, in which Lawrence Block, Ed McBain, and Wambaugh were asked to host hour-long segments about notorious unsolved crimes. Wambaugh's turn came with "The Black Dahlia," which aired October 10, 1999. The murder of Elizabeth Short had occurred when Wambaugh was ten, and during his rookie years on the beat he heard many anecdotes about the sensational manhunt. Despite his vow not to return to true-crime writing, Wambaugh reviewed the evidence and offered his own solution.

Of the crime committed as documented in *Echoes in the Darkness*, Wambaugh wrote, "Perhaps it had

nothing to do with sin and everything to do with sociopathy, that most incurable of human disorders because all so afflicted consider themselves *blessed* rather than cursed." The fate of a police officer who becomes a best-selling author as a representative of the police to the rest of the human species might be considered both a blessing and a curse. Certainly Wambaugh's insights into the follies and struggles of humanity have proved a blessing for crime fiction.

Alice MacDonald
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The New Centurions*, 1970; *The Blue Knight*, 1972; *The Choirboys*, 1975; *The Black Marble*, 1978; *The Glitter Dome*, 1981; *The Delta Star*, 1983; *The Secrets of Harry Bright*, 1985; *The Golden Orange*, 1990; *Fugitive Nights*, 1992; *Finnegan's Week*, 1993; *Floaters*, 1996; *Hollywood Station*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAYS: *The Onion Field*, 1979 (adaptation of his book); *The Black Marble*, 1980 (adaptation of his novel)

TELEPLAY: *Echoes in the Darkness*, 1987 (adaptation of his book)

NONFICTION: *The Onion Field*, 1973; *Lines and Shadows*, 1984; *Echoes in the Darkness*, 1987; *The Bleeding*, 1989; *Fire Lover: A True Story*, 2002

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from his writing of *Echoes in the Darkness*.

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"Joseph Aloysius Wambaugh, Jr." In *Current Biography Yearbook: 1980*, edited by Charles Moritz. New York: H. H. Wilson, 1981. In addition to a brief biography, this article contains excerpts of press interviews with Wambaugh and critical evaluations of his works.

Kaminsky, Stuart. *Behind the Mystery: Top Mystery Writers*. Cohasset, Mass.: Hot House Press, 2005. Wambaugh is one of eighteen mystery writers interviewed in this collection who reveals the creative process that goes into producing best-selling mystery fiction.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Malmgren discusses Wambaugh's *The Secrets of Harry Bright*, alongside many other entries in the mystery and detective genre. Bibliographic references and index.

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Van Dover, J. Kenneth. *Centurions, Knights, and Other Cops: The Police Novels of Joseph Wambaugh*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Brownstone Books, 1995. A critical study of Wambaugh's first fourteen books. Includes an excellent chronology of his life.

Wambaugh, Joseph. "Ship to Shore with Joseph Wambaugh: Still a Bit Paranoid Among the Palms." Interview by Andy Meisler. *The New York Times*, June 13, 1996, p. C1. An interview with Wambaugh on his boat, *Bookworm*, near the San Diego harbor. The article explores some of Wambaugh's views and gives a brief description of his career.

HILLARY WAUGH

Born: New Haven, Connecticut; June 22, 1920

Also wrote as Elissa Grandower; H. Baldwin Taylor; Harry Walker

Types of plot: Hard-boiled, police procedural; private investigator; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Sheridan Wesley, 1947-

Fred Fellows, 1959-

David Halliday, 1964-

Frank Sessions, 1968-

Simon Kaye, 1981-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

FRED FELLOWS, the chief of police in Stockford, Connecticut, is married, with four children. At first glance, Fellows is the stereotypical small-town police officer—the overweight, tobacco-chewing storyteller. As criminals who choose to commit a crime in Stockford quickly learn, however, the truth of the matter is that Fellows is an extraordinarily good detective, solving his cases with a combination of solid police work and imaginative thinking. Fellows is fifty-three years old in his first novel (1959), and he ages slightly over the course of the eleven novels in which he appears.

FRANK SESSIONS, a detective second grade in the homicide squad, Manhattan North, is divorced. A tough and capable detective, Sessions originally became a detective because his father was a police officer. Quick to dispel any idealistic notions about his job, Sessions is a veteran of more than sixteen years on the force who nevertheless remains passionate about justice. This passion is often tested in his brutal cases.

SIMON KAYE, a private investigator, is single. A former cop, Kaye is a resourceful private eye who works in the same unnamed city in which he grew up. Around thirty years old, Kaye is a very physical investigator who is capable of inflicting as well as absorbing much physical damage. Often cynical and sarcastic, Kaye works as a detective to help people as individuals, not out of some overblown Don Quixote/Sir Galahad complex.

CONTRIBUTION

One of the true pioneers of the police procedural, Hillary Waugh was not the first writer to use police officers as detectives, but he was one of the first to present a realistic portrait of police officers and police work, emphasizing all the details of the case from start to finish, including the dull legwork that is often ignored. This emphasis was picked up later by other writers such as Ed McBain and Dell Shannon. According to Julian Symons and others, Waugh's first police procedural, *Last Seen Wearing . . .* (1952), is one of the classics of detective fiction. Waugh's later police novels involving Fred Fellows and Frank Sessions are praised for their realism and polish. In his less-known works as well as in these police procedurals, Waugh is a master craftsman who knows how to tell a good story and construct a tight and suspenseful plot. His prolific and enduring career is a testament to his ability and innovation.

BIOGRAPHY

Hillary Baldwin Waugh was born on June 22, 1920, in New Haven, Connecticut. He remained in that city until he received his bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1942. Straight from graduation, he entered the navy and became a pilot in the Naval Air Corps in May, 1943. He remained in the navy until January, 1946, achieving the rank of lieutenant. It was in the navy that he began to write his first mystery, which was published in 1947 as *Madam Will Not Dine Tonight*.

After his discharge from the navy, Waugh returned to New England. With the exception of some time in New York and Europe, Waugh has mostly lived in Connecticut. In 1951, he married Diana Taylor, with whom he had two daughters and one son. After a divorce in 1981, he married Shannon O'Cork. He has worked as a teacher (1956-1957), has edited a weekly newspaper (1961-1962), and has been involved in local politics, serving as First Selectman of Guilford, Connecticut (1971-1973). These vocations have always been secondary, though, to his writing.

A prolific writer, Waugh published more than forty novels in the forty-two-year span between 1947 and 1989. Waugh is a past president of the Mystery Writers of America and received that organization's Grand Master Award in 1989.

ANALYSIS

One of the most interesting aspects of the detective story is the vast variety of forms it has taken in its history. The police procedural, one major variation of the detective novel, got its start in the 1940's and 1950's with the work of writers such as Lawrence Sanders and Hillary Waugh and has since become one of the most popular forms of the genre. This particular type of story follows the efforts of a police officer or a police force (not a gifted amateur or a private eye) working toward solving a case. Waugh himself explains this emphasis in an essay, "The Police Procedural," in John Ball's *The Mystery Story* (1976):

The police procedural thrusts the detective into the middle of a working police force, full of rules and regulations. Instead of bypassing the police, as did its predecessors, the procedural takes the reader inside the department and shows how it operates.

These are stories, not just about policemen, but about the world of the policeman. Police Inspector Charlie Chan doesn't belong. (There're no police.) Nor does Inspector Maigret. (There are police, but Maigret, like Chan, remains his own man.)

Thus, the police procedural presents a realistic milieu to the reader; the emphasis is on ordinary police officers who solve cases through a combination of diligence, intelligence, and luck. Waugh helped pioneer this particular form and remains one of its masters.

Waugh began to write while he was a pilot in the navy, and he began his career with three fairly standard private eye novels: *Madam Will Not Dine Tonight, Hope to Die* (1948), and *The Odds Run Out* (1949). He returned to the private eye form in the early 1980's with his Simon Kaye novels, a series of entertaining mysteries. It was in 1950, however, that Waugh began a work that would become an influential classic, a work that would help define the emerging type of detective novel known as the police procedural. In writing that novel,

Waugh found himself influenced by an unlikely source. In 1949, he had read a book by Charles M. Boswell titled *They All Died Young: A Case Book of True and Unusual Murders* (1949). The book, a true-crime collection of ten stories about murders of young girls, had a tremendous impact on Waugh. "I went through those stories, one by one, and was never the same thereafter." Waugh resolved to write a detective story in the same matter-of-fact style as that of Boswell, a detective story that would show how the police of a small town would solve the case of the disappearance and murder of a college girl. That novel, which appeared in 1952 as *Last Seen Wearing . . .*, is still considered by many to be one of the best detective stories ever written.

LAST SEEN WEARING . . .

That novel, which appeared in 1952 as *Last Seen Wearing . . .*, is still considered by many to be one of the best detective stories ever written. The detectives in the story are Frank Ford and his sergeant, Burton Cameron, two ordinary police officers who are well-drawn and realistic characters. In fact, they were so realistic that the rough, grouchy Ford seemed to take over the work as the novel progressed. Waugh had originally intended the two to be modeled on the rather nondescript detectives of the true-crime stories—solid professionals with no outstanding features. Instead, the realistic, complex portrayal of the detectives became an important part of the story and was to become an important part of later successful police procedurals. Like the classic puzzle story or the private eye story, the successful police procedural depends on and revolves around the detectives. Ford and Cameron lack the genius of Sherlock Holmes or the guile of Sam Spade, but they make up for that by being admirably professional police officers and believable, engaging characters.

SLEEP LONG, MY LOVE

Waugh had clearly hit on a successful formula. In 1959, he returned to the idea of a small-town police force in *Sleep Long, My Love*. That novel featured a slightly overweight, folksy gentleman named Fred Fellows, the chief of police of Stockford, Connecticut. Over the next nine years, Fellows appeared in eleven novels, and it is these novels that show Waugh in full mastery of the form.

In the creation of Fellows, Waugh transformed a ste-

reotype into a complex, three-dimensional character. Police officers in small towns have often been portrayed as inept and bumbling, if not incompetent and corrupt. Stockford is definitely a typical small town (except for its extraordinarily high crime rate), and Fellows is, on the surface, the typical small-town police chief. He is fifty-three at the beginning of the series, and he is married, father to four children—a devoted family man. He is slightly overweight, a source of anxiety for him. He chews tobacco and has nude pinups on the wall of his office. Deliberate and methodical, he has a penchant for telling stories in the manner of parables, using them to illustrate his thought processes.

ROAD BLOCK

In Fellows's second adventure, *Road Block* (1960), one of the crooks planning a payroll holdup in Stockford dismisses Fellows and his force as "a bunch of hick cops." As that criminal and many others discover, the truth of the matter is that Fellows and his co-workers are a group of very talented police officers. In *Road Block*, Fellows tracks down the criminals by using the mileage on the odometer of a car and catches them by feeding them false reports over the police radio. Behind Fellows's genial, folksy manner, the reader discovers a complex individual—a police officer who is not bound by his office, but instead brings to it shrewdness and imaginative thinking.

FELLOWS SERIES

In addition to introducing a realistic detective, Waugh set a precedent in the Fellows series by giving attention to the actual nuts and bolts of a police investigation. Rather than dismissing the details—the endless interviewing of suspects and witnesses, the tracking down of leads that prove to be false as well as those that are valuable, the combing of neighborhoods, the searching through all types of records—Waugh relishes them, utilizing them to create suspense. For an organized police force, bound by the legal system, cases are built piece by piece. Information comes in as bits and pieces—some useful, some worthless. Detection for Fellows and his men is pure work—work that sometimes leads nowhere, yet work that ultimately pays off. In Waugh's deft hands, the step-by-step, repetitive legwork of a case is never dull. By allowing the reader to focus on the detectives as they sort out the details of

the case, Waugh builds suspense the same way his detectives build their cases, moving step by step. As he says, "The tension should build to an explosion, not a let-down."

All the novels in the Fellows series exhibit another strength of Waugh's writing—his tight, believable plots. Waugh does not use the multiple-case approach of later writers; each novel focuses on a single case, following it from beginning to end. *Road Block*, for example, begins with the crooks planning the holdup, and their plans are revealed in great detail. As the robbery unfolds and the plans go awry, the story moves swiftly. Time is of the essence for Fellows, and the novel reflects that. There is no time for subplots, and there are none. Every detail of the novel builds the suspense of the case, propelling it toward the climax.

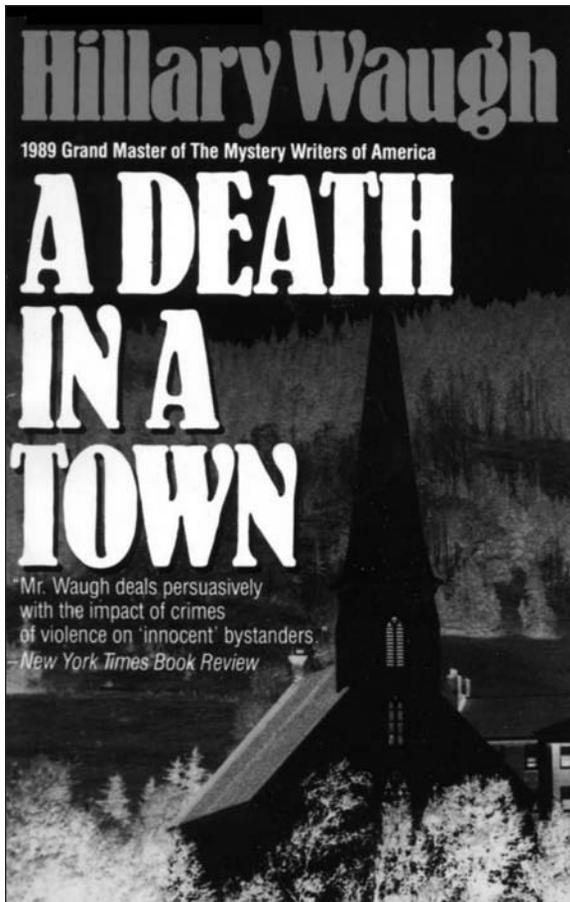
THE MISSING MAN

Another example is *The Missing Man* (1964), which begins with the discovery of the body of a young woman on the beach of a lake near Stockford. The case is a frustrating one for Fellows and his men as they struggle to identify both the victim and her murderer; although it takes them weeks to solve the case, there are no extraneous subplots. This deliberate focus is a skillful way of building tension in the work, forcing the reader to continue turning pages. There are simply no lulls in the action.

FRANK SESSIONS SERIES

After leaving Fred Fellows, Waugh turned his attention to another police officer, Detective Second Grade Frank Sessions of the homicide squad, Manhattan North. Sessions first appeared in *30 Manhattan East* (1968), which appeared the same year as the last Fellows novel, *The Con Game*; he also appeared in *The Young Prey* (1969) and *Finish Me Off* (1970). With this trio of brutal and gritty novels, Waugh left the small-town locale of Fellows and Ford for the big city, but he did not abandon the strengths and innovations of his earlier works. As a central character, Sessions is complex enough to sustain the reader's interest. A sixteen-year veteran of the force, Sessions, like Fellows and Ford, is a true professional. On one hand, he sees police work for the demanding job that it is; on the other, he remains dedicated to that difficult job.

In the three Sessions novels, Waugh pays even



Waugh's *A Death in a Town* (1989), concerns the rape and murder of a teenager in a quiet New England town.

more attention to the detailed legwork of the cases. The everyday workings of a police department are once again the primary focus, and the manner in which the homicide squad of Manhattan North goes about solving a case is examined very closely. The urban setting amplifies the importance of the tedious, repetitive legwork, for here it is even more difficult to reach a solution to a case. The late 1960's were an uneasy time in the history of America, and Waugh captures the uneasiness and unrest perfectly. It was an especially difficult time to be an urban police officer, and the Sessions novels reflect that. Like his other works, these novels demonstrate Waugh's mastery of the procedural; the three Sessions novels are textbook examples of tight, controlled plotting and masterful storytelling.

The police procedural form owes much to Waugh;

that is apparent. Yet, for all of his pioneering and innovation, Waugh's greatest claim to fame is the simple fact that he is an excellent storyteller. All of his works—be they police procedurals, private eye novels, or other types of works—show this ability. His long career attests the fact that, above all, Waugh tells a story that people take great pleasure in reading.

Stephen Wood

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

SHERIDAN WESLEY SERIES: *Madam Will Not Dine Tonight*, 1947 (also known as *If I Live to Dine*); *Hope to Die*, 1948; *The Odds Run Out*, 1949

FRED FELLOWS SERIES: *Sleep Long, My Love*, 1959 (also known as *Jigsaw*); *Road Block*, 1960; *That Night It Rained*, 1961; *Born Victim*, 1962; *The Late Mrs. D*, 1962; *Death and Circumstances*, 1963; *Prisoner's Plea*, 1963; *The Missing Man*, 1964; *End of a Party*, 1965; *Pure Poison*, 1966; *The Con Game*, 1968

DAVID HALLIDAY SERIES: *The Duplicate*, 1964 (as Taylor); *The Triumvirate*, 1966 (as Taylor)

FRANK SESSIONS SERIES: *30 Manhattan East*, 1968; *The Young Prey*, 1969; *Finish Me Off*, 1970

SIMON KAYE SERIES: *The Doria Rafe Case*, 1980; *The Glenna Powers Case*, 1980; *The Billy Cantrell Case*, 1981; *The Nerissa Claire Case*, 1983; *The Veronica Dean Case*, 1984; *The Priscilla Copperwaite Case*, 1986

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Last Seen Wearing . . .*, 1952; *A Rag and a Bone*, 1954; *The Case of the Missing Gardener*, 1954; *Rich Man, Dead Man*, 1956 (also known as *Rich Man, Murder* and *The Case of the Brunette Bombshell*); *The Eighth Mrs. Bluebeard*, 1958; *The Girl Who Cried Wolf*, 1958; *Murder on the Terrace*, 1961; *Girl on the Run*, 1965; *The Trouble with Tycoons*, 1967 (as Taylor); *Run When I Say Go*, 1969; *The Shadow Guest*, 1971; *Parrish for the Defense*, 1974 (also known as *Doctor on Trial*); *A Bride for Hampton House*, 1975; *Seaview Manor*, 1976; *The Summer at Raven's Roost*, 1976 (as Grandower); *The Secret Room of Morgate House*, 1977 (as Grandower); *Madman at My Door*, 1978; *Blackbourne Hall*, 1979 (as Grandower); *Rivergate House*, 1980 (as Grandower); *Murder on Safari*, 1987; *A Death in a Town*, 1989

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Hillary Waugh's Guide to Mysteries and Mystery Writing*, 1991

EDITED TEXT: *Merchants of Menace*, 1969

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Waugh's novel, arguing for its central place in the history of detective fiction.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Discusses Waugh's *Last Seen Wearing . . .* Bibliographic references and index.

Penzler, Otto, ed. *The Great Detectives*. London: Little, Brown, 1978. Waugh's characters are among those afforded the status of "great" fictional detectives in this study of the most important and memorable characters in detective fiction.

Waugh, Hillary. *Hillary Waugh's Guide to Mysteries and Mystery Writing*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 1991. Waugh's handbook for aspiring writers and critical analysis of the genre provides crucial insight into his own creative process and investments.

JACK WEBB

Born: Los Angeles, California; January 13, 1916

Also wrote as John Farr; Tex Grady

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; hard-boiled; police procedural; private investigator

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Father Shanley and Sammy Golden, 1952-
Cy Clements, 1955-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

FATHER JOSEPH SHANLEY is the priest of a Catholic parish in a poor section of Los Angeles, where he suspects or encounters crimes and seeks the help of the police in solving them.

SAMMY GOLDEN, a Jewish police detective sergeant, is a friend of Father Shanley and takes charge of the cases brought by the priest, often getting himself into more trouble than expected.

RED ADAMS, Sammy's partner on the police force, figures in a number of the Shanley-Golden adventures,

as do BILL CANTRELL, the detectives' boss; TOM MEIGS, a reporter who assists the pair with research and publicity; and LIZ SONGER, one of Sammy's girlfriends.

CY CLEMENTS is a zookeeper who uses his knowledge of animals to solve several murder cases involving animals.

CONTRIBUTION

Jack Webb's principal series of mystery novels, the Father Shanley and Sammy Golden books, features a Catholic priest with a church in a Hispanic neighborhood of Los Angeles who teams up with a Jewish police detective. As a result, Webb places heavy emphasis on ethnic characters and their attitudes and problems, an unusual approach that ran against the grain of the culturally cautious 1950's, when all but the last book in the series appeared. Even more unusual than the characters who appear in Webb's novels are his warm approach to human problems (even crim-

inals are sometimes sympathetically viewed as victims of forces beyond their control), his emphasis on higher moral issues (usually raised by Father Shanley), and his frequent references to music, art, and literature.

BIOGRAPHY

Jack Webb was born as John Alfred Webb on January 13, 1916, in Los Angeles and has lived most of his life there, except for military service and a period of residence in Phoenix, Arizona, from 1957 to 1966. He attended Occidental College in Los Angeles and was graduated with a degree in English literature in 1937. For the next two years, he worked at the San Diego Zoo and developed an interest in animals. During World War II, he served as a lieutenant with the Office of Strategic Services as part of a Signal Corps unit stationed near Chungking, China.

Webb was married to his wife, Nell, in 1950, and they have two children and a large collection of animals. During his time in Arizona, he established an aviary and a natural history library. He was most active as a writer during the 1950's, when the majority of his work appeared. He worked at a series of jobs, including a position at an advertising agency, before becoming manager of the Technical Information Unit of the General Electric Company. Although he retired from that company in 1986, he continued to work as a consultant.

ANALYSIS

Although mystery writer Jack Webb is often confused with Jack Randolph Webb (1920-1982), who produced and starred in the popular television series *Dragnet*, it is difficult to see how the mystery novels of Webb could be considered the work of the television star. *Dragnet* and other series produced by television's Jack Webb are noted for a tough, no-nonsense approach to crime that emphasizes the boring and tedious elements of daily police work, debunks the conventions of detective fiction, and makes direct and simple, sometimes simplistic, moral judgments. By contrast, the mystery novels of the Jack Webb discussed here make heavy use of the conventions of detective fiction (unusual characters, elaborate plots, and abundant violence) but are also remarkable for their humor and fre-

quent literary allusions, qualities for which the other Jack Webb is not noted.

THE BIG SIN

The unlikely pair of Father Shanley and Sammy Golden was introduced in *The Big Sin* (1952). Father Shanley, a rose-growing, pipe-smoking priest in his thirties, asks for the help of the police in solving the case of the death of one of his parishioners, Rose Mendez, who was ruled by the police to have committed suicide in the office of a nightclub owner. As a suicide (the "big sin" of the title), Rose may not receive the sacraments of the Church and may not be buried in consecrated ground. Father Shanley is at first attracted by a moral problem. Although Rose was a dancer in the club and lived on the fringes of the gangster world, the priest does not believe that she was a corrupt person or that she would kill herself. At the police station, he tries to arouse the interest of Sammy Golden, a plumpish Jewish detective in his thirties. Not only has Sammy been around the streets of Los Angeles, but he has also been action in World War II in North Africa, Salerno, and Anzio. Although he at first regards the priest's request as motivated by naïve sentimentality, he soon becomes interested in the case; indeed, his sense of morality is as intense as that of the priest, although the detective tries to mask his humanity under a hard shell. When someone attempts to cover up certain aspects of the case, Sammy becomes fully committed to helping Father Shanley. The priest and the detective eventually solve the case, save the reputation of the girl, and uncover a scandal that reaches to the highest level of the city's government. All the while, Father Shanley remains faithful to his priestly obligations; he says a prayer aloud, for example, as he and Sammy do some breaking and entering during their investigations.

The main weakness of the Webb mysteries is their elaborate and sometimes confusing plots. *The Big Sin*, Webb's first book, has a labyrinthine structure that suggests that its author was unsure whether there was enough mystery and so kept adding plot twists. Webb's later entries in the series are sparer and more effective.

THE NAKED ANGEL

The moral problems that Father Shanley encounters are interesting not only from the perspective of a

priest but also from that of an ordinary reader. In *The Naked Angel* (1953), the priest hears police detective Mike Shannon call one of his parishioners a “greaser” and learns of his roughing up Mexican American suspects. Father Shanley believes that he must fight the detective to defend the honor of his flock and teach Shannon a lesson; the priest is good with his fists, an important skill to have considering the trouble that he and Sammy encounter. Father Shanley teaches the neighborhood boys to box and reminds Shannon that a priest started the Golden Gloves tournament. The priest lands some punches, but Shannon knocks him down, though not without regret. Later, confronting in an alley one of the Latin suspects in the naked angel case, Shannon remembers what he did to the priest, hesitates, and in that unguarded moment receives a knife in the belly. In the hospital, he asks to see the priest and dies cursing him, unrepentant, leaving Shanley to consider the practical difficulties of maintaining Christian civility in a fallen world.

The love interests in these mysteries are left for Sammy Golden to handle. (Father Shanley is so genuinely righteous that if he is ever attracted to a woman, the reader never discovers it.) Sammy’s work does not allow him to meet many law-abiding people, so the women with whom he becomes involved are usually on the wrong side of the law or tramps with hearts of gold. When a “good” woman does come along, such as Barbara Mendez, the sister of the murder victim in *The Big Sin*, Sammy considers her out of his league. Even so, Sammy usually becomes fond of one of the women involved in the mystery and by the end of the novel has become very close to her. Nell Wharton, a high-class lady of the evening who appears in *The Big Sin*, falls in love with the detective, and there is talk of marriage between them at its close. When *The Naked Angel* begins, however, Nell is footloose again, and Sammy is carrying the torch for her. In that book, Sammy becomes involved with Myra Merrick, who proves to be part of a scheme to compromise him. Webb finally gave Sammy a more permanent liaison in *The Damned Lovely* (1954), where he meets Elizabeth Songer (with whom he is saved from death by Father Shanley), who becomes a regular girlfriend and appears in several other cases until she departs to get

married. Sammy’s activities beyond normal police procedure sometimes get him in trouble: At the end of *The Naked Angel*, he is demoted to patrolman, and in *The Deadly Sex* (1959), he seriously considers joining a beautiful female thief and fleeing to the Caribbean.

Webb does not stress Sammy’s ethnic background as strongly as that of the priest, although the reader finds in *The Naked Angel* that the detective’s mother and father operate a delicatessen. At the end of *The Brass Halo* (1957), when Father Shanley says that God will listen to the prayers of the murderer caught by the detective team, Sammy remarks, “Your God is a kinder one than mine.”

ONE FOR MY DAME AND MAKE MY BED SOON

Webb gave the priest and detective a rest at the end of the 1950’s before bringing them back for a final appearance in *The Gilded Witch* (1963). Each of the two books between *The Deadly Sex* and *The Gilded Witch*, *One for My Dame* (1961) and *Make My Bed Soon* (1963), concerns different characters, and each allows Webb to explore two of his favorite interests, animals and literature. Rick Jackson, the protagonist of *One for My Dame*, runs a pet shop and has three pets who figure in the plot (a Great Dane, a mynah, and a squirrel monkey). When Rick becomes involved with the kidnapped daughter of a Mafia chieftain, he is able to withstand a considerable amount of punishment by the mob because he had been a prisoner of war in Korea and had already been tortured by experts. Rick is beaten so frequently in this novel that the effect is finally comic, and Webb’s intent may be satiric.

Make My Bed Soon also has a main character who is knowledgeable about animals, Al Duffey. He presents a theory about the crime with which he is involved as part of a discussion of the mating ritual of the Argus pheasant in relation to the theory of evolution as developed by Charles Darwin from his observation of the finches found on the Galápagos Islands. *Make My Bed Soon* is also the most strongly literary of Webb’s books; the title comes from the English ballad “Lord Randal,” and there are references to William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Keats, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, William Blake, and Omar Khayyám. The most literary book before this work had been *The Delicate Darling* (1959), which featured

Juan Delicado, a Cuban poet and revolutionary who was clearly modeled on José Martí; this book not only gave Webb an opportunity to indulge his penchant for Latin characters but also allowed him to smuggle some poetry into a mystery novel. In *One for My Dame*, the kidnapped girl compares Rick Jackson to Don Quixote, whom he greatly resembles, for after he frees the two of them from her captors, she drops back and is recaptured so that he may escape, but he returns to free her again. The emphasis on animals in these two books parallels that in an earlier series of three books, written under the pen name of John Farr, about a zookeeper who is called in to solve crimes apparently committed by animals. Another John Farr book is Webb's only essay in the hard-boiled detective field: In *The Deadly Combo* (1958), a seedy private eye tries to track down the murderer of a jazz trumpet player.

One for My Dame and *Make My Bed Soon* not only suffer from overly elaborate plots but also present another problem—strangers who appear at just the right time to help the hero. In *One for My Dame*, Rick Jackson takes refuge in a model tract house and finds it inhabited by a television actor who helps him and, coincidentally, holds a grudge against the criminals Jackson is chasing. Al Duffey, the hero of *Make My Bed Soon*, is befriended by a Mexican shoeshine boy who knows all about the people trying to kill Duffey and leads him to a boat where the crooks are hiding. Later, Duffey is fished out of the Gulf of California by a man who happens to be from Duffey's army unit in Korea. Furthermore, the plot of *Make My Bed Soon*, which involves a double-crossing woman who helps thieves smuggle cars into Mexico and smuggle drugs out, and which ends in that country, is quite similar to the plot of *The Naked Angel*, which involves a deceptive woman and a used-car dealer who smuggles drugs from Mexico, where that book's climactic scenes occur.

HUMOR

Webb's mysteries are often enlivened by humor. The highlight of *The Deadly Sex* is a fight at a bar: A diamond thief, a corrupt bar owner, Sammy Golden operating undercover, a widow who is trying to get information about the men who killed her police-officer husband, members of a Chicano motorcycle gang, another undercover police officer, and Father Shanley all

arrive at the bar at the same time, with hilarious consequences. In addition to the usual banter between the characters, there are inside jokes that suggest that the author does not take himself too seriously. In *The Naked Angel*, people are watching a film titled *High Mesa*—the title of Webb's only Western novel, published in 1952 and issued under the name Tex Grady because his publishers thought that readers would be skeptical of a Western written by Webb. *The Broken Doll* (1955) has a joke about Sergeant Joe Friday, and in *The Delicate Darling*, Sammy describes a character as "overcome by her Thursday night television." Thursday was the night when *Dragnet* appeared.

Fans of pure mystery are sometimes alienated by the blend of humor, literature, and philosophy that gives the Webb books their distinctive character. Like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, Webb regarded the mystery as merely an instrument for evoking an atmosphere or making a psychological or philosophical point.

James Baird

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

FATHER SHANLEY AND SAMMY GOLDEN SERIES:

The Big Sin, 1952; *The Naked Angel*, 1953 (also known as *Such Women Are Dangerous*); *The Damned Lovely*, 1954; *The Broken Doll*, 1955; *The Bad Blonde*, 1956; *The Brass Halo*, 1957; *The Deadly Sex*, 1959; *The Delicate Darling*, 1959; *The Gilded Witch*, 1963

CY CLEMENTS SERIES (AS FARR): *Don't Feed the Animals*, 1955 (also known as *The Zoo Murders* and *Naked Fear*); *She Shark*, 1956; *The Lady and the Snake*, 1957

NONSERIES NOVELS: *The Deadly Combo*, 1958 (as Farr); *One for My Dame*, 1961; *Make My Bed Soon*, 1963

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *High Mesa*, 1952 (as Grady)

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- Erb, Peter C. *Murder, Manners, and Mystery: Reflections on Faith in Contemporary Detective Fiction—The John Albert Hall Lectures, 2004*. London: SCM Press, 2007. Collected lectures on the role and representation of religion in detective fiction; sheds light on Webb.
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PATRICIA WENTWORTH

Dora Amy Elles Dillon Turnbull

Born: Mussoorie, India; 1878

Died: Camberley, Surrey, England; January 28, 1961

Types of plot: Private investigator; cozy

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Maud Silver, 1928-1961

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

MAUD SILVER, a professional private investigator, unmarried, operates her detective agency from her drawing room after her retirement from a position as governess. Her clients are usually young females who are friends or have been referred by friends. Seemingly acquainted with people throughout England, including the police, she works carefully and efficiently, not only proving the innocence of her clients but also reinstating their inevitable social respectability.

ERNEST LAMB is the woolly and not entirely skillful chief investigator who often works with Miss Silver. His three daughters are all named after flowers.

ETHEL BURKETT is Miss Silver's favorite niece, whose four young children receive most of the bounty from Miss Silver's perpetual knitting.

GLADYS ROBINSON is Miss Silver's other niece. Her complaints about her husband make her less than

pleasant both to Miss Silver and to the reader.

RANDAL MARCH is the chief constable in the county where many of Miss Silver's cases occur. When she worked as a governess, Randal was her favorite child, and their devotion to each other remains.

CONTRIBUTION

The more than seventy novels of Patricia Wentworth, more than half of which feature Miss Silver, Inspector Lamb, or both, have been variously judged anodyne, dependable, and engaging—solid praise for such an extensive canon. Often compared to Jane Marple, Wentworth's heroine, Miss Silver, is enriched with much detail, making her one of the most successfully and clearly drawn private detectives in the genre. She inevitably brings a happy solution to varied maidens-in-distress who have been wrongly accused of crime and stripped of their good names and reputations. Wentworth's style, though in no way poetic or memorable, is sufficient to tell the story, and is, at times, mildly witty. Her plots play fair with the reader, even though they are at times highly unrealistic. They are successful, however, because they create considerable suspense by placing ordinary, decent people from comfortable English settings into extreme danger, a plot device that Wentworth helped to initiate. Like

other prolific mystery writers, notably Agatha Christie, Wentworth wrote novels that are uneven in quality, with the least successful written at the end of her career. Yet her charming, rational heroine, Miss Silver, and her skill in creating suspense ensure Wentworth's lasting popularity as a writer of detective fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Patricia Wentworth was born Dora Amy Elles in Mussoorie, India, in 1878. She was the daughter of a British army officer. She received a high school education at the Blackheath High School in London, where she and her two brothers had been sent to live with their grandmother. When she completed her education, she returned to India, where she married Colonel George Dillon in 1906. He died soon after, leaving her with three stepsons and a young daughter. She returned to England with the four children and established a successful writing career, publishing six well-received novels of historical fiction between 1910 and 1915.

In 1920, Wentworth (then Dillon) married another British army officer, Lieutenant George Oliver Turnbull, and moved to Surrey. He encouraged and assisted her in her writing and served as a scribe while she dictated her stories, the two of them working only during the winter months between 5:00 and 7:00 P.M. In 1923, she began writing mystery novels with *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*; in 1928, she introduced Miss Silver in *Grey Mask*. Then, after an interim of nine years and fifteen mystery novels, she revived the Maud Silver character in 1937 and used her exclusively in her books written between 1945 and 1961. She died on January 28, 1961.

ANALYSIS

Like many other prolific mystery novelists, Patricia Wentworth began her professional career writing in another genre, historical fiction. Unlike her peers, however, she earned a solid reputation as such a writer, with her first novel, *A Marriage Under the Terror* (1910), appearing in ten editions and winning a literary prize. She wrote five more historical novels, which were published annually through 1915. Although technically unremarkable, these early volumes helped

her develop style, plotting technique, and the extensive use of detail in characterization.

When Wentworth began writing mysteries in 1923, she was a polished writer already showing the traits that would become the hallmarks of her entire body of work. In her first novel of detection, *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*, while using generic mystery plot elements, she conjured up considerable suspense and intrigue. In many of her books, the typical English settings of pastoral country village or urban London gain deadly and suspenseful qualities with the emphasis on secret passageways and gangs of disguised criminals who have mysterious though entirely mortal power. Such plot elements are saved from becoming silly and absurd throughout her work because of the suspense they consistently generate.

Wentworth's settings offer the orderly, romanticized views of England that the reader of English mystery novels has come to expect. The small English village, made most famous by Christie, contains within itself all the plot and character requirements. The village green is surrounded by a few small cottages with their requisite gardens, fewer still larger homes built in the Georgian style and filled with unpretentious furniture that, though worn, is very good indeed, a group of small shops containing collections of innocuous items for sale, and the necessary official places, a vicarage and a solicitor's office. Such exaggerated peace in the setting is stressed to create a strong contrast to the strange and nearly diabolical evil that enters and temporarily cankers the village. It is also the peace to which the village returns after Miss Silver has excised the evil. Thus, Wentworth uses setting in a traditional mystery fashion.

On the surface, too, Wentworth's characters resemble those of Christie. First among them is Maud Silver herself, an elderly female whose powers of knitting and detection seem unbounded. Often compared to Jane Marple, she is only superficially similar. Interestingly, Miss Silver's appearance in *Grey Mask* predates that of Miss Marple in *Murder in the Vicarage* (1930) by two years. Wentworth's creation of Miss Silver is highly detailed, perhaps more than that of any other detective hero. These details function to make her comfortably familiar to the reader and often stunningly unpredict-

able to her foes. Nearly everything about her is misleadingly soft, pastel, and chintz, from her light blue dressing gown and pale smooth skin to her little fur tie and ribbon-and-flower-bedecked hat. She is not a fussy elderly lady, however, and, it is important to note, not an amateur. With her detective agency she has established a professional reputation, and her skills are acknowledged both financially and socially.

Other characters in the books, particularly the dozens of damsels in distress, may be fit into categories. This placement must be made with caution, however, to avoid the mistaken conclusion that they are similar, interchangeable, or two-dimensional. The damsels' behavior is a result of more than beauty and virtue; each has her own consistent weaknesses and idiosyncrasies that are not extraneous but instead primary sources for the movement of the plot. The characters who reappear from book to book are also endowed with their own traits, but they gain their entertainment value from the pleasant familiarity the reader soon establishes with them. A newly introduced character may suddenly realize that he or she knows one of Miss Silver's longtime favorites, a niece or a student perhaps, and the requisite order of social class, inherent in the world of the English detective story, is underscored.

Such order is clearly seen in Wentworth's plots. Although plot conflicts range from the unlikely to the downright silly, they succeed because the characters who are placed in outlandish predicaments are themselves down to earth. Hence, manmade monsters threateningly lying in wait for realistic victims are not entirely foolish. Even when the threat seems to be an ordinary person using no mechanical monsters, that person is horrible within; the individual's evil becomes diabolical, almost unmotivated. It is comforting to purge such characters from the ordered society. Considered a pioneer in the use of artful suspense, Wentworth has been compared to Charlotte Armstrong, the most successful writer of suspenseful detective fiction. It is Wentworth's own method, however, to juxtapose the everyday and the horrible in order to sustain suspense and bring consistently satisfying conclusions.

The style of Wentworth's novels, while often pedestrian, serves the plots well, particularly as a result of its nonintrusiveness. Readers pause neither to ad-

mire its brilliance and wit nor to shake their heads over the jarring clichés. In a chatty, second-person style, the nearly omniscient narrator briefs readers on the personalities and motivations of the various characters and also allows them to hear their ongoing thoughts. Short lines of light wit also color the descriptions so that Wentworth's books become something other than reportage.

MISS SILVER COMES TO STAY

In *Miss Silver Comes to Stay* (1949), Wentworth presents a story typical of many of her successful novels. The closed setting of the small village of Melling provides the predictable scenes of a manor house library with doors leading to the garden, cottage parlors, a solicitor's office, and a general store. The proximity and the small number of these scenes enables the reader to imagine easily their location; further, it allows characters to socialize and to be aware of one another's business. The setting also functions as a presentation of the order to which this little village of Melling will return after Miss Silver removes the chaotic element.

The cast of characters, too, is pleasant and predictable. Miss Silver has come to Melling to visit her friend, appropriately named Cecilia Voycey. Acting as a foil to Miss Silver, she is an old school chum who chatters and gossips, while Miss Silver, on the other hand, quietly and methodically solves the murders. The heroine, Rietta Cray, is the damsel in distress, the leading suspect; for variation, however, she is forty-three years old, has big feet, and is often compared to Pallas Athene. In this volume, she becomes the wife of Chief Constable Randal March, the recurring character who is Miss Silver's favorite student from her governess days. He is attractive both in his admiration and affection for Miss Silver and in his common sense and wisdom. His subordinate, Inspector Drake, impetuous and imprecise, acts as his foil. The victim, James Lesiter, a wealthy lord of the manor, is amoral and unscrupulous, thereby arousing sufficient numbers of enemies who become suspects to puzzle the police. Both he and the second victim, Catherine Welby, are unlikely, which ensures that their deaths raise no grief in the other characters or in the reader. A final important suspect is Carr Robertson, Rietta Cray's twenty-eight-

year-old nephew, whom she reared. He and his aunt are the chief victims of misplaced accusations; they are also both involved in their own star-crossed love affairs and are unable to marry their lovers. Thus Miss Silver not only purges the village of evil but also opens the path to love for four deserving people. She herself is drawn with no new strokes. A first-time reader is easily introduced to her knitting, good sense, and prim appearance, while the longtime reader of Miss Silver is seduced with the pleasure of familiarity.

The plot is not outlandish and depends on only one scene of outrageous coincidence, the fact that Marjory Robertson, Carr's first wife, happens to have run away with Lessiter. Otherwise, the plot contains no twists that are not acceptable in the detective-story genre. A weakness of this particular story, however, is the lack of a sufficient number of suspects, and a few more lively red herrings are needed. The murder of Lessiter in his library is accomplished by bashing in his head with a fireplace poker. Ordinarily, men and not women commit murder using such means; still, only four men are possible suspects, one of whom is the loving and loyal Carr. The others are two minor characters, who are not involved enough to have committed the crime, and the real murderer himself. His means, motive, and opportunity for murdering Lessiter are logical but not overwhelming, and the solution is not one that completes a splendid puzzle. The pacing of the plot is classic, with the cast of characters being introduced as future suspects in the first few chapters and the murder scene being described in detail with the curtain drawn on the reader at the necessary moment. It is during this scene that Wentworth creates her standard suspense scene when the evil Lessiter acts as both the aggressor with Rietta and as the victim with the unknown murderer. Following this scene comes the questioning of suspects, the second murder, the discovery of secrets in everyone's closet, and the final revelation. The latter, however, is somewhat carelessly revealed too soon. The finger of blame seems not to point falsely at successive suspects; it simply appears and aims at the real killer. Clearly this work follows a formula plot and utilizes formula characters. Nevertheless, it is ordinarily with the expectation of such formula writing that the reader takes up such a book in the first place.

Although language and style are appropriate, the dialogue is stilted and mannered. Descriptions of the physical are clear but often repetitious. The bloodied sleeve of Carr's raincoat, for example, the most gruesome image in the story, is noted an extraordinary number of times, considering that it is unimportant in the solution to the crime. In a similarly repetitive manner, lovers kiss, embrace, and kneel beside the beloved so many times that a pervasive tone of romance is cast over the entire story. Murder—romanticized, unregretted, and evil—suspensefully committed and covered up, with several pairs of happy lovers united in the end, thanks to Maud Silver: Such is the formula for the entire canon of Wentworth.

Vicki K. Robinson

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

MAUD SILVER SERIES: 1928-1945 • *Grey Mask*, 1928; *The Case Is Closed*, 1937; *Lonesome Road*, 1939; *In the Balance*, 1941 (also known as *Danger Point*); *Miss Silver Deals with Death*, 1943 (also known as *Miss Silver Intervenes*); *The Chinese Shawl*, 1943; *The Clock Strikes Twelve*, 1944; *The Key*, 1944; *She Came Back*, 1945 (also known as *The Traveller Returns*)

1946-1950 • *Pilgrim's Rest*, 1946 (also known as *Dark Threat*); *Latter End*, 1947; *Wicked Uncle*, 1947 (also known as *Spotlight*); *Eternity Ring*, 1948; *The Case of William Smith*, 1948; *Miss Silver Comes to Stay*, 1949; *The Catherine Wheel*, 1949; *The Brading Collection*, 1950; *Through the Wall*, 1950

1951-1961 • *Anna, Where Are You?*, 1951 (also known as *Death at Deep End*); *The Ivory Dagger*, 1951; *The Watersplash*, 1951; *Ladies' Bane*, 1952; *Out of the Past*, 1953; *Vanishing Point*, 1953; *The Benevent Treasure*, 1954; *The Silent Pool*, 1954; *Poison in the Pen*, 1955; *The Listening Eye*, 1955; *The Fingerprint*, 1956; *The Gazebo*, 1956 (also known as *The Summerhouse*); *The Alington Inheritance*, 1958; *The Girl in the Cellar*, 1961

ERNEST LAMB SERIES: *The Blind Side*, 1939; *Who Pays the Piper?*, 1940 (also known as *Account Rendered*); *Pursuit of a Parcel*, 1942

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1923-1930 • *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*, 1923; *The Annam Jewel*,

1924; *The Red Lacquer Case*, 1924; *The Black Cabinet*, 1925; *The Dower House Mystery*, 1925; *The Amazing Chance*, 1926; *Anne Belinda*, 1927; *Hue and Cry*, 1927; *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, 1928; *Fool Errant*, 1929; *Beggar's Choice*, 1930 (also known as *Kingdom Lost*, 1930); *The Coldstone*, 1930

1931-1945 • *Danger Calling*, 1931; *Nothing Venture*, 1932; *Red Danger*, 1932 (also known as *Red Shadow*); *Seven Green Stones*, 1933 (also known as *Outrageous Fortune*); *Walk with Care*, 1933; *Devil-in-the-Dark*, 1934 (also known as *Touch and Go*); *Fear by Night*, 1934; *Blindfold*, 1935; *Red Stefan*, 1935; *Dead or Alive*, 1936; *Hole and Corner*, 1936; *Down Under*, 1937; *Mr. Zero*, 1938; *Run!*, 1938; *Rolling Stone*, 1940; *Unlawful Occasions*, 1941 (also known as *Weekend with Death*); *Silence in Court*, 1945

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *A Marriage Under the Terror*, 1910; *A Little More than Kin*, 1911 (also known as *More than Kin*); *The Devil's Wind*, 1912; *The Fire Within*, 1913; *Simon Heriot*, 1914; *Queen Anne Is Dead*, 1915

POETRY: *A Child's Rhyme Book*, 1910; *Beneath the Hunter's Moon: Poems*, 1945; *The Pool of Dreams: Poems*, 1953

NONFICTION: *Earl or Chieftain? The Romance of Hugh O'Neill*, 1919

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Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *Great Women Mystery Writers: Classic to Contemporary*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Wentworth is compared with other successful and notable female writers of detective fiction.

Kungl, Carla T. *Creating the Fictional Female Detective: The Sleuth Heroines of British Women Writers, 1890-1940*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Study of the fifty years immediately preceding the primary beginning of Wentworth's career; details the evolution of the conventions that Wentworth worked with and the state of the female detective subgenre when she inherited it.

Malmgren, Carl D. *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001. Includes analysis of Wentworth's *The Gazebo*. Bibliographic references and index.

Reynolds, Moira Davison. *Women Authors of Detective Series: Twenty-one American and British Authors, 1900-2000*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001. Examines the life and work of major female mystery writers, including Wentworth.

DONALD E. WESTLAKE

Born: Brooklyn, New York; July 12, 1933

Also wrote as John B. Allan; Curt Clark; Tucker Coe; Timothy J. Culver; J. Morgan Cunningham; Samuel Holt; Richard Stark; Edwin West

Types of plot: Inverted; comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Parker, 1962-1974, 1997-

Alan Grofield, 1964-

Mitch Tobin, 1966-

John Dortmunder, 1970-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

PARKER is a ruthless, brilliant master thief with no first name. Through an elaborate underground criminal network, Parker is recruited or sometimes recruits others for daring thefts: an army payroll, an entire North Dakota town. Meticulous and coldly efficient, he will kill without compunction but abhors needless violence.

ALAN GROFIELD is an aspiring actor, thief, and sometimes associate of Parker. Grofield is more charming, human, and humorous than Parker but equally conscienceless in perpetrating the thefts and scams by which he subsidizes his acting career.

MITCH TOBIN, an embittered former police officer, is guilt-ridden because his partner was killed while Tobin was sleeping with a burglar's wife. Though he tries to hibernate in his Queens home, Tobin grows progressively more involved with other people by reluctantly solving several baffling murders. Eventually, he becomes a licensed private detective.

JOHN DORTMUNDER is a likable two-time loser who lives a quiet domestic life with May, a grocery checker and shoplifter, when not pursuing his chosen career as a thief. Often lured into crimes against his will by Andy Kelp, Dortmunder designs brilliant capers that always go wrong somehow.

ANDY KELP, an incurable optimist, is a car thief who steals only doctors' cars. He is a sucker for gadgets and Dortmunder's longtime associate and jinx.

STAN MURCH is a gifted getaway driver who

monomaniacally discusses roads, routes, detours, and traffic jams, often with his mother, a cabdriver usually referred to as Murch's mom.

TINY BULCHER, a cretinous human mountain, leg breaker, and threat to the peace, is often called "the beast from forty fathoms."

CONTRIBUTION

By combining the intricate plotting characteristic of mystery writing with the deconstructive energies of comedy and satire, Donald E. Westlake invented his own form of crime fiction, the comic caper. Comedy was a significant element in the fiction Westlake published under his own name during the late 1960's, beginning with *The Fugitive Pigeon* (1965). In those novels, harried protagonists bumblingly encounter the frustrations of everyday life while sidestepping dangerous enemies. Somehow, all the negative forces are rendered harmless in the end, as is usual in comedy. In the same period, Westlake, writing as Richard Stark, produced novels featuring master thief Parker, which developed increasingly more complex capers, or "scores."

With *The Hot Rock* (1970), Westlake united these two creative forces in a single work and found his perfect hero/foil, John Archibald Dortmunder. In the series of novels that followed, Dortmunder designs capers as brilliant as Parker's. His compulsive associates follow through meticulously, but these capers never quite succeed. The reader, hypnotized by the intricacy and daring of Dortmunder's planning, watches in shocked disbelief as the brilliant caper inexorably unravels. The laughter that inevitably follows testifies to Westlake's mastery of this unique subgenre.

Some of Westlake's novels have been made into American, English, and French films starring actors as varied as Lee Marvin (*Point Blank*, 1967), Sid Caesar (*The Busy Body*, 1967), Robert Redford (*The Hot Rock*, 1972), Robert Duvall (*The Outfit*, 1973), George C. Scott (*Bank Shot*, 1974), Dom DeLuise (*Hot Stuff*, 1979), Gary Coleman (*Jimmy the Kid*, 1983), Christopher Lambert (*Why Me?*, 1990), Antonio Banderas and

Melanie Griffith (*Two Much*, 1996), and Mel Gibson (*Payback*, 1999). Westlake has also scripted several films, most famously his Academy Award-winning screenplay for *The Grifters* (1990, based on Jim Thompson's novel, directed by Stephen Frears and starring John Cusack, Angelica Huston, and Annette Bening).

Westlake was thrice awarded the Edgar. The first was for his novel *God Save the Mark* (1967); the second for his short story "Too Many Crooks" (1989), which appeared in the August issue of *Playboy*. *The Grifters* won an Edgar for best motion picture screenplay in 1991. The Mystery Writers of America named Westlake a Grand Master in 1993. He received lifetime achievement awards in 1997 from the Bouchercon Mystery Convention and in 2004 from the Private Eye Writers of America.



BIOGRAPHY

Donald Edwin Westlake was born July 12, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Albert Joseph Westlake and Lillian Bounds Westlake. He was educated at Champlain College and the State University of New York at Binghamton and served in the United States Air Force from 1954 to 1956. Westlake married Nedra Henderson in 1957, and they were divorced in 1966. He married Sandra Foley in 1967; they were divorced in 1975. These marriages brought Westlake four sons: Sean Alan, Steven Albert, Tod David, and Paul Edwin. In 1979, he married writer Abigail Adams, with whom he collaborated on two novels, *Transylvania Station* (1987) and *High Jinx* (1987).

After a series of jobs, including six months during 1958-1959 at the Scott Meredith literary agency, Westlake committed himself to becoming a full-time writer in 1959. He quickly became one of the most versatile and prolific figures in American popular literature. His first novel, *The Mercenaries*, published in 1960, was followed by more than sixty other titles, some published under Westlake's own name, some under the pen names Richard Stark, Tucker Coe, Curt Clark, and Timothy J. Culver. During 1967, for example, as Richard Stark he published *The Rare Coin Score* and *The Green Eagle Score*, both featuring the ruthless thief Parker, and *The Damsel*, starring the more charming Alan Grofield. In the same year, *Anarchaos*, a work of science fiction, appeared under the pseudonym Curt Clark; Westlake's name was on the cover of *Philip*, a story for children, and the comic crime novel *God Save the Mark*. The latter received the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America, demonstrating that Westlake's writing was distinguished as well as prolific.

In an interview with *Publishers Weekly* in 1970, Westlake credited his experience in a literary agency for his understanding of the practical aspects of the literary life. His books have enjoyed good sales not only in the United States but also abroad, especially in England.

ANALYSIS

Donald E. Westlake's earliest novels were praised by the influential Anthony Boucher of *The New York*

Times as highly polished examples of hard-boiled crime fiction. Although Westlake wrote only five novels exclusively in this idiom, concluding with the extremely violent *Pity Him Afterwards* in 1964, he did not entirely abandon the mode. The novels he wrote under the pen names Richard Stark and Tucker Coe all display elements of hard-boiled detective fiction. In fact, much of this work invites comparisons to that of Dashell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. The resemblances, however, are much more a matter of tone than of character or structure. Although Tucker Coe's hero, Mitch Tobin, solves murder mysteries, he does so as a discredited police officer rather than as a private detective. The two Richard Stark series are even less traditional, since their protagonists are thieves and murderers. Illustrating the inverted mode of crime fiction, these novels draw the reader into sympathy with, or at least suspended judgment toward, Parker and Alan Grofield. Whether attributed to Stark or Coe, all these novels present a professionally controlled hard edge.

PARKER SERIES

Parker, the master thief, is a remarkable creation in himself: calculating, meticulous, highly inventive, and totally lacking in normal human feelings. In some respects he resembles characters in the earlier novels published under Westlake's own name, but Parker elevates these qualities through exaggeration. For example, murder is easy for Parker, but small talk is difficult, as are most human relations, because Parker sees no practical advantage to such transactions. When involved in a caper, Parker is all business, so much so that he feels no sexual desire until the current heist is completed. Then he makes up for lost time. The purely instrumental nature of this character is further evident in the fact that he has only a surname. According to Francis M. Nevins, Jr., the first novel in the series, *The Hunter* (1962), came so easily to Westlake that he had written more than half the book before he noticed that Parker had no first name. By then, it was too late to add one unobtrusively. Because Parker normally operates under an alias in the series, this lack causes few problems. Parker was scheduled to wind up in the hands of the police at the end of *The Hunter*, and it was Westlake's editor at Pocket Books who recognized the

potential for a series. Westlake easily arranged for Parker to escape and to pursue a successful criminal career.

The basic plot in the Parker novels and in the Grofield series is an elaborate robbery, a heist, caper, or score. In *The Seventh* (1966), for example, the booty is the cash receipts of a college football game; in *The Green Eagle Score*, the payroll of an army base; in *The Score* (1964), all the negotiable assets in the town of Copper Canyon, North Dakota. Daring robberies on this scale require sophisticated planning and criminal associates with highly varied skills, weapons, transportation, electronic equipment, explosives, and perhaps uniforms, false identification, or other forms of disguise. Engaged by the detailed planning and execution of the caper, readers temporarily suspend the disapproval that such an immoral enterprise would normally elicit. Thus, readers experience the release of vicarious participation in antisocial behavior.

Westlake cleverly facilitates this participation through elements of characterization. For example, Parker would unemotionally kill in pursuit of a score, and he can spend half a book exacting bloody revenge for a double cross, but he will not tolerate needless cruelty on the part of his colleagues. Furthermore, he maintains a rigid sense of fair play toward those criminals who behave honestly toward him. His conscientiousness is another winning attribute. In the same way, Grofield appeals to readers because he is fundamentally an actor, not a thief. He steals only to support his unprofitable commitment to serious drama. In addition, although Grofield often collaborates with Parker on a caper, his wit and theatrical charm give him more in common with the comic protagonists of Westlake's *The Spy in the Ointment* (1966) and *High Adventure* (1985) than with the emotionless Parker. Thus, despite being far from rounded characters, both Parker and Grofield offer readers the opportunity to relish guilty behavior without guilt.

Westlake left off writing the Parker series with *Butcher's Moon* (1974), telling interviewers, "Parker just wasn't alive for me." He had wearied of the noir voice. So Parker fans were delighted when, after twenty-three years, he returned in *Comeback* (1997) to steal nearly half a million dollars from a smarmy tele-

vangelist, only to find that a co-conspirator means to kill Parker and keep the loot for himself. A *New York Times* notable book of the year, the novel found a reception so hot that Westlake quickly followed up with a string of Parker best sellers, including *Backlash* (1998), *Flashfire* (2000), and *Breakout* (2002). In *Nobody Runs Forever* (2004), Parker's perfect bank heist disintegrates spectacularly and leaves the more than usually frustrated thief running before the bloodhounds, apparently without possible escape. Refuge does, however, present itself in the opening pages of *Ask the Parrot* (2006), in the person of Tom Lindahl, an embittered whistle-blower who has been quietly plotting revenge. The titular bird is the cause of an uncharacteristically comic episode in this otherwise noir novel.

MITCH TOBIN SERIES

Mitch Tobin comes much closer to filling the prescription for a rounded fictional character, largely because of his human vulnerabilities and his burden of guilt. After eighteen years as a New York City police officer, Tobin was expelled from the force because his partner, Jock Sheehan, was killed in the line of duty while the married Tobin was in bed with Linda Campbell, the wife of an imprisoned burglar. Afterward, consumed by guilt but supported by his understanding wife, Kate, Tobin tries to shut out the world by devoting all his time and energy to building a high brick wall around his house in Queens. The world keeps encroaching, however, in the persons of desperate individuals needing help—usually to investigate a murder—but unable to turn to the police. A crime kingpin, a distant relative's daughter, the operator of a psychiatric halfway house, the homosexual owner of a chic boutique—all seek Tobin's aid. Partly in response to Kate's urging, partly because of his own residual sense of decency, Tobin takes the cases, suffers the resentment and hostility of the police, and solves the murders.

Although Tobin returns to his wall after every foray into the outside world, with each case he clearly takes another step toward reassuming his life, thereby jeopardizing his utility as a series character. In fact, Westlake wrote in the introduction to *Levine* (1984) that Tobin's character development inevitably led to the expiration of the series. In the final novel, *Don't Lie to Me* (1972),

Tobin has a private investigator's license and is regularly working outside his home as night watchman at a graphics museum. Linda Campbell reappears, several murders take place, and a hostile police officer threatens and beats Tobin, but he copes with it all effectively and without excessive guilt—that is to say, he comes dangerously close to becoming the conventional protagonist of crime fiction. At this point, Westlake wisely abandoned the pen name Tucker Coe and turned to more promising subjects.

NONSERIES NOVELS

By 1972, the year of Mitch Tobin's disappearance, Westlake had already published, under his own name, a number of comic novels about crime. Thus, Westlake was already well on his way toward establishing his unique reputation in the field. Appearing at the rate of about one per year, beginning with *The Fugitive Pigeon* in 1965, these novels usually featured a down-to-earth, young, unheroic male hero, suddenly and involuntarily caught in a tangled web of dangerous, often mob-related, circumstances. Charlie Poole, Aloysius Engle, J. Eugene Raxford, and Chester Conway are representative of the group. Though beset by mobsters, police, and occasionally foreign agents, these protagonists emerge, according to comic convention, largely unscathed and usually better off than when the action commenced, especially in their relations with women. In this respect they resemble Alan Grofield, as they do also in their personal charm and their sometimes witty comments on contemporary society. Westlake's achievement in these novels was demonstrated by their continuing favorable reception by reviewers such as Boucher and by the recognition conveyed by the Edgar Allan Poe Award for *God Save the Mark*.

DORTMUNDER SERIES

The novels in the Dortmund series depart from these patterns in various ways. For one thing, John A. Dortmund is not young or particularly witty. Nor is he an innocent bystander: He is a professional thief. Furthermore, he is seldom much better off at the end of the novel than he was at the beginning, and his only romantic attachment is a long-standing arrangement with May, a food market checker, who fell in love with Dortmund when she caught him shoplifting. Finally, Dortmund is not a lone wolf, despite his frequently

expressed wish to be one, but only one member of what is probably the least successful criminal gang of all time.

In the course of the novels making up the series, the membership of this gang varies somewhat, depending on the caper at hand. Andy Kelp steals cars for a living, usually doctors' cars because they come with outstanding optional equipment and can be parked anywhere. Another regular gang member is Stan Murch, a getaway driver who talks obsessively about the shortest drive between two points. He is often accompanied by his mother, a cynical New York cabbie who is usually referred to as Murch's mom. She and May sometimes act as a sort of ladies' auxiliary, making curtains in *Bank Shot* (1972) and taking care of the kidnap victim in *Jimmy the Kid* (1974). The mammoth and very dangerous Tiny Bulcher is also frequently on hand. Sullen, ignorant, and violent, he often frightens his fellow crooks, but he is strong enough to lift or carry anything. Fictional criminals who can be categorized in this way according to their obsessions and character defects seem to belong more to the world of conventional Jonsonian comedy than to the frightening world of contemporary urban America. This disparity permits Westlake to approach disturbing subject matter in these novels without upsetting his readers.

Among the early members of Dortmund's gang are Roger Chefwick, expert on locks and safes and an obsessive model-train hobbyist; Wilbur Howey, who served forty-eight years in prison on a ten-year sentence because he could not resist the temptation to escape; and Herman X, whose criminal activities support both black activist political causes and a sybaritic lifestyle. As the series developed, extra hired hands became less frequent, although the regular planning sessions of Dortmund, Kelp, Stan, and Tiny in the back room of Rollo's beloved and atmospheric bar remained de rigeur.

Dortmund does the planning, even though the original idea for the crime is usually brought to him by someone else, often his old pal and nemesis, Andy Kelp. In *What's So Funny?* (2007), Dortmund is presented with a heist he cannot refuse. An unscrupulous former cop named Eppick has the ability to put Dortmund in prison but instead chooses to use his le-

verage to acquire a valuable chess set through the unwilling services of Dortmund and his associates. Westlake thoroughly milks the comic irony of Eppick's choice of this singularly unlucky thief to pull off a nearly impossible theft.

COMEDY AND MYSTERY

In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), John G. Cawelti argues that detective fiction generally functions as a comic genre because it subdues the threatening elements of life through the powers of mind and structure. Overly elaborate plotting, that is, inevitably triggers some sort of comic reader response. Even before discovering Dortmund in 1970, Westlake showed evidence of a similar conviction in the incredibly complex kidnap caper he created for *Who Stole Sassi Manoon?* (1968). Later, *Help I Am Being Held Prisoner* (1974) develops another non-Dortmund caper of Byzantine complexity, a double bank robbery conducted by prison inmates who have a secret passage to the outside world. In these novels, as in the Dortmund and Parker series, the intricacy of the caper both enthralls readers and distracts them from the negative judgments they would make in real life.

The fundamental difference between the comic and the chilling capers lies in the degree to which Westlake permits realistic circumstances to undermine the design. Paradoxically, the comic variety entails a greater degree of realism. Though Parker must sometimes settle for a fraction of his anticipated haul, Dortmund gets even less. Moreover, the antagonistic forces subverting Dortmund's plans are rarely the sorts of dangerous assassins whom Parker encounters but more mundane elements such as weather, illness, time, and coincidence—in other words, real life. The distinction of Westlake's comic caper novels, therefore, arises from his combining the coherence available only in elaborately constructed fiction with the comic incoherence familiar to readers in their everyday lives. Such comedy, though often howlingly hilarious, is ultimately a serious, highly moral form of literature.

HUMANS AND SMOKE

Westlake's *Humans* (1992) showed just how seriously he intends his comedy. In the 1990's he undertook a number of novels that are neither comedy ca-

pers (though they are occasionally highly comedic) nor hard-boiled. In *Smoke* (1995), Freddie Noon, a burglar, breaks into a secret tobacco research laboratory, swallows some experimental solutions, and finds himself invisible. *Humans*, however, is narrated by an angel, Ananayel, who has been sent by God to arrange the end of the world. "He" encounters obstacles not only from the resident devils, who will do anything to thwart God's will, but also from his growing love for a human woman.

THE AX

The Ax (1997) addressed the phenomenon of the increasing, one might say hasty, layoffs and downsizing in the name of the corporate bottom line that ruined hundreds of thousands of American lives during the period of greatest prosperity that America had ever known. The protagonist, Burke Devore, gets fired from his middle-management position at a paper mill, and his rage drives him to commit murder—in fact to commit mass murder.

KAHAWA

The 1995 republication of 1982's *Kahawa* by Mysterious Press includes an introduction by Westlake that signaled how strongly he indicts the kind of crime about which he writes so (apparently) casually. It also showed that by comparison, even in the Parker novels there were lengths to which he would not go, a barrier beyond which lies soul-blanching horror. *Kahawa* is based on a true story: In Idi Amin's Uganda, a group of white mercenaries stole a coffee-payload railroad train a mile long and made it disappear. Of Uganda after Amin fled, Westlake writes in his introduction, "Five hundred thousand dead; bodies hacked and mutilated and tortured and debased and destroyed; corridors running with blood. . . ." His research, he reported, "changed the character of the story I would tell. As I told my wife at the time, 'I can't dance on all those graves.'" One is reminded of Joseph Conrad's Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), who murmurs as he looks upon civilized England, "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth."

After spending considerable time in those dark places, many a writer turns to absurdism. Westlake's blessing is that, though his outrage seems to grow by the year, he has never lost his sense of humor. Al-

though he documents the atrocities of Uganda, he also creates lovable characters over whom a reader might well weep. Although he plans the end of the world, he dramatizes how precious and valuable are human follies and foible-filled lives. Westlake, after the 1990's, is no longer the madcap he pretends, who remarks, "It probably says something discreditable about me that I put the serious work under a pseudonym and the comic under my own name." Westlake's ever-evolving career has proven that he is not merely a "genius of comedy" or a "heistmeister." He has become one of the truly significant writers of the twentieth century.

Michael Dunne

Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Janet Alice Long

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

PARKER SERIES (AS STARK): *The Hunter*, 1962 (also known as *Point Blank* and *Payback*); *The Man with the Getaway Face*, 1963 (also known as *The Steel Hit*); *The Mourner*, 1963; *The Outfit*, 1963; *The Score*, 1964 (also known as *Killtown*); *The Jugger*, 1965; *The Handle*, 1966 (also known as *Run Lethal*); *The Seventh*, 1966 (also known as *The Split*); *The Green Eagle Score*, 1967; *The Rare Coin Score*, 1967; *The Black Ice Score*, 1968; *The Sour Lemon Score*, 1969; *Deadly Edge*, 1971; *Slayground*, 1971; *Plunder Squad*, 1972; *Child Heist*, 1974; *Butcher's Moon*, 1974; *Comeback*, 1997; *Backflash*, 1998; *Flashfire*, 2000; *Firebreak*, 2001; *Breakout*, 2002; *Nobody Runs Forever*, 2004; *Ask the Parrot*, 2006

ALAN GROFIELD SERIES (AS STARK): *The Damsel*, 1967; *The Blackbird*, 1969; *The Dame*, 1969; *Lemons Never Lie*, 1971

MITCH TOBIN SERIES (AS COE): *Kinds of Love, Kinds of Death*, 1966; *Murder Among Children*, 1968; *Wax Apple*, 1970; *A Jade in Aries*, 1971; *Don't Lie to Me*, 1972

JOHN DORTMUNDER SERIES: *The Hot Rock*, 1970; *Bank Shot*, 1972; *Jimmy the Kid*, 1974; *Nobody's Perfect*, 1977; *Why Me?*, 1983; *Good Behavior*, 1986; *Drowned Hopes*, 1990; *Don't Ask*, 1993; *What's the Worst That Could Happen?*, 1996; *Bad News*, 2001; *The Road to Ruin*, 2004; *Thieves' Dozen*, 2004; *Watch Your Back!*, 2005; *What's So Funny?*, 2007

NONSERIES NOVELS: 1960-1970 • *The Mercenaries*, 1960 (also as *The Smashers*); *Killing Time*, 1961 (also as *The Operator*); *Brother and Sister*, 1961 (as West); *Campus Doll*, 1961 (as West); *Young and Innocent*, 1961 (as West); *Strange Affair*, 1962 (as West); *361*, 1962; *Killy*, 1963; *Pity Him Afterwards*, 1964; *The Fugitive Pigeon*, 1965; *The Busy Body*, 1966; *The Spy in the Ointment*, 1966; *God Save the Mark*, 1967; *Who Stole Sassi Manoon?*, 1968; *Somebody Owes Me Money*, 1969; *Comfort Station*, 1970 (as J. Morgan Cunningham); *Ex Officio*, 1970 (as Timothy J. Culver; also known as *Power Play*)

1971-1980 • *I Gave at the Office*, 1971; *Cops and Robbers*, 1972; *Gangway*, 1973 (with Brian Garfield); *Help I Am Being Held Prisoner*, 1974; *Brothers Keepers*, 1975; *Two Much*, 1975; *Dancing Aztecs*, 1976 (also as *A New York Dance*); *Enough*, 1977; *Castle in the Air*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Kahawa*, 1982; *High Adventure*, 1985; *One of Us Is Wrong*, 1986 (as Holt); *I Know a Trick Worth Two of That*, 1986 (as Holt); *High Jinx*, 1987 (with Abby Westlake); *What I Tell You Three Times Is False*, 1987 (as Holt); *Transylvania Station*, 1987 (with Abby Westlake); *Trust Me on This*, 1988; *The Fourth Dimension Is Death*, 1989 (as Holt)

1991-2003 • *Smoke*, 1995; *The Ax*, 1997; *Corkscrew*, 2000; *The Hook*, 2000; *Put a Lid on It*, 2002; *Money for Nothing*, 2003; *The Scared Stiff*, 2003

SHORT FICTION: *The Curious Facts Preceding My Execution, and Other Fictions*, 1968; *Levine*, 1984; *Tomorrow's Crimes*, 1989; *Horse Laugh, and Other Stories*, 1991; *A Good Story, and Other Stories*, 1999

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Anarchaos*, 1967 (as Clark); *Up Your Banners*, 1969; *Adios, Scheherazade*, 1970; *A Likely Story*, 1984; *Sacred Monster*, 1989; *Humans*, 1992; *Baby, Would I Lie? A Romance of the Ozarks*, 1994

SCREENPLAYS: *Cops and Robbers*, 1972; *Hot Stuff*, 1975 (with Michael Kane); *The Stepfather*, 1987; *The Grifters*, 1990; *Why Me?*, 1990 (adaptation of his novel; with Leonard Mass, Jr.)

TELEPLAYS: *Supertrain*, 1979; *Fatal Confession: A Father Dowling Mystery*, 1987; *Flypaper*, 1993

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Philip*, 1967

NONFICTION: *Elizabeth Taylor*, 1962 (as John B. Allan); *Under an English Heaven*, 1972

EDITED TEXTS: *Once Against the Law*, 1968 (with William Tenn); *Murderous Schemes: An Anthology of Classic Detective Stories*, 1996; *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 2000

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Banville, John, and Donald Westlake. "Lives of Crime: Novelists John Banville and Donald Westlake Compare Notes on the Seedy Worlds That Inspire Their Fiction." Interview by Malcolm Jones. *Newsweek* 149, no. 15 (April 23, 2007): 56. Banville and Westlake talk about using pseudonyms and creating different sorts of novels.

Cannon, Peter. "A Comic Crime Writer." *Publishers Weekly* 254, no. 6 (February 5, 2007): 25. Profile of Westlake traces his history and notes that Westlake writes six days a week on an old Smith-Corona typewriter.

Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Knight sees Westlake as a transitional writer, one whose characters derive from the traditions of earlier fictional private eyes but who live and work in a modern America, with all its broadened understanding of race, gender, and psychology.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. An excellent, all-around trove of information for the reader. Priestman discusses paid assassins, such as Parker, who are a mainstay of the thriller.

Taylor, Charles. "Talking with Donald E. Westlake, Grand Master of Crime." *Newsday*, March 18, 2001, p. B11. Profile focuses on the career of Westlake and his longevity as a writer. Westlake says that he does not use outlines and writes for his readers.

DENNIS WHEATLEY

Born: London, England; January 8, 1897

Died: London, England; November 10, 1977

Types of plot: Espionage; historical; thriller

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Duke de Richleau, 1933-1970

Gregory Sallust, 1934-1968

Julian Day, 1939-1964

Roger Brook, 1947-1974

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

DUKE DE RICHLÉAU, patterned after Athos in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844; *The Three Musketeers*, 1846), was one of Dennis Wheatley's favorite characters. A vivid and colorful figure, the duke is involved with many significant historical events during his long life (in his first appearance, it is 1894 and he is eighteen; he dies in 1960 at the age of eighty-five).

GREGORY SALLUST is a British agent during World War II. Sent behind German lines to assist those in Germany who do not support Adolf Hitler, he attempts to bring about the latter's defeat by various means, including, finally, use of the occult. At the end of the war, Sallust is married to Erika von Epp, his beautiful assistant.

JULIAN DAY has a flair for languages, and during World War II he is assigned to the Interpreter Corps in Cairo; he participates in Great Britain's winning campaigns in North Africa and witnesses his country's losses to the Nazis in Greece.

ROGER BROOK is a special agent for Prime Minister William Pitt. During the period covered by Brook's activities (1783-1815), he participates in espionage involving every important historical event and plays a role in the lives of significant figures such as the Dauphin Louis XVII and Napoleon Bonaparte. He is in love with Georgina Thursby; although married to another, he has an affair with Georgina throughout the series.

CONTRIBUTION

As a very young man, Dennis Wheatley wrote for his own pleasure; his career as a writer began only

when financial need demanded it. Once he found an audience for his writing and saw the possibility for a comfortable income, he became involved in the advertising and marketing of his work. He was both a writer and a businessman, and once he recognized a new market, he adjusted for it.

During World War II, Wheatley's reputation as a writer gained for him the opportunity to serve his country in an official capacity by using his imagination to assist military leaders in devising plans for defeating the enemy. His experiences in this capacity are related in *Stranger than Fiction* (1959).

Wheatley's novels of crime, mystery, and espionage brought enjoyment to many people over a number of years. His attitude about producing fiction for the sake of the readers' pleasure was expressed when he wrote, "From the beginning, I had always believed that the vast majority of my readers wanted to read about people of wealth or beauty, such as they never met in their own lives." Wheatley succeeded as a writer because of his recognition of the needs and desires of those of his period who sought entertainment through reading.

BIOGRAPHY

Dennis Yeats Wheatley, the son of Albert David Wheatley and Florence Baker Wheatley, was born in London on January 8, 1897. In 1908, he was sent for a time to Dulwich College, a private school near where his family lived. From 1909 to 1913 he was a cadet aboard H.M.S. *Worcester*, chosen for him because of its reputation for producing young men of discipline. At the age of sixteen, Wheatley was escorted by his father to Germany, where at Traben-Trarbach he was expected to learn wine making from a local family. In less than a year, he was back in London, where he was put to work in his father's wine shop on South Audley Street, in the Mayfair section of London.

As a boy of seventeen, Wheatley was extremely eager to join the army that was being formed in preparation for war with Germany. He was finally accepted in 1914 in the Royal Field Artillery, City of London Bri-

gade. From 1917 until 1919, he served in France with the Thirty-sixth Ulster Division. His release from service was the result of his having developed bronchitis, having been exposed to the chlorine gas released by the Germans at the front.

Wheatley, after recuperating, went back to work in the family wine business. His first marriage, to Nancy Madelaine Leslie Robinson, lasted for just over nine years and produced a son, Anthony Marius. Wheatley's second wife was Joan Gwendoline Johnstone.

Wheatley began writing as a way of earning a living. His first novel, *Three Inquisitive People*, though written in 1932, was not published until 1940. His second novel, *The Forbidden Territory*, published in 1933, was so well accepted that it set him on a career that was to give him great satisfaction both monetarily and artistically.

During World War II, Wheatley was the only civilian directly commissioned to serve on the Joint Planning Staff of the War Cabinet. For three years during the war, he served as one of Sir Winston Churchill's staff officers. These positions came about because in 1940 and 1941, Wheatley had written a number of papers in which he had explained how the British might transport supplies from the United States via convoys of wooden rafts and how best to confuse the enemy should it invade and occupy England. Wheatley died in London on November 10, 1977.

ANALYSIS

A small tombstone beneath which lie Dennis Wheatley's ashes is inscribed:

Dennis Wheatley
8.1.97-10.11.77
"Prince of Thriller Writers"
RIP

"Prince of Thriller Writers" would have pleased Wheatley—indeed, he may have requested the inscription himself. It was in the pursuit of a life full of those things that princes might take for granted that Wheatley discovered and made use of a talent placing him among the "royalty" of British authors of action-oriented crime, mystery, and spy fiction during and since World War II.

Wheatley began writing seriously when business failures had left him in debt and without prospect for financial recovery. He was in his early thirties when he lost the wine business that had been given him by his dying father. Encouraged by his wife, who had read some of the short stories he had written years before for his own pleasure, he wrote his first novel. About his reaction to his wife's suggestion that he write, Wheatley said in his memoirs:

I had little faith in my ability to do so and even if I did, and succeeded in getting a publisher to take it, I could not hope to make out of it more than about fifty pounds. But having a shot at it would at least take my mind off my worries; so I bought some paper and sat down to write a thriller.

From that beginning, Wheatley made of himself a successful writer, having more than seventy published works to his credit when he died at the age of eighty. He noted in his memoirs that his books had been published in thirty-one languages. He was especially proud of the many letters he had received from people who had enjoyed reading his books while bedridden.

Because he was dependent on the income from his writing, it was very important to Wheatley that his books have wide distribution. He took a serious interest in the demand for books, in the trends in what people were reading, and in the way in which his books were marketed. From the beginning of his writing career, he participated in the plans for advertising. To market his first book, he says:

I had 2000 postcards printed; on one side they had the pictorial end-papers of the book, on the other, alongside the space for the address, simply the title, date of publication and a request that the recipient, if he enjoyed adventure stories, should ask for the book at his library.

This book became a best seller and was reprinted seven times in seven weeks.

Wheatley's first novels were historical thrillers, full of color and drama. As a young man, he had enjoyed reading historical novels; among his favorites were those of Alexandre Dumas, *père*. Wheatley does not, however, share the reputation of Dumas for altering

historical fact to suit his fictional purposes. Wheatley, a lifetime student of history, insisted that the historical information in his novels be absolutely accurate. Not only did he receive critical praise for his novels' historical accuracy, but also he was gratified to learn that his books were used successfully by teachers as a means to encourage their pupils to study history.

THE SCARLET IMPOSTER

In the late 1930's, Wheatley decided that spy stories would be well received, now that there was a war on, and he wrote *The Scarlet Imposter* (1940). Of it, he said:

It was the longest book that I had so far written—172,000 words—and highly topical, as it covered the events of the war during the autumn and even, by remarkable good fortune, a forecast of the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. Moreover, during that first winter of the black-out people were reading as never before.

People were indeed reading more escapist fiction. With England engaged in an all-out defense effort, other popular forms of entertainment were less and less available.

The Scarlet Imposter features Wheatley's Gregory Sallust. For fear that he might find himself stuck with one character and a limited following, as perhaps Sapper had with Bulldog Drummond and Leslie Charteris with the Saint, Wheatley inserted a message at the back of *Faked Passports* (1940), inviting readers to write to him and indicate whether they would prefer more of Sallust or a choice of other fiction subjects. The response favored Sallust; as a result, Wheatley continued his stories featuring the British agent.

OTHER WORKS

Four very popular novels that proved too expensive to continue in production were the so-called crime dossiers. Wheatley was given the idea by his friend Joe Links of including in a mystery novel photographs of real people and clues such as bits of hair, fabric, telegrams, and handwritten letters. The pages that revealed the solution to the mystery were sealed. Inclusion of the physical clues required special packaging, making the product unsuitable for use in lending and subscription libraries. The novels were rather expensive to buy, as well. They serve as evidence, however,

of Wheatley's interest in the marketing aspects of publishing. These "detective games" were *Murder off Miami* (1936), *Who Killed Robert Prentice?* (1937), *The Malinsay Massacre* (1938), and *Herewith the Clues!* (1939).

After the end of World War II, Wheatley was not sure whether he should continue writing espionage stories, because he had had access to secrets, knew the way in which the intelligence system worked, and feared that he would be accused of revealing classified information. The solution was to write espionage stories in a historical setting. Wheatley chose the Napoleonic Wars because they were so different from the most recent one, and Roger Brook became the new hero of espionage fiction.

Wheatley described himself as a hard worker, putting in thirteen or more hours per day, six or seven days a week. Encouraging aspiring young writers, he wrote that anyone willing to work very hard could achieve and maintain the same degree of success that he had enjoyed. He further maintained that he had succeeded in writing many best sellers, in spite of his serious difficulty with spelling and grammar, because of his determination and his understanding of what it took to satisfy the reader. He believed that he had mastered the ability to combine fiction and fact in such a way as to appeal to both emotion and intellect.

Paula Lannert

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

DUKE DE RICICLEAU SERIES: *The Forbidden Territory*, 1933; *The Devil Rides Out*, 1934; *The Golden Spaniard*, 1938; *Three Inquisitive People*, 1940; *Strange Conflict*, 1941; *Codeword—Golden Fleece*, 1946; *The Second Seal*, 1950; *The Prisoner in the Mask*, 1957; *Vendetta in Spain*, 1961; *Dangerous Inheritance*, 1965; *Gateway to Hell*, 1970

GREGORY SALLUST SERIES: *Black August*, 1934; *Contraband*, 1936; *Faked Passports*, 1940; *The Black Baroness*, 1940; *The Scarlet Imposter*, 1940; "V" for *Vengeance*, 1942; *Come into My Parlor*, 1946; *The Island Where Time Stands Still*, 1954; *Traitor's Gate*, 1958; *They Used Dark Forces*, 1964; *The White Witch of the South Seas*, 1968

JULIAN DAY SERIES: *The Quest of Julian Day*,

1939; *The Sword of Fate*, 1941; *Bill for the Use of a Body*, 1964

ROGER BROOK SERIES: *The Launching of Roger Brook*, 1947; *The Shadow of Tyburn Tree*, 1948; *The Rising Storm*, 1949; *The Man Who Killed the King*, 1951; *The Dark Secret of Josephine*, 1955; *The Rape of Venice*, 1959; *The Sultan's Daughter*, 1963; *The Wanton Princess*, 1966; *Evil in a Mask*, 1969; *The Ravishing of Lady Mary Ware*, 1971; *The Irish Witch*, 1973; *Desperate Measures*, 1974

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Such Power Is Dangerous*, 1933; *The Fabulous Valley*, 1934; *The Eunuch of Stamboul*, 1935; *Murder off Miami*, 1936 (also known as *File on Bolitho Blane*); *They Found Atlantis*, 1936; *The Secret War*, 1937; *Who Killed Robert Prentice?*, 1937 (also known as *File on Robert Prentice*); *The Malinsay Massacre*, 1938; *Uncharted Seas*, 1938; *Herewith the Clues!*, 1939; *Sixty Days to Live*, 1939; *The Man Who Missed the War*, 1945; *The Haunting of Toby Jugg*, 1948; *Star of Ill-Omen*, 1952; *Curtain of Fear*, 1953; *To the Devil—a Daughter*, 1953; *The Ka of Gifford Hillary*, 1956; *The Satanist*, 1960; *Mayhem in Greece*, 1962; *Unholy Crusade*, 1967; *The Strange Story of Linda Lee*, 1972

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Mediterranean Nights*, 1942 (revised 1963); *Gunmen, Gallants, and Ghosts*, 1943 (revised 1963)

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

SCREENPLAY: *An Englishman's Home (Madmen of Europe)*, 1939 (with others)

NONFICTION: *Old Rowley: A Private Life of Charles II*, 1933 (also known as *A Private Life of Charles II*); *Red Eagle: A Life of Marshall Voroshilov*, 1937; *Invasion*, 1938; *Blockade*, 1939; *Total War*, 1941; *The Seven Ages of Justerini's*, 1949 (revised as *1749-1965: The Eight Ages of Justerini's*, 1965); *Alibi*, 1951; *Stranger than Fiction*, 1959; *Saturdays with Bricks and Other Days Under Shell-Fire*, 1961;

The Devil and All His Works, 1971; *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley—The Young Man Said, 1897-1914*, 1977; *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley—Officer and Temporary Gentleman, 1914-1919*, 1978; *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley—Drink and Ink, 1919-1977*, 1979; *The Deception Planners: My Secret War*, 1980

EDITED TEXTS: *A Century of Horror Stories*, 1935; *A Century of Spy Stories*, 1938; *Uncanny Tales*, 1974

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Cabell, Craig. *Dennis Wheatley: Churchill's Storyteller*. Staplehurst, Kent, England: Spellmount, 2006. Tells the story of Wheatley's experiences during World War II, when he worked for the British Joint Planning Staff, writing fake official documents that would then be fed to Nazi spies.

Hedman, Iwan. "Dennis Wheatley: A Biographical Sketch and Bibliography." *The Armchair Detective* 2 (April, 1969): 227-236. Lists Wheatley's novels alongside a discussion of his life and work.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel—A History*. 3d ed. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993. Symons, a successful mystery author in his own right, argues that mystery fiction evolved over time from being concerned with the figure of the detective and the methods of detection to a primary focus on the nature of crime and criminality. Sheds light on Wheatley's work.

Wheatley, Dennis. *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley*. 3 vols. London: Hutchinson, 1977-1979. Primarily focused on Wheatley's childhood and youth: The first two volumes of this three-volume memoir cover the first twenty-two years of the author's life, while the remaining years are relegated to the third volume.

VICTOR WHITECHURCH

Born: Norham, England; March 12, 1868

Died: England; May 25, 1933

Types of plot: Amateur sleuth; police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

Victor Whitechurch's crime novels were written when England was not at war and when the prospect of war seemed remote. During this welcomed peace, the detective story form no doubt provided amusement and stimulation for Whitechurch as well as for his readers, yet his bucolic settings and the sturdy country folk about whom he wrote with such grace seemed hardly suited to violent crime. Perhaps having no taste for tales of brutal injury, he chose to dispense with the horror in the first chapter, in which he always revealed the crime's occurrence. From that point he could proceed, in the remaining chapters, with the less emotional work of bringing the guilty to justice.

Whitechurch's method of plot development, confided to the reader in the foreword of the novel, no doubt made writing each all the more pleasurable and challenging. By revealing his method, Whitechurch gives the reader a special participation in the work and a more intense interest in each turn of events.

BIOGRAPHY

Victor Lorenzo Whitechurch was born in Norham, England, on March 12, 1868. His parents were William Frederick Whitechurch and Matilda Cornwall Whitechurch. As a youth, he attended Chichester Grammar School in Sussex, England, and received his licentiate of theology from Chichester Theological College, an affiliate of Durham University. In October, 1896, he was married to Florence Partridge. They had one daughter.

Whitechurch spent most of his life in rural England, primarily in towns and villages to the west and northwest of London in the counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. As an Anglican churchman, he served with varying church titles, first as curate (parson), then as senior curate, vicar, dean, and rector, in various country parishes. Late in his life, he was named Honorary Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. His

home was Stone Vicarage, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England. Whitechurch died May 25, 1933.

ANALYSIS

Who is better qualified than a rural Anglican churchman to write novels of crime detection whose settings are quaint English villages? There surely can be no one with more experience in the observation of behavior and with more intimate knowledge of the secret pain of his contemporaries than the sympathetic parson of a country church. During the latter part of his thirty-year avocation as a writer, Victor Whitechurch became fascinated with crime fiction. His service and experience in the church no doubt provided his imagination with abundant material for character development, and once his first crime novel was published, his work of this type soon became well accepted by readers and critics alike.

THE CRIME AT DIANA'S POOL

Whitechurch had an unusual approach to plot development, one that he was not in the least hesitant to share with his readers. In the foreword to *The Crime at Diana's Pool* (1927), he confides that his method was to write the first chapter without knowing "why the crime had been committed, who had done it, or how it was done." He set himself this task, he says, because in a true crime those in charge of investigation are in the same position and must work their way through the clues as they are uncovered or as they appear. Whitechurch suggested that after reading the first chapter, the reader might close the book and devise his own plot, then compare the result with that of the author. One can assume, however, that very few of Whitechurch's readers would be willing to forgo the pleasure of proceeding through the novel, once begun, in favor of working out a separate plot. In the first chapter of *The Crime at Diana's Pool*, the host of a summer garden party is found dead in his own pool, a knife having penetrated his green coat, which had originally been worn by a musician hired for the party. After such a beginning, one would find it difficult to put the novel aside.

Whitechurch was obviously familiar with life in English villages and thoroughly knowledgeable regarding the people of whom he wrote. Included in each novel is a police investigator who is intelligent, cautious, and conscientious. There is often a vicar, who may serve as the amateur sleuth. (In *The Crime at Diana's Pool*, the vicar, through careful, reasoned study, deduces the identity of the murderer and provides the proof necessary to arrest him.) An attractive couple provides the token wearisome romance. Other characters often present are the village doctor, a lawyer or two, town tradesmen, members of the propertied class, and their gardeners and other servants (in one novel, the butler is the culprit). Men are in the positions of authority, and women stay in their places. Diana Garforth, in *The Crime at Diana's Pool*, is described as follows:

Diana was four-and-twenty, essentially a type of the English country girl. She played a good game of golf and tennis, rode to hounds, drove a car, and was game for a tenmile walk over the hills when the mood took her. Added to this she was a first-rate housekeeper, and "ran" "Beechcroft" admirably. Also she was, if not exactly brilliant, a well-informed girl, and had had the advantage of being educated at a school modeled on the lines of a public school, with nothing "finicky" in its atmosphere. She was good company, frank and natural and without affectation.

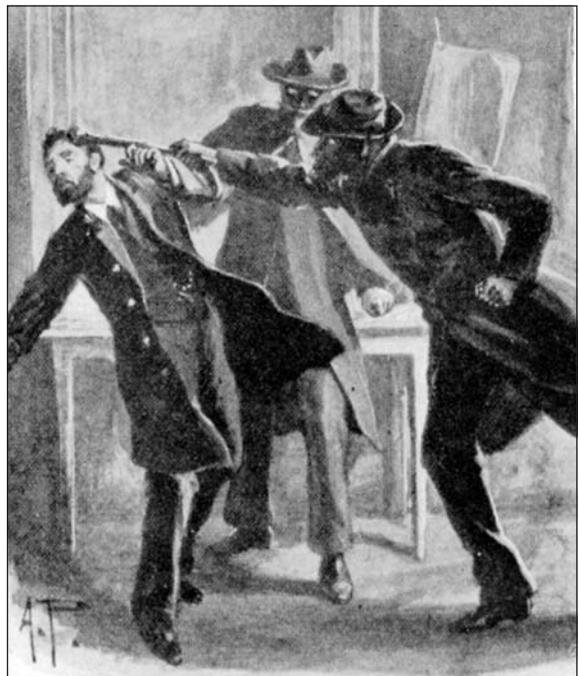
By and large, all the characters are unpretentious and are described sympathetically and with humor. Their habits of life and mind would not have been atypical, surely, of those living out their lives in a small English village of the period.

After the crime is described in chapter 1, the story moves quietly and without haste. The reader is kept well abreast of the investigation as it proceeds toward the solution, which is achieved through the accumulation of evidence. Questions arise and are answered one by one, as a chain of connections is exposed. Predictably, the first and perhaps the second party arrested will not prove to be guilty, for at the time of arrest there is still too far to go in the novel. Plenty of time remains for the suspect(s) to be cleared, and the reader knows from the start the fruitlessness of pursuing a solution based on evidence incriminating those so early arrested.

SHOT ON THE DOWNS

The end is not too predictable, except that the solution will be highly moral, but it is not always satisfactory to the reader. The reader of *Shot on the Downs* (1927) would prefer that almost any character other than the one chosen by the author would have committed the crime. The murderer is perhaps the most sympathetic and most vulnerable character in the novel, and the reader is left with a sense of loss, even though, technically, justice has been served. Whitechurch's more typical final chapters are more satisfying: In most cases, the crime has been committed by a recent comer to the town, one whose background and character are not known and whose values prove to be not at all similar to those of the villagers.

Whitechurch takes the opportunity, when he considers it appropriate, to insert a bit of instruction into his stories. Although this practice dates his novels, it adds a certain charm, if one does not view these passages as pedantry. In *The Crime at Diana's Pool*, Vicar Westerham is used as a means to give the reader in-



Victor Whitechurch also wrote stories about a railway detective named Thorpe Hazell; this picture by Alfred Paget illustrated "A Station Master's Story," which Whitechurch published in *The Strand Magazine* in 1899.

sight into the professional life of a parish parson. This passage may have served also to appease Whitechurch's own congregation, who may have found fault with the time and attention he devoted to his writing, believing that it was done at their expense:

The next morning the Vicar was busy in his study over the forthcoming fête and sale of work. He had settled down to a full morning's work. Many people, because they only come across the parson on Sundays, imagine that his profession only entails one day per week of real work, but in this they are greatly mistaken. Often the work on a week day is much more exacting than the taking of services or preaching on Sundays. And the parson is rarely given credit for the many hours he spends in his study over a variety of matters that would puzzle many a business man.

THE FLOATING ADMIRAL

For *The Floating Admiral* (1931), Whitechurch wrote only the first of the twelve chapters. The remaining eleven, along with the introduction, prologue, and appendixes, were written by fellow members of the Detection Club. The method of construction of the novel was described by Dorothy L. Sayers in the introduction: "Each contributor tackled the mystery presented to him in the preceding chapters without having the slightest idea what solution or solutions the previous authors had in mind." Each of the participants, who included Agatha Christie, Henry Wade, and John Rhode, was required to have a definite solution in mind and to present it, along with the manuscript for his or her assigned chapter, for publication. All the solutions (except that of Whitechurch and the author of the second chapter) are provided in an appendix to the novel. The project provided amusement for the participants and afforded them exposure among readers who might not previously have known the work of them all.

Whitechurch's crime novels are gracefully written and are among the better mysteries of their time. His respect for the reader's intelligence makes his novels satisfying to read, interest being heightened by his admittedly unorthodox method of plot development.

Paula Lannert

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: *The Templeton Case*, 1924; *Shot on the Downs*, 1927; *The Crime at Diana's Pool*, 1927; *The Robbery at Rudwick House*, 1929; *Murder at the Pageant*, 1930; *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Murder at the College*, 1932 (also known as *Murder at Exbridge*)

SHORT FICTION: *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*, 1912 (also known as *Stories of the Railway*); *The Adventures of Captain Ivan Koravitch*, 1925

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *The Course of Justice*, 1903; *The Canon in Residence*, 1904; *The Locum Tenens*, 1906; *Concerning Himself: The Story of an Ordinary Man*, 1909; *Off the Main Road: A Village Comedy*, 1911; *A Downland Corner*, 1912; *Left in Charge*, 1912; *Three Summers: A Romance*, 1915; *If Riches Increase*, 1923; *A Bishop out of Residence*, 1924; *Downland Echoes*, 1924; *The Dean and Jecinora*, 1926; *Mixed Relations*, 1928; *First and Last*, 1929; *Mute Witnesses: Being Certain Annals of a Downland Village*, 1933

SHORT FICTION: *The Canon's Dilemma, and Other Stories*, 1909

NONFICTION: *Parochial Processions: Their Value and Organization*, 1917; *Concerning Right and Wrong: A Plain Man's Creed*, 1925; *The Truth in Christ Jesus*, 1927

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barzun, Jacques, and Wendell Hertig Taylor. *A Catalogue of Crime*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. List, with commentary, of the authors' choices for the best or most influential examples of crime fiction. Whitechurch's work is included and evaluated.
- Cox, Michael. Introduction to *Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection: An Oxford Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Relates Whitechurch's fiction to the preceding Victorian culture from which it emerged.
- Keating, H. R. F., ed. *Whodunit? A Guide to Crime, Suspense, and Spy Fiction*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982. General overview of the conventions and practitioners of British and American

crime fiction; sheds light on Whitechurch's works. Kestner, Joseph A. *The Edwardian Detective, 1901-1915*. Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000. Reads Whitechurch as emerging from and continuing the Edwardian tradition in detective fiction. Steinbrunner, Chris, and Otto Penzler, eds. *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Analyzes Whitechurch's distinctive

contributions to British detective fiction between the wars.

Whitechurch, Victor. Foreword to *The Crime at Diana's Pool*. New York: Duffield, 1927. The author reveals his method to his readers in this foreword, allowing them a glimpse behind the curtain before the novel has even begun.

PHYLLIS A. WHITNEY

Born: Yokohama, Japan; September 9, 1903

Types of plot: Psychological; cozy; amateur sleuth; historical

CONTRIBUTION

Phyllis A. Whitney is one of the few mystery writers to excel in both adult and juvenile mysteries. In the sixty years after her first book appeared, she published seventy-six novels, twenty of them young-adult mysteries and thirty-nine of them adult mysteries. There is no incongruity in the Virginia State Reading Association presenting its Young Readers Award for 1997 to Whitney's adult novel *Daughter of the Stars* (1994), as her mysteries can be read by every member of the family. Neither the romance nor the crime is graphic, and her characters inhabit a moral universe. Often an unsolved murder turns out to be a crime of passion or an accidental death, not a premeditated murder or a killing in cold blood. Keeping secrets has upset the balance of the universe. Once those involved give up their secrets, remorse rights the balance between right and wrong.

Whitney holds her readers by telling a good story. She spins a plot full of action and unexpected developments while allowing her heroine to grow emotionally and psychologically. Whitney is known for using a location as if it were a character. Her thorough research of a location and its history provides not only a colorful background but also important clues to the solution of the mystery. Whitney's novels have been consistently ranked as best sellers throughout her career and have been published in twenty-four languages.

BIOGRAPHY

Phyllis Ayame Whitney was born on September 9, 1903, to Charles Joseph Whitney and Mary Lillian Mandeville. Her American-born parents had been living in Asia. When their daughter was born in Yokohama, they gave her a middle name that means "iris" in Japanese. After her father died in 1918, Whitney and her mother returned to the United States and lived in California and Texas until her mother's death in San Antonio in 1922. Whitney lived with her aunt in Chicago, where she graduated from high school in 1924. She married George Garner a year later. In 1928, she sold her first short story to the *Chicago Daily News*. She wrote in her spare time while she worked in the children's room of the Chicago Public Library and later in area bookstores. Her daughter, Georgia, was born in 1934. Whitney had published more than one hundred short stories before her first book, the young-adult novel *A Place for Ann* (1941), was published.

Although in 1943 Whitney published an adult mystery, *Red Is for Murder* (later reissued as *The Red Carnelion*), in her early career she was primarily a writer of young-adult novels and mysteries. In three of her earliest books, *A Star for Ginny* (1942), *Ever After* (1943), and *The Silver Inkwell* (1945), her young female protagonists work toward a career in publishing, two as illustrators of children's books and one as an author. In 1942, Whitney began a four-year stint as a children's book editor for the *Chicago Sun*. She held the same position on *The Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1947 to 1948. In 1945, she taught children's fiction

writing at Northwestern University. Two years later, she produced a nonfictional book, *Writing Juvenile Fiction*, which she updated in 1976. She taught a similar course for ten years at New York University between 1947 and 1958.

In 1945, Whitney and Garner divorced. Two years later, she published the most prescient of her young-adult novels, *Willow Hill*. The book explores the reaction of a young white girl and her friends to the integration of a neighborhood housing project. The topic was so controversial that Whitney had to search for a publisher, but the book won a Youth Today contest as well as Book World's Spring Book Festival Award. Seven years later, she tackled a similar subject in *A Long Time Coming* (1954), when her young heroine attempts to heal the rift between Hispanic migrant workers and the residents of the Midwest farm town that employs them.

Whitney married Lovell F. Jahnke in 1950. The couple lived on Staten Island, New York, for twenty years, and until Jahnke's death in 1973, they traveled together to places that became locations in Whitney's books. By 1950, Whitney had begun alternating between young-adult novels and young-adult mysteries, publishing approximately one per year. With the publication of *The Quicksilver Pool* (1955), Whitney added adult mysteries to this rotation, and by 1960, she was primarily alternating between adult and young-adult mysteries, often using a similar setting for each. For example, the young-adult mystery *Secret of the Samurai Sword* (1958) and the adult mystery *The Moonflower* (1958) both take place in Kyoto, Japan; *The Secret of the Tiger's Eye* (1961) and *Blue Fire* (1961) take place in South Africa; *The Secret of the Spotted Shell* (1967) and *Columbella* (1966) take place in the Virgin Islands.

In 1961, *The Mystery of the Haunted Pool* (1960) won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for best juvenile mystery. Three years later *The Mystery of the Hidden Hand* (1963) won the same award as well as the 1963 Sequoia Children's Book Award. By 1975, when Whitney was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, she had published twenty adult mysteries and nineteen young-adult mysteries. In 1988, the Mystery Writers of America designated Whitney a Grand Master of the genre. Two years later, she received the Malice Domes-

tic Award for lifetime achievement. In 1995, the Society of Midland Authors presented her with a lifetime achievement award.

ANALYSIS

In the essentially moral and virtuous worlds of Phyllis A. Whitney's adult and young-adult mysteries, secrets, thefts, or murders are temporary departures from the norm. Once the air is cleared, the characters can live in peace. For example, in the *Mystery of the Hidden Hand*, Grandfather Thanos confesses his crime and returns the stolen artifact to the museum authorities. In *Amethyst Dreams* (1997), the housekeeper and daughter-in-law confess to Hallie Knight and the murdered girl's father that they covered up what was actually an accidental drowning. Whitney's books are as much *Bildungsromane* as they are clever, fast-paced mysteries. Whitney's final young-adult mystery appeared in 1977, and the young-adult worlds she created seem dated: The young people dress for dinner and respect their elders, and their elders never miss a chance to teach them a life lesson. However, like the adult mysteries, the characters reflect the four decades of change in the roles available for women in the United States and abroad that Whitney witnessed. Her early heroines might wear kid gloves, but they are as independent as the later heroines. The heroines in both the adult and young-adult novels are determined to find themselves as well as save a family, a marriage, or a home whose harmony is threatened by secrets.

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED POOL

Mystery of the Haunted Pool (1960) is Whitney's seventh young-adult mystery and the first to win an Edgar Award. It typifies Whitney's young-adult mysteries. Most of these mysteries are narrated in the third person from the point of view of the protagonist, a teenage girl who has been separated from her family. In this story, Susan Price moves to upstate New York from New York City to live with her aunt for a month. Her mother, her ailing father, and her three brothers will follow if she can help her aunt persuade a former Hudson River boat captain to rent his family's mansion to them. The mansion, like the spotted shell or golden horn of later mysteries, holds the clue to a family secret. In this story, the secret is the fate of priceless

jewels supposedly lost at sea a century ago by the family patriarch who had been hired to deliver them. Repaying the debt impoverished the family for generations; therefore, when the captain's grandson is hit by a car, the captain must give up his home to pay the medical bills. Susan is the touchstone. She hears the bumps in the night, sees the face in the pool, and recovers the beads that provide clues to the location of the treasure. She is also the glue that holds the families together. She befriends the captain and his grandson as well as the mysterious neighbor who is also bent on discovering the family secret and perhaps destroying the fragile bond between generations. Her older brother arrives in time to help her, but she is the one who solves the mystery, reunites her family, and brings the captain and his grandson closer.

MYSTERY OF THE HIDDEN HAND

Mystery of the Hidden Hand is Whitney's tenth young-adult mystery and the second to win an Edgar Award. It typifies Whitney's use of exotic locations and pacing that keeps the reader guessing. An American teenager, Gale Tyler, her mother, and her brother Warren visit an aunt and cousins they have never met who live on the Island of Rhodes. Gale is the lightning rod. She sees a caped figure, discovers a guest with a grudge against their cousin's family, and helps reconcile her cousins with their grandfather and owner of the family business, Pegasus Pottery. Gale's new cousins and their grandfather keep secrets from each other, the deepest being the ancient marble hand hidden in Grandfather Thanos's study. Whitney sets up the question of antiquities theft with descriptions of the beauty of the landscape, the villages, and the island's history as well as the ruins at Camiros and Lindos that help the reader sympathize with Grandfather Thanos's desire to keep the exquisite object he discovered in his youth during an archaeological dig. Through Gail, Whitney reveals her character's secrets bit by bit. For example, Gale discovers that one of her new cousins is the caped figure, but she does not discover until much later who signaled the figure from the house below the hotel. Once she finds out the identity of the signaler, she must work harder to find out why he was signaling.

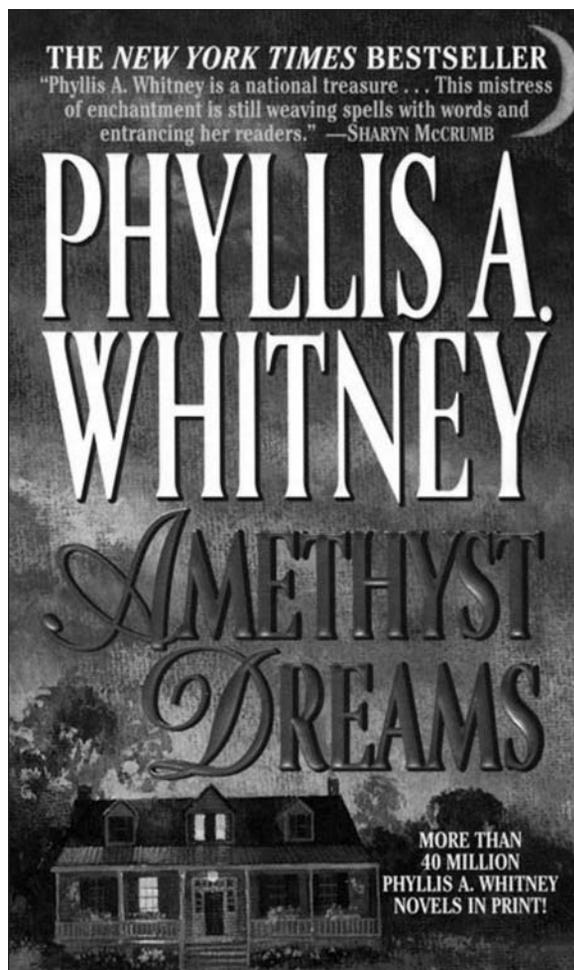
SEVEN TEARS FOR APOLLO

Seven Tears for Apollo (1963) is the adult compan-

ion book to *Mystery of the Hidden Hand*. It is also set in Rhodes and deals with antiquities theft. Dorcas Brandt is an American of Greek descent whose manipulative husband had grown up in Rhodes. Dorcas suspects him of antiquities theft. When she believes he has died in a plane crash, she takes their four-year-old daughter and returns to Rhodes to find the truth. Dorcas is terrorized by her husband, who ransacks her rooms, scrawls eyes on walls and mirrors, and leaves cryptic messages. She teeters on the brink of mental collapse as her friends doubt her suspicions, but she is also strong enough to persist. Again, Whitney reveals bit by bit how secrets distort and corrupt relationships. Whitney uses Dorcas's status as a stranger to present the reader with stunning descriptions of the scenery as well as the ancient and contemporary history behind the locations and the art treasures. Whitney draws on every mother's fear for her child's safety to heighten the suspense. History and kidnapping converge when Dorcas discovers that her husband has been stealing ancient sculptures and replacing them with copies. Finally, all parties involved in the theft have the opportunity to confess before poetic justice ends the tale as Dorcas's husband is killed by one of the sculptures he was stealing, freeing Dorcas to begin a new life with a new man. This book is a particularly striking example of how integral Whitney's research is to the mystery. For example, Dorcas cannot solve the riddle of the scrawled eyes without knowing about the owl as the symbol of the goddess Athena.

AMETHYST DREAMS

Amethyst Dreams is Whitney's seventy-sixth adult novel and follows a well-established pattern. The narrator is a woman who is young, but not too young. She is summoned to a place where she has never been before, and her presence sets off a chain of events that compel her to solve a mystery. In this story, Hallie Knight is summoned by the ailing father of her college friend to the family mansion on Topsail Island to discover the truth about his daughter's mysterious disappearance from her bedroom two years before. Like many of Whitney's heroines, Hallie is in emotional turmoil: She is fleeing the breakup of her marriage. Throughout the novel, she measures her own situation against that of the broken marriages of the characters



around her. Without being clairvoyant, like many of the heroines of Whitney's later novels, she is the psychic touchstone. She can sense the negative energy of the pool, later revealed as the murdered girl's final resting place, as well as that of the housekeeper, later revealed as complicit in covering up the murder. Readers are attracted as much by the heroine scaring herself with her feelings of impending doom as they are by the knowledge that all will be resolved in the end.

Cecile Mazzucco-Tham

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVELS: 1943-1960 • *Red Is for Murder*, 1943 (re-issued as *The Red Carnelian*, 1965); *The Quicksilver Pool*, 1955; *The Trembling Hills*, 1956; *Skye Cameron*, 1957; *The Moonflower*, 1958; *Thunder Heights*, 1960

1961-1970 • *Blue Fire*, 1961; *Window on the Square*, 1962; *Seven Tears for Apollo*, 1963; *Black Amber*, 1964; *Sea Jade*, 1965; *Columbella*, 1966; *Silverhill*, 1967; *Hunter's Green*, 1968; *The Winter People*, 1969; *Lost Island*, 1970

1971-1980 • *Listen for the Whisperer*, 1972; *Snowfire*, 1973; *The Turquoise Mask*, 1974; *Spindrift*, 1975; *The Golden Unicorn*, 1976; *The Stone Bull*, 1977; *The Glass Flame*, 1978; *Domino*, 1979; *Poinciana*, 1980

1981-1990 • *Vermillion*, 1981; *Emerald*, 1983; *Rainsong*, 1984; *Dream of Orchids*, 1985; *Flaming Tree*, 1986; *Silversword*, 1987; *Feather on the Moon*, 1988; *Rainbow in the Mist*, 1989; *The Singing Stones*, 1990

1991-1997 • *Woman Without a Past*, 1991; *The Ebony Swan*, 1992; *Star Flight*, 1993; *Daughter of the Stars*, 1994; *Amethyst Dreams*, 1997

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Mystery of the Gulls*, 1949; *The Island of Dark Woods*, 1951 (re-issued as *Mystery of the Strange Traveler*, 1967); *Mystery of the Black Diamonds*, 1954; *Mystery on the Isle of Skye*, 1955; *Mystery of the Green Cat*, 1957; *Secret of the Samurai Sword*, 1958; *Mystery of the Haunted Pool*, 1960; *Secret of the Tiger's Eye*, 1961; *Mystery of the Golden Horn*, 1962; *Mystery of the Hidden Hand*, 1963; *Secret of the Emerald Star*, 1964; *Mystery of the Angry Idol*, 1965; *Secret of the Spotted Shell*, 1967; *Secret of Goblin Glen*, 1968; *The Mystery of the Crimson Ghost*, 1969; *Secret of the Missing Footprint*, 1969; *The Vanishing Scarecrow*, 1971; *Mystery of the Scowling Boy*, 1973; *Secret of Haunted Mesa*, 1975; *Secret of the Stone Face*, 1977

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Place for Ann*, 1941; *A Star for Ginny*, 1942; *A Window for Julie*, 1943; *The Silver Inkwell*, 1945; *Willow Hill*, 1947; *Ever After*, 1948; *Linda's Homecoming*, 1950; *Love Me, Love Me Not*, 1952; *Step to the Music*, 1953; *A Long Time Coming*, 1954; *The Fire and the Gold*, 1956; *Creole Holiday*, 1959; *Nobody Likes Trina*, 1972

NONFICTION: *Writing Juvenile Fiction*, 1947; *Writing Juvenile Stories and Novels*, 1976; *Guide to Fiction Writing*, 1982

BIBLIOGRAPHY

DuBose, Martha Hailey, with Margaret Caldwell Thomas. *Women of Mystery: The Lives and Works of Notable Women Crime Novelists*. New York: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2000. These essays look at the lives and works of early writers such as Mary Robert Rinehart, Golden Age writers such as Agatha Christie, and modern writers such as Mary Higgins Clark. While Whitney is not covered, the biographies of women of her generation shed light on her work.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory, ed. *Women Times Three: Writers, Detectives, Readers*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995. These essays on books about female detectives authored by women, while not discussing Phyllis Whitney directly, shed light on her fiction, as

they cover both older and newer masters of the genre.

Whitney, Phyllis. *Guide to Fiction Writing*. Boston: The Writer, 1982. Whitney's guide, intended to instruct would-be authors, reveals a great deal about her motivations for writing and her process.

_____. "Letter to a Young Writer." *Writer* 120, no. 2 (February, 2007): 38-39. In her letter to a young writer, she urges the writer not to be too self-critical and to produce that first novel, whether great or not.

_____. Phyllis A. Whitney: The Official Web Site. <http://www.phyllisawhitney.com>. The official Web site for Phyllis Whitney. Contains synopses of all of her books as well as information about the author.

CHARLES WILLEFORD

Born: Little Rock, Arkansas; January 2, 1919

Died: Miami, Florida; March 27, 1988

Also wrote as Will Charles; W. Franklin Sanders

Types of plot: Hard-boiled; comedy caper

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Hoke Moseley, 1984-1988

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTER

HOKE MOSELEY is a cynical, grizzled Miami police detective who smokes Kool cigarettes and drives a battered 1973 Pontiac LeMans. A Vietnam veteran, toothless and prematurely aging, Hoke is the divorced father of two teenage daughters. As a police officer, he is hard-boiled and has his own code of honor but is not above scrounging free drinks when he can.

CONTRIBUTION

Charles Willeford's colorful career, which included military service, university teaching, journalism, and writing, crested during the 1980's, when his Hoke Moseley crime novels, set in Miami, gained both criti-

cal and popular acclaim. However, success came late to Willeford, and he died only days after the release of *The Way We Die Now*, the fourth and last novel in the Moseley series. Known as the father of the south Florida crime novel, Willeford captured the sun, sleaze, and violence of the Miami region, inspiring other writers such as Carl Hiaasen and James W. Hall as well as film director Quentin Tarantino, who compared his film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) to Willeford's work.

Willeford's unique style combined black humor, satire, and touches of the absurd with startlingly real and abrupt acts of violence. His characters, whether heroes, antiheroes, or villains, offer the reader a skewed yet oddly convincing worldview. Willeford readers learn to expect the unexpected. In the first chapter of *Wild Wives* (1956), one of Willeford's early pulp novels, private eye Jacob Blake fends off a surprise attack in his office—but the attacker is a teenage girl and the weapon is a water pistol. In *High Priest of California* (1953), another early pulp novel, a car salesman enters a bar, sizes up a stranger, and knocks him cold. "I felt a little better," he comments as he walks out. The protagonist

of *Cockfighter* (1962), a novel that was filmed in 1974, communicates with written notes, having taken a vow of silence that he will break only when he wins the Cockfighter of the Year award. Hoke Moseley, though closer to the mainstream than many Willeford protagonists, has his eccentric side, as seen in *Sideswipe* (1987), the third book in the series, when a semi-retired Hoke decides to pare his wardrobe down to only two costumes, both of them bright yellow jumpsuits.

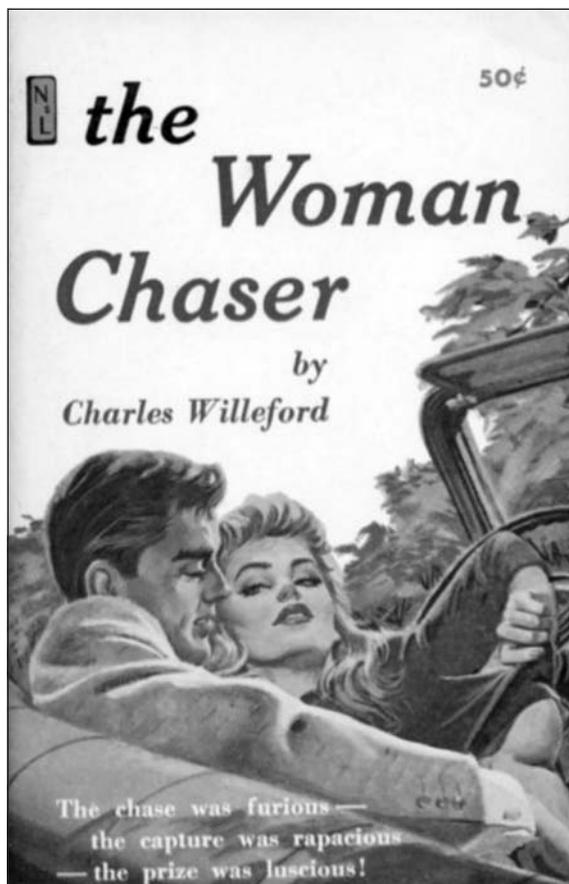
Willeford himself had a quirky, iconoclastic approach to life. After *Miami Blues* (1984) became a success, his publishers asked him to continue the Hoke Moseley character in a series. Despite years of financial struggle, Willeford's first response was to write a violent, nihilistic black comedy in which the detective kills his daughters to avoid having to take custody of them. His agent refused to submit it, and Willeford eventually wrote *New Hope for the Dead* (1985), in which Hoke stays mainly on the side of the law. A versatile writer, Willeford wrote everything from Westerns (*The Hombre from Sonora*, 1971) to a strange little medical memoir (*A Guide for the Undehemorhoided*, 1977), but he is best known for bridging the gap from postwar noir to modern crime fiction.

BIOGRAPHY

Charles Ray Willeford III was born in Arkansas in 1919. In *The Burnt Orange Heresy* (1971), a crime caper about an art critic who schemes to steal a painting from a secretive artist, the hero muses that men who grow up without fathers never develop a superego. Willeford echoed the thought in *I Was Looking for a Street* (1988), a memoir of his youth, in a free-verse poem musing on the father who died in 1921 when Willeford was two, a father he knew only from faded photographs and family stories. Willeford's mother died six years later, and he lived with his grandmother until he was thirteen. Worried that she could no longer support him after losing her job, he left home and took to the road, riding freight trains and taking odd jobs to survive. In 1935, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he served on and off until 1956, including service in World War II, for which he earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Luxembourg War Cross.

Between army hitches, Willeford studied art and art

history in Peru and published a book of poetry, *Proletarian Laughter* (1948). In 1953, he published his first novel, *High Priest of California*. Like most of Willeford's early work, it was published as a paperback original in a cheap pulp edition. Willeford's publishers had a tendency to illustrate his work with scantily clad women, to use misleading cover teasers, and to change his titles without notice—for example, *The Director* became *The Woman Chaser* (1960). In one case, the publishers even spelled his name wrong. Disillusionment with the publishing industry may have been one reason for the gap between the publication of *Cockfighter* in 1962 and his next novel, *The Burnt Orange Heresy*, in 1971, his first hardcover publication. During his hiatus from fiction writing, Willeford earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Miami and



Despite its title, Charles Willeford's *The Woman Chaser* is actually about a vicious used-car salesman who wants to make a movie. Willeford's own title for the book was *The Director*.

later taught there and at Miami-Dade Junior College. He also wrote for a Miami newspaper and edited *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. A longer, revised version of *Cockfighter* was published in hardcover in 1972, earning good reviews and the attention of director Roger Corman, who bought the film rights. The film version of *Cockfighter*, released in 1974 under various titles, featured a strong performance by Warren Oates and received some critical attention but was not a box-office success. Willeford again took a break from fiction writing, only to come back in 1984 with his greatest success, *Miami Blues*, published in hardcover by a mainstream publisher. The character of Hoke Moseley proved the perfect vehicle for Willeford's dark, ironic voice. Suddenly, after more than thirty years as a writer, Willeford was in the world of six-figure book deals, praised by critics for his wry, atmospheric depiction of a seedy and violent world.

Willeford, however, had only a few years left to enjoy his success. In 1988, he died of congestive heart failure, leaving behind his third wife, Betsy Pollar, and a lifetime of writings, some of which were collected and published after his death. Willeford has become something of a cult figure, and many of his early works have been reprinted in stylish new editions.

ANALYSIS

As a crime writer, Charles Willeford is difficult to categorize. Not only did he work in different subgenres, but his writing broke the boundaries of genre as well. His early work can best be described as pulp noir, in the tradition of James M. Cain and Jim Thompson, but with a comic twist. *Wild Wives*, for example, seems almost an absurdist parody of a private eye novel, until the intrusion of a brutally realistic murder. Marshall Jon Fisher, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly*, noted that Willeford never found humor and violence mutually exclusive. The doomed romanticism of writers like Cain and Cornell Woolrich is absent in Willeford's work; instead, there is a self-contained, confident pragmatism and an eye for the quirky details of everyday life. Whether his heroes are smooth-talking car salesmen, silent cockfighters, pretentious art critics, or middle-aged, chain-smoking detectives, Willeford takes the reader fully into their world. Read-

ers know Willeford's characters: how they speak; what they eat, and, more important, what they drink; the cars they drive; how they dress (often eccentrically, as with Hoke's yellow jumpsuit); and the routine of their work, whether that work involves solving crimes or committing them.

PICK-UP

Pick-Up (1955) is representative of Willeford's early pulp period, the bleakest and perhaps the best of his 1950's paperback novels. It was collected in the Library of America's prestigious series *Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s*, together with the work of Jim Thompson, Patricia Highsmith, and other classic noir authors. This short novel tells the story of Harry Jordan and Helen Meredith, lovers who share a weakness for alcohol and an inability to live in the world. Dark, nihilistic, and disturbing, *Pick-Up* is one of Willeford's most serious works, with only flashes of the black humor that infused his later novels.

When Harry Jordan, a failed artist and unemployed art teacher working in a diner, meets beautiful and reckless Helen Meredith, a woman from an upper-class background who prefers to lose herself in drink, they form an instant connection. However, Helen's love for Harry is not enough to end her self-destructive behavior. When Harry finds her in a bar, helplessly drunk and being fondled by a sailor, he erupts in a jealous rage and beats the man, slashing his face with a broken bottle. The lovers decide that death is their only way to attain peace, so Harry strangles Helen and tries to gas himself to death. Ironically, he fails even at suicide, having left a window open. He confesses to Helen's murder and eagerly awaits execution, but in a final ironic twist, an autopsy reveals that Helen actually died of natural causes, and he is free to resume his hopeless existence, a "tall, lonely Negro" walking the rainy streets.

Willeford's use of the theme of interracial romance, a motif also used in *Honey Gal* (1958, originally titled *The Black Mass of Brother Springer*), was daring for 1955, an era when segregation, Jim Crow laws, and open racism were very much present. At one point, Harry compares himself to a car without a driver, a machine functioning without feeling or desire. Viewed in the context of his race—a detail not revealed until the novel's end—Harry's alienation and

despair may be seen not as madness but as a rational response to a brutal society.

THE BURNT ORANGE HERESY

The Burnt Orange Heresy stands alone among Willeford's novels. In this comic novel, Willeford uses the plot device of a crime caper to satirize modern art, art collectors, and critics who look for "movements" to praise or condemn. Willeford introduces James Figueras, a writer trying to make his name as an art critic. Figueras is proud that his article on Jacques Debierue, the "Grand Old Man of Modern Art," is featured in a recently released art encyclopedia, and he writes a regular column for an art journal, but his finances are less impressive than his education. In the monied world of Florida's Palm Beach, he is a self-described free-loader, living on the fringe of several social groups. When Figueras meets Joseph Cassidy, a wealthy art collector, he is easily persuaded to steal a picture from the reclusive Debierue, who never sells and rarely shows his work. Debierue, the founder of an art movement known as Nihilistic Surrealism, is most famous for his *No. One*, an empty picture frame placed over a crack in a wall.

Although the tale involves deception, arson, and eventually murder, the tone remains essentially light. Willeford, who had studied art history, uses his background to good effect as he describes Debierue's role in the art community of Paris between the world wars. The critical world's worship of an artist who is most famous for a painting he did not paint gives Willeford an opportunity to satirize art, criticism, and celebrity. *The Burnt Orange Heresy* is also notable for its dapper, cheerfully amoral narrator, James Figueras, a cad in a red silk dinner jacket, whose treatment of his long-suffering girlfriend, Berenice, is both horrific and hilarious.

MIAMI BLUES

Willeford's first Hoke Moseley novel, *Miami Blues*, is notable not only for its hero, veteran police detective Hoke Moseley, but also for its villain, Freddy Frenger, a murderer and psychopath who explains to his former prostitute girlfriend that he just wants to live a normal, suburban married life. However, Freddy has left a few corpses behind, including a Hare Krishna follower whose finger Freddy broke when the

man asked him for money at the airport. (The man later dies of shock.) Hoke is called in to investigate the bizarre case of murder-by-finger, and the parallel stories of detective and killer begin. Hoke—overweight, morose, rumped, and old beyond his years—is the antithesis of the glamorous Hollywood detective hero, while Freddy, despite his penchant for random violence, comes across as the more competent and certainly the more cheerful of the two. Jon A. Jackson, in his introduction to *Miami Blues*, comments on Willeford's remarkable ability to invert the usual roles of hero and villain.

Miami Blues, like *The Burnt Orange Heresy*, has a south Florida setting, but the difference in the two Floridas depicted is remarkable. *The Burnt Orange Heresy* depicts the Florida of the 1960's and 1970's, still mainly a sleepy retiree's haven except during "the season," when society visitors arrive from the north. It is a community of rules, where homogeneous social groups seldom intermingle. By the time of the later novel, set in the mid-1980's, south Florida is a much faster, more diverse, and more dangerous world. Foreign tourists, Cuban refugees, middle-American vacationers, and hustlers of every variety crowd this new Florida of strip malls and theme parks. Willeford's writing evokes this world in all its energy, vulgarity, flashes of beauty, and underlying violence.

Miami Blues is filled with what can only be called Willeford moments, as when Hoke Moseley has his gun, badge, and false teeth stolen, and when Freddy Frenger returns from a trip to the convenience store covered in blood, an eyebrow hanging from his face by a thread, and tells his girlfriend that he was run over by a car. Unfazed, she replies that she thought it was something like that. *Publishers Weekly* praised *Miami Blues* for expertly combining elements of a satire and a thriller, and crime writer Elmore Leonard paid homage to Willeford, calling him the best writer in the field.

Kathryn Kulpa

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

HOKE MOSELEY SERIES: *Miami Blues*, 1984; *New Hope for the Dead*, 1985; *Sideswipe*, 1987; *The Way We Die Now*, 1988

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Pick-Up*, 1955; *Wild Wives*, 1956 (also known as *Until I Am Dead*); *The Burnt Orange Heresy*, 1971

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *High Priest of California*, 1953; *Honey Gal*, 1958; *Lust Is a Woman*, 1958; *The Woman Chaser*, 1960; *Understudy for Love*, 1961; *No Experience Necessary*, 1962; *Cockfighter*, 1962 (revised 1972); *The Shark-Infested Custard*, 1993; *Deliver Me from Dallas*, 2001

SHORT FICTION: *The Machine in Ward Eleven*, 1963; *Everybody's Metamorphosis*, 1988; *The Difference*, 1999; *The Second Half of the Double Feature*, 2003

POETRY: *Proletarian Laughter*, 1948; *Poontang, and Other Poems*, 1967

NONFICTION: *The Whip Hand*, 1961 (as Sanders); *The Hombre from Sonora*, 1971 (as Charles); *A Guide for the Undehemorrhoided*, 1977; *Off the Wall*, 1980; *Something About a Soldier*, 1986; *New Forms of Ugly: The Immobilized Hero in Modern Fiction*, 1987; *I Was Looking for a Street*, 1988; *Cockfighter Journal*, 1989; *Writing and Other Blood Sports*, 2000

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versity Popular Press, 1997. This chapter in a genre study looks at depictions of south Florida in the fiction of Willeford and Carl Hiaasen.

Fisher, Marshall Jon. "The Unlikely Father of Miami Crime Fiction." *Atlantic Monthly* 285, no. 5 (May, 2000): 117-121. A profile of Willeford by a writer who knew him in Miami, with discussion of his works and publishing career.

Herron, Don. *Willeford*. Tucson, Ariz.: Dennis McMillan Publications, 1997. A biography of the author, with transcripts of interviews, descriptions of his works, and a complete bibliography.

Oder, Norman. "Willeford Returns Darkly, Via Dell." *Publishers Weekly* 243, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 36. Discusses the republication of the four Hoke Moseley books as well as the release of the formerly unpublished *The Shark-Infested Custard*.

Sublett, Jesse. "Doing Right by a Poet of the Pulp Novel." *The New York Times*, June 18, 2000. Discusses the filming of *The Woman Chaser*, an adaptation of a 1960 Willeford novel, with commentary on other film adaptations of the author's work.

Willeford, Charles. *I Was Looking for a Street*. Woodstock, Vt.: Countryman Press, 1988. This memoir of the author's youth describes his early life and its influences on his work.

_____. *Something About a Soldier*. New York: Random House, 1986. Willeford describes his days and antics as an enlisted man in the Depression army. Sheds light on his later life as a writer.

DON WINSLOW

Born: New York, New York; October 31, 1953

Also wrote as McDonald Lloyd

Types of plot: Private investigator; comedy caper; thriller; inverted; espionage

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Neal Carey, 1991-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

NEAL CAREY is a part-time, reluctant investigator for a confidential organization known as Friends of the Family, operated by the Bank in Providence, Rhode Island, which provides clandestine services for wealthy depositors. Neal, the son of a heroin-addicted prostitute, never knew his father (one of his mother's cus-

tomers) and was orphaned at the age of twelve. Neal seldom uses guns because he is a lousy shot and is even more inept as a fistfighter. A frustrated scholar with a peculiar sense of humor and a jaded attitude, Neal transferred credits from Columbia University to Nevada, where he lives in the desert village of Austin.

JOE GRAHAM is Neal's adopted father: They met when Neal attempted to pick Joe's pocket, and thereafter Joe raised the youngster, teaching him tricks of the investigative trade, such as lock picking, surveillance, and tracing missing persons. He also serves as Neal's boss, handing out assignments for Friends of the Family. A short, almost dwarfish man with an artificial hand, Joe is not afraid to mix it up with the bad guys with whom his son's assignments invariably bring him in contact, and often he has to bail the younger man out of trouble.

KAREN HAWLEY is an occasional elementary schoolteacher, an attractive, no-nonsense woman, and Neal's live-in girlfriend. She often becomes unwittingly entangled in Neal's assignments. Keenly aware of her biological clock, Karen wants to marry Neal and have children.

CONTRIBUTION

Don Winslow, like many writers, has converted significant autobiographical events into fiction. Winslow's life encompasses considerable occupational and geographical territory. His interesting, if checkered, earlier career has provided a wealth of material related to crimes of domestic and international scope, has given him an expanded worldview, and has lent him a dry, sardonic wit that informs much of his work. His stints as undercover agent, private investigator, hostage simulator, fraud and arson analyst, safari leader, and freelance consultant have brought him into contact with a wide range of criminal and law enforcement types that he delineates with unerring accuracy, and he writes about the work involved with unquestioned authority.

Not yet a household name, Winslow has elicited an enviable degree of critical acclaim for his novels and a collaborative nonfictional work. His first novel, *A Cool Breeze on the Underground* (1991), which introduced private investigator Neal Carey, gained an Edgar Award

nomination. *California Fire and Life* (1999) garnered a Shamus Award for best novel. *The Power of the Dog* (2004) was nominated for a Macavity Award and for *Deadly Pleasure* magazine's Barry Award. His non-fictional collaborative effort *Looking for a Hero: Staff Sergeant Ronnie Hooper and the Vietnam War* (2004) attracted considerable attention for its unflinching portrait of the tempestuous life of a real soldier. His *The Death and Life of Bobby Z* (1997) was made into a feature film in 2007, and his *The Winter of Frankie Machine* (2006) has been optioned.

BIOGRAPHY

Don Winslow was born on October 31, 1953, in New York City, the son of U.S. Navy noncommissioned officer Don Winslow, Sr., and librarian Ottis Schevrmann Winslow. Because of his father's occupation, Winslow moved frequently when he was a child. He grew up primarily in Warwick, near Providence, and in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. As a youngster, he performed in theater and voiced radio commercials.

In the early 1970's, Winslow attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, majoring first in journalism and later in African history, and directed a theater company. During his junior year in college, he worked as a researcher at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and freelanced as a newspaper reporter. Winslow also surreptitiously brought in funds for TEACH—an educational organization in Soweto banned by the apartheid government—an action that led to his arrest and deportation. He afterward traveled around southern Africa for a time before returning home to complete his bachelor's degree.

Following graduation, Winslow directed a theater company for two years, then moved to rural Idaho, where he herded cattle. Winslow relocated to New York City, where he managed movie theaters for three years then worked at a detective agency as an undercover operative investigating theft at a chain of theaters. For the same agency, he was also engaged in operations in London and Amsterdam. The work led to employment with the Institute for International Studies, where—through simulated kidnappings—he helped train representatives from the national govern-

ment, law enforcement, and the media in terrorist situations and hostage negotiations.

Winslow returned to school, earning a master's degree in military history while freelancing as a private investigator. He aspired to join the U.S. Foreign Service but instead joined a firm specializing in safaris and spent five years planning, selling, and leading treks into China and Kenya. In Kenya in 1985, he met and proposed to his wife, designer Jean Enstrom; the couple had a son, Thomas, born in 1989. After a term designing overseas educational programs for high school students, Winslow was briefly employed with Forensic Anthropology as an arson and fraud analyst. When the company folded, he continued working as a freelance investigator and consultant to law firms, assisting witnesses preparing to give testimony.

Drawing on his colorful history for inspiration, Winslow published his first novel, *A Cool Breeze on the Underground*, in 1991. The first in a series of novels centering on private investigator Neal Carey, it was nominated for an Edgar Award. Later nonseries novels have garnered Winslow similar critical acclaim and comparisons to Elmore Leonard and Carl Hiaasen for his unique amalgamation of hard-boiled action and humor. He has also written short stories, stage plays, screenplays, and television scripts, and he has collaborated on a nonfictional book about a troubled American Medal of Honor winner, *Looking for a Hero: Staff Sergeant Ronnie Hooper and the Vietnam War*.

ANALYSIS

As important as Don Winslow's convoluted plots are to his work, his novels are first and foremost studies of intriguing characters from both sides of the law and from all gradations in between. His well-trained (and somewhat jaundiced) eye has the ability to spot telling physical clues that help reveal personality, and his ear catches subtle nuances and rhythms of conversation. Winslow is particularly adept at portraying a character's angst and giving voice to innermost thoughts, often tinged with terse, ironic, self-deprecating understatement. Even the best characters are severely flawed, and the worst have redeeming features.

Winslow's early novels (beginning with *A Cool Breeze on the Underground*) all concern freelance pri-

ate investigator Neal Carey and the bizarre cases he is enlisted to undertake. These are told in the third person rather than the usual first person used for detective novels, giving the author the ability to jump from character to character as necessary to present information the protagonist alone would not know, thus increasing suspense. Though violence plays a role in these books, it takes a backseat to the generally lighthearted presentation of madcap adventures fraught with multiple, humorous complications and of an assortment of types of usually believable people who either want something or want to prevent others from achieving something. Winslow's growing maturity as a writer is evident from book to book, as characters become more sharply drawn, dialogue grows terser, and the prose style becomes leaner—all of which combine to make pacing more consistent, resulting in increased tension throughout.

Later nonseries novels take a darker tone while keeping Winslow's strengths—character portrayal, dialogue, and twisty plots—intact. Protagonists in these novels, unlike Neal Carey, who though laid-back is nonetheless heroic, are more complex and contradictory. For example, Walter Withers, an alcoholic private eye of questionable morality in *A Long Walk Up the Water Slide* (1994), commits various dubious acts while battling both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the KGB in the course of protecting an ambitious politician in *Isle of Joy* (1996), a thriller set in the 1950's against the paranoia of the Cold War. The central character in *The Death and Life of Bobby Z* (1997) is born loser Tim Kearney—sentenced to life for killing a member of the Hell's Angels and surrounded by vengeful imprisoned bikers—who is given the chance to win his freedom by impersonating a missing drug kingpin named Bobby Zacharias ("Bobby Z"). Crack arson investigator Jack Wade from *California Fire and Life* lost his job as a police officer for beating a confession out of a felon. Former CIA operative and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agent Art Keller in *The Power of the Dog* constantly breaks rules in his pursuit of justice and is especially unconcerned about legal issues in his devotion to the destruction of Mexican drug lord Tio Barrea, a former police officer whose ascent Keller unwittingly aided

by eliminating his rivals. Protagonist Frank Machianno, in *The Winter of Frankie Machine*, is a never-miss mob hit man, now retired and running a bait shop in Southern California, who is reluctantly lured back into his former profession.

Though another Winslow trademark, humor, is not entirely absent in his tales of espionage, drug deals gone wrong, horrible deaths by immolation, and wholesale mob assassinations, the laughs are somewhat downplayed, because they would be inappropriate given the more serious nature of the subject matter. People lie and cheat and die and kill—such things are not the usual stuff of comedy, except for the morbidly inclined. Thus, Winslow transforms the ridiculous to the sublime, in the form of wry and truthful observations concerning human nature, and plot complications farfetched enough to be believable—operating on the “truth is stranger than fiction” principle—provoke sad smiles of recognition rather than hearty guffaws. Winslow, though he shows violence close up and in Technicolor, does not glorify it. Graphic scenes are presented matter-of-factly, as the logical progression of evil deeds that cannot help but adversely affect the good, the bad, and the in-between alike.

A LONG WALK UP THE WATER SLIDE

The fourth novel in the Neal Carey mystery series, *A Long Walk Up the Water Slide*, begins as a routine assignment for Neal and quickly deteriorates into a farcical romp, perhaps inspired by the Jimmy Swagert and Jim Bakker sex scandals. Brooklyn-born Polly Paget, a secretary for the wholesome television show the *Jack and Candy Family Hour*, has been having an affair with Jackson “Jack” Landis, costar of the show and founder, president, and majority owner of the Family Cable Network. Polly publicly claims that after ending their affair, Jack raped her, but her heavy New York accent and bimbo-like appearance prevent her from presenting herself credibly before the media. Therefore, Neal is to hide her at his Nevada home while, like Henry Higgins, he grooms her linguistically so she will be more believable and more likely to be awarded a large settlement.

There are many forces at work throughout the story, because in addition to the fate of the network in the wake of a scandal, there is much at stake, including

Candyland, a planned family resort under construction outside San Antonio, Texas, featuring condominiums and a gigantic water slide. Antagonists include tabloid reporters eager for a scoop, an alcoholic private detective sent by a pornography publisher to offer Polly a small fortune to appear in a magazine spread, mobsters and their minions raking off money from the construction of Candyland, lawyers for various factions within the network who have their own agendas, and a professional assassin sent to make sure Polly does not survive to jeopardize the whole television empire.

A Long Walk Up the Water Slide is a complex, fast-paced satirical thriller told in snapshot scenes from divergent viewpoints across the whole cast of participants. Winslow performs a masterful balancing act, veering from slapstick to extreme violence but never losing sight of his objective: the demonstration that large issues consist of small acts. The novel has a manic feel, with numerous plot reversals and unexpected twists. Characters, who often begin as stereotypes, reveal hidden depths that make them fully rounded. Dialogue, a particular Winslow strength, is full of insight and irony, sparked throughout with humorous throwaway lines that provide comic relief in tense situations.

WHILE DROWNING IN THE DESERT

The fifth Neal Carey novel, *While Drowning in the Desert* (1996), presents the detective with a seemingly straightforward errand: elderly Nathan Silverstein, supposedly in the first stages of Alzheimer’s, has wandered away from his California condominium. He is currently in Las Vegas, and it is Carey’s task to collect him and fly with him back to his home.

As usual, the simple job becomes complicated. Nathan Silverstein turns out to be an old-time stand-up comedian known in his Catskills heyday as Natty Silver. Far from having Alzheimer’s, Natty is still sharp: He has an inexhaustible supply of jokes and one-liners that he is not shy about airing. The octogenarian also has an active libido, which comes into play when he runs into an old flame in Las Vegas, former showgirl and current piano bar chanteuse Hope White. Natty refuses to fly, so Neal must rent a car for the long drive to California. During the trip, it is revealed that Natty witnessed a crime and that is why he fled. Reluctant to return to the scene of the crime, Natty steals Neal’s

rental car and sets off across the desert, pursued by the criminals who wish to eliminate the only witness to their misdeeds while Neal scrambles to catch up.

A fast-paced page-turner with a relatively small cast of well-drawn characters, the novel features hallmarks of Winslow's popular series: sparkling dialogue, wry observations about life in general and aging in particular, and gently satirical humor.

Jack Ewing

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NEAL CAREY SERIES: *A Cool Breeze on the Underground*, 1991; *The Trail to Buddha's Mirror*, 1992; *Way Down on the High Lonely*, 1993; *A Long Walk Up the Water Slide*, 1994; *While Drowning in the Desert*, 1996

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Isle of Joy* (1996; also known as *A Winter Spy*, 1977, as Lloyd); *The Death and Life of Bobby Z*, 1997; *California Fire and Life*, 1999; *The Power of the Dog*, 2004; *The Winter of Frankie Machine*, 2006

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

PLAY: *Alexander Hamilton: In Worlds Unknown*, pr. 2004

SCREENPLAYS: *Alexander Hamilton: In Worlds Unknown*, 2004; *The Full Ride*, 2002 (with George Mills)

NONFICTION: *Looking for a Hero: Staff Sergeant Ronnie Hooper and the Vietnam War*, 2004 (with Pete Maslowski)

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Mobilio, Albert. "An Insurance-Business Thriller? Actually, Yes." Review of *California Fire and Life*, by Don Winslow. *Fortune* 144, no. 4 (August 16, 1999): 44. A highly favorable review in which the critic notes that Winslow spent many years

working with arson investigators, giving the story—dealing with former police officer and claims adjuster Jack Wade—the ring of authenticity. The author is praised for his skill in presenting factual information, his smooth style, and his many plot turns that keep readers guessing.

Publishers Weekly. Review of *A Cool Breeze on the Underground*, by Don Winslow. 238, no. 2 (January 11, 1991): 94. A mixed review of the author's first novel. Though praised for its colorful characters, the novel is criticized for its lack of technical sophistication, particularly for its plodding early pace.

_____. Review of *The Trail to Buddha's Mirror*, by Don Winslow. 239, no. 6 (January 27, 1992): 91. A highly favorable review, demonstrating that Winslow learned from his mistakes to produce a tale of a routine missing-persons case—a brilliant scientist has fallen in love with a beautiful Chinese woman—that turns into a complicated morass on an international scale. Called a "superb mystery," loaded with vivid details.

_____. Review of *Way Down on the High Lonely*, by Don Winslow. 240, no. 40 (October 4, 1993): 67. A starred review showing Winslow's progress as a storyteller in a novel dealing with Neal Carey's efforts to recover a two-year-old boy snatched by his divorced father, a member of a white supremacist group who has fled into the wilds of Nevada. The reviewer especially notes the author's skillful blend of action, well-drawn characters, wry humor, and sharp prose.

Winslow, Don. Don Winslow's Official Website. <http://www.donwinslow.com>. The author's Web site, containing a brief biography; summaries and cover shots of Winslow's most recent books; news of signings, appearances, and other events; links, and contact information.

STUART WOODS

Stuart Lee

Born: Manchester, Georgia; January 9, 1938

Types of plot: Police procedural; private investigator; hard-boiled

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Will Lee, 1982-
Stone Barrington, 1991-
Holly Barker, 1998-
Rick Barron, 2004-

PRINCIPAL SERIES CHARACTERS

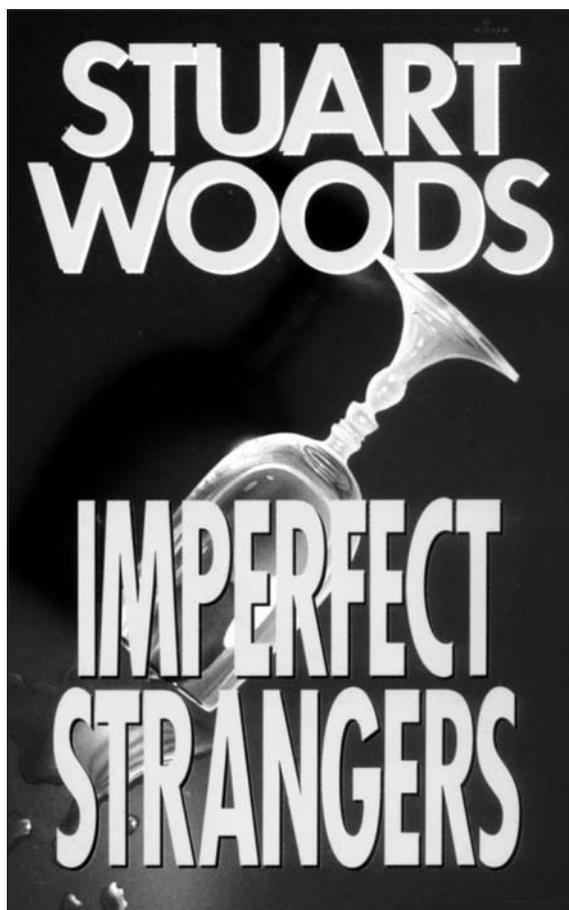
WILL LEE is Stuart Woods's most developed character. Readers come to understand his family's political background and witness him grow into a man. After serving as a lawyer, a chief aide to a U.S. senator, and a U.S. senator, Lee becomes the president of the United States. Weathered by everyday problems, Lee becomes a leader who does not allow lies and manipulation to encroach on his obligations, mostly because of his keen instinct about the strengths and weaknesses of those around him.

STONE BARRINGTON begins as a New York City homicide detective and leaves the department to begin a law practice. However, his curiosity, personal connections, and lifelong commitment to solving crime constantly place him in the role of private investigator. Barrington is familiar with the dark side of humanity but has not let that destroy him. Instead, he remains gallant and loyal to his lifelong calling, as if he were a modern-day knight.

HOLLY BARKER, a friend of Barrington and a former army major and military police officer, is the police chief in the fictional town of Orchid Beach, Florida. In battling drug traffickers, organized crime, and crooked real estate developers, Barker uses her knowledge of human greed, lust, and hubris to succeed. She later is depicted working for the government. Her beauty, wit, and sense of humor make her successful as a fictional character. The most fun-loving, courageous, and independent of Woods's characters, she is often obligated to put her life on the line with little or no help from others.

CONTRIBUTION

Stuart Woods began his career in mystery and detective fiction with the critically acclaimed novel *Chiefs* in 1981. Woods used stories from his hometown and family history to create a critically acclaimed thriller lauded for its realistic portrayal of a small town's political dynamics and its critical dissection of a seemingly peaceful American community, themes that Woods has revisited occasionally throughout his career. *Chiefs* won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America and gave rise to the possibility that Woods could become one of the premier mystery writers of his day. Woods's novel *Palindrome* (1991) was nominated for the Edgar Award, and his *Imperfect Strangers* (1995)



was awarded France's Prix de Littérature Policière. He has written more than thirty-five novels, most of which have become best sellers because he has gained a strong American and international readership.

With a few exceptions, rather than offering a deep analysis of his characters, Woods focuses on the systems in which the characters function. These are typically the bureaucracies of politics, criminal justice, and law. His protagonists are those who willingly accept the consequences of breaking normal protocol to solve a problem for the greater good of the system, community, or nation in which they live and work. His protagonists' ability to overcome bureaucratic obstacles makes them modern-day heroes and makes their experiences relevant to contemporary American civilization.

BIOGRAPHY

Stuart Woods was born Stuart Lee in Manchester, Georgia, in 1938. A pivotal event in his adolescence was finding a chief-of-police badge in his grandmother's closet. According to Woods, it was dented by buckshot and spattered with dried blood. It belonged to his grandfather, who was wearing it when he was shot to death on duty ten years before Woods was born. The story of his grandfather influenced the premise of the novel *Chiefs* and provided the framework for the character William Henry Lee, Sr. Georgia, his home state, has been the setting for many of his novels and is mentioned in most of them. His hometown provided the setting of the fictional town Delano.

Woods majored in sociology at the University of Georgia and served in the Air National Guard in the early 1960's. He spent ten months of his year of service in Mannheim, Germany, during the Berlin Wall Crisis. During the rest of the 1960's, he worked as an advertising agent in New York, and at the end of that decade, he moved to London, where he worked quite successfully in advertising and copy writing. Despite his career choices up to that point, he had not forgotten about the chief-of-police badge and the novel that had been brewing inside him, so in 1973 he decided to move to Ireland to write his novel. It is not clear why he chose to move to Ireland, but he found a peaceful place to begin writing while working part-time at an ad agency.

Although he was in a position to write, he was distracted for a time by sailing. It became such a passion that he had a boat built in Cork and raced it in the 1976 Observer Singlehanded Transatlantic Race (OSTAR) from Plymouth, England, to Newport, Rhode Island. He returned to Georgia and wrote two nonfictional books: a travel book about England and Ireland and a memoir about his time in Ireland and the OSTAR race. The British publisher of the latter, *Blue Water, Green Skipper* (1977), sold the rights to W. W. Norton. Based on an outline and two hundred completed pages, W. W. Norton gave Woods a contract for the novel he had begun in 1973 and advanced him seventy-five hundred dollars, which gave him the incentive to finish *Chiefs*, the first Will Lee series novel, and diligently to pursue his fiction-writing career. He has continued to write in the Will Lee series and written novels in the Stone Barrington, Ed Eagle, Holly Barker, and Rick Barron series as well as nonseries novels.

Woods has established homes on the Treasure Coast of Florida, on an island off the coast of Maine, and in New York City. In addition to being an accomplished sailor, he is also an experienced small-aircraft pilot, both of which factor heavily into his novels.

ANALYSIS

Stuart Woods, like many writers, is influenced and inspired by his childhood and personal experiences. His writing shows an antipathy to bureaucracy, military protocol, authority, and blind obedience to orders that may partially be the result of his time in the Air National Guard during the Berlin Wall Crisis. Though he was certainly not on a combat mission, he has hinted that he still does not thoroughly understand why the government sent him to Mannheim. His attitude may also stem from being a young American in the 1960's and early 1970's. In addition, he may have moved to London in the late 1960's as an act of protest against the political situation in the United States. All of Woods's protagonists are people who will listen to and carefully consider orders from superiors and advisers, but they ultimately will make their own decisions. Though it is important for his protagonists to work with the system to improve it, their competence and courage in the face of mortal danger often super-

sede the guidelines set forth by those sitting behind desks. Some of the government officials in his novels—such as Will Lee, Katherine Rule Lee, and Lance Cabot in *Dark Harbor* (2006) and *Iron Orchid* (2005) and Robert Kinney in *Capital Crimes* (2003)—are talented people, but Woods does not let readers forget the fact that officials' incompetence can endanger ordinary people. In creating intuitive, talented, versatile, and ethical heroes, he appeals to the ideals of American independence and individuality and the frustrations of those who are not satisfied with the political status quo.

Woods's childhood in Manchester, Georgia, clearly influenced his fiction. He has often experimented with the ways deep-rooted, small-town problems can have universal consequences. For example, the plots of *Chiefs* and *Under the Lake* (1987) are based on the premise that a few divulged secrets, pertaining to perversion, racism, fraud, and other sins, can shake the foundations of a small town. In these and the Holly Barker novels, if no one is interested in the truth, or if the root problems of the community are micromanaged, then the conflicts can and will reach beyond the township limits, affecting a state or even a nation. This is also how Woods's background in sociology comes into play in the world of his fiction.

Woods's experience in navigation and travel have helped him create dynamic characters and plots. In preparation for his novel *White Cargo* (1988), for example, he spent a lot of time flying over Columbia. His geographic knowledge of Florida helped to fuel the plots of *Orchid Beach* (1998), *Orchid Blues* (2001), and *Blood Orchid* (2002). His time in Maine helped him conceive of places for fugitives to hide and small airstrips suitable for dramatic landings and pursuits in novels such as *Capital Crimes* and *Dark Harbor*. Furthermore, his knowledge of London gave him an intriguing setting for the Stone Barrington novel *The Short Forever* (2002). His knowledge of boats, sailing, and aviation allows him to place extra barriers in the protagonists' way, thereby generating more suspense, and to create chases in which protagonists pursue wealthy criminals escaping by water or air.

In creating a suspenseful novel, Woods immediately sets up a murder mystery for the protagonist to solve,

then he methodically creates several red herrings, disincentives, and obstacles for that character to overcome. These obstacles are often caused by or manifested in the following character types: derelict leaders trying to serve a large bureaucracy instead of the general public, egotistical leaders who micromanage because of fear or lack of faith in others, irresponsible journalists (as in the novel *Dirt*, 1996), organized criminals who are eternally flawed because they take sex and money more seriously than their own collective success, and technologically savvy criminals who strive for some semblance of control in a postmodern world (Teddy Fay in *Capital Crimes* and *Shoot Him if He Runs*, 2007). To complement the fast pace and suspense, Woods uses a clear and concise style of dialogue that very rarely strays from standard English. He seldom uses jargon, slang, idioms, or clichés that would detract from the credibility of the characters or, more important, the reader's understanding of what has transpired.

CAPITAL CRIMES

Little attention has been paid to Woods's understanding of the positive and negative dynamics of social groups. Although one person often takes the leadership role in solving the murder in Woods's novels, many of the solutions occur through the work of several individuals, often working as a team toward one common goal, as in *Dark Harbor* and *Capital Crimes*.

In *Capital Crimes*, Will Lee has settled into his first term as president of the United States, and he has enough experience in Washington, D.C., to know what to expect from those around him. He knows his enemies and allies, and he and his wife, Katherine Rule Lee, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), can safely delegate some of their problems to the expertise of others, in this case, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) deputy director Robert Kinney. The problem is that someone as intelligent and skilled as any FBI agent is killing conservative leaders: First, Republican senator Frederick Wallace was killed, then a right-wing radio personality. Next, a powerful figure in the religious right was nearly killed. It takes Katherine's finesse, Kinney's leadership and diligence, and a tip from a traitor and former CIA agent, Ed Rawls, to locate the man responsible. In addition, several people have to put their differences aside to stop these murders.

Woods wrote this book shortly after the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City, which makes the themes of political dichotomy, postmodern isolation, and blame-seeking more relevant to his readers.

DARK HARBOR

As in *Capital Crimes*, the solution to the murders in *Dark Harbor*, an island village in Maine, requires the work of a group whose members trust one another. The primary murders, those of Stone Barrington's cousin Dick Stone, his wife, and their daughter, occur shortly before Barrington reads a will sent to him by Dick. The will grants Barrington the Dick Stone estate, which is peculiar considering the timing and the fact that Dick's brother Caleb would be the most likely beneficiary. After learning that Dick, also a lawyer, had been working covertly as a CIA operative, Barrington gains an ally in CIA agent Lance Cabot, who informs him that there are other retired agents living on Islesboro Island, including Ed Rawls. As the case becomes life-threatening, Barrington calls in his friend and former New York Police Department colleague Dino Bacchetti, along with Holly Barker and her father, Ham. Barrington's group, which includes Sergeant Young of the Maine State Police, bonds to pursue a solution when one of the CIA retirees and his granddaughter are murdered.

Because the reader initially suspects that Caleb is the murderer, *Dark Harbor* seems to be about the consequences of greed; however, it is about the hubris of individuals who have an exaggerated vision of their power in a small community and no knowledge of the truth of their own existence in the broad spectrum of society. This relates to most of Woods's novels in that the truth is exposed by a group of people who will put their professional reputations and lives on the line to solve a problem. While others are pointing fingers and hacking at the branches of the problem, Woods's heroes are busy digging for the roots.

Troy Place

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

WILL LEE SERIES: *Chiefs*, 1981; *Run Before the Wind*, 1983; *Deep Lie*, 1986; *Grass Roots*, 1989; *The Run*, 2000; *Capital Crimes*, 2003

STONE BARRINGTON SERIES: *New York Dead*, 1991; *Dirt*, 1996; *Dead in the Water*, 1997; *Swimming*

to Catalina, 1998; *Worst Fears Realized*, 1999; *L.A. Dead*, 2000; *Cold Paradise*, 2001; *The Short Forever*, 2002; *Dirty Work*, 2003; *Reckless Abandon*, 2004; *Two Dollar Bill*, 2005; *Dark Harbor*, 2006; *Fresh Distasters*, 2007; *Shoot Him if He Runs*, 2007

ED EAGLE SERIES: *Santa Fe Rules*, 1992; *Short Straw*, 2006

HOLLY BARKER SERIES: *Orchid Beach*, 1998; *Orchid Blues*, 2001; *Blood Orchid*, 2002; *Iron Orchid*, 2005

RICK BARRON SERIES: *The Prince of Beverly Hills*, 2004

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Under the Lake*, 1987; *White Cargo*, 1988; *Palindrome*, 1991; *L.A. Times*, 1993; *Dead Eyes*, 1994; *Heat*, 1994; *Imperfect Strangers*, 1995; *Choke*, 1995

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NONFICTION: *Blue Water, Green Skipper*, 1977; *A Romantic's Guide to the Country Inns of Britain and Ireland*, 1979

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Huntley, Kristine. Review of *Capital Crimes*. *The Booklist* 100, no. 1 (September 1, 2003): 9. This favorable review summarizes the plot of this Will Lee series novel and recommends it to Woods's fans.

_____. Review of *Dark Harbor*. *The Booklist* 102, no. 12 (February 15, 2006): 7. This favorable review provides a plot summary and praises the pairing of Barrington and Barker.

St. Martin, Tiffany. "Stuart Woods Coming to Sarasota: Novelist Brings Back Popular Protagonist." *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, October 15, 2006, p. 1. This short profile written on the author's appearance in Sarasota to promote *Short Straw* looks at Woods's motivations to write, the

difference in his pace and dedication now versus when he started, and the return of a series character, lawyer Ed Eagle.

Woods, Stuart. Stuart Woods Official Website. [http://](http://www.stuartwoods.com)

www.stuartwoods.com. Includes the most insightful and thoroughly compiled information on Woods's life and philosophy toward writing, plus a bibliography and plot summaries.

CORNELL WOOLRICH

Born: New York, New York; December 4, 1903

Died: New York, New York; September 25, 1968

Also wrote as George Hopley; William Irish

Types of plot: Psychological; thriller; police procedural; inverted; historical

PRINCIPAL SERIES

Black series, 1940-1948

CONTRIBUTION

Cornell Woolrich's highly suspenseful plots are often recounted from the standpoint of leading characters who, however ordinary they may seem at the outset, become embroiled in strange and terrifying situations. Woolrich was particularly adept at handling questions of betrayal and suspicion, arousing doubts about characters' backgrounds and intentions. Works dealing with amnesia or other unknowing states of mind produce genuine tension, though in other hands such themes might seem forced and overused.

Woolrich rarely made use of master detectives or other agents committed to bringing criminals to justice. His police officers attempt as best they can to grapple with apparently inexplicable occurrences; some of them are willful and corrupt. When they reach solutions, often it is with the help of individuals who themselves have been suspected of or charged with criminal acts. One of Woolrich's strengths is the vivid depiction of stark emotional reactions; the thoughts and feelings of leading characters are communicated directly, often in sharply individual tones. Some of his plots revolve about methods of crime or detection that might seem ingenious in some instances and implausible in others. Taken as a whole, his work may appear uneven; his best tales, however, produce somber and

deeply felt varieties of apprehension, plunging the reader into the grim, enigmatic struggles of his protagonists.

BIOGRAPHY

The dark forebodings that affected the author's works may have originated in his early life. Cornell Woolrich was born Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich in New York City on December 4, 1903. His father was a civil engineer and his mother was a socialite; as a boy, Woolrich was often in Latin America. At about the age of eight, after seeing a production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (1904), he was overwhelmed with a profound sense of fatalism. When revolutions broke out in Mexico, he was fascinated by the fighting and collected spent cartridges that could be found on the street. It would appear that he was badly shaken by the eventual breakup of his parents' marriage, which left him unusually dependent on his mother.

In 1921, Woolrich entered Columbia University in New York, where courses in English may have spurred his interest in creative writing. One of his classmates, Jacques Barzun, later recalled that Woolrich was an amiable if somewhat distant individual. On one occasion, he was immobilized by a foot infection, an experience that may be reflected in the theme of enforced immobility that would appear in some of his later writings. During that time, however, under the name Cornell Woolrich he composed his first novel, *Cover Charge* (1926); this romantic work was favorably received. His *Children of the Ritz* (1927) won a prize offered jointly by *College Humor* magazine and a motion-picture company; Woolrich went to Hollywood to adapt a film script from that book. In 1930, he

married Gloria Blackton, a film producer's daughter, but she left him after a few weeks. Woolrich may have had homosexual inclinations. After he returned to New York, he wrote other sentimental novels, the last of which was *Manhattan Love Song* (1932), before devoting his efforts entirely to mystery writing.

In 1934, Woolrich's first crime and suspense stories were published in detective magazines. Even with the success of *The Bride Wore Black* (1940) and other full-length works, Woolrich remained a reclusive figure; frequently he would remain in his room at a residential hotel for long periods, venturing outside only when necessary. Success and public esteem apparently meant little to him, even when his works were widely distributed and had become known through films and other adaptations. In 1950, he won the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America for the motion picture *The Window*, based on his story "The Boy Who Cried Murder." His mother, to whom he remained inordinately devoted, died in 1957, and he dedicated the stories in *Hotel Room* (1958) to her. His ensuing despondency seemed to diminish his creative output. In addition to bouts of alcoholism, he developed diabetes, yet he ignored the progressive deterioration of his health. Gangrene affected one leg, but he left this condition untreated until it became necessary for doctors to amputate the limb. He finally suffered a stroke and died in his native city on September 25, 1968. Very few people attended his funeral. His will established a trust fund, dedicated to his mother's memory, in support of scholarships for the study of creative writing at Columbia.

ANALYSIS

The stories that marked Cornell Woolrich's debut as a mystery writer display a fatalism that lends added weight to surprise endings and ironic twists. Almost invariably, seemingly innocuous situations become fraught with dangerous possibilities. Outwardly ordinary people prove to harbor devious and malign intentions; the innocent, by the odd machinations of fate, often find themselves enmeshed in the schemes of the guilty. Frequently, the outcome of these dark, troubled struggles remains in doubt, and Woolrich was not averse to letting characters perish or be undone by

their own devices. Many of his works are set in New York or other large urban areas during the Depression and depict people who, already impoverished and often desperate, are drawn relentlessly into yet more serious and threatening circumstances.

In Woolrich's first suspense work, "Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," the mysterious demise of a man who has recently had his teeth filled leads to some frantic searching for the murderer. An unusual murder method is uncovered, and the protagonist is nearly poisoned during his efforts to show the culprit's mode of operation. In "Preview of Death," when an actress costumed in an old-fashioned hoop skirt is burned to death, a police detective shows how the fire could have been produced by one of her cohorts. "Murder at the Automat" leads to some anxious investigations when a man dies after eating a poisoned sandwich obtained from a machine; actually, the trick seems remarkably simple once the murderer's likely whereabouts have been reviewed. Other deadly devices, some outwardly improbable, appear in various stories.

In "Kiss of the Cobra," death from snake poison cannot easily be explained until it is learned how a strange Indian woman could have transferred venom to common articles used by her victims. Suggestions of supernatural agencies are developed more fully in "Dark Melody of Madness" (also known as "Papa Benjamin" and "Music from the Dark"), in which a musician all too insistently attempts to learn the secrets of voodoo from some practitioners of that dark religion. Although he can compel them to divulge the incantations that seemingly will summon malevolent spirits, such forces are not content to be used in the man's stage performances. Eventually, whether from the intervention of unearthly powers or from sheer fright, he collapses and dies. "Speak to Me of Death," which eventually was incorporated into another work, concerns a seemingly prophetic warning: When a wealthy old man is told that he will die at midnight, other interested parties take note of the means specified and gather to prevent harm from coming to him. In the end he falls victim not to any human agency or to anxiety and apprehension; rather, the original design is carried through in a wholly unexpected way. In Woolrich's stories, the distinction between known op-

erations of the physical world and his characters' subjective beliefs is often left shadowy and uncertain; when improbable events take place, it is not always clear whether individual susceptibilities or the actual workings of malignant powers are responsible. Similarly, when protagonists are introduced in an intoxicated state, sometimes it cannot easily be determined whether they are actually responsible for deeds that were perpetrated when they were inebriated. In other stories, certain individuals are under the sway of narcotics, such as marijuana or cocaine.

At times, Woolrich's protagonists find themselves implicated in grim plots that begin with apparently incriminating situations and end with unusual resolutions. In "And So to Death" (better known as "Nightmare"), a man who has been found at the scene of a murder has some difficulty in convincing even himself that he is innocent, and only with the intervention of others can the facts in the case be established. Police procedures are often portrayed as arbitrary and brutal. A marathon dance contest furnishes the background for "Dead on Her Feet," a macabre study of a killing in an unusual pose. When a girl is found rigid, not exhausted but actually murdered, a ruthless police officer forces a young man, weary and frightened, to dance with his dead partner; though soon afterward he is absolved, he breaks down under the strain and falls prey to uncontrollable mad laughter. In "The Body Upstairs," police torment a man with lighted cigarettes in an attempt to make him confess; all the while, another man on the force has tracked down the real killer.

"THE DEATH OF ME" AND "THREE O'CLOCK"

If the innocent generally suffer in Woolrich's stories, it is also true that crime often fails to achieve its ends. Well-laid plans tend to go awry in strange or unanticipated ways. In "The Death of Me," a man determines to stage his own death to defraud his insurance company. He exchanges personal effects with someone who was killed at a railroad crossing, but this other man proves to have been a criminal who had stolen a large sum of money; thus, the protagonist is pursued both by the man's cohorts and by an insurance investigator. When he turns on his company's agent and kills him, he realizes that he will be subject to criminal charges under whichever name he uses. In "Three

O'Clock," a man decides to eliminate his wife and her lover. He builds a time bomb that he installs in the basement of his house; once the mechanism is in place, however, he is accosted by burglars, who tie him up and leave him behind as the fateful countdown begins. After the man has abandoned all hope of rescue, it is discovered that the device had inadvertently been deactivated beforehand, but by then he has been driven hopelessly mad by his ordeal.

"IT HAD TO BE MURDER"

In other cases, those who in one way or another are confronted with crime are able to confound lawbreakers. In "Murder in Wax," a woman uses a concealed phonograph machine to record the testimony that is required to save her husband from murder charges. "After-Dinner Story" has the host at a social gathering use the threat of poison to elicit a vital admission from one of the guests. The notable story "It Had to Be Murder" (also known as "Rear Window") begins with a man with a cast on his leg casually observing others in his vicinity; some mysterious movements by a man at the window across from him attract his attention, and he arrives at the inference that his neighbor's wife has been murdered. Although at first the police are inclined to dismiss this theory, these suppositions prove to be correct, and an encounter at close quarters with the killer takes place before the matter is settled.

Woolrich's crime novels, notably those that came to be grouped together because of their common "color scheme"—the word "black" figures in the titles of six Woolrich novels—deal with more complex issues of anxiety and violence. Multiple killings, for example, raise questions about how apparently unrelated persons and occurrences may have become part of a larger web of havoc and destruction; the pattern is eventually explained by reference to previous events that have left the perpetrators permanently embittered and changed. In some cases, the murderer's actions and the efforts at detection are shown in alternating sequences, so that the overarching question becomes which side will prevail in the end. Although clues and testimony figure prominently in some works, the reader rarely is challenged directly by such means; assessments of character and intentions often are equally significant. Problems of love frustrated or gone wrong

frequently account for the single-minded intensity and twisted, circuitous logic underlying murderous deeds; some characters are driven by an anguished loneliness that has turned ordinary emotional impulses inside out.

THE BRIDE WORE BLACK AND RENDEZVOUS IN BLACK

The pursuit of revenge is a common motivation for crime in Woolrich's novels. In *The Bride Wore Black*, various murders seem to implicate a mysterious woman; it is learned that years ago her husband was killed on the church steps immediately after their wedding ceremony, and she has vowed to eliminate those responsible. In some respects *Rendezvous in Black* (1948) is a haunting, bittersweet study in love denied. After the death of his fiancé, a man sets forth to inflict similar anguish on others who may have been involved; killing those whom each of them loved most, he leaves a trail of bodies that can be explained only when his original design is uncovered. All the while

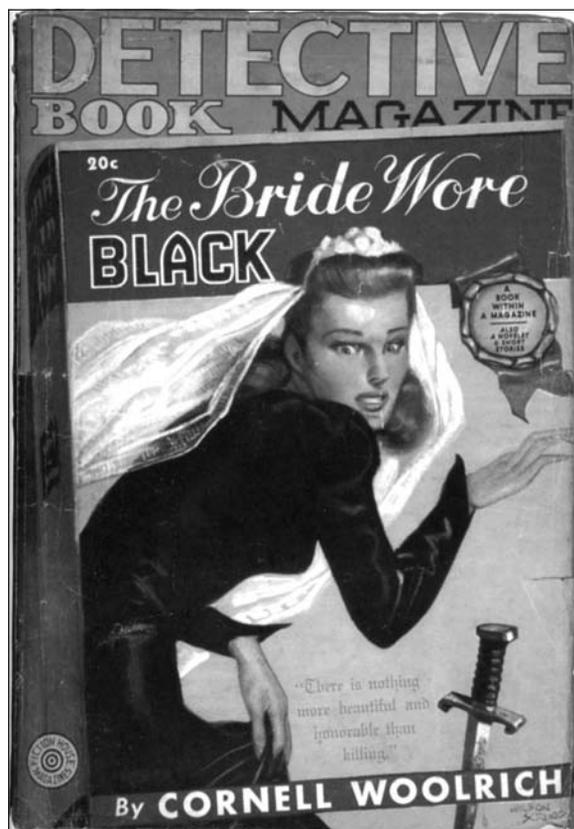
tangled, turbulent feelings have welled up within the killer; when a woman is hired by the police to lure him into the open, she creates the illusion that his beloved has returned to him.

THE BLACK CURTAIN AND THE BLACK ANGEL

Woolrich was adept at portraying the lonely desperation of those who must struggle against the most unfavorable odds to prove their innocence or to save loved ones. Sometimes it appears that sheer willpower and determination can triumph over the most imposing obstacles; even the most unlikely forms of evidence can be instrumental in efforts to find the real culprits. *The Black Curtain* (1941) concerns a man who has suffered a blow to the head that has effaced the memories of three years; uneasily, he sorts out the bits of information that may cast some light on the missing period of his life. It emerges that under another identity he was falsely implicated in a murder, and the actual perpetrators have been trying to do away with him once and for all. The protagonist's groping, agonizing attempts to learn about his own past, despite his fear that some terrible secret lies at the end of his quest, makes this work a highly compelling one. *The Black Angel* (1943) begins with a man's sentence to death for the murder of his presumed mistress; his wife believes in him implicitly, however, and as the date for the execution draws near she sets off on her own to clear him. Beginning only with a monogrammed matchbook and some entries in the victim's notebook, she succeeds finally in confronting the real killer. Along the way there are a number of unsettling encounters in the murky night world of call girls and criminal operators. A man who fled to Havana with a gangster's wife is implicated in her murder, in *The Black Path of Fear* (1944); dodging threats from several sides, he receives aid from some unexpected quarters, and eventually some bizarre and vicious criminals are brought to justice.

PHANTOM LADY AND DEADLINE AT DAWN

In many of Woolrich's works, time itself becomes an enemy. This motif is utilized most powerfully in *Phantom Lady* (1942), which begins 150 days before a man's scheduled execution. The time remaining, down to the final hour, is announced at the beginning of each chapter. The protagonist has been found guilty of murdering his wife, after no one would believe that he had



actually been with another woman on the night in question. Even he has begun to doubt that she ever existed. Finally, after much fruitless searching, the mystery woman is located. The evidence used to bring her into the open is no more substantial than an old theater program. In the end, the real culprit turns out to be an individual who had been close to the condemned man. In *Deadline at Dawn* (1944), a man and a woman who happened to be at the scene of a killing must find the actual murderer within a matter of hours; chapter headings consist simply of clock faces showing how much closer the protagonists have come to freedom, or to disaster, at each turn.

WALTZ INTO DARKNESS

Suspicion and conflict at close quarters also appears in Woolrich's works; while husbands and wives, and for that matter lovers of various sorts, often act on behalf of each other, when differences arise the results can be frightful and unsettling. In *Waltz into Darkness* (as William Irish; 1947), set in New Orleans in 1880, a man seeks a mail-order bride, but he discovers that the woman he has married is not quite the one he had expected. His new wife appropriates his money, and he discovers that she probably had a hand in the death of his original betrothed. Yet she exercises a fatal sway over him, and though she mocks him for his apparent weakness, he believes that the signs of her deep underlying love for him are unmistakable. This curious polarity seems to enervate him and leave him without a will of his own; he commits murder for her sake, and even when he learns that she is slowly poisoning him, his devotion to her is so strong that he cannot save himself.

Woolrich frequently employed first-person narratives. Those works in which accounts of crime and detection follow each other on parallel courses utilize an omniscient narrator, who appears, however, never to be far from the thoughts, hopes, and fears of the leading characters. In some of his stories he adopts a lilted, sentimental tone for the recounting of romantic aspirations; the shock of disillusionment and distrust is conveyed in a jarring, somber fashion. In some of his later offerings such tendencies took on maudlin qualities, but at his best Woolrich could create an acute and well-drawn contrast between lofty ideals and

close encounters with danger. Reactions to impending threats are expressed in a crisp, staccato tempo; blunt, numbing statements, either in direct discourse or in narration, generally bring matters to a head. Often situations are not so much described as depicted through the uneasy perspective of characters who must regard people and objects from the standpoint of their own struggles with imminent danger. Odd metaphors for frenzied and violent action sometimes lend ironic touches. In much of Woolrich's writing, action and atmosphere cannot readily be separated. Indeed, quite apart from the original conceptions that are realized in his leading works, the dark and penetrating power of his studies in mystery and fear entitle his efforts to be considered among the most important psychological thrillers to appear during the twentieth century.

J. R. Broadus

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BLACK SERIES: *The Bride Wore Black*, 1940 (also known as *Beware the Lady*); *The Black Curtain*, 1941; *Black Alibi*, 1942; *The Black Angel*, 1943; *The Black Path of Fear*, 1944; *Rendezvous in Black*, 1948

NONSERIES NOVELS: *Phantom Lady*, 1942 (as Irish); *Deadline at Dawn*, 1944 (as Irish); *Night Has a Thousand Eyes*, 1945 (as Hopley); *Waltz into Darkness*, 1947 (as Irish); *I Married a Dead Man*, 1948 (as Irish); *Fright*, 1950 (as Hopley); *Savage Bride*, 1950; *Strangler's Serenade*, 1951 (as Irish); *You'll Never See Me Again*, 1951 (as Irish); *Death Is My Dancing Partner*, 1959; *The Doom Stone*, 1960; *Into the Night*, 1987

OTHER SHORT FICTION: 1943-1950 • *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, 1943 (as Irish; also known as *And So to Death and Nightmare*); *After-Dinner Story*, 1944 (as Irish; also known as *Six Times Death*); *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, 1945 (as Irish); *Borrowed Crimes*, 1946 (as Irish); *The Dancing Detective*, 1946 (as Irish); *Dead Man Blues*, 1947 (as Irish); *The Blue Ribbon*, 1949 (as Irish; also known as *Dilemma of the Dead Lady*); *Six Nights of Mystery*, 1950 (as Irish); *Somebody on the Phone*, 1950 (as Irish; also known as *The Night I Died* and *Deadly Night Call*)

1951-1960 • *Bluebeard's Seventh Wife*, 1952 (as Irish); *Eyes That Watch You*, 1952 (as Irish); *Night-*

mare, 1956; *Violence*, 1958; *Beyond the Night*, 1959; *The Best of William Irish*, 1960 (as Irish)

1961-1986 • *The Dark Side of Love*, 1965; *The Ten Faces of Cornell Woolrich*, 1965; *Nightwebs*, 1971; *Angels of Darkness*, 1978; *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich*, 1981; *Darkness at Dawn*, 1985; *Vampire's Honeymoon*, 1985; *Blind Date with Death*, 1986

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

NOVELS: *Cover Charge*, 1926; *Children of the Ritz*, 1927; *Times Square*, 1929; *A Young Man's Heart*, 1930; *The Time of Her Life*, 1931; *Manhattan Love Song*, 1932

SHORT FICTION: *Hotel Room*, 1958

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Z

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

Born: London, England; February 14, 1864

Died: Midhurst, West Sussex, England; August 1, 1926

Type of plot: Police procedural

CONTRIBUTION

Israel Zangwill, hailed in his time as “the [Charles] Dickens of the ghetto” and praised as a peer of classic writers such as Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, and George Bernard Shaw, made his single outstanding contribution to the realm of mystery fiction when he was twenty-seven years old. Serialized in 1891 and published in book form in 1892, *The Big Bow Mystery*, Zangwill’s unique crime novel, has been termed the first full-length treatment of the locked-room motif in detective literature. Zangwill has thus come to be proclaimed the father of this challenging mystery genre, and properly so. On the fictional trail to the solution of the Big Bow murder, the author’s professional sleuths, along with a number of amateur newspaper theorists and assorted curbstone philosophers, offer a number of ingenious alternate explanations of the puzzle, possible hypotheses that through the years have inspired other literary craftsmen involved in constructing and disentangling locked-room mysteries. In addition, *The Big Bow Mystery* offers a graphic picture of late Victorian life in a seething London working-class neighborhood. Zangwill effectively combined social realism of the streets with a realistic depiction of the criminal investigative process.

BIOGRAPHY

Israel Zangwill was born in the ghetto of London’s East End. His father, an itinerant peddler, was an immigrant from Latvia; his mother, a refugee from Poland. Part of Zangwill’s childhood was spent in Bristol, but by the time he was twelve, the family had

returned to London, where young Israel attended the Jews’ Free School in Whitechapel, becoming at the age of fourteen a “pupil-teacher” there.

By the time he was eighteen, Zangwill had manifested extraordinary talent for writing, winning first prize for a humorous tale brought out serially in *Society* and publishing a comic ballad. He showed, too, an early interest in social realism by collaborating on a pamphlet describing market days in the East End Jewish ghetto. In 1884, Zangwill was graduated from London University with honors in three areas: English, French, and mental and moral sciences. He continued teaching at the Jews’ Free School until 1888, when he resigned to devote all of his considerable energy to a career in letters.

Subsequently, the writings of Zangwill were indeed prolific: In addition to twenty-five collected volumes of drama and fiction, Zangwill wrote hundreds of essays for popular and esoteric journals and gave as many speeches. He worked efficiently and rapidly, and editors quickly recognized and rewarded his talent. Zangwill once observed that he had never written a line that had not been purchased before it was written. His plays were produced in London and New York; his final drama, staged on Broadway, provided Helen Hayes with one of her first starring roles.

Zangwill’s range of interests was remarkably extensive: art, economics, pacifism, politics, racial assimilation, World War I, and Zionism and the Jewish homeland. Around these themes he composed romances and satires, entertainments and polemics. Though he continued his strenuous habits of composition right up to his death, Zangwill’s most effective period of fiction writing came, so the consensus records, during the 1890’s, the era he had ushered in with *The Big Bow Mystery*. Critics of fiction regard *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), *The King of Schnor-*



Israel Zangwill. (Library of Congress)

ers: *Grotesques and Fantasies* (1894), and *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898) as his most provocative and enduring contributions to socio-ethnic literature. His most famous drama, *The Melting-Pot* (pr., pb. 1909)—“That’s a great play, Mr. Zangwill,” declared President Theodore Roosevelt on opening night—presented for the first time the now-clichéd metaphor of America as a crucible for uniting into a single people the disinherited of the Old World.

Zangwill soon focused his work on social and political issues, bringing to modern problems a sensibility at once idealistic in its hopes and realistic in its proposed solutions. His ideas were given wide publicity in both England and America; he was always a popular attraction as an orator. Late in his life, Zangwill suffered a nervous breakdown, brought on by the stresses of his work for the theater as dramatist and theater manager. He died in the summer of 1926 in Sussex.

ANALYSIS

In the lore of mystery and detective fiction, Israel Zangwill’s reputation, based on one classic work, is secure. He is the father of the locked-room mystery tale, a subgenre launched by Edgar Allan Poe in short-story format but made especially attractive by Zangwill’s versatile, full-length rendering. Written in 1891, when Zangwill was at the virtual beginning of his career, *The Big Bow Mystery* was serialized in the *London Star*, published a year later in book form, and finally collected in *The Grey Wig: Stories and Novelettes* (1903). More than a whodunit cipher or a pure exercise in inductive reasoning, Poe’s “ratiocination,” Zangwill’s novel brings together the intellectual acumen of the scientific sleuth with the inventive imagination of a poet. At the same time, the novel offers a perceptive and sociologically valid picture of working-class life in late Victorian England, replete with well-defined portraits of fin de siècle London characters. Many of the issues and ideas distinguishing the turbulent 1890’s are mentioned or explored in the novel.

THE BIG BOW MYSTERY

As a writer with roots in the ghetto, Zangwill theorized that it was essential to reveal the mystery, romance, and absurdity of everyday life. In *The Big Bow Mystery* he employs a photographic realism to render the human comedy. With vivid attention to detail, he depicts the truths inherent in class relationships, the tensions in political realities, and the passions in reformist clamor. Influenced himself by the pulp novels or “penny dreadfuls” of the time, Zangwill was perhaps paying homage to them through loving parody. In the main, however, the literary sources of the novel are Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and Robert Louis Stevenson, whose romances of the modern and the bizarre, particularly *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), had caught Zangwill’s attention.

The characters in *The Big Bow Mystery* are Dickensian in name as well as behavior: Mrs. Drabdump, a hysterical widowed landlady who, with retired Inspector Grodman, discovers the body of the victim; Edward Wimp, the highly visible inspector from Scotland Yard who undertakes the well-publicized investigation; Denzil Cantercot—poet, pre-Raphaelite devotee of the beautiful, professional aesthete—who

has ghostwritten Grodman's best-selling memoirs, *Criminals I Have Caught*; Tom Mortlake—union organizer, “hero of a hundred strikes,” veritable saint to all workingmen of Bow—who is arrested for the murder of Arthur Constant—idealist, much-loved philanthropist, believer in the true. The ideas of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, particularly those set forth in his essay on suicide, had become important to Constant; so, too, had the visions of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the founders of Theosophy, who claimed power over superphysical forces and whose cult during the 1890's attracted serious thinkers, dabbling dilettantes, and crackpots. Fascinated by the confluence of these intellectual and spiritual forces, Zangwill juxtaposed esoteric discussions of astral bodies to pragmatic reviews of trade unionism. *The Big Bow Mystery* presents an almost encyclopedic view, sometimes satiric but always accurate, of polarized British thought patterns of the age.

Constant's dead body is discovered in a room sealed as effectively as a vault, with no instrument of death found on the premises. As Grodman and Wimp, experienced Scotland Yard detectives, endeavor to solve the mystery, the popular *Pell Mell Gazette* prints numerous ingenious theories mailed in by interested amateurs. With a sly twist, Zangwill even brings Poe directly into the story by having a newspaper correspondent assert that Nature, like the monkey she is, has been plagiarizing from “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and that Poe's publisher should apply for an injunction. Another would-be investigator suggests that a small organ-grinder's monkey might have slid down the chimney and with its master's razor slit poor Constant's throat. Thus Zangwill pays his debt to Poe and serves notice that he intends to embellish the genre.

As the true and the useful, the aesthetic and the utilitarian collide, as the tenets of Oscar Wilde and Algeon Charles Swinburne challenge the ideas of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Zangwill graphically sustains the brooding, gaslit Victorian atmosphere. His characters trudge through London mists, take tea in musty, gray boardinghouses, and slink through bleak working-class neighborhoods. Zangwill possessed a strong awareness of environmental factors and their effect on people's lives. Before he begins to unravel the

complexities of this tale, however, even Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and the home secretary appear as actors in the drama. The ultimate revelations come as a shocking series of twists, yet no clues have been denied the reader; the solution is honest, intricate, and logical. Zangwill has remained in total control of his material.

“THE MEMORY CLEARING HOUSE” AND “CHEATING THE GALLOWES”

The King of Schnorrers contains two mystery tales: “The Memory Clearing House” and “Cheating the Gallows.” Again, Poe is the inspiration behind both. “The Memory Clearing House” has as its basis a theory of supernatural thought transference, with people selling unwanted and superfluous memories to a memory broker, who catalogs these unique materials and sells them. He runs a “pathological institution.” When an author purchases a murderer's memory for use in a realistic novel he has in progress, the complications begin. The climax occurs when the published novel is damned for its tameness and improbability. Zangwill's inventiveness is again evident in “Cheating the Gallows.” In this story, an odd pair who happen to live together—a respectable bank manager and a seedy, pipe-smoking journalist—become involved with the same woman. A murder, a suicide, and a phantasmic dream bring about several stunning revelations. A few other grotesques and fantasies from the volume—“A Double-Barrelled Ghost,” “Vagaries of a Viscount,” and “An Odd Life”—also capture Zangwill's art in the area of mystery; each has a balanced dose of humor and pathos.

As much an interpreter of life's vicissitudes and problems as he was an entertainer in his mystery writings, Israel Zangwill—and his famed locked room in *The Big Bow Mystery*—will continue to occupy a prestigious position in the annals of detective fiction.

Abe C. Ravitz

PRINCIPAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

NOVEL: *The Big Bow Mystery*, 1892

SHORT FICTION: *The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies*, 1894; *The Grey Wig: Stories and Novelettes*, 1903

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NOVELS: *The Premier and the Painter: A Fantastic Romance*, 1888 (with Louis Cowen); *Children of the Ghetto*, 1892; *Joseph the Dreamer*, 1895; *The Master*, 1895; *The Mantle of Elijah*, 1900; *Jinny the Carrier: A Folk Comedy of Rural England*, 1919

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PLAYS: *The Great Demonstration*, pr. 1892; *Aladdin at Sea*, pr. 1893; *Six Persons*, pr. 1893; *The Lady Journalist*, pr. 1893; *Threepenny Bits*, pr. 1895; *Children of the Ghetto*, pr. 1899 (adaptation of his novel); *The Monument of Death*, pr. 1900; *The Revolted Daughter*, pr. 1901; *Merely Mary Ann*, pr., pb. 1903 (adaptation of his short story); *The Serio-Comic Governess*, pr., pb. 1904; *Nurse Marjorie*, pr., pb. 1906; *The Melting-Pot*, pr., pb. 1909; *The War God*, pr., pb. 1911; *The Next Religion*, pr., pb. 1912; *Plaster Saints*, pr., pb. 1914; *The Moment Before*, pr. 1916; *Too Much Money*, pr. 1918, pb. 1924; *The Cockpit*, pr., pb. 1921; *The Forcing House: Or, The Cockpit Continued*, pb. 1922; *We Moderns*, pr. 1923; *The King of Schnorrers*, pr. 1925 (adaptation of his novella)

POETRY: *The Ballad of Moses*, 1892; *Blind Children*, 1903

NONFICTION: 1882-1900 • *Motza Kleis*, 1882 (with Cowen); "A Doll's House" Repaired, 1891 (with Eleanor Marx Aveling); *Hebrew, Jew, Israelite*, 1892; *The Position of Judaism*, 1895; *Without Prejudice*, 1896; *The People's Saviour*, 1898

1901-1910 • *The East African Question: Zionism and England's Offer*, 1904; *What Is the ITO?*, 1905; *A Land of Refuge*, 1907; *One and One Are Two*, 1907; *Talked Out!*, 1907; *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, 1909; *Old Fogeys and Old Bogeys*, 1909; *Report on the Purpose of Jewish Settlement in Cyrenaica*, 1909; *The Lock on the Ladies*, 1909; *Italian Fantasies*, 1910; *Sword and Spirit*, 1910

1911-1920 • *The Hithertos*, 1912; *The Problem of the Jewish Race*, 1912; *Report on the Jewish Settlement in Angora*, 1913; *The War and the Women*,

1915; *The War for the World*, 1916; *The Principle of Nationalities*, 1917; *The Service of the Synagogue*, 1917 (with Nina Davis Salaman and Elsie Davis); *Chosen Peoples: The Hebraic Ideal Versus the Teutonic*, 1918; *Hands Off Russia*, 1919; *The Jewish Pogroms in the Ukraine*, 1919 (with others); *The Voice of Jerusalem*, 1920

1921-1937 • *Watchman, What of the Night?*, 1923; *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive? A Debate Between Imperial Wizard Evans, Israel Zangwill, and Others*, 1924; *Now and Forever: A Conversation with Mr. Israel Zangwill on the Jew and the Future*, 1925 (with Samuel Roth); *Our Own*, 1926; *Speeches, Articles, and Letters*, 1937; *Zangwill in the Melting-Pot: Selections*, n.d.

TRANSLATION: *Selected Religious Poems of Ibn Gabirol, Solomon ben Judah, Known as Avicebron, 1020?-1070?*, 1923

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**CRITICAL SURVEY OF
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AND
DETECTIVE FICTION**

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TOPICAL ESSAYS

**PAST AND PRESENT MYSTERY
AND DETECTIVE FICTION**

ROOTS OF MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

Any consideration of the history of mystery and detective fiction must start by separating the traditional meaning of the word “mystery” from the genre that bears the name. Even the earliest-known writings of humankind contain elements of mystery. Mystery, as the is word now commonly understood, is the unknown, the unanswered. This is a very different meaning from that used in mystery novels, in which mystery goes from being only one of the elements in a story to being the central purpose of a story. Gothic romance novels, which predate the modern mystery, utilized mysterious elements in their plots, often using the supernatural in combination with dark, long-hidden family secrets that were revealed to readers slowly throughout their pages.

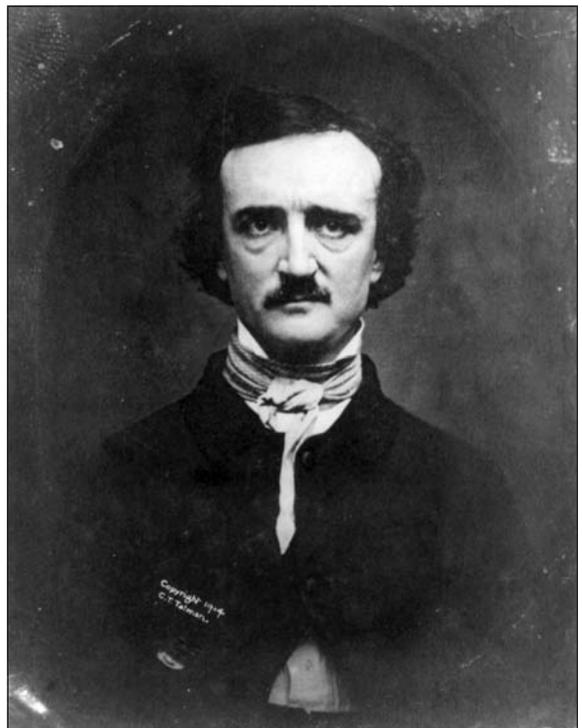
The American author Edgar Allan Poe extracted the mystery element from gothic romance novels and made it the core of three short stories, beginning with “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in 1841. With that short story, Poe established a pattern that is still used today. At the center of the story is the crime: two mutilated women in a locked room on an upper floor of a Parisian apartment building. One of the women has been nearly beheaded, the other is stuffed halfway up the chimney. After shocking readers with the brutality of the crime that has already been committed, Poe introduced his detective, C. Auguste Dupin. An amateur detective, Dupin relates his theories to the story’s unnamed narrator, who marvels at Dupin’s brilliance. In this story, then, can be seen the prototypes for future pairings of detectives and companions, of which the most famous include Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot and Captain Arthur Hastings, and Rex Stout’s Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin.

Poe’s story also gave the genre its first locked-room mystery. With no evident way in which a murderer could have entered or left the locked room in which the dead women are found, a profound puzzle takes center stage in Poe’s story, and the story *is* the mystery. The telling of the story, the introduction of the detective, the interviewing of witnesses, the appar-

ent contradictions and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and finally the solving of the case through what Poe termed ratiocination, the triumph of reason.

While Poe influenced virtually all the mystery story writers who would follow him, he had literary influences of his own. For example, he was familiar with Eugene-François Vidocq, the real-life French detective whose four-volume memoirs, a blend of fact and fiction, was published in 1828. Vidocq was a lifelong criminal who became a police detective and is credited with starting the first detective agency. Poe mentions Vidocq by name in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Vidocq also served as the model for Émile Gaboriau’s Monsieur Lecoq who first appeared in 1869. Gaboriau was an admitted follower of Poe’s style, and they both were influenced by the legend of Vidocq who, interestingly enough, was also the model for Victor Hugo’s Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* (1862).

Poe followed “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”



Edgar Allan Poe in 1848. (Library of Congress)

with two more short stories featuring Dupin. He based "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842) on the true story of the murder of Mary Rogers in New York City. "The Purloined Letter" (1844) is a story in which the property that is stolen remains hidden in plain sight. Poe's enduring contribution to the mystery genre, these three short stories provided the framework that later writers in Great Britain, France, America, and the rest of the world would adopt and occasionally improve upon.

NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH AND FRENCH MYSTERY NOVELS

After Poe's three stories, the genre lay dormant for a decade or two. Eventually, three writers in Europe, one in France and two in England, began to fulfill the promise of Poe's legacy. Émile Gaboriau's *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866) was the first work in the tradition of Poe to be published in Europe. Monsieur Lecoq became the main character in Gaboriau's later novels, *Le Crime d'Orci-val* (1867), *Le Dossier no. 113* (1867), and *Monsieur Lecoq* (1868). Gaboriau was the first author to write book-length crime novels, and he also is credited with creating the *roman policier*, the crime novel form featuring police procedures.

Even before Gaboriau, however, Charles Dickens wrote *Bleak House* (1852-1853), a novel that featured Inspector Bucket as one of the main characters. In this lengthy novel, Bucket attempts to untangle a complicated case of questionable maternity and comes to the aid of the heroine Esther Summerson. Detective Bucket marked one of the first appearances of a detective in British fiction. However, while *Bleak House* may have included a detective among its large cast of characters, Dickens's earlier novels *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) also contained substantial mystery elements. However, Dickens's greatest contribution to the mystery novel is doubtless his fifteenth and last book, the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Drood was half-written when Dickens suffered a stroke; he died the next day. Because no ending to the novel was ever written or even discussed by Dickens, various authors over the subsequent generations have supplied their own endings.

One of Dickens's best friends, and a sometime collaborator, was Wilkie Collins. Collins was the son of

an English painter, and his influence on Dickens is well evidenced. Collins published his novels serially through Dickens's periodicals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. His early novels were primarily social novels that examined how the aristocracy lived. His later novels were essentially social protest novels, works written to draw attention to social ills in Great Britain. However, between those two phases of his writing, Collins wrote what are considered his two best books as well as two of the earliest mystery novels.

The first of Collins's mystery novels, *The Woman in White* (1860) concerns a devious plot to disinherit a beautiful young heiress. The primary villain in the story is Count Fosco, one of the best-drawn characters in English literature. A man of great civility and charm on the outside, Fosco manipulates everyone to suit his own needs. There is no designated detective figure in Collins's novel, but the young heiress, along with the young man who loves her and her devoted half sister, endeavor to solve the intricate case, which includes elements of mistaken identity, false allegations, and organized crime. Collins's second mystery novel, *The Moonstone* (1868), involves opium use, a stolen gem, sleepwalking. Like *The Woman in White*, it is written in a style of limited perspective, with each character revealing only the facts he or she has personally witnessed.

TWO EARLY AMERICAN WOMEN MYSTERY WRITERS

The first detective novel in the United States was written by a woman, Metta Victoria (Fuller) Victor, who lived from 1831 until 1885. Married to Orville Victor, a publisher of dime novels, she wrote under the pseudonym Seeley Regester. Her best-known work is *The Dead Letter* (1866). Victor wrote many popular novels, and her works encompassed hundreds of titles outside the mystery genre.

A contemporary of Victor was the American writer Anna Katharine Green, who was born in 1846. Green wrote thirty-five novels and four collections of short stories. She was thirty-two years old and a college graduate when she wrote her first novel, *The Leavenworth Case* (1878). That novel was very successful, and Green was admired for her craft. Arthur Conan

Doyle, Agatha Christie, and Mary Roberts Rinehart all cited Green as a major influence on their own writing.

Green set most of her novels in the state of New York. Her Victorian-era stories do not stand up well against modern novels, as her writing seems stilted and cumbersome. Nevertheless, Green is sometimes dubbed “The Mother of Detective Fiction.” Her primary detective is an older, rounder man named Ebenezer Gryce. Gryce seldom makes eye contact with people he is questioning; he is more likely to look at their feet if he looks at them at all. Writing between 1878 and 1923, Green created two women detectives, one a spinster and the other a young woman. The spinster, Amelia Butterworth, who made her debut in *That Affair Next Door* (1897), was a forerunner of Agatha Christie’s Miss Jane Marple. Green’s younger woman, Violet Strange, made her debut in a collection of nine short stories titled *The Golden Slipper* (1915).

Green also created a fourth detective, Caleb Sweetwater. He first appeared in *A Strange Disappearance*

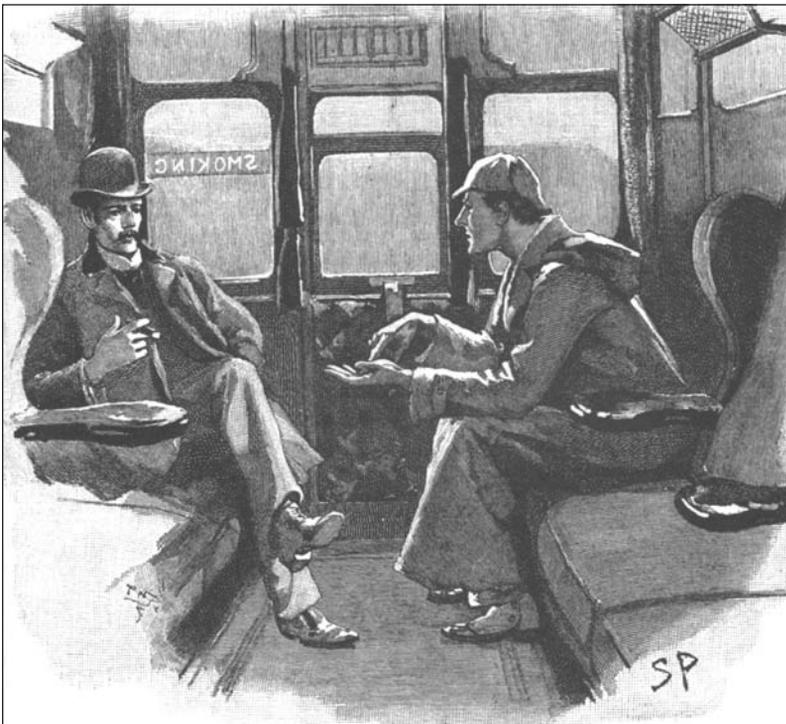
(1880), but he is much more prominent in *Agatha Webb* (1899). Sweetwater is a talented violinist who gives up his career to become a detective. Green often has her detectives working in combination, forging relationships. For example, Amelia Butterworth is the lead detective in *That Affair Next Door*; but Ebenezer Gryce is called in on the case for consultation. Sweetwater often assists Gryce on cases, acting as an operative for the older detective.

SHERLOCK HOLMES

A brilliant man of many passions, Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Scotland. He entered the medical school at Edinburgh University in 1876 and graduated with a doctor of medicine degree in 1885. Afterward, he wrote anonymously for publications in his spare time and served for a time as a ship’s doctor on long sea voyages. After qualifying as a medical doctor, he married and eventually moved his young family to London in 1891. There he took up the specialty of

ophthalmology. If his medical practice had been more demanding, perhaps he would not have continued to pursue writing. As it was, he wrote his first novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), for *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*. In this way, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John H. Watson were first introduced to the reading world. The series persisted through 1927, reaching its zenith with the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1902.

Doyle was ambivalent about his most famous fictional creation. He thought that his true calling was to be a writer of historical novels and thought that the time he spent writing about his eccentric detective detracted time he should spend writing more serious literature. Nevertheless, he ultimately produced fifty-six short stories and four novels about the genius detec-



This Sidney Paget illustration for *The Strand Magazine’s* publication of Arthur Conan Doyle’s “*The Adventure of Silver Blaze*” (1892) shows Sherlock Holmes (right) and Dr. Watson riding a train during their investigation of a missing racehorse.

tive and his amiable chronicler, and few modern readers pay attention to his historical novels. Doyle followed his second Holmes novel, *The Sign of the Four* (1890), with his first short story about Holmes, "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891). Despite the great popularity of Holmes, Doyle seemingly wrote an end to his detective in "The Final Problem" (1893). In that story, Holmes becomes locked in a struggle with archenemy Professor Moriarty, and together they plunge to their apparent deaths over a waterfall. However, pressure from his readers later forced Doyle to bring Holmes back.

Doyle modeled Holmes on one of his medical school professors, Dr. Joseph Bell, whose powers of observation and deduction had amazed his students. What is known of Sherlock Holmes comes from a number of sources including the stories themselves, the illustrations drawn by Sidney Paget, based on his younger brother Walter, who was also an illustrator. It is known that Holmes is interested in opera, the violin, and forensics. He shares his flat at 221B Baker Street in London with Watson, and Mrs. Hudson is their housekeeper. Holmes is not without his faults. For example, he uses cocaine in a 7-percent solution, and he generally has a low opinion of women. Inside the confines of his residence dressed in his robe, smoking his pipe, reading a treatise on the mating rituals of bees, Holmes occupies his own universe and lives by his own rules. In this well-known setting, his short stories, first published by *The Strand Magazine*, take the reader through the four collections: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905), and finally *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927).

MYSTERY AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The French writer Gaston Leroux is best known today as the author of *The Phantom of the Opera* (1910), but he, too, was greatly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. After years as a journalist, he turned to fiction after 1900 and his best-known mystery story is *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1907) which features one of his two series detectives, Joseph Josephson, also known as Rouletabille because of his bullet-shaped head. Rouletabille was a young journalist and in *The*

Mystery of the Yellow Room encounters a corpse in a locked room. Rouletabille's friend, Sinclair, serves as the narrator of the story. Leroux's stories often featured fast-paced, complicated plots with supernatural elements thrown into the mix. His detective with an odd-shaped head inspired several film treatments during the 1930's and 1940's in his native France.

Curiously, the American writer Jacques Futrelle also wrote short stories about an amateur detective with a deformed head. His main character, S. F. X. Van Deusen, was popularly known as the Thinking Machine. His abnormally large head supposedly contained a large brain that allowed him to ascertain the answers to the world's most perplexing problems. His most famous case is "The Problem of Cell Thirteen" (1907). In this case, the Thinking Machine is locked inside a cell with nothing but the clothes on his back. Nevertheless, he miraculously escapes. Futrelle's writing career and life ended tragically when he went down with the *Titanic* in 1912.

The English writer R. Austin Freeman created the intellectual detective Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke. No doubt owing to Freeman's own medical education, Thorndyke is a convincing amateur sleuth who use his vast scientific knowledge to solve crimes in more than forty years' worth of mysteries, from Freeman's first novel, *The Red Thumb Mark* (1907), to two of his better books, *As a Thief in the Night* (1928) and *Mr. Pottermack's Oversight* (1930). Freeman is credited with inventing the inverted mystery, in which readers are introduced to the criminals in the opening pages.

In what has come to be described by critics as a watershed title in the history of mysteries, E. C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case* (1913) turned the tables on the genre. From Poe's time until then, unerring reason had been at the center of every mystery solution in fiction. Investigators such as C. Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Thorndyke, and others were all figures with keen intellects and sharp powers of observation who reeled in wrongdoers with the use of their great mental powers. Enter Bentley's Philip Trent, a young journalist and detective. Trent analyzes evidence, interviews suspects, and through great feats of mental ability arrives exactly at the wrong conclusion. The case is eventually solved, but through no fault of

Trent's. True to his book's title, Trent swears that this will be his last case. However, that book's popular success naturally led to sequels: *Trent's Own Case* (1936) and *Trent Intervenes* (1938). Bentley's contribution was the creation of a more accessible detective, a more human detective. Trent opened the mystery genre's door to the Everyman.

Mary Roberts Rinehart, the author of the first American detective story to appear on a best-seller list, wrote several successful mystery novels in the early twentieth century. Her books did much to set the stage for authors such as Agatha Christie who followed her. Rinehart's first mystery novel, *The Circular Staircase* (1908), sold more than 800,000 copies. A critical and commercial success, it was followed by *The Man in Lower Ten* (1909) and *The Case of Jennie Brice* (1913).

Rinehart is credited with coining one of the most ubiquitous catchphrases in the mystery genre: "The butler did it!" It originated in her novel *The Door* (1930), in which the butler actually did do it. Rinehart is also one of the originators of the "had-I-but-known" school of mystery fiction. This label comes from the frequent repetition of that and similar phrases in her stories.

Trained as a nurse, Rinehart began writing to support her family after the stock market crash of 1903. Many of her works were adapted to other media, especially *The Circular Staircase*, which Rinehart and Avery Hopwood rewrote for the stage as *The Bat*. After 1932, she moved to New York to be near her sons who had established the publishing house Farrar and Rinehart, and they published her novels throughout the rest of her life. In 1950, *Newsweek* reported that Rinehart's works had sold more than ten million copies worldwide.

GREAT BRITAIN'S GOLDEN AGE

The years between World Wars I and II have been termed the Golden Age of detective fiction because many mystery writers were active during these years and because many of them were of high quality and quite prolific and because of the sheer numbers of mystery novels and short stories in print. The accepted dates of 1920 to 1940 are somewhat arbitrary. Impor-

tant mystery authors wrote shortly before and after those years. However, it is clear there was a high level of accomplishment in the genre between those designated years in both Great Britain and the United States. In Great Britain, this period was dominated by four women writers: Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh.

Discussion of the Golden Age must begin with Agatha Christie, who wrote more than one hundred novels, plays and short-story collections. Her books have sold in the hundreds of millions. Within the Western world, only William Shakespeare and the Bible have had more readers. Moreover, in her two main detective figures, Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple, Christie created two of the best-known characters in English literature.

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Born in Devon, England, in 1890 to a British mother and an American father, Christie was the youngest of three children. Schooled at home, she was shy but imaginative. When she was twenty-six, she accepted a challenge from her sister and began writing her first mystery, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), which was initially rejected by several publishers. This first novel introduced Hercule Poirot, a retired Belgian detective who would go on to appear in thirty-three novels and sixty-five short stories. In *Curtain: Hercule Poirot's Last Case* (1975), Poirot finally dies while working his last case. Christie had actually written *Curtain* during the early years of World War II, afraid that she herself might be killed and her fictional detective might outlive her. She held the novel back until shortly before her own death over thirty years later.

Christie's Miss Marple appeared in twelve novels and thirty short stories. She lives in the village of St. Mary Mead, a seemingly quaint and peaceful community. Yet, Marple discovers that people are people wherever one lives, and she is able to classify people she meets by their types, often drawing parallels between new acquaintances and people she has known all her life in St. Mary Mead. Marple is often described as an old tabby, an elderly, unmarried woman. However, behind her disarming facade is a keen mind wielding great powers of observation that silently cal-

culates the evidence. The first novel featuring Miss Marple was *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930).

The year 1926 was pivotal for Christie. During that year, her mother died, her first husband left her, she herself disappeared from public view for ten days, sparking a nationwide search and a mystery of her own. It was also the year in which her novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) was published. That book broke a cardinal rule of mystery fiction, and readers' reactions were either surprise or horror upon finishing this Poirot mystery. With her reputation firmly established, Christie went on to write several more high-quality works, both in and out of the Poirot series, including *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), *Death on the Nile* (1937), *And Then There Were None* (1939), and *Evil Under the Sun* (1941). Critics have often discounted Christie's works for their formulaic plots, lack of character development, and unlikely solutions. Christie once even described herself as "a sausage machine." However, the Queen of Crime or Duchess of Death, as she was affectionately known, has continued to outsell her more literate contemporaries, even thirty years after her death.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

Born in Oxford, England, Dorothy L. Sayers earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from Oxford University. One of the most intellectual of all mystery authors, Sayers was fascinated by the stage, by religion, and by languages. In her later years she abandoned mystery novels in favor of theological treatises, passion plays, and a notable translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (c. 1302). However, Sayers was also a major figure in the history of the mystery genre, not only for her own mystery novels but also for her commentaries on mystery and detective fiction. She wrote a dozen novels and two dozen short stories in fifteen years. Her first mystery novel, *Whose Body* (1923), introduced Lord Peter Wimsey. Wimsey was an aristocrat, a dandy, an overeducated, highly cultured, long-winded snob. With his monocle, fine clothes, and passions for fast cars and excellent port, Wimsey was an amateur detective with both intelligence and style.

Little violence occurs in a Wimsey novel. People die, but the blood and gore are ignored in favor of the motivations of the characters involved in the story and

especially Wimsey's interactions with other characters. Light, airy, intelligent, sophisticated banter is the meat of most Wimsey novels. Readers have their curiosity piqued, their minds engaged, and eventually their hearts charmed by Wimsey's ways. In *Strong Poison* (1930), Wimsey works to free a woman named Harriet Vane from a charge of murder. Vane and Wimsey develop a romance that continues on in four of the final seven books in the series. Sayers wanted to end the series, but she was persuaded by friends to give Wimsey a companion, a family, and a decent sendoff before retiring him. Some of the best of Sayers's work appears when Vane takes center stage. *Gaudy Night* (1935) is a book in which Vane appears particularly prominently.

Sayers's books stand in sharp contrast to those of Christie. While reading Christie provides an afternoon's pleasant diversion, reading Sayers creates a long-term relationship. Sayers's plots are sometimes overly complex, as in the novel *Have His Carcase* (1932), or deal in arcane, obscure subject matter that demands considerable explanation on the part of author and genuine interest and patience on the part of readers, as in *The Nine Tailors* (1934), a novel dealing with the art of bell ringing.

MARGERY ALLINGHAM AND NGAIO MARSH

Appearing in seventeen novels and more than twenty short stories, Albert Campion evolved from "a silly ass" to a seasoned sleuth in nearly forty years of Margery Allingham's writing. Campion first appeared as a minor character in *The Crime at Black Dudley* (1929) but came to be the major and central character in *Mystery Mile*, Allingham's next novel. Over the years, Campion gets married, has children, and matures. Central to the Campion series is his manservant, Magersfontein Lugg. Lugg is a former cat burglar, and he and Campion engage in verbal jousts that are as memorable as those of Lord Wimsey and Harriet Vane. Two of the better titles in the Campion series are *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938) and *More Work for the Undertaker* (1948). Allingham's Campion novels, like those in Sayers's Wimsey series, mix crime, humor, and manners. Campion seems to float from one world to the next, fitting in equally well with both the aristocracy and the underworld element. He is

a somewhat shadowy figure who combines equal parts of charm and menace.

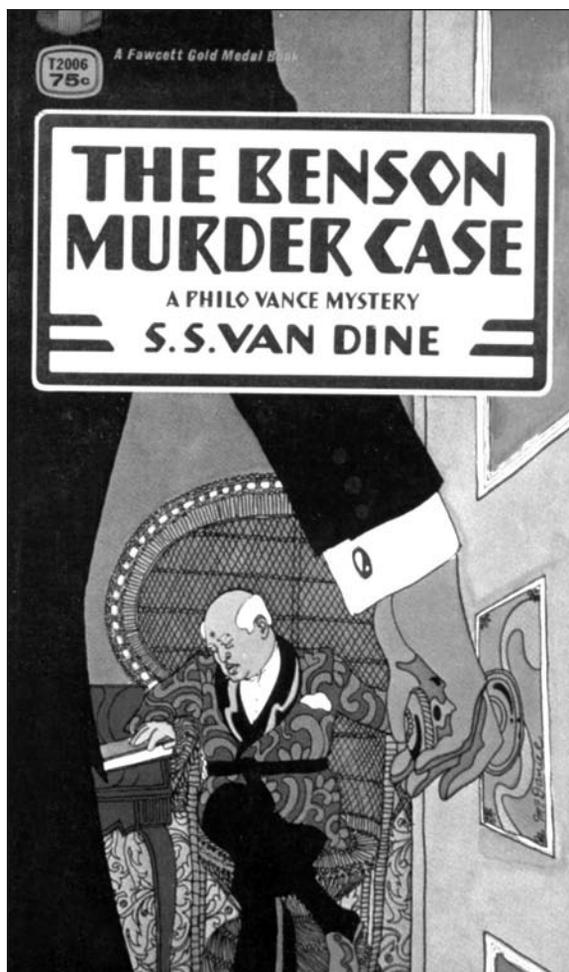
Although Ngaio Marsh was a New Zealander, the settings in her mystery novels were most often in the English countryside and frequently dealt with the arts. Marsh was a theater enthusiast, a dramatic director of skill, and a painter of considerable merit. These passions are on display to one extent or another in many of her novels, either as a central theme, a setting, or as background. She wrote thirty-two mystery novels, all featuring the same detective, Roderick Alleyn.

Alleyn is Oxford educated, and he eventually marries his love interest the painter Agatha Troy and has a family. He is joined on most of his cases by Inspector Edward, or Teddy, Fox, often referred to as B'rer Fox by Alleyn. Nigel Bathgate, another frequent Alleyn associate, is a brash, aggressive newspaper reporter who sometimes proves useful to Scotland Yard. Unlike Albert Campion and Peter Wimsey, Alleyn is a professional police detective. Marsh's novels usually introduce the murder first, creating characters with motives, exposing the relationships among the characters, killing off one of the characters, and then finally bringing in Alleyn and his associates. Alleyn often does not arrive until a hundred pages of a novel have passed. He first appeared in the novel *A Man Lay Dead* (1934) and was last seen in *Light Thickens* (1982). In nearly fifty years of writing, Marsh never tired of Alleyn, who almost always re-creates crimes using the evidence and eyewitness testimony.

AMERICA'S GOLDEN AGE

While Great Britain's Golden Age centered on a blend of murder, humor, and manners primarily made popular by women, it was men in the United States who wrote about quirky male characters such as Philo Vance, Dr. Gideon Fell, and Nero Wolfe. Five male authors dominated this period: S. S. Van Dine, Ellery Queen, John Dickson Carr, Erle Stanley Gardner, and Rex Stout.

S. S. Van Dine was the pen name of Willard Huntington Wright. Van Dine's detective, Philo Vance, like Lord Peter Wimsey, is erudite, elegant, and snobbish. He was introduced in Van Dine's first mystery novel, *The Benson Murder Case*, in 1926 and appeared in



eleven more novels through 1939. Van Dine himself was well educated and traveled extensively; his personal life, including his expensive tastes, mirrored that of his private eye. In addition to his Vance novels, Van Dine is remembered for his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" (1928). Like all rules, however, Van Dine's rules were made to be broken, and most have been broken by other authors.

Ellery Queen was the pen name of cousins Frederic Dannay and Manfred Bennington Lee. Queen is both a pen name and the name of the main character in a series of novels stretching over forty years. The character debuted in *The Roman Hat Mystery* (1929) and continued in more than thirty novels and several short-story collections. Ellery Queen books lay out all the clues readers need to solve the cases themselves. At

the end of each novel, readers are challenged to come up with the correct solution before it is revealed. Early Ellery Queen novels mimicked the successful Philo Vance. Like Vance and Wimsey, Queen is well educated and snobbish. Young Ellery, son of Inspector Richard Queen, is always getting involved in his father's cases. Inspector Queen's irascible assistant, Sergeant Velie, provides a balance to Queen's haughtiness. An important contribution of Ellery Queen's was *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, an important outlet for young mystery writers.

John Dickson Carr invented a number of detectives, perhaps the most notable being Dr. Gideon Fell, an obese lexicographer who appears in Carr's best-known work, *The Three Coffins* (1935). Other Carr detectives include Sir Henry Merrivale, Henri Bencolin, and Colonel March. Carr wrote under a variety of pen names including Carter Dickson, Carr Dickson, and Roger Fairbairn. His specialty was locked-room mysteries. He was influenced by Gaston Leroux and G. K. Chesterton, who wrote the Father Brown mysteries.

The prolific American writer Erle Stanley Gardner wrote 127 books, 82 of which feature attorney Perry Mason. Other series characters created by Gardner included Bob Larkin, Ed Jenkins, Speed Dash, Bertha Cool, and Donald Lam. With his loyal secretary Della Street and his able investigator Paul Drake, Mason engineers numerous courtroom miracles to the dismay of prosecutor Hamilton Berger. Described as a paid gladiator for his clients, Mason was immortalized to generations of television viewers through the popular television series and television movies starring Raymond Burr.

Rex Stout was a successful businessman before he began writing mystery novels. Born in Indiana to Quaker parents, he was a committed liberal and an original member of the American Civil Liberties Union board. His first mystery novel, *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), introduced the rotund, beer-drinking, orchid-growing, gourmand Nero Wolfe and his live-in associate, the skirt-chasing, wise-cracking Archie Goodwin. Working together until Stout's death in 1975, Wolfe and Goodwin appeared in more than thirty novels and as many collected novels and short stories. Although Wolfe seldom leaves his New York brownstone for any reason,

he sends out Goodwin and other assistants to gather clues and interview witnesses. From the comfort of his study, Wolfe closes his eyes and pieces together the evidence that is brought back to him. Police detectives are both awed by and resentful of Wolfe's powers of deduction, and Wolfe's short temper and arrogant manner does not endear him to authorities.

HARD-BOILED AND NOIR FICTION

Magazines such as *Black Mask* and *True Detective Stories* were springboards to American mystery writers of the late 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. Many of these writers created characters known as hard-boiled detectives—men with personal honor and integrity who lived by their own rules in a corrupt society. Dialogue in their stories tends to be terse, witty, and rapid. Women are vixens, tramps, and dames out to defile the heroes and lead them away from truth. Among the authors who epitomized this new style were Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, Ross Macdonald, and Mickey Spillane.

Noir fiction was even darker, with stories often told from the viewpoint of killers or characters sympathetic to the killers. Cornell Woolrich was one of the best of this breed. During the 1930's and 1940's, he wrote a series of dark novels that demonstrate this trend. A second writer in this vein was Jim Thompson, whose *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) portrays an unrepentant sociopath.

Dashiell Hammett's stark, minimalist writing style had an influence on later noir and crime fiction that cannot be overstated. Two of his major characters, the nameless Continental Op and Sam Spade, set the standard for private detectives to come. The originator of the hard-boiled school of writing, Hammett wrote nearly ninety short stories in magazines but only five mystery novels: *The Red Harvest* (1929), *The Dain Curse* (1929), *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *The Glass Key* (1931), and *The Thin Man* (1934). Before he took up writing, Hammett had worked as a detective for the Pinkerton Detective Agency in San Francisco for several years. An alcoholic and a chain smoker, he suffered from tuberculosis. Although he lived another twenty-five years, he never wrote another short story or book after 1934.

Equally important to the hard-boiled school was Hammett's contemporary Raymond Chandler, an author who did much to establish "West Coast cool." Born in Chicago and raised and educated in England, Chandler served in the Canadian army and returned to the United States after a seventeen-year absence and settled in California. He did not begin writing mystery novels until he was forty-two. His detective was Philip Marlowe, perhaps the best representation of the hard-boiled detective. A private detective, Marlowe is a smooth operator, an independent contractor who would never compromise his personal code. He first appeared in *The Big Sleep* (1939), the first of Chandler's seven novels. The best of the rest are *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), and *The Long Goodbye* (1953). Like Hammett, Chandler also wrote dozens of short stories for magazines such as *Dime Detective* and *Black Mask*. Chandler also had success in Hollywood writing screenplays.

James M. Cain was the son of a college president and was trained as a journalist. He worked in New York City with Walter Lippman and in Baltimore with H. L. Mencken. Like Chandler, Cain took to writing mysteries when he was forty-two. Cain's first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), is one of the most critically acclaimed novels in the genre. Along with *Double Indemnity* (1936) and *Mildred Pierce* (1941), *Postman* makes up a trio of commercially successful novels. All three books were made into popular films.

Ross Macdonald was the pen name of Kenneth Millar, who was born in California and educated in Canada and at the University of Michigan. After returning to California, he settled in Santa Barbara. Most of his books are set in and around Santa Barbara, which he calls Santa Teresa in his books. A committed conservationist, Macdonald changed his name so as not to conflict with the writing career of his wife, Margaret Millar, who was also a successful mystery novelist. He initially used the pen name John Ross Macdonald but then changed it to Ross Macdonald to avoid confusion with yet another contemporary writer, John D. MacDonald. Ross Macdonald's main character, Lew Archer, first appeared in *The Moving Target* in 1949 and was the central character in eighteen novels.

Mickey Spillane took all the elements of the hard-

boiled school and exaggerated them to almost disturbing proportions. In what Ellery Queen once termed the "guts, gore and gals" style, Spillane caused a sensation with his first Mike Hammer book, *I, the Jury* (1947). Spillane thought of himself as a "writer," not an "author," because it is the writers who sell books, and he sold millions of books. With titles such as *My Gun Is Quick* (1950) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1952), Spillane cemented his image as a no-nonsense tough guy.

Cornell Woolrich is remembered for his dark, brooding, cynical, and somehow romantic noir fiction. He reached his zenith as a writer with his Black series, which include *The Bride Wore Black* (1940), *The Black Curtain* (1941), *The Black Alibi* (1942), *The Black Angel* (1943), *The Black Path of Fear* (1944), and *Rendezvous in Black* (1948). Alfred Hitchcock's famous film *Rear Window* (1954) was based on Woolrich's short story "It Had to Be Murder."

Randy L. Abbott

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GOLDEN AGE FICTION

The so-called Golden Age of mystery novels is generally regarded as the period between World Wars I and II, which encompassed all of the 1920's and 1930's. During that period that the conventions of the mystery genre were established. At first, the Golden Age was dominated by British writers. Three British women and one New Zealander woman, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh—were so influential that they became known as the “Queens of Crime.” American writers of what are sometimes called “classical” mysteries, works that bowed to these conventions, emerged during the mid-1920's. American writers, however, soon found themselves in competition with writers from the realistic, “hard-boiled” school of mystery writing. Although the hard-boiled mystery was popular in the United States, especially among male readers, works of that kind were not read in Great Britain in any significant numbers until the late 1930's, and even then they did not capture the interest of the reading public as soon as they had in America.

It is often pointed out that the Golden Age of the mystery novel was preceded by a golden age of the mystery short story, which began with Arthur Conan Doyle's creation of Sherlock Holmes in 1887. According to critic Julian Symons, the short-story genre continued to flourish during the 1920's and the 1930's, dying out only as magazines became less interested in publishing short stories, partly because the expansion of libraries gave readers easier access to books. Sherlock Holmes stories have retained a loyal reading public, but most authors of mystery short stories of the 1920's and 1930's are now forgotten. However, the four women who dominated the Golden Age continue to be well known, and their works can still be found on the shelves of bookstores and libraries.

It is sometimes argued that the Golden Age actually began before World War I, in 1913, the year in which British journalist E. C. Bentley published his only important mystery novel, *Trent's Last Case*. Bentley said that he wrote the book to point out what he saw as objectionable qualities in Sherlock Holmes, notably his infallibil-

ity and his egotism. Bentley's protagonist, Philip Trent, is often called the first fallible detective. In fact, in Bentley's novel, he falls in love with the prime suspect in the murder case and abandons his investigation. The novel has several qualities that would soon become standard. For example, it takes place in a closed setting, a country house, whose occupants represent a closed society. However, Dorothy L. Sayers called *Trent's Last Case* a landmark work because it was the first story to depict a detective as a real human being. Nevertheless, other critics have pointed out that Philip Trent does not share all of his findings with his readers. Therefore *Trent's Last Case* is not a clue-puzzle—a structure that is seen by many as the most important mystery format of the Golden Age.

THE CLUE-PUZZLE

Clue-puzzles are mysteries in which both detectives and readers are provided with the same clues at the same time, enabling the readers to follow the sleuths' investigations step by step, assessing clues and arriving at solutions to the crimes as quickly as the investigators do. That is the theory. However, in practice, readers are seldom so fully informed. Nevertheless, as with difficult Sunday crossword puzzles, the challenge of the clue-puzzle format brings readers back again and again.

The primary appeal of clue-puzzles is intellectual, not emotional. Therefore, when writers introduce romance into their novels, as Dorothy L. Sayers does in her series showing the developing relationship between Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane, they minimize sentimental scenes and emphasize the progress of the plot. Well-written clue-puzzles may have clearly drawn settings, perhaps even atmosphere, and they should contain interesting, believable characters. However, what they *must* have is flawless plots. Blackmail and embezzlement may be discovered in clue-puzzles, but the central crimes should always be murder—sometimes one murder, sometimes more than one. Permissible clues include circumstantial evidence, such as the placement of a dead body; blood at the scene; weapons,

present or absent; letters and papers; and statements by the characters. These statements may include information on where the informants were at a particular time, what they saw, what they heard, and what they know about the victim and other characters.

Other types of clues have to do with motives. By ascertaining who benefits from a murder, a detective can often narrow the list of suspects, as Christie's detective Hercule Poirot does in *The A.B.C. Murders* (1935). At the end of that novel, as in many other Golden Age mysteries, the sleuth assembles all the suspects and, with a policeman friend in attendance, makes a speech retracing all the steps in his investigation. At the conclusion of the speech, the detective identifies the criminal, who is promptly carted off by the police. The novel does not include a description of the culprit's time in prison or of the execution that, it is assumed, will follow. Once the puzzle is solved, the story is over. Because a clue-puzzle mystery ends with the identification of the murderer, it is often called a "whodunit."

CLUES AND THE READER

Agatha Christie, who is credited with doing the most to invent the clue-puzzle, did not believe that writers should make the task of detection easy for readers. Most of the clues she supplies turn out to be irrelevant. Moreover, she often uses detectives' side-kicks to mislead readers by having them misinterpret clues and jump to erroneous conclusions. When Hercule Poirot's friend Captain Arthur Hastings picks up the wrong clues and reaches the wrong conclusions, Christie does not always have Poirot correct his friend immediately. Instead, she often has him say that they will discuss the matter later or has him simply remain silent, smiling secretively, leaving readers as much in the dark as Hastings.

Christie's approach is somewhat different in books in which her sleuth is Miss Jane Marple. Marple does not take initiatives in interviewing suspects, even informally. She generally picks up clues by watching others and listening to them. As she tells the vicar in the first book in which she appears, *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), she has a hobby, the study of human nature. In pursuit of that lofty goal, she feels it is her duty to know everything that is going on in her little village, St. Mary

Mead. Moreover, Marple is not overly hampered by scruples. In St. Mary Mead, she uses binoculars to keep an eye on her neighbors. She also listens to gossip, which is the primary diversion in her village. Some verbal clues that aid her in her investigations come from friends at the tea table; others are the overheard gossip of servants. Marple is broad-minded where eavesdropping is concerned; in one of her last books, *At Bertram's Hotel* (1965), she is delighted to discover a high-backed chair facing the fireplace in which one can sit unobserved while other people in the room carry on revealing conversations. Her skill in knitting clues into finished garments is illustrated in *The Thirteen Problems* (1932; also known as *The Tuesday Club Murders*). In that book, she explains how, simply by observing small details, she solved twelve criminal cases and also prevented a young girl from ruining her life.

RULES OF THE GAME

Recognizing that the clue-puzzle had become the standard form for a mystery novel by the mid-1920's, writers and critics began to analyze the new genre. In a 1924 essay titled "The Art of the Detective Story," R. Austin Freeman stressed that the form appealed primarily to the readers' intellects. In 1928, Dorothy L. Sayers wrote an introduction to an anthology in which she recognized the genre as a clue-puzzle, while suggesting that it move toward a broader definition, perhaps as a comedy of manners. Meanwhile, in 1926, E. M. Wrong had insisted on the need for "fair play" in authors' treatment of their readers. In 1928, the American author Willard Huntington Wright, who wrote mysteries under the pseudonym of S. S. Van Dine, included both the concept of the puzzle form and the idea of fair play in an essay entitled "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories."

Wrong and Wright were not the only critics who were concerned about fair play in clue-puzzles. Critics and writers agreed that detectives should not conceal clues from readers. There was a consensus that solutions to crimes should not come as the result of unexpected revelations of past histories, introduction of new characters, use of the supernatural, or reliance on coincidences. These strictures were included in ten rules, known as the "Detective Story Decalogue," that

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Dorothy L. Sayers in 1942. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Ronald A. Knox, a British detective writer himself and a Roman Catholic priest, listed in his preface to *The Best Detective Stories of 1928-1929* (1929).

When the Detection Club was formed in 1929 by twenty-six mystery writers, including Knox, Sayers, and Christie, its members swore to an oath based on Knox's rules. Undoubtedly, the Detection Club and the rules of fair play helped to discourage the writing of some novels that were labeled mysteries but in fact were not. Among these were the books the satirical poet Ogden Nash called "had-I-but-known" novels, in which romantic heroines straight out of gothic novels describe series of hairbreadth escapes. Since it is obvious that the heroines have survived to tell their stories, there are no mysteries to be solved.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Although everyone in the Detection Club recognized that though it was important to adhere to the clue-puzzle form as closely as possible, they recog-

nized that creative imaginations could not and should not be stifled. Even before the club set down its rules, Agatha Christie broke the rule that the thoughts of the detective's friend must not be concealed from the reader. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), Dr. James Sheppard is called in to examine a widow who has been found dead, apparently a suicide. Roger Ackroyd, a friend of the doctor, guesses at her motive. Ackroyd tells Sheppard that he had been planning to marry the widow but that she had broken off her engagement because she was being blackmailed for a crime that she had committed, the murder of her abusive husband. Then Ackroyd is killed, and his niece Flora consults Hercule Poirot, who happens to be staying nearby. Dr. Sheppard becomes Poirot's friend and confidant. Because the doctor is also the book's narrator, it is only natural for readers to assume that he is dutifully reporting Poirot's ideas, as well as his own thoughts. However, the doctor-narrator himself turns out to be the murderer. After the formation of the Detection Club, there were reportedly some heated discussions about Christie's novel. Finally, however, it was agreed that her use of a ruse in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was justified. In his seminal work *Bloody Murder* (1972), Julian Symons uses this work as evidence of his belief that "Every successful detective story in this period involved a deceit practiced upon the reader."

Among Knox's other rules was his insistence that twins not be used as a plot device unless readers are properly prepared for them and his absolute prohibition of what he called "Chinamen." This latter rule is assumed by some simply to be facetious, perhaps reflecting an inside joke among Detection Club members. However, others believe that the rule refers to a convention that was generally observed during the Golden Age, keeping all the suspects within the same social circle.

As some critics have pointed out, although one of the conventions of clue-puzzles is that the stories involve solving murders, one of Dorothy L. Sayers's most popular books, *Gaudy Night* (1935), not only does not begin with a murder, but no murder occurs within its entire narrative. Sayers also broke another rule by introducing romance into her mysteries, a practice that

Van Dine had specifically forbidden, as distracting readers from the main business of the books.

THE RED HERRING

“Red herring” is a term used in discussions of mystery fiction that originated in the blood sport of foxhunting, in which red herrings were sometimes dragged across trails to throw hounds off the track. In both logic and in politics, the term has long been used to describe attempts at diversion. In mystery fiction, a red herring is a clue or suspect that is introduced to divert the attention of readers. In a sense, a writer who introduces a red herring is like a magician performing a sleight-of-hand trick, but without admitting it to readers. Early twentieth century writers and critics agreed that using red herrings in stories was not a violation of the fair-play rule. Agatha Christie’s first detective novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), used several red herrings, intriguing clues that turned out to be irrelevant.

Dorothy L. Sayers recognized the plot device by titling one of her novels *The Five Red Herrings* (1931). That book is set among a community of artists in the Scottish Highlands. When a painter is found dead at the foot of a cliff, it is assumed that while stepping back to look at his work, he simply took one step too many and fell off the cliff. Because his general lack of consideration and deliberate rudeness antagonized all his fellow artists, his absence does not unduly distress them. In fact, the other artists simply breathe a collective sigh of relief and go back to their own work. However, Lord Peter Wimsey, who happens to be in the area, does not believe that the man’s death was an accident. He alerts the police to his suspicions and then begins his own investigation. He discovers that six people in the community had strong reasons to kill the dead man. Wimsey’s strategy is to eliminate five of these suspects, the “five red herrings” of the title. He then identifies the one remaining as the murderer.

VICTIMS AND DETECTIVES

Theoretically, since clue-puzzles were essentially intellectual exercises, it was thought inappropriate for authors to encourage readers to indulge their emotions. Readers were thus not expected to empathize

with any of the stories’ characters, not even the victims. One way to prevent developing sympathy for victim was to get the murders out of the way as soon as possible, thereby not giving readers time to become attached to the victims before they die.

It was also considered important that detectives have no emotional ties to the victims. Ngaio Marsh typically begins one of her books by setting the scene, briefly introducing a few characters, then proceeding to the discovery of a victim. At that point she switches to the office of her detective, Roderick Alleyn, at Scotland Yard. Since it is assumed that the murder case would tax the talents and the resources of the local police, Alleyn is given a cursory briefing and dispatched to the scene, often along with his subordinate, Inspector Edward Fox. Alleyn’s social standing makes it almost inevitable that some of the people involved in the case will know members of his family, but these tenuous connections do not prevent him from dealing with the case in a purely professional manner. Moreover, Alleyn can sometimes acquire useful information from his friends and relatives that would not be available to someone outside that social circle.

Christie’s amateur detectives are as dispassionate as Marsh’s professional. Hercule Poirot is a pleasant man, especially sympathetic when a pretty young woman is involved. However, once a murder takes place, it is Hastings, not Poirot, who allows his feelings to affect his mental processes. For example, in *Death on the Nile* (1937), Linnet Doyle tells Poirot that she feels threatened by her new husband’s previous fiancé, but when Linnet is killed, Poirot is not too emotionally involved to undertake a rational investigation. It takes more than a shipboard conversation for him to establish a friendship. In *Peril at End House* (1932), Poirot is present when an attempt is made on the life of another attractive young woman. Although he seems to take her statements at face value, his analytical mind is actually always at work, weighing her assertions and evaluating the evidence. At the end of the novel, when Poirot politely exposes her as a liar, it is evident that he has remained rational and dispassionate, while Hastings, and probably many readers, have been taken in by the woman’s charms.

When victims are close friends or relatives of detec-

tives, the structure and the tone of the novels are very different. The first fifth of Marsh's novel *Death in a White Tie* (1938) is devoted to establishing Lord Robert Gospell as a sympathetic character. When Roderick Alleyn calls upon Gospell for help in a blackmail case, it is obvious that the two men are close friends, that Alleyn trusts Gospell implicitly, and that they share the same code of ethics. Most of what follows in the initial chapters is seen through Gospell's eyes; his function as the voice of the author ends only with his death. When Alleyn is called out to examine the body of his friend, he trembles, utters a violent oath, and then has to ask for a moment to collect himself. As he proceeds with the investigation, Alleyn manages to mask his emotions, but he admits to those close to him that he is not simply doing his duty but seeking justice for his dead friend. It is to his credit that Alleyn controls his emotions. Nevertheless, by permitting the victim to become a real person and a sympathetic character and by allowing her detective to be motivated as much by his feelings as by his professional duty, Marsh makes *Death in a White Tie* something other than a clue-puzzle that is supposed to be merely an intellectual exercise. It is significant that this is also the book in which Marsh shows Alleyn at his most desperate in his desire for Agatha Troy. Most readers find Troy's capitulation to Alleyn at the end of the novel as satisfying as the detective's success in tracking down his friend's murderer.

VILLAINS AND SUSPECTS

Members of the Detection Club also agreed on what kinds of murderers are acceptable in mystery novels. For example, they thought that master villains belong in thrillers, not in mysteries. Moreover, they wanted every murder to be committed by a single person; it was not appropriate to have a murder committed by a gang. Moreover, murderers should be seemingly respectable members of respectable social groups. Thus, there would be multiple suspects, each seemingly as unlikely as another. Sometimes the basic philosophy of Golden Age writers is stated in terms of a social equilibrium: If a society shares a moral code, the detective's task is to discover which member of the group has violated that code so that the culprit can be exposed and expelled, thus restoring the moral order.

Foolish, superficial, and arrogant characters may populate a Golden Age mystery, but the novel will not contain any blanket indictments of society.

The rules of Golden Age detection included warnings against probing too deeply into the psychology of murderers, as writers did not want their readers to feel some sympathy for the offenders and perhaps even hope that the offenders would escape punishment. However, as Ngaio Marsh pointed out, the ban on psychological analysis made it difficult for writers to create plausible characters. Some critics insist that clue-puzzle mysteries emphasized plot at the expense of characterization. This charge has some merit. Freeman Wills Crofts was considered the most meticulous plotter of his time, but he rarely managed to bring his characters to life. Perhaps for that reason, his books are no longer well known. In any case, after the 1950's, writers of mysteries felt free to include psychological analysis in their novels and sometimes made character studies, rather than detection, the primary purpose of books that were still classified as mysteries.

One issue that the Detection Club did not address was how many suspects a mystery should have. The answer seems to have been determined in part by settings, in part by story lines. Sometimes a plot dictates the number of suspects. For example, in Marsh's first mystery, *A Man Lay Dead* (1934), five guests at a country house party are playing a game of "Murder." When one of them is killed, the other four all become suspects. In Margery Allingham's *Police at the Funeral* (1931), the setting is a manor house, but it is not quite so easy to determine the number of suspects. However, since all of the victims are members of the same family, the detective, Albert Campion, can at least limit his list of suspects to people who are still alive and who are connected in some way to that family.

When one of Christie's novels featuring Miss Marple is set in St. Mary Mead, a village so tiny as to have only one main street, its suspect pool is almost as small as it would be in a country-house mystery. *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930) is a good example. By contrast, in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), Christie offers Poirot a wide variety of suspects from a number of different countries. Most of the travelers at least profess to have no secret involvements with one another.

After the murder occurs, Poirot is able to limit the suspects to those passengers on one specific coach that is traveling from Istanbul to Calais. Moreover, since the train got stuck in a snowbank a half hour before the murder, Poirot can be certain that the murderer is still aboard. However, that still leaves him with a dozen suspects in what is one of his most complicated cases.

CLOSED-WORLD SETTINGS AND CLOSED SOCIETIES

A typical Golden Age mystery has a closed-world setting, that is, it takes place in a place where a small number of characters, all of whom know one another, are brought together in a limited area. After a murder occurs, everyone remains in place until the murderer is identified. This kind of setting has a number of advantages. Both the author and the detective can systematically map the characters' activities and check their alibis. Sometimes a map is included in the book, so readers can follow the characters' movements. Closed-world settings make it possible to limit the numbers of suspects. For example, in a country-house murder, the only suspects are usually the people who live in the house and a relatively small number of guests who are present for a long weekend.

Because the conventions of the genre almost never allow servants to commit murders or even to be considered as suspects, suspect pools are limited socially as well as geographically. The cozy mysteries written by the four major women writers of the Golden Age—Allingham, Christie, Marsh, and Sayers—are all set in closed societies in which both servants and masters subscribe to the same codes of behavior, which they follow in the most minute details, at least publicly. Moreover, the primary detectives are always ladies or gentlemen, who have been reared to adhere to the same rules and to observe the same conventions. As H. R. F. Keating has pointed out, in a well-run country house no mere murder is allowed to interfere with the serving of breakfast, lunch, or tea, and no respectable sleuth, amateur or professional, would expect the hallowed routine to be altered. In these settings, standards must be upheld.

Writers sometimes found ways to make it impossible for the suspects to leave the closed-world setting un-

til the murderers are identified and exposed. For example, in Ngaio Marsh's *Death and the Dancing Footman* (1941), set in an English country house, a snowstorm cuts off access to the outside world. Similarly, in Marsh's *Photo Finish* (1980), which is set at a New Zealand retreat accessible only by boat, a violent storm prevents anyone from leaving until Alleyn finds out who has killed their mercurial hostess. Less dramatically, writers may have police officers called in to make sure that no one leaves the places where crimes occur. Ships, planes, and trains can also function as closed-world settings when their passengers cannot disembark.

JOHN DICKSON CARR AND LOCKED-ROOM MYSTERIES

Although the four "Queens of Crime" are regarded as having ruled unchallenged during the Golden Age, a number of British and American men also wrote excellent mysteries during that period. One was John Dickson Carr, who also wrote as Carter Dickson, Carr Dickson, and Roger Fairbairn. A Pennsylvanian by birth, Carr moved to England in 1930, when he was twenty-four. Under his own name, he wrote twenty-three novels about the hugely overweight, eccentric Dr. Gideon Fell, a lexicographer and the consultant to whom Scotland Yard turns in seemingly hopeless cases. In both his appearance and the high quality of his intellect, Fell was said to resemble the writer G. K. Chesterton. As Carter Dickson, Carr published an additional twenty-two full-length mysteries and a novelette that featured Sir Henry Merrivale, another imposing figure, who was said to be a composite of the British statesman Winston S. Churchill and the author himself.

Carr is best known for his "locked room mysteries," so named because they present seemingly impossible situations. This form dates back to 1841, when Edgar Allan Poe published "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." The victim in that tale is found dead inside a locked room with the key on the inside. In the decades that followed, other authors wrote stories in which murderers manage to penetrate rooms that are sealed in some way. Among these authors were Arthur Conan Doyle, whose Sherlock Holmes faced such a situation in "The Adventures of the Speckled Band" (1892), and G. K. Chesterton, whose Father Brown encounters

his first locked-room problem in "The Wrong Shape" (1911).

However, Carr himself was the acknowledged master of the form. Among the many locked-room mysteries he wrote, *The Three Coffins* (1935) is probably his most famous, in part because it contains Dr. Fell's famous lecture on the locked-room mystery. Fell points out to his assembled friends the various tricks and devices that can be used to commit such a murder. In this novel, the murderer enters the study of Professor Grimaud, shoots him, and then vanishes, leaving the only door to the room locked from the inside. There is no indication as to how the killer left, no footprints in the snow on the ground outside the window or on the roof above it. Another of Carr's sleuths, Sir Henry Merriwale, confronts locked-room puzzles in *The Peacock Feather Murders* (1937), and *The Judas Window* (1938), and many other stories.

Like his fellow members of the Detection Club, John Dickson Carr believed that mysteries should be constructed as clue-puzzles and that writers should always practice fair play. As the acknowledged master of the locked-room form, Carr stood for the intellectual challenge that defined the Golden Age mystery. However, in his admitted liking for gruesome details and in his habit of having his murderers motivated by mental instability, rather than more rational desires for social or financial benefits, Carr resembles the mystery writers who emerged later in the century.

THE AMERICAN GOLDEN AGE

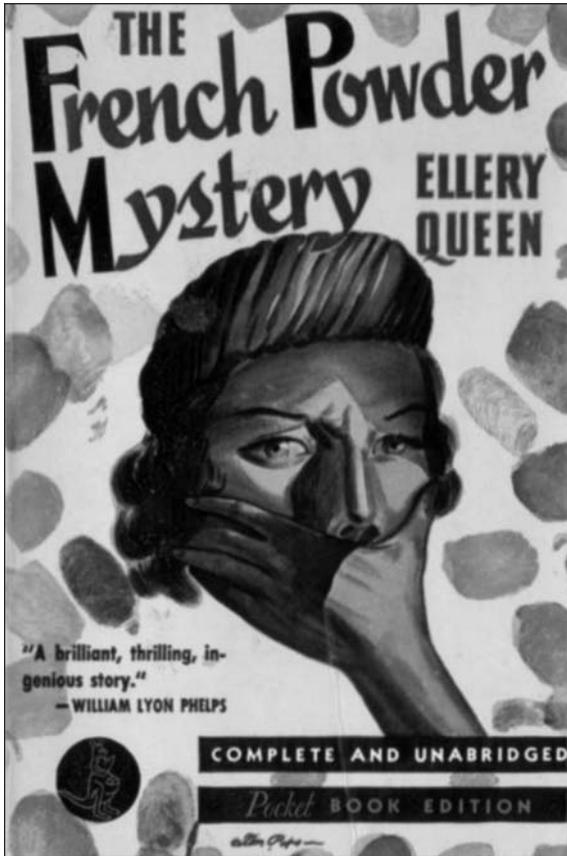
Carr was not the only American to write mysteries that followed, at least to some degree, the conventions established in the British Golden Age. Ironically, one of the earliest of these other American writers, Earl Derr Biggers defied one of Knox's rules by making his detective-hero Chinese. Biggers's Sergeant Charlie Chan of the Honolulu Police first appeared in *The House Without a Key* in 1925 and immediately attained great popularity. Although Biggers's mysteries differed in setting and ambiance from those being produced in Great Britain, Biggers did attempt to utilize the clue-puzzle format, and to some extent he succeeded.

S. S. Van Dine was an American writer who helped formulate the rules by which mystery writers should

be governed. Nevertheless, he unashamedly bent and even broke many of those rules. Van Dine's primary interest was in character, not plot, as he demonstrated by focusing on Philo Vance, his erudite, well-to-do amateur detective and a darling of New York society. Vance first appeared in *The Benson Murder Case* (1926) and by the sheer force of his personality dominated the nine mysteries that followed. Critics have been puzzled about Van Dine's attitude toward his hero, whom he modeled, in part, on Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey. Some critics believe that Van Dine was as charmed by Vance as were his readers; others, that he was simply satirizing a character whom he viewed as overly verbose and pretentious. However, it is generally agreed that the series' loss of popularity during the 1930's should be ascribed not to any loss of interest in Vance but instead to the new enthusiasm for hard-boiled fiction.

The writing team known as Ellery Queen was more successful in adapting to changes in taste. Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee (both pseudonyms) were cousins living in Brooklyn, New York, who decided to write mysteries under the pseudonym of Ellery Queen, which they also made the name of their fictional sleuth. They were highly successful. During the 1930's and the early 1940's, Ellery Queen may have been the most famous American detective.

Queen first appeared in *The Roman Hat Mystery* (1929) as a handsome, brilliant young dilettante who is often called in as a consultant by his father, an inspector with the New York Police Department. In *The French Powder Mystery* (1930), for example, Queen is asked to help find out why and how a corpse turned up in the window of a New York department store. In *The Devil to Pay* (1938), after moving to Hollywood to become a screenwriter, Queen finds himself investigating crimes instead of pursuing his new vocation. In *Calamity Town* (1942), Queen is in Wrightsville, a fictional town in either New England or upstate New York, where again he finds his attempts to write interrupted by calls on his sleuthing talents. However, Queen develops a lasting affection for Wrightsville. Even after his return to New York City, he goes back to Wrightsville from time to time to solve particularly baffling crimes. Meanwhile, during the late 1940's, his



Ellery Queen was the most popular American detective during the 1930's.

creators show him taking an interest in urban social problems such as juvenile delinquency and class hostility. By remaining flexible as to setting and situation, the creators of Ellery Queen were able to adapt to social change and to changing tastes without having to discard their popular hero or abandon their adherence to the clue-puzzle format and the fair-play principle.

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

During the 1930's, a number of other American authors wrote mysteries in what is now often called the classical tradition. However, although they flourished during that decade, almost all of them are now forgotten. The most successful new writers to appear during the decade combined the older clue-puzzle techniques with some of the elements of the new hard-boiled detective story. One of the best known of these writers

was Erle Stanley Gardner, who introduced the lawyer Perry Mason in *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933). In what became an extremely popular series, Mason, his secretary Della Street, and Paul Drake, a private detective, eventually appeared in eighty-six novels. The courtroom scenes, in which Mason identified and confronted criminals in the latter parts of each mystery, made Gardner's stories ideal for film and television, and they were still being shown on television in the twenty-first century.

Another important series began with the publication of Rex Stout's novel *Fer-de-Lance* (1934). Even though Nero Wolfe is a professional private investigator, he almost never surveys actual crime scenes. Instead, he remains in his New York City brownstone, reading, cultivating his orchids, and indulging his immense appetite, while his employee Archie Goodwin, who narrates the series, does the legwork for him. Goodwin eventually assembles suspects in Wolfe's office, where the great man recapitulates his investigations and turns the murderer over to the police. Like Mason, Wolfe was adapted to television and thus lived on into the next century.

Although for a time the hard-boiled style of mystery writing prevailed, especially in America, and as the century progressed, thrillers, fantasies, science fiction novels, and horror stories gained worldwide popularity, the writing conventions of the Golden Age were never totally ignored. During the 1980's and 1990's, readers who had tired of gritty realism sought mysteries that recaptured the restrained tone and the intellectual emphasis of the British Golden Age and the American classical tradition. Although their detectives might not be aristocrats, writers of the "cozy domestic" subgenre avoided gratuitous gore and explicit sex, choosing instead to present readers with seemingly insoluble puzzles, then to challenge them to proceed, clue by clue, to their solutions and identification of the murderers.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

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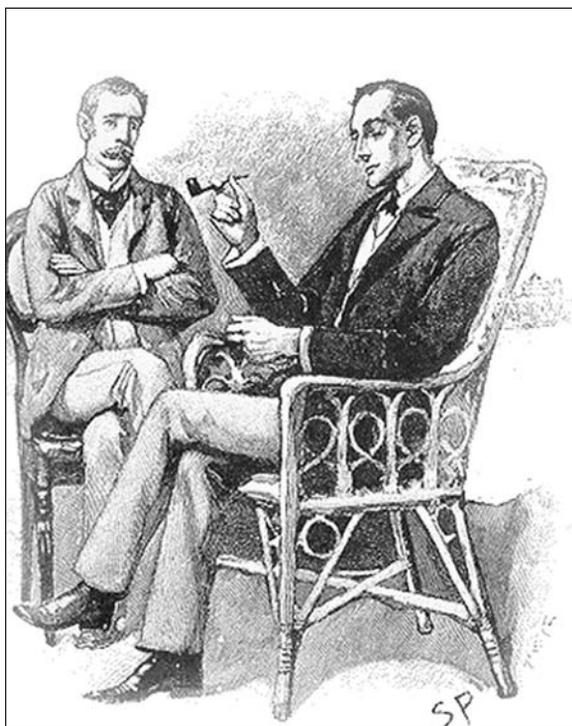
INNOVATIONS

Edgar Allan Poe is generally credited with inventing the fictional form that focuses primarily on crime and its investigation. His early 1840's short stories featuring the detective C. Auguste Dupin—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter"—set the fundamental pattern that would become the basis of detective fiction over the next century. Poe called these works "tales of ratiocination" to emphasize how analytical reasoning helped drive their plots and to distinguish them from his gothic tales of suspense and horror. Several innovative features in Poe's Dupin stories influenced future works of detective fiction. These included using as a protagonist a brilliant, if eccentric, amateur detective who articulates a particular method of analyzing evidence. Another was employing as a sidekick a friend of less intelligence than the protagonist who tells the protagonist's story and assists him, and policeman whose pro-

posed solutions of crimes invariably prove incorrect. Poe's other inventions included arrays of false leads (later known in the genre as "red herrings") and apparent anomalies and climactic scenes in which the detectives' solutions are fully explained and perpetrators are identified. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe introduced the locked-room mystery in which a murder occurs within a space sealed off from the outside world, making it appear impossible for a killer to have entered or left the space. This kind of anomaly would become a staple of the so-called British Golden Age mysteries between World Wars I and II.

The most famous detective in the world is, without a doubt, Sherlock Holmes, the creation of Arthur Conan Doyle. Holmes first appeared in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887); however, the form in which his vast popularity was secured was the short story. More precisely, it was the series of short stories that Doyle published in *The Strand Magazine*, a London monthly, before being collected in volumes such as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905). Altogether, Doyle wrote fifty-six stories and four short novels about Holmes; the most famous of the latter being *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). So devoted was Holmes's readership that their protests after Doyle had apparently killed his famous sleuth in "The Final Problem" in 1894 compelled Doyle to reincarnate Holmes and write more stories about him over several decades. Sherlock Holmes's influence in detective and mystery genre was further magnified by his many later appearances on the stage, in films, and on radio and television.

When Doyle created his Holmes saga, he clearly drew on Poe's Dupin stories, as well as those of other contemporary writers of popular mysteries, such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. However, Doyle greatly enriched and improved upon these antecedents to develop the detective series as a distinct form. Holmes's sidekick, Dr. Watson, for example, is far more fully developed than Poe's anonymous narrator, while Scotland Yard's Inspector Lestrade sharpens



One of the many pictures of Sherlock Holmes (right) drawn by Sidney Paget for *The Strand Magazine*, in which Arthur Conan Doyle's stories first appeared.

the portrait of the inept policeman, and Professor Moriarty provides a formidable antagonist whose evil genius is worthy of Holmes's genius for good. However, it is Holmes himself whose character most embellishes the prototype. Doyle's descriptions of his appearance and personal habits, his distinctive manner of speaking, his abstruse learning and curiosity about odd subjects, his bouts of ennui and melancholy and his addiction to opium, and above all his brilliant "scientific" method of reasoning—these qualities bring him vividly to life on the page. Doyle also captured the rich atmosphere of late Victorian England, its fogbound London streets with hansom cabs carrying the sleuth and his loyal friend and chronicler to and from their bachelor digs at 221-B Baker Street, or out into the countryside to pursue a trail of clues in some small village or a country estate such as Baskerville Hall and its famous moors.

EARLY VARIATIONS ON DETECTIVE HEROES

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Sherlock Holmes and his imitators, such as Austin Freeman's Dr. John Evelyn Thorndike, Jacques Futrelle's "Thinking Machine," and S. S. Van Dine's Philo Vance, continued to repeat the popular formula of the super-rational, infallibly brilliant sleuth. In reaction, G. K. Chesterton and E. C. Bentley began to experiment with variations in the formula that prepared the way for that high-water mark of the formal detective novel known as the Golden Age.

Chesterton was an exceptionally prolific writer who produced more than one hundred books. His detective fiction represents only a small part of that total; his fifty-one Father Brown stories were collected in five volumes, beginning with *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911). Those stories are by far his most popular works. Father Brown departs from the scientific approach to detection championed by Holmes in that. Nevertheless, despite his innocent appearance, his theological training and deep awareness of human depravity endow him with remarkable insights into the minds—even the souls—of criminal suspects. His investigations are grounded in intuition and divine inspiration more than on the logical analysis of material evidence. Indeed, Chesterton's fiction leans toward romance instead of realism, relying on a sort of exagger-



The British writer G. K. Chesterton's main innovation was the creation of an amateur sleuth who relies more on intuition and divine inspiration than on scientific analysis to solve crimes.

(Library of Congress)

ation and surface simplification in order to focus more forcefully on the ideas underlying the story. Such fiction has the quality of moral fable or parable. Critic Ian Ousby sees as the greatest strength of the Father Brown stories "the way they embed the detective puzzle in a metaphysical-cum-theological fable without making it any less satisfying as a puzzle."

Like his good friend Chesterton, E. C. Bentley was both a precursor of and a participant in the heyday of British mysteries. Bentley was determined to write a detective story that avoiding the excesses of writers who imitated Doyle. Bentley wanted a detective to be an ordinary man, not a superior being. He would be a more lighthearted hero, not aloof, eccentric, and anti-social like Holmes and Dupin. He would also not be a scientific investigator and would not be scornful of the police. He would not take himself or his work too seriously but would be capable of ordinary human feelings, including—and this would be one of his boldest

strokes—romantic love. Bentley's hero, Philip Trent, is a gentleman, a man of some learning and social grace. Far from the tendentious aphorisms of Holmes or Dupin's stilted lectures on "method," Trent's conversation is playful and witty, full of literary allusions and wordplay. He is blithe, smooth, nonchalant, and full of good-natured optimism instead of Holmesian egocentrism and gloom.

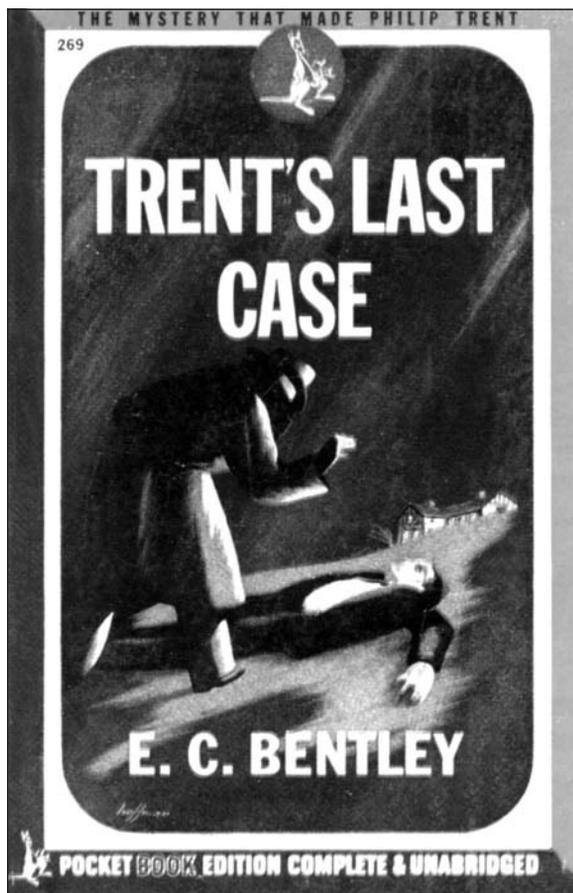
Bentley's masterpiece, *Trent's Last Case* (1913), also makes a strategic change in narrative viewpoint, eschewing the first-person observer-narrator by a half-comprehending, worshipful Watson-type character in favor of a flexible third-person narrator who is sometimes omniscient and sometimes restricted to the free indirect discourse of particular characters, including the detective. Finally, *Trent's Last Case* was innovative simply in being a novel. The short stories of Poe, Doyle, and Chesterton tended to focus strictly on indi-

vidual problems—crimes, their surrounding circumstances, and solutions. The greater expanse of the novel form allowed Bentley to engage in a more complicated game with reader expectations. Novels invited the inclusion of larger and more varied casts of characters, explorations of characters and incidents in greater depth, opportunities for additional subplots and variations of narrative pace, and room for presenting more surprising revelations, red herrings, and reversals throughout narratives, rather than saving them until the denouements. In its ample and variable use of these "middle tactics," *Trent's Last Case* is a tour de force that had a powerful influence on subsequent works.

FORMAL DETECTIVE NOVELS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

British mystery novelist Dorothy L. Sayers was a great admirer of Bentley's *Trent's Last Case*, which she saw as a revolutionary work that liberated and opened up the genre to new possibilities. Like Bentley, she wanted her own writing to be less like conventional detective stories and more like novels. She especially wanted to write books like those known as comedies of manners, in which the customs, conventions, and habits of a definite social class at a particular time and place are focal points of interest, and witty dialogue, intellectual banter, clever intrigues, and mocking treatments of certain stock character types are parts of the mix. Additionally, beginning with her fifth novel, *Strong Poison* (1930), Sayers introduced a love interest—something she had criticized in her famous *Omnibus of Crime* essay (1928) as usually detracting from the main focus of a detective story, the criminal investigation.

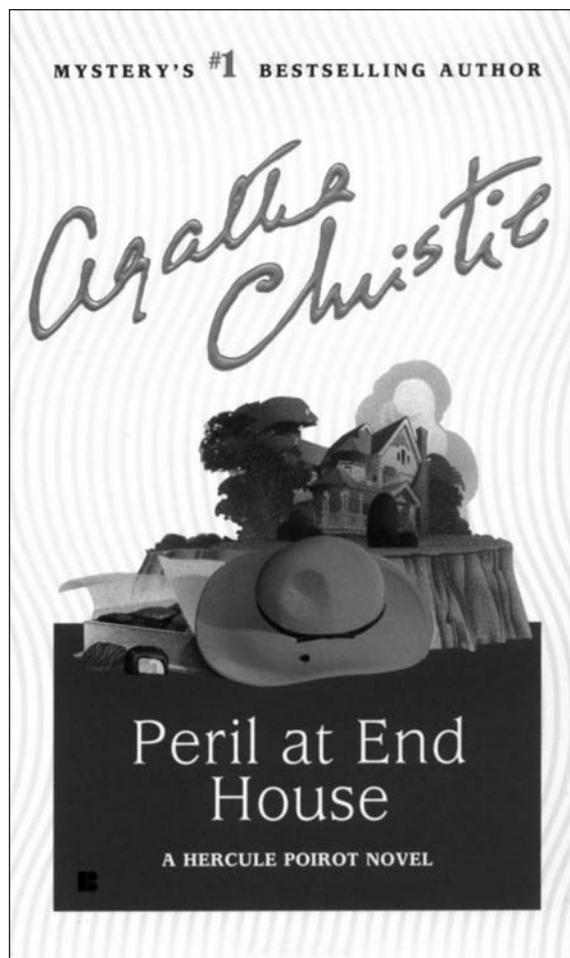
The fact that Sayers changed her mind and decided to introduce a romantic element in her novel reflects the influence of Bentley; it also indicates her desire to develop and humanize her series character, Lord Peter Wimsey, who, she felt, had remained basically static since his first case and had become merely what she called "a repository of tricks and attitudes." The challenge presented by this change would be to find an effective means of integrating the love plot into the detective plot, as Bentley had done so well in *Trent's Last Case*. Sayers's solution was to make the detection



of the crime a means for realizing the love. That is, if Wimsey can exonerate Harriet Vane, a writer of murder mysteries who finds herself charged with murder, the way will be clear for him to court her. However, although Wimsey clears Vane, their romance is left hanging over the course of several novels and is not finally resolved until the last title in the Wimsey series, *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937), with its revealing subtitle: *A Love Story with Detective Interludes*.

Sayers's choice of a titled aristocrat for her detective marks another departure from the Dupin-Holmes tradition of detectives from ordinary backgrounds. One benefit of this innovation is that it gives her protagonist easy access to aristocratic homes and establishments that are often unwelcoming to the official police. Wimsey also has the leisure and the material resources to pursue detective work "for fun," as he whimsically puts it, rather than depending on it for a living. On the other hand, the aloofness and frigidity often associated with the British aristocracy would seem to present an obstacle to Wimsey's involvement in the life of those beyond his own circle. Sayers attempts to surmount this obstacle by, for example, having Peter dissent occasionally from the values he has inherited with his title. His brother, the duke of Denver, and his sister-in-law the duchess uphold aristocratic standards and perquisites, while Wimsey demurs. He is a veteran of the Great War, and despite his monocle, white tie, and stilted speech, he is very capable of establishing rapport with those not born into such privilege. His determination to wed a commoner, and one accused of murder, is evidence of his flexibility, as is his regular delegation of investigative duties to his "cattery," a collection of superficially unremarkable women who clandestinely assist him in his cases. Wimsey is not a formidable logician, nor a "scientific" investigator. Instead he uses legwork, common sense, intuition, and empathy with others to solve a case. Lacking an elaborate "method," what he has at his disposal are the more ordinary tools of charm, wit, and a resourceful intelligence.

Agatha Christie's prolific output is exceeded only by her phenomenal commercial success. Despite her immense popularity, Christie is the epitome of the formulaic writer rather than a true innovator. Her shortcomings are obvious: Her prose style is pedestrian, her



casts of characters—not excluding her detectives—consist of broad types presented in little or no depth, her settings are generic and one-dimensional, her stories take place in a kind of vacuum with little if any reference to important social or political issues of the day.

Christie's fiction confounds all such criticisms by making a virtue out of these very limitations, as they enable her to focus on what she does best: devising ingenious plots. Her flat characters, generic settings, and the rest lend themselves—all the better for lacking concrete individuality and color—to their function as interchangeable pieces in a puzzle. Perhaps more than any other writer of the formal detective story, Christie at her best satisfies the play impulse, which takes delight in sheer gamesmanship. Her work entirely depends on her readers' familiarity with the conventions of the detec-

tive story, conventions that may be generally subscribed to or, in strategic instances, confounded, but without ever undermining them altogether. A Christie favorite is the “least likely suspect” who turns out to be the culprit. She successfully repeats this ploy scores of times, with cunning variations that always deliver surprise endings. For example, in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), the narrator, whom readers implicitly trust, turns out to be the murderer. In *Peril at End House* (1932) the murderer appears initially to be the victim of several murder attempts. In *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) it turns out that *all* the suspects have participated in the same murder.

The conventions of detective fiction that Christie exploited so brilliantly became literally codified into rules of fair play. A famous formulation of the rules is the so-called Detective Story Decalogue that Ronald A. Knox wrote in the preface of *The Best Detective Stories of 1928-1929* (1929), which he edited. These rules were officially subscribed to by members of the London Detective Club, founded by Anthony Berkeley in 1928. Knox’s ten rules:

- Criminals must be mentioned early and not be anyone whose thoughts readers have been allowed to follow.
- Supernatural and preternatural agencies are not permitted.
- Only one secret room or passage per story is permissible.
- Neither previously unknown poisons nor devices that require long scientific explanations at the end may be used.
- No “Chinaman” can figure into a story.
- Detectives must never be aided by accidents or unaccountable intuitions.
- Detectives themselves must not commit the crimes.
- Detectives must find clues that are not instantly revealed to readers.
- The detectives’ stupid friends (the Dr. Watson characters) must not conceal thoughts that pass through their minds; their intelligence must be very slightly below that of average readers.
- Twin brothers and doubles generally must not appear unless readers are prepared for them.

Such rules allow for a only limited degree of varia-

tion within the confines of a repeated and comfortingly familiar pattern. Nevertheless, as Agatha Christie repeatedly demonstrated, the possible permutations ranged as widely as chess strategies, and indeed resembled them. Knox’s rules implicitly rely on the assumption that *order*, however elusive, is ultimately not only attainable and comprehensible, but it is also normative. This assumption would be much harder to maintain after the momentous social, economic, and political changes ushered in by the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. Nevertheless, the formal detective novel, or “cozy,” continued to be produced successfully by such writers as Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham, Josephine Tey, Ruth Rendell, Martha Grimes, Amanda Cross, Dorothy Cannell, and Colin Dexter.

HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION

Most of the best formal detective novels and stories of the Golden Age were produced in Great Britain. British stories reflected a comparatively stable society with prescribed class distinctions in which social codes and rules were analogous to the rule-bound formula of the detective fiction that was so popular during the 1920’s and 1930’s, even as British society itself began to undergo gradual change. This is why there is such a pronounced nostalgic or elegiac quality to much Golden Age fiction, conveyed by the fantasy of a “return to Eden” or innocence which, according to W. H. Auden in his famous essay “The Guilty Vicarage” (1948), this fiction implicitly offered its readers. As one whose investigative efforts restore order to a community temporarily threatened by the anarchical act of murder, the English sleuth is largely defined within, and is a champion of, the existing social order. He (or, less frequently, she) preserves and defends the status quo and is a part of it.

In contrast, the school of writing known as “hard-boiled” is distinctly American in origin and frame of reference. Its beginnings are usually traced to popular pulp magazines appearing during the 1920’s, particularly *Black Mask*, which published stories by such writers as Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, Horace McCoy, Cornell Woolrich, and Raymond Chandler. The “tough” style favored by these writers made use

of idiomatic, clipped language, laconic “smart aleck” dialogue, and graphic accounts of violent action and sexual encounters. The worlds in which hard-boiled heroes functioned were anything but static and orderly, and private investigators often had to contend with the gritty struggles of society’s alienated victims as well as the gaudy excesses of those who have risen to the top, by whatever means.

Again unlike the formal detective story, the hard-boiled story generally used an “open” form. That is, the criminal events (and typically there were more than one, often in fact a series of crimes of escalating seriousness) would keep recurring during the investigation, and the detective would be more directly involved in the main plot events, not merely in their interpretation after the fact. As Ian Ousby puts it, “the adventures which yield discovery are usually confrontations, often physical ones, deliberately sought out and provoked by [the detectives]. Stirring things up rather than thinking things out is always their method.” Accordingly, the narrative focus changes from the retrospective process of analyses of completed events to apparently ad hoc quests for understanding events that are still unfolding. The drama of “ratiocinative” solution is subordinated to the detective’s ongoing quest—to persevere, to understand, to act in accordance with a code of honor, and to see justice done. The model for this kind of story and the source of this kind of hero is to be found in the Western cowboy yarn, rather than in the drawing-room comedy of the English cozy.

Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler are the chief pioneers of the hard-boiled detective story. Similar to the succession of Poe and Doyle in establishing the tale of the ratiocinative supersleuth, Hammett was the chief initiator of the hard-boiled form and Chandler the follower who indelibly enriched it and in so doing demonstrated its possibilities as “serious” fiction. Although the literary output of both Hammett and Chandler was rather small, the influence of the two writers was vast.

Hammett’s most famous private eye was Sam Spade, the protagonist of *The Maltese Falcon* (1929–1930). Hammett offered a sense of his “tough” hero when he commented that

your private detective does not . . . want to be an erudite solver of riddles in the Sherlock Holmes manner; he wants to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent bystander or client.

Hammett’s conception of the character was no doubt colored by his own experiences as an operative for the Pinkerton Detective Agency between 1915 and 1921.

Chandler admired Hammett’s writing precisely for its realistic style and characterization. In his famous 1944 essay “The Simple Art of Murder,” he paid tribute to his mentor, who, he wrote,

took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley. . . . Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not with hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare, and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes.

Chandler once remarked that his whole career was “based on the idea that the formula does not matter, the thing that counts is what you do with the formula; that is to say, it is a matter of style.” Style, attitude, atmosphere, character—these were the things that mattered most to him as a writer. Unlike the flat, clipped, scrupulously objective style of Hammett, Chandler’s style is richly figurative and emotionally charged. His use of wisecracks and slangy, hyperbolic similes is notorious. Symptomatic examples include

- “[Moose Malloy] looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food” (*Farewell, My Lovely*, 1940)
- “Her whole body shivered and her face fell apart like a bride’s pie crust” (*The Big Sleep*, 1939)
- “She gave me one of those smiles the lips have forgotten before they reach the eyes” (*The Big Sleep*)

Chandler admittedly did not plan out his plots in detail before writing a novel but worked them out as he wrote. “With me,” he once said,

a plot . . . is an organic thing. It grows and often overgrows. I am continually finding myself with scenes that I won’t discard and that don’t want to fit in. So that my

plot problem invariably ends up as a desperate attempt to justify a lot of material that, for me at least, has come alive and insists on staying alive. . . . The mere idea of being committed in advance to a certain pattern appalls me.

This statement suggests much about the kind of writer Chandler was and fittingly describes the somewhat wayward, improvisational air of his narratives.

HARD-BOILED REFINEMENTS

Perhaps more than other factor, it was Chandler's iconic private eye, Philip Marlowe, who has inspired generations of followers and imitators of varying degrees of success. Among the many examples are Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer, John D. Macdonald's Travis McGee, Robert B. Parker's Spenser, Stephen Greenleaf's John Marshall Tanner, and Robert Crais's Elvis Cole. Like Marlowe, all these characters are professional investigators, working on their own, answering to no one but themselves. This mandatory independence often brings them into conflict with the official police, who are typically viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility. Like Marlowe, all can defend themselves as readily with clever quips as with handguns, and all regard the glossy world of big shots, fast money, and easy sex with weary cynicism; in Mike Hammer's case with overtly sadistic aggression as well. However, not all of the private eyes inspired by Marlowe have achieved what Chandler himself found lacking in the otherwise exemplary work of his mentor Hammett, a quality of "redemption." For Chandler, this was evidently an ethical quality contained in the hero's tacit code of honor, and it was what enabled him occasionally to rise above the tawdry world with which he must deal. This hero and his quest were, he believed, central:

Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. . . . He must be . . . a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world . . . [yet] a relatively poor man. . . . He will take no man's money dishonestly and no man's insolence without a due and dispassionate revenge. He is a lonely man. . . . The story is his adventure in search of a hidden truth.

Up to a point, this description fits California-based private investigator Lew Archer, the creation of Ross Macdonald. Macdonald is perhaps the only literary descendent of Chandler who has equaled and even surpassed the acknowledged master of the hard-boiled form in realizing that elusive "redemption." The eighteen novels featuring Archer that Macdonald published between 1949 (*The Moving Target*) and 1976 (*The Blue Hammer*) have been praised as one of the finest series of detective novels ever written by an American. Thematically, what distinguishes Macdonald's fiction is his recurrent probing of dysfunctional families at the core of most cases. Beginning with *The Galton Case* (1959), Macdonald succeeded in fusing genealogy, applied psychology, and prose of uncommon beauty and precision to arrive at a more sophisticated and "literary" version of the hard-boiled novel.

In Macdonald's later works, the wisecracks, gratuitous violence, cynicism and misogyny characteristic of his two hard-boiled predecessors became more muted and eventually were all but eliminated in favor of Archer's empathetic explorations of the damaged lives of murder victims' families. The central mysteries in these books are often solved by tracing the families' histories back several generations, until Archer uncovers primal sins that are visited upon the lives of descendants in one form or another. His searches are often complicated by hidden or mistaken identities, doubles, and self-defensive repression. This pattern leads to very intricate plotting and narratives of remarkable density.

Macdonald also departed from Chandler's example in that Lew Archer is not really the protagonist of the novels. Unlike Philip Marlowe, of whom Chandler wrote "He is the hero, he is everything," Archer is basically an observer, a listener, even a kind of amateur social worker whose efforts make possible not only justice, in legal terms, but also a healing self-awareness. In short, the emotional center of the novels is not Archer but the other characters whose lives he gets to know in considerable depth. Macdonald once compared Archer's role to that of the mask worn by a welder, which offers protection from material that is too hot to handle.

LATER APPROPRIATIONS OF THE DETECTIVE NOVEL

The hard-boiled legacy of Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald has been sustained and even enriched by successive generations of crime fiction writers. The subgenre of the police procedural developed as a highly successful variation on the hard-boiled model. In the hands of practitioners such as Ed McBain, Per Wahlöö and Maj Sjöwall, and Joseph Wambaugh, procedurals continue the exploration of urban mean streets but focus primarily on the methodology of law-enforcement teams in solving crimes, with emphasis on questions of *how*, rather than of *who* or *why*.

Another subgenre, crime thrillers, focuses on criminals rather than detectives. Stories center on the commissions of murders, or series of murders, instead of their detection. This shift of emphasis has led to an interest in exploring the psychohistories of serial murderers and psychopaths. Such fiction, sometimes called noir because of its frequent adaptation to dark films, is exemplified in such works as James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), Elmore Leonard's *Freaky Deaky* (1988), and Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1989).

The conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction have also been appropriated and adapted to reflect more contemporary social concerns, particularly with race and gender. Chester Himes was certainly a pioneer in depicting African American police and detectives in such works as *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965) and *Blind Man with a Pistol* (1969).

The ongoing Easy Rawlins series of Walter Mosley provides a thoroughly different take on Chandler's Los Angeles, highlighting the meanest of mean streets of Watts during the 1950's and 1960's in *White Butterfly* (1992) and *Black Betty* (1994), among others. Rudolfo Anaya's Sonny Baca novels—*Zia Summer* (1995), *Rio Grande Fall* (1996), *Shaman Winter* (1999), and *Jemez Spring* (2005)—transplant the hard-boiled private eye to the Chicano community of Albuquerque and environs.

As Tony Hillerman has done in his Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn novels set on Navajo tribal lands, Anaya has drawn extensively on the colorful traditions and

occult superstitions of an ethnic group previously omitted or marginalized in hard-boiled fiction. Female private eyes have become the subject of several well-known series such as the Sharon McCone novels produced by Marcia Muller, the Kinsey Millhone alphabet mysteries of Sue Grafton, and the V. I. Warshawski novels of Sara Paretsky. Considering the traditional femme fatale role of characters such as Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* and Carmen Sternwood in *The Big Sleep*, it is interesting to see how the conventions of hard-boiled fiction can be successfully adapted to express feminist concerns without undermining the essential elements of the form. Indeed the first-person narration of Warshawski and Millhone in particular, along with their atmospheric evocation of setting, makes the "female voice" a welcome addition to hard-boiled detective fiction.

Mosley's novels render certain poignant and disturbing aspects of the African American experience from the aftermath of World War II (*Devil in a Blue Dress*, 1990) to the Watts riots (*Little Scarlet*, 2004) and beyond.

HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

Mosley's novels also exemplify another recent trend: the setting of mystery stories in earlier historical periods. James Ellroy's L.A. Quartet series offers an apposite example. For its part, the formal detective novel has also been successfully adapted to represent earlier historical periods. Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951) is a well-known work of this type, and Ellis Peters's Cadfael novels and Stephanie Barron's series featuring Jane Austen as the detective demonstrate that the cozy also is capable of breaking new ground.

Perhaps the most ambitious work of historical crime fiction is Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980; *The Name of the Rose*, 1983), set in a Benedictine abbey in Italy in the year 1327. However, merely labeling this book a historical mystery does not begin to convey the richness and complexity of the novel, with its framed narration, multiple flashbacks, prolific allusions, and epistemological anomalies. In his *Postscript to "The Name of the Rose"* (1983), Eco describes his novel as "a mystery in which very little is discovered and the detec-

tive is defeated.” Despite the assiduous efforts of the detective protagonist, William of Baskerville, and the aid of maps and floor plans, the investigation fails, and the novel ends by leaving readers to ruminate on the opaqueness of history, the incommunicability of knowledge, and the dogged elusiveness of order, whether religious, legal, or linguistic.

Eco’s appropriation and ultimate inversion of the conventions of detective fiction effectively subverts the worldview implicitly promoted by the form from its beginnings: that the apparently mystifying events are parts of a coherent pattern that is susceptible to rational understanding. This kind of subversion, in which both detectives and readers are left at loose ends and there is no ultimate illumination or solution, has been variously called antidetective, postmodern, and metaphysical detective fiction. In addition to *The Name of the Rose*, examples of this loose category of experimental crime fiction include Jorge Luis Borges’s “Death and the Compass” (1942), Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *The Erasers* (1953), Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and Paul Auster’s *New York Trilogy: City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986), and *The Locked Room* (1986). Given the codified formula which once testified to the importance of the conventions in mystery and detective fiction, one can only marvel at the form’s malleability as it continues time and again to reinvent itself for an ever more diverse and discriminating audience.

Ronald G. Walker

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LITERARY ASPECTS OF MYSTERY FICTION

Readers of fiction who enter modern bookstores are confronted with a series of choices. Not only are books separated and shelved according to basic categories such as fiction and nonfiction, but fictional works may be subdivided into various genres, such as “classic” fiction, literary fiction, general fiction, mysteries, science fiction, Westerns, and romance fiction. Readers may be even further confounded, however, when works that seem to fit squarely into one genre are shelved in another. For example, the works of Raymond Chandler are obviously mysteries; with the introduction of Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep* (1939) Chandler created one of the most famous and archetypal private eyes of the genre. However, in some stores readers may find some of his novels housed within the general fiction section rather than within the mystery section.

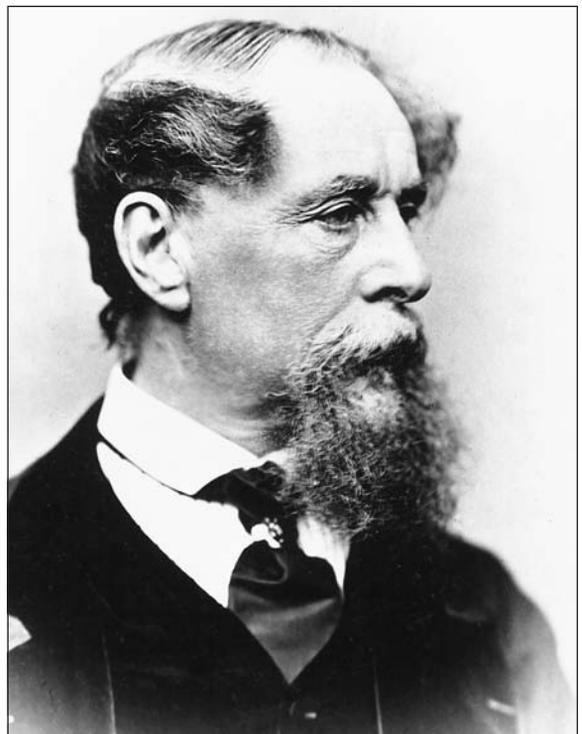
Bookstores organize titles by category to assist readers to find what they want to read. Despite the apparent usefulness of such labeling, however, there is a negative side effect evident in the need of not only booksellers but also the entire literary world to separate titles among different genres. Inevitably, it seems, genre fiction is regarded as less challenging, more poorly written, and generally inferior in quality to so-called literary fiction. Regardless of the merit of drawing such aesthetic distinctions among genres, certain authors blur the lines. Distinctions between mystery and literary fiction become even hazier when one considers not only the mystery authors who write at a highly artistic level, such as Chandler and Ross Macdonald, but also the many authors who work simultaneously within the genre and in literary fiction, such as Graham Greene and Joyce Carol Oates and the authors of literary fiction who have turned to mystery writing, such as James Lee Burke.

ORIGINS OF THE GENRE

Paradoxically, the battle between genre conventions and aesthetic respectability dates to the origins of the novel in English. During the form’s growth in the eighteenth century, the intellectual elite felt that poetry

was for serious literature and the novel for satire and entertainment only. By the middle of the nineteenth century, prejudice against the novel had largely vanished, but as genre publishing flourished, works were still at times judged prematurely by their categories and not by their substance.

Edgar Allan Poe, the inventor of the modern detective story, did not concern himself with genre bias. An editor, well-known poet, reviewer, critic, and master of the gothic short story, he introduced detective Auguste Dupin and his friend the unnamed narrator of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841). He was little appreciated during his lifetime, but during the decades following his death, his reputation rose to prominence, particularly in Europe. The mystery form gained further development in *Bleak House* (1852-1853) by English writer Charles Dickens. One of its subplots deals with a murder and a police inspector’s investigation. Dickens’s friend Wilkie Collins soon



Charles Dickens. (Library of Congress)

wrote what many consider to be the first full mystery novel in *The Woman in White* (1859), about an art teacher's quest to solve the mystery of a strange woman he encounters on the road. Collins would also add to the form with *The Moonstone* (1868), about the theft of a large diamond. Like Dickens and Poe, Collins led an active literary life as both an editor and a writer of works that were not mysteries. During his lifetime, he was not closely associated with the mystery genre. As originators of the form, Poe and Collins cannot be said to be following a formula; however, the same cannot be said of those who came later.

FORMULA AND PULP

In 1887, Arthur Conan Doyle introduced, in *A Study in Scarlet*, the most famous fictional detective ever created, Sherlock Holmes. Influenced by Poe and Collins, Doyle would go on to publish three more novels and more than fifty short stories about Holmes and his friend and narrator Dr. Watson, and a definite formula emerged. The prototype developed by Doyle would provide the basis for the English, or cozy, mystery stories. Later writers in both Great Britain and the United States, such as Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, S. S. Van Dine, and John Dickson Carr would follow in Doyle's footsteps and further formalize the pattern. A seemingly insolvable crime—such as the notorious “locked-room mystery”—is perpetrated; the detective, often an amateur sleuth, is engaged; many victims, witnesses, detectives, and murderers are members of the aristocracy; and the crime is often set in an isolated community, such as a pastoral hereditary estate.

Many critics argue that once writing follows formulaic patterns, that the repetition of plots, settings, characters, and overall methods interferes with creativity, originality, and the art of a given story. Doyle, as the refiner of the form, and perhaps due to the idiosyncratic characterization he provided Holmes, has been in some ways exempt from such criticism. However, stories written following Doyle's method more than fifty or sixty years after Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes stories have difficulty making claims for innovation or originality. Furthermore, due to the repetition and lack of originality, the use of genre forms in itself seems to work in some ways against literary

style. Even when the American hard-boiled school arose in reaction to the cozy mystery formula during the 1920's and 1930's from such innovators as Dashiell Hammett, the new style very quickly became formulaic.

The mystery genre has ever been wedded to a kind of media that bespeaks less-than-ambitious intentions. Mysteries as well as gothic stories, romances, Westerns, and all manner of adventure stories were published in great number in English penny dreadful tabloid magazines, then in cheaply produced dime novels, and eventually in pulp magazines, which were so named for the cheap paper used in them, that dominated the genre literary market from the late nineteenth century through the 1950's. Two of the most important pulp magazines, Great Britain's *The Strand Magazine* (1891-1950) and the American *Black Mask* (1920-1951), published many of the greatest writers of the genre. Stories by Doyle, Dorothy L. Sayers, and



April, 1913, issue of the American edition of *The Strand Magazine*.

Agatha Christie appeared in *The Strand*, and stories by Hammett, Chandler, and Cornell Woolrich appeared in *Black Mask*. The literary establishment typically sneered at the pulps, as it did the paperbacks that succeeded them during the Depression and World War II and eventually become a mainstay of publishing. Ironically, in 1983 American writer Barry Gifford would found the Black Lizard Press, which reissued vintage crime novels with a reputation for literary excellence in a line of trendy, artistically rendered trade-sized paperbacks. This firm was later acquired by Random House and merged with Vintage Crime, and the resulting Black Lizard/Vintage Crime started publishing high-quality paperback editions of writers such as Hammett and Chandler that automatically acquired an air of literary credibility.

EVALUATING LITERARY WORTH

Judging the merits and value of works of mystery fiction, as with any kind of art, is complicated. Beauty, as the saying goes, is in the eye of the beholder; taste seems to be almost entirely subjective. Nevertheless, for many mystery writers who have entered the so-called canon of literature, a multitude of critics, writers, and readers have been able to reach an accord on their worth, so there must be some measure of objective standards. In fact, the North American branch of the International Association of Crime Writers awards the Hammett Prize for Literary Excellence in the Field of Crime Writing.

Furthermore, mystery fiction is being read more seriously now than previously, as many scholars in the academy have embraced the cultural studies approach, which, as a critical movement, is less focused on discerning aesthetic value. This approach considers popular culture to be an essential part of a society and thus worthy of scholarship; its influence in the academy has led writers such as French critic Roland Barthes to write essays on such popular culture interests as diverse as professional wrestling. The *Journal of Popular Culture* has been in operation since 1968, and a number of treatises and books have been written on the value, meaning, methods, and purpose of various kinds of popular culture.

A useful example of such a scholarly work is Stuart

Hall and Paddy Whannel's 1964 study, *The Popular Arts*, which argues that works of art can be divided into three categories. First is *high art*, which challenges audiences, or readers, breaks new ground, and refuses to rely on convention. The opposite extreme is *mass art*, which follows formulas and conventions to such an extent that it exists only for simple entertainment and reaffirms the audience's beliefs and viewpoints rather than challenging them. The authors distinguish mass art, however, from what they call popular art. The third category, *popular art*, is created within the parameters of popular formulas and conventions, as is mass art, yet manages to rise above the form, challenging its audience intellectually, or philosophically, or in other ways. Hall and Whannel would consider superb books in the mystery genre such as Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (1954) to be popular art, and more clichéd works, such as *The Dragon Murder Case* (1933) by S. S. Van Dine to be mass art.

Judging a fictional work's value is a problematical exercise, yet most critics can agree on certain criteria. First, is a story innovative? Poe's trilogy of Dupin stories is important, in part, because no one had ever written such stories before. Secondly, are the story's plot and setting distinctive, original, new? Or is it the same story that has been read hundreds of times before? Philip Kerr is an example of a writer who reinvigorated the private eye genre with *March Violets* (1989), a novel about a German detective set in Berlin shortly before World War II. Are the story's characters interesting, appealing, engaging, and realistic? Do they seem fresh and are they fully rounded and developed characters, or are they simply stereotypical and flat? Realism, or verisimilitude, often seems to play a part as well: Are details realistic and plausible? Has the author done sufficient research? Does the work stretch the boundaries of probability?

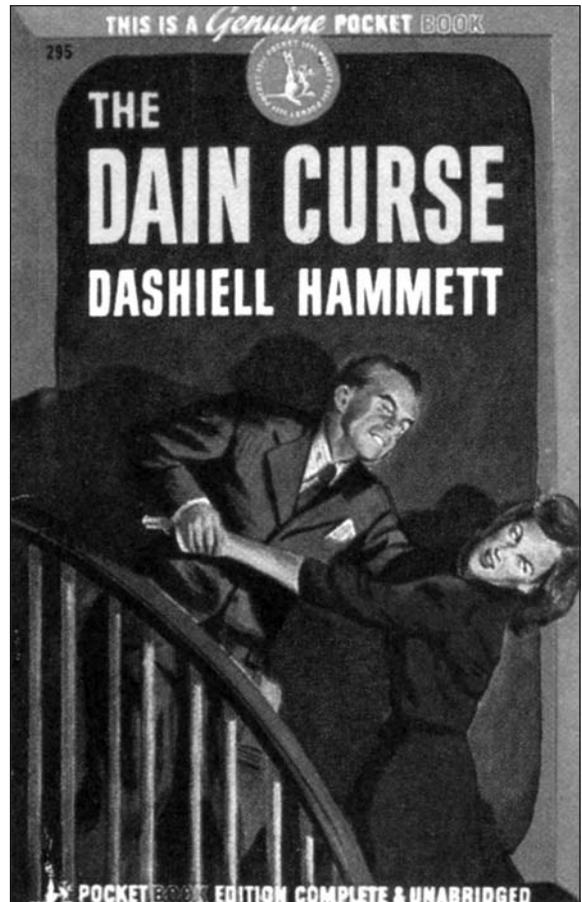
Finally, and most difficult to articulate—is the story well crafted? Does the author simply write well? Does the author have a distinctive style or a poetic diction or a wry sense of humor that leaps off the page? Although this last criterion of craft is the hardest to define, it is probably the most essential element in defining the literary value of a text.

DASHIELL HAMMETT

In his 1944 essay on crime writing and the evolution of the hard-boiled school titled “The Simple Art of Murder,” Raymond Chandler wrote, “Everything written with vitality expresses that vitality: there are no dull subjects, only dull minds.” This vitality is made clear through the work of Chandler and two other of the most important writers from the era between the world wars that on one hand is referred to as the Golden Age in the English mystery tradition, and on the other witnessed the birth of the hard-boiled tradition.

Among the mystery writers working during the 1920’s, Dashiell Hammett was uniquely qualified to write about detectives because he had worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency. More than any other writer, he developed the hard-boiled detective subgenre with the short stories he began publishing about an unnamed investigator whom he simply called the Continental Op in *Black Mask*. Although some of Hammett’s plots were possibly as convoluted as those of traditional cozy mysteries, he nevertheless brought a verisimilitude to his stories in the criminals who peopled them, their use of street slang, their motivations and methods, and his unaffected and understated depictions of violence. Hammett’s stories were more often about criminals than about aristocrats, and murders were typically committed for prosaic and realistic reasons. Hammett truly hit his stride with *The Maltese Falcon* in 1930, which introduced the world to private eye Sam Spade. Whereas the Continental Op was always bound by duty, Spade was a more ambiguous, morally obscure character, much like Ned Beaumont, the gangster protagonist of Hammett’s *The Glass Key* (1931).

The Maltese Falcon differed from Hammett’s Continental Op novels (*Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse*, both serialized initially but published in book form in 1929) in that Sam Spade was a lone operator—after his partner was murdered—and the story is told in the third person, rather than in the first-person point of view of the Op stories. In all Hammett’s books, however, the detectives remain ciphers. Readers know nothing of the Continental Op’s life outside his work; they do even know his name. Similarly, the central



mystery of *The Maltese Falcon* is not about the missing statuette that Spade is hired to find or locating the murderer of his partner; it is Spade himself.

Hammett’s most important innovation is his prose style. It is clean, stripped, and sparse, but almost poetic at times due to its cadence and Hammett’s ear for natural-sounding dialogue. Furthermore, his laconic narratives often convey a wry sense of humor, as his characters display a certain penchant for wisecracking that became a staple of the subgenre. In this regard, Hammett’s work resembles that of Ernest Hemingway, but as they were contemporaries, it seems unlikely that either writer had much influence on the other. Interestingly, Hemingway’s memoir about a safari, *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), describes how Hemingway’s wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, read Hammett’s *The Dain Curse* aloud to him. Hammett was not a particularly prolific writer in the detective genre; he pub-

lished only five novels and fewer than forty short stories during his lifetime. Nevertheless, his influence on the genre is immeasurable.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

In contrast to Dashiell Hammett, the British writer Dorothy L. Sayers could not be said to be an innovator within the form. Rather, she makes full and conscious use of the conventions of the English or cozy mystery novel. Her primary detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, whom she introduced in *Whose Body?* in 1923, is an English aristocrat, not a professional detective. Many of the crimes he investigates take place in isolated settings, such as estates, villages, and colleges. His cases typically boil down to gatherings of all the suspects and denouements in which the suspects are eliminated, one by one, until only the murderers remain.

In Wimsey himself, however, and in his love interest Harriet Vane, Sayers created characters that are more fully rounded than the stock characters of the mystery genre. Wimsey is by turns arrogant and vulnerable; he suffers moments of doubt and worry quite in contrast to the supreme confidence exhibited by detectives such as Sherlock Holmes and Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe. A combat veteran of World War I, Wimsey suffers through recurring bouts of shell shock.

Sayers's craft as a writer is also exemplary. In addition to her fine eye for detail and exact and poetic descriptive writing, her third-person narratives are often suffused with understated and wry humor, reminiscent of the works of Jane Austen and Sayers's contemporary P. G. Wodehouse and other writers of English novels of manners. Indeed, Sayers stated openly upon more than one occasion that her goal was less to write complicated mysteries and more to comment upon the English class system and society, as writers such as Austen had done. In addition to writing detective novels and short stories, she was a respected playwright and scholar, and she wrote many admired pieces on theology.

RAYMOND CHANDLER

Like Dorothy L. Sayers, Raymond Chandler received an excellent English education. Although born in Chicago, he attended Dulwich College, a boarding school for boys in a London suburb. A latecomer to

writing, he published his first detective story in 1933, when he was forty-five. Like Hammett, Chandler was not a prolific novelist; he published only twenty-five stories, many of which he "cannibalized," as he put it, for use in his seven novels. He also had some success in Hollywood, where he worked on screenplays of such famous films as *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

Although Chandler's genius was evident early on, it was only with the publication of his novel *The Big Sleep* in 1939 that Chandler showed his true gifts. In Philip Marlowe, the narrator of all his novels, Chandler created a detective who is tough enough to stand up to hired killers and gangster leaders but sentimental enough to pursue a dangerous and difficult case because of his whimsical affection for his elderly client. *The Big Sleep* opens with Marlowe standing in the foyer of a mansion examining a picture of a knight trying to rescue a young damsel. Throughout Marlowe's seven novels, it becomes clear that Marlowe is a down-at-the-heels Sir Lancelot in the modern world, a questing knight working against the forces of chaos and corruption. Marlowe's basic decency—covered with a cynical shell and ready wisecracks—has doubtless had more influence on the private eyes that followed him than the moral evasiveness of Hammett's Sam Spade. Although his past is almost as mysterious as that of Hammett's characters, Marlowe allows himself at times to become invested in his clients' and friends' lives. In *The Long Goodbye* (1954), for example, he allows himself to be thrown in jail and harassed for his friend Terry Lennox. In *The Big Sleep*, he continues on his case even though he is told by one and all that he has been dismissed from it.

Chandler's writing style has an immediacy, directness, and fluency that owes much to Hammett, and doubtless also to Hemingway, but his own style is more lyric. Moreover, Marlowe's personality—his cynicism, his romanticism, and his biting sense of humor—permeates the narratives in ways that do not occur in Hammett's more restrained writing. Chandler's gift for metaphor and poetic similes has become a legend in itself; tied with his hard-boiled poignancy and humor, it makes for an ageless style. Witness, for example, these lines from *The Little Sister* (1949):

I put the duster away folded with the dust in it, leaned back and just sat, not smoking, not even thinking. I was a blank man. I had no face, no meaning, no personality, hardly a name. I didn't want to eat. I didn't even want a drink. I was the page from yesterday's calendar crumpled at the bottom of the waste basket.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Through the mid-twentieth century, all the various kinds of crime novels—from the hard-boiled private eye novel to the cozy mystery to crime fiction centered around criminals, and they continued to flourish in the decades following World War II. From that era, two names of particular importance appear: Ross Macdonald and Patricia Highsmith.

A native Californian, Ross Macdonald began writing literary fiction while in graduate study at the University of Michigan. After service during World War II interrupted his studies, he wrote and published his first private eye novel, *The Moving Target*, in 1949. He subsequently completed his doctorate in literature. Macdonald has admitted his debt to Raymond Chandler, and both writers are, indeed, noted for their lyrical descriptions and laconic first-person narratives. Nevertheless, for all their similarities as writers Macdonald's detective Lew Archer becomes a unique and different private eye. Like Chandler's Marlowe, Archer—who is named after Sam Spade's murdered partner in *The Maltese Falcon*—gets involved with his clients and even his quarries. However, the divorced and lonely Archer has a level of humanity and ability to identify with both victims and suspects that makes him far more vulnerable than either Marlowe or Spade. Archer eschews violence when possible and, more than anything else, is interested in the human truths at the core of mysteries.

Although Patricia Highsmith's focus was more on crime than mystery fiction, she often involved her criminals in complicated mysteries. A graduate of Manhattan's Barnard College with experience in scripting comic books, Highsmith is fascinated in works such as *Strangers on a Train* (1950) and her Tom Ripley series with the pervasiveness of evil, the banality of everyday life and marriage, and sexual ambiguity. Many of her novels, particularly her five Ripley books, are centered around antiheroes who seek to thwart the law and jus-

tice rather than uphold them. At the same time, Highsmith's works are loved not only because of how she subverts the crime and mystery genres but also because of her complex and dense literary style; Highsmith remained a true original throughout her career.

CROSSOVERS

Any discussion of mystery fiction acclaimed for literary merit must also consider authors made famous for literary fiction who also have written mysteries. Often, writers who succeed in other genres find that crossing over into mystery fiction, or another subgenre, is not as easy as it looks, and their genre offerings are less successful than their literary works. There are, however, some notable successes, such as Nobel Prize winner William Faulkner. As a number of critics have noted, Faulkner's works were often influenced in various subtle ways by detective fiction, and Faulkner himself admired writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Rex Stout. Moreover, during his years in Hollywood Faulkner helped adapt Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1946) to the screen for director Howard Hawks.

Faulkner's successful ventures into the mystery genre included the novel that put him on the map, *Sanctuary* (1931), and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). *Sanctuary* is a crime novel, about kidnapping, bootlegging, murder, and an investigating attorney. At the same time, however, it bears the Faulkner stamp of dense and poetic literary style throughout. Similarly, while *Intruder in the Dust* is ostensibly about a young man proving that an older black man has not committed murder, it is much more a Faulknerian discussion of race and prejudice. Faulkner's book of detective stories, *Knight's Gambit* (1949), featuring his Harvard-educated but nevertheless down-home county-detective Gavin Stevens, largely failed to live up to the standards of his more famous works, such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930).

Perhaps the greatest straddler of the divide between literary fiction and genre fiction is English writer Graham Greene. He was a journalist who soon became a professional novelist and travel writer. In the latter capacity he occasionally also worked for British Intelligence. Greene saw the novels that he wrote as falling into two categories. The first, serious literary stories

dealing with such themes as adultery, love, faith, and Roman Catholicism, includes such works as *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and *The End of the Affair* (1951). His second category, what he called "entertainments," encompassed suspense and mystery stories, such as *This Gun for Hire* (1936) and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). Some of Greene's late novels blur the distinction between "entertainments" and literary fiction so thoroughly that they must be acknowledged for what they are: suspense novels that are so excellent that they should be considered literary achievements. Among these can be counted *The Quiet American* (1955), *The Human Factor* (1978), and *The Comedians* (1966).

Other writers known primarily for their literary works who have written successfully in mystery fiction include the incredibly prolific Joyce Carol Oates, winner of the National Book Award and a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer. She has published a series of well-received mysteries under the pseudonyms of Rosamund Smith and Lauren Kelly. Southern novelist T. R. Pearson, who first gained prestige for his whimsical *A Short History of a Small Place* (1985), about a small town in Appalachian Virginia, has written a number of crime novels that are usually shelved with literary fiction, such as *Cry Me a River* (1993), *Blue Ridge* (2000), and *Polar* (2002). Genre-busting literary novelist Jonathan Lethem won the Macallan Gold Dagger award for crime fiction with his novel *Motherless Brooklyn* (1999), about a bounty hunter with Tourette's syndrome seeking to solve his boss's murder.

LATER WRITERS

The trend in marketing some genre works in the larger and more expensive trade paperback editions to give them cross-genre appeal has continued, although many novels marketed in such ways are not necessarily worthy of notice. However, one such writer whose career has received wide attention is James Crumley. A far cry from the stoic Philip Marlowe and taciturn Lew Archer, Crumley's Milo Milodragovitch, of *The Wrong Case* (1975), and C. W. Sughrue, of *The Last Good Kiss* (1978), make their way through cocaine and alcohol addictions, willing women, and corrupt corporations. Although Crumley's later novels, such

as *The Right Madness* (2005), have become almost parodies of his earlier books in their slippery plots and extreme violence, the influence of Chandler in characterization and style is evident throughout Crumley's work.

Women writers continue to be very strongly represented in mystery fiction; furthermore, thanks in part to the hard-boiled novels of Sara Paretsky, whose tough and capable woman private eye V. I. Warshawski first appeared in *Indemnity Only* (1982), women writers are as prevalent on the hard-boiled side of the aisle as on the cozy side. Paretsky's work distinguishes itself from that of other writers in how she has created a community of persons. Warshawski is not a cipher like Hammett's Continental Op but an important and contributing member of her community.

James Ellroy published his first mystery in 1981, yet it was with his Los Angeles Quartet, comprising *The Black Dahlia* (1987), *The Big Nowhere* (1988), *L.A. Confidential* (1990), and *White Jazz* (1992), that his harsh, violent, unsentimental, and complicated plots and a savagely clipped and poetic style merged to make his writing exceptional and original. *White Jazz*, particularly, is a tour de force, written in a terse, fragmented style. One of the most successful writers since the late 1980's has been James Lee Burke. A literary novelist who turned to hard-boiled crime fiction in 1987's *The Neon Rain*, Burke merges the past-haunted setting and lyrical language of southern literature in the tradition of Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe with the private eye novel. In 1990, Philip Kerr burst upon the scene with *March Violets*, the first novel in his Berlin Noir series. Kerr's protagonist, Bernie Gunther, is a German private eye with a lot in common with Philip Marlowe, who tries to retain his soul even as the newly empowered Gestapo seek to coopt it.

Scott D. Yarbrough

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MAINSTREAM VERSUS MYSTERY FICTION

Mainstream fiction encompasses all fictional works that are not published as genre fiction, which is geared to specific markets. Mystery and detective fiction, Westerns, and science fiction are among the most notable examples of genre fiction. Such labels no longer have anything to do with quality or popularity but with the niche into which publishers feel a particular book might fit. Despite what his legions of fans might say, best-selling author Stephen King writes mostly genre fiction, not mainstream fiction, because his horror novels are published and marketed to a huge but specific audience. In contrast, authors such as Philip Roth and Alice Munro produce mainstream fiction, or literary fiction, as it is often designated by critics and reviewers.

For a long time distinctions between mainstream and genre mattered greatly, and sophisticated readers avoided genre fiction. However, sometime around the middle of the twentieth century, barriers between “highbrow” and “lowbrow”—that is, between critically regarded and popular fiction—began falling. It may have been the end of World War II, which brought so many changes to the United States, as to other Western countries, but whatever the causes, the once-rigid divisions that had existed for more than a century between what critics separated into “literature” and “mass culture” were erased. Then, the subgenres of American literature—not only mysteries but Westerns, science fiction, and other popular fictional forms—suddenly began finding readers among a much wider audience.

The causes of this social and cultural shift are complex. On one hand, the advent of paperback publishing changed the way the book trade did business because publishers no longer had to rely on hardback sales for their success. A number of publishers started issuing popular fiction titles wherever they could find them. Although cheap chapbooks and dime novels arose during the nineteenth century, modern mass paperback books can fairly accurately be dated from the creation of Pocket Books in 1939, and the appearance at about the same time of Dell, Avon, Ballantine, Bantam, Penguin, and similar paperback lines. By 1960, some

twenty thousand paperback titles were in print in the United States. A crime novel such as Mickey Spillane’s *I, the Jury* (1947) was hardly noticed when it came out in hardcover in 1947 (to mainly hostile reviews), but the twenty-five-cent Signet paperback edition of the book was in its thirty-third printing barely six years later.

On the other hand, novelists in this brave new post-war world began pushing the boundaries of all inherited literary models in new directions. Suddenly, mainstream fiction was adopting the forms, styles, and conventions of what had until then been regarded as subliterary genres. E. L. Doctorow’s first novel, *Welcome to Hard Times* (1960), was a Western; Kurt Vonnegut’s second novel, *Sirens of Titan* (1959), was a work of science fiction; and Peter S. Beagle’s *The Last Unicorn* (1968) was a medieval fantasy. Other mainstream writers experimented in other popular forms, even playing with the conventions of literary pornography in works such as the sex spoof *Candy* (1965) that Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg wrote under the pen name Maxwell Kenton. What had once been a fairly clean line between mainstream fiction and everything else quickly disappeared.

MYSTERY FICTION AS MAINSTREAM FICTION

No genre benefited more from this development than mystery fiction, including crime thrillers and detective novels. Certainly there had been important mystery writers before 1950, such as the American writers Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler during the 1930’s and 1940’s. However, even these writers had always had figurative asterisks placed beside their names indicating that although they might be wonderful writers, they were writers clearly working in a literary subgenre. In his *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (1947), Frank Luther Mott found only eighteen murder mysteries that had attained wide popularity from colonial times to 1945. After 1950, that division between literary and subliterary writers no longer made sense, as established writers who attempted mysteries and writers who produced

only mysteries found themselves standing side by side on the best-seller platform.

On one level, all fiction deals with mysteries, and all readers of fiction are literary detectives trying to get to the stories *behind* the stories, piecing together the evidence the authors give them to come up with solutions to plot complications and character predicaments. Likewise, most fiction is concerned with the same questions that lie at the heart of the mystery genre: the search for truth, the attempt to distinguish between innocence and wrongdoing, questions of right and wrong, the examination of the consequences of human actions.

In this regard, the classical drama *Oedipus Rex* (c. 426 B.C.E.) of Sophocles was a murder mystery two millennia before that label was even invented. In that play the title character plays a detective slowly revealing the murderer . . . as himself. William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) is a great murder drama, as Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* (c. 1600-1601) is a dramatic murder mystery. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and her sister Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (both 1847) are gothic romances with violent mysteries deep within them. Russian author Fyodor Dostoevski's novel *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) like his fellow countryman Leo Tolstoy's short story "God Sees the Truth but Waits" (1872), is a classic work of crime and retribution. Mark Twain's *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) features a murder solved with the early use of fingerprints, and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) is a thriller combining sex, murder, and other gothic elements. At the heart of Ernest Hemingway's great short story "The Killers" (1927) lies a mystery that will never be solved: Why is the Swede being murdered? The literary critic Cleanth Brooks called William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) "a wonderful detective novel," while Faulkner's classic short story "A Rose for Emily" (1924) is a murder mystery readers uncover and solve only in its last line. Graham Greene's *A Gun for Sale* (1936; *This Gun for Hire* in U.S.) is a noir thriller that was translated to the silver screen in 1942. Greene's later *Brighton Rock* (1938) mixes murder with theological issues. These examples could be spun out endlessly.

HISTORY OF THE MYSTERY FORM

The American short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe is credited with inventing the modern mystery genre, in "The Murder in the Rue Morgue" (1841) and "The Purloined Letter" (1844), stories called "tales of ratiocination" that feature detective C. Auguste Dupin, and novels soon followed. The English novelist Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) is a suspenseful tale of a jewel theft—a crime solved by Sergeant Cuff, possibly the first detective in English fiction. Charles Dickens left *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) unsolved at his death, although many later writers have attempted to find a solution and finish the novel.

The mystery form found its first full-time professional practitioner in Arthur Conan Doyle, who created Sherlock Holmes. The mystery story flourished during the first decades of the twentieth century in both England and America and proliferated through the twentieth century, and broadened out to encompass spy novels and other variants. By the early twenty-first century, most fiction best-seller lists could be expected to have a third to two-thirds of their titles falling into the general mystery category, including detective novels by authors such as James Lee Burke, spy novels by authors such as John le Carré, legal thrillers by authors such as John Grisham, and other varieties of the genre. A March, 2007, *Los Angeles Times Book Review* list of best-selling fiction included new crime titles by Robert B. Parker, James Patterson, Joseph Wambaugh, Robert Crais, and J. D. Robb. It might as easily have included—and undoubtedly has in the past—Tony Hillerman, Sue Grafton, Michael Connelly, and Sara Paretsky, or John Burdett, Robert Ludlum, Thomas Harris, and Elmore Leonard, or dozens of similar writers.

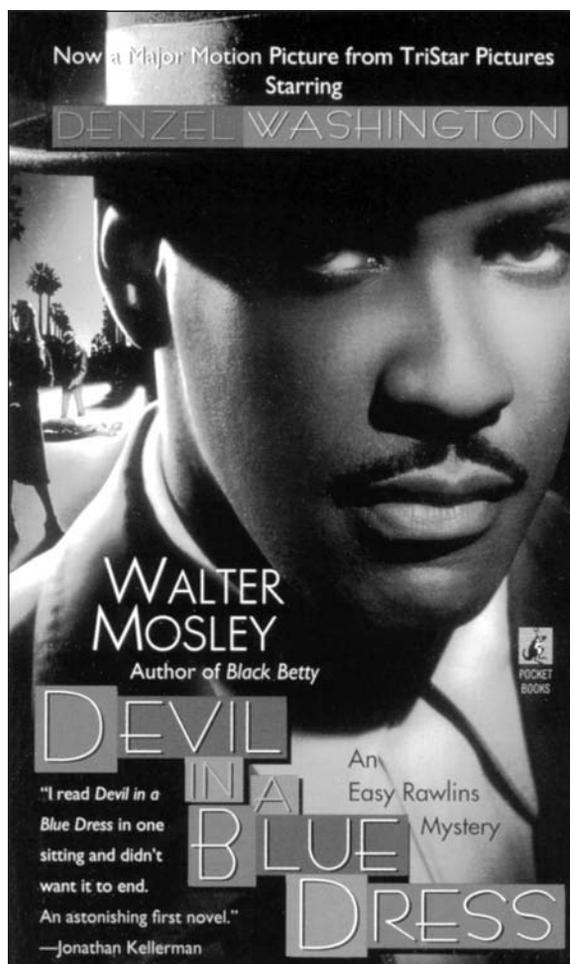
MYSTERY IN MAINSTREAM

One might ask what constitutes the difference between a genre mystery writer and a serious, mainstream writer who uses mystery themes. Fans of the mystery novel might answer that the difference is small; however, in works written by mainstream writers the story lines generally have greater significance than those in mystery writers' works, and such works typically resonate more deeply for the readers. At the

center of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), for example, is the mystery of who the shadowy figure of Jay Gatsby is, along with at least two murders (Myrtle Wilson and later Gatsby himself). As readers sort through the evidence that the novel's unreliable narrator, Nick Carraway, gives them, and try to solve the questions the novel poses, larger meanings emerge. The mystery of *Gatsby*, for example, is solved only to reveal the failed American Dream at the heart of his meteoric rise and the degeneration and materialism at the core of American life during the 1920's. Myrtle Wilson is killed by Daisy Buchanan driving Gatsby's car, because she thinks her lover, Tom Buchanan, is behind the wheel. People in this Jazz Age world are beginning to define one another by their possessions, particularly by their cars. Indeed, the very reason Myrtle and Gatsby are killed is that people confuse cars with their drivers. Another indication of this moral bankruptcy is that Gatsby is murdered by his lover's (Daisy) husband's (Tom) lover's (Myrtle) husband (Wilson). Put another way, Tom's lover's husband kills Tom's wife's lover. It is a world in which relationships, like personal character, are marked by moral confusion, corruption, and violence, and Gatsby is both author and victim of this evil. One could even argue that Gatsby in the end commits suicide, that he knows Daisy will not call him (as she had promised) the day after she killed Myrtle with the car, and is only waiting by his swimming pool for Wilson, the inevitable agent of the fate Gatsby knows is finally his. He has climbed to the top of the American social ladder and seen how empty and shallow the world of this decadent aristocracy really is; he kills himself (or, lets himself be killed) rather than let his dream die.

WALTER MOSLEY BRIDGES THE DIVIDE

If there is one writer who best represents the successful fusion of mainstream and mystery fiction, it might well be the African American novelist and short-story writer Walter Mosley. His earliest novels, such as *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990), were Easy Rawlins mysteries. He has produced ten works in that series with the title character as the hard-boiled Los Angeles private investigator, and nearly all of them have authentic social and historical settings. *Little Scarlet*



(2004), for example, has Easy Rawlins trying to solve a murder case several days after the 1965 Watts riot. *Cinnamon Kiss* (2005) involves the search for papers incriminating a family with a Nazi past. Mosley's three Fearless Jones mysteries, such as *Fear of the Dark* (2006), feature a friend of the Los Angeles second-hand bookseller Paris Minton. Mosley inhabits a tradition of African American mystery writers that stretches from Chester Himes, the creator of a series of fast-paced detective novels set in Harlem, to Stephen L. Carter, the author of the well-respected legal thriller *The Emperor of Ocean Park* (2002).

Mosley would be considered a great crime writer if these mysteries were his total output. However, he has moved into other genres as well. Through 2007, he had written three works of science fiction, a book for

young adults titled *Forty-seven* (2005), and four works of nonfiction, and his nonfiction articles and essays have appeared in *The Nation*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. Mosley's mainstream fiction stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and other leading journals. He is represented in *Prize Stories, 1996: The O. Henry Awards*, and he was the guest editor for *The Best American Short Stories of 2003*. His literary fiction includes two books—*Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* (1997) and *Walkin' the Dog* (1999). These novels feature a character named Socrates Fortlow, a former con living a precarious life on the edge of Watts, coping with all the crime and tensions of his troubled city, and grappling at the same time with his own troubled past. Surrounded by murder and other acts of violence, living in an abandoned house off an alley in South Central Los Angeles, Fortlow manages not only to overcome his own demons but to help change the racist world that surrounds him.

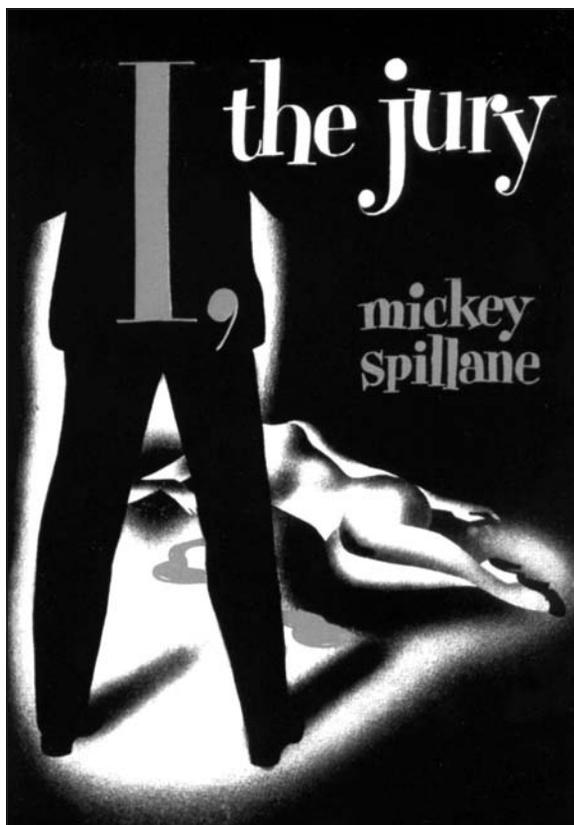
Mosley renders the people and places of a Los Angeles few other writers attempt to see, and his efforts link him to earlier African American writers such as Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison in the exploration of issues of race and social class. His 2004 novel *The Man in My Basement*, is a powerful and compelling short work that can only be described as an existential thriller. Set not in Los Angeles but in Sag Harbor, Long Island, it tells the story of a white man who imprisons himself in the cellar of a black man, and the changing relationship between the two men. A complex meditation on black history and black-white relations, *The Man in My Basement* examines notions of power, truth, and justice in a manner that may remind readers of the works not only of Wright and Ellison, but of such earlier writers as Herman Melville (“Benito Cereno,” “Bartleby the Scrivener”) and Franz Kafka as well. Mosley, in short, transcends the labels.

HARD-BOILED FICTION—STYLE AND CONTENT

Something that blurs the distinction between modern genre mysteries and mainstream mysteries, making it often difficult to tell one from the other, is the fact that both often employ the same hard-boiled style of writing. This style can be traced back to the founding, in

1919, of *Black Mask*, the pulp magazine that first published the work of Dashiell Hammett and other early detective writers. The hard-boiled style it fostered combined spare, realistic dialogue with a tough-guy tone and attitude, especially in the voices of detective heroes such as Hammett's Sam Spade or Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. This style merged with the prose that Ernest Hemingway was developing in his early short stories and novels during the 1920's. During the 1930's, prose was further influenced by the gritty Depression style of proletarian writers such as James T. Farrell, Nelson Algren, and others. By the time of books such as Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* (1937), a tough-guy novel involving smuggling and murder, and John Fante's *Ask the Dust* (1939), a depiction of the down-and-out in Los Angeles, the hard-boiled style had become a permanent fixture of the American literary landscape. Readers would later find it in the fiction of any number of mainstream writers, from Charles Bukowski (*Post Office*, 1971), John Gregory Dunne (*True Confessions*, 1977), and Norman Mailer (*Tough Guys Don't Dance*, 1985), to Cormac McCarthy (*All the Pretty Horses*, 1992) and Don de Lillo (*Underworld*, 1997). All these mainstream writers are the literary descendents of the first hard-boiled detective writers, but of the novels named, only Dunne's and Mailer's are true mysteries. Nevertheless, all are linked to their hard-boiled literary ancestors.

Another issue blurring distinctions between genre and mainstream mysteries is the expanding realism of fiction that developed between World War II and the end of the twentieth century. Novels such William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959), John Rechy's *City of Night* (1963), Hubert Selby, Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964), James Leo Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy* (1967), Judith Rossner's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1975), and Brett Easton Ellis's *Less than Zero* (1985) are all works that pushed fiction deeper and deeper into areas of human life previously unexplored. They often contain graphic depictions of sex, drug use, and violence. However, none of them is considered a mystery novel. Elements in these works that would have made them crime novels a half century earlier are in the hands of these writers merely gritty depictions of life in urban worlds of late twentieth century America.



Walter Mosley's mainstream novel *Killing Johnny Fry: A Sexistential Novel* (2007) has been called literary pornography by several reviewers for its graphic descriptions of sexual acts.

In 1950, the lurid pulp cover for the paperback of Mickey Spillane's *I, the Jury* was meant to advertise the sex and violence between its covers; twenty-first century mainstream writers do not need to broadcast their attention to these subjects. Put another way, James Ellroy, the author of *The Black Dahlia* (1987) and *L.A. Confidential* (1990), is a crime writer of the first rank; however, many elements that make up his books can be found in the writings of any number of contemporary writers who are *not* considered mystery writers. Moreover, Ellroy's lean, telegraphic style, which can be traced back to earlier practitioners of the hard-boiled school of detective fiction, can also be found in other contemporary writers who are not crime writers. Distinctions between genre mysteries and mainstream fiction are, in short, often hard to isolate.

This literary history is complicated by the emergence of the postmodernism that colored so much literature at the end of the twentieth century. The literary qualities that critics find in the fiction of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, and many others of the second half of the twentieth century—the indeterminate or plural meanings, the discontinuities or circularities of structure, the irony and ambiguity—turn much prose fiction into literary puzzles that scholars and teachers must attempt to solve. A short fictional narrative by Jorge Luis Borges, for example, may be a puzzle in which the reader works to decipher the meaning—in the same way, a century and a half earlier, readers tried to decode stories such as Poe's "The Gold Bug" or "The Masque of the Red Death." The mystery story has thus come full circle.

MODERN MAINSTREAM MYSTERIES

It is clear that that distinctions between contemporary mystery writers and mainstream writers are increasingly difficult to find, and authors on both sides of the divide move easily back and forth across it. Many readers rely on reviewers and critics to identify the best mystery writers and the mainstream writers whose works contain mystery themes. The early 1980's saw a number of first-rate mysteries in the United States, including early works by Elmore Leonard, Sara Paretsky, Thomas Harris, and Tony Hillerman, as well as Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park* (1981), which *Time* magazine dubbed the "thriller of the eighties." That period also saw works by a number of mainstream writers containing mystery themes. Jane Smiley would produce a dozen works of fiction over the next several decades, including *A Thousand Acres* (1991), which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, but one of her first novels was the taut mystery *Duplicate Keys* (1984), a chilling and suspenseful tale that follows a double-murder among a group of friends in New York City. The qualities that came to be known as Smiley's trademarks—her range, her intelligence, her instinctive sense for setting and character—are clearly evident in this early literary thriller.

Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980; *The Name of the Rose*, 1983) is an even more telling example of crossover writing. The novel would eventually

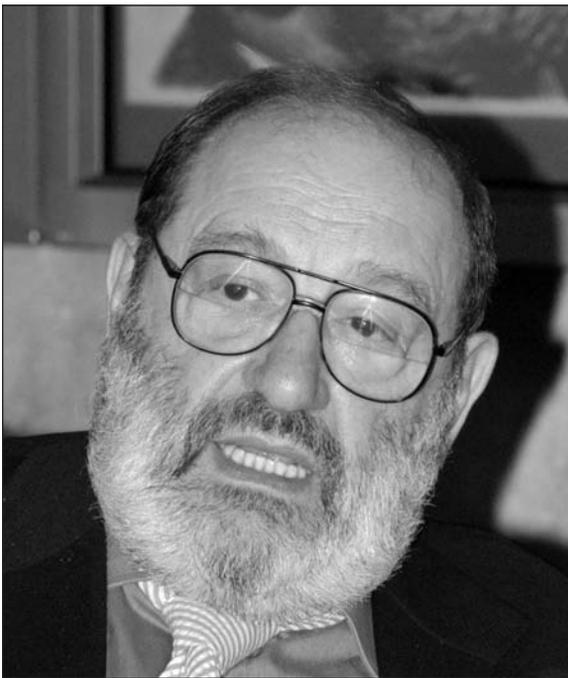
sell more than fifty million copies worldwide and be made into a popular film starring Sean Connery and Christian Slater. However, the appearance of the novel during the early 1980's was something of a shock. Eco was an Italian academic best known for his works of philosophy and history, a writer whose previous publications were thick books of medieval philosophy on subjects such as the aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas and literary theory on subjects such as the theory of semiotics. Although there are links to both fields in *The Name of the Rose*, few readers who knew of Eco's work could have anticipated his novel—a medieval mystery set in a monastic library in Italy.

The Name of the Rose has a central detective, the English Brother William of Baskerville, who employs his enormous powers of logic and deduction—which are realistic uses of the scholastic method popular during the fourteenth century—to solve the murder case, along with a fascinating cast of villains and heroes. The novel is full of arcane medieval information, passages in Latin, descriptions of Church history, and numerous literary references and puns. For example, the character name “Jorge of Burgos” is a play upon the name of the

South American writer Jorge Luis Borges, and Brother William's Baskerville connection is an obvious homage to a famous Sherlock Holmes story. Despite its complexity and unusual makeup, Eco's novel became an international best seller and critical success matched by few mysteries in the history of publishing.

Other late twentieth and early twenty-first century international mysteries by major writers include *The Savage Detectives* (1998/2007) by the late Chilean writer Roberto Bolano and *Christine Falls* (2007) by English author John Banville, who writes as Benjamin Black. British mainstream works using the conventions and devices of the mystery novel include Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and Salman Rushdie's *Fury* (2001). There may be no British writer who is considered more mainstream than Ian McEwan, the author of a dozen critically acclaimed novels and winner of numerous literary awards. His novel *Saturday* (2005) is not a traditional mystery novel; nevertheless, it is filled with the same fictional qualities found in that genre—most notably tension, suspense, and terror. The novel concerns a day in the life of a British neurosurgeon that begins with a sign of warning (a plane with its wing on fire heading toward Heathrow airport), involves a car accident and menacing confrontation with a hoodlum, and ends with the surgeon's family being held hostage by two toughs threatening rape and murder. The novel has been called by reviewers an example of a new kind of post-9/11 fiction, in which McEwan has translated the acts of terror of September 11, 2001, and the menace and dread of its aftermath, into the lives of fictional characters. If *Saturday* is not a traditional mystery novel, it is missing only the detective, for it has all the crime, violence, suspense, and psychological fear that any mystery reader could demand.

Julian Barnes's *Arthur and George* (2005) is a similarly complex example of modern mystery fiction. A fictional re-creation of a real-life nineteenth century detective story, the novel shifts back and forth between the story of the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the history of a young British Indian named George Edalji, the son of a Parsi Anglican vicar and a Scottish mother. The two are drawn together when Doyle investigates the crimes that have wrongly sent Edalji to prison. Although the mysteries at the heart of



Umberto Eco.

the novel are never fully solved, the book is a literary thriller with a real-life detective—a man who also happens to be the creator of one of the first detectives in English fiction—and the exploration of issues of love and loss, identity and racial prejudice. Barnes earlier wrote two straight mystery novels under the pen name Dan Kavanagh: *Fiddle City* (1981) and *Going to the Dogs* (1987). With *Arthur and George*, he has produced a complex mainstream novel with mystery themes.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions to this history are not hard to locate. The tendencies readers have witnessed in books of the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first will undoubtedly last, and mainstream writers will continue to produce fiction with the thematic and formal elements of the mystery genre, just as mystery writers continue to produce critically and commercially successful fiction. Like other literary trends of the late twentieth century—such as the emergence of ethnic voices across a broad literary spectrum, the interchange of forms and devices between fiction and nonfiction—the marriage of mystery and mainstream can only broaden and deepen the reading experience. Since the mid-twentieth century, the literary conventions and moods of mystery fiction have inextricably worked themselves into a number of works of mainstream fiction at the same time many mainstream writers have attempted the mystery genre. That cross-pollination is most readily apparent in a writer such as Walter Mosley, whose mainstream novels have the settings and language of detective fiction, at the same time as his mysteries have the deeper social commentary that readers previously expected to find only in mainstream fiction. This crossover process is expected to be apparent among increasing numbers of writers.

David Peck

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PULP MAGAZINES

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1950's, a large portion of new mystery and detective fiction saw its first publication in the pages of popular pulp magazines. The pulps, as they were familiarly known, took their name from the cheap wood-pulp paper on which their text pages were printed. Generally measuring seven by ten inches, the brittle, short-fibered pages were fragile and difficult to preserve, but the magazines' vividly colored covers were usually printed on stiffer and higher-quality, coated stock and were easily the most attractive and durable parts of the magazines. Most of the pulps published genre fiction—Westerns, men's adventure stories, and science fiction, in addition to mystery and detective fiction—and their cover art generally depicted lurid subjects. Mystery and detective fiction antedates the pulp magazines, but during the twentieth century the pulps published more stories in that genre than any other format.

PULP ORIGINS, 1890'S TO 1918

Theories on the origins of the pulps differ. According to some scholars, the magazines originated in the United States when Frank A. Munsey, a publisher of stories about idealistic juveniles, transformed *Argosy* from a magazine designed for adolescent boys to one specializing in adventure stories for adults. Other scholars claim that the pulps owed their origin to nineteenth century dime novels, which were printed on wood-pulp paper and antedated *Argosy*. Most dime novels were Western stories, but stories about detective heroes were also popular. For example, a character named Old Cap Collier appeared in a series of detective stories that numbered more than seven hundred titles by 1900. His spirited individuality, skill in fist-cuffs, and penchant for disguises made him especially popular among young male readers.

By the turn of the twentieth century, dime novelists had created such new urban detectives as Old Sleuth, Nick Carter, and Frank Merriwell. Popular during the 1880's and 1890's, stories in the Old Sleuth series were often set in such New York City locales as Broadway and the Bowery, where a young detective,

disguised as an old man, solved a variety of crimes. The Nick Carter stories also reached their peak of popularity around the same time. Thousands of these stories, written by Eugene T. Sawyer, Frederick van Rensselaer Dey, and many other authors, appeared in such publications as the *Nick Carter Library*, which began in 1891, and *Nick Carter Weekly*, which began in 1896. Some scholars claim that the Nick Carter stories, with their urban concerns, anticipated the later emergence of hard-boiled detective fiction, but Nick Carter, who never smoked, drank, or swore, scarcely prefigures Sam Spade, nor does Frank Merriwell, a college hero who solved crimes. Nevertheless, some scholars have seen Merriwell as a bridge between nineteenth and twentieth century detectives.



The creation of Harlan Halsey, "Old Sleuth" is a detective who first appeared in dime novels during the early 1870's. Old Sleuth Weekly was published from 1908 until 1912.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Items from the large Street & Smith collection of old magazines, dime novels, comic books, and radio scripts dating from 1855 to 1962 held by Syracuse University. In 1996, the National Endowment for the Humanities gave the university a \$250,000 grant to help preserve the publications, many of which are printed on decaying pulp paper. (AP/Wide World Photos)

During the first decade of *Argosy's* existence, Munsey increased the magazine's circulation to one-half million by satisfying the public's demand for a variety of short stories, including the mystery and detective genres. The American mystery writer Mary Roberts Rinehart published some of her early stories in *Argosy*, although she became much better known through her novels, which she began publishing in 1908. *Argosy's* success stimulated competition, particularly from pulp magazines that specialized in one type of story, such as Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*, which began in 1915. The proliferation of pulp magazines helped support a growing number of writers, some of whom cranked out a new story almost every day. Writers had to produce a great volume of material because some publishers paid them as little as one cent per line. However, the usual rate was one or two cents a word. Such rapid writing often meant that

quality suffered, but the public seemed not to mind. By the end of World War I more than twenty pulp magazines, which sold at prices from ten to twenty-five cents a copy, were flourishing, and the pulp market was far from saturated.

PROLIFERATION OF THE PULPS, 1918-1929

During the two decades following the end of World War I, the number of pulp magazines grew exponentially as various publishers launched hundreds of specialized titles to satisfy the public's accelerating appetite for Westerns and romances as well as adventure, fantasy, horror, science fiction, and mystery and detective stories. As many as seventeen hundred new writers may have contributed mystery and detective stories to pulp magazines during the 1920's and 1930's. Some of the magazines were monthlies containing more than two hundred pages. More common, however, were

128-page weeklies. Two publishers, Frank A. Munsey and Street & Smith, dominated the pulp field during the 1920's, but their success inspired many competitors, from established publishing houses to hole-in-the-wall operations. Detective pulps contained both factual and fictional stories. For example, Bernard Macfadden, a health crusader, published *True Detective Mysteries*, which some saw as related to his "true-confessions" pulps, as both genres exploited sin.

The most famous and influential of the fictional detective pulps was *Black Mask*, the creation of the magazine editor and poet Henry L. Mencken and drama critic George Jean Nathan. Mencken was aware of the success of Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine* magazine, and his own high-quality lifestyle magazine, *Smart Set*, was in financial difficulty. In 1919, Mencken got the idea of publishing a pulp magazine modeled on *Argosy* that would serve as what he called "boob bait" and generate the profits that would return *Smart Set* to fiscal health.

When the first issue of *Black Mask* appeared in April, 1920, editors Mencken and Nathan promised to publish the best stories in a variety of genres, including adventure, romance, and the occult, along with mystery and detective fiction. Despite the broad variety and generally low quality of most of the magazine's stories, *Black Mask* was a success. In November, 1920, after publishing only eight issues of the magazine, Mencken and Nathan sold it to Eltinge ("Pop") Warner and Eugene Crowe, a paper manufacturer. Some scholars put the sales figure at \$12,500, others at \$7,500. In either case, the selling price represented a substantial profit because *Black Mask*'s launching cost had been only \$500.

Over the next five years, with the capable guidance of such editors as Phil Cody and Harry North, *Black Mask* began to publish more crime and detective stories with individualistic heroes whose use of violence grew out of personal codes of ethics. Early issues of *Black Mask* contained stories in the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, that is, tales of ratiocination. However, the United States of the 1920's was vastly different from the worlds of Poe and Doyle. Passage of the Volstead Act in 1919 prohibited the manufacture, trans-

portation, and sale of alcoholic beverages, a situation that led to the multiplication of gangsters willing to break the law to sate the thirsts of millions of Americans. With the rise of violence and lawlessness in American society during the 1920's, millions of World War I veterans, cynical citizens, flappers, and others were attracted to magazines offering reasonably realistic explorations of crime and social changes.

One of the writers who helped create this new kind of detective fiction was Carroll John Daly, whose earlier career was in managing theaters in New Jersey. He began publishing stories in *Black Mask* in 1922, and some scholars consider his "The False Burton Combs" the first true hard-boiled story, even though its nameless hero is not a detective. Nevertheless, Daly's unsentimental gentleman adventurer proved willing to serve as a bridge between the world of law-enforcers and law-breakers. "Three Gun Terry," which Daly published in the May 15, 1923, issue of *Black Mask*, developed his tough-talking protagonist by making him a detective and even giving him a name, Terry Mack. Daly's hero saw himself at the center of a triangle whose corners were the police, the criminals, and the victims. Novelist and critic William F. Nolan claimed that this story contained "almost every cliché" that would afflict the genre from the 1920's into the 1980's.

The most popular and influential character that Daly created, however, was Race Williams, who first appeared in *Black Mask* in 1923. He would later play his heroic role in seventy pulp-magazine stories and eight novels. Williams has also been called the first hard-boiled detective, and his characteristic traits certainly made him a better exemplar of the genre than any of Daly's earlier characters. In a fictional world in which everyone was more or less evil, Williams often had to choose the lesser of two evils to bring about justice. Relying on a personal code of ethics reminiscent of those gunmen who delivered frontier justice in the American West, Williams boasted that he never killed a person who did not deserve to die. Critics have found Daly's style stiff and awkward and his plots melodramatic, and his pioneering efforts pale in significance when compared to his *Black Mask* successors, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Shortly after Race Williams appeared, another

hard-boiled hero began his career in the pages of *Black Mask*. This character was called the Continental Op by his creator, Dashiell Hammett, whom some scholars have called the true creator of the hard-boiled school of detective fiction. Hammett had actually worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency before he took up writing. He was in his late twenties and living in San Francisco when he decided to leave the agency and begin writing stories for magazines. His first story, which he published in *Black Mask* under the pseudonym of Peter Collinson in December, 1922, was clearly the work of an apprentice.

Not until October 1, 1923, when *Black Mask* published "Arson Plus," Hammett's first Continental Op story, did Hammett find his subject and his voice. His first-person narrator was a middle-aged, urban private investigator. Although his first case, which involved arson and insurance fraud, culminated in a car chase

and shoot-out, the story obviously benefited from Hammett's experiences as a Pinkerton investigator, since the investigations leading to the climax were methodical and professional.

Scholars disagree whether the Continental Op and Hammett's other heroes are realistic or romantic. Those who favor realism point to the influence of Ernest Hemingway on Hammett's style and contents; they also call attention to Hammett's disdain for English mystery stories set in country estates populated by family members, upper-class guests, and servants. Those who argue for Hammett's romanticism point to his heroes as paragons of independence, isolated from both police and people, able to rise above the temptations of money and sex. For these interpreters, Hammett's heroes have more in common with medieval knights than modern private investigators.

Because Hammett experimented with characters, plots, and techniques, it is difficult, if not impossible, to categorize him as a realist or romantic. This would be attempting to stereotype a writer who strove to avoid the stereotypical. The Continental Op shares traits of other hard-boiled investigators. Like Daly's Race Williams, for example, the Op is a professional knowledgeable about both sides of the law. Unlike Williams, the Op is detached and cool-tempered, particularly in Hammett's early stories. In later stories, the Op frequently becomes the recipient of violence when criminals beat and torture him, and he seems to enjoy the retribution when he exacts revenge on his persecutors.

At the end of 1926 Joseph T. Shaw, a former army captain and reporter, became the new editor of *Black Mask*. During the following decade he transformed the magazine into a successful haven for the new type of detective. After narrowing the magazine's focus to crime, detective, and mystery stories, to the exclusion of all other genres, he increased its circulation from 66,000 to well over 100,000. He encouraged new and talented writers, and, through his judicious editing, fostered a style that emphasized simplicity, clarity, and plausibility. He strongly believed that action not rooted in three-dimensional characters was boring and meaningless. Important writers whose work he fostered included Raymond Chandler, Raoul Whitfield,

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

(Courtesy, Condé Nast)

Paul Cain, Lester Dent, and Erle Stanley Gardner.

Shaw also encouraged writers to submit novelettes and novels, which allowed for much more complex characterizations and plots than short stories did. For example, Dashiell Hammett's novel "The Cleansing of Poisonville," which began serial publication in *Black Mask's* November, 1927, issue, contains twenty-six murders, and the Op rescues a Montana mining town that has been taken over by criminals. When the hardcover version of the novel was issued in February, 1929, its title was changed to *Red Harvest*. Over the next three years, *Black Mask* published three more Hammett series that became classic novels in book form.

The third decade of the twentieth century has been called the Golden Age of American detective stories because of the large number and high quality of stories published by various pulp magazines, especially *Black Mask*. Other examples of popular fictional detectives from this period include the Chinese American detective Charlie Chan, created by Earl Derr Biggers, who first appeared in *The House Without a Key* in 1925. Chan mixed scientific techniques and Far Eastern wisdom in solving various crimes.

Although hard-boiled detectives predominated during the 1920's, detective stories in the English tradition still had their adherents. For example, S. S. Van Dine introduced Philo Vance to the American public in *The Benson Murder Case* in 1926. This and the later entries in the series made Van Dine very wealthy, and Philo Vance reigned for years as the most famous sleuth in the world. The novels of Hammett and Van Dine were often made into Hollywood films, and some, such as John Huston's adaptation of Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), became classics.

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, would have a profound effect on pulp fiction. New publishers appeared while other houses were consolidated. When American News Company, a magazine distributor, lost its largest client, Street & Smith, a new line of pulp magazines was needed, and Standard Publications began to be edited by Leo Margulies, who formerly worked for Munsey. Margulies launched such new detective pulps as *The Phantom Detective* and *Thrilling Detective*. Henry Steeger and Harold Goldsmith founded Popular Publications in 1930. Among their

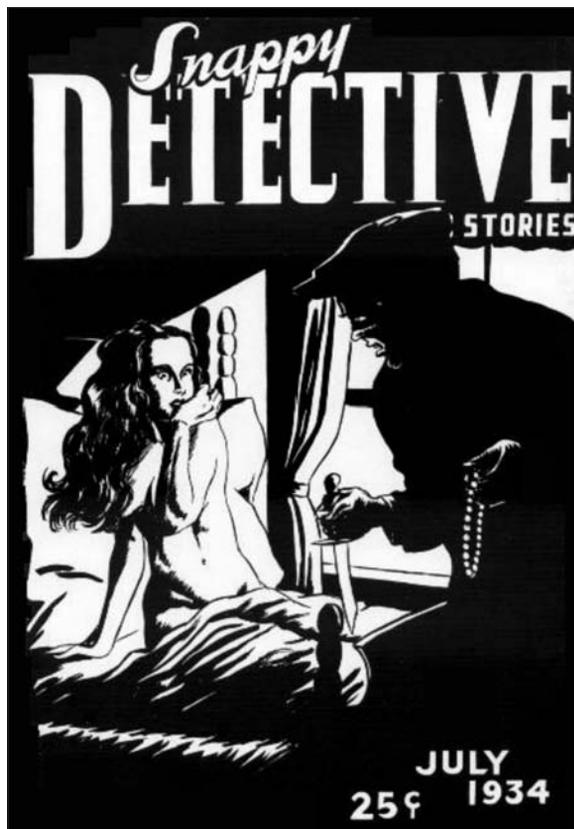
products were such detective pulp magazines as *Detective Action Stories*. Within a decade Popular Publications would become the world's largest issuer of pulp magazines. One of their most successful magazines was *Dime Detective*, which often sold more than 300,000 copies of single issues. Some critics rate this pulp as second only to *Black Mask* in the quality of its stories.

SUMMIT OF DETECTIVE PULPS DURING THE 1930'S

Surprising though it may seem, pulp detective fiction flourished during the darkest days of the Depression. *Black Mask* continued to sell well during the early years of the 1930's. Many Americans had to live on radically reduced incomes, and the hard-boiled stories of the pulps emphasized the gloomy side of life and human nature. Nevertheless, in most pulp stories, no matter how grim the problems were, they were eventually solved by the clever actions of astute individuals. The stories thus helped readers escape from a world in which the problems of the Depression were not so easily solved.

Meanwhile, Hammett published his last story in *Black Mask* in November, 1930, but other writers emerged to replace him. The most popular writer after Hammett was Erle Stanley Gardner, who, under the pseudonym Charles M. Green, began writing pulp stories during the 1920's. However, his popularity was principally due to his Perry Mason novels, the first of which, *The Case of the Velvet Claws*, was published in 1933. Rex Stout is an unusual example of an important mystery writer of that era who bypassed an apprenticeship in the pulps. His successful series of novels centering on the fat, orchid-raising Nero Wolfe began with publication of *Fer-de-Lance* in 1934.

The greatest of Hammett's successors was Raymond Chandler. Although born in Chicago, he was raised and educated in England, and after serving in the Canadian army during World War I, he moved to California, where he had a series of jobs and married. After being fired from his position with an oil company, Chandler took up writing. In 1933, at a penny per word, he sold his first story, "Blackmailers Don't Shoot," to *Black Mask* for \$180. Shaw continued to



Among the scores of pulp mystery and detective magazines that arose during the early twentieth century, there was one near constant: covers with attractive young women in peril.

publish Chandler's carefully crafted stories throughout the decade. Because Chandler was a slow and meticulous writer, he sold only four or five stories per year. He introduced his most famous detective, Philip Marlowe, in 1939, but Marlowe had predecessors in the twenty stories that Chandler published earlier. The hard-boiled heroes in those stories are often private detectives, but others include an undercover operative in a narcotics squad and even a hotel detective. Chandler was sympathetic to Hammett and other hard-boiled writers. He praised this new type of detective fiction for rescuing the genre from genteel English writers who often depicted murders occurring in vicarages with such weapons as "duelling pistols, curare or tropical fish." Americans had given murder back to the gangsters and racketeers who commit it for good reasons and who really know how to do it.

While writing short stories for the pulps, Chandler began writing a novel, which was published as *The Big Sleep* in 1939. Its success led to his concentrating on novel writing, and his last pulp magazine story was published in 1941. By that time he had published his second novel, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940). He would continue to publish novels into the 1960's, but his early pulp stories already contained the essence of his later achievements. His heroes, Marlowe and his antecedents, have often been described as "modern knights," and scholars have debated whether Chandler's stories are romantic or realistic. Chandler's Southern California settings are often grimly realistic, and he graphically presents what happens when human passions are distorted by such obsessions as greed or lust. On the other hand, his hero always manages to occupy the moral high ground, where he is also insightful in mocking his own pretensions. Like a medieval knight, Marlowe laments how idealism has become corrupted in a seductively deceitful world.

Black Mask's success bred imitators, such as *Detective Fiction Weekly* and *Black Aces*, and the increased competition reduced its circulation from a high of over 100,000 to 63,000 in 1935. When the editor Shaw was asked to take a pay cut in 1936, he refused, choosing to leave *Black Mask* instead. Raymond Chandler then switched his allegiance to *Dime Detective*. Many scholars have praised Shaw's editorship at *Black Mask* for helping to establish the hard-boiled detective story as an influential literary achievement. The poet and critic W. H. Auden lauded Chandler's stories and novels as great works of art.

Because some detective pulps had very short lives, estimates of their total numbers differ. Some scholars have calculated that more than 170 different detective pulp magazines made it to the newsstands during the 1920's and 1930's. A few lasted through the 1940's into the 1950's, but most had much shorter lives. What had been innovative in *Black Mask* became formulaic in its imitators.

Just as there was an interaction between certain pulp stories and the films, so, too, a fruitful interaction took place between radio and the pulps. For example, Street & Smith had a radio program to promote its *Detective Story Magazine* magazine. At the suggestion of

a radio writer, the program's narrator began using the tag line, "The Shadow knows," followed by a scarifying laugh. The success of this ploy with listeners led to the success of *The Shadow* magazine, based on the radio character of the same name. This, in turn, led to a resurgence of single-character pulp magazines. For example, Leo Margulies created *The Phantom*, which enjoyed a long life during the 1930's. However, the heyday of hero pulps ended as the 1940's began.

While the hard-boiled private investigators dominated the pulp market, other detective pulps were based on crime fighters with different occupations. For example, Richard Sale, a former newspaperman, created a popular newspaper-based series that featured Joe "Daffy" Dill and his photographer friend and ally, Candid Jones. Some pulp sleuths had unusual professions. They could be magicians, inventors, acrobats, even morticians. Raoul Whitfield, a former silent-film actor and World War I fighter pilot, had lived for a time in the Philippines, and he wrote twenty-four stories that featured Jo Gar, a Filipino private detective who worked in Manila. Another Whitfield series centered on Ben Jardinn, a Hollywood private detective.

Other pulp writers tried to subvert the hard-boiled prototype by writing stories centered on so-called defective detectives. *Dime Mystery* published stories devoted to the exploits of private investigators suffering from various defects or diseases. For example, Calvin Kane was a detective with deformed legs, and Nicholas Street was a detective who suffered from amnesia. Whatever their organic deficiencies, from blindness to hemophilia, these detectives could still solve crimes. Lawrence Treat, who was educated at Dartmouth College and at the Columbia University School of Law, garnered experience as a San Diego policeman to help create some of the earliest police procedural stories, a genre later brought to perfection in the novels and stories of Ed McBain.

Some 1930's writers tried to take the hard-boiled style in new directions. A good example of such a writer is Cornell Woolrich, who has been called a "pulp genius." Born in New York City in 1903 and educated at Columbia University, he was haunted, from early in his life, by a sense of doom, and this feeling, starting during the 1930's, provided him with the

tragic themes that he developed in stories for such pulp magazines as *Black Mask* and *Detective Fiction Weekly*. He sold his first crime story, "Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," to the latter magazine for \$110 in 1934. His stories were often set in squalid surroundings, such as cramped tenements in lower Manhattan, in subways, and in dime-a-dance halls. His stories of dark passions and nameless terrors often have surprise twists, and many scholars see Woolrich as the founder of noir fiction. Some of his later novels and stories were indeed made into film noir classics, and other stories provided the plots for such classic films as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and François Truffaut's *La Mariée était en noir* (1968; *The Bride Wore Black*). Unlike the cool toughness of the hard-boiled detectives, Woolrich's protagonists were often troubled by unbearable anxieties.

PROBLEMS DURING THE 1940'S

Although Americans continued to buy pulp magazines in large numbers during the World War II years, an astute critic would have seen the signs that the days of pulp magazines were numbered. Two factors that would play a role in the demise of the pulps during the 1950's had already surfaced in the 1940's. The first was the rise of comic books, which, by the early 1940's, already had combined monthly sales in the tens of millions. Two comic book titles, alone, *Action Comics* and *Superman*, sold more than two million copies per month. By the end of the war, the circulation of comic books was four times that of the pulps.

The other factor was the development of the paperback, or "pocket-sized," books. During the 1940's, book publishers began issuing massive editions of popular soft-cover titles, and detective and mystery novels proved to be particular favorites of the general reading public. The U.S. entry into World War II stimulated the production of paperback books, which families were encouraged by various organizations to send to friends and relatives in uniform. The Red Cross, for example, mounted drives for paperback books for soldiers and sailors. Finally, most Americans tended to view paperback books more favorably than the "sordid" pulp magazines. No organization ever sponsored the sending of pulp magazines to Americans in uniform.

Despite these difficulties, many pulp magazines continued to sell well during the war years, and some new magazines were also founded. For example, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* was established in 1941. Ellery Queen was the pseudonym for a pair of cousins, authors Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee and was also the name of a central character in their stories, along with Inspector Richard Queen. The long and very popular series of Ellery Queen novels began with *The Roman Hat Mystery* in 1929. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* was not only very popular in the 1940's and 1950's, but it was also one of the very few pulp magazines that survived into the twenty-first century.

A third factor that contributed to the problems of the pulps was the shortage of wood-pulp paper during the war. Wartime paper restrictions necessitated caps on overall circulations, and the pulp publishers responded in the only way they could—by dropping their pulp magazines with the smallest circulations in order to protect their major moneymakers. Fewer magazines meant fewer stories, and that in turn meant that fewer writers could make their living selling stories to the pulps. Several important pulp writers of detective and crime stories had already left the genre to become novelists, for example, Erle Stanley Gardner, Raymond Chandler, and Cornell Woolrich. Others began selling detective stories to such “slick” magazines as *The Saturday Evening Post*, which often paid ten to twenty-five cents per word. Other detective, crime, and mystery writers who had published in the pulps found work as screenwriters in Hollywood.

A significant event for all mystery writers occurred in 1945, with the foundation of the Mystery Writers of America. This professional organization was dedicated to raising the quality and quantity of mystery and detective fiction, and to improving the economic condition of its members. During its early years the society had about four hundred writers as members. Meanwhile, during the immediate postwar years, the pulps steadily declined in sales and in quality. Many pulp magazines disappeared.

By the end of the 1940's, the great variety of pulp genres had been reduced to three categories: Westerns, science fiction, and detective stories. Within these gen-

res new titles sometimes appeared, but even after American paper production returned to prewar levels, much of the paper went into paperback books instead of pulp magazines. Detective titles were extremely popular in paperback formats. Mickey Spillane's *I, the Jury* (1947) was the first mystery or detective novel to sell more than six million copies. Spillane's chief character, Mike Hammer, had clearly evolved from previous hard-boiled detectives, but the Hammer series of novels contained much more sex, sadism, and sensationalism than their earlier models.

During the late 1940's, two other problems confronted publishers of pulp magazines. Some major periodical distributors decided that they no longer wanted to handle inexpensive fiction magazines. This change forced Street & Smith to stop production of all its pulp magazines, with the exception of the particularly successful *Astounding Science Fiction*. The rise of book clubs may also have contributed to smaller audiences for pulp-fiction magazines. With a few exceptions, detective and mystery pulps saw their numbers drastically reduced, and many detective-story writers found themselves without markets.

DECLINE OF THE PULPS DURING THE 1950'S

During the 1950's, pulp magazines were no longer a major source of entertaining stories for the American public. By then, detective, crime, and mystery stories were increasingly being told in other forms, from comic books and inexpensive paperbacks to slick magazines, films, and television. In the culture that arose from the Cold War, spy stories became an ever more important genre. Many authors who would have published in the pulp magazines, had they written during the 1930's, were publishing in other places. Such writers included Jim Thompson, Charles Willeford, Chester Himes, and Patricia Highsmith. Like their pulp predecessors, these authors were criticized for writing stories that corrupted traditional human values, but their defenders pointed out that the stories of these authors went to the core of the cultural contradictions inherent in Cold War societies. Their works challenged the patriotic pieties of the Cold War by emphasizing the devastating ironies of societies bent on mutually assured destruction.

Some scholars have suggested 1957 as the year in which pulp magazines effectively died. That was the year in which bankruptcy struck down the American News Company, which had been the primary distributor of pulp magazines. However, while many pulps stopped publishing at that time, others soldiered on.

Something else that happened during the mid-1950's may also have contributed to the demise of certain mystery and terror pulps. In 1954, psychologist Frederick Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, a book that detailed the negative influences on the psychosocial development of children who were exposed to the sex, violence, and cruelty in crime, horror, and terror comic books. Wertham's book prompted a Senate subcommittee investigation, and the comic book industry responded by instituting a standards code that had a chilling effect, not only on crime and horror comics but also on pulp magazines with similar kinds of stories. Liberals tended to see this code as restricting freedom of artistic expression, but Wertham's defenders argued that many banned stories taught children that violence is a way to solve problems—a notion that could pave the way to vigilantism.

In 1951, *Black Mask* published its final issue, but two years later it was incorporated into *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, which occasionally reprinted classic stories by former *Black Mask* authors. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* was one of the survivors from the pulp era. Other mystery magazines that resembled it in having famous names attached to them also survived. Examples included *Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. Sporadic efforts were later made to revive classic pulp magazines for specialized audiences. While most such efforts failed, many of the most popular and most influential stories from the pulp era have been reprinted in book form. After 2000, some small independent publishers issued magazines that contained stories in the pulp tradition, but these had very limited runs, and the magazines were not printed on pulp paper, and so they could not be considered genuine pulp magazines.

LEGACY OF THE PULPS

As with so much else in American cultural history, the detective, crime, and mystery pulps were born,

flourished, and died in response to the demands of the marketplace. Through several decades in the twentieth century pulp magazines constituted a major means of entertainment for millions of Americans, ranging from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the callow Kansas adolescent. Several explanations can be advanced to account for the magazines' success. Pulp fiction writers produced stories with heroes to whom ordinary people could relate. Crime and detective stories also had an appealing dialectic of innocence and guilt through which writers tried to make sense of seemingly random events. In this way some of the best stories provided important lessons for life. In his study of crime and mystery stories, the English poet W. H. Auden argued that these genres had artistic merit, since they taught readers that victims were not all completely innocent and that villains were not all totally guilty. Auden felt that a complex admixture of good and evil must be seen as central to human existence.

A further contribution of pulp magazines was the experience they provided to such fledgling writers as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. These writers now have positions of great respect in the history of American literature, and their stories and novels are taught at universities around the world.

Pulp crime, mystery, and detective stories have also provoked criticisms. Some scholars have pointed out that the authors of these stories often wrote quickly, sloppily, and superficially. Their plots and characters were formulaic, and their primary purpose was instant gratification. This is the way these magazines tended to be perceived and used by many members of the general public, and this is also the reason so few of these magazines have physically survived, as most copies were discarded as soon as they were read. Other critics have emphasized that representations of human relationships and values in pulp stories tend to be false. For example, unlike in the pulps, extreme violence plays a very small role in ordinary human relationships. The distinguished English novelist and critic D. H. Lawrence suggested that some pulp stories reveal something ugly about the American soul, which is "hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer."

Cultural historians have studied pulp magazines to learn what they can reveal about what moved ordinary

Americans in changing times. Pulp magazines reflected their times, and detective, crime, and mystery stories helped to reveal the multifaceted nature of Depression-era America. What writers and readers of the time considered heroic or demonic can be instructive in understanding the deepest values held by Americans during those troubled years. Pulp magazine stories can therefore serve as a window on the joys and anxieties, hopes and frustrations, fears and triumphs of a people who eventually grew into what some have called the “greatest generation”—the men and women who fought and won World War II.

Science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon once devised a dictum stating that 90 percent of everything is “crap.” That dictum applies as much to the pulps as it does to other genres. Most of the stories published in the pulps are now forgotten, but a small percentage of them did more than provide ephemeral entertainment for adolescents, workers, and the poor. Some reached the level of literary greatness because they communicated characters, ideas, and values the contemplation of which continues to deepen the sensibilities of new audiences. Some of the best of these stories also challenged the ideas and values that were held then and are still held today. This, too, is the role of good literature, to provoke as well as to enlighten.

Because of the tremendous variety in the quality of pulp magazine fiction, no simple conclusions can be given for the field of pulp detective fiction as a whole. In their day, pulp detective, crime, and mystery stories offered many readers satisfying solutions to problems raised by the stories themselves. In this sense, many stories were capsule morality plays that provided solace to those who were overwhelmed by the problems of the Depression. Although twenty-first century America is very different from Depression-era America, many problems, both personal and public, continue to confront Americans, who still find entertainment, enlightenment, satisfaction, and challenges in a genre that was initiated by Poe, developed by Doyle, extended by Hammett and Chandler, and now the preferred form for many storytellers around the world.

Robert J. Paradowski

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**MYSTERY FICTION AROUND
THE WORLD**

AMERICAN MYSTERY FICTION

Mystery fiction is the most popular form of secular literature that the world has ever seen, surpassing every other genre in sales. According to scholar Robin W. Winks, one of every four books sold in the United States and Great Britain is a mystery novel. The genre has also influenced film and television productions to a great extent. Although the field covered by mystery fiction is a broad one, encompassing a host of disparate subgenres, the history and primary characteristics of American mystery fiction may be readily traced through an examination of the works of the handful of innovative and influential writers who established the foundations that all later writers built upon.

POE'S INVENTION OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

All English-language mystery fiction derives, directly or indirectly, from three short stories written by the American author Edgar Allan Poe during the early 1840's: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter." These three stories set the essential characteristics by which a new literary genre was defined. Virtually all works of literature contain mysteries in the widest sense of the term, as both characters and readers must normally wait until the stories end to learn what happens. However, Poe was the first author to focus on logical solutions of central problems through expert interpretation of clues by specialized problem-solving agents. Most earlier crime fiction had taken the form of pseudoautobiographical memoirs by criminals or, more rarely, police officers; however, those stories were simply loosely episodic adventure stories, rarely concerned with puzzle solving. The most famous of these early crime stories was *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté jusqu'en 1827* (1828-1829; *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827*, 1828-1829). That work details the career of Eugène-François Vidocq, a French criminal who became a police informer and then, in 1811, a full-time detective for the French Sûreté. After he retired, he published his memoirs in four volumes. Written mostly by professional ghostwriters, his melodramatic memoirs

became sensational best sellers. Although Poe was apparently not impressed by either the French detective or his methods, he must have been impressed by the popularity and potential of the new field of crime fiction.

Poe's debt to Vidocq is implicit in his own writings, in which his fictional detective, C. Auguste Dupin, makes a disparaging remark about Vidocq's inadequate education and analytic scope. However, although Poe's stories are set in Paris, he creates a different type of detective and a new type of mystery. The basic ingredients of Poe's formula are simple: a brilliant but eccentric amateur detective with a trusty but less intelligent companion and chronicler, an even less intelligent police force, and a complex and bizarre crime that the detective solves through a complex series of logical deductions drawn from equally complex and subtle clues. According to eventually what came to constitute the rules of this literary genre, the same clues were known to the detective's chronicler, and through him to readers, who derived pleasure from trying to beat the detective to the solution to the mystery. By assigning the narration to the sidekick, rather than to the detective himself, Poe created a plausible reason for withholding the detective's own observations and conclusions from readers until he was ready to explain the mystery to the narrator—and thus also to the readers—in the final pages.

The first of Poe's stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," presented the new paradigm in virtually its completely developed form. After its anonymous first-person narrator meets Dupin, the two men rent a house together. The narrator then establishes the eccentricity of Dupin, whom he concedes the general public would regard as mad, and demonstrates Dupin's skills in observation and ratiocination as they read a newspaper account of a bizarre and grisly double murder together. Among the many unusual circumstances that move Dupin to look into the case is the point that the doors and windows giving access to the crime scene were all found locked from the inside. He wonders how a murderer could have entered and exited the room. Literally hundreds of subsequent mysteries

have been built around this device, and the convention of the “locked-room” mystery would become a standard subgenre of mystery fiction. Meanwhile, Dupin spots and analyzes seemingly trivial clues that escape the notice of the less intelligent police; he solves the mystery and captures the murderer, an escaped orangutan. Poe’s use of the ape established yet another genre convention that would be followed by future writers—making the least likely suspect the culprit.

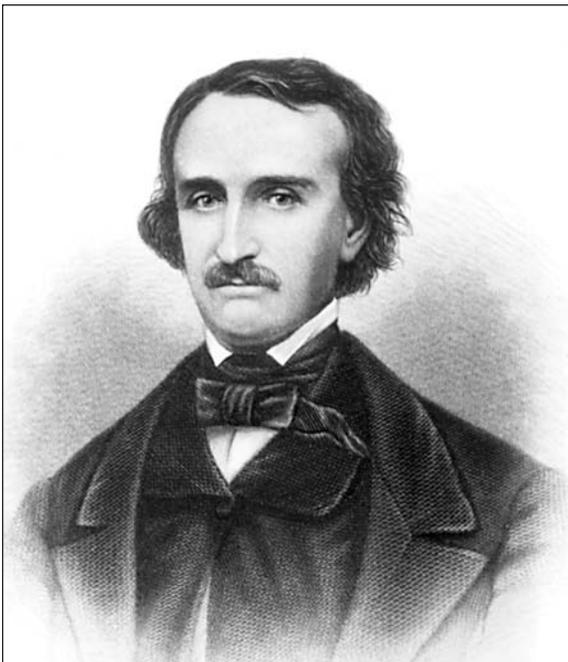
Poe’s third and final Dupin story, “The Purloined Letter” added more key elements to the mystery formula, including the convention of hiding key objects in plain sight. Poe also added two new figures who would become standard characters in later works—the police inspector and the archcriminal. In “The Purloined Letter,” Poe refined the competitive relationship between Dupin and the police by raising “Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police,” to the status of a supporting character who reluctantly seeks Dupin’s help. The police are methodical and scientific but limited by their bureaucratic rigidity and unimaginative procedures, which can never match the discernment of a creative person. In the character of “Minister

D—” (abbreviated names were a nineteenth century fictional convention suggesting that real people whose identities must be protected were involved in the stories) Poe also created the stock role of the criminal mastermind whose intelligence and abilities make him a worthy opponent for the brilliant detective.

POE’S DISCIPLES

The canonical popular version of this classical tradition of the mystery as a puzzle to be solved is the British writer Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes series, which began with *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887. Some purists have objected that essential information available to Holmes is often withheld from readers and that is cheating on the part of the author. Nevertheless, the immense success of the Sherlock Holmes stories paved the way for similar work by later British writers, such as Agatha Christie. Although the predominance of this type of mystery among British writers has led to its being thought of as the “English school,” in opposition to the more realistic types of mysteries written by Americans around the 1920’s, it should be remembered that this classic model was invented by the American Poe and practiced by other major American mystery writers. The thirty-three Nero Wolfe novels that Rex Stout published between 1934 and 1975 constitute some of the best examples of the type; they are complete with an eccentric armchair detective and a narrator sidekick.

It should also be noted that later writers have continued to develop the field that Poe first mapped out. For example, the late twentieth century saw the rise of a new subgenre, the police procedural, which eliminates the brilliant private detective and instead follows the painstaking routines of real police work. A particularly successful contemporary version of the police procedural is found in the enormous popularity of forensic medicine as an alternative to police work for the protagonist’s profession, as exemplified by Patricia Cornwell’s series about medical examiner Kay Scarpetta and the many television series linked by the “crime scene investigation” (CSI) label, as authors have continued to develop every permutation of Poe’s original formula.



Edgar Allan Poe is almost universally recognized as the inventor of the modern detective story. (Library of Congress)

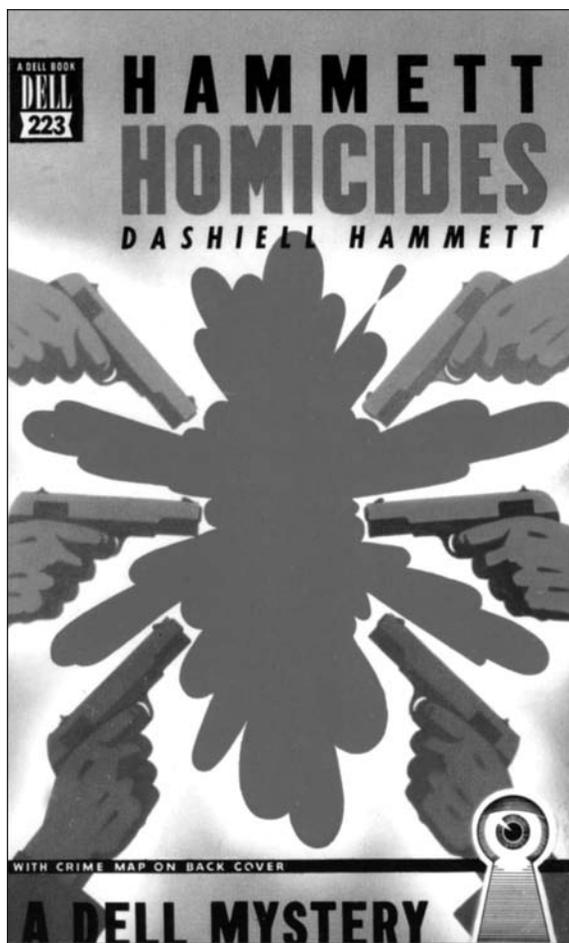
HAMMETT AND THE HARD-BOILED SCHOOL

A new kind of American detective story that arose in reaction to the “English” model during the 1920’s has become known as the “hard-boiled school.” Dashiell Hammett was one of its first masters. Instead of serving as vehicles for intentionally bewildering sets of clues and often implausible solutions, his more realistic stories shifted their emphases to character development, action, and colloquial dialogue. These story traits were a major shift from the flat characters, slow pace, and stilted, often set, speeches of the classic school. Just as the entire classic formula had arisen virtually complete in Poe’s earliest stories, the essentials of the realistic model were nearly complete in Hammett’s very earliest work.

Hammett’s thirty-six mystery stories—all but two of which first appeared in the pulp magazine *Black Mask*—feature an operative for the Continental Detective Agency who is known to readers only as the Continental Op. Hammett himself had been a detective for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a background that enabled him to present more realistic views of both crime and criminals and detective work than had been previously attempted. Hammett’s familiarity with the classic detective-story paradigm is shown in the seventy-three reviews of detective novels he wrote for the *Saturday Review of Literature* and the *New York Evening Post* between 1927 and 1930. His rejection of that paradigm is thorough.

Hammett’s detective is not an erudite solver of riddles like Sherlock Holmes but a hard and shifty player, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody with whom he comes into contact, whether criminal or client. Hammett humorously underscored the difference in methods between his detective and the classic model in a 1924 short story, “The Tenth Claw,” which parodies the classic detective plot with a set of nine baffling clues, including a victim missing his left shoe and collar buttons, a mysterious list of names, and a bizarre murder weapon (a typewriter). The solution of the mystery, the “tenth clue,” is to ignore all nine confusing and ultimately phony clues and instead use standard methods such as the surveillance of suspects to find the killer.

Hammett’s Continental Op is lower-class, short,



Collection of Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op stories that were first published in book form in 1946.

overweight, and pushing forty. Thus, the traditionally colorful and aristocratic amateur detective of classic detective stories is replaced by the anonymous and colorless Op, who has no history, no family, and no known hobbies or interests outside his work. He relies on methodical routine, long hours, action, and instinct to get results, not on reasoning alone. Although the Op narrates his own stories, readers seldom get an inside view of his thinking. His narratives are individualized by his colorful vocabulary and deadpan humor, but they are largely objective rather than subjective, restricted to what the Op observes and what he says and does, leaving much of what he thinks and feels for readers to figure out.

Rather than present brilliant alternatives to unimagi-

native police methods, the Op often relies on routine police procedures and direct, often violent action instead of elaborate chains of logic to track down criminals. Poe and Doyle relied mostly on the short-story form for their mysteries. In contrast, the success of Hammett's five novels—all of which were quickly recognized as classics—made the novel the preferred form for many future mystery writers. After writing two Op novels, *Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse* (both 1929), he created his best-known detective, Sam Spade, for his third novel, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930). In that book Hammett switched to a rigorously objective third-person point of view. Part of the mystery that readers had to solve was that of Spade's character; his motives and morality are very much open questions that affect readers' interpretation of the novel. Hammett's novel *The Glass Key* (1931) is unique in containing no detective, only gamblers and criminals of various degrees of culpability. His fifth and last novel, *The Thin Man* (1934), is also unusual in presenting a husband-and-wife team, Nick and Nora Charles, in a comic treatment of the genre that took on a fresh existence as a hugely popular film series. A telling sign of the extent of Hammett's influence on American mystery writing is offered in a survey undertaken by Robert A. Baker and Michael J. Nietzel during the early 1980's that found Hammett's three sets of detectives still ranked among the eight most readily recognized detectives in the genre.

Just as Hammett's detective are different, so too are the crimes and criminals in his stories. The world of the traditional mystery is one of security and regularity, disrupted only temporarily by aberrant crimes. Once the traditional detective solves a crime through the application of reason, normalcy is restored. The worldview implicit in this structure was comforting to middle-class English readers at the turn of the twentieth century but was remote from the sensibility of the generation of American readers who had just survived World War I. As mystery writer Raymond Chandler summed it up, Hammett took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley; he gave murder back to the kind of people who commit it for reasons other than merely providing corpses for puzzles. One effect of this American shift often noted by critics was a democratization of the genre as murder scenes

moved from stereotypical upper-class English country houses to sites involving all classes in the new urban melting pots. The world of the hard-boiled detective usually involves several crimes and several criminals, and the society is not an elite and orderly one temporarily disrupted but a seamy and deeply corrupt one that is neither redeemed nor even much changed after a set of crimes is solved. Some critics have speculated that the Prohibition era in the United States, which contributed materially to the rise of organized crime during the 1920's and made millions of adult Americans into criminals, was a powerful catalyst for this philosophical disillusionment, and that it was exacerbated by the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed.

CHANDLER AND THE DETECTIVE AS KNIGHT

One response to the widespread loss of confidence in American social institutions during the 1920's and 1930's was a turn to romantic individualism, represented by the next major author of American mystery fiction, Raymond Chandler. While Hammett had created four different protagonists for his five novels, Chandler marked out the path for most subsequent writers by building almost his entire literary output around a single continuing central character, Philip Marlowe. Chandler originally named his detective Mallory, an allusion to Sir Thomas Malory, who compiled the legends of King Arthur and his knights during the fifteenth century, thereby suggesting that there was something noble about his protagonist. However, even without that suggestive name, Chandler's conception of the detective as a modern equivalent of the knightly hero of chivalric romance comes through clearly. For example, Marlowe has two clients named Grayle and Quest—clear allusions to the quest for the Holy Grail. Moreover, as scholar David Geherin has noted, Marlowe's cases often become crusades in his eyes. As Chandler himself explained, he was not interested in posing puzzles, but in telling stories of one worthy man's adventures in search of hidden truths.

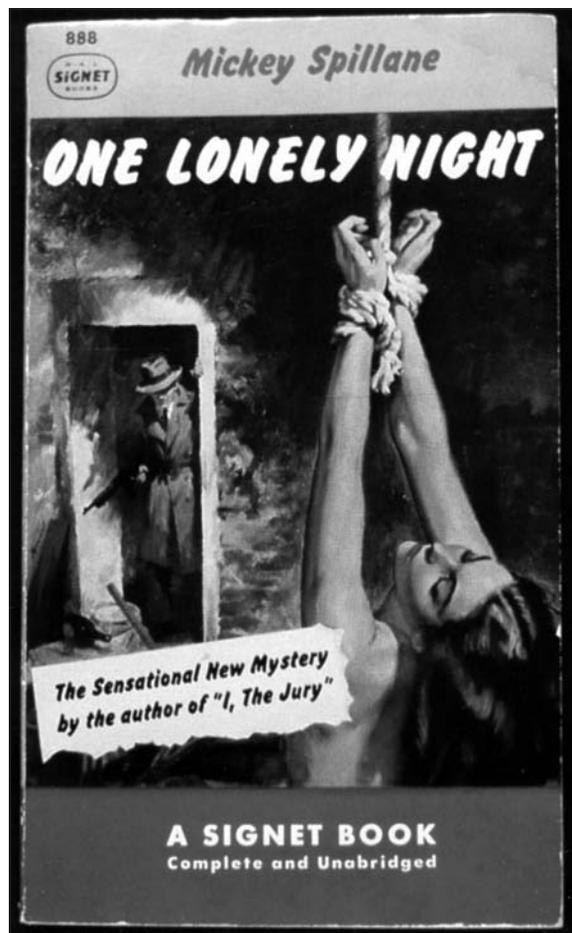
Chandler's first Marlowe novel, *The Big Sleep* (1939), opens with a scene in which Marlowe views a stained glass panel depicting a knight trying to rescue a damsel in distress; he jokes to himself that he should

help the knight, who seems not to be really trying. However, Marlowe enjoys only partial success in freeing the distressed damsels involved in his own investigation amid the urban corruption of Los Angeles, which was the preferred setting for many mystery writers who followed Chandler. Although Marlowe is as tough on the surface as Hammett's hard-boiled detectives and speaks in the same terse, colloquial style of Hammett's detectives, Chandler allows readers more access into the hero's consciousness than Hammett does. Chandler reveals Marlowe to be intelligent, educated, and sensitive, with a startling range of awareness, qualities about which readers can only speculate in Hammett's detectives. Moreover, Chandler provided the introspective Marlowe with a highly poetic style for his frequent interior monologues, relying particularly on striking similes. For example, Marlowe thinks of the gigantic and garishly dressed Moose Malloy as looking "about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food."

Chandler was more interested in exploring the character of an intellectual hero than he was in depicting violent death. In his best-known formulation of this principle, he wrote, "down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean," whose personal moral code and conscience keep his integrity intact in a decadent society. Marlowe's alienated status in a hostile and treacherous city is part of a deeper ideological meaning: Crime in Chandler's books symbolizes the psychic and spiritual threats posed by modern society to moral and emotional stability. The best defense, the novels suggest, is Marlowe's model of sensitive vigilance, taut self-control, and trust in one's own cognitive resources.

MACDONALD AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MYSTERY

Ross Macdonald was recognized early in his career to be the successor to Hammett and Chandler in the field of realistic crime fiction, and his detective, Lew Archer, was recognized as the successor to Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. Although writers such as Mickey Spillane, whose main series character was the hard-boiled detective Mike Hammer, had enjoyed astounding book sales, critics typically viewed Spillane's brutally violent and misogynistic melodramas as mis-



The brutality and misogyny within Mickey Spillane's novels were often self-evident on the covers of his books.

guided perversions of the mystery formula. Spillane's works are studied now primarily as illustrations of the worst cultural impulses of their era, rather than as compelling literature.

Macdonald's major advance over his predecessors was in the greater emphasis he placed on psychology and character, creating a more humane and complex detective and more intricate plotting. In a review of *The Goodbye Look* (1969) in *The New York Times Book Review*, novelist William Goldman called the Lew Archer books the finest series of detective novels ever written by an American. The series is notable for both its consistently high quality and its quantity. Whereas Hammett wrote only five novels and Chandler seven, Macdonald wrote twenty-four Archer nov-

els. Taken as a whole, his achievement is unmatched by any other American mystery writer.

The first six Archer books build the society and geography of California into important thematic elements, and feature increasingly complex plots, with multiple murders and plotlines. Nevertheless, Archer shows traces of the influence of the hard-boiled detectives of Hammett and Chandler. For example, he is named after Miles Archer, Spade's partner in *The Maltese Falcon*, and is closely patterned on Marlowe. However, his sensitivity, patience, and reliance on understanding and analysis separate him from his predecessors. Even in Macdonald's early books, Archer is more often a questioner than a doer.

The next twelve Archer novels constitute Macdonald's major achievement. Crimes in these books are usually committed not by professional criminals but by middle-class people going through emotional crises. These books followed a period of crisis in Macdonald's personal life, during which he underwent psychotherapy, and all of them deal openly with psychological issues. *The Doomsters* (1958), although begun before Macdonald's psychoanalysis, presents his first extended treatment of the theme of intrafamilial relations that dominates all his later books. In this novel, a psychologically disturbed young man appears at Archer's door after escaping from the state mental hospital, where he has been confined as a murder suspect in the mysterious death of his father. Although he knows himself to be legally innocent, he feels guilty for having quarreled violently with his father on the night of the latter's death. Such oedipal tension between father and son, following the pattern of Sigmund Freud's famous theory, drives the plots in many of Macdonald's later novels.

Although Macdonald's focus on family psychology constituted a clean break with both the Hammett and Chandler school and most of his own early work, Macdonald's next Archer novel, *The Galton Case* (1959), was of even greater importance for his career. The murder case in *The Doomsters* was rooted in a crime committed three years earlier. In *The Galton Case*, as in most of the Macdonald novels to follow, the present crime is rooted deeper in the past, in the preceding generation, giving Macdonald a means to

show the long-term effects of a family on each of its members. As Macdonald explains in his essay "Writing *The Galton Case*" (1973), this plot is roughly shaped on his own life. His father left him and his mother when he was three years old. This transformation of personal family history into fiction seems to have facilitated the breakthrough that led him to write the rest of his novels about relationships among parents and their children. He followed his exploration of three generations of fathers and sons in *The Galton Case* with examinations of relationships between fathers and daughters in *The Wycherly Woman* (1961) and *The Zebra-Striped Hearse* (1962), and between a mother and son in *The Chill* (1964). Women are frequently the murderers in Macdonald's books; he believed that people who have been victims tend to victimize others in turn, and he regarded American society as one that systematically victimizes women.

A striking characteristic of Macdonald's later novels is the way in which seemingly unrelated events and characters come together. The deeper Archer goes into circumstances involving people who know one another, the more connections he finds. Macdonald's novels all have large casts of characters and multiple crimes, which often occur decades apart. Once the proper connections are made, however, there is usually only one murderer and one fundamental relationship at the center of the plot. All the disparate elements, past and present, pull together in one coherent piece.

Although Freudian themes continued to dominate Macdonald's work, he often combined them with elements adapted from mythology and the Bible. *The Far Side of the Dollar* (1965) has been seen as a modern, inverted version of Homer's stories about Ulysses and Penelope. Jasper Blevins, the fratricidal murderer of *The Instant Enemy* (1968), explicitly finds an analogy between his own story and that of the biblical Cain and Abel. The complex events of *The Goodbye Look* (1969) are catalyzed by the search for a gold box that is specifically compared to Pandora's box of Greek myth. All three of these books repeat the quintessential Macdonald plot of a young man's search for his missing father. The search for an absent father also sets in motion the events of *The Underground Man* (1971), probably the most admired of Macdonald's

works. This novel, together with his next, *Sleeping Beauty* (1973), also reflects its author's abiding concern with conservation. Each novel examines an ecological crime as well as a series of crimes committed against individuals. In *Sleeping Beauty*, Macdonald uses an offshore oil spill, inspired by an offshore spill near his Pacific coast home in Santa Barbara, California, as a symbol of the moral life of the society responsible for it, in particular that of the family that runs the oil corporation. In *The Underground Man*, the disaster of a human-made forest fire serves similar ends.

Macdonald built his last novel, *The Blue Hammer* (1976), around the Dostoevskian theme of the double, combining it with the familiar themes of the past shaping the present and of the son's search for his true father. The book thus serves as an appropriate summation of the major themes of his entire Archer series. One suggestion that *The Blue Hammer* may have been intended to be the last of the Archer novels lies in its symmetry with the first, *The Moving Target* (1949). In the earlier book, Archer kills a man during a struggle in the ocean—the only time he kills anyone in the eighteen books about him. In the last book, Archer finds himself in a similar struggle but manages to save his adversary's life. Archer explicitly compares the two events and reflects that he has balanced out his earlier sin, somehow completing a pattern. Another suggestion that the series ended lies in an unusual plot development: For the first time—apart from a brief interlude in *The Goodbye Look*—Archer has a romantic interest. The effects of lack of love preoccupy all the novels about Archer, who recognizes that the same lack has affected him. He has been single since a divorce that took place before the events of the first novel, but he now falls in love with a young newspaper reporter. Macdonald knew that Chandler had been unable to continue the Philip Marlowe novels after marrying off his detective and may have intended to end his own series similarly.

LEONARD AND THE NEW CRIME NOVEL

Writers of mystery fiction typically employ first-person narratives, telling their stories from the points of view of continuing characters who are the protagonists for all the novels in a series. Hammett switched

characters from book to book and sometimes relied on an objective, "camera-eye" point of view, but Chandler's Marlowe and Macdonald's Archer always told their own stories, establishing a formula followed by most later American writers. The field of American mystery fiction continues to be dominated by series detectives, but some modern writers have developed alternative approaches.

Perhaps the most successful modern American mystery writer, in both popular and critical terms, has been Elmore Leonard, who has been called the "Dickens from Detroit." He has shown a remarkable ability to invent fresh casts of memorable characters in every book and realistically depict the nuances of all their distinctive voices, much as the great nineteenth century English novelist Charles Dickens did. Critics have recognized that the apparent ease and naturalness of his style is deceptive and that the authenticity and precision of his depictions of contemporary people and places make him both an accomplished and important American novelist and an heir to the Hammett/Chandler/Macdonald tradition. Leonard seldom uses the same character in more than one or two books, and his readers' expectations about the structures of mystery novels are confounded by his characteristic practice of relying on multiple points of view—perhaps his most distinctive and original stylistic contribution to the field. Rather than having his protagonists tell their stories in consistent first-person narratives, Leonard typically shifts his book's points of view from one character to another. In many novels, readers cannot even be sure who the main characters are until they are well into the books. Leonard's *Maximum Bob* (1991) goes so far as to include a scene written from the point of view of an alligator. Leonard never speaks in his own voice in his later books, delegating all the narrating to one or another of his usually large casts of characters. One critic described him as a skilled ventriloquist whose own lips never move.

Leonard begins his books not with plots but with sets of characters. He decides first on the right names for characters, then works out the details of their backgrounds and, especially, how they talk. Once he has created a set of interesting characters, he improvises a situation that puts them into conflict and lets them dic-

tate the action to him. He claims that he rarely knows what will happen more than a scene or two ahead of what he is writing or how his books will end. His improvisational approach accounts for the fact that many of his best characters are minor ones who develop unexpectedly after he starts writing.

Leonard's technique of rapidly shifting points of view seems at first to have more in common with the difficult experimental literature of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf than with traditional popular fiction. Such an approach could certainly become confusing in the hands of another writer, but Leonard always manages to convey information readers need to follow his stories. He accomplishes this, in part, through a heavy reliance on dialogue, always couched in each character's individualized mannerisms of speech and presented in short, dramatic scenes. Individual scenes typically end with punch lines or unexpected twists. Leonard eschews entirely the typical novelist's use of blocks of narrative exposition. Another interesting effect of Leonard's use of multiple points of view is that readers are privy to the thoughts of virtually every character, hero and villain alike, and therefore understand more what is happening than the individual characters do.

Leonard's novels are not really mysteries in the traditional sense; their readers know exactly who commits every crime and often even witness the crimes from the criminals' points of view. Such detailed multiple visualizations are especially common in Leonard's later novels, which resemble film scripts in their rapid cuts from character to character and in their explanations of the precise directions from which characters view scenes. Not surprisingly, many of his novels have been successfully adapted to the screen. Leonard's practice of giving his criminals' points of view equal time creates yet another problem for some readers, who can be disturbed by his ability to render the thoughts and feelings of the most depraved characters accurately and even sympathetically. That this intimate association with evil characters never becomes oppressive for readers results from Leonard's gift of making a sort of deadpan satire come through the realistic dialogue; few of his characters intend to be funny, but readers often find humor in unexpected places.

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY DIVERSITY

Although the paradigms and conventions of the mystery genre were developed almost entirely by white middle-class male detectives and writers, the very essence of such formulaic fiction lies in its ability to be used repeatedly, either within a series by a single writer or within books and series by other writers. This remarkable portability of the mystery format has enabled it, somewhat surprisingly, to accommodate an unprecedented diversity in the range of different characters and contexts used to fill in the components of the formula. For example, Chester Himes wrote a series of ten successful detective novels set in the African American community of Harlem, beginning with *For the Love of Imabelle* (1957). *Fadeout*, the first of Joseph Hansen's twelve novels featuring the homosexual detective David Brandstetter, appeared in 1970. Despite a number of interesting exceptions and precursors, however, the boom in cultural diversity in mystery fiction is primarily a product of the 1980's and 1990's, which saw the introduction of a wide range of female, minority, and gay detectives.

Women have long been successful mystery writers; however, the introduction of women as protagonists has been more gradual. Amanda Cross introduced amateur detective Kate Fansler in 1964, and Marcia Muller began her series featuring private investigator Sharon McCone in 1977. However, Sue Grafton produced the first completely successful hard-boiled female private eye series with her character Kinsey Millhone, who made her first appearance in *A Is for Alibi* (1982). Sara Paretsky's similarly hard-boiled V. I. Warshawski series began in the same year, but it has never quite matched the popular success of Grafton's work.

Born in 1950, Kinsey Millhone is thirty-two years old in Grafton's first book; however, Grafton creates a disparity between story time and historical time, so that the eighteenth novel in the series, *S Is for Silence*, published in 2005, is set in 1987, leaving the character essentially unchanged through twenty-plus years of real time. Resisting what must have been the obvious temptation to cast Millhone as a committed feminist, Grafton lets her tough, blue-collar protagonist make a feminist statement implicitly, but effectively, by downplaying the gender issue, a strategy that has proven

prescient in the modern postfeminist cultural climate. Millhone proceeds as though performing traditionally male detective work were nothing unusual for a woman, and most of the other characters react the same way.

Although social criticism has always been an important aspect of the best detective fiction, the rise of ethnic detectives such as Tony Hillerman's Navajo policeman Jim Chee and Walter Mosley's African American detective Easy Rawlins has brought to the foreground the issue of American society's treatment of minorities and the conflicts that arise within characters of multiple and conflicting cultural identities. Emphases vary from one writer to another. For example, Mosley sets his series in Watts during the period from 1948 to 1963, in order to heighten the racism that Rawlins faces and educate his readers about the history of black Americans, while Hillerman focuses more on contemporary tensions between Navajo and mainstream culture. Most writers adopting ethnic detectives deal with two levels of crime: the immediate criminal acts, which are usually resolved, and the larger sphere of social injustice, which protagonists can resist and perhaps ameliorate but never eradicate.

Despite differences in emphasis, the mystery and detective genre has always had the capacity to be subversive as well as conservative, and the basic elements of that durable model remain more or less intact. Chee's conflicts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other bureaucracies outside the reservation parallel the often adversarial relations between Philip Marlowe's personal code and the corrupt police and politicians he encounters. Rawlins is a typical hard-boiled loner who often solves problems with violence rather than logic. The flexibility and adaptability of the mystery formula will doubtless enable it to accommodate new emphases in the future while retaining a recognizable generic identity.

William Nelles

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AFRICAN MYSTERY FICTION

The roots of written literature are not deep throughout Africa, especially in tropical Africa, where literacy was essentially a twentieth century development. As a consequence, a large part of published fiction set in Africa has been created by outsiders, particularly Europeans from colonizing countries. Any consideration of African mystery fiction must therefore take into account the writings of both Africans and outsiders, and a useful way in which to categorize these writers is by their origins.

NATIVE AFRICAN WRITERS

The mystery and detective fiction genre is yet relatively unexplored by black African writers. African authors who write about crime in their continent tend to focus on themes that deplore colonialism and its aftermath—the loss of traditional ways, civil wars, political corruption, exploitation, genocide, and retribution. They often depict clashes between traditional systems of justice and colonial systems of justice imposed on them and find subject matter in the abrupt shifts from one system to the other that almost always had disastrous consequences.

In 1958, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, who would become one of the continent's leading authors, published a novel that has become a modern classic: *Things Fall Apart*. Its story builds to a climax which sets tribal justice so sharply at odds with British colonial justice that each side sees the other as barbaric outsiders. The story concerns four crimes. The first is an accidental gun firing during a celebration that sends the main character, Okonkwo, into exile from his home under tribal law. The second is the colonial administrators' execution of an entire village's residents as punishment for the killing of a British soldier. The third is Okonkwo's slaying of a British representative who challenges his village's right to follow its own rules. The fourth, and ultimate crime, is the British colonial system's destruction of a society's way of life. As Okonkwo, the very best of citizens, is forced to kill himself to save his village from destruction. Okonkwo strikes out at the British invaders because it is his duty

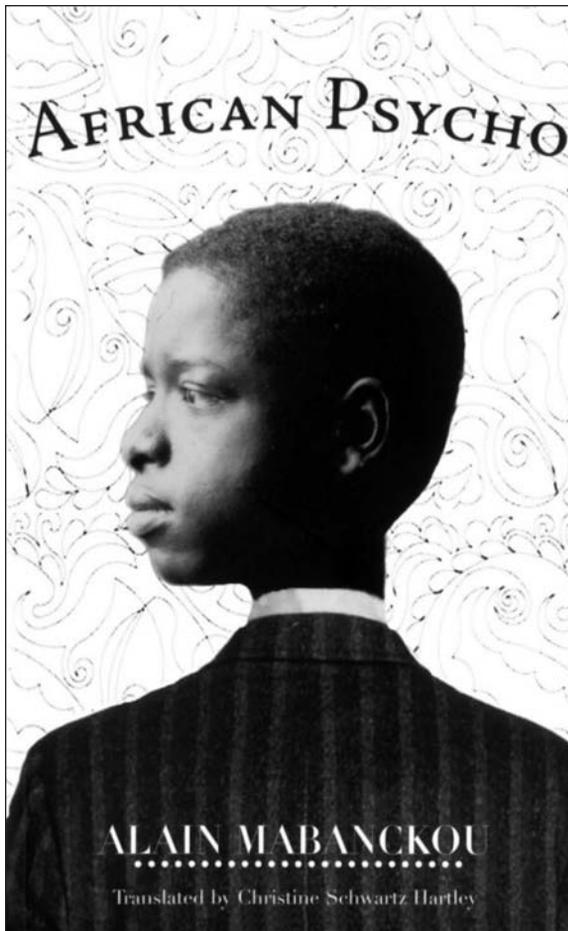
as community protector. However, British retribution threatens to destroy the village he is duty bound to defend. He thus takes his own life, a crime against himself and a forbidden act in both communities, to protect his family and tribe from annihilation.

Bessie Head, a South African writer based in Botswana, has explored more contemporary crime. Like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, her 1995 short story "Looking for a Rain God" considers issues of crime and retribution. It depicts the persistence of tradition: parents, in time of drought, turning to traditional blood sacrifice to bring rain. Tried for infanticide, a father and another male relative are executed under British law. Head's *The Collector of Treasures* (1977) explores the gender attitudes that lead a Botswana woman to murder her abusive husband.

Modern questions of social justice and military rule in a country still suffering the long-term effects of colonial rule are the subjects of crime novels by two Nigerian authors: Arthur Agwuncha Nwankwo's *The Day of the Long Shadow* (2002) and Henri Eyo's *The Dawn of Time* (2004). The Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou's short novel *African Psycho* (2007) is an innovative narrative related by a serial killer who is conversing with his phantom mentor. The story is at once both gruesome and comedic.

As with *African Psycho*, there is sometimes unexpected humor in African crime stories. Driss Chraïbi, considered the creator of the modern Moroccan novel, writes about colonialism and clashes between Arab and French culture with particular sensitivity to the plight of women in Arab societies, but also with humor. An example is having a simple government inspector thinking that by restoring bureaucratic procedures he can restore justice in Morocco. In the first volume of Chraïbi's Berber trilogy, *Flutes of Death* (1981), two metropolitan policemen, Inspector Ali and his superintendent, schooled in bureaucratic forms are sent on a detective mission to the mountains. There they clash with poverty-stricken villagers and their home-grown systems of policing.

Defining crime to include crimes against humanity



further broadens the scope of the African crime novel. The three Inspector Llob books written by Yasmina Khadra (the feminine pseudonym of former Algerian army officer Mohammed Moulessehoul) are set in the mid- to late 1990's, at the height of the Algerian civil war, in which several hundred thousand people died and the police were targets for Islamic insurgents. *In the Name of God* (2000) parallels the themes of Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1947) in having Algerian fundamentalists as fascist destroyers. *Morituri* (1997; translation, 2003) depicts a kidnapping and defines crime as depriving citizens of their civil rights. In *A qui rêvent les loups* (1999; *Wolf Dreams*, 2004), Khadra examines how Islamic fundamentalism creates suicide bombers. He and writers like him explore modern questions of crime asked in African countries dominated by Islam or caught up in civil wars fought in the name of religion.

WHITE SOUTHERN AFRICANS

Southern African writers of European descent have often chosen the crime or mystery form. Mysteries written by such authors as James McClure, Nadine Gordimer, Deon Meyer, and Gillian Slovo typically assert the rightness of opposing an unjust system that has purposefully and methodically sought to destroy tribal ways and undercut the worth of whole races. However, white South Africans are also known occasionally to add touches of humor to a genre not generally known for levity. For example, Herman Charles Bosman's short stories "Unto Dust" (1949), about a murder during frontier wars, and "Willemsdorp" (1977) both consciously mimic Edgar Allan Poe's detective and mix crime and humor.

South Africa's best-known mystery writer is almost certainly James McClure, the creator of the unlikely teaming of an Afrikaner, Tromp Kramer, and a Zulu, Mickey Zondi, as detectives during the apartheid era. Despite rules forbidding black and white police officers from fraternizing, these two characters share a sense of humor that makes the seemingly unendurable social system in which they operate bearable. As detectives they cross racial bridges impassable by others, overcoming legal restrictions that separate native Africans from not only white people but also Asians and the so-called Coloureds—people of mixed heritage.

McClure's novel *The Steam Pig* (1971) effectively captures the nightmare of apartheid: police torture, African gangs, white families reclassified as black, pass laws, daughters trying to pass for white, sons turning to crime and murder, public officials violating the racial sex act laws and using murder to cover up their "schoolboy" pranks. *The Caterpillar Cop* (1972) features a youthful character who belongs to a detective club, whose members stand on guard, much like members of the Hitler Youth, against supposed violations of race laws. *The Gooseberry Fool* (1974) describes the horrors of "black spot" evictions and forced transportation to desolate African homelands. *The Sunday Hangman* (1977) details the techniques of state executions, and *The Blood of an Englishman* (1980) has Zondi play dead to catch a killer, while pseudoscientists try to find a biological factor that will enable them to identify race by blood.

Gillian Slovo, the daughter of South African anti-apartheid activists Ruth First and Joe Slovo, who has made her home in Great Britain, began her literary career with her socialist feminist Kate Baeier detective series that began with *Morbid Symptoms* in 1984. Later titles include *Death by Analysis* (1986), *Death Comes Staccato* (1987), *Catnap* (1994), and *Close Call* (1995). All these books follow classic crime fiction patterns, but Slovo's later novels have taken on more serious subject matter. In the courtroom drama *Red Dust* (2002), Slovo explores the brutal legacy of apartheid in a story in which an expatriate lawyer helps South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission prosecute a former policeman who tortured a prisoner who later became a member of the postapartheid parliament. However, the ambiguities of the case demonstrate that exposure of mere facts does not equal exposure of the truth. In her political thriller *The Betrayal* (1991), Slovo explores personal and political betrayals.

South Africa's most distinguished writer is Nadine Gordimer, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her novel *The House Gun* (1998) links a white-on-white crime of passion with the South African debate over gun control and over the death penalty, thus tying the familial and personal to the national. At the same time, the novel demonstrates how much South Africa has progressed since apartheid through the easy relationship of a successful black lawyer with his accused white client. In contrast, Deon Meyer's crime novels *Orion* (2000), *Dead Before Dying* (1999), and *Feniks* (1996), originally written in Afrikaans, focus on crimes that result from South African racial tensions.

Perhaps the most famous writer to come out of Africa is South Africa's Alan Paton. His novel *Cry the Beloved Country* (1945) places the blame for black African crime squarely on the apartheid system's purposeful separation of families and communities to provide labor for mines and households. His study of one family whose son murders a white liberal during a burglary sets the pattern for what was going awry all over South Africa. At the other end of the continent, Algerian-born Albert Camus's existentialist crime story *The Stranger* (1954) provides a first-person account of the life of M. Meursault, from his mother's death to his trial and execution for shooting and killing

a stranger, an Arab on an Algerian beach. The murder is a whim, an act committed without a sense of guilt.

Tim Couzens's *Murder at Morija* (2002) is a true-crime story that reads like a locked-room mystery. A distinguished South African social historian, Couzens examines a crime that occurred in 1920 that was never solved: the poisoning of six members of a missionary family in what is now Lesotho.

A mystery writer of Southern African extraction who has achieved a significant international following is Alexander McCall Smith. A distinguished professor of medical law in Scotland, McCall Smith is best known to the world as the author of a gentle and slow-paced mystery series about Precious Ramotswe, the first female detective in Botswana, who first appeared in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* in 1998. Born in neighboring Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), McCall Smith brings to his Ramotswe stories a strong affection and authentic feeling for Southern African landscapes and peoples. His Mma Ramotswe has been

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Alexander McCall Smith. (AP/Wide World Photos)

called an African Miss Jane Marple, an homage to Agatha Christie's famous amateur sleuth. A self-trained private investigator, Ramotswe is no amateur, but like Christie's character, she is happy to focus on domestic relationships and relax with her tea. The titles of McCall Smith's books reflect the often whimsical nature of Ramotswe's adventures: *Tears of the Giraffe* (2000), *Morality for Beautiful Girls* (2001), *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* (2002), *The Full Cupboard of Life* (2003), *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies* (2004), *Blue Shoes and Happiness* (2005), and *The Good Husband of Zebra Drive* (2007).

EXPATRIATE AND IMMIGRANT WRITERS

European immigrants to Africa tend to see crime in terms of political and social issues, though they often follow European crime and mystery conventions, in a tradition that goes back to the turn of the twentieth century. For example, journalist Douglas Blackburn, writing anonymously in *Kruger's Secret Service* (London, 1900), examines issues that drove the South Africa War.

British writer Elspeth Huxley, who grew up in colonial Kenya, is best known for her evocative memoirs, especially *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959), but she also wrote several murder mysteries: *Murder at Government House* (1937), *Murder on Safari* (1938), *Death of an Aryan* (1939; also known as *The African Poison Murders*, 1940), *The Merry Hippo* (1963; also known as *Incident at the Merry Hippo*, 1964), and *A Man from Nowhere* (1964). These books mix comedy and satire with crime, taking on big-game hunters and politics by vested interests. Most important, however, they explore interactions between Europeans and Africans, depicting each group as equally puzzled by the other's idiosyncracies. Huxley captures distinct differences in point of view, methods of investigation and detection, degrees of criminal violence, and interpretations of human behavior. Another of her novels, *The Red Rock Wilderness* (1957), depicts a mad biologist who runs amuck in French Equatorial Africa.

Another well-known British author who grew up in colonial Africa is Doris Lessing, whose *The Grass Is Singing* (1950), views the Southern Rhodesian society of her youth as polarized by race. Henning Mankell, a

Swedish writer who divides his time between Sweden and Mozambique, is best known for his novels about Detective Inspector Kurt Wallander. In *Den vita lejoninnan* (1993; *The White Lioness*, 1998), Wallander foils a plot by former South African secret police members to assassinate Nelson Mandela.

Lauri Kubuitsile is an American freelance journalist who went to Botswana in 1989 as a Peace Corps volunteer, stayed, and married a Botswana teacher and former Olympic boxer, Shakes Kubuitsile. Her novels *The Fatal Payout* (2005) and *Murder for Profit* (2006) exploit the growing popularity of stories set in Africa.

NON-AFRICANS ON AFRICA

Non-African writers who have exploited African settings for their sensational and exotic values have generally relied on the story strategies of mainstream British or American mystery writers. Examples include P. N. Walker-Taylor's *Murder in the Game Reserve* (1938), and Donald Swanson's own 1950 novel of the same title. In Lawrence Sanders's *The Tangent Objective* (1976) and *The Tangent Factor* (1978), American oil company troubleshooter and amateur detective Peter Tangent tries to exploit the political chaos convulsing West Africa but is somewhat transformed by his contact with local people. The story line of Michael Gruber's thriller *Tropic of Night* (2003) moves among the United States, Mali, and Nigeria, mixing Yoruba sorcerers with Siberian shamans and French scholars, anthropology, and mayhem.

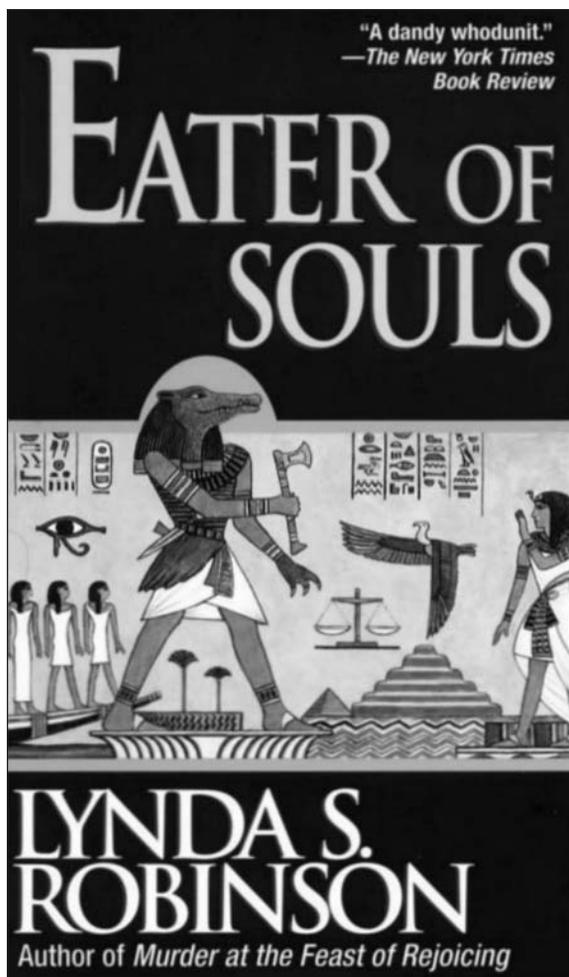
Robert Wilson, a British crime novelist who lives in Portugal, has set four of his stories in West Africa. His protagonist in this series, middle-aged hard-boiled detective Bruce Medway, deals violently with political corruption and disdain for human rights. In *The Big Killing* (1996), Medway minds a young British diamond merchant. In *Instruments of Darkness* (1996), set along the coast, he acts as a fixer for traders, one of whom is seeking a missing mystery man who may be a murderer. Medway tracks down missing money connected to the American mob and a power-hungry Nigerian presidential candidate in *Blood Is Dirt* (2002). In Wilson's fourth West African story, *A Darkening Stain*, (2002), Medway exposes illegal mining and sexual depravity involving missing schoolgirls.

Africa's colonial and postcolonial eras have long offered rich subject matter and exotic settings for both mainstream fiction and mystery stories about corruption and exploitation. Indeed, equatorial Africa provides the setting for one of the most famous suspense stories in modern literature, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Although the story never specifies its exact location, it is clearly set in the Congo Free State, the most corrupt and exploitative territory in colonial Africa. Conrad's short novel targets the greed, violence, and inhumanity of Europeans, who are killing Africans almost indiscriminately, starving or working them to death in mines and slave camps, shelling them from offshore ships, or simply butchering them because they exist. Kurtz provides a particular example of the larger pattern, as his jungle search for ivory has led him to destroy whole villages, appropriating their wealth and torturing and beheading their citizens. His confessor, Marlowe, seeks causes that lead men into territory with whose alien nature they cannot cope, uncomfortably settling on the lies of religion and "good women."

A modern tale of political exploitation of the undeveloped by the developed is noted spy author John le Carré's *The Constant Gardener* (2001), in which multinational pharmaceutical companies caught testing drugs on sick Africans prove willing to murder to keep their activities secret. Le Carré's *The Mission Song* (2006) follows the career of protagonist Bruno Salvador, an interpreter fluent in English, French, Swahili, and other African languages who works part of his time for the British secret service and assents to the nefarious deeds of a multinational syndicate looting the Democratic Republic of the Congo. John Fullerton's thriller *White Boys Don't Cry* (2006) is a psychological study of a spy that follows le Carré's style, as a rich liberal Afrikaner disappears and his English journalist friend wades through the political waters of Afrikaner politics past and present that have resulted in murder.

ANCIENT EGYPT AS A SETTING

Many mystery stories written by non-Africans focus on ancient Egypt, a setting that allows them to avoid harsh contemporary realities and political issues



and instead to provide history lessons sprinkled with archaeological details. Lynda Robinson is a good example. A native Texan who studied archaeology and did fieldwork in the Middle East, she sets such novels as *Murder in the Place of Anubis* (1994), *Murder at the God's Gate* (1995), *Murder at the Feast of Rejoicing* (1996), *Eater of Souls* (1998), and *Slayer of Gods* (2003) in the fourteenth century B.C.E. Her detective is Pharaoh Tutankhamen's chief investigator, Lord Meren. Meren unravel murders and mysteries that plague the boy king, including the early and unexpected death of Nefertiti.

P. C. Doherty, an English writer with a doctorate in history, also writes about ancient Egyptian detectives. He deftly interweaves genuine historical events with investigations of looting, professional assassinations,

and other murderous acts in novels such as *The Mask of Ra* (2001), *The Anubis Slayings* (2001), *The Horus Killings* (2002), *The Slayers of Seth* (2002), *An Evil Spirit Out of the West* (2004), *The Season of the Hyena* (2005), *The Year of the Cobra* (2006), and *The Assassins of Isis* (2006). All these books are set at critical moments in the lives of various pharaohs.

Another English novelist, Elizabeth Peters, takes a different approach to Egyptian history. Her lengthy Victorian series follows the adventures of married archaeologists Amelia Peabody Emerson and Radcliffe Emerson and their son, Ramses, all of whom seek undiscovered Egyptian tombs and murderers. Peters combines comedy and romance with investigations centered on nineteenth century archaeological digs amid desert sands. The feminist projections of Peters's *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975), *The Curse of the Pharaohs* (1981), and *The Mummy Case* (1985) have continued from volume to volume, with *Serpent on the Crown* (2005) and *Tomb of the Golden Bird* (2006) continuing the family history and replaying familiar patterns.

The success of these authors' series has inspired imitators, such as Anton Gill, author of *City of Dreams* (1994), a thriller set in ancient Egypt. Another is Brad Geagley, author of *Year of the Hyenas* (2005), which uses the down-and-out investigator Semerket, a former clerk of investigations and secrets in Egypt, during the twelfth century B.C.E. Jane Jakeman's *The Egyptian Coffin* (2006) is another archaeology mystery, set during the 1830's.

Gina Macdonald

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ASIAN MYSTERY FICTION

Crime, criminals, and their punishment figure in the literature of virtually all Asian countries. However, mystery fiction, as the modern genre is commonly understood, is a relatively recent Western literary invention. Critics generally agree that mystery fiction originated in the United States with Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) and saw its first popular hero in detective Sherlock Holmes, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Mystery fiction—with plots featuring puzzling crimes and rational solutions through combinations of observation, calculation, and reasoning by individual investigators, often detectives—became popular in the late nineteenth century.

In Asia, mystery fiction was associated with Western culture, which had a major effect on South, Southeast, and East Asia during the age of imperialism in the nineteenth century. Elite members of Asian society in China, Japan, India, and the Ottoman Empire learned English and began to read and enjoy the stories of Sherlock Holmes in their original forms and undertook the first translations of English and American mystery fiction into Asian languages. Translators often took some liberties in their work, and some Asian writers tried to write in the new genre.

Nowhere in Asia was Western mystery fiction as popular as in Japan. Shūroku Kuroiwa (1862-1920), using the pen name Ruiko Kuroiwa, began translating English mysteries in 1888 and published the first Asian mystery, "Muzan" (cruel), in 1889.

JAPANESE MYSTERIES BEFORE WORLD WAR II

The early popularity of mystery fiction in Japan was clearly influenced by the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which sought to modernize Japan along Western lines. During the early Meiji era, existing Japanese crime fiction provided a base on which Western mysteries could be built. The Kabuki plays of Kawatake Mokuami (Yoshimura Yoshisaburō, also Kawatake Shinshichi; 1816-1893) featured underworld figures such as thieves, murderers, and swindlers as primary characters and were innovative works within the Japa-

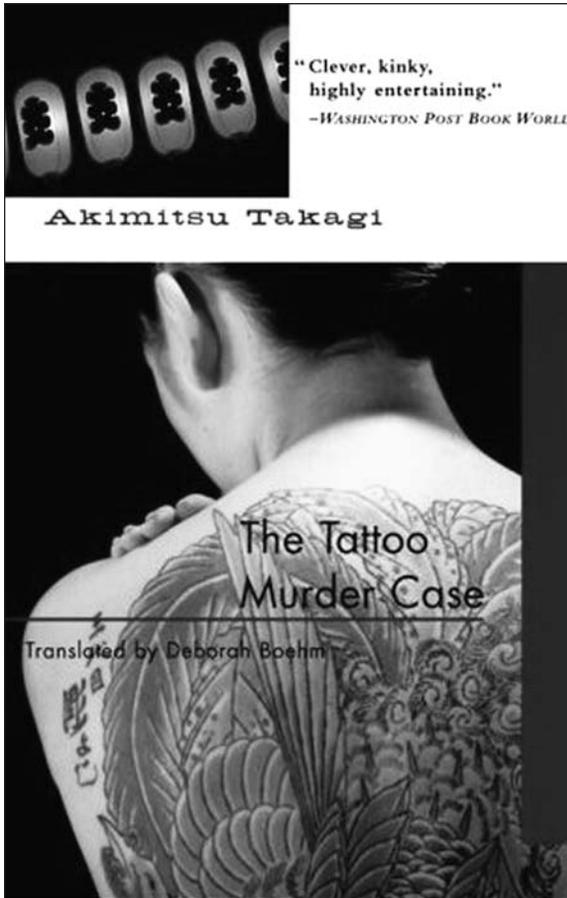
nese tradition. Kanagaki Robun (Nozaki Bunzō; 1829-1894), a comedic writer, depicted evil women and humorous characters in works that appealed to Japanese audiences for their adept depiction of new, confusing Western influences. However, it was Ruiko Kuroiwa's "Muzan" that established the tradition of Western-style mysteries written by Japanese authors.

Japanese mystery fiction began to follow two different trends. Some writers created realistic stories emphasizing logic and pretending to tell of true criminal investigations, and others wrote mysteries that embraced the irrational and bizarre inherent in the notion of crime as a transgression against social norms. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) became part of the latter group when he wrote his influential *Shisei* (1910; the tattoo).

The magazine *Shin Seinen* (1920-1950; new youth) published both foreign detective stories in translation as well as original Japanese works. In 1923 one of the stars of Japanese mysteries, Edogawa Rampo (Hirai Tarō; 1894-1965), debuted with his "Nisen dōka" (two-sen copper coin). Hirai's pen name was a witty allusion to Edgar Allan Poe, whom he admired. Throughout the 1920's, the mysteries of Edogawa Rampo fascinated, shocked, and entertained his large readership with tales focusing on the creepy, weird, macabre, and mysterious, crossing into fantasy, suspense, and thrillers. In steady homage to Poe, Edogawa Rampo wrote such stories as the aptly titled "Akai heya" (1925; "The Red Chamber," 1956).

The early 1930's saw a flourishing of the two strands of Japanese mystery fiction, the realistic-logical and the fantastic. Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (1892-1931) ran afoul of the proletarian literary movement when he claimed that art, as in his fanciful mysteries, was as important as politics. *Kokushikan satsujinjiken* (1934; murder in the black hall of death) by Oguri Mushitarō (Oguri Eijirō; 1901-1946) was considered one of the best mysteries of the decade.

As Japan's War In China deepened after 1937 and World War II became imminent, mysteries were suppressed and their publication discouraged. Like oth-



ers, Edogawa Rampo temporarily retired. He began writing about science under the new pen name of Ryunosuke Komatsu.

JAPANESE MYSTERIES AFTER WORLD WAR II

The end of World War II saw the second wave of Japanese mystery fiction. Seishi Yokomizo (1902-1981) established a new emphasis on logical detective stories with his *Honjin satsujin jiken* (1946; murder at the headquarters). In addition to reorienting Japanese mysteries toward more rational, clue-centered mysteries, Yokomizo also created the first major Japanese mystery series character, private eye Kōsuke Kindaichi, in 1946. Until 1973, Kindaichi would solve seventy-seven cases.

Akimitsu Takagi (1920-1995) also wrote in the classic vein and created two series characters, the lawyer Saburō Kirishima and the private detective Kyō-

suke Kamizu. Kamizu's first case, *Irezumi satsujin jiken* (1948; *The Tattoo Murder Case*, 1998) is one of the few classic Japanese mysteries translated into English. Etsuko Niki (1928-1986) was one of the first Japanese female mystery writers. Her *Neko wa shitte ita* (1957; *the cat knew it*) confirmed the fame of the postwar style that came to be called *honkaku misuteri*, or authentic mystery.

At the height of the popularity of the authentic mystery, Seichō Matsumoto (Kiyoharu Matsumoto; 1909-1992) published *Ten to sen* (1958; *Points and Lines*, 1970) a mystery masterpiece that focused on social criticism. Matsumoto's runaway success, solidified by his *Suna no utsuwa* (1961; *Inspector Imanishi Investigates*, 1989), was based on carefully researched murder cases involving realistically drawn members of Japanese society. Matsumoto was especially interested in the social forces that could drive a normal person to crime.

Masako Togawa (1933-) became known as a mystery novelist in what has been called the Seichō period, ranging from 1957 to the early 1980's, when she won the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Prize in 1962 for her *Ōinaru gen'ei* (*The Master Key*, 1984), which focused on social issues. Togawa's occupation as nightclub singer and owner of a Tokyo club added to the popularity of her mysteries. The Edogawa Rampo Prize was established in 1954 by the famous mystery writer, who returned to crime fiction after World War II, writing until his death in 1965. The prize continues to be one of Japan's most coveted mystery awards.

In 1967, Jirō Ikujiima (1933-) introduced the hard-boiled subgenre to Japan. His series character Shirō Shida debuted in *Oitsumeru* (1967; chase to the finish) and spawned many more hard-boiled stories by other authors. Jirō Akagawa's (1948-) success was based on his tongue-in-cheek humor in his long-lasting series with the cat Holmes, begun with *Mike neko Hōmuzu no suiri* (1978; the investigations of the cat Holmes).

JAPANESE MYSTERIES SINCE 1980

With the appeal of socially conscious mysteries waning and the classic detective story holding on, the 1980's were an intermediary era in Japanese mystery

writing. Stylistic and thematic innovations fought off strong competition from adventure stories. Japanese mysteries also saw more international attention, with numerous translations appearing in English.

What Japanese mystery author and critic Kiyoshi Kasai (1948-) called the Third Wave of Japanese crime fiction began with *Jukkakukan no satsujin* (1987; murder in the hall of ten corners) by Yukito Ayatsuji (1960-). Often called *Shin honkaku* (new authentic mystery), these mysteries displayed a renewed focus on the classic murder puzzle and the importance of clues but with inclusion of socially relevant elements. Kaoru Kitamura (1949-) focused on mysteries grounded in daily life and solved by an amateur detective team of a man and a woman in his *Aki no hana* (1990; autumn flower).

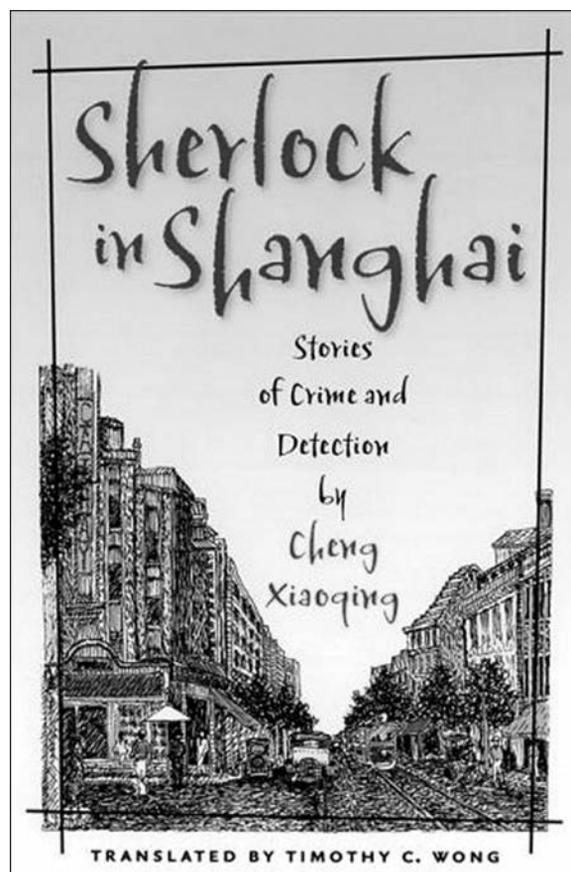
After the late 1980's writers began to focus on bizarre, shocking crimes arising out of the pressures of modern Japanese life. Outstanding authors whose novels were translated into English are Miyuki Miyabe (1960-) and Natsuo Kirino (Mariko Hashioka; 1951-). Miyabe debuted in 1989 with *Pāfekuto burū* (perfect blue), and her *Kasha* (1992; *All She Was Worth*, 1996) chillingly combined a masterful crime puzzle with a reflection on the pitfalls of easy credit and stringent bankruptcy laws. Natsuo's *Auto* (1997; *Out*, 2003) and *Gurotesuku* (2003; *Grotesque*, 2007) focused on women driven to violence, crime, and social disassociation.

As the twenty-first century progressed, Japanese mystery fiction writers continued to invigorate a popular genre. There were crossovers into the supernatural and fantastic reminiscent of the 1920's when the bizarre and erotic had influenced the genre. There were police procedurals and series characters successfully solving fascinatingly constructed crimes. As Japanese society became shocked by ever more bizarre real-life crimes of increasing brutality, crime authors saw their most outrageous tales mirrored by reality. Increasingly, the works of Japanese mystery writers were translated into English.

CHINESE MYSTERIES BEFORE 1949

Long before the birth of Western mysteries, Chinese were fascinated by *gongan xiaoshuo* (stories of

court cases) based on famous cases, the earliest of which date back to the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.). They were first written down in *Duchen jisheng* (1235; all marvels of the capital) in the late Song Dynasty (960-1279). The most famous cases were those of judge Zheng Bao (999-1062), the most popular of all classic Chinese judges, collected in *Baijin gongan* (1594; court cases of Judge Bao) and *Longtu gongan* (c. 1640, 1775; court cases of Judge Longtu Bao). A close second in popularity was Judge Di Renjie (630-700), whose cases were published in *Wu Zetian si da qi an* (eighteenth century; *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee*, 1949). Robert H. van Gulik's translation covered only the first three of the four original cases but made available in English Chinese court cases that had fascinated Chinese audiences for a millennium.



Cheng Xiaoqing modeled his Shanghai private eye Huo Sang closely on Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

As soon as they became available in China in the late 1890's, Western mysteries were embraced by the urban elite as international, modernizing, and reformist literature. Soon, Chinese authors were writing mysteries in the Western style. Two writer friends created series characters based on their most famous Western counterparts. During the first "golden age" of Chinese detective fiction from 1910 to 1949, Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) created private eye Huo Sang, a science teacher from Shanghai deliberately modeled on Sherlock Holmes, and Bao Long, a sidekick akin to Dr. Watson. Huo's cases began with "Dengguang renying" (1914; human shadow in lamplight) and "Jiangnan yan" (1919; swallow of the south). Huo solved his original and entertaining cases analytically and was portrayed as a Chinese acting like a Westerner.

Cheng's friend Sun Liaohong (1897-1958) created Lu Ping, a character modeled on the gentleman burglar and detective Arsène Lupin of Maurice Leblanc. Lu burglarized, detected crimes, and strolled through his witty mystery stories like a decadent urban dandy of Shanghai. As a sign of their friendship, Sun wrote one Lu Ping mystery, "Gui shou" (ghost's hand), where Huo Sang appears to solve the case before Lu does. Both Cheng's Huo Sang and Sun's Lu Ping enjoyed great popularity in the 1920's and 1940's.

CHINA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND AFTERMATH

When the Communists conquered mainland China and established the People's Republic in 1949, Western mystery fiction and classic *gongan xiaoshuo* were suppressed for being capitalist or feudalist. Theoretically, there was no crime under socialism, only acts of spying and sabotage committed by foreign agents and class enemies. Instead of mysteries, Mao Zedong's China allowed only Soviet-style *fante* (antispies and treason) stories that included Guomindang (Chinese nationalist) agents, Japanese and later Soviet enemies, and Chinese counterrevolutionaries.

Popular authors such as Sun Liaohong desperately tried to adapt. Sun's *Qingdao miwu* (1958; *miasma over Qingdao*) was a formulaic antispies novel written in the year of Sun's death from tuberculosis. His friend Cheng Xiaoqing tried to write mysteries that obeyed

Communist Party ideological dictates. In his *Dashucun xue an* (1956; *bloody case at Big Tree village*), three people are suspected of counterrevolutionary rural sabotage for burning the hut of eight peasants, who died in the flames. A heroic detective team finds the sole guilty perpetrator.

During Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), virtually all crime fiction, like other fiction, ceased to exist. Cheng was harassed until his death in 1976. Mysteries could not be written when cadres were supposedly omniscient, when regular crime did not officially exist in the socialist society, when the Ministry of Justice was abolished in 1959, and when in all of the People's Republic of China, encompassing over a billion people at the time of Mao's death in September, 1976, only four lawyers were allowed to practice.

After the fall of the Gang of Four, including Mao's widow Jiang Qing, and the rise of reformist leader Deng Xiaoping in 1977, mystery fiction suddenly came into vogue again. Old Chinese *gongan xiaoshuo* texts were reprinted, as were Western classics. Contemporary Japanese, Western, and Soviet crime fiction was imported and translated. Chinese mystery short stories appeared in a variety of magazines and tabloids.

To combat this wild expansion, in 1980 the Ministry of Public Security, the nation's police force, decided to publish crime fiction of its own through its publishing house, the Masses' Press. Yu Haocheng was enlisted to edit *Zhuomuniao* (woodpecker) magazine featuring crime stories written mostly by police officers. To increase its reputation, the ministry engaged science-fiction writer Ye Yonglie (1940-). With *Qiaozhuang daban* (1980; *in disguise*), Ye created the first post-Mao Chinese mystery series character. Super-detective Jin Ming was active until 1984. Even though the flamboyant Jin Ming used a private helicopter and availed himself of super-science to solve his cases, the six Jin Ming cases were based on the files of authentic crimes that the ministry made available to Ye and other star writers.

CHINESE MYSTERIES SINCE 1980

The mysteries written by police officers and published by their ministry's printing press proved amazingly popular in Deng Xiaoping's China and beyond.

Lü Haiyan, a former prison guard, police officer, and assistant manager of the Ministry of Public Security's Kuntun Hotel in Beijing wrote *Bianyi jingcha* (1985; the plainclothes police officer), a best seller as complex as a nineteenth century Chinese family saga and as suspenseful as a cliffhanger.

With "Bangwan qiaomen de nuren" (1985; the woman who knocked at dusk), Li Di featured the Beijing police cadre Liang Zi. As an interrogator, Liang managed to solve the case of a love triangle gone wrong, but the suicide of the falsely accused widow Dr. Ouyang Yun left him feeling guilty. The story slid by censorship.

As the legal profession began to rise from the ashes in Deng's China, Wang Xiaoying wrote *Ni wei shui bianhu* (1987; whom do you defend), a long novel in which the author explores the conflicts encountered by her heroine, Mei Zhen. Lawyer Mei, daughter of a famous precommunist counsel, has to decide which clients to defend. Wang's novel became even more critical because she left the central murder mystery unsolved at the novel's end, pointing toward postmodernism.

Readers still loved *gongan xiaoshuo* in the new age of *faxhi wenxue*, or legal system literature, as mysteries were called in China after 1984. Therefore Liu Zongdai, writing as Zong Dai, created a modern Judge Bao character. His chief of detectives, Huangfu Yu, solved his first case, *Gongan hun* (1988; soul of public security), in more than seven hundred pages. Nicknamed after the benevolent god Zhong Kui, Huangfu presided over the plot.

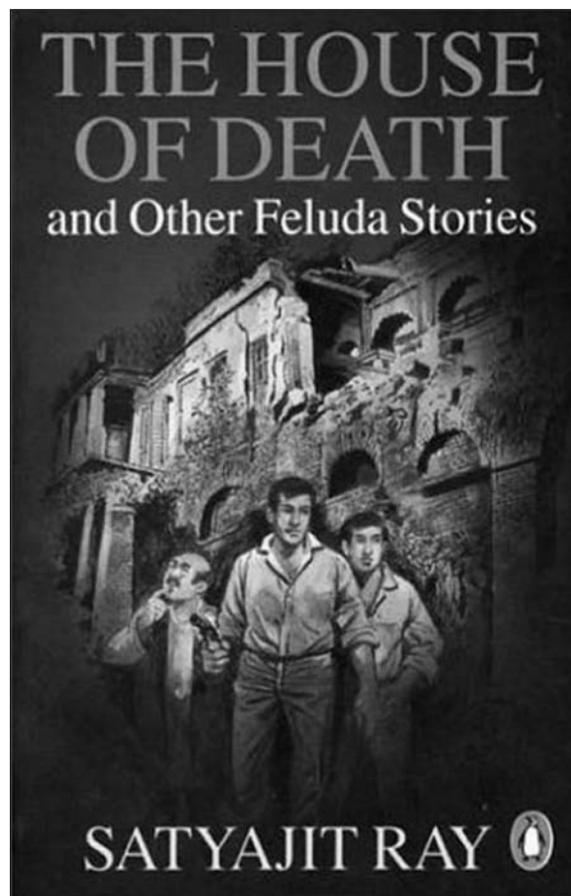
Even the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4, 1989, which literally crushed a student movement, failed to discourage modern authors from trying the limits of crime fiction permissible in mainland China. Chen Yuabin (1955-) wrote of a family's quest for judicial justice, "Wan jia susong," (1991; the Wan family sues). Director Zhang Yimou made this story into the widely popular film *Qiu ju da guansi* (1995; *The Story of Qiu Ju*), which, together with actress Gong Li, propelled Chinese mysteries onto the international stage.

Chinese mystery fiction thrived in the twenty-first century, despite the vast popular appeal of Hong Kong

gangster films and South Korean crime cinema. On Taiwan, the intellectual elite rejected Taiwanese mystery authors for producing what intellectuals derisively called "airport literature."

INDIAN MYSTERIES

A brief look at mysteries in India reveals that in part because of heavy exposure to classic, British-style mysteries in the colonial era, Indian readers developed a strong taste for this type of mystery. Indeed, one of India's most popular mystery writers, acclaimed filmmaker Satyajit Ray (1921-1992), created with Feluda and his sidekicks Topse and Lalmohan Ganguli an Indian version of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. From Feluda's debut in "Badshahi Angti" (1966; "The Emperor's Ring," 1989), published in the Bengali-



The distinguished film director Satyajit Ray is also India's best-known writer of mystery and detective fiction.

language children's magazine *Sandesh*, to his final appearance in "Robertson er Ruby" (1992; "Robertson's Ruby," 1992), Ray created a significant body of work that fascinated Indian juveniles and adults.

While Ray's Feluda stories are perhaps the most famous, many mysteries have been created by Indian authors working in various Indian languages. Typically, their detective stories are relatively short and published in magazines or serialized in newspapers. Unfortunately, like so much of Asian mystery fiction outside the realm of internationally acclaimed Japanese and Chinese mysteries, translation into English has not been forthcoming, making much of these Indian mysteries inaccessible to English audiences.

ASIAN CHARACTERS IN AMERICAN MYSTERIES

As Asian writers embraced and worked within the originally Western genre of mystery fiction, American writers also imagined Asian detectives and villains with whom to fascinate, puzzle, delight, and shock their readers. When Earl Derr Biggers created his detective Charlie Chan, he based him in part on real-life Hawaiian detective Chang Apana (Chang Ah Ping). Similarly, John P. Marquand's spy Mr. Moto had some roots in authentic Japanese characters, even though Moto's Japanese-sounding name is an invention, not a real Japanese name. Because of their reliance on stereotypes, Charlie Chan and Mr. Moto earned the scorn of later-generation Asian American critics such as Frank Chin, who hated Charlie Chan with a vengeance.

Matters were not helped by authors such as British-born Sax Rohmer, who created the evil Dr. Fu Manchu, whom contemporary American literary critics deconstructed as the embodiment of xenophobic anti-Asian resentment. At first Fu Manchu fought to expel Europeans from China, but after 1949 he took on the communists in China, changing from villain to hero.

Asian Americans also began to write crime fiction. Singapore-born Leslie Charteris, who had a Chinese father and a British mother and later became an American citizen, created Simon Templar, "the Saint." Ironically, both Japanese sleuth Sano Ichirō, active in late 1600's Tokyo, and Japanese American amateur woman detective Rei Shimura were created by a Korean American, Laura Joh Rowland, and a half-British, half-Indian

woman born in England who became a naturalized American, Sujata Massey (1964-). Shanghai-born Qiu Xiaolong (1953-), who came to the United States in 1988, created Inspector Cao Chen, a modern Chinese series character whose cases fascinate American readers with their penetrating, authentic probings of the deep social conflicts of Chinese society.

OUTLOOK

In the twenty-first century, much mystery fiction is being written in many Asian countries. However, only Japanese mysteries are widely available in translation, reflecting their international high acclaim. All too often, translation resources for Asian languages are not spent on mysteries. English-language crime publishers are reluctant to launch Asian crime fiction, and nongenre literary publishers tend not to publish works that they consider ephemeral, if not trivial. It is regrettable that only a tiny fraction of Asian mysteries have been translated into English.

R. C. Lutz

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BRITISH MYSTERY FICTION

Any survey of the history of British mystery and detective fiction quickly uncovers two basic truths. First, that what the average reader thinks of as contemporary British mystery and detective fiction is, in reality, far more mixed in pedigree, having been heavily influenced by American and Australian writers. Second, that between 1749 and 1990, mystery and crime fiction writers produced more than 3,800 works of truly breathtaking variety. There is no doubt that Great Britain has produced, and continues to produce, many of the most important figures in the mystery and detective fiction genre. Names such as Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Ruth Rendell, and Anne Perry are familiar to even casual readers of the genre.

LONG BEFORE DOYLE: EARLY WHODUNITS

Although mystery and detective fiction is generally perceived as having arisen during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, its British antecedents go back much further. An early form of the genre, the “whodunit,” goes back at least to the eighteenth century. In stories of that classic form, either a professional or an amateur sleuth investigates a crime, usually a murder, identifies a list of suspects, and then narrows the list until the guilty party is identified. Elements of the whodunit can be found in the works of authors known primarily for other sorts of writing. A notable example is philosopher William Godwin’s *Things as They Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794, also known as *Caleb Williams*). This novel is sometimes regarded as the earliest example of detective fiction. A secretary suspected of the murder of his employer, Caleb Williams is relentlessly pursued across England by the authorities even though another person, an associate of the villainous murder victim, has committed the crime. How Williams is vindicated—the revelation of clues and witnesses that exonerate him—became a set of genre conventions used by later generations of mystery writers, whose own detectives use circumstantial evidence to clear their clients.

The popularity of *Caleb Williams* inspired other

crime novels, such as George Walker’s *Theodore Cyphon: Or, the Benevolent Jew* (1796), which describes problems resulting from laws that oppress minorities. Only the cleverness of the hero in dealing with this oppression allows him to triumph over his foes. Like Caleb Williams, Cyphon is pursued and must take shelter in a poorhouse when he is suspected of a murder he has not committed.

Edward Bulwer Lytton, who is best known for his works of historical fiction, such as *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), also wrote a murder mystery, *Pelham* (1828). This book devotes considerable space to describing a crime, suspects, and clues that, eventually, reveal the true villain of the work. The hero, Henry Pelham, defends his friend Reginald Glanville against murder charges and exonerates him through an investigation of the existing physical evidence. Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1852-1853) also depicts a murder, that of Mr. Tulkinghorn, which is solved by Inspector Bucket, one of the earliest literary examples of a police detective. In all of these stories, circumstantial evidence is used to determine which person, from a pool of suspects, is the actual culprit.

SENSATION NOVELS

During the 1850’s and 1860’s, British authors started writing remarkable melodramatic thrillers that became known as sensation novels. One of the best known of these writers is Wilkie Collins, the author of *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868). The first of these books is not exactly a murder mystery; it concerns the struggles of an art teacher, Walter Hartright, to discover the identity of a mysterious woman—possibly a fugitive from an asylum—found wandering on a road in Hampstead. *The Moonstone*, which shares a modified epistolary form with Collins’s earlier novel, concerns the tangled history and eventual theft of a large blue diamond given to a young woman by her uncle, a corrupt British army official in India. *The Moonstone* also provides an early example of detective fiction; Sergeant Cuff, the sleuth of the story, is a policeman, although he is hired pri-



Scene from the prologue of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* in which a British officer takes a valuable gem from its Indian owners.

vately to solve the case and acts more as a consulting detective than as an official representative of the law.

Another writer who shaped the genre of sensation fiction was Mary Elizabeth Braddon, author of *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). As in *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, the plot of *Lady Audley's Secret* is complex. Having received word of his wife, Helen's, death while working in Australia, Braddon's hero, George Talboys, returns to England and discovers his wife embroiled in a mystery of mistaken identity. Talboys gradually sorts out many clues that reveal a complex case of fraud and deception, following a methodology on which later detective fiction would rely.

A common technique in sensation fiction was revealing to readers full descriptions of the crimes being committed and the legal process that followed. Later mystery writers would tend to open their stories with the crimes having been committed already, so their plots involved only the unraveling of the mystery behind the crime. The idea of challenging readers to con-

sider clues intellectually, rather than evoking their emotional responses to graphic portrayals of murder, was a key component of the other main form created in the mid-nineteenth century, the casebook form of detective writing.

CASEBOOK FICTION

Casebook fiction is a classic example of a genre of writing that came into being because of a dramatic social change. The rapid expansion of British cities as industrial centers during the early nineteenth century occasioned Sir Robert Peel's creation of the London Metropolitan Police in 1828. Having an official police presence that was separate and distinct from the Crown relieved the anxiety of the new urbanized public. It also helped stimulate the creation of a new kind of fiction—police memoirs, or casebooks. Early nineteenth century writers began constructing comparatively realistic stories about police officials hunting criminals. Based in part on real-life case descriptions—notably the memoirs of the French detective Eugene-François Vidocq published in 1828-1829—the fictionalized British police casebooks were presented to a newly literate middle-class public hungry for stories involving murder and punishment. These books depicted police officers skilled at making clever deductions from evidence, tracking criminals, and disguising themselves.

Also known as yellowbacks because of their bright yellow covers, casebooks were written by authors such as William Russell, who used the pen name R. N. Waters; Andrew Forrester, Jr.; Charles Martel; and others. The books were essentially collections of short stories written in the first person and ostensibly related by real police officers and amateur sleuths working directly with the police on cases. The books represent the earliest examples of mystery literature that describes police methodology in a comparatively realistic manner.

Russell's *Recollections of a Detective Police Officer* (1856?) presents the purported narrative of a police detective who pursued criminals in the countryside while wearing disguises to conceal his identity as a member of the Metropolitan Police. The book describes the careful scrutinizing of crime scenes for clues, interviewing witnesses, and examining trace evidence. Rus-



A typical nineteenth century casebook.

sell emphasizes police procedures. For example, his story titled "Murder Under the Microscope" (1860) presents itself as a truthful retelling of an actual police case and attempts to provide realistic—and frequently lurid—portrayals of crime and punishment.

A characteristic aspect of casebook fiction is the anonymity of its purported narrators. In contrast to Wilkie Collins and other writers of sensation novels who were well known and made no effort to conceal their identities, casebook writers tended to be semi-anonymous figures whose own lives remained mysterious. Despite the general anonymity of its creators, casebook fiction strongly influenced the development of the detective genre. Late nineteenth century contemporaries of Arthur Conan Doyle, such as Arthur Morrison, Max Pemberton, and Catherine Louisa

Pirkis, drew a great deal of their inspiration from the casebook school of writing as they helped to shape modern detective fiction.

DOYLE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

During the late 1880's, Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes, the great detective, and featured him in a series of short stories and novels. Doyle is generally regarded as the founder of modern mystery and detective fiction, and Sherlock Holmes is not only one of the most imitated characters in the genre, but also one who has been repeatedly parodied and used by other authors as the hero of new adventures. Holmes is the subject of fifty-six short stories collected in five anthologies but is the protagonist of only four novels: *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), *The Sign of the Four* (1890), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), and *The Valley of Fear* (1914). All four novels follow the same pattern as Doyle's short stories: Holmes, as a private detective, is asked by people to investigate possible criminal activities. For example, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* Holmes is initially engaged to investigate the curious circumstances surrounding the death of country squire Sir Charles Baskerville. Dr. James Mortimer, a friend of the heir to Sir Charles's estate, approaches Holmes because he fears that an age-old curse is threatening his friend, the young Henry Baskerville. In "The Red-Headed League," a typical Holmes short story, the person who asks Holmes for help is not even sure that anything criminal has occurred. After being hired for a job he found both easy and profitable, he suddenly discovered that his job had been terminated and his employers had disappeared. His suspicion that he has been duped in some mysterious way leads him to Holmes's door. In both cases, Holmes applies his powers of deduction to solve the mysteries, but he does so solely as a private consultant and only reluctantly involves the police—whom he tends to treat with scorn.

Doyle's popularity sparked an explosion in mystery publishing, especially short stories. Other authors were eager to follow the new trend of writing about private detectives instead of police officers. Many British authors from Doyle's time and later created their own versions of consulting detectives, such as Arthur Morri-

son's Martin Hewitt and Horace Dorrington, Max Pemberton's Bernard Sutton, Richard Marsh's Judith Lee, and Catherine Louisa Pirkis's Loveday Brooke.

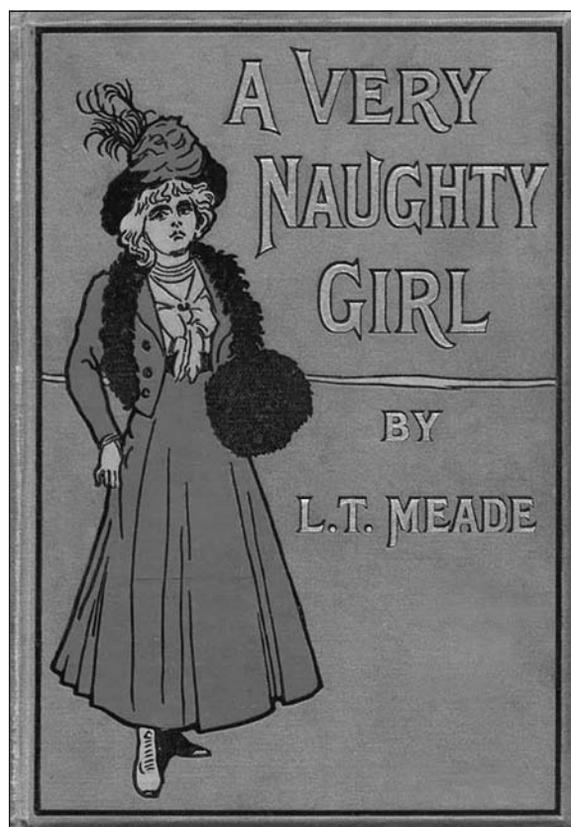
Morrison's Hewitt, often regarded as a poor counterfeit of Sherlock Holmes, appears in three volumes of collected stories: *Martin Hewitt, Investigator* (1894), *The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt* (1895), and *The Adventures of Martin Hewitt* (1896). Initially a lawyer, Hewitt discovers that he is far more interested in solving crimes than working for the English court system. Like Holmes, he becomes a consulting detective. In contrast to the mild-mannered Hewitt, Morrison's other private investigator, Horace Dorrington, is far more ambiguous a character. Featured in *The Dorrington Deed-box* (1897), Dorrington is a former thug who, although winning the trust of his clients, is not above trying to kill them for financial gain.

Catherine Louisa Pirkis's Loveday Brooke is also noted for her deductive ability and, like Holmes, is decidedly eccentric. In *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894), Brooke works for Ebenezer Dyer, who is chief of a detective agency in London's Lynch Court. What is most interesting about Brooke as a character is her status as an obstinately single woman who earns her own living solely through her deductive abilities. She is also like Holmes in remaining aloof from the opposite sex. Other than the professional relationship she shares with Dyer, she never associates herself with a man. A woman of high intellectual ability, she can solve crimes without becoming romantically involved in the process.

BRITISH SCIENTIFIC DETECTION

Arthur Conan Doyle and his contemporaries were fascinated with the scientific processes inherent in police investigations. The nineteenth century witnessed the discovery of fingerprints' uses in identifying people, the invention of photography, and the development of the microscope. These developments helped put forensic investigations on a scientific base and gave new and exciting tools to real and fictional criminal investigators. Doyle, L. T. Meade, and Clifford Halifax all wrote about detectives skilled in the sciences and made scientific detection the primary focus of many of their mysteries.

L. T. Meade was the pen name of Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith (1854-1914), the prolific author mainly of books and stories for young women. She also wrote numerous stories of crime and detection, both alone and with collaborators. With Robert Eustace, the pen name of Eustace Robert Barton (1854-1943), she wrote *The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings* (1899), the saga of a sinister secret society. Another of their collaborations, *The Secret of Emu Plain* (1898), introduced the Master of Mystery, John Bell, who debunked the existence of ghosts in much the same manner as the real-life Harry Houdini. Bell's insistence on rationality and scientific method is particularly significant in the story "The Secret of Emu Plain" (1898), in which he investigates the disappearance of a young man in Australia and must fight local superstitions. Meade's other collaborations with Eustace include a



L. T. Meade was the pen name of Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith (1854-1914), an exceptionally prolific English author who is best known for her girl stories, such as *A Very Naughty Girl* (1901). (Cornell University Library)

number of stories published in *The Strand Magazine*. Most of these stories exhibit the deep respect for science that pervaded Victorian literature and use as their theme the use, or misuse, of new technology.

Victor L. Whitechurch, a technophile who was a contemporary of Meade, was a clergyman and railroad enthusiast who used trains as settings for many of his stories and mystery novels, which ranged from *The Canon in Residence* in 1904 to *Murder at the College* in 1932. His most interesting character was Godfrey Page, arguably the first railway detective, who appeared in six stories in *Pearson's Weekly* that were later collected in *The Investigations of Godfrey Page, Railwayac* (1990). Whitechurch invented the word *railwayac*, short for "railway maniac," to apply to people who get immensely excited about railroads—someone like Godfrey Page. It is primarily Page's love of railroads that drives him to investigate mysteries connected with them.

THE GOLDEN AGE, 1920-1945

Sometimes called the cozy age because of the fondness of readers of that era for sentimentality and familial themes, the period between roughly 1920 and 1945 is more commonly known as the Golden Age because of the large amount of high-quality mystery fiction written then. Like the literary salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, writing circles among Golden Age writers abounded, serving as both support networks and critical forums for young writers. One such group that was started in 1928 by four prolific and talented intellectuals was the Detection Club. Its members emphasized the writing and publishing of mystery and detective fiction as the club's primary purpose. Members included G. K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Ronald Knox, along with many less-known writers.

Some members of the Detection Club collaborated in writing mystery novels. One member would write a chapter of a new mystery and then hand the plot and characters over to another writer to continue until an entire book was written. Participants were bound by certain rules: Each writer had to keep the final solution in mind and could not introduce complications merely to make the job more difficult for writers who fol-

lowed or for eventual readers. Although this kind of collaborative effort produced works intended more for the amusement of the members than for publication, the process of writing and revision no doubt encouraged club members to help each other and work on their own books.

A founder member of the club and a prolific author, G. K. Chesterton wrote a large volume of essays on literature, economics, theology, and politics and even some poetry. He wrote only one novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1907), and collaborated on the Detection Club novel *The Floating Admiral* (1931), but he is popularly remembered as the author of forty-eight short stories featuring Father Brown, a Roman Catholic priest and amateur sleuth. Mild-mannered and humble, but still a very observant Roman Catholic priest, Brown has a special knowledge of human nature that leads him to solve mysteries. He recognizes people's weaknesses and sins and is able to look

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Agatha Christie around 1963. (AP/Wide World Photos)

deeply into the souls of the characters with whom he associates.

Another charter member of the Detection Club, Agatha Christie is probably the best-selling novelist in the world. She produced no fewer than sixty-six mystery novels. More than thirty of her novels feature Hercule Poirot, a Belgian detective, and twelve feature Miss Jane Marple, an elderly spinster. Christie was fond of Marple, whom she apparently modeled on her own grandmother, but she found Poirot less appealing. Her readers disagreed, however. As a result, she acknowledged that she had a duty to provide fiction about characters whom her readers loved and, consequently, wrote most of her mysteries about Poirot. These ranged from *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* in 1920 to *Curtain: Hercule Poirot's Last Case* in 1975, the year before Christie herself died. Christie had written *Curtain* many years earlier, to ensure there would be a suitable book to end the Poirot series.

Another Detection Club member who was known for her work outside mystery writing was Dorothy L. Sayers. She left a lucrative career in advertising only because her fiction writing became too time-consuming for her to continue regular employment. Sayers was among many women who developed professional careers in fields formerly dominated by men because many British men went off to fight in World War I. She was fiercely proud of what she had accomplished. Although her father was a don at Oxford University, Sayers herself could not earn a degree there simply because she was a woman. After the war ended, women were finally admitted to Oxford, and Sayers earned a master's degree there in modern languages and medieval literature. It is not surprising that her fiction often contains many satiric digs at the formerly all-male environments she had had to struggle to enter. The male characters in the advertising boardroom of her *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) and in the academic halls of her *Gaudy Night* (1935) are treated with a certain measure of scorn no doubt born out of Sayers's personal experiences.

As a mystery writer, Sayers is best known for her most famous detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, whom she used in eleven novels, ranging from *Whose Body?* in 1923 to *Busman's Honeymoon* in 1937. She also used

him in three volumes of short stories. Wimsey was such a colorful and eccentric character that even his creator grew exceptionally fond of him. Not only was she unable to kill him off when she got tired of writing about him, she was also unable to leave him alone. After she later created another fictional crime-solver in Harriet Vane, she had Vane meet and marry Wimsey.

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY WRITERS

One of the modern British crime writers credited with helping to move the mystery and detective genre to the level of mainstream literature is Ruth Rendell, who also writes a more romantic style of novels under the pseudonym Barbara Vine. Born in 1930, Rendell was a reporter whose career foundered after she published an article about a dinner she had pretended to attend. The problem was that her article neglected to mention that the main speaker at the dinner had dropped dead in the middle of his speech. She eventually turned to writing fiction. In 1964, she introduced Inspector Reginald Wexford in *From Doon with Death*, the first of twenty books she would write about him. Wexford has a developed personality and life of his own. His readers know he is married to Dora, with whom he has two daughters. In fact, the series has developed the whole family so well that the readers have become very familiar with all its members. In the novel *Road Rage* (1997), Dora is taken hostage by a group of radical environmentalists.

In addition to her Wexford novels, which are essentially police procedurals, Rendell writes dark psychological crime novels that deal with sexual obsession, misunderstandings, blind chance, and the mysteries of the criminal mind. For example, *Judgment in Stone* (1977) is about an illiterate woman who murders an entire family because she misinterprets their attempts to be kind. The novel examines social class issues in England and their role in fostering crime. In *The Face of Trespass* (1974), an impoverished would-be writer becomes a victim of his own obsessions. *Live Flesh* (1986) is about a released criminal who finds it easy to regress to his former life. Other titles in Rendell's psychological novels include *Talking to Strange Men* (1987), *The Killing Doll* (1984), and *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* (2001).

Another immensely popular and prolific modern British crime writer who is credited with helping to raise the entire genre of criminal and detective fiction to the mainstream level is P. D. James, who in 2000 celebrated her eightieth birthday with the publication of her autobiography. James is the author of nineteen books, most of which have been filmed or adapted to television in Great Britain, the United States, and other countries. Unlike most crime writers, she has a long background of work in law and law enforcement. In 1962, she published her first novel, *Cover Her Face*, in which she introduced Scotland Yard detective Adam Dalgliesh. Dalgliesh is unusual in being a published poet who is known as much for his intellectual gifts and deep knowledge of human behavior as he is for solving crimes. James's novels spend a great deal of time developing backgrounds to their stories, and readers learn a good deal about the situations long before the detective appears on the scene. The novels

deal with Dalgliesh as a lonely and introspective man, not just a detective.

In 1972, James wrote a novel that particularly speaks to her own experiences in police work: *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* introduces Cordelia Gray, a woman detective. Unlike other authors' characters who want to be detectives, Gray has gotten into the profession because she inherited her agency. Part of the charm of the ironically titled *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* lies in Gray's doubts about her ability to succeed as a detective. In 1982, James published a second novel about Gray, *The Skull Beneath the Skin*.

HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

A striking trend in modern British crime fiction is the number of novelists who write about past eras. The earliest, and in many ways one of the best, of these writers is Ellis Peters, who introduced her twelfth century Benedictine monk Brother Cadfael in *A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Medieval Whodunit* in 1977. In his monastery herbarium at Shrewsbury Abbey, Brother Cadfael solves crimes through his understanding of the mysteries of the human heart and soul.

Peters's Brother Cadfael Chronicles are set between the years 1135 and 1145, the period when King Stephen and Empress Maud fought a civil War In England. The order in which Peters has published the books parallels the historical sequence of the stories themselves, and real historical events often figured into the stories. For example, the return of the bones of Saint Winefride to their proper place at Shrewsbury Abbey is the subject of *A Morbid Taste for Bones* (1977), and King Stephen's siege of Shrewsbury in 1138 provides the setting for *One Corpse Too Many* (1979).

Another writer in this rapidly expanding subgenre is Peter Tremayne, who introduced Sister Fidelma, princess of Cashel, in *Absolution by Murder: A Sister Fidelma Mystery* in 1994. More than seventeen other books in the series have followed. Sister Fidelma solves crimes in seventh century Ireland. Like Peters's Brother Cadfael Chronicles, the Sister Fidelma mysteries have a religious community as their setting. As the daughter of a former king and the sister of the current king, Fidelma is a *dálaigh* and serves as an advocate of the Irish law courts. Her position gives Tre-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

P. D. James in 1982, around the time she was becoming recognized as the heir to Agatha Christie among British mystery writers. (AP/Wide World Photos)

mayne scope to demonstrate the unique system of law in seventh century Ireland. Sister Fidelma is often called by local authorities to determine the guilt or innocence of someone accused of a crime. Acting as an official representative of her brother, the king, she uses her special position to investigate and solve crimes herself.

Yet another British writer who sets his books in medieval England is Michael Jecks, who focuses on fourteenth century Devonshire. His hero is Sir Baldwin Furnhill, a former Knight Templar, who often helps his friend Simon Puttock, bailiff of Lydford, solve crimes committed in his jurisdiction. The many books in this series range from *The Last Templar* (1995) to *The Malice of Unnatural Death* (2007).

Anne Perry, who has written two dozen books featuring Thomas and Charlotte Pitt, chose as her setting Victorian England, perhaps in tribute to Arthur Conan Doyle. Thomas Pitt is a police inspector of the Bow Street Station who is frequently assisted by his wife, Charlotte, as he tries to keep order in Victorian London.

Since 1945, British crime fiction has become increasingly intertwined with film. As the short-story magazines that had been so important to earlier eras lost readers and ceased publication, films, and later television programs, began to attract mystery and detective fiction devotees. The Public Broadcasting Service's *Masterpiece Theater*, for example, opened a venue for both writers of mysteries and scriptwriters to turn popular mystery and detective stories into equally popular television programs.

One such writer is Colin Dexter, the author of the famed Inspector Morse mysteries set in late twentieth century Oxford. Morse is the complete police detective. Intelligent and introspective, he is a life-long bachelor, a hard drinker, and an enthusiast for both puzzles and classical music. Almost from the beginning of the series, which began with *Last Bus to Woodstock* in 1975, Morse became so popular on both sides of the Atlantic that his stories were dramatized for television. Between 1987 and 2000, thirty-three episodes of the *Inspector Morse* series were made. The program was immensely popular, and John Thaw, the actor playing Morse, became so closely identified with the character that Dexter began revising his descrip-

tions of Morse to match the actor's appearance and character. Dexter even changed his car to match that of the television series.

Julia M. Meyers

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EXOTIC SETTINGS

Exotic settings used in mysteries range from hot tropical islands and Central American rain forests to medieval castles and arctic icescapes to ocean depths and even the farthest reaches of outer space. Their use in mysteries can be traced back to the dawn of the genre. Perhaps the first mystery set in an exotic locale is Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which was first published in 1794. This gothic novel chronicles the misfortunes of heroine Emily St. Aubert, who endures such indignities as being imprisoned in a dank castle and fending off the advances of a villainous Mediterranean lothario before she is rescued. So vivid is the setting of Radcliffe's novel that within two decades Jane Austen would lampoon its setting in *Northanger Abbey* (completed in 1803 and published in 1818), a novel of manners in which the impressionable protagonist is so obsessed with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that she imagines herself in a similar plot. Friendly relations and acquaintances are viewed initially with suspicion and

later with horror as Austen's heroine, Catherine Morland, equates them with villains plucked from Radcliffe's thriller. Although Austen's novel, unlike Radcliffe's, was meant for comic effect, it reveals what fans of the exotic mystery have enjoyed for centuries: a pleasurable thrill experienced at a safe distance while reading about a temptingly unfamiliar or taboo locale.

EXOTIC SETTINGS

Many authors intentionally unfold their mysteries in places their readers might like to visit but probably never will: exotic destinations and centers of intrigue. Popular mysteries are often set in milieus that people are curious about exploring, unusual locations they may not have the financial means or the opportunity or the courage to visit otherwise. An element of voyeurism pervades mysteries placed in exotic terrains, whether they be tropical paradises or desert wastelands. Mysteries set in unusual environments provide readers opportunities to observe from their anonymous perches the criminal or merely curious behaviors of others. Such mysteries provide two levels of satisfaction. First, they offer the familiar experience of following along as a mystery unfolds and second, and perhaps more important for devotees of the genre, they provide a vicarious armchair experience of distant lands, unfamiliar cultures, or places in the distant past or future.

What constitutes an exotic setting depends, in part, on the reader's perspective and expectations. A murder mystery set in 1920's Hollywood might appear exotic to a resident of Wichita, Kansas, who is reading the story at the dawn of the twenty-first century, while a mystery set on the Caribbean island of Jamaica might appear ultrarealistic and devoid of all exoticism to a Jamaican. In English-language mysteries, the exotic generally excludes plots set on American or British soil unless they explore an unusual subculture or a distinctive region. Thus, mysteries set in the wilderness of Alaska, in the Liverpool underworld, in a midwestern Amish community, or in the London theater district might be considered exotic to many readers, while stories about criminal investigations in New York City's financial



Jane Austen. (Library of Congress)

center might not. To most American and British readers, exotic mysteries are those set in Africa, Antarctica, Asia, the Middle East, and remote tropical islands.

When the geographic region and cultural climate in which a mystery takes place are unfamiliar to readers, the setting enhances the atmosphere and heightens anticipation of the unknown. The more foreign the setting is to readers, the greater their sense of bafflement as they try to interpret clues and unravel the mystery. Authors who choose unfamiliar locales as backdrops for the staging of bewildering crimes or inexplicable events frequently do so to enhance the aura of the mysterious for their audience: The double appeal of the exotic is a mystery in a mysterious setting.

TROPICAL ISLANDS

Mysteries set on tropical islands are frequently labeled “exotic” in their book blurbs and reviews. The fascination of readers with these settings can be traced back to popular literary classics such as Robert Louis

Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1881-1882) and to travel literature. Part of the appeal of islands as settings for mysteries is their generally small size—when compared to large landmasses such as continents—and their remoteness from heavily populated places. They appear to be beyond the reach of civilization and the law; perhaps that is what lures the criminally minded to their shores in so many mysteries. Tropical islands evoke images of warm winds, turquoise waters, pristine beaches, and unusual flora and fauna. One might expect that such environments would foster peace and good will among islanders. The appearance of corpses in such idyllic retreats is doubly disturbing and deeply intriguing to readers. Island mysteries are a chief form of escapist literature, a pleasurable vicarious vacation.

Children as well as adults find such settings mesmerizing. Carolyn Keene transported Nancy Drew to such a locale in *Mystery of Crocodile Island* (1978), in which the girl detective must explore suspicious circumstances on an island crocodile farm in Key West, Florida. Another young amateur sleuth, seventeen-year-old Connie Blair, also confronted mysterious events in the Caribbean in *Peril in Pink*, which is set on St. Lucia with a plot involving a stolen map, one replete with directions to sunken pirate treasure. Blair was the creation of Betty Cavanna (1909-2001), who wrote under the pseudonym of Betsy Allen.

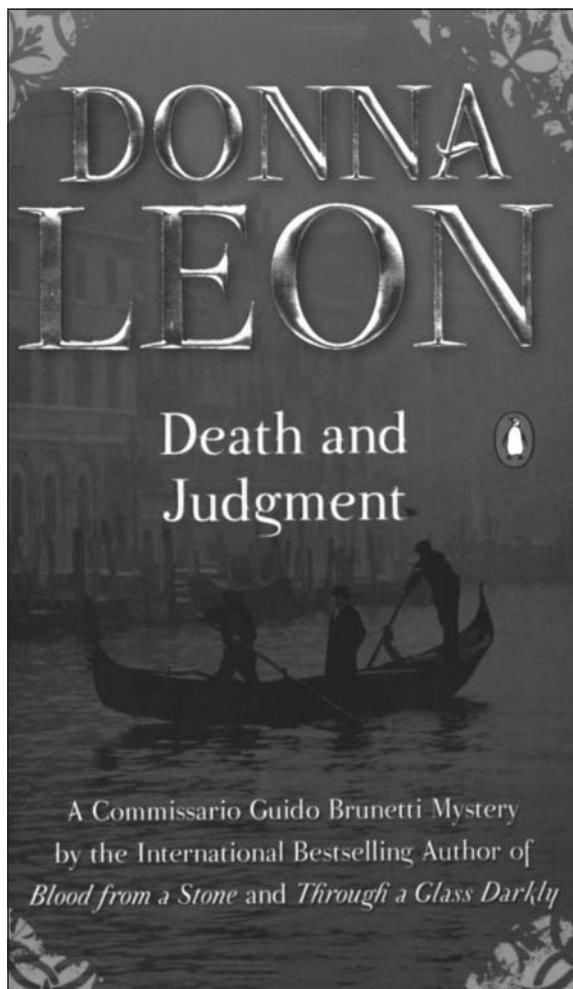
To the delight of many readers, writers continue to locate murders and mayhem in tropical spheres. For example, Wendy Howell Mills’s *Island Intrigue* (2006) places her heroine on remote Comico Island in the Caribbean, a former pirate enclave and a place where a lush garden becomes a site for a ghostly encounter. In a different body of water, the Pacific, Mark Brown has established his Ben McMillen series, including *The Puna Kahuna* (1993). In this Hawaiian novel, detective Ben McMillen battles crime and bureaucrats in an effort to stop a rain forest from becoming the site for a nuclear power facility. Tunnels of lava at the base of a volcano and detailed descriptions of tropical jungles give the novel its exotic flare.

EXOTIC CITIES

Far removed from the remote isolation of island mysteries are the metropolitan murders committed in



Illustration by George Edmund Varian for an early twentieth century edition of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. (Library of Congress)



A long-time resident of Venice, Donna Leon has set many of her mystery novels in that Italian city.

densely populated, impersonal venues. From Tokyo, Japan, and St. Petersburg, Russia, to London, England, and Paris, France, mystery writers have chosen urban landscapes with their skyscrapers, mass transit systems, and unique landmarks as unnatural terrains for the commission of heinous crimes. The sheer expanse of these cities provides greater anonymity to culprits and makes detective work a labyrinthine challenge. Elements of city culture, including nightlife, restaurants, entertainment, architecture, fashion, and what can only be described as a city's soul contribute to a sense of the exotic in urban environments.

Donna Leon's *Death and Judgment* (1995), a work of suspense set in modern-day Venice, is a contribu-

tion to her Guido Brunetti series. In this police procedural, Commissario Brunetti must descend into the Venetian underworld to infiltrate a crime circuit. His search leads him through picturesque tourist centers along the canals and into sordid nightclubs inhabited by prostitutes and members of organized crime. Ironically, those he seeks are not to be found among this crowd, but among the upper echelons of Venetian society. Ngaio Marsh's *Killer Dolphin* (1966) features a theater district and gives readers a backstage view of the thespian lifestyle and its many eccentricities. Also of interest is a glove purportedly belonging to William Shakespeare that leads to theft and murder. Richard Grayson's *Death au Gratin* (1995) is a mystery set in late nineteenth century Parisian society that features Inspector Gautier of the Sûreté in an investigation involving incendiary love affairs. An enchanting element of the work is its depiction of belle époque Paris.

The exotic urban setting for Josef Skvorecky's series featuring Lt. Boruvka is Prague, Czechoslovakia. *The Mournful Demeanor of Lt. Boruvka* (1991) offers a look at the city during its socialist period. With the magnificent architectural structures of Prague as backdrop, Lt. Boruvka fights crime and Soviet-era bureaucracy. Philip Kerr's *Dead Meat* (1994) is set in St. Petersburg, Russia. Investigative journalist Mikhail Milyukin is executed in what appears to be an organized crime hit. Yevgeni Grushko, a military officer, pursues the killers throughout St. Petersburg in a realistic and dark portrait of the contemporary Russian city. Also casting a critical eye on social custom, politics, and crime in a capital city is Japanese writer Seichō Matsumoto. His most popular work, *Inspector Imanishi Investigates* (1989), offers a snapshot of post-World War II Tokyo. Matsumoto depicts a vast modern city of huge structures and complex transit systems in which kimono-clad women engage in traditional tea ceremonies. His novel is a unique blending of the culturally exotic with the industrial.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East comprises western portions of Asia, part of North Africa, and the easternmost corner of Europe and includes such modern nations as Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt.

Some of the world's most famous classic mysteries have been set in this region, whose cultures are dominated by Islam and Orthodox Christianity.

The Middle East is the setting for two of Agatha Christie's most popular novels. Her choice of setting derives from her personal experiences. During the late 1920's, she went to the Middle East, where she met her future husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan. In his company she visited digs in Syria and Iraq. This region of the world would later feature in her novels *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) and *Death on the Nile* (1937). In the first of these two novels, an excavation site in Iraq becomes the setting for the murder of an archaeologist's wife. *Death on the Nile* is a whodunit in which Belgian detective Hercule Poirot investigates the murder of a tourist while on an Egyptian holiday. Poirot's suspects share close quarters on a cruise ship navigating the Nile, and Christie vividly re-creates balmy nights on the river and hot days on the sand in the shadows of ancient wonders. More recently, Egypt became the setting of Michael Pearce's Mamur Zapt series. Pearce sets the stories during the British military occupation of Cairo in 1908 and makes the Welsh captain Garth Owen its chief investigator. One of the charms of the series is its depiction of the multicultural Egyptian capital during a time of transition. The inaugural work, *The Mamur Zapt and the Return of the Carpet*, appeared in 1988.

Israel provides the backdrop for a number of popular Middle East mysteries, including a series by Israeli mystery writer and literary critic Batya Gur (1947-2005). Gur's Michael Ohayon mysteries include *The Saturday Morning Murder* (1993), *Murder on a Kibbutz* (1995), *Murder in Jerusalem* (2006), and *Bethlehem Road Murder* (2006). Gur juxtaposes the beautiful landscapes of Israel with the political and cultural strife that has long rocked the region. Robert Rosenberg sets his mysteries, including *An Accidental Murder* (1999) and *Crimes of the City* (1997), in the rolling terrain of Israel. In the first of these two books, Rosenberg pits his detective against the Russian mafia. In the second, police officer Avram Cohen investigates the murder of two Roman Catholic nuns while navigating treacherous religious and political labyrinths.

THE FAR EAST

The Far East, sometimes termed the Pacific Rim, encompasses East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Countries in this category include China, Japan, North and South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Nepal. A number of writers have chosen to place their mysteries in this region, with the majority of their stories set in China and Japan.

China is a frequent locale for exotic mysteries set in both historical and modern eras. Dutch writer and diplomat Robert H. Van Gulik's Judge Dee series is set in the seventh century, during the era of China's early Tang Dynasty. *The Lacquer Screen* (1963), a representative novel in the series, follows Judge Dee's investigation of a mystery that takes him into a world of courtesans and magistrates, robbers and bankers. The exotic locale offers a depiction of life as Van Gulik, a careful researcher, imagined it to be in the Tang Dynasty. Lisa See's *Flower Net* (1997) is set alternately in modern Beijing and San Francisco. The novel provides images of these cities that tourists and even residents would likely miss on their own. In this tale of international murder, a Chinese cop and an American attorney close ranks to expose a connection between organized crime and big business in a mystery that affects both cultures.

Numerous murder mysteries have been set in Japan. Dubbed Japan's Agatha Christie by critics, Natsumi Shizuko has written many mystery novels. His most popular book is *Murder at Mt. Fuji* (1987), in which a dramatic New Year's mystery unfolds with Japan's impressive national symbol, Mt. Fuji, as backdrop. Laura Joh Rowland's enduring mystery series features a seventeenth century courtier in Tokyo. In *Shinjū* (1994), a samurai, Sano Ichiro, seeks to expose the secrecy surrounding a bound couple found drowned in a river; his search leads him to the royal family. James Melville set his Tetsuo Otani in modern Kobe, Japan. The second installment in the series, *Chrysanthemum Chain* (1980), pits police superintendent Otani and his men against government officials who may or may not want the murder of a British teacher of English to be uncovered.

AFRICA

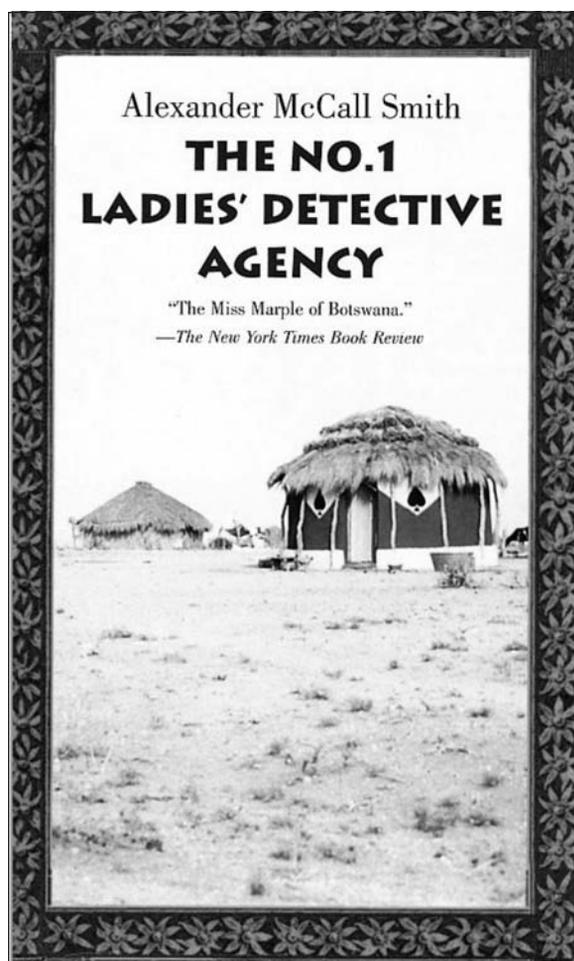
Africa was once known to the Western world as the mysterious continent. A vast and culturally varied place, Africa is the second-largest continent. With geographic features ranging from treeless savannas and deserts to rain forests and mountains, incredibly diverse ecosystems and species, deep lakes and coursing waterways, Africa is one of the most diverse land masses on the planet. A land of extremes, Africa strikes many writers as a prime location for the staging of mysteries. Numerous authors have succumbed to the lure of Africa. Among the earliest was Agatha Christie. Her *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) chronicles the adventures of Anne Beddingfeld in a mystery involving a diamond heist in remote Southern Africa. As is the case with most of her works set outside En-

gland, Christie traveled in Africa and infuses a feeling of authenticity in her descriptions of place.

Interest in mysteries set in Africa has increased exponentially since the publication of Alexander McCall Smith's popular Precious Ramotswe series set in Botswana. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998) launched the series and introduced readers to Mma Ramotswe, a capable and moral woman who establishes her own private detective agency. While she investigates a number of mysterious events in and around Gaborone, she also dispenses acquired cultural wisdom and a universal understanding of the human heart. Other titles in the series include *Tears of the Giraffe* (2000) and *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* (2002). With its images of the Kalahari Desert, the series unfolds to readers a portrait of modern-day Africa that is both exotic and credible.

Karin McQuillan's Jazz Jasper series is set in Kenya and features a proprietor of a safari company who advocates animal rights. In *Deadly Safari* (1989), Jazz Jasper flees a broken marriage and relocates to Kenya. Barely is her safari operation up and running than two deaths, including the spearing murder of her friend, arouse the attention of local authorities. Jasper commences her own investigation to save her enterprise and remain in Kenya. The series continues with *Elephant's Safari* (1993) and *Cheetah Chase* (1994). In all three novels, McQuillan's depiction of the African countryside and its wildlife is vivid.

Dorothy Dodge Robbins



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FRENCH MYSTERY FICTION

The foundations of modern mystery fiction were laid in France, in an eccentric fashion. The most popular French writer of the 1820's, Étienne-Léon Lamoignon, was essentially a fiction writer, but many of his works were disguised as nonfiction, adopting the form of fake autobiographies. An example was *L'Espion de Police* (1826; the police spy), which claimed to offer insights into the hidden world of police informers. That book was not one of his best sellers but did prompt the production of a rival, which became one of the most influential texts of the era: François-Eugène Vidocq's *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté jusqu'en 1827* (1828; tr. as *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827*).

Vidocq's book offered a colorful account of his alleged career as a Parisian thief that had culminated in a change of sides when he offered his expertise to the police in 1809. He claimed that his offer was gratefully accepted, and that he rose to command a force of twenty-four men—which constituted the original French Sûreté—before resigning his post in 1827. When serial fiction took off in the Parisian newspapers in 1843, however, one of the first works that demonstrated its potential as a circulation builder was Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-1843; *The Mysteries of Paris*, 1843), whose hero—a prince in disguise—engages in a long contest of wits with various criminal adversaries.

Vidocq was quick to cash in on the success of Sue's book's success by rapidly publishing a second volume of his "memoirs" as *Les Vrais mystères de Paris* (1844; true mysteries of Paris), in which he claimed to have returned to police work after the July Revolution of 1830, when retirement had proved too boring. It is probable that Vidocq's memoirs were pure fiction. If they were not, they certainly embellished the truth considerably. However, at the time, they seemed to offer useful insights into the workings of a complex secret organization, and they became a key reference handbook for later writers of serial fiction. The first volume had some influence outside France. For example, The American writer Edgar Allan Poe acknowl-

edged Vidocq's influence on his "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841). However, it was Vidocq's second book that nursed the development of crime fiction in domestic popular fiction.

VIDOCQ'S OFFSPRING

Vidocq was used as a model by several writers, including Honoré de Balzac, who used a sinister master-criminal named Vautrin in several novels in his *La Comédie Humaine* series (1829-1848), and Alexandre Dumas, père, whose *Les Mohicans de Paris* (1854-1855; the Mohicans of Paris) featured a Sûreté chief named Monsieur Jackal. Vidocq's most significant clone was Monsieur Lecoq, a character in a series of novels by Paul Féval featuring a crime syndicate called the Habits Noirs (Blackcoats). The Habits Noirs are virtually immune to detection, partly because of their masterful ingenuity in framing innocent parties for all their crimes, and partly because M. Lecoq is an influential figure in the Prefecture of Police—where, it seems, he sometimes uses a pseudonym beginning with the letter V.

Féval had pioneered detective fiction in *Jean Diable* (1862; tr. as *John Devil*), in which the eponymous master criminal is opposed—anachronistically—by a Scotland Yard detective named Gregory Temple, who is the first police detective to play a significant role in a work of fiction. Temple is the author of *The Art of Detecting the Guilty*, and his investigative technique involves mapping evidence on a blackboard in a manner that has since become a common feature of police "incident rooms." After *Jean Diable* finished its serialization, Féval founded a periodical with the same title that published thirty-seven issues in 1862-1863. In parallel with that enterprise, Féval published *Les Habits Noirs* in 1863. After providing *Les Habits Noirs* with two sequels, *Coeur d'acier* (1865; heart of steel) and *L'avaleur des sabres* (1867; the sword-swallower), he wrote two prequels explaining the evolution of the criminal organization: *La rue de Jérusalem* (1868; Salem Street) and *L'arme invisible* (1869; the invisible weapon). This retrospective account coopted *Jean Di-*

able and three earlier novels into a vast “secret history” of organized crime. Féval later added three more novels to the Habits Noirs series.

Féval did not follow up on his invention of Gregory Temple. At that time, the French police were held in such low esteem—especially after the savage portrayal of Inspector Javert in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* (1862)—that Féval made only one token attempt to establish a heroic French policeman, in his depiction of Inspector Badoît in *La rue de Jérusalem*. Badoît’s show is, however, eventually stolen by his sidekick, a teenage gamin nicknamed Pistolet. The same strategy was followed by Féval’s great rival as a Second Empire serial writer, Pierre-Alexis Ponson du Terrail, who developed a series of his own in parallel with that of Féval. The

main emphasis of Ponson’s series was the thwarting of criminal enterprises, but it regarded the police with manifest contempt.

Ponson followed the same strategy as Féval, establishing Rocambole, a character he had earlier introduced as a spirited teenager, in the serial *Les drames de Paris* (1857-1862; the dramas of Paris), as a flamboyantly unorthodox crime-fighting hero. Rocambole’s adventures continued through the 1860’s and survived Ponson’s premature death in 1871 to be taken over by other writers. The adventures of Rocambole were so distinctive that *rocambolique* entered the French language as an adjective describing flagrantly implausible but stirring endeavors.

INVENTION OF THE ROMAN POLICIER

Paul Féval’s secretary, and coeditor on the magazine *Jean Diabie*, Émile Gaboriau, also got in on the act. He took up Ponson’s crucial realization that the ideal way to construct a crime fiction series was to establish a hero who might confront a potentially infinite series of challenging cases; however, he dispensed with the rocambolique approach in favor of the naturalistic. His *L’Affaire Lerouge* introduced a sedentary amateur detective named Père Tabaret, but he was displaced in several sequels by his more active acolyte, a Sûreté agent named—surely not by coincidence—Monsieur Lecoq. Gaboriau’s Lecoq continued his career in *Le crime d’Orcival* (1867; *The Mystery of Orcival*, 1871), *Le dossier no. 113* (1867; *File No. 113*, 1875), *Les esclaves de Paris* (1867; *The Slaves of Paris*, 1879), and *Monsieur Lecoq* (1869; English translation, 1879).

Gaboriau would probably have made further use of his Lecoq had he not died in 1873. However, his detective’s posthumous career was limited to one further book by one of his most faithful imitators, Fortuné du Boisgobey (1821-1891), who wrote *La vieillesse de Monsieur Lecoq* (1878; *The Old Age of Monsieur Lecoq*, 1888). Boisgobey wrote some thirty other novels in a similar vein, including *Le coup de pouce* (1875; the thumb stroke), *La main coupée* (1880; *The Severed Hand*, 1888) and *Le crime de l’Opéra* (1880; *The Crime of the Opera House*, 1881). Boisgobey was one of several writers who produced a series of *nouveaux mystères de Paris* in honor of Sue.

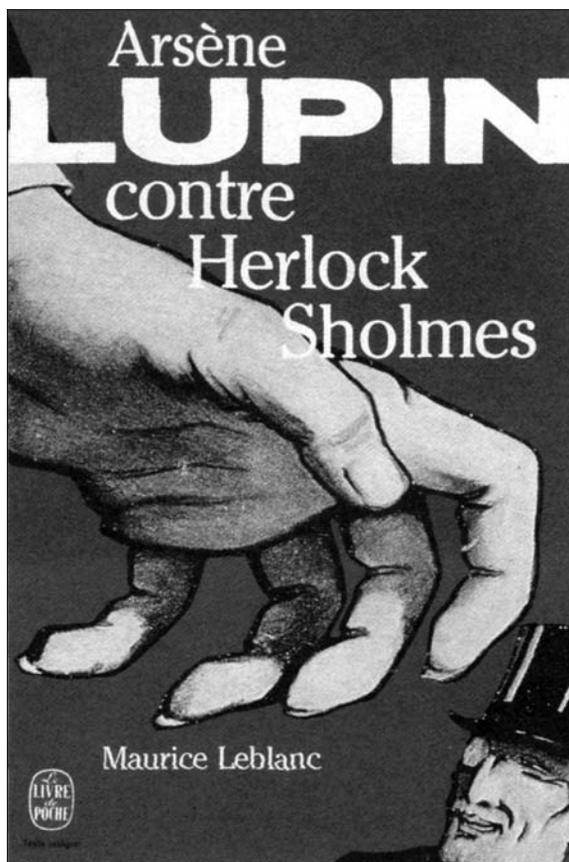


The roguish crime-fighter Rocambole, from an early edition of the works of Pierre-Alexis Ponson du Terrail.

Among other writers of serial fiction who attempted to fill the gap left by Ponson and Gaboriau was Eugène Vachette (1827-1902), who wrote as Eugène Chavette. He was the author of *Le Procès Pietompin* (1865; the Pietompin cases) and the first lockedroom mystery, *La Chambre du crime* (1875; the crime scene). Another was Xavier de Montépin, the author of *La Porteuse du pain* (1884; the bread carrier) and a pioneering fictional study of criminal psychopathology, *L'Homme aux figures de cire* (the wax model man), first developed as a play in 1865 and novelized in 1884. The most significant precedent for modern detective fiction, however, was set by Henry Cauvain's *Maximilien Heller* (1871), which introduced a neurotic master of deduction who can be seen retrospectively as a kindred spirit of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

Such endeavors as these helped to distinguish detective fiction as a genre in its own right, not only in France but in England, where Gaboriau and Boisgobey were very successful in translation during the early 1880's. In fact, their works provided a flood of exemplars, which laid the groundwork for the boom in British detective fiction, whose early products included Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). It was, however, the English amateur detective—as spectacularly exemplified by Sherlock Holmes—who then took over leadership of the field, swiftly overtaking the popularity of his French predecessors, even within France.

The threat posed by Holmes to the dominance of French mystery fiction was reflected in striking fashion by Maurice Leblanc, who had continued the Féval-esque tradition of criminal-centered fiction in the adventures of the *gentleman-cambrioleur* (gentleman burglar) Arsène Lupin. His earliest exploits were collected in book form in 1907. The second collection in the series, *Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes* (1908; *Arsène Lupin Versus Herlock Sholmes*, 1910) was the first of several volumes in which Sherlock Holmes, or his alter ego Herlock Sholmes—a change prompted by an understandable copyright dispute—unsuccessfully matched wits with Lupin. Lupin's domestic adversary, Inspecteur Ganimard, fared even worse as Lupin elucidated one tricky mystery after another while casually avoiding capture. Arnould Galopin (1865-1934) followed suit with an unflattering



portrait of Herlokolmes in *La ténébreuse affaire de Green Park* (1910). However, the detective that outshines the Holmes figure in this story, Allan Dickson, is an Australian.

AFTERMATH OF THE ENGLISH INVASION

Leblanc's efforts to denigrate Holmes failed. The English detective continued to out-do and out-sell French masters of deduction. In an ironic twist of fate, the most prolific French detective of the twentieth century, Harry Dickson, began life as a transmogrification of the central character of a numbered series of French translations of Sherlock Holmes pastiches written in German, and he might well owe his name to Galopin's influence. The Belgian writer Jean Ray, who became the series' translator in 1930, took over as Dickson's creator in 1932, with issue number 63, and continued until number 178 in 1938, establishing the character as a significant archetype.

French mystery fiction did, however, continue to break important new ground of its own for some years. In *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1908; *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908)—a book widely, but incorrectly, celebrated as the first locked-room mystery—Gaston Leroux (1868-1927) introduced an eccentric journalist-detective named Joseph Rouletabille whose further adventures were chronicled in *Le Parfum de la femme en noir* (1908; *The Perfume of the Woman in Black*, 1909) and several further adventures. Leroux also introduced the endearing *Cheri-Bibi* (1913) in a second series of mysteries, and Todd Marvel in a third, while carrying forward the Féval-esque tradition of criminal-centered mysteries in such works as *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* (1910; *The Phantom of the Opera*, 1911)—which gave birth to a significant modern legend by virtue of its cinematic adaptations and Andrew Lloyd Webber's successful musical.

As English detectives became the cutting edge of crime fiction, French writers grew more inclined to fall back on a subgenre about appealing criminals in which they still held the lead. Leon Sazie's masked bandit *Zigomar* (1909-1910) was soon superseded by Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre's even-more-rocambollesque character, Fantômas, in thirty-two volumes written with remarkable rapidity (considering that they were writing two other series alongside it) before Souvestre's death in 1914. Allain was persuaded to resurrect Fantômas some years later—casually announcing that the thief and his chief adversary, Inspecteur Juve, had been frozen in suspended animation in an iceberg in the interim—thus adding another name to the lengthening list of indestructible legendary figures. Fantômas became a favorite with the Surrealists, who thought Allain and Souvestre's writing method akin to "automatic writing" because they spent three days planning a plot, three days dictating the text, and four days correcting their typescript. The Surrealists also approved of the criminally inclined mad scientist in Gustave Lerouge's eighteen-part *Le mystérieux Dr. Cornelius* (1912-1913).

Gaston Leroux had a rocambollesque fondness for seemingly impossible crimes, some of which, like the mystery of the vanishing train in *La Double vie de Theophraste Longuet* (1904; *The Double Life*, 1909),

have extremely implausible solutions. Nevertheless, they also inspired imitators. The subgenre of mystery fiction providing ingenious naturalistic explanations of seemingly supernatural events became something of a French specialty, its first classic being Maurice Renard's *Les Mains d'Orlac* (1920; *The Hands of Orlac*, 1929). Arthur Bernède's "king of detectives," Chantecoq, whose career began in 1912, often faced brazenly rocambollesque challenges of this sort, especially when he became involved with the femme fatale Belphégor, initially in *Le Mystère du Louvre* (1927). Bernède, Leroux, and an actor famous for playing Fantômas, René Navarre, formed a Société des Cinéromans with the purpose of producing films and books in concert, with a heavy emphasis on crime and mystery. Gaboriau's Lecoq and Leroux's Rouletabille had been adapted for the screen in 1914, although their popularity was outstripped by Fantômas and by Bernède's tale of elaborate vengeance, *Judex* (1917), in collaboration with Louis Feuillade. Bernède's involvement with the pioneering of cinema novelizations prompted the translation of several of his books in the cinema-related Readers Library series, including the Chantecoq novel *La Maison hantée* (1916; the haunted house).

EVOLUTION OF THE ROMAN POLICIER

The genrification of mystery fiction took a significant step forward in France in 1927, with the foundation of two long-running series of books, Albert Pigasse's *Le Masque* and Alexandre Railli's *L'Empreinte*, which played a major part in popularizing translations of books by such influential writers as Agatha Christie. French detective fiction began to cleave much more closely to such models, as exemplified by such pastiches as Pierre Véry's *Le Testament de Sir Basil Crookes* (1931).

Véry produced more distinctive works in *L'Assassinat de Père Noël* (1934; the murder of Father Christmas) and *Les Disparus de Saint-Agil* (1935; the disappeared of Saint-Agil) and made other increasingly idiosyncratic contributions to the *Masque* line. The author who became its domestic mainstay was the Belgian Stanislas André Steeman, the author of *Six hommes morts* (1931; six dead men), *La Nuit de 12 au*

13 (1931; the night of the 12th/13th), *Le Mannequin assassiné* (1932; the murdered mannequin), and many others.

Other notable writers to participate in this burst of creativity were Noël Vindry, the author of *La Maison qui tue* (1932; the house that kills), *La Fuite des morts* (1932; the flight of the dead), and numerous others, and Jacques Decrest, whose works included *Hasard* (1933; chance) and *Les Trois jeune filles de Vienne* (1934; three girls from Vienna). Spy fiction, abundantly exemplified in the *Masque* line by the works of John Buchan and Edgar Wallace, was also relocated to the French political context by such writers as Jean Bommart, in *Le Poisson Chinois* (1934; the Chinese fish) and André Brouillard, who wrote as Pierre Nord, in *Double crime sur la ligne Maginot* (1936; double murder on the Maginot Line).

The most innovative French-born mystery writer to emerge during the 1930's was Eugène Avtsine, who wrote under the name Claude Aveline. His works included *Le Double mort de Frédéric Belot* (1932; the double death of Frederic Belot), the first of a loosely knit series that included *Voiture 7, place 15* (1937; car 17, seat 15) and extended to *Le Jet d'eau* (1947; jet of water).

Aveline's efforts were far outnumbered, if not outshone, by those of the equally versatile and amazingly prolific Belgian writer Georges Simenon, who signed more than two hundred books with his own name and published an even greater number under various pseudonyms. Simenon's *Pietr-le-Letton* (1931; *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett*, 1933; *Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, 1963) introduced the character of Inspector Jules Maigret of the French Sûreté, who became the most famous of all French detectives and the central figure of the twentieth century *roman policier*. Simenon retired him in *Maigret* (1934) but quickly brought him back, by popular demand, in *Maigret revient* (1934; *Maigret Returns*, 1941) and continued his career until 1972. Maigret seemed distinctly French by virtue of his methods, which put a heavier emphasis on intuitive empathy than logical deduction. Maigret was, in a sense, the first great psychological profiler in crime fiction—and he also functioned as a kind of confessor to those he apprehended—a more useful confessor, Simenon claimed,

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Belgian author Georges Simenon (top) and actors Suzy Prim and Georges Colin leaving impressions of their handprints at a Parisian cabaret in 1952. (AP/Wide World Photos)

than a priest could ever be, because his judgments were not bound by dogma. Simenon's pseudonymously written fiction included numerous narrations from the criminal point of view, many of them significant studies in criminal psychopathology.

AMERICAN INFLUENCES

The amazing productivity of writers such as Ponson, Allain and Souvestre, and Simenon remained a key feature of French mystery fiction. It was carried forward by Frédéric Dard, who wrote nearly three hundred novels, beginning with orthodox *policiers* written under mock Anglo-Saxon pseudonyms. About half his output was, however, representative of a new kind of mystery fiction that became fashionable dur-

ing the 1940's, and to which he contributed a long series of adventures signed with the name of their hero, San-Antonio—who is a French police commissaire. However, his work is nevertheless redolent with an American ambience.

The cynical attitude and frank violence of the “hard-boiled” detective fiction nurtured in American pulp magazines was introduced to France when translations of novels by Dashiell Hammett appeared during the early 1930's. French pastiches of such fiction began to appear in Georges Ventillard's *Minuit* series in 1941, typically using pseudonyms such as “Frank Harding” and “Leo Latimer.” From the very beginning, French pastiches of American thrillers attracted contributors with highbrow interests and credentials; Harding and Latimer were both pseudonyms of Léo Malet, a celebrated anarchist and Surrealist poet, who moved on from such pseudonymous endeavors as *Johnny Metal* (1941) and *La Mort de Jim Licking* (1942; the death of Jim Licking) to breezy *policiers* signed with his own name. In *120, rue de la Gare* (1943), Malet introduced the highly unorthodox and influential detective Nestor Burns.

The influence of American fiction of this sort was greatly increased by its cinematic spin-offs, which made a bigger initial impact in France than at home, and whose genre became known as the film noir. French novels of a similar sort were sometimes called *romans noirs*, but the label was always problematic because of its prior use to refer to the French equivalents of German *schauer-romans* and English gothic novels, and its usage was never universalized. In 1945, the large Parisian publishing firm Éditions Gallimard launched the highly influential Série Noire (noir series), which published translations of Raymond Chandler, Hammett, Horace McCoy, and other icons of American hard-boiled fiction. Significantly, however, its first titles were books written by British authors imitating American originals: Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase, the pen name of René Raymond. Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939), published in France as *Pas orchidées pour Miss Blandish*, had already achieved a *succès de scandale* in England, kick-starting a genre of pseudonymous pastiche fiction that further exaggerated the naked cynicism and

brutal violence of its American models and greatly encouraged a new style of titling.

French contributors to the Série Noire initially followed the *Minuit* precedent very closely. The first French writer the series published, Serge Arcouët, signed his book *La Mort et l'ange* (1948; death and the angel) Terry Stewart. The series proved similarly capable of attracting highbrow writers. The avantgarde existentialist novelist Boris Vian, who had translated Chandler's books, attached the pseudonym Vernon Sullivan to *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes!* (1946; I'll spit on your graves!), *Et on tuera tous les affreux* (1946; and the ugly will all be killed), and *Les Morts ont tous la même peau* (1949; all dead men have similar skin). The first of these books matched James Hadley Chase's success in being prosecuted for obscenity and banned. (Even so, Chase settled in France after finding it politic to leave England, as many exiles had done before him.)

As time went by, however, French writers abandoned such pseudonyms. Once Léo Malet had come out of hiding, Nestor Burma became the mainstay of his writing career. Burma started yet another series of *nouveaux mystères de Paris* as the proprietor of the detective agency Fiat Lux. Burma was one of the few late twentieth century French detectives whose novels were translated into English, albeit belatedly, during the 1990's. Malet's translated titles include *Le Soleil naît derrière le Louvre* (1954; *Sunrise Behind the Louvre*, 1991) and *Les Rats de Montsouris* (1955; *The Rats of Montsouris*, 1991).

Another significant recruit to the new subgenre who scorned the use of a pseudonym was Albert Simonin, the author of *Touchez pas au grisbi!* (1953; hands off the dough!) and *Le Cave se rebiffe* (1954; the sucker digs his heels in). However, the use of supposedly appropriate bylines persisted long after that. For example, André Duquesne contributed some three hundred titles to the imitative Fleuve Noir series during the 1960's and 1970's, using the pen name Peter Randa.

ALTERNATIVE INFLUENCES

The most prominent dissenters from the new vogue for hard-boiled fiction, who preferred to carry forward the mystery-centered tradition, signed themselves

Boileau-Narcejac. Pierre Boileau had made his debut before World War II, with *Repos du Bacchus* (1938) but it was in collaboration with Thomas Narcejac (the pen name of Pierre Ayraud)—who also published several notable solo works—that he brought his distinctive form of mystery fiction to its peak of perfection. In addition to calculatedly traditional work—they resurrected Arsène Lupin—Boileau-Narcejac produced a fine sequence of novels featuring characters caught up in seemingly supernatural events that turn out to be the results of ingenious criminal conspiracies, a regular feature of rationalized gothic novels. These included *Celle qui ne'était plus* (1952; the one who is no more), filmed as *Le Diaboliques* (1954), and *D'entre les morts* (1954; *The Living and the Dead*, 1956), which provided the basis of the famous Alfred Hitchcock film *Vertigo* (1958). They, too, had an American model, though, in William Irish (a pen name of Cornell Woolrich), who wrote several thrillers centered on the dire anxiety of protagonists under stress.

Roman noir was not the only new generic description tested out in this period by way of contrast to *roman policier*. The term *polar*, which began life as a slang contraction of *policier*, gradually took on a life of its own, being applied to novels that were not straightforward pastiches of American hard-boiled fiction, but which nevertheless seemed slicker, more cynical and—above all—more naturalistic than their stylized forerunners. Exponents of this kind of fiction included André Héléna, who wrote *Les Flics ont toujours raison* (1949; the cops are always right) shortly after a spell in jail and went on to write two hundred books under various pseudonyms; Alain Page, who made his debut with *Liberté conditionnel* (1958; conditional liberty); and Exbrayat, who excluded his Christian name, Charles, from his byline and developed a more humorous species of *polar* in the course of a one-hundred-book career, launched with *Vous souvenez-vous de Paco?* (1958; remember Paco?).

Like Boileau-Narcejac, Hubert Monteilhet embarked on a crusade to increase the sophistication of traditional French mystery fiction in such novels as *Les Mantes religieuses* (1960; the praying mantises), *Le Retour des cendres* (1961; returning the ashes), and *Les Pavés du diable* (1963; the devil's pavement). Fol-

lowing a precedent set by Pierre Siniac's *Les Morfalous* (1968), Jean-Patrick Manchette launched an influential series of political crime thrillers with *L'Affaire N'Gustro* (1971; the N'Gustro affair) that included *Morgue pleine* (1973; full morgue). The latter's reprinting under the punning title of *Polar* attempted to set it up as an archetype of the new subgenre.

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the gap that had opened up between traditional *romans policiers* and American-influenced fiction disappeared, not only because it was bridged by *polars* but because the social environment of the fiction changed considerably. The cynicism and violence that had seemed shocking in the noir fiction of the 1940's and 1950's became so commonplace by the mid-1970's that they were virtually taken for granted as aspects of modernity. Meanwhile, an increasing public appreciation of the actual methods and conduct of police investigators set far higher standards of realism for fiction in which they featured. Edgy subject matter became expectable in all such works.

The avant-gardist filmmaker Jean Herman adopted the pseudonym Jean Vautrin—borrowed from Balzac's Vidoquesque master-criminal—to become one of the leading writers of this period. His novels include *À bulletins rouges* (1973; of red reports) and *Bloody Mary* (1979). Pierre Siniac also went on to become one of the leading writers of the period, after chronicling the exploits of the significantly named Luj Inferman in a series begun with *Les 401 coups de Luj Inferman* (1972; Luj Inferman's 401 strikes) and *Les Cinq milliards de Luj Inferman* (1973; Luj Inferman's five millions). Siniac continued the long-standing hybrid tradition in French mystery fiction in what he called "*fanpols*," injecting an element of *le fantastique* (horror) into the *polar*, in such novels as *Charenton non stop* (1983) and *Carton blême* (1985; white cardboard).

One of the most significant figures to emerge during this period was Didier Daeninckx, who introduced Inspector Cadin in *Mort au premier tour* (1982; death on the first turn) and chronicled the character's further adventures in *Le Géant inachevé* (1984; the unfinished

giant) and several sequels. He also wrote such non-series novels as *Meurtres pour mémoire* (1984; murders to remember). Another emerging author was Thierry Jonquet, whose career went from strength to strength between *Mygale* (1984; *Tarantula*, 2005) and *Ils sont votre épouvante et vous êtes leur crainte* (2006; they are your fear and you are their dread).

While existing traditions maintained their appeal—Frédéric Dard's son, Patrice, continued the adventures of Commissaire San-Antonio into the twenty-first century—other social trends inevitably had their effect on the development of French mystery fiction. Women detectives made their appearance, often in a distinctive vein reminiscent of the femmes fatales who were once popular adversaries of the likes of Rocambole and Chantecoq, as in Jean-Daniel Giraud's *Parfum sauvage* (2001; wild perfume), which stars Inspector Lea de Sera, alias "Le Tigresse." An *avant garde* was conscientiously maintained by such writers as Philippe Jaenada, who won a significant literary prize before turning to mystery fiction in *La grande à bouche molle* (2001; the VIP with the soft lips) and *La Vie et mort de la jeune fille blonde* (2004; the life and death of the young blonde).

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS

French mystery fiction is only patchily represented in English, although its most influential phase—from Gaboriau to Leblanc—is easy enough to research. Many of the key adventures of Rouletabille and Arsène Lupin were still in print during the early years of the twenty-first century, and *Fantômas* had been in print quite recently. Émile Gaboriau's books were still relatively easy to find in English translation. The mature *roman policier* of the 1930's is very poorly represented, with the sole exception of Simenon's novels about Maigret, some of whose exploits remained in print into the twenty-first century. Only a few later examples were translated, including the Fred Kassak novel translated in 1976 as *Come Kill with Me*.

Although the series of 1990's translations of Léo Malet's Nestor Burma adventures remains a notable exception, few quasi-American *romans noirs* have ever been translated. Boris Vian's international reputation never prompted translation of his Vernon Sullivan

books. However, the title of the first of those books was used in the "video nasty" version of Meir Zarchi's unrelated *Day of the Woman* (1978). There were some signs of impending change before and after the end of the century. Ten thrillers by Sébastien Japrisot were translated, including *Piège pour Cendrillon* (1963; *A Trap for Cinderella*, 1964) and *La Dame dans l'auto avec des lunettes et un fusil* (1966; *The Lady in the Car with the Glasses and a Gun*, 1967). Daniel Pennac became the most prolifically translated modern French mystery writer with the English edition of his humorous Belleville series launched in 1997. These books include *Au bonheur des ogres* (1985; *The Scapegoat*, 1999) and *La Fée carabine* (1987; *Fairy Gunmother*, 1997). Jean Vautrin's historical crime series begun with *Le Cri du peuple* in 1999, began to be published in translated editions in 2001 with *The Voice of the People*. The novelization of Claude Klotz's film script for *L'Homme du train* promoted some further translations of his mystery fiction. Thierry Jonquet's *Mygale* was translated in 2005, as *Tarantula*, in anticipation of a film version.

The most useful contemporary resource for research into the earliest history of French mystery fiction is Southern California's Black Coat Press—named after Paul Féval's Habits Noirs series—which began publishing translations of numerous relevant items in 2003. These publications have included works by Ponson and Leblanc as well as items from the Habits Noirs series and an elaborately annotated edition of Féval's *John Devil*. The publisher's anthology series *Tales of the Shadowmen* features new adventures, in English, of many of the classic figures of French mystery fiction, with an altogether apt emphasis on the rocambolesque.

Brian Stableford

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LATIN AMERICAN MYSTERY FICTION

Readers in Latin America countries of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean have long been attracted to mystery fiction. Because of their different perceptions of corruption in their public institutions, including their legal systems, the development and presentation of protagonists in their mystery and detective fiction varies markedly from the models one finds in North American mystery novels.

Mystery literary works in Latin America fall into two distinct groups. The first group, known as *novelas de enigma*, follows the classic mystery model of whodunits, which present readers with crimes and investigators who solve those crimes using logic and judicial resources. The *novela de enigma* formula usually presents investigators as gentlemanly amateurs who are detached from others who are involved in the crimes. These works generally do not evaluate, either directly or indirectly, the sociopolitical realities of the societies in which their mysteries are situated.

The second group, *novelas negras*, which are equivalent to hard-boiled detective novels, evolved as a negative reaction to the lack of realistic representations of social, psychological, and economic realities of the modern world in Latin American mystery fiction. In the United States, Prohibition, the Great Depression, gangsters, and other forms of social unrest created a populace that expected more realistic and critical representations of contemporary American life in their literary works. *Novelas negras* present protagonists as individuals with human frailties and limits. Crime investigators in these books exist within settings that include violence, corruption, uncertainty, and insecurity. Authors of *novelas negras* critique these societies, either directly or subtly, by exposing their flaws within the texts of their works.

Although works representing the two basic groups sometimes overlap, most Latin American mysteries can be assigned to one or the other group. Both *novelas de enigma* and *novelas negras* can be labeled as essentially *costumbrista* works—those whose texts include descriptions of the societies in which the stories are set. The books generally describe crime scene

locales in detail, giving street names and making observations on ethnic, gender, social, and psychological facts. To some degree, all mystery novels link societal and psychological realities with crime. At the core of these novels are crimes, which often involve murders. However, behind the facts of the cases lie other conflicts that involve money or power or both. These very human values provide mystery writers with a basic formula that pits characters who seek money or power—including the power to take another's life—against other characters who attempt to bring about resolutions to the crimes.

An element common to all works in the mystery genre is the involvement of audacious investigators. Sometimes these characters are mild mannered; at other times, they may be energetic extroverts. What is always present in any novel, however, is a person who doggedly pursues an explanation of a crime and the series of events that led up to it. In one form or another it is a literary work that pits the legal system of a specific region against those who choose to work outside the law.

LATIN AMERICAN INVESTIGATIONS AND FORENSICS

Police departments in North American and European nations generally have extensive crime laboratories in which forensic analyses can be conducted. In those nations, such facilities are available to most crime investigators at almost any level, local, state or provincial, and federal. Although the quality of the equipment and the time required to process evidence may vary widely, systems of cooperation among different jurisdictions allow for widespread use of the facilities.

In Latin American nations, the situation is somewhat different, but most large municipalities have excellent forensic facilities. Many Latin American countries also maintain national forensic laboratories, often located within federal university systems. However, two things separate the Latin American forensics model from those of North America and Europe. First, police departments in small Latin American commu-

nities and those in almost all rural areas have little or no access to advanced forensics. Second, limited financial resources and backing restrict the use of the facilities that do exist to only high-profile cases and those that involve the wealthiest members of society. The same observation might also be made about facilities in North America and Europe, but to a far lesser extent than in Latin America.

A general shortage of verifiable evidence gathering and processing leaves most crime solving in Latin America to individual detectives, police officers, and members of the military, many of whom are underpaid and overworked. Some Latin American nations still have lower-level police officials who deal only with such matters as traffic violations and minor crimes and either do not receive salaries or receive only token salaries. Such officers count on "tips" to make ends meet. Moreover, because of the lack of access to forensic facilities, officers of local agencies must spend disproportionate amounts of time gathering information that could be more efficiently obtained from judicious use of forensics. For all these reasons, and others, there are many opportunities for abuses of power, extortion, and other forms of corruption.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL AS MODELS FOR LATIN AMERICA

The development of Latin American mystery novels generally parallels that of mystery novels in North America, Spain, and Portugal. During the nineteenth century, American mystery writers tended to follow European models; consequently, their works tended to focus on their investigators' personalities and prowess and on the unique characteristics of the crimes. By the time the American stock market crashed in 1929, Prohibition was ushering in a new realm of lawlessness and gangsters in the United States, and a new group of mystery writers were intent upon exposing the flaws of American society, judicial systems, and government in their mystery works. For example, the novels of Raymond Chandler, who set his stories in Los Angeles, were among the first in the United States to bring realism to the forefront in mystery fiction. Chandler exposed his readers to gangsters, political opportunists, corrupt police, drugs and the generally violent

and unpredictable nature of crime in Los Angeles. His enforcers of the law typically become part of the problem and showed that it was not only the criminals who could not be trusted.

Historical differences between Latin America and Spain impeded the arrival of the *novela negra* in the old country. From 1936 to 1975, Spain endured the repressive dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Although the general public image of the *guardia civil*, or paramilitary federal police, was that of fraudulent enforcers of a fascist regime, authors within Spain were severely limited in their freedom to confront police and societal corruption directly. Immediately after the end of Franco's regime, Spanish mystery writers began presenting most police investigators in a negative light, as loyal adherents to Franco's state. However, after publication of Andreu Martini's *Barcelona Connection* in 1988, Spanish mystery novels started presenting police investigators as persons capable of honesty within a system that was corrupt. Spanish *novelas negras*, following the lead of those of the United States and Latin America, gradually reduced their emphasis on the negativity of the fascist period. They returned to the formulaic *novelas negras* that critiqued Spanish society through the eyes and minds of honest investigators, caught up within an imperfect society.

Portugal also suffered a dictatorship, under Antonio Oliveira Salazar, who ruled from 1928 until 1968. As was the case with Spain, Portuguese readers of mysteries primarily read translations of *novelas de enigma* written by American and European authors during Salazar's regime. Government censorship lessened during the 1970's, and by the 1980's, Portuguese mystery writers were freely publishing works that included critics of both the abusive Salazar period and the period in which they lived. One of the most exemplary of these mystery authors is Francisco José Viegas. His novels *Crime em Ponta Delgada* (1989) and *Um céu demasiado azul* (1995; a much too blue sky) both express revulsion with the Salazar regime. Their protagonist inspectors work within an environment in which the past of the Salazar era is juxtaposed with a better, but still unjust, legal system of the present. *Novelas negras* such as these would not have been allowed to go to press under Salazar's regime.

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Mystery fiction deals with issues of power. These issues may be based on financial wrongdoing, such as robbery and extortion; personal power, such as physical abuse and murder; or society-based matters, such as political and religious conflicts. In one form or another, all novels deal with the interactions among the protagonists and these real-world issues. A key to understanding what aspects of the style, structure, and approaches to societal value systems are unique to Latin American mystery fiction is to understand the differences between the perceptions about matters of fairness, justice, and redemption held by members of different cultures.

North Americans are individualists, and most North American mystery fiction portrays investigators as somewhat lonely individuals confronting problems. These generally lonely protagonists not only have to resolve crimes and restore justice and honor in their society, but also they hold an enduring belief in the correctness of their sociopolitical system. In their view, anything can be achieved and the future offers endless possibilities to those who invest enough effort and faith in the system. North Americans tend to accept what their education has taught them: that while the sociopolitical realities of their culture may be flawed, individual effort can nevertheless find solutions to problems that threaten society.

With few exceptions, authors from the United States have held an abiding trust in the underlying ethics and regenerative possibilities of their country. This is seen in most works throughout its history. Even authors who have purposely exposed wrongdoing in society have written with the underlying assumption that their words may help bring about positive changes. These authors include the author whom most critics label the first mystery writer, Edgar Allan Poe. Another is Raymond Chandler, one of the founders of the hard-boiled school of detective novel writing.

In Latin America a quite different set of realities is playing out. Historical experience there has shown that individual effort and audacity seldom lead to any permanent improvement in social or political conditions. *Collective* efforts are the only ones that are fostered. The structure of Latin American society also

mimics this collectiveness. People in Latin America tend to live in closer proximity to one another, in terms of both physical space and family structures. Latin Americans rarely consider themselves as courageous individualists. This is not to say that there are no individualists in Latin America, but rather that the collective consciousness is more accepted as the norm.

The fact that writers of mystery fiction in Latin America have not as many *novelas de enigma* as their North American counterparts is due, in great part, to the reality of their lacking faith that individuals can help bring about justice within overwhelmingly corrupt systems. Simply maintaining existing cultures in Latin American nations requires constant vigilance and resistance. The sociopolitical realities have always generated unstable institutions that have produced dictatorships and economic collapses. Latin Americans simply lack faith in the integrity of their governments and judicial systems, particularly the latter. Therefore, the concept of individual investigators who trust that the work they do will not be sabotaged by the system is a difficult one for Latin Americans to accept. Therefore, the concept of an individual investigator who trusts that the work being done will not be sabotaged by the system was difficult for a Latin American to accept. However, when the *novela negra* developed in North America and Europe and offered obvious criticisms of societal flaws and limits, it was soundly embraced and creatively expounded upon by many Latin American mystery writers.

ROOTS OF LATIN AMERICAN MYSTERY WRITING

Most literary critics regard Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" as the first mystery fiction work because it focused on the use of deductive reasoning and systematic investigation to solve a crime. That story and many other English-language mystery stories that followed were quickly translated into Spanish and Portuguese for an expanding readership in Latin America.

Novelas de enigmas were originally quite formulaic in content. In a typical North American or European story, a representative of a law-enforcement agency, usually a detective, investigates a crime. Suspense is developed through an intense focus on the il-

legal act itself. The social and political realities of the culture in which the crime has taken place are of little or no concern to the story. This assumption of honesty in the political and law-enforcement segments of the society in which these early mystery fiction works are situated created a genre that was almost always written in English and then translated for Latin American consumption.

With some exceptions, mystery stories written by Latin Americans and located within Latin American nations did not appear. The reason was that the legal systems in many Latin American nations were not receptive to the basic idea of gentlemanly investigators working within systems that exist to deliver justice to the wronged and punishment to the guilty. This view of a reassuring society that had the confidence of its citizens in judicial matters was not entrenched in Latin America. The less admired and even less accepted authority of the police force and a perceived lack of fairness in the judicial systems in Latin America did not promote native writers of mysteries to emulate works of crime and punishment in the highly formulaic manners of the European and United States writers.

During the formative period of Latin American mystery writing, many authors used anglicized pen names and situated many of the stories in the United States or Europe. This allowed their readers to accept the validity of the idealized social setting their stories presented.

CULTURAL SHIFTS

More authentic Latin American mystery works arose as the genre outgrew its almost naïve faith in the decency of society in relationship to crime to one incorporating more realistic views of sociopolitical realities of contemporary Latin America. The arrival of the *novela negra* opened the door to a form of mystery novels that would allow native Latin American authors not only to express their creativity independently of North American and European norms but also to use their writings to critique their own societies and governments.

During the 1920's, North American mystery writers attempted pragmatically to portray a society that was struggling with organized crime and its violent

and corrupt influence in a capitalist system. This new subgenre removed the assumption of an honest society in which investigations could proceed without reference to cultural realities. Criminal mysteries would no longer be presented as aberrations in societies. Instead, the sociopolitical, cultural, and psychological traits that motivate crime become part of the message of the authors. The ever-present realities of machismo, hypocrisy, unbridled ambition and greed, illusions of glory, visions of power, and the full range of human and social distortion were presented as integral parts of the Latin American mystery fiction work.

This form of expression, sometimes described as determined realism, is perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of the Latin American mystery fiction. *Novelas negra* do not avoid realistic and critical portrayals of Latin American societies; instead, they expose the sociopolitical problems as being the major causes of crime and the lack of public faith in Latin American judicial systems.

Some Latin American women authors have created characters, usually detectives, who live in the United States but reflect the social realities of both countries and present feminist viewpoints that emphasize women's roles in the expanding Latino immigrant population in the United States. Included in this group are Marcia Muller and Edna Buchanan.

Latin American mystery writings can be geographically grouped among four regions that have produced the vast preponderance of Latin American mystery fiction. Two of these regions are in the South American continent, one is geographically part of North America but culturally part of the Central American divide between North and South America, and the third is a Caribbean island nation.

RIVER PLATE REGION WRITERS

One of the most prolific areas of Latin American mystery writing is the vast area around the mouth of South America's Rio de la Plata that encompasses the metropolitan Buenos Aires region in Argentina and Montevideo in Uruguay and extends into the surrounding Argentine and Uruguayan countrysides. Argentina provided the earliest works of Latin American mystery fiction.

Before the 1930's, most mystery and detective novels published in the southern part of South America were translations of foreign authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, and Arthur Conan Doyle. Carlos Olivera (1854-1910) translated Poe's writings into Spanish for an ever-expanding readership in Argentina. Some writers, such as Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937), used the classic formulaic structure of the early European authors in their own works. Quiroga's only mystery work was *El triple robo de Bellamore* (1903; the triple robbery of Bellamore). Some of these early works did, however, use satire to question the validity of some norms in this early form of *novelas de enigma*. For example, Edward Ladislao Holmberg's (1852-1937) *La bolsa de huesos* (1896; the bag of bones) parodies the police system in Argentina by presenting a detective-narrator who faces punishment for independently solving the crime outside of the normal Argentine judicial system.

During the 1940's and 1950's, Argentine authors began writing hard-hitting and sociopolitically critical mystery works. One of the most recognized authors in this area is Leonardo Castellani (1896-1980). His *La mosca de oro* (1938) was one of the first Latin American mystery works not only to describe vividly the regional peoples and culture but also to expose a society that lacked honest systems of justice. Castellani stands out among his contemporary writers with his caustic renderings of the structure of Argentine society.

Many writers who followed Castellani's lead in criticizing Argentine society did so in response to observation of the negative effects of the populist Perónist movement in Argentina from 1946 to 1955. This movement was unique to Argentina. The populist hero Juan Perón, with his famous first wife, Eva Perón, led an anti-elitist workers movement that threatened many in Argentina's upper classes, which included many authors and their families. Other writers whose works have contained specific critiques of the Perónist movement include Enrique Anderson Imbert (1920-2000), the author of *El general hace un lindo cadáver* (1956; the general makes a lovely corpse); David Viñas (1929-), author of *Chico grande* (1953; big Chico); Manuel Peyrou (1902-1974), the author of *El estruendo de las rosas* (1948; the thunder of the

roses); and Jorge Luis Borges, the author of *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* (1942; *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi*, 1981).

The boom of the *novela negra*, or hard-boiled detective novel, in the River Plate region began during the 1970's and continued into the twenty-first century. Argentina's last military government collapsed in 1983 and was followed by a series of civilian governments that left Argentina with an exorbitant foreign debt that led to the freezing of bank accounts and the collapse of much of the economy. In 2001, President Fernando de la Rúa was forced to flee his presidential palace by helicopter to escape a mob, and police brutally suppressed the uprising. Many mystery writers used Argentina's deteriorating situation as a backdrop in their literary works.

En la estela de un secuestro (1977; in the wake of a kidnapping) by María Angélica Bosco (1917-) details problematic interpersonal relationships, especially among family members. The novel's plot involves a wealthy doctor who is kidnapped while driving in the Paraná River Delta and held for ransom. The work clearly presents an analogy to the Argentine economic situation, in which economic status is based upon personal or political power. The story also critiques the unequal division of justice according to economic status.

Another Argentine writer, Juan Sasturain (1945-), writes short mystery stories as well as *novelas negras*. In *Versión de un relato de Hamlet* (2001; version of a Hamlet story), he presents a brutal exposé of the consequences of Argentina's military dictatorships, which were replaced by inept regimes that squandered the nation's wealth by vaguely following neoconservative global economic strategies.

MEXICO

A prominent characteristic of Mexican mystery literature, especially during the 1920's to 1950's, its formative years, has been its strong linkage to nationalist themes. Although the formative period produced the typical whodunit form of *novelas de enigma*, Mexican writers did not use foreign settings or foreign pen names to make their works more acceptable to their readers. Translated North American and European works were readily available to Mexico's many mystery fiction

fans, but Mexican writers themselves used local settings for their backdrops. Antonio Helú (1900-1972) is a good example of an early Mexican mystery writer. Many of his short, satirical stories deal with class conflict and the antipathy of the poor toward the affluent.

Another example of a Mexican writer who obliquely criticizes the social realities is José Martínez de la Vega (1908-1954). His popular collection of short stories, *Péter Pérez, detective de Peralvillo y anexas* (1952), humorously attacks Mexico's long-ruling political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). However, it stops short of actually defying that powerful political force. Detective Pérez is presented as a bumbling but honest cop working among greedy political autocrats.

By the 1980's, Mexican mystery writers had embraced the *novela negra*. In Mexico, these works tend to critique two main subjects: PRI, the political party that corruptly ruled the country for more than forty years, and drug-trafficking gangsters. Paco Ignacio Taibo II wrote a hybrid mystery novel combining the *novela negra* with an almost journalistic style of writing that directly confronts issues of honesty, values, and repression in Mexico City following the government's massacre of students and others during the country's 1968 protest movement. His novel, *Heroes convocados: Manual para la toma del poder* (1982; *Calling All Heroes: A Manual for Taking Power*, 1990), won the Grijalbo Prize. All of Taibo's many works confront the corrupt sociopolitical system.

Another Mexican writer, Francisco José Amparán (1957-), has exposed the most recent threat to social order and economic stability in Mexico: the smuggling of narcotics into the United States. His novel *Otras caras de paraíso* (1995; *Other Faces of Paradise*) involves a search for a missing young girl but leaves readers with a macabre vision of life in the Mexican drug underworld.

CUBA

Imported and translated *novelas de enigma* were long readily available in Cuba, but Cuban writers produced no original mystery fiction until 1971. In that year, Ignacio Cárdenas Acuña published *Enigma para un domingo* (1971; *Enigma for a Sunday*). Since then,

original detective works have proliferated in Cuba. However, due to strict government censorship controls, all Cuban mystery works have been required to conform to the government's socialist goals. The works must not only entertain, but also educate the public. It is therefore not surprising that the dominant theme in Cuban mystery fiction has been struggles against social inequality and correction of past vices.

Cuban mystery works differ from those of other regions in that they are set in a well-controlled society in which all citizens are identified and watched. This lack of anonymity makes it theoretically impossible for criminals to commit crimes without being prosecuted. Moreover, investigators cannot be amateurs; they must be members of police teams or other judicial investigative bodies, whose members are, without question, honest and held responsible by their fellow socialist peers. All investigations are team efforts, and one member cannot lead an investigation independently. Under these restrictions, Cuban mysteries cannot employ such suspense-building genre gimmicks as false inspectors and corrupt police. Acuña's *Enigma para un domingo* had to use prerevolution Cuba as its setting in order to criticize the corruption of capitalist systems.

Another example of the limited scope of Cuban works is *La ronda de los rubiés* (1973; *The Round of the Rubies*) by Armando Cristóbal Pérez (1938-). This work is situated in Cuba and details the counter-revolutionary actions of a group that plans to use a ruby necklace to purchase an illegal escape from Cuba. *Cuentos para una noche lluviosa* (1986; *Tales for a Rainy Night*), a collection of short mystery novels by Bertha Recio Tenorio (1950-), detailed how crimes from petty theft to murder are solved in a cooperative effort by vigilant neighbors and honest police teamwork. Each story presents antirevolutionary crimes based upon a lack of moral turpitude.

BRAZIL

Mystery fiction has enjoyed at least modest popularity in Brazil since the 1930's. As in many Latin American nations, most of the mysteries that Brazilians read were translations of books imported from the United States and Europe. The relatively few original Brazilian works were written in the formulaic *novela*



de enigma style. Considered a somewhat disreputable form of literature in Brazil, mystery works received little attention from the literary establishment until much later than in most of Latin America.

The overwhelming use of satire, parody, and farce in Brazilian works has set them apart from works from other Latin American regions. The very first Brazilian detective novel is an example. Cowritten by Afrânio Peixoto (1876-1947), Henrique Maximiliano Coelho (1864-1934), and José Joaquim de Campos Medeiros e Albuquerque (1867-1934), “O Mistério” (1920; the mystery) satirizes Brazilian culture by presenting investigators and police who aggressively round up any and all citizens who might vaguely know anything about a crime, regardless of necessity. However, the book depicts the investigators behind these rights violations as more inept than corrupt. Nevertheless, the novel foreshadowed the emergence of the *novela negra* in Brazil during the 1970’s.

True, hard-hitting detective novels finally appeared in Brazil during the 1970’s. In addition to the very violent crimes and judicial corruption depicted in these works, the works also embrace a sardonic attitude toward class conflict and a dehumanized Brazilian populace. Parodies of Brazilian life can also be observed in the twenty-first century works of Luiz Alfredo Garcia Roza (1936). For example, his *Achados e perdidos* (1998; *December Heat*, 2003) contains clear references to a dehumanized society of Rio de Janeiro that includes the burning alive of a child. Garcia Roza satirizes the local police force by having all witnesses interviewed by a detective pledge not to mention anything about the detective’s investigation to other members of the police. In a sharp contrast to the mystery fiction of Cuba, Brazilian witnesses are reluctant to provide any information, and the information they do provide is inherently suspect.

Paul Siegrist

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SUBGENRES OF MYSTERY FICTION

ACADEMIC MYSTERY FICTION

Institutions of higher learning provide the settings for many intriguing mystery and detective novels. The roots of academic mystery fiction go even deeper than those of the mystery and detective genre itself. Long before Edgar Allan Poe created what is generally regarded as the first detective story during the mid-nineteenth century and far longer before fictional crime took up residence in academia, the seventeenth century poet John Donne unwittingly explained why colleges and universities have proved so congenial to writers of mysteries. In one of his sermons Donne observed,

The university is a paradise, rivers of knowledge are there, arts and sciences flow from thence. Council tables are *Horti conclusi*, (as it is said in the Canticles), *Gardens that are walled in*, and they are *Fontes signati*, *wells that are sealed up*; bottomless depths of unsearchable counsels there.

As Donne shows, academia provides an ideal setting for works of detection. The twentieth century poet W. H. Auden had more to say on this subject. In his 1948 essay “The Guilty Vicarage,” he wrote that a detective story requires a “closed society,” a demand that might be met by a closely knit geographical group, such as a village or by an occupational group, such as a theatrical troupe. Auden also insisted that the milieu of a mystery should be an “innocent society in a state of grace,” or, as he later describes it in his essay, the “Great Good Place; for the more Eden-like it is,” the more glaring a crime will be.

Western colleges and universities, those *horti conclusi*, fit Auden’s requirements. Many were literally walled in, with gates that were locked at curfew. As in a country house or village, then, the number of suspects in a mystery story placed in an academic setting would automatically be limited. First created in the Middle Ages as quasi-monastic establishments from which secular concerns and deadly sins were to be banished, European universities were, and remain, dedicated to matters of the intellect. To quote Auden yet again,

It is a sound instinct that has made so many detective story writers choose a college as a setting. The ruling

passion of the ideal professor is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake so that he is related to other human beings only indirectly through their common relation to the truth; and those passions, like lust and avarice and envy, which relate individuals directly and may lead to murder are, in his case, ideally excluded.

It is often said that the four universal motives for crime are love, lust, lucre, and loathing. If that is true, then academia should in theory be immune from criminal wrongdoing. On the other hand, colleges and universities can also be breeding grounds for conflict. In the preface to his *Biathanatos* (wr. c. 1611), Donne observed, “Contemplative and bookish men, must of necessitie be more quarrelsome than others, because they contend not about matters of fact, nor can determine their controversies by any certaine witnesses, nor judges.” Residents of colleges, universities, and other schools possess sufficient pride and envy, along with lust and loathing—if not “love” and “lucre”—to impel others to murder them and sometimes to commit murder as well. A. E. Housman encapsulated the dual nature of the academic world when he remarked, “I find Cambridge an asylum, in every sense of the word.”

ACADEMICS AS DETECTIVES

In addition to serving as both victims and perpetrators of crime, academics make plausible detectives. However, only about one-third of the detective figures in academic mysteries are professors; the others are either private eyes or members of police forces. Kate Fansler, Amanda Cross’s fictional professor of literature, often serves as a detective in her creator’s novels. In one of those novels, she asks, “Aren’t all scholars really detectives?” In posing that question, Fansler echoes something that Marjorie Nicolson wrote in her 1929 essay “The Professor and the Detective”:

After all, what essential difference is there between the technique of the detective tracking his quarry through Europe and that of the historian tracking his fact, the philosopher his idea, down the ages? . . . For, after all, scholars are, in the end, only detectives of thoughts.

Academic standing gives professor-detectives excuses to be present at the scenes of crimes, whether those locations be campuses or academic conferences, as in D. J. H. James's *Murder at the MLA* (1993). Academics also have the advantage of possessing the expertise necessary to understand the motives for crimes in these settings, such as plagiarism, academic jealousy, and academic frustration.

MODERN ORIGINS OF THE SUBGENRE

Although academia offers all the elements that Auden lists as necessary for a good mystery, it is surprising that the subgenre did not emerge until the early twentieth century. However, elements of academic mysteries go back further. For example, Poe's detective C. Auguste Dupin is bookish. In Poe's 1841 story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the narrator says of Dupin that "Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries." Indeed, the narrator first meets Dupin in "an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre," where both men are seeking "the same very rare and very remarkable volume." Although both characters might be classified as independent scholars, Poe cannot claim parentage of the academic mystery. That honor seems to belong to Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote three stories with academic settings in 1904. In the first of these, "The Priory School," the only son of the duke of Holderness vanishes from the school. Heidegger, the German master, is initially suspected of abducting the boy—or worse—until the teacher is found murdered. However, apart from supplying some of the scenes and the victims of the tale, academia plays little part in the mystery. In the last of Doyle's three 1904 stories, "The Missing Three-Quarter," academia is even less significant. Godfrey Staunton, a forward on the Cambridge University rugby team, vanishes on the eve of a match with Oxford, which wins the game. As in "The Priory School," the student's disappearance is not related to academic matters, and the only detector with university connections is a dog named Pompey, which is described as "something between a beagle and a foxhound."

Doyle's third 1904 story, "The Three Students," published in the June issue of *The Strand Magazine*, is a true academic mystery. Sherlock Holmes goes to an

unspecified university (Oxford or Cambridge) to research early English charters. Hilton Soames, tutor and lecturer at the imaginary St. Luke's College, asks the famous detective to investigate a cheating incident involving one of three students competing for the Fortescue Scholarship. Part of the examination for this prize requires sight translation of a Greek passage written by the ancient historian Thucydides. On the day preceding the test, one of the students entered Soames's rooms and secured a copy of the text Soames had selected for the exam. Characteristic of the academic mystery subgenre, the entire story unfolds on the university campus, Holmes is consulted to avoid the scandal of involving the police, the motive of the crime is academic, and all the suspects belong to the college. The incident temporarily shatters the sense of innocence, but the guilty party was prepared to confess and leave the country for South Africa even before Holmes discovers his guilt. Thus, the conclusion is that honesty and honor still exist on campus after all.

The year after Doyle wrote his three college mysteries, Jacques Futrelle introduced Professor S. F. X. Van Dusen, whom he dubbed the "Thinking Machine." A master of all the sciences and possessing a brain so large that he wears a size eight hat, Van Dusen teaches at Hale University in New England. He makes his debut in "The Problem of Cell 13," in which he escapes from a jail using only polished shoes, tooth powder, and twenty-five dollars. Another early academic detective is Craig Kennedy, a chemistry professor in New York City at a school resembling Columbia University. His first case is chronicled in Arthur B. Reeve's *The Poisoned Pen* (1911). Neither Van Dusen nor Kennedy deals with academic crimes; both are private investigators who happen to be academics.

THE FIRST NOVELS

In 1910, William Johnston published the first academic mystery novel, *The Innocent Murderers*, set at Graydon College in New England. In this novel, chemistry professor Josiah Hopkins disappears, as does his attractive research assistant, Ernesta Frost. Philip Sullivan, a private investigator from Boston, discovers what has happened.

Although academia seems perfectly suited as the

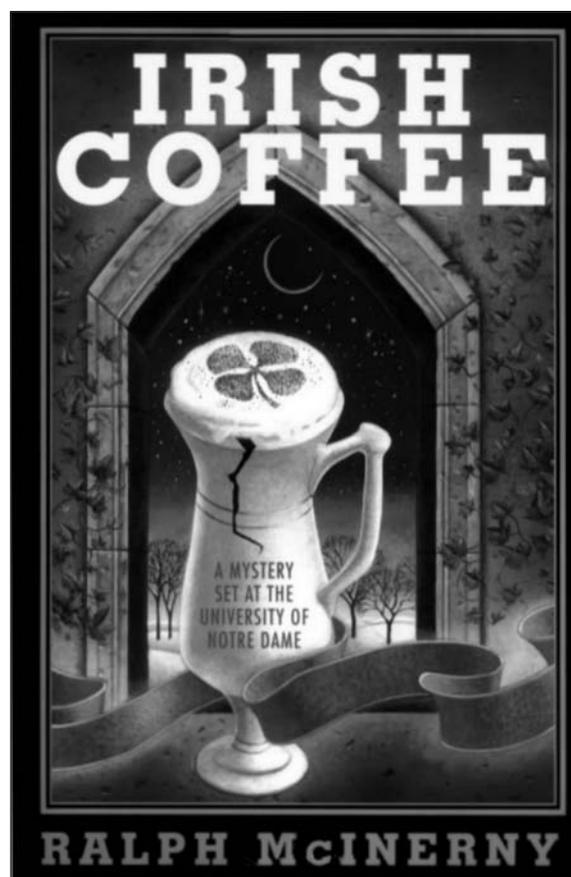
setting for a mystery, the subgenre of academic mysteries emerged slowly. The next example that John Kramer lists in his annotated bibliography of these works did not appear for more than a decade: Carolyn Wells's *The Mystery Girl* (1922). Perhaps the small number of college graduates who would have been the most likely purchasers of such stories is at least partially responsible for the dearth of titles. Moreover, most academic mysteries are written by academics, and even as late as the 1960's, writing a popular novel could threaten university careers. Erich Segal's best-selling romance novel *Love Story* (1970) is widely blamed for his not receiving tenure at Yale University despite his excellent study of the ancient Roman comedian Plautus. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, a literary scholar at Columbia University felt safer writing her mysteries under the pseudonym Amanda Cross.

During the late 1920's and 1930's, about one dozen college mysteries were published in England and more than thirty were published in America. The first fictional Oxford University murder occurred in 1928, in Ronald A. Knox's *Footsteps at the Lock*. The next year, the university's regius professor of Latin, a reader in French, and a philosophy tutor were all killed in Adam Broome's *The Oxford Murders*. In that novel, Reggie Crofts, a former student of the fictional St. Anthony's College, and his girlfriend, Barbara Playfair, niece of an Oxford faculty member, discover the killer, who hoped to enhance his own intellectual abilities by securing the brains of his victims.

The quintessential academic mystery of the golden age of detective fiction, perhaps of all time, is Dorothy L. Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (1935). Like many other academic mysteries, it takes its title from a literary source, in this case William Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606-1607). Sayers modeled her fictional Shrewsbury College on Oxford's Somerville College, from which she graduated in 1914; it is the Great Good Place. Sayers chose for her epigraph the passage from John Donne's sermons cited above, calling the university a "paradise." In her novel, mystery writer Harriet Vane, preparing to visit her alma mater for the "Gaudy" festival, recalls Shrewsbury College as "built by a modern architect in a style neither old nor new, but stretching out reconciling hands to past and pres-

ent." At the end of her weekend there she reflects on the faculty: "how refreshing and soothing and *good* they all were, walking beneath their ancient beeches and meditating . . ."

The innocence of the college is disrupted by a poltergeist that sends hateful messages to faculty and students and destroys books and manuscripts. To avoid scandal, Harriet is asked to investigate, and where Harriet goes, her admirer Lord Peter Wimsey, a graduate of Oxford's Balliol College, follows. Together they discover that the culprit is neither student nor instructor but rather an outsider with no intellectual integrity whose crimes are academically motivated. Arthur Robinson had been denied his master's degree because Miss de Vine had recognized that he had suppressed evidence contradicting his thesis. After Robinson



Irish Coffee (2003) is the seventh of ten Roger Knight mysteries that Ralph McInerny set at the University of Notre Dame between 1997 and 2006.

killed himself, his widow sought revenge. Various students and faculty are suspects as well as victims; one student attempts to drown herself because of the poison pen letters. Although Harriet and Lord Peter are not academics, they have academic ties, and in the end Oxford lives up to John Donne's description. Lord Peter tells the gathered faculty that

the one thing which frustrated the whole attack from first to last was the remarkable solidarity and public spirit displayed by your college as a body. . . . Nothing but the very great loyalty of the Senior Common Room to the College and the respect of the students for the Senior Common Room stood between you and a most unpleasant publicity.

A decade after Sayers's novel, Glyn Daniel, a don at Cambridge's St. John's College, published a similar work under the pen name of Dilwyn Rees (*The Cambridge Murders*, 1945). At the beginning of this book Dr. Quibell, president of Cambridge's fictional Fisher College, reflects on his faculty:

What a good company! . . . all so contented, and all, in their ways, so scholarly and learned. Sir Richard and Traherne both scholars of European reputation. Wedgwood one of the greatest organists in England. The Dean and Tutor both excellent in their jobs and yet finding time for research. . . . What a fortunate, contented High Table!

As the narrator observes, Dr. Quibell is both literally and metaphorically short-sighted. Evan Fothergill, fellow of Fisher College in mathematics, is having an affair with the dean's wife. Wedgwood hates the dean for meddling with the music played in the chapel. The dean has expelled John Parrott, who has been courting Diana Gostlin, daughter of the college's underporter, against her father's wishes. When Dean William Landon and Sam Gostlin are killed, there is thus no shortage of suspects. The college gates were locked the night of the murder, making the students and faculty the most likely suspects. That is the view of local detective-inspector Wyndham and Detective-Superintendent Robertson-Macdonald from Scotland Yard. The latter settles on archaeologist Sir Richard Cherrington, vice president of the college and professor of prehistory. Cherrington, however, is also seek-

ing the killer. Applying his academic training, he recognizes that Gostlin was not an intended victim:

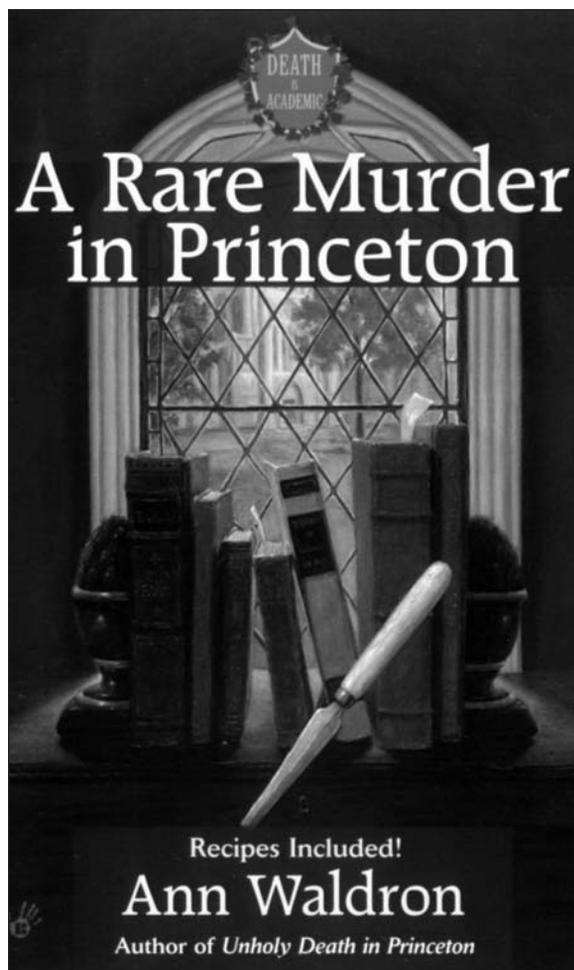
I find some pottery or some metalwork in a strange place and I have to explain how they come to be there. Here we have a man murdered. I say there is no reason in his private life why he should be killed. . . . that he was murdered by someone fresh from another crime.

Sir Richard is correct, and he identifies the murderer as someone from outside the college. He dismisses any possible guilt among the faculty, "as though a set of quiet, disputatious academics could commit such murder." Again the university emerges as Auden's Great Good Place after supplying setting, victims, suspects, and a detective, but not the killer.

POST-WORLD WAR II FICTION

Post-World War II academic fiction has taken a darker view of academia. Joanne Dobson's *Quieter than Sleep* (1997) aptly takes its title from a poem by the nineteenth century poet Emily Dickinson. The victim in this novel, Professor Randy Astin-Berger of Enfield College in Massachusetts, is killed because of his research into Dickinson. Karen Pelletier, who also teaches in the Enfield English department, is hired to help find the killer, who turns out to be another faculty member. The motive of the killing is academic: Astin-Berger's research contradicts the murderer's view of Dickinson. This book is typical of late twentieth century academic detective fiction in other ways as well. It is written by a female academic whose detective is, like her creator, a teacher of English. Despite the early twentieth century vogue for scientists as academic sleuths, those in the humanities, especially English teachers, have come to predominate, largely because academic mysteries are generally written by people in those disciplines.

Among the best-known writers of academic fiction during the postwar period is Amanda Cross, whose first novel appeared in 1964 (*In the Last Analysis*), introducing Kate Fansler, who, like her inventor, teaches at Columbia University. Like many other works in this subgenre, Cross's *Poetic Justice* (1970) is modeled on Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (1935), even including an engagement. Cross's vision of academia is close to



Another writer who has specialized in academic mysteries is Ann Waldron, whose female protagonist, McLeod Dulaney, is a distinguished journalist who teaches a course at Princeton University, where she gets involved in investigating a new murder every year. *A Rare Murder in Princeton* (2006) is the fourth title in the series that began with *The Princeton Murders* in 2003.

Sayers's as well. Although *Poetic Justice* is set at Columbia during the fall semester of 1968, following the spring 1968 student riots, Kate Fansler loves her scholarly world. Nevertheless, she recognizes problems within the university, which has "a fumbling, withdrawn administration and a self-indulged, indifferent faculty." Bill McQuire, who teaches economics, believes that undergraduates want only "to get confronted and laid, preferably on alternate days." Kate's fiancé, Reed Amhearst, who works in the district attorney's office, notes, "As troublemakers, the members of

the academic world have lost their amateur standing." Frederick Clemance wishes that the college were still "a world of gentlemen," but it is not. As in Dobson's *Quieter than Sleep*, the killer in Cross's novel is a faculty member. However, he intends only to incapacitate, not murder, his victim, a colleague who had become power-mad and who inadvertently contributes to his own demise.

In Cross's *Death in a Tenured Position* (1981) the all-male Harvard English department causes the death of Professor Janet Mandelbaum. In a disclaimer at the beginning of her book, Cross writes that she is not depicting the actual Harvard. However, in 1986 Harvard had 121 tenured female faculty members and 334 tenured male faculty members. *Poetic Justice* discusses the real salary gap in academia between male and female faculty members of the same rank, a disparity that led Carolyn Heilbrun, Cross's alter ego, to threaten to sue Columbia. Criticism of academia is not new to detective fiction. Kurt Steel's 1936 novel *Murder Goes to College* describes Chelsea College as standing for "the orderly genteel past of American letters and American men of science, a past when Greek and Latin were two marks of the gentleman and academic degrees proudly worn for their rarity." However, the murderer here is an academic, and a mathematics professor uses his skills to help a numbers racketeer.

INCREASINGLY NEGATIVE PORTRAYALS OF ACADEMIA

During the late twentieth century criticism of the academic world increased in mystery fiction. John D. MacDonald describes Nevada's fictional State Western University as designed to cram its students through "and feed them out into corporations and the tract houses" in *A Purple Place for Dying* (1964). In MacDonald's *A Deadly Shade of Gold* (1965) the fictional Florida Southwestern trains "ants to invent insecticides," not thinkers. Ruth Dudley Edwards's *Matriicide at St. Martha's* (1994) is another homage to *Gaudy Night*, but it also shows how far colleges have strayed from Sayers's ideal, at least in fiction. In this work the Cambridge woman's college of the title has received a large bequest that creates political wrangling among the three rival factions. One group, led by

Dame Maud Buckbarrow, wants to use the money for a postgraduate scholarship in a traditional discipline. Lesbians on the faculty want the money to be used for a gay and ethnic studies research center, and a third group believes that an improved faculty wine cellar and food service are long overdue. The bursar, Ida Troutbeck, comments, "This may look like an establishment for the education of docile young women, but it is packed for the most part with battleaxes, harpies and thought police." In the end, after two murders, Troutbeck becomes the head of the college and seeks to restore sanity and integrity.

In her 1993 novel *Murder at the MLA*, Nancy Cook describes the current state of English studies as divided between arrogant, unproductive old-guard Athenians and young Spartans who care nothing about literature or teaching and who publish books with titles such as *The Anal-Logical Philosophy of the Fag Hag* and give papers on "Autoeroticism or Carnal Knowledge: Steven Spielberg and the Vehicles of Desire."

Detective fiction has been accused of being escapist. Evil is always exposed and usually punished; love triumphs. Perhaps for academic authors these works are escapist in another sense as well—opportunities to kill off conceited colleagues or insufferable administrators or to track down killers instead of errant bibliographic references. Academic mysteries have nonetheless become more realistic. They depict the stresses of student life, as in Nancy Herndon's *Casanova Crimes* (1999), which deals with AIDS and date rape, and addresses issues such as faculty rivalries and the darker side of campus politics.

Joseph Rosenblum

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COZIES

The term “cozy” was first used to describe a particular type of mystery fiction in 1958, when it appeared in a review in the *Observer*, Great Britain’s oldest Sunday newspaper. Since then, the word has proven to be useful to both readers and critics. However, it has acquired several slightly different meanings, so care must be taken in its use and interpretation. For example, some critics equate “cozy” works with those that are considered “traditional” within the genre, thereby emphasizing the fact that this kind of fiction developed during the early days of mystery fiction and flourished in what has come to be known as the Golden Age. Other critics quite appropriately describe such fiction as “cozy/domestic,” for usually much of the action takes place within homes, whether they be great country houses, modest vicarages, or temporary abodes, such as the train in Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). Moreover, although there may be serious consequences at the national or even the international level when persons of high standing in society are accused of criminal behavior, at their core novels about such cases typically involve personal sins and private enmities.

Like comedies of manners, which in many ways they resemble, cozy mysteries are traditional in that they are light in tone. Their appeal is intellectual rather than emotional. They are filled with the kind of wit and humor, even satire, that one would find in a play by an eighteenth century British playwright such as Richard Brinsley Sheridan or Oliver Goldsmith. Even though they necessarily involve murders, cozy mysteries are not meant to stir readers emotionally. Violence is kept offstage, and gory descriptions of bodies are avoided. Within a cozy mystery, a pool of blood is simply that—a pool of blood. Emotionalism is also avoided in that while sexual involvements may be mentioned, there are no scenes of explicit sex.

Cozies also resemble comedies of manners in that their authors’ intentions are to deal with lapses from an ideal order. Within this context, murder is simply another example of bad manners. When murderers are exposed and expelled, the closed societies in which

cozy/domestic/traditional mystery novels are set can return to normal. As a result, cozy mysteries always conclude on optimistic notes. Thus, they simultaneously provide intelligent readers with intellectual challenges while enabling them to escape from a world in which the news always seems to be troubling.

AMATEUR CRIME-SOLVERS VS. PROFESSIONAL CRIMINALS

Crimes and criminals began to appear in novels and in short stories as soon as those genres were invented. The original picaresque novel, written by an unknown Spanish author, *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554; *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes: His Fortunes and Adversities*, 2005) is the story of an amoral trickster living by his wits. Transplanted to England, the form was used by Daniel Defoe for novels such as *Moll Flanders* (1722). That picaresque novel’s title character is a thief and occasional prostitute who is caught, imprisoned, and transported to Virginia but nevertheless ends up so wealthy that she can afford to repent of her sins.

The early nineteenth century American writer Edgar Allan Poe is usually credited with inventing modern detective fiction, and it is generally agreed that Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin, who first appeared in the short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in 1841, was the first important amateur sleuth in English literature. Significantly, both Dupin and the anonymous narrator of Poe’s story lodge in a large, gloomy Parisian mansion, the same kind of setting that would later be used in countless mysteries called cozies. It is also significant that most detectives in early cozy mysteries were amateurs, like Dupin. In Poe’s other Dupin stories, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” (1842) and “The Purloined Letter” (1844), he has professional policemen turn to the amateur for assistance. This pattern would become a staple of the cozy mystery form. Whenever Agatha Christie’s amateur detective, Miss Jane Marple, turns up in the vicinity of a dead body, sooner or later a police inspector will appear, hat in hand, begging for her help.

POLICE DETECTIVES

In later cozy novels, it is often professional policemen who track down murderers. The first important police detective in English fiction is generally believed to have been Inspector Bucket, who appeared in *Bleak House* (1852-1853), by the British novelist Charles Dickens. Bucket was evidently modeled on a real-life London police inspector whom Dickens admired. However, though there were crimes and criminals in all of Dickens's novels, it was his friend and fellow novelist Wilkie Collins who wrote the first true, full-length detective novel.

Although the plot of Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) involves an identity switch, a false imprisonment, an attempt to change birth records, and an Italian secret society bent on revenge, most critics classify it as a gothic novel, rather than a true mystery in which read-

ers are given all the clues that the sleuth uncovers so they can participate in the solution of the crime. It is Collins's novel *The Moonstone* (1868) that the British poet and critic T. S. Eliot called the first true detective novel. In that novel, Sergeant Cuff is called in to solve a mystery, the disappearance of a huge diamond, which only a few hours earlier was presented to an English girl on her eighteenth birthday. Its country-house setting, closed world, and limited number of suspects all anticipate the cozy form of the mystery novel, while the intellectual rigor that Sergeant Cuff applies to solving the crime is typical of that of all the great detectives that follow, both amateurs and professionals.

PHILIP TRENT AND A NEW KIND OF FICTION

By the turn of the twentieth century, all the ingredients of cozy mysteries were present in one work or an-



The first significant police detective in mystery fiction, Inspector Bucket searches a woman's boudoir for clues in an early edition of Charles Dickens's Bleak House (1852-1853).

other, with the exception of lightness of tone. The American writer Mary Roberts Rinehart displays humor in works such as *The Circular Staircase* (1908), but her works lack other aspects of the cozy subgenre that was developing. Rinehart's stories are realistic, often even graphic; however, detectives do not occupy central places in her narratives, and the stories lack clue-by-clue plot development.

The novel that defined the cozy mystery subgenre and at the same time launched the Golden Age of mystery fiction was *Trent's Last Case* (1913), published in America as *The Woman in Black*. Its author, E. C. (Edmund Clerihew) Bentley, was known in his native England as a journalist and the author of light verse, including many satirical biographies written in a four-line verse form called clerihews that he invented himself. In 1910, Bentley decided to write a humorous novel that would satirize the detective novel, specifically the kind produced by Arthur Conan Doyle. Although he admired Doyle's stories about Sherlock Holmes, Bentley found the detective too serious, too much impressed by himself and his powers, in essence too perfect to qualify as a convincing character. By contrast, Bentley's book would be light in tone, and his detective hero would be a real human being, complete with emotions, foibles, and the capacity for errors in reasoning. Bentley's approach is evident in the fact that while he was writing the book, he gave his hero a Dickensian name, "Philip Gasket." However, by the time Bentley's novel appeared, Philip Gasket had become Philip Trent, and his hero was not a fool to be mocked, but simply an intelligent human being who was as capable as the next man of misinterpreting clues and misreading character. What Bentley created was the first fallible sleuth.

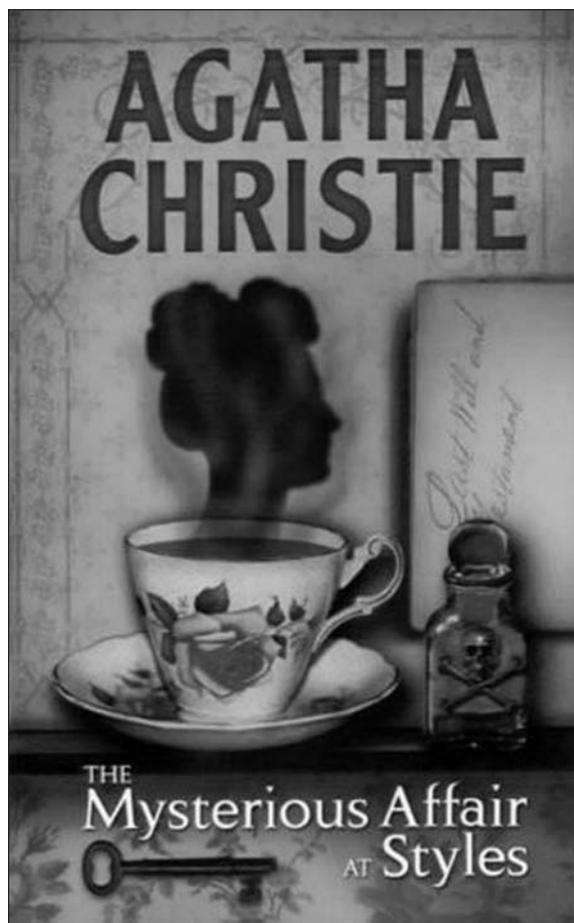
A tall, blond, unmarried man of thirty-two with impeccable manners, Philip Trent has an independent income and an established career as an artist. However, he has also had considerable success as a detective; in fact, a London paper regularly publishes his investigative reports. Because the murder of an American millionaire, Sigsbee Manderson, is having serious repercussions in the financial world, Trent is asked to go to Marlstone, Manderson's estate, to investigate the matter. There Trent finds that there is no shortage of sus-

pects, since everyone seems to have detested the murdered man. Manderson's widow, Mabel, is ecstatic about losing her husband, and his two secretaries, John Marlowe and Calvin Bunner, are almost as pleased. Trent collects clues, interviews servants, and acquires information from his old friend, Nathaniel Cupples, who happens to be Mabel's uncle. When his list of suspects narrows down to Marlowe and Mabel, Trent drops the case. A year later, he marries Mabel and resumes his investigation. However, it is not Trent but Cupples who comes up with the solution. As a result, at the end of the novel, Trent swears that this will indeed be his last case—hence the title of the novel.

Ironically, what Bentley intended to be a parody of the detective novel turned out to be the prototype of a new kind of mystery fiction with its own set of conventions. *Trent's Last Case* has the required confined setting, an estate in the country. The limited cast of characters includes the estate's occupants, their employees, and their guests, all of whom know one another. The list of suspects is even more limited because servants are routinely assumed to be innocent. The often-used phrase "the butler did it" should be regarded as a joke, for in cozy mysteries, only ladies and gentlemen commit murder. Finally, *Trent's Last Case* marked the initial appearance of the charming, witty amateur detective, who seasons the conversation with literary allusions, thus establishing the light-hearted tone that characterizes the subgenre.

LORD PETER WIMSEY

Despite the character's vow, Trent did reappear in several short stories and in the novel *Trent's Own Case* (1936). Meanwhile, the British critic and scholar Dorothy L. Sayers has admitted that the character of Trent influenced her in the creation of her own famous detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, the tall, blond, and elegant character whom she introduced in *Whose Body?* (1923). Like Trent, Wimsey is well read, witty, and given to expressing literary allusions. However, his habit of chattering inanely at serious moments, especially in the early books, gives others the impression that he is a mere dilettante. To the reader, it is evident that this disguise is intended to disarm other characters so that they will talk more freely in his presence, thus



making it easier for him to ferret out the truth. Unlike Trent, Wimsey always does so. However, like Trent, Wimsey falls desperately in love with a suspect.

Like Dorothy L. Sayers herself, the object of Wimsey's affections is a writer of detective novels, an intellectual, and a feminist. When Wimsey first sees her in *Strong Poison* (1930), Harriet Vane is on trial for murdering her lover. Wimsey manages to get the trial postponed, giving him enough time to solve the crime, thereby winning Vane's freedom. However, Vane is so traumatized by the experience that she is not capable of feeling anything more than gratitude toward her rescuer. Nevertheless, she thinks of Wimsey as a trusted friend, and when she next appears, in *Have His Carcase* (1932), the two friends team up to discover whether a dead body Vane found on a deserted beach was a suicide or a murder. In *Gaudy Night* (1935), Vane finally

accepts Wimsey's proposal of marriage; in *Busman's Holiday* (1937), the two are honeymooners; and in later short stories, they are the parents of three children. Altogether, Lord Peter Wimsey appeared in eleven novels and twenty-one stories before his creator abandoned the mystery form in 1940 in order to devote her energies to religious writing.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S GIFTED AMATEURS

Agatha Christie's 1920 novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* introduced another eminent fictional detective, Hercule Poirot, to the world. After retiring from the police force in his native Belgium, during the early years of World War I, Poirot was smuggled out of the country and settled in England, where after successfully solving the mystery at Styles, he launches into a second career as a private investigator. Poirot does not have the upper-class affectations of Wimsey but does have eccentricities of his own, including his passion for order, his loathing of being identified as French, and his inability to conceal his pride in his own brilliance. Poirot is as courteous and as chivalrous as any of the aristocrats he encounters, and despite being short in stature, he has a commanding presence. In Christie's early books about him, Poirot has an audience for his speculations, Captain Arthur Hastings, who is as well bred as he is obtuse. Later, however, Christie sent Hastings to Argentina and filled his place in Poirot's life with other characters, including an extremely efficient secretary, a manservant, and various friends, including the novelist Ariadne Oliver and various members of the police force.

Christie is also admired as the creator of another superb character, Miss Jane Marple, an elderly, upper-class English woman. Although her family connections include high-ranking government officials and members of the aristocracy, Marple appears to have led a sheltered life, first in a cathedral close and then in a country village, St. Mary Mead. Nevertheless, her life in St. Mary Mead has made her an expert on human nature and developed her ability to penetrate any disguise that is meant to conceal evil. Even when she leaves St. Mary Mead to visit friends at country houses or to spend a few days at luxurious hotels, thanks to the generosity of a family member, after a

few hours of observation she understands the situation and if a murder occurs, she can almost immediately spot the culprit.

Between the publication of her first novel in 1920 and her death in 1976, Christie produced eighty books. Poirot or Marple appeared in most of them, but Christie occasionally featured other sleuths. In *The Secret Adversary* (1922), for example, she introduced a husband and wife team, Tuppence and Tommy Beresford. In later years, she periodically called the Beresfords out of retirement, ostensibly because of popular demand. Even when they are involved in the most serious matters—such as their search for Nazi agents in *N or M?* (1941), this charming pair maintain the light-hearted tone that characterizes the cozy genre.

CHRISTIE'S PROFESSIONAL DETECTIVES

In most of Christie's novels brilliant amateurs solve the crimes, as policemen bumble about in confusion or shamefacedly seek their help. Nevertheless, Christie occasionally introduced professional detectives who are as effective as her amateurs. For example, Colonel Johnny Race, a member of His Majesty's secret foreign service, is both a suspect and a sleuth in *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924). Superintendent Battle of Scotland Yard is the hero in four Christie books issued over two decades. Race sometimes finds it useful to pose as a pompous, upper-class fool, but Battle is a solidly middle-class character unlike any of Christie's other detectives. Like Miss Marple, he observes people closely but lacks her intuitive qualities. Although he is intelligent, he is not as brilliant as Poirot, but because he is stolid in his behavior, his adversaries can easily dismiss him as unimaginative. Battle simply refuses to take anything at face value. Moreover, because he has no connections to society, he does not feel it necessary to pretend to believe anyone's story or to be captivated by anyone's charm. He simply files away information and soldiers on toward solutions. Tenacious as a bulldog, he never fails.

One of Christie's most interesting novels, *Cards on the Table* (1936), has a London socialite, Dr. Shaitana, invite Hercule Poirot, Ariadne Oliver, Superintendent Battle, and Colonel Race to a dinner party, along with four other guests, all of whom have good reasons to

wish their host dead. At the end of the evening, Colonel Race discovers Shaitana has been stabbed to death while sitting in his chair. The sleuths immediately set about to identify the murderer. Each sleuth has a different approach to detection, but by pooling their information and their insights, eventually they are successful.

MARGERY ALLINGHAM'S ALBERT CAMPION

One of the minor characters in Margery Allingham's 1929 mystery *The Crime at Black Dudley* is a well-mannered but seemingly obtuse man-about-town named Albert Campion who is eventually shown not only to be up to no good but also to have a criminal record. Allingham's next book, *Mystery Mile* (1930), expunged Campion's record and transformed him into a virtuous detective of noble lineage. Over the next forty years, Allingham wrote about Campion's adventures, featuring him in novels, novellas, and short stories. In his early appearances, Campion masks his intelligence with a practiced, vacant look and flippant comments. Later, however, he abandons that pose, while retaining his modest demeanor throughout all his triumphs as a sleuth. The changes in Campion may be attributable in part to his involvement with Lady Amanda Fitton, whom Allingham introduced in *Sweet Danger* (1933). Fitton's amazing mechanical skills and knowledge of electricity help Campion to succeed in tracking down murderers. More important, their growing love for each other and their eventual marriage bring Campion both joy and a new seriousness about life.

Although Campion always remains an amateur detective, he sometimes seeks help from two policemen, Stanislaus Oates and Charlie Luke. More often, however, he calls upon another kind of professional for help—Magersfontein Lugg, a former cat burglar who has become Campion's manservant. Lugg is as much at home in the underworld as Campion is at a house party in the country. Lugg has a dual role in the novels. Not only does he help Campion in his detective work, but as an eccentric from the lower orders of society he also provides valuable comic relief in stories that are essentially intellectual exercises. Mystery writers generally utilize villagers or servants in such roles, but few lower-class characters in cozy mysteries are as

memorable as Lugg, with his Cockney speech, pervasive pessimism, and the unique perspective derived from his colorful past.

NGAIO MARSH'S ARISTOCRATIC POLICEMAN

The New Zealand writer Ngaio Marsh joins Sayers, Christie, and Allingham as the fourth of the great woman mystery writers of the formative period of the cozy era who have collectively come to be known as the "Queens of Crime." Marsh's background was solidly of the middle class, but during her youth in Christchurch, New Zealand, she was befriended by an aristocratic family and included in their social life. As a result, she felt very much at home at country house parties and other society functions. She knew how members of the upper classes talked, how they behaved, and how their mental processes worked. It was only appropriate that the British sleuth whom Marsh introduced in her first novel, *A Man Lay Dead* (1942), is an aristocrat, the brother of a baronet.

The hero in all Marsh's subsequent mysteries, Roderick Alleyn is also no amateur, but a hard-working police inspector who eventually ascends to the rank of chief superintendent. Unlike Wimsey and Campion, Alleyn never pretends to be frivolous; he is urbane but never affected, dignified but never pompous. If members of his social class expect special treatment from him, they soon discover that while he will treat them politely, he will not do them any special favors. As a working policeman, Alleyn accepts the fact that he must operate as part of a team. He routinely depends on the help of a pathologist from the Home Office, as well as a photographer and a fingerprint expert from Scotland Yard, all of whom reappear in one book after another. However, the most important of these recurring characters is Inspector Edward Fox, an unpretentious man whose special talent is extracting information from servants. Interestingly, both detectives have a habit that they share with the aristocratic amateurs in novels by other writers: They frequently insert lines from William Shakespeare into their discussions. In this regard, Ngaio Marsh bows to another cozy convention: inserting passages that do not advance the plot but instead display linguistic agility, wit, and humor, usually including literary allusions.

Although Alleyn has no illusions about his society and its murderous members, he is no iconoclast. However, he falls in love with a woman with a mind of her own. He first meets the high-spirited Agatha Troy in *Artists in Crime* (1938). Troy is a painter, as unconventional, at least on occasion, as Alleyn is conventional. As is typical in cozy mysteries, the courtship lasts through several volumes, but eventually the lovers marry. The finely honed skills in observation that make Troy a successful artist prove to be useful as Alleyn goes about the detection process. Thus Troy, too, plays a role as a member of Alleyn's team.

SOCIAL CLASS AND SETTINGS

The primary sleuths that appear in cozy mysteries by the four "Queens" credited with establishing the form vary as to background, age, and gender. Most, but not all, are brilliant amateurs. Some are aristocrats, others are not. Some are reserved, others deliberately affected. However, all of them are recognizable as ladies and gentleman, who can appropriately be invited to take tea in elegant drawing rooms or to sit down to dinner with aristocratic guests at country-house weekends. Class is thus not a barrier to their investigations. By contrast, in early twentieth century mysteries professional police officers would be expected to enter great houses through servant entrances, as if they were tradesmen. In Marsh's writings, Roderick Alleyn is welcomed in society because of his bloodlines, not because of the high rank in his profession that he eventually attains.

The primary detectives in cozy mysteries, then, have the advantage of being members of the small societies within which they operate. Their processes of investigation are aided immeasurably by the fact that these sleuths are familiar with these societies and with their spoken and unspoken languages. They are not likely to be impressed by wealth or lineage, to take praise at face value, to miss hints of scandal, or to mistake plausible lies for the truth. Moreover, suspects feel so at ease in the company of members of their own class that they are easily persuaded to gossip about one another. By interviewing suspects separately, the sleuths can acquire useful information not only about the interviewees but also about other characters.

Another convention of the early cozy mysteries, the closed setting, is more flexible than may at first appear. For example, Agatha Christie sometimes confines her suspects to a country house, as she does in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. However, in *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), the action begins on an ocean-going steamship and then moves to an African train. In *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), the closed setting is not only the vicarage, where the body is found, but also the whole village of St. Mary Mead. In *Peril at End House* (1932), Hercule Poirot operates in three closed settings, the garden of a Cornish seaside hotel, a nearby country house, and a nursing home where the supposed target of the murderer is sent for her own protection. Christie's settings include a seaside golf course in *The Boomerang Clue* (1934), an airplane in *Death in the Air* (1935), a riverboat in *Death on the Nile* (1937) and even a dentist's office in *The Patriotic Murders* (1940).

CLOSED SETTINGS REDEFINED

Although Agatha Christie ordinarily limited her settings spatially, her contemporaries often had their characters occupy the same "world" of professional interests, though they are not necessarily together inside single buildings. Thus Dorothy L. Sayers's *Murder Must Advertise* (1933) is set in an advertising agency, which does have a central location, while her *Gaudy Night* (1935) deals with dons, students, and servants spread out across an Oxford University college. The focus of her *The Nine Tailors* (1934) is a set of bells in a village church and the men who ring changes on them. Margery Allingham's *Death of a Ghost* (1934) deals with painters and painting, while *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938) is set in the world of high culture. Characters in her novel *Dancers in Mourning* (1937) are all involved in a musical theater production, though the settings include both London's Argosy Theater and a leading dancer's country estate.

Ngaio Marsh was an experienced actress, playwright, and producer, who for some thirty years worked with college drama students in Christchurch, New Zealand. Consequently, she knew and loved the world of the theater. It was only natural that she should frequently use theater as settings. In *Enter a Murderer*

(1941), for example, an actor is shot on the stage. However, Marsh does not confine herself to actual theatrical settings; it is the theater world generally that interests her. Thus in one of her best mysteries, *Vintage Murder* (1936), she has Roderick Alleyn and Agatha Troy travel along the same route being taken by a British theater troupe touring New Zealand. The scene in another of Marsh's novels, *Final Curtain* (1947) is a castle that is the home of a famous Shakespearean actor, and his murder is carried out with all the finesse of a theatrical production. Marsh also utilized other worlds as settings for her novels. Often, as in *Artists in Crime* (1938), her characters are artists. In *Swing, Brother, Swing* (1949), they are musicians, and in *Death of a Fool* (1957) they are villagers drawn together by their participation in an annual fertility ritual.

REALISM AND THE RESURGENCE OF COZIES

Although hard-boiled detectives began appearing in American mysteries as early as the 1920's, the realistic school of fiction did not become dominant until the 1940's in the United States and the 1950's in Great Britain. Cozy mysteries were still published, but they were not as popular as they had been earlier. During the 1960's, however, some readers tired of realism, with its brutal details and consistent pessimism. They reread the older writers in the cozy subgenre and looked for new ones.

The revival of the cozy domestic was recognized by the establishment in 1989 of Malice Domestic, which meets annually in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of paying tribute to the types of traditional mysteries typified by the works of Agatha Christie. The organization maintains an online Web site that defines such mysteries as containing "no explicit sex or excessive gore or violence; and usually (*but are not limited to*) featuring an amateur detective, a confined setting, and characters who know one another." Malice Domestic presents Agatha Awards to authors whose works meet its standards. These awards are now given out in five categories: best first novel, best novel, best nonfiction, best short story, and best children/young adult fiction. In addition, periodically a Malice Domestic Award for Lifetime Achievement is given to recognize a writer's body of work in the genre. Many

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Elizabeth George (AP/Wide World Photos)

winners of Agatha Awards for best first novel have become popular favorites. Among them are Elizabeth George (1988), Barbara Neely (1992), Nevada Barr (1993), Anne George (1996), and Julia Spencer-Fleming (2002). One year after winning the Agatha for best first novel in 2003, Jacqueline Winspear received the Agatha for best novel. Other best-novel winners have included Carolyn G. Hart (1988, 1993, 2003), Sharyn McCrumb (1994, 1995), Elizabeth Peters (1989), Margaret Maron (1992, 1996, 2000), Kate Ross (1997), and Rhys Bowen (2001).

ADAPTATIONS

Even a cursory examination of the partial list of Agatha Award winners reveals how various writers have adapted the cozy mystery subgenre to changes in society and readers' interests. For example, Kate Ross's novels, which are set in the Regency period of early nineteenth century England, are conventional in

that their detective is a London dandy, and his assistant and valet is a former pickpocket. However, her books do not limit their scope to country-house murders; they are just as likely to be found in London's ill-famed Haymarket district. Similarly, the American writer Elizabeth George is known for her adherence to the conventional pattern of the cozy mystery. Her Inspector Thomas Lynley is an English earl, and his subordinate, Sergeant Barbara Havers, is defiantly lower class. Lynley also utilizes the sleuthing talents of three members of his own class, his fiancé and later his wife Lady Helen Clyde; his long-time friend Simon St. James, a forensic scientist; and Simon's wife, Deborah. Their conversations are marked by the same kind of wit found in mysteries written seventy years earlier. However, George also increasingly makes contemporary social problems the focus of their investigations, for example, immigrant unrest, London gangs, and child abuse and abduction.

Cozy mysteries written late in the twentieth century or early in the twenty-first often emphasize the efforts of women to break out of their conventional roles. In her series about two Victorian archaeologists in Egypt, Elizabeth Peters makes it clear that her heroine Amelia Peabody Emerson is a full partner of her husband Radcliffe Emerson. Both characters often display their contempt for the constricting social conventions of their time and class. For example, the immensely practical Amelia has a habit of discarding her cumbersome female attire and donning trousers instead.

Through the life story of Maisie Dobbs, Jacqueline Winspear shows how the breakdown in society that followed World War I opened up opportunities for lower-class women. Only a decade earlier, it would not have been possible for a housemaid like Dobbs to aspire to anything better than a life in service. However, Dobbs obtains an education, serves as a frontline nurse, and then after the war becomes a private investigator and soon is running her own business.

Rhys Bowen's turn-of-the-twentieth-century heroine Molly Murphy also defies convention. First she defends herself against the advances of a landowner's son, and when the encounter results in the son's accidental death, instead of staying in Ireland to be hanged, Murphy flees to New York. There at first she

does what society expects of her: She becomes an old woman's companion. Then she decides to defy the rules and do what she wants to do. She, too, becomes a private investigator.

THE NEW DETECTIVES

Detective novels set in the present reflect more recent social changes. Even Anne George's Southern Sisters mysteries, set in traditionally conservative Alabama, show how barriers of race, class, and gender have been eliminated. George's primary sleuth, Patricia Anne Hollowell, is a retired schoolteacher. However, her women friends, several of whom are African Americans, work in a wide variety of occupations, ranging from police work to genealogical research to playing Mrs. Santa Claus in retail stores during the Christmas season. While seeing members of their extended family, the sisters are as likely to visit a trailer park as one of the mountain-top mansions of Birmingham. Their range of friends and acquaintances is as wide as that of Margaret Maron's Deborah Knott, a North Carolina judge who finds that wherever her profession takes her, she is likely to find someone who claims to be kin. Inevitably, she also has to deal with men who do not like to see women in positions of authority.

The women who have become the primary detectives in most cozy mysteries work in many different fields. They may be chefs, caterers, wedding planners, or producers of greeting cards. Barbara Neely's African American heroine, Blanche White, has a job as a housekeeper in an exclusive section of Boston. Carolyn Hart's Annie Laurance owns a bookstore; Sharyn McCrumb's Elizabeth MacPherson is a forensic anthropologist; and Nevada Barr's Anna Pigeon is a park ranger. In 2002, Julia Spencer-Fleming won the Agatha Award for best first novel for *In the Bleak Midwinter*. Clare Ferguson, the amateur detective in that novel, is a former army helicopter pilot who is now an Episcopal priest.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, readers could find cozy mysteries to appeal to almost any interest. For example, some mysteries involved quilt-making and crossword puzzles; some featured cookery and included recipes; and many mysteries appealed to animal-lovers, notably Lilian Jackson Braun's popular

Cat Who books, in which Siamese cats seem to assist in solving mysteries. Other books include well-researched mysteries in which fictional characters, such as Sherlock Holmes, or long-dead writers, such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Mark Twain, are brought back to life in the appropriate historical period and presented with crimes to solve.

The cozy mystery has expanded in directions that were never envisioned by the creators of the genre. However, the works' assessments of popular tastes have proven to be accurate. There will probably always be readers who dislike gritty realism, graphic violence, and explicit sex, but are drawn to books with interesting settings, well-realized characters, and displays of wit and humor, books in the cozy mystery subgenre that can be depended upon to present an intellectual challenge and to end with order restored.

Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

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ETHNIC AMERICAN MYSTERY FICTION

Ethnicity as a literary trope has been prevalent since nineteenth century colonialism stimulated images of Native American and African savagery and European social prejudices resulted in stereotyped images of African Americans and Jews. However, the American literary employment of ethnic characters and issues has been largely a response to a home-grown issue, the resistance to and later accommodation of alien-seeming peoples entering the American ethnic mix.

The classification of fictional African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic, and Jewish characters as “ethnic” can often be misleading. Many of these characters are thoroughly American in every way, although as members of recognizable minorities they see themselves as set apart. A Nisei investigator or a Native American sleuth might be presumed to reflect alien cultural influences, including the speaking of a non-English language, adherence to a non-Western religion, and a value structure and way of thinking. It is the degree of cultural difference that drives the best of the ethnic mystery stories, those that depict other cultures accurately and use them as more than simple exotic backdrops.

Because African Americans are more thoroughly Westernized Americans than members of some of the other ethnic groups, stories about them tend to draw less on dramatic cultural differences and more on variations of social roles and distinctive minority perspectives. The novels of Chester Himes provide a good illustration. His two Harlem detectives, Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones, are in the position of enforcers of the law against their own people and must brutally show the enemy flag in occupied territory to negate the possibility of insurrection. The rule of the white majority is depicted as corrupt and indifferent, designed only to contain crime in black communities. Justice is an irrelevant concept that is not even a goal. The resonance of Himes’s mysteries comes not from the interplay of cultural differences or alien perspectives, but rather from the plight of a powerless minority group caught in an untenable situation.

The modern subgenre of ethnic mystery fiction has grown out of a shift in American thinking about immigrants. Ethnic, or cross-cultural, detectives have been around at least since the 1920’s, when Earl Derr Biggers created his Chinese Hawaiian detective Charlie Chan, who spoke in something like pidgin English, frequently quoted Confucian aphorisms, and had an obsessive attention to details. During the 1930’s, John P. Marquand created Chan’s counterpart, the stereotyped Japanese detective Mr. Moto, a master of disguise. During the 1940’s and 1950’s, Ken Crossen created in pulp magazine stories two Tibetan detectives who worked in America: Chin Kwang Kahm and the Green Lama. The latter was an American who gains superhuman strength, invulnerability, and the ability to fly by studying Tibetan philosophy.

EARLY DETECTIVES AND INFLUENCES

Ethnic American detectives did not come fully into their own in mystery fiction until the 1970’s, a time of sharply increased immigration into the country and changing attitudes about ethnicity. By then, many Americans were reading detective stories by foreign writers who employed ethnically diverse characters. Examples include the South African James McClure, who wrote about the unlikely detective team of Afrikaner Tromp Kramer and Zulu Mickey Zondi; the Australian Arthur Upfield, whose Inspector Napoleon “Bony” Bonaparte often uses an Aborigine tracker in his investigations; and Janwillem van de Wetering, a Dutch writer whose characters included the Japanese inspector Saito. H. R. F. Keating wrote about an Indian police inspector named Ganesh Gote, and the British diplomat James Melville wrote about a Japanese police superintendent. The characters in the works of these and other authors combined the appealing intrigue of foreign settings with demonstrations of people of different ethnicities and nationalities working together to promote justice. The refreshing uniqueness of these detective novels helped promote the idea of ethnic diversity in American detective fiction. The concept of the ethnic detective is a natural one in

American culture, which is built on ethnic diversity. While ethnic American detectives may have been slow to arrive on the scene, they have become an integral part of the modern mystery and detective genre.

AFRICAN AMERICAN DETECTIVES

In her introduction to an anthology of long-unavailable crime and espionage stories by African American writers, novelist Paula L. Woods points out that the mystery genre offers unique opportunities for black writers to explore important social issues and counter ethnic stereotypes, while at the same time helping to educate by reaching large audiences. For these reasons and others, an immense number of African American authors have taken to writing mystery and detective fiction. The best of the African American detective stories turn on the idea of point of view, a dual perspective, a vision of the weaknesses in a system that proclaims one set of values and practices another. Their heroes, like those of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, tend to be cynical about the justice system. The issues of race they raise have also influenced authors who write about other minorities.

African American characters now occupy a significant part of the spectrum of ethnic characters in modern mystery and detective fiction, but they have actually been around for a surprisingly long time. One of the earliest black detectives was John E. Bruce's Sadipe Okukenu, whose adventures were serialized in "The Black Sleuth" (1907-1909) in *The McGirt's Reader*. A later figure, Octavius Roy Cohen's Florian Slappey, an Alabaman transplanted to Harlem, was a black caricature in *Florian Slappey* (1928). Another early African American police investigator was Harlem detective Perry Dart, who appeared in Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure-Man Dies* (1932), a book that is often called the first black detective novel. During the 1940's, African American police officers appeared only as minor figures in fiction until the African American author Joe Hughes Allison's Detective Joe Hill appeared in "Corollary" in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1948.

During the 1950's, the first African American writer to gain serious attention in the mystery was Chester Himes. His two famous hard-boiled Harlem

detectives, Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones, are outspokenly bitter about the racism that afflicts their work. Their stories forced readers to take more realistic looks at ghetto life. Johnson and Jones are always heavily armed and have their own personal interpretations of law enforcement. Their territory is physically and psychically violent and chaotic, full of fearful people who have learned to turn silently inward or explode outward in murderous rage. Himes's novels, which include *A Rage in Harlem* (1957), *The Real Cool Killers* (1959), *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965), and *Blind Man with a Pistol* (1969), capture the smells and sights of Harlem and force readers to look closely at street gangs, the heroin trade, and the homosexual subculture, alongside rent parties and fish fries, jazz, and wakes.

Another African American writer who made his mark during the 1960's is Ed Lacy. His novel *Harlem Underground* (1965) captures the difficulty that Toussaint Moore faces in having to choose between keeping a secure government job as a postal worker and experiencing the risks and excitement of being a private investigator.

The 1970's saw the emergence of a tougher and hipper generation of black detectives. Ernest Tidyman enjoyed the success of creating an African American private investigator who became an iconic figure in films. In keeping with the new breed of African American detectives, John Shaft, the tough, hip Harlem private eye he introduced in 1970, demanded respect. So, too, did Percy Spurlock Parker's Bull Benson and Kenn Davis's Carver Bascombe, for both of whom violence brought power and community prestige. Donald Goines, who wrote the first two books in his Kenyatta series from prison under the name Al C. Clark, involves his detective hero in a black revolutionary campaign to end inner-city exploitation in *Black Gangster* (1972) and *Cry Revenge!* (1974). Meanwhile, satirist and poet Ishmael Reed went where no one else had gone by making his detective PaPa LaBas a "hoodoo priest"—a sacred witch doctor who smells out evil and corruption in *Mumbo-Jumbo* (1972) and *The Last Days of Louisiana Red* (1974).

Since the 1970's, the number and diversity of African American detectives who have emerged has been

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almost staggering. The vast quantity of African American detectives appears to represent their creators' recognition of the need to give voice to those silenced in the past by political and personal mainstream attitudes. The numerous new professional private investigators range from Grace F. Edwards's Mali Anderson, a former police officer who has returned to graduate studies and become a private investigator, to Kenn Davis's San Francisco poet/investigator Carver Bascombe. Amateur African American sleuths include George P. Pelecanos's record store owner Marcus Clay; Veronica Parker Johns's Webster Flagg, whose occupation as a cook and butler has made him privy to secrets not heard by others; James Sallis's New Or-

leans novelist and private investigator Lew Griffin; and Gar A. Haywood's Joe and Dottie Loudermilk, a retired married couple who spend most of their time traveling.

The many female African American private investigators include Susan Moody's Penny Wanawake; Nora DeLoach's sleuthing sisters Candi and Simone Covington; Julie Smith's New Orleanian Talba "Baroness Pontalba" Wallis; Charlotte Carter's Nanette Hayes, a street saxophonist and Grace Jones look-alike; and Valerie Wilson Wesley's Newark private investigator Tamara Hayle. In *Blanche on the Lam* (1992), author Barbara Neely goes beyond race and gender to involve class issues by making her amateur sleuth, Blanche White, a domestic worker in the contemporary South.

One of the most widely read and influential of the new generation of African American mystery writers is Walter E. Mosley, who introduced his unlicensed black detective Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins in *Devil in a Blue Dress* in 1990. Mosely sets his novels in the Los Angeles of the postwar 1940's.

AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICE DETECTIVES

Black police officers have appeared in many works of crime fiction written by both black and nonblack authors. For example, Ed McBain's 87th Precinct series features a black detective named Arthur "Big Bad Leroy" Brown, whose physical size often intimidates suspects into confessions. Among many others are Hugh Holton's Chicago police commander Larry Cole; Ed Lacy's police detective Lee Hayes; and John T. Lescroart's San Francisco police detective Abe Glitsky, who is also part Jewish. However, the best known is probably John Ball's Virgil Tibbs, the dignified and compassionate California policeman of *In the Heat of the Night* (1965), who won fame when actor Sidney Portier portrayed him in a series of film adaptations of Ball's books. George Baxt introduced a somewhat different kind of black officer in his flamboyantly gay New York cop Pharoah Love (*A Queer Kind of Death*, 1966). In James Patterson's novel *Along Came a Spider* (1993), Alex Cross is a Washington, D.C., police investigator with a doctorate in psychology who has had to give up his chosen vocation because few patients were willing to consult a black psychologist.

Black women police detectives are fewer in number. Among those who do exist are Richard A. Lupoff's Berkeley homicide detective Marcia Plum, Paula L. Woods's Los Angeles homicide detective Charlotte Justice, and Eleanor Taylor Bland's widowed detective Marti MacAlister.

While black police officers typically face racial barriers to their promotion, distrust from fellow officers, and racist treatment from victims, witnesses, and fellow officers alike, they may just as readily be the demanding commanders of homicide squads or members of smooth-working investigatory teams. There is no clear pattern to the depictions of black police officers, except the obvious implication that they are vital to policing America's mean streets.

ASIAN MYSTERIES

Although the number of Americans of Asian descent is significant smaller than those of African descent, Asian Americans have written or inspired a volume of mystery and detective fiction out of proportion to their numbers. Until the late twentieth century, however, most of the Asian American characters who appeared in the genre were the creations of non-Asian American writers.

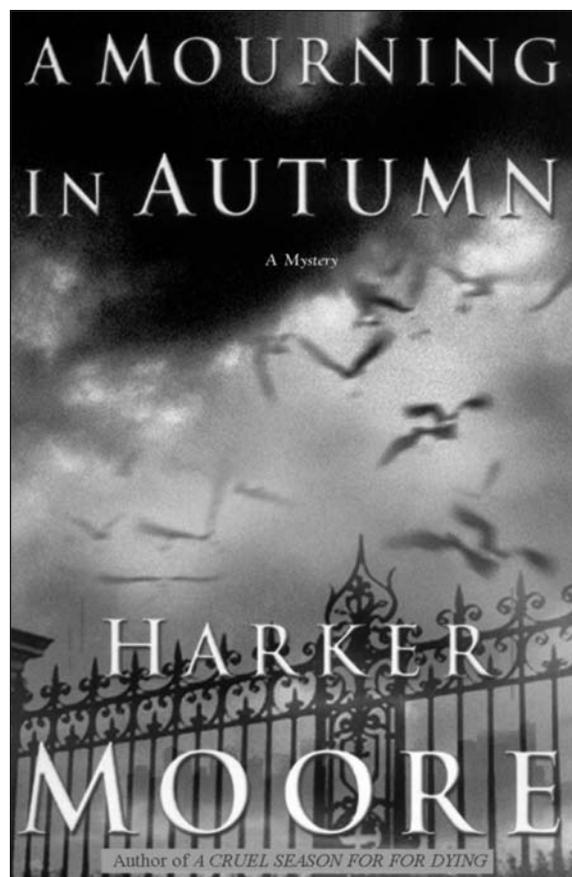
Writing as E. V. Cunningham in 1967, Howard Fast was ahead of his time when he launched his Masato Masuto series (1967-1984) with *Samantha*. A tall, lean Nisei man who works for the Beverly Hills Police Department, Masuto is a Zen Buddhist who speaks Spanish and empathizes with the common man. He takes on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), big industry, white-collar criminals, funeral homes, and California liberal racists.

Asian American detectives following Fast's lead have burgeoned. Japanese American writer Dale Furutani's Ken Tanaka series employs a Japanese American detective who solves crimes in Los Angeles. Other Nisei detectives have included John Ball's Bob Nakamura, Paul Bishop's Los Angeles policewoman Tina Tamiko; Ray Gilligan's Reiko Masada; Nan Hamilton's Sam O'Hara; Richard LaPlante's Josef Tanaka; and Anne Wingate's Mark Shigata, a former FBI agent who has become a sheriff in Bayport, Texas.

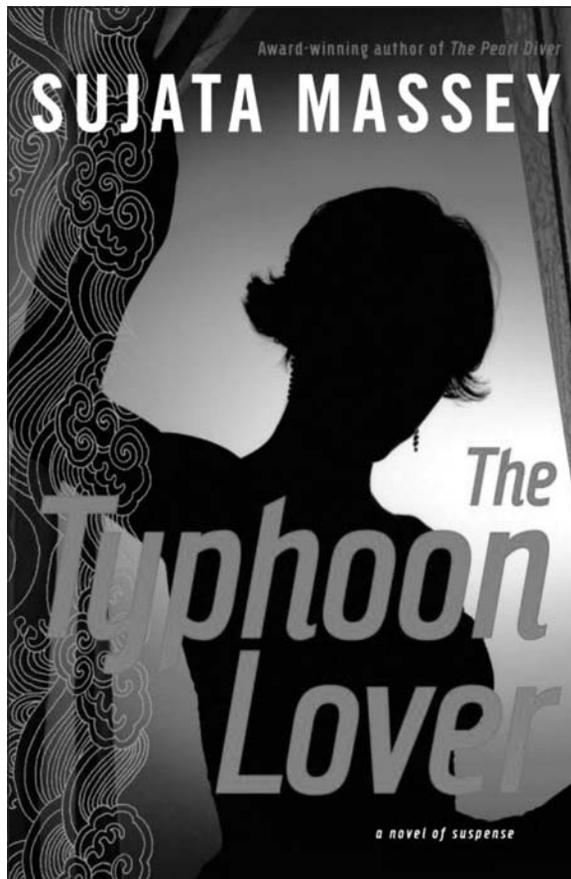
Harker Moore's Japanese American New York Po-

lice Department (NYPD) lieutenant James Sakura heads the department's Special Homicide Unit and tracks down serial killers with the aid of an FBI profiler and an intuitive wife. Science fiction writer Poul Anderson's Norwegian Japanese detective Trygve Yamamura bridges three worlds: America, Norway, and Japan. Naomi Hirahara's Japanese American gardener and amateur sleuth Mas Ara, from Pasadena with relatives in Brooklyn, deals with an assimilated community that maintains some Japanese ties, while Sujata Massey's antiquities expert Rei Shimura uses her special knowledge to uncover stolen goods, such as antiquities looted from Iraq.

Asian American detectives are not limited to characters of Japanese heritage. Charles Goodrum has created the Chinese American detective Kit Change. Oth-



In Harker Moore's second James Sakura novel, *A Mourning in Autumn* (2004), the NYPD detective tracks a gruesome serial killer.



Sujata Massey's eighth Rei Shimura novel, The Typhoon Lover (2005), has the Asian American antiquities expert go to Japan to investigate an ancient ewer that is missing from a Baghdad museum.

ers include S. J. Rozain's Lydia Chan and Leslie Glass's New York police officer April Woo. Henry J. Gambino's Philadelphia homicide detective Douglas MacArthur Kim is part Korean and part European, alienated from his American stepfather who brought him to the United States and abandoned him and torn between two cultures as he practices his profession

In *TickTock* (1996) Dean Koontz spoofs the ethnic detective phenomenon through his Vietnamese American amateur detective, Chip Nguyen. A martial arts expert and chess master, Nguyen is tough and philosophical but often silly. A fantasy projection, Koontz's Nguyen comically sums up what often goes wrong in detective stories in which ethnicity is defined by superficial and simplistic identifiers, such as ethnic

names, attire, and foods that in no way address true differences of perception, values, behavior, and habits.

HISPANIC DETECTIVES

As one might expect, there are a number of detectives of Hispanic descent. Although most of them tend to be well assimilated into mainstream American culture, they usually have the advantage of speaking two languages and can therefore enter into two distinct cultures. However, apart from superficial differences in skin color, food preferences, and attire, they are little different from mainstream figures. Some are stereotyped as good dancers, flashy dressers, or womanizers, as are Rex Burns's Denver cop Gabe Wager; Dell Shannon's independently wealthy and colorful Lieutenant Luis Mendoza, the head of the Los Angeles homicide department; Marilyn Wallace's Oakland homicide detective Carlos Cruz; Richard and Frances Lockridge's police detective Ricardo Bueno; and Richard Martin Stern's smartly dressed police lieutenant Johnny Ortiz. R. J. Hamilton sets his Lorenzo Garcia apart from other police officers by making him gay. Other writers have created dozens of other Hispanic police detectives and private investigators. Most are of Mexican or Central American heritage, but some trace their origins back to other parts of Latin America. K. J. A. Wishnia's apprentice private investigator Filomena Buscarsela, who served as a New York cop, differs in being from Ecuador. However, that difference means little to her successful assimilation into American culture.

Amateur detectives vary greatly in calling. Marcia Muller's Mexican American detective Elena Olivere is an art expert, Carol Cail's Carmen Ramirez is a newspaper editor, Michael Nava's Henry Rios is a defense attorney, and Manuel Ramos's Luis Montez is an attorney and political and social activist. In some cases these investigators are proof of American diversity transformed by the melting pot; in others, they speak for those on the economic fringes of American society. In some cases they move readers into alien worlds. For example, Rudolfo Anaya's Sonny Baca, an Albuquerque private investigator, becomes caught up in Santeria and in Native American visionary experiences that involve peyote-induced dreams, shapeshifting, and time jumping.

JEWISH DETECTIVES

Just as it can be easy to overgeneralize about members of other ethnic groups, it can be easy to overgeneralize about Jewish Americans. In fact, American Jews can be subdivided into several overlapping communities, including completely assimilated secular Jews with little Jewish cultural identity, Reform and Conservative Jews who practice varying degrees of Jewish culture but are basically accepting of modern American culture, Orthodox Jews who practice strict adherence to Talmudic teaching, and ultra-Orthodox Jews whose powerful unifying values and determined rejection of mainstream cultural values and of less orthodox forms of Judaism often lead them to be labeled, possibly unfairly, as members of “sects.”

Each Jewish group has its own place in mystery and detective fiction. Unassimilated Jewish detectives—usually amateurs, such as Faye Kellerman’s Rina Lazarus—have some of the same exotic appeal as Nisei and Native American detectives. All are practitioners of unfamiliar ways of thinking, ways shaped by non-Western languages, non-Christian religions. If linguist Benjamin Whorf is correct in asserting that a people’s worldview is shaped by the grammar of its mother tongue, then Nisei, Native American, and ultra-Orthodox Jewish detectives are likely to follow lines of reasoning quite different from those followed by other American detectives. Indeed, the very concept of crime differs among different communities and cultures.

Jewish detectives who are more thoroughly assimilated into American culture than their Orthodox counterparts have a different appeal to readers. They offer elements both familiar and different to readers. The ethical emphases of Judaism also create the possibilities of interesting counterpoint with existing police values. Most Jewish detectives whom readers encounter are highly assimilated. They tend to be simply mainstream Americans with Jewish family heritages, such as author Jack Webb’s Los Angeles cop Sammy Golden and Ed McBain’s 87th Precinct cop Meyer Meyer. The list of other fictional Jewish detectives and private investigators is long and includes the creations of such well-known writers as George Baxt, Octavus Roy Cohen, E. V. Cunningham, Dan Greenburg, Nat Hentoff, Joan Hess, Stuart Kaminsky, Elizabeth Lin-

ington, and Roger Simon. To that list can be added John T. Lescroart, whose San Francisco police officer Abe Glitsky is also part African American.

Perhaps the best-known Jewish figure in detective fiction is Harry Kemelman’s Rabbi David Small, introduced in *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* in 1964. A scholar schooled in Judaic tradition and inflexible in his principles, Rabbi Small is more truly ethnic than most Jewish detectives in fiction, and he uses his knowledge of Judaism to solve crimes involving temple members, by following the logic of Talmudic interpretation.

Likewise, Faye Kellerman’s Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus series takes readers into the world of Orthodox Judaism. However, in contrast to Kemelman’s books, her mysteries often become more like lessons in Jewish orthodoxy than like lessons in criminal detection. Attracted to Peter Decker but disturbed by his assimilation into mainstream culture, Rina Lazarus preaches orthodoxy and resistance to assimilation, asserting that the old ways are superior to mainstream values. In such works as *Sacred and Profane* (1987), *Day of Atonement* (1991), and *Sanctuary* (1994), Lazarus seeks to bring Decker back into the closed community of conservative Judaism. Whether intentionally or not, she makes readers consider the special problems faced by members of ethnic minorities who choose to cut themselves off from the cultural mainstream.

NATIVE AMERICAN MYSTERIES

Although Native Americans constitute one of the smallest major ethnic groups in the United States, a surprisingly large number of mystery and detective novels use Native American characters as detectives and private investigators. Andrew and Gina Macdonald’s book *Shape-Shifting: Images of Native Americans in Recent Popular Fiction* (2000) discusses thirty-eight authors who write about Native American detectives, and the same authors’ book *Shaman or Sherlock: The Native American Detective* (2001) analyzes more than one hundred fictional Native American detectives. However, despite the impressive numbers of writers and characters whom they examine, they find only a handful of writers who depict their characters in ways that use their ethnic characteristics



Tony Hillerman. (AP/Wide World Photos)

in meaningful ways to integrate the ethnic and the detective.

A common problem with mystery stories featuring Native American detectives is a lack of ethnic authenticity: Many Native American detectives think and act like mainstream Americans. Artificial Native Americans are easily created by simply applying to them accoutrements of Native American cultures and having them make vague references to the “Great Spirit” and use their powers of intuition more than their powers of reasoning. An apt example is C. O. Yabro’s series detective, Charlie Spotted Moon, a Canadian Ojibwa and San Francisco lawyer who turns to shamanism in his investigations whenever reason fails him. Another example is J. F. Trainor’s Angela Biwaban, who insists that she is Ah-nish-ih-nay-bay, not Chippewa. Biwaban mimics the Lone Ranger’s sidekick Tonto by calling her parole officer “Kemo Sabe” and defines being Indian as having “an attitude.” Christopher Lane’s Inupiak police officer Ray Attla and Stan Jones’s Inupiak state trooper Nathan Active both have all the trappings of members of a different culture. However, their stories do not take readers into the minds of native peoples.

Other Native American characters are more convincingly authentic. For example, Mercedes Lackey’s Osage-Cherokee heroine of *Sacred Ground* (1994),

criminologist P. T. Jennifer Talldeer, employs the magic inherited from her shaman grandfather to bring spirit power to bear on her cases. Aimee and David Thurlo’s Lee Nez, who is both a vampire-nightwalker and a New Mexico police officer, moves readers into a different plane of reality wherein the real world is manipulated and controlled by an invisible spirit world. When Naomi Stokes’s Salish reservation sheriff Jordan Tidewater goes on a spirit journey to battle an ancient evil spirit in *Tree People* (1995) or Coyote magically interferes in human activities as in

Micah Hackler’s *Coyote Returns* (1996), detective work tends to get lost amid supernatural happenings.

Some of the most outstanding examples of authentic ethnic fiction can be found in the seventeen novels Tony Hillerman published about Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police through 2006. Hillerman himself is not Native American, but he grew up among Native Americans in Oklahoma and developed a strong empathy for their cultures. After serving with some distinction in World War II, he became a journalist and eventually edited a newspaper in New Mexico, where he lived close to other Native American cultures. His novels about Leaphorn and Chee pay considerable attention to the conflicts they face in carrying out their responsibilities as police while staying true to their Navajo culture and community. Leaphorn and Chee constantly struggle to function within the white world and have it make sense to their Navajo ways of thinking. While managing skillfully to display his characters’ dual viewpoints, Hillerman reveals the positive and negative aspects of both cultures and the essential humanity of both peoples.

VALUABLE USE OF ETHNICITY

At their best, ethnic detectives bring to mystery and detective fiction the type of dual vision that is sometimes attributed to exiles, people separated from their

own cultures and forced to live within other cultures. Caught between two worlds, they learn to appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of two different cultures. The insights that ethnic detectives can offer may carry readers in two directions: toward an understanding of a culture and point of view alien from their own and toward a better understanding of the faults and virtues of their own communities and ways of life.

In ethnic mystery fiction, a negotiation of identity often takes place, as it does with Jim Chee in Tony Hillerman's Navajo series. In trying to be both a tribal policeman and a Navajo shaman, Chee discovers that his duty to one way of life prevents him from fulfilling his obligations to the other. However, while his shaman practices help center his mind and direct his intuition, the solutions he seeks can be found rationally and logically as well. In Thomas Perry's four Jane Whitefield novels (1994-1999), the part Seneca woman Whitefield helps victims acquire new identities just as her ancestors helped move the pursued across their lands to safety.

Popular writing can serve a serious purpose that lifts it to the level of literature when it deals fluently with serious issues, as in ethnic detective stories that raise historical issues relevant to the present. Tony Hillerman argues that because crime grows out of culture, tribal policemen can almost always recognize whether an insider or an outsider has committed a reservation crime. Again, offering a perspective alternative to that of the entrenched rationalism of the majority culture is salutary: some instincts and intuitive understandings may well be as accurate as more laboriously worked out conclusions. Hillerman is a master at showing the validity and dignity of Navajo ways; he has no peer in the ethnic detective genre.

Andrew F. Macdonald
Gina Macdonald

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FEMINIST AND LESBIAN MYSTERY FICTION

Feminist and lesbian mystery fiction is a broad field that can be difficult to classify. At its core, it is a body of work that strains against, or outright defies, traditional literary designations and parameters. It can, however, be defined as a branch of mystery and detective fiction encompassing works written primarily by female authors who assign women characters roles traditionally associated with men. Such roles include amateur and professional investigators, police officers and homicide detectives, legal figures such as prosecutors and judges, and the criminals.

FEMINIST FICTION

Most feminist and lesbian mystery works are not free of men, but male roles are generally reduced in significance or altered in function. In all cases, however, women emerge at the forefront, and male characters tend to appear in supporting, rather than leading, roles. On the other hand, men with significant roles to play are frequently the leading female characters' antagonists; they tend to interfere with the women's investigations. The women assume the duties of protagonists, characters who take actions to right wrongs or who see cases to their logical conclusions. In some works men assume traits traditionally associated with women and vice versa. Thus men might be portrayed as vulnerable and in need of protection, while strong, capable women come to their defense or rescue. However, some works eschew such easy gender reversals and instead further complicate what it means to be a woman or a man in contemporary society. Meanwhile, these gender issues play out against the same backdrops of deceit, murder, and mayhem that readers expect to find in works of mystery fiction.

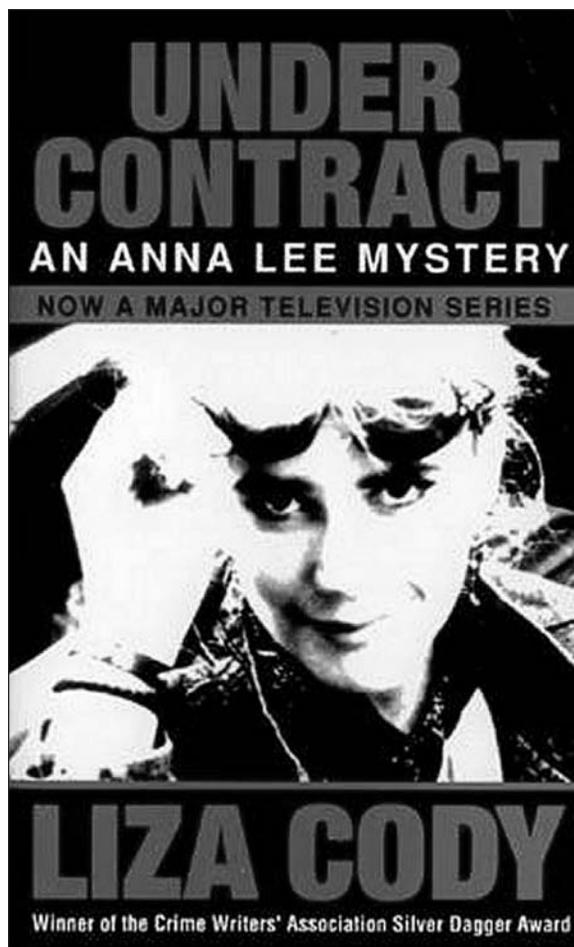
In addition to incorporating traits inherent to the mystery genre, such as puzzling circumstances and crimes needing resolution, feminist mystery fiction also addresses social issues relevant to women's lives. The appearance of women in traditionally male venues, such as police precincts or courts, is common. Equality under the law and in pursuit of justice takes on further significance when female detectives are

penalized for being women. Such characters frequently battle not only the criminal elements, but also a hostile society that judges them inadequate, by virtue of their gender, for the tasks they undertake. Female sleuths must unravel the mysteries presented to them while circumventing social barriers and proving their detractors wrong. Often, they succeed in the former pursuit but fail in the latter.

LESBIAN FICTION

Lesbian mystery fiction is an extension of feminist mystery fiction. Like its sister genre, it features female protagonists who defy stereotypes of women by filling what were formerly exclusively male roles in the workplace, whether the characters be detectives, lawyers, police officers, or amateurs. Lesbian authors and characters surmount limiting gender and sexual conventions, expanding notions of what it means to be, and to live as, women. Additionally these stories explore problems faced by lesbians as members of a predominantly heterosexual society. Hostility toward lesbian characters can escalate into hate crimes, situations in which victims are threatened, assaulted, or even murdered because of their sexual orientation. In some works, lesbian detectives themselves investigate such crimes; in others they themselves may be the targets and in need of rescue by others. Help typically arrives in the form of avenging lesbian friends or partners.

In lesbian works, as in feminist mystery fiction, men are frequently impediments to be overcome, rather than helpmates, but there are exceptions. As is the case in many heterosexual mysteries, often there is a love interest for the investigator. In lesbian mysteries, the object of desire is naturally a member of the same sex. This type of attraction can create additional problems for protagonists who try to keep their private lives secret from others with whom they associate. A recurrent subplot in lesbian mystery novels is the coming-out narrative, in which a character reveals to others her previously shrouded sexual identity, a disclosure that results in either rejection or acceptance.



A former police officer, Liza Cody's Anna Lee is the lone female private investigator in a London detective agency in which she often encounters gender discrimination.

Not every work written by a female author that features female characters in lead roles can be classified as feminist or lesbian mystery fiction. Many works of mystery fiction feature women as primary investigators but remain in the realm of traditional detective fiction. Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple series, for example, while classic to the genre, fails to qualify as feminist mystery fiction. Christie's famous amateur sleuth is a stereotypical spinster who upholds, rather than opposes, the patriarchal social order. Marple solves her cases, in part, because she is a busybody who spies on others in her village, a domestic venue beyond which she rarely ventures. Although some critics have questioned Marple's sexual identity—she

is, after all, an unmarried female living alone—there is insufficient evidence to suggest she is a lesbian.

The fact that a woman writes a mystery, or that a man writes a mystery about a woman, does not make the text a work of feminist or lesbian mystery fiction. Moreover, men are not necessarily excluded from being authors of feminist or lesbian fiction, although their contributions to the genre may meet resistance from readers who perceive them as trespassing on sacrosanct territory. Alexander McCall Smith's Precious Ramotswe series features Africa's first fictional female detective. Many of the mysteries that Mma Ramotswe explores are intertwined with the changing social status of women in her village. Additionally she must repeatedly work to convince skeptical male clients that she is qualified for the job and deserving of the fees she charges. Throughout the series, she champions the principle of female liberation and ponders the differences between men and women.

Feminist mystery fiction and lesbian mystery fiction frequently intersect. Collectively, works in these two fields address such common issues as crimes against women's bodies and the changing role of women in contemporary society. Publication of feminist and lesbian mystery fiction has also had an impact on more traditional works with the mystery and detective genre by expanding the boundaries of the field to include previously marginalized peoples, topics, and settings. In these works, representations of feminist and lesbian detectives, both professional and amateur, contrast sharply with their male counterparts and with images of earlier female investigators. Often they transgress social boundaries established to keep the two sexes distinct and in separate spheres. Although men can be counted among the genre's readership, the works appeal primarily to women seeking both familiar elements of the mystery format and images of the female self not found in more traditional works.

ORIGINS OF FEMINIST MYSTERY FICTION

Mystery fiction about women sleuths dates back to Ann Radcliffe's 1793 gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which chronicles the detective skills of Emily St. Aubert. A protofeminist, St. Aubert enters the traditionally male domain of investigative detection

and proves herself the equal of men. She possesses the mental acuity necessary to unravel the mysteries of Udolpho, a castle in which her evil Uncle Montoni has secreted his wife and entrapped his niece. Additionally, the young woman is armed with sufficient energy to undertake an exploration of the castle's labyrinthine passages and secret chambers. For the historical era in which her character appears, author Ann Radcliffe defies many stereotypes attributed to women. Neither faint of heart nor weak of body, the ever capable St. Aubert goes where many eighteenth century women characters in mystery fiction fear to tread: into man's land.

Emily St. Aubert's ability to navigate treacherous and unfamiliar terrain can certainly be attributed to the men in her life. Her father has instructed her in the male arts of detection, in part because her two brothers have died and he must pass on his family business. He tutors his daughter as a last resort, not as his first choice. Predating the development of male detectives aided by trusted male companions, such as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, St. Aubert has a reliable maid, Annette, who serves as her helpmate and sounding board.

In addition to changing the traditional gender of the literary detective, Radcliffe alters the landscape of mystery. Castle Udolpho is under the control of a man, the villainous Montoni, and its jutting towers are typically phallic—an image representative of male power and sexuality. However, its internal structure is curiously female in design. Yonic symbols, those images suggestive of female sexuality and fertility, are evident in the numerous passageways and tunnels that connect the castle chambers. These representative female spaces allow Emily to breach the dangers of the castle, locate her aunt, and ultimately subvert male power and authority.

Since the original publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, numerous mysteries featuring female sleuths have been written by both female and male authors. However, not all of the women characters who have appeared in this expansive genre have been feminists. The question of what qualities determine whether a work of mystery fiction should be classified as feminist might be addressed by considering one controversial example.

Critics are divided on the character of Dorothy L. Sayers's Harriet Vane. A mystery writer and sleuth, Vane appears in the popular Lord Peter Wimsey series that Sayers wrote during the 1920's and 1930's. Some critics view Vane as forging new ground as a woman who both writes clever mysteries and engages in successful sleuthing. Others, however, see her as tied to the patriarchy through her marriage to Wimsey. Her husband views her as a *new woman*, one who supports equal rights and opportunities for women, as he does himself. How, then, should Vane be classified?

Generally, to be labeled a feminist, a character must display nontraditional female traits such as reason, strength, and bravery, qualities usually associated with men. Additionally, she must recoil at the notion that men are inherently superior in mind and body to women and also engage in endeavors that traditionally have been relegated to men. How, then, should one classify female characters who appear in fiction in more traditionally female pursuits, such as cooks, teachers, librarians, and schoolgirls, all of whom engage in amateur sleuthing? Furthermore, how should one categorize women in positions of authority who abuse that authority, such as women judges who uphold laws denigrating women or privileging men?

The *perceptions* of characters of roles assigned to women and men in society are often more revealing of their feminist orientations than their own chosen occupations. Characters who support expanded roles for women and men and who reject restrictive stereotypes of what it means to be female or male qualify as feminists. As in life, so too in art. There are many degrees and branches of feminism and even scholars cannot agree on one definition of feminism. A major division concerns whether perceived differences between men and women are innate, and thus biologically determined, or acquired through immersion in a culture. The nature-versus-nurture argument is one echoed in works of feminist mystery fiction. It is not uncommon for successful female sleuths to be ridiculed for hiding their feminine mystique behind tough exteriors. Accusations that a female detective is acting too manly usually derive from dissatisfied or threatened male companions or coworkers, but occasionally other women voice similar disapproval.

FEMINIST CHARACTERS AND THEMES

Characters in feminist mystery fiction tend to be women of independent character who range in age from children to seniors, but the majority are in their twenties, thirties, or forties. These women are connected by their unique abilities to navigate the double treacheries of crime and sexism. Most are self-employed, like Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, who operates a low-budget detective agency. Some, like Liza Cody's Anna Lee, work in private detective firms. Others are employed in police departments or practice as lawyers. However, characters do not have to be directly tied to traditional law-and-order careers to be sleuths. A variety of characters, including musicians, teachers, and even a professional wrestler, have appeared as protagonists in feminist mystery fiction. Collectively, these women are highly competent at completing tasks traditionally associated with men, including the solving of mysteries and the capture and prosecution of criminals. Mental toughness and physical strength are often the only weapons these women possess, but some also pack firearms and know how to use them.

Themes in feminist mystery fiction tend to focus on women's issues, particularly women's desire for personal and financial independence, physical autonomy, and equal protection under the law. The fact that many female characters—both victims and sleuths—are denied these basic rights in fiction reflects society at large and underscores the importance of gender equality as a goal worthy of pursuit in this genre and in life.

FEMINIST PLOTS AND SETTINGS

Plots in feminist mystery fiction derive largely from mainstream mystery fiction: Typically, a character dies in the first few pages of the novel and the killer is sought and eventually captured; a loved one disappears and requires finding; a mysterious person appears and her identity merits revelation, or an unsolved case from the past is reopened. The element that distinguishes stock scenarios in feminine mystery fiction from their mainstream counterparts is the presence or absence of narrative authority. Plots typically involve women as the main players and not as appendages to male characters. Incidents are viewed from the van-

tage point of women's eyes and stories are told through distinctly female voices using narrative techniques associated with women's writing, such as diary entries or shifting perspectives.

Settings in feminist mystery fiction include such traditional male bastions as crime scenes and police precincts, but these are transformed due to the presence of female characters. Often these works introduce other kinds of environs more closely associated with women's lives, such as health clinics, beauty shops, gym classes, and other sites of female bonding. Of equal importance is how women characters relate to these settings. Unlike their male counterparts, female investigators do not set out to master settings but to understand them.

A classic example of female sleuthing that transforms setting is Susan Glaspell's 1917 story "A Jury of Her Peers." In this short story, the men, a sheriff and a district attorney, search an isolated farmhouse for clues in the strangulation death of a farmer. Although the farmer's wife remains their chief suspect, the men find no evidence pointing strongly to her guilt. However, the two women in their company, the sheriff's wife and a neighbor, discover overwhelming proof of the woman's guilt, including erratic quilt stitches and a broken bird cage. The women remain silent about the trifles the men have ridiculed; they have found not only evidence of her guilt, but also justifiable cause for the homicide the psychologically battered housewife committed.

POPULAR FEMINIST MYSTERY SERIES

Two of the most recognized characters in feminist mystery fiction are Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski and Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone. Both fictional private eyes appear in long-running series and both have legions of loyal readers. The popular and critical success of their creators and the close proximity of the dates when they emerged on the mystery genre scene have led these characters to be linked together in the minds of many fans. Although their similarities are many, each character and each series has distinct features.

Sue Grafton's alphabet series began with *A Is for Alibi* in 1982 and introduced readers to Millhone, a pri-



vate detective who resides in Santa Teresa, California. An orphan, Millhone was raised by a loving relative, but never recovered from the psychological trauma of permanent parental separation. Following a rebellious adolescence, Millhone joined the police force, but two years of being mired in that male bastion persuaded her to emancipate herself. Her new occupation as a private investigator offers her independence, if not always contentment. Her specialty appears to be locating missing persons, and her downfall is men. She has a close relationship with her landlord, the preternaturally young senior citizen Henry, who is a father figure. An avid runner, Millhone has a weakness for fast food. The series has progressed letter by letter, including *G Is for Gumshoe* (1990) and *T Is for Trespass* (2007), through a dark alphabet, and will continue until its author reaches her zenith: the letter Z.

Sara Paretsky's Chicago-based series features V. I.

Warshawski. Like Millhone, Warshawski is a private investigator and a jogger. Her series began with 1982's *Indemnity Only* and includes *Burn Marks* (1990) and *Fire Sale* (2005). A single woman in her thirties, Warshawski specializes in investigating corporate malfeasance. She is the daughter of an opera singer mother and a police officer father. Although she breaks into operatic arias from time to time, she follows her father's lineage, supporting herself as an independent detective. Most of her sleuthing centers on women's issues, and in one case she investigates the bombing of a women's clinic. However, she is not a stereotypical feminist. Her concerns and loyalties extend beyond women's issues to include concern for people of diverse backgrounds, genders, ages, and circumstances.

ORIGINS OF LESBIAN MYSTERY FICTION

Although feminist mystery fiction can be written without a lesbian component, it is difficult to imagine a lesbian mystery novel that is not at its core feminist. The origins of lesbian mystery fiction can be traced back to the lesbian pulp classics of the 1950's, but not all those works fit in the mystery genre. These cult novels were, in fact, written primarily to entertain men with lurid tales of forbidden love. However, they also attracted lesbian readers, who no doubt relished the irony of the books' one-dimensional depictions. M. F. Beal's *Angel Dance*, which appeared in 1977, is now recognized as the first crime novel featuring a lesbian detective. Influenced by 1970's protest literature, Beal's protagonist is an angry Chicana. Fed up with a corrupt justice system that privileges white upper-class men and their female cohorts, Detective Kat Guerrero declares war on what she views as the political institutionalization of heterosexuality.

During the mid-1980's, lesbian mystery fiction came more fully to fruition and gained a significant audience, one made up primarily of lesbian readers looking for representation in literature. Popular lesbian mystery novels from this decade include Barbara Wilson's *Murder in the Collective* and Katherine Forrest's *Amateur City*, both of which were published in 1984. These works subvert both the narrative form and the conservative politics associated with traditional works in the genre. By their very nature, lesbian nov-

els disrupt the male hegemony of mystery and detective fiction. Both the privileged sex (male) and the dominant sexuality (heterosexuality) are undercut by the appearance of lesbian women detectives. In these and later works, familiar ground was trod by a new breed of gumshoes, sometimes laced into athletic sneakers, sometimes slipped into Versace heels, and sometimes shod in steel-toed Doc Martin boots.

LESBIAN CHARACTERS AND THEMES

Mainstream mystery and detective works frequently relegate lesbian characters to the positions of tainted others, outsiders beyond the pale of acceptable society. As persons of suspicion, lesbians who transgress into heterosexual fiction are almost certainly aligned with criminal elements and not the right arm of the law. These deviant images of lesbianism, as scripted through the lens of entrenched heterosexual social values, once dominated mainstream literature with rare exceptions. During the mid-1980's, lesbian authors of mystery fiction began to replace this distorted heterosexual view of lesbianism, offering in its place a complex presentation of diverse lesbian characters. Most writers avoided simply reversing the previous dichotomy and privileging the lesbian characters over their detractors; instead, authors of lesbian mysteries relied on the genre's standard types to reintroduce lesbian characters into popular fiction.

The stock character of the hard-boiled detective in mystery fiction was once exclusively the property of male heterosexual writers. Popularized by Raymond Chandler, a hard-boiled detective is a man's man. A bitter unsentimental loner who eschews social niceties, he methodically tracks a killer, often narrowly escaping being killed along the way, while attempting to suppress an attraction for a "hot dame," who may or may not be worthy of his trust. This model of the private eye is one frequently appropriated by lesbian authors of mystery fiction. Their detectives, whether amateur or professional, look and act in what appears to be a stereotypically male manner. They dress in men's attire, often uniforms reflecting their employment, such as police garb for officers and business suits for lawyers. They are strong physically, taking great pains to keep their bodies in top form through

extensive training and exercise regimens. Nevertheless, these lesbian characters are more than women in male drag—a charge occasionally leveled at them by critics. These characters disrupt social norms that dictate what it means to be male or female, straight or lesbian, in the very act of wearing the other sex's attire.

Some critics have noted what appears to be a butch/femme axis in certain works of lesbian mystery fiction. According to this theory, the more "butch," or masculine, the investigator, the more competent the investigation. In the same fashion, the more "femme," or feminine, the lesbian sleuth appears, the less capable she is of resolving the case on her own. Femme sleuths often find themselves in dire situations in need of rescue by more butch allies or lovers. Images of butch and femme characters do occur in some lesbian mystery fiction, but there are also series that function without these types and that depict what might be termed conventional lesbians. Mainstream lesbians integrate into the larger society with greater ease, and can, if their investigations warrant such masquerades, pass for "straight."

A major theme in lesbian mystery fiction is that of identity, particularly in works that include coming-out scenarios. Lesbian detectives may need to come to terms with their strong desires, both physical and emotional, for other women generally, or for particular women. In certain novels, the greatest mystery a lesbian character solves is that of her own hitherto unrecognized identity. Finally, she pieces the clues to her orientation together and embraces the discovery, often after having lived many years as a discontented and false heterosexual. She then finds a way to announce her new self to others. Not surprisingly, themes of self-acceptance and social justice predominate in lesbian mystery fiction.

LESBIAN PLOTS AND SETTINGS

Lesbian mystery fiction published during the 1980's contained numerous coming-out scenarios. Works published in later years are less likely to contain such subplots. Critics have viewed this narrative change as a shift away from foundation myths—the emergence of lesbian identities from the social margins—to stories of being—the lesbian as a visible and

acknowledged presence in society with an important role to play. Given the nature of these works, many settings in lesbian novels are traditional male venues: courthouses, jail cells, and dens of iniquity where criminal elements lurk. However, these places are contrasted with lesbian environs, residences and hangouts where the detectives can acknowledge their sexual identity in safety.

Story lines for lesbian mysteries borrow from traditional mainstream mystery works. Depending on the types of mystery being written—such as police procedurals, suspense novels, or whodunits—the formula is recognizable, but with a twist. Connected to the standard search for a missing person or a murderer are issues crucial to lesbian life and identity. A victim might be a lesbian, secrets might conceal sexual identity, and the investigation might focus on a hate crime. Frequently blended into the text is a coming-out scenario. In the course of investigating a case, the detective decides to reveal her sexual orientation to her colleagues or family. In other instances, her lesbian identity might be leaked in an attempt to silence her or to distract her from the case. Similar to her heterosexual sisters and partners in detection, she may battle workplace prejudice and harassment, but twice over. The hostilities she faces are based on both her sex and her sexual orientation. Often the same skills that allow her to sleuth successfully—her intelligence, strength, and wit—help her navigate tense social terrains. However, she does not always succeed. At times the lesbian sleuth becomes the victim, but not without a fight.

POPULAR LESBIAN MYSTERY SERIES

Mystery fiction that features lesbian sleuths has gained in popularity, as reflected by increasing sales records and the appearance of these novels in mainstream bookstores. Detectives in these series are connected by their sexual orientation and their prime activity—sleuthing—but are diverse in their occupations, economic status, racial and ethnic orientations, and sexual appetites. Representative of these best sellers are Ellen Hart's Jane Lawless series, Kate Allen's Alison Kane series, and Janet McClellan's Tru North series.

Jane Lawless is a private investigator and restaurateur in Minneapolis, Minnesota, who first appeared in

Hallowed Murder in 1989. The novel might be classified as a schoolgirl mystery, as much of its action is set in a sorority house in which Lawless serves as an alumna advisor. Another prime setting is Lawless's restaurant, which features gourmet food and drinks. These traditional female venues disrupt expectations for the mystery genre in their domesticity. It is a woman's world, particularly for the male characters who enter and exit. Even the final climactic scene of *Hallowed Murder*, in which Lawless finds herself chained to a steering wheel of a sinking vehicle, provides yonic imagery in the waters of a thawing lake. The identity theme common to lesbian mysteries predominates as young women determine their sexual orientation in the confines of the sorority house and across the larger university campus. Some sorority members are clearly lesbians, including the murder victim. Some are heterosexuals, and some are as yet indeterminate, experimenting with both sexualities. Lawless herself, who is mourning the death of her lover the previous year, leads a celibate life.

In *Just a Little Lie* (1999), blue jeans- and T-shirt-wearing Alison Kane is anything but celibate. In fact, the butch Kane has trouble staying faithful to her femme girlfriend, a woman whose tastes include flirty skirts and sado-masochistic, but safe, sex. Currently on medical leave from her position as a Denver, Colorado, police officer, Kane is hired privately to discover the identity of an angry blackmailer. A medical condition, fibromyalgia syndrome, leaves Kane fatigued, causing both her and others to question her butchness. However, Kane's illness and relationship troubles are minor distractions compared to her first order of business: solving a suspicious death at a raucous lesbian leather convention.

In *Chimney Rock Blues* (1999), Tru North is a Kansas City, Missouri, police detective. While transporting a lesbian inmate back to the city, she becomes involved in a scary game of cat and mouse with a cop killer. North is torn between her comfortable but predictable relationship with a university psychology professor and her recent affair with an exciting new lover on the force. Her two love interests come face to face when a bullet lands North in a hospital bed. In the end, North resolves both the crime and her messy love life.

These three lesbian detectives are connected to one another and to the larger community of characters who populate mainstream mysteries by the very ordinariness of their locations, their relationship issues, and their investigations, which are murders motivated by greed, malice, or revenge. Jane Lawless, Alison Kane, and Tru North portray lesbians who have integrated into predominantly male-oriented and heterosexual fields to contribute productively to society. Despite their battles with dangerous criminals and narrow-minded bigots, positive portrayals of lesbians predominate in these mysteries, leaving images that effectively lay to rest lurid images from the 1950's pulp fiction mills.

Dorothy Dodge Robbins

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FORENSIC MYSTERIES

Western society has long been preoccupied with mortality and quests for truth. Mystery fiction is, in a sense, a manifestation of society's fascination with both of these powerful concepts. Mortality and quests for truth are as inextricably intertwined in mystery fiction as they are in life. Their interrelationship goes beyond the honesty and finality of death, particularly violent death as is usually the case in mystery fiction; it is the quest for answers around a murder or any other crime, which realizes justice for the victim and for society, a concept encapsulated in the early nineteenth century English scholar William Hazlitt's observation, "Death cancels everything but truth."

Quests for answers surrounding crimes have been transformed by the rapid evolution of science and technology, whose application to legal and criminal investigations is known as forensic science. Many disciplines and processes have permeated the legal practice of the investigation of deaths and other legal questions. Forensic science itself is neither law nor law enforcement but rather any science-based discipline that assists in investigations of crimes and preparations for legal cases.

THE FORENSIC SCIENCES

Although almost any science or technology can be applied to criminal investigations, a limited number of established professional areas have found their way firmly into both fiction and fact. They primarily deal with three areas: the study of human remains in forensic medicine or forensic anthropology, the study of criminal behavior in forensic psychology or profiling, and the examination of evidence, or criminalistics. Criminalistics uses a variety of scientific processes to answer questions relating to biological evidence; trace evidence; impression evidence, such as fingerprints, footprints, tire tracks, and bloodstains; controlled substances; ballistics; and other evidence. Criminalistics often plays a crucial role in the resolution of investigations that are regularly reported in the news media and depicted in mystery fiction.

Although the forensic sciences have been used to

investigate almost every conceivable type of crime, from theft and fraud to kidnapping and assault, the type of crime most commonly investigated in mystery and detective fiction is murder. Among the most common specialties in the forensic sciences pertaining to murder investigations are these:

- Forensic anthropology—application of physical anthropology to identify bodies and causes of death
- Forensic ballistics—science of identifying firearms and ammunition
- Forensic entomology—examination of insect evidence surrounding human remains to determine conditions of death
- Forensic graphology—handwriting analysis
- Forensic odontology—study of teeth for identification
- Forensic pathology—analysis of causes of death
- Forensic photography—accurate photographic reproduction of crime scenes
- Forensic psychology and psychiatry—legal aspects of human behavior or criminal profiling
- Forensic sculpting—facial reconstruction
- Forensic toxicology—study of the effect of drugs and poisons

FORENSIC SCIENCE IN EARLY MYSTERY FICTION

Mystery fiction has often dealt with legal matters and investigations from a legal standpoint, using primary characters who have some official standing in government law enforcement. As such, logic, reason and observation are all at the core of mystery and detective novels. The role of the forensic sciences, in life and in fiction, is to provide objective, reasonable, and factual accounts of events based on the scientific method. Evidence used in forensic investigations is even more objective than that obtained from verbal testimonies and witness statements, as it uses physical evidence that is uncolored by human perception. It is in this way that forensic science is distinct from traditional legal and investigatory efforts, and it is a commitment to identifying hard facts that typifies forensic scientists.

Edgar Allan Poe, the inventor of the modern detective story, was also the first author to bring science into play within mystery fiction. Although his works are typically permeated with deep psychological and philosophical meanings, his detective stories demonstrated the fundamental principles of scientific observation in criminal investigations. His detective, C. Auguste Dupin, declares that his “ultimate object is only the truth.” Poe’s use of scientific evidence is especially evident in his 1841 story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” which contains long statements from forensic experts, such as Dr. Paul Dumas, who testifies on the conditions in which the bodies of several murder victims were found. He describes the settings and the nature of the bodies’ wounds and offers his analysis of the causes of those wounds in clinical yet graphic detail. Poe’s language heightens the effect:

The throat was greatly chafed. There were several deep scratches just below the chin, together with a series of livid spots which were evidently the impression of fingers. The face was fearfully discolored, and the eye-balls protruded. The tongue had been partially bitten through. A large bruise was discovered upon the pit of the stomach, produced, apparently, by the pressure of a knee. In the opinion of M. Dumas, Mademoiselle L’Espanaye had been throttled to death by some person or persons unknown.

Poe’s descriptions of scientific investigations and techniques detailing the investigations of Dupin are archetypal of the role that forensic science plays in mystery fiction. From the scientific, and often morbid, detail to the objective, almost emotionless, narrative, Dupin, and through him, Poe, pick their way through all the emotion and very human, gory detail to find the truth, that aim of all detectives.

Charles Dickens’s 1852-1853 novel *Bleak House* centers around several mysteries that are narrated by various characters, who speak as if they were testifying in court. The novel’s plot involves intertwining intrigues, one of which is the question of the true identity of the orphan Esther Summerson. Inspector Bucket is also investigating the murder of a family lawyer, Mr. Tulkinghorn. Although not closely connected to the novel’s primary mystery, a sensational

incident brings forensic elements to the fore when an alcoholic named Krook, who smells of brimstone, dies after spontaneously combusting. Dickens’s use of spontaneous combustion provoked controversy when his book was first published, so he attempted to explain the scientific basis of the phenomenon in the introduction to later editions. He claimed to have taken “pains to investigate the subject” and found evidence of about thirty recorded cases of spontaneous combustion, including a 1731 case in Italy on whose recorded description he modeled his own description of Krook’s burning. *Bleak House* also contains a strong forensic element that both records and reveals “the truth”—the concept of using personal images, in the form of portraits, to identify persons or to reveal things they may be trying to keep hidden. This device ultimately reveals both the murderer of Tulkinghorn and the parents of Esther.

Mark Twain is not well known as an author of detective stories, but he wrote several and made a signal contribution to the use of forensic evidence in fiction by being the first author to use fingerprint evidence as a plot device. He actually employed this device twice. The first time was in a story about murder that he integrated into his classic work on the Mississippi River, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). In that story, a German man whose wife and child were murdered in Arkansas tracks down the murderer and identifies him through a thumbprint matching one left behind by the murderer. Eleven years later, Twain elaborated on the device by having the title character of his novel *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894) make a career of collecting fingerprints. The novel reaches its dramatic climax in a trial scene in which Wilson uses fingerprint evidence not only to prove the identity of a murderer but also to prove that a slave man and a free man had been switched during their infancy.

Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, was not the first writer to employ elements of forensic science in his stories. However, in Holmes he created the first, and arguably the greatest, forensic scientist in fiction. Holmes uses a variety of advanced scientific methods to establish facts in the cases he investigates. For example, he does experiments in ballistics, fingerprinting, and blood testing. He is a leading

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Basil Rathbone, as Sherlock Holmes using his scientific equipment to study clues in the 1939 film The Hound of the Baskervilles. (AP/Wide World Photos)

authority on tobacco-ash analysis and also analyzes handwriting samples, poisons, trace evidence, and footprints. He even does profiling. Although they did exist during Doyle's time, few of these technologies were then commonly used by law enforcement. In Holmes, Doyle created the very model of the forensic scientist, one who is so appealing and authentic that many subsequent characters have been patterned on him. Some writers have even made Doyle himself a prominent character in their own fiction, as Mark Frost does in *The List of Seven* (1993), conferring on the fictional Doyle the same personality traits and drives that the author gave Holmes.

FORENSIC SCIENCE IN HARD-BOILED FICTION

The early twentieth century saw the use of forensic science in mystery fiction in a more macabre and sardonic fashion. In earlier mystery fiction forensic science was looked upon with skepticism until it could demonstrate its usefulness in uncovering truths. The

turn of the century heralded a more cynical view, one in which the motivations of detectives were not as transparent or altruistic. The new hard-boiled detectives did often employ elements of forensic science, but not always to reveal truths and solve crimes. At times, they put their scientific expertise to work to cover up crimes, misdirect law enforcement, or protect their own interests.

Dashiell Hammett, a writer whose name is almost synonymous with hard-boiled detective stories, is best known for his Sam Spade stories, including *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930), which was made into a classic film with Humphrey Bogart. However, he also wrote several novels about another private investigator, one known only by the name the Continental Op. One of his Op novels, *Red Harvest* (1927-1928) makes extensive use of elements of forensic science. Characteristic of Hammett's other writings, it is gritty and violent, with a morbidly clinical description of the Op's waking up to find a corpse in his bed:

Not much blood was in sight: a spot the size of a silver dollar around the hole the ice pick made in her blue silk dress. There was a bruise on her right cheek, just under the cheek bone. Another bruise, finger-made, was on her right wrist. Her hands were empty. I moved her enough to see that nothing was under her.

Ironically, the unemotional starkness of the Op's observations is contrasted by his attempts to cover up the evidence and use it as a tool for deception.

Raymond Chandler is another writer whose name is closely associated with hard-boiled detective fiction. He also wrote spare, austere depictions of crime scenes in his Philip Marlowe novels, which appeared in 1939. Despite his books' clinically correct descriptions, which are often narrated in his detective's voice, his use of scientific observations almost seems to mock forensic science because of Marlowe's disdain for the law and its often corrupt officers. More constructive depictions of forensic science began appearing in later works by other authors, whose protagonists were typically well-respected and exceptionally competent lawyers and detectives who applied forensic science cleverly—much like magicians pulling rabbits out of hats.

Agatha Christie used forensic science elements throughout her prolific writing career, but nowhere more notably than in her 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express*. In that novel, the fastidious and eagle-eyed detective, Hercule Poirot, investigates the murder of a rich passenger on the train. He finds many clues, but individual clues point to thirteen other passengers on the train, and no two of the clues point to the same person. The complex and baffling case seems insoluble, but Poirot eventually establishes that the murder is connected to the kidnap and murder of a young heiress years earlier. Indeed, the murdered man on the train was the kidnapper and murderer of that young girl. He also concludes that all thirteen of the suspects on the train have suffered as a result of that deep-rooted crime. In spite of these conclusions, the murder on the Orient Express goes unresolved in the interest of justice.

Erle Stanley Gardner wrote more than eighty mysteries about Perry Mason, a defense attorney who

never loses a case, thanks to his legal prowess and his use of forensic science in his investigations. Forensic science plays an important role in Gardner's formulaic plots. In *The Case of the Amorous Aunt* (1963), for example, Gardner wrote that

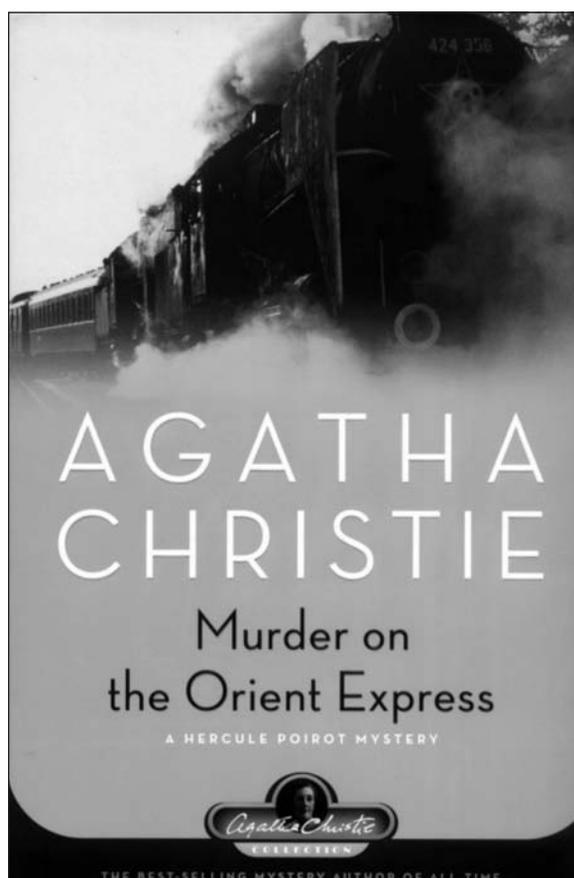
the arch-enemy of the murderer is the autopsy . . . In cold-blooded crimes committed by an intellectual and scheming murderer who has greed or revenge as his goal, the medical examiner, following clues which would never be apparent to a less thoroughly trained individual, can establish the truth.

Since Gardner's time, forensic science has played an increasingly prominent role in mystery fiction, particularly in straight detective stories and police procedurals.

FORENSIC SCIENCE IN THE NEWS AND ON TELEVISION

Toward the end of the twentieth century, mystery writers began building their plots around forensic scientists themselves. In many stories, lines between real-life cases and fiction are blurred, as authors have looked to crime news to get their plots. True-crime stories have always captured the public's interest, and sensational stories in the news have increased that interest. Events such as the murder trial of former football star O. J. Simpson, the unsolved murder of six-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey, and the disappearance of the pregnant California woman Laci Peterson have whetted the public's appetite for more information about the forensic sciences.

Television has played an important role in the popularization of the forensic sciences. The trend started in 1976, when a dramatic series titled *Quincy, M.E.* began its seven-year run on television. That program, in which actor Jack Klugman played a strong-willed medical examiner named Quincy, strove for dramatic effect, not realism. In a typical episode, Klugman would examine the body of a person believed to have died from natural causes, find evidence of foul play, and then proceed to solve a murder case. The early twenty-first century has seen a profusion of more realistic television programs focusing on forensic sciences whose very titles describe their content: *Profiler*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-), *CSI: Miami* (2002-), and *CSI: New*



To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

The frequency of postmortem examinations in television shows about crime scene investigations has created a need for actors to play corpses. Here, a makeup artist touches up Megan Boyle for her role as a corpse in a 2004 episode of CSI: Miami. (AP/Wide World Photos)

York (2004-), *NCIS* (Naval Criminal Investigation Service; 2003-), *Without a Trace* (2002-), and *Criminal Minds* (2005-).

Shows such as these have changed public perceptions of what forensic science can do in real life—a phenomenon dubbed the “CSI effect.” The change has had such an impact on the criminal justice system process that judges have had to give juries special instructions about what constitutes acceptable evidence to modify their expectations.

FORENSIC SCIENTISTS AS PROTAGONISTS IN FICTION

Although forensic science has played a role in mystery fiction for more than a century and a half, it is only since the late twentieth century that it has moved to center stage in the creation of primary characters who are professional forensic scientists. Indeed, what has been called forensic mysteries may be the fastest-growing subgenre in mystery fiction. Many of these new leading characters are medical examiners, coroners, and forensic pathologists, but there are also numerous mysteries featuring forensic geologists, forensic psychologists, and even forensic hematologists and forensic sculptors. Although depictions of the tech-

niques used in the forensic sciences in mystery fiction have evolved, descriptions still tend to be painstakingly detailed and morbid in their objectivity.

People have long had a fascination with the mysteries of human bodies and what happens to them when they are victims of violent crimes. Interest in the role of science in mystery fiction was made more prominent with the popularity of medical thrillers, which may have been the harbinger of the more pronounced role that forensic science later assumed in mystery fiction. Similar elements can be found in both specialized genres. Protagonists in medical mysteries are gener-

ally medical professionals, and their stories are typically centered around hospitals or medical facilities. Robin Cook, Michael Palmer, and Michael Crichton brought medical mysteries into eminence: Cook’s *Coma* (1977) and Crichton’s *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) captured the public’s imagination, even on the big screen.

Ann Benson, Leah Ruth Robinson, and Tess Gerritsen have cast physicians as their protagonists, while Eileen Dreyer has written numerous novels about trauma and forensic nurses. Benson’s novels tend to be more epic, both in the nature of their crises and in their settings. She regularly weaves together plots set in fourteenth century Europe and in twenty-first century America to describe mysteries surrounding both plagues and struggles against bioterrorism. Robinson, Gerritsen, and Dreyer all focus on more contemporary settings and more immediate concerns involving serial killers in efforts to make life-and-death struggles to find the truth more personal.

Coroners, medical examiners, and forensic pathologists have become popular characters in fiction and on the screen. People in these occupations share an interest in establishing causes of death, but there are important differences among their professions. Usually

elected or appointed officials, coroners may have medical credentials, but their positions tend to be political. Their primary function is generally to hold inquests to determine whether deaths have resulted from natural causes, accidents, or violent acts. Medical examiner positions are appointed and require medical degrees, but not necessarily degrees in pathology. Medical examiners use their medical training to investigate deaths that have occurred under unusual or suspicious circumstances. They also perform postmortem examinations and initiate inquests into the cause of death. Forensic pathologists are medical doctors, but also have specialized training in forensic science. They participate in death scene investigations and laboratory analysis of evidence and often serve as expert witnesses in criminal and civil law proceedings.

The best-known contemporary author of forensic mysteries is Patricia Cornwell, the author of sixteen best-selling novels about the fictional chief medical examiner for the state of Virginia, Kay Scarpetta. Although Cornwell has established herself as the standard to whom other authors of forensic mysteries are compared, she herself is neither a forensic pathologist nor a physician. All the legal and medical detail she puts in her novels come to her through her own research and her consultations with experts in the field. While her characters are solid and straightforward, her plots are twisted and sensational. Benton Wesley, a longstanding character in her books who is the love interest of Scarpetta, is a professional profiler who helps Scarpetta find maniacally creative killers. In one novel, Wesley is apparently killed by a serial killer who mutilates his victims and removes their faces to keep as trophies.

Leonard S. Goldberg, another best-selling author in this subgenre, created forensic pathologist Joanna Blalock, settling her in Los Angeles. Throughout Goldberg's novels, Blalock faces a number of conspiracies and villains, such as megalith corporations, corrupt hospital administrators, and terrorist organizations that use such weapons as an Ebola-like virus, organ harvesting, and good old-fashioned blunt instruments to achieve their aims. Robert Walker is another author with a talent for creating maniacal killers with gruesome creative urges and making life difficult for

forensic pathologist Jessica Coran. Coran investigates deaths that include torture by gangrene, crucifixion, and harvesting of brains, hearts, and spines. D. J. Donaldson also writes about a forensic pathologist, Andy Broussard, and a novice forensic psychologist named Kit Franklyn, who practice in New Orleans. His plots tend to be secondary to character development, with the city of New Orleans playing as important a role as his forensic scientists.

FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGISTS

Forensic anthropologists analyze skeletal remains for purposes of identification and investigation of legal questions. They tend to focus on osteological evidence, and their preference for bones, and consequent aversion to softer tissue, is alluded to in several mystery novels, including those of Aaron Elkins and Kathy Reichs. In 1982, Elkins introduced forensic anthropologist Gideon Oliver in *Fellowship of Fear*. By 2007, the series had reached fifteen titles and inspired a short-lived television series, *Gideon Oliver* (1989), starring Lou Gossett, Jr. Popularly known as the "Bone Detective," Oliver is also a university professor who travels throughout the world and demonstrates his considerable knowledge about skeletal cuts, osteological growth, and environmental impacts on bones.

Kathy Reichs, who is sometimes called "next Patricia Cornwell," introduced her own forensic anthropologist, Temperance Brennan, in *Déjà Dead* in 1997 and averaged nearly one new book a year over the next decade. (Many of her titles use the word "bone.") Brennan and Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta are in different fields but otherwise have much in common. Scarpetta is a medical examiner in Virginia, while Brennan is a forensic anthropologist who splits her time between North Carolina and Montreal. The problems Reichs creates to challenge Brennan's knowledge and skills are varied and imaginative, and Brennan gained a wider following when her stories were adapted to television in the Fox series *Bones*, which debuted in 2005.

Beverly Connor created not one, but two series about forensic anthropologists. There are marked differences between between her two series characters, Lindsey Chamberlain and Diane Fallon. Chamberlain is both an archaeologist and a forensic anthropologist

who specializes on Native Americans of the Southeast. Fallon is a museum director and human rights investigator. Sharyn McCrumb also has a popular series about Elizabeth MacPherson, a forensic anthropologist who appears in such colorfully titled books as *PMS Outlaws* (2000) and *If I'd Killed Him When I Met Him* (1995).

FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PROFILERS

Forensic psychology and forensic psychiatry are similar specialties whose differences parallel those of their parent professions. Psychiatrists have medical degrees with specialized training and are licensed. Psychologists hold doctoral degrees and may also be licensed. Profilers may or may not have similar credentials; their focus is on creating psychological descriptions, or profiles, of criminal wrongdoers, based on evidence collected in investigations of criminal incidents. James Patterson's forensic psychologist, Alex Cross, is a former detective for the Washington, D.C., police who now works for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a senior agent and profiler. His investigations take him all over the United States to track down serial killers and find kidnappers.

In Thomas Harris's sensational 1988 novel *The Silence of the Lambs*, Clarice Starling, an FBI agent in training, is assigned to ask convicted serial killer Hannibal Lecter for assistance in profiling and catching another serial killer. A doctor of psychiatry, Lecter is a talented profiler himself. He uses his profiling skills to assist the FBI but only after profiling Starling for his own gratification.

Caleb Carr's novels marry science fiction to psychological mystery. *The Alienist* (1994) is commissioner Lazzlo Kreisler, a late nineteenth century psychologist who diagnoses, profiles and treats the severely "alienated," or criminally insane. In this novel and its successor, *The Angel of Darkness* (1997), Carr creates an alternative history and psychological thriller, with Teddy Roosevelt playing a police commissioner and appearances by other historical figures, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Clarence Darrow.

Jonathan Kellerman's popular clinical psychologist, Alex Delaware, acts regularly as police consultant for assisting with victim counseling, witness state-

ments, and profiling. Delaware counsels victims and examines crime scenes, looking for motives and details that might lead to the identities of the criminals. Kellerman focuses on victimology and motives in many of his works, but in ways that humanize the victims. Kellerman's wife, Faye Kellerman, also writes mysteries with elements of forensic science, but her primary characters are homicide detectives.

FORENSIC SCIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

The use of forensic science in mystery fiction has become so common that it has become a subgenre in its own right. As such, it has developed characteristics and conventions of its own. One of its most common characteristics is clinical and often gruesomely detailed description of murder scenes. Such graphic representations of the results of violence were present in the earliest mystery fiction, from Poe to Doyle, and are commonplace in the works of modern authors. However, writers of forensic mysteries tend to use exotic and sensational modes of death and convoluted motives more than other mystery writers.

Fictional forensic scientists are often portrayed as intellectuals who are firmly entrenched in observation and hard facts, a trait that may handicap their personal relations and cause others to see them as detached or cold-blooded. As a matter of course, these scientists are interested in technology and new methods, particularly within their own fields. Moreover, they often have an obsessive commitment to finding and revealing the truth.

In stories with forensic scientists as their main characters, the protagonists often step outside the boundaries of their positions and professions by acting as detectives themselves—something that rarely happens in real life. As a consequence of their expanded roles, fictional forensic scientists often have direct and even violent confrontations with the criminals. In real life, the only times forensic scientists are likely to get near perpetrators are in courtrooms, when they testify. Despite such literary liberties, casting forensic scientists in secondary roles has the value of holding up a mirror to the concept of forensic science as a discipline and the value that it has to the legal process. P. D. James even casts a forensic scientist as the victim in *Death of an Expert*

Witness (1977). Philip Margolin goes even further in *Proof Positive* by having his forensic expert play the story's murderer and using his professional expertise to manufacture false evidence to cover his tracks.

A final characteristic of forensic mysteries is their tendency to fictionalize true crimes and borrow elements from real cases. In an interview, Kathy Reichs admitted that she maintained a box for each of her novels in which she collected information on real cases on which she drew for her books. This practice of using "cases ripped from the headlines" or basing plots on real-life investigations is not uncommon. However, in reality, forensic science does not always achieve satisfactory conclusions, while in mystery fiction, the scientific evidence is often the pivotal point to acquit innocent persons charged with crimes or to ensnare or unmask the true criminals at the climax, so that justice is served in the end.

Wendi Arant Kaspar

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HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

Mystery stories set in past historical periods enjoyed a great surge in popularity toward the end of the twentieth century. Many of these books are carefully researched, and some of their authors hold graduate degrees in archaeology, history, and related fields. Despite the often impressive historical credentials behind many of the historical mysteries that are being published, the books themselves frequently reveal traces of their authors' own modern time periods. Sharan Newman, the author of several series of historical mysteries, admitted as much in her afterword to *Heresy* (2002). She explains that her novel's depiction of the panic that occurred at the time of the 1148 Council of Rheims actually portrays millennial fears near the end of the twentieth century. She implied that the world was no more likely to end in the twentieth than in the twelfth century. By describing a fictional medieval detective dealing successfully with millennial paranoia, Newman offers a kind of therapy by suggesting, in effect, that her readers should be at least equally successful in resisting their modern fears.

Such an inherently psychological use of historical mystery goes back at least as far as Sophocles' drama *Oedipus Tyrannos* (428 B.C.E.). Although the basic Oedipus story had existed for hundreds of years before Sophocles' time, its chief relevance to Athens during the midst of the Peloponnesian War was that King Oedipus's once-powerful Thebes had become one of Athens's most implacable foes. Loyal to Athenian democracy, Sophocles, therefore, makes the Theban king Oedipus an arrogant investigator, who finds that he has murdered his father for reasons traceable to the degeneracy of his dynasty. Sophocles was reassuring his Athenians of their superiority and eventual success against their enemies—a prognosis even more explicit in his later play *Oedipus at Colonus* (c. 406 B.C.E.), in which Oedipus abandons his Theban sons and bestows on Athens a magical protection against invasion.

During Sophocles' time, Greece itself had become a divided family—a situation that may have been appropriate to the birth of the historical-mystery genre as a way of puzzling out distant mythic roots of the crisis.

One might ask whether this means that historical mysteries tend to flourish during particularly ominous times. The most prolific period of historical-mystery writing has been the 1990's and early twenty-first century. Perhaps the period's proximity to the millennial year 2000 may have inspired writers to reassess the past in order to extrapolate the future. As Newman noted, millennial reassessment and speculation can generate brief moments of terror. In historical mysteries, however, terror may take many forms. These forms may be classified under four headings:

- The retreat: situations from which characters wish to escape
- The labyrinth: confusing situations that characters struggle to clarify
- The frontier: borderland adventures that both frighten and thrill the characters
- The threatened ideal: situations in which characters struggle to defend model ways of life

Another approach to considering these themes is to see them as moods, some extroverted, some introverted, and with varying emphases on thinking or feeling. Readers choosing stories are likely to relish those with initial themes that match their moods, even when such stories take them in exciting new directions that help to balance their disposition.

THE RETREAT (INTROVERTED FEELING)

If a reader's initial mood is turned in and focused on disturbing emotions, a congenial opening might be an image of retreat from the world, such as a fictional protagonist who has retired from worldly concerns to a place such as a monastery or convent in an medieval mystery. Typically, however, the character's urge to withdraw is in dynamic tension with the same character's need to solve a mystery. Historical fictions are not the only literary works that may begin with the theme of retreat, but the use of a historical setting helps to distance action in a way that can make a novel itself an escape for present-day readers.

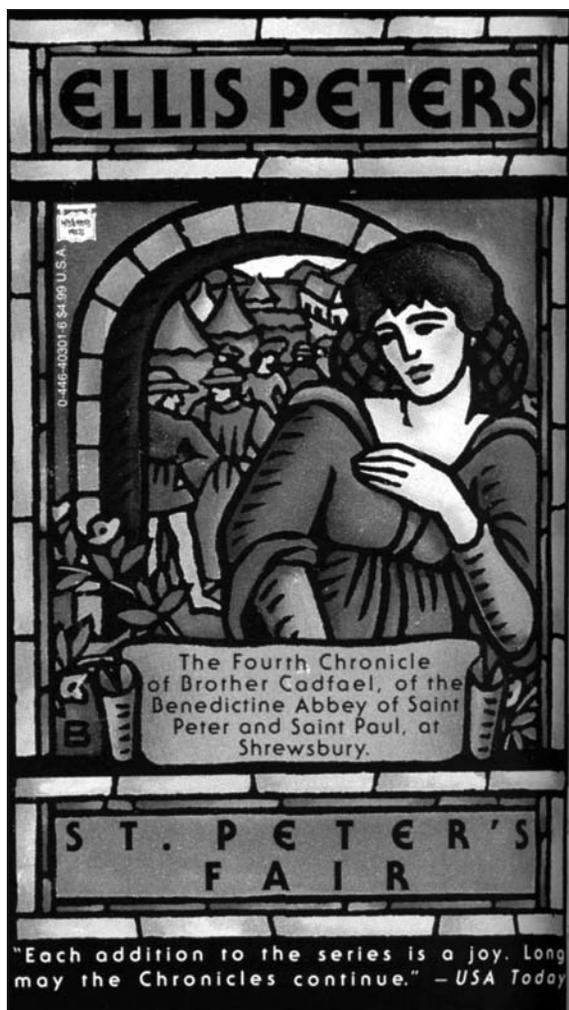
Agatha Christie's historical mystery *Death Comes as the End* (1944) is a good example of this pattern of

the initial retreat, probably because of Christie's own personal predilection to retreat from crises, both fictional and real. She is best known for her nonhistorical mysteries featuring Miss Jane Marple and Hercule Poirot, both of whom are often in states of semiretirement. When Christie's first husband asked her for a divorce in 1928, she disappeared from public view for ten days. It was an emotional withdrawal so extreme that she later said it induced amnesia. Although she managed to pull herself together enough to return temporarily, she eventually left for the Middle East—an area very remote from Europe in those days. She later married an archaeologist and devoted much of her new married life to digs into the Middle Eastern past.

Christie's *Death Comes as the End* juxtaposes nostalgia for its ancient Egyptian setting with distaste for the character Nofret, a family-disrupting concubine. Within the narrow confines of the novel's plantation, the detective figure, Renisenb, uses her investigatory reasoning to recover from the disturbing loss of her husband. She zigzags between moments of panicky withdrawal and courageous return to detection, as if the narrative were teaching integration of feeling and thinking, as well as of introversion and extroversion. Like most historical mysteries, this book's emphasis on the distinctiveness of its historical setting may invite readers to associate it with their own pasts, yet find it safer, making it an excellent space for rumination through Renisenb, who finds a handsome new partner. In writing this book, Christie may have been dealing with memories of divorce and remarriage.

CADFAEL'S RETREAT

Thanks largely to a popular Public Broadcasting System miniseries, the best-known historical mysteries of the initial retreat are Ellis Peters's Brother Cadfael books (1977-1994). In reaction to the traumas of the years he spent soldiering and the horrors of a British civil war, Cadfael has withdrawn to a monastery. There, one part of him is content with a relatively isolated life of healing and of raising medicinal herbs, which Peters describes in loving detail. Indeed, this setting is so beautiful that it inspired Rob Talbot and Robin Whiteman to publish *Cadfael Country: Shropshire and the Welsh Borders* (1990) and *Brother Cad-*



fael's Herb Garden: An Illustrated Companion to Medieval Plants and Their Uses (1996).

Cadfael is actually Cadfael ap Meilyr ap Dafydd, a Welshman living among anti-Welsh Englishmen near the Welsh border, in the part of Shropshire where Peters spent most of her life. In some of Peters's books, Welsh-English political strife and, more often, murder draw Cadfael from his retreat into the frontier activity of the border, as he helps the local sheriff. Although he encounters a grown son whom he begot in the Middle East, his primary devotion is to the long-dead St. Winifred, whose bones Cadfael escorts to England in the first book in the series. Cadfael calls the saint his "girl" and speaks affectionately to her remains in Welsh. Despite occasionally helping young lovers to

unite, he himself has retired from secular romance and turned toward more saintly pursuits.

RETREAT THEMES IN SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERIES

Ellis Peters quietly injects modern psychology into her Cadfael stories to help delineate the monks' semi-retirement from the world. Laurie R. King's Mary Russell series (1994-) has a protagonist who is well read in works of the pioneering psychologists Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung. *The Beekeeper's Apprentice: Or, On the Segregation of the Queen* (1994), the first volume in the series, is set during World War I, when the fifteen-year-old Russell is plagued by nightmares about having caused the deaths of her father, mother, and brother and decides to live in a secluded British farmstead. Her neighbor is Sherlock Holmes. Apparently in his fifties, Holmes has taken an early retirement so he can study bees, whose company he prefers over that of most human beings. In this, he resembles his brother Mycroft, the founder of the Diogenes club, an organization for asocial Londoners who want to have as little to do with other human beings as possible. To these notable images of defensiveness and seclusion, King has added the metaphor of bees, creatures ready to sting all who intrude on their space—a trait that Mycroft, Sherlock, and Mary Russell share.

Beekeepers segregate young queen bees to protect them from the older queens until they are large enough to reign over their hives. This image applies to Mary Russell's retreat, but her retreat has other associations, including chess queens and villains, introverted regal figures. With Holmes's protection and guidance, Russell's initial rustication allows her to grow into a brilliant sleuth. After she leaves the countryside, her progress becomes a zigzag of adventures and retreats, including small withdrawals to her Oxford studies and a larger retreat to the historic sites of Palestine, in strategic flight from a villain's attack.

Russell's goal is clearly to emulate her idol, Holmes. By the middle of the novel, she has progressed enough for a little girl whom she saves to look on her as a model. Remembering her own trauma, Russell conducts therapy on the child, who has suffered psychological withdrawal after being kidnapped. However,

King does not allow Russell to recover completely from her own traumas to keep her series from losing its distinguishing quality. In the eighth volume in the series, *Locked Rooms* (2005), Russell is again at her childhood home, suffering nightmares. The theme of retreat also assumes other forms, as in the emphasis on the diminishment that age brings throughout *The Moor* (1998), or the need of abused women for a refuge in *The Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1995).

King's image of a traumatized Holmes owes much to Nicholas Meyer's first Sherlock Holmes pastiche, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1974), which was later adapted by its author into a film with a slightly different plot. In both versions of the story, Holmes's traumatic childhood leads to a drug addiction, cured by Sigmund Freud. Meyer followed this novel with a less memorable sequel, *The West End Horror* (1976). It begins in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a prolonged blizzard that keeps Watson and Holmes indoors. Aside from some clever twists of plot, the novel is only notable for its cast of famous London authors, from George Bernard Shaw to Oscar Wilde, so Meyer discontinued the series for years. Then, when writing historical mysteries became a pronounced vogue during the 1990's, he wrote *The Canary Trainer* (1993), a sequel more like his first pastiche of Holmes. It opens with the detective in retirement, raising bees. While telling about the years he spent hiding from the late Professor Moriarty's subordinates, Holmes describes his employment with the Paris opera. There he was willing to work on a case only under the threat of blackmail.

The fact that a historical mystery involves Sherlock Holmes does not necessarily mean that it need begin with images of seclusion or retreat. However, Holmes is so often given to fits of depression that later authors have dwelt on these almost as much as they have on his ratiocination. Furthermore, the stories are set during a historical period when the pace of life was accelerating from the Victorian to the modern. Thus, the famous would-be-retired investigator easily serves as a symbol of each era's future shock.

Aside from pastiches of Holmes, traumatized detectives have appeared in such historical mysteries as Charles Todd's six-volume Inspector Ian Rutledge series. This series concerns an introverted and shell-

shocked World War I hero. Inside his head he hears the voice of a coward whom he once killed, thus internally dramatizing an ambivalence toward war that is relevant to virtually any historical period.

CLASSICAL RETREATS

An important attraction of reading literature from earlier periods of history is being able to enter distant mirrors that reflect one's current worries, while simultaneously distancing one from those same worries, thereby soothing one's emotions. Consequently, modern pastiches of classical literature often feature the theme of the retreat. Stephanie Barron has written a long series in which the early nineteenth century English writer Jane Austen writes autobiographical thrillers. Barron's titles range from *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* (1996) to *Jane and His Lordship's Legacy* (2005). Although Barron's Austen meets men with whom she works closely in the solving of crimes and sometimes tastes scandal thereby, she is guaranteed to remain single and above the social hubbub, usually in some relatively rustic retreat.

Michael Crichton retells the early Middle Ages English epic *Beowulf* in his novel *Eaters of the Dead* (1976). Crichton's novel is, in a sense, a historical mystery that contains an initial retreat—Ibn Fadlan's recoil from the barbarities of the Vikings. Historian Paul Doherty has written a series based on Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). His own titles include *An Ancient Evil* (1994), *Ghostly Murders* (1997), and *The Hangman's Hymn* (2001). His starting point is Chaucer's pilgrims, who spend time diverting themselves by telling tales. According to Doherty, the pilgrims tell stories about mysteries in the evening. In *An Ancient Evil*, for example, the Knight tells about a cult of Satanists who were supposedly destroyed long ago but who the abbess of the Convent of St. Anne's believes are guilty of renewed horrors. Indeed, retreat is probably the most common premise of historical mysteries; however, the labyrinth is almost as prevalent.

THE LABYRINTH (INTROVERTED THINKING)

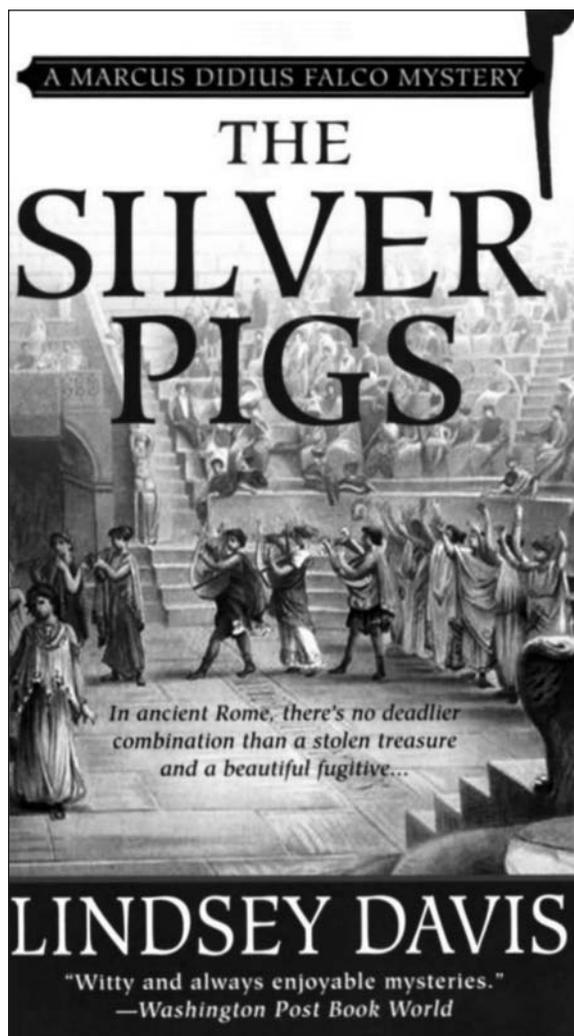
While all mysteries immerse readers in puzzles, labyrinthine historical mysteries begin as puzzles

within puzzles. Both characters and readers sense that they are constantly at the point of becoming lost, and mazes of historical details heighten their confusion. Retreat, frontier, or ideal themes may also occur in labyrinthine narratives, but it is the nature of this theme to reduce other such motifs to mere twists within it. Jorge Luis Borges's 1941 short story "El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," which was translated into English as "The Garden of Forking Paths" is one of the most influential of such works.

In Borges's story, the highly introverted and scholarly Dr. Yu Tsu is, for his own complex reasons, spying for the Germans during World War I. He needs to inform them about a secret British artillery installation. By an intricate series of chances, he encounters a scholar of Chinese culture, Dr. Stephen Albert, who knows a secret from a previous century about the spy's ancestor, Governor Ts'ui Pen. Albert has discovered that the governor retired from office to write a novel filled with anomalies. For example, the protagonist perishes in the third chapter, yet is alive in the fourth, because the book is a maze of temporal possibilities. Despite being grateful to learn of his ancestor's literary achievement, Yu Tsun shoots Albert, so that newspapers recording the incident would connect his name with Albert's, thereby signaling a clue to the Germans about the target to be bombed. Borges's own story, like that of Ts'ui Pen, is labyrinthine in its narrative of the spy's convoluted path to Albert's home, the complex place of his espionage in World War I, the irony of a Chinese person siding with the Germans, and the odd fate that makes Yu Tsun both friend and enemy to Albert.

Borges significantly influenced what may be the best-known historical mystery novel yet written, Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980), which was translated into English as *The Name of the Rose* (1983). Jorge, the major character in Eco's novel, is a blind librarian—an allusion to Jorge Luis Borges, a man who was blind when he became the director of Argentina's National Library. Like Borges's short story, Eco's book is a historical murder mystery set in something like a maze—an enormous monastery with a jumbled library. Also like Borges's story, Eco's novel is highly metaphysical, spending as much time on philosophical co-

nundrums as it does on action. Indeed, *The Name of the Rose* debates the very meaning of time. Jorge insists that however intricate, its pattern is meaningful—an idea Borges had offered playfully in his use of coincidence. Eco's Jorge, however, is the opposite of playful; indeed, he will do whatever is necessary to make people take his apocalyptic interpretation of time seriously. William of Baskerville, Eco's Sherlock Holmes-like detective, opposes Jorge, but his relatively scientific approach to solving mysteries is sufficiently ahead of its time to make his victory indecisive. However, such indecisiveness is common in labyrinthine mysteries, in which the knots of events often intertwine too intricately to be untied completely.



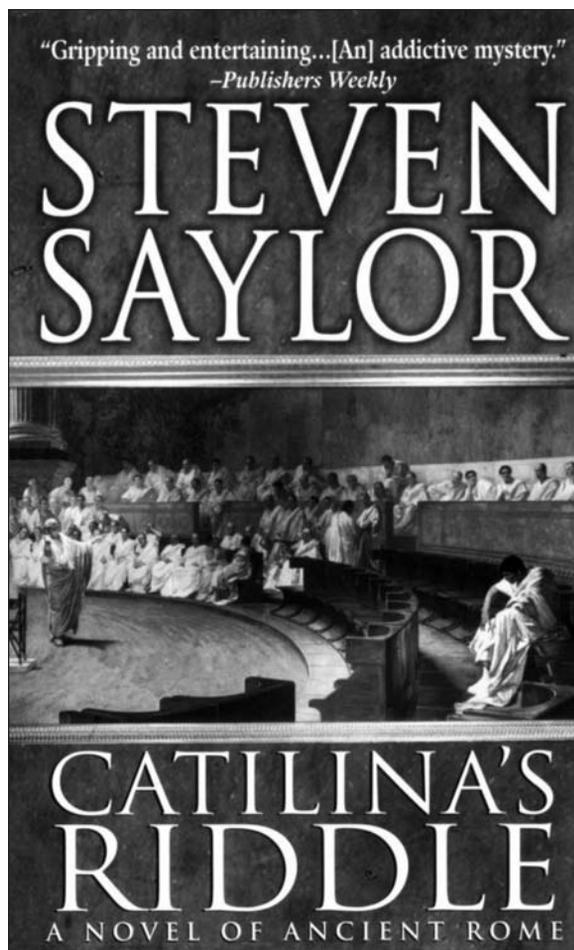
ROMAN AND BYZANTINE LABYRINTHS

Indeterminacy dominates several major mystery series set in ancient Rome. One example is the Marcus Didius Falco series, which Lindsey Davis launched in 1989 with *The Silver Pigs*. Like Jorge Luis Borges himself, the fictional Falco was once promoted to chicken inspector—an ambiguous honor. In his predilection for tangled stories, Borges often chose traitors as heroes, and Davis's Falco is a professional traitor—a *delator* or informer, who wanders through the maze of noir Rome in the pay of the emperor. Since Robert Graves published his novel *I, Claudius* in 1934 and especially since the airing of the 1976 miniseries based on that book, ancient Rome has been popularly regarded as exemplar of high intrigue and corruption. It has become the setting for numerous historical mysteries, including John Maddox Roberts's SPQR books (1990-) and Steven Saylor's Roma Sub Rosa series (1991-). Roberts's Roman detective is often unable to charge the real criminals whom he identifies because they are too powerful to be called to account in a corrupt era. Saylor's detective is also at odds with the city's almost ubiquitous conspiracies and cruelty.

Despite the historical evidence of widespread intrigues and corruption in ancient Rome, it was not that city but the ancient Greek city of Byzantium (now Istanbul) that became synonymous with conspiracies and corruption and gave the English language the word "byzantine," a synonym for devious and labyrinthine. Mary Reed and Eric Mayer have made that ancient Middle Eastern metropolis their setting for their John the Eunuch series (1999-). John is a Mithra-worshipping eunuch living with an officially Christian society in which he is as much at risk from his treacherous employers, the emperor and empress, as he is from the criminals whom he pursues.

OTHER ASIAN LABYRINTHS

Not only Byzantium but all of Asia long ago acquired a reputation among Westerners for incomprehensible complexity. According to *Anabasis Alexandri*, by the second century C.E. Greek historian Arrian, an ancient Phrygian oracle proclaimed that whoever untied the intricately entangled Gordian knot could also conquer Asia, which was equally complex. Meta-



In Steven Saylor's *Catilina's Riddle* (1993), *Gordianus the Finder* investigates early Rome's populist politician Lucius Sergius Catilina, who may be the principal conspirator behind a plan to overthrow the Roman government by force.

phoric of Western force, Alexander the Great simply cut the knot. However, modern Western authors writing mysteries set in Asia tend to be attracted to Asia's very complexity—even when they have to invent it themselves. One such writer was Robert H. van Gulik.

After publishing a translation of the eighteenth century Chinese mystery tales of the *Dee Goong An* as *Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee* in 1949, van Gulik began writing his own mystery stories about the famous seventh century Chinese judge, starting with *The Chinese Maze Murders* (1956). Since van Gulik hoped to inspire a renaissance of the mystery genre in Asia, he actually released a Japanese version of the

book in 1951 and a Chinese one in 1953. However, regardless of the book's language, its contents are tinged with Orientalism—projections of Western authors' own desires on the East. The stories in *The Chinese Maze Murders* are all about a garden labyrinth similar to Borges's "Garden of Forking Paths." They also include a tale on that Occidental cliché "The Murder in the Sealed Room" (the title of the first story). Another tale, "The Girl with the Severed Head," offers the kind of sadism Westerners have long associated with China.

A Dutch ambassador and scholar, van Gulik brought considerable knowledge of Asia to his fiction. Another Western author who is almost equally well qualified—and nearly equally sensational—is Laura Joh Rowland, the granddaughter of Chinese and Korean immigrants. Rowland has spent many years researching Asian—particularly Japanese—history and has set her Sano Ichirō series (1994–) in seventeenth century Japan. It thrusts readers into the already convoluted politics of Tokyo when it was still Edo. Not surprisingly, Rowland's books offer the expected descriptions of Edo as a maze. However, the books' other intricacies are even more interesting.

In *The Assassin's Touch* (2005), for example, Sano is hunting through that tangle for a killer who knows the secret of the *dim-mak*, a martial-arts technique with which a very slight touch can cause a brain hemorrhage that results in death after a delay of several days, thereby separating the moment of assault from the moment of death so completely that tracking a murderer who uses the technique seems impossible. This indirectness is a microcosm of a similarly convoluted society. During Sano's time period, Japan's ostensible ruler, the emperor, merely reigned. At the same time, the Shogun, the supposedly actual ruler, was almost senile; his power was sometimes in the hands of a relative, sometimes in the hands of his child lover, and sometimes in the hands of one or another of his feuding ministers.

Perhaps improbably, Sano's own standing usually depends on what his wife is doing when she serves as one of his detectives. In each novel, she generally undermines his position before restoring it. In *Red Chrysanthemum* (2006), for example, she is caught "in a maze-like space" with no memory, naked, next to an enemy who is not only murdered but also castrated.

The basic metaphor of the labyrinth in Rowland's books is disconnection—of time, trust, memory, place, and culture. In *The Way of the Traitor* (1997), an undependable chamberlain sends Sano away from court to Nagasaki to look for traitors who might be allowing Christian proselytizing. Meanwhile, the chamberlain's true agenda is to work behind Sano's back to make him appear to be a traitor.

THE OPEN FRONTIER (EXTROVERTED FEELING)

Most detective fiction conforms to one or both of the first two introspective themes, the retreat or the labyrinth. In both forms, armchair detectives often fight against armchair villains, such as Sherlock Holmes's nemesis, Professor Moriarty, who manages his criminal empire from the confines of his own study. In stories of the retreat, introversion is usually deliberate on the characters' part. With the labyrinth, it is often a result of disconnecting conditions under which the characters function. For example, Rowland's Sano would prefer to do his own legwork, but after he becomes chamberlain, he must depend on the assistance of either his handicapped subordinate or his wife—despite conventions against a woman detective.

The retreat involves the emotion to retire, while the labyrinth involves the intellectual decision to act indirectly. In either situation, protagonists mirror the inherently introspective situations of readers puzzling over the mysteries. These are very effective, and thus common, manners of eliciting reader empathy. Readers who prefer vicarious adventures over introspection may turn to the smaller number of extroverted historical mysteries. These works seek out periods in the past mostly for their potential excitement. In contrast to the claustrophobic retreat and labyrinth themes, the open frontier theme is agoraphobic, offering panoramas so vast as to be profoundly challenging. Its best-known genre, the Western mystery, connects the indistinctness of physical and political boundaries with lack of moral boundaries for outlaws pursued by detectivelike heroes.

THE WESTERN AS A PARADIGMATIC OPEN FRONTIER

In Zane Grey's *Lone Star Ranger* (1915), Buck Duane finds that the temporary absence of a sheriff

in town tempts him into violence. This in turn leads him into a career as an outlaw, but he is plagued by nightmares. After he receives a pardon for his crimes, he becomes a Texas Ranger, investigating crimes—emotionally rather than intellectually. In a similar vein, Louis L'Amour's *Borden Chantry* (1977) has as its murder investigator a marshal who can only detect with the skills he learned herding cattle, and like Duane, he relies heavily on his guns rather than his mind.

To be more intriguing than *Lone Star Ranger* or *Borden Chantry*, Western mysteries must reinvent both genres. An example is Steve Hockensmith's parody *Holmes on the Range* (2006). Its Dr. Watson figure, Big Red, and his brother, the would-be Holmes figure, Old Red, live a stereotypical extroverted, cowboy life. This situation is congenial to Big Red but not to Old Red, who has an introverted temperament. However, he is illiterate and consequently knows no way to follow his natural bent. Because the brothers have red hair, Big Red reads aloud Doyle's recently published "The Red-Headed League," thereby offering Old Red a model of the intellectual life that requires only acute observation, not education. Soon afterward, the men encounter a mystery that they try to solve through an integration of their temperaments. In *On the Wrong Track* (2007) the comedy crime-solving continues, this time on a train ride.

William L. DeAndrea's Lobo Blacke and Quinn Booker series is only slightly more serious than Hockensmith's novels and has similarly complementary characters. Once a federal marshal, Blacke is now a paraplegic newspaper publisher; Booker is an easterner who writes dime novels. When he comes west, Booker must imitate the Western heroes about whom he has written. In the first book, *Written in Fire* (1995), he must deal with inebriated cowboys the moment he arrives in Blacke's town; in *Fatal Elixir* (1997), six months later he becomes its sheriff and almost immediately confronts an angry lynch mob.

The form of Michelle Black's Eden Murdoch series drifts gradually from liberal Western to feminist mystery. The first book in the series, *Uncommon Enemy* (2001), sends a cavalry officer to investigate what to George Armstrong Custer's prejudiced mind is a puzzle, but which turns out to be little more than the

tale of a woman who has learned respect for her Native American captors.

Black's third book, *Second Glass of Absinthe* (2003), leans more toward being a murder mystery than a Western. It begins with both suspect and victim in the same kind of amoral daze that led Zane Grey's Buck Duane into crime. The reason is the same—lack of psychological boundaries in the West. However, its setting is a Colorado mining town, where wealth has brought such civilized vices as absinthe.

OTHER FRONTIERS

Although the American West may be the most prominent frontier, it is not the only frontier in historical mysteries. Lauren Haney has set her Lieutenant Bak series (1997-) in the Egyptian desert when Hatshepsut was pharaoh during the early fifteenth century B.C.E. In *A Path of Shadows* (2003), Bak tracks prospectors through a desert, where nomads serve functions comparable to American Indians in Westerns. Spear fights substitute for shootouts, and Bak simply has to stay alive until the mystery unwinds.

P. F. Chisholm's Sir Robert Cary series (1996-2000) has a sixteenth century Warden on the border between England and Scotland. Acting as both judge and sheriff, Cary patrols a wild area, where feuds for vengeance and wide-scale raiding among the farms disturb the uneasy peace. In Barbara Cleverly's Joseph Sandilands series (2001-), the proxy for the American West is early twentieth century India. In these books, the open frontier is a theme more about historical adventure than intricate puzzles.

THE THREATENED IDEAL (EXTROVERTED THINKING)

Perhaps the clearest example of the threatened ideal theme can be seen in Elliott Roosevelt's twenty-volume series featuring his own mother, Eleanor Roosevelt, as a detective. The series' idealization comes both from Roosevelt's filial admiration for his mother and from his mother's reputation as a powerful feminist hero. Threats to that idealization include reactionary Americans and Nazis. America stands therein as a place where anyone with sufficient extroversion and intellect can achieve greatness. Similar uses have been

made of American, or partly American, women detectives in numerous historical mysteries, including Robin Paige's ten-volume Kate Ardleigh series and Rhys Bowen's three-volume Molly Murphy series.

The threatened ideal is also the theme of the post-Western, the tale of a closed or closing frontier, when civilization and the West have achieved an insecure yet beautifully balanced union, easily associated with various psychological balances, for example, of gender traits. In Dianne Day's *The Strange Files of Fremont Jones* (1995), for example, the title character drops her first name (Caroline) in favor of her more masculine middle name, Fremont, honoring an explorer relative of hers. With that relative as a distant model, she leaves for San Francisco in 1905 to avoid an arranged marriage in Boston. Her neatly outlined plan is to open a secretarial service, scarcely, one might assume, a flight into adventures. Adventures come, however, in the form of a murderous Tong and a man named Edgar Allan Partridge, who leaves a terrifying, allegedly true manuscript to be typed and then disappears. After Jones's office is rifled, she employs her very orderly mind to maintain that ideal of freedom that has brought her to California.

MEDIEVAL IRELAND AS THREATENED IDEAL

America is far from being the only part of the world idealized in historical mysteries. For example, Peter Tremayne presents medieval Ireland as an egalitarian utopia. Its virtues have coalesced into the sleuth Sister Fidelma, whom Tremayne introduced in 1994 in *Absolution by Murder*; the first of more than sixteen novels he published about Sister Fidelma through 2007. Fidelma entered a religious order to gain an education, not to escape. Without violating seventh century Irish custom, she marries a monk and acts at various times as defense lawyer, prosecuting attorney, and judge. Ellis contrasts this culture with Saxon barbarism and the period's allegedly misogynistic Roman Catholicism, which Ellis presents as threatening the Irish church quite as insidiously as the Saxons threatened Ireland's physical security. In *The Subtle Serpent* (1996), for example, Fidelma calmly solves murders in the community of The Salmon of the Three Wells, where the politically motivated evil abbess has exiled the male members and sided with the Roman church. Perhaps in

reaction against the old stereotype of women as introverted and emotional, the female detectives of the threatened ideal are very much in control of their emotions and oriented toward external action, while their struggle to overcome sexist opponents earns them readers' admiration. Indeed, without this or some comparable problem, extroverted and unemotional characters would be difficult to make interesting.

OTHER APPROACHES TO HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

The structures described above account for the majority of historical mystery novels: volumes that begin with one attitude and then usually alternate with a complementary one, as if to take readers into a special version of the past where balance is being achieved. This pattern, however, does not always account for theory-driven books, such as Robert Graysmith's *The Bell Tower: The Case of Jack the Ripper Finally Solved . . . in San Francisco* (1999). Presented through partly fictionalized details, Graysmith's book contends that the Baptist minister John George Gibson committed both the London ripper murders and two murders in San Francisco. Although Graysmith himself is involved in introspective thinking, the book is organized around the needs of his argument rather than any effort to balance moods. Also very mixed in themes are the many volumes of short stories, such as the Mammoth series edited by Michael Raymond Donald under the pseudonym Mike Ashley. Representative series titles include *The Mammoth Book of Historical Detectives* (1995), *Classical Whodunits: Murder and Mystery from Ancient Rome and Greece* (1996), and *The Mammoth Book of Roaring Twenties Whodunits* (2004). Authors of novel series often contribute short stories to such collections or publish their own collections.

Historical fantasy mysteries merit a special note. Because they mix genres, they are particularly likely to have more complex themes. Examples include P. N. Elrod's Vampire Files (1990-) and Chelsea Yarbro's nineteen-volume Count Saint-Germain series. To achieve a humorous effect, Elrod makes her vampire private investigator not a Bela Lugosi-type emotional introvert but a garrulous extrovert, whose first-person narration chats with the reader. At the same time, the

vampire's human partner is the more introverted one. As a parody of noir detective fiction, the Vampire Files books sometimes evoke the image of 1930's Chicago as a labyrinth; however, the vampire has supernatural powers that free him from much fear of becoming lost in a maze. Actually, as narrator, he keeps the mood closer to that of the frontier—in his case the blurred border between mundane and supernatural.

James S. Whitlark

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HORROR STORIES

The horror fiction and mystery fiction genres have a number of natural affinities that create various points of contact between them. Crime fiction is a fundamental genre in that it exemplifies the most basic kind of story arc: A state of normality is violated by a deviant occurrence, the necessity of whose repair provides a problem needing heroic address and a satisfactory sense of narrative closure. Within the framework of this normalizing story arc, many of the central motifs of horror fiction function quite straightforwardly as more extreme forms of deviance than are represented by thefts and murders. Indeed, many monsters of horror fiction are designed to represent particular extremes of conceivable deviance. In much horror fiction the central issue of the narrative is that of penetrating the mystery of how a breach in normality has come about, in order that a plan can be made for its effective repair, while the protagonist is endangered by forces intent on inhibiting that solution.

THE LINE SEPARATING HORROR AND MYSTERY FICTION

There is a nearly continuous spectrum of fictional deviance, in which such melodramatically exaggerated antagonists as Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty, Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, and Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter are not far removed from such prototypical horror fiction adversaries as Clemence Housman's *The Were-wolf* (1896), Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). However, one very significant difference between the two genres has resulted in the drawing of clear line between them in terms of their historical development and readership.

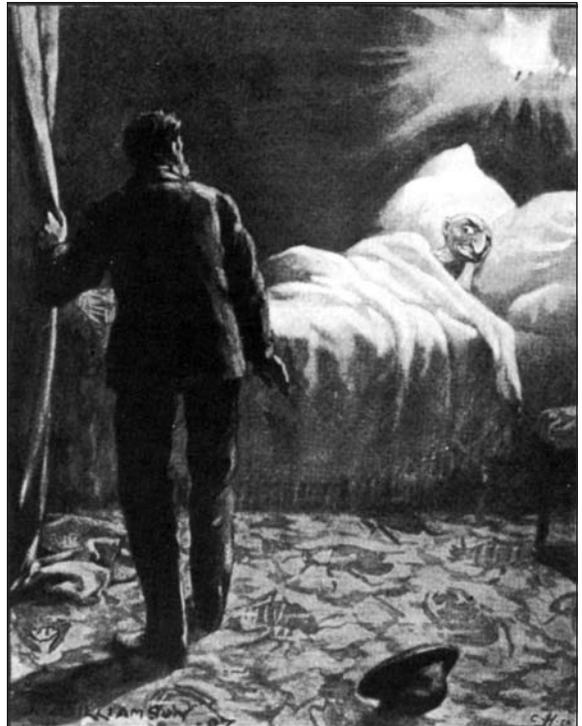
When a detective's use of logic eventually leads to an unassailable conclusion as to the identity of a perpetrator, he or she usually has an established legal apparatus to bring to bear on the apprehension, conviction, and punishment of the offender. Should that fail—as it often does in tales of crime-fighting that take a cynical view of the law's efficacy—the detective can fall back on some other practical means of retribu-

tion (usually a gun). By contrast, in a horror novel, the conclusion to which a protagonist's logic leads is an arbitrary contrivance of the author, and so is any means of exorcism by which normality can be restored. The law cannot cope with the supernatural, and guns are impotent to dispel it.

This discrepancy is so considerable as to create awkward difficulties for any narrative that attempts to straddle the line separating the horror and mystery genres, in spite of the fact that much horror fiction is, structurally speaking, a subspecies of mystery fiction, and the fact that much naturalistic mystery fiction also finds opportunities to deploy an exploit an element of horror.

MYSTERY ELEMENTS OF GHOST STORIES

The basic narrative affinity between horror and mystery fiction is elaborated and complicated in several significant ways. Many motifs that horror fiction



John Williamson's frontispiece for Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897).

adopted from folklore came with assumptions of deviance built in; the Devil is, quite literally, deviance personified. Other motifs were already coupled by traditional belief with assumptions regarding the means by which normality might be restored, such as the rule that vampires may be destroyed by wooden stakes driven through their hearts, or that werewolves can be killed with silver bullets. However, some images stubbornly resist this kind of artifice, especially ghosts.

Ghosts traditionally appear to demand reparation for some moral deficit, such as the failure of the living to live up to their ancestors' ideals, or to demand vengeance against their own murderers, or simply to provide enduring reminders of past violations of the moral order. Whatever their reason for appearing, though, they cannot be banished by any cheap trick; if they are to be banished, their demands must be met.

In consequence of this, the mystery element of longer ghost stories typically extends far beyond the simple problem of exorcising apparitions, usually demanding further reparative action. Short ghost stories normally lack space for this kind of elaboration, often functioning as producers of mysteries whose investigation is abruptly cut short by the deaths or defections of potential investigators. However, even short stories of a sophisticated sort—those of M. R. James are archetypal in this respect—obtain their force by reference to a broader moral scheme. In most long ghost stories, ranging from such pioneering examples as Edward Bulwer Lytton's "The Haunted and the Haunters" (1859) and Mrs. Oliphant's *A Beleaguered City* (1879) to such modern extravaganzas as Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971) and Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* (1979), the central task facing the ghost-seer is to unravel the mystery of why the ghost manifests itself, and what demands it is making of the living.

Ghosts of this questing kind far outnumber straightforwardly malevolent apparitions that function as monsters, and even in novels of the latter sort, the motivations of ghosts are often rooted in past events requiring investigation. Curses and other magical impositions are similarly rooted in a broader moral scheme, which means that the actions required to lift them routinely involve some kind of reparation or expiation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFINITIES BETWEEN HORROR AND MYSTERY FICTION

Complications of a different sort—although they are often entangled with the other—arise from the fact that horror is an excitation of the nervous system that is, to at least some extent, transmutable into other sorts of excitation. The Marquis de Sade earned himself an enduring notoriety by pointing out that when erotic excitation begins to lag it can often be renewed by an injection of horror—with the consequence that erotic stimulation becomes a significant, if quintessentially perverse, motivation for various kinds of crime, especially the most extreme. Sade's observation is extensively celebrated by the hybrid horror/mystery subgenre of serial-killer fiction, which has always traded heavily in sadistic perversity, even when subject to restraints by censorship.

This complication lends an additional mystery element to much psychological horror fiction, over and above its narrative convenience—a complication that lends itself well to such highbrow literary analyses of deviant motivation as Fyodor Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955). In more typical middlebrow examples, the mystery element is foregrounded because the nasty behavior of antagonists requires explanation and revelation in terms of sexual psychopathology; the fact that sufferers from such pathological urges are bound to make every effort to keep them hidden is a readily exploitable resource in the amplification and maintenance of this sort of mystery.

An extra twist is added to this variety of horror/mystery hybrid by the occasional tendency of individuals guilty of nasty behavior to hide it even from themselves. This gives rise to a subgenre of stories focused on deeply divided and conflicted characters, who are as mysterious to themselves as to others, ranging from James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), to the late twentieth century vogue launched by George Cukor's film *A Double Life* (1947) and Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1960).



The American actor Richard Mansfield made his reputation playing both title roles in T. Russell Sullivan's 1887 play *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's novel. This double-exposed photograph shot around 1895 shows the actor in both roles.

Such split-personality stories as these lie at the core of a more elaborate and generalized kind of horror/mystery fiction based in the idea of “madness”—a concept that is both intrinsically horrific and intrinsically mysterious. The essential horror of madness, in fact, arises from its inexplicability, which cuts so deep that it has never been clear what kind of explanation might suffice. It was once considered a matter of divine affliction, but its gradual recategorization as “mental illness” resulted in concerted attempts to categorize it, analyze its various forms, and devise successful treatments—all of which impinged on the historical development of both mystery and horror fiction, especially on subgenres lying close to the border between them.

The horrific quality of madness reflects the most

fundamental of all the affiliations between horror and mystery: the fact that there is a particular kind of horror that arises reflexively from the absence of explanation, and thus from mystery itself. Unlike the literal void, of which the universe has no shortage, this is one kind of vacuum that human nature really does seem instinctively to abhor.

It is presumably this innate psychological horror that generates makeshift supernatural explanations, on a massive scale, for occurrences that seem—at least for the moment—otherwise inexplicable, lending almost-unbreakable support to superstition, religious faith, and pseudoscience and donating considerable psychological plausibility to the entire tradition of occult fiction.

RATIONALIZATION IN GOTHIC FICTION

Modern horror fiction was born in the pages of the German *schauer-roman* and its English equivalent, the gothic novel. The German tradition made exceedingly free with its supernatural materials but nevertheless played host to a number of mysteries that are among the earliest significant examples of crime fiction. It was, however, the most popular English writer of gothic novels, Ann Radcliffe—the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797)—who highlighted the mystery element of gothic fiction most forcefully.

Acutely conscious of living in an Age of Enlightenment, as well as being a dutiful Christian, Radcliffe apparently considered it a moral duty not to endorse the superstitious fears that she mobilized so skillfully to harass, pressure, and terrify her heroines. She always took her normalizing story arcs to the conscientious extreme of “rationalizing” all their seemingly supernatural manifestations, thus restoring the natural order of her fictional worlds as well as the personal situations of her favored characters. One side effect of this policy was to transform all such menacing manifestations into mysteries whose solutions would include explanations based on mundane causes and effects.

Radcliffe's policy would have been widely imitated in any case, given that she was the best-selling and most highly paid author of her era. However, it really

did catch the mood of her era, which became very disapproving of superstition, especially when it smacked of residual paganism. The crusade against such materials generated such a powerful lobby in Great Britain that it threatened for a while to banish fairy tales from children's reading, and required champions of the imagination to mount their own campaigns in opposition; Charles Dickens's plea that conventional standards might be relaxed at Christmas helped give rise to the odd subgenre of Christmas ghost stories.

Although the supernatural made a spectacular comeback, in terms of real belief as well as literary usage, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Radcliffe method of double normalization gave rise to a significant descendant subgenre of horror/mystery fiction. The influence of her policy is obvious in the hybrid works of Edgar Allan Poe, especially "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), and Wilkie Collins, especially *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). Collins's influence fed in its turn into Charles Dickens's ventures into mystery fiction, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), as well as many works by Arthur Conan Doyle, including such Sherlock Holmes stories as *The Sign of Four* (1889), "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902).

The pertinence of this rationalizing methodology is reflected in the fact that one of the key activities of early detective agencies, such as the Pinkerton Detective Agency founded in the United States by Allan Pinkerton, was the investigation and exposure of fake spiritualist mediums, as Pinkerton himself recorded in *The Spiritualists and the Detectives* (1877). In terms of fictional norms, an insistence on rationalizing seemingly supernatural events fit in very well with the emerging ethos of problematic detective fiction, one of whose central tenets was Sherlock Holmes's famous assertion that "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however implausible, must be the truth."

TWENTIETH CENTURY RATIONALIZATION OF NEOGOTHIC APPEARANCES

The principal flaw in the Holmesian doctrine is that "eliminating the impossible" can only be achieved

conclusively when one knows exactly where the limits of the possible actually lie. Ann Radcliffe had been in no doubt about that question, and many others agreed with her—although Sadducistic champions of the Enlightenment and doctrinaire Christians did not necessarily agree with one another.

Arthur Conan Doyle was by no means as sure as Sherlock Holmes of where possibility ended and impossibility began. However, he recognized that Holmes's methods would be far less effective in a world in which the dead routinely spoke to the living through spiritualist mediums and children could photograph fairies in their gardens. This was one of the reasons why he developed such a strong antipathy to his own character. The occult revival of the late nineteenth century turned the tables on Holmes and Pinkerton alike, in both social and literary terms.

Twentieth century manifestations of stubbornly rationalized gothic fiction sometimes seem bizarre, if not perverse. This is partly because what are considered rational solutions are often far less psychologically plausible than interventions of the supernatural. It is also because their inherently anticlimactic quality easily extends to absurdly bathetic extremes—as it often did in the produce of the "weird menace" pulps of the 1930's and even the late twentieth century's children's animated television series *Scooby-Doo*. Even so, the subgenre retains a particular aesthetic charm, derived from the extreme ingenuity required to produce convincing naturalistic explanations for seemingly impossible events.

Notable examples of rationalized neogothic fiction include Maurice Renard's *Les mains d'Orlac* (1920; the hands of Orlac), Eden Phillpotts's *The Grey Room* (1921) and *Lycanthrope* (1937), Sydney Horler's *The Curse of Doone* (1928) and "The Screaming Skull" (1930), John Dickson Carr's *The Three Coffins* (1935) and *He Who Whispers* (1946), and Patrick Hamilton's play *Gaslight* (1939). Other examples include Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac's nove *Celle qui ne'était plus* (1952), which was filmed as *Les Diaboliques* in 1954, and *D'entre les morts* (1954; *The Living and the Dead*, 1956), which was the basis of Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 film *Vertigo*. Two more examples include Paul Gallico's novels *Too Many*

Ghosts (1959) and *The Hand of Mary Constable* (1964). So successful was the occult revival in the real and literary worlds, however, that such works retain an air of fugitive eccentricity, and examples are far outnumbered by unashamedly supernatural mysteries whose essentially arbitrary, so-called solutions are far less ingenious.

THE HORROR OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

Rationalized neogothic fiction obtains increased dramatic tension from its protagonists' hesitation to choose between supernatural and rationalistic explanations of seemingly impossible events. This dilemma is frequently sharpened by the suspicion that the only rationalistic explanation that seems possible is that the protagonist is seriously deluded, and hence in the process of going mad.

French horror fiction trades heavily on this kind of hesitation, to the extent that the usual French label for horror/mystery fiction, *le fantastique*, was defined by Tzvetan Todorov in terms of a hesitation between rival explanations—which, if settled, removes the text into one of two bordering genres: either *le merveilleux* or *l'inconnu*. These terms shift their meaning considerably if they are transposed into English as “the fantastic,” “the marvelous,” and “the uncanny.” The last term is further confused by virtue of its being used as the standard English translation of the German *unheimlich*, a word used by Sigmund Freud in a classic essay on the psychological operation of horror fiction.

Even when the question of the potential intervention of the supernatural does not arise in borderlands where the genres of thriller and horror fiction come close—as in novels of suspenseful persecution like such as Highsmith's *Strangers on a Train* (1950), Stephen King's *Misery* (1987), and Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* (1989)—the psychological pressure exerted on protagonists by anxiety, terror, and dread routinely acquire awesome dimensions. The kind of ambiguity that lies at the heart of rationalized neogothic fiction and the French *fantastique* is, in fact, the tip of a much bigger iceberg.

The central task of the detective in fiction is to demonstrate that the seemingly insoluble is always soluble—that there is no “perfect crime.” This is a psy-

chologically taxing process in itself, given extravagant representation in the various mental agonies suffered by Sherlock Holmes and many of his imitators. The subgenre of locked-room mysteries, for example, involves no potential evocation of the supernatural, but offers a puzzle that threatens to defeat any and all potential explanations, thus remaining vexatious forever. The prospect of being “driven mad” by an inability to solve such problems need not, however, be literal in order to be painful.

Given the primal horror of the unexplained, it is not surprising that the heroic efforts of Allan Pinkerton and Harry Houdini to expose all spiritualist mediums as frauds were soon eclipsed by the much more sympathetic enquiries of the physicist William Crookes and other members of the Society for Psychic Research. Nor is it surprising that literary endeavors were even more extravagant in favoring attempts to fill the occult vacuum. The heroic detective of L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace's *Master of Mysteries* (1898), who invariably debunked apparent hauntings and magical accomplishments, was soon overshadowed by a host of specialists whose task was to analyze authentically supernatural problems. This legion was headed by E. and H. Heron's Flaxman Low, in *Ghosts* (1899), Algernon Blackwood's *John Silence: Physician Extraordinary* (1908) and William Hope Hodgson's *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder* (1913).

DETECTIVES AND THE OCCULT

It is hardly surprising that the kind of mystery fiction in which freelance detectives neutralize threats by elaborating supernatural explanations, rather than by reducing menacing manifestations to mere banality, was attractive to would-be occultists. Aleister Crowley and Dion Fortune, respectively, added their own candidates to the list of occult detectives in *The Scrutinies of Simon Iff* (written c. 1920; collected 1987) and *The Secrets of Dr. Taverner* (1926). The less flamboyant *poseur* Margery Lawrence added Miles Pennoyer in *Number Seven Queer Street* (1945). The tradition of occult detective stories lost some of its impetus as the occult revival waned, but it extended to the end of the twentieth century in such series as one featuring John Burke's Alexander Caspian, begun with *The Devil's*

Footsteps (1976), and one collected in Glen Cook and Mark Valentine's *In Violet Veils and Other Tales of the Connoisseur* (1999).

There was also a small but significant subgenre of early twentieth century mystery fiction in which mundane detectives find themselves faced with incontrovertibly supernatural events, with the result that the issue at stake ceases to be a matter of elucidation and becomes a matter of pragmatic response. Jack Mann's Gees, who sometimes solved perfectly ordinary cases, often found himself in pickles of this sort, most significantly in *Grey Shapes* (1937), *Nightmare Farm* (1937), *Maker of Shadows* (1937), and *The Ninth Life* (1939). He inevitably accumulated a certain rough-and-ready expertise as the catalog of his confronta-

tions grew. Other notable examples of the formula include A. Merritt's *Burn, Witch, Burn!* (1933), many of the adventures of Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin, whose pulp magazine career lasted from 1925 to 1951—a representative sample is contained in *The Phantom-Fighter* (1966)—and Dennis Wheatley's Black Magic series, launched with *The Devil Rides Out* (1935).

There was an even smaller—and considerably less significant—subgenre of stories of the same period featuring psychic detectives who solved ordinary crimes by extraordinary means. J. U. Giesy's astrologically talented Semi-Dual and Sax Rohmer Morris Klaw in *The Dream Detective* (1920), who solved crimes by dreaming the solutions, were notable examples. Although this kind of crime solving seemed suspiciously like cheating, in terms of the normal expectations of detective fiction, the subgenre received a considerable boost when self-supposed psychics actually began offering their services to the police and to victims of crime on a considerable scale. Their fictional equivalents—especially the heroine of the television series *Medium* (2005-)—inevitably have a much higher success rate. The subgenre of modern detective fiction featuring psychological profilers is arguably not greatly different, and it is significant that its fictional variants are most frequently invoked in cases of exotic murder, which trade heavily on their horrific components.

COROLLARIES OF THE MEDICALIZATION OF MADNESS

The subgenre of psychopathological mystery stories descended from gothic accounts of insane villainy inevitably became the most important twentieth century horror/mystery hybrid. Social order depends on the predictability of behavior, which in turn depends on the assumed rationality of the individual. When the behavior of others becomes peculiar, the peculiarity generates unease long before the point at which it involves any manifest threat or danger.

As with all aberrations from the norm, madness has been a perennial preoccupation of literature, from classical representations of the madness of Orestes through such representations as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando*

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First published in Argosy magazine in 1934, A. Merritt's supernatural mystery novel Creep, Shadow, Creep is a direct sequel to Burn, Witch, Burn! It concerns the investigation of a young ethnologist into the mysterious suicides of wealthy New Yorkers.

Furioso (1516), William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1600-1601) and *King Lear* (1606), and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605-1615), to modern representations of the psychopath as the ultimate villain of crime fiction. These examples demonstrate clearly that literary madness inevitably takes on all the kinds of meaning that are absent by definition from actual madness—Hamlet was by no means alone in displaying madness with method in it—but they also demonstrate, with equal clarity, that such impositions of meaning never serve to eliminate either the essential horror or the essential mystery of madness.

It is not only the possibility that others might be mad—and hence disposed to threatening behavior—that is intrinsically horrific; the possibility that an individual might be going mad can easily seem even more horrific to that individual than the threat of mutilation or death. A significant subgenre of horror fiction comprises madman narratives, many of which are studies of obsessive attempts to penetrate mysteries that cannot, in the end, be resolved—often with horrific consequences. The formula is particularly well represented in the tradition of French *fantastique* fiction. Notable examples include Honoré de Balzac's *La recherche de l'absolu* (1834: *The Quest for the Absolute*, 1859), Jean Richepin's "La machine à métaphysique" (1877; "The Metaphysical Machine") and Guy de Maupassant's "Le Horla" (1887)—but it became increasingly significant in English fiction as the twentieth century progressed.

The horrific component of fiction dealing with madness is sometimes further exaggerated by representations of attempts to contain, treat, and understand madness by administrators of asylums. The prospect of being deemed mad is, in a sense, only the penultimate horror. The ultimate horror is being thus delivered into the keeping of people who believe they can cure one's madness by means that in any other circumstances would be considered torture—a delusion that is not only commonplace but frequently obtains official sanction. The involvement of legal process in committing patients to asylums creates another significant bridge between crime and horror fiction.

As the medical taxonomy of mental aberration evolved it was rapidly transplanted into problematic

literary case studies of a sort pioneered by Oliver Wendell Holmes's "medicated novels": *Elsie Venner* (1861), *The Guardian Angel* (1867), and *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885). Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Queen of Sheba* (1877) followed in the same vein in the United States, while the English physician who first described alcoholism as a disease, William Gilbert, collected a more extensive and inventive series of hypothetical case studies in *Shirley Hall Asylum* (1863) and *Dr. Austin's Guests* (1866). The conspicuous clinicality of these imaginary case studies is meticulous in shunning gothic extravagance, but that kind of method, like the other, only serves to refine their elements of horror and mystery.

Clinicality can embody a particular horror of its own, most extremely manifest in such real-world examples of moral anesthesia as the activities of Dr. Josef Mengele in the Auschwitz concentration camp and such ingenious demonstrations as Stanley Milgram's experiments persuading subjects to administer what they believed to be painful and dangerous electric shocks to other alleged volunteers. That kind of horror gives rise to a subgenre of mad scientist stories, which are mostly horror and mystery stories even when they are solidly embedded in the science fiction genre. This kind of horror is extensively exploited in twentieth century "medicated" thrillers like those wrote by Robin Cook, and reaches its finest pitch of acuity in those that maximize the mystery element in their plotting.

NARRATIVES OF EROTIC INSANITY

The various fetishisms explored in minute detail in Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886 provided abundant fodder for the literary construction of narratives of erotic insanity over the next two decades, especially by French writers affiliated to the Decadent Movement. Numerous examples can be found in such samplers of translations as Rémy de Gourmont's *Angels of Perversity* (1992) and Jean Lorrain's *Nightmares of an Ether-Drinker* (2002). Although the development of such narratives in the English language was initially inhibited by Victorian moralism, the delay eventually caused something of a backlash in such conscientiously provocative English

explorations as Edward Heron-Allen's *The Cheetah Girl* (1923) and Ronald Fraser's *The Flower Phantoms* (1926).

The most extravagant Decadent fantasy written in America, Ben Hecht's *Fantazius Mallare: A Mysterious Oath* (1922) is a straightforward narrative of erotic insanity. Hecht also toyed with similar narrative developments in his ingenious detective story *The Florentine Dagger* (1923) and his film script *The Specter of the Rose* (1946). Hecht's contemporary Guy Endore was similarly versatile, couching his classic account of *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933) as a narrative on insanity before producing the conscientiously Freudian murder mystery *Methinks the Lady* (1945). Endore scripted one of the film adaptations of Renard's *Les mains d'Orlac* as *Mad Love* (1935) and also had a hand in the talkie version of Tod Browning's classic rationalized gothic film, *Mark of the Vampire* (1935; based on the silent *London After Midnight*, 1927).

As psychological theory and psychiatric practice made significant advances during the late twentieth century, narratives of erotic insanity evolved further layers of complexity and sophistication, increasingly cashing in on the horrific aspects of clinicality. Notable examples of horror/mystery fiction illustrating this increase of sophistication in one way or another include Robert Bloch's *The Scarf* (1947), Barry N. Malzberg and Bill Pronzini's *The Running of Beasts* (1976), Patrick McGrath's *Spider* (1990), Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985), Jonathan Aycliffe's *Naomi's Room* (1991), Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* (1995), and Poppy Z. Brite's *Exquisite Corpse* (1996). After Alfred Hitchcock's film version of Bloch's *Psycho*, this kind of fiction became a key cinematic resource, extravagantly redeveloped in such horror/mystery films as the Thomas Harris-based *The Silence of the Lambs* (1990), *Se7en* (1995), the James Patterson-based *Kiss the Girls* (1997), and *The Bone Collector* (1999).

CHIMERICAL COMBINATIONS OF HORROR AND MYSTERY

The various affiliations between horror and mystery have generated several hybrid subgenres in which elements of horror and mystery are carefully fused.

The readiness with which such hybridizations can be contrived and exploited should not, however, be allowed to obscure the logical incompatibility of the rival accounting schemes whose clash produces the tension fundamental to *fantastique* fiction. There remains a basic discrepancy between the expectations of readers who are fond of detective stories and those who are fond of horror stories.

Although they form a marginal subgenre, tales of occult detectives are not enjoyed equally by fans of mystery and horror fiction. They are conventionally seen as a subgenre of horror fiction, which happens to feature "detectives," not as a subgenre of detective fiction that happens to involve supernatural agencies. The latter combination appears to detective story fans to be a fatal breach of the fundamental Holmesian principle that the establishment of a sole mundane possibility is adequate proof of its actual occurrence.

An interesting test case for this rule was established by John Dickson Carr in *The Burning Court* (1937), in which the detective provides a brilliantly ingenious explanation of how a seemingly supernatural murder could have been committed by naturalistic means. However, the author then adds a coda stating that it was, after all, committed by supernatural means, and that the production of a possible naturalistic explanation has only served to deflect blame from the actual guilty party. This controversial move seemed to many detective story readers to be a blatant violation of impropriety and a betrayal of the genre's fundamental ethos. Such a move can, in fact, only be tolerated as an exception trading on its shock value; the basic assumption of the mystery genre has to be the persistent and triumphant reaffirmation of the Holmesian rule.

This creates a problem for horror/mystery stories of the kind featured in Jack Mann's Gees series, in which a professional detective routinely confronts supernatural mysteries. Like the plots of occult detective stories, such plots belong to the horror genre rather than to the mystery genre, and their proximity to the borderline between the two genres does not result in an actual crossover. Rather than being generic hybrids, in fact, they are more like generic chimeras, in which incompatible elements are juxtaposed without being fused.

Such chimerization seems less offensive in accounts where the investigators are amateurs, as in Dennis Wheatley's *Black Magic* series, than they do in accounts where the detectives are professionals; it was not unknown for literary policemen and members of other official law-enforcement agencies to meet supernatural threats, but it remained very rare throughout the early history of both genres. It did, however, become much more common in the second half of the twentieth century.

MODERN EXPERIMENTS IN CHIMERIZATION

The increase in chimerical texts was mainly due to the fact that attempts to contrive generic crossovers for marketing reasons became much more common; as all genre sales figures waned, the possibility of producing books that would appeal to fans of more than one genre inevitably became more attractive. Notable groundbreaking examples of stories in which formal law-enforcement agencies are faced with supernatural adversaries include Leslie Whitten's *Progeny of the Adder* (1965) and *Moon of the Wolf* (1967), Whitley Strieber's *The Wolfen* (1978), Basil Copper's *Necropolis* (1980), Thomas F. Monteleone's *Night Train* (1984), Dean R. Koontz's *Darkfall* (1984; initially published under the pseudonym by Owen West) and *Midnight* (1989), and David C. Morrell's *The Totem* (1979).

The most sustained attempt to overcome the essential awkwardness of this kind of story was the television series *The X-Files* (1993-2000), which imagined a hypothetical department of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) assigned to investigate naturalistically inexplicable occurrences. Although the show's basic explanatory scheme was science fiction—a common means of neutralizing the apparent incompatibility between naturalism and the supernatural—it retained a far closer generic affiliation to both horror and mystery than to science fiction, and thus served to highlight certain key effects of chimerization, especially the way in which the credulous agent Fox Mulder is treated by his more orthodox colleagues—suspicions of madness shading into naked contempt—and the stress the show placed on the mechanics of the normalizing story arc fundamental to television series

production. At the end of every episode the deviant manifestation had not only to be defeated but to vanish without leaving any evidential trace that it had ever existed. The same necessity of awkward contrivance had afflicted the show's most conspicuous predecessor, which used an investigative reporter as its protagonist, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (1983-1985).

The blatant clumsiness of normalizing contrivance was a considerable handicap to this kind of story, but refusal of such contrivance brings about a drastic alteration of a story's generic status, because it involves a profound transformation of the world within the text. A good illustration is provided by Jack Williamson's *Darker than You Think* (1948), in which the logical extrapolation of an investigative reporter's confrontation with a werewolf leads into highly exotic narrative territory. Even in a relatively discreet example like William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* (1978), in which a private eye discovers that he is embroiled in a deal with the Devil, the story moves far beyond the mere trickery of *The Burning Court* into deeper metaphysical waters.

What the 1980's experiments with fiction of this sort did demonstrate, however, was that chimerization can generate literary rewards of its own, and that there is a certain amount of narrative energy to be obtained from exotic clashes of methods and worldviews. As the turn of the twenty-first century slipped by, there was a spectacular boom in fiction that grasped this nettle wholeheartedly, thus developing a host of exotic literary worlds in which mystery and horror could be more enterprising and exciting bedfellows—worlds that brought horror/mystery fiction to unprecedented levels of best-sellerdom and that generated some of the most successful television shows of the era.

THE NEW ZENITH OF HORROR/MYSTERY FICTION

There are two ways in which the world within a literary text might be transformed in such a way as to make it hospitable to innovative horror/mystery combinations. One is to set stories in a Secondary World that resembles our own world in many respects but is crucially different in its entertainment of supernatural motifs. This is the strategy followed by Laurel K. Hamilton in the Anita Blake series launched by *Guilty*

Pleasures (1994) and the Merry Gentry series launched by *A Kiss of Shadows* (2000). Both series are set in a world in which the acceptance of all manner of supernatural monsters is taken for granted. The first series features a vampire-hunter, while the second stars a mystery-solving “fey princess.”

The employment of a Secondary World facilitates further genre crossovers; Hamilton’s second series also incorporates strong elements of genre romance, reflecting a concerted attempt by publishers in that genre to diversify in several new directions; “vampire romances” cashing in on the popularity of Anne Rice were the forerunners of a much broader spectrum of “paranormal romances,” which provide a further example of the negotiability of nervous excitement and the use of horror as an erotic stimulant. A much more common strategy, however, is to juxtapose some such Secondary World with the primary one, in such a way that it provides a hidden metaphysical backcloth to the routines of everyday life, whose existence is unsuspected by the majority but perfectly familiar to a chosen few. Hamilton’s success was, to some extent, built on precedents provided by P. N. Elrod, whose *Vampire Files* series of hard-boiled detective thrillers in which the principal adversaries are vampires was launched with *Bloodlist* (1990). Simon R. Green’s series launched with *Hawk and Fisher* (1990) is similar in kind.

The highest profile series of this narrowly defined sort is the television show extrapolating the horror-comedy film *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992), which ran from 1997 through 2003. Much narrative capital was extrapolated from its heroine’s attempt to function in two worlds simultaneously, enduring the conven-

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John Irving (left), J. K. Rowling (center), and Stephen King at a press conference before reading from their works at “An Evening with Harry, Carrie, and Garp” in August, 2006.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

tional agonies of high-school adolescence while simultaneously functioning as a superhero keeping the world safe from continual invasions by vampires and other monsters. This formula was further extrapolated in other television shows, most successfully in *Charmed* (1998-2006), but it achieved its most spectacular success when it was broadened out and transplanted back into the literary arena by J. K. Rowling in her accounts of troubled adolescence in the series of novels begun with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (1997; retitled *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in the United States).

Another kind of quasi-chimerical combination—pioneered in Alexander Laing’s classic mystery *The Cadaver of Gideon Wyck* (1934)—results from the use of human teratology and extreme injury to spice up a mystery plot. Although that kind of “gross-out” horror is much more readily exploitable in nonfictional con-

text—as in the early twenty-first century boom in so-called “freak show” television and cosmetic surgery shows—the remarkable television drama series *House* (2004–), which continually referenced Sherlock Holmes in its representation of an expert diagnostician, achieved unprecedented dimensions of fictitious excruciation in its first two seasons.

This sequence of developments transported the narrative strategy of chimerization a long way from its roots in formal detective fiction, but always retained and made constructive use of the mystery element of the fiction; the Harry Potter books are framed as exotic but carefully constructed mysteries, whose solution is confused and inhibited by all manner of other pressures constraining and tempting the young hero. The books benefited from, and lent considerable impetus to, a sudden weakening in the taboos that had previously forbidden or discouraged the use of horror in fiction marketed for young readers. Long before that barrier came crashing down, however, the confrontation of child characters with supernatural agents—especially ghosts—had been forced to put a heavy emphasis on the mystery element of their plots, precisely because the horror element had to be soft-pedaled. Rowling’s work extrapolated that tendency very cleverly, to strike a balance whose success was reflected in monumental sales figures.

CONCLUSION

The successful establishment of so many new exercises in generic hybridization and chimerization in the final years of the twentieth century suggests that horror/mystery fiction not only had a bright future at the beginning of the twenty-first century but one in which the natural affiliations between the two genres would become more intimate and more intricate. In the final analysis, however, the protective wall that has always separated purist mystery fiction from supernatural fiction seemed bound to remain intact, despite the increased traffic across its various drawbridges.

Despite the various threats to which it has been subject, the Holmesian principle holds: the *true* solution to any mystery can only be determined by eliminating the impossible, and refining the evidence until only one possible solution remains. Within that frame-

work, the only permissible intrusions of horror into mystery fiction are mundane and naturalistic: the horror of violence, the horror of grief, the horror of madness and—least obviously but perhaps most significantly—the horror of unsolved mystery.

Such horrors are psychologically corrosive rather than imagistically flamboyant, but they are effective enough, especially when they are deployed in the context of a sophisticated awareness of the erotic potential of horror, which stimulates rather than—or as well as—corroding the mind’s self-confidence. It is difficult to imagine that serial killers in fiction have any further depths of perverse depravity to plumb, or that their further proliferation can have any other effect than a numbing of affect leading inexorably to ennui, but if that turns out to be the case it will force writers to return more attentively to the mystery elements of that sort of fiction, emphasizing the methodology of pursuit rather than the horrific monstrousness of the quarry.

Brian Stableford

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thorne's "Lock and Key Library" had earlier done likewise, and there was a glut of such hybrid showcases during the 1930's, including several edited by John Gawsworth, notably *Thrills, Crimes and Mysteries* (1935), and the Odhams Press *Mammoth Book of Thrillers, Ghosts and Mysteries* (1936).

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JUVENILE AND YOUNG-ADULT MYSTERY FICTION

After the 1870's, the American publishing world experienced an explosion of literature written for young readers. Many of the early books published for juveniles were didactic and moralistic in tone and subject. Others based on historical characters, events, and situations were educational. There was also another kind of publication read by young people that was generally decried as tasteless, unwholesome, and a bad influence on young people: the dime novel. That "demon-in-print," as it was sometimes known, was undoubtedly the most widely read of all the works of literature of that day and age in the United States. Dime novels were also diverse; some were written specifically for adults, while others were aimed at younger reader. There were also dime novels written specifically for women, and others written for male readers.

The range of subject matter in dime novels was immense, and mystery and detective stories numbers were exceptionally popular. In the world of the dime novel, Nick Carter and the Old Sleuth series of detective stories, including the adventures of Detective Gay and countless other sleuths, inspired readers breathlessly fans to await new installments in the adventures of their favorite mystery solvers. Moreover, no matter what the subject or theme of most dime novels, mysteries were frequently used as secondary plot devices to hold readers' interest. Such secondary mysteries might pertain to hidden identities; recovery of lost jewelry, money or documents; perpetrators of vandalism; or devices that would serve to whet readers' attention. Dime novels were stigmatized as poorly written and sensationalist publications, but that stigma was not always deserved. Such respected children's authors as Louisa May Alcott perfected their craft by writing dime novels.

By the late nineteenth century, most dime novel publishers, and especially Street & Smith, began pooling their titles into "Libraries" designed for boys and girls and printing those titles into hardback books. At a time when hardbound children's books sold for more than a dollar, the seventy-five cents charged for a Library volume was a bargain. In most instances, however, these hardbound Library volumes were simply

previously published dime novels in new bindings redesigned for children. Some of the authors represented in the Libraries went on to write juvenile series books. As a consequence, the unsavory reputation of dime novels tended to taint the new juvenile series.

THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

During the nineteenth century, certain authors created successful niches for themselves in juvenile fiction. The rags-to-riches tales that Horatio Alger began writing during the 1860's were considered to be morally exemplary, if a bit unrealistic. Oliver Optic's boys books were mostly historical adventures set in various places and times, and featured a youthful hero. Martha Findlay created the Elsie Dinsmore books, a series of domestic novels much admired by sentimental young women of that period.

As the twentieth century approached, the face of juvenile literature was about to change. Men such as Gilbert Patten and Edward Stratemeyer would bring about that change. Both men had enjoyed success as the authors of dime novels themselves and were ready to investigate the new opportunity of juvenile literature. Writing as Burt L. Standish, Patten created a popular series of dime novels about Frank Merriwell (1901-1911) that were then collected into a series of hardbound books. With the explosion of new juvenile books, new publishers sprang up across the country, but many of them disappeared almost as rapidly as they had appeared.

Patten's Merriwell books were mostly school and sports stories. Some of them contained suspenseful plot elements or simple mysteries to solve. Stratemeyer wrote as Arthur M. Winfield. His main series was the Rover Boys (1899-1926), which were also essentially school stories. However, Stratemeyer's characters often traveled to faraway places and had adventures solving mysteries concerning such matters as crooks who tried to steal from their father's business or would-be kidnappers. Rover Boys books also involved treasures to be unearthed, cases of amnesia to be cured, and rescues to be effected. Books in the

Rover Boys series were never based primarily on mysteries, but because Stratemeyer had written twenty-two Nick Carter dime novel mysteries, he realized the value of making books engrossing for readers, both young and old.

Mysteries alone could not always make a series successful. L. Frank Baum, the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), tried to write juvenile mysteries, but his series lasted through only two books, *The Daring Twins* (1911) and *Phoebe Daring* (1912) before being discontinued. Baum's publisher was a small Chicago-based company that could not afford to carry a series until it developed an audience of regular readers.

GIRLS' MYSTERIES

Until the early twentieth century, girls' books were outsold by boys' books. The introduction of mysteries aimed specifically at girls in the second decade of the new century changed that, and girls' books were soon outselling those written for boys. The Ruth Fielding series of novels that began in 1913 quickly became a huge success and eventually reached thirty titles. Authorship of the Freeman books was credited to Alice B. Emerson, but Emerson was actually a house name used by the new publishing syndicate created by Stratemeyer.

Much like the fiction factory of Alexander Dumas, *père*, in nineteenth century France, Stratemeyer's syndicate provided titles and outlines of stories to work-for-hire writers who turned out books written to specification. Stratemeyer decided early to follow fairy-tale conventions; consequently, many of his leading characters were either partial or full orphans who proved themselves to be self-reliant, clever, and courageous. As an orphan and very much on her own, Ruth Fielding is an example. She takes her life into her own hands and tries to mold it as she wishes it to be. She has friends who help her, but she meets her own challenges head-on and independently. She begins as a self-confident schoolgirl who later becomes a Red Cross nurse, an actress, a scriptwriter, and a director of motion pictures. She also finds time to marry, have a child, and solve mysteries during her spare hours.

The Ruth Fielding series represented both the continuum of the dime novel tradition and the innovative

qualities that created juvenile mystery fiction. Such books gave young readers a sense of empowerment, enabling them to see themselves operating on adult levels but often without having to deal with adult supervision or the necessity of being responsible to adults. In many series, the youthful heroes faced adult villains whom they had to outsmart. All the leading characters in series were understood to be on the side of right and working for the good. However, adult characters in the series generally fail to understand that truth and frequently warn youngsters to stay away from trouble.

INNOVATIONS IN JUVENILE SERIES

A twentieth century innovation in juvenile series books was the use of advanced technology of the kind popularized in the works of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. At the turn of the twentieth century, American lifestyles were rapidly changing as new inventions were loosed upon society. Steam-powered ships and railroads and automobiles were revolutionizing travel. This development was reflected in such juvenile books as the Motor Boys series that began in 1906, the Motor Girls series (1910), and the Ralph of the Railroad series (1906). Meanwhile, aviation had recently become possible, and on a larger scale than anyone dreamed possible, so there were naturally Boy Aviators series (1913) and Girl Aviators series (1911). L. Frank Baum entered this field, too, with his two-volume Flying Girl series (1911). By the 1920's, radio was also making a place for itself in American homes, so it is not surprising that there were also Radio Boys (1922) and Radio Girls (1922) series.

Because young people are often quickest to pick up on and champion new technologies, it is not surprising that young readers would be quick to see the value of applying new technologies to solving mysteries. One of the more popular juvenile characters of all time is Tom Swift, a youthful inventor who made his debut in *Tom Swift and His Motor Cycle* in 1910. Tom envisioned and built flying machines, house trailers, electric rifles, and all kinds of wonderful things, including some whose rights the government bought for national defense. Moreover, Tom was always at least ten years ahead of the actual perfection or release of products similar to his own. In addition to solving the problems

connected with his inventions, Tom Swift usually had to spend a bit of time solving some mysteries of industrial espionage. A dirty competitor was either trying to steal the plans for his latest invention or was trying to sabotage the prototypes on which his company was working. After a while, however, readers tired of the Tom Swift series, which came to an end after thirty books.

Early on, the Tom Swift books established that Tom had a girlfriend. Eventually, he married and settled down. His was, it seems, a series that would not die; the Tom Swift, Jr. series appeared in 1954 and lasted until 1971. Swift's son, Tom, Jr. was involved in nuclear research and had to foil the attempts of unspecified, but clearly Soviet bloc, nations trying to steal or sabotage his work. Tom appeared again in 1981 in a space series and yet again in a brief series ten years later. In 2006, he reappeared in the new Tom Swift: Young Inventor series.

All the Tom Swift books were published under the name Victor Appleton, one of the house names of the Stratemeyer Syndicate. The original series was actually partly the work of the noted children's author Howard Garis. The Tom Swift, Jr., series was the work of veteran radio writer and journalist James Lawrence. By the time the third series came out, the syndicate had been sold to the firm of Simon & Schuster.

WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

To any mystery series, readers must bring a willing suspension of disbelief. If readers can believe that teenage boy capable of running a laboratory or factory on his own, while inventing devices such as atomic-powered vehicles, then they should have no trouble in believing that an enemy nation is attempting to subvert the boy's work and that the boy can find time to solve the mystery of who is scheming against him, even while having obligations to a family and a girlfriend.

Tom Swift, Jr.'s main series competitor was the Rick Brant science mystery series published from 1947 to 1968 under the house name John Blaine. Peter Harkins wrote the first three books in the series, Harold Godwin the next twenty-one. The Rick Brant books were actually mysteries that used science backgrounds, in contrast to books about solving the mys-

teries of science—a description that tends to characterize the Tom Swift books. Tom's work often takes him to very exotic places, including outer space, but Rick's adventures are strictly confined to Earth.

The challenge of solving mysteries appeals to readers of all ages and especially to the young, who know that mysteries exist all around them and look for ways to solve them. Young readers want to be treated with the same respect accorded to the series detectives by the police who defer to them. That same kind of freedom from the restraints of childhood is symbolized by the mobility available to these series heroes by use of mechanical forms of transportation, such as motorboats, airplanes, automobiles, and motorcycles. The decades between the later 1920's and the 1960's were when series mysteries enjoyed their greatest popularity and sales. In spite of the Great Depression, these inexpensive volumes continued to sell. The books were inexpensive because publishers realized they make more money by selling in volume than by selling books at inflated prices. When a new series was launched, it was customary to release its first three volumes simultaneously in which was called a "breeder" set, so readers would not have to wait for six months or a year to get another volume.

THE HARDY BOYS

The final years of the 1920's and opening years of the 1930's introduced two young-adult mystery fiction series that set the standards against which all later juvenile mystery series would be judged. The Hardy Boys series began in 1927, and the Nancy Drew series followed three years later.

The sons of the nationally known detective Fenton Hardy, Frank and Joe Hardy are brothers who try to follow in their father's footsteps. Frank tends to be serious, cautious, and thoughtful, while Joe is impetuous, impatient, and prone to acting without thinking through the consequences. Fenton Hardy is proud of his sons' efforts to detect and encourages them to follow their dreams. However, the boys' father is often away from home, and their mother is not strong enough to keep the boys safely at home. The boys essentially operate in a world without parents.

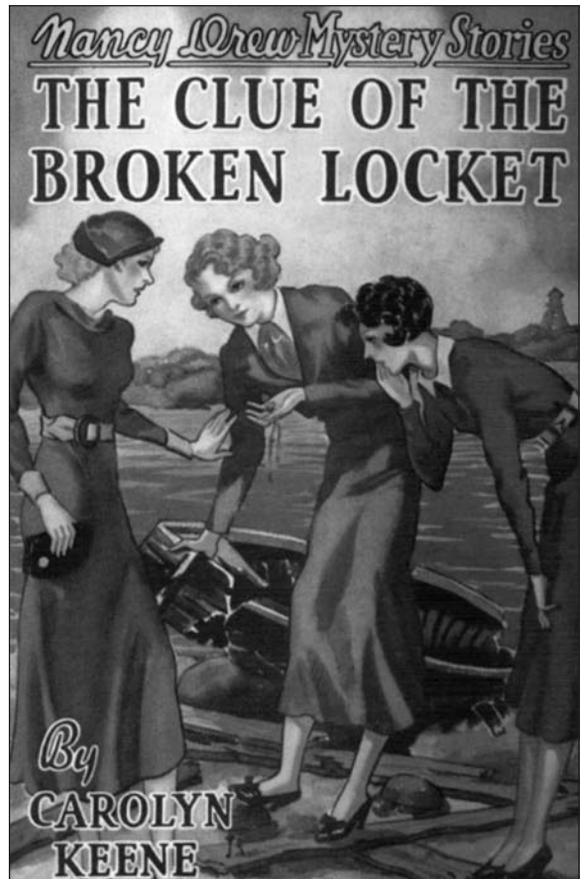
Before the appearance of the Hardy Boys, the device

of father and son detectives had been used in dime novels, in some of which the fathers and sons competed with each other. The Hardy Boys seldom compete with their father but frequently find that by chance they are working on the same cases. Coincidence plays an important role in the stories, as was common in juvenile mystery series. For example, in one story the boys became irate when a red-haired man nearly runs them down, so they decide to track him down. Eventually, they discover that the man is a criminal whom their father has been pursuing. Consequently, and only by coincidence, the boys and Fenton come to work on the same case. Often, the boys rescue their father from criminals. For example, in the second volume in the series, *The House on the Cliff* (1927), Fenton disappears while tracking a gang of smugglers. Meanwhile, the boys are becoming suspicious of the new occupants of a house a cliff over a bay, so they investigate. The house naturally turns out to be both the place in which their father is being held and the headquarters of the smuggling operation that their father was investigating. The boys not only expose the smugglers but also rescue their father. Part of the boys' ability to investigate crimes comes from the mobility made possible by vehicles such as motorcycles, cars, and boats to which they have access. Eventually, they own their own boat and car. The boys can also extend the range of their investigations because they live near train and plane facilities.

Because the Hardy Boys are not professional detectives, they charge no fees. However, grateful recipients of their aid often put money in their college fund. The brothers thus keep their amateur status, while winning the respect due professionals. Although their father operates strictly on his own, the boys often get help from friends. Although their comrades are an ethnically diverse group, the novels contain many offensive racial and ethnic depictions and stereotypes. Since the 1950's, as these books have been republished, they have been rewritten to be more accommodating to modern sensibilities. In some instances, even the plots of the books have been changed.

NANCY DREW

After completing the Ruth Fielding series during the late 1920's, Edward Stratemeyer wanted to create an-



First published in 1934, The Clue of the Broken Locket involves Nancy Drew in mysteries surrounding two sets of twins. When the book was republished in 1955, the story was completely rewritten to focus more on the mysterious haunting of a sunken launch in Maryland. (Grosset & Dunlap)

other girls' series that would serve as a companion to the Hardy Boys series. Thus was born an incredibly popular titian-haired, blue-eyed amateur detective called Nancy Drew, whose books would consistently outsell those of the Hardy Boys and whose name would become an icon of juvenile mystery fiction.

The stated author of all the Nancy Drew books is Carolyn Keene. However, that is merely a house name created by the Stratemeyer syndicate. Twenty-five of the books were written by Mildred Wirt, a popular journalist and juvenile fiction writer under her own name. Among the many other authors to write books in the series was Stratemeyer's own daughter, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, who later took over the syndicate, produced outlines for new stories, and personally re-

wrote most of the original books herself.

Sixteen years old, Nancy Drew is the motherless child of a prominent attorney in a small town, in which her father's position gives her some status. Remarkably self-possessed and alert for her age, Nancy takes up detecting when she tries to help her father with some of his more puzzling legal cases. Like the Hardy Boys, she is allowed an unusual degree of freedom and has considerable mobility, thanks to the blue roadster that she drives. She is so devoted to solving crimes that she sometimes commits crimes herself, such as breaking and entering in her search for clues. Originally on her own, Nancy joins forces with her boyfriend, Ned Nickerson, and her cousins George Fayne and Bess Marvin, who assist her investigations.

Although the Nancy Drew series was launched during the early years of the Great Depression, nothing appeared in the series to remind readers of the dire economic situation of the United States. The books thus offered readers some escapism from economic realities. At first, Nancy's mysteries were mainly domestic; she found missing wills, jewelry, antiques, and the like. However, she soon became good at cracking codes and deciphering enigmatic problems. In fact, she becomes such an effective investigator that hardened criminals worry when once they learn she is on their cases.

Criminals are wise to be concerned about Nancy, because as an investigator, she is as tenacious as a bloodhound. Exceptionally thick-skinned, she is immune to insults and invitations to mind her own business. At the same time, she is also capable of taking a high-handed attitude toward others and can even be a bit disrespectful to adults, especially those whom she believes may be associated with wrongdoing. Like the Hardy Boys, Nancy refuses payment for her sleuthing. She instead settles for small souvenirs, such as a nice antique or simple piece of jewelry. Despite Nancy's diverse skills and steely determination, she is still a girl, and one with access to her father's charge accounts who enjoys shopping. She may be a serious detective, but she also enjoys being a girl.

OTHER BOYS' SERIES

Another Stratemeyer series for much younger readers, the Bobbsey Twins, was launched in 1904 and

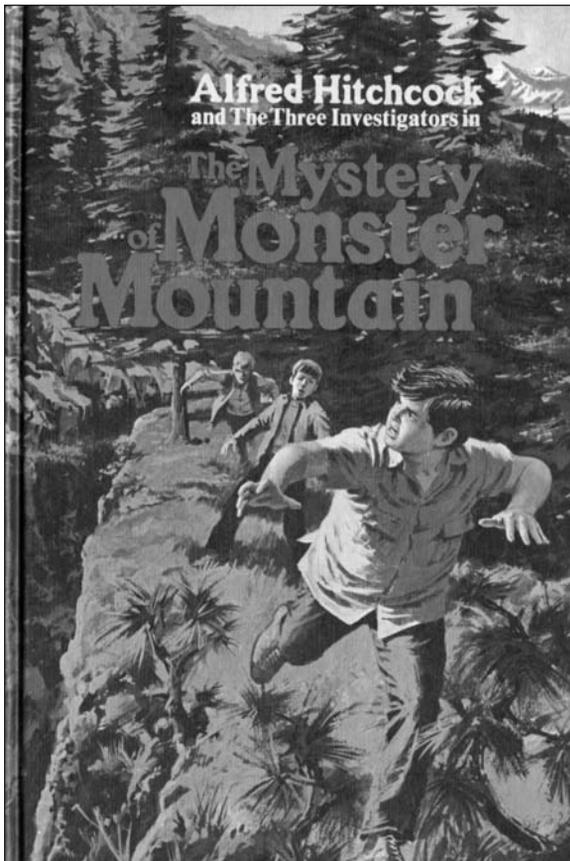
lasted seventy-five years. Published under the house name Laura Lee Hope (Lilian and Howard Garis), these books provided children with a gentle introduction to the world of mystery. When the series was reworked during the 1950's, the mystery components in the books were given greater emphasis, evidently in response to the interest shown by very young children in mysteries. In contrast, older children and young adults generally prefer more action in the mysteries they read. With few exceptions, most juvenile series are not modeled on investigators like Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot. Their juvenile protagonists prefer using their muscles, rather than their brains. However, although the criminals in their adventures are bad, they are seldom violent. Characters do not get killed. Moreover, when characters are badly hurt, it is usually the result of an accident. Likewise, deaths result from either accidents or natural causes.

Edward Stratemeyer died in 1930, a few months after the first Nancy Drew books appeared on the market. Members of his family then managed his syndicate for nearly fifty years before selling rights to its literary properties. Stratemeyer's daughter, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, continued to develop new series and to rework old favorites until she was in her eighties.

For approximately seventy-five years, Stratemeyer Syndicate books dominated the juvenile market for mystery series. From the late 1920's through the 1930's, Capwell Wycoff wrote several mystery series for the A. L. Burt Company. His Mercer Boys series might be seen as the Hardy Boys meet the Rover Boys, as the Mercer brothers were cadets in a military school. His Mystery Hunters series also had Hardy boys overtones, but it was only the Hardys who endured. Percy Keese Fitzhugh wrote a long-running scout series that was extremely successful and approved by Franklin K. Mathiews of the Boy Scouts of America. However, the Hal Keen mystery series, which he wrote under the name Hugh Lloyd during the 1930's, was not as well received. Its hero, the red-haired, nineteen-year-old Hal, was not an appealing character. He uses slang excessively, refers to himself in the third person, and smokes. In juvenile mystery fiction, it was usually only the villains who smoked cigarettes. If parental figures

smoke, they usually smoke more respectable pipes.

Andy Adams's Biff Brewster series appeared briefly during the 1960's, and Jack Lancer's Teen Agent Chris Cool enjoyed an even briefer run during the late 1960's. One of the more successful series of the late twentieth century was the Three Investigators, which also began during the late 1960's. It ran to more than forty volumes, but even that figure does not begin to compete with the longevity of the Hardy Boys. The Ken Holt series by Bruce Campbell—the pseudonym for the husband-and-wife team of Sam and Beryl Epstein—began in 1949 and lasted into the 1960's. The Ken Holt books are regarded as more thoughtful, more realistic, and more analytical than most books in most juvenile mystery series, including the Hardy Boys.



When the *Three Investigators* series was launched in 1964, film director Alfred Hitchcock's name was put on the books to lend them credibility as mysteries. The investigators themselves are three young teenage boys, whose cases generally revolve around baffling phenomena.

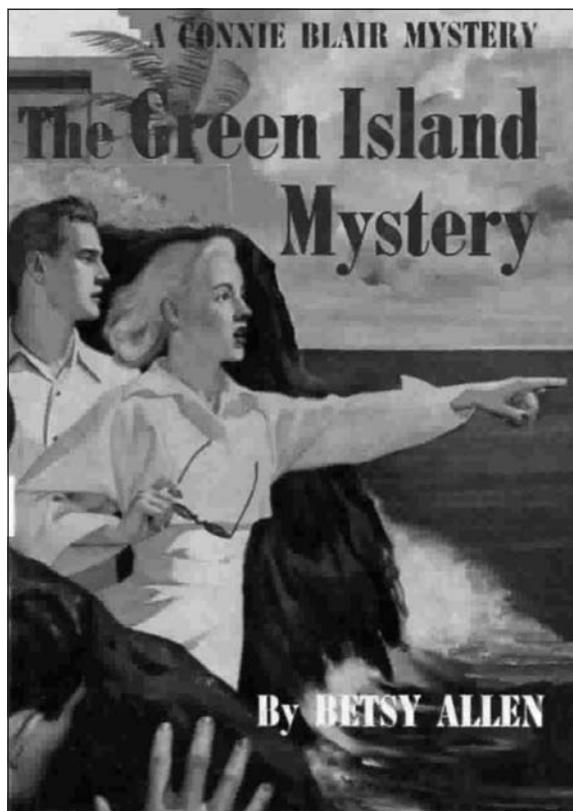
Some critics have said that the books are more like adult mysteries than those for young adults. Nevertheless, it too, never rivaled the Hardys in popularity.

From 1924 to 1930, Grosset & Dunlap published sixteen volumes in Leo Edwards's series about Jerry Todd, a card-carrying Juvenile Jupiter Detective. Between 1926 and 1930, the company also published eleven volumes in Edwards's Poppy Ott series. Both series are primarily comic stories that incorporate mysteries into their plots.

OTHER GIRLS' SERIES

Within the annals of girls' mystery fiction, Nancy Drew's closest rival was probably Grosset & Dunlap's Judy Bolton series, written by Margaret Sutton. It began in 1932 with *The Vanishing Shadow* and ran to thirty-eight titles by 1967. Some critics regard the Bolton books as superior to the Drew series and see Judy as offering a better role model. Judy tends to be more personally involved with her friends and those who need her help and does not project the same aloof persona that Nancy does. Whereas Nancy never really ages, Judy progresses from her early teens to high school age and eventually marries—a rarity in itself in girls' series. Judy also shows that she has a conscience and sometimes reveals a lack of self-confidence. Her readers could share and follow her thought processes.

Grosset & Dunlap also published several "glamour girl" series, such as the Cherry Ames series (1943-1968) written by Julie Tatham and Helen Wells. Cherry is a nurse who solves mysteries. Her stories were designed to introduce to young women the attractions of a nursing career and sometimes managed to make emptying bedpans seem glamorous. Tatham and Wells also wrote the Vickie Barr series (1947-1964) about an airline flight attendant. Between 1934 and 1954, Beverly Gray wrote twenty-six books about a young investigative reporter named Clair Blank. The series was initiated by A. L. Burt Company and later sold to Grosset & Dunlap. Beverly Gray is not only a journalist but also an author and playwright. All three of the young women in the Grosset & Dunlap series find time to solve mysteries between working and being courted by handsome young professional men. Of the three, Cherry had the longest run with thirty-three volumes.



In Betsy Allen's 1949 novel *The Green Island Mystery*, her youthful heroine, Connie Blair, goes to Bermuda in search of a stolen manuscript.

Another Grosset & Dunlap series written by Betty Cavanna under the pseudonym Betsy Allen was about Connie Blair, a teenage department-store model who becomes a secretary and then a commercial artist. Meanwhile, she also finds time to solve mysteries, but she has the aid of a twin sister, thereby enabling her to be two places at the same time. Her series ran to twelve volumes between 1948 and 1958. An interesting aspect of the Connie Blair books is that all their titles anticipated those of adult writer John D. MacDonald's later Travis McGee novels in having colors in their titles. Examples include *The Clue in Blue*, *The Riddle in Red*, *Puzzle in Purple*, *The Ghost Wore White*, and *The Yellow Warning*.

No one, however, could compete with the Nancy Drew books. Even Mildred Wirt, the primary author of the Nancy Drew books, could not match the sales of the Drew books with her other series, which included

books about characters named Kay Tracy, Penny Parker, Penny Nichols, Flash Evans, Madge Sterling, and Doris Force, as well as books about Brownie Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts. She also wrote a series about the Dana Girls under the house name of the Nancy Drew author, Carolyn Keene.

One of the last major successes for the Stratemeyer Syndicate was the Happy Hollister series (1953-1970) for younger boys and girls. Written by Andrew E. Svenson under the pseudonym Jerry West, the series followed the adventures of an entire family of amateur sleuths and ran to thirty-three titles. Whitman Publishing Company found its own success with the Trixie Belden series by Julie Campbell during the 1950's and 1960's. Younger than most girl detectives, Trixie lives on a small farm and investigates comparatively ordinary mysteries.

JUVENILE MYSTERIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Juvenile mysteries are still being written in the twenty-first century. J. K. Rowling's extremely popular Harry Potter series is, in effect, an installment mystery. John Bellair's supernatural suspense stories are also mysteries. Once readers accept that wrongs can be perpetrated by supernatural entities, Bellair's stories become mysteries like any others. Meanwhile, Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys continue to appear in new stories, and sometimes, all three of them join up to fight crime. At the same time, many of the classic juveniles series are being reprinted—in both original and revised editions. Scholarly articles and conferences reflect an undying interest in and devotion to the older series books.

H. Alan Pickrell

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PARODIES

Conventional genres—those structured around stock character types, plot twists, themes, situations, and locales—lend themselves easily to parody, the spoofing and satirizing of the very elements that define the genre. Because genre conventions are cherished by fans and widely recognized by the general public, it is easy for parodists to select targets for their humor that will be understood and identified by almost any audience. For example, when filmmaker Mel Brooks wrote and directed his parody of the Western genre, *Blazing Saddles* (1974), he knew the expectations his audience would hold about any film identified as a Western: a setting in the wide spaces of the American Southwest; conflicts among land barons, poor farmers, and ranchers; gunfighters and gunfights; ethnic tensions; sexy saloon singers; and epic, climactic showdowns between good guys and bad guys. He therefore chose those very elements to tweak as sources of irreverent comedy. For example, in typical Westerns, racial conflict usually pits Native Americans against settlers of European descent. Brooks's film instead set a black sheriff against white settlers. At the film's climax, the conflict between townspeople and the forces of the evil land baron erupts into such a tremendous battle that it literally breaks down the conventions of the Western genre, as the rustic combatants spill onto the soundstage of a modern musical film and begin fighting with dancers.

TYPES OF PARODY

Generic parodies, those spoofing genres defined by sets of conventions and expectations, tend to separate into three categories. The most common category includes straightforward spoofs, or satires, of the sort represented by the film *Blazing Saddles*. Their humor is broad, obvious, and often bawdy; the audience's pleasure comes from having its expectations of the genre tweaked, thwarted, contradicted, or grossly exaggerated. This type is by far the most common sort of generic parody.

A second category of parody might be called "parody-plus." Works of this nature taunt audiences

with the expected conventions of the genre, while offering humor that is at once more intellectual and more playful than profane. Moreover, in addition to serving as parodies, the works function much as standard examples of their genres. A good example of this sort of parody can be found in the three *Scream* films released during the 1990's. These films play with the conventions of horror films throughout, and the characters frequently make jokes about the expectations audiences bring to the theaters. At the same time, however, the films are also genuinely frightening enough to satisfy fans of the genre.

A third and final sort of generic parody can be called the metafictional parody. Humor in this sort of parody is slight and cerebral. Although generic conventions are often used in playful ways, the works play with the broader conventions and uses of narrative and storytelling in general as much as with those of a specific category or type. An example of this sort of self-conscious, parodistic writing is Stephen King's best-selling series of seven novels known collectively as *The Dark Tower*. Those books toy with the conventions of both the Western and horror genres, not to spoof them, but to analyze them and to reflect on how stories are told, what needs narrative fulfills, and how relationships among authors, characters, and readers are structured. Examples of all three types of parodies can be found in the many parodies of mystery and crime fiction.

SHERLOCK HOLMES PARODIES

Although Edgar Allan Poe is traditionally credited with inventing the modern mystery story with "The Case of Marie Rogêt" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," it was Arthur Conan Doyle's later stories about Sherlock Holmes that popularized the new genre and gave the world a paradigmatic figure of the detective. Holmes skillfully solved crimes through thorough attention to the smallest of details, careful ratiocination, and total objectivity. Beginning with his novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), Doyle adhered in almost all his Holmes stories to a successful formula: In

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Mark Twain's novella A Double-Barrelled Detective Story, which he published as a book in 1902, contains a savage parody of Sherlock Holmes. While visiting his nephew Fetlock Jones in a remote western American mining camp, Holmes investigates a murder and impresses everyone with his brilliant deductions. However, Twain's protagonist proves not only that Holmes is wrong on every point, but also that Holmes was the unwitting accomplice in the crime of his nephew—the true murderer. Holmes is lucky to escape from the camp without being lynched.

(Arkent Archive)

a late Victorian setting realistically depicted by the standards of Doyle's time, Holmes faces with what seems to be an insoluble crime or inexplicable occurrence. Throughout his ensuing investigation, his sidekick, Dr. Watson, and the police remain baffled because they lack Holmes's eye for detail or because they succumb to emotions and begin fretting or blustering. Holmes has no such shortcomings and soon solves the mystery to the delight and admiration of all. The formulaic nature of the Holmes mysteries allowed

them to be imitated widely—and also parodied, almost from the time Holmes first appeared.

The first parody of Holmes was a series of spoofs written by R. C. Lehmann that began appearing in various magazines and journals in 1893 and were collected into book form in 1901. Lehmann's titles spoofed Doyle's original titles by imitating them while sounding dull and uninviting. In 1894, Robert Barr published a story titled "The Great Pegram Mystery," which has a Holmes-like detective named Sherlaw Kombs stop a Watson-like friend from revealing the details of the Pegram conundrum, explaining that the man should save his breath, as the great detective has just sensed the distant approach of a man who will soon knock on his door and explain the entire matter in a clear and coherent form. During that same year, Allan Ramsey published "The Adventure of the Table Foot," in which the Holmes figure takes one glance at the Watson figure one morning and instantly deduces that his friend has not had breakfast, that he has taken a cab to visit him, that it is not raining but soon will be, and that a man of the working class brushed up against his friend on the street.

Some of these parodies spoofed various details of Holmes's lifestyle and pastimes. For example, G. F. Forrest has his Holmes figure playing an accordion rather than a violin, and R. K. Munkittrick has his master detective enjoy morphine as his drug of choice, rather than cocaine. John Kendrick Bangs, an admired writer of crime and supernatural stories in his own right, wrote several Holmes parodies, including a book of purported comic memoirs.

A number of writers celebrated outside the mystery genre also contributed to the growing amount of Holmesian parodies published during Doyle's day. In America, both Bret Harte and O. Henry produced spoofs of Holmes. In Harte's "The Stolen Cigar-Case," the Holmes-figure amazes the Watson-figure by revealing he has deduced that it is raining. He then impresses him even more by explaining how he arrived at this deduction: He heard the rain on the roof and window. In O. Henry's "The Adventures of Shamrock Jolnes," the great detective merely glances at his sidekick to perceive that the man has just installed electricity in his house. O. Henry's name "Shamrock

Jolnes” is typical of the names of most of these spoofs of Doyle’s creation, as well as indicative of the level of humor found in them. Other examples include Picklock Holes (Lehman), Thinlock Bones (Ramsay), Sherlaw Kombs (Barr), Hemlock Jones (Hart), Shylock Jones (Bangs), and Warlock Bones (Forrest). Clearly, these Holmesian spoofs were straightforward parody and nothing more.

As intellectually undemanding and lowbrow as these burlesques may have been, parody quickly became so much a part of the growing cult of Sherlock Holmes that even one of Doyle’s closest friends, James M. Barrie, the famed playwright and creator of Peter Pan, used such a device to communicate his affection and admiration. After the two writer collaborated unsuccessfully on a libretto called “Jane Annie” for Richard D’Oyly Carte, the producer of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan’s operettas, Barrie expressed his feelings about his friend and their failed effort when he signed the flyleaf of a copy of his book *A Window in Thrums* to Doyle, adding afterward “The Adventure of the Two Collaborators,” a brief recasting of their mutual misadventure in theater as a loving take-off on a Holmes-and-Watson story.

TWENTIETH CENTURY PARODIES

Arthur Conan Doyle never wrote again about his famous creation after World War I began. He turned to other genres and, most especially, to a study of spiritualism and parapsychology. Meanwhile, mysteries and crime stories continued to fascinate readers, and other authors were beginning to write mysteries that drew especially on one of the best of the Holmes stories, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Their books tended to deal especially with the dark secrets of old families in stately manor houses and of the villagers and servants surrounding them. Agatha Christie soon emerged as the best—and the best selling—of this new generation of mystery writers. As the twentieth century progressed, other writers, especially in the United States, began crafting a new type of mystery story that was more urban and more distinctly American. The works of writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler came to be called the “hard-boiled” subgenre of mystery and detective fiction. They were so

named because of the toughness of their protagonists, the leanness of their prose style, and the bleakness of their worldview. Perhaps predictably, the works of Christie and other English writers similar to her in style and subject as well as those of the new, very different American writers soon became fodder for parodies. Through the remainder of the century and into the twenty-first century, literary parodies of mystery and crime fiction of all three sorts—simple spoofs, “parody-plus,” and metafictional parodies—appeared frequently in a variety of formats: short stories, novels, plays, and even musicals.

One of the earliest and best straightforward spoofs of Agatha Christie’s pastoral detective fiction is the engaging novel, *Trent’s Last Case* (1913) by the English novelist E. C. Bentley. The book is funny and gentle in both language and tone, but it is also one of the most damning satires of detective fiction ever written. Its protagonist, Philip Trent, is not a moronic bungler botching a case out of ineptitude. He is intelligent and competent and employs all the techniques of observation and ratiocination that Holmes and Christie’s detectives routinely use, but he misinterprets every clue, overlooks important evidence, and misidentifies the culprit. At the end of the novel, Trent recants—to the actual murderer, no less—all future interest in solving crimes and mysteries. Bentley thus subverts the basic paradigm of crime-solving as spelled out in the stories of Doyle and Christie, namely, that cleverness, eagle-eyed skills of observation, and cool application of logic do not always lead an investigator to a proper conclusion, with everything solved and tied up neatly with no loose strands of thought or plot. Bentley seems to be spoofing not only the outward conventions of the genre but also the very core of values that is central to it.

The next best spoof of the Holmes/Christie school of mystery story was American humorist James Thurber’s 1938 short story “The Macbeth Murder Mystery.” Thurber’s story satirized not only the conventions but also the fans of the genre. The story has an American mystery-story fan go to England, find a copy of William Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth* (1606), foolishly mistake it for a mystery story, and set out to prove that Macbeth did not murder Duncan.

The hard-boiled detective subgenre arose during the 1920's but had to wait until the 1950's for its first really good satire. When it finally arrived, it came in an unusual form—a comic recording by humorist Stan Freeburg titled *Sam Splayed: Detective*. Freeburg's recording poked good-natured fun at Dashiell Hammett's detective Sam Spade, who was made famous by the 1941 film *The Maltese Falcon*. (Perhaps coincidentally, many fans of comedy and mystery consider another recorded comedy routine of the 1960's, "The Giant Rat of Sumatra," by the Firesign Theater, to be the best twentieth century spoof of Sherlock Holmes.)

During the 1970's, another popular American humorist, Woody Allen, took on the hard-boiled school of mystery fiction in a hilarious series of short stories he wrote for *The New Yorker*. Featuring a Sam Spade semicloned called Kaiser Lupowitz, Allen's spoofs juxtaposed the tough, stoic language and character types of Hammett and Chandler with the trendy, neurotic milieu of the late twentieth century United States, in which characters have anxiety attacks and whine about abstract philosophical issues. Allen's stories were assembled by an English theatrical troupe called I Am Camera in 2006 and presented as a play with jazz accompaniment to enthusiastic reviews in London and New York. This was not, however, the first such combination of mystery spoof and music. In 1987, John Bishop's *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*, a combination of comic song and satire of both Agatha Christie and hard-boiled mystery fiction, had a successful run on Broadway.

Some straightforward mystery spoofs are very narrow in their scope, satirizing a particular author, series, or even individual books. For example, Robert Kappel's *The Cat Who Killed Lilian Jackson Braun* is a take-off on Braun's seemingly endless series of mystery novels in which cats figure prominently both in the plots and in the titles. Likewise, *Confessions by a Teenage Sleuth*, by Chelsea Cain and Lia Miternique, pokes fun at the Nancy Drew series of juvenile mystery stories. Some spoofs take on a single book. For example, Toby Clements's *The Asti Spumante Code* (2005) burlesques Dan Brown's wildly popular thriller *The Da Vinci Code* (2003)

PARODY AND MORE

Other parodies written since World War I have striven to do more than simply poke fun—good-natured or otherwise—at the mystery/crime genre and its loyal fans. Other writers have experimented with the tropes and figures of typical crime fiction while providing audiences with solid and involving narratives. One of the best in the parody-plus category is Lawrence Block's *The Burglar in the Library*. This novel features a typical Agatha Christie-type plot: Guests staying in an English country manor house try to solve the mystery of who has murdered their aristocratic host. The twist on convention—and the playful reference to the mystery genre itself—lies in who the protagonist and amateur sleuth is and why he is present: Bernie Rhodenbarr is a thief who has insinuated himself into the household in order to steal a first edition of a classic of the hard-boiled detective genre, Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939). Rhodenbarr must solve the murder of his host in order to steal the valuable mystery novel.

The longest-running Off-Broadway play in American history is also a good example of parody-plus. *Shear Madness*, an English-adaptation of a Swiss play by Paul Portner, began its record-breaking run at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in August of 1987. Set in a unisex hair salon, it is a comic mystery play that pokes fun at all the twists and turns of plot and motive and character that genre fans expect. At the same time, it invites reflection on the nature of the genre and its appeal by involving audiences in the solving of its mystery. A similar exercise in audience-exploration and involvement in generic conventions was tried, with less success, in the 1985 production of Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

The popular trend of mystery-themed parties began during the 1980's. Evenings and even entire weekends were devoted to elaborate games in which guests acted out and tried to solve mysteries, usually in the form of Agatha Christie novels or hard-boiled crime tales. These "events" might easily be labeled "parodies-plus"; while the competitions to solve the crimes were real, the guests were, in a context of light-hearted entertainment, made to review and test the conventions of mystery stories they had read or viewed.

A number of plays, novels, and stories appearing

from the latter half of the twentieth century onward take the notion of parody to an even higher level: they knowingly employ conventions of, and references to, classic mystery and crime literature in order to explore the very nature of truth, storytelling, and intellectual endeavor. These works might be called metafictional parodies, in that they tend to be fiction *about* fiction and how it works and does not work, or epistemological parodies, in that they play around with generic tropes of mystery stories in order to demonstrate the difficulty humankind has in identifying truth with any finality.

Perhaps the best known metafictional mystery parody is Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980; *The Name of the Rose*, 1983). This international best-seller spoofs other writers. For example, its investigator and protagonist, the monk William of Baskerville, recalls Arthur Conan Doyle's most famous Holmes story. Moreover, the relationship between William and his sidekick, Adso, a novice monk, is much like that between Holmes and Watson. Eco's narrative technique is typically Holmesian. Its sidekick, Adso, is its narrator, not the primary investigator. Unlike other parodists, however, Eco aims not to poke fun at the mystery genre or Doyle, but to depict the difficulty of identifying truth amid many conflicting possibilities and to demonstrate how the unwavering deductive approach to the mysterious—that taken by Holmes and most prototypical crime-story protagonists—is not always effective.

Another writer who sometimes uses crime-fiction allusions and conventions to point out how reason and logic often prove to be faulty guides through the maze of human existence is the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, a Nobel Prize winner for literature. "The Garden of Forking Paths," his most widely read short story, plays with conventions of two subgenres of crime literature—the espionage thriller in the style of Ian Fleming and the typical manor-house mystery of Christie. Borges's protagonist is a spy trying to uncover a valuable artifact on a country estate. His skills of stealth and deduction help him but little, as he soon becomes lost literally and metaphorically in a vast maze of hedges in the estate's garden.

SATIRE ON SCREEN

Despite the many short stories, plays, and novels that parody mystery, crime, and detective fiction, the most striking examples of such satires since the early twentieth century have been film spoofs. One of the earliest and best was famed silent screen comedian Buster Keaton's *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924). In that film Keaton plays a meek movie-house projectionist who is saddened by the prospect of his girlfriend's being stolen by a sophisticated rival; he literally projects himself onto the theater screen. There, he finds himself playing the role of Sherlock Holmes, Jr., who must solve his girlfriend's kidnapping at the hands of an amorous sheik. More sixty years later, Woody Allen used a similar gimmick in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) in which poverty-stricken small-town Americans during the Great Depression find themselves

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(Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

mixing with characters who come to life from a film similar to an Agatha Christie story set amid the ancient ruins of Egypt.

Allen's film was one of a spate of mystery/crime story parodies produced during the 1970's and 1980's. All of them owe a debt to Buster Keaton, Mel Brooks, or both. Shortly after the dual successes of Brooks's spoofs of the Western and horror-film genres, *Blazing Saddles* and *Young Frankenstein* (1974), Gene Wilder, Brooks's protégé and star of those two films, wrote and directed *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother* (1975), a Brooksonian treatment of the Holmes material. Wilder's story about Sherlock's younger, bumbling, jealous brother, Sigerson (not the Mycroft Holmes of Arthur Conan Doyle), Wilder's film featured not only Brooks's trademark physical comedy and punning wordplay but also a number of actors who had appeared in *Blazing Saddles* and *Young Frankenstein*. The following year, Robert Moore directed a similar, but more thorough and sophisticated take on mystery and crime fiction, *Murder by Death* (1976), from a script by the popular Pulitzer-Prize-winning playwright Neil Simon. Moore and Simon satirize not one but several types of mystery stories, as Dashiell Hammett's sleuthing socialites Nick and Nora Charles become Dick and Dora Charleston, Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple become Milo Perrier and Jessica Marbles, and Hammett's Sam Spade becomes Sam Diamond.

Although *Murder by Death* received lukewarm praise from critics at the time of its release, it contains a brilliant satire of one of the genre's oldest traditions: the denouement in which all suspects and investigators assemble and all possible scenarios explaining the crime are explained out and the culprit is pinpointed. Although this traditional scene is a legitimate form of foreshortening—a technique for advancing a story faster than it would transpire in reality to avoid tedium—mystery writers and film directors have often overused or overextended this technique to tie up all plotlines and provide closure. Simon's final scene in *Murder by Death* is a witty take-off on such excesses. It drags on and on, with almost every imaginable secret revealed about all the characters, whether they are suspects or not. In 1977, Mel Brooks took on the

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Carl Reiner's film Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid parodies film noir conventions by mixing new footage with scenes from actual films noirs.

crime genre himself with a spoof of director Alfred Hitchcock's thrillers he titled *High Anxiety*.

The 1980's saw the release of another Brooks-type mystery spoof, *Clue* (1985). Based on the popular Milton Bradley board game, this film was similar in plot and characterization to Moore and Simon's *Murder by Death*. However, most mystery satires that appeared during the 1980's seemed to have been inspired more by Buster Keaton than by Mel Brooks. Director Carl Reiner's 1982 film *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982) took Keaton's notion of projection into a mystery film and applied it to his lead actor, rather than to the character. In this satire of the hard-boiled detective genre, Steve Martin plays a private eye who, during the course of his investigation, interacts with characters from classic Hollywood crime films through artful split-screen techniques. In 1988's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, Bob Hoskins plays a hard-boiled detective in an alternative-world Hollywood in which classic cartoon characters are real and must be interrogated during murder investigations. Like the characters in Keaton's Sherlock Holmes parody and Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, Hoskins moves back and forth between a realistically seedy 1930's-era Hollywood and the brightly colored, literally cartoonish Toonville.

During the 1990's and early twenty-first century, the most popular film spoofs of the genre were parodies of the spy-film subgenre, particularly the iconic James Bond films, beginning with Mike Myers's *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997). Poking fun at the conventions and characters of films based on Ian Fleming's James Bond novels, Myers's film also parodied the fashions and slang of the 1960's. Its success spawned sequels in 1999 and 2002. Three decades earlier, *Get Smart* (1965-1970) had been popular as a long-running spoof of mystery and crime fiction on television. Like the Austin Powers films, *Get Smart* parodied James Bond, having particular fun with Agent Maxwell Smart's outrageous gadgets, such as shoe phones. That show was developed by Mel Brooks.

As might be expected, metafictional parody is uncommon in films. However, three examples from three different decades embody this sort of self-aware mystery film about mysteries. The most daring of the three films is Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* (1965), which

combines conventions of James Bond-style espionage thrillers and hard-boiled detective stories to comment on the Cold War, totalitarianism, and the dehumanizing effect of mechanization.

The year 1982 saw Sidney Lumet's film adaptation of Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*, the longest-running thriller ever to run on Broadway. Jay Presson Allen's screenplay, adapted closely from Levin's original play, toys with viewers' expectations again and again as it seems to morph from one type of story to another. At first, it seems to be a thriller about a frail wife trying to talk her strong-willed playwright husband out of killing a younger playwright in order to appropriate a play he has written. Then, the audience realizes that the two men are actually lovers who are plotting—successfully—to frighten the wife to death so that they can be together. Later, the plot becomes a war of nerves between the two men over who will write which play. Along the way, Allen and Levin trot out almost every clichéd gimmick from more than a century of mystery tales: conflicting motives, shifting alliances, a half-dozen types of weapons, duplicitous lovers, unfaithful spouses, even a dark and stormy night. The authors and director seem to exult in their ability to review all these conventions and at the same time baffle viewers about what will happen next. Moreover, the film, like the original play, explores in a satiric vein the very nature of writing mysteries, as much of its action and motivation center on who can or cannot write a clever mystery and who will or will not succeed as an author of mysteries.

Perhaps the best of the three metafictional film parodies is Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* (2001), which turns the conventions of classic whodunits and British cozy mysteries on end: During the 1930's, a tyrannical English aristocrat is murdered during a lavish house party—a story line straight from thousands of mysteries published since the time of Doyle. However, Altman deliberately foregrounds themes and plot elements that are secondary in traditional mysteries, for example, romance, class conflict, and gender warfare. The murder occurs late in the film and its solution is desultorily offered—and not by the police inspector and his assistant, who are buffoonish bunglers. The murder of the aristocrat is assigned less value than the harm he has done by virtue of the power his class and

sex have allowed him. The resolution of the film involves not a review of suspects and clues but a reconciliation between two elderly servants, sisters who had long ago been seduced and abandoned by the aristocrat, thereby having both their lives ruined and creating a rift between them. Altman thus plays with the expectations audiences bring to mysteries and questions the values and attitudes common to many whodunits and cozies.

Thomas Du Bose

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POLICE PROCEDURALS

During the first one hundred years after the creation of detective fiction during the 1840's, the popular genre was dominated by two subgenres that are based on contrasting moral fantasies: classic, or orthodox, detective stories and hard-boiled detective fiction. During the 1940's another subgenre began taking shape and threatened to overtake its predecessors in popularity, particularly in the realms of film and television adaptations: the police procedural. Not having developed organically from its predecessors, the police procedural is a radical departure from the basic cultural and social assumptions of the other two subgenres. As critic John G. Cawelti argues in his pioneering study, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), the police procedural constitutes a different moral fantasy.

CLASSIC DETECTIVE FICTION FORMULAS

Classic detective fiction was born out of the scientific materialism of the second half of the nineteenth century. Opposed to superstition and belief in the supernatural, it is based on the assumption that all occurrences, even the most bizarre ones, have rational and logical explanations for which irrefutable material evidence can be found. Moreover, the classic detective story sets its action in something like a preindustrial utopian society. It is, at heart, a benevolently feudal society from which large, industrial areas are absent. Within this nearly ideal society, serious crime is so rare as to be considered extraordinary. It therefore cannot be tackled by the developing police forces, made up of lower-class plodders. Police investigators serve largely as comic relief. Extraordinary crimes, which are committed mostly for personal reasons and with great ingenuity, can be solved only by extraordinary detectives. Crime is never random or gratuitously violent; indeed, most victims in classic detective stories die as consequences of applied poetic justice; their deaths and the methods by which they are dispatched are appropriate punishments for transgressions they themselves have committed. The involvement of detective heroes is for the most part cerebral, with a min-

imum of physical violence, primarily seen as an intellectual challenge, without consideration of financial rewards, and motivated mostly by attempts to prevent wrongful condemnation of friends or acquaintances. Acts of physical violence are left to the police and less cerebral sidekicks, except in cases of self-defense.

The attraction of the classic detective story to readers is based largely on a form of nostalgia similar to that evoked by classic Westerns. It evokes illusions of bygone Great Good Places—to borrow the poet John Donne's phrase—and of pastoral societies with clear social hierarchies, administered by benevolent squires, in which all crime is rare and sordid crime is nonexistent. Moreover, such rare and extraordinary crimes as do exist are solved by private, highly talented and self-motivated persons, not by functionaries of the state. The genteel detectives provide logical solutions and explanations for even the most mysterious events, sufficient to withstand the scrutiny of the developing scientific laws of evidence in criminal cases. The consequent eradication of crime by amateur, upper-class intellectuals restores edenic society to perfection after temporary disturbances.

HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION

The moral fantasy of the Great Good Place, most popular in Britain mystery and detective fiction between the world wars, a period often called the Golden Age of detective fiction, was being revised and replaced in the United States during that same period. The Depression era created new paradigms in the public's attitude toward crime and law enforcement. The growing disparities between the condition of the class of wealthy businessmen, financiers, and industrialists and that of the large masses of impoverished, unemployed, and displaced workers and farmers were made increasingly evident by the irrefutable images of breadlines, soup kitchens, and labor unrest that appeared in newspapers and newsreels. This social and economic shift made the nostalgic utopia of the Great Good Place more and more untenable in both the United States and Europe, and it logically moved the

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Despite its often far-fetched characters and plots, Chester Gould's long-running comic strip Dick Tracy was essentially a police procedural, emphasizing the day-to-day work of a police detective.

conservative, blithe social fantasy of the classic detective story radically to the left. Unsurprisingly, the utopian moral fantasy of the Great Good Place was transformed into the melancholic and bitter dystopia of the Great Bad Place depicted in the American hard-boiled detective novel and prefigured in mainstream novels such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

The hard-boiled detective story is an American subgenre of the detective story, but examples of hard-boiled detective fiction abound in other countries as well. In many ways it is a logical consequence of the closing of the frontier and with it the final refutation of the myth of the promised land of El Dorado. It is thus appropriate that many early classics of the genre take place in Los Angeles and San Francisco, outposts of the far western frontier. The detectives themselves usually live alone in

simple apartments downtown, among other displaced lower-class people, while their work takes them to the wealthy, almost pastoral suburbs, where the wealthy and powerful have built their mansions. Initially hired for what appear to be straightforward jobs—finding missing persons or uncovering embezzlers—the detectives soon find themselves involved in webs of lies and deception by the very people who have hired them and who are actually trying to use them to cover up crimes that threaten their wealth, power, or reputations. Law-enforcement officials, with rare exceptions, collude or cooperate with the powerful and frequently brutalize the detectives in efforts to persuade them to abandon their investigations.

In the end, the detectives always solve the cases for which they have been hired and expose and personally punish other crimes committed in conjunction with their original investigations. In contrast to stories in classic detective novels, these solutions are brought about by perseverance, physical and mental pain, and suffering, as well as the loss of relationships and friendships. Only a small part of the solutions are achieved through ratiocination. More important, the detectives' efforts have only served to eradicate only one small link in the huge web of corruption that continues unabated. Whereas the classic detective story is closely allied with the mode of comedy and ends in reconciliation and restoration, hard-boiled detective fiction is more closely related to satirical tragedy, ending in disappointment and discord.

THE POLICE PROCEDURAL

Police officials have always played roles in detective fiction; however, they have been treated very differently over the years. Conforming to its dominating moral fantasy, the classic detective story tends to treat the police as unnecessary and incompetent. The corresponding dystopian world of the hard-boiled detective novel depicts police, with rare exceptions, as venal and corrupt, appropriate if one considers them as instruments of a society dominated by venal and corrupt people. Readers of classic detective fiction prefer heroes whose profiles reflect their own moral and cultural fantasies. Their ideal detectives are upper-class, by nature if not by birth; they have scientific minds; they are amateurs who essentially volunteer their ser-

vices; they are inclined to argue rather than engage in physical action. Readers of hard-boiled fiction prefer heroes who will fight with the means appropriate to the conditions of the Great Bad Place, namely, with physical violence. Readers also prefer their detectives to exhibit cleverly disguised idealism, deception, tolerance of pain and suffering, and a willingness to accept that only small moral victories without material rewards are possible in a society that is rotten to the core.

The stances of the two types of readers represent positive and negative extremes. It is thus both logical and necessary that a third subgenre should emerge to provide a less extreme, more realistic compromise, both in its view of society and in its portrayals of crime and the methods applied to combating it. The resulting new form of detective fiction has become known as the police procedural. In this new subgenre, the social dystopia of the Great Bad Place is mitigated to a certain degree to that of the Great Gray Place of modern, urban-industrial society, with a greater sense of realism regarding the statistical realities of the frequency and motivations of criminal activities and the most efficient ways of dealing with crime. Readers are thus allowed to live vicariously in a society in which crime is a fact of daily life and to witness the existence and growth of paramilitary police forces as the most appropriate defense against the random and brutal violence they confront in their environment and in the media.

The police procedural is an international genre. Although cultural and national differences with regard to the public view of and attitude toward law enforcement lead to significant variations in detail, the basic formula thrives in the United States, where it logically shows some resemblance to the hard-boiled formula; in Great Britain, where its ties to the classic detective story are stronger and more lasting; and in central and northern Europe, particularly in postwar social democracies such as Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. Southern and Mediterranean Europe's traditional hostility to police as instruments of repressive governments has prevented the police procedural in its strict definition from thriving there.

EARLY HISTORY OF POLICE PROCEDURALS

Anthony Boucher, an author, critic, and reviewer of mystery novels for *The New York Times*, is generally credited with having first used the term police procedural. The term describes a subgenre of detective fiction whose plots are designed to describe accurately and realistically police solutions of crimes. Typically, police are represented by a number of officers working as a team. In most stories, however, attention is focused only one or two members of the team, usually including the commander of the unit.

Contrary to the form of classic detective stories, police procedurals describe the investigations of multiple, simultaneous crimes, several of which usually are revealed as having previously unknown connections. Contrary to the 100-percent solution rate of classic detective novels, one or more of the investigated crimes—mainly minor ones—in a typical police procedural may remain unsolved. Police procedurals also differ from stories in the other forms in abandoning surprise solutions and hidden identities of criminals. They instead concentrate on the means and methods used to find and convict the perpetrators, and, to varying degrees, on the lives of individual members of the police teams.

It should be emphasized that the mere presence of police officials as investigators of crimes does not define a detective story as a police procedural. Much of the time, police detectives such as the much maligned Inspector Lestrade of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories or Sergeant Cuff of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) are not themselves the main instruments of detection. The famous police inspectors and superintendents of the Golden Age and later—such as Ngaio Marsh's Inspector Roderick Alleyn, Michael Innes's Inspector John Appleby, and Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse—do not function primarily as members of police teams. Instead, they are simply uniformed or plainclothes versions of the great eccentric sleuths, complete with a sergeant functioning as the Dr. Watson figure. The closest model for the detective of the police procedural can be found in Eugène François-Vidocq, an early nineteenth century French criminal-turned-policeman whose lurid memoirs described methods for catching criminals, including

bribes, entrapment, and various disguises and impersonations—standard police procedures at the time.

Direct precursors of the police procedural, according to the statements of its first practitioners, can be found in the scientific detective novel of R. Austen Freeman and his brilliant scientist-detective, Dr. Thorndyke. Although the detective is still clearly in the mold of the eccentric master sleuth of the classic detective story, there is great detailed attention to then state-of-the-art laboratory science as applied to the solution of the mysterious crime. Even more important for the police procedural is Freeman's invention of the inverted detective story, that is, the revelation of the crime and the criminal at the beginning of the story, thus turning the readers' attention away from the identity of the criminal and to the procedure by which the crime will be solved.

Several early authors of procedurals also mention the influence of the popular comic strip *Dick Tracy* (1931-1977) by Chester Gould. Tracy is a plainclothes detective working in a city resembling Chicago. His comic strip first appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and was soon nationally syndicated. The hero, whose features are modeled on those of Sherlock Holmes, employs forensic science in his crusade against often grotesquely evil gangsters and employs other technological gadgets that were science fiction at the time of publication, but are now common tools in criminal investigation, such as portable phones and the hero's famous 2-Way Wrist Radio.

There is nearly unanimous consent, however, that the most important and direct precursor to the literary police procedural is *Dragnet*, a radio series about a crime detection unit of the Los Angeles Police Department that aired from 1949 to 1957 and ran as a television series on NBC from 1951 to 1959 and from 1967 to 1970. Indeed, George N. Dove's pioneering 1982 study of police procedurals defines the police procedural as a "*Dragnet* kind of story." The opening musical chords of the *Dragnet* shows, the characters of Sergeant Friday and Frank Smith, the protagonists of the series, and their oft-repeated phrase, "Just the facts, ma'am," have become part of American popular culture, and have been the objects of considerable imitation and parody.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Jack Webb, the star and producer of television's Dragnet series.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

Dragnet attempted to demystify the work of city police by mixing the excitement of fighting criminals with depictions of the boredom and often mind-numbing routine of real police life. The insistence at the beginning of each episode that the show reported true events, with "only the names . . . changed to protect the innocent," convinced audiences that *Dragnet* was a reality show. The scripts' laconic and unpretentious dialogue added to that impression.

PIONEERS: LAWRENCE TREAT

Scholars and historians of detective fiction almost unanimously agree that the first modern police procedural is Lawrence Treat's novel "*V*" as in *Victim* (1945). No evidence suggests that Treat consciously set out to revolutionize detective fiction. He had started writing detective novels and short stories in 1937. All those works were rather conventional, with most using the alphabet-tag titles, as in "*V*" as in *Victim*. Nevertheless, Treat's contribution to the develop-

ing genre, however unintentional, is significant. His two protagonists, Detectives Mitch Taylor and Jub Freeman, initially are not dedicated and enthusiastic cops. Taylor is rather bored by police work and spends much time trying to avoid getting involved in cases. Freeman is a young man with a scientific bent who is looking for a steady civil service job that will allow him to follow his vocation; he is not greatly interested in law enforcement. However, during the course of the investigation of two seemingly unrelated crimes, the two men begin working together as a team, reluctantly at first, with Taylor becoming increasingly convinced of the value of science and Freeman growing more enthusiastic about his contributions to the criminal justice system.

Although “V” as in *Victim* is a rather traditional whodunit in its overall plot structure, Treat used it to introduce several innovations that facilitated the development of the police procedural. Treat was never a police official, but he spent some time as an unofficial observer with the San Diego police and in the New York Police Department’s crime lab, both to study police procedures and to get a feeling for the daily routine of policemen and their way of thinking. The development of the police procedural is tightly connected to a proliferation of authors who were, or had been, police officials themselves and thus could bring to genre an unprecedented component of verisimilitude of method, ambiance, and psychology. In his later novels, Treat shifted the emphasis of his plots to Jub Freeman, virtually eliminating Mitch Taylor, and thus moving his novels more into the direction of the scientific procedural that would later gain great popularity, particularly on television.

HILLARY WAUGH

Hillary Waugh is credited with writing the first police procedural novel to garner critical acclaim, *Last Seen Wearing . . .* (1952). One of the few early writers of procedural novels who stridently denies having been influenced by *Dragnet*, Waugh claims to have been inspired to write his novel after reading accounts of ten true murder cases in which all the victims were young women. *Last Seen Wearing . . .* was his attempt to write a novel that would mirror the tone of those

semidocumentary accounts so that events would sound true to the reader. It is generally believed that his novel is based on a true 1941 case of a Vermont student who disappeared that still remains unsolved. Waugh’s approach anticipated the strategy of Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1965) and what became known as the nonfiction novel. Even Waugh’s title is taken from actual police records describing the apparel of a missing person. Waugh’s protagonist, Police Chief Frank W. Ford, demonstrates the limits of the concept of reality in police procedural fiction; at the end of the novel, the case is solved. However, this novel brings to the police procedural a much greater sense of real-life police procedure; its plot develops in a perfectly straight line, with readers being made privy to the same facts Ford has at his disposal and also being allowed to follow Ford’s train of thought.

Although obvious traces of the classic detective story remain in *Last Seen Wearing . . .*, Waugh’s attempts at presenting his novel as a dispassionate and straight-forward “police case” are largely successful and have been praised by many scholars and critics. The novel can also serve as a yardstick for judging the aesthetic limits of the concept of reality in popular fiction: how much reality audiences of entertainment fiction can ultimately tolerate. An alternative approach is to develop narrative strategies that persuade readers to believe that stories are true, while firmly staying within the boundaries of fiction. In recognizing the difficulties of locating a police procedural in a small, rural town—frequency of significant crime, size of police force, scientific resources—Waugh took the final step in the direction the modern police procedural with his Manhattan series of novels around Detective Frank Sessions of the New York Homicide Division.

MAURICE PROCTER

Born in 1906, Maurice Procter worked for twenty years as a policeman in Halifax, Yorkshire. After leaving the police force in 1946 he used his professional experiences as the basis for a series of novels, most of which feature Detective Chief Inspector Harry Martineau. The first in a long list of prominent British writers of police procedurals, Procter was also the first procedural writer with a background in police work.

His background gives his work an especially authentic flavor, both in depicting methods used by the Yorkshire police and in the characters of its members. In addition to his Martineau novels, Procter's *The Chief Inspector's Statement* (1949; published in the United States as *The Pennycress Murders* (1951), established him as the foremost author of early police procedurals in Great Britain.

EARLY MASTERS: JOHN CREASEY

One of the most prolific writers of all time—and not merely of detective fiction—British author John Creasey is best known for the series of novels about Chief Superintendent Roger West that he wrote under his own name and others about Commander George Gideon that he wrote under the pseudonym of J. J. Marric. The Roger West series began in 1942 and thus predates the beginnings of the police procedural; it is also still clearly dominated by the formula of the classic detective mastermind. By contrast, the Gideon novels are early masterpieces of the police procedural. In contrast to the traditional single-murder pattern of the West series, the Gideon novels all follow multiple investigations, as has become standard in the modern police procedural. In addition, Creasey adopts R. Austin Freeman's technique of "inverting" the plot, eliminating the mystery element, and focusing on the procedures used to solve the cases.

Whereas Roger West is essentially a stereotype of the dashing young hero of adventure and romance fiction, Commander Gideon is much more complex, rounded character. He is a man full of loyalty to his country and to the policemen under his command. As has become standard for protagonists of the police procedural, he is conservative, deploring the excesses of the revolutionary youth culture of the late 1960's, and a firm supporter of what have been called "family values." However, despite his conservative social and political outlook, Gideon is quite capable of empathy, even toward criminals and hippies. He disapproves of using firearms and deplors the resistance to modernization among English law-enforcement organizations.

ED MCBAIN

To many readers of detective fiction, the name Ed McBain is synonymous with police procedurals, as his writing career parallels the growth of the genre from its early beginnings. After the huge success of his novel *The Blackboard Jungle* (1954, written under the name of Evan Hunter) and the film based on it, he turned to detective fiction. In 1956, shrewdly recognizing the growing appeal of procedural novels, he began to write his 87th Precinct series, set in the mythical city of Isola, which resembles New York City more than casually, despite McBain's protestations. After a slow start the series became phenomenally successful and occupied him until his death. *Fiddlers*, the last novel in the series, was published posthumously in 2005.

McBain made no secret of having been influenced by *Dragnet*; in fact, many of his early 87th Precinct novels quote from the television series. However, *Dragnet* and other early practitioners of the genre had not yet separated themselves adequately from the main characteristic of the classic detective story and the hard-boiled detective novel, as they still tended to focus on single heroes, with supporting casts of lesser mortals. McBain immediately set out to use what he called in an interview a "conglomerate hero," made up of a small group of very different characters, all working out of the same police station. He subtitled all the books in the series "An 87th Precinct Novel." This contrasted sharply with Creasey's practice of using the names of individual protagonists in the subtitles of his series novels. It is not an exaggeration to call Ed McBain the godfather of the modern police procedural, since his inspired de-emphasis of individual heroes in favor of the collective shifted emphasis from personalities to procedures.

In theory, McBain's concept of the "conglomerate hero" is an ideal protagonist for the police procedural. In practice, however, the use of multiple heroes creates artistic problems, particularly for McBain himself, who tried to keep his series novels relatively short. Because space did not permit the creation of multiple fully developed characters, he had to resort to the shortcut of using stereotypes. Without being crude, McBain flattens his precinct crew into national, ethnic,

and professional stereotypes, a popular literary technique for portraying minor characters. His books thus contain the black cop, the Jewish cop, the Hispanic cop, the rookie, the intellectual, the jaded cop, and many more. Fortuitously, however, the conglomerate hero technique allowed McBain to remove members of the precinct through death and transfers, and to introduce new squad members almost at will. Ultimately, however, the conglomerate hero technique began to falter because of McBain's growing sentimental attachment to certain of his characters, in particular Steve Carella, who eventually turned into a lead character almost like Inspector West or Commander Gideon, but in a more populist American tradition.

Despite some of these incongruities, McBain's 87th Precinct series moved the police procedural a quantum step forward. Apart from minor adaptations to the changing social and political conditions and to the progress in the forensic sciences, his series provides a blueprint for writing police procedurals.

MODERN POLICE PROCEDURALS

By the late 1960's, the police procedural had found its niche among the readers of detective fiction who had become accustomed to its distinctly different approach to mystery fiction. Due to the increasing remoteness of their moral landscape, both classic detective stories and hard-boiled detective fiction were being written by fewer young authors than ever before, and their basic formulaic ingredients were being absorbed by the police procedural. Lawrence Treat, Hillary Waugh, John Creasey, and particularly Ed McBain had established a basic formula for the police procedural that remains successful and popular. In order to satisfy readers' demands for reality, police procedurals had to adapt to and incorporate into their landscape developing political, social, and scientific changes.

An almost exclusively male genre at its beginning, the police procedural also had to account for the increasing role women were beginning to play in public and professional life. Elizabeth Linington, also writing as Lesley Egan and Dell Shannon, became the first woman to write acclaimed procedurals. However, her police heroes are all men.

Another pioneering woman writer of police procedurals was Dorothy Uhnak. As a member of the New York Transit Police, she had experienced at first hand the difficulties women faced in law enforcement and vividly describes them in her autobiography, *Police-woman: A Young Woman's Initiation into the Realities of Justice* (1964). These real-life experiences form the basis for her three novels featuring Detective Christie Opara. However, she abandoned her heroine after the third novel in favor of a traditional male detective. More in the tradition of the classic detective are the novels of Lillian O'Donnell and her protagonist Norah Mulcahaney of the New York Police Department, who rises from detective to lieutenant in the course of the series. Significantly, O'Donnell sees the inclusion of women and minorities in the traditionally male, all-white police forces as the only way to stem the gradual disintegration of law enforcement into corruption and alienation from the communities they are supposed to serve.

At the same time women were entering the world of police procedurals, members of ethnic minorities were also entering it, both as authors and as characters. Among the characters are Dell Shannon's (pseudonym for Elizabeth Linington) Lieutenant Luis Mendoza of the Los Angeles Police Department, John Ball's Sergeant Virgil Tibbs of the Pasadena police, and Chester Himes's detectives Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson of the New York Police Department. Of note is also the work of Faye Kellerman with its central conflict between Orthodox Jewish rules and the secular law.

In later decades, police procedurals without minorities and women in prominent roles became unthinkable in the United States and Great Britain, and gay and lesbian police officials also became accepted and even expected in the formerly very homophobic police procedural. The character of the police detectives themselves also changed during the 1970's and 1980's, from the straight, squeaky-clean type of *Drag-ner's* Sergeant Friday to the more cynical, hardened, and characters of the McBain mold, reaching its extreme in the self-serving, brutal police force of James Ellroy's Los Angeles, particularly in his most famous novel, *L.A. Confidential* (1990).

All this points to the fact that police procedurals found their own voice during the 1970's and 1980's, co-opting, wherever profitable, the methods of the classic and the hard-boiled detective story, but concentrating more on the increasingly bureaucratic and scientific and technological nature of police work. At the same time, the police procedural enlarged its geography by branching out of Los Angeles and New York to most major American cities.

In the more conservative American climate of the 1980's, public concern about rising crime statistics left its mark on the police procedural. Novels began reflecting a growing public interest in maintaining law and order with the help of advances in forensic science, assisted by sensational, televised criminal trials. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1966 *Miranda v. Arizona* ruling dramatically changed the way the police officers conducted their investigations and interrogations. The introduction of profiling, fiber evidence, and DNA testing had a similarly strong impact on police work and on the public image of criminal justice.

The popular image of police corruption that had also informed the world of the police procedural during the 1970's diminished during the 1980's and 1990's. It was replaced by a new view of the police as an embattled, courageous band of brothers burdened by having to navigate mazes of legal and departmental bureaucracy and public hostility while combatting crime. At the same time, American police procedurals began to project a view that was, by and large, hostile to federal law-enforcement agencies, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Many novels depicted federal agencies as interfering—often with political motives—with the work of local and state law officers.

Mass murders and serial killings performed during the 1960's and 1970's by the so-called Boston Strangler, Son of Sam, Ted Bundy, Richard Speck, Zodiac Killer, and the Manson family helped to give serial killers a special place in police procedurals, starting with Lawrence Sanders's novel *The First Deadly Sin* (1973). Serial killings lend themselves well both to the structure of the police procedural, with its multiple-crime formula, and to the interplay among legal and

political authorities and the police, as well as the use of advanced technology and psychology. Fueled by another wave of serial killings perpetrated by John Wayne Gacy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and others during the 1980's, an increasing number of writers began using the subject as the focus of their novels.

Police procedurals contain elements of both the hard-boiled and the classic detective novel, and in Great Britain the classic detective formula has lingered longer than in the United States and in France, where the "hard-boiled" procedural has dominated. At the same time, the growing emphasis on the personal life and the psyche of policemen and criminals, as well as the complex interactions between police and the general public have led to a split within the subgenre. An increasing number of novels are being written by former police officials who wish to show the police as a distinct paramilitary subculture in contemporary Western society, subject to working conditions, stress, and temptations far more severe than that of the average reader, indeed given to a certain siege mentality in the face of a hostile public. This development has led to a de-emphasis of the mysterious elements of crimes and their solutions that has been traditionally central to detective fiction. Works in which this central concern of detective fiction is no longer present or devalued to secondary status might more appropriately be called "police novels" or "police fiction"—something fundamentally different from true mystery and detective fiction.

Some scholars of police procedurals, such as George N. Dove and Leroy L. Panek, exclude uniformed police officers as proper protagonists of procedurals. They insist on procedurals using plainclothes detectives. According to this view, novels that use uniformed officers—beat cops—as protagonists should instead be relegated to the police novel category. Under this definition, some scholars of police procedurals dismiss the writings of Joseph Wambaugh, a former police officer himself whose books are popularly regarded as police procedurals.

ELEMENTS OF POLICE PROCEDURALS

As a subgenre of detective fiction, the police procedural adheres to the basic plot structures of the main genre: Crimes are committed; one or more detectives

take up the investigations; complications arise in the course of the investigations; the crimes are solved. After initially having close ties to one or both of the other subgenres, the police procedural developed into a separate and distinct subgenre during the 1970's and 1980's by drastically altering the character of the investigators, the methods of detection, the nature of the crimes under investigation, and the physical and moral landscape of the action.

THE DETECTIVES

Few readers of detective fiction have ever encountered real-life equivalents of the Great Amateur Detective or the seedy but idealistic hard-boiled detective of fiction. Almost everyone, however, has had some contact with, or observed, a real police official. Detectives in police procedurals bear a double burden: They must conform to readers' images of police detectives, their professional methods, and their private lives. At the same time, the authors' descriptions of reality must also be of sufficient aesthetic interest to keep readers coming back for more. This is even more of a challenge at a time when compelling visual images of real and fictional policemen abound in films and on television.

This tension becomes most obvious in formulaic depictions of police officers as average, ordinary human beings who are not endowed with superhuman intelligence, extraordinary perseverance, special capacities to endure pain, or immunities from common human weaknesses, such as jealousy, greed, lust, and cowardice. Although police procedurals go to great length to humanize their detectives and to de-individualize them into members of teams, the fact is that most of these fictional teams have above-average leaders who become the focus of reader interest. In addition, some of the intellectual superiority appears again in the scientific acumen and intuitive brilliance of the forensic scientists on the team.

A further formulaic convention of the procedural is the notion that the police detective's job is stressful and thankless, without the commensurate intellectual or material satisfaction often attributed to their counterparts in the classic detective story and the hard-boiled novel. Indeed, not only is their profession a

thankless task, it is seen as a continuing, never-ending battle against the criminal element in society and against hostility and suspicion within the community. Therefore, the image of the police becomes one of a tightly knit band of brothers (similar to that of war novels), sworn to support one another against criminals, the public's misconceptions, an increasingly bureaucratic police hierarchy, and judges who are soft on criminals.

THE CRIMES

Gone, for the most part, from police procedurals are the brilliant criminals of the classic detective story. However, the theme of political corruption and the boundless acquisitive greed of wealthy and powerful people of the hard-boiled thriller still operates in the procedural. Most crimes in procedurals are committed by ordinary people for ordinary reasons, such as sex and money. The brilliance of the classic criminal that was only matched by the intellectual genius of the Great Detective has mutated into the deviant, warped criminal mind of serial killers.

The main innovations of the procedural, then, are the investigation of multiple common crimes instead of single, extraordinary crimes, and the admission of the reality-based fact that some, indeed most crimes go unsolved. However, since this last feature contradicts the moral fantasy of most of the readers, who prefer to live, at least in fiction, in a world where most crimes are solved, all major crimes in the police procedural are also solved in the end, with the unsolved cases consisting of minor crimes that do not engage readers emotionally or aesthetically.

METHODS OF DETECTION

In conformance with the characteristics of the detectives, the main formula of the procedural insists on teamwork, both in solving a particular case or in assigning individual, multiple cases to different members of the unit. Contrary to the ratiocination of the amateur detective and the deceptive role-playing of the hard-boiled detective, the main method of detective in the procedural is the police routine, consisting of the use of informants, strenuous door-to-door gathering of mainly useless information, the interrogation

of subjects, and the allocation of limited time and resources to multiple cases.

One of the most important variants in the procedural formula is the convention, based on reality, that police detectives are assigned their cases to investigate and do not have the luxury of choosing the cases they find most appealing or rewarding. In addition to that significant difference, the police procedural shows the protagonists continually pressed for time, because of the large number of cases that demand their attention and because of the myth that any crime not well on its way to being solved within forty-eight hours of its commission will never be solved.

Police procedures used in the fictional world of the procedural closely parallel those of the real police and have evolved at the same rate as forensic science has progressed. Indeed, there is now a whole new subformula, the forensic, or scientific, procedural, in which interest is focused on teams of forensic experts, such as profilers, police psychologists, police laboratory scientists, and DNA experts.

An additional innovation of the police procedural concerns the outcome of investigations. Although only hinted at in the classic detective story and virtually absent in the hard-boiled detective novel, the most daunting requirement of a successful investigation in the procedural is that it must be "court-proof." If a conviction cannot be obtained in a court of law, the investigation has failed. As a consequence of this new convention, the convenient suicide or laconic, one-sentence report of the execution of the criminal at the end of a classic detective story is no longer satisfactory. This demand leads to frequent tension between the legal-political arm of government and the investigative forces, which adds suspense to the police procedural.

LANDSCAPES OF POLICE PROCEDURALS

Although more closely related to the Great Bad Place of the hard-boiled detective than to the pastoral idyll of the classic detective story, most police procedurals are set in large metropolitan areas, which are closely associated in readers' minds with large-scale criminal activity. In such vast, impersonal landscapes in which criminals can hide and disappear, police work becomes particularly difficult and frustrating,

and the cooperation of the civilian population is hard to attain. At the same time, large metropolitan areas are also ethnically and culturally diverse, adding color and depth to the monolithic landscape of the English countryside or the American suburbs, while blurring rank and class distinctions. In this urban jungle a personal approach to crime investigation is virtually impossible, particularly in the early stages, and the reliance on "police procedure" and impersonal science becomes a necessity.

The police procedural is thus an attempt to create an aesthetically pleasing and realistic view of crime and criminal investigation in the Western world after World War II. It creates a world which is unmistakably different from the utopian neofeudal world of the classic detective story and the dystopian Great Depression world of the hard-boiled thriller. The procedural is painstakingly realistic in its description of the physical world and the geography it employs as background. Nevertheless, it is as prone to mythmaking as its predecessors and has, like them, developed into a fairly rigid formula over the fifty years of its existence, varied only by advances in scientific methodology and cultural differences.

It is, however, clear that its clever mix of realism and moral fantasy has made the police procedural the most popular subgenre of detective fiction during the first decade of the twenty-first century, bolstered by the increasing popularity of the formula in film and on television, while the classic and hard-boiled detective fiction are in decline.

Franz G. Blaha

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SCIENCE FICTION MYSTERIES

Science fiction and the mystery genre differ in the dates of their origins and in certain of their approaches to fiction. Nevertheless, they are similar in being plot-oriented forms of fiction. Authors in both genres assemble casts of characters and focus on patterns of conflict within the constraints of altered, unusual, and odd backgrounds and contexts. Science fiction writers generally select sets of scientific, technological, or sociological assumptions and then extend them in coordinated ways into unknown and hypothetical futures, presents, or pasts. Within the frameworks the writers create, mysteries abound, but within certain constraints.

Some science fiction writers base their assumptions on logical projections of known science, things that are possible given certain discoveries or conditions in the future, or that may have happened in some unrecorded or long-since-forgotten past, or that may exist even now, somewhere. They create probable or possible futures and alternative or imaginary histories. Other writers, through venturesome speculations, create what might be called future fantasies. These writers base their assumptions on logical projections of factors that cannot now be accepted by science but that are suspected to be possible or on yet-to-be-discovered scientific principles that may one day be accepted as at least probable, no matter how uncertain they appear now. These writers seek readers' acceptance of the premises on which their stories are based. They construct, through careful detail, scientifically plausible explanations or rationales for their altered settings and their consequences or side effects. The altered settings, having their own histories and subsequent futures, may assume any number of forms, in any time and any place, or in dimensions defined by other parameters. They may involve powers and potentials far greater than those of the human race, typifying the ultimate background for human action, the cosmos.

CHARACTERS AND CONTEXT IN SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction writers create characters who are shaped by their special environments, which may have

their own physical constants or laws, and their characters are shaped by the social conventions of those environments. Science fiction characters may be nonhuman, or altered human beings. In such cases, their creators may, as with human characters of the remote past or far future, greatly alter or expand the range of perception, traits, and motivations of such characters. Alien characters may have their own unique physical structures, chemical organizations, and sensory mechanisms. Although such characters are likely to differ from human beings physically, they—like humans—have basic goals, dreams, objectives, motives, adventures, and torments that readers can share.

Science fiction writers must depict characters whose actions and attitudes stem from their individual natures and must impart to them, or to what they are to become, some degree of sympathy. Writers generally avoid the kind of introspective character probing found in traditional fiction, since it would be intrusive in a literary form whose power, mystery, and wonder arise from the intersections of the characters and the problems to be solved and situations to be faced. Characters often follow some version of the scientific method that shapes their commitments to what they are doing or hope to do. Conflict can, however, arise from personal problems that must be solved, at least to some degree, so the main problems can be worked out. Still, the kind of conflict the characters experience involves aspects of the greatest of factors, outside of and beyond the self: the transformative power of science and technology or the mysteries of space and time, matter and energy, life and death. Suspense and tension arise from watching characters struggle against frontiers extending to infinity.

DEMANDS OF SCIENCE FICTION

Like the mystery genre, science fiction makes considerable demands upon readers. It requires them to stretch their minds to think in new ways, apart from their accustomed conceptual categories, and to question assumptions regarded as self-evident or settled and involving anything from daily habits to world-

views. Science fiction writers commonly employ a third-person narrative point of view, moving back and forth from character to character, or scene to scene.

In rendering the future, science fiction writers may impart to it the authority of history by using the past tense. Further, they may contrast present sequences of events centering on groups of characters with contemporary, past, or future sequences centering on other sets of characters. Their contrasts, built upon evidence within the fiction or assumed evidence outside the fiction, demonstrate the effects of human or nonhuman adjustment to conditions of life as they extend beyond the range of a single lifetime. Those contrasts can indicate wide temporal and spatial perspectives, as well as major differences in mental outlook or viewpoint and in quality of life, vast realms of wonder and mystery. They may, for example, involve events, processes, structures, or circumstances, or settings that might be possible for human beings, given their tenacious nature and yet precarious position amid cosmic forces which are alien to human interest and perhaps even unknowable. In providing new or altered frames of reference built on suppositional science or technology, writers ask that readers employ a certain flexibility of mind; readers must accustom themselves to some degree of strangeness of environments in which the rules of life, its constraints or limitations, have changed and so the results will change.

Some writers in the mystery genre, working within the age-old tradition of the mystery tale, focus attention on unusual doings, often involving settings and characters far removed from the experience of readers and sometimes involving the supernatural.

THE MYSTERY GENRE: KNOWN UNKNOWNNS

Writers in the mystery genre have traditionally interpreted the nature of their genre broadly. Whatever their particular subgenre, they tend to focus upon things that are unexplained, that are unknown, that are kept secret, or that have indefinite possibilities. Mystery writers have created tales that date back from ancient and medieval times to the present and that draw attention to oddities and complexities of central problems or circumstances. In this latter regard, their works are similar to those of science fiction.

Mystery fiction describes known historical and contemporary settings that contain unexplained phenomena—alterations of the known or expected, though not to the same extent that science fiction does. Mystery fiction settings and circumstances may be characterized by their peculiarity, inexplicability, strangeness, and distance. Mystery fiction can demonstrate or indicate actualities that are, or at least appear to be, greater than a human being's five normal senses. Its writers focus on the extraordinary or unaccountable qualities of problems and occurrences that may never be understood. They provide, as in stories of hauntings, ghosts, ghouls, or the supernatural, or in stories of unaccountable events at sea, no more than enigmatical hints, glimpses, and suggestions that, at times, there may be something wrong with normal patterns of cause and effect, or with geography, or perhaps even with time itself. They select events or situations that can be and have been believed or experienced, things that, at one time or another, people have accepted as true without question, or have believed that there was something to them. They may be enriched by folklore, legends, superstition, myth, religion, the great wealth of tales handed down from generation to generation. The events or situations might be weirdly beautiful, eerily exotic, hideously strange, entirely otherworldly, deeply melancholy, suggestive of the finality of death, or murderously evil.

Writers of this kind of mystery, as with writers of detection or crime mystery, typically depict characters whose minds, emotions, imaginations, and sentiments are capable of registering or receiving the impact and reflecting the results of the settings, problems, or situations. Accordingly, writers bring to bear the unpredictability of human beings and the complexities of human behavior, things that might be bred by human imagining, by the combined forces of nature and society, or by the ways the past shapes the present and future, not to mention the influence of those age-old and unexplained questions of life and death. Doubts and fears, as a kind of anguish or torment, linger in the minds and memories of the characters and the readers, whether the events are to be explained by reference to natural but unperceived or still unknown causes or to greater-than-normal, unknowable or supernatural causes.

DETECTION MYSTERY

Detection mystery fiction, as with earlier forms of mystery fiction, often focuses on particular places that serve as primary backgrounds or frameworks for the action. In these stories, detectives or small groups of inquirers use scientific methods to solve problem, often crimes. These problems may present more than one possible answer, each equally valid, none of which involves a supernatural explanation. Through a kind of scientific detachment, the detectives reconstruct events, elaborate in structure, that have happened in the setting, moving back and forth from the fictional past to the fictional present. They employ methods of comparison, association, and difference involving a cast of characters who are depicted so as to provoke curiosity about the least or most likely suspect and about what will emerge through conversations involving the detectives and the suspects or involving the suspects themselves. This kind of discursive structure nurtures the impulse to connect and discover.

The detectives pursue many sets of relations or multiple lines of reasoning which, in retrospect, converge to reveal pertinent facts, a design inherent in events, causal connections, or succession of incidents. Often, simple, apparently harmless facts can totally undermine one's expectations or presence of mind, as when little or nothing turns out to be what it at first appeared to be. The improbable can be verified and the fabulous can become factual. Questions tend to clarify themselves with each asking, and sometimes what is required is not more facts but better command of the facts already known. Clever, skillful inquirers, protecting the innocent, eventually illuminate the mystery, having puzzled together a model or reconstructed events, similar to a kind of scientific theory that has remarkable predictive success.

In detection stories, wrongdoers often remain unidentified and unsubdued until the end. The investigators eventually solve the crimes or prevent catastrophes at great personal risk. They might, for example, dramatically trap or confront the guilty, or tell of the punishment or death of the guilty when that information itself could be dangerous. Resolutions, however, although rationally satisfying, may remain partial. Human nature continually poses perplexities of motiva-

tion, intention, and behavior, as with those complications that grow out of the cultural patterns that shape human beings or with those baffling ways that the past, personal or social, remains in the mind and memory and thus shapes present perception and action. If there is no such thing as a perfect crime, that knowledge goes unheeded, never becoming a deterrent, any more than it does in actual life. Still, many crimes remain mysteries, as do stories that offer no solutions.

Writers of detection fiction also produce a form of imaginary history, similar to science fiction. A writer may assume, for example, in that if a given thing took place, involving a certain group of characters, in the circumstances given, then readers can believe that the characters whom the author describes would have said and done and thought things similar to what they did. In its narrative point of view, however, the story might vary from that of the inquirer to that of a recorder of events or both, or a teller of tall tales, or perhaps the one responsible for the crime who eventually sides with the forces of law and order, or even remains anonymous.

SCIENCE FICTION-MYSTERY FICTION LINKS

During the late 1890's, stories involving aspects of science or technology began appearing in popular American and British magazines. These stories met the growing public demand for striking short fiction. They competed with, and absorbed aspects of, action and adventure stories, fantastic and occult tales, and mysteries. *Weird Tales*, a magazine founded in 1923, stressed supernatural mysteries and horror and occult stories. It also published stories providing exciting glimpses of new scientific and technological wonders by such writers as Otis Adelbert Kline, Seabury Quinn, Austin Hall, H. P. Lovecraft, and Edmond Hamilton. All these writers combined elements of mystery with their science fiction. For example, Seabury Quinn contributed several stories involving the psychic detective Jules de Grandin.

In April, 1926, Hugo Gernsback, an American born in Luxembourg, launched *Amazing Stories*, the earliest magazine exclusively devoted to fiction based on science and technology. He initially gave the vague body

of writing that stretched scientific and technological premises the name “scientifiction.” Three years later, after selling *Amazing Stories*, Gernsback launched another magazine devoted to fictional extrapolations of science—*Science Wonder Stories* (later renamed *Wonder Stories*). He then came up with a new name for the emerging literary genre: “science fiction.” In both *Amazing Stories* and *Science Wonder Stories*, Gernsback stressed the potential for novelty or mystery. He believed that scientific development brings newness or unknowns to many forms of human activity and that science fiction should draw out the implications and imaginable consequences of these developments.

Gernsback’s magazines drew upon earlier writers for specimens of this new form of fiction by reprinting stories written by Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe. Each of these nineteenth century writers had combined elements of the mystery genre with

their well-known science fiction. Gernsback also published new stories by contemporary writers of commercial fiction who also combined elements of the mystery genre with science fiction. These writers included Garrett P. Serviss, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Edward E. Smith, A. Merritt, and H. P. Lovecraft. Gernsback recognized a public appetite for stories involving concepts that would become basic to science fiction, although they often derived from the mystery category. Gernsback also combined science fiction with the mystery genre in another magazine that he launched in 1930: *Scientific Detective Monthly* (later renamed *Amazing Detective Stories*). This was one of the earliest magazines devoted to scientific detection.

Gernsback founded *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories*, and *Amazing Detective Stories* at exactly the right time. At the end of nineteenth century, some people thought that human knowledge of history and geography was reaching a point that would limit the plausible unknowns that could sustain imaginative speculation. As editors, writers, and readers increasingly realized, however, science and technology actually offered an *unlimited* number of unknowns. These unknowns included indefinite or removed settings or situations beyond the confines of geography, history, and Earth itself, as well as new frames of reference that allowed for the study or observation of old things in novel ways. For example, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, new scientific developments revolutionized understanding of physical nature, posing unimaginable forms of complexity, uncertainty, and mystery.

With his books *The Universe Around Us* (1929) and *The Mysterious Universe* (1930), the distinguished British physicist Sir James Jeans made the new science accessible to general readers. He indicated, among other things, that given the dynamic features of physical nature, answers to its mysteries—its beginning, its ultimate composition, its possible combination, its size, its future—might never be known, or might not be knowable to human intelligence. Physical nature appeared to have an open-endedness and strangeness that defied any attempts to describe how it functions as a system. Writers of science fiction turned to such speculations of the time, especially H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, and Donald Wandrei; they



The author of The Time Machine (1895), The Invisible Man (1897), The War of the Worlds (1898), and other classic stories, H. G. Wells is one of the great pioneers of science fiction literature. (Library of Congress)

developed a form of science fiction that might be termed comic mystery.

Other magazine editors and writers, some of them scientists, like Gernsback himself, also recognized that science and technology were gradually but permanently and immeasurably altering fundamental human assumptions, aspirations, and attitudes. They produced new magazines, rivaling Gernsback's, that specialized in science fiction and bore titles, similar to *Amazing Stories*, which proclaimed excitement. These magazines published fiction by established writers in other categories of fiction, especially mystery fiction, and by new writers entering the emerging field. *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, founded in 1930, later named *Astounding Science Fiction*, and, still later, *Analog: Science Fiction and Fact*, was the most important magazine to follow *Amazing Stories*. For more than thirty years, its editors, Harry Bates, F. Orlin Tremain, and especially John W. Campbell, Jr. kept the magazine at the forefront of the science fiction field, and it published many authors who combined science fiction with mystery.

EARLY SCIENCE FICTION MYSTERIES

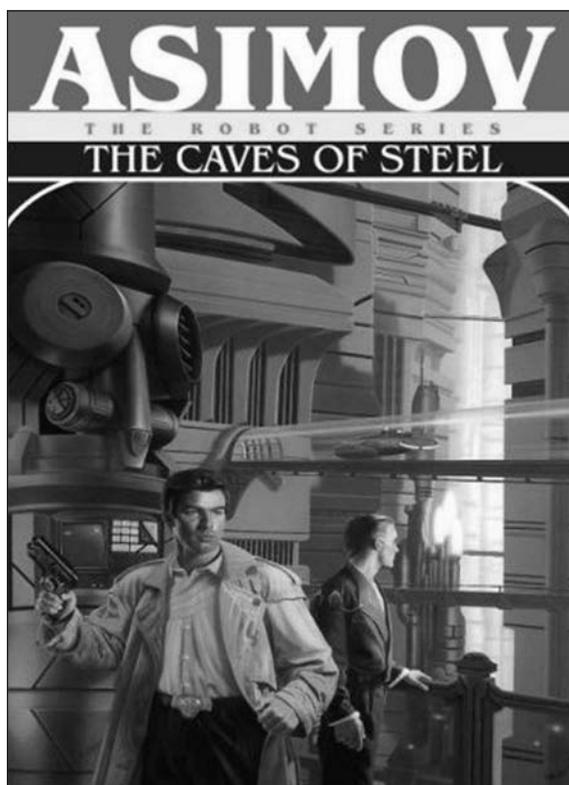
It is difficult to date the moment that science fiction and mystery fully joined. In 1909, Algernon Blackwood combined science fiction and detection in *John Silence: Physician Extraordinary* (1909), a collection of stories involving an occult detective. However, the occult premise of those stories might justifiably exclude the stories from the label of science fiction. More likely, the merger of the two genres occurred during the mid-twentieth century, when Isaac Asimov, one of the best-known contributors to *Astounding Science Fiction*, began writing his famous robot stories.

In 1954, Asimov published *The Caves of Steel*, a novel that many people believe to be the most successful combination of science fiction and detection mystery ever written. Lije Bailey, the human detective in that novel, and his robotic partner, R. Daneel, combine their skills to solve a murder. Along the way, Bailey overcomes his prejudice against robots because of Daneel's selfless, noble competence. In 1957, Asimov followed *The Caves of Steel* with a sequel, *The Naked Sun*. Four years later, another writer, Poul Anderson,

published *After Doomsday* (1961), an ambitious novel that extended the concept of criminal investigation mysteries to an entire planet: After the earth is deliberately destroyed, two groups of survivors, one male and one female, travel in separate spaceships, searching for those responsible for destroying Earth and for each other. They then set about looking for a species similar to human beings with whom they can live.

One of the most fruitful combinations of science fiction and the mystery genre involves methods of time travel, a field pioneered in H. G. Wells's brief novel *The Time Machine* (1895), whose unnamed scientist investigates the future of Earth. In many science fiction works, some means of traveling in time, or at least of viewing the past or future, allows characters to discover exactly what happened in the past or what will happen in the future. The characters then return to their own time with secret or shocking knowledge that might transform a society.

Among the many new science fiction magazines that appeared between the 1930's and the 1950's were



Astonishing Stories, *Marvel Stories*, *Startling Stories*, *Fantastic Adventures*, *Other Worlds*, *Future Science Fiction*, and *Galaxy Science Fiction*, as well as *The Magazine of Fantasy*, which was later expanded and retitled as *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. These magazines and others published stories by many writers who were important in the field of science fiction as well as writers in the mystery and horror genres. Collectively, they helped to increase the scope and appeal of science fiction.

Magazines remained the primary forum of science fiction publishing until the 1950's. Books with science fiction themes were generally not labeled as science fiction until the late 1940's and early 1950's. After the mid-1950's, however, a great expansion of paperback science fiction titles began drawing readers away from the specialist magazines, eliminating all but four or five. The handful of science fiction magazines that survived until the end of the century included *Analog*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, which had begun in 1977. Although the magazines have been overtaken in popularity by books, films, and television programming, science fiction magazines have retained some of their influence. A similar kind of transition in mystery magazines has left only a few influential magazines, such as *Ellery Queen's Magazine*, and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*.

THE MYSTERY GENRE: KNOWN UNKNOWNNS

Implicit in much of science fiction are mysteries involving odd, unexplained, or unknown circumstances. A primary example of this category of mystery is Horace Walpole *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), which is usually regarded as the first gothic novel. Such novels were characterized by settings remote in time or place, often castles fraught with gloom, ancestral curses, and omens—places where mysterious, thrilling, or frightening events could plausibly occur, particularly during storms and other terrifying manifestations of nature. The central conflicts pitted good versus evil and often involved magic, although science itself may often resemble magic. Walpole's novel was followed by Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew George Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), and John Polidori's

The Vampyre (1819). Other important early gothic novels include William Beckwith *Vathek: An Arabian Tale* (1786), which introduced mysteries of the Middle East into the framework of the gothic novel, and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1789).

Mary Shelley incorporated components of the gothic novel into *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), as did Edgar Allan Poe in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1837) and his collection *Tales Grottesque and Arabesque* (1840). Shelley and Poe, who both wrote major mystery works, are regarded as important forerunners of science fiction because they used scientific rationalization to account for startling departures from the norms of existence. In varying ways, they also warned of the consequences of misusing scientific knowledge. They contributed to an evolving body of work that eventually would be called gothic science fiction, an influence which reveals itself in the writings of many science fiction authors.

As late as the turn of the twentieth century, several sizable parts of Africa, Asia, South America, the polar regions, and the South Pacific remained unexplored and largely unknown to the Western world. Those places offered writers settings for imaginative tales about strange and wonderful things. One of the best-known writers to exploit such settings was H. Rider Haggard, the author of such popular novels as *King Solomon Mines* (1885), *Allan Quatermain* (1885), and *She: A History of Adventure* (1886-1887). Another was William Hope Hodgson, the author of *The Boats of Glen Carrig* (1907), *House on the Borderland* (1908), and *The Night Land* (1912). A third was Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle is best known for his Sherlock Holmes stories, but he also wrote *The Lost World* (1912), about the discovery of a primitive world deep in the unexplored mountains of South America.

Haggard's books described excursions into the interior of Africa and probed legends and religious secrets and rites that had ties to ancient Egypt, the Middle East, and Asia. Hodgson explored the mysteries of the sea, including islands of menacing landscapes and bizarre life-forms, portals or gateways to other worlds and galaxies, and the horrors faced by a remnant of humanity in Earth's far future. Doyle was interested in mysteries of a uncharted region of Earth where crea-



H. Rider Haggard. (Library of Congress)

tures of the Jurassic age coexisted with primitive human beings. Doyle's sequel to *The Lost World*, *The Poison Belt* (1913) illustrated how conditions of outer space can affect Earth's atmosphere to cause an ecological catastrophe. These authors and others created powerful themes and images echoed by many later writers; characters seemed to challenge the very nature of existence itself and sometimes—most notably in Doyle's novels—they succeeded.

ALLIED FORMS OF FICTION

Science fiction and the mystery genre will always be related. When things cease to be mysterious, they cease to be of concern of those kind of individuals who will immerse themselves in those things with the intensity and resolve of real exploration. The inquiring minds and creative imaginations of characters in science fiction and the mystery genre have more in common than divides them. Writers employ a philosophy which rec-

ognizes that human beings will not likely reach a point where they can make no further discoveries; facts at hand may not be the only ones available and facts will not cease to prove stranger than fiction in an infinite universe and require new interpretation. Both kinds of fiction provide at least glimpses of a frontier, in one form or another, where imagination and the unknown meet. They indicate the intricate, interlocking, mutually interdependent pathways by which physical nature and human nature (or some other intelligent nature) coexist and evolve. They picture the never-ending quality of investigation and discovery.

Timothy C. Miller

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SPY NOVELS

The practice of collecting information about adversaries through secret and extralegal means is as old as civilization itself. References to this pursuit, variously known as spying or espionage, date from the time of Egyptian pharaoh Ramses the Great, who reigned during the thirteenth century B.C.E. The books of the Old Testament are replete with tales of spies, and other such tales may be found in the chronicles of ancient China, Persia, and Greece. Despite the long history of espionage, no writer made fictional use of the subject until the early nineteenth century, and the popular genre of the modern spy novel dates from much later—the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The spy novel is primarily an English-language genre, and most of its practitioners have been British. However, it is a curiosity of literary history that the first novel to deal with spying was actually written by an American, James Fenimore Cooper. Nevertheless, although there have been many American spy novelists since Cooper's time, few of them have enjoyed the popularity and critical acclaim accorded their British counterparts.

Spy fiction has developed over the years in response to wars, anticipation of wars, and other stressful and even traumatic international events. Cooper set his novel *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821) during the American Revolution. Although he succeeded in describing the ambiguous moral terrain—the “neutral ground”—in which spies operated during that conflict, his work is virtually unreadable by twenty-first century standards. Cooper subsequently turned to novels about the American frontier in his Leatherstocking tales, laying the groundwork for what would become another popular genre, the Western.

TWO FORGOTTEN PIONEERS

The earliest British spy novels were written by two highly prolific authors who both wrote in a variety of genres—William Le Queux and E. Phillips Oppenheim. Their earliest works appeared during a period

in which the great European powers—France, Great Britain, Russia, and Germany—seemed to be preparing for war. A popular genre of the period, the “future war novel” or “war prophecy novel,” grew out of the international tensions of that period. The earliest such work was General Sir George Tomkyns Chesney's “The Battle of Dorking,” an 1871 story describing the imaginary conquest of Great Britain by Germany.

Both Le Queux and Oppenheim began writing their war prophecy novels during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the former with *The Great War In England in 1897* (1894) and the latter with *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (1898). Both authors also drew upon two other popular genres of their time—the adventure novel, as it had been developed by Robert Louis Stevenson and H. Rider Haggard, and the crime story and novel, as developed by Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle. Successive generations of spy novelists would combine elements of these three genres in varying proportions, and many would also write about international crime and political intrigue, including the ultimate political act of assassination.

In addition to dealing with the threat of war, *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin* also features aspects of spying, making it Oppenheim's first foray into the genre. Le Queux's first spy novel is usually regarded to have been *The Day of Temptation* (1899). Neither Oppenheim nor Le Roux had literary pretensions, and only one of their many works—Oppenheim's *The Great Impersonation* (1920)—has survived the test of time. Set in East Africa and England during World War I, *The Great Impersonation* revolves around what was by then a tired and dated theme—a German plan for the conquest of Europe. However, it is notable for its ingenious plot. Le Queux, Oppenheim, and their imitators churned out a seemingly endless parade of ephemeral works. Long before their deaths, however, more skillful writers had begun to extend the artistic possibilities of spy fiction, using the subject as an opportunity to explore themes of loyalty, deceit, and betrayal in a gripping manner.

THE SPY NOVEL GAINS STATURE

Rudyard Kipling was born and raised in British India, a fact reflected in his most important novel, *Kim* (1901). That book follows the adventures of young Kimball (Kim) O'Hara, an orphan who finds himself involved in the rivalry between Great Britain and Russia for control of Central Asia. Known as the "Great Game," that rivalry had occupied much of the energy and resources of the two nations since early in the nineteenth century. Although espionage is one of *Kim*'s main themes, it is developed through the story of its protagonist's gradual recognition of his Anglo-Indian heritage and his growth to maturity. *Kim* may be enjoyed for its headlong plot, its generous outlook, and its unparalleled portrait of everyday Indian life, but it also offers a firsthand glimpse into the attitudes of the British Empire's rulers during a crucial period of imperial intrigue.

In contrast to Kipling, Erskine Childers wrote only one work of fiction, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service* (1903). This exciting work revolves around the voyages of the *Dulcibella* in the shallow waters and low-lying Frisian Islands of the North Sea off the coast of Germany. The tiny craft belongs to Arthur Davies, who has invited an old university chum and Foreign Office bureaucrat named Carruthers to sail with him. Together the two discover German preparations for a seaborne invasion of England. Childers himself was an amateur sailor, and included charts and long passages of nautical detail in *The Riddle of the Sands*. Many readers have found the details overwhelming, but the textual passages lend the novel an air of authenticity lacking in the works of Le Queux and Oppenheim. Childers was genuinely concerned with Great Britain's lack of coastal defenses and dramatizes that concern through a suspenseful narrative. He also adds a touch of romance, but wisely subordinates it to his larger story. Later generations have read the book not only as an adventurous spy novel but also as a classic of sailing fiction.

Four years after Childers published *The Riddle of the Sands*, the renowned British novelist Joseph Conrad produced a wholly different kind of spy novel, *The Secret Agent* (1907). The ostensible agent of Conrad's title is Adolf Verloc, who secretly receives

money from the Russian embassy to spy on anarchist groups in London. When the cowardly Verloc is ordered to set off a bomb at the Greenwich Royal Observatory—an attack that British authorities would be sure to blame on anarchists—he persuades his naïve and unworldly stepson Stevie to carry out the deed. A naturalized British citizen born in Poland, Conrad was deeply skeptical of the possibilities of political change, and his skepticism damages *The Secret Agent* as a work of art. Conrad depicts Verloc and his anarchist acquaintances with such scorn that they are little more than caricatures; however, his treatment of Verloc's wife Winnie and her doomed son is more sympathetic. *Kim* and *The Riddle of the Sands* would play important roles in the subsequent development of the spy novel. However, the bitter irony and unrelieved gloom of *The Secret Agent* limited its influence on what would become an increasingly popular genre.

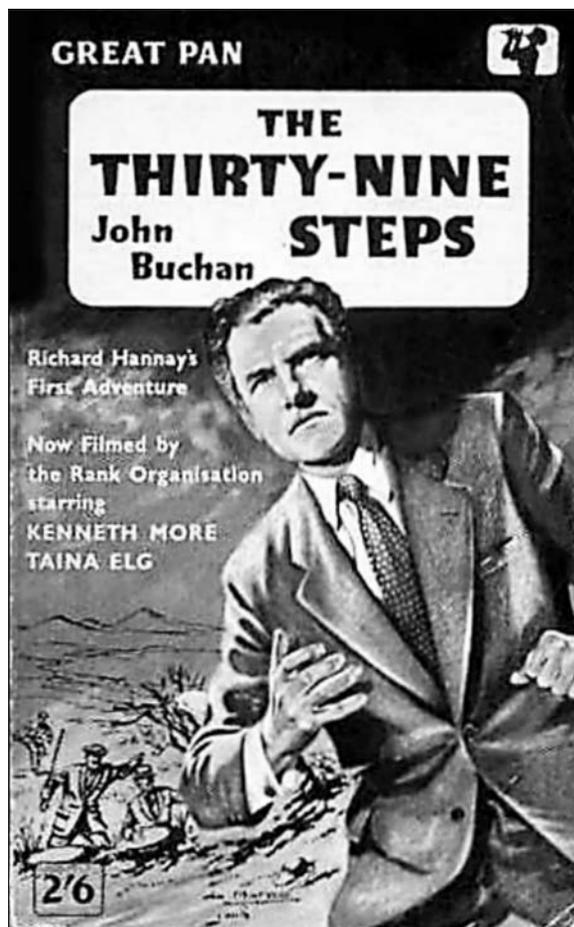
JOHN BUCHAN

William Le Queux claimed, but never offered proof, that he had worked for the British Secret Service. In the case of the Scottish-born writer John Buchan there is no uncertainty, as he is known to have served with the British Intelligence Corps during World War I. Indeed, he may be regarded as the first in a long and distinguished line of spy novelists who gained at least some of their knowledge of the clandestine world of espionage at first hand.

Buchan began working for the British government in South Africa at the end of the South African (Boer) War in 1902. He later drew on his Southern African experience to write his adventure novel *Prester John* (1910). That work was a success, but it was Buchan's next novel, *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), that has remained the favorite of readers and critics. This book involves an improbable plot to steal Britain's naval secrets and provoke a war between Germany and Russia, but it is most notable for the breathless, headlong flight its protagonist Richard Hannay must make across the Scottish countryside to escape both enemies and suspicious authorities. Director Alfred Hitchcock filmed the book in 1935. Although he altered the sense of the title, the resulting motion picture is one of the first of many notable adaptations of the spy genre to the screen.

Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* shows the influence of *The Riddle of the Sands*, a book that Buchan admired so much that he arranged to have a publisher for whom he worked issue a reprint of it. Buchan himself produced four sequels to *The Thirty-nine Steps*, the best of which, *Greenmantle* (1916), involves what was essentially a new and dangerous variation on the Great Game—rivalry between Great Britain and Germany in Asia. Positing a German plot to incite Muslim attacks on British India, *Greenmantle* drew upon Buchan's experiences in the Turkish city of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in 1910, his work on a history of the ongoing war, and his background in intelligence. Like most of his novels in the genre, it was unquestioningly pro-British in its sympathies.

Buchan wrote well over one hundred books, fiction



One of the earliest works of spy fiction, John Buchan's 1915 novel *The Thirty-nine Steps* is still widely read.

and nonfiction, and ended his years of civil service as governor general of Canada. Most of his works are now forgotten, but his spy and adventure novels, which he wrote for relaxation and dismissed as literature, have remained in print and inspired succeeding generations of mainstream and genre writers alike.

THREE AGENTS

Another British author with experience in espionage work was W. Somerset Maugham, who twice served as a British agent. However, the stories he wrote about his experiences are poles apart from the adventure-oriented works of Buchan. Born in 1874, Maugham was recruited into Military Intelligence, Division 6 in 1915; that unit was Great Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, otherwise known as MI6 or the SIS. Told that the British government would disavow him if he were ever caught, he was sent to Switzerland, where he gathered information from other agents and carried out a number of mundane surveillance assignments over the course of a year. Maugham undertook a second mission in 1917, this time to Russia, where he met with the liberal leader Alexander Kerensky during that nation's revolution in a vain effort to forestall the ascendancy of the communists.

Maugham worked his experiences into *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928). *Ashenden* is an anti-heroic antidote to Buchan's heroes, and Maugham's disillusionment with the dull and morally repugnant aspects of espionage would set the tone of much spy fiction for decades to come. Maugham destroyed several *Ashenden* stories when told that they violated Britain's Official Secrets Act. However, he later discovered to his pleasure that those he published had become required reading for a new generation of agents.

Ashenden appeared during the same year as another significant fictional work about spies, Compton Mackenzie's *Extremes Meet* (1928). Already an established author, Mackenzie had been given charge of counterespionage activities in the Aegean region of Greece, which was then ostensibly neutral, during World War I. At one point, he took control of the Cyclades Islands on behalf of Greece's pro-Allied prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, patrolling the waters in his own yacht. Mackenzie clearly found es-



W. Somerset Maugham. (Library of Congress)

pionage and its machinations farcical, an attitude reflected in *Extremes Meet* and its sequel, *The Three Couriers* (1929). He was later prosecuted under Britain's Official Secrets Act for his frank memoir, *Greek Memories* (1932). However, he retaliated with an even more biting spy novel, *Water on the Brain* (1933).

Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939) tempered the adventurous spirit of Buchan with the grim realities of modern power politics. Household published the book during the year in which World War II began in Europe. It depicts its protagonist as having been preparing to assassinate a European leader clearly modeled on German chancellor Adolf Hitler. With his scheme foiled at the last minute, he escapes and makes his way back to England. However, like Richard Hannay in *The Thirty-nine Steps*, he must elude both foe and friend alike. Shortly after completing the novel, Household joined a unit of the British War Office known as Military Industrial Research and was sent to Romania as part of an operation (betrayed

at the last moment) to destroy that country's oil fields before Hitler could seize them. His later intelligence work in the Middle East in the Field Security Police provided material for many more works, but none quite achieved the fever pitch of *Rogue Male*.

GRAHAM GREENE

Few of Graham Greene's novels deal with actual spies, but many involve international intrigue, and all are set in the shadowy "neutral ground" that James Fenimore Cooper had identified a century earlier. In fact, during Greene's lifetime, his critics took to referring to the settings of his novels, whatever their diverse geographical particulars, as "Greeneland." Greene's first important novel was *Stamboul Train* (1932; also published as *Orient Express*) and was set on the famous train that runs the breadth of Europe. Greene placed a variety of sharply drawn characters on the train, some pursuing private matters and others caught up in the increasingly desperate convolutions of European politics. In addition to publishing novels, Greene was also a film critic, and wrote *Stamboul Train* in the fluid, cinematic style that would later distinguish most of his fiction. His subsequent novels include *The Confidential Agent* (1939), which follows Spanish Loyalist attempts to secure coal in England during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), which involves an innocent man caught up in a spy ring.

One of Greene's last projects of the 1940's was *The Third Man*, which he wrote first as a screenplay in 1949 and subsequently as a short, taut novel (1950). The story follows a naïve American writer seeking an old and, as it turns out, dangerous friend in the ruins of postwar Vienna. Revolution and international intrigue figure in Green's major novels, *The Quiet American* (1955), *The Comedians* (1966), and *The Honorary Consul* (1973). However, he deals most directly with spying in *Our Man in Havana* (1958) and *The Human Factor* (1978).

Set in prerevolutionary Cuba, *Our Man in Havana* features a British expatriate who sells vacuum cleaners and is reluctantly drawn into doing intelligence work for the British government. After making a good impression on the London office with all the information

he has culled from American newsmagazines, he gets carried away and passes off drawings of the inner workings of one of his vacuum cleaners machines as diagrams of a rocket-launching base. The novel is a send-up of the espionage establishment worthy of Mackenzie and was made into a droll comedy film with Alex Guinness as the vacuum cleaner salesman.

The Human Factor, Greene's last substantial novel, mirrors a famous real-life spy scandal. During World War II, Greene had worked under British intelligence officer Harold "Kim" Philby, who was one of several Soviet "moles" exposed during the 1950's and 1960's. Although the events of the novel bear little resemblance to the real Philby affair, its portrayal of British agent Maurice Castle, whose conscience leads him to betray his country, recalls Greene's earlier public defense of Philby. Some critics praised *The Human Factor* as the best spy novel ever written, but others believed that Greene's decision to set aside the manuscript for a decade had cost the work the immediacy that characterized his best writing. Although Green admired John Buchan, his own works, which combine penetrating moral analysis with a flair for describing action and violence, mark a decisive break with the complacency and reflexive patriotism of Buchan's outlook.

ERIC AMBLER

Eric Ambler was another British writer who set out intentionally to turn the spy novel genre on its head. He rejected John Buchan's political outlook, sharing with Graham Greene a sympathy for left-wing causes. Also like Greene, he wrote about actual spying in only a few of his novels, dealing in others with international crime or political intrigue. Although Ambler lacked Greene's dramatic style and gift for characterization, he helped create a new and more realistic form.

Ambler's travels in the Mediterranean and the Balkan region of southeastern Europe during the 1930's provided the raw material for many of his works. His first important novel, *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938), is set in southern France. It explores the predicament of an innocent language teacher accused of taking photographs of important naval installations. The bumbling teacher's only salvation lies in flushing out the real

spy, whose camera he has apparently used by mistake. Ambler's most important pre-World War II novel, and the one usually judged his masterpiece, is *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939; also published as *A Mask for Dimitrios*). This novel's protagonist, Charles Latimer, is an English mystery writer who carries out a kind of experiment by tracking the career of a drowned Turkish archcriminal, Dimitrios Mackropoulos. As Latimer delves into Dimitrios's unsavory past, he comes to realize that the criminal is actually very much alive and, incarnated as an influential financier, dangerous as well.

Ambler's *Journey into Fear* (1940) recalls Greene's *Stamboul Train* in that it follows a group of travelers brought together on a dangerous voyage—in this case aboard a ship bound from Istanbul to the Italian port of Genoa. Ambler's protagonist is a British scientist whose knowledge of Turkey's military plans has made him a target of Nazi assassins. Both Ambler's and Greene's novels, and their titles, play upon the period's preoccupation with travel and borders.

During the 1950's Ambler extended his historical and geographical range, but it was with *The Light of Day* (1962; also published as *Topkapi*) that he reached new audiences. This frequently comic novel follows the misadventures of Arthur Abdel Simpson, a petty thief and pimp of Anglo-Egyptian parentage who is forced to help first a band of international criminals and then the police intent on capturing them. Ambler produced a droll sequel, *Dirty Story: A Further Account of the Life and Adventures of Arthur Abdel Simpson*, in 1967.

Although not Ambler's final novel, *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969; also published as *A Quiet Conspiracy*) marked the return of Charles Latimer of *A Coffin for Dimitrios* and a return to that novel's strengths. The ingeniously unfolding plot concerns the aging heads of two European intelligence agencies who purchase an obscure newsletter in which they begin to publish classified information. Realizing that they are being blackmailed, the governments of the major powers buy out the publishers, who may now retire on their handsome profits. Less fortunate, alas, is Latimer, who this time has pursued the wrong mystery.

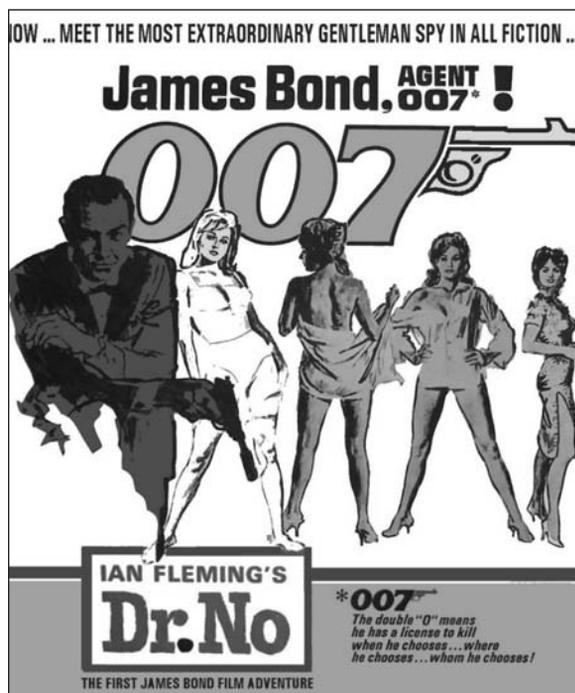
THE JAMES BOND PHENOMENON

The Allied Powers won World War II, but Great Britain emerged from the ordeal in a seriously diminished capacity. It struggled for years to regain its economic health. Moreover, in the wake of the war, Britain's many colonies stepped up their demands for independence. However, a fictional character who made his debut in 1953 reasserted Britain's might and its determination to outwit a host of new and dangerous enemies. That character was James Bond, and his creator was British journalist Ian Fleming. During the war, Fleming had played an important role as personal assistant to Britain's director of naval intelligence, but little of what he learned about the real, day-to-day world of espionage was reflected in his first Bond novel, *Casino Royale* (1953; also published as *You Asked for It*). That novel pits Bond, who is code-named Operative 007, against a renegade agent of the Soviet assassination agency SMERSH. Bond's assistant is the beautiful Ves-

per Lynd, a Russian double agent who becomes Bond's lover before killing herself.

Casino Royale and the dozen or so Bond books that followed it owed much of their violence and frank sexuality to the American hard-boiled detective novel, a form that had also influenced the earlier and now-forgotten spy novels of Peter Cheyney. On the other hand, Fleming's preference for archfiends and opulent, high-society settings recalled the sensational works of Le Queux and Oppenheim.

Fleming was easily the most popular spy novelist of the two decades in which he wrote, but he did little to advance the genre in literary terms and owed most of his popularity to extraliterary factors. A magazine article naming the fifth Bond adventure, *From Russia, with Love* (1957), as one of President John F. Kennedy's favorite books escalated the character's popularity. The 1962 film version of the sixth Bond book, *Dr. No* (1958), cemented that reputation. Afterward, a steady stream of Bond films followed, playing up the character's taste in weaponry, beautiful women, and luxury consumer goods well into the first decade of the twenty-first century. James Bond was always a figure of fantasy, albeit a potent one, as the books' sales and the films' enormous popularity attest. After Fleming's death in 1964, Bond became a franchise, with the character taking on a life of his own in films and new novels by other authors, and his very name becoming a popular cultural touchstone to millions who had never heard of Ian Fleming.



Ian Fleming's James Bond novels enjoyed modest success for nearly a decade before Dr. No became the first of the books to hit the screen in 1962. The success of that film and President John F. Kennedy's praise of the novels then lifted James Bond to a level of popularity that would not be surpassed until J. K. Rowling began publishing her Harry Potter novels during the late 1990's.

JOHN LE CARRÉ

Ian Fleming's final James Bond book appeared in 1966, but the recent publication of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) by John le Carré had by then reintroduced the psychological realism and political skepticism of Graham Greene and Eric Ambler. The spy of le Carré's title is Alec Leamas, a burned-out British agent whose superiors are using him without his knowledge to protect their mole in East German intelligence. The novel concludes with a dramatic scene at the recently erected Berlin Wall, which had become the defining symbol of the Cold War. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was a best seller and a critical success and drew the praise of Greene himself.

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

John le Carré in 1964, the year after he published The Spy Who Came in from the Cold. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Le Carré had served as a British intelligence agent in Germany, and had written two earlier, more conventional, novels featuring cerebral, deceptively mild-mannered agent George Smiley, who also appears briefly in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Le Carré built upon his success with *The Looking-Glass War* (1965), which again includes Smiley, and *A Small Town in Germany* (1968).

The 1963 revelation that Graham Greene's former colleague Kim Philby had been a Soviet "mole" was a stunning blow to both British intelligence and the British public, and it inspired a new wave of spy novels. The most important of these, and arguably one of the best spy novels ever written, is le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974). In this story George Smiley again assumes center stage, searching out an enemy agent deeply embedded in the intelligence service. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* has been likened to a chess game, and the careful pace with which it approaches its revelatory conclusion makes that conclusion all the more satisfying. Le Carré followed this novel with two

equally complex sequels, *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) and *Smiley's People* (1979).

With *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983) le Carré turned to the Arab-Israeli conflict, producing a work that recalls the novels of the nineteenth century in its length and level of detail. The "drummer girl" of the title is Charlie, an actress chosen by Israeli intelligence to pose as the lover of a deceased Palestinian terrorist in hopes of locating the terrorist's more dangerous brother. Le Carré was pointedly evenhanded in his treatment of the conflict, and was attacked by some supporters of Israel as a result. Greene's *A Perfect Spy* (1986) constitutes le Carré's most telling comment on the psychological roots of espionage. Its story of Magnus Pym—whose skill at suppressing his true personality makes him a perfect spy—reflects le Carré's bitter relationship with his own father, who was a notorious confidence man.

In contrast to many other spy novelists, John le Carré responded to the end of the Cold War during the early 1990's with renewed vigor. He dealt with the involvement of retired British agents in the breakaway Russian province of Chechnya in *Our Game* (1995), then turned his attention to the machinations of ruthless private interests in Africa with such works as *The Constant Gardener* (2001) and *The Mission School* (2006).

LEN DEIGHTON

Len Deighton's first novel, *The Ipcress File*, appeared in 1962, a year before le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. For a time Deighton and le Carré were bracketed in the minds of readers and many critics. Although Deighton's initial approach to spy fiction differed greatly from le Carré's, his work had much of the same salutary impact on the genre. *The Ipcress File* introduced an anonymous British intelligence agent who would feature in several subsequent novels and be played by Michael Caine in several films, in which he was given a name, Harry Palmer. Like his creator, the agent is of lower-middle-class origins, and is resentfully aware of the rigid class structure within which he lives and of the equally rigid bureaucratic structure in which he works. In *The Ipcress File* he investigates the disappearances of Brit-

ish biochemists, eventually stumbling onto a bizarre foreign scheme involving mind control.

Deighton's spy novels are often as complex as le Carré's, and in fact one reviewer complained that *The Ipcress File* read as if every other chapter had been left out. Deighton wrote in a gritty, staccato style that suited his character's personality, and augmented several of the novels with seemingly (and sometimes genuinely) factual material, mitigating the often-fantastic nature of his plots. *The Ipcress File*, for example, concludes with several pages of appendices discussing, among other subjects, the proper handling of Smith & Wesson revolvers and a method of altering nerve cells in the brain.

Deighton utilized a variety of settings, but displayed a particular interest in Germany and especially Berlin. His novel *Funeral in Berlin* (1964), which involves the defection of an Eastern Bloc general, is generally regarded as the best of his first series, due in large part to the book's grittily factual treatment of its setting. The city features again in *Berlin Game* (1983), the first of a trilogy involving agent Bernard Samson. This novel and its two sequels, *Mexico Set* (1984) and *London Match* (1985), are more realistic than Deighton's earlier works, and rival le Carré's work at its best. Like the earlier *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, Deighton's trilogy deals with the presence of a mole in British intelligence. However, Deighton's take on the situation contains a surprisingly original twist.

Deighton continued the story of Bernard Samson with two more trilogies, concluding the nine-volume series with *Charity* (1996), but history was to catch up with him. The Berlin Wall, whose construction had begun in 1961, came down in 1989. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War ended. As a result, Deighton was left to tie up the loose ends of a fictional endeavor that no longer seemed relevant.

OTHER BRITISH SPY NOVELS

Many other British writers turned to spying as a theme during the second half of the twentieth century. The subject had become a favorite with readers and filmgoers, and continued to offer opportunities for examining extreme and revealing human situations. The noted poet and novelist Lawrence Durrell, for exam-

ple, revived the spirit of John Buchan in *White Eagles over Serbia* (1957), an adventure—apparently based on true events—involving an attempt to smuggle Yugoslavia's gold reserves out of the country during World War II.

Frederick Forsyth wrote about international intrigue in a plain, unadorned style that reflected his background as a journalist. His first and most famous novel, *The Day of the Jackal* (1971), details an assassin's plot to shoot French president Charles de Gaulle. Forsyth based his characters on actual personages, including a professional assassin and members of a dissident group of French army officers.

In *The Eye of the Needle* (1978; also published as *Storm Island*), Ken Follett produced one of the most popular spy novels of his time. Set during World War II, the book posits a German spy (code-named "Die Nadel") who has unmasked the Allied deception over the location of the invasion of France of 1944 and then struggles to get word of the Allied scheme to German chancellor Adolf Hitler. Follett won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America for this moody, atmospheric novel but was unable to match its success in his many later works.

Literary novelist Barry Unsworth wrote a metaphysical spy novel in *The Idol Hunter* (1980; also published as *Pascali's Island*). Set on a Greek island under Turkish control shortly before World War I, the novel's narrative takes the form of the last report of a melancholy, forgotten informer, Pascali, whose Turkish masters have never acknowledged his carefully written missives. He realizes that it is only a matter of time before his suspicious Greek neighbors turn on him. Ian McEwan's *The Innocent* (1990) is a macabre variation on the spy novel. Based on a real event—a post-World War II British plan to bore a tunnel beneath East Berlin to tap into Soviet communications—the book treats murder and deceit as metaphors for the brutal manner in which East and West, communism and capitalism, had treated their vanquished enemy.

Long after the particular events involved, the treason of Kim Philby and his fellow spies continued to reverberate in the British psyche. In *The Untouchable* (1997) noted Irish novelist John Banville examined the double life of a prominent British art historian un-

masked in his old age as a Soviet agent. The character is based on Anthony Blunt, who had been a member of Philby's circle but whose activities were concealed for years by British authorities in return for his cooperation in their investigation of Philby.

MODERN AMERICAN SPY NOVELS

Twentieth century American novelists had no home-grown tradition of spy fiction on which to draw. Nevertheless, a handful of writers produced works that were critically or commercially important. The first of these was Richard Condon. Like Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*, Condon's most famous novel turns upon an attempted assassination with international dimensions. In *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959) he played upon Cold War fears by creating a decorated Korean War veteran, Sergeant Raymond Shaw, who was brainwashed in Manchuria, China, and programmed to shoot an American presidential nominee. In a grotesque twist, the communist spy controlling Shaw is his own mother.

Most of Charles McCarry's carefully crafted works feature Paul Christopher and his family, and deal with the "Outfit," an intelligence organization modeled on McCarry's former employer, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The first, densely written entry in the series, *The Miernik Dossier* (1973), consists of a series of documents concerning a Polish diplomat who may or may not be a master spy. Another volume, *The Tears of Autumn* (1974), delves into the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Robert Ludlum wrote fast-paced, best-selling novels of espionage and international intrigue as complex as McCarry's, but with little of his contemporary's psychological insight or sense of style. A typical work, *The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977), is built around the premise that Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover did not die of natural causes but was murdered. *The Bourne Identity* (1980), in which an amnesiac fears that he may be a professional assassin, proved to be the first of a series.

Famed American novelist Norman Mailer produced a massive fictionalized history of the CIA in *Harlot's Ghost* (1991). Narrated through the life of agent Harry Hubbard, the novel not only chronicles

the major events of the Cold War but also probes the psychological identity of the agency and, ultimately, of the country that produced it. The "Harlot" of the title is Hugh Tremont Montague, and is based on James Jesus Angleton, a real-life CIA official reduced to paranoia by the realization that his close friend Kim Philby was a Soviet agent.

Robert Littell's first novel, *The Defection of A. J. Lewinter* (1973), dealt with the bona fides of a defecting American ceramics engineer and won a Gold Dagger Award from the Crime Writers of Great Britain. Littell followed it with eleven more books before writing *The Company: A Novel of the CIA* (2002). This lengthy and ambitious work recalls *Harlot's Ghost* but lacks Mailer's stylistic verve and imaginative sweep.

Alan Furst's concerns and approach set him apart from his fellow American spy novelists. *Night Soldiers* (1988) was the first of a sometimes loosely connected series of historical novels set in Europe during the period of World War II. Books in the series recall the works of Graham Greene and Eric Ambler but are written in a muted, poetic style entirely Furst's own. *Night Soldiers* follows a Bulgarian agent of the Soviet Union whose experiences turn him against his masters. *Blood of Victory* (2002) concerns a plot to sabotage Romania's oil fields. *The Foreign Correspondent* (2006) describes an Italian dissident's efforts to publish an antifascist newspaper in prewar Paris. Alan Furst wrote more distinctively about espionage and intrigue than any of his American contemporaries, and his works mark the most important development in the genre since the emergence of John le Carré.

Grove Koger

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THRILLERS

Like the detective novel, the thriller is a special branch of crime fiction. Closely related to mystery stories as well, thrillers portray worlds in which protagonists are pitted against fast-breaking events, convoluted criminal and political conspiracies, spies, and serial killers. Thrillers may be set in almost any period of history, but the genre itself developed out of the eighteenth century gothic novel that was pioneered by writers such as Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Although Walpole's fiction inspired a generation of stories about haunted castles, tormented heroes accused of unspeakable crimes, and other corrupt behavior, the mainspring of the thriller in his novel concerns the commission of a murder that may lead to other homicides and to a complicated course of threatening and baffling events. In subsequent thrillers, the family, the government, or society itself may be at risk if a terrifying series of crimes is not solved and the perpetrators imprisoned or annihilated. The ordinary procedures of detectives will not suffice, and unorthodox—even illegal—actions may be necessary to stem the onslaught of evil. Like Jack Bauer, in the Fox network's popular series *24*, heroes in thrillers may have no choice other than to become renegades and go underground, assume false identities, and engage in conspiracies of their own to restore civilization to normalcy.

Nearly all thrillers have a political dimension, even when they are not specifically about politics or political processes. Thrillers, in other words, view society as a polity, an intricate and fragile network of standards, laws, rules, and codes of individual behavior that can be grievously damaged or destroyed by monomaniacs driven by insane ambition and rage. In modern society, since the American and French Revolutions, the notion that peoples' daily lives are under threat of massive conspiracies fomented by unscrupulous masterminds has taken hold. So, too, has the legend of the loner hero—like the title character of Baroness Orczy's 1905 novel *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, the leader of a small society of aristocrats who banded together to rescue compatriots from the guillotine during

the French Revolution. The Pimpernel's true identity is kept secret and may be known only to the Prince of Wales.

The Scarlet Pimpernel reflects one ideological thread of the thriller, one that is basically conservative and intent on preserving the status quo against the threat of radicals. However, another groundbreaking novel presents a counterclaim, so to speak, revealing a society that is so corrupt that it has subverted the rule of law and instituted a tyranny of the ruling class. This was the danger confronting Great Britain during the French Revolution, argued the philosopher William Godwin, who protested the way in which the British government was imprisoning dissenters and depriving them of due process and other constitutional rights. Godwin dramatized his political protest in a novel that led directly to the modern thriller: *Things as They Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794, also known simply as *Caleb Williams*). Godwin had become alarmed at the suppression of individuals with progressive views and the silencing of those who did not conform to the reigning politics and social codes of society. In Godwin's novel, a crime must be solved to free an innocent man, and in the process of achieving that end, the rottenness of the class structure is revealed. Framed by his employer Falkland for a theft, Caleb Williams cries out to readers:

My life for several years has been a theater of calamity. I have been a mark for the vigilance of tyranny, and I could not escape. My fairest prospects have been blasted. My enemy has shown himself inaccessible to intreaties and untired in persecution. My fame, as well as my happiness, has become his victim.

The incantatory quality of Williams's words brilliantly evokes the obsessive behavior characteristic of the thriller. Both the victim and his nemesis are locked in an unending struggle, but the hero cannot seem to get at the villain, whose untiring malevolence becomes the engine that drives Godwin's novel forward. The reader's rage at such injustice mounts as Falkland literally gets away with murder. In order to

save himself, Williams must perforce become a detective and understand his persecutor's crimes and conspiracies. As in the thrillers that would later elaborate on Godwin's formula, the hunted hero becomes the hunter, having to think like a criminal in order to catch a criminal. Consequently, when Falkland is finally apprehended, Williams cries out, "I have been his murderer."

Although some thrillers remain melodramas in which the hero is clearly a superman who brings the guilty to justice, others such as *Caleb Williams* verge on the tragic. These self-reflexive thrillers question the hero's motivations. Does he become as corrupt as the society or government he opposes? This question is posed by radicals such as Godwin who saw the cause of social justice perverted by the terror that resulted from the French Revolution.

Although novelists such as Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens built on Godwin's concern with the nexus between murders and political conspiracies, thrillers in the English tradition tended more toward "cozy" mysteries, in which apprehension of murderers essentially returned society to its pacific state. Even Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, while sometimes dealing with brutal criminals, hardly has to worry about the kind of widescale corruption and depravity that is portended in Godwin's novel. In this sense, the thriller became domesticated and complacent—a far cry from the gloomy gothic foreboding that Walpole's novel presaged.

THRILLERS AND HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION

During the late 1920's, Dashiell Hammett, a former Pinkerton detective, began writing a series of crime stories for the pulp magazine *Black Mask* that shattered the cozy confines of the mystery genre. After watching Pinkerton agents break up strikes and side with employers, Hammett became revolted by his own participation in this brutal world in which the privileged exploited the powerless. He then devised a form of the detective story that exposed corruption and injustice. His detectives are not aristocrats like Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey, or aloof intellectuals like Sherlock Holmes. Instead, they are rather disaf-

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Dashiell Hammett in 1947. (AP/Wide World Photos)

fectured loners. Hammett's Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930) is an example. Hammett's detectives are more likely to be found in alleys than in posh homes, and their quests to find murderers involve them in a maze of interlocking conspiracies that reflect Hammett's own cynicism about the degraded state of capitalist society.

Hammett set his novel *Red Harvest* (1927-1928) in a corrupt Montana mining town. Donald Willsson, an idealistic young newspaper publisher, launches a campaign to clean up the town, unaware that his own father is at the root of its decay. In this criminal and violent setting, Willsson discovers that as an investigator he cannot begin to understand the network of crime unless he immerses himself in it. Thus begins the modern thriller's questioning of the hero's own bonafides and of how in the quest to save society he comes very close to destroying it.

Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1930) carried his wrecking of the classic detective's reputation further by making his protagonist, Ned Beaumont, a racketeer

who does the dirty work for a local politician. Also a liar and gambler, Beaumont nevertheless has a sense of justice, which prompts him to investigate a murder case because he believes the suspect is innocent. What Beaumont discovers is a cover-up with political implications that range well beyond a single murder. In Hammett's hands, the thriller ultimately emerges as a nuanced and disturbing exploration of clashes between appearance and reality.

Raymond Chandler advanced Hammett's foray into the political thriller in a series of novels featuring Philip Marlowe, a detective. A complex mix of positive and negative attributes, Marlowe is an investigator who falls between the extremes of Donald Willsson and Ned Beaumont. Chandler is famous for his convoluted plots—one of the chief pleasures of the thriller—that often link the corruption of family and society, as in his celebrated novel, *The Big Sleep* (1939).

THRILLERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL NOVEL

W. Somerset Maugham, Eric Ambler, and Graham Greene moved thrillers onto the international stage, linking traditional mystery stories and crime fiction with complex plots involving espionage and political assassination. Their novels—as well as the work of John Buchan and Richard Hannay—resulted from the events of World War I, such as the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Germany's spiriting of V. I. Lenin in a sealed train to Russia, and efforts of Western governments to overthrow Russia's new Bolshevik government both through traditional military means and through a network of spies working in secret to undermine communist governments.

Under the cover of writing as a journalist, W. Somerset Maugham worked for British intelligence during the 1917 Russian Revolution. He is often credited with writing the first modern spy story, *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928). Unlike the heroes of traditional mystery and detective fiction, Maugham's spy often has only a sketchy idea of his mission. He receives orders from above (a British colonel named "R"), and recognizes that he is only a small part of a much larger enterprise. It is no wonder, then, that he is skeptical, aloof, and wary. In Maugham's world of intrigue, the wrong man can be murdered because of faulty intelligence,

and missions fail (as in Ashenden's efforts to prop up the Kerensky government and forestall a Bolshevik takeover). The spy novel in Maugham's hands becomes suffused with mysterious contacts with Russians, Americans, and strange Englishmen. Moreover, the thriller's thwarting of the traditional mystery's tying up of loose ends and the identification of the "real" criminals is firmly established in Maugham's ironic prose.

Eric Ambler heightened the excitement of thrillers. His stories treat spying as very elaborate games, tests of wits, and traps for innocents whose simplistic worldviews are shattered by the machinations of rogue scientists (*The Dark Frontier*, 1936), Fascist and Soviet agents, and the minions of international capitalism (*Background to Danger*, 1937; *Epitaph for a Spy*, 1937; *Cause for Alarm*, 1938). The fact that Ambler was consciously critiquing the genre of the thriller is apparent in his choice of heroes who either read mystery stories or write them. For example, Charles Latimer in *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939) writes standard-issue mysteries and becomes involved in a plot involving international finance and a disturbing denouement that refutes the very conventions of the mystery story that Latimer continues to employ in his pedestrian fiction.

Ambler's later novels, such as *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969), become more cynical as he probes the Cold War period, drawing many of the same conclusions that John le Carré was then beginning to dramatize: Neither side can find the higher moral ground as rival intelligence services employ the same dirty tactics against each other. The business of spying—its development as a bureaucracy akin to other commercial enterprises—takes the thriller into a world of great anxiety, one in which issues of right and wrong are not easily resolved.

Like Maugham, Graham Greene had worked as a British intelligence officer. During World War II, Greene was in the foreign office and saw firsthand the reports of spies. Indeed, he even befriended one of the most famous British double agents, Kim Philby, who defected to the Soviet Union. Like Maugham's heroes, Greene's own heroes become involved in politics. In his early thriller *A Gun for Sale* (1936; also known as *This Gun for Hire*), a hired killer learns that his victim is a politician associated with progressive ideas and

that he has been an unwitting pawn in a plan to start a war. His own profits pall in comparison to what his employers expect to gain in the military buildup. Greene was a socialist; like Godwin, he used thrillers to score political points. In his fiction, those in power are generally seen as agents of capitalism, a creed appealing to human greed.

Many of Greene's killers are unattractive types who are nevertheless viewed sympathetically as victims of violent families; they are societal outcasts whose perverse behavior is portrayed not so much as perversion but as the outcome of a maladjusted society. This is perhaps why Greene's own Roman Catholicism becomes so important an ingredient in his thrillers. Religion at least points a way out of the human dilemma. Society cannot heal itself on its own any more than individuals can rely solely on themselves for redemption. Killers in this context are lost souls.

In books such as *Brighton Rock* (1938), *Our Man in Havana* (1958), and *The Honorary Consul* (1973), Greene brought to the thriller an elegant style, a probing and ironic sense of amusement that was greatly influenced by Joseph Conrad's novels about terrorists, *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1910). Although the two writers presented rather pessimistic assessments of the human condition, the human comedy of mixed motivations and compromised ideals energizes their prose.

COLD WAR THRILLERS

The Allied victory over Germany and Japan in 1945 was the result of a so-called "good war" that saw the Western powers collaborating with the Soviet Union in a triumph over fascism. Almost immediately afterward, however, there was a new era of suspicion, espionage, and high tensions, and this, in turn, inaugurated a new era in thriller writing. By the late 1940's, China and most of the Central and Eastern Europe nations had communist governments, and American and British thriller writers began exploiting the public's concern about an endangered "free world." Readers were concerned about questions such as whether the Soviet Union was intent on world domination. In Greece, Korea, and Vietnam, the communists seemed to be on the march. Were they all part of the same world conspir-

acy? What about the British and American intelligentsia, which often seemed to excuse Soviet behavior, suggesting that the Soviet arms buildup was a response to America's possession of a huge nuclear arsenal and military bases abroad. Westerners wonder how the Soviet Union was able to develop its own atomic bombs so quickly. In 1952, two Americans, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, were executed for conspiring to pass atomic bomb secrets to the Soviet Union. At the same time, there were rampant charges that other spies had infiltrated the U.S. government. Alger Hiss, who had been a highly placed official in Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, went to prison for conspiracy to commit espionage. All these and other developments made millions of Americans gravely concerned about the security of their nation and of their own families. Similar developments in Great Britain caused the British people to be equally concerned about the extent to which communists had compromised their government's intelligence services.

Ian Fleming exploited Cold War tensions in a series of cloak-and-dagger thrillers featuring one of the most famous series characters in the history of the thriller: James Bond. Code-named Agent 007, Bond is a superhero who is virtually always in danger. He is forever a romantic object, an escape artist blessed as well with good fortune. At the same, he is also obviously a fantasy figure—but one who appeals not only to a huge worldwide audience but also to real-life spies and political leaders, including Allen Dulles, the first head of the Central Intelligence Agency, and President John F. Kennedy.

Fleming himself, who died in 1964, before his books reached the full extent of their fame, never made great claims for his fiction. He said that he simply found his work "fun." However, his idea of fun took the form of Cold War allegory, a melodrama in which Bond represents the free world's indomitable individualistic spirit and perhaps, as well, a nostalgia for days when Rule Britannia was a fact, rather than a fiction of Fleming's invention.

John le Carré, the successor to Maugham and Greene, also worked for British intelligence. He brought the thriller back to solid ground, and that seems to be one reason why his work presents a much more

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John le Carré in 1996. (AP/Wide World Photos)

sober and realistic view of spying than Fleming's adventure stories. Le Carré's series hero, George Smiley, is middle-aged, overweight, a brooder, and a cuckold. Although he has become an intelligence agent in order to support the forces of right, he often has doubts about his missions and is skeptical about the measures his own side uses against the Soviets and their collaborators. He wonders if one can fight evil without also becoming implicated in the same evil. This age-old question makes le Carré's thrillers much more complex than those of Fleming. Indeed, le Carré's nuanced narratives have convinced many critics that his work transcends the formulas of the thriller and should be regarded simply as mainstream literature in the same league with that of other great contemporary writers. However, other critics have rated his achievement a little lower, suggesting that he has merely broadened the formula boundaries of the genre.

The fact that le Carré's novels are character-driven makes them stand out against the tightly plotted sus-

pense stories of writers such as Robert Ludlum, in which conflicts between good and evil may be complex and yet, in the end, be resolved in favor of the right (morally justified) side. In 1982, le Carré published an omnibus edition of his Smiley novels under the title *The Quest for Karla*. Karla is Smiley's opposite number in the Soviet intelligence agency. The overriding theme in these novels concerns the existence of a "mole"—that is, a double agent, seemingly on Smiley's side but in fact in Karla's employ. The fact that Smiley is not sure of the loyalty of his own people is almost more important than the question of whether a mole actually exists, as the mole calls into question the integrity of the Cold War campaign. Le Carré almost certainly had in mind the perfidy of Kim Philby, his former real-life intelligence colleague who defected to the Soviet Union. However, le Carré's fictional equivalent of Philby, Bill Haydon, is not demonized as he would be in a Fleming novel. A man such as Haydon can exist only because of the corruption that pervades both sides of the Cold War. In other words, Haydon is merely a manifestation of a compromised intelligence agency. Le Carré is exposing the West's weakness, not touting its strength as Ian Fleming would.

Like Maugham, to whom le Carré pays tribute as an influence on his work, le Carré is exploring the nature of institutions and their tendency to wear down individuals like Smiley, who is, nevertheless, dogged in his pursuit of the truth, no matter how bitter and disillusioning it may be. That is the saving grace of le Carré's thrillers: Smiley's unblinking pursuit of reality. Moreover, even when Smiley finally discovers the truth, it is rarely a moment of triumph for him. He wonders what his victory is. Le Carré's world is far too ambiguous to merit the kind of satisfying resolutions offered in conventional thrillers.

An American counterpart to le Carré is Charles McCarry, a former Central Intelligence Agency operative whose series hero, Paul Christopher, returns the thriller genre to the superagent—but with a twist. Christopher seems too good to be true; he is handsome, honest, and so nonviolent that he refuses to carry a gun. Critics have faulted McCarry for idealizing his hero, but McCarry's world of intelligence agents and political operatives is no less corrupt and

ambiguous than le Carré's. Indeed, it can be argued that McCarry's vision is even grimmer than his English counterpart's, and that without Christopher's rock-solid character, the truth of this debauched and malevolent world would never emerge. In McCarry's novels, the CIA—which is known as the Outfit—has become so mired in duplicity that it can no longer recognize an innocent man and thus assumes that his ingenuous pleas for help are, in fact, a ploy aimed at entrapping agents.

In McCarry's first novel, *The Miernik Dossier* (1973), Paul Christopher is assigned to investigate the perplexing and provocative behavior of a Polish diplomat, who the CIA refuses to believe is as good as his word. In the end, Christopher can account for, and excuse, every one of Miernik's seemingly suspicious actions; however, his report is rejected. The result is a horrifying death for Miernik. To McCarry, it is not merely that both sides of the Cold War have lost their moral compass; the problem is much worse: how to hold onto a moral compass when *everyone*, including Christopher at times, is a suspect. His own Outfit has trouble crediting his conclusions, even though he is widely recognized as a man of integrity.

As with Smiley, Christopher's ultimate loyalty is to the truth. Unlike Smiley, however, he is not an organization man. In *The Tears of Autumn* (1974), Christopher becomes convinced that he has pieced together the truth behind President John F. Kennedy's assassination. However, in order to prove he is right, Christopher feels he must quit the Outfit. Only by acting independently—a traditional hallmark of thriller heroes—can he discover what really happened.

Again, as with Smiley, Christopher's private life is a torment. Although women find him attractive, his attempts at marriage fail because he cannot confide in a wife. His life is built on secrets and a commitment to a vision of a just world that renders him unfit for any sort of conventional family life. McCarry makes this aspect entirely convincing by having Christopher be the son of an intelligence agent who was murdered in Berlin and a mother who was abducted by Nazis and disappeared in a Soviet prison. Christopher is therefore moored in a tragic family history that is inextricably tied to the fate of Western civilization.

Close in spirit to McCarry is Alan Furst, another American writer who brings to the thriller a similar brooding over the nexus between the individual and history. Furst's *The Polish Officer* is an example. The story is set in World War II Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, and Russia; the mission of Polish captain Alexander de Milja is to spirit the gold reserves out of his Nazi-occupied homeland. No superhero, de Milja realizes he may well fail, but his chameleon-like talent for assuming different identities facilitates his work. He wearies of his task yet perseveres. De Milja was trained as a cartographer and linguist, and his travels provide a panoramic perspective, not only on the war but also on the degraded, occupied civilian populations. Like le Carré and McCarry at their best, Furst is a master of the telling historical detail and understated prose that heightens the sense of adventure and suspense.

LEGAL THRILLERS

Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason is the most famous lawyer or detective in the history of thrillers that create suspense through courtroom dramas. Gardner favored plot twists, fast-paced action, and intriguing characters. Although he produced well over 150 novels—as many as three in a year—the consistency of his performance is phenomenal. His work sustained the genre because he kept inventing new situations that called on the suave Mason to finesse potentially losing cases and solve crimes with an agile legal mind. Gardner did not, however, attempt to examine the legal process itself, to make it an integral part of his action. However, no other writer did so either, until judge John D. Voelker, under the pen name Robert Travers, published *Anatomy of a Murder* in 1958. As Patrick Anderson notes in *The Triumph of the Thriller* “a novel-writing judge” was a “literary curiosity . . . as unlikely as a dancing pig.”

In 1987, Scott Turow forever changed the nature of legal thrillers with his publication of *Presumed Innocent*. A lawyer himself, Turow rejected the Erle Stanley Gardner formula; he wanted to make legal procedures themselves a major theme. He also wanted to make his lawyers fallible, in contrast to the unfailingly triumphant Perry Mason and the heroic Atticus Finch in

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Turow's first legal thriller upended the genre with a vengeance, making his protagonist, Rusty Sabich, a prosecutor who is accused of murdering his mistress. The law itself becomes a fascinating subject in Turow's highly literary work. Eschewing the genre convention of having a series hero, Turow instead dramatizes the legal system in which his characters struggle to survive.

John Grisham built on and simplified Turow's breakthrough novels, returning legal thrillers to their roots in melodrama, ensuring that readers root for the lawyers and other protagonists confronting seemingly insurmountable odds. In *The Pelican Brief* (1993), for example, a beautiful young law student pits herself against a conspiracy that results in the murders of two U.S. Supreme Court justices, and an undaunted investigative reporter assists her. Grisham's other novels, such as *The Firm* (1991), in which a young lawyer discovers that his colleagues are in fact working for the mob, play to popular interest in organized crime and suspicions about the integrity of lawyers and others in high places.

Closer in spirit to Turow's nuanced novels are those of John Lescroart, who writes about a team of series characters. Lescroart's Dismas Hardy is a former cop who became a prosecutor and then a defense lawyer; Abe Glitsky is a part African American, part Jewish homicide detective. Although such pairings have been a staple of the detective/mystery/thriller genre, Lescroart transcends genre formulas by making his pair representative of the law-and-order apparatus. Although friends, Hardy and Glitsky are often in conflict, with the former using every legal maneuver he can to defend his clients, while Glitsky takes advantage of every loophole in the law to circumvent Hardy's exculpatory efforts on behalf of his clients.

The trajectory of Lescroart's novels, however, goes well beyond the law—as in the case of *The Oath* (2003), a superb exploration of modern medicine, especially the world of hospitals, in which pressures to cut costs put doctors and nurses at odds with administrators and drug companies. As Lescroart notes in the acknowledgments to his novels, his work is based on formidable research, which is why a critic such as Patrick Anderson calls his work “just as entertaining and a lot more real” than Grisham's.

TOM CLANCY'S TECHNO-THRILLERS

In the writing of thrillers, Tom Clancy seems to be in a class of his own. His first novel, *The Hunt for Red October* (1985), is a gripping tale about the search for a runaway Soviet submarine with advanced technology that is headed toward the United States. Clancy, who had never been aboard a submarine, nevertheless brought the environs of his subject to life with meticulous research and gripping detail. His work is about the romance of equipment, a material world that defines the parameters of his series hero's action. Jack Ryan, a favorite character of President Ronald Reagan, is the all-American hero, the fearless patriot appealing to one of the oldest impulses in the thriller genre: to project into the hero the belief that unwavering individualism can conquer the enemy, regardless of whether the hero's nemesis is a person, corporation, government, or military organization.

Clancy is a writer best read for his arsenal of weaponry. His work is not merely patriotic, it is militaristic in the sense that it imagines a world that can only be controlled through force of arms. The kind of deft, nuanced view of the Cold War present in other thriller writers such as le Carré and McCarry has no place in Clancy's overscale novels. Not surprisingly, critics have noted that Clancy pays little attention to writing style. Nevertheless, Clancy's work is unique, not only among his contemporaries but also within the history of the genre. His grasp of technology and what it portends has usually been the province of science fiction writers. However, Clancy's fascination with gadgets recalls Ian Fleming's James Bond spy novels and especially their film adaptations.

FEMINIST THRILLERS

Patricia Highsmith, P. D. James, Sue Grafton, Sara Paretsky, Patricia Cornwell, Lia Matera—to name just a few of the many superb writers of thrillers who happen to be women—have crossed genre boundaries by creating series characters who are lawyers, detectives, coroners, and career criminals. It is probably misleading to identify them as a separate group except insofar as women and women's issues enter into their work.

Highsmith began writing during the late 1940's, attaining her first success with the riveting *Strangers on a*

Train (1949), which Alfred Hitchcock transformed into a memorable film. Two strangers who meet on a train agree to murder each other's intended victim. Highsmith's focus in her books is on how such crimes come about, the psyches of the murderers—not bringing murderers to justice or the restoration of conventional morality. Indeed, her most famous series character, Tom Ripley, gets away with murder again and again. Highsmith was a lesbian and spent much of her life in Europe. Her sense of alienation from American society led to her creation of amoral characters who contravene the dictates of what is considered normal behavior. She explored the lesbian psyche only once, in *The Price of Salt* (1952), but her subversion of complacent straight society is evident throughout her novels.

One of the towering figures in the mystery genre, P. D. James has published many novels in her Inspector Adam Dalgliesh series that evince no particular feminist consciousness. On the other hand, another series detective, Cordelia Gray, becomes Dalgliesh's friendly rival. In *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972), for example, Gray is introduced as a young woman who unexpectedly inherits a detective agency. However, her sexuality is hardly the issue; rather it is her optimistic nature that tempers Dalgliesh's inclination to brood that is James's concern. However attractive this pairing may be, James has resisted romanticizing the relationship between her two series characters.

Sue Grafton is one of the first women writers of thrillers to create a series character. Her Kinsey Millhone can be as astringent and hard-boiled as her male counterparts. However, in Grafton's novels, Kinsey's inner life is exposed. Like her creator, she has to deal with a former husband and other family troubles. A scarred but undaunted detective, Kinsey is competent and yet vulnerable. Here, for example, is how she sizes up her second former husband: "Daniel Wade is quite possibly the most beautiful man I've ever seen—a bad sign." Kinsey acknowledges and deals with her weak points and handles complicated psychological problems that most male private detectives are not called on to confront.

Sara Paretsky is perhaps the most outspokenly feminist among modern thriller writers. She began writing

thrillers as a deliberate attack on the genre's conventions, especially the treatment of women. Her detective V. I. Warshawski comes from a blue-collar background and defers to no one. Some of Paretsky's novels are overtly political. For example, *Ghost Country* (1998) deals with homeless women in Chicago; *Blacklist* combines two plot elements: McCarthyism during the 1950's and abuses of the Patriot Act after the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001.

Patricia Cornwell and Lia Matera have both created professionals. Cornwell's medical examiner, Kate Scarpetta, and Matera's lawyer, Willa Jansson, are bold but also romantic figures, deeply involved with the men who help them solve crimes. They are also acutely sensitive to their own needs to maintain dignity and self-respect. Like Tom Clancy, Cornwell loves to explain the technical aspects of the jobs her series characters perform. Both Scarpetta and Jansson also become the targets of the criminals they are investigating.

HORROR NOVELS AND THRILLERS

With his Hannibal Lecter series, Thomas Harris raised thrillers to a new level of gruesome violence. Lecter is not only a cannibal and a dangerous serial killer but also a fiendishly enticing interlocutor who snares the imagination of neophyte agent Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). He is at once an intellectual, a charmer, and a provocateur who has a strange hold over Starling—a sadomasochistic pull that Starling cannot seem to escape. Harris's sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal* (1999) is even more violent and more reliant on the staples of horror fiction—such as the demon-like character who keeps surfacing somehow, no matter how many times he has been apprehended and incarcerated. Nevertheless, Harris's explorations of the psychosexual components of his good and evil characters puts him in a class of his own.

THRILLERS AS LITERATURE

After lavishing praise on Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, literary critics have debated whether certain writers of thrillers deserve the same

attention as mainstream writers of literature. They ask whether a writer such as Hammett merits a place beside Ernest Hemingway. The styles of both these authors are similar: clipped and understated with sharp-edged dialogue and sentences linked together by simple conjunctions such as “and” and “but.” Writing in the Hammett tradition, Chandler superbly evokes the urban ambiance of cities such as Los Angeles. These writers are read, in other words, for their literary value.

In *The Triumph of the Thriller*, Patrick Anderson argues that the thriller has emerged from the ghetto of genre fiction and dominates best-seller lists because it is on a par with good mainstream literature. He argues that writers such as Charles McCarry, Scott Turow, Alan Furst, and John Lescroart should be considered for major mainstream literary awards. Other writers whom he includes in this literary category are George Pelacanos, Michael Connelly, Michael Gruber, James Crumley, and Peter Abrahams.

For some time other thriller writers such as P. D. James and John le Carré have been singled out as breaking out of the ranks of formula fiction. However, it seems that in later generations of thriller writers, a wider array of fiction has been produced that deserves to be called literary and that is, at the very least, fundamentally changing the nature of thrillers both as a popular category of fiction and as works of art.

Carl Rollyson

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TRUE-CRIME STORIES

Accounts of real-life crimes have appeared in literature throughout recorded history. Some of the oldest such accounts can be found in early scriptural writings that many people regard as real history. Both the Torah and the Bible tell the stories of Cain's murder of his brother Abel by his brother Cain and of the kidnapping and sale of Joseph by his brothers. The births of both Moses and Jesus were followed by the murders of infants. Indeed, the pivotal event of the Christian faith is told in the story of a political crime, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Some of the tragedies and histories of William Shakespeare depict politically motivated crimes such, as the assassination of Julius Caesar and the crimes committed by the Scottish king Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible* dramatizes the stories of the late seventeenth century Salem witch trials, which were documented in such works as Cotton Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693).

Modern true-crime stories, however, trace their origins to several developments in the nineteenth century, particularly the establishment of police forces in response to growing urban crime problems, the emergence of the novel as a dominant literary form, the development of the social sciences—especially psychology—and the influence on literature of the philosophy called determinism. The modern true-crime novel, a descendant of the tradition of American literary naturalism, reached its apex in 1966 with the publication of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and has remained among the most popular subgenres of literature.

TRUE CRIME VS. MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

The primary literary subgenres about crime are the true-crime story and the mystery or detective story. Although both depict violent crime and may feature similar characters, true-crime stories and novels differ substantially from mystery and detective fiction. Apart from the factual content of true-crime stories, there is a fundamental difference in point of view. In mystery and detective fiction, protagonists are usually detec-

tives, police officers, or amateur sleuths who attempt to solve crimes or masteries. Readers learn of events as the main characters do. In true-crime stories, the focus is usually on the criminals themselves, and the writers are primarily interested in explaining what caused the criminals to commit their violent acts.

In true-crime novels, writers often identify the suspects or perpetrators early and devote most of their books' space to exploring the biological, psychological, and sociological circumstances that appear to have influenced the characters' actions. In mystery and detective novels, writers generally withhold the culprits' identities from both investigators and readers until the climaxes of their stories. In contrast, the climaxes of true-crime stories are typically the perpetrators' conviction, sentencing, or executions. The climaxes and denouements of the two forms also differ in tone. Mystery and detective stories generally end with the feeling that the final pieces of puzzles are in place. Details of suspects' trials and punishment may be handled in a few paragraphs, and the tone may be moralistic. In contrast, conclusions of true-crime stories are likelier to be philosophical, focusing on abstractions such as whether or not justice has been served. If the tone of the true-crime denouement is moralistic at all, it may offer an indictment of society itself, rather than individuals.

The writing style of mystery and detective novels tends to be melodramatic, relying on suspense as a primary plot device. By contrast, the style of true-crime stories tends to be a more detached and objective style of journalism. True-crime writers generally primarily use reporting methods, and many have, in fact, worked as journalists.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The heart of a crime story is the riddle of what happened and why. The riddle motif was common even in ancient times, as in the riddle of King Solomon in the Old Testament and the riddle of the sphinx in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex* (c. 426 B.C.E.). The plot of a crime story develops as a revelation of various clues to the riddle's solution, which is revealed at the end. In the

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Like other subgenres of crime writing, true-crime stories inspired the creation of many pulp magazines that were popular during the 1940's and 1950's.

nineteenth century, as the Industrial Revolution drove many people from rural to urban areas in search of manufacturing jobs, and urban crime consequently rose, professional police forces were developed to keep order. In 1841, the American writer Edgar Allan Poe published “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” generally acknowledged as the first modern detective story. During the 1880’s, Arthur Conan Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes, the prototype of the modern fictional sleuth. The popularity of the type was later extended by such practitioners as Wilkie Collins, G. K. Chesterton, and Agatha Christie in the British Isles. By the 1930’s, the genre experienced a “Golden Age” among American writers such as Mickey Spillane, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald.

True-crime story form developed more than fifty years after Poe’s first detective story. However, some novels before the twentieth century contain elements

of real crimes. For example, English novelist George Eliot used the 1801 case of Mary Voce, who poisoned her own infant daughter and confessed on the way to the gallows, for her character Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede* (1859). Victorian novelist Charles Dickens wrote few novels without crime and criminals, and several of his books, including *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838) and *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), depict murders. His historical novel *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) is probably his most direct examination of violence, including mob violence; in the character of Dennis the Hangman, Dickens appears to indict capital punishment as demeaning those who enact it. Dickens’s critique of society and social institutions, particularly prisons and the legal system, is similar to the attitude of major naturalistic novelists, whose works would not appear for nearly a half-century. Dickens’s protégé Wilkie Collins incorporated into his 1868 novel *The Moonstone* details from two 1860’s murder cases reported in British newspapers. In one case, twenty-one-year-old Constance Kent was suspected of slitting the throat of her four-year-old half brother and hiding his body in an outdoor privy. Kent confessed and served nearly twenty years in prison before being released.

TRUE CRIME AND LITERARY NATURALISM

During the 1890’s, naturalism started becoming a central influence on American literature, which was influenced by French writers such as Émile Zola. Literary naturalism is the application to literature of the principles of scientific determinism—the notion that every event has a cause. At the end of the twentieth century, when philosophical determinism was influenced by Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), a strict naturalist would have argued that humans are, in essence, animals, so all human behavior is determined by natural causes. The influence of naturalism in literature broadens the theory to include sociological, economic, and psychological factors that influence human action. In Stephen Crane’s 1893 novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, for example, the main character’s death is attributed to a variety of circumstances, including her parents’ alcoholism, her family’s poverty, and her mother’s rigid Roman Catholicism.

Authors interested in the effect on human behavior of biological and environmental influences began to turn their attention to the worst instances of human behavior—violent crime. At the same time, many early naturalists apprenticed as writers in newsrooms, where they learned the techniques of journalism and had access to accounts of sensational crimes. This combination of circumstances helped to produce novels such as Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) and Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), both modeled on actual cases.

THEODORE DREISER'S GROUNDBREAKING NOVEL

Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* is the most significant true-crime novel prior to Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Many critics regard its publication as the apex of naturalism in American literature because it is such a clear and mature illustration of the naturalistic perspective. Dreiser was born into a family so destitute that he was probably lucky to survive childhood, and he became particularly interested in how young men of little means achieve any success. During his apprenticeship as a young newspaper reporter, Dreiser encountered numerous cases following this pattern: A young man in an entry-level clerical job becomes involved with a young woman, sees his advancement threatened by the relationship (particularly by an out-of-wedlock pregnancy), and kills the woman, hoping thereby to resolve his predicament. Dreiser was so interested in sensational violent crimes that he kept a file of clippings, and he and other young reporters formed an informal supper club to discuss such cases. A similar group that met in Chicago during the 1890's was named the Whitechapel Club, after the area in London in which Jack the Ripper had murdered prostitutes during the 1880's.

The factual basis behind *An American Tragedy* is well known. In 1905, young Chester Gillette was boating on an upstate New York lake with his pregnant girlfriend, Grace Brown, who fell, or was pushed, out of the boat and disappeared. Gillette was convicted of murder and executed in 1908. Before Dreiser wrote *An American Tragedy*, he visited the area where Gillette and Brown had lived, the spot where Brown had disappeared, and Auburn Penitentiary, where Gillette had died. His novel changes the characters' names, but his

protagonist, Clyde Griffiths, gets the idea for eliminating Roberta Alden from newspaper accounts of a similar crime. The published novel reads almost as much like the work of a reporter as that of a novelist, as accuracy appears to have been among Dreiser's primary aims.

In his depiction of the fictional Roberta Alden's drowning, Dreiser perfectly illustrates the naturalistic view of the murderer as a victim of circumstances and effects. Clyde Griffiths, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's title character in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), is motivated by the glittering lights of social advancement, not by in-born depravity. His is a crime of personal convenience, rather than malice. In fact, he causes Alden's death without touching her. Sitting in the rowboat, contemplating how to throw Alden from the boat, Griffiths is paralyzed by indecision. As Alden moves toward him, he shifts to avoid her, accidentally striking her with his camera and causing her to lose her balance and capsize the boat. He then takes advantage of the accident by ignoring Alden's pleas for help and swimming to shore. Thus, in Dreiser's novel, Alden is killed by negligence rather than intent. It is a perfect illustration of Dreiser's belief that humans lack free will or, at best, can exercise it only in an environment severely constrained by circumstances. This depiction of a killer who is a victim of his environment, and perhaps even of himself, is central to the naturalistic true-crime novel, and most subsequent writers of true-crime novels with literary qualities reflect this attitude to some degree.

Donald Pizer, the leading scholar on American literary naturalism, identifies Dreiser's novel as the beginning of a tradition of American social protest novels, largely fictional narratives reflecting how humans are limited by socioeconomic circumstances and indicting society for lack of parity. The best-known example of this tradition is John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Earlier naturalists had been primarily influenced by biological determinists such as Darwin. In *McTeague*, for example, Frank Norris portrays McTeague's violent acts as the manifestation of his more brutal, animalistic tendencies. However, later writers were generally affected more by the social, economic, and psychological theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD, 1925-1965

Novels about crime combining naturalistic ingredients continued to be written from 1925 to 1965. Most examples fall within the literary mainstream and are generally classified as fiction, even though they are typically based on actual murder cases. Examples include William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932), James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), and Meyer Levin's *Compulsion* (1956).

Faulkner's novel was influenced by a murder, castration, and lynching that occurred near the author's native Oxford, Mississippi, in 1908. It may also have been influenced by the 1919 murder of an Oxford woman by her husband. Cain's novel was inspired by a case in which the proprietor of a gas station that Cain frequented in California killed her husband. Cain also said that he developed his interest in the psychodynamics of lovers involved in murders together from

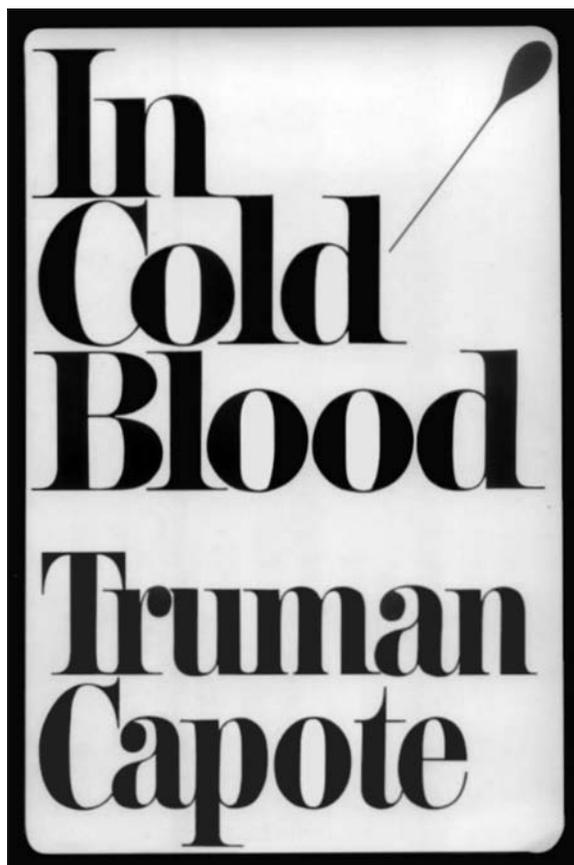
the Ruth Snyder/Judd Gray case in New York in 1927. Cain's novel is significantly shorter than earlier novels of the same type, and its economical journalistic style makes his book an important precursor of true-crime novels such as Capote's.

In the essay "How Bigger Was Born," Richard Wright describes how he sketched out his "native son," Bigger Thomas, and then found him in Chicago newspaper accounts of a 1938 murder case. In a 1973 essay, Wright's friend Margaret Walker Alexander described how Wright plotted his novel by covering his apartment floor with newspaper clippings. Levin's *Compulsion* is a fictionalized account of the notorious Leopold-Loeb murder case, also in Chicago, of 1924. In that case, two rich university students who fancied themselves above the law killed the cousin of one of them, apparently to see whether they could outsmart authorities (they did not). Cain and Levin, writing about homicides perpetrated by two people, are interested in the psychological phenomenon the French call *folie à deux* (madness of two), or how two people influence each other to commit acts that neither is likely to commit alone. In this respect, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Compulsion* are important predecessors of *In Cold Blood*.

IN COLD BLOOD AND NEW JOURNALISM

In November 1959, when Truman Capote read a *New York Times* story about the Kansas murder of a low-level Eisenhower administration official, Herbert Clutter, and his wife, daughter, and son, he knew he had found the ideal subject for the "nonfiction novel" he had planned to write for nearly ten years. As Capote saw it, members of a picture-perfect family in the American heartland had been killed in their own home in the middle of the night. There were no suspects and no theories.

The saga of Capote's journey to Kansas with his childhood friend Harper Lee, the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), in search of his story is now famous and was the subject of two feature films, *Capote*, in 2005, and *Infamous*, in 2006. Capote and Lee initially spent about three months in Kansas, and Capote worked on the book for nearly five years before the two men eventually convicted of the murders, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith, were executed. Their deaths



gave Capote the ending he had awaited since the killers' April, 1960, convictions.

Capote's claims of having created a new literary form were challenged by contemporary writers, most prominently by Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer, who charged that Capote's use of a real homicide case represented a lack of imagination. In Mailer's case, this was ironic, as he would win a Pulitzer prize for his own true-crime book fifteen years later. Despite the book's critics, *In Cold Blood* is widely regarded as the prototype of the true-crime novel and a classic American novel. In a *New York Review of Books* review, critic F. W. Dupee called the book "the best documentary account of an American crime ever written." After its appearance, almost every homicide case that garnered major media attention attracted a Capote imitator.

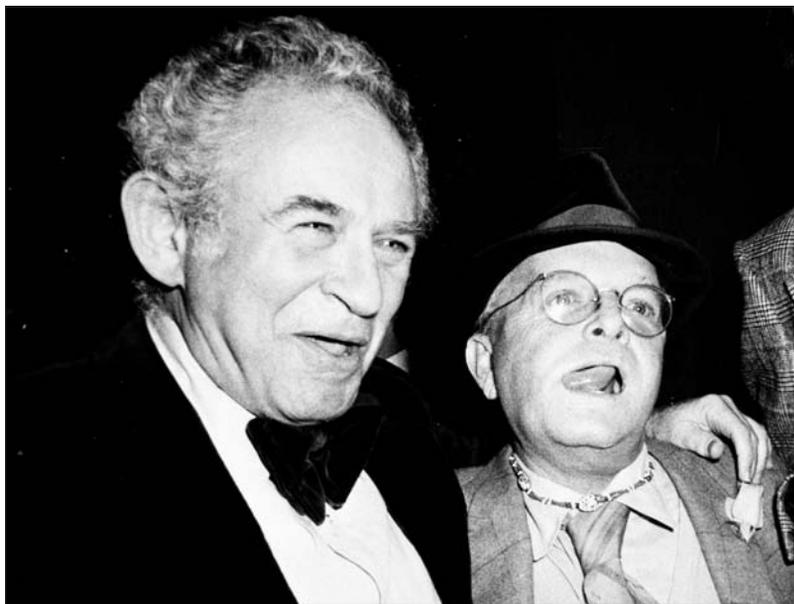
Capote's desire to write about an actual event using the techniques of fiction illustrates a development called the "New Journalism," a phrase generally attributed to writer Tom Wolfe. New Journalists used literary strategies such as plotting, characterization, and symbolism to write about actual events. During the 1960's, these writers found themselves living in a chaotic society in which events such as assassinations and

the Vietnam War seemed to defy explanation. Perhaps paradoxically, they attempted to bring some order to events by imposing meaning on them, at the same time that they valued the detached methods of journalism.

Examples of New Journalism are not limited to crime writing. Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968) is about 1960's drug culture and his *The Right Stuff* (1979) is about the early U.S. astronauts. Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* (1968) recounts Mailer's participation in a 1967 anti-Vietnam War protest at the Pentagon. John Hersey's *The Algiers Motel Incident* (1968) concerns a shooting during riots in Detroit in 1967. The reportorial style of much nonfiction written during the 1960's and 1970's profoundly affected true-crime writers and influenced the journalistic aspect of the modern true-crime novel.

The true-crime subgenre acquired new status in 1980, when Norman Mailer was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Executioner's Song* (1979), the story of Gary Gilmore, the first man executed in the United States after a long, court-ordered moratorium on the death penalty during the 1970's. The challenge to booksellers and award committees in classifying literary nonfiction is evident in the Pulitzer committee's awarding Mailer the prize for fiction, even though a

prize for nonfiction existed. This may reveal the committee's hesitation to accept the novelist's claims for factuality. *The Executioner's Song* also represented a major shift in the philosophical underpinnings of the true-crime novel to a sort of postmodern position about the possibility of accuracy. Whereas Capote was determined to arrive at answers to the questions the Clutter murders raised and was dogmatic in insisting that he had delivered those answers, Mailer realized that such questions sometimes had to remain unanswered, even after he examined reams of evidence. In an interview with William F. Buckley, Jr., after the



Norman Mailer (left) and Truman Capote at a publishing house's party in 1978. (AP/Wide World Photos)

novel's publication, Mailer acknowledged his own authorial limitations, admitting that despite months of research, he did not feel he had achieved definitive answers to his questions about Gary Gilmore's life and crimes. In fact, Mailer admitted, some of those who had known Gilmore might be able to produce better answers than the novelist.

AFTER CAPOTE AND MAILER

After around 1980, books about violent crimes have tended to vary more in approach and style than before *In Cold Blood*. The subgenre also grew to include television and film adaptations of prominent true-crime books, and it developed an Internet presence. Cable and satellite television have contributed to this development; some companies offer channels specifically geared to crime and or true stories. Some true-crime stories have been around long enough to spawn more than a single film adaptation. For example, a black-and-white studio version of *In Cold Blood* appeared in 1967, and a television miniseries version commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the novel's publication in 1996.

In a sort of literary reversal, some filmmakers suggest their releases are factual even when they are not. For example, the makers of the wildly successful *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) constructed a Web site devoted to the fictitious claim that the film's stars were actually missing. Joel and Ethan Coen's 1996 film *Fargo* opens with the statement "This is a true story," although Ethan Coen writes in the screenplay's preface that the story only "pretends to be true." The desire of makers of fictional films to give their projects the veneer of factuality suggests their awareness that the true-crime subgenre enjoys a wide audience.

After *The Executioner's Song*, sensational violent crimes were often described in multiple books. The phenomenon may bear out Norman Mailer's contention that any case involves multiple perspectives on the facts and answers to pertinent questions. It can also be attributed to the public's growing appetite for true-crime books. For example, the crimes committed by Ted Bundy in the Pacific Northwest and in Florida during the 1970's led to at least five books, including two written by Richard Larsen and Ann Rule, both of whom knew Bundy personally. Two decades later,

the murder of six-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey in Colorado on Christmas night 1996 became the subject of more than a dozen books, one of which was written by Lawrence Schiller, Norman Mailer's primary researcher on the *Executioner's Song* project.

More than 150 years after a notorious North Carolina murder case that led to the hanging of Frances ("Frankie") Stewart Silver in 1833, three books about her appeared suddenly within three years: Sharyn McCrumb's *The Ballad of Frankie Silver* (1998), Perry Deane Young's *The Untold Story of Frankie Silver* (1998), and Daniel Patterson's *A Tree Accurst: Bobby McMillan and Stories of Frankie Silver* (2000). However, the record for most books about a single criminal is undoubtedly held by the London murderer known only as Jack the Ripper. More than a century and dozens of volumes after the crimes attributed to the "Ripper," American crime novelist Patricia Cornwell made a rare foray into nonfiction with *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper, Case Closed* (2002).

MODERN TRUE-CRIME NOVELS

True-crime books published after *In Cold Blood* can be grouped into several categories. Those written primarily from a law-enforcement perspective affirm the status quo and present murderers as threats to society. Notable examples of this type include *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* (1974), by Vincent Bugliosi, who prosecuted Charles Manson and his "family" in California, and *Fatal Vision* (1984), Joe McGinniss's account of physician Jeffrey Macdonald's trial for the 1970 murders of his pregnant wife and two daughters at their home on the Fort Bragg Army base in North Carolina. McGinniss later wrote several other true-crime books, but *Fatal Vision* is particularly interesting, as it became the subject of a lawsuit filed against him by Macdonald that is chronicled in Janet Malcolm's *The Journalist and the Murderer* (1990). Malcolm's book provides a rare examination of the relationship between a true-crime writer and his subject. McGinniss, who originally became involved in Jeffrey's Macdonald's case as a member of the defense team, became convinced of Macdonald's guilt. *Fatal Vision* presents Macdonald unsympathetically, as preoccupied, after the murders, with his own celebrity status.

A second variety of modern true-crime novel focuses on victims, rather than the perpetrators. A notable example is John Hersey's *The Algiers Motel Incident* (1968), an account of how three young black men killed during a sniper incident at a Detroit motel fell victim to the racism of the era. Joseph Wambaugh's *The Onion Field* (1973) is the story of a Los Angeles police officer devastated by his own guilt at having escaped a shooting that left his partner dead. Judith Rossner's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1975) is a thinly fictionalized account of a woman killed by a drifter she picked up in a bar on New Year's Eve. In a larger sense, the woman is a victim of her own sexual appetite and the effect on her self-image of a physical deformity.

A third category of modern true-crime book focuses on communities in which violence occurs. The first half of Capote's *In Cold Blood* illustrates this aspect, but the best examples of this type are Gerald Frank's *The Boston Strangler* (1966), Calvin Trillin's *Killings* (1984), and Alec Wilkinson's *A Violent Act* (1993).

Frank's *The Boston Strangler* depicts how a series of stranglings terrified the Boston area between June, 1962, and January, 1964. Frank explores the background of the eventual prime suspect, Albert DeSalvo, but DeSalvo himself does not appear until the last quarter of the book's narrative. The focus of the book is instead on Boston. Frank seems to argue that a serial killer victimizes far more people than those whom he murders.

Trillin's *Killings* is a collection of true-crime stories originally published in *The New Yorker*. Trillin's focus is also on the communities that are the settings for his stories, as he states in his book's preface. Critics have argued that Trillin's true interest is in the eccentricities of American life and that he chose accounts of violent crimes as a means of depicting those eccentricities.

Wilkinson's *A Violent Act* chronicles the search in Wright City, Missouri, for the killer of a local probation officer and two other people in September, 1986. The perpetrator, Mike Wayne Jackson, whose identity is never in question, is absent through most of the narrative, showing up only in occasional sections about

his background and in the book's climax. Wilkinson's primary focus is, instead, on how the community is nearly paralyzed by the fugitive's presence in its midst and on the psychological devastation of the probation officer's family.

Another category of true-crime book that became popular during the last decades of the twentieth century encompasses books whose authors seek to exonerate their subjects. Whereas the perspective of the naturalistic true-crime novels is "He did it, but there is a long list of mitigating circumstances," the perspective of the exoneration true-crime book is "He didn't do it." One of the best-known examples of the latter approach is the case of Randall Adams, who, along with two cowriters, offered his account of his victimization by the criminal justice system, in the book *Adams v. Texas* (1991). After running out of gas one night in 1977, Adams accepted a ride from a juvenile delinquent who, a few weeks later, shot and killed a Dallas police officer in an incident that Adams had nothing to do with. Nevertheless, the false testimony of the true killer helped convict Adams, who spent twelve years on Texas's death row. He was eventually exonerated and pardoned. His story is also the subject of the acclaimed documentary film *The Thin Blue Line* (1988).

In 2005, after publishing eighteen thrillers, novelist John Grisham turned to true-crime writing with *The Innocent Man*, an account of two murder investigations in Oklahoma focusing on a mentally ill man who, by all accounts, was innocent. Grisham acknowledged in interviews that he had studied *In Cold Blood* and Capote's methodology.

A final category encompasses true-crime stories featuring women as perpetrators. Books about women who committed acts of violence began to appear in greater numbers toward the end of the twentieth century. Notable examples include Faith McNulty, *The Burning Bed* (1980) about Francine Hughes, a woman who burned her husband to death as he slept and was acquitted on grounds of temporary insanity. Hughes's husband, Mickey, was an abusive alcoholic, and McNulty's book is naturalistic in its approach to social problems.

Other accounts focus on three of the eleven women

executed in the United States since 1976, when a U.S. Supreme Court decision permitted reinstatement of the death penalty: Velma Barfield in North Carolina, Karla Faye Tucker in Texas, and Aileen Wuornos in Florida. Barfield confessed to poisoning four people, including her mother, in ten years. Put to death by lethal injection in 1984, she became the first woman executed in the United States since 1962. Karla Faye Tucker was executed in 1998 as an accomplice in the 1983 murders of two people in Houston. She was the first woman executed in Texas since the Civil War. Tucker said she became a born-again Christian during her incarceration, and her clemency petition was one of George W. Bush's toughest decisions as governor of Texas. Aileen Wuornos is perhaps the only female sexually motivated serial killer to work alone in the United States. Other known female serial killers worked as accomplices of men. She was executed in Florida in 2002 for the murders of seven men whom she lured with sexual solicitations and shot.

All these women have been subjects of books about their crimes. Barfield is also the author of a book about her own case, *Woman on Death Row* (1985). However, the most comprehensive account of her case is *Death Sentence* (1999) by Jerry Bledsoe. Tucker's story is the subject of two books, *Karla Faye Tucker Set Free* (2000) by Linda Strom, and *Crossed Over* (1992) by Beverly Lowry. The latter is as much about the relationship Lowry formed with Tucker after as it is about Tucker's case. Within just a few weeks of her arrest, Wuornos and her attorney sold film rights to her story, and the resulting film, *Monster*, (2002) won a best-acting Academy Award for Charlize Theron, who played Wuornos. The film is based on a book of the same title by Wuornos and Christopher Berry-Dee. Wuornos is also the focus of about a half-dozen other books.

ENDURING POPULARITY OF TRUE CRIME

As the true-crime subgenre has become more popular, some writers have built careers on it. Ann Rule, a former Seattle police officer and the author of about twenty books, is a case in point. Other well-known true-crime authors include Edna Buchanan, a former crime reporter for the *Miami Herald*; Jerry Bledsoe, a

former reporter for the *Greensboro News and Record*, and Joe McGinniss, a former *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter who has written at least three best-selling true-crime books. These writers generally have official Web sites through which readers can engage them in discussions of their work. Many other sites, such as that sponsored by the cable channel Court TV, sponsor online archives about criminal cases.

Crime drama was also among the most popular television subgenres at the turn of the twenty-first century, with the series *Law and Order*, which first appeared in 1990 and inspired at least two related franchises, becoming the longest-running prime-time drama on American television. During the same period, several other crime programs were routinely in the top ten in television ratings, including shows focusing on forensic medicine.

Lana A. Whited

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THE DETECTIVES

AMATEUR SLEUTHS

Amateur sleuths are the mainstay of so-called “cozy” mysteries, in which the four mystery genre elements—the sleuth, the setting or the sleuth’s occupation, the sleuth’s associates, and the crime itself—coalesce into novels that reassure readers about the existence of order and meaning in puzzles associated with human existence. These mysteries always involve a crime, but readers often find the crime itself less important than the novel’s major emphases: acquainting readers with the sleuth’s personality and background, the sleuth’s associates, and puzzles for both sleuths and readers to solve.

ELEMENTS OF AMATEUR SLEUTH MYSTERIES

Fascination with puzzles is an important element in human nature. Many newspaper readers believe they could solve crimes more quickly and efficiently than the police, and apparently many of those readers are busy writing mystery novels featuring amateur sleuths much like themselves. Thus, the audience pool for amateur sleuth mystery seems unlimited, and the author pool is also huge, with even the children of former U.S. presidents writing novels set primarily in Washington, D.C. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt solves crimes in books written by her son Elliott Roosevelt; Harry S. Truman’s daughter, Margaret Truman, has written several mysteries; and Gerald Ford’s daughter Susan Ford has drawn on her experience as a child of the president to create an amateur sleuth.

Despite surface differences, such as settings and the sleuths’ backgrounds and personalities, these mysteries tend to follow a similar overall pattern. In the course of their daily activities, the amateur sleuths—who may have no previous experience solving crimes—encounter mysteries whose circumstances render them uniquely qualified to unravel. Either completely alone, or assisted by close friends or family members, the amateur sleuths uncover series of clues, and survive physical perils (often because of timely rescues). Finally, they provide answers to law-enforcement authorities, who are often uncooperative or even hostile up until the resolution of the crimes. Because the writ-

ers provide readers all the information their amateur sleuths possess—including red herrings—the primary appeal of these mysteries is the challenge for readers to unmask the culprits before the sleuths do. However, a secondary appeal is that readers enter the sleuths’ worlds. They become acquainted with basically likeable characters and gain new understandings of various groups and occupations. Amateur sleuth novels often end with the sleuths promising never to get involved in another mystery; however, readers generally hope that a series will follow.

THE SLEUTHS’ BACKGROUNDS

As diverse as the people who read about them, amateur sleuths may be any age. Some—for example, Agatha Christie’s Miss Jane Marple and Patricia Wentworth’s Maud Silver—draw their inferences from lifetimes of experience. For others—including Carolyn Keane’s teenage Nancy Drew, who influenced generations of mystery writers; Martha Grimes’s Emma Graham; and Jeffery Deaver’s “Rune”—independence and enthusiasm compensate for lack of experience and naïveté. Several, such as Mary Daheim’s Judith McMonigle-Flynn and Anne George’s sister team of Mary Alice and Patricia Ann, consider themselves middle-aged, as do Corinne Holt Sawyer’s Angela Benbow and Caledonia Wingate, residents of an upscale retirement home.

Sleuths also vary in marital status. Being unmarried is not an absolute requirement, but sleuths must possess a high degree of independence. Thus, married sleuths, such as Elizabeth Peters’s Amelia Peabody and Valerie Wolzien’s Susan Henshaw, must have cooperative, patient husbands. Romantic relationships are another recurring element. As early as M. McDonnell Bodkin’s Dora Myrl of *The Lady Detective* (1900), the courtship and marriage of the primary sleuth becomes a subplot; for example, in Carolyn Hart’s series, the romance of Annie Laurance and Max Darling figures significantly. Likewise, Amanda Cross describes Kate Fansler’s marriage to Reed Amhearst, and Charlotte MacLeod’s Sarah Kelling not only marries Max Bittersohn but even-



*R. Austin Freeman's master medical detective,
Dr. John Thorndyke, with his assistant and chronicler,
Dr. Christopher Jervis.*

tually gives birth to a son. A few sleuths—including Joan Hess's Claire Malloy, Virginia Rich's Eugenia Potter, and Richard Barth's Margaret Binton—are widowed. However, far more are divorced or, like Rita Mae Brown's Mary Minor Haristeen, separated from their spouses. Notable examples are Lilian Jackson Braun's James Qwilleran and JoAnna Carl's Lee McKinney, both of whom choose new locales in which to rebuild their lives. In contrast, Tamar Myers's Magdalena Yoder discovers that she has married a bigamist but nevertheless continues to run the Penn-Dutch Inn, becoming involved in another ongoing romantic relationship in later novels.

Amateur sleuths populate diverse times and places. Medieval England is home to Margaret Frazer's Dame Frevisse and Ellis Peters's Brother Cadfael. Fiona Buckley's Ursula Blanchard is Lady of Presence Chamber to Queen Elizabeth I. Stephanie Barron's Jane Austen mysteries are set in early nineteenth century England, Robin Paige's Kate Sheriden is one of the

landed gentry in Victorian England, and P. B. Ryan's Nell Sweeney is an Irish immigrant working as a governess in Boston during the late nineteenth century Gilded Age. Peter Heck has written a series of mysteries in which Mark Twain is the sleuth. More modern novels set in England feature Sarah Caudwell's Oxford don Hilary Tamar and Nancy Atherton's American heiress Lori Shepherd. Almost all areas of the United States have provided settings for contemporary mysteries, and small towns seem to attract a substantial number of amateur sleuths.

THE SLEUTHS' OCCUPATIONS

The underlying premise of amateur sleuth novels is that solving mysteries requires keen powers of observation, imagination, and deduction but not necessarily formal training. In fact, amateur sleuths may hold mundane jobs, exotic jobs, or no jobs at all. The important element is that their lives involve frequent, often close, interaction with relatively limited groups of people.

In contrast to police procedurals and private investigator mysteries, in which detectives may pursue clues over long periods of time and across relatively large geographical areas, or forensic mysteries, whose solutions depend primarily on laboratory analyses, amateur sleuth mysteries are character-driven and are resolved within limited time frames and geographical areas because their victims, suspects, and sleuths are part of cohesive social groups, which are usually determined by the sleuths' occupations or circles of friends. The sleuths themselves often lead relatively ordinary lives, but their occupations seem destined to lead them to encounters with people with serious problems and to mysteries that need to be solved.

Whatever an individual reader's area of interest, curiosity, or professional expertise may be, there probably is at least one amateur sleuth who shares it and uses its specialized skills and training to solve crimes. For example, Kate Goldring's Willi Gallagher uses the tarot to unmask murders, while Dorothy Salisbury Davis's Julie Hayes employs her skills as a fortune-teller. Kathleen Kunz's Terry Girard gets involved in murders connected to her profession as a genealogist, as does Rhett MacPherson's Torie O'Shea, who is also the town historian in a small Appalachian community.

Parnell Hall's Sherry Carter composes crossword puzzles and, as an unofficial sideline, solves mysteries, but her flamboyant aunt Cora Felton receives credit for both. Katrina Nash's Cassandra Burnett solves crimes while she is on her professional golfing tours, Christine L. Goff's Angela Dimato leads bird-watching groups, and Kate Grilley's Kelly Ryan is a Caribbean tourist guide.

Amateur sleuths may also belong to more conventional professions. For example, Connie Shelton's Charlie Parker is a certified public accountant, Lou Allen's Belle Palmer is a Realtor, Tim Cockey's Hitchcock Sewell is an undertaker, and Paula Paol's Dr. Alexandra Gladstone and Robin Hathaway's Dr. Andrew Fenimore are village physicians. Claudia Bishop's Austin McKenzie is a veterinarian and equestrian judge, and Edie Claire's Leigh Koslow is a pet-sitter who frequently works with her veterinarian father. Julie Smith's Rebecca Schwartz is an attorney, and Carolina Garcia Aguiera's Margarita Maria Santos Silva combines professional and domestic lives as a lawyer on maternity leave. In contrast, Sarah Strohmeier's Bubbles is a hairstylist who writes a newspaper beauty column, Marian Babson's Trixie Dolan and Evangeline Sinclair are former film stars. Even more unusual is Barbara Seranelle's Munch Mancini, a recovering drug addict, former prostitute, and former convict who works as an auto mechanic.

ACADEMIC SLEUTHS

Not surprisingly, perhaps, many amateur sleuths are associated with academics. Placing mysteries in the academic world allows writers to create amusing and eccentric characters, who often include the sleuths themselves. Charlotte MacLeod's Peter Shandy teaches at a small agricultural college, where his wife, Helen, is a librarian. Together, they solve crimes directly or indirectly involving their college's academic and support personnel, a relatively cohesive social group they know well. In contrast, Amanda Cross's Kate Fansler teaches at a large city university; nevertheless, the scope of her mysteries usually is limited to individuals who interact with Fansler and her academic colleagues. Thus, despite the urban university setting, the crimes are played out within a restricted social group.

Similarly, Lee Harris's Kix Bennett teaches at a community college in New York City and lives in Westchester—a situation that combines two types of limited social groups. Other university professor-sleuths include Susan Kenney's Roz Howard at Vassar College; Gail Bowen's Joanne Kilbourne at a Canadian university; Ralph McNerny's Roger Knight at Notre Dame University; J. S. Bothwick's Sarah Deane, an English professor in Maine; Patricia Thomas Graham's Veronica Chase, an African American economics professor at Harvard; Erin Hart's Cormac Maguire, an Irish archaeologist; Judith Van Gieson's Clair Reynier, an archivist; Sarah Andrews's Em Hunter, a geologist; Ridley Pearson's Daphne Matthews, a psychologist; Susan Slater's Ben Pecos, a Native American psychologist; and Virginia Swift's Sally Alder, a professor in Wyoming.

Melissa Cleary's Jackie Walsh teaches university film classes; Earlene Fowler's Benni Harper is a folk art expert; Nageeba Davis's Maggie Kean is an art teacher and sculptor; and Elizabeth Peters's Jacqueline Kirby is a university librarian. Jane Isenberg's Bel Barrett teaches English at a community college; Gillian Roberts's Amanda Pepper teaches at a private high school; Denise Swanson's Skye Denison is a school psychologist; Hazel Holt's Mrs. Malory is a substitute teacher; and Marlis Day's Margo Brown is an Indiana schoolteacher interested in mysteries. Among the retired teachers who become amateur sleuths are Amber Dean's Abbie Harris, Stuart Palmer's Hildegard Winters, Anne George's Patricia Anne, and Louisa Revell's Julia Tyler. Patricia Houck Sprinkle's Sheila Travis and Elizabeth Peters's Vicky Bliss have become academic administrators.

WRITERS AND REPORTERS AS SLEUTHS

A clearly related group of sleuths are the writers and reporters. Ellen Pael's Juliet Bodine is a former English professor who writes romance novels, as does Susan Rogers Cooper's E. J. Pugh. Sarah Shaber's Professor Simon Shaw has moved to North Carolina's Outer Banks to write novels. Jill Churchill's Jane Jeffrey wants to become a writer, but Mignon G. Eberhart's Susan Dare and Dwight Babcock's Hannah Van Doren already are mystery writers. Robin Paige's Kate Sheriden writes novels. Lilian Jackson Braun's James

Qwilleran, once a crime reporter for a metropolitan newspaper, becomes a columnist for a small-town weekly. Ellen Byorrum's Lacy Smithsonian writes a fashion column; Ann Ripley's Louise Eldridge stars in a television show about gardening; Sherryl Woods's Amanda Roberts is an investigative reporter in Atlanta; and Arlene Schumacher's Tory Travers is a senator's daughter and investigative reporter. Carolyn Hart's Henrietta O'Dwyer Collins is a retired reporter; Jan Burke's Irene Kelly is a California reporter, Tom Corcoran's Alex Rutledge is a freelance photographer, Kerry Tucker's Libby Kincaid is a New York City photojournalist, and Susan Ford's Eve Cooper is a freelance photographer whose father happens to be the president of the United States.

SLEUTHS AMONG THE CLERGY

The training in theology and counseling that members of the clergy receive helps them to see the weaknesses and strengths of their parishioners. They thus presumably also possess special talent in analyzing the character of others. Moreover, their synagogues and churches constitute the kinds of limited social groups required in cozy mysteries. Harry Kemelman's sleuth Rabbi David Small draws upon his specialized knowledge of the Torah to help his synagogue's members solve problems. Frequently, those same problems draw him into murder investigations.

Similarly, seminary training—especially in logic—serves as preparation for sleuthing priests, such as G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, Andrew Greeley's Father Blackie Ryan, Margaret Coel's Father John O'Malley, and Ralph McInerny's Father Dowling. In addition to his clerical duties, William X. Kienzle's Father Bob Koesler writes for Detroit's Roman Catholic newspaper, and his journalistic instincts lead to additional investigations and help him unmask murderers.

Most of the clergy sleuths are Catholic priests, but Sister Carol Anne chronicles mysteries solved by a sleuth named Sister Mary Helen, who sets a model that is also followed by Veronica Black's Sister Joan, who solves mysteries in Cornwall. The best-known sleuthing monk, however, is Ellis Peters's Brother Cadfael, whose intellectual independence—combined with astute judgment of human nature and scientific knowl-

edge unusually advanced for his era—enable him to solve crimes in medieval England. The modern American version of this character is David Manuel's Brother Bartholomew of Faith Abbey in Massachusetts.

Isabelle Holland's Claire Aldington is an Episcopal rector in New York City. Cristina Summers's the Reverend Dr. Kathryn Koerney is an Episcopal priest, as is Julia Spencer-Fleming's Clare Fergusson. Claire Hunning's Rosemary Stubbs is a college chaplain, Matthew Head's Dr. Mary Finney is a missionary in Africa, and Deborah Woodworth's Sister Rose Callahan is a leader among Kentucky Shakers. Katherine Hall Page's Faith Sibley Fairchild, the wife of small-town Massachusetts minister, sometimes draws her husband into the mysteries she solves. Less formally trained in theology is Charles Merrill Smith's Reverend C. P. Randolph, a former pro football player whose role as pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd places him at the center of his parishioners' mysteries.

Clergy mysteries seem to appeal to readers in two ways. For readers unfamiliar with the sleuth's religion, these novels provide introductions to basic religious tenets and practices, allowing the writers to explain beliefs and perhaps correct common misconceptions. For readers who share a sleuth's religion, the familiar elements create a sense of shared insight and thus community with the sleuth; these readers may feel that they have "inside knowledge" that is an advantage as they solve the mystery along with the sleuth.

SLEUTHING AMONG THE SHOPKEEPERS

Small specialty shops with local clientele also provide the kinds of restricted social groups conducive to the solving of mysteries, especially when the shop owners are well acquainted with their customers and the local community. Not surprisingly, therefore, many amateur sleuths operate such shops, solving crimes that affect their employees, clients, neighbors, and families. These shops sell merchandise of various kinds. In Monica Ferris's novels, for example, divorcé Betsy Devonshire inherits a small-town needlecraft shop, solves her aunt's murder, and becomes involved in other local conflicts. JoAnna Carl relates the adventures of another divorcé, Lee McKinney, who is caught up in local mysteries after her aunt invites her

to keep the books for the family's luxury candy factory and chocolate shop. Yet another divorcé, Mary Ellen Hughes's Jo McAllister, finds herself involved in a murder on the day she opens her craft store.

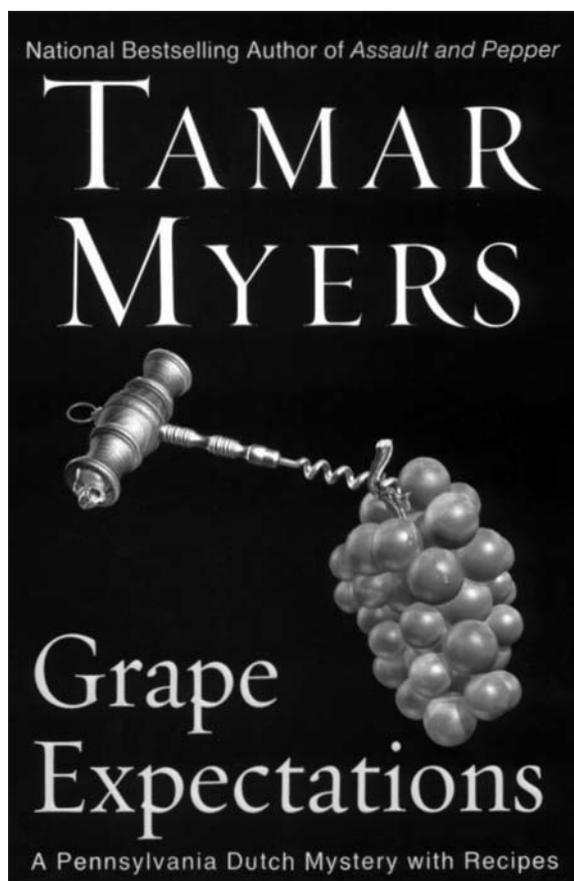
An atmosphere of mystery always seems to surround antiques, and antique collectors are a comparatively cohesive group. Moreover, because owners of antique shops must investigate the provenance of their wares, they develop skills that can be useful for solving criminal mysteries. Logically then, these shopkeepers often become amateur sleuths. In Tamar Myers's Den of Antiquity series, Abigail Timberlake tracks down murderers and forgers. Tony Fennelly's Matt Sinclair also is an antique dealer, as are Deborah Morgan's Jeff Abbott, Sharon Fiffer's Jane Wheel, Jonathan Gash's Lovejoy, and Elizabeth Dean's Emma Marsh. Marianne

Macdonald's Dido Hoare sells antique books. Madelyn Alt combines an antique shop setting with a bit of witchcraft when her sleuth, Maggie O'Neill, accepts a job at an antique shop owned by avowed witch Felicity Down. Lee Wait's Maggie Summer is a dealer in antique prints.

Some shopkeeping sleuths sell books or art. Strictly speaking, the protagonist of John Dunning's Cliff Janeway is not an amateur sleuth because he is a former police detective. However, within the context of Dunning's Bookman novels, he is an antiquarian book dealer by profession and a sleuth only by accident. Other fictional book dealers are more clearly amateurs. For example, following her husband's death, Joan Hess's Claire Malloy opens an independent bookstore. Carolyn Hart's Annie Laurance runs a mystery bookstore; Julie Wallin Kaewert's Alex Plumtree is a British publisher; and Alice Kimberly's Penelope Thornton-McClure operates a bookstore in a haunted building. Clarissa Watson's Persis Willum and Lise McClendon's Alix Thorssen both own art galleries, and Haley Jane Kozak's Wollie Shelly has a greeting card business.

Among other types of independent merchants who are sleuths is Laura Child's Theodosia Browning, the proprietor of the Indigo Tea Shop. Doug Allyn's Mitch Mitchell and Kathleen Taylor's Tony Bauer both own cafés, and Ellen Hart's Jane Lawless owns a pub. Other specialty shop-owning sleuths include Jacqueline Gardner's Kate Jasper, the owner of a gift shop and Susan Wittig Albert's China Bayles, who has an herb shop. Allana Martin's Texana Jones owns a trading post, Mary Bowen Hall's Emma Chizzit owns a salvage business, and Taffy Cannon's Roseanne Prescott owns the Irish Eyes Travel Agency.

Some amateur sleuths are into gardening and landscaping. Mary Freeman's Rachel O'Connor owns a landscaping company. Patricia Houck Sprinkle's MacLaren Yarbrough and Joyce and Jim Lavene's Peggy Lee both operate seed stores and nurseries, and Janis Harrison's Bretta Solomon is a florist. Other sleuths provide specialized services. Margaret Chittenden's Charlie Plato is part owner of a Western dance club. Martha C. Lawrence's Elizabeth Chase is a psychic, and Deborah Donnelly's Carnegie Kincaid is a wedding planner.



Tamar Myers's fourteenth Magdalena Yoder novel, Grape Expectations (2006), the Mennonite sleuth becomes the prime suspect in the murder of a rival hotelier.

INNKEEPERS, CATERERS, AND HOUSE CLEANERS

Few social groups are more restricted than the residents of boardinghouses and inns, in which hospitality has a commercial element and paying guests feel free to make unusual demands and engage in eccentric behavior. Not surprisingly, the operators of those establishments often draw on their experience and become amateur sleuths. For example, realizing it is the only way to save the family mansion, Charlotte MacLeod's Sarah Kelling converts it into a genteel boardinghouse and in the process learns quite a bit about human behavior. Similarly, after the stock market crash of 1929 forces Jill Churchill's brother-and-sister team, Lily and Robert Brewster, to earn a living, they use their only training—in the social graces—and their mansion also becomes a boardinghouse. Tamar Myers's Magdalena Yoder takes a slightly different approach. After her parents are killed in a freak automobile accident, she opens the

family farmhouse to paying guests. Quickly recognizing that the inn's true appeal is its Amish associations, she allows her guests to pay her for the privilege of cleaning their own rooms.

Perhaps no one knows people as well as the domestic servants who work in their homes. It is not surprising, therefore, that amateur sleuths become involved in mysteries when they work in other people's houses, either as cleaners or as caterers. Kathy Hogan Trocheck's Callahan Garrity is a cleaning woman. Ann Purser's Lois Meade is building a cleaning business in the English village of Tresham, where she uses her crews to investigate crimes ranging from pornography to blackmail and murder. Similarly, Charlaine Harris's Lily Bard cleans houses to supplement her income as a karate instructor. Like Lois, Lily solves mysteries through careful observation and astute questioning.

A number of sleuths are caterers, restaurateurs, or chefs. For example, Isis Crawford's Libby Simmons, Diane Moss Davidson's Goldy Bear, and Jerrilyn Farmer's Madeline Bean all operate catering services. Janet Laurence's Darina Lisle is a cookbook writer as well. Among the gourmet chefs who sometimes work as caterers are Katherine Hall Page's Faith Sibley Fairchild, Joanne Pence's Chef Angie Amalfi, and Eugenia Potter from the series begun by Virginia Rich and continued by Nancy Pickard.

THE SLEUTH'S RELATIVES

Although amateur sleuths may live almost anywhere—in rural areas, small towns, or big cities—and follow almost any occupation, the culprits and the victims of the crimes they investigate must be part of cohesive social groups. The sleuths are more likely to be successful if they also are part of the same groups. Nevertheless, sleuths often need assistance from other trustworthy characters.

Unlike professional private investigators, amateur sleuths frequently draw support from their own families and from the friends who surround them. Generally these other characters provide information, assist in searches for clues, help trail suspects, serve as sounding boards for the sleuths' theories about their cases, and often rescue the sleuths at the climactic moments when they confront the villains. In most novels,



The fifth novel in Jill Churchill's Grace and Favor series.

these assistants function essentially in supporting roles. Although the sleuths may need their relatives' and friends' help and suggestions to track down and subdue culprits, the relatives and friends are never central to the mysteries themselves. Nevertheless, the relationships between sleuths and their assistants are usually close.

Assistants are often part of the sleuths' extended families. For example, Charlotte MacLeod's Sarah Kelling repeatedly draws upon her large extended family to solve murders involving Boston's elite. Her elderly cousins provide crucial information, her aunts and uncles shadow suspects, and her first husband dramatically saves her from the first murderer whom she unmasks. Later, Sarah's marriage to Max Bittersohn expands her family network with the addition of a close-knit Jewish family, whose members also participate in solving the mysteries.

Several sleuths are assisted by significant female relatives. For example, Meredith Blevins's Annie Szabo works with her mother-in-law, Madame Mina, who describes herself as a gypsy fortune-teller. Mary Daheim's Judith McMonigle-Flynn is usually assisted by her cousin Renie Jones. Some of their cases arise from Judith's attempts to help Renie resolve personal problems. Parnell Hall's Sherry Carter creates the crossword puzzles and solves the mysteries for which her aunt, Miss Cora Felton, takes credit. Perhaps the most unusual niece-aunt team, however, is Nancy Atherton's Lori Shepherd and Aunt Dimity Westwood, as the latter happens to be a ghost.

Some sleuths have children living at home, but although these children may occasionally provide valuable pieces of information, their role more often seems to be comic relief. Interactions between sleuths and children can also help establish the sleuths as complex characters. The children rarely participate in solving mysteries because their parents try to shield them from violence and danger.

There are many sleuthing teams. One logical, and therefore frequent, two-person team consists of a wife and husband. Many of these teams are not, strictly speaking, amateur sleuths because they involve spouses of law-enforcement professionals. However, in some series, spouses play significant roles in the so-

lution of crimes. Examples include Helen Shandy in Charlotte MacLeod's Peter Shandy series, Godfrey Norton in the adventures of Carole Nelson Douglas's Irene Adler, and Nick Ryan in P. M. Carlson's Maggie Ryan mysteries. The actual solving of the crime and unmasking of murderers becomes more nearly a joint effort after MacLeod's Sarah Kelling marries Max Bittersohn and after Carolyn Hart's Annie Laurance marries Max Darling. In a formula reminiscent of Golden Age mysteries, Steve Allen introduces the detective team of Jayne Meadows and Steve Allen.

SIBLINGS AS SLEUTHING TEAMS

Less numerous than husband-wife teams are brother-sister teams, which combine the humorous element of sibling bickering with the ability of siblings to anticipate each other's thoughts and reactions. In most instances, one sibling is better at deductive reasoning than the other, while the other does more of the legwork. In Sharyn McCrumb's novels about Elizabeth and Bill MacPherson, both siblings are central characters, but Elizabeth is the more analytical sleuth, while Bill does most of the interviewing.

In contrast, Lily and Robert Brewster of Jill Churchill's Grace and Favor series carefully observe the conventions of their upscale society. Lily gleanes information from the gossip of women in her quilting circle, while Robert is the one who discovers bodies and examines crime scenes. In *Someone to Watch over Me* (2001), Robert travels to Washington, D.C., to interview participants at the Bonus Army encampment, while delegating to Lily the task of examining old newspaper files. Robert refers to himself and his sister as The Sleuthing Siblings, and the eventual solution of their cases invariably depends on the work of both.

Relationships among sisters have also been brought into the amateur sleuth genre, and few relationships so closely combine closeness and competition. The pattern of eccentric sister sleuths apparently was established by Torrey Chanslor's elderly sisters, Amanda and Lutie Beagle, who live in New York City during the 1920's. That pattern continued with sister teams such as Mirinda and Clare Clively of Ann Crowleigh's Clively Close series, set in Victorian England. More recent series involve teams of sexagenarian southern sisters such

as Annie Griffin's Kiki and Hannah and Anne George's Mary Alice and Patricia Anne. Kiki Goldstein frequently precipitates crises through her flamboyant behavior and constant chatter. Hannah Malloy is a year older than Kiki. Both sisters consider Hannah the sensible one, and she frequently has to rescue Kiki from dangers of her own making. Likewise, Mary Alice Crane is a flamboyant sixty-five-year-old widow who has outlived three husbands. Weighing well over two hundred pounds, she describes herself as pleasingly plump, and her hair usually is some shade of pink. Her younger sister, Patricia Anne Hollowell, is a foot shorter, wears a size six, and refuses to dye her graying hair. Drawing on knowledge of human nature acquired during many years as a schoolteacher, Patricia Anne usually solves the mystery, extricating herself and her sister from dangers that result from Mary Alice's heedless comments.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

In a growing number of mystery series, the valued assistants are not human beings but animals that live with them. Sleuths may rely on their animals to uncover valuable clues, help in trailing culprits, and ultimately rescue them at climactic moments. The animals can also be sympathetic listeners, serving as sounding boards while the sleuths work out theories about their cases. Apart from some children's books, animals usually remain in secondary roles, primarily assisting the humans. Most such animal companions were originally dogs, but with the growing popularity of cats as indoor pets, the number of feline companions has increased. In these mysteries, the role of the animal companion has greatly expanded.

The number of sleuths with canine companions reflects the long-standing relationship between humans and dogs. In fact, the word "sleuth" itself seems to have developed from the now-archaic word *sleuth hund*, a Middle English term for dogs used in trailing and tracking. By the late nineteenth century, humans who followed trails of clues and tracked down culprits were being called sleuth-hounds, or sleuths.

Among modern sleuths, Virginia Lanier's Jo Beth Siddens breeds and trains bloodhounds. Her favorite companion is Bobby Lee, a blind bloodhound who is still an outstanding tracker and who protects Jo Beth.

Donna Ball's Raine Stockton also uses Cisco, her young golden retriever, primarily as a tracker. In Laurien Berenson's Melanie Travis series, protecting Melanie is the primary job of her standard poodle Faith. In professional dog-trainer Carol Lea Benjamin's Rachel Alexander and Dash series, Rachel is on her own in New York City and trusts only her rescued pit bull terrier, Dashiell. Colleen Coble's Bree Nicholls probably could not solve her mysteries without the help of her German shepherd-chow, Samson, a search dog. Likewise in Cynthia Baxter's Reigning Cats and Dogs series, veterinarian Jessica Popper solves mysteries with the help of her one-eyed Dalmatian, Lou, and her tailless Westie Max.

FAITHFUL FELINES

From the days of Rin Tin Tin and Lassie, mystery fiction conventions have established dogs' roles as trackers, protectors, and judges of human character. The emergence of cats in similar roles is a relatively recent development. Even in series such as Lydia Adamson's Alice Nestleton mysteries, the crimes are solved by Alice, who cat-sits various finicky and valuable felines; the cats usually are treated as trophies or window dressing, and the assistance they provide to the sleuth is minimal. That limitation changed with the popularity of Lilian Jackson Braun's Cat Who series. In that series, former newspaperman James Qwilleran's interviewing skills help him to solve mysteries; however, he insists that credit actually should go to his Siamese cats Koko and Yum Yum, particularly the former. In these popular books, certain typical feline behaviors have become conventional signals for readers. Aloof behavior by Koko, the tomcat, quickly indicates when a visitor is dangerous. He howls each time a murder takes place, and the titles of books he knocks off the shelves provide clues to the culprit's identity. Yum Yum, the female cat, is less active in sleuthing, but she frequently retrieves small objects that are vital clues in solving the mystery.

Rita Mae Brown credits her cat Sneaky Pie as co-writer in her long running Mrs. Murphy Mystery series. Sneaky Pie changes Braun's formula by telling the stories from the point of view of Mrs. Murphy, a tabby who helps Mary Minor "Harry" Haristeen run

the local post office. The roles of sleuth and assistant are reversed as Mrs. Murphy and Tee Tucker, a corgi who lives with Harry's best friend, roam the countryside, investigating everything that piques their curiosity, and then try to figure out how to alert Harry. Although Mrs. Murphy is sometimes assisted by Tee Tucker and Pewter, an overweight Russian blue who continually bickers with her, the mysteries are really solved by this astute tabby.

Another feline sleuth and narrator is Carole Nelson Douglas's jet-black tomcat, *Midnight Louie*, who refers to himself as the roommate of Las Vegas public-relations agent Temple Barr. *Midnight Louie* considers himself a hard-boiled private detective, and his only regret is that he cannot speak to the humans and reveal his brilliant deductive reasoning.

Shirley Rousseau Murphy's gray tomcat Joe Grey and his feline girlfriend Dulcie have mastered the skill of human language. Joe—who can think, read, and speak—is clearly the primary sleuth in this series, and Dulcie is his assistant. Although both Joe and Dulcie live with humans and use them to convey messages to the police, the human characters' role is peripheral. In one novel, even the villain is a cat (*Azrael*) who possesses the same skills as Joe and Dulcie.

THE POPULARITY OF AMATEUR SLEUTH SERIES

The fan base of amateur sleuth and cozy mysteries appears unaffected by the rise of video games or the increasing readership of romance as well as other types of mystery fiction. Bookstore employees regularly post recommendations of new authors or series. When fans perusing bookstore or library shelves meet other fans doing the same, even total strangers are apt to compare mysteries they have read and recommend authors. The explanation for the genre's enduring popularity is complex. On the whole, amateur sleuth fans are as intrigued by puzzling plots as they are by the sleuths about whom they read, and solving mysteries along with the sleuths is an intellectual game.

Although the overwhelming variety of amateur sleuths' interests and occupations indicates there are several sleuths for every reader, amateur sleuth fans do not restrict their reading to those who share their interests. In fact, readers often consider reading these novels

educational exercises, not only introducing them to unfamiliar beliefs and practices but often involving them in mental or ethical problems. Other sleuths provide their readers directions for hobbies such as cooking, quilting, or needlework. Many novels even include recipes, quilting templates, and needlework patterns.

The key elements in novels are action, setting, plot, tone, and characters. In amateur sleuth novels, the mystery is an intellectual puzzle, and the action is limited to the kind of crimes that might take place in neighborhoods or small towns. Victims are poisoned, bludgeoned, or shot, but there are no terrorist attacks or drive-by shootings. Settings may be modern or medieval, most frequently British or American. Some readers enjoy reading about familiar settings, and other readers consider these novels a substitute for travel books. Fans of amateur sleuth series are likely to be relatively forgiving about plot repetition; in fact plots frequently become almost indistinguishable. Clearly these elements may add to reader appeal, but they are not the primary reason amateur sleuth fans choose this genre.

Overall, the tone of amateur sleuth novels is essentially optimistic. Readers can retreat from the daily news into a world of meaning and universal order, where ultimately the forces of good prevail, and villains are unmasked and punished. Cases are resolved; there are no so-called cold cases. In addition, these novels give their readers reassurance about human nature; friends intervene to rescue sleuths, and even the most brutal villains usually are shown to be psychologically impaired, not totally evil.

The primary appeal of amateur sleuth novels lies in the personalities of the sleuths. Amateur sleuths possess primarily positive qualities, along with enough quirks and character flaws to make them believably human. Amateur sleuths must resemble people whom readers know, such as business associates, friends, or family members, or persons whom readers would like to know.

CONVENTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AMATEUR SLEUTHS

One characteristic of all amateur sleuths is independence of thought. The sleuths may lack financial independence or their situations may make indepen-

dent action difficult, but they always think for themselves. Amateur sleuths possess a strong ethical sense and show respect for conventional views, but although they approach others politely, they refuse to be cowed by authority. Generally, they trust their instincts about people and situations, and failure to do so often leads them to peril as the culprit tries to exploit some area of vulnerability, either physical weakness, personal insecurity, a checkered past, or concern for a child or a close family member.

Amateur sleuths usually get involved in mysteries for one of two reasons. The first is that they may simply be at the wrong place at the wrong time and need to have their own names cleared after they are unjustly accused of crimes. The second reason for their involvement is their need to investigate to win the release of friends from jail. Amateur sleuths have faith in their own knowledge of human nature, especially within their own families or restricted social groups. Consequently, these sleuths exhibit loyalty to friends, believing them innocent of whatever charges are leveled against them. Although amateur sleuths often employ skills developed from their occupations or other life experiences, their success actually results from their own personality traits. They notice discrepancies and persist in asking questions, never settling for the easy answers. Polite as well as inquisitive, they know when to let people talk, and they gather information from even the most innocuous conversations. At times, the sleuths simply stumble on solutions to crimes. Often these cases place the sleuths in physical jeopardy. In such situations, sleuths must use their wits in order to escape from danger and alert legal authorities. However, their friends occasionally must come to their rescue.

Charmaine Allmon Mosby

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ARMCHAIR DETECTIVES

When Edgar Allan Poe began writing mystery stories during the 1840's, he not only inadvertently created the template for a new literary genre—detective fiction—but he also introduced the first armchair detective, C. Auguste Dupin. Dupin solves crimes that the police cannot. In “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” (1842), set in Paris but based upon an actual murder near New York City, Dupin obtains his information from newspaper accounts. The story is made up of summaries of those articles by Dupin's housemate, who serves as his chronicler, and Dupin's commentary and conclusions. This first armchair detective and his descendants gather information primarily at second hand, rather than through personal observation. They succeed

by using their intellects, intuition, and logical reasoning powers, which Poe called ratiocination, to deduce solutions. Sedentary chaps, armchair detectives rarely visit crime scenes or interview witnesses and suspects themselves. Unlike their descendants, however, Dupin and his chronicler are undeveloped and shadowy figures, although Dupin's unnamed, loyal amanuensis clearly has limited intellect and imagination.

In a footnote to “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” Poe writes that the story

was composed at a distance from the scene of the atrocity, and with no other means of investigation than the newspapers afforded. Thus much escaped the writer of which he could have availed himself had he been upon the spot and visited the localities.

Early in the story, Dupin's housemate and chronicler says that he “procured, at the Prefecture, a full report of all the evidence elicited,” along with copies of every newspaper containing “any decisive information in regard to this sad affair.” After the two men review the news reports, Dupin asks his unnamed friend to check the validity of affidavits while he examines the newspapers “more generally than you have done.” His associate, however, fails to see the object of Dupin's efforts.

BARONESS ORCZY

Not until half a century later did another writer utilize Poe's armchair detective prototype. Between 1901 and 1925, Baroness Emmuska Orczy's Old Man in the Corner appeared in thirty-eight tales. Her unnamed sleuth passes his time in a London tearoom, where Polly Burton, a novelist-turned-newspaperwoman, often sees him. Described as “timid and nervous as he fidgeted incessantly with a piece of string,” the old man gleans his knowledge of crime cases mainly from newspaper accounts and recalls facts and dialogue with amazing precision. His analyses for skeptical Polly are in the Dupin and Sherlock Holmes tradition, focusing upon minutia that the police miss. He works cases backward until, through ratiocination and intu-



The first illustrated edition of Edgar Allan Poe's works, published in London in 1851, had this picture of the body of Marie Rogêt being fished from the river. Auguste Dupin learns of her discovery from reading police reports and newspaper accounts.

ition, he arrives at solutions. He states, “There is no such thing as a mystery in connection with any crime, provided that intelligence is brought to bear upon its investigation.”

Most of the cases that the Old Man shares with Polly are set in Victorian and Edwardian London. He tells Polly that money is the key to nine criminal cases out of ten. In “The Lisson Grove Mystery,” a young woman and her boyfriend murder and dismember her father to get his recently inherited estate. In “The Mysterious Death on the Underground Railway,” a destitute husband poisons his wealthy wife. In “The York Mystery,” the Old Man concludes that a doting wife has killed her husband’s blackmailer, though the crime remains, as Polly thankfully reports, “a mystery to the police and the public.” The conventional methods of the police are inadequate when confronted with the criminals about whom the Old Man tells, and he gloats that crime interests him “only when it resembles a clever game of chess” in which all the intricate moves lead to the checkmating of the antagonist.

The Old man empathizes with criminals who are “clever and astute enough to lead our entire police force by the nose.” Although the guilty often are tried in Orczy’s stories, there is typically inadequate evidence to convict them. In “The Mysterious Death in Percy Street,” the Old Man obliquely suggests to Polly the source of his disdain for the police. Mrs. Owen, the elderly caretaker of artist studios, is found dead in her flat after withdrawing her savings from a bank. A young man who had befriended her is charged with murder but released when he establishes an alibi. The case is left unsolved, though suspicion falls on her irresponsible nephew, who sought money from her before disappearing. The story ends with Polly concluding that the Old Man himself is Bill Owen, who years earlier took advantage of a fortuitous accident to bring about his aunt’s death and steal her money. However, before she can confirm her suspicion, the Old Man disappears, and Polly never sees him again.

Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, a contemporary of Orczy’s Old Man, is as cerebral as any armchair detective and often functions like one. However, he is primarily a man of action, as the very title *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) suggests. If Doyle



Polly Burton interviews the Old Man in the Corner in a story Baroness Orczy published in The Royal Magazine in 1901.

had chosen as his sleuth Sherlock’s older brother Mycroft, who was as indolent as he was brilliant, the mysteries he wrote would be of the armchair detective type. The popularity of Doyle’s novels and stories and those of Orczy encouraged others to write crime fiction, but most of the other writers’ stories do not feature armchair detectives. The type was probably not more popular because sedentary detectives, more receivers than seekers, have inherent limitations. Armchair detectives rely on others for help, static settings offer few opportunities for action, and the formula makes it difficult to generate suspense over the greater length of a novel. These limitations help explain why there are more short stories than novels with armchair detectives and why novels with armchair detectives often stray beyond the traditional boundaries of the form.

AGATHA CHRISTIE AND OTHERS

Agatha Christie was among those who, in the wake of Holmes and Orczy, wrote about armchair detec-

tives. Her armchair sleuth is Miss Jane Marple of the bucolic English village St. Mary Mead. In *The Thirteen Problems* (also called *The Tuesday Club Murders*), a 1932 collection, Marple sits by her fireplace knitting—recalling Orczy's Old Man sitting and knotting string—while various friends describe cases of murder, smuggling, and other diversions from their experiences. After a worldly professional vainly attempts to solve a crime, the old spinster draws parallels between a present problem and things from the past, considers suspects—guided by her belief that human nature is unchanging—and arrives at solutions.

Christie's second attempt at an armchair detective appears in a 1934 volume of twelve stories, *Parker Pyne Investigates* (*Mr. Parker Pyne, Detective* in the United States). A "happiness consultant" or Miss Lonelyhearts, Pyne offers his services as a detective through newspaper advertisements. After listening to clients' woes, he turns to a stable of helpmates for assistance in restoring their happiness, jewels, or whatever they have lost.

Anthony Berkeley's 1929 novel *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, an expansion of his story "The Avenging Chance," is a memorable example of armchair detection that John Dickson Carr included in his list of the ten best detective novels of all time in a 1946 essay. Similar in form to Christie's *The Thirteen Problems*, Berkeley's novel features the six amateur sleuths of the Crime Circle, one of whom is Berkeley's detective Roger Sheringham. While talking about a murder case that Scotland Yard cannot solve, they review motives, develop theories, and finally reveal the least likely suspect as the perpetrator.

From the 1920's through the 1960's, British author John Rhode wrote dozens of novels and some stories starring Dr. Lancelot Priestley, a brilliant scientist to whom Scotland Yard friends and others bring cases. He is aided by his secretary, Harold Merefield, who "could be trusted to ferret out the facts without which Dr. Priestley very rarely moved far," as Rhode says in *The Claverton Affair* (1933). Indeed, it is while reviewing Merefield's notes that Priestley happens upon the solution to the mystery in that novel. As if he were playing chess, Priestley reduces everything, as he puts it, "to its simplest and most logical terms," guided by

the belief that the greatest mistake detectives can make is forming their theories too early and then skewing new facts to fit their preconceptions.

An American contemporary of Rhode, Anthony Boucher, also created an armchair detective. His first novel, *The Case of the Seven of Calvary* (1937), has John Ashwin, a professor of Sanskrit at the University of California, solve a series of campus murders in the classic armchair detective manner. With a graduate student who is a Dr. Watson-like narrator as a central character and Ashwin's foil, Ashwin lists clues, offers playful digressions into scholarly byways, and includes a narrative pause to challenge readers in the manner of Ellery Queen. The novel seems almost a parody of the genre. At the same time it is a seriously conceived and developed whodunit, beginning with narrator Martin Lamb promising "nothing irrelevant and everything relevant. This shall be a model of fair play." When Lamb brings Ashwin newspaper accounts of a murder, the professor asks "Now just what is it you want me to do? Play detective with you?" After Lamb reviews what he knows about the case, Ashwin says, "let us begin, in the conventional manner of detective fiction, with that immortal trinity: Motive, Means, and Opportunity." This deliberate pattern informs Ashwin's progress throughout the case, as Lamb regularly brings him up to date. Ashwin prods Lamb on facts through Socratic dialogue, presents him with a detailed time line of the case, and urges him take new directions. At the end, Lamb confesses to a friend, "We knew everything; it just happened that Ashwin was the only man in Berkeley who could piece it together." Only in the conventional assembly scene—a traditional conclusion in whodunits—does Ashwin meet all the players. He then reviews the double murder case, confesses his missteps along the way, and points the finger of guilt. In a coda, Lamb mimics Holmes's Watson by tantalizingly promising other examples of Ashwin's detection skills in the case of the Maskeleyne cipher and an odd business of the Angel's Flight. However, Boucher never wrote another Ashwin story.

REX STOUT'S NERO WOLFE

Another armchair detective of the 1920's and 1930's was Vincent Starrett's Chicago bookstore owner

George Washington Troxell, who appeared in stories such as “Too Many Sleuths” (1927). Like Boucher’s Ashwin, Troxell is an obese man who usually is ensconced in an oversized chair when a local police reporter, Fred Dellabough, comes to him with problems. Troxell thinks up possible solutions and sends Della-

bough in search of supportive evidence. However, many of Troxell’s ideas prove to be wrong, so Dellabough goes on many futile errands. Troxell and Dellabough may be the prototypes for Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin. Wolfe is another sedentary fat man, and Goodwin is his hyperactive assistant and chronicler in Rex Stout’s quintessential armchair detective novels.

Beginning with *Fer-de-Lance* in 1934, Stout wrote more than seventy novels and novellas about the successes of his rotund sleuth, who rarely leaves his Manhattan townhouse. While Wolfe meets clients and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship with the police, narrator Goodwin functions as Wolfe’s legs. By having his assistant play a major role in each novel, Stout finesses the inherently static nature of the armchair detective genre. In effect, he combines a largely cerebral whodunit form with another popular type, the hard-boiled detective. Goodwin becomes romantically involved with women, occasionally gets in fights, physically restrains suspects, and generally is the antithesis of his inactive boss, who eschews physical contact with others. A self-described office boy, Goodwin is superb at following instructions but leaves the thinking to his boss. Indeed, when Wolfe is ready to wrap up a case, Goodwin generally remains in the dark about its resolution and often even seems indifferent to his employer’s solution. Even with hyperactive Goodwin on hand, the constraints of armchair detection are such that Stout occasionally moves Wolfe from his normal milieu. In *Some Buried Caesar* (1938), the action occurs in upstate New York, where Wolfe goes to show his prize orchids. He is involved in a car wreck and happens upon a double murder case.

John Dickson Carr, best known for locked-room mysteries featuring Londoner Dr. Gideon Fell, also wrote armchair detective novels. Similar to Ashwin, Troxell, and Wolfe, Fell is an oversized, highly educated eccentric. In *The Blind Barber* (1934), whodunit writer Henry Morgan tells Fell about the strange events that occurred during an ocean voyage from New York. The first half of the book constitutes Morgan’s narrative. This is followed by an interlude of several pages in which Fell makes some observations and lists eight clues that Morgan overlooked. After

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

The classic armchair detective is Nero Wolfe. Not only does Wolfe rarely leave his New York house, but he also rarely ventures as far downstairs as his front door, as he is doing in this illustration by Carl Mueller for The American Magazine’s 1940 publication of the short story “The Bitter End.”

seven more chapters, Fell offers eight additional clues and then identifies the murderer. In sum, Carr's armchair detective is present for only a small part of the novel, framing the crime narrative and bringing it to a conclusion.

YAFFE AND ASIMOV

Reminiscent of Orczy and Christie are James Yaffe's eight "Mom" stories, which he published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* between 1952 and 1968. Yaffe used an unvarying formula: A New York police detective and his wife have dinner with his mother every Friday night, during which the mother invariably asks "So, Davie, how is work going these days?" After the detective tells her about a current crime, she asks three or four probing questions and proceeds to solve the mystery, not only through her uncanny ability to isolate clues from her son's narrative, but also by drawing parallels between a present problem and her own experiences, much as Christie's Miss Marple does. In his introduction to *My Mother, the Detective* (1997), a collection of the stories, Yaffe explains that when planning his first story, he made a choice:

Mom would be an armchair detective. She would never visit the scene of a crime, grill a suspect, or, God forbid, look at a corpse. All her inquiries into murder would take place at her own dinner table. . . . Violent crime is outside the experience of most of us . . . but we are all familiar with the venal landlord, the crooked TV repairman, the good-for-nothing son-in-law, the beaten down wife, all these everyday morally imperfect types that Mom uses as analogies in solving her son Dave's murder cases.

Yaffe also follows this pattern in four Mom novels that he wrote two decades after his first short story.

Hewing closely to the traditional template are Isaac Asimov's Black Widowers and Union Club stories of the 1970's and 1980's. These stories are formulaic narratives involving monthly meetings of a men's club at which mysteries are introduced, discussed, and solved. At each dinner gathering, a guest introduces a mystery that the six Black Widowers attempt to solve. When they are stumped, their waiter Henry comes up

with the solution. In "Yes, but Why?," the sixty-third story in the series, Asimov departs from his formula by having Henry himself present the problem; however, the development of the narrative is otherwise unchanged. The professional, well-educated men ask probing questions and hit upon the solution, but as the story's title suggests, identifying the motive is the focus of the story. Once again, Henry—as in the other stories—provides enlightenment.

VARIATIONS ON ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE STORIES

An example of the armchair detective genre that is both nonformulaic and memorable is Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951), in which her Scotland Yard inspector, Alan Grant, is confined to a hospital bed with a broken leg. Grant becomes interested in the historical mystery of whether King Richard III was responsible for the 1480 murders of his nephews, the princes in the Tower of London. Assisted by an American researcher, Grant accumulates evidence, develops theories, and resolves to his satisfaction the historical controversy about the king's culpability. Colin Dexter uses the same gimmick in *The Wench Is Dead* (1989), in which temporarily bedridden Inspector Morse becomes intrigued by a nineteenth century murder, starts to doubt the verdict, and enlists his colleague Sergeant Lewis and a librarian to help him investigate the case.

In a number of novels and short stories that often are described as thrillers, Jeffrey Deaver adds a new twist to the armchair detective genre: Lincoln Rhyme. A feisty former forensics chief of the New York Police Department and a nationally known criminalist, Rhyme is a quadriplegic who can move only his head, shoulders, and left ring finger. Introduced in *The Bone Collector* (1997), Rhyme is confined to his bed—though he makes rare forays in a specially equipped wheelchair—and assists his former police colleagues by reviewing the case records and laboratory reports they bring to his room and guiding them, by telephone, as they search crime scenes. His room is better outfitted with scientific equipment than most small police departments. He relies extensively upon the legwork of policewoman Amelia Sachs. Because of Deaver's creative concept of the armchair detective, his novels also are prime examples of the police procedural genre of the Ed McBain

type as well as forensic thrillers in the Patricia Cornwell manner, and rivals both for the amount and sophistication of technical detail, characterization, suspense, and surprising plot twists.

Although not as popular as other whodunit types, armchair detective stories constitute a historically important subgenre whose elements are present in much of crime fiction. Further, the label “armchair detective” has come to refer to mystery readers who attempt to solve crimes along with their favorite fictional sleuths. That use of the term even inspired the title of a magazine, *The Armchair Detective*, which Allen J. Hubin launched in 1967.

Gerald H. Strauss

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HARD-BOILED DETECTIVES

“Hard-boiled” is an ambiguous term in detective and mystery fiction. From a historical perspective, it indicates the school of mystery writing spawned in the United States after World War I, partly in reaction to the English, or classical, form of the mystery genre, and partly in keeping with the literary movements of the era. In a purely descriptive sense, hard-boiled describes the terse style of writing and violent plots identified with the postwar school of detective literature, a style still often used in stories of the mystery genre. Some of the very best and some of the very worst mysteries and detective tales ever written have been works of hard-boiled fiction. To understand how that style of writing was developed, it is necessary briefly to consider the genre’s origins.

BIRTH OF THE DETECTIVE AND THE COZY MYSTERY

As many critics have noted, the modern detective story has numerous antecedents. However, its most essential origins are in a trio of stories written by the American author Edgar Allan Poe during the 1840’s. Poe introduced his genius detective C. Auguste Dupin in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841); Dupin is not a police officer but a gentleman of some means and a scholar; he solves crimes because of his personal interest in the cases, as in “The Purloined Letter,” or because of his intellectual curiosity, as in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Some eighteen years after Poe introduced the trope of deductive reasoning, or “ratiocination,” the English author Wilkie Collins published *The Woman in White* (1859); he later followed it with *The Moonstone* (1868). The latter novel, in its portrayal of a large gathering of well-to-do suspects and two police detectives who would come to represent mainstays of the genre—the brilliant detective and the bumbling incompetent—introduces many of the elements that would form the English detective novel.

The popularization of detective stories can be traced to Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the genius detective Sherlock Holmes. Doyle introduced Holmes—and his narrator, Dr. Watson—in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and

would go on to write three more brief novels and fifty-six short stories about them. Doyle’s Holmes and the patterns of his narratives owe a debt to Poe’s Dupin stories: Both have genius detectives, less skillful narrators, and less-than-competent police forces. The English, or cozy, detective story became further formalized with the work of such twentieth century English writers as G. K. Chesterton, and his Father Brown stories; Agatha Christie and her Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple stories; and Dorothy L. Sayers, the creator of gentleman sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey. American mystery writers such as S. S. Van Dine, the creator of gentlemanly dilettante detective Philo Vance, quickly embraced the cozy formula as well.

Each of these authors’ novels typically followed the conventions established earlier by Collins and Doyle. The crimes are almost always “whodunit” cases, and their detectives rarely deal with known criminals, who must be apprehended as opposed to discovered. Their detectives are rarely full-time policemen or members of various professional detective agencies (Poirot is a notable exception). Stories and plots are essentially conservative, unquestioning of the British class system, notions of right or wrong, or ways of life. Settings for the mysteries are typically pastoral, often on ancestral estates, and crimes are rarely perpetrated by commonplace career criminals for anything so base as passion or so prosaic as simple theft. The victims—and often the criminals—are members of the aristocracy. Violence is understated and usually does not occur on the pages of the stories. Stories are often solved in set-piece denouements, at which all the suspects are gathered by the detectives, who disqualify one suspect after the other, until the guilty parties are identified. These classical, detective stories are, in a sense, extensions of English novels of manners. Novels in the English, or classical, detective subgenre are often called “cozies.” However, scholars differ over whether this designation owes its origins to the mildness of the stories’ crimes and criminals or to the lace serving mats placed under tea services that so often appear in the novels.

By the time of Sayers's and Van Dine's heyday, during the middle to late 1920's, the formula parameters of the cozy subgenre were strictly demarcated. The better cozy writers tended to subvert or toy with the formula, but scores of lesser writers were comfortable with the subgenre's strictures. Hard-boiled detective writing arose partly in rebellion against the stolid and sturdy form of detective writing that was overwhelmingly popular during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

LITERARY TRENDS AND WORLD WAR I

The hard-boiled reaction against the cozy formula might be attributed to the time when it arose as much as it is to any conscious decisions to break with the established formulas. Naturalism was the foremost literary trend in American fiction through the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, the term is misleading in that literary naturalism is not so much about the natural world as it is about using concepts familiar in the study of natural science, such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, to examine subjects in literary form. Part of Darwinism and natural science is examining the impact of the environment upon the subject; as a result, naturalist novels were often critiques of society and humankind's social environments. For example, Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) tells of a young "fallen woman" who is forced into a life of prostitution in New York. Frank Norris's novel *McTeague* (1899) is about a working-class man who tries to overcome his social class and becomes a murderer. Similarly, many early hard-boiled novels were equally willing to critique the social milieu and challenge the social order.

The Western world was turned upside by World War I, which raged from 1914 to 1918. The war had many characteristics that distinguished it from earlier conflicts, such as its sheer scale, the huge numbers of combat fatalities, and the widespread postwar expectation that the war's unsatisfactory settlement would lead to another big war within a generation or so—something that did, indeed, happen. In the aftermath of this traumatic event, many young writers found the safe and comfortable world portrayed by earlier authors to be alien and strange. Often grouped together,

despite their great individual differences, as *modernists*, some writers, such as Irish novelist James Joyce and American poets Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, expressed their break with the old worlds stylistically. Eliot, however, also showed the disillusionment of the postwar generation in his famous poem *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. These themes of disillusionment and disenfranchisement also appeared in the novels of such American writers as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway.

The hard-boiled writers who gained prominence during the 1920's were of this same generation of postwar writers who were so famously dubbed the Lost Generation by the American writer Gertrude Stein. Within the United States, the postwar period also saw enactment of the Volstead Act in 1920, which outlawed the sale of alcohol across the nation. The resulting Prohibition era soon created a nation of speakeasy saloons and amateur bootleggers. The large profits to be made from selling illegal alcohol during Prohibition fostered the development of organized crime and made possible ruthless gangsters such as Al Capone. Hard-boiled detective writers were attempting to accurately reflect the world they perceived around them.

BLACK MASK AND OTHER PULPS

Mystery fiction was an important part of pulp magazine publishing, so named for the cheap and pulpy quality of the paper used in the magazines. One of the more important turn-of-the-twentieth-century pulps, *The Strand Magazine*, which was printed in England from 1891 to 1950, published many of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, as well as later works by Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie. The pulps were also home to other genres, such as romance, Westerns, men's adventure stories, and horror and gothic fiction, all of which flourished in both the pre- and post-World War I eras.

One of the most important pulp magazines in the history of the detective genre, *Black Mask* was founded in 1920 by the famous columnist H. L. Mencken and editor George Jean Nathan to help finance their struggling arts and lifestyle magazine, *Smart Set* (1900-1930). After only eight months, they sold *Black Mask* at a profit. Initially, *Black Mask* published cozies, as well

as romances, Westerns, and adventure stories. However, editor George W. Sutton, Jr., decided upon changing the magazine's direction by emphasizing hard-boiled stories. After he left the magazine in 1924, his successors Phil Cody (1924-1926) and, most famously, Joseph T. "Cap" Shaw (1926-1936) continued to develop the distinctive hard-boiled flavor of *Black Mask*. Shaw was particularly important to both the long-standing success and reputation of the magazine and the development of the hard-boiled subgenre. He stressed that stories should be both plausible and realistic, that violence should serve a purpose in the narrative and not be simply gratuitous, and that writing should be clear and terse. Moreover, he thought that stories about crimes motivated by human nature were more entertaining than "whodunits" or complicated puzzles.

The birth of hard-boiled detective literature might fairly be traced to *Black Mask*, and more specifically to its December, 1922, issue. That issue contained Carroll John Daly's first story, "The False Burton Combs," and the first crime story of Dashiell Hammett (writing as Peter Collinson) "The Road Home." In June, 1923, Daly introduced his two-fisted detective Race Williams in "Knights of the Open Palm." In October of that same year, *Black Mask* published "Arson Plus" by Hammett (still writing as Collinson), who introduced the character he would later write about most often: the Continental Op.

CARROLL JOHN DALY

Although Dashiell Hammett is generally acknowledged as the founder of hard-boiled detective literature, the contributions of Carroll John Daly should not be underestimated. Daly's stories were probably less influenced by broad literary trends than those of Hammett. Although Daly's writing contrasted starkly with the cozy mysteries written by Doyle, Van Dine, Chesterton, and Christie in many ways, this is at least in part because his work stemmed from a different literary tradition. Daly's detective Race Williams owes much more of his persona and methods to the pulp adventure and Western heroes that preceded him than he does to earlier detectives such as Sherlock Holmes. Williams rarely solves a crime through deductive reasoning. Instead, he typically takes up his pistols and simply goes

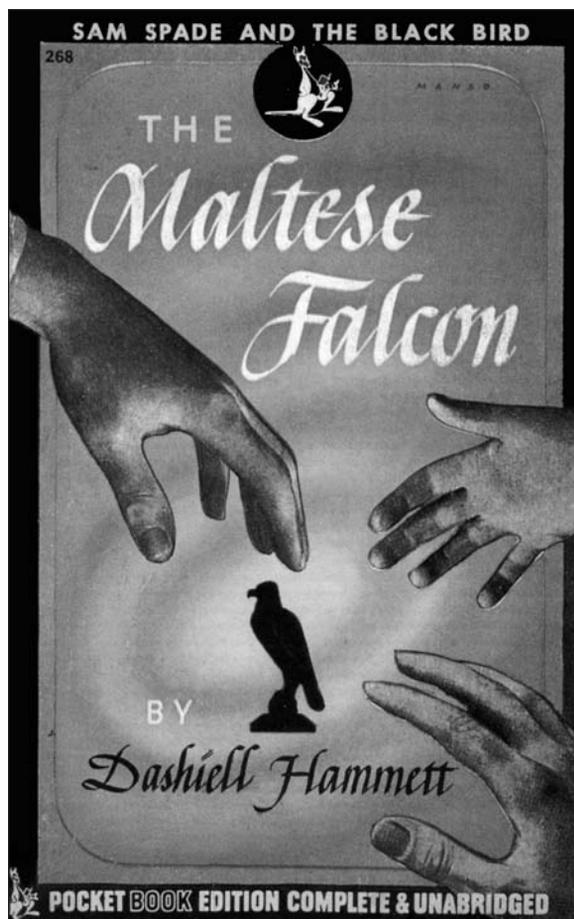
after the most likely suspects. Unlike Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and Van Dine's Philo Vance, Williams is a professional private investigator who is paid for his investigations. At the same time, at least part of his motivation stems from the adrenalin thrills he gains from hunting criminals. Boastful and supremely confident, Williams has no compunction about gunning down adversaries. Much of the harsh violence associated with hard-boiled detective writing has its origins in Daly's stories, even if his depictions are not always as realistic as would eventually be true of the form. Like his Western and adventure hero progenitors, Daly's Williams is typically protective toward women; his ire greatly raised when they are endangered.

Daly was not the same caliber of writer as Hammett and Chandler. Dialogue in his stories often falls flat, and his characters have a tendency to present their expositions clumsily and often. Nevertheless, his stories are fast paced and packed with action. Sales of *Black Mask* magazine rose whenever he published in its pages, and his novels sold extremely well during the 1920's and 1930's. Daly published more than thirty stories in *Black Mask*, and more than twenty in *Dime Detective*, which was published from 1932 until 1953. He also serialized six Race Williams novels and eventually published seventeen books. In Williams's immense capability and autonomous nature, later super-competent and violent hard-boiled detectives such as Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer and Robert B. Parker's Spenser find their origin.

DASHIELL HAMMETT

More than any other writer, Samuel Dashiell Hammett may be said to have originated the hard-boiled form. A World War I veteran (and later a World War II vet), Hammett actually worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency for two years before World War I and for a year afterward. Forced into convalescence by tuberculosis, he turned to writing to earn some income. After selling a few humorous pieces and literary stories, he turned to detective fiction. Although he initially wrote under pseudonyms, he soon began using his real name, dropping the Samuel.

The character who appeared most frequently in Hammett's stories is his unnamed Continental Op, an



operative for the Continental Detective Agency. Based loosely on a superior whom Hammett had known in the Pinkerton Detective Agency, the Op differs greatly from the such gentlemen sleuths as Lord Peter Wimsey and S. S. Philo Vance. Short, balding, and overweight, he uses street slang and is comfortable with the criminal language and is decidedly working-class. Although not afraid of violence, he prefers to avoid it; his goal is always to do his job, not to gain revenge, win the girl, or even necessarily see justice done. Above all, he is a professional. His very namelessness is, in a way, indicative of his professionalism, as his personal life never intrudes into his stories. He uses deductive reasoning but rarely solves crimes with his deductive prowess alone. Rather, he depends on careful methodology, interrogation techniques, infiltration of his opponents' organizations, persistence,

and when in need, carefully orchestrated chaos to achieve his ends. Hammett published some thirty-six stories about the Op, almost all in *Black Mask* magazine. He also published his five novels in serial form in *Black Mask*; his first two novels, *Red Harvest* (1927-1928) and *The Dain Curse* (1928), were about the Continental Op.

In Hammett's Continental Op stories, readers find a definitive break with the cozy formula. Most of the criminals in these stories are practicing members of the underworld, not slumming members of the aristocracy. They commit crimes for money or passion and rarely for more obscure reasons. Identifying culprits is often less complicated than actually apprehending them. Many of Hammett's stories and novels dwell in moral ambiguity. Furthermore, Hammett sympathized with leftist causes and often inserted implicit criticisms of corrupt capitalistic society in his writings.

Hammett's third novel, one of the most famous detective novels ever published, *The Maltese Falcon*, was serialized in *Black Mask* in 1929 and was published in hardback by Alfred A. Knopf in 1930. Sam Spade, Hammett's detective in that story, is morally evasive, a wise-cracker, and tough. In many ways, he is the quintessential private eye. The book has been filmed three times; the third and most important film, John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), starring Humphrey Bogart as Spade, helped begin the film noir movement and established for many viewers the archetype of hard-boiled private investigators. Like the Op, Spade adheres to a code of conduct, as detectives are defined by their ability to live up to their own codes.

Some critics have pointed out that a number of Hammett's plots are as unrealistic as those of the earlier cozy stories. For example, within his stories, characters are killed by knives thrown from great distances; leaders of cults try to commit human sacrifice; criminal gangs plot against, and kill, one another over a legendary jewel-encrusted statuette; and a large gang assaults an entire seaside town. However, it is not Hammett's plots that set him apart from other writers, nor his more realistic depictions of criminal behavior and dialogue. What distinguishes from both cozy detective writers and the boisterous boastfulness of writ-

ers such as Carroll John Daly is his style. Hammett's lines are sparse, terse, and understated; his prose style similar to that of Ernest Hemingway, who began publishing during the same year as Hammett. Readers are rarely privy to the thoughts inside his characters' heads, even when Hammett writes in the third person, as he does in *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Glass Key* (1931). As Joseph T. Shaw worked to formalize the conventions of what he thought hard-boiled detective literature should be in *Black Mask* magazine, he held up Hammett's prose as a guide to style.

RAYMOND CHANDLER

In Raymond Chandler Shaw found the next great writer for *Black Mask*. Raised partly in England, a veteran of World War I, and classically educated, Chandler turned to writing after failing to succeed as an executive for an oil company. Less prolific than most of his contemporaries, he did not publish his first short story, "Blackmailers Don't Shoot," until 1933, when he was forty-five. While publishing nineteen stories over the next six years, Chandler made use of a number of private eye characters such as Ted Carmady, John Dalmas, and Mallory. He would rework some of these narratives into his seven novels, and more important, rework these early private eyes into the character who—along with Hammett's Spade—contributed most to the archetype of the hard-boiled private eye: Philip Marlowe.

Debuting in 1939's *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe is simultaneously a more cynical and a more romantic narrator than Hammett's Continental Op. For example, early in *The Big Sleep* Marlowe examines a picture of a questing knight in the parlor of a rich client's home; in *The Little Sister* (1949) a woman client is named Quest; in *Farewell My Lovely* (1940), a woman client is named Grayle (or Grail). The connections should be clear to readers: Marlowe is the newest incarnation of the questing knight, challenged by the modern dragons of well-connected gangsters and entitled millionaires in a corrupt urban world.

Although Chandler's plots are, at times, famously convoluted, the interactions among characters are realistic. After shooting a pair of villains in the first novel, Marlowe never kills anyone else in his remaining six novels (however, he does resort to violence in the four

short stories about him published separately from the novels). Although in some ways Chandler's method is influenced by Hammett's, he develops what is often considered the most literary prose style in all of detective literature. Understated at times, humorous, cynical, incisive, poetic in its restrained descriptiveness, Chandler elevates the hard-boiled form to the level of literary art.

Like Hammett's Op and Sam Spade, Marlowe is not particularly brilliant, though obviously gifted. His experience and insights into human failings often help to inform his detective work. Moreover, like the Op, he is single-minded and tough when it comes to pursuing his cases. He is also governed by an internal code, one even more exacting than those ruling Hammett's characters. Despite his cynical shell, at heart he is determined to see truth and justice win out. In the same way that Hammett often used urban San Francisco for his settings, all the Marlowe novels are set in greater Los Angeles.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HARD-BOILED STYLE

From the writings of Daly, Hammett, Chandler, and other pulp writers of the 1920's and 1930's, it is possible to tease out the basic characteristics of the original hard-boiled detective story. Other writers whose works contribute to this analysis include Raoul Whitfield, Frederick Nebel, Jonathan Latimer, and Brett Halliday.

Stories by these writers are almost always set within large urban environments that are run by corrupt institutions (Hammett's *Red Harvest* is a notable exception). Their protagonists are always highly individualistic and often lone operators, such as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. Even when the heroes are members of organizations, they typically do their work in idiosyncratic and autonomous ways. In the tradition of Hammett and Chandler's detectives, later hard-boiled protagonists are typically laconic, understated, and unflappable wisecrackers. Their prime virtues are not preternatural powers of deduction and reasoning but single-minded persistence and the toughness to withstand the stress and violence that may beset them in pursuit of their cases. Often, the cases they initially undertake to investigate turn out to be something like red

herrings; in pursuit of the truth, they must dig deeper than their clients may wish them to go, sometimes at great cost to the detectives themselves.

Violence always plays an important part in hard-boiled narratives. Not only are murders portrayed more gruesomely, more realistically, and more intimately than in cozy mysteries, but the detectives themselves are often violent persons. Some hard-boiled private eyes—notably Daly’s Race Williams and Mickey Spillane’s Mike Hammer—relish their ability to visit violence upon adversaries. Others—notably the Continental Op—fear that too much violence may cause them to go “blood-simple” and become the same as the criminals they seek to combat.

Finally, narrative voice and style are important to hard-boiled tales. Often, but by no means always, the stories are narrated in a laconic first-person voice. In the tradition of Hammett and Chandler, and following Joseph T. Shaw’s edicts, the style of these tales is often fast-paced, clipped, and understated. Dialogue is peppered with street slang and police and criminal jargon. Emphasis is rarely placed on the detectives’ personal lives and backgrounds but is instead focused on examining the clients, criminals, and misfits who venture into the detectives’ lives.

WOMEN AS VICTIMS, TEMPRESSES, AND FEMMES FATALES

As a number of critics and scholars have noted, early hard-boiled novels seem to be hyper-masculine in a number of ways, particularly in terms of their violence, masculine codes of honor, and almost masochistic trials of endurance and survival. More troubling are portrayals of women in these stories. Typically, women in such stories are depicted as victims in need of saviors—such as Merle Davis in Chandler’s *The High Window* (1942) and Gabrielle Dain Leggett in Hammett’s *The Dain Curse*—or as temptresses trying to lure detectives away from their quests—like Helen Grayle in Chandler’s *Farewell My Lovely* or Dinah Brand in *Red Harvest*.

Quite often, women clients, love interests, or temptresses are revealed to be the villains of the stories. The most famous, perhaps, is Brigid O’Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon*. When French film critics

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Mickey Spillane in 1952, near the start of his writing career.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

writing about film noir during the 1940’s noticed the repetition of the villainous woman motif in American crime and detective films of the period, they dubbed her the *femme fatale*, the deadly woman.

Film scholars have often argued that portrayals of *femmes fatales* are a direct result of masculine unease at the changing role of American women during World War II, when many women left their homes and entered the defense industry and other work areas while men were away at war. This argument ignores the fact that most novels behind films such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *The Big Sleep* (1946), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), and *Double Indemnity* (1944) predated World War II. However, the role of women in society began changing greatly during the years immediately following World War I, thanks to passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote, and the flapper movement of the 1920’s with its inclusion of middle-class women in historically male environments such as nightclubs and saloons.

Interestingly, some feminist critics have argued that although the casting of women in villainous roles in hard-boiled stories is negative, its use is nevertheless better than portraying women simply as victims and sexual objects. The latter are stereotypes that would

persist within the genre, particularly in works such as Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novels. A femme fatale is, if nothing else, an empowered woman.

Since the early 1970's a number of women writers have distinguished themselves as the authors of hard-boiled detective novels. Most notably, Sara Paretsky introduced no-nonsense, tough-talking, and violent V. I. Warshawski in 1982's *Indemnity Only*. Sue Grafton's private eye Kinsey Millhone has narrated more than nineteen novels since first appearing in *A Is for Alibi* during the same year. Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone first appeared in 1977's *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*.

HARD-BOILED CRIME AND GANGSTER STORIES

The initial impetus of hard-boiled detective writing focused on private eyes to such an extent that in 1930 *Black Mask's* editor Joseph T. Shaw felt it necessary to write an explanatory note to justify the magazine's serialization of Hammett's *The Glass Key*, in which gangster Ned Beaumont works as a kind of detective to further his boss's designs. The intensive violence, understated prose, laconic narration, witty dialogue, and immediacy of hard-boiled fiction were all quickly taken up by most writers of crime fiction in general. For that matter, many writers saw no conflict in writing stories that used thieves and gangsters as their protagonists in stories that viewed the detectives, in a sense, from the other side of the tracks.

One of the most accomplished writers of crime novels during this period was James M. Cain. A newspaper journalist who also worked briefly as an editor for *The New Yorker*, Cain moved to Los Angeles and worked sporadically for the film industry. In 1933, he published *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, whose narrator, Frank Chambers, is not a detective by any stretch of the imagination, and does not even seem to be a professional criminal. However, while eating at a roadside diner, he meets the owner's wife, Cora. Wishing to become involved with her, he slowly allows himself to be seduced, until she persuades him to kill her husband. Similarly, Cain's *Double Indemnity* (1936) tells of insurance agent and investigator Walter Huff's conspiring with seductress Phyllis Nirdlinger to kill her wealthy husband. A more capable protagon-

ist than Frank Chambers, Huff is fully aware of the danger in which Phyllis is placing him throughout the narrative.

Stylistically, Cain's novels are hard-boiled in every way. Their prose is lean, and economical; their dialogue is sharp and witty; their violence is immediate and realistic. In a typical Cain story, a femme fatale leads the protagonist astray. Cain also dwells in the world of moral ambiguity common to many hard-boiled detective stories. As the refiner of the hard-boiled crime novel—in contrast to the hard-boiled detective novel—Cain's fiction would have tremendous impact upon later writers such as Jim Thompson, the author of *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) and *After Dark, My Sweet* (1955), and Patricia Highsmith, author of *Strangers on a Train* (1950) and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955).

CROSSOVER NOVELS: COZY AND HARD-BOILED

As soon as the hard-boiled detective story became a recognizable formula by the early 1930's, a number of writers sought to have their literary cake and eat it by merging forms of the cozy mystery with the emerging tropes of the hard-boiled form. Chief among these writers are Erle Stanley Gardner and Rex Stout.

Although Gardner's fictional attorney Perry Mason would become one of the most famous television characters ever created, in his initial incarnation in the 1933 novel *The Case of the Velvet Claws* and through Gardner's next several novels, Gardner drew upon both cozy and hard-boiled formulas. Mason is an attorney, not a private detective, but he employs detective Paul Drake to help him. Mason has to be tough and tenacious, and is not above getting his hands dirty as the novels spiral into hard-boiled levels of violence. On the other hand, Mason's clients are rarely actually criminals, and they are generally not guilty of anything. Moreover, at the ends of cases, the usual suspects are rounded up and the villains are delivered in classic cozy denouements. Later Mason novels show little of their partly hard-boiled origins.

Similarly, Rex Stout's obese detective Nero Wolfe (first appearing in the 1934 novel *Fer-de-Lance*) is very much in the vein of Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes. He does most of his investigating without

leaving his townhouse, he is supremely intelligent and knowledgeable about obscure trivia, and, as required in the cozy formula, he typically resolves cases by summoning handfuls of suspects and disqualifying them, one by one, until the true villains are revealed to the less perceptive police detectives. Rarely career criminals, Wolfe's clients and suspects are usually members of high society who get into trouble when they face seemingly impossible problems. Despite the formulaic pattern of Stout's narratives and plots, however, the stories themselves are narrated in a laconic, humorous first person by his able assistant Archie Goodwin. Goodwin is a direct descendant of Hammett's Continental Op. Like the Op, Goodwin is willing to work around the law in order to satisfy the demands of his employer. Through Wolfe and Goodwin, Stout managed to carry off a balancing act between the two subgenres in more than thirty-three novels and some thirty-nine shorter works.

FROM FILM NOIR TO ROMAN NOIR

Noir, a French word for "dark" or "black," was first used to categorize hard-boiled, black-and-white films by French film critic Nino Frank during the mid-1940's. Although the term was originally applied to American films of the 1940's, many concepts developed in noir criticism, such as the femme fatale, have become a part of the lexicon in discussions of hard-boiled writing. Similarly, bookstores and publishers frequently use "noir" as a synonym for hard-boiled, even when the texts in question have never been filmed or are widely divergent from the early works of hard-boiled detective literature. A number of academic scholars, such as William Marling, have taken to calling hard-boiled writing roman noir.

The form, style, writing, direction, and creation of the great works of film noir are outside the subject of hard-boiled detective fiction. Nevertheless, a brief examination of several landmark films in that genre shows how much the popularity of the hard-boiled subgenre has benefited from its often excellent translations to the screen. Examples of novels that have been made into excellent films noirs include Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, which was filmed by director John Huston in 1941, and *The Glass Key*, which director Stuart Heisler

filmed in 1942. (The same novel was the basis of the somewhat altered *Miller's Crossing*, made by the Coen Brothers in 1990.) Chandler's *The Big Sleep* was filmed by Howard Hawks in 1946; *Farewell My Lovely* was filmed as *Murder, My Sweet* by Edward Dmytryk in 1944. Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was filmed by Tay Garnet in 1946, *Double Indemnity* by Billy Wilder in 1944, and *Mildred Pierce* (1941) in 1945 by Michael Curtiz. Similarly excellent films have been adapted from novels by Ross Macdonald, Cornell Woolrich, and Patricia Highsmith.

POST-WORLD WAR II DEVELOPMENTS

Within a decade or so of its invention, hard-boiled writing was every bit as formulaic as the cozy mysteries against which it had rebelled. Nevertheless, a large number of hard-boiled writers have managed to distinguish themselves. During the 1940's and 1950's, two radically different writers entered the fray. Mickey Spillane who established his vengeful, pistol-packing detective Mike Hammer in such novels as *I, the Jury* (1947) and *Vengeance Is Mine* (1950), is much more a follower of Carroll John Daly than Raymond Chandler. Gone from his novels is the kind of social critique found in Hammett—although Spillane is not fond of the rich. Hammer is something like an all-American supermale. Through more than twenty years, Spillane's novels were immensely popular.

In contrast, Ross Macdonald, a completely different kind of writer, created a lonely, divorced detective in Lew Archer, whose name he took from Spade's murdered partner in *The Maltese Falcon*. Like Chandler's Marlowe, Archer kills a man in the first of his twenty novels, *The Moving Target* (1949). He then does whatever he can to avoid violence in later novels. A high stylist like Chandler, Macdonald brings a humanity and compassion to his detective that would eventually have as much influence on later genre writers as Hammett and Chandler had had.

Another excellent stylist and surprising writer and one of the most original hard-boiled writers during the 1950's was the African American novelist Chester Himes. Himes published a number of literary novels before turning to detective fiction with *For Love of Imabelle* in 1957. His work focuses on two black New

York police detectives, Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones, who often confront racism and intolerance. Their seven novels are collectively titled the Harlem Detective novels.

Occasionally confused with Ross Macdonald because of his surname, novelist John D. MacDonald created an iconoclastic private eye in his beer-swilling, boat-dwelling, athletic, and capable ladies' man Travis McGee, who first appeared in *The Deep Blue Good-bye* (1964). Much like the Hammer and Archer novels, the McGee novels tend to become repetitive in their later iterations. Nevertheless, McGee often manages both to subvert the genre and to pay homage to it simultaneously.

Two of the most important writers in crime fiction of the 1950's and 1960's were masters of the inverted story. The work of Jim Thompson contains all the immediacy, vitality, and violence of essential hard-boiled fiction, even as he uses serial killers and corrupt policemen as his protagonists in novels such as *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) and *Pop 1280* (1964). Patricia Highsmith's obsessive antihero Tom Ripley has become a cult hero. Her work is more densely literary than is common among hard-boiled writing, but her plots are as bloody and unsentimental as anything from the pen of Mickey Spillane.

THE 1970'S AND BEYOND

During the 1940's, readers may have suspected that hard-boiled literature would become too formulaic to last as a subgenre without becoming self-parodying. Certainly many writers have followed in the footsteps of earlier authors without managing to overcome the limitations of the form. However, the genre has grown and developed in ways that *Black Mask* editor Joseph T. Shaw might never have dreamed. For example, the wisecracking banter that is considered intrinsic to the genre reached a kind of apogee in the crime novels of Elmore Leonard, who moved from writing Westerns to crime novels with *The Big Bounce* in 1969. The 1970's also saw the emergence of one of the most enduring hard-boiled detectives since the pulp era with the Robert B. Parker's creation of Spenser. In this character, Parker has merged the wit and downtrodden gallantry of Chandler's Marlowe with the capability and

physical prowess of Race Williams and Mike Hammer.

The predisposition of hard-boiled detectives to live on the seamy side of life has particularly informed the novels of James Crumley, whose books about Milo Milodragovitch and C. W. Sughrue have contained alcohol and cocaine abuse as well as heightened violence. Influenced greatly by Chandler, Crumley's detectives almost always seem to find themselves in conflict with corrupt members of the upper class. Similarly, the detectives and policemen in the novels of James Ellroy have much in common with the criminals that they apprehend. Ellroy's work follows Hammett's in its exploration of violence and moral ambiguity.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, hard-boiled literature began following a trend of reverse migration, infiltrating Great Britain, notably in books by writers such as Ian Rankin and Philip Kerr. Hard-boiled women private detectives have flourished since the 1970's. In addition to authors already discussed, Janet Evanovich has written a number of novels about her smart-alecky bounty hunter Stephanie Plum, whom she introduced in *One for the Money* in 1994. Patricia Cornwell has written mysteries about her medical examiner, Kay Scarpetta, and Kathy Reichs has written novels based around the detective work of forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan.

A number of African American hard-boiled writers have followed in the path of Chester Himes; one of the best, Walter Mosley, has established a popular and critically hailed series with private eye Easy Rawlins, whom he introduced in *Devil in a Blue Dress* in 1990. In addition to ten novels about Rawlings, Mosley has also written a number of other crime novels about Fearless Jones and Socrates Fortlow.

Although hard-boiled writing has typically focused on urban environments since its inception in the pages of *Black Mask*, a number of regional detective novels have gained popularity. One of the most widely regarded and popular of these is James Lee Burke, a literary writer who turned to crime fiction with *The Neon Rain* in 1987. Most of Burke's hard-boiled novels have focused on the exploits of Cajun detective Dave Robicheaux. Burke combines a poetic narrative style, tinged with southern nuances, with the explosive action and violence of early pulp writing. Despite its

filtering into various parts of the mystery landscape, hard-boiled detective writing remains a vital subgenre in the field. Writers such as Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, and Robert Crais continue to reinvent the form during the twenty-first century.

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SHERLOCK HOLMES PASTICHES

In December, 1887, a seminal event in the history of English literature occurred: the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, for it introduced the most popular and imitated character that the world has ever seen—Sherlock Holmes. Its author, Arthur Conan Doyle, went on to write a total of sixty Holmes tales—four novels and fifty-six short stories that came to be regarded as the Holmesian, or Sherlockian, canon. Those sixty tales define the character of Holmes and his friend, colleague, and chronicler, Dr. Watson, and define the methods and skills that have made Holmes stories, in all their various forms, among the most popular books in the world.

However, Doyle has not been the only author to chronicle Sherlock Holmes's adventures. Thousands of stories featuring Holmes and Watson have been written by other authors, as writers throughout the world have attempted to put their own stamp on the saga. From England to America, from Russia to Japan, and across the globe, writers have tried their hands at endowing Holmes with eternal life. As novelist Vincent Starrett once said, Holmes is a man "who never lived and so can never die." His continuing existence is the realm of the pastiche.

The term pastiche encompasses the concepts of both parody and homage. Although Holmes has been subject to both, most pastiches fit the latter category. They are attempts to tell tales as Doyle would have told them with all the respect that he did. They run the gamut from short stories to novels to plays and films. Their characters include not only Holmes and Watson but historical figures, peripheral characters from the Holmesian canon itself, and invented characters who are given a new role in the Holmesian world. They exist in all countries, in all classes, and in all time.

Sherlock Holmes is a character who is so well known and so well portrayed by Doyle that other writers have no need to reinvent him or give him a personality. He is a known commodity whose keen powers of observation and attention to detail, determination to solve cases, and unmatched skill at deductive reasoning (though most logicians would call what he does inductive reasoning) define the man. Even readers not fa-

miliar with Doyle's work are familiar with Holmes. He has become a cultural legend. A principal part of that legend is the antagonism between Holmes and his archenemy, Professor Moriarty. The professor's pervasiveness in pastiches is somewhat surprising: Of the sixty canonical stories written by Doyle, Moriarty appears in only one.

GENERAL STORIES

Many early pastiches can be consigned to the realm of parody. For example, an early series, written by R. C. Lehmann under the pseudonym of Cunnin Toil, recounts the adventures of a detective named Picklock Holes and his friend Potson. The first of these stories, "The Bishop's Crime," appeared in *Punch* in August, 1893. Seven other stories followed. During that same year, Doyle and his friend James M. Barrie, the creator of *Peter Pan*, wrote *Jane Annie*, a musical play that was produced in London. Unfortunately for the two of them, it was a colossal flop. Afterward, Barrie wrote a story titled "The Adventure of the Two Collaborators," in which both he and Doyle are characters who consult Sherlock Holmes to find out the reason for their theatrical failure. Not liking the answer the detective finds for them, Doyle transforms Holmes into a puff of smoke.

Holmes has occasionally turned up in other strange settings. For example, John Kendrick Bangs's *Pursuit of the House Boat* (1897), the second part of his trilogy about the dead, concerns a boat, which is home to the souls of such people as Socrates, Noah, Napoleon, and Confucius, that is taken by Captain Kidd from its moorings on the River Styx. The victims eventually hire Sherlock Holmes to help them; he ingeniously finds the boat and restores order to the world of the dead. One might wonder why Holmes was among the dead, but at the time of the novel's publication, Holmes was believed by all to have met his demise at the foot of the Reichenbach Falls.

Other well-known authors have followed. Bret Harte wrote "The Stolen Cigar Case" in 1902, featuring the detective Hemlock Jones. Nine years later, O. Henry wrote about "The Adventures of Shamrock Jones."



Arthur Conan Doyle's son Adrian Conan Doyle (right) and American mystery writer John Dickson Carr in 1952. (Library of Congress)

Other names that have been used include Thinlock Bones, Sherlaw Kombs, and numerous other plays on "Sherlock Holmes." What makes stories about such characters work is the fact that readers are already familiar with Sherlock Holmes and recognize him even when he appears under different names.

Even Doyle himself also engaged in Holmesian pastiches. Two in particular stand out and are considered part of the Holmesian canon. "The Field Bazaar" was first seen in *The Student*, a University of Edinburgh publication in 1896. "How Watson Learned the Trick" appeared in 1922. Both stories are brief, and both are of a slightly whimsical nature, as though Doyle went out of his way to make fun of himself.

In 1941, the writing team known as Ellery Queen published *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, the first collection of pastiches brought into book form. Containing works of such authors as Mark Twain, Agatha Christie, Bret Harte, and O. Henry, this volume was the definitive collection of pastiches for its time.

Another seminal event in the world of Holmesian pastiches was the 1954 publication of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, which was important for two reasons, first because of the stature of its two authors, John Dickson Carr and Adrian Conan Doyle. Carr was considered one of the best American mystery writers at that time, and Doyle was the son of Sir Arthur himself. The second reason was that the stories were very well received. The presence of the younger Doyle as a Holmesian writer seemed to signal that anyone could write a new Sherlock Holmes story. Since that time, many writers have.

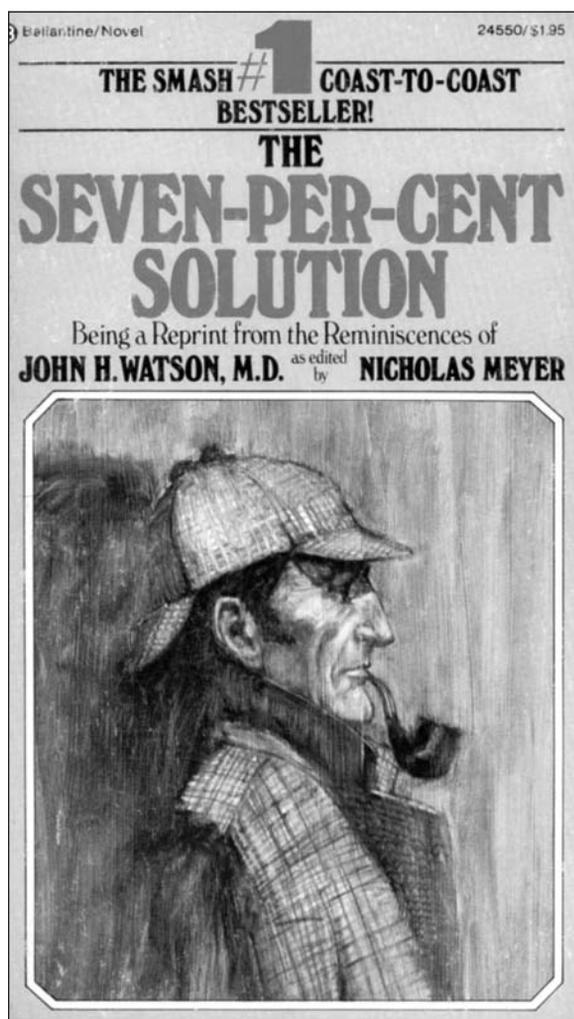
Of the numerous editors who have published collections of new Holmes stories since that time, perhaps the most prolific are the team of Martin H. Greenburg and Jon L. Lellenberg, who have edited at least seven collections of new Sherlock Holmes stories since 1987. These collections include *Sherlock Holmes in Orbit* (1997), *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1987), *Murder in Baker Street: New Tales of Sherlock Holmes* (2003), and two volumes of the Christmas-themed *Holmes for the Holidays* (1996). These collections have brought together some of the finest mystery writers of the modern era, including Loren Estleman, Edward D. Hoch, Stuart M. Kaminsky, and L. B. Greenwood. They and many others have brought the great detective back to life in a style that pays homage to Doyle and furthers the legend of Sherlock Holmes.

Over the years, Holmesian pastiche writers have found a treasure trove of subject matter in the unchronicled cases mentioned in Doyle's canonical tales. Examples include the singular adventure of the aluminum crutch, the story of James Phillimore who stepped back into his own house to get his umbrella, and was never again seen, "The Giant Rat of Sumatra." These and many other adventures are mentioned only in passing within Doyle's works. The Phillimore story has been the subject of at least two novels and nine short stories by other writers. The saga of the giant rat has been told in at least nine novels and seven short stories and has been at least mentioned in numerous other stories. One of the most bizarre of these adaptations was the "The Tale of the Giant Rat of Sumatra" told by the players of the Firesign Theater in 1974.

“THE GREAT HIATUS”

A gap in publication of the canonical Sherlock Holmes stories occurred between May, 1891, when Doyle appeared to kill off Holmes at Reichenbach Falls, and April, 1894, when Holmes reappeared in “The Adventure of the Empty House.” This three-year stretch is known in Holmesian circles as “The Great Hiatus,” and many novels and stories have been written about the events in Holmes’s career that could have occurred during those years.

The American author Nicholas Meyer has written three Sherlock Holmes books, the most acclaimed of which is *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1976), which is set during the time of the Great Hiatus and tries



to explain Holmes’s three-year disappearance. In this book, Dr. Watson, concerned about Holmes’s addiction to cocaine, takes his friend to Vienna in the hope that Dr. Sigmund Freud can cure his addiction. Under Freud’s psychoanalysis, Holmes discovers the reason for his obsession with Professor Moriarty. Meanwhile, Holmes prevents a war from breaking out. In *The Canary Trainer* (1993), Meyer provides another explanation of the Great Hiatus. This book has Holmes employed as a violin player by the Paris Opera and features Irene Adler as one of the opera’s stars. Meyer’s third Holmesian novel, *The West End Horror* (1976), involves murders in the theatrical district of London and has Holmes interact with such historical figures as George Bernard Shaw and Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula* (1897).

The extent to which writers go to bring Holmes into play can never be underestimated. One of the most bizarre explanations of the Great Hiatus has to be one constructed by Bob Jones in *Sherlock Holmes Saved Golf* (1986). That book recounts how Sherlock Holmes, at the request of the Prince of Wales, foils a scheme to transform golf from the gentleman’s game that it was into something far less honorable that might compromise the integrity of some of England’s great families.

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY FIGURES

Pastiches have pitted Holmes against three of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ most notorious real and literary figures, none of whom appears in Doyle’s canonical stories. The first of these is the very real figure of perhaps the most famous serial killer of all time: Jack the Ripper, who haunted London’s East End for only four months during late 1888, when he murdered at least five women. He was never arrested or even identified, and his identity remains to be established. His reign of terror was brief, but it occurred during the heyday of Holmes’s career. Many people have argued that it is inconceivable that Scotland Yard would not have called upon the great detective to investigate the Ripper case.

Doyle himself never connected Holmes with the Ripper, but many pastiche artists have. Perhaps the most famous of these depictions is the 1965 film *A*

Study in Terror, directed by James Hill, that finds Holmes tracking down the famous killer, who turns out to be one Lord Carfax. A year after this film appeared, the Ellery Queen team, along with Paul W. Fairman, came out with a well-received novelization of the film. At least ten other writers have put Holmes and the Ripper in direct contact. Edward B. Hanna's *The Whitechapel Horrors* (1993) is probably the best known.

Another major literary figure of the Victorian age is Bram Stoker's Transylvanian vampire, Dracula, who comes to London and to take up residence at the Carfax estate in Stoker's 1897 novel. Since that time, many readers have wondered how Holmes might cross paths with Dracula. Fred Saberhagen's *The Holmes-Dracula File* (1978) postulates interesting familial connections between the two characters. Loren Estleman's *Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula* (2003) dispenses with the family connections but adds more adventure.

Another literary figure who was known to have haunted London during the early twentieth century is Dr. Fu Manchu, whose evil exploits were first recounted by Sax Rohmer in 1912. He also finds his way into Holmes pastiches. His most famous appearance is in Cay Van Ash's 1985 novel *Ten Years Beyond Baker Street*, in which the two characters match wits, as Holmes searches for Sir Denis Nayland Smith, the detective who was Fu Manchu's principal nemesis in the Rohmer novels. Van Ash's novel is not the only appearance of Fu Manchu in the noncanonical tales. Among the other authors who have matched Holmes against Fu Manchu is George Alec Effinger, who uses him in "The Musgrave Version," a story told by Reginald Musgrave that appears in *Sherlock Holmes in Orbit*.

One of the most celebrated of the Holmesian pastichists is August Derleth, author of the adventures of detective Solar Pons and his partner, Dr. Parker. It is said that Derleth began composing his Pons series in 1928 after writing Doyle to see if more Holmesian tales would be published. When he learned that Doyle intended to write no more, he decided to publish his own. His Solar Pons stories are similar to Doyle's Holmes stories both in style and substance. Indeed, the similarities are so strong that many Holmes readers think of Pons as Holmes's nephew, although the exact

familial connections are unclear. Nevertheless, Derleth knew his Holmes. Between 1945 and 1973, he published nine collections of Pons stories.

PERIPHERAL CHARACTERS

Many Sherlock Holmes pastiches revolve not around Holmes himself, but other characters created by Doyle, and even some simply created by circumstance. Three central characters in serial novels are Holmes's brother, Mycroft Holmes; Irene Adler; and Mary Russell, Sherlock Holmes's wife.

Mycroft Holmes has been used by many authors, but he actually appears in only two canonical stories, "The Greek Interpreter" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans." Doyle also briefly mentions him in "The Final Problem" and "The Adventure of the Empty House." One of the most popular works to make Mycroft a central character is *Enter the Lion*, a 1979 novel by Michael Hodel and Sean Wright. This tale brings Mycroft and Sherlock together in 1875, before Holmes meets Watson. Mycroft takes the lead here as he and Sherlock thwart a scheme to overthrow the American government and establish Confederate rule ten years after the American Civil War. A series of books by Quinn Fawcett has Mycroft defending the British government, its treaties, and its diplomatic relationships against a shadowy group known as the Brotherhood. These stories are narrated by Mycroft's secretary, Pittman Guthrie, who acts as a Watson-like character and does the legwork in investigations, much as Archie Goodwin serves Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe.

Irene Adler has also become a seminal figure in the world of Holmesian pastiches. Along with Moriarty, she is probably the most recognizable of Doyle's minor characters. Carole Nelson Douglas has written at least eight novels about Adler. Although Adler appears in only one canonical story—as an opera singer in "A Scandal in Bohemia"—Holmes's chronicler, Watson, says that "to Sherlock Holmes, she is always *the woman*." Douglas has transformed this opera singer into a detective in her own right. Although Holmes himself appears regularly in Douglas's Adler novels, his presence is peripheral to that of Adler herself. She solves the novels' mysteries and presents as strong a presence as she does in her canonical appearance.

Laurie R. King has taken another direction altogether. Her 1994 novel *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* introduces readers to Mary Russell, a young woman who meets and marries Holmes after his retirement to Sussex Downs. In such novels as *A Monsterous Regiment of Women* (1995) and *The Game: A Mary Russell Novel* (2004), an adventure initiated by Mycroft Holmes, King portrays a strong young woman who carries on the detecting tradition of her elderly husband. She has the greatest respect for her retired husband's skills but also has the utmost confidence in her own abilities and solves cases in her own way.

STRANGE TALES

Science fiction is a genre that few readers would associate with Sherlock Holmes. Nevertheless, Holmes has found his way into that genre with some regularity. *Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Space* (1985) is a collection of such stories. Edited by Isaac Asimov, Martin Henry Greenburg, and Charles Waugh, it features stories by Asimov and such other esteemed writers in the science fiction field as Poul Anderson and Philip José Farmer. Even the canonical story "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" makes its way into this collection. *Sherlock Holmes in Orbit* (1995), edited by Michael Resnick and Martin H. Greenburg, contains twenty-six stories depicting the detective not only in his own era, but in the deeper past, in the future, and around time itself. *Ghosts in Baker Street* (2006), edited by Martin H. Greenberg et al., contains thirteen stories by twelve authors who try to refute Holmes's famous dictum, from "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," that "the world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply."

Two strange science fiction adaptations of Holmes revolve around the concept of cryogenics. In the 1987 television film *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1987), Holmes is said to have been frozen at the point of death and brought back to life during the late twentieth century by Jane Watson, a descendent of Dr. Watson. Holmes's freezing and thawing out take place in England, but most of the adventure is set in the American Southwest, where Holmes learns to drive a car and adapt to a new culture.

Sherlock Holmes in the Twenty-second Century is a twenty-six-episode cartoon series produced by DiC

and Scottish Television between 1999 and 2001. This series offers a futuristic look at the detective. In this series, Holmes has been frozen since his demise during the early twentieth century only to be revived two hundred years later, at a time when his detective skills are as much in demand as they were in his own time. Things have naturally changed, however. For example, Watson is now a robot; Inspector Lestrade is a lovely female detective; hansom carriages have been replaced by flying cars; and many stories are set on the Moon. However, although some things change, others remain the same, and the plots of these television stories are derived from Doyle's original stories. Nevertheless, the pervasive presence of Moriarty in the episodes adds a definitely noncanonical aspect to what are, after all, merely pastiches.

DRAMA AND FILM

Theater and film have played a major role in the popularization of Sherlock Holmes and in the creation of images of him in the public mind. Moreover, it is likely that no character in the history of films has been portrayed as often as Sherlock Holmes. Hundreds of films have shown Holmes and Watson in a variety of locales, situations, and characterizations. However, the first screen presentation of Holmes was nothing more than a farce that used cinematic tricks popularized at the time by George Melius. Produced by the New York studios of the American Mutescope and Biograph Company around 1900 and featuring what would now be considered primitive appearances and disappearances, *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* was a sixty-one-second cinematic exploration of what the new film medium could do. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the pervasive presence of Holmes, as the brief film's joke would make no sense to anyone unfamiliar with Sherlock Holmes.

During the early twentieth century, no actor portrayed Holmes more astutely than William Gillette, who wrote the play *Sherlock Holmes* and played the lead role for more than thirty-three years. First produced in 1899, *Sherlock Holmes* defined the living detective and is responsible for bringing the cult of Moriarty to life in subsequent pastiches. At the time the play opened, only twenty-five Holmes stories had

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Like most of Universal's Sherlock Holmes films, Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror has nothing to do with Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories. This 1942 film has Holmes investigating mysterious radio broadcasts out of Nazi Germany during World War II. The film was originally released in the United States as Sherlock Holmes Saves London. (Courtesy, Universal Pictures)

been published, and only one of them had even mentioned Moriarty. Thanks to the prominent role assigned to Moriarty in Gillette's play, Moriarty dominated Holmes pastiches. Gillette made Holmes his own. Perhaps his most famous addition to the lore of Holmes is the curved meerschaum pipe, which appears nowhere in Doyle's stories.

Gillette's play was filmed in 1916, with Gillette in the title role at the age of sixty-three. Sherlock Holmes films based on, or inspired by, Gillette's play, were later made numerous times and in various forms. In 1922, John Barrymore made his one and only appearance as Holmes in such a film; Clive Brook did the same in 1932. Even *The Adventures of Sherlock*

Holmes, starring Basil Rathbone in 1939, is said to be based on the Gillette play, although there are reasons to doubt that claim. There are no reasons, however, to doubt the version of *Sherlock Holmes* produced at the Willamette Theatre in 1981 and captured on film by HBO with Frank Langella playing the lead role. This production is closer to the spirit of the original play than were any of the previously filmed versions.

Many other Sherlock Holmes pastiches have been staged over the years. One of the most notable is *The Crucifer of Blood*, written by Paul Giovanni, which ran on Broadway from September, 1978, through April, 1979. The play is loosely based upon Doyle's novel *The Sign of the Four*. One of this play's many revivals was produced in 1980 in Los Angeles, with Charlton Heston as Holmes and Jeremy Brett as Watson. Heston also starred in the 1991 film version of the play, and Brett went on to star as Holmes in the Granada Films television series, which many critics call the most accurate screen portrayals of Holmes ever made.

Perhaps the most famous Sherlock Holmes films are those starring Basil Rathbone, whom many regard as the definitive Sherlock Holmes. Rathbone's tall, thin profile, prominent nose, and distinguished English manner made him the image of the detective for a generation of Holmes fans. The same can be said for the portrayal of Dr. Watson by Nigel Bruce, despite the fact that his portrayal of Watson as a bumbler little resembles Doyle's erudite doctor. Of the fourteen films that Rathbone and Nigel Bruce made between 1939 and 1946, however, few can accurately be called canonical, even though several—notably *The Hound of the Baservilles* and *The Pearl of Death*—present themselves as films based on Doyle stories.

Irene Adler and Professor Moriarty were united in *Sherlock Holmes in New York* (1976), in which Roger Moore plays Holmes, Patrick Macnee is Watson, John Houston is Moriarty, and Charlotte Rampling is Adler. The plot revolves around Adler's son being kidnapped by Moriarty, knowing that he could lure Holmes to America to do all that he could to save "the woman." In 1970, Billy Wilder directed *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, in which Holmes encounters not only Queen Victoria and his brother Mycroft but also the Loch Ness monster.

CONCLUSION

The world of Holmes pastiches continues to grow. One place that feeds that growth is the Internet and the world of fan fiction. On numerous sites, people are encouraged to provide their own stories and their own perspectives on characters they have encountered in either their reading or their viewing. The Web site www.Sherlockian.net is a rich resource for all things regarding the detective and his creator. Almost everything in the Holmesian world can be found there.

Steve Hecox

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WOMEN DETECTIVES

Women have come a long way in mystery and detective fiction, just as they have in society in general. During the late 1920's, the distinguished mystery novelist Dorothy L. Sayers complained about the depictions of women detectives in fiction when she wrote her introduction to the first *Omnibus of Crime* (1928):

There have . . . been a few women detectives, but on the whole, they have not been very successful. In order to justify their choice of sex, they are obliged to be so irritatingly intuitive as to destroy that quiet enjoyment of the logical which we look for in our detective reading.

Sayers also complained that most women detectives in fiction were too young, too beautiful, too interested in marriage, and too often prone to walk into physically dangerous situations and interfere with men trying to solve crimes. Although acknowledging some exceptions to these deficiencies, Sayers maintained that a "really brilliant woman detective" was yet to be created.

When Sayers wrote these words, women had been detecting in fiction more than sixty years. Although many fictional female detectives do exhibit the faults that Sayers noted, others have represented impressive achievements by their creators. In 1864, a little more than two decades after Edgar Allan Poe created the modern mystery form, the British writer Andrew Forrester, Jr., introduced the first female detective character, Mrs. Gladden, in *The Experiences of a Lady Detective*. Typical of the "casebooks" of its time, Forrester's book collects seven cases narrated by Gladden, whose deductive methods and energetic approach anticipated those of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who would first appear in 1887. Gladden even has abstruse areas of expertise, such as interpreting boot marks, which she says "have sent more men to the gallows . . . than any other proof whatever." Indeed, she advises criminals to provide themselves with extra pairs of boots, adding that she will still hunt them down.

In the story titled "The Unknown Weapon," Gladden becomes interested in events at Petleighcote that

she learns about in a newspaper. A death has occurred, seemingly accidentally. Although solving the mystery will yield her only one hundred pounds, she is fascinated by "several peculiar circumstances." A young man has been found dead outside his parents' house; the cause of death is an arrowlike barb. Gladden visits the scene of the incident, talks to local people, and reads the report of the inquest. She also studies the contents of the dead man's pockets. To examine the house without interference, she lures its housekeeper to London through a fake advertisement she places in *The Times*. Like Poe's earlier C. Auguste Dupin and the later Holmes, Gladden regards the constabulary as less competent than her pet dog at solving crimes. Like her male counterparts, she eventually solves the case; however, the murderer escapes.

Mrs. Gladden was soon joined by another English female investigator, Mrs. Paschal, the protagonist in W. Stephens Hayward's *Revelations of a Woman Detective* (1864). A widow aged forty in search of a job, Paschal is employed by Colonel Warner, chief of London's police detectives. She solves ten cases, three for her employer and seven on her own. Her cases involve theft, murder, kidnapping, forgery, and impersonation. No retiring Victorian gentlewoman, she would make a hard-boiled American detective proud. She carries a Colt revolver, which she knows how to use, trails suspects, and searches houses. Paschal, who relates her own adventures, claims that her sex gives her certain advantages over her male counterparts because criminals do not recognize her as a detective. She demonstrates this advantage by competing successfully with men trying to solve the same crimes she investigates. In so doing, she is open to Sayers's complaint of relying too heavily on intuition. At the same time, she exhibits many qualities that characterize her best successors: She is brave, independent, and unswayed by emotions. Both Gladden and Paschal are adept at disguise. In "The Nun, the Will, and the Heiress," Paschal camouflages herself as a novitiate to rescue a young heiress imprisoned in an Ursuline convent.

Kate Goelet, a detective created by Harlan P. Halsey

(writing as Old Sleuth) in *The Lady Detective* (1880), is a beautiful twenty-three-year-old New Yorker. Despite her youth and inexperience, she is smart, courageous, patient, clever, and feels “perfectly able to take care of herself.” She devises weapons that would do credit to James Bond, such as six-inch daggers that emerge from her sleeves. In *The Lady Detective*, Goelet seeks to recover a large cache of missing bonds so she can claim the reward. Henry Wilbur has been accused of stealing them, but Goelet proves his innocence and in the process falls in love with him. At the end of the book they marry.

Halsey also introduced another female sleuth in *Cad Metti: The Female Detective Strategist; Or, Dudie Dunne Again in the Field* (1895). Metti is strong enough to knock out an antagonist; she is also wily and a genius at disguise. Dunne, her male partner, tries to protect her, but Metti also shadows him to save him from any rash action. Halsey also wrote *Mademoiselle Lucie, the French Lady Detective* (1904). That book’s Mademoiselle Lucie works with Jerry Mack to save Agnes Tift from her in-laws.

Albert W. Aiken created two proto-hard-boiled female investigators. In *The Actress Detective; Or, The*

Invisible Hand: The Romance of an Implacable Mission (1889) he made twenty-five-year-old Hilda Serene an excellent pugilist who is comfortable with both guns and bowie knives. The associates of the criminal she captures claim that no man on the New York City police force could have brought the culprit to justice. This type of implicit, or actual, competition with men, in which the woman always emerges victorious, is a staple of books featuring women detectives. In Aiken’s *The Female-Barber Detective; Or, Joe Phoenix in Silver City* (1895) Mignon Lawrence of the New York police force moves to Bearopolis, New Mexico, where she pretends to be a barber to conceal her investigations. Aiken presents her as strong, clever, courageous, and determined—a match for any male detective or criminal.

These earliest women detectives were all created by male writers. The first woman writer to introduce such a character was Anna Katharine Green, author of *The Affair Next Door* (1897). Its protagonist, Amelia Butterworth, is of good family, financially secure, and independent. Male investigators dismiss her abilities, but she solves the case through careful observation. For example, she recognizes that the victim’s hat was worn only once because it has only one hatpin hole—something a male detective would probably not notice. She also determines that the case’s victim was killed with a hatpin. Butterworth reappears in *Lost Man’s Lane* (1898) and *The Circular Study* (1900). Green created a second female investigator in *The Golden Slipper and Other Problems for Violet Strange* (1915). In this book Violet Strange, who takes up detecting to earn money for her sister, solves nine crimes, including five murders and a robbery. A debutante, she encounters the same problem that many of her successors face: Men do not take her seriously. She tells one male client who regards her as unfit for practical work that she is “nothing if not practical.”

THE NEW WOMAN

The 1890’s marked the emergence of the so-called New Woman, an early feminist movement that advocated liberating women from domesticity by allowing them to become professionally and financially independent. This movement was also reflected in detective fic-



Albert W. Aiken.



Modern edition of two of Anna Katharine Green's novels.

tion of the era. In M. McDonnell Bodkin's *Dora Myrl: The Lady Detective* (1900), for example, the title character is the well-educated daughter of a Cambridge don. She is a good shot, observant, adept at disguises, and intuitive. Although the culprit, Dr. Phillmore, denies the ability of a woman to detect, let alone capture, a criminal, Myrl proves him wrong when she arrests him. Myrl resurfaces in *The Capture of Paul Beck* (1909), in which she and the title character marry.

Joan Mar, the creation of Marie Connor Leighton in *Joan Mar, Detective* (1910), is even more the new woman. After she rescues Brian Charlton, Charlton's fiancé expresses the hope that Mar will marry. However, Charlton recognizes that domesticity does not interest Mar, who does not want to marry. She prefers to remain free to work at her profession and win fame until "the whole criminal world shall tremble at the name of Joan Mar, detective."

Equally independent is Catherine Louisa Pirkis's

Loveday Brooke, who first appears in *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894). Well-read but impecunious, she chooses detecting over a more conventional work, such as being a governess. When a client questions her competence as a detective, her employer, Ebenezer Dyer, defends her ability and intelligence. In many ways Brooke recalls her contemporary Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, she uses disguises to help penetrate the disguises of others. She makes observations in a Holmesian manner and draws brilliant deductions from what she sees. Also like Holmes, she becomes bored when she is not detecting, and she always outwits both the criminals and the police.

Even more closely modeled on Sherlock Holmes is Madelyn Mack, whom Hugh C. Weir introduced in *Miss Madelyn Mack, Detective* (1914). Mack's personal drug of choice is kola nuts, which she consumes when she is bored with no case to solve. Also like Holmes, she relishes the idea of confronting a criminal "who has really raised murder to a fine art!" Her other Holmesian traits include turning to music to help her think, having an ability to distinguish types of tobacco ash, and asking seemingly pointless questions that later prove highly revealing. By the time her Watson, Nora Noraker, meets her, Mack at twenty-five is already a successful detective. Relying on deduction, Mack maintains that women have more imagination than men. In the five murder cases she solves, she demonstrates that she is right.

Hazel Campbell's *Olga Knaresbrook, Detective* (1933) offers a fascinating variation of the Holmes-Watson partnership. Knaresbrook's cousin Molly Kingsley serves as her sidekick, like Holmes's Watson; however, Kingsley unmask Knaresbrook's own criminal activity after Knaresbrook baffles three professional male investigators. Kingsley comments on the prejudice of men who assume that being five-foot-three and having naturally wavy hair, soft brown eyes, and a rose-leaf complexion preclude the possibility of having brains or business acumen. Kingsley demonstrates that one can be both beautiful and smart, both feminine and a detective. Her fiancé and fellow detective, Hal Barnard, suggests that they become partners as well as husband and wife, but she decides to abandon her career.

MARRIAGE VS. CAREERS

Choosing between marriage and careers is common in stories about female detectives. Dora Myrl, for example, also decides to marry. The solitary detective, whether man or woman, is, however, by no means a universal. Agatha Christie's Tommy and Tuppence (Prudence) Beresford are equal partners, with Tuppence often the more active and astute. The married couple Richard and Frances Lockridge wrote about the married investigators Jeremy and Paula North. Nicholas Blake (C. Day Lewis) created the married detecting couple Nigel Strangeways and Georgia Cavendish. After Georgia is killed in the Blitz, she is succeeded by Clare Massinger. Amanda Cross's Kate Fansler solves most of her cases after her marriage, and Dorothy L. Sayers's Harriet Vane helps her husband, Lord Peter Wimsey, with an investigation during their honeymoon.

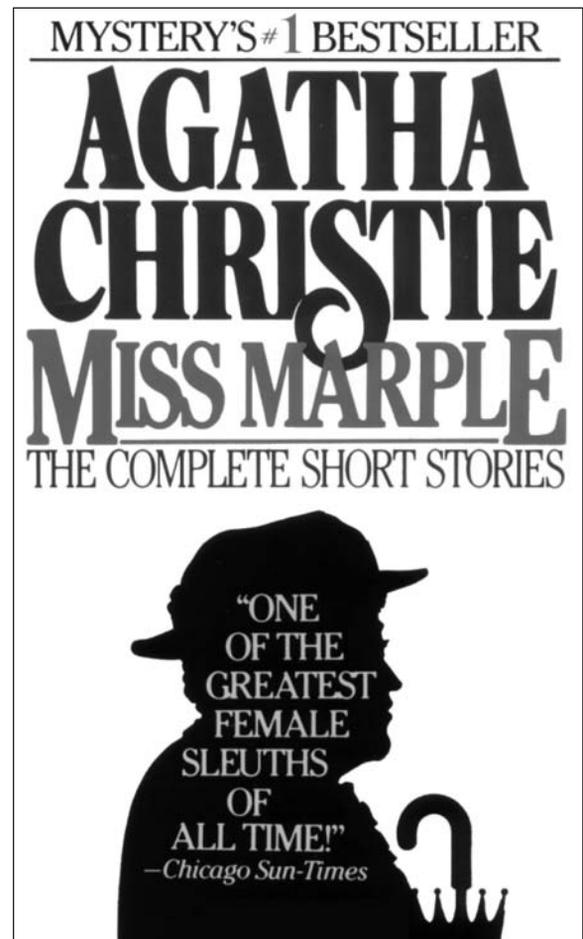
SOLITARY SLEUTHS

The solitary sleuth, either male or female, nonetheless remains the more common type, following the example of Poe's Dupin and Doyle's Holmes. The most famous spinster detective is Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple, who first appeared in 1928 in "The Tuesday Night Club." Although the best-known and one of the most appealing woman detectives ever created, Marple comes from a long line of predecessors, particularly Amelia Butterworth. Christie may also have drawn on Jeanette Lee's Millicent Newberry (*The Green Jacket*, 1917; *The Mysterious Office*, 1922; *Dead Right*, 1925). Newberry had worked for Tom Corbin's detective agency, and in *The Green Jacket* Corbin requests her help. Her cases generally involve women; men prove less adept in these instances. Jane Marple's knitting may owe something to Newberry's, who not only knits but also encodes information in her stitches.

When she was first introduced in 1930, Miss Marple was sixty-five, the age at which she would remain through the nearly fifty years of her detecting career. The club in "The Tuesday Night Club" comprises Sir Henry Clithering, the recently retired commissioner of Scotland Yard; a lawyer named Petherick; Dr. Pender, a minister; artist Joyce Lemprière; and Marple's nephew, writer Raymond West. Lemprière suggests

that each person present relate an unsolved mystery that the group will then seek to explain, a detective's version of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron: O, Principe Galetto* (1349-1351; *The Decameron*, 1620) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). Lemprière assumes that Marple, who leads a quiet life in an English village, will listen but have nothing to contribute. Marple herself modestly observes that although she is not clever, "living all these years in St. Mary Mead does give one an insight into human nature." In view of Marple's later accomplishments as a detective, that comment is one of the great understatements of all time.

Sir Henry begins the series with a tale of Mr. and Mrs. Jones and her elderly companion. At dinner all



Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple appeared in thirteen novels and twenty short stories.

three eat the same food prepared by Gladys Linch, the young cook. All become ill, and Mrs. Jones dies of what is discovered to be arsenic poisoning. The husband is suspected of murder, but the police lack evidence to make an arrest. After each member of the club offers a solution to the crime, Sir Henry asks Marple for her opinion. Lamenting that she has dropped a knitting stitch, Marple then demonstrates what becomes her signature habit of appearing to ignore the case at hand while discussing an apparently irrelevant tale of village life. In this instance, she recalls an old villager named Hargraves who left his money to his former housemaid instead of his wife. It turned out that Hargraves had led a double life and had had five children by the other woman. West cannot understand why his aunt is rambling on about Hargraves, and he is even more puzzled when she adds, "I suppose the poor girl has confessed now," alluding to Gladys Linch. West protests that his aunt has gotten muddled, but Sir Henry confirms her solution of the case. When West expresses amazement that his aunt has discovered the killer, she replies, "You don't know as much of life as I do."

Although Marple seems to exhibit the kind of intuition that Sayers condemned, in fact she observes her surroundings and understands that human nature is everywhere the same. Hence, life in St. Mary Mead does not differ from that in London or a country estate. In Sir Henry's story, she recognizes that a man who has a young, attractive servant and an old wife will be inclined to exchange the latter for the former. In another Marple story, *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), a vicar observes that "no detective in England" is equal to a spinster woman "of uncertain age with plenty of time on her hands." In *The Body in the Library* (1942) Sir Henry concedes that Marple is a better detective than he is.

NANCY DREW

It is a curiosity of literary history that the genre's two most famous female detectives made their first appearances at almost the same time. In 1930, Mildred Wirt, using the pseudonym Carolyn Keene, published *The Secret of the Old Clock* for Edward Stratemeyer's syndicate. Its protagonist was the sixteen-year-old

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Many women who write mysteries credit their reading of Nancy Drew books when they were young with getting them interested in becoming writers.

amateur sleuth Nancy Drew, with her blue roadster, speedboat, and airplane, all of which she could handle as easily as she could ride an unruly horse. Despite her youth and sex, Nancy could fell an assailant with a single blow. Fearless and rational, she rejected supposedly supernatural warnings and solved all her mysteries logically. Typical of the subgenre of mysteries with female detectives, Nancy is told repeatedly that detecting is an unsuitable job for a woman, but she perseveres and competes successfully with boys and adults. Stratemeyer's daughter, Harriet S. Adams, later took over the Nancy Drew enterprise. Nancy's age advanced to eighteen, where it has remained ever since through numerous adventures.

Nancy Drew is very young, but Margaret Sutton's Judy Bolton is even younger, fifteen. Her detecting ca-

reer ran from 1932 to 1967, beginning with *The Vanishing Shadow* (1932). The daughter of a small-town Pennsylvania doctor, Judy matured to the age of twenty-two and married Peter Dobbs, an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). She then became her husband's secretary, but she also continued to investigate cases unofficially and even pursued smugglers while on her honeymoon.

HARD-BOILED WOMEN DETECTIVES

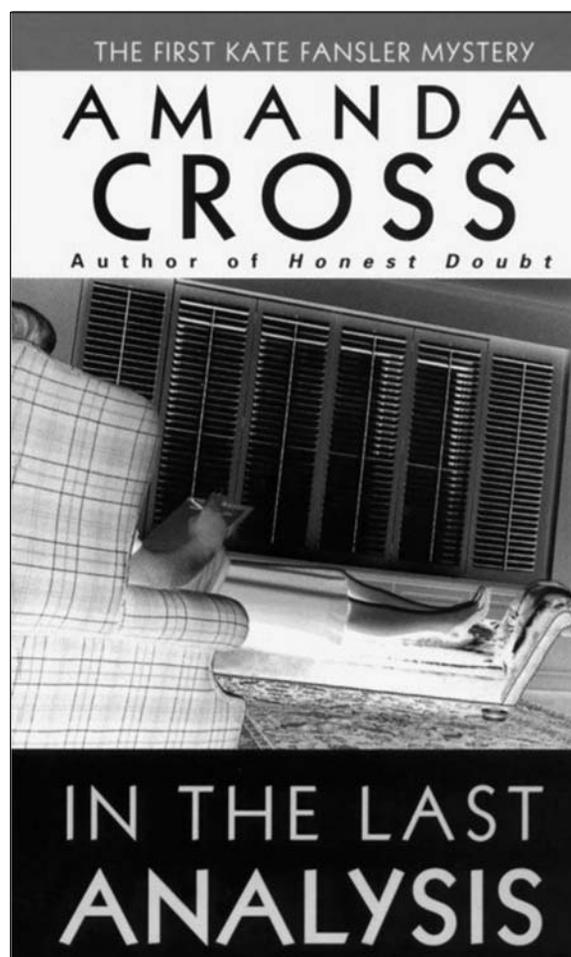
Nancy Drew and Miss Marple always remained genteel and ladylike, even as they engaged in what men consider unladylike activities. Other female detectives, looking back to those created by Halsey and Aiken, behave like their male hard-boiled counterparts. Writing as A. A. Fair, Erle Stanley Gardner introduced Bertha Cool in *The Bigger They Come* (1939). Bertha is indeed big; in her first appearance she weighs 275 pounds, later reduced to 164. Her partner is Donald Law. Reversing the stereotypical handling of such male-female partnerships, Law focuses more on the intellectual side of detecting, Cool on the physical.

Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone, and Sara Paretsky's Victoria Iphigenia Warshawski continue this hard-boiled tradition. All three women detectives are in their mid-thirties, unmarried, self-reliant, intelligent university graduates. Physically and mentally tough, they do not hesitate to take risks, and they respond forcefully, even lethally, when attacked. In their world, men continue to question their abilities. In Paretsky's *Indemnity Only* (1982) Bobby Mallory of the Chicago police force objects to Warshawski's working as a detective, and Andrew McGraw in that book hesitates to hire her to find his daughter because Warshawski is a woman. Ralph Devereux dismisses Warshawski's detecting skills and is nearly killed as a result. By the end of the novel he has fallen in love with her, but he recognizes that she does not need him or any man. Warshawski certainly does not need protection. In the climactic scene of the book, she bests three men in a shoot-out and brings the culprits to justice.

In *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), sociologist Carolyn G. Heilbrun complained that women have been too content to accept as natural their dependency on

men. She challenged women writers to create "female characters who are complex, whole, and independent—fully human." Grafton, Muller, and Paretsky may be seen as having taken up Heilbrun's challenge by creating strong, independent women detectives. Some male writers have also created similar characters. Examples include Jim Conaway's Jana Blake during the 1950's, James D. Lawrence's Angela Harpe during the 1970's, and David Galloway's Lamaar Ransom during the late 1970's.

Heilbrun herself, writing as Amanda Cross, created Kate Fansler in *In the Last Analysis* (1964) as a similarly independent woman. An academic like Heilbrun, Fansler is rational, rich, and well born. Also tall, elegant, smart, and independent, she wants neither children nor a husband. Although she accepts the latter af-



ter much persuasion, she continues to act on her own. A large portion of writers and their detectives in the subgenre of academic fiction are women. Examples include Susan Kenney's Roz Howard, Theodora Wender's Gloria Gold, Joan Smith's Loretta Lawson, Valerie Miner's Nan Weaver, Edith Skom's Beth Austin, and Carol Clemeau's Antonia Nielson. Alexander McCall Smith's *The Sunday Philosophy Club* (2004) inaugurated a series of mysteries with Isabel Dalhousie of Edinburgh, accomplished philosopher and editor of the *Review of Applied Ethics*.

Nearly seventy years after Dorothy L. Sayers complained about the depictions of women detectives in fiction as weak, compliant creatures, the situation had changed considerably. In his introduction to *Feminism in Detective Fiction* (1995), Glenwood Irons described woman detectives created during the previous three decades as "outgoing, aggressive, and self-sufficient sleuths who have transcended generic codes and virtually rewritten the archetypal male detective from a female perspective." The female sleuths solving mysteries around the turn of the twenty-first century bore little resemblance to their earliest forebears.

Joseph Rosenblum

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OTHER MEDIA

DRAMA

Because mystery fiction is primarily about creating suspense and tension, there may be no better form for this genre than drama. Dramas about murder date back to the beginning of the Western theater tradition, with plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles. In the latter's *Oedipus Rex* (c. 426 B.C.E.), a king is murdered, and Oedipus takes it upon himself to unravel the mystery. The body of plays that follow dealing with murder and other crimes is enormous. To understand the development of modern popular mystery and detective drama, some crime play genres must be eliminated.

The great Greek and Elizabethan tragedies belong to a category of plays that deal primarily with a universal conflict in a serious manner. The central subject in such plays is not so much who committed crimes or who will catch the culprits as much as it is about the characters involved, their motivations for behavior, their own tragic flaws, and their reactions to the consequences of their crimes and their detection. The great dramatic tragedies intend to instruct as well as entertain. For example, the lesson from William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* (c. 1600-1601) is that revenge is as lethal as murder, as both lead to death and destruction.

After Shakespeare's time, two other periods of drama produced plays of a similarly didactic nature—the decades between the two twentieth century world wars and the postmodern era. Plays such as Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* (pr. 1916), Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* (pr. 1928), and Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (pr. 1935) treated actual crimes in a manner that challenged audiences to examine the nature of crime itself, issues of gender-based expectations, and the consequences of revenge. Because of their complex mixtures of humor and tragedy, those plays are usually regarded as tragicomedies. Likewise, many postmodern and twenty-first century plays dealing with murder deal with such critical social topics as hate crime, serial criminals, and rage violence. Examples include Edward Bond's *Saved* (pr. 1965), Marsha Normans's *Getting Out* (pr. 1977) and *'night, Mother* (pr. 1983), and David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* (pr. 1984). All these plays typify the frank and confrontational nature of postmodern drama in dealing with the

underlying questions about what motivates criminals and the individual consequences of their crimes.

MELODRAMA

Most plays dealing with crime are classified as melodrama, a form of dramatic literature that deals with individual conflicts in a sometimes serious, sometimes humorous manner, but that always has happy, or at least satisfying, endings. Melodrama became popular first in France in *boulevard theatre*, so called because of their location on the Boulevard du Temple, during the reign of Napoleon I, who placed tight restrictions on drama. The prolific French dramatist Pixerecourt (1773-1844) wrote more than 120 plays and is credited with developing the form and giving it its characteristic elements, which include virtuous heroes and heroines who are hounded by evil villains, forced to endure threats to their lives or reputations, and finally rescued for happy endings. The new genre gained fans across Europe and dominated the world of theater during the nineteenth century.

Melodrama depends upon the artificial building up of suspense by presenting all important action on stage, with little exposition, ending each act with a strong climax that leaves important questions unanswered. Early melodramas often used elaborate spectacle along with music and dancing. Plots include devices such as disguises, abductions, harrowing perils, and strict adherence to poetic justice. Villains are always punished and comic relief is usually offered by servants or friends of the main characters. In stage productions, music underscores important action to enhance the emotional impact, hence the term "melo-drama," meaning literally, drama with melody, that is, music.

Because melodrama is much easier to write than classical tragedy or comedy, it flourished after its introduction to nineteenth century theaters. Melodramas about murder, regardless of how serious the characters take their situations, almost always have elements of fun for their audiences—sometimes through humor, sometimes through terror, or possibly through the unraveling of puzzles—in much the same way a roller

coaster creates the illusion of impending disaster yet always deposits its riders safely at the gate. Lack of serious intent or thought along with sensational special effects in stage productions gave melodrama so much appeal that it overshadowed other literary forms and catapulted the theater into a place of prominence in nineteenth century society, making it the place to be and be seen.

Crime melodrama has been popular since its inception. However, detective-driven mysteries have emerged as the most enduring image in this broad genre. Before considering the origins of modern mystery dramas, it should be noted that “mystery play,” as the term is used here, bears no relation to the religious mystery plays of the Middle Ages. A medieval “mystery play” is a dramatization of the life of Jesus as told in the Bible.

BEGINNINGS

The earliest known play about a real murder, *Murderous Michael* (pr. 1578), by an unknown playwright, documented a domestic murder case that had occurred in England in 1550; it was performed for Queen Elizabeth I. The original manuscript is now lost, but another version of the play appeared in 1590, making it one of the earliest surviving examples of fact-based crime drama. Early in the seventeenth century, John Webster wrote his classic play about murder, *The White Devil* (pr. 1612), which dramatized actual events from nearly thirty years before. A century later, George Lillo’s *The London Merchant* (pr. 1731) dramatized the murder of George Barnwell, a young merchant’s apprentice who was murdered after being lured into crime by a prostitute. These early crime plays enjoyed long runs in London and have seen many revivals since. They demonstrated the popularity of crime drama, especially plays containing onstage violence, and they made possible the emergence of gothic thriller plays in the late eighteenth century that whetted the public’s voracious appetite for the macabre.

GOTHIC DRAMA

As the Age of Enlightenment drew to an end around the turn of the nineteenth century, European artists explored a variety of ideologies and produced

some of the world’s greatest literature and music. However, little memorable drama came out of that era. The Romantic movement, which began in Germany, dominated much of the eighteenth century and gave rise to a renewed interest in the medieval period. This so-called gothic revival was largely inspired by Horace Walpole’s novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) and his play *The Mysterious Mother* (pr. 1768). Walpole initiated a gothic revival in literature and architecture that attempted to revive the spirit, if not the details, of gothic thought and design. Gothic fiction typically contains supernatural creatures, mysterious atmospheres, and run-down castles and old mansions with spiral staircases, grated windows, secret panels, hidden passageways, midnight bells, fluttering candles and fires, and dark, dank weather.

Gothic fiction is frequently about the disruptive return of the past into the present, and plots for gothic plays often incorporate long-lost relatives, buried family secrets, and concealed identities. The primary interest in these plays is not in defining characters or presenting the kinds of complications and reversals that playwrights generally try to create. Gothic plays seek to create mysterious horror for its own sake. In his study of gothic drama, Bertrand Evans argues that gothic plays share one primary purpose: to exploit mystery, gloom, and terror.

Gothic monsters presented a special problem for the leading actors of the early nineteenth century. They were usually the most interesting—though despicable—characters in gothic plays but typically appeared only briefly on stage. To satisfy the actors, a new type of villain had to be created, one who develops remorse for his crimes and redeems himself in the end with some grand gesture. No character from early nineteenth century drama embodies this type of character better than the title character of Lord Byron’s *Manfred* (pr. 1817). A leading Romantic poet, Byron had more success as a playwright than most of his contemporaries, and the great actors of his time were drawn to his dastardly, yet vulnerable, leading characters and used them as vehicles to stardom.

Among of the most enduring gothic monsters of nineteenth century literature are Bram Stoker’s Count Dracula and Gaston Leroux’s Phantom of the Opera.

An “undead” creature who survives by drinking the blood of the living, Dracula first appeared as the title character in Stoker’s popular novel in 1897. The book took readers in Europe and the United States by storm and became one of the most famous gothic horror stories of all time. In 1927, Hamilton Deane brought *Dracula* to the stage in London, where his play ran for 391 performances and then continued an additional three years in the provinces, with nurses on hand to administer to the fainthearted. In a version slightly revised by John L. Balderston, Deane’s play also premiered on Broadway in 1927. It ran for 261 performances there and then went on tour. In 1930, the stage play was adapted to a film in which Bela Lugosi gave an indelible performance as Dracula. Deane’s play is still revived in the twenty-first century, and numerous versions of Dracula films have thrilled audiences for many years.

One of the most successful modern gothic plays is Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical *Phantom of the Opera*, which opened in 1986 in London and in 1988 in New York, where the same production was still running almost twenty years later. The musical is based on Gaston Leroux’s novel *Le Fantôme de l’Opéra* (1910; *The Phantom of the Opera*, 1911), a story of a tortured “ghost”—actually a disfigured man whom no one ever actually sees—who lives beneath Paris’s great opera house and becomes obsessed with a beautiful singer. The story has been adapted to a number of plays, musicals, and films. Leroux’s story is itself an adaptation of the beloved French folktale “Beauty and the Beast.” The terror Leroux’s Phantom instills diminishes into compassion at the end, making the Phantom a tragic figure reminiscent of the great remorseful monsters of the early nineteenth century, such as Byron’s Manfred. Webber’s musical ranks as the highest-grossing entertainment event of all time, and its success demonstrates the ongoing popularity of gothic monsters even today.

Modern crime thrillers, especially those in the cinema, are direct descendants of gothic drama. Not only do they retain many of the conventional gothic trappings, but they also share the goal of creating the kind of nail-biting tension that generates a sense of constant danger and terror. When police detectives emerged as

the dominant figures of mystery drama during the nineteenth century, the use of thriller elements subsided and took a secondary role to the detectives’ methodical and deliberate dissections of crimes.

NINETEENTH CENTURY CRIME MELODRAMA

The first major shift toward modern detective plays was initiated by the American pioneer of detective fiction, Edgar Allan Poe. Poe himself wrote only one unpublished verse play, but his influence on crime fiction, including drama, is undeniable. His preoccupation with gothic horror stories is legendary; less well known are his stories that focus on his detective, C. Auguste Dupin, whom Poe modeled on a real-life French detective and used in three seminal stories. In addition to creating the detective figure, Poe also contributed the classic narrative time structure in which mystery stories—including plays—begin *after* murders have been committed.

Another writer who contributed to the rise of detective fiction was the English novelist Charles Dickens, who was a fervent admirer of the London police and Scotland Yard inspectors. Dickens’s novel *Bleak House* (1852-1853) has a character named Inspector Bucket, whom Dickens modeled on a real London detective, Charles Field, whom he had studied and even accompanied on nightly rounds. Dickens’s writings are still widely read in the twenty-first century, and his stories continue to be frequently filmed. The musical play *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, based on Dickens’s unfinished novel of the same title, opened on Broadway in 1985, enjoyed 604 performances, and won many awards, including an Edgar Award for its author, Rupert Holmes. Holmes’s adaptation respects the unfinished state of Dickens’s novel by allowing audiences at each performance to vote on its ending, which is then played out by the actors. Audiences are also invited to vote on the identity of the detective and which pair of characters will become romantically involved and thereby create a happy ending.

In addition to Dickens’s writings, the Victorian period also saw the birth of the sensation, or dime, novel. Inspired largely by Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), sensation novels focused on the emotional trauma of their cen-



Wilkie Collins's novel *The Woman in White* was also successfully adapted to the stage.

tral characters—usually women—and stressed contrasts between innocence and guilt and between purity and sin. Collins adapted many of his novels into plays and was a close friend of Dickens.

The spread of mass education in Great Britain and the United States combined with the development of public library systems to introduce new audiences to the joys of reading, and sensation novels answered the need for easy-to-read crime fiction. These books had four common characteristics—in addition to being inexpensive: murders, lawyers as narrators, professional police detectives who solve the crimes, and gradual introduction of clues that allowed readers to participate in the hunt for the killers. Two of the best sensation

novels were Metta Victoria Fuller Victor's *The Dead Letter* (1866) and Anna Katharine Green's *The Leavenworth Case* (1878). Victor's novel is considered by many literary historians to have been one of the first detective novels published in the United States.

The best play using the elements of a sensation novel was actually written more than fifty years after the period. Patrick Hamilton's *Angel Street* (1938) revolves around a woman who is slowly being driven insane by her husband. Seeking to be rid of her without losing her money, the husband hopes to find the jewels of an elderly woman whom he murdered years earlier, but a detective eventually persuades the woman to help bring her murdering husband to justice. Although the play lacks a lawyer because no narrator is needed in drama, the other elements of a murder slowly unraveled by a detective fit the fundamental formula for Victorian sensation novels.

When Hamilton's play was first produced in England, under the title *Gaslight* in 1938, it became an instant hit. In 1941, it was opened in New York, where it ran for more than three years. Its 1,295 performances made it one of the longest-running nonmusical plays in Broadway history. Moreover, it was a hit not only with the public but also with critics, one of whom called it a "masterpiece of suspense." The play was made into two motion pictures: *The Murder in Thornton Square* (1940) in Great Britain and *Gaslight* (1944) in the United States. Often called the quintessential Victorian thriller, Hamilton's play is still frequently revived.

Other successful quasi-Victorian thrillers written during this period include *The Bat* (1920) by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood and *The Cat and the Canary* (1922) by John Clawson Willard.

THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN WHODUNIT

The turn of the twentieth century marked the appearance of the first influential play about crime and detectives: *Sherlock Holmes* (pr. 1899) was written by William Gillette, who also played the lead role. It is difficult to determine who was more instrumental in shaping the play's title character—Gillette or Arthur Conan Doyle, who created Holmes in novels and short stories. Gillette's play gave Holmes the outfit with which he became permanently associated and some of his most fa-

mous lines, such as “Elementary, my dear Watson.” Gillette based his play on Doyle’s character, but in playing Holmes in more than thirteen hundred performances throughout the United States; throughout Europe, South Africa, and Australia; and also on film, he created a portrayal of Holmes that has become more familiar to the public than that of Doyle’s own writings.

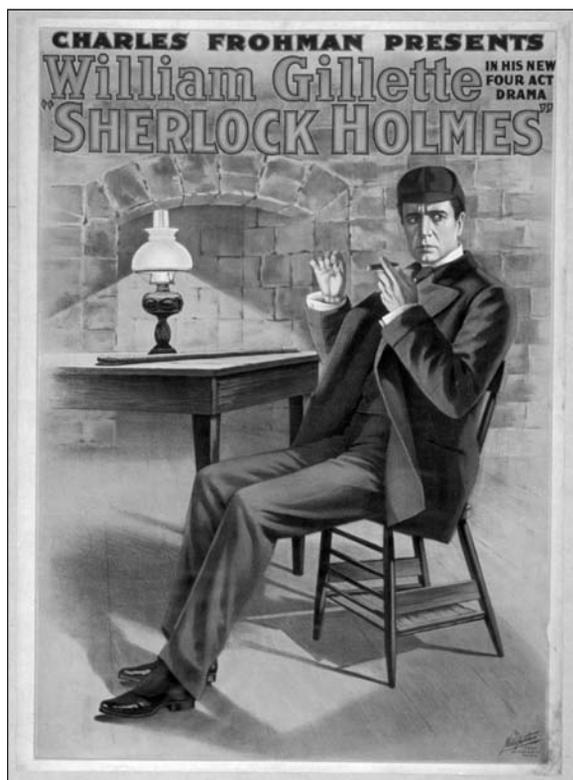
Although other plays used crafty detectives as protagonists, Gillette’s *Sherlock Holmes* was the first crime play to become an international sensation, thereby shifting crime melodrama from extravagant spectacle and gothic monsters to more realistic subject matter. This new approach would become the standard for dramatic “whodunits” in the years ahead. Detective crime thrillers became much more successful than gothic monster plays and plays inspired by sensation novels. Nevertheless, they retained some of the latter’s most chilling gothic elements, such as an old mansion

as setting, dark and gloomy weather, and dark family secrets that lead to murder. The melodramatic elements of thrilling climaxes, poetic justice, and even musical underscoring carried the detective drama genre through the twentieth century on stage and were even more evident in films.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF DETECTIVE FICTION

During the 1920’s, Agatha Christie, a writer often dubbed the “first lady of crime” and “queen of mystery,” began overshadowing other crime fiction writers. After a few stumbles in landing a publisher for her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles: A Detective Story* (1920), she embarked on a career that would dominate twentieth century mystery and detective fiction and leave a body of work few writers have come close to matching. Christie is known primarily for her mystery novels, but she also wrote poetry, short stories, and plays. Each of her two most famous detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple, has a series of mystery novels that has been adapted to the screen many times. For many years, other playwrights dramatized Christie’s novels, and she collaborated on a few of them. Finally, in 1943, she won international fame with the first full-length play entirely of her own, *Ten Little Niggers*. Over the next nineteen years, she followed it with eleven more full-length plays and three one-act plays. Meanwhile, her first play, based on her 1939 novel of the same title, enjoyed great success in both London and New York. It was also adapted into four separate film versions. In 1945, Christie transformed one of her Poirot novels, *Death on the Nile* (1937), into a play that ran on a London stage as *Murder on the Nile* and later on Broadway as *Hidden Horizon*. Her greatest dramatic success, however, was *The Mousetrap* (pr. 1952), which she adapted from her novella *Three Blind Mice* (1948).

The Mousetrap revolves around a young couple who have just opened a boardinghouse in a town where a grisly murder has just taken place. While a blizzard prevents them and their guests from leaving and from even phoning out, a murder takes place. No one can leave the house, but a police detective arrives on skis and begins an investigation. The only possible murder suspects appear to be the boarders, and eventu-



William Gillette’s play *Sherlock Holmes* did almost as much as Arthur Conan Doyle’s stories to shape popular images of the immortal detective. (Library of Congress)

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Set of Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap at London's St. Martin Theater in 1987, when the play was in the thirty-fifth year of a record-breaking run that would continue into the twenty-first century. (AP/Wide World Photos)

ally it is established that the murderer is a young man who has returned to his hometown to kill everyone he thinks is responsible for the death of his brother. This play is typical of Christie's prose writing in presenting a collection of colorful characters, all of whom might reasonably be suspected of murder. Also like Christie's fiction, the play concludes by revealing the murderer to be the least likely suspect of them all. The play flopped in New York, but it was an astounding success in London, where it became the longest-running play of any type in history. In 2007, the play completed its fifty-fifth continuous year and showed no sign of closing.

Christie's strengths in playwriting are her careful plotting and her putting action before character. According to her biographers, she took up writing plays

because of her dissatisfaction with the way in which others had dramatized her prose. She understood the requirements of dramatic structure better than most novelists and believed, perhaps ironically, that other writers tried to remain *too* true to her original works. In her autobiography, she explains that novels have so many characters and intricate plots that keeping them all in plays would confuse audiences. She thought that plays should present their stories in simpler, tightly focused plots.

Christie's second most successful play was *Witness for the Prosecution* (pr. 1953), which did better in New York than in London. Her other important plays include *Spider's Web* (pr. 1954), *Towards Zero* (pr. 1956), *Verdict* (pr. 1958), *The Unexpected Guest* (pr. 1958), *Go Back for Murder* (pr. 1960), and *Rule of*

Three (pr. 1962). Many of her novels and plays were also adapted to the screen.

A different kind of crime play that emerged during the mid-twentieth century was the comic murder mystery. The best example of this form is Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace* (pr. 1941), which ran for several years in both New York and London and was filmed in 1944. A charming and often hilarious story about the elderly Brewster sisters, who poison lonely old men and bury them in their basement, it combines farce with the suspense of a murder mystery wrapped into a single pleasing melodrama.

DETECTIVE PLAYS IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

The United States and Europe experienced convulsive political and social upheavals during the mid-twentieth century, and the tidy endings and false sense of poetic justice that characterized melodrama lost their appeal in dramatic works. Playwrights wanted to stretch their imaginations, and audiences craved the kinds of spectacles and special effects they saw in films. In the United States, mainstream commercial theater, which was centered on Broadway, turned to the developing musical comedy form for survival, and serious plays were generally relegated to Off-Broadway and experimental theaters. Plays written during the 1960's had an altogether different tone. Playwrights wanted to show the ugly undersides of domestic life, politics, crime, and other aspects of human life. The postmodern period had arrived.

The first play to offer a totally new approach to the crime genre was Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, which opened in London in 1968. It ushered in a new kind of murder mystery play, the postmodern comedy thriller. Comic murder mystery plays had been seen before, most notably in *Arsenic and Old Lace*. However, the crime thrillers of the late twentieth century had far more sinister tones than the play about the murderous Brewster sisters. These plays take good advantage of the predictability of traditional detective plays by poking fun at the well-known formula. Although these plays are not simply about murders and mysteries, they use these elements to make broader statements on subjects such as marital infidelity, revenge, or power. Moreover, their humor is of a very

different nature from that of the earlier comic thrillers. It is more seriocomic and socially aware, with more emphasis on satire than pure comedy. Finally, the element of surprise is paramount in creating their humor and revealing the plays' content.

In Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, a play-within-a-play, two feuding newspaper critics, Moon and Birdboot, meet at a theater to review the latest Agatha Christie-style murder mystery. They carry on a conversation that continues after the play they are watching begins. Before any characters step on stage, a phone rings and Birdboot leaves his seat to answer it. Before he can return to his seat, he becomes entangled in the stage play's plot, taking on the character of Inspector Hound. Moon is also eventually pulled into the action. Both critics end up being killed and are replaced in the stalls by the actors playing the roles they have assumed. This play is clearly not written merely for entertainment; it also makes an artistic statement about the role of critics in the theater. It received enthusiastic responses from the public and critics alike, but because it was only an extended one-act production, it was usually billed with other short plays and never achieved a commanding run on its own.

The first full-length comedy thriller to achieve significant success was Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth* (pr. 1970). This murder mystery has many of the standard elements of conventional detective stories, which it uses in order to parody them. In his study of the postmodern thriller, Marvin Carlson points out that *Sleuth* is "double-coded," a technique typical of postmodern writing. One set of codes encourages audiences to accept the play as a traditional detective mystery. However, a second set of codes is provided by one character, and sometimes all the characters, commenting on the convention being portrayed. The play thus becomes a self-conscious examination of the characters, the plot, and the play itself.

Sleuth is really a match of wits between a middle-aged man and his wife's young lover. The game between the two of them provides the main plot conflict and leads the audience through a series of surprises colored by an increasingly sadistic jousting for power. In the end, neither character wins, but one of them dies. *Sleuth* was an instant hit in London and played

for more than three years on Broadway, where it won a Tony Award for Best Play in 1971. The 1972 film version of the play also won audience and critical success, and Shaffer won an Edgar Award for his screenplay. Playwright Harold Pinter collaborated with Shaffer in a revised screenplay for a new film adaptation that was completed in 2007.

Other significant comedy thrillers of the late twentieth century include Ira Levin's *Deathtrap* (pr. 1978), Walter Peter Marks's *The Butler Did It* (pr. 1981), and Francis Durbridge's *Deadly Nightcap* (pr. 1986). These and other plays contain so much comic invention that perhaps the only thing predictable in them is their authors' attempts to misdirect, surprise, and thwart audiences at every turn. The interesting element for the audience is not *whodunit*, but *howdunit*. The murderers are usually known to audiences early on; *how* they will perpetrate their crimes constitutes the mystery. Endings of comedy thrillers must be satisfying, yet inverted, denouements in which order is *not* established and the mystery/thriller conventions have been successfully dismantled.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TRENDS

Later murder mysteries and thrillers have suffered from the genre's history. Plays written in the traditional thriller or mystery mode must compete with the success of their forerunners, especially Agatha Christie's well-known works. Having exhausted nearly all possible plot twists, postmodern thrillers virtually ceased to exist in the twenty-first century. There are limits to how many plays can be built around clever killers who murder people, only to have them come back to life to exact revenge and then discover their guns have blanks because the original killers anticipated what would happen. Audiences expecting mind-boggling arrays of twists and turns become more involved in the *game* of the play than in the plots of such plays.

In the twenty-first century, murder-mystery musicals and whodunit dinners have tended to take the place of modern traditional crime drama. In whodunit dinners, murder mysteries are audience participation games used for pure entertainment. Indeed, the crime drama genre has become so "camp" that only period revivals of old plays, such as *Angel Street*, permit audi-

ences a credible suspension of disbelief that will allow them to get involved with the characters and plot. More modern crime plays rarely do anything new or interesting with the genre. Perhaps when a formula is so familiar that it serves primarily as the subject of satire, as in the postmodern comedy thrillers, it must either stagnate into extinction or reinvent itself.

Jill Stapleton-Bergeron

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FILM

Crime films have played a role throughout film history. However, mystery and detective stories did not truly flourish on screen until the advent of sound films during the late 1920's. This late development occurred because the basic elements of the mystery genre—clues, ratiocination, and interrogation—work better in talkies than in silent films. As sound films matured during the early 1930's, gangster films, such as *Little Caesar* (1930) and *Public Enemy* (1931), became popular. At the same time, however, several detective series and stand-alone mystery films were also becoming popular.

The decade of the 1940's is famous for films noirs, many of which featured detective heroes. The genre declined during the 1950's and 1960's, perhaps as a result of the growing competition from television programs about police, lawyers, and private eyes. Crime films began making a comeback during the 1970's, but few of the new films had the traditional investigatory qualities. Filmmakers outside the United States and Great Britain have always made mysteries, but their emphasis, especially since the end of World War II, has been on the psychology of the criminal and the thin line separating upholders of the law from those who break it.

THE SILENT FILM ERA

Evaluating the mysteries of the silent era is problematic because most films from that period have disappeared, leaving behind few traces beyond their titles. The most famous early mystery is the German director Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1922), in which a detective (played by Bernhard Goetzke) is out to stop an archcriminal (Rudolf Klein-Rogge). Other notable titles include *Before Midnight* (1925), in which a detective (William Russell) goes undercover to expose a crooked operative within his agency; *The Handsome Brute* (1925), in which a disgraced cop (William Fairbanks) discovers a famous detective (Lee Shumway) is actually a master criminal; *The Mystery Club* (1926), in which millionaires wager that perfect crimes can be committed; *The Thirteenth Hour*

(1927), in which a detective (Charles Delaney), with the help of his dog, reveals that a noted criminologist (Lionel Barrymore) is a murderer; and *London After Midnight* (1927), in which Lon Chaney plays a detective looking into a suspicious suicide.

Many other silent mysteries were adapted from well-known literary sources, including *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1914), *The Moonstone* (1915), *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman* (1917), starring John Barrymore, and *Seven Keys to Baldpate* (1917), with George M. Cohan, who had previously adapted Earl Derr Biggers's 1913 novel for the stage.

EARLY SHERLOCK HOLMES

Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is almost certainly the most famous detective in literature, so it is not surprising that he has had a long career on the screen. The earliest known depiction of Holmes on the screen was a thirty-second film made in 1900 titled *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900). Made to be seen in amusement arcades, the brief film shows a cigar-smoking Holmes foiling a burglar. Holmes's international appeal can be seen in a series of films made in Denmark several years later, directed by Viggo Larsen, who also played Holmes in the series. During the following decade, Georges Tréville played Holmes in twelve films made in France. Doyle's 1902 novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was filmed in Germany in 1914. Two years later, the American actor William Gillette, who had won fame playing Holmes in his own stage play, took his play to the screen in *Sherlock Holmes* (1916). That film is not believed to be forever lost, as are most of the earliest Holmes films.

When Stoll Picture Productions made forty-six films based on Sherlock Holmes stories between 1920 and 1923, Doyle himself assisted with the productions. He approved the casting of Eille Norwood, who had played Holmes on stage, even though the actor was about sixty years old. Doyle's only objections were to the films' use of such post-Victorian inventions as telephones and automobiles.

In 1922, another version of *Sherlock Holmes* was

made from Gillette's play, with John Barrymore as Holmes and Roland Young as Dr. Watson. Two years later, Buster Keaton made *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924). One of the great comedies of the silent era, *Sherlock, Jr.*, was a highly imaginative spoof of the detective genre in which Keaton played a shy motion-picture projectionist who dreams himself into the Sherlock Holmes film his theater is showing.

In 1929, audiences heard Holmes speak in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, the first sound film about the detective. The Paramount studio's head of production, David O. Selznick, cast Clive Brook as Holmes because he felt the actor resembled the detective depicted in the famous illustrations that Sidney Paget had drawn for the original Holmes stories in *The Strand Magazine*. Like most early Doyle adaptations, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* takes broad liberties with its source material. For example, it gives Dr. Watson (H. Reeves Smith) a flapper daughter (Betty Lawford). Doyle had liked Barrymore's portrayal of Holmes, but he died before he could see Brook's performance.

Several more British and American Holmes adaptations followed during the 1930's, including four in which Arthur Wontner played Holmes. The best-known American Holmes adaptation from that period is *A Study in Scarlet* (1933), with Reginald Owen as the detective. However, the best-known actor to play Holmes during the early sound period was Raymond Massey, in *The Speckled Band* (1931).

RATHBONE AND BRUCE

The earliest sound films about Sherlock Holmes were of generally poor quality, both as mysteries and as representations of Doyle's original stories. An era of higher quality films began in 1939, with the release of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which introduced Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson. From that film until *Dressed to Kill* (1946), the Rathbone and Bruce pair would make thirteen Holmes films together. They also played the same characters on radio. Like Brook, Rathbone had a physical resemblance to Paget's illustrations of Holmes, and he is widely considered to have been the definitive screen Holmes. However, his close identification with Holmes had drawbacks; like many actors associated

primarily with one role, Rathbone eventually felt that playing Holmes had ruined his career.

The first two Sherlock Holmes films starring Rathbone were made by the Twentieth Century-Fox studio. Both those films were shot with Victorian settings. The series then moved to Universal, which spent less money on the productions and set their stories in what was then the present time. The contemporary settings resulted in such anachronisms as having Holmes go up against Nazi agents during World War II. Although the Universal productions lifted Holmes out of his original setting, many of the films have a certain charm. One of the best films in the series is *Terror by Night* (1946). Set entirely on a train, that film evokes some of the Victorian-era flavor of Doyle's original stories.

LATER SHERLOCK HOLMES FILMS

Following the Rathbone era, film interest in Holmes declined until 1959, when a new adaptation of *The*

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Basil Rathbone's portrayals of Sherlock Holmes in thirteen films made a lasting contribution to popular images of Arthur Conan Doyle's hero as a cool, rational, and indomitable detective.

(The Granger Collection, New York)

Hound of the Baskervilles was released. Horror film veteran Peter Cushing played Holmes and André Morell played Watson. Notable principally because it was the first color film about Holmes, this production was almost an afterthought by Hammer Films. That studio had been much more successful with its string of horror films featuring Cushing and Christopher Lee, who would later play Holmes in the German film *Sherlock Holmes and the Deadly Necklace* (1962). Another English production, *A Study in Terror* (1965), cast John Neville as Holmes and Donald Houston as Watson and pitted the detective against Jack the Ripper.

Billy Wilder's 1970 film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* hints at Holmes's having a homosexual orientation and involves the Loch Ness Monster. Robert Stephens played Holmes and Colin Blakely was Watson. In *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1976), adapted from Nicholas Meyer's best-selling original novel about Sherlock Holmes, Watson (Robert Duvall) helps Holmes (Nicol Williamson) overcome his addiction to cocaine by tricking him into visiting Sigmund Freud (Alan Arkin), who uncovers a surprising revelation about Professor Moriarty (Laurence Olivier). This amusingly self-conscious extravaganza featured what were probably the most uniformly strong performances of any Holmes film.

A new version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1978) directed by Paul Morrissey—who was famous as Andy Warhol's collaborator—starred Peter Cook as Holmes and Dudley Moore as Watson. It is a tediously unfunny spoof based on Cook and Moore's screenplay. Holmes again confronted Jack the Ripper in *Murder by Decree*, a Canadian production released in 1979. Despite strong performances by Christopher Plummer as Holmes and James Mason as Watson, this film tends to be overly dark and depressing. Much lighter in tone is *Young Sherlock Holmes* (1985). Written by Chris Columbus and directed by Barry Levinson, this film depicts Holmes (Nicholas Rowe) and Watson (Alan Cox) as schoolboys confronting an evil professor (Anthony Higgins). Less successfully whimsical is *Without a Clue* (1988), in which Watson (Ben Kingsley)—Holmes's chronicler in Doyle's stories—is portrayed as the actual creator of Holmes. In order to satisfy public interest in Holmes, Watson hires a

drunken actor (Michael Caine) to pretend to be the brilliant detective, while Watson himself solves crimes.

None of the actors who portrayed Sherlock Holmes in films after Rathbone won recognition as a definitive Holmes. However, all the big-screen treatments of Holmes were overshadowed for many by the energy and inventiveness of the British Broadcasting Corporation's four series of Holmes stories made for television between 1984 and 1994. Meticulously faithful to Doyle's original stories, the series starred Jeremy Brett as Holmes. David Burke played Watson in the first series and was replaced by Edward Hartwicke in the other three series.

EARLY AGATHA CHRISTIE FILMS

Agatha Christie is arguably the most popular mystery writer of all time, but film adaptations of her work have generally not treated her creations well. Of the numerous screen adaptations that have been made, only a handful demand close attention. Her eccentric Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, made his first film appearance in *Alibi* (1931), which was adapted from her novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). Austin Trevor, the actor who played Poirot, lacked not only the detective's famous moustache but also his accent. Trevor played Poirot two more times, and then the character disappeared from the screen for more than three decades. Indeed, there were few other Christie films until the 1960's. In *Love from a Stranger* (1937), based on Christie's 1934 story "Philomel Cottage," a young woman (Ann Harding) slowly discovers her new husband (Basil Rathbone) may be disturbed. Among that film's supporting actors was Joan Hickson, who would play Miss Jane Marple on television a half-century later. In 1947, *Love from a Stranger* was remade with Sylvia Sidney and John Hodiak.

The strongest of the early Christie adaptations is *And Then There Were None* (1945), based on the novel first published as *Ten Little Niggers* (1939). In that story, ten unrelated characters who have escaped punishment for past wrongdoing are invited to an island off the Cornish coast, where they are mysteriously killed off, one by one. Director Ren Clair was known for his light comic touch, so the results are more playful than gruesome. Christie's novel reached the screen

again, rather ineptly, as *Ten Little Indians* in 1965, 1975, and 1989. The 1975 version was set in the Iranian desert because its financing came from that country. The basic premise in Christie's story has become an archetype occasionally used in other films. For example, *The Last of Sheila* (1973), a film written by composer Stephen Sondheim and actor Anthony Perkins, is an entertaining variation on Christie's plot. Another film adapted from Christie's work is Billy Wilder's *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957), based on Christie's 1953 play of the same title. Wilder keeps the comedic and dramatic elements balanced as Charles Laughton defends Tyrone Power against murder charges, with Marlene Dietrich providing surprising testimony.

LATER AGATHA CHRISTIE FILMS

During the 1960's, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) began a popular series of Miss Marple adaptations starring Margaret Rutherford. These included *Murder She Said* (1961), based on Christie's *4:50 from Paddington* (1957); *Murder at the Gallop* (1963), drawn from the Poirot novel *After the Funeral* (1953); and *Murder Most Foul* (1964), from another Poirot novel, *Mrs. McGinty Dead* (1952). Another Miss Marple film, *Murder Ahoy* (1964), was based on an original screenplay by David Pursall and Jack Seddon. These films' emphasis on humor was fitting for Rutherford, a splendid comic performer, but the films' stories have little to do with their sources. Rutherford's husband, Stringer Davis, was cast as Marple's elderly sidekick—a character who does not appear in the novels. Christie herself regarded the films as predictable and lacking in suspense.

MGM bought the rights to Christie's *The A. B. C. Murders* (1936) when the Poirot novel was published but did not bring the story to the screen until 1965. Released as *The Alphabet Murders*, the film starred a heavily made-up Tony Randall as Poirot. As was the case with the early Miss Marple films, the result was campy, with a brief appearance by Miss Marple herself. Austin Trevor, the first film Poirot, played a butler.

Christie herself was pleased with Sidney Lumet's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974). In addition to a

much-padded Albert Finney as Poirot, the all-star cast included Lauren Bacall, Sean Connery, John Gielgud, Vanessa Redgrave, and Richard Widmark. Ingrid Bergman won her third Academy Award for the supporting role of a nanny-turned-missionary. That film's success sparked a new series of Poirot features with Peter Ustinov as the detective, beginning with *Death on the Nile* in 1978. These new adaptations tended to emphasize all-star casts, high production values, and exotic settings at the expense of mystery elements, and Ustinov played Poirot as an arch caricature. After the second entry, *Evil Under the Sun* (1982), the series migrated to television.

This same period saw Angela Lansbury as Miss Marple in *The Mirror Crack'd* (1980). As in the recent Poirot films, this film assembled an all-star cast, but



Margaret Rutherford's portrayals of Miss Jane Marple had little to do with Agatha Christie's brilliant amateur sleuth.

Lansbury's portrayal of Marple is closer to Christie's character than that of Rutherford. Television would later serve Christie's characters much better.

PHILO VANCE

The first American detective to have an impact in films was Philo Vance, the creation of S. S. Van Dine. Paramount cast William Powell as Vance because of his distinctive voice. *The Canary Murder Case* (1929) was adapted from Van Dine's 1927 novel of the same title. Louise Brooks played a blackmailing singer, and Eugene Pallette was Sergeant Heath, a role he would play four more times. Director Malcolm St. Clair created a memorable expressionist sequence, in which Brooks swings on a trapeze over her wealthy victims in a theater audience. Van Dine proclaimed the film an improvement over his novel and the best filmed mystery he had seen.

By the 1930's, Van Dine was the most popular living American mystery writer, and his dandified New York detective, Philo Vance, appeared in at least twelve more films through the late 1940's. Powell played Vance three additional times; Warren William played him twice; and Basil Rathbone, Paul Lukas, Edmund Lowe, Grant Richards, James Stephenson, William Wright, and Wilfrid Hyde-White each played him once. Director Michael Curtiz's *The Kennel Murder Case* (1933), generally considered the best of these films, has Powell as Vance and exploits Van Dine's interest in show dogs. When tropical fish were featured prominently in *The Dragon Murder Case* (1934), a national craze was launched.

After Powell left the series, the Vance titles went into a decline in quality, production values, and faithfulness to their sources. In *The Grace Allen Murder Case* (1939), Warren William's detective is secondary to the wacky radio comedian, who calls him Fido. The popularity of Van Dine's novels and the films adapted from them made an important contribution to the genre by demonstrating to Hollywood studios there was a significant market for film detective stories.

DASHIELL HAMMETT ON SCREEN

Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man* (1934) represented something of a departure for the hard-boiled

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of Sam Spade in the 1941 adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon helped to create the film noir genre. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

detective novelist. In contrast to such works as *Red Harvest* (1927) and *The Glass Key* (1931), Hammett's story about retired detective Nick Charles and his wife, Nora, is essentially lighthearted, with the wisecracking Nora inspired by Hammett's own relationship with playwright Lillian Hellman. The 1930's saw the heyday of American wisecracking, and filmgoers adored the repartee between William Powell and Myrna Loy in the 1934 film adaptation. The film proved so

popular that MGM made five more Thin Man films, concluding the series with *Song of the Thin Man* (1947). In creating the sequels, MGM ignored that the title of the original film does not, in fact, actually refer to Powell's character. *After the Thin Man* (1936), featuring a young James Stewart in a surprising role, is almost as good as the first film but has little to do with Hammett's character. The later films fell off in quality.

Meanwhile, Warner Bros. made three attempts to adapt Hammett's masterpiece, *The Maltese Falcon* (1929-1930), before getting it right. The 1931 film *The Maltese Falcon*, featuring Ricardo Cortez as private investigator Sam Spade, follows the novel reasonably closely but is burdened by a dull cast. Even worse is the second attempt, *Satan Met a Lady* (1936), a star vehicle for Bette Davis. In this mostly comic treatment of the novel, Warren William played Spade. When veteran screenwriter John Huston made his directorial debut, he decided to give Sam Spade another shot. His *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) sticks so closely to Hammett's novel that it must rank as one of the most faithful screen adaptations of a novel ever produced, and Humphrey Bogart's performance as Spade help make him a star.

Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* also helped create the genre that came to be called film noir. Cinematographer Arthur Edeson's use of dark, atmospheric lighting and shadows evoked the feeling that everything is not as it seems in the morally ambiguous world in which Spade operates. Edeson's low camera angles accented the dangers that Spade faced. For example, Edeson often filmed the obese Casper Gutman (Sydney Greenstreet) from floor levels to emphasize his enormous size. The neuroses that came to be associated with post-World War II films noirs are revealed in Bogart's portrayal of a man struggling over his moral obligation to capture the villains and his love for the duplicitous Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor). Moreover, Spade's sadistic streak is revealed in his obvious pleasure at roughing up the fragile Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre). In treating the detective genre with the respect it warrants, Huston created one of the greatest and most influential detective films ever made.

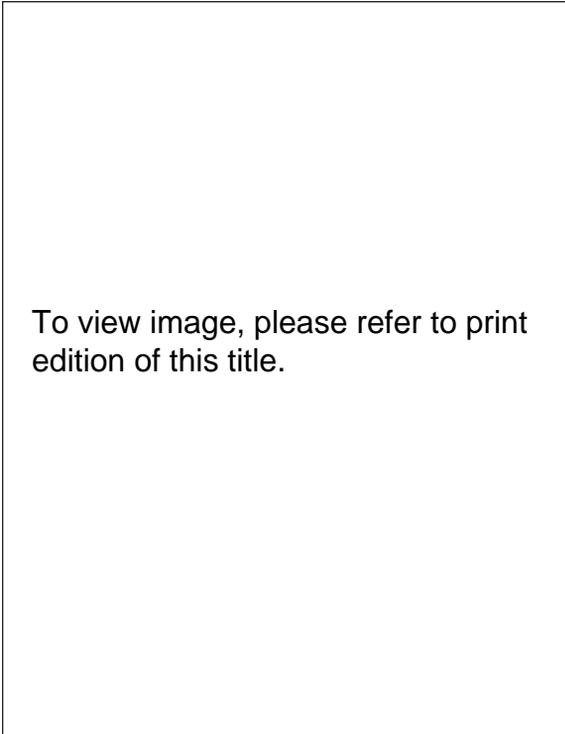
Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1930) was filmed twice. This tale of a politician's henchman proving his boss

innocent of murder starred George Raft and Edward Arnold in its 1935 adaptation and Alan Ladd and Brian Donleavy in the 1942 remake. Hammett's most violent novel, *Red Harvest* (1927-1928), is the uncredited source for Akira Kurosawa's samurai saga *Yojimbo* (1961). It, in turn, was remade as a Western by Sergio Leone as *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). Later, it returned to Hammett's original 1920's American setting in Walter Hill's *Last Man Standing* in 1996. Joel and Ethan Coen's 1990 film *Miller's Crossing* (1990) borrows plot elements from both *Red Harvest* and *The Glass Key*.

RAYMOND CHANDLER ON SCREEN

One of the greatest American detectives is Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles private eye Philip Marlowe. The first film to use Marlowe as its central protagonist is *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), based on *Farewell, My Lovely*. In that film, director Edward Dmytryk sends Marlowe (Dick Powell) into a dangerous, dark whirlpool of greed and corruption. It includes a memorable drug-induced nightmare sequence. Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946), based on Chandler's 1939 novel, is even better. As Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) investigates a complex blackmailing scheme, he falls for the wealthy Vivian Sternwood (Lauren Bacall). Many viewers complained that the film's plot was difficult to follow, and Chandler himself reportedly could not explain who perpetrated one of his story's murders to screenwriters William Faulkner, Jules Furthman, and Leigh Brackett. Nevertheless, *The Big Sleep* is a classic film noir, perfectly capturing the novel's murky moral climate.

Robert Montgomery played Marlowe in *Lady in the Lake* (1947), from Chandler's 1943 novel. This film is most notable for its use of a subjective camera by Montgomery, who also directed the film. Marlowe appears only as a reflection in mirrors, and the femme fatale (Audrey Totter) kisses not the hero but the camera. George Montgomery played a B-film Marlowe in *The Brasher Doubloon* (1947), based on *The High Window* (1942). The detective entered a more modern and sordid era in *Marlowe* (1969), based on Chandler's novel *The Little Sister* (1949) and starring James Garner as Marlowe. Played by Robert Mitchum, Mar-



To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Raymond Chandler working on a film script at his Hollywood home in 1945. (AP/Wide World Photos)

lowe returned to Chandler's own era in *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975). Mitchum again played Marlowe in the 1978 production of *The Big Sleep*, which moved the story to contemporary England for no obvious reason except, perhaps, the film's financing.

Perhaps the most unusual Chandler adaptation was Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973). Starring Elliott Gould as a smart-mouthed, profane Marlowe, the film is more true to Altman's idiosyncratic style than to Chandler's 1953 novel. Altman and screenwriter Leigh Brackett clearly intended to deconstruct the genre, amusing Altman's fans while appalling Chandler purists.

Chandler himself was also a successful screenwriter and is credited with three outstanding films. Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944), which Chandler helped adapt from James M. Cain's novella, is one of the most important early films noirs. Chandler also wrote the original screenplay for *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), another film noir, in which Alan Ladd tries to prove himself innocent of murdering his estranged

wife. Finally, Chandler cowrote the script of Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951), the best adaptation of a Patricia Highsmith mystery.

ASIAN DETECTIVES

After Sherlock Holmes, the most popular detective series films of the 1930's and 1940's were those featuring Charlie Chan, Earl Derr Biggers's Honolulu-based police inspector, who never seems to spend much time in Hawaii. Chan first appeared as a secondary character, played by the Japanese-born actor George Kuwa, in *The House Without a Key* in 1926. Another Japanese actor, Sojin, played Chan in *The Chinese Parrot* in 1927, and the Korean actor E. L. Park played him in *Behind That Curtain* in 1929. Kuwa, Sojin, and Park were the only Asian actors ever to play Chan.

Chan was only a minor character in his first screen appearances. When the Chan series began officially with *Charlie Chan Carries On* in 1931, the detective did not even appear until midway through the film. That film was the first of sixteen in which the Swedish actor Warner Oland played Chan. Chan finally became the central protagonist in *The Black Camel* (1931). The Twentieth Century-Fox series quickly became popular and profitable. After Oland died in 1938, the American actor Sidney Toler took over as Chan, beginning with *Charlie Chan in Reno* (1939). Toler made eleven Chan films for Fox and eleven more after the series migrated to low-budget Monogram Pictures in 1944. Monogram had earlier attempted to imitate Chan with *The Mysterious Mr. Wong* (1934), starring Bela Lugosi, and *Mr. Wong, Detective* (1938), with Boris Karloff, who played the character four more times before Keye Luke took over for the final entry, *Phantom of Chinatown* (1940). Following Toler's death in 1947, Roland Winters starred in Monogram's final six Chan films. The formula for the Charlie Chan films always had Chan assembling the suspects at the end of each film and tricking the guilty party into confessing. There was little variation from one film to another. After reaching its high point with *Charlie Chan at the Opera* (1936), featuring Karloff as the villain, the quality of the series declined, with the Monogram entries especially weak.

The Chan films have often been attacked as racist. Chan speaks in something like a form of pidgin En-

glish—a sharp contrast to the perfect language of his college-educated “Number-one Son,” Lee Chan, who was frequently played by the Chinese-born actor Keye Luke. Frequently uttering fortune-cookie epigrams, Chan appears to reinforce white Americans’ stereotyped images of Asians. The fact that no Asian actors were ever cast in the lead role in Charlie Chan films offended many people, especially Asian Americans. When Peter Ustinov—who had earlier played Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot—starred as Chan in *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen* (1981), protesters picketed theaters in several cities.

Meanwhile, the success of the Charlie Chan films during the 1930’s prompted Twentieth Century-Fox to launch a new series featuring Mr. Moto, the Japanese secret agent created by novelist John P. Marquand. Peter Lorre, one of the finest actors ever involved in mystery series, played the role eight times, beginning with *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937). The 1938 film *Mr. Moto’s Gamble* began as a Charlie Chan production but changed protagonist after Warner Oland died. *Mysterious Mr. Moto* (1938), in which Moto foils an assassination ring in London, is considered to be the best in the series. Despite the film’s success, Lorre himself grew to despise his role, feeling that his identification with the character was limiting the other roles offered to him. In 1965, Henry Silva starred in *The Return of Mr. Moto*.

OTHER CLASSIC DETECTIVES ON SCREEN

The French reporter Maurice Leblanc created master thief Arsène Lupin as a response to Sherlock Holmes, who appeared as one of Lupin’s antagonists in Leblanc’s early stories. A morally ambiguous character, much like E. W. Hornung’s A. J. Raffles and Leslie Charteris’s Simon Templar, Lupin is actually on the right side of the law. Lupin made his sound-film debut in MGM’s *Arsène Lupin* (1932), in which the thief (John Barrymore) is pursued by a detective (Lionel Barrymore) who thinks he knows Lupin’s true identity. *Arsène Lupin Returns* (1938) finds the thief (Melvyn Douglas) pursued by an American detective (Warren William). *Enter Arsène Lupin* (1944), starring Charles Korvin, is a more modest production. There have been several French adaptations, including *Arsène Lupin* (2004), with Romain Duris, which sur-

prised many by becoming a box-office hit in Europe.

Georges Simenon’s Jules Maigret, the most famous of European police detectives, has been the subject of many films. Jean Renoir made the first, *La Nuit du carrefour* (1932; *Night at the Crossroads*), starring his brother, Pierre Renoir. Charles Laughton played Maigret in *The Man on the Eiffel Tower* (1949), and Jean Gabin played him in *Maigret tend un piège* (1957; *Maigret Lays a Trap*).

Ellery Queen developed into a major rival of Philo Vance during the early 1930’s. The New York writer and amateur detective created by Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee first appeared on the screen in *The Spanish Cape Mystery* (1935), which starred Donald Cook. After Eddie Quillan played Queen in *The Mandarin Mystery* (1936), the series lay dormant until Columbia relaunched it in 1940 with *Ellery Queen, Master Detective*, starring Ralph Bellamy, who played the character three more times before William Gargan took over the role for the final three films in the series.

Because of the popularity of Philo Vance, Warner Bros. decided to bring Erle Stanley Gardner’s legal whiz, Perry Mason, to the screen, beginning with *The Case of the Howling Dog* (1935), starring Warren William, a tall, unremarkable-looking actor whose success is difficult to account for. He could be both lethargic and hammy, as could many stage-trained actors of the 1930’s. William is frequently too flamboyant as Mason, but he could not entirely weaken Gardner’s solid plots. Gardner himself disapproved of the series because of its casting. *The Case of the Curious Bride* (1935), directed by Michael Curtiz, is the best of the early Mason films. After William left Warner Bros. to play the Lone Wolf for Columbia, he was replaced first by Ricardo Cortez and then by Donald Woods. However, the studio soon dropped the series because of its inability to find the right actor to play Mason. Gardner’s character then had to wait until 1955 and the intervention of television for the perfect actor, Raymond Burr, to fill the role.

LONE WOLF, BULLDOG DRUMMOND, AND BOSTON BLACKIE

Louis Joseph Vance introduced his reformed jewel thief Michael Lanyard, alias the Lone Wolf, in his

1914 novel *The Lone Wolf*. The story was adapted for the screen in 1917, with Bert Lytell, and again in 1924, with Jack Holt. Lytell played the character four more times at Columbia between 1926 and 1930. Columbia reintroduced the character with *The Lone Wolf Returns* (1936), starring Melvyn Douglas. The sophisticated comedy mystery was patterned after MGM's Thin Man series and costarred Gail Patrick, later producer of the *Perry Mason* television series.

Columbia resumed the series in 1939 with *The Lone Wolf Spy Hunt*, starring Warren William, who played the character eight more times through 1943. One of the delights of such mystery series of the 1930's and 1940's is the casting of wonderful character actors in supporting roles. Eric Blore, the best comic butler of the era, appears as Lanyard's sharp-tongued valet, Jamison, in ten films. Gerald Mohr took over for William for the final three films of the series, which ended with *The Lone Wolf in London* (1947).

Herman C. McNeile's Captain Hugh Bulldog Drummond appeared in several American and British films between 1922 and 1951. The most notable are the two starring Ronald Colman. *Bulldog Drummond* (1929), arguably the best of the early sound detective films, earned Colman one of the rare Academy Award nominations given to an actor playing a detective. Colman's second film was *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back* (1934), with Warner Oland as the villain. Colman's Bulldog is more suave and sophisticated than the rough-hewn character about whom McNeile wrote under the pseudonym Sapper. Other actors who played Drummond include Ray Milland, in *Bulldog Drummond Escapes* (1937), and Walter Pidgeon, in *Calling Bulldog Drummond* (1951).

Boston Blackie, a reformed jewel thief who became an amateur detective, was created by Jack Boyle, a former reporter who was himself in prison for armed robbery. Boyle's short stories were adapted several times in the silent era, beginning with *Boston Blackie's Little Pal* (1918), with Bert Lytell. Lionel Barrymore played Blackie in *The Face in the Fog* (1922). The character's most famous incarnation, however, began with *Meet Boston Blackie* (1941), in which Chester Morris began his fourteen-film run as Blackie. The force of Morris's personality helped the films overcome weak scripts.

THE SAINT AND THE FALCON

Leslie Charteris created his debonair sleuth Simon Templar, known as the Saint, in his 1928 novel *Meet the Tiger*. The character first reached the screen in 1938 in *The Saint in New York*, starring Louis Hayward. George Sanders then assumed the role for four films. In the best, *The Saint in London* (1939), Templar returns to England to investigate the murder of a nobleman. After one film with Hugh Sinclair, Hayward returned for the last film in the series, *The Saint's Girl Friday* (1953). Future James Bond actor Roger Moore played the Saint on television from 1962 to 1969. In 1997, the Saint returned to the big screen in *The Saint*, in which Val Kilmer's portrayal of the character emphasized Templar's penchant for disguises during his clashes with the Russian mafia.

George Sanders left the Saint series to play Gay Lawrence, known as the Falcon, another debonair sleuth almost indistinguishable from the Saint, in *The Gay Falcon* (1941). Although this character was based on stories by Michael Arlen, the films drew upon other sources. For example, *The Falcon Takes Over* (1942) reworked Raymond Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940). In *The Falcon Brother* (1942), Sanders passed the Falcon character on to his real-life brother, Tom Conway, who played Gay Lawrence's brother Tom. As adept at drollery as his more famous sibling, Conway played the Falcon ten times, ending with *The Falcon Adventure* in 1946. Among the low-budget detective series of the 1940's, the Falcon series is the most consistently entertaining. The films were usually lighthearted, but they also often contain dark elements that characterized film noir. Such elements are especially evident in *The Falcon and the Co-eds* (1943), in which Lawrence investigates a murder at a girls' school. Conway also played Bulldog Drummond in two unmemorable 1948 films.

OTHER DETECTIVES

Brett Halliday's sleuth Mike Shayne reached the big screen in *Michael Shayne, Private Detective* in 1940. Lloyd Nolan played Shayne in that film and six others, only the first of which was based on a Halliday novel. The last, *Time to Kill* (1942), was adapted from Raymond Chandler's novel *The High Window* (1942).

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Four decades before actor Warren Beatty brought Dick Tracy to the screen, Morgan Conway played the comic strip detective in a series of films.

Chester Gould's comic-strip police detective Dick Tracy was the subject of several serials and B-films between 1937 and 1947. Most starred Ralph Byrd, who proved superior to his meager material. The radio program *Crime Doctor* provided a character for a short-lived series (1943-1945) in which Warner Baxter played the gangster-turned-psychiatrist. Another popular radio program, *The Whistler*, spawned seven low-budget efforts during 1944-1947, with Richard Dix starring in a different role in each.

Several films were made about E. W. Hornung's amateur sleuth A. J. Raffles beginning in 1917, with the most notable being *Raffles* (1930), with Ronald Colman, and its 1939 remake with David Niven. Lamont Cranston, the criminologist/scientist hero of radio and Maxwell Grant's pulp stories, appeared in *The Shadow* (1940), a serial with Victor Jory, and a

1994 big-budget flop starring Alec Baldwin. After Edward Arnold starred in *Meet Nero Wolfe* (1936) and Walter Connolly in *The League of Frightened Men* (1937), Rex Stout allowed no further films to be made about his housebound detective. Bonita Granville played Carolyn Keene's girl detective Nancy Drew four times during 1938 and 1939. After *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1939), Walter Pidgeon played the pulp detective twice more before the series expired.

COMEDY MYSTERIES

The success of the Thin Man series prompted the production a large number of romantic-comedy mysteries between the mid-1930's and mid-1940's. Robert Young and Constance Cummings played socialites solving a murder case in James Whale's stylish *Remember Last Night?* in 1935. William Powell starred in two of the best comic mysteries of that era. In *Star of Midnight* (1935), he played attorney and amateur sleuth Clay Dalzell, who, with the help of a socialite (Ginger Rogers), looks for a friend's missing girlfriend only to stumble into a murder case. In *The Ex-Mrs. Bradford* (1936), Powell plays a physician who reluctantly joins his former wife (Jean Arthur), a mystery writer, in investigating the suspicious death of a jockey. Many such films featured reporters. In *The Mad Miss Manton* (1938), for example, a spoiled, wealthy young woman (Barbara Stanwyck) says she has found a body in a deserted house. When a newspaperman (Henry Fonda) calls her claim a stunt, she enlists her fellow debutantes to solve the case.

In another series inspired by Nick and Nora Charles, New York rare-book dealers Joel and Garda Sloane look into book-related murders. Harry Kurnitz's characters were played by Melvyn Douglas and Florence Rice in *Fast Company* (1938), by Robert Montgomery and Rosalind Russell in *Fast and Loose* (1939), and by Franchot Tone and Ann Sothern in *Fast and Furious* (1939). Dozens of more broadly comic mysteries were also made during this period. In *Whistling in the Dark* (1941), for example, Red Skelton solves imaginary mysteries on his radio program, only to be drawn into a real mystery. *My Favorite Brunette* (1947) starred Bob Hope as a San Francisco baby photographer mistaken for a private eye.

In 1975, *The Maltese Falcon* was remade as a dismal comedy, *The Black Bird* (1975), with George Segal as Sam Spade, Jr. In the spoof *Murder by Death* (1976), written by Neil Simon, Peter Falk plays a character modeled on Sam Spade, Peter Sellers plays a character reminiscent of Charlie Chan, Elsa Lanchester a Miss Marple character, and James Coco a Hercule Poirot character, with David Niven and Maggie Smith as Nick and Nora Charles characters. Despite a lack of sophistication and wit, the film was a success that inspired Simon's *The Cheap Detective* (1978), with Falk as a different Sam Spade imitation. Much cleverer was Carl Reiner's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982), in which a somewhat dim detective played by Steve Martin interacts on the screen with Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Bette Davis, and many other actors in footage borrowed from 1940's films noirs. In the even more inventive *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), a Los Angeles detective (Bob Hoskins) is on a case involving Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, and other cartoon characters.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Although famous as the greatest director of romantic thrillers, Alfred Hitchcock also included a strong mystery element in many of his films. In *Blackmail* (1929), for example, a policeman (John Longden) investigates a murder case in which his fiancé (Anny Ondra) is the main suspect. *Murder* (1930) is a straightforward whodunit, as a juror (Herbert Marshall) votes to convict a young woman (Norah Baring) of murder while setting a trap to catch the true killer. In *Number Seventeen* (1932), a detective (John Stuart) pursues a gang of jewel thieves. Distraught parents solve the kidnapping of their child in both of Hitchcock's versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934 and 1956). Robert Donat played a man on the run from police who must prove his innocence in *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1935), from the 1915 John Buchan novel of the same title. Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave try to prove an elderly woman (Dame May Whitty) has been abducted from a train in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938).

Rebecca (1940), from the Daphne du Maurier novel of the same title, is a mystery about the title

character's death. A newlywed (Joan Fontaine) thinks her husband (Cary Grant) may be planning to kill her in *Suspicion* (1941). In *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) a young woman (Teresa Wright) suspects her favorite uncle (Joseph Cotton) may be a murderer. Amnesia hides a killer's identity in *Spellbound* (1945). In *The Paradine Case* (1948), an attorney (Gregory Peck) falls for the client (Alida Valli) whom he is defending in a murder trial. In *Stage Fright* (1950), Jane Wyman plays an actress trying to prove her boyfriend (Richard Todd) did not commit a murder. A priest (Montgomery Clift) must keep a killer secret in *I Confess* (1953).

A policeman (John Williams) suspects a woman (Grace Kelly) has been wrongly convicted of murder in *Dial M for Murder* (1954). In *Rear Window* (1954), which Hitchcock adapted from a Cornell Woolrich story, James Stewart and Grace Kelly try to prove that a neighbor (Raymond Burr) has murdered his wife. In Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), one of the most intricate mysteries ever made, a retired policeman (James Stewart) falls for an apparent suicide victim (Kim Novak) only to discover he is at the center of a sinister plot. Mistaken identity leads to a man (Cary Grant) becoming a murder suspect in *North by Northwest* (1959), and policeman Alec McCowen suspects Jon Finch of murder in *Frenzy* (1972).

MORE MYSTERIES

In Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), a detective (Dana Andrews) falls in love with an apparent murder victim (Gene Tierney). This adaptation of Vera Caspary's novel is a perfect blend of mystery, film noir, and romance, with Clifton Webb giving a star-making performance as an acerbic columnist. *Green for Danger* (1946) is an outstanding British mystery in which a police investigator (Alastair Sim) tries to solve murders in a hospital. In *Dark Passage* (1947), Humphrey Bogart plays a man who escapes from prison to clear his name in his wife's murder. Director Delmer Daves used a subjective camera until the prison escapee has had plastic surgery that makes him look like Bogart.

Alec Guinness played G. K. Chesterton's detective priest in *Father Brown* (1954). Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) is the most significant film adaptation from Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novels as

well as one of the last of the pure films noirs. Akira Kurosawa made the best-known adaptation of a novel from Ed McBain's long-running 87th Precinct series. *Tengoku to jigoku* (1963; *High and Low*) explores the moral dilemma that develops when kidnappers mistakenly snatch a chauffeur's son instead of the child of a wealthy industrialist.

In 1971's *Gumshoe*, Albert Finney played a Liverpool nightclub emcee who wants to be Sam Spade. Gordon Parks's 1971 film *Shaft*, starring Richard Roundtree as a Harlem private eye, was one of the most popular of the so-called blaxploitation films of the 1970's. Two less successful sequels followed. *Chinatown* (1974), written by Robert Towne and directed by Roman Polanski, is one of the most highly regarded detective films ever made from an original screenplay. Set in Los Angeles during the 1930's, the film follows private investigator Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson) as he stumbles into municipal corruption, murder, and incest, all of which reflected the cynicism of the 1970's Watergate era. *The Two Jakes*, a 1990 sequel directed by Nicholson, was less successful. Robert Benton's *The Late Show* (1977) is an affectionate tribute to film noir, with Art Carney as an aged Los Angeles private detective who has not kept up with the times and Lily Tomlin as his eccentric client.

Michael Adams

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GRAPHIC NOVELS

Graphic novels are essentially comic books that combine various forms of graphic art with story lines, or sequential art that is both longer and more complex than the artwork in serialized comic books. However, the term is used so loosely that it is difficult to define. Nevertheless, two fundamental types of graphic novels can be distinguished. The first type is the so-called original graphic novel, or OGN; these are lengthy, ambitious works that appear in single volumes. The second variety comprises previously released material, such as limited series or story arcs of ongoing series.

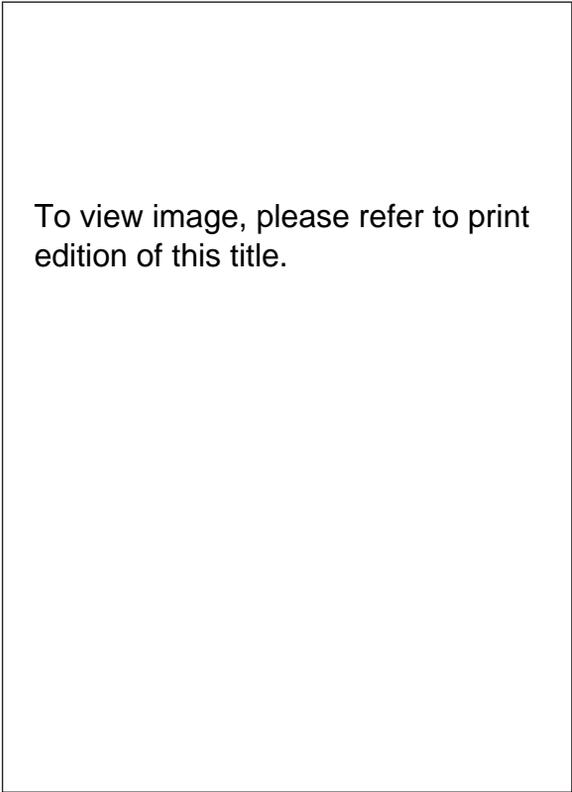
The term “graphic novel” is used almost solely for American publications. Similar graphic text forms are called “albums” in Europe and “tankobons” in Japan. The term itself was coined by comic legend Will Eisner (1917-2005), who applied it to *A Contract with God, and Other Tenement Stories*, which he published in 1978. However, earlier books compete for the claim of having been the first graphic novel. By the mid-1980’s, graphic novels were firmly established in the publishing market, and they eventually became standard features of most major trade publishers, with dozens of original and collected graphic novels appearing every month. Crime stories and mystery and detective fiction make up a large part of the graphic novel market, just as they did in comic books published long before the advent of graphic novels.

CRIME AND MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION COMICS

After the age of comic book publishing began in early 1933, with *Funnies on Parade*, one of the first subgenres to develop was detective stories. Comic books titled *Adventures of Detective Ace King*, *Bob Scully the Two-Fisted Hick Detective*, and *Detective Dan Secret Op. 48* all were released in 1933. These were humorous stories, but three years later, the more serious *Detective Picture Stories* appeared. It was followed by *Detective Comics* in 1937. Issue number 27 of that comic book introduced Batman in 1939, thus combining the mystery and detective genre with the new superhero genre, which had been invented a year

earlier with the appearance of Superman in the first issue of *Action Comics*. Still being published in the twenty-first century, *Detective Comics* is not only the longest-running comic book in the mystery and detective category but also the longest-running comic book of any kind. In 1940, Eisner started published a Sunday newspaper comic strip, *The Spirit*, a crime noir mystery about a masked vigilante that proved highly influential in graphic mystery fiction and in graphic story telling generally.

With these and other publications, two crime and detective comic book categories soon emerged. The first was crime comics, which told stories from the inverted viewpoint of the criminals in order to send anti-crime messages to young readers. This philosophy was reflected in comic titles such as *Crime Does Not Pay*, which debuted in 1942. The second category was the



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Will Eisner in 1998. (AP/Wide World Photos)

mystery-detective comic, which focused on solving crimes and punishing criminals. In 1950, EC Comics started publishing *Crime Suspensories*, which launched a trend of more adult-themed and violent crime comics. Other publishers followed with similar series. Soon, the entire comic book industry, and especially the crime and horror genres, came under heavy criticism because of the supposed negative influence of comic books on juveniles. With the adoption of the Comics Code in 1954, the industry began regulating and censoring itself. Crime comics became so tame that they lost their appeal, and most faded away.

Over the ensuing decades, the Comics Code became less important, and fewer and fewer publishers submitted their books to the Comic Code Authority (CCA) for evaluation. From their start, crime and mystery and detective comic books had featured both superpowered and non-superpowered heroes. Gradually, superheroes such as Batman, Superman, and Spider-Man, came to dominate the comic book format, and their human counterparts tended to fade away. Meanwhile, graphic mystery novels, covering all aspects of the mystery genre, began proliferating.

STORIES WITHOUT SUPERHEROES

Although the superhero genre dominates the graphic fiction scene, one of the earliest graphic novels, released as a “picture novel,” was a hard-boiled type of mystery with an ordinary mortal, a femme fatale named Rust, as its central character. This book, *It Rhymes with Lust* (1950), which was written by Arnold Drake and Leslie Waller and illustrated by Matt Baker, set the tone for most of the realistic graphic mysteries that came later. Graphic novels influenced by crime noir or hard-boiled mysteries in black and white became the prevalent type.



New York City magistrate Charles F. Murphy at a September, 1954, news conference, when he was named the administrator for the newly created Comic Magazine Association of America's code of ethics, which transformed the comic book industry.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

Black-and-white graphic novels about ordinary mortal figures hit their stride during the 1990's. One of the most successful writer-artists in this field was Frank Miller, who explored the noir themes in his seven-volume *Sin City* series (1991-2000). These books lifted violence in graphic mystery to a new level and inspired a revival of black-and-white crime comic books. Miller drew his books almost entirely in black and white, using colors only sparsely. In *That Yellow Bastard* (1996), for example, the eponymous title character is drawn in yellow, while everything else is black and white. Parts of *Sin City* were made into a film in 2005. Another graphic novel that came to the screen in 2005 was John Wagner's *A History of Violence* (1997), an original black-and-white graphic novel illustrated by Vince Locke. It tells the story of a small-town café owner who, in becoming a local hero, has to confront his own violent past with the Mafia.

David Lapham's critically acclaimed *Stray Bullets* series, which has been published in black and white on an irregular basis since 1995, is also being collected in graphic novel format. These books tell the stories of

various characters and their involvement in crimes and tragedy. Lapham is also the creator of *Murder Me Dead* (2000), a collected murder mystery story in black and white.

Road to Perdition (1998) is another original black-and-white graphic novel with a noir crime tale. Written by Max Allan Collins and drawn by Richard Piers Rayner, it tells the story of an Irish mob enforcer seeking revenge against his former boss, who tried to kill his family during the 1930's. The story was made into a major live-action film starring Tom Hanks in 2002.

Elements of the psychological thriller can be found in the extremely violent hard-boiled police procedural *Scars* (2004), written by Warren Ellis and drawn by Jacen Burrows. Haunted by the murder of his wife and unborn daughter, detective John Cain hunts the killer of a nine-year-old girl and finally crosses the line when he kills the prime suspect. Other contributions by Ellis to graphic mystery novels include his *Strange Kiss* series, which mixes crime fiction and horror, featuring combat magician William Gravel, and his *Fell* (2005-), drawn by Ben Templesmith, in which Detective Richard Fell works to solve the worst crimes imaginable in the corrupt city of Snowtown. Ellis bases all the stories in this eerie series on actual crimes.

Another subgenre of non-superhero graphic comics is historical mysteries, such as Alan Moore's *From Hell* (1999), drawn by Eddie Campbell. This dense, multilayered, black-and-white story draws on Stephen Knight's *Jack The Ripper: The Final Solution* (1976) to offer one possible explanation of London's late nineteenth century Jack the Ripper murders.

SUPERHERO STORIES

The larger-than-life model for most detectives in crime fiction, Sherlock Holmes, has also been portrayed in a number of graphic mysteries, in which he often fights against supernatural foes. In writer Martin Powell and artist Seppo Makinen's *Scarlet in Gaslight* (1989), for example, he confronts Dracula. Some graphic novels have adapted Holmes's original adventures and characters. In writers Mark Waid and Scott Beatty and artist Butch Guice's *Ruse* series (2001-2004), for example, a Holmes look-alike named Simon Archard goes after criminals in an alternative

reality that also features supernatural characters.

Since the late 1930's, the archetypal superhero crime fighter in comic books has been Batman, who is at once both a costumed crime fighter, like Superman, and the world's greatest detective. He solves crimes not only with his fists and weapons, but also with the time-honored detection methods introduced by Sherlock Holmes. Batman came into existence because when Bruce Wayne had been a boy, his parents were killed by a robber who was never apprehended. The motif of avenging crime fighter has been repeated with other superheroes, such as Spider-Man. Batman also stands between the superpowered and the non-superpowered heroes, as an ordinary human being whose physical and mental attributes have been honed to perfection. Batman has continued into the twenty-first century as the main character of both graphic novels and monthly comic books. Batman made a groundbreaking contribution to graphic mystery novels in the 1986 book *The Dark Knight Returns*, which was both written and illustrated by Frank Miller. This dark tale about an older Batman, who comes out of retirement to fight crime once more, set the tone for many more publications in a darker and more violent vein, such as Alan Moore's *The Killing Joke* (1988), illustrated by Brian Bolland. In this book, Batman hunts down one of his nemeses, the Joker, who has abducted the police commissioner and crippled his daughter. This original graphic novel likewise set a darker and more violent tone.

DC's *Elseworlds* line of graphic novels, which are set in alternative realities, places Batman in many different literary and historical contexts related to the mystery genre. For example, in Brian Augustyn's *Gotham by Gaslight* (1989), drawn by Mike Mignola, one of the first stories of the series, a nineteenth century Batman hunts down Jack the Ripper. Grant Morrison's *Arkham Asylum* (1989), illustrated by Dave McKean, is one of the first original Batman graphic novels with fully painted art. In a story laden with symbols and literary references, Batman confronts the criminals he has helped put in the Arkham Insane Asylum. Other novel-length Batman adventures include *Batman: Night Cries* (1992), written by Archie Goodwin and Mike Hampton and fully painted by Hampton. This somber story explores Batman's hu-

man side as he goes after a serial killer who is targeting child abusers. Jeph Loeb's *Batman: The Long Halloween* (1996-1997), illustrated by Tim Sale, is a noir story in which Batman draws on all his detective skills to combat corruption in Gotham City.

DC COMICS

The year 1986 also marked the advent of another groundbreaking graphic novel, Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, illustrated by Dave Gibbons. It combines dense graphic storytelling with extended textual passages. Although it is not solely concerned with mystery, it has the solving of one crime and the prevention of another one at its center, as it tries to answer the question of what would happen if superheroes really existed. In contrast to the dark and realistic world of *Watchmen*, Moore also wrote a limited, twelve-issue series titled *Top Ten* (1999-2001), illustrated by Gene Ha. Reissued in two volumes and supplemented with an additional volume in 2005, *Top Ten* is a police procedural set in the futuristic city of Neopolis, in which everybody has superpowers. Moore also turned to literary sources in *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2000, 2003), a two-volume collected graphic novel illustrated by Kevin O'Neill, in which a team made up of literary figures from the Victorian age takes on Sherlock Holmes's nemesis, Professor Moriarty; Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu; and Martian invaders inspired by H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898). The team comprises H. Rider Haggard's Alan Quatermain; Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde; Wells's Invisible Man; Mina Harker from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897); and Jules Verne's Captain Nemo. In 2002, Moore's story was adapted to the screen in a big-budget Hollywood film, in which Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer was added to the team to give the story an American character. Together with fellow British visionary writers Neil Gaiman, Warren Ellis, and Grant Morrison, Moore has been a major influence in the American comic book and graphic novel scene.

VERTIGO

Apart from its stable of traditional superheroes, DC Comics also provided an outlet for alternative style

comics with the Vertigo imprint that it launched in 1993. Aimed at more mature readers, Vertigo books feature many variations on the graphic mystery novel. Vertigo's longest ongoing series, with many collected story arcs and an original graphic novel, is *Hellblazer*, which was launched in 1988 and which has been written and drawn by many different people. The central character in the series, John Constantine, is a kind of hard-boiled magician and con man who is often reluctantly drawn into solving supernatural crimes.

Brian Azzarello's *One Hundred Bullets* (1999-) series, drawn by Eduardo Rizzo, contains an ongoing story with collected story arcs and a distinct noir style that explores the possibility of committing murder without repercussions. Its central character, Agent Graves, offers people a chance to enact vengeance on their enemies by giving each of them a briefcase containing a gun and one hundred bullets that are untraceable. Other Vertigo publications include Grant Morrison's original graphic novel *The Mystery Play* (1994). Illustrated by J. J. Muth, it is an allegorical story with fully painted art about a murder that occurs during a mystery play being acted on stage. The actor portraying God is killed, with the actor portraying Satan a prime suspect.

Neil Gaiman's *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy, of Mr. Punch* (1995), illustrated by Dave McKean, is a complex story intertwining the narrator's memoirs with the traditional story of the Mr. Punch puppet theater, both of which contain murder mysteries.

Mystery stories often figure into war comics. For example, in Brian Azzarello's original graphic novel *Sgt. Rock Between Hell and a Hard Place* (2003), illustrated by Joe Kubert, the title character—a longtime DC Comics character—solves a murder mystery during the midst of fighting in the Ardennes during World War II. The style is reminiscent of hard-boiled and crime noir mysteries.

OTHER PUBLISHERS

Marvel Comics also has a line of books about superpowered crime fighters, such as the Punisher, Daredevil, and others. However, its characters do not focus as much on detection as Batman does. Vigilantism is the predominant theme, and Marvel stories tend to be more

like thrillers than mysteries. Like DC, Marvel has also launched its own imprint for more mature readers: Icon Comics. This line also offers graphic mystery books. For example, Brian Michael Bendis's *Powers* series (2000-), illustrated by Michael Avon Oeming, offers a new variation on the police procedural by using policemen who investigate crimes in the superhuman, or "powers," world.

Supernatural mysteries are an important part of graphic mystery publishing, especially in books released by independent publishers. A popular series of collected graphic novels that focus on supernatural mysteries in a gothic style is *Hellboy* (1993-), written and drawn by Mike Mignola. Mignola draws on such literary sources as Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft and on folklore from around the world. *Hellboy*, his protagonist, is a demon from hell who investigates supernatural crimes for the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense (BRDP). These crimes typically involve evil Nazi scientists, witches, goblins, and even the Russian monk Grigori Rasputin. The most successful independent comic book series yet published, *Hellboy* was adapted to the screen in 2004, with Ron Pearlman playing the title character.

Neil Gaiman's *Murder Mysteries* (2002), illustrated by P. Craig Russell, mixes metaphysics and realism. Its story tries to explain the motivations for crime on a metaphysical level as preordained by a higher being, while using traditional crime fiction plot elements. Alan Moore's metaphysical thriller *The Courtyard* (2003), illustrated in black and white by Jacen Burrows and offering a concrete literary intertext, is a tale of a police investigator combating drug dealers. He ends up becoming a killer himself after he is exposed to a drug that consists of ancient words that open the world to godlike beings fashioned after the stories of H. P. Lovecraft.

OVERVIEW

Crime and mystery and detective fiction have always been an integral part of comic book and graphic novel publishing. The comic book mainstream is ruled by costumed superheroes. Their stories tend to use elements of traditional thrillers and emphasize action scenes. More traditional mystery fiction, featuring only

ordinary human characters, also continues to be a vital part of the comic book scene. Most of the books are released in imprints issued by the two major comic book publishers, DC Comics and Marvel, but independent publishers have also found their own niches, away from the superhero market. These mystery comic books, which are mostly done in black and white, often without sound icons, likewise are published monthly, collected or in original graphic novel form, and cover all the different subgenres of mystery fiction, with hard-boiled, crime noir, and thriller-type mysteries being the majority. These texts tend to be one-story affairs. However, there is still no series of original mystery graphic novels that center on a single protagonist, like many characters in prose mystery novels.

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RADIO

The mystery genre has been a major force in radio programming since the earliest days of radio broadcasting. During the 1920's, as radio grew from a novelty for hobbyists into a profitable national entertainment source, the nascent radio networks searched for ways to enlarge their audiences and revenues. As radio dramas gained in popularity, programmers found mystery stories a natural format for radio production. Radio's auditory dimension lent itself well to mysteries since the simple sounds could enhance suspense in ways that print and film could rarely match. Moreover, detective stories were widely read, both for entertainment and for their reflection of a violently changing society, so finding audiences for mystery programs was not difficult.

What is remembered as the Golden Age of radio, the 1930's through the 1950's, corresponds roughly with the so-called Golden Age of detective fiction. Although it is difficult to say if there was a causal relationship in this connection, the two forms certainly took advantage of their mutual popularity. Some of the most successful and long-lived dramatic programs in radio history were detective shows. These included *The Shadow* (1930-1954), *Sherlock Holmes* (1930-1946), *Gangbusters* (1935-1957), and *Suspense* (1942-1962)—which tended more toward thrillers than straight mysteries.

The quality of the radio mystery programs was enhanced by the fact that some of the best writers wrote directly for or helped create radio series based on their own characters. Notable examples include Dashiell Hammett's *The Adventures of the Thin Man* (1941-1950), Raymond Chandler's *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* (1947-1951), and Erle Stanley Gardner's *Perry Mason* (1943-1955).

Radio also benefited from its strong connection to the Hollywood film industry. The radio networks regularly broadcast adaptations of popular feature films, including detective films such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1943) and *Double Indemnity* (1950). Major Hollywood actors who performed in radio mysteries included Humphrey Bogart, Sidney Greenstreet, and

Lauren Bacall. Film directors such as Orson Welles also worked in radio, and film detectives inspired new radio shows and vice versa.

During the 1950's, television began to have a major impact on radio. As audiences turned to television for narrative entertainment, radio placed more emphasis on music and news programming. By the 1970's, American radio drama lived on only sporadically, through public radio productions and occasional commercial programs. In contrast, original radio drama lived on in Great Britain and Canada, as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) continued to produce and broadcast new mystery plays.

RADIO'S BEGINNINGS

The roots of radio broadcasting date back to the 1860's, when James Clerk Maxwell and Heinrich Hertz conducted experiments on the propagation of electromagnetic waves. During the 1890's, three different men—Guglielmo Marconi, Nikola Tesla, and Nathan Stubblefield—independently invented radio broadcasting. During the early years of the twentieth century, radio broadcasting was used primarily for communications with ships at sea. Voice transmission was possible, but signals were mostly confined to messages sent in Morse code. However, by 1913, Edwin H. Armstrong and W. E. Hartley perfected an oscillator circuit that greatly improved the long-distance transmission of speech. As the second decade of the century drew to a close, a number of amateur radio stations were operating, most notably KDKA near Pittsburgh, KQW in San Jose, WWJ in Detroit, and WHA in Madison, Wisconsin. These stations broadcast news, sports, and music to fellow radio enthusiasts.

In 1920, KDKA made two changes that would help launch commercial radio. A Pittsburgh music store began lending records to the station, which in return broadcast the recordings and broadcast plugs for the store. This was the dawn of radio advertising. Westinghouse Electric Corporation then purchased KDKA and began using its regular broadcasts to promote sales of

its radios. Soon, other businesses around the United States were establishing radio stations to promote their own products. By 1922, there were 550 radio stations and 1.5 million radio sets across the country.

The first individual dramatic program was broadcast in 1914, on KQW in San Jose. Eight years later, in 1922, WGY in Schenectady, New York, began broadcasting the first dramatic series. Early radio plays were generally unaltered stage plays performed over the air, but WGY quickly pioneered the use of sound effects and music to create fully dimensional radio dramas. The earliest radio programming was created locally, by individual stations. By the mid-1920's, however, different stations began linking themselves together through telephone lines to form consortiums. These consortiums soon evolved into networks. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) formed in 1926; the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) followed in 1928.

With vast resources and a system of interconnected stations, NBC and CBS were poised to create good quality radio programming. Each company built centralized studios and advanced the art of broadcasting by improving the sound quality and their use of audio effects. Both networks began regular programming; by the end of the 1920's, they both had regular radio dramas that presented complete stories each week, using the same regular characters.

THE 1930'S: DETECTIVES TAKE TO THE AIR

Mysteries were part of dramatic radio broadcasting during the 1920's, but during the following decade, the rise of dramatic serials made radio mysteries a major feature of radio programming, and by extension, of the American household. Several forces came together to make radio drama significant. In 1929, the United States entered the Great Depression. Americans who could not easily afford to buy novels or theater tickets were happy to listen to free entertainment on their radios. Moreover, with economic conditions being bad, escapist entertainment was a necessity. Listeners wanted to lose themselves in the stories of bigger-than-life characters. Radio serials met that need.

During the early 1930's, NBC, CBS, and the newly formed Mutual Broadcasting Network greatly in-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

To millions of American radio listeners, Basil Rathbone (left) and Nigel Bruce were the definitive Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.
(The Granger Collection, New York)

creased their production of serials, and many of these were based in the mystery genre. Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes first appeared on the radio in 1930 and stayed on the air almost continuously until 1946. During the final five years of the program's long run, Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce played Holmes and Watson, whom they were also playing in feature films, and for many Americans, these two actors epitomized Doyle's characters.

Other programs derived from more contemporary sources. Radio executives noticed the popularity of the pulp magazines and found it natural to create radio characters inspired by the magazines' action-packed style. One of the most enduring new radio dramas was *The Shadow* (1930-1954). Initially the Shadow character merely introduced *The Detective Story Hour*, which premiered in 1930 and featured tales from Street & Smith's *Detective Story Magazine*. By the time Orson Welles played the Shadow in 1937, the character was center stage as Lamont Cranston, mil-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Publicity picture used to promote the popular radio program *The Shadow* during the 1940's. (The Granger Collection, New York)

lionaire man-about-town who uses the knowledge of invisibility learned from an Indian yogi to fight crime. By 1940, *The Shadow* was the highest-rated show on radio, and it would spawn a magazine and several feature films.

Another popular radio show was *The Green Hornet* (1936-1952), devised by George W. Trendle, the creator of *The Lone Ranger* (1933-1956). Its hero, Britt Reid (the great-nephew of Dan Reid, the Lone Ranger), was a newspaper publisher who donned his Green Hornet outfit to fight crime alongside his faithful Japanese valet Kato. Reid used a high-speed car he called Black Beauty and fought with knockout gas instead of bullets. Like *The Shadow*, *The Green Hornet* inspired films, a magazine, and a short-lived television program.

Although not originally pulp characters, Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu and Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan certainly exhibited the pulp spirit, and would spawn everything from magazines to films. Fu Man-

chu, the evil Chinese genius who is trying to take over the world, only to be thwarted by British police commissioner Denis Nayland Smith, inspired two radio programs. The first ran from 1929 to 1933, and the second from 1939 to 1940. Charlie Chan, the affable but inscrutable Chinese American detective from Honolulu, was more popular; his radio series ran from 1932 to 1948. However, both series demonstrated the period's lack of ethnic sensibilities, as Fu Manchu and Chan exhibited some of the worst aspects of Asian stereotypes.

The most significant example of the true-crime program from the 1930's was *Gangbusters* (1935-1957). Every week *Gangbusters* mixed fact with fiction by dramatizing incidents from the records of local, state, and federal law offices. Opening each episode with the sounds of marching feet, sirens, and machine-gun firing, *Gangbusters* became the prototype of all such shows to come on both radio and television.

Meanwhile, as the 1930's progressed, so did radio production quality and content. Two programs that epitomized these advances were *Lux Radio Theater* (1934-1955) and Orson Welles's *Mercury Theater on the Air* (1937-1938). Hosted by film director Cecil B. DeMille, *Lux Radio Theater* presented radio versions of top-flight feature films. Two notable detective films presented on the program during the 1930's were *Sherlock Holmes* (1935) and *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1937), from the Alfred Hitchcock film adapted from the 1915 novel by John Buchan. In the *Lux Radio Theater* production, Robert Montgomery plays Richard Hannay, the hapless Canadian who gets caught up in a deadly game of espionage when a beautiful spy is murdered in his apartment.

Mercury Theater on the Air brought the stage genius of Orson Welles to radio with his adaptations of classic novels. Although the show presented only two mystery offerings—its own versions of *The Thirty-nine Steps* and *Sherlock Holmes*—it did push forward the boundaries of radio drama, and it honed Welles's skills as a director and actor. Those skills would bear fruit in such powerful mystery-related films as *Journey into Fear* (1944), *The Stranger* (1946), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1946), *The Third Man* (1949), and *Touch of Evil* (1958).

THE 1940'S: RADIO'S GOLDEN AGE

Because of the quality of their productions, writing, and acting, shows such as *Mercury Theater on the Air*, *Lux Radio Theater*, and the radio documentaries of audio master Norman Corwin demonstrated that radio was a powerful and enriching medium. Radio dramas began to move away from simplistic sound effects and organ music toward cinematic sound and full orchestration. Detective radio dramas such as *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* and *Rocky Jordan* did more than merely tell stories; they also evoked the atmosphere places such as a neon-lighted Los Angeles and Cairo's crowded streets. Audiences responded by making radio a major part of their lives. Radio was king during the 1940's, and that was radio theater's finest decade.

After the United States entered World War II at the end of 1941, many dramatic programs turned more to plots involving spies, fifth columnists, and the like. Radio dramas were broadcast to the troops through the

Armed Forces Radio Network, and people in and out of uniform turned to their radios to relieve the tensions of world conflict. The war also strengthened the federal government's influence on radio, and wartime censorship built the foundation for the anticommunist interference to come with casualties such as Dashiell Hammett, who would be banned from radio during the 1950's because of his communist affiliations.

In 1943, a major new network formed when the recently created Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Supreme Court declared that NBC was stifling competition. Until then, NBC owned two radio networks, simply named the Blue and the Red. In 1943, NBC sold the Blue Network to Edward Noble, owner of the Lifesavers Candy Company, and he renamed it the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). The addition of ABC to the airwaves helped diversify network programming.

After the war, the United States experienced a new prosperity that was reflected in radio's vigorous competitiveness. Mystery and detective shows rode the wave of radio's popularity. In 1941, sixteen suspense and mystery programs were being broadcast; by 1945, there were more than forty. Although action-adventure shows such as *The Shadow* remained popular through the 1940's, networks began presenting more programs based in the hard-boiled style pioneered by *Black Mask* magazine and best represented in the works of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald. Among the most popular shows in this vein were *I Love a Mystery* (1939-1952), which concerned the adventures of the Triple A-1 Detective Agency; *The Whistler* (1942-1955), an anthology of crime stories narrated by the mysterious character of the show's title; and *Rocky Jordan* (1945-1953), a crime-solving café owner in Cairo clearly inspired by Rick Blaine, played by Humphrey Bogart, in the film *Casablanca* (1943). A notable exception was America's answer to Sherlock Holmes, *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1943-1955), whose origins went back to 1880's dime novels.

THE 1940'S: MYSTERY WRITERS

Many detective characters of 1940's radio came straight from the pens of the genre's best writers, though the authors of the original novels did not usu-

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Norman Corwin (center) directing a radio show in 1943.
(Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

ally write the radio scripts themselves. Dashiell Hammett's work inspired three 1940's radio series. The first, *The Adventures of the Thin Man* (1941-1950), featured heavy-drinking sophisticates Nick and Nora Charles from the novel of the same name. The other two programs sprang from Hammett's third novel, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), with its heady mixture of a medieval-style quest and contemporary urban crime. One of these programs, *The Adventures of Sam Spade* (1946-1951), chronicled the further adventures of the novel's protagonist. The second, *The Fat Man* (1946-1951), was a series that Hammett himself created. It centered on a 270-pound detective based loosely on the character of Kasper Gutman, the collector of rare artifacts and leader of the quest for the golden falcon in *The Maltese Falcon*.

Erle Stanley Gardner's smash television series about defense lawyer *Perry Mason* (1957-1966) began as a series of novels that inspired a daily radio series that premiered in 1943 and lasted twelve years. Raymond Chandler got a shot at radio with *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* (1947-1951), featuring the wisecracking Los Angeles detective who fueled all of Chandler's highly atmospheric novels. The detective series about Miami-based private eye Mike Shayne, written by Brett Halliday, found its way to radio as *Michael Shayne, Private Detective* (1944-1953), and S. S. Van Dine's novels about a wealthy amateur detective in New York City inspired the radio show *Philo Vance, Detective* (1945-1950).

Ellery Queen—which was both the name of a fictional detective and the pen name for Manfred B. Lee and Frederic Dannay, inspired a radio series that aired from 1939 to 1948. Lee and Dannay, known for their bizarre plot twists and puzzle-ridden narratives, wrote not only nearly forty Ellery Queen novels but also many scripts for the radio series. Detective Ellery Queen would also appear in nine feature-length films and several television series and lend his name to a major mystery magazine. Another writer involved with *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, Anthony Boucher, is credited with writing nearly one hundred episodes for the program. He also cowrote, with Denis Green, most of the episodes of the *Sherlock Holmes* program that starred Basil Rathbone. Moreover, Boucher also

started his own radio series, *The Casebook of Gregory Hood* (1946-1948), about an antiques dealer who solves crimes connected with his purchases. At the same time, he used the pen name H. H. Holmes to write a series of widely read novels about a crime-solving nun named Sister Ursula. In 1949, he ended his writing career to edit *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Some mystery writers wrote for other radio shows that were not based on continuing characters. For example, John Dickson Carr, the author of nearly seventy detective novels, wrote twenty-two radio plays for the highly popular show *Suspense*, an anthology series that boasted such major actors as Charles Laughton, Anne Baxter, Ida Lupino, and Jimmy Stewart.

Another writer, better known for his science fiction than for mystery, Ray Bradbury, also landed stories on *Suspense*. Bradbury wrote numerous mystery-related works, such as the macabre classic *The October Country* (1955) and a nostalgic ode to detective fiction, *Death Is a Lonely Business* (1985). His *Suspense* radio plays included "Riabouchinska" (1947) and "The Screaming Woman" (1948). Radio dramas actually helped inspire Bradbury to become a writer. Writing for radio, in turn, helped move him on his way to becoming a significant American author.

Another important anthology radio program was *Molle Mystery Theater* (1943-1951). Built around a fictional narrator, Geoffrey Barnes, "connoisseur of mysteries," the program provided stiff competition to *Suspense*, though it relied more on the classic mystery genre and less on thrillers. *Molle Mystery Theater* also did a Bradbury story, "Killer Come Back to Me" (1946), as well as thirty-minute versions of Dashiell Hammett's *The Dain Curse* (1944); Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution* (1946); and Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1943), *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), *Farewell, My Lovely* (1944), "Goldfish" (1944), and "Murder in City Hall" (1946).

THE 1940'S: FILM AND RADIO

During the 1940's, radio and film increasingly interacted, as each medium recognized the potential gains of sharing audiences with the other. Many radio

serials based on major novels by writers such as Hammett and Chandler either had first been films or were being made into films at the same time radio versions were being broadcast. Actors who performed the same roles in both film and radio versions included Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade, Dick Powell as Philip Marlowe, Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes, and Sidney Greenstreet as Kasper Gutman. Meanwhile, *Lux Radio Theater* continued to feature radio versions of detective films, most notably *The Maltese Falcon* (1943), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *The Lady in the Lake* (1948), and *Key Largo* (1949).

In addition, less literary radio mysteries also became films, such as *The Shadow*, *Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu*, *The Green Hornet*, *Mike Shayne*, *Ellery Queen*, and *Nick Carter*. These pulp-oriented films tended to be “B” productions, unlike major detective films such as *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Big Sleep* (1946), but many more of them were released. Fictional private eye Mike Shayne, for example, appeared in twelve films.

Another way in which radio and film interacted was through radio actors and directors finding their way into film productions as their talents matured. The most notable examples came from the *Mercury Theater on the Air*, which launched the careers of Orson Welles, Joseph Cotton, and Agnes Moorehead; all would later work in such detective film classics as *The Lady from Shanghai* (1946), *The Third Man* (1949), and *Dark Passage* (1947). The relationship between film and radio during the 1940’s was a lively one, with each medium borrowing from the other, and detective stories were no exception.

BRITISH AND CANADIAN RADIO DEVELOPMENTS

Although American radio networks were the most active producers of radio drama from 1920 to 1960, they were not alone. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) were certainly doing their part to bring radio theater, including mysteries, to their audiences. Moreover, after 1960, when radio dramas had nearly died out in the United States, the BBC and CBC would keep the form going strong.

The BBC began in 1922 and acquired its present

name in 1926. Guided by its first director general, John C. W. Reith, the BBC became a government-run broadcasting monopoly throughout the entire British Empire. The British parliament legislated its monopoly to avoid what its members viewed as a chaotic broadcast situation in America. The BBC’s charter eliminated the creation of multiple networks and numerous privately owned stations. In Great Britain, stations that attempted to broadcast independently were closed down. Director General Reith pledged that the BBC would focus on information, education, entertainment, and high quality—a directive it followed throughout its history.

From 1942 to 1945, American soldiers and their Armed Forces Radio Network exposed British listeners to the concept of multiple radio stations with a greater focus on music and comedy. The BBC responded by creating two separate networks. One focused on information and serious drama, the other on light entertainment. As the decades passed, competition from mainland European stations and offshore “pirate” stations—unlicensed stations that broadcast from international waters—prompted the BBC to expand further. By 2000, the BBC had seven networks and also provided programming through tape cassettes, compact discs, and the Internet.

During the 1930’s and 1940’s, the BBC created its own share of mystery and detective programming. British mystery author Dorothy L. Sayers was well represented on the BBC, which broadcast many of Sayers’s Lord Peter Wimsey novels. Fellow English author Agatha Christie wrote original mystery plays for the BBC, including *Yellow Iris* (1938), *Three Blind Mice* (1947), and *Butter in a Lordly Dish* (1948). In 1952, Christie reworked *Three Blind Mice* for the stage, and it became *Mousetrap*, the longest-running play in British theatrical history. John Buchan’s *The Thirty-nine Steps* made it onto BBC radio as well, in 1939 and 1948.

The BBC also created its own detective radio serials, including the one with the longest continuous run of any detective drama on radio, *Paul Temple* (1938–1968). The creation of Francis Durbridge and Douglas Rutherford, Temple was a crime writer-turned-private investigator whom Scotland Yard often brought in as a

special agent. As the hero of fourteen novels and four films, Temple remains one of Britain's most beloved fictional detectives.

Another successful BBC detective series from the 1940's was *Dick Barton* (1946-1951), about a private eye with a love for gadgets. Barton appears in seven novels by Mike Dorrell and three films. *Philip Odell* (1947-1961) was about an Irish detective living in London, where he specialized in bizarre cases. Lester Powell, Odell's creator, wrote five novels based on him but had little to do with the one Odell film, *Lady in the Fog* (1952). Novelist Ernest Dudley developed the misogynistic Dr. Morelle, a psychoanalyst-turned-detective loosely based on German film director Eric von Stroheim. The radio series *Meet Dr. Morelle* (1942-1948) helped generate fourteen novels as well as the film *Case of the Missing Heiress* (1949). The second actor to play Dr. Morelle, Heron Carvic, would himself write a series of novels featuring spinster sleuth Miss Seeton.

The BBC also presented a mystery anthology series by directly borrowing the CBS show *Suspense*. In *Suspense*, a character named the Man in Black narrated the stories, so the BBC simply named its program *The Man in Black* (1943-1955). It also borrowed *Suspense* writer John Dickson Carr, who wrote original dramas or adaptations of classics by Edgar Allan Poe, G. K. Chesterton, and others for most of *The Man in Black*'s episodes. With these programs, the BBC became a major force in the world of radio theater and would rank as the world's top producer of radio drama by 1970.

Founded in 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) was like the BBC in being a nation-wide radio service. However, it never enjoyed the total monopoly held by the BBC. Moreover, near Canada's southern border—where most of the nation's citizens lived—radio broadcasts from the United States were always potent competitors. Until 1970, most CBC radio plays were adaptations of stage pieces by Canadian

authors. The network's active production of mystery narratives did not begin until the late decades of the twentieth century.

THE 1950'S: TELEVISION'S TRIUMPH

As the 1940's drew to a close, radio drama appeared to be an unstoppable juggernaut. However, the 1950's would see that juggernaut come to a halt, thanks to a new technological development—television. The arrival of television caused audiences to turn away from radios for dramatic entertainment. Television permitted audiences to sit in their living rooms and watch dramas unfold before their eyes; viewers could see the faces behind the voices and see action that previously had been evoked only by sound effects. Radio could not compete.

However, just as a fire burns brightest before it burns out, the radio networks produced some of their finest dramatic programs during the 1950's. Nevertheless, nearly every radio drama vanished during the same period, just as fiction-based magazines drastically declined between 1950 and 1960 as television seized audiences. In 1950, the many popular crime and detective shows of the 1940's still going strong included *The Shadow*, *Gangbusters*, *Green Hornet*, *The Whistler*, *Suspense*, *I Love a Mystery*, *Nick Carter*, and *Rocky Jordan*. However, of these programs, only *Gangbusters* and *Suspense* would survive past 1955.

Still optimistic about retaining their audiences in the early 1950's, radio networks launched a number of new programs. The most popular, *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* (1949-1962), concerned an insurance fraud investigator whose job often necessitated solving mur-



Advertisement for one of the seven films inspired by the popular radio program *The Whistler*.

der cases. Played by such superb actors as Dick Powell and Edmund O'Brien, *Johnny Dollar* was the only new radio arrival during the 1950's that survived into the next decade.

Another successful new show was *Dragnet* (1949-1957), a program of true-crime stories in the *Gangbusters* tradition. Week after week, *Dragnet's* Sergeant Joe Friday, one of the most famous characters from radio, stoically solved crimes taken from real case files of the Los Angeles Police Department. After *Dragnet* became a television series in 1951, the television and radio versions ran side by side for five years—a unique record in broadcast history. The television version lived on after the radio version died. The same fate awaited *Perry Mason*, which left radio in 1955, only to be resurrected as a long-running television series in 1957.

Other new series did not do as well, but some of them left a powerful impression on mystery fans. These included *Richard Diamond* (1949-1953), about a singing private eye played by Dick Powell. It was created by Blake Edwards, who during the 1960's directed the highly popular Pink Panther detective film parodies. *Nightbeat* (1949-1952) starred Frank Lovejoy as a reporter who prowls Chicago's nighttime streets seeking out stories. *The New Adventures of Nero Wolfe* (1950-1951) starred Sydney Greenstreet as the sophisticated but enormously overweight detective featured in Rex Stout's best-selling novels.

Perhaps the finest of the new programs was *The Lives of Harry Lime* (1951-1952), which explored the adventures of Graham Greene's dark trickster in *The Third Man* (1949). Orson Welles played Lime in both film and radio versions, but despite his brilliant acting and the high quality of the scripts, *Harry Lime* lasted only one year.

In addition to *Harry Lime*, Hollywood continued to contribute to radio mysteries through *Lux Radio Theater*, which aired radio versions of such brilliant mystery films as *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1950), a film based on a 1943 *Suspense* episode by Lucille Fletcher; James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* (1950); and *Strangers on a Train* (1951), the Alfred Hitchcock adaptation of a novel by Patricia Highsmith with a screenplay by Raymond Chandler. However, despite excellent produc-

tions boasting exceptional talent, *Lux Radio Theater* was axed in 1955. By 1960, American radio networks were nearly free of drama.

Meanwhile, at the BBC, radio theater remained steady. *Philip Odell* and *Paul Temple* reached across the 1950's unscathed, as did *The BBC Presents Sherlock Holmes*, begun in 1952. Dorothy L. Sayers's novels were again represented with *The Nine Tailors* (1954) and *Murder Must Advertise* (1957), and Agatha Christie's radio play *Personal Call* aired in 1955. John Buchan's old standby, *The Thirty-nine Steps*, found its way into three new productions in 1950, 1953, and 1958. Radio drama's continued presence on the BBC was due in part to the network not having to face the same commercial pressures that American radio broadcasters faced. Moreover, the British public seemed less inclined to depend entirely on television for narrative entertainment at home.

THE 1960'S: THE NADIR OF RADIO DRAMA

Across the world, the decade of the 1960's was the lowest ebb for radio drama. In the United States, radio broadcasting became dominated by music formats, with local disc jockeys playing records, along with occasional network news and commentary programs. By 1965, *Suspense* and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*, the last remaining mystery holdouts from radio's Golden Age, were also gone.

In Great Britain, the BBC, pressured by competition from European and pirate stations, also shifted to more music programming. Radio theater consequently declined in Britain, but not as drastically as in the United States. New radio productions of Dorothy L. Sayers's novels *Strong Poison* (1963) and *Busman's Honeymoon* (1965) were made, and the series *Inspector West*, based on John Creasey's fictional Scotland Yard detective Roger West, began in 1967. Still, *Philip Odell* went off the air in 1961; *Sherlock Holmes* in 1969; and *Paul Temple*, after its unmatched thirty-year run, in 1968.

Meanwhile, forces were at work that would result in a radio drama renaissance on both sides of the Atlantic, especially at the BBC and CBC. In Canada, a growing desire to promote Canadian culture against the overwhelming influence of American media prompted the

CBC to revive radio drama. In Britain, the BBC realized that radio drama brought in a surprising audience market share, leading it to rethink radio theater's viability. In the United States, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act, which led to the formation of National Public Radio (NPR) in 1970. Funded by tax dollars, listener donations, and corporate sponsors, NPR would be more amenable to radio drama than the commercial networks. Also during the late 1960's, the youth counterculture, enamored of pulp fiction and comic books, became fascinated by the radio programs inspired by these forms. The biggest factor in radio drama's American revival, however, was nostalgia radio.

NOSTALGIA RADIO

Beginning in 1920, radio programs, especially those with multiple market distribution and weekly sponsors, were recorded on sixteen-inch phonograph-type discs called Electrical Transcriptions (ETs). The Library of Congress began to archive ETs in 1949, and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Washington acquired archives collecting discs made during the 1930's through the 1980's. By the 1950's, fans of radio drama were beginning to make their own disc and tape copies from these and other archives. As early as 1954, Charles Michelson acquired a license to distribute rebroadcast rights to *The Shadow*, and many individual stations bought the programs. In 1968, J. David Goldin, a former network radio engineer, formed a company called Radio Yesteryear and started marketing Golden Age radio dramas to radio stations and selling them to private collectors in the form of cassette tapes. The trend grew; by the 1990's, syndicated programs such as *When Radio Was* and *Radio Hall of Fame*, specializing in radio drama of the 1940's and 1950's, were being broadcast by more than three hundred stations. Sales of cassette and compact disc versions of these shows increased as well.

The marketers of classic radio drama had discovered that although commercial networks had turned their backs on radio theater, audiences still hungered for audio narrative entertainment. When the big radio corporations did not fill the need, smaller companies did. However, nostalgia radio's growth was limited by

two major difficulties. First, as recording technologies were changing, archival materials were beginning to decay before they could be replicated in the new formats, and replication was often commercially not feasible. Transferring ETs to reel-to-reel tapes, reel-to-reel tapes to marketable cassettes, and all these forms to compact discs is costly and time-consuming. Second, as copyright laws changed, and media companies bought out one another, ownership of the rights to old radio programs became a tangled issue. Technological limitations and copyright issues thus kept nostalgia radio from reaching its full audience potential.

THE 1970'S: REBIRTH OF RADIO DRAMA

Nevertheless, by the early 1970's, American radio networks sensed the potential for successful new drama programs in nostalgia radio's popularity. In 1973, the Mutual Broadcasting Network responded with *The Zero Hour*, produced by radio veteran Norman Corwin and created and hosted by Rod Serling, who had become a household name a decade earlier on television's *The Twilight Zone*. Running primarily suspense and mystery stories, *The Zero Hour* ran five days a week. Although it lasted only one year, it demonstrated the viability of radio drama in a new era.

In 1974, CBS weighed in with *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, which ran nightly until 1982. That show's surprising success was due in part to its producer, Hiram Brown, who had directed one of radio's most popular horror series, *Inner Sanctum*, from 1941 to 1952. Brown even borrowed the signature opening sound from *Inner Sanctum* for *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*—a screeching door. However, *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* owed more to the thriller and mystery anthology show *Suspense* than to the horror-based *Inner Sanctum*. Encouraged by the success of *Radio Mystery Theater*, CBS briefly tried two more nightly series—*General Mills Radio Adventure Theater* (1977-1978) and *Sears Radio Theater* (1979-1981). Of the two, only *Sears Radio Theater* ran mysteries as its Wednesday night offerings, hosted by the famous horror-film actor Vincent Price.

After the demise of *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* in 1982, no American commercial network again tried radio drama into the early twenty-first century. How-

ever, a number of independent production companies created new radio drama series well into the new century. The most notable of these are Jim French Productions and the ZBS Foundation. Jim French Productions is responsible for a number of radio mystery dramas, with the longest-running being *The Adventures of Harry Nile*, a series that started in 1976 and concerned the adventures of a 1940's-era Los Angeles private investigator, and *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, which began in 1998. Both were syndicated for radio broadcast into the early twenty-first century by Theater of the Imagination.

The ZBS Foundation (taking its name from "Zero Bull S—") grew straight out of the 1960's counter-cultural milieu. Its productions combined the pulp-based radio conventions of the 1940's with a wildly surreal sense of humor. Its first release, *The Fourth Tower of Inverness* (1972), featured Jack Flanders and his attempt to solve the mysterious disappearance of Lord Jowls in an old mansion filled with oddball characters and gateways to multiple dimensions. More than twenty additional Jack Flanders adventures were made. ZBS's other radio hit is *Ruby: The Adventures of a Galactic Gumshoe*, which, like the Jack Flanders tales, combines humor with pulp-fiction sensibilities. Ruby, a futuristic private eye, premiered with *Tired of the Green Menace* in 1977. Heard mostly on NPR and community radio stations, the adventures of Jack Flanders and Ruby continued in production into the twenty-first century.

Another satire of detective fiction to make its way to NPR is the ongoing saga of private eye Guy Noir. Noir is one of the stock characters on Garrison Keillor's long-running variety show *A Prairie Home Companion*, which first aired in 1974. NPR has also presented more serious approaches to mystery fiction. Under the auspices of *NPR Playhouse*, which began in 1981, NPR aired *Midnight!* (1982), thirteen suspenseful tales in the tradition of *Inner Sanctum*; *Bradbury Thirteen* (1984), audio versions of stories by Ray Bradbury; a radio version of Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer novel *The Zebra-Striped Hearse* (2000); and BBC renditions of *Sherlock Holmes* in 1982, 1987, 1991, and 1993. *NPR Playhouse* also rebroadcast CBC productions, most notably *Nightfall* (1980-

1983), a horror series that some people considered so frightening that many stations refused to air it.

In an attempt to attract larger audiences for Canadian theater after 1980, the CBC became a major producer of mystery and detective shows. Along with *Nightfall*, the network produced Rex Stout's *Nero Wolfe* (1982) and a blend of suspense and fantasy genres called *Vanishing Point* (1984-1986). The network also adapted two novels from Howard Engel's series on Jewish-Canadian private detective Benny Cooperman—*The Suicide Murders* (1984) and *The Ransom Game* (1985). *CBC Mystery Project*, which began in 1992, featured its own home-grown detectives—Becker, the house detective in a grand hotel somewhere in the Canadian Rockies; Walter Devereaux, a night-shift cabdriver who solves murders; and Peggy Delaney, a hard-drinking Toronto news reporter. *CBC Mystery Project* has also adapted such classic detective stories as Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1997) and *The Little Sister* (1998).

The leading producer of radio drama at the close of the twentieth century was clearly the BBC. A partial listing of BBC mystery programs between 1970 and 2000 should begin with *Brothers in Law* (1970-1972), a series about barrister Roger Thursby based on the novels of Henry Cecil. Georges Simenon's Belgium police inspector Jules Maigret was featured in a number of presentations between 1976 and 1998. Another *Sherlock Holmes* graced the airwaves from 1988 to 2004, and *The Man in Black* anthology series returned to the air from 1988 to 1993. Baroness Orczy's nameless gentleman, the Old Man in the Corner, who solves mysteries while sitting at the Lyon's Corner House café, was featured in *The Teahouse Detective* from 1998 to 2000.

Most impressive, however, were the BBC's extended productions of entire novels. To begin, there were Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe novels, including *The Big Sleep*, *The High Window*, *The Lady in the Lake*, *The Little Sister*, and *The Long Goodbye* between 1977 and 1978, and *Farewell, My Lovely* in 1988. The BBC also broadcast three of Sara Paretsky's novels about V. I. Warshawski, the tough private investigator from Chicago—*Killing Orders* (1991), *Deadlock* (1993), and *Bitter Medicine* (1996-1997).

Meanwhile, the crown jewels of BBC mystery radio productions were the novels of Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie. Backed by popular television series, BBC radio presented nine Sayers novels between 1970 and 2000, featuring Ian Carmichael as Lord Peter Wimsey. Christie's Miss Jane Marple series, starring June Whitfield, also landed nine novels on radio. However, the champion was Christie's eccentric Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. The BBC adapted fifteen Poirot novels to radio, including the classic *Murder on the Orient Express*, between 1993 and 1994.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RADIO DRAMA

As the new century dawned, radio drama was undergoing a transformation. As had happened during the 1950's, new technologies were affecting it. This time, however, the encounter was invigorating. In Britain, radio drama was secure. Since 2000, the BBC has continued to produce radio adaptations of stories by Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Georges Simenon. Other mystery writers are represented as well. For example, in 2007, the BBC produced a series entitled *Readings to Die For* based on James Sallis's fictional detective Lew Griffin, and another program, *McLevy*, based on the writings of the real mid-nineteenth century Scottish detective and crime author James McLevy. The BBC also based *Secret Agent X-9* on Dashiell Hammett's comic strip hero of the 1930's.

Meanwhile, in Canada, the CBC retreated from radio drama, retaining only *CBC Monday Night Playhouse*. In the United States, *NPR Playhouse* ceased broadcasting in 2002. The major American radio networks had no interest in reviving radio drama. Nevertheless, a very different phenomenon arose, primarily in the United States: Compact discs, tape cassettes, MP3 players, and the Internet became the media of choice to distribute radio drama, and not merely classic radio. Dozens of local public and community radio stations produce radio plays, which they both broadcast and distribute through the Internet. Commercial enterprises that contribute include Jim French Productions, Imagination Radio, ZBS, Shoestring Radio Theater, Atlanta Radio Theater Company, Great Northern Audio Theater, and LA Theater Works. Some new radio networks actually do not broadcast at all. For ex-

ample, the Sci-Fi Channel's Seeing Ear Theater is available only on the Internet. The satellite network XM Radio produces Sonic Theater, which provides an outlet for many new radio dramas. Eighty years after mystery dramas first appeared on radio, their production, at least in the United States, has essentially returned to its original condition—localized programming linking up into new networks.

John Nizalowski

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TELEVISION

Mystery and detective television programs are almost as old as American television broadcasting itself. During the late 1940's, when television broadcasting was beginning in earnest, audiences quickly developed an insatiable appetite for programs—almost any kinds of programs. Little imagination was required. To meet the growing demand for programming, the networks adapted material from other media, such as radio programs and films. A particularly durable genre that quickly found public favor was mystery stories, which television adapted and shaped to meet its own particular needs. The television mystery and detective programs that eventually arose reflected all the various literary subgenres: hard-boiled detective stories, private eye stories, police procedurals, courtroom dramas, and stories about both master and amateur sleuths. Some programs enjoyed impressively long runs, while others disappeared almost as quickly as they appeared. Ultimately, what made some shows popular enough to last for more than a few years has been successful confluences of actors and roles—the right actors for the right parts—as well as the shows' success in reflecting the periods in which they have been made.

THE AVUNCULAR PRIVATE EYE

The first long-running detective series on American television was *Martin Kane, Private Eye* (1949-1954), whose private eye's name was borrowed from that of an executive of the advertising firm of the show's sponsor, the American Tobacco Company, which owned the show. The show's star, William Gargan, was a soft, almost unassuming actor who was typical of the actors being hired for television at the time. They were mainly character actors who may have had leading parts in a few B-motion pictures and were not under contract to major studios. *Martin Kane* was a much different kind of detective from those who would later follow him on television. He worked closely with the police, assisting them on cases, and was often seen conferring with police officers in a tobacconist's shop, where he smoked the sponsor's pipe-tobacco products—an early attempt to integrate com-

mercials within a program. Although Kane carried a gun and occasionally used it, he seemed more like a favorite uncle than a hard-boiled private eye. He was later played on the show by Lloyd Nolan, Lee Tracy, and Mark Stevens. Gargan later returned for a brief stint in *The New Adventures of Martin Kane* in 1957. As befits a show in a fledgling medium, the original *Martin Kane* series was replete with technical gaffes—missing sound effects, studio cameras visible in scenes, and backdrops that were obviously painted flats.

Another successful early television private eye program was *Man Against Crime* (1949-1956), in which Ralph Bellamy, another second-tier star, played Mike Barnett, a more physical detective than Kane, although he did not carry a gun and was obviously getting on in years. He was later replaced by Frank Lovejoy. *Man Against Crime* was technically somewhat better than *Martin Kane*; its later episodes were filmed on a soundstage. Both shows, and others being produced around the same time, had distinctly New York theatrical flavors. After shooting was completed for the day, their stars were often rushed from the television sets to theaters in which they performed in the evening. Often they traveled in ambulances, changing their costumes along the way. Their acting naturally tended to have a theatrical flourish. When Harold J. Stone played a pickle-vendor witness in an episode of *Martin Kane*, no one reined in his overly theatrical performance. A later series that continued this theatrical tradition was *Naked City* (1958-1963); perhaps no other police commander was as voluble as that show's Lieutenant Mike Park (Horace McMahon). Certainly, no other series featured as many guest stars whose careers were in transition, either up or down.

DRAGNET

One of the most iconic crime shows in the history of television, *Dragnet* (1952-1959, 1967-1970) suffered the fate of becoming something like a parody of itself even before the end of its first television run—a parody that became full-blown when it returned to television for a second run in 1967. The show's cre-

ator, actor Jack Webb, wanted realism in its depiction of police work, which Webb regarded as mostly routine, boring, methodical, rarely violent, and certainly not glamorous. He received the assistance of the Los Angeles Police Department, on whose case files each episode was supposed to have been based, with real names and other identifying details changed.

Dragnet was a police procedural whose emphasis was almost entirely on police procedures, not on police officers themselves. Revealing almost nothing about the personal life of Sergeant Joe Friday, whom Webb portrayed, *Dragnet* was all about the enforcement of law. Each episode ended with a shot of the episode's chief suspects standing uncomfortably next to a wall, as an authoritative voice-over announced the dispositions of their cases (suspects were almost invariably found guilty). Webb reinforced this sense of hyperrealism by downplaying his own acting and that of the rest of the cast. His deadpan earnestness was immortalized in the catchphrase he often delivered to people he interrogated: "Just the facts, ma'am." In contrast to the pioneer private eye shows, *Dragnet* was antitheatrical and had an anti-New York style. During the early years of its first run, the producers of the show did outstanding and original work. Years later, a 1993 episode of *Homicide: Life on the Street* was widely praised for its realism after devoting almost an entire episode to the relentless interrogation of a suspect (played by Moses Gunn). Jack Webb, however, had done virtually the same thing decades earlier.

If Webb had left well enough alone, he would have been enshrined by critics as well as by the Los Angeles Police Department. However, Webb eventually spoiled the show by transforming it into an exercise in moralistic didacticism by having Joe Friday explain to the people he apprehended and those who abetted their criminal activities that what they did was wrong and *why* it was wrong. During his show's 1950's run, Friday preached in favor of the U.S. Constitution and against communism. During the show's later run, Friday campaigned against drugs and hippies. In using the show to proselytize, Webb went against what had originally made it distinctive: its emotionally detached, unglamorous depiction of professional law enforcement. Perhaps the lesson of *Dragnet* is that a

television crime show can survive only so long as a reaction to another trend.

DRAMATIC ANTHOLOGIES

One of the staples of 1950's television programming generally was the dramatic anthology. None was more important to the mystery genre than *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, which the distinguished British film director Alfred Hitchcock personally hosted from 1955 until 1965. Delegating responsibility for the show to able producers such as Joan Harrison and Norman Lloyd, Hitchcock became the most recognizable film director in the United States, thanks largely to the larger-than-life image he projected on the screen when he delivered his show's droll introductions and afterwords on more than 350 episodes. He also directed twenty episodes himself and used his television production crew and some of the techniques he learned from television works on the feature film many consider his masterpiece, *Psycho* (1960).

Hitchcock's anthology series was unusual in finding much of its script material in published works—something that network television has rarely done successfully. Hitchcock also managed to flout network censors, both in his show's scripts and in the often sarcastic remarks about them that he made after each episode. In order to conform to the television production code, crime shows had to demonstrate that wrongdoers were apprehended and punished. Many episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* portrayed characters committing what appeared to be perfect crimes, only to be followed by Hitchcock appearing and explaining that the culprits were later caught and convicted. His statements would have spoiled the episodes if audiences believed them, but most viewers probably chose to ignore his remarks. More than almost any other show of its period, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* delivered to its audiences the literate joys of the mystery and detective fiction genre, along with whatever cinematic virtues could be achieved under severe budgetary constraints and the pressures of production.

PERRY MASON AND COURTROOM DRAMAS

When the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) launched *Perry Mason* in September, 1957, critics

from both *Variety* and *The New York Times* predicted that the courtroom drama would not succeed. Instead, it confounded its early critics by lasting nine seasons (1957-1966) and setting a longevity record for mystery series that would stand for decades. Based on the novels of Erle Stanley Gardner, *Perry Mason* was one of the few clearly successful adaptations of a literary mystery in American television history. A primary reason for the show's success was its strong plot formula: About half of each episode was spent on establishing the crime, and the second half was spent in the courtroom. The same formula was replicated several decades later by Dick Wolf's *Law and Order*.

Perry Mason also had superlative cast chemistry. Actor Raymond Burr, who had spent his earlier career playing heavies, was personally selected by Erle Stanley Gardner to play Mason. Burr had a stentorian voice that he could quickly modulate into an imperative boom when he made his final courtroom accusations. An easy camaraderie developed on the set among Burr; William Hopper, who played detective Paul Drake; and Barbara Hale, who played Mason's secretary, Della Street. Long hours on confined sets made such amity essential. Mason seemed barely to grasp the law's arcane details in cases that he discussed with Street before the mystery began each week. Most of his courtroom work consisted of displaying his mastery of interrogating witnesses during preliminary hearings, at the end of which he would unmask the real criminals through his relentless questioning. Mason never lost a case and, seemingly, never defended a client who was not innocent.

Some critics of *Perry Mason* contended that the show tended to disparage the forces of authority, represented by William Talman as prosecutor Hamilton Burger and Ray Collins as police lieutenant Arthur Tragg. Most viewers realized that *Perry Mason* was merely a television show; however, the show had a more insidious influence in projecting the idea that defense attorneys needed to identify the real culprits to prove their own clients innocent. That expectation was the product of television's hunger for certainty; virtually all subsequent courtroom dramas have shared the same tendency—but few satisfied that hunger so dramatically and so effectively as *Perry Mason*.

“COOL” PRIVATE EYES

One of the most popular television shows among adolescent and young-adult viewers during the late 1950's was *77 Sunset Strip* (1958-1964), a slick and fast-moving private detective series with an attractive cast set amid the glamour of Hollywood. The success of that series quickly prompted imitators such as *Bourbon Street Beat* (1959), *Hawaiian Eye* (1959-1963), and *Surfside Six* (1960-1962), all of which had similarly attractive young casts and glamorous settings. Each of these shows enjoyed some success, but their attempts to pander to current viewer tastes caused them to grow dated as tastes changed.

Another private eye show that was truly “cool” was the product of Blake Edwards's dramatic and cinematic talents and Henry Mancini's musical talents. *Peter Gunn* (1958-1961) starred Craig Stevens as a kind of cut-rate Cary Grant, at least physically and sartorially. His “office” was, more often than not, a jazz club. Gunn got along well with his policeman friend, Lieutenant Jacoby, played by Herschel Bernardi with quiet authority and wit. Gunn's relationship with his girlfriend (played by Lola Albright) was quirky as well as believable. Edwards often wrote and directed the show, and the pressure to meet schedules was sometimes evident in the flatness of certain episodes. However, the show's relatively low production values, which encouraged the shooting of some episodes on deserted nighttime sets, proved to be a virtue, as the many night scenes gave the series a film noir flavor. Eventually, the demands of Edwards's film work caused him to cancel the show before it wore out its welcome. Thanks to the memorable music provided by composer Henry Mancini, no other detective show sounded as “cool” as *Peter Gunn*.

VIOLENCE AND THE SUBURBS

The early 1960's saw a general decline in the numbers of detective shows on television. During 1960 alone, seven new private eye series were launched. By 1963, that number was down to two, and only one new private eye show appeared during each year remaining in the decade. One reason for this decline can be found in the movement against television violence that had begun during the late 1950's. Public criticisms of television helped drive *The Untouchables* (1959-1963),

Quinn Martin's series about Eliot Ness's campaign against Prohibition-era gangsters, off the air. Criticisms of television violence grew even stronger after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in late 1963, and his presumed killer, Lee Harvey Oswald, was shot to death on live television.

Another reason for the decline of private eye shows may have been the massive middle-class population shift from cities to the suburbs that had burgeoned during the previous decade. With this change, programs about urban crimes seemed less meaningful than before to growing numbers of viewers. Indeed, the dour and dutiful policemen depicted in shows such as *Dragnet* were even being parodied on television in series such as *Car 54, Where Are You?* (1961-1963). Although short-lived, that show paved the way for future police comedies, such as *Barney Miller* (1974-1982). However, no later police comedy was as relentlessly unserious as *Car 54*.

The most popular mystery drama of the 1960's centered on the agonizingly prolonged flight of an innocent man accused of murdering his wife from a policeman who relentlessly pursued him. Another Quinn Martin production, *The Fugitive* (1963-1967) was loosely based on both Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) and the real-life story of Dr. Sam Sheppard, a Cleveland doctor accused of murdering his wife. In the show, Dr. Richard Kimble was memorably portrayed by David Janssen, who excelled in depicting internal conflict and weary apathy—a talent that would later assist him in his last television series, the distinctly original private eye show *Harry O* (1974-1976). In each episode of *The Fugitive*, actor William Conrad's authoritative introductory narration would declare that Kimble was "an innocent victim of blind justice" before Kimble faced yet another dilemma during his seemingly unending flight: He had to decide whether he should run to save himself, or stay to help others in need. When the long chase ended in the two-part series finale, the show got the highest ratings of any television series episode until *M*A*S*H* ended its own run in 1980.

Despite the declining popularity of private eye shows during the 1960's, the decade also saw the beginning of long-lived shows about law enforcement.

The first was Quinn Martin's *The FBI* (1965-1974), starring Efreem Zimbalist, Jr., which was personally endorsed by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover himself. A stickler for detail, Hoover disapproved of even fictional bureau agents being shown with their suit coats unbuttoned or drinking coffee on duty. Although this series boasted of its authenticity and verisimilitude, most of its cases were dramatically enhanced, as in the premiere episode, which showed the bureau pursuing a serial killer who strangled women with their own hair. After Hoover died in 1972, the FBI's reputation sank deeply, virtually ensuring that *The FBI* would have no future in reruns.

Meanwhile, another new 1960's crime show, *Hawaii Five-0* (1968-1980), was proving more durable. Set in the beautiful Hawaiian Islands, this show followed the highly stylized adventures of the new state's chief police force. As the head of that force, Detective Steve McGarrett (Jack Lord) led a team of crime-fighters against a series of exotic and often over-the-top villains. Like many other popular crime shows, *Hawaii Five-0* contributed one of its own catchphrases to American popular culture—McGarrett's episode-ending signature line to his subordinate (James MacArthur): "Book 'em, Danno."

SPY SHOWS

The often improbable villains in *Hawaii Five-0* were carryovers from an earlier 1960's trend, when many spy shows were replacing police and detective dramas. The popular craze over Ian Fleming's super-spy James Bond led to countless film and television imitators. The title character of *Honey West* (1965-1966), starring Ann Francis, was initially conceived as a female private investigator, but her increasing use of advanced spy gadgetry led to the show's loss of identity. Similarly, *The Green Hornet* (1966-1967), which introduced future martial arts film star Bruce Lee to American audiences, also made use of spy gadgets as well as Asian martial arts. Eastern martial arts had actually been introduced into the spy television genre early by the female characters in the British series *The Avengers* (1961-1969). Meanwhile, the new television spy genre spawned a comic mirror image in Mel Brooks and Buck Henry's *Get Smart* series

(1965-1970), which starred Don Adams as an often clueless superspy.

At the same moment *Get Smart* was being launched, an innovative spy Western appeared: *The Wild, Wild West* (1965-1969), which starred *Hawaiian Eye*'s Robert Conrad and Ross Martin as U.S. Secret Service agents during President Ulysses S. Grant's administration. However, the most original show in this genre was Bruce Geller's *Mission: Impossible* (1966-1973). It boasted an unforgettable musical theme, innovative cinematography, generally strong writing and casting, and perhaps the best use of editing on a television dramatic series up until that time. Eventually the television spy fad wore itself down. However, it was later resurrected at times when the nation again seemed to be imperiled. After the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, new shows such as *Alias* (2001-2006) and *24* (2001-) began. The often extralegal tactics of federal agent Jack Bauer (Keifer Sutherland) in the latter show are possible only in an atmosphere in which the ends seem to justify any means.

A NEW BREED OF DETECTIVES

After the early 1960's, private detectives remained largely dormant on television for some years. When they finally reemerged, they appeared in a variety of new incarnations. Some, for example, dressed in simple, unassuming garb, such as tweed jackets with patched elbows or rumpled raincoats. Many of these newer private eyes played off the incongruity of their appearances. Almost all were played by personable actors with whom audiences felt comfortable, such as David Janssen in *Harry O*. The first major success along these new lines was William Levinson and Richard Link's *Mannix* (1967-1975), starring Mike Connors. During the show's first season, Mannix was depicted as a rebellious investigator employed by a large detective agency who often clashed with his boss. At the end of the season, however, he quit the agency and then worked out of his own office. He had an African American secretary, played by Gail Fisher, but her race was never a subject on the show. Although Mannix occasionally had to use violence, he could also display emotions, and he started the practice of wearing baggy tweed jackets.

After his long stint as Perry Mason, Raymond Burr returned to television in 1967 in *Ironside* (1967-1975). He played a former San Francisco chief of detectives, now confined to a wheelchair, who served as a special consultant to the force. This show helped pave the way for two more atypical private detectives, one unusually heavy and the other unusually old. The title character of *Cannon* (1971-1976) was memorably played by William Conrad. Vulnerable both physically and emotionally, Frank Cannon was an overweight detective who managed not only to get knocked out or beaten up in nearly every episode but also to suffer from such indignities as being shot by a spear gun. A more laid-back and unconventional detective was *Barnaby Jones* (1973-1980), played by Buddy Ebsen. Jones was a senior citizen who came out of retirement to pursue the murderer of his son. Since Ebsen refused to work more than four days a week, episodes tended to spend more time than was usual on the machinations of the villains. Jones was also unusual among television private detectives in relying a great deal on scientific analyses of evidence and even had a laboratory attached to his office.

Arguably the most popular of this new breed of television private detectives was Jim Rockford of *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), created by Roy Huggins and Stephen J. Cannell. The Rockford character was an updating of the personality that the show's star, James Garner, had created in the popular Western series *Maverick* (1957-1962) and his various film roles as lovable rogues. The rest of *The Rockford Files* cast provided Garner with strong support. Noah Beery, Jr., played Rockford's father, who wanted his son to get out of his dangerous profession. Stuart Margolin played Angel Martin, an unredeemed con artist whom Rockford met in prison while he was serving out an unjust sentence. Joe Santos played Rockford's ally on the police force, Sergeant Dennis Becker, whose friendship with Rockford often got him into trouble. Unlike other private eyes who "love trouble," Rockford does all he can to avoid it. He is physically capable of handling himself in fights, but this does not prevent him from occasionally being roughed up—sometimes more than once in a single episode. Moreover, even when he successfully solves a case, there is

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Actor Peter Falk, standing next to Lt. Columbo's 1959 Peugeot 403, in 2002.
(AP/Wide World Photos)

often a good chance he will not collect his fee. Perhaps the most human of television private eyes, Rockford is, for many, also the most memorable.

Perhaps the best pure detective of this group, a man known only by his surname, Columbo, was actually a police lieutenant. However, his deductive brilliance places him in the master sleuth school of the mystery genre. *Columbo* (1971-1977) was the creation of William Levinson and Richard Link. Because the series was only one part of a rotating group of mystery films filling a one and one-half hour time slot, more time than usual could be spent developing and producing each episode. A number of creative people who later became famous worked on the series, such as writer and story editor Steven Bochco and director Steven Spielberg. The series would not have succeeded, however, without its star, Peter Falk, whose acting career reached its zenith on this show. Falk frequently stole entire scenes with such simple devices as fumbling with his cigar, calling attention to his rumpled raincoat or beat-up car, or not being able to find a pencil. Through all his seemingly inept behaviors, he kept his keen intelligence hidden.

Another of the show's strengths was its innovative narrative format. The most famous example of the in-

verted mysteries on television, it devoted the first part of each episode to showing the criminal murdering a victim and then covering up the crime. The remainder of the episode followed Columbo's dogged pursuit of the murderer. Almost always intelligent, cocky, and proud, the murderers consistently underestimated Columbo's intelligence, and their arrogance allowed them to fall into the careful traps he set to make them reveal their guilt. The show's format required villains who were sympathetic enough for audiences to understand their motivation, and victims who frequently seemed to deserve their fates. In most in-

vestigations, Columbo remained consistently respectful toward the murderers whom he caught. However, on the rare occasions when murderers killed thoroughly innocent victims, Columbo would lose his temper.

The influence of the comfortable detective was widespread and long-lasting. *Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988) was another crime show that took advantage of Hawaii's scenery; however, private eye Tom Magnum (Tom Selleck) wore Hawaiian shirts, not tweed jackets. The genre-bending show *Moonlighting* (1985-1989) introduced actor Bruce Willis's easy, wisecracking persona to audiences. The attraction of some shows lay in their stars' relative lack of apparel, as in Aaron Spelling's *Charlie's Angels* (1976-1982), about a glamorous team of police-trained female detectives who worked for a mysterious, unseen boss.

Other crime shows addressed the aging demographics of audiences. For example, *Murder, She Wrote* (1984-1996) starred Angela Lansbury as a middle-aged mystery writer constantly called upon to work as an amateur sleuth. After the *Perry Mason* series failed in a brief reincarnation with Monte Markham in 1973-1974, Raymond Burr occasionally returned to the role in made-for-television movies. Despite the limitations

of some of these programs, this period probably represented the zenith of the private detective on television.

COP SHOWS

During the same period, series about police officers also underwent a kind of reinvigoration. Although Jack Webb had gone in the direction of less realism and more action in *Adam-12* (1968-1975), another successful show about the Los Angeles Police Department that he produced, the general thrust in television cop shows was toward greater realism. In 1973, a made-for-television movie about a real-life crime case, *The Marcus-Nelson Murders*, introduced a lollipop-sucking cop who afterward starred in a series of his own, Telly Savalas's *Kojak* (1973-1978). Joseph Wambaugh, a policeman who had written acclaimed novels about the Los Angeles Police Department, created perhaps the finest television series ever broadcast about the police, *Police Story* (1973-1977), an anthology series in which a handful of characters had semi-recurring roles. Its most famous spin-off was *Police Woman* (1974-1978), starring Angie Dickinson, which began as an attempt to portray the perils of undercover roles for female officers. However, the show soon descended into an excuse for showing more of Dickinson herself. In one episode, for example, she goes undercover in a women's prison, where inmates wear revealing jumpers, pantyhose, heels, and makeup.

During the 1970's, even the police comedies grew more serious. *Barney Miller* (1974-1982) was not afraid to show a prisoner's suicide in the midst of an episode otherwise filled with laughter. Meanwhile, police dramas grew more complex. Fred Silverman, who was looking for hit shows when he took over programming for the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), turned to Michael Kozoll and Steven Bochco, who applied the ensemble casting of *Barney Miller* to a police drama in a way never before attempted. The resulting *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) traced stories of more than ten leading characters from episode to episode, often failing to resolve individual story lines at the ends of episodes. This innovation provoked charges that soap-opera dramatics were invading nighttime television.

Hill Street Blues also attempted to portray a grittier reality: Hill Street Station was meant to be a cousin of

the precinct depicted in the 1981 film *Fort Apache, the Bronx*, supposedly the most dangerous police beat in the country. In the show's pilot episode, two of the stars were gunned down, only to be later resurrected—under network pressure—for the series run. The city in which the show was set was nameless; indeed, the show used a combination of title images of Chicago's Maxwell Street Station on a raw, rainy day, with episodes filmed in a Los Angeles relentlessly shorn of palm trees and foothills. Perhaps the show's most influential innovation was its use of hand-held cameras during each episode's opening roll call, which Sergeant Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad) would always end with the reminder, "Let's be careful out there," until the actor's 1983 death ended his appearance in the show. No show had been more carefully nurtured by its network; even though its first-year rating numbers were abysmal, they were considered demographically strong, and the support paid off when the show grew more popular and began winning Emmy Awards.

A more stylized reality was introduced in another influential series, created by Anthony Yerkovich and Michael Mann. *Miami Vice* (1984-1989) depicted the undercover investigations of two detectives in a Florida city full of both glamour and corruption. Mann went on to create a finer show, based on the knowledge of the Chicago Police Department he gained while producing the film *Thief* (1981). *Crime Story* (1986-1988) involved the attempts of a team of police investigators, led by policeman-turned-actor Dennis Farina, to convict a ruthless criminal during the Chicago of the 1950's. The show lost credibility and some its force when its locale was switched, midway through the first season, to Las Vegas.

A new level of police realism was offered in two series that premiered during the early 1990's. *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-1999) benefited from strong casting and writing and from a fresh location in director Barry Levinson's Baltimore. Like *Hill Street Blues*, the series got off to a slow start, but critical acclaim moved NBC to support the show after a sputtering beginning. Another new show with a much more controversial birth was *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005), the creation of David Milch and Steven Bochco. Its casual use of profane language and occasional nudity helped

ensure that audiences would start watching it; however, they continued to watch because of the show's strong ensemble cast, most notably Dennis Franz's Andy Sipowicz. The show took the use of hand-held cameras to new lengths in an attempt to give the drama a cinema verité look; the effect was disorienting at first but soon became unnoticeable and perhaps unnecessary. After the introduction of these bold series, it became difficult to see how much further police dramas could go in their depictions of realism.

BRITISH IMPORTS

British mystery series have appeared sporadically on American television. The shows most popular with American audiences aired during the 1960's. They included *The Saint*, with Roger Moore, and *The Avengers*, with Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg. The latter show premiered in the United States in 1966. The excellence of British television adaptations of Britain's rich heritage of mystery literature was not fully appreciated in the United States until the Boston public television station WGBH began airing British adaptations on its show *Mystery!* in 1980, with horror-film veteran Vincent Price as its creepily avuncular host. In teleplays faithfully adapted from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories between 1984 and 1994, *Mystery!* introduced American audiences to the actor who many think created the finest dramatic portrayal of Holmes, Jeremy Brett.

Other famous British detectives appearing in British television series included Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot (David Suchet) and Miss Jane Marple (Joan Hickson), P. D. James's Adam Dalgliesh (Roy Marsden), Dick Francis's Sid Halley (Mike Gwilym), and Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse (John Thaw). American audiences did not know how versatile an actor Thaw was; he had become widely known in England previously as the star of *The Sweeney*, in which he played a London police detective who had more in common with Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry than with Peter Falk's Columbo.

Other, lesser-known sleuths who became famous on American television included Ellis Peters's Brother Cadfael (Derek Jacobi), Peter Lovesey's Sergeant Cribb (Alan Dobie), and John Mortimer's Horace Rumpole

To view image, please refer to print edition of this title.

Joan Hickson as Agatha Christie's Miss Jane Marple, a role she played in a series of BBC television plays that were broadcast between 1984 and 1992. (AP/Wide World Photos)

(Leo McKern). For a time it appeared that American cable television companies would introduce the high production values and authenticity of British programs to American mysteries. The A&E network, for example, presented *A Nero Wolfe Mystery* (2001-2002), a series relatively faithful to Rex Stout's novels about Nero Wolfe, played by Maury Chaykin. However, the American television industry's need to create series that run to at least one hundred episodes so they can be syndicated seemed to ensure that mystery series with high production values would remain the preserve of British television.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) gave grudging support to *NYPD Blue*, while the most popular

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A testimony to the immense popularity of television programs about police investigations was the awarding of best-drama honors to CSI: Crime Scene Investigation at the People's Choice Awards in January, 2006, where members of the cast and crew gathered onstage to accept the award. (AP/Wide World Photos)

new series seemed to be based on two old genre staples: forensics and the law. Jerry Bruckheimer produced a show focusing on the gathering and interpretation of forensic evidence. An earlier series based on forensic pathology, *Quincy, M.E.* (1976-1983), was a long-running success; however, it revolved more around the medical examiner Quincy's clashes with his superior and police brass than around forensic work, and it never even depicted an actual autopsy. Eventually, it degenerated into the tried-and-tested formula of medical shows, the disease-of-the-week.

Bruckheimer's *CSI* series (2000-) featured a strong ensemble cast led by William Petersen; an ironically named police liaison, Jim Brass; and autopsies that were relentlessly graphic, becoming more so each year. Although the series was built on the premise that criminals always leave things at crime scenes and take away other things, it unrealistically showed its forensic detectives as interviewers of suspects and solvers of crimes. Moreover, DNA test results seem to be produced with the speed of making a cup of coffee. More seriously, critics have charged that the show provides a

primer for real criminals on how to clean up the evidence of their crimes, and that juries are coming to expect all criminal cases to involve irrefutable forensic evidence for conviction.

CSI at times also reveals how hard it is for writers to come up with plot lines for an hour-long show. Writers address this difficulty with scripts presenting two crimes solved in tandem. Nevertheless, the show attracted some impressive talent, with Quentin Tarantino directing a two-part episode, "The Grave," in 2005. The show also produced two successful spin-offs: *CSI: Miami* (2002-) and *CSI: New York* (2004-). Although the original *CSI* series was set in Las Vegas because that city's crime lab was the second busiest in Amer-

ica, it is clear that the locales of the spin-off series were selected because of their glamour and glitz.

Another influential and long-running show still popular with television audiences well into the twenty-first century is *Law and Order* (1990-), produced by Dick Wolf. It follows the dependable formula of presenting criminal investigations during the first half of each episode and prosecutions during the second half. To this formula, Wolf has added a sense of contemporaneity by adapting real-life cases to its plots. Trailers for the show declare coming episodes to be "ripped from the headlines." *Law and Order* has also addressed more pressing legal and ethical issues than earlier legal series. The show has spawned two successful spin-offs: *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999-), which deals with sex crimes, and *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* (2001-), which deals with major cases and presents more background on the crime at the beginning of each show than the original series. The spin-offs also tend to emphasize law over order.

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RESOURCES

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and in developments in urban policing. Notes that in the eighteenth century criminals and their detectors were greatly distinguishable. In Charles Dickens's works, the detective becomes a hero, but in Sherlock Holmes Arthur Conan Doyle produced the quintessential private investigator, gentle, reclusive, eccentric, precise, and something of a show-off.

Panek, LeRoy Lad. *Probable Cause: Crime Fiction in America*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1990. Covers the period between 1840 and 1940 in three sections: 1840-1890, 1890-1917, 1917-1940. Each section is divided into two chapters: "Contexts" chapters discuss historical developments relating to crime and police; "Texts" chapters examine the detective fiction of the period. Finds that over time detective fiction showed an increased concern with social issues.

_____. *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain 1914-1940*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1979. Study of eight mystery writers who worked in Great Britain during the Golden Age of detective fiction: E. C. Bentley, Agatha Christie, A. A. Milne, Dorothy L. Sayers, Anthony Berkeley, Margery Allingham, John Dickson Carr, and Ngaio Marsh. Denying that their works are simply puzzles to be solved, Panek claims these books are also "games, jokes, reactions to the adventure thriller, and reactions to the established form itself." An appendix discusses and outlines different plotlines used by mystery writers. A second appendix lists works by the authors discussed.

Pate, Janet. *The Book of Sleuths*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1977. Provides brief biographies of fictional detectives and their creators, from Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin to television's Theo Kojak. Includes illustrations of these figures drawn from stage, screen, dust jackets, magazines, and comics. Includes lists of the books, films, television programs, and plays in which each detective appears.

Paul, Robert J. *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes? Detective Fiction, Popular Theology, and Society*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991. Seeking to explain the appeal of detec-

tive fiction, Paul argues that these works posit belief in an ordered, rational universe, in clear distinctions between right and wrong, and in justice as necessary for society to endure. Even though most detective fiction is not overtly theological, the genre embodies these religious values, a thesis Paul supports through a chronological survey of the genre.

Porter, Dennis. *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981. Explores the reasons for the enduring popularity of detective fiction, following a reader-response approach. Detective fiction arouses readers' desire to know the solution and then satisfies that desire. Although every mystery deals with a different case, all follow a formula that readers find comfortable. Readability also derives from the genre's defense of the established order and affirmation of a rational world. Like many other critics, Porter sees detective fiction as inherently conservative.

Priestman, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Collection of essays on a wide range of topics. Ian A. Bell writes on eighteenth century crime writing, Stephen Knight on detective fiction between the world wars, and Maureen T. Reddy on women detectives. Includes a chronological listing of landmarks in detective fiction and an eight-page bibliography.

_____. *Crime Fiction from Poe to the Present*. Plymouth, England: Northcote House, 1998. Brief survey of detective fiction beginning with Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841). Focuses mainly on British and American writers. Includes a chronological list of key works.

_____. *Detective Fiction and Literature: The Figure on the Carpet*. Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 1991. Roughly chronological study of detective fiction that explores the genre as serious literature. Priestman sees many similarities between detective fiction and other novels and also discusses their differences.

Pyrhönen, Heta. *Murder and Mayhem: Narrative and Moral Problems in the Detective Story*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Challenges

- Dennis Porter's contention (in *The Pursuit of Crime*, above) that detective fiction is inherently conservative. Argues that mysteries ask two questions: Who committed the crime and who is guilty. Takes a semiotic approach, which is appropriate for a genre that relies on signs. The detective is the ideal reader; readers of detective fiction are themselves aware of the process of reading. Readers, like the detective, must unravel the clues and distinguish correct from false interpretations. Studies major examples of detective fiction from Edgar Allan Poe to Ruth Rendell and draws on the work of major literary critics such as Umberto Eco and Slavoj Žižek.
- Rodell, Marie F. *Mystery Fiction: Theory and Technique*. New York: Hermitage House, 1952. Intended to help would-be writers of detective fiction, this book provides a sound analysis of the elements that go into these works. Includes chapters on such subjects as "The Victim and the Motive," "Means and Opportunity," "Settings and Suspects," "Clues," "Taboos and Musts, and Characterization."
- Roth, Marty. *Fair and Foul Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995. Roth read 138 mysteries to determine the conventions of the genre and finds a continuity of conventions over time. This study considers those conventions in a series of chapters that focus on aspects such as the rationality of detectives. Roth also maintains that detective fiction is a masculine form even when written by women. He finds that love stories are antithetical to detective fiction, and that women pose a threat even when they are not criminals. Chapter 7 looks at the crime, criminal, and community; chapter 8 considers the need for narrative closure.
- Routley, Erik. *The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story: A Personal Monograph*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1972. Chronological survey of mostly British mysteries, with a chapter on Americans. Maintains that the intellectual puzzle-solving aspect of detective fiction is less interesting to readers than the characters and the sense of "moral and psychological security" that mystery works provide. Routley claims that detective fiction celebrates the puritanical virtues of commerce, rationalism, the work ethic, condemnation of vice, appreciation of masculinity, subordination of sex, and love of good conversation. Even readers who reject Routley's premise will find his book a useful historical overview.
- Rowland, Susan. *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave, 2001. Examines the work of six women writers: Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, P. D. James, and Ruth Rendell. Argues that these authors should be regarded as serious artists, whose chief merit lies not in creating and solving puzzles but in offering literary pleasures. Rowland looks at gender and genre issues in chapter 2. In chapter 3 she disputes the view that detective fiction is inherently conservative. Other chapters consider issues of race and colonialism, psychoanalysis and detective fiction, gothic elements, metaphysical elements, and the treatment of women.
- Rzepka, Charles J. *Detective Fiction*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2005. This self-described "cultural history of detection" offers extended essays on Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Raymond Chandler, as well as shorter discussions of Émile Gaboriau, Wilkie Collins, G. K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald. Maintains that the detective story was shaped initially by the rise of modern science and psychology. World War I caused cultural dislocations that prompted the development of the hard-boiled detective story to challenge the cozy world of classical mysteries. During the late twentieth century, mysteries also challenged traditional views of race, class, and gender.
- Scott, Sutherland. *Blood in Their Ink: The March of the Modern Mystery Novel*. London: Stanley Paul, 1953. Chapters 1-4 survey detective novels from 1918 onward and provide thumbnail sketches of writers and their works. The second half of the book treats technical issues: how to construct detective novels, what to avoid, where to set mysteries, and the role medical matters play. Concludes

with a now-dated prediction on the future of the genre.

- Stewart, R. F. . . . *And Always a Detective: Chapters on the History of Detective Fiction*. North Pomfret, Vt.: David and Charles, 1980. Surveys the development of early detective fiction and discusses some important critics of the genre.
- Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. 3d ed. New York: Mysterious Press, 1992. First published in 1972 as *Mortal Consequences: A History—From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, this work begins by defining the genre and explaining why it is so popular. The rest of the book provides a chronological survey from the eighteenth century onward. Symons regards Edgar Allan Poe as the true originator of the detective story because of his creation of C. Auguste Dupin and his not-overly-bright narrator friend, his use of red herrings, and his choice of unexpected culprits. Regards the best mystery stories as “fine books of the second order, masterpieces in their kind,” but not great literature.
- _____. *The Detective Story in Britain*. Harlow, England: Longmans, Green, 1969. Part of the publisher’s Writers and Their Works series, this forty-six-page pamphlet provides a good introduction to the topic by an important practitioner. His historical overview begins with Edgar Allan Poe and Wilkie Collins, then proceeds to Sherlock Holmes and more modern mysteries. Symons traces a movement away from an emphasis on puzzles to concern for character and motive, making later works more like mainstream fiction. Includes a brief bibliography of detective fiction and critical works.
- Thomson, H. Douglas. *Masters of Mystery: A Study of the Detective Story*. London: W. Collins, 1931. Analyzes the literary devices the genre employs and offers a guide to what Thomson regards as the best detective fiction. Heavily weighted toward British works, though it includes chapters on Edgar Allan Poe, early twentieth century American mysteries, and French writers.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. “The Typology of the Detective Story.” In *Poetics of Prose*. Translated by Richard Howard. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press,

1977. Divides detective fiction into two stories, that of the crime (event) and that of the investigation, or plot—the way the event is presented to readers. Distinguishes detective fiction from thrillers because in the latter form the two stories are fused. Moreover, thrillers focus on plot, so that what happens next becomes more important than what has happened already. Suspense novels combine elements of both thrillers and true detective stories, asking not only what has happened already but also what will happen next. Todorov sees a trend over time for authors to shift from creating detective fiction to writing thrillers and then suspense novels.

- Walker, Ronald G., and June M. Frazer. *The Cunning Craft: Original Essays on Detective Fiction and Contemporary Literary Theory*. Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1990. Applies postmodern literary theories such as narratology, reader-response theory, and deconstruction to classic detective works as well as some late twentieth century mysteries.
- Watson, Colin. *Snobbery with Violence: English Crime Stories and Their Audience*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971. Considers how detective fiction, especially thrillers, has reflected and influenced social attitudes of its readers since the 1920’s.
- Wells, Carolyn. *The Technique of the Mystery Story*. Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1978. First published in 1913, this book is generally regarded as the first serious study of the genre. Contains a history of detective fiction, which Wells regards as beginning in antiquity, and includes analyses of the various components of the mystery to guide both readers and writers. Wells herself was a prolific writer of detective fiction.
- Winks, Robin W. *Modus Operandi: An Excursion into Detective Fiction*. Boston: Godine, 1982. Personal defense of the mystery form by a distinguished historian. Argues that detective fiction does not differ from more “respectable” literature and that it appeals to readers for the same reasons as other writing does. Also denies that mysteries are more formulaic than other forms of fiction.

_____, ed. *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980. Collection of seventeen previously published, but hard to find, classic essays on the subject. Includes W. H. Auden's "The Guilty Vicarage," Jacques Barzun's "Detection and the Literary Art," and Ronald A. Knox's "A Detective Story Decalogue."

Winn, Dilys, ed. *Murder Ink: The Mystery Reader's Companion*. New York: Workman, 1977. Collection of short essays on a wide variety of topics, such as Gladys Mitchell's "The Most Asked Question: Why Do People Read Detective Stories?" Reginald Hill writes about academic mystery stories, and R. M. Whyte considers mysteries with

theatrical settings. Includes many reading lists.

Woeller, Waltraud, and Bruce Cassiday. *The Literature of Crime and Detection: An Illustrated History from Antiquity to the Present*. Translated by Ruth Michaelis-Jena and Willy Merson. New York: Ungar, 1988. Chronological survey of the genre from its earliest form in such works as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (c. 426 B.C.E.) and the biblical story of Susannah and the Elders to the early 1980's. Because the book was originally written in German, it devotes a fair amount of attention to German as well as British and American authors. The bibliography also cites German and English language sources for further study.

Joseph Rosenblum

GUIDE TO ONLINE RESOURCES

WEB SITES

With literally billions of pages of information on the World Wide Web, no one person could possibly find or open them all. The purpose of this guide is to assist readers to find the best Web sites with information on mystery and detective fiction. The sites included here, and many others, can be found easily by using such Web search engines as google.com, yahoo.com, altavista.com, excite.com, and ask.com. Search engines are huge searchable databases designed with the goal of indexing and making available to users every word on every page of the World Wide Web.

To find information about mystery and detective fiction, one must type a search word or character string into a search engine. The string can be a relatively simple term, such as the name of a specific author or novel. After typing in an author's name, for example, the search-engine user will be presented with a

lengthy list of Web sites. In author searches, the first site listed will often be the author's official site, followed by a wide range of other sites. Similarly, search engines can be used to find information about individual book titles, magazines, subgenres, organizations, and other subjects.

Retrieving more general information about mystery and detective fiction can be a little trickier, since users have the option of entering several search terms. For example, entering the phrase "mystery and detective fiction" will produce a list of sites that differs from those brought up by such phrases as "mystery fiction," "detective fiction," or "crime writing." Moreover, the various online search engines organize their databases in slightly different ways, so users might want to consult several different search engines to obtain the most appropriate information.

SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Because so many pages of information are available on the World Wide Web, search results using names of authors or general terms may retrieve thousands of hits, and users must decide which of the hits are most relevant, accurate, and authoritative for their needs. Users generally can find solid information by searching on refined and very narrow search terms or phrases. The narrower the search phrase, the more targeted the results. If one wants a search engine to retrieve sites based exactly on both the terms and the word order of the terms used, it is necessary to place quotation marks around the search terms.

Another efficient way to find information about specific aspects of mystery and detective fiction is to start with a more general site, such as one in the list below. These sites contain information about authors, novels, characters, types of detective fiction, and other subjects. Most of them contain lists of links to related Web sites that one need merely click on to navigate between sites.

Some of the larger of these Web sites also have their own internal search engines, which enable users to find narrower information within the site.

Whatever technique one uses to find information on the Web, one should be wary of the reliability of individual sites. Although many sites are reliable and accurate, others are created by people with little knowledge of their subjects and may be rife with errors and even deliberately misleading information. The most reliable sites about mystery and detective fiction are generally those created by university departments, libraries, mystery organizations, and authors themselves. Many sites created by fans of the genre or of specific authors or characters can be excellent sources of information, but even more are not reliable. Users should also be careful about information they find in Wikipedia, the ever-expanding online encyclopedia. Many entries are accurate and up-to-date, but others are riddled with errors, including some deliberately inserted by cyber vandals.

GENERAL MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE FICTION SITES

Clerical Detectives (and Some Other Crime Fiction)

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/philipg/detectives>

Philip Grosset created this site featuring more than fifty priests (male and female), ministers, monks, current nuns, former nuns, two rabbis, a rabbi's wife, a church administrator, a clerk of a Quaker meeting, and a choirmaster/organist. Grosset provides biographical information about these characters and the authors who created them, synopses of books in which they appear, and links to related sites. The information can be accessed via an alphabetical list of characters or an alphabetical list of authors.

Crime Culture

www.crimeculture.com/index.html

Created in 2002 to serve as a resource for people taking or teaching courses in crime fiction, film, or graphic art, this site contains a wide range of information and fascinating graphics culled from dime novels, pulp magazines, and films. Its Crime Fiction section provides an overview of this literary genre, with information on Victorian-era literature, French and British detective fiction, American hard-boiled detective stories, serial-killer fiction, and graphic crime fiction, among other topics. The Crime Films section contains reviews of motion pictures and descriptions of various types of crime films, such as gangster sagas, film noir, and television shows. The True Crime section contains an essay examining the history of true-crime literature. The site also contains Web links, a bibliography, and information about college courses related to crime fiction.

Fantastic Fiction

www.fantasticfiction.co.uk

This easily navigable site lists 200,000 books by ten thousand authors that can be accessed by two search engines. One engine enables users to enter book titles and retrieve information about those titles. The other engine allows users to enter names of authors and retrieve brief biographical information, listing of the authors' books, reproductions of book covers, lists of

published short stories, and other data. These author lists specify the novels that are parts of series, so users can readily find books featuring particular detectives. The Awards section of the site lists the authors who won or were nominated for annual literary awards, including the Edgar Awards and other mystery fiction honors.

A Guide to Classic Mystery and Detection

members.aol.com/MG4273/classics.htm

This site provides a historical overview of mystery and detective fiction, with sections devoted to nineteenth century mystery fiction, early twentieth century fiction, the Golden Age of mystery writing, pulp fiction, and contemporary mystery fiction. It also contains information about authors, "genuine" mystery films, "impossible crimes" in comic books, and links to other Web sites.

Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction

www.case.edu/artsci/engl/marling/hardboiled/index.html

William Marling of Case Western Reserve University created this comprehensive, well-informed, and easy-to-navigate site examining the hard-boiled detective fiction subgenre. The site contains essays tracing the history of the subgenre from its origins to the present, including the *Black Mask* school of detective writing and the classic mysteries of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, and Ross Macdonald. Other pages provide information about Mickey Spillane, Joseph Wambaugh, James Ellroy, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Chester Himes and early African American detectives. Marling also summarizes the plots of major works of hard-boiled fiction, describes some of the characteristics of the subgenre, and provides information about hard-boiled detectives in radio and television shows, films, and comic books.

Mysterious Home Page

www.clueclass.com/MystHome/index.html

This large collection of Web links describes itself as a "streamlined, 'just the links, ma'am' jumping off site for the mystery world online." Included in its hundreds of entries are links to mystery fiction and author Web

sites, as well as sites about mystery fiction events, associations, awards, characters, films, television shows, and radio programs.

Mysterynet.com

www.mysterynet.com

This site contains information about classic mystery authors and characters, as well as lists of television shows and films, awards, and organizations. Particularly useful is the Books and Resources section, which features essays written by contemporary mystery authors and descriptions of subgenres of mystery fiction and the authors associated with them.

Project Gutenberg

www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page

Project Gutenberg is a massive online library containing seventeen thousand free electronic texts of books whose copyrights have expired in the United States. Users can download these books in several formats, read them on their computers, or print them. Some of the works also are available in audio book formats. Individual texts can be found by searching on titles or author names or by browsing three specialized lists:

Mystery Fiction Bookshelf, [www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Mystery_Fiction_\(Bookshelf\)](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Mystery_Fiction_(Bookshelf)), features five volumes of work by and about Edgar Allan Poe, as well as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and works by Joseph Conrad and John Buchan.

Detective Fiction Bookshelf, [www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Detective_Fiction_\(Bookshelf\)](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Detective_Fiction_(Bookshelf)), contains additional works by Poe, Collins, and Dickens. Four novels and several short stories featuring Sherlock Holmes also are included, along with one of Agatha Christie's earliest Hercule Poirot novels and fiction by G. K. Chesterton and Gaston Leroux.

Crime Fiction Bookshelf, [www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Crime_Fiction_\(Bookshelf\)](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Crime_Fiction_(Bookshelf)), includes Fyodor Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*, some Arsene Lupin stories by Maurice Leblanc, and some of Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu stories, among other books.

Thrilling Detective Web Site

www.thrillingdetective.com/index.html

One of the best online resources about mystery and detective fiction, this site is a comprehensive compendium of information about all aspects of mystery and detective literature. Its Private Eyes and Other Tough Guys section is especially useful; it features biographical information on several hundred fictional detectives and lists the novels, short stories, films, television and radio programs, and other media in which they appeared. The Authors section contains biographical sketches and lists of books for numerous mystery writers. Other sections provide information about detective films, television shows, radio programs, and comic books, strips, and graphic novels. In addition, the site provides links to other mystery Web sites and a bibliography listing anthologies of mystery short stories and other books about private eyes.

CLASSIC MYSTERY WRITERS AND CHARACTERS

Raymond Chandler Web Site

<http://home.comcast.net/~mossrobert>

Maintained by Chandler scholar Robert Moss, this site describes itself as an "online resource for scholarship on Raymond Chandler, the foremost American hard-boiled detective writer." It includes a chronology of Chandler's life; lists of his novels, short stories, and screenplays; an essay about his early poetry and prose; and criticism and reviews of his work. In addition, there's a collection of "Chandlerisms," the similes, one-liners, and turns of phrase that were a hallmark of the author's literary style.

Official Agatha Christie Web Site

<http://us.agathachristie.com/site/home>

Christie's only grandchild, Matthew Prichard, who also is chairman of Agatha Christie, Ltd., oversees this official site devoted to his grandmother's publications. It features descriptions of Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, and Christie's other detectives and links to related chat rooms and Web sites.

Official Web Site of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Estate

www.sherlockholmesonline.org

This official site of the Arthur Conan Doyle estate contains a lengthy biography of Doyle and descriptions of Sherlock Holmes and two other of Doyle characters, Professor Challenger and Brigadier Gerard. It also features a bibliography of Doyle's work and a filmography of motion pictures featuring Holmes.

Sherlockian.Net

www.sherlockian.net

Chris Redmond, the director of internal communications at Ontario's University of Waterloo, edits this Web portal, which provides hundreds of links to other sites about Doyle's famed fictional detective. Users can obtain links to online versions of the original Holmes stories; information about the world of Holmes and Watson and their creator, Arthur Conan Doyle; illustrations of Holmes on the Web; listings of films, plays, and radio and television shows about Holmes; and pastiches and parodies of the Holmes stories. Additional sections of the site discuss how to teach Holmes and how to write essays about him.

Ed McBain: The Official Site

www.edmcbain.com

The site includes news about the late author, his biography, information about his books, an online forum, and links to other sites.

Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore

www.eapoe.org

This organization maintains a growing collection of Poe's works in electronic format on its Web site, including his mystery tales, poems, essays, and sketches. The site also contains a biography of Poe and articles and lectures about his work.

Unofficial Mickey Spillane Mike Hammer Site

<http://pages.interlog.com/~roco/hammer.html>

Although this site is unofficial, it is well written, interesting, and full of information about Spillane and his fictional detective, Mike Hammer. It includes a biography of Spillane, excerpts from his novels, and lists

of books, films, comics, and radio and television shows featuring Hammer. Users also can see covers of paperback books illustrated in classic pulp fiction style with gumshoes, guns, and gun molls.

The Wolfe Pack

www.nerowolfe.org

An online forum created to discuss, explore, and enjoy Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe books and short stories, the Wolfe Pack was founded during the 1970's by fans of Wolfe and by the late John McAleer, a professor who wrote a biography of Stout. The group's Web site features a biography of Stout; a list of Wolfe mysteries, with brief synopses of plots and reproductions of their covers; information about the A&E Television Network series *A Nero Wolfe Mystery* (2001-2002); and events and book groups related to the Wolfe character.

OFFICIAL SITES OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

Official Web sites for contemporary authors are generally maintained or at least overseen by the authors themselves and give the authors opportunities to communicate directly with their readers. These sites generally feature information about their forthcoming and newly released books and other news items, biographies, lists of books, and links to other sites. Some authors, such as Elmore Leonard, even maintain blogs on their sites in which they regularly send messages to readers. Other sites offer chat rooms or discussion forums in which readers can participate directly. Many authors also post interviews on their sites that have previously appeared in print or on the Web or include podcasts of their television and radio interviews. Arranged alphabetically by surnames, this list contains only a selection of the hundreds of official Web sites for mystery writers. The list does not include any of the thousands of unofficial author Web sites.

Ken Bruen

www.kenbruen.com

Margaret Coel

www.margaretcoel.com

Max Allan Collins
www.maxallancollins.com

Michael Connelly
www.michaelconnelly.com

Patricia Cornwell
www.patriciacornwell.com

Robert Crais
www.robertcrais.com

Lindsey Davis
www.lindseydavis.co.uk

D. J. Donaldson
www.dondonaldson.com

Barry Eisler
www.barryeisler.com

Frederick Forsyth
www.booksatransworld.co.uk/frederickforsyth

Dick Francis
www.dickfrancis.com

Sue Grafton
www.suegrifton.com

John Grisham
www.jgrisham.com

Carl Hiaasen
www.carlhiaasen.com

Tony Hillerman
[www.harpercollins.com/authors/4488/
Tony_Hillerman](http://www.harpercollins.com/authors/4488/Tony_Hillerman)

P. D. James
www.randomhouse.com/features/pdjames/index.html

Jonathan Kellerman
www.jonathankellerman.com

Laurie R. King
www.laurierking.com

Stephen King
www.stephenking.com

Dean Koontz
www.deankoontz.com

Elmore Leonard
www.elmoreleonard.com

Archer H. Mayor
www.archermayor.com

Walter Mosley
[www.twbookmark.com/features/waltermosley/
index.html](http://www.twbookmark.com/features/waltermosley/index.html)

Sara Paretsky
www.saraparetsky.com

James Patterson
www.jamespatterson.com

Elizabeth Peters
www.ameliapeabody.com

Kathy Reichs
www.kathyreichs.com

J. K. Rowling
www.jkrowling.com

Steven Saylor
www.stevensaylor.com

Dana Stabenow
www.stabenow.com

Stuart Woods
www.stuartwoods.com

ORGANIZATIONS

Although much of the content on Web sites for mystery writers' organizations is specifically aimed at professional writers who are members, readers and fans of the genre can use the sites to obtain pertinent information about some of their favorite writers and newly released books. The typical site announces the publication of members' new books and features a calendar of events and information about the organization's annual awards. Crime Writers of Canada contains biographies of its members, while American Crime Writers League features an interview with one of its members each month. Several of the sites also provide links to other Web pages about mystery and detective fiction.

The largest organization, Mystery Readers International, is listed first here, followed by other organizations listed alphabetically.

Mystery Readers International

www.mysteryreaders.org

The world's largest organization of mystery readers and fans, Mystery Readers International maintains a lively Web site aimed at serious readers of mystery and detective fiction. The site features author interviews; lists of mystery reading groups and mystery bookstores in the United States, Canada, and other countries; and a list of mystery periodicals. It also provides news about its members and information about the organization's annual Macavity Awards.

American Crime Writers League

www.acwl.org

Crime Writers' Association

www.thecwa.co.uk

Crime Writers of Canada

crimewriterscanada.com/cwc/index.html

International Thriller Writers

www.thrillerwriters.org

Mystery Writers of America

www.mysterywriters.org

Private Eye Writers of America

hometown.aol.com/rRANDISI

Sisters in Crime

www.sistersincrime.org

FILMS, RADIO AND TELEVISION SHOWS, AND COMICS**Alfred Hitchcock: A Mystery Net Web Site**

www.mysterynet.com/hitchcock

This site offers several pages devoted to the master director of suspense films. There is a biography, an essay assessing Hitchcock's impact on film culture, a comprehensive filmography, and an essay about the *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* television series.

The Big Screen: Celluloid Eyes

www.thrillingdetective.com/flics.html

This site offers information about several hundred mystery films, including the names of the detectives featured in each and the authors who created these detectives.

Detective and Mystery Comic Books, Strips, Etc.

www.lib.msu.edu/comics/rri/drri/detecta.htm#myst

This site is maintained by the Michigan State University Comic Art Collection, the most extensive library collection of comic books, in print and on microfilm, books, articles, fan magazines, and other materials about comic art. It focuses on detective and mystery comics, which the site describes as a "broadly defined genre . . . including ratiocinating and hard-boiled detection, as well as spooky mysteries, crime, and police procedural stories."

Internet Movie Database

www.imdb.com

Created in 1990, this massive film resource was taken over by the giant online retailer Amazon.com in 1998. The largest single online resource on films, it contains detailed and interlinked information on tens of thousands of individual films and television programs, as well as actors, directors, writers, characters, awards, and other subjects—all of which can be found through

internal search engines. Searching on keywords and plots adds to the site's usefulness as a resource for finding information on mystery and detective films and television programs.

Mystery and Crime Television Shows and Series

www.mysterynet.com/tv

This page from Mysterynet.com contains links to short essays on television mysteries by decades, as well as select links to sites on specific shows.

Radio Shows Featuring Private Eyes

www.thrillingdetective.com/radio.html

A page from the Thrilling Detective Web Site with information about both old-time and recent radio mystery programs, audio tapes, and podcasts, listed alphabetically by program names.

Television

magicdragon.com/UltimateMystery/tv.html

This page from the Ultimate Mystery/Detective Web Guide provides information about more than five hundred American and British television series listed alphabetically by program name.

ELECTRONIC DATABASES

Electronic databases containing information about literature include information about mystery and detective fiction and the genre's authors. These databases usually do not have their own URLs. Instead, public, college, and university libraries subscribe to these databases and install them on their Web sites, where they are available only to library card holders or specified patrons. Readers can check their library Web sites to see if these databases are installed or ask reference librarians if the databases are available at their local libraries.

Literary Reference Center

EBSCO's comprehensive full-text database contains more than 26,000 plot summaries, synopses, and overviews of authors' works; 140,000 author biographies; about 100,000 literary articles and essays; book reviews; 13,500 classic and contemporary short stories; and 4,000 author interviews. A catalog of authors, listed alphabetically by surnames, and another alphabetically arranged list of literary works enable users to retrieve specific information. The advanced search engine provides numerous tools for narrowing searches, including the option of looking for information about particular fictional characters.

Literature Resource Center

This database maintained by Thomson Gale includes more than 140,000 author biographies; nearly 700,000 critical essays on literary works from a wide range of literary disciplines, countries, and eras; and 500,000 full-text articles from more than 280 literary journals. Users can conduct author, title, keyword, and literary-historical time line searches. The authors-by-type search engine enables users to retrieve information about specific literary genres, including the genres entitled crime novels, mystery fiction, and detective fiction.

MagillOnLiteraturePlus

A comprehensive literature database maintained by Salem Press, this resource incorporates the full contents of Salem's many literature-related reference works, including information from its many *Masterplots* series and *Magill's Literary Annual*. Among the available materials are articles on more than 35,000 individual literary works and more than 8,500 writers, poets, dramatists, essayists, and philosophers. Essays feature critical analysis as well as plot summaries, biographical information, character profiles, and authoritative listings of works with dates of publication.

Rebecca Kuzins

GENRE TERMS AND TECHNIQUES

Terms in SMALL-CAPITAL LETTERS are subjects of entries of their own.

LITERARY AND GENRE TERMS

academic mystery: Story placed in an academic setting, usually a college or university, or involving mainly academic figures.

amateur sleuth: Character who though neither private investigator nor policeman gets into situations, either by accident or by invitation, that require solving crimes. Bird watchers, gardeners, and clergy most often find themselves with the opportunity or the equipment to accomplish the task.

analytic school: See WHODUNIT.

antagonist: fictional character who stands as a rival or opponent to the PROTAGONIST.

armchair detection: Method of detection in which the detective solves a crime solely through analysis and deduction of the facts with which he has been provided, and not through field work. The quintessential armchair detective is Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe, who almost never leaves the Manhattan apartment in which he breeds orchids. The term armchair detective is also sometimes applied to readers who follow clues and attempt to solve mysteries as they read.

atmosphere: General mood or tone of a work; it is often associated with setting but can also be established by action or dialogue.

canon: Authorized or accepted list of books, usually of a single author. For example, the sixty Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories by Arthur Conan Doyle are regarded as the Holmesian canon, and all Holmes stories by other authors are considered non-canonical.

casebook: Collection of fictional narratives purporting to be taken from actual police files.

climax/crisis: Whereas the climax in a story is the moment of the reader's highest emotional response, crisis is a structural element of plot—a turning point when a resolution must take place.

closed setting: Relatively confined physical setting with a small number of characters, all of whom al-

ready know one another. See also LOCKED-ROOM MYSTERY.

clue-puzzle: Mystery in which both investigator and readers see all clues at the same time, enabling readers to follow the investigation step by step.

comedy caper: Comparatively lighthearted and generally fast-paced crime story in which humor takes priority.

comedy of manners: Story that satirizes the manners, fashions, and values of a particular social class or set of people.

courtroom drama: Fictional work that revolves around a legal or criminal trial.

cozy: In its narrower sense, a mystery story involving genteel people and no overt violence and in which the characters take precedences. In its broader sense, any mystery and detective story that follows the traditional British conventions of the genre.

crossover fiction: Fiction written in a SUBGENRE by an author known as a MAINSTREAM writer or for writing in another subgenre.

deductive reasoning: Logical technique through which conclusions about particulars follow necessarily from general or universal premises. Detectives employing the deductive method form their general conclusions before all facts are explained and then use additional facts to modify or verify those conclusions. Particularly associated with the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. See also INDUCTIVE REASONING; RATIOCINATION.

defective detective: Term from the 1930's PULP writers, who created detectives with physical disabilities in order to make them unique.

denouement: Conclusion of a story in which the plot is unraveled and the mystery is solved.

detective story: Highly formalized and logically structured mode of fiction in which the focus is on a crime solved by a detective through interpretation of evidence and ratiocination. However, many modern

writers have de-emphasized the puzzlelike qualities of the form, stressing instead characterization, theme, and other elements of mainstream fiction.

detective story decalogue: Ten rules for writers of detective fiction composed by Ronald A. Knox in 1928. Intended to allow readers a fair chance at solving the mystery, it holds that the criminal must be mentioned early in the story; there will be no use of the supernatural; there will be no more than one secret room or passage; no new poisons or new appliances necessitating long explanations at the end of the story will be introduced; no “Chinaman” can figure in the story; no accident or intuition can aid the detective; detectives may not themselves be the culprits; readers must receive the same clues as the detectives and must get them around the same time; sidekicks, or Watson characters, must not conceal any thoughts that pass through their minds, and they must be slightly less bright than the average reader; and twin brothers or doubles may not be used without ample preparation by the writer. See also FAIR-PLAY CLUING.

dime novel: Cheaply printed and bound paperback book containing melodramatic fiction that was a popular form in the nineteenth century United States. So named because of its price, which was generally five or ten cents.

espionage: Type of fiction that has as its subject the clandestine machinations of government agents, usually regarding the discovery, theft, or recovery of secret documents. This SUBGENRE is also characterized by the use of a distinct and often colorful vocabulary.

exotic setting: Any setting that is strikingly out of the ordinary or unusually mysterious to its readers. However, a setting that may seem exotic to one reader may seem familiar and ordinary to another.

fair-play cluing: Convention in which mystery writers abide by certain rules in writing their stories. For example, readers must have access to the same clues as the fictional detectives, and there may not be any coincidences or supernatural solutions to the crimes. See also DETECTIVE STORY DECALOGUE.

film noir: Type of crime film in which cynical and dangerous characters operate in settings that are typically dark and forbidding. The ominous atmosphere is enhanced by cinematic techniques and foreboding background music. See also NOIR; ROMAN NOIR.

flashback: Scene in a fictional work that depicts an earlier event; it can be presented as a reminiscence by a character in the story or may simply be inserted into a narrative.

foreshadowing: Literary device designed to create suspense or dramatic irony by indicating through suggestion what will take place in the future.

genre: In the term’s most general sense, a group of literary works defined by a common form, style, or purpose. In practice, the term is used in a wide variety of overlapping and, to a degree, contradictory senses. Thus, tragedy and comedy are described as distinct genres; the novel (a form that includes both tragic and comic works) is a genre; and various subspecies of the novel, such as the GOTHIC and the PICARESQUE, are themselves frequently treated as distinct genres. Finally, the term GENRE FICTION refers to forms of popular fiction in which the writer is bound by more or less rigid conventions. Indeed, all these diverse usages have in common an emphasis on the manner in which individual literary works are shaped by the expectations and conventions of a particular genre: This is the subject of genre criticism.

genre fiction: Categories of popular fiction such as mysteries, the romances, SCIENCE FICTION, and Westerns. Although the term can be used in a neutral sense, “genre fiction” is often pejorative, used dismissively to refer to fiction in which writers are bound by more or less rigid conventions. See also MAINSTREAM FICTION.

Golden Age: Period beginning roughly in the 1920’s in Great Britain and continuing into the late 1930’s, primarily in the United States, when the mystery/detective GENRE went through its most profound changes. Beginning with an emphasis on rules (see DETECTIVE STORY DECALOGUE), with the puzzle being the most important element in the story (see

WHODUNIT), the genre gradually moved into more complex forms (see LOCKED-ROOM MYSTERY) and eventually into the HARD-BOILED form in the United States. It was during the Golden Age that mystery writers consciously set the limits and conceived of a philosophy by which the genre would be defined.

gothic fiction: SUBGENRE characterized by vulnerable female characters who find themselves in isolated, mysterious settings populated by strange and sinister people who are driven by secrets. The most characteristic setting is an ancient, decaying castle or mansion. Stories often involve evil uncles and vindictive housekeepers—and perhaps even an insane wife in the attic.

Grand Dames: See QUEENS OF CRIME.

graphic novels: Densely illustrated books similar to traditional comic books.

Great Detective: See MASTER SLEUTH.

Had-I-But-Known school: Phrase coined by humorist Ogden Nash referring to a type of plot and narration in which the story is artificially stalled and prolonged by odd coincidences, senseless acts that upset the sleuth's plans, accidents that cause a character to forget to relate something of importance, and so on. The narrator (usually female) laments that "had I but known what was going to happen, we might have stopped it."

hard-boiled: Unsentimental, mean, cynical, unconcerned about the feelings or opinions of others; a type of detective fiction whose protagonist is a tough guy, a man of action who uses his fists and his mind to solve a crime. He is sometimes dishonest and not always chivalrous with women. His displacement of the more cerebral master sleuth reflects the 1920's American recognition that irrationality is the rule rather than the exception. The most representative writers in the genre are Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald.

historical mystery: Mystery or detective story that depicts past historical events, usually public in nature, and features real as well as fictional people.

house name: Fictitious author name under which more than one author write books for the publisher who

owns the name. A well-known example is Carolyn Keene, the purported author of the Nancy Drew mysteries.

inductive reasoning: Technique used by detectives who wait for all relevant facts and information to emerge before drawing any conclusions. The technique is most commonly used in complex white-collar crimes and drug cases involving many suspects. See also DEDUCTIVE REASONING.

inverted mystery: Crime story told from the point of view of the criminal. In this case the emphasis is not on "whodunit," since this is already obvious, but on how. Readers are often able to sympathize with the protagonists, despite their criminal nature.

Knox's decalogue: See DETECTIVE STORY DECALOGUE.

locked-room mystery: Type of MIRACLE CRIME in which a person is found murdered in a locked room in which it appears impossible for a murderer to have entered or exited. Story emphasis is on "howdunit" as much as on "whodunit." See also CLOSED SETTING.

MacGuffin: Term coined by film director Alfred Hitchcock to refer to the plans, papers, secrets, or documents that must be found, stolen, discovered, and so on, and which are vital to the characters of ESPIONAGE stories. The formulas of most stories of this kind have at their center this entity.

mainstream fiction: Fiction that is not classified as belonging to a SUBGENRE, such as mysteries, SCIENCE FICTION, or Westerns. See also GENRE FICTION.

master sleuth: Larger-than-life figure capable of a supreme level of detecting, who uses his powers of observation and reason, rather than his muscles, to unravel a puzzle. He rarely works for money; rather, he works for the sheer pleasure of finding a crime puzzling enough to challenge his superior intelligence. Sherlock Holmes is the quintessential example of this kind of fiction and character.

melodrama: In its narrowest sense, a form of drama in which virtuous heroes and heroines are pursued by dastardly villains and suspense is artificially height-

ened until the protagonists are rescued and happy endings ensue. In its broader sense, melodramas are any narratives in which the main conflicts are played out between sharply drawn, and often exaggerated, heroes and villains. Situations, not characters, predominate and sentimentality, suspense, and horror tend to play major roles. Characters do not develop, and little attention is paid to their efforts to understand themselves or their actions.

miracle crime: Crime that seemingly has no rational explanation but which is ultimately demonstrated to have occurred through natural rather than supernatural means.

narrator: Character who recounts the narrative, or story.

naturalism, literary: Application to literature of the principles of scientific determinism—the notion that everything that happens has a cause behind it.

Newgate novels: Kind of literature popular in the eighteenth century, characterized by semifictional colorful accounts of highwaymen and other criminals, often with implied admiration for these outlaws. Based on the lives of English criminals who ended up in London's Newgate Prison.

noir: From French word for black, a crime story that usually features a cynical and hard-boiled detective and dark and often murky settings. See also FILM NOIR.

parody: Literary work that closely imitates the work of another, usually well-known, writer with the purpose of satirizing or creating a comic effect.

pastiche: Literary work similar to a PARODY in being an imitation of another writer's work, but not necessarily for the purpose of satirizing or creating comic effects. Sherlock Holmes has been the subject of numerous pastiches, many of which are respectful homages.

picaresque: Fictional form that follows the adventures of a central rogue figure, who usually tells the story.

police novel: Crime story focusing on the work of uniformed police officers that lacks the traditional mystery elements of detective stories and POLICE PROCEDURALS.

police procedural: Type of crime story in which the police and their methods in solving a crime are of primary importance. Readers follow the police, seeing the methods they employ in tracking a criminal. Realism is an important characteristic of this type of story. See also ROMAN POLICIER.

postmodern: Frequently used but imprecisely defined term applied to literary and other artistic movements that followed the the era of so-called high modernism, represented by such giants as James Joyce and Pablo Picasso. In critical discussions of contemporary fiction, the term is applied to writers who exhibit a self-conscious awareness of their modernist predecessors.

protagonist: Central character in a fictional work, the one whose fortunes most concern readers. See also ANTAGONIST

psychological crime novel: Form in which character, especially the inner life of characters, is the primary focus. Emphasis is on “whydunit,” rather than “whodunit.”

pulps: Early mystery magazines, such as *Black Mask*, so called for their use of grainy paper made from wood pulp. Characterized by garish covers that were often the best parts of the magazines, they usually measured seven by ten inches, and their pages were short-fibered, fragile, and difficult to preserve.

“Queens of Crime”: Collective nickname for Margery Allingham, Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L. Sayers, the four great women mystery writers who developed and perfected the classic English WHODUNIT, who are also known as the “Grand Dames” of crime fiction.

ratiocination: Edgar Allan Poe's term for the rational, deductive method used to solve mysteries. This method presupposes a benevolent and orderly universe that is ultimately knowable.

red herring: Extraneous clue introduced to distract the attention of readers from the real solution to a mystery.

roman à clef: Fictional work wherein actual people, often celebrities of some sort, are thinly disguised.

roman noir: Prose fiction with the characteristics of FILM NOIR. The term is sometimes used as a synonym for HARD-BOILED detective fiction.

roman policier: French police novel. Émile Gaboriau's works featuring Monsieur Lecoq and involving painstaking reconstruction of the crime and analysis of detail are characteristic works in this SUB-GENRE. See also POLICE PROCEDURAL.

science fiction: Fiction in which certain givens (physical laws, psychological principles, social conditions: any one or all of these) form the basis of an imaginative projection into the future or, less commonly, extrapolations in the present or even into the past.

sensation novels: GENRE that became popular in the 1860's. Characterized by paradoxical combinations of luridness and convention, romance and realism, these works focused on crime, villainy, and evil. The term was a derogatory one, meant to condemn the works of writers such as Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Wilkie Collins, as well as many lesser figures, for their preoccupation with crime.

series character: Character who appears in an interrelated series of books by one or more authors.

sleuth: Detective. From the Middle English word *sleuth hund* for a kind of bloodhound.

subgenre: Branch of a GENRE. For example, mystery and detective fiction is a subgenre of prose fiction. However, the term genre is often used loosely to apply to subgenres.

suspense stories: Subgenre closely allied to THRILL-

ERS that steadily builds danger and tension toward a dramatic climax.

thriller: Broad category of fiction that involves battles between good and evil, represented by a hero and one or more villains and with reader suspense as to the outcome.

tough-guy school: Outgrowth of the HARD-BOILED school of mystery/detective fiction whose distinctive characteristics include the private investigator as the central character, the WHODUNIT plot emphasizing deduction over violence, and little or no emphasis on sociological insights.

unreliable narrator: Narrator whose account cannot be fully trusted, obliging readers to reconstruct—if possible—the true state of affairs themselves. An example is Nick Carraway in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

whodunit: Type of plot in which the killer's identity is known from the beginning, but that of the victim is unknown until the end.

whodunit: Classic English mystery; characterized by many clues, faintly comedic overtones, several suspects, usually aristocratic and stereotypical, and at least one corpse. Often set in an English country house or some other idyllic setting; emphasis is placed on the hierarchical nature of society. See also CLUE-PUZZLE.

Rochelle Bogartz
R. Kent Rasmussen

CRIME FICTION JARGON

Terms in SMALL-CAPITAL LETTERS are subjects of entries of their own.

above-the-line: Slang for espionage agent who operates in a foreign country using as COVER a position in an organization or institution. See also BELOW-THE-LINE.

affidavit: Written statement made under oath.

alias: Alternative name under which a person is known, often for the purpose of concealing the person's true identity.

angels: Espionage term for local security services.

angle: Selfish motive or an unethical plan by which a person hopes to advance his or her own interests.

antecedents: British police term for criminal's history.

antihero: Character, usually a protagonist, who lacks heroic qualities. A notable example is Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley.

babe: Slang for sexually desirable woman.

babysit, to: Slang for to protect an agent while he is involved in an espionage operation.

back door: Slang for agent's emergency escape route, usually prepared in advance of an espionage operation.

barrister: British term for lawyer authorized to argue cases in court, in distinction to a SOLICITOR, who represents a client. This distinction is not recognized in the United States

bat phone: British slang for for policeman's radio.

be on the nut, to: Slang for to be broke.

bean-shooter: Slang for gun

behind the eight ball: Slang for difficult or dangerous position.

below-the-line: Slang for espionage agent who operates in a foreign country without an official COVER. See also ABOVE-THE-LINE.

Ben Franklin: Slang for one-hundred-dollar bill.

bent cars: Slang for stolen automobiles.

big wheel: Slang for important man.

black-bag job: Slang for illegal break-in, usually by the Central Intelligence Agency or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

blackmail: In its narrowest sense, an attempt to extort money by the threat of exposing a person's wrongdoings. In its broadest sense, any attempt at EXTORTION.

blown cover: Slang for penetration of an espionage agent's true identity.

book off, to: British term for to go off duty.

book on, to: British term for to report for duty.

bookie: Slang for bookmaker.

booking: Recording of an arrest.

box: Slang for group tailing an espionage agent, with each individual positioned at a different place.

boys in blue: Slang for police officers.

brain: Slang for detective.

branch lines: Slang for agent's espionage contacts.

break: British term for breakthrough in a case; also a BURGLARY.

broad: Slang for young woman or girl; a prostitute.

brothel creepers: Slang for boots with soft soles.

brush over the traces: Slang for hide the signs of espionage.

bug: Electronic listening device.

bulge: Slang for advantage.

bull: Slang for uniformed policeman or prison guard.

bump off, to: Slang for to kill.

bunco: Slang for swindling game or SCAM.

bunco artist: Slang for confidence man.

burglar: Person who commits BURGLARY.

burglary: Entrance into a building for the purpose of committing a felony such as THEFT. See also CAT BURGLAR; SECOND-STORY MAN.

burrower: Slang for espionage researcher.

button man: Slang for professional killer.

butts: Slang for cigarettes.

C-note: Slang for one-hundred-dollar bill; from "century."

cabbage: Slang for money.

cabbie: Slang for cabdriver.

caboose: Slang for jail.

- camel*: Slang for espionage agent who transports secret material.
- can*: Slang for jail.
- cap*: Slang for shoot.
- case*: Examine a location with a view to robbing it.
- cat burglar*: BURGLAR skilled at entering buildings without being detected. See also SECOND-STORY MAN.
- chamber of horrors*: Slang for trial room at headquarters.
- charge room*: Police processing room.
- cheese it, to*: Slang for to hide things to avoid detection.
- Chicago lightning*: Slang for bullets or gunfire.
- Chicago overcoat*: Slang for coffin.
- chin*: Slang for conversation.
- chisel, to*: Slang for to cheat or to acquire something using petty means.
- chiseler*: Slang for petty crook; a schemer.
- chiv*: Slang for knife. Also spelled “shiv.”
- CIA*: Acronym for Central Intelligence Agency. The U.S. government’s primary civilian intelligence-gathering agency
- CID*: Acronym for CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT.
- circumstantial evidence*: EVIDENCE that requires investigators, judges, and juries to draw inferences to establish facts. Such evidence cannot stand on its own, in contrast to DIRECT EVIDENCE. An example of circumstantial evidence might be an item known to belong to a criminal suspect that is found at a crime scene; discovery of the item suggests that the suspect was present at the scene but does not, in itself constitute proof.
- clam up, to*: Slang for to stop talking.
- clams*: Slang for money.
- clean*: Slang for innocent; usually referring to the lack of a gun on a person.
- climber*: British term for CAT BURGLAR.
- clink*: Slang for prison.
- clip joint*: Slang for high-priced establishment, such as a nightclub, known for fleecing its patrons.
- clue*: Item of EVIDENCE that may be useful in solving a mystery
- coat trailer*: Slang for espionage agent who shows interest in being recruited by the enemy.
- cobbler*: Slang for espionage jargon for a passport maker.
- cold case*: Closed crime case that is reopened for a new investigation.
- collar*: Slang for arrest.
- collator*: British term for policeman who keeps records.
- company, the*: Slang for U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. See CIA.
- con artist/con man*: Slang for confidence man or SWINDLER; any charming, persuasive man.
- confidence game/con game*: Slang for organized, often elaborate, scheme to swindle.
- conjuring tricks*: Slang for set of basic espionage techniques.
- cooks*: Slang for narcotics chemists.
- cooler*: Slang for jail.
- cooping*: Slang for time out, as for a nap, for a policeman, on police time.
- cop, or copper*: Slang for policeman.
- coroner*: Public official who conducts inquests into the circumstances of violent or suspicious deaths. See also MEDICAL EXAMINER.
- cover*: Lie for a person who is suspected of a crime; false identity assumed by an espionage agent during an operation.
- crack*: Cocaine prepared for smoking.
- crash*: Slang for espionage emergency or urgent situation.
- creep*: Slang for undesirable person.
- Criminal Investigation Department (CID)*: PLAIN-CLOTHES branch of a police department in Great Britain or in almost Commonwealth country that investigates the most serious crimes.
- croak, to*: Slang for to die.
- crook*: Thief.
- cross-examination*: Technique of asking pointed, direct, and leading questions of a witness to elicit answers that will undermine testimony previously given by the same or other witnesses.
- curtains*: Slang for death.
- cutout*: Slang for espionage agent who serves as a mediator between two other agents, thereby keeping each unknown to the other.

dame: Slang for woman.

dance, to: Slang for to be hanged.

dead letter box: Slang for place in which espionage agents hide secret messages.

deep six, to: Slang for to destroy evidence.

deskman: Slang for espionage agent who works at headquarters rather than in the field.

detail: Temporary assignment (police).

dick: Slang for detective.

dimmer: Slang for dime.

dip: Slang for pickpocket.

direct evidence: EVIDENCE that tends to establish the existence of facts without the need of additional proof, in contrast to CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE. Examples of direct evidence might include fingerprints, blood specimens, and eyewitness testimony.

dispatch, to: Slang for to kill.

dive: Slang for cheap establishment.

divisional sleuth: British term for detective.

do time: Serve a sentence in prison.

dope: Slang for information; drugs.

dope fiend: Drug addict.

dope peddler: Drug dealer.

double agent: Espionage agent who TURNS and begins working for the enemy.

double-double game: Slang for turning of espionage agents against their own side.

dough: Slang for money.

downtown: Slang for police headquarters.

drill, to: Slang for to shoot.

dropper: Slang for messenger; hired killer.

duchess: Slang for girl, especially a sophisticated one.

duck-dive: Slang for sudden disappearance.

dutch, be in, to: Slang for to be in trouble.

eel juice: Slang for liquor.

egg: Slang for man.

equalizer: Slang for pistol or other gun.

evidence: Body of factual matters presented to prove a contention in a legal proceeding. Evidence comprises all tangible and intangible items collected in investigations and is used by both prosecution and defense in trials to make legal cases. See also CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE; DIRECT EVIDENCE.

extortion: Use of illegal threats by one party to obtain

money or property from another. See also BLACKMAIL; SHAKEDOWN; SQUEEZE.

fallback: Cover story for an espionage agent; secondary or spare clandestine meeting place.

false-flag operation: Slang for operation in which espionage agents pretend to belong to another service to protect their own service from scandal or embarrassment.

family man: Slang for clean-living police officer.

FBI: ACRONYM for FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): Primary federal government law-enforcement agency in the United States.

felony: Serious crime, as distinguished from a MISDEMEANOR, normally punishable by death or a prison sentence rather than a jail sentence.

femme fatale: Seductive, and often mysterious, woman who lures men into danger.

fence: Slang for person who buys and sells stolen goods.

ferret: Slang for espionage agent whose specialty is uncovering electronic listening devices.

fieldman: Slang for espionage agent who works in enemy territory.

fin: Slang for five-dollar bill.

finger, to: Slang for to identify a person, or to set up a rival or double agent for capture.

finger man: Slang for person who identifies someone who is to be targeted.

fireman: Slang for espionage agent.

fireproof: Slang for invulnerable.

flake, to: Slang for to plant evidence on a suspect to facilitate arrest.

flasher: Slang for person, usually a man, who exposes his genitals.

flatfoot: Slang for policeman.

flimflam: Slang for deception; SWINDLE.

float, to: Slang for to work for a time solely on one's COVER job to establish one's false identity.

flophouse: Slang for cheap hotel for transients.

flute: Slang for whiskey-filled soft-drink bottle.

foot-in-the-door operation: Situation in which an espionage agent must use force or intimidation to contact a target.

- footpad*: Slang for espionage agent.
- frame*: Conceive evidence against an innocent person.
- frighten the game, to*: Slang for to alert the target of an espionage operation by accident.
- fry, to*: Slang for to be executed, especially by electrocution.
- fun toy*: Slang for listening device.
- gams*: Slang for woman's legs.
- gangster*: Member of an organized criminal gang.
- gasper*: Slang for cigarette.
- gat*: Slang for gun.
- germs*: Slang for pimps, prostitutes, junkies, and other unsavory characters.
- gin mill*: Slang for bar.
- go equipped, to*: Slang for to possess tools for crime.
- go to the mattress, to*: Slang for to disappear or leave town.
- gold seam*: Slang for route of laundered money from one bank to another.
- gong*: British slang for medal.
- good cop/bad cop*: See HARD-GUY/SOFT-GUY INTERROGATION TECHNIQUE.
- goods, the*: Slang for information.
- goon*: Slang for hoodlum or thug; one lacking in brains or imagination.
- gooseberry lay*: Slang for THEFT of clothing from a clothesline.
- gopher*: Slang for young thief or hoodlum; a safe-cracker; a dupe.
- gorilla*: Slang for hoodlum or thug, particularly one with more muscle than brain.
- grand*: Slang for one thousand dollars.
- greasy spoon*: Slang for inferior or cheap restaurant.
- grift*: Slang for confidence game or swindle.
- grifter*: Slang for con man.
- grilled*: Slang for questioned.
- gumheel, to*: Slang for to work as a detective.
- gumshoe*: Slang for detective.
- gun moll/moll*: Slang for girlfriend of a gangster or a woman who associates with criminals and may or may not be a criminal herself.
- gunsel*: Slang for boyish assistant; a thieving or untrustworthy person.
- guts*: Slang for intestinal (or other) fortitude.
- hack*: Slang for taxicab.
- handler*: British term for person who buys and sells stolen goods.
- hard-guy/soft-guy interrogation technique*: Two-man method in which one officer is intimidating and rough while the other is more reasonable toward the suspect. The two together can often bring about a confession or obtain information. Also known as good cop/bad cop technique.
- hardwire*: Electronic equipment used by espionage agents.
- hash house*: Slang for cheap diner or restaurant.
- hat*: Slang for five-dollar bribe ("Go buy yourself a hat").
- hatchetman*: Slang for professional killer.
- heat*: Slang for police; a handgun, as in "packing heat."
- heat on, put the*: Slang for demand payment or information, specifically with the use of threats.
- heat-packer*: Slang for gunman.
- heat's on, the*: Slang for condition of being energetically pursued or sought, usually by the police.
- heeltap*: Slang for espionage agent's technique for avoiding possible tails.
- heist*: Slang for steal (verb); a robbery (noun).
- highjack*: Steal by stopping a ground vehicle; commandeer an airplane for the purpose of THEFT or EXTORTION.
- hinky*: Slang for suspicious.
- hit-and-run job*: Particularly dangerous and violent espionage mission.
- hock shop*: Slang for pawnshop.
- hold the bag, to*: Slang for to be double-crossed or left to take the blame for others.
- homicide*: Killing of another person.
- honey-trap*: Slang for making an enemy espionage agent vulnerable to blackmail by luring the agent into a sexually compromising situation.
- hooch*: Slang for liquor.
- hood*: Slang for criminal, particularly a gangster.
- hooker*: Slang for prostitute.
- hoosegow*: Slang for jail.
- horn*: Slang for telephone.
- hot*: Slang for stolen.
- house dick*: Slang for hotel detective.

ice: Slang for diamonds.
ice, put on: Slang for kill.
iceman: Slang for jewel thief.
illegal resident: See BELOW-THE-LINE.
in grays: Slang for still in the police academy.
in stir: Slang for in jail or prison.
in the bag: Slang for in uniform.
in the heave: Slang for time out.
inside job: Crime committed against an organization by someone within it.
Interpol: Acronym for International Criminal Police Organization, a French-based international body created in 1923 to facilitate cooperation among the police departments of different nations.

jack: Slang for money.
jake: Slang for all right, satisfactory.
jam, in a: Slang for in trouble.
jane: Slang for a young woman; a man's sweetheart.
java: Slang for coffee.
job: Slang for robbery.
joe: Slang for coffee.
joint: Slang for prison.
jug: Slang for prison or jail, usually a local one.
jug day: Slang for celebration for promotion or retirement.
juju man: Slang for espionage agent who plans, rather than carries out, missions.
 jumper: Slang for actual or potential suicide victim.
junkie: Slang for drug addict.

key-holder: Person who provides a place for an espionage agent's secret meeting.
kick off, to: Slang for to die.
King's Counsel: See QUEEN'S COUNSEL.
kite: Slang for complaint to the police received through the mail.
knock off, to: Slang for to kill.
knock over: Slang for rob, as in a hijacking or bank robbery.
knockout drops: Drug, often chloral hydrate, put into a drink to render the drinker unconscious.

lace-curtain job: Slang for espionage operation calling for very discreet observation.

lag: British slang for ex-convict.
lam: Slang for hasty flight to escape trouble.
larceny: Illegal taking of another's personal property with the intent to steal it.
launder, to: To transfer illegally obtained money or funds through outside parties to conceal their illegitimate origins.
law, the: Slang for police.
leash dog: Slang for espionage agent who works under immediate supervision.
legal resident: See ABOVE-THE-LINE.
legal thriller: Thriller built around the details and nuances of practicing law.
legend: Fabricated history of an individual or event involved in an espionage operation. See COVER.
legman: Espionage agent who carries secret messages between two other agents.
lettuce: Slang for money, especially folding paper currency.
lineup: Group of five persons (including decoys and at least one real suspect) lined up for identification of a perpetrator.
lip: Slang for attorney.
liquidate, to: Slang for to kill, often in large numbers.
loid: Slang for item used to open locks, often a celluloid credit card.
lolly: British slang for loot.
looker: Slang for attractive woman.

made: See MAKE.
mailfist job: Slang for espionage operation with the objective of assassination.
mainline operation: Slang for major espionage enterprise.
make, to: Slang for to recognize someone who wishes to avoid being identified.
make a pass, to: Slang for to approach an enemy agent in order to gather intelligence.
malice aforethought: Predetermined intent to commit a wrongful act.
Maltese Duck: Slang for wild-goose chase.
manor: British slang for policeman's beat; a criminal's territory.
manslaughter: Negligent or otherwise unlawful killing of a person without MALICE AFORETHOUGHT.

mark: Slang for easy victim, particularly of a CONFIDENCE GAME.

mean streets: Term coined by Raymond Chandler to describe, in a narrow sense, the squalid, crime-ridden milieu of private investigators and their quarry and, in a broader sense, a world marked by disorder, uncertainty, and violence.

meat wagon: Slang for ambulance.

medical examiner: Official responsible for investigating the circumstances of suspicious or violent deaths. See also CORONER.

mens rea: Criminal intent.

Mickey Finn: Slang for strong hypnotic or barbiturate dose given to an unsuspecting person to render the person unconscious.

minder: Slang for strong-arm man.

Miranda rights: Requirement that individuals be advised of certain constitutional protections at the time of their arrest.

misdemeanor: Minor crime that is usually punishable by a fine or brief incarceration in local jail, as opposed to a prison. See also FELONY.

m.o.: Acronym for MODUS OPERANDI.

modus operandi (m.o.): Method by which a crime is carried out. SERIAL OFFENDERS are often apprehended because they repeatedly use the same m.o.

mole: Foreign national recruited and prepared for later use as a double agent.

moll: See GUN MOLL.

money laundering: See LAUNDER.

moniker: Name or nickname.

moola: Slang for money.

mouthpiece: Slang for attorney.

mug: Slang for face.

mug shot: Slang for police photograph of a face.

murder: In common law, a HOMICIDE committed with malice aforethought. Not all homicides are murder.

Murphy man: Slang for confidence man.

nail, to: Slang for to catch.

necktie party: Slang for a hanging.

network: Espionage ring.

newsie: Slang for newspaper vendor.

nick, to: British slang for police station. Also British slang for to steal or to arrest for a minor offense.

nip: British slang for pickpocket.

numbers game: Illegal lottery, usually operated by an organized gang.

nutter: British slang for crazy person.

on the lam: Slang for on the run.

on the skids: Slang for on the decline from one's previous position.

on the tin: Slang for free.

op: Slang for detective, especially private detective, from OPERATIVE.

operational intelligence: Information usable in an espionage operation.

operative: Espionage agent.

Outfit, the: Espionage slang for the Central Intelligence Agency. See CIA.

packing heat/packing: Slang for carrying a gun.

palooka: Slang for oaf or man who is not bright.

panda car: British slang for local beat patrol car, particularly one that is black and white.

paraphernalia: Slang for innocent objects used for MURDER.

parole: Release of a prisoner, generally subject to conditions, prior to the time a sentence has been completed.

paste, to: Slang for to punch.

patient: Espionage jargon for an interrogatee.

patsy: Slang for person set up to be victimized or to take the RAP for someone else.

pavement artist: Slang for espionage agent who specializes in surveillance.

pawn: Slang for espionage agent.

peeper: Slang for detective.

pen: Slang for prison, especially a penitentiary.

perjury: Deliberate false statement made under oath.

perp: Short for PERPETRATOR.

perpetrator: Person who commits a criminal act.

P.I.: Private investigator.

pick man: Slang for lock picker.

pickings: British slang for loot.

pigeon: See STOOL PIGEON.

pin on, to: Slang for to cause blame to fall on.

pinch, to: Slang for to arrest.

Pinks, the: Slang for Pinkerton detectives.

plainclothes policeman: Sworn police officer who wears ordinary civilian clothes while conducting investigations.

play back: Slang for return of enemy agents to their own countries after they have been turned.

play for a sucker (or sap), to: Slang for to take advantage of.

play it long, to: Slang for to act with extreme caution.

plea bargain: Agreement between a prosecutor and a criminal defendant disposing of a criminal matter without going to trial.

plug, to: Slang for to shoot a person.

pointman: Slang for espionage agent who forms one of several tails on a quarry.

poker face: Slang for private investigator.

pokey: Slang for jail.

pop, to: Slang for to kill.

postman: Slang for case officer who handles the daily needs of an intelligence network.

potsie: Slang for shield.

previous: British term for criminal's earlier convictions.

private dick: Slang for private investigator.

private eye: Slang for PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR taken from the Pinkerton Detective Agency logo, which was a wide-open eye with the legend "We never sleep."

private investigator: Privately (often self-) employed detective who may or may not have professional training.

prostitution: Criminal act of engaging in the sale of sexual services.

punk: Slang for hood or thug.

put out smoke, to: Slang for to reinforce one's COVER by behaving in accordance with one's false identity.

put the screws on, to: Slang for to make things difficult.

put the squeeze on, to: Slang for to force, harass, or embarrass someone into doing something.

QC: Acronym for QUEEN'S COUNSEL.

queen bee: British slang for senior female officer.

Queen's Counsel/King's Counsel: Lawyer, usually a BARRISTER, who is appointed to represent the gov-

ernment in Great Britain and in many commonwealth countries.

Quentin quail: Slang for teenage girl below the age of sexual consent.

rabbi: Slang for influential friend.

racket: Slang for illegal enterprise.

railroad, to: Slang for to convict falsely.

rap: Legal charge for criminal behavior.

rat, to: Slang for to inform on.

recidivism: Tendency to repeat the same criminal behavior, even after being apprehended and punished for that behavior.

recycle, to: Espionage term for to return defecting agents to their own countries for use as double agents.

reefer: Slang for marijuana or marijuana cigarette.

reptile fund: Slang for secret government fund for intelligence operations.

ripper: Slang for safecracker.

robbery: Taking another's property within the owner's presence by force or the threat of force.

rock: Slang for diamond. See also ICE.

rub out, to: Slang for to kill.

rube: Slang for easy MARK.

safe house: Slang for secure location in which it is safe to conduct secret meetings.

safety paper: Slang for passport paper.

safety signals: Slang for sign system used by espionage agents to indicate when it is safe to meet.

sanction: Espionage term for a counterassassination.

sap: Slang for fool; also, to hit a person on the head, as with a blackjack, to render the person unconscious.

scam: Slang for fraudulent operation or scheme.

Scotland Yard: Headquarters of the detective department of the London metropolitan police.

scratch: Slang for money.

screw: Slang for prison guard.

search warrant: Judicial order allowing police to enter and search a particular location.

second-story man: BURGLAR who typically enters buildings through upper-story windows. See also CAT BURGLAR.

serial offender: Criminal who repeatedly commits the

- same types of crimes, often with the same MODUS OPERANDI.
- shake the tree, to*: Slang for to do things to cause a target to panic and accelerate an illegal operation that is being watched.
- shakedown*: Slang for act of EXTORTION.
- shamus*: Slang for detective, usually private.
- sharper*: Slang for SWINDLER.
- shiv*: Slang for knife.
- shoemaker*: Slang for forger.
- shoo-fly*: Slang for plainclothes policeman, usually assigned to investigate the honesty of uniformed police.
- shopsoiled*: Espionage term for agent whose cover is no longer effective.
- shylock*: Slang for loan shark.
- shyster*: Slang for unscrupulous person, especially a lawyer.
- silence, to*: Slang for to kill.
- sing, to*: Slang for to inform, confess secrets.
- sister*: Slang for woman.
- sitting-duck position*: Slang for exposed and vulnerable position during a fight.
- skip, to*: Slang for to leave town after being told by authorities to remain.
- skirt*: Slang for woman.
- slammer*: Slang for prison.
- sleep, to*: Slang for to wait for a long time before commencing espionage activity.
- slug*: Slang for bullet.
- smacker*: Slang for one dollar.
- snatch, to*: Slang for to kidnap, abduct.
- snitch*: Slang for informer.
- snow*: Slang for cocaine.
- snuff out, to*: Slang for to kill.
- sob story*: Slang for sad account of personal misfortunes, usually calculated to arouse sympathy in the hearer.
- solicitor*: British term for a lawyer who represents clients but does not argue cases in court, as a BARRISTER does. A solicitor, unlike a barrister, can conduct litigation for a client.
- sound thief*: Slang for hidden microphone.
- spring, to*: Slang for to aid an escape from prison.
- sprung*: Slang for released.
- square*: Slang for honest.
- squeal, to*: Slang for to complain or protest; to inform to the police.
- squealer*: Slang for informer.
- squeeze*: Slang for EXTORTION, graft.
- stash, to*: Slang for to hide something; a hiding place; a cache.
- static post*: Slang for fixed surveillance position.
- stick-and-carrot job*: Slang for use of bribes and threats together to obtain information.
- stick-up*: Slang for robbery.
- stiff, to*: Slang for to be drunk; a dead body; a stupid or drunk person; an average, common man.
- stir*: Slang for prison.
- stooge*: Slang for underling, especially one who is a puppet of another.
- stool pigeon*: Slang for informer, usually a police informer.
- stoolie*: Slang for STOOL PIGEON.
- subpoena*: Order for a witness to appear in court to testify.
- sucker*: Slang for easily deceived person, an easy victim.
- Sûreté General*: First modern police force, established in France during the early nineteenth century.
- swag*: Slang, particularly in British usage, for loot.
- sweat, to*: Slang for to interrogate with the use of physical force.
- swindle*: Obtaining of property or money by fraudulent means; a SCAM.
- swindler*: Person who perpetrates SWINDLES.
- swing one's legs at, to*: Slang for to BLACKMAIL.
- tag*: Slang for single TAIL or follower.
- tail, to*: Slang for to follow or a person who follows someone else.
- take a fall for, to*: Slang for to accept punishment for a crime, especially one committed by someone else.
- take a powder, to*: Slang for to disappear.
- take for a ride, to*: Slang for to kill or cheat.
- taking the silk*: Process of a SOLICITOR's becoming a BARRISTER.
- talent spotter*: Slang for one skilled at spotting potential recruits for the espionage line.
- tap*: Short for WIRETAP.

telephone monitor: Listening device.
ten-spot: Slang for ten-dollar bill.
ten-thirteen: Call to assist a police officer.
tenner: Slang for ten-dollar bill.
theft: Taking of a person's property without that person's consent.
thin one: Slang for dime.
third degree: Prolonged, sometimes rough, questioning to acquire information or a confession.
tiger's claw: Self-defense technique involving a blow to the windpipe.
tighten the screws, to: Slang for to increase pressure on somebody.
tin star: Slang for private investigator.
tip off, to: Slang for to warn of something impending, to inform; a clue or hint.
tip the wink, to: British slang for to let in on a secret.
tomato: Slang for attractive young woman.
tonsil varnish: British slang for tea or coffee in police cafeterias.
torpedo: Slang for gunman.
tough guy: Slang for private investigator.
tradecraft: Espionage techniques.
tradesman: Espionage specialist who is not an agent but who can be called on to provide certain services.
trail: Espionage term meaning to set up a situation of personal advantage.
traveling salesman: Espionage agent.
trawl: Espionage term meaning to seek out.
treff: Slang for meeting with a contact or fellow espionage agent.
triggerman: Slang for gunman who does the actual shooting.
turn: Persuade an enemy agent to betray his country; to change allegiance and betray one's country.
two-bit: Slang for cheap, inferior, second-rate, small-time.

unbutton: Decode a secret message.
under glass: Slang for in jail.
undesirables: Slang for pimps, prostitutes, junkies, and other unsavory types.

unpack: Espionage term meaning to provide information.

varnish remover: Slang for strong coffee.
vicar: Slang for controller of an espionage network.

walk-in: Approaching an enemy embassy with the intention of TURNING.
walk in the park: Slang for clandestine meeting.
walking papers: Slang for passport.
waste, to: Slang for to kill.
watch my back: Request a fellow agent to provide protection during an espionage operation.
water games: Training in techniques for espionage activities on water.
water-testing: Techniques used to be sure that an espionage agent is not being watched.
weak sister: Slang for pushover.
whack: Slang for to kill a person
wire: Rig a person with an electronic listening device.
wireless intercom: Listening device.
wiretap/tap: Surreptitious electronic monitoring of telephone conversations by law-enforcement officials.
wooden kimono: Slang for coffin.
wooden overcoat: Slang for coffin.
wopsie: British slang for woman police constable.
work over, to: Slang for to beat up.
working a beat: Patrolling on duty.
workname: Alias used by an espionage agent within the agent's own service.
wrangler: Code-breaker.

Yard, the: Scotland Yard.
yegg: Slang for safecracker, particularly one of limited skill.
yellow: Slang for cowardly.
yellow perils: British slang for traffic wardens.
yellow sheet: Record of previous arrests.
yob: British slang for thug.

Rochelle Bogartz
 R. Kent Rasmussen

MAJOR AWARDS

AGATHA AWARDS

Malice Domestic, established in 1989, holds an annual convention at which the Agatha Awards, honoring the British novelist Agatha Christie, are given. The award takes the shape of a teapot because “cozy” is the term used for novels like Christie’s and also the term for a teapot cover. Criteria for eligibility specify no explicit sex, bloodshed, or unwarranted violence. Awards are made in several categories: best novel, best first mystery, best short story, best children/young adult fiction, and lifetime achievement.

BEST NOVEL

1988	Carolyn Hart	<i>Something Wicked</i>
1989	Elizabeth Peters	<i>Naked Once More</i>
1990	Nancy Pickard	<i>Bum Steer</i>
1991	Nancy Pickard	<i>I.O.U.</i>
1992	Margaret Maron	<i>Bootlegger’s Daughter</i>
1993	Carolyn Hart	<i>Dead Man’s Island</i>
1994	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>She Walks These Hills</i>
1995	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>If I’d Killed Him When I Met Him</i>
1996	Margaret Maron	<i>Up Jumps the Devil</i>
1997	Kate Ross	<i>The Devil in the Music</i>
1998	Laura Lippman	<i>Butcher’s Hill</i>
1999	Earlene Fowler	<i>Mariner’s Compass</i>
2000	Margaret Maron	<i>Storm Track</i>
2001	Rhys Bowen	<i>Murphy’s Law</i>
2002	Donna Andrews	<i>You’ve Got Murder</i>
2003	Carolyn Hart	<i>Letter from Home</i>
2004	Jacqueline Winspear	<i>Birds of a Feather</i>
2005	Katherine Hall Page	<i>The Body in the Snowdrift</i>
2006	Nancy Pickard	<i>The Virgin of Small Plains</i>

BEST FIRST MYSTERY NOVEL

1988	Elizabeth George	<i>A Great Deliverance</i>
1989	Jill Churchill	<i>Grime and Punishment</i>
1990	Katherine Hall Page	<i>The Body in the Belfry</i>
1991	Mary Willis Walker	<i>Zero at the Bone</i>
1992	Barbara Neely	<i>Blanche on the Lam</i>
1993	Nevada Barr	<i>Track of the Cat</i>
1994	Jeff Abbott	<i>Do Unto Others</i>
1995	Jeanne M. Dams	<i>The Body in the Transept</i>
1996	Anne George	<i>Murder on a Girl’s Night Out</i>

MAJOR AWARDS*Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*

1997	Sujata Massey	<i>The Salaryman's Wife</i>
1998	Robin Hathaway	<i>The Doctor Digs a Grave</i>
1999	Donna Andrews	<i>Murder with Peacocks</i>
2000	Rosemary Stevens	<i>Death on a Silver Tray</i>
2001	Sarah Strohmeier	<i>Bubbles Unbound</i>
2002	Julia Spencer-Fleming	<i>In the Bleak Midwinter</i>
2003	Jacqueline Winspear	<i>Maisie Dobbs</i>
2004	Harley Jane Kozak	<i>Dating Dead Men</i>
2005	Laura Durham	<i>Better Off Wed</i>
2006	Sandra Parshall	<i>The Heat of the Moon</i>

BEST SHORT STORY

1988	Robert Barnard	"More Final than Divorce"
1989	Sharyn McCrumb	"A Wee Doch and Doris"
1990	Joan Hess	"Too Much to Bare"
1991	Margaret Maron	"Deborah's Judgment"
1992	Aaron Elkins and Charlotte Elkins	"Nice Gorilla"
1993	M. D. Lake	"Kim's Game"
1994	Dorothy Cannett	"The Family Jewels"
1995	Elizabeth Daniels Squire	"The Dog Who Remembered Too Much"
1996	Carolyn Wheat	"Accidents Will Happen"
1997	M. D. Lake	"Tea for Two"
1998	Barbara D'Amato	"Of Course You Know That Chocolate Is a Vegetable"
1999	Nancy Pickard	"Out of Africa"
2000	Jan Burke	"The Man in the Civil Suit"
2001	Katherine Hall Page	"The Would-Be Widower"
2002	Margaret Maron	"The Dog That Didn't Bark"
	Marcia Talley	"Too Many Cooks"
2003	Elizabeth Foxwell	"No Man's Land"
2004	Elaine Viets	"Wedding Knife"
2005	Marcia Talley	"Driven to Distraction"
2006	Toni L. P. Kelner	"Sleeping with the Plush"

BEST CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULT FICTION

2001	Penny Warner	<i>Mystery of the Haunted Cave</i>
2002	Daniel J. Hale and Matthew LeBrot	<i>Red Card</i>
2003	Kathleen Karr	<i>The Seventh Knot</i>
2004	Blue Balliett	<i>Chasing Vermeer</i>
2005	Peter Abrahams	<i>Down the Rabbit Hole</i>
	Carl Hiaasen	<i>Flush</i>
2006	Nancy Means Wright	<i>Pea Soup Poisonings</i>

MALICE DOMESTIC LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

1990	Phyllis A. Whitney
1994	Mignon G. Eberhart
1996	Mary Stewart
1997	Emma Lathen
1998	Charlotte MacLeod
1999	Patricia Moyes
2000	Dick Francis
2001	Mildred Wirt Benson
2002	Tony Hillerman
2003	Elizabeth Peters (also known as Barbara Mertz and Barbara Michaels)
2004	Marian Babson
2005	H. F. R. Keating
2006	Carolyn Hart

ANTHONY AWARDS

Named for Anthony Boucher, a well-known mystery fan, writer, and critic, the Anthony Awards are selected by the attendees of the Buchercon World Mystery Convention. Standard categories are best novel, best first novel, best paperback original, and best short story. Sometimes special awards are given, as in the case of the 2000 awards, which commemorated the end of a millennium with awards for best series of the century, best writer of the century, and best novel of the century.

BEST NOVEL

1986	Sue Grafton	<i>"B" Is for Burglar</i>
1987	Sue Grafton	<i>"C" Is for Corpse</i>
1888	Tony Hillerman	<i>Skinwalkers</i>
1989	Thomas Harris	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>
1990	Sarah Caudwell	<i>The Sirens Sang of Murder</i>
1991	Sue Grafton	<i>"G" Is for Gumshoe</i>
1992	Peter Lovesey	<i>The Last Detective</i>
1993	Margaret Maron	<i>Bootlegger's Daughter</i>
1994	Marcia Muller	<i>Wolf in the Shadows</i>
1995	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>She Walks These Hills</i>
1996	Mary Willis Walker	<i>Under the Beetle's Cellar</i>
1997	Michael Connelly	<i>The Poet</i>
1998	S. J. Rozan	<i>No Colder Place</i>
1999	Michael Connelly	<i>Blood Work</i>
2000	Peter Robinson	<i>In a Dry Season</i>
2001	Val McDermid	<i>A Place of Execution</i>
2002	Dennis Lehane	<i>Mystic River</i>
2003	Michael Connelly	<i>City of Bones</i>
2004	Laura Lippman	<i>Every Secret Thing</i>
2005	William Kent Krueger	<i>Blood Hollow</i>
2006	W. H. Krueger	<i>Mercy Falls</i>

BEST FIRST NOVEL

1986	Jonathan Kellerman	<i>When the Bough Breaks</i>
1987	Bill Crider	<i>Too Late to Die</i>
1988	Gillian Roberts	<i>Caught Dead in Philadelphia</i>
1989	Elizabeth George	<i>A Great Deliverance</i>
1990	Karen Kijewski	<i>Katwalk</i>
1991	Patricia Cornwell	<i>Postmortem</i>
1992	Sue Henry	<i>Murder on the Iditarod Trail</i>
1993	Barbara Neely	<i>Blanche on the Lam</i>
1994	Nevada Barr	<i>Track of the Cat</i>
1995	Caleb Carr	<i>The Alienist</i>
1996	Virginia Lanier	<i>Death in Bloodhound Red</i>
1997	Dale Furutani	<i>Death in Little Tokyo</i>
	Terris M. Grimes	<i>Somebody Else's Child</i>
1998	Lee Child	<i>Killing Floor</i>
1999	William Kent Krueger	<i>Iron Lake</i>
2000	Donna Andrews	<i>Murder with Peacocks</i>
2001	Qui Xiaolong	<i>Death of a Red Heroine</i>
2002	C. J. Box	<i>Open Season</i>
2003	Julia Spencer-Fleming	<i>In the Bleak Midwinter</i>
2004	P. J. Tracy	<i>Monkeewrench</i>
2005	Harley Jane Kozak	<i>Dating Dead Men</i>
2006	Chris Grabenstein	<i>Tilt-a-Whirl</i>

BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

1986	Nancy Pickard	<i>Say No to Murder</i>
1987	Robert Campbell	<i>The Junkyard Dog</i>
1988	Robert Crais	<i>The Monkey's Raincoat</i>
1989	Carolyn Hart	<i>Something Wicked</i>
1990	Carolyn Hart	<i>Honeymoon with Murder</i>
1991	James McCahery	<i>Grave Undertaking</i>
	Rochelle Krich	<i>Where's Mommy Now?</i>
1996	Harlan Cohen	<i>Deal Breaker</i>
1997	Terris M. Grimes	<i>Somebody Else's Child</i>
1998	Rick Riordan	<i>Big Red Tequila</i>
1999	Laura Lippman	<i>Butcher's Hill</i>
2000	Laura Lippman	<i>In Big Trouble</i>
2001	Kate Grillely	<i>Death Dances to a Reggae Beat</i>
2002	Charlaine Harris	<i>Dead Until Dark</i>
2003	Robin Burcell	<i>Fatal Truth</i>
2004	Robin Burcell	<i>Deadly Legacy</i>
2005	Jason Starr	<i>Twisted City</i>
2006	Reed Farrel Coleman	<i>The James Deans</i>

BEST SHORT STORY

1986	Linda Barnes	“Lucky Penny”
1987	Sue Grafton	“The Parker Shotgun”
1988	Robert Barnard	“Television for Breakfast”
1990	Nancy Pickard	“Afraid All the Time”
1991	Susan Dunlap	“The Celestial Buffet”
1992	Liza Cody	“Lucky Dip”
1993	Diane M. Davidson	“Cold Turkey”
1994	Susan Dunlap	“Checkout”
	Sharyn McCrumb	“The Monster of Glamis”
1996	Gar Anthony Haywood	“And Pray Nobody Sees You”
1997	Carolyn Wheat	“Accidents Will Happen”
	Jan Grape	“Front Row Seats”
	Edward D. Hoch	“One Bag of Coconuts”
1999	Barbara D’Amato	“Of Course You Know That Chocolate Is a Vegetable”
2000	Margaret Chittenden	“Noir Life”
2001	Edward D. Hoch	“The Problem of the Potting Shed”
2002	Bill Crider and Judy Crider	“Chocolate Moose”
2003	Marcia Talley	“Too Many Cooks”
2004	Rhys Bowen	“Doppelganger”
2005	Elaine Viets	“Wedding Knife”
2006	Barbara Seranella	“Misdirection”

BEST TRUE CRIME

1992	David Simon	<i>Homicide</i>
1993	Barbara D’Amato	<i>The Doctor, the Murder, the Mystery</i>
1994	Ann Rule	<i>A Rose for Her Grave</i>
1995	David Canter	<i>Criminal Shadows</i>
1996	Ann Rule	<i>Dead by Sunset</i>

BEST HISTORICAL MYSTERY

2004	Rhys Bowen	<i>For the Love of Mike</i>
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BEST YOUNG ADULT MYSTERY

2004	J. K. Rowling	<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>
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BEST COLLECTION/ANTHOLOGY

1992	Sara Paretsky, ed.	<i>A Woman’s Eye</i>
1995	Tony Hillerman, ed.	<i>The Mysterious West</i>
1996	Marcia Muller	<i>McCone Files</i>
2001	Lawrence Block, ed.	<i>Master’s Choice II</i>

BEST FAN PUBLICATION

2006 Jon Jordan and Ruth Jordan, eds. *Crimespree Magazine*

GRANDMASTER/LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

1986 Elizabeth Peters (also known as Barbara Mertz and Barbara Michaels)
 1999 Len Moffat and June Moffat

BEST MYSTERY NOVEL OF THE CENTURY

2000 Daphne du Maurier *Rebecca*

BEST SERIES OF THE CENTURY

2000 Agatha Christie Hercule Poirot

BEST WRITER OF THE CENTURY

2000 Agatha Christie

BARRY AWARDS

Founded in 1997, the Barry Awards are named for the late Barry Gardner, a critic and fan of mystery stories. The recipients are nominated by the staff of the quarterly mystery magazine *Deadly Pleasures*. Subscribers and readers of the magazine vote for the winners. The categories are best novel, best first novel, best British crime novel, and best paperback original.

BEST NOVEL

1997	Peter Lovesey	<i>Bloodhounds</i>
1998	Michael Connelly	<i>Trunk Music</i>
1999	Reginald Hill	<i>On Beulah Height</i>
	Dennis Lehane	<i>Gone, Baby, Gone</i>
2000	Peter Robinson	<i>In a Dry Season</i>
2001	Nevada Barr	<i>Deep South</i>
2002	Dennis Lehane	<i>Mystic River</i>
2003	Michael Connelly	<i>City of Bones</i>
2004	Laura Lippman	<i>Every Secret Thing</i>
2005	Lee Child	<i>The Enemy</i>
2006	Thomas H. Cook	<i>Red Leaves</i>

BEST FIRST NOVEL

1997	Charles Todd	<i>A Test of Wills</i>
1998	Lee Child	<i>Killing Floor</i>

1999	William Kent Krueger	<i>Iron Lake</i>
2000	Donna Andrews	<i>Murder with Peacocks</i>
2001	Davis Liss	<i>A Conspiracy of Paper</i>
2002	C. J. Box	<i>Open Season</i>
2003	Julia Spencer-Fleming	<i>In a Bleak Midwinter</i>
2004	P. J. Tracy	<i>Monkeewrench</i>
2005	Carlos Ruiz Zafon	<i>The Shadow of the Wind</i>
2006	Stuart McBride	<i>Cold Granite</i>

BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

1997	Susan Wade	<i>Walking Rain</i>
1998	Harlan Coben	<i>Backspin</i>
2000	Caroline Roe	<i>An Antidote for Avarice</i>
2001	Eric Wright	<i>The Kidnapping of Rosie Dawn</i>
2002	Deborah Woodworth	<i>Killing Gifts</i>
2003	Danielle Girard	<i>Cold Silence</i>
2004	Jason Starr	<i>Tough Luck</i>
2005	Elaine Flinn	<i>Tagged for Murder</i>
2006	Reed Farrel Coleman	<i>The James Deans</i>

BEST BRITISH CRIME NOVEL

2000	Val McDermid	<i>A Place of Execution</i>
2001	Stephen Booth	<i>Black Dog</i>
2002	Stephen Booth	<i>Dancing with the Virgins</i>
2003	John Connolly	<i>The White Road</i>
2004	Val McDermid	<i>The Distant Echo</i>
2005	John Harvey	<i>Flesh and Blood</i>
2006	Denise Mina	<i>Field of Blood</i>

BEST THRILLER

2005	Barry Eisler	<i>Rain Storm</i>
2006	Joseph Finder	<i>Company Man</i>

BEST SHORT STORY

2002	Deborah Woodward	“Killing Gifts”
2004	Robert Barnard	“Rogues’ Gallery”
2005	Edward D. Hoch	“The War in Wonderland”

BEST SHORT STORY

1998	Kate Grilley	“Guavaberry Christmas”
2000	Dorothy Francis	“When in Rome”
	Carol Kilgore	“Just a Man on the Sidewalk”
2001	Nick Andreychuk	“In the Heat of the Moment”
2003	Del Tinsley	“A Cut Above”
2004	Rob Lopresti	“Nailbiter”
2005	Mike Wiecek	“The Test”
2006	Nancy Pickard	“There Is No Crime on Easter Island”

DON SANDSTROM MEMORIAL AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN MYSTERY FANDOM

2002	Gary Warren Neibuhr
2003	Maggie Mary Masson
2005	Bill Crider
2006	Janet Rudolph

CWA DAGGER AWARDS

The Dagger Awards are given by the Crime Writers’ Association (CWA) of Great Britain, organized in 1953, for mystery works. A committee appointed by the CWA selects the honorees. Awards were first given in 1955, and the number of awards have varied since their inception, depending in part on who the sponsors are. The awards given include the following:

- **Cartier Diamond Dagger**

Begun in 1986, this award is sponsored by Cartier and honors writers who have maintained excellence over time and contributed significantly to crime fiction written in, or translated into, English. The CWA selects winners from writers nominated by its membership.

- **Duncan Lawrie Dagger**

This award is given to the year’s best crime novel written in English and is sponsored by the Duncan Lawrie Private Bank. From 1960 to 1994 and from 2003 to 2005, this award was named the Gold and Silver Daggers, although the Silver Dagger was not given until 1969. From 1995 to 2002, this award was known as the Macallan Gold and Silver Daggers (after their sponsor, Macallan Distillers). The Gold Dagger was called the Crossed Red Herring Award from 1955 to 1959.

- **Duncan Lawrie International Dagger**

This award, also sponsored by the Duncan Lawrie Private Bank, is given for the best crime novel translated into English from another language and was first awarded in 2006.

- **New Blood Dagger**

This award, formerly called the John Creasy Memorial Award, is given in memory of CWA founder John Creasy for first crime fiction by a previously unpublished writer. Chivers Press sponsored the award from 1973 until 2002, after which BBC Audiobooks became the sponsor. Past winners determine the honorees.

- **Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction**

Instituted in 1978, this award for the best crime nonfiction, sponsored by the CWA membership, was known as the Macallan Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction (after the sponsor, Macallan Distillers) between 1995 and 2003. A Silver Dagger for Non-Fiction was awarded in 1978 and 1979.

- **Ian Fleming Steel Dagger**

Introduced in 2002, Ian Fleming (Glidrose) Publications sponsors this award for the best thriller. Judges are agents, authors, booksellers, and reviewers.

- **Short Story Dagger**

First awarded in 1995, this award was sponsored by Macallan Distillers until 2002, when the CWA membership became its sponsor and renamed it the Short Story Dagger.

- **Ellis Peters Award**

The estate of the late Ellis Peters and her publishers, Headline and Little Brown, sponsor this award, which was first given in 1999 in memory of the author of the medieval Brother Cadfael series. Honorees for this award must have written a crime novel with a historical background set in any period up to the 1960's. Until 2006, the award was known as the Ellis Peters Historical Dagger.

- **Last Laugh Dagger**

Formerly known as the Punch Award, this award for the most humorous crime novel was first given in 1988.

- **Dagger in the Library**

Formerly the Golden Handcuffs, this award, sponsored by the Random House Group, is given to living writers who have provided pleasure to readers. United Kingdom libraries nominate candidates, and librarians judge the competition.

THE CARTIER DIAMOND DAGGER

1986	Eric Ambler
1987	P. D. James
1988	John le Carré
1989	Dick Francis
1990	Julian Symons
1991	Ruth Rendell
1992	Leslie Charteris
1993	Ellis Peters
1994	Michael Gilbert
1995	Reginald Hill
1996	H. R. F. Keating
1997	Colin Dexter
1998	Ed McBain
1999	Margaret Yorke
2000	Peter Lovesey
2001	Lionel Davidson
2002	Sara Paretsky
2003	Robert Barnard
2004	Lawrence Sanders
2005	Ian Rankin
2006	Elmore Leonard
2007	John Harvey

THE DUNCAN LAWRIE DAGGER

1955	Winston Graham	<i>The Little Walls</i>
1956	Edward Grierson	<i>The Second Man</i>
1957	Julian Symons	<i>The Colour of Murder</i>
1958	Margot Bennett	<i>Someone from the Past</i>
1959	Eric Ambler	<i>Passage of Arms</i>
1960	Lionel Davidson	<i>The Night of Wenceslas</i>
1961	Mary Kelly	<i>The Spoilt Kill</i>
1962	Joan Fleming	<i>When I Grow Rich</i>
1963	John le Carré	<i>The Spy Who Came in from the Cold</i>
1964	H. R. F. Keating	<i>The Perfect Murder</i>
1965	Ross Macdonald	<i>The Far Side of the Dollar</i>
1966	Lionel Davidson	<i>A Long Way to Shiloh</i>
1967	Emma Lathen	<i>Murder Against the Grain</i>
1968	Peter Dickinson	<i>The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest (Skin Deep)</i>
1969	Peter Dickinson	<i>The Old English Peep Show (A Pride of Heroes)</i>
1970	Joan Fleming	<i>Young Man, I Think You're Dying</i>
1971	James McClure	<i>The Steam Pig</i>
1972	Eric Ambler	<i>The Levanter</i>
1973	Robert Littell	<i>The Defection of A. J. Lewinter</i>
1974	Anthony Price	<i>Other Paths of Glory</i>
1975	Nicholas Meyer	<i>The Seven-Per-Cent Solution</i>
1976	Ruth Rendell	<i>A Demon in My View</i>
1977	John le Carré	<i>The Honourable Schoolboy</i>
1978	Lionel Davidson	<i>The Chelsea Murders</i>
1979	Dick Francis	<i>Whip Hand</i>
1980	H. R. F. Keating	<i>The Murder of the Maharajah</i>
1981	Martin Cruz Smith	<i>Gorky Park</i>
1982	Peter Lovesey	<i>The False Inspector Dew</i>
1983	John Hutton	<i>Accidental Crimes</i>
1984	B. M. Gill	<i>The Twelfth Juror</i>
1985	Paula Gosling	<i>Monkey Puzzle</i>
1986	Ruth Rendell	<i>Live Flesh</i>
1987	Barbara Vine	<i>A Fatal Inversion</i>
1988	Michael Dibdin	<i>Ratking</i>
1989	Colin Dexter	<i>The Wench Is Dead</i>
1990	Reginald Hill	<i>Bones and Silence</i>
1991	Barbara Vine	<i>King Solomon's Carpet</i>
1992	Colin Dexter	<i>The Way Through the Woods</i>
1993	Patricia Cornwell	<i>Cruel and Unusual</i>
1994	Minette Walters	<i>The Scold's Bridle</i>
1995	Val McDermid	<i>The Mermaids Singing</i>
1996	Ben Elton	<i>Popcorn</i>
1997	Ian Rankin	<i>Black and Blue</i>
1998	James Lee Burke	<i>Sunset Limited</i>

1999	Robert Wilson	<i>A Small Death in Lisbon</i>
2000	Jonathan Lethem	<i>Motherless Brooklyn</i>
2001	Henning Mankell	<i>Sidetracked</i>
2002	Jose Carlos Samoza	<i>The Athenian Murders</i>
2003	Minette Walters	<i>Fox Evil</i>
2004	Sara Paretsky	<i>Blacklist</i>
2005	Arnaldur Indridason	<i>Silence of the Grave</i>
2006	Ann Cleeves	<i>Raven Black</i>
2007	Peter Temple	<i>The Broken Shore</i>

THE CWA SILVER DAGGER FOR FICTION

1969	Francis Clifford	<i>Another Way of Dying</i>
1970	Anthony Price	<i>The Labryinth Makers</i>
1971	P. D. James	<i>Shroud for a Nightingale</i>
1972	Victor Canning	<i>The Rainbird Pattern</i>
1973	Gwendoline Butler	<i>A Coffin for Pandora</i>
1974	Francis Clifford	<i>The Grosvenor Square Goodbye</i>
1975	P. D. James	<i>The Black Tower</i>
1976	James McClure	<i>Rogue Eagle</i>
1977	William McIlvanney	<i>Laidlaw</i>
1978	Peter Lovesey	<i>Waxwork</i>
1979	Colin Dexter	<i>Service of All the Dead</i>
1980	Ellis Peters	<i>Monk's-Hood</i>
1981	Colin Dexter	<i>The Dead of Jericho</i>
1982	S. T. Haymon	<i>Ritual Murder</i>
1983	William McIlvanney	<i>The Papers of Tony Veitch</i>
1984	Ruth Rendell	<i>The Tree of Hands</i>
1985	Dorothy Simpson	<i>Last Seen Alive</i>
1986	P. D. James	<i>A Taste for Death</i>
1987	Scott Turow	<i>Presumed Innocent</i>
1988	Sara Paretsky	<i>Bloodshot (Toxic Shock)</i>
1989	Desmond Lowden	<i>The Shadow Run</i>
1990	Mike Phillips	<i>The Lage Candidate</i>
1991	Frances Fyfield	<i>Deep Sleep</i>
1992	Liza Cody	<i>Bucket Nut</i>
1993	Sarah Dunant	<i>Fatlands</i>
1994	Peter Hoeg	<i>Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow</i>
1995	Peter Lovesey	<i>The Summons</i>
1996	Peter Lovesey	<i>Bloodhounds</i>
1997	Janet Evanovich	<i>Three to Get Deadly</i>
1998	Nicholas Blincoe	<i>Manchester Slingback</i>
1999	Adrian Matthews	<i>Vienna Blood</i>
2000	Donna Leon	<i>Friends in High Places</i>

2001	Giles Blunt	<i>Forty Words for Sorrow</i>
2002	James Crumley	<i>The Final Country</i>
2003	Morag Joss	<i>Half-Broken Things</i>
2004	John Harvey	<i>Flesh and Blood</i>
2005	Barbara Nadel	<i>Deadly Web</i>

THE NEW BLOOD DAGGER

1973	Kyril Bonfiglioli	<i>Don't Point That Thing at Me</i>
1974	Roger L. Simon	<i>The Big Fix</i>
1975	Sara George	<i>Acid Drop</i>
1976	Patrick Alexander	<i>Death of a Thin-Skinned Animal</i>
1977	Jonathan Gash	<i>The Judas Pair</i>
1978	David Serafin	<i>Saturday of Glory</i>
1979	Paula Gosling	<i>A Running Duck (Fair Game)</i>
1980	Liza Cody	<i>Dupe</i>
1981	James Leigh	<i>The Ludi Victor</i>
1982	Andrew Taylor	<i>Caroline Miniscule</i>
1983	Carol Clemeau	<i>The Ariadne Clue</i>
1984	Eric Wright	<i>The Night the Gods Smiled</i>
1985	Elizabeth Ironside	<i>A Very Private Enterprise</i>
1986	Robert Richardson	<i>The Latimer Mercy</i>
1987	Neville Steed	<i>Tinplate</i>
1987	Denis Kilcommons	<i>Dark Apostle</i>
1988	Janet Neel	<i>Death's Brith Angel</i>
1989	Annette Roome	<i>A Real Shot in the Arm</i>
1990	Patricia Cornwell	<i>Postmortem</i>
1991	Walter Mosley	<i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i>
1992	Minette Walters	<i>The Ice House</i>
1994	Doug J. Swanson	<i>Big Town</i>
1995	Laurie R. King	<i>A Grave Talent</i>
	Janet Evanovich	<i>One for the Money</i>
1997	Paul Johnston	<i>Body Politic</i>
1998	Denise Mina	<i>Garnet Hill</i>
1999	Dan Fesperman	<i>Lie in the Dark</i>
2000	Boston Teran	<i>God Is a Bullet</i>
2001	Susanna Jones	<i>The Earthquake Bird</i>
2002	Louise Welsh	<i>The Cutting Room</i>
2003	William Landay	<i>Mission Flats</i>
2004	Mark Mills	<i>Amagansett</i>
2005	Dreda Say Mitchell	<i>Running Hot</i>
2006	Louise Penny	<i>Still Life</i>
2007	Gillian Flynn	<i>Sharp Objects</i>

THE DUNCAN LAWRIE INTERNATIONAL DAGGER

2006	Fred Vargas	<i>The Three Evangelists</i>
2007	Fred Vargas	<i>Wash This Blood Clean from My Hand</i>

THE IAN FLEMING STEEL DAGGER

2002	John Creed	<i>The Sirius Crossing</i>
2003	Dan Fesperman	<i>The Small Boat of Great Sorrows</i>
2004	Jeffrey Deaver	<i>Garden of Beasts</i>
2005	Henry Porter	<i>Brandenburg</i>
2006	Nick Stone	<i>Mr. Clarinet</i>
2007	Gillian Flynn	<i>Sharp Objects</i>

THE SHORT STORY DAGGER

1995	Larry Beinhart	“Funny Story”
1996	Ian Rankin	“Herbert in Motion”
1997	Reginald Hill	“On the Psychiatrist’s Couch”
1998	Jerry Sykes	“Roots, in Mean Time”
1999	Antony Mann	“Taking Care of Frank”
2000	Denise Mina	“Helena and the Babies”
2001	Marion Arnott	“Prussian Snowdrops”
2002	Stella Duffy	“Martha Grace”
2003	Jerry Sykes	“Closer to the Flame”
2004	Jeffrey Deaver	“The Weekender”
2005	Danuta Reah	“No Flies on Frank”
2006	Robert Barnard	“Sins of Scarlet”

THE ELLIS PETERS AWARD

1999	Lindsey Davis	<i>Two for the Lions</i>
2000	Gilliam Linscott	<i>Absent Friends</i>
2001	Andrew Taylor	<i>The Office of the Dead</i>
2002	Sarah Waters	<i>Fingersmith</i>
2003	Andrew Taylor	<i>The American Boy</i>
2004	Barbara Cleverly	<i>The Damascened Blade</i>
2005	C. J. Sansom	<i>Dark Fire</i>
2006	Edward Wright	<i>Red Sky Lament</i>

THE DAGGER IN THE LIBRARY

1994	Robert Barnard
1995	Lindsey Davis
1996	Marian Babson

2002	Peter Robinson
2003	Stephen Booth
2004	Alexander McCall Smith
2005	Jake Arnott
2006	Jim Kelly
2007	Stuart MacBride

DERRINGER AWARDS

The Derringer Awards are limited to recognizing excellence in the short-story subgenre. They were created in 1997 by the Short Mystery Fiction Society and named after the small handgun because of its metaphoric significance: The gun is small but dangerous. Creators of the awards felt that they filled a vacuum left by the majority of American mystery awards that tend to focus on novels. Any short story that is published in print or electronic media is eligible for the award.

BEST FLASH STORY

1998	Michael Mallory	“Curiosity Kills”
1999	Joyce Holland	“Pretty Kitty”
2001	Earl McGill	“Dolls Don’t Lie”
	Mike Wiecek	“The New Lawyer”
2004	Michael Bracken	“All My Yesterdays”
2005	J. A. Konrath	“The Big Guys”
2006	Patricia Harrington	“Secondhand Shoe”
2007	Jan Christensen	“Matched Set”

BEST SHORT-SHORT STORY

1998	Eileen Brosnan	“Back Stairs”
2000	Dorothy Francis	“When in Rome”
	Carol Kilgore	“Just a Man on the Sidewalk”
2002	Nick Andreychuk	“In the Heat of the Moment”
2003	Del Tinsley	“A Cut Above”
2004	Michael Bracken	“All My Yesterdays”
2005	Mike Wiecek	“The Test”
2006	Stephen D. Rogers	“Zipped”
2007	Gail Farrelly	“Even Steven”

BEST MID-LENGTH STORY

1998	Barbara White-Rayczek	“The Adventurers”
	Kris Neri	“L.A. Justice”
1999	Kris Neri	“Capital Justice”
2000	Elizabeth Dearl	“The Way to a Man’s Heart”
2001	Steve Hockensmith	“Erie’s Last Day”

2002	Earl Stagg	“All the Fine Actors”
2003	Dave White	“Closure”
2004	Dorothy Rellas	“Notions of the Real World”
2005	Sandy Balzo	“Viscery”
2006	Iain Rowan	“One Step Closer”
2007	David Bareford	“Éden’s Bodyguard”

BEST NOVELLA/LONGER STORY

1998	Margo Power	“Best Conspiracy”
2000	Doug Allyn	“Saint Bobby”
2001	Lynda Douglas	“Lilacs and Lace”
2002	Jean McCord	“Early Morning Rain”
2003	Doug Allyn	“The Murder Ballads”
2004	Clark Howard	“The Mask of Peter”
2005	Doug Allyn	“Secondhand Heart”
2006	Mark Best	“The Safest Place on Earth”
2007	Annette Dashofy	“Signature in Blood”

BEST FIRST SHORT MYSTERY STORY

1998	Eileen Brosnan	“Back Stairs”
2000	Ray Wonderly	“Death in Full Bloom” (Honorary)

BEST PUZZLE STORY

2001	Henry Slesar	“The Cabin Killer”
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THE GOLDEN DERRINGER FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SHORT MYSTERY FICTION

1999	Edward D. Hoch
2000	Henry Siesar
2001	John Lutz

EDGAR ALLAN POE AWARDS

First awarded in 1946, the Edgar Awards are prestigious honors sponsored by the Mystery Writers of America. Initially, only the category of best first American mystery novel was considered, but over the years, a number of additional categories have been recognized, including best novel, best original paperback, best critical/biographical, best fact crime, best short story, best young adult, best juvenile, best play, best episode in a television series, best television feature or miniseries, and best motion picture screenplay. Other special awards include the Robert L. Fish Memorial Award, sponsored by his estate and given to the best first mystery short story by a previously unpublished American fiction writer; the Grand Master life achievement award; the Ellery Queen award for writing teams and outstanding people in the publishing industry; and the Raven award, for noncreative outstanding achievement in the mystery field.

BEST MYSTERY NOVEL

1954	Charlotte Jay	<i>Beat Not the Bones</i>
1955	Raymond Chandler	<i>The Long Goodbye</i>
1956	Margaret Millar	<i>Beast in View</i>
1957	Charlotte Armstrong	<i>A Dram of Poison</i>
1958	Ed Lacy	<i>Room to Swing</i>
1959	Stanley Ellin	<i>The Eighth Circle</i>
1960	Celia Fremlin	<i>The Hours Before Dawn</i>
1961	Julian Symons	<i>The Progress of a Crime</i>
1962	J. J. Marric	<i>Gideon's Fire</i>
1963	Ellis Peters	<i>Death and the Joyful Woman</i>
1964	Eric Ambler	<i>The Light of Day</i>
1965	John le Carré	<i>The Spy Who Came in from the Cold</i>
1966	Adam Hall	<i>The Quiller Memorandum</i>
1967	Nicolas Freeling	<i>The King of the Rainy Country</i>
1968	Donald E. Westlake	<i>God Save the Mark</i>
1969	Jeffrey Hudson	<i>A Case of Need</i>
1970	Dick Francis	<i>Forfeit</i>
1971	Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö	<i>The Laughing Policeman</i>
1972	Frederick Forsyth	<i>The Day of the Jackal</i>
1973	Warren Kiefer	<i>The Lingala Code</i>
1974	Tony Hillerman	<i>Dance Hall of the Dead</i>
1975	Jon Cleary	<i>Peter's Pence</i>
1976	Brian Garfield	<i>Hopscotch</i>
1977	Robert B. Parker	<i>Promised Land</i>
1978	William H. Hallahan	<i>Catch Me, Kill Me</i>
1979	Ken Follett	<i>The Eye of the Needle</i>
1980	Arthur Maling	<i>The Rheingold Route</i>
1981	Dick Francis	<i>Whip Hand</i>
1982	William Bayer	<i>Peregrine</i>
1983	Rick Boyer	<i>Billingsgate Shoal</i>
1984	Elmore Leonard	<i>LaBrava</i>
1985	Ross Thomas	<i>Briarpatch</i>
1986	L. R. Wright	<i>The Suspect</i>
1987	Barbara Vine	<i>A Dark-Adapted Eye</i>
1988	Aaron Elkins	<i>Old Bones</i>
1989	Stuart M. Kaminsky	<i>A Cold Red Sunrise</i>
1990	James Lee Burke	<i>Black Cherry Blues</i>
1991	Julie Smith	<i>New Orleans Mourning</i>
1992	Lawrence Sanders	<i>A Dance at the Slaughterhouse</i>
1993	Margaret Maron	<i>Bootlegger's Daughter</i>
1994	Minette Walters	<i>The Sculptress</i>
1995	Mary Willis Walker	<i>The Red Scream</i>
1996	Dick Francis	<i>Come to Grief</i>
1997	Thomas H. Cook	<i>The Chatham School Affair</i>

1998	James Lee Burke	<i>Cimarron Rose</i>
1999	Robert Clark	<i>Mr. White's Confession</i>
2000	Jan Burke	<i>Bones</i>
2001	Joe R. Lansdale	<i>The Bottoms</i>
2002	T. Jefferson Parker	<i>Silent Joe</i>
2003	S. J. Rozan	<i>Winter and Night</i>
2004	Ian Rankin	<i>Resurrection Men</i>
2005	T. Jefferson Parker	<i>California Girl</i>
2006	Jess Walter	<i>Citizen Vince</i>
2007	Jason Goodwin	<i>The Janissary Tree</i>

BEST FIRST MYSTERY BY AN AMERICAN AUTHOR

1946	Julius Fast	<i>Watchful at Night</i>
1947	Helen Eustis	<i>The Horizontal Man</i>
1948	Fredric Brown	<i>The Fabulous Clipjoint</i>
1949	Mildred Davis	<i>The Room Upstairs</i>
1950	Alan Green	<i>What a Body</i>
1951	Thomas Walsh	<i>Nightmare in Manhattan</i>
1952	Mary McMullen	<i>Strangle Hold</i>
1953	William Campbell Gault	<i>Don't Cry for Me</i>
1954	Ira Levin	<i>A Kiss Before Dying</i>
1955	Jean Potts	<i>Go, Lovely Rose</i>
1956	Lane Kauffman	<i>The Perfectionist</i>
1957	Donald McNutt Douglass	<i>Rebecca's Price</i>
1958	William Rawle Weeks	<i>Knock and Wait a While</i>
1959	Richard Martin Stern	<i>The Bright Road to Fear</i>
1960	Henry Siesar	<i>The Grey Flannel Shroud</i>
1961	John Holbrooke Vance	<i>The Man in the Cage</i>
1962	Suzanne Blanc	<i>The Green Stone</i>
1963	Robert L. Fish	<i>The Fugitive</i>
1964	Cornelius Hirschberg	<i>Florentine Finish</i>
1965	Harry Kemelman	<i>Friday the Rabbi Slept Late</i>
1966	John Ball	<i>In the Heat of the Night</i>
1967	Ross Thomas	<i>The Cold War Swap</i>
1968	Michael Collins	<i>Act of Fear</i>
1969	E. Richard Johnson	<i>The Silver Street</i>
	Dorothy Uhnak	<i>The Bait</i>
1970	Joe Gores	<i>A Time of Predators</i>
1971	Lawrence Sanders	<i>The Anderson Tapes</i>
1972	A. H. Z. Carr	<i>Finding Maubee</i>
1973	R. H. Shimer	<i>Squaw Point</i>
1974	Paul E. Erdman	<i>The Billion Dollar Sure Thing</i>
1975	Gregory McDonald	<i>Fletch</i>

MAJOR AWARDS

Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction

1976	Rex Burns	<i>The Alvarez Journal</i>
1977	James Patterson	<i>The Thomas Berryman Number</i>
1978	Robert Ross	<i>A French Finish</i>
1979	William L. DeAndrea	<i>Killed in the Ratings</i>
1980	Richard North Patterson	<i>The Lasko Tangent</i>
1981	K. Nolte Smith	<i>The Watcher</i>
1982	Stuart Woods	<i>Chiefs</i>
1983	Thomas Perry	<i>The Butcher's Boy</i>
1984	Will Harriss	<i>The Bay Psalm Book Murder</i>
1985	R. D. Rosen	<i>Strike Three, You're Dead</i>
1986	Jonathan Kellerman	<i>When the Bough Breaks</i>
1987	Larry Beinhart	<i>No One Rides for Free</i>
1988	Deidre S. Laiken	<i>Death Among Strangers</i>
1989	David Stout	<i>Carolina Skeletons</i>
1990	Susan Wolfe	<i>The Last Billable Hour</i>
1991	Patricia Cornwell	<i>Postmortem</i>
1992	Peter Blauner	<i>Slow Motion Riot</i>
1993	Michael Connelly	<i>The Black Echo</i>
1994	Laurie R. King	<i>A Grave Talent</i>
1995	George Dawes Green	<i>The Caveman's Valentine</i>
1996	David Housewright	<i>Penance</i>
1997	John Morgan Wilson	<i>Simple Justice</i>
1998	Joseph Kanon	<i>Los Alamos</i>
1999	Steve Hamilton	<i>A Cold Day in Paradise</i>
2000	Eliot Pattison	<i>The Skull Mantra</i>
2001	David Liss	<i>A Conspiracy of Paper</i>
2002	David Ellis	<i>Line of Vision</i>
2003	Jonathon King	<i>The Blue Edge of Midnight</i>
2004	Rebecca Pawel	<i>Death of a Nationalist</i>
2005	Don Lee	<i>Country of Origin</i>
2006	Theresa Schwegel	<i>Officer Down</i>
2007	Alex Berenson	<i>The Faithful Spy</i>

BEST ORIGINAL PAPERBACK

1970	C. S. Stone	<i>The Dragon's Eye</i>
1971	Dan J. Marlowe	<i>Flashpoint</i>
1972	Frank McAuliffe	<i>For Murder I Charge More</i>
1973	Richard Wormser	<i>The Invader</i>
1974	Will Perry	<i>Death of an Informer</i>
1975	Roy Winsor	<i>The Corpse That Walked</i>
1976	John R. Feegel	<i>Autopsy</i>
1977	Gregory McDonald	<i>Confess, Fletch</i>
1978	Mike Jahn	<i>The Quark Maneuver</i>

1979	Frank Bandy	<i>Deceit and Deadly Lies</i>
1980	William L. DeAndrea	<i>The HOG Murders</i>
1981	Bill Granger	<i>Public Murders</i>
1982	L. A. Morse	<i>The Old Dick</i>
1983	Teri White	<i>Triangle</i>
1984	Margaret Tracy	<i>Mrs. White</i>
1985	Warren Murphy and Molly Cochran	<i>Grandmaster</i>
1986	Warren Murphy	<i>Pigs Get Fat</i>
1987	Robert Campbell	<i>The Junkyard Dog</i>
1988	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>Bimbos of the Death Sun</i>
1989	Timothy Findley	<i>The Telling of Lies</i>
1990	Keith Peterson	<i>The Rain</i>
1991	David Handler	<i>The Man Who Would Be S. Scott Ritzgerlad</i>
1992	Thomas Adcock	<i>Dark Maze</i>
1993	Dana Stabenow	<i>A Cold Day for Murder</i>
1994	Steven Womack	<i>Dead Folks' Blues</i>
1995	Lisa Scottoline	<i>Final Appeal</i>
1996	William Heffernan	<i>Tarnished Blue</i>
1997	Harlan Coben	<i>Fade Away</i>
1998	Laura Lippman	<i>Charm City</i>
1999	Rick Riordan	<i>The Widower's Two-Step</i>
2000	Ruth Birmingham	<i>Fulton County Blues</i>
2001	Mark Graham	<i>The Black Maria</i>
2002	Daniel Chavarria	<i>Adios Muchachos</i>
2003	T. J. MacGregor	<i>Out of Sight</i>
2004	Sylvia Maultash Warsh	<i>Find Me Again</i>
2005	Domenic Stansberry	<i>The Confession</i>
2006	Jeffrey Ford	<i>Girl in the Glass</i>

BEST FACT CRIME

2002	Kent Walker with Mark Schone	<i>Son of a Grifter</i>
2003	Joseph Wambaugh	<i>Fire Lover</i>
2004	Erik Larson	<i>The Devil in the White City</i>
2005	Leonard Levitt	<i>Conviction: Solving the Moxley Mystery</i>
2006	Edward Dolnick	<i>The Rescue Artist</i>
2007	James L. Swanson	<i>The Manhunt</i>

BEST SHORT STORY

1955	Stanley Ellin	"The House Party"
1956	Philip MacDonald	"Dream No More"
1957	Stanley Ellin	"The Blessington Method"
1958	Gerald Kersh	"The Secret of the Bottle"

1959	William O'Farrell	"Over There, Darkness"
1960	Roald Dahl	"The Landlady"
1961	John Durham	"Tiger"
1962	Avram Davidson	"Affair at Lahore Cantonment"
1963	David Ely	"The Sailing Club"
1964	Leslie Ann Browning	"Man Gehorcht"
1965	Lawrence Treat	"H as in Homicide"
1966	Shirley Jackson	"The Possibility of Evil"
1967	Rhys Davies	"The Chosen One"
1968	Edward D. Hoch	"The Oblong Room"
1969	Warner Law	"The Man Who Fooled the World"
1970	Joe Gores	"Goodbye, Pops"
1971	Margery Finn Brown	"In the Forests of Riga the Beasts Are Very Wild"
1972	Robert L. Fish	"Moonlight Gardner"
1973	Joyce Harrington	"The Purple Shroud"
1974	Harlan Ellison	"The Whimper of Whipped Dogs"
1975	Ruth Rendell	"The Fallen Curtain"
1976	Jesse Hill Ford	"The Jail"
1977	Etta Revesz	"Like a Terrible Scream"
1978	Thomas Walsh	"Chance After Chance"
1979	Barbara Owens	"The Cloud Beneath the Eaves"
1980	Geoffrey Norman	"Armed and Dangerous"
1981	Clark Howard	"Horn Man"
1982	Jack Ritchie	"The Absence of Emily"
1983	Frederick Forsyth	"There Are No Snakes in Ireland"
1984	Ruth Rendell	"The New Girlfriend"
1985	Lawrence Block	"By the Dawn's Early Light"
1986	John Lutz	"Ride the Lightning"
1987	Robert Sampson	"Rain in Pinton County"
1988	Harlan Ellison	"Soft Monkey"
1989	Bill Crenshaw	"Flicks"
1990	Donald E. Westlake	"Too Many Crooks"
1991	Lynne Barrett	"Elvis Lives"
1992	Wendy Hornsby	"Nine Sons"
1993	Benjamin M. Schultz	"Mary, Mary, Shut the Door"
1994	Lawrence Block	"Keller's Therapy"
1995	Doug Allyn	"The Dancing Bear"
1996	Jean B. Cooper	"The Judge Boy"
1997	Michael Malone	"Red Clay"
1998	Lawrence Block	"Keller on the Spot"
1999	Tom Franklikn	"Poachers"
2000	Anne Perry	"Heroes"
2001	Peter Robinson	"Missing in Action"
2002	S. J. Rozan	"Double-Crossing Delancy"
2003	Raymond Steiber	"Mexican Gatsby"

2004	G. Miki Hayden	“The Maids”
2005	Laurie Lynn Drummond	“Something About a Scar”
2006	James W. Hall	“The Catch”
2007	Charles Ar dai	“The Home Front”

BEST YOUNG ADULT

1989	Sonia Levitin	<i>Incident at Loring Grove</i>
1990	Alane Ferguson	<i>Show Me the Evidence</i>
1991	Chap Reaver	<i>Mote</i>
1992	Theodore Taylor	<i>The Wierdo</i>
1993	Chap Reaver	<i>A Little Bit Dead</i>
1994	Joan Lowrey Nixon	<i>The Name of the Game Was Murder</i>
1995	Nancy Springer	<i>Toughing It</i>
1996	Rob MacGregor	<i>Prophecy Rock</i>
1997	Willo Davis Roberts	<i>Twisted Summer</i>
1998	Will Hobbs	<i>Ghost Canoe</i>
1999	Nancy Werlin	<i>The Killer’s Cousin</i>
2001	Elaine M. Alphin	<i>Counterfeit Son</i>
2002	Tim Wynne-Jones	<i>The Boy in the Burning House</i>
2003	Daniel Parker	<i>The Wessex Papers, Vols. 1-3</i>
2004	Graham McNamee	<i>Acceleration</i>
2005	Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler	<i>In Darkness, Death</i>
2006	John Feinstein	<i>The Catch</i>
2007	Andres Clements	<i>Room One</i>

BEST JUVENILE

1962	Phyllis A. Whitney	<i>The Mystery of the Haunted Pool</i>
1963	Edward Fenton	<i>The Phantom of Walkaway Hill</i>
1964	Scott Corbett	<i>Cutlass Island</i>
1965	Phyllis A. Whitney	<i>The Mystery of the Hidden Hand</i>
1966	Marcella Thum	<i>The Mystery at Crane Landing</i>
1967	Leon Ware	<i>The Mystery of 22 East</i>
1968	Kin Plat	<i>Sinbad and Me</i>
1969	Gretchen Sprague	<i>Signpost to Terror</i>
1970	Virginia Hamilton	<i>The House of Dies Drear</i>
1971	Winifred Finlay	<i>Danger at Black Dyke</i>
1972	John Rowe Townsend	<i>The Intruder</i>
1973	Joan Aiken	<i>Night Fall</i>
1974	Robb White	<i>Deathwatch</i>
1975	Jay Bennett	<i>The Long Black Coat</i>
1976	Jay Bennett	<i>The Dangling Witness</i>
1977	Robert C. O’Brien	“Z” for Zachariah

MAJOR AWARDS

Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction

1978	Richard Peek	<i>Are You in the House Alone?</i>
1979	Dana Brookins	<i>Alone in Wolf Hollow</i>
1980	Joan Lowery Nixon	<i>The Kidnapping of Christian Lattimore</i>
1981	Joan Lowery Nixon	<i>The Séance</i>
1982	Norma Fox Mazer	<i>Taking Terri Mueller</i>
1983	Robbie Branscum	<i>The Murder of Hound Dog Bates</i>
1984	Cynthia Voight	<i>The Callender Papers</i>
1985	Phyllis R. Naylor	<i>Night's Cry</i>
1986	Patricia Windsor	<i>The Sandman's Eyes</i>
1987	Joan Lowery Nixon	<i>The Other Side of the Dark</i>
1988	Susan Shreve	<i>Lucy Forever and Miss Rosetree, Shrinks</i>
1989	Willo Davis Roberts	<i>Megan's Island</i>
1991	Pam Conrad	<i>Stonewords</i>
1992	Betsy Byars	<i>Wanted . . . Mud Blossom</i>
1993	Eve Bunting	<i>Coffin on a Case</i>
1994	Barbara B. Wallace	<i>The Twin in the Tavern</i>
1995	Willo Davis Roberts	<i>The Absolutely True Story . . . How I Visited Yellowstone Park with the Terrible Rubes</i>
1996	Nancy Springer	<i>Looking for Jamie Bridger</i>
1999	Iain Lawrence	<i>Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief</i>
2000	Elizabeth M. Jones	<i>The Night Flyer</i>
2005	Blue Balliett	<i>Chasing Vermeer</i>
2006	D. James Smith	<i>The Boys of San Joaquin</i>
2007	Robin M. McCready	<i>Buried</i>

BEST PLAY

2005	Patricia Finney	<i>Spatter Pattern</i>
2006	Gary Earl Ross	<i>The Matter of Intent</i>

ROBERT L. FISH MEMORIAL AWARD

1984	Lilly Carlson	"Locked Doors"
1985	Bill Crenshaw	"Poor Dumb Mouths"
1986	Doug Allyn	"Final Rites"
1987	Mary Kittredge	"Father to the Man"
1988	Eric M. Heideman	"Roger, Mr. Whilkie!"
1989	Linda O. Johnston	"Different Drummers"
1990	Connie Colt	"Hawks"
1991	Jerry F. Skarky	"Willie's Story"
1993	Steven Saylor	"A Will Is a Way"
1994	D. A. McGuire	"Wicked Twist"
1995	Batya Swift Yasgur	"Me and Mr. Harry"
1996	James Sarafin	"The Word for Breaking August Sky"

1997	David Vaughn	“The Prosecutor of Duprey”
1998	Rosalind Roland	“If Thine Eye Offend Thee”
1999	Bryn Bonner	“Clarity”
2000	Mike Reiss	“Cro-Magnon, P. I.”
2001	M. J. Jones	“The Witch and the Relic Thief”
2002	Ted Hertel, Jr.	“My Bonnie Lies”
2003	Mike Doogan	“War Can Be Murder”
2004	Sandy Balzo	“The Grass Is Always Greener”
2005	Thomas Morrissey	“Can’t Catch Me”
2006	Eddie Newton	“Home”
2007	William D. Powell	“Evening Gold”

GRAND MASTER AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

1955	Agatha Christie
1958	Vincent Starrett
1959	Rex Stout
1961	Ellery Queen (Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee)
1962	Erle Stanley Gardner
1963	John Dickson Carr
1964	George Harmon Coxe
1966	Georges Simenon
1967	Baynard H. Kendrick
1969	John Creasey
1970	James M. Cain
1971	Mignon G. Eberhart
1972	John D. MacDonald
1973	Judson Phillips
	Alfred Hitchcock
1974	Ross Macdonald
1975	Eric Ambler
1976	Graham Greene
1978	Dorothy B. Hughes
	Daphne du Maurier
1979	Aaron Marc Stein
1980	W. R. Burnett
1981	Stanley Ellin
1982	Julian Symons
1983	Margaret Millar
1984	John le Carré
1985	Dorothy Salisbury Davis
1986	Ed McBain
1987	Michael Gilbert
1988	Phyllis A. Whitney
1989	Hillary Waugh

1990	Helen McCloy
1991	Tony Hillerman
1992	Elmore Leonard
1993	Donald E. Westlake
1994	Lawrence Sanders
1995	Mickey Spillane
1996	Dick Francis
1997	Ruth Rendell
1998	Elizabeth Peters (Barbara Mertz or Barbara Michaels)
1999	P. D. James
2000	Mary Higgins Clark
2001	Edward D. Hoch
2002	Robert B. Parker
2003	Ira Levin
2004	Joseph Wambaugh
2005	Marcia Muller
2006	Stuart M. Kaminsky
2007	Stephen King

GUMSHOE AWARDS

First awarded in 2002, the Gumshoe Awards recognize the best achievements in the crime fiction genre. The awards are sponsored by Mysterious Ink, a popular Web site.

BEST NOVEL

2002	Thomas Perry	<i>Pursuit</i>
2003	George P. Pelecanos	<i>Hell to Pay</i>
2004	Steve Hamilton	<i>Blood Is the Sky</i>
2005	Jim Fusilli	<i>Hard, Hard City</i>
2006	Laura Lippman	<i>To the Power of Three</i>
2007	Julia Spencer-Fleming	<i>All Mortal Flesh</i>

BEST THRILLER

2005	Barry Eisler	<i>Rain Storm</i>
2006	Joseph Finder	<i>Company Man</i>
2007	Robert Ferrigno	<i>Prayers for the Assassin</i>

BEST EUROPEAN CRIME NOVEL

2005	Henning Mankell	<i>The Return of the Dancing Master</i>
2006	Robert Wilson	<i>The Vanished Hands</i>
2007	Karin Fossum	<i>When the Devil Holds the Candle</i>

BEST FIRST NOVEL

2002	C. J. Box	<i>Open Season</i>
2003	Eddie Muller	<i>The Distance</i>
2004	P. J. Tracy	<i>Monkeewrench</i>
2005	Dylan Schaffer	<i>Misdemeanor Man</i>
2006	Randall Hicks	<i>The Baby Game</i>
2007	John Hart	<i>The King of Lies</i>

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

2002	Ross Thomas
2003	Dick Francis
2004	Ruth Rendell
2005	Lawrence Block
2006	Ed McBain
2007	Robert B. Parker

HAMMETT PRIZE FOR CRIME WRITING

The Hammett Prize, first awarded in 1992 and sponsored by the North American Branch of the International Association of Crime Writers, is given for excellence in the mystery field. The association strives to promote communication among published crime writers. The falcon-headed Thin Man trophy symbolizes Dashiell Hammett's literary spirit.

1992	Elmore Leonard	<i>Maximum Bob</i>
1993	Alice Hoffman	<i>Turtle Moon</i>
1994	James Crumley	<i>The Mexican Tree Duck</i>
1995	James Lee Burke	<i>Dixie City Jam</i>
1996	Mary Willis Walker	<i>Under the Beetle's Cellar</i>
1997	Martin Cruz Smith	<i>Rose</i>
1998	William Deverell	<i>Trial of Passion</i>
1999	William Hoffman	<i>Tidewater Blood</i>
2000	Martin Cruz Smith	<i>Havana Bay</i>
2001	Margaret Atwood	<i>The Blind Assassin</i>
2002	Alan Furst	<i>Kingdom of Shadows</i>
2003	Owen Parry	<i>Honor's Kingdom</i>
2004	Carol Goodman	<i>The Seduction of Water</i>
2005	Chuck Hogan	<i>Prince of Thieves</i>
2006	Joseph Kanon	<i>Alibi</i>

HERODOTUS AWARDS

The Historical Mystery Appreciation Society established the Herodotus Awards in 1998 to recognize excellence in the field of mystery writing. Herodotus, who wrote the first great narrative history about the Greco-Persian Wars, is said to have never let history stand in the way of a good story, thus epitomizing the historical mystery writer. Categories for the award are best short-story historical mystery, best first U.S. historical mystery, best first international historical mystery, best U.S. historical mystery, and the Herodotus Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Historical Mysteries.

BEST U.S. HISTORICAL MYSTERY

1998	Sharan Newman	<i>Cursed in the Blood</i>
1999	Steven Saylor	<i>Rubicon</i>
2000	Kris Nelscott	<i>A Dangerous Road</i>

BEST FIRST U.S. HISTORICAL MYSTERY

1998	Fichard Zimler	<i>The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon</i>
1999	Owen Parry	<i>Faded Coat of Blue</i>
2000	Joe Lansdale	<i>The Bottoms</i>

BEST INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL MYSTERY

1998	Ross King	<i>Ex-Libria</i>
1999	Gillian Linscott	<i>Absent Friends</i>
2000	Arabella Edge	<i>The Story of a Murderer</i>

BEST FIRST INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL MYSTERY

1999	Clare Curzon	<i>Guilty Knowledge</i>
2000	Betsy Tobin	<i>Bone House</i>

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

1998	Anne Perry
1999	Paul Doherty
2000	Lindsey Davis

MACAVITY AWARDS

The Macavity Awards, first given in 1987, are named for Macavity, the cat in T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). Members of the Mystery Readers International, an organization dedicated to enriching the lives of readers of mysteries, determine the winners. In addition to a certificate, each winner receives a stuffed cat representing Macavity the cat. Award categories are best mystery novel, best first mystery novel, best short story, and, starting in 2006, the Sue Feder Award for historical mystery.

BEST MYSTERY NOVEL

1987	P. D. James	<i>A Taste for Death</i>
1988	Nancy Pickard	<i>Marriage Is Murder</i>
1989	Tony Hillerman	<i>A Thief of Time</i>
1990	Carolyn Hart	<i>A Little Class on Murder</i>
1991	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O</i>
1992	Nancy Pickard	<i>I.O.U.</i>
1993	Margaret Maron	<i>Bootlegger's Daughter</i>
1994	Minette Walters	<i>The Sculptress</i>
1995	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>She Walks These Hills</i>
1996	Mary Willis Walker	<i>Under the Beetle's Cellar</i>
1997	Peter Lovesey	<i>Bloodhounds</i>
1998	Deborah Crombie	<i>Dreaming of the Bones</i>
1999	Michael Connelly	<i>Blood Work</i>
2000	Sujata Massey	<i>The Flower Master</i>
2001	Val McDermid	<i>A Place of Execution</i>
2002	Laurie R. King	<i>Folly</i>
2003	S. J. Rozan	<i>Winter and Night</i>
2004	Giles Blunt	<i>The Delicate Storm</i>
2005	Ken Bruen	<i>The Killing of the Tinkers</i>
2006	Michael Connelly	<i>The Lincoln Lawyer</i>

BEST FIRST MYSTERY NOVEL

1987	Fay Kellerman	<i>Ritual Bath</i>
	Marilyn Wallace	<i>A Case of Loyalties</i>
1988	Robert Crais	<i>The Monkey's Raincoat</i>
1989	Carolyn Graham	<i>The Killings at Badger Drift</i>
1990	Jill Churchill	<i>Grime and Punishment</i>
1991	Patricia Cornwell	<i>Postmortem</i>
1992	Sue Henry	<i>Murder on the Iditarod Trail</i>
	Mary Willis Walker	<i>Zero at the Bone</i>
1993	Barbara Neely	<i>Blanche on the Lam</i>
1994	Sharan Newman	<i>Death Comes as Epiphany</i>
1995	Jeff Abbott	<i>Do unto Others</i>
1996	Dianne Day	<i>The Strange Files of Fremont Jones</i>

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1997	Dale Furutani	<i>Death in Little Tokyo</i>
1998	Penny Warner	<i>Dead Body Language</i>
1999	Jerrilyn Farmer	<i>Sympathy for the Devil</i>
2000	Paula I. Woods	<i>Inner City Blues</i>
2001	David Lies	<i>A Conspiracy of Paper</i>
2002	C. J. Box	<i>Open Season</i>
2003	Julia Spenser-Fleming	<i>In the Bleak Midwinter</i>
2004	Jacqueline Winspear	<i>Maisie Dobbs</i>
2005	Harley Jane Kozak	<i>Dating Dead Men</i>
2006	Brian Freeman	<i>Immoral</i>

BEST SHORT STORY

1987	Sue Grafton	“The Parker Shotgun”
1988	Robert Bernard	“The Woman in the Wardrobe”
1989	Doug Allyn	“Déjà Vu”
1990	Nancy Pickard	“Afraid All the Time”
1991	Joan Hess	“Too Much to Bare”
1992	Margaret Maron	“Deborah’s Judgment”
1993	Carolyn Hart	“Henrie O’s Holiday”
1994	Susan Dunlap	“Checkout”
1995	Deborah Adams	“Cast Your Fate to the Wind”
	Jan Burke	“Unharméd”
1996	Colin Dexter	“Evans Tries an O-Level”
1997	Carolyn Wheat	“Cruel and Unusual”
1998	Peter Robinson	“Two Ladies of Rose Cottage”
1999	Barbara D’Amato	“Of Course You Know That Chocolate Is a Vegetable”
2000	Kate Grillery	“Maubi and the Jumbies”
2001	Reginald Hill	“Candle for Christmas”
2002	Jan Burke	“The Abbey Ghosts”
2003	Janet Dawson	“Voice Mail”
2004	Sandy Balzo	“The Grass Is Always Greener”
2005	Terence Faherty	“The Widow of Slane”
2006	Nancy Pickard	“There Is No Crime on Easter Island”

SUE FEDER HISTORICAL MYSTERY AWARD

2006	Jacqueline Winspear	<i>Pardonable Lies</i>
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NERO WOLFE AWARDS

The Nero Wolfe novels by Rex Stout inspired these awards for mystery novels that reflect the spirit of fair play that is typical of Stout's novels. In 1969, Viking Press sponsored a contest for Nero Wolfe fans, and in 1973, Professor John McAleer, who was writing a biography of Rex Stout, wanting to meet Wolfe fans, obtained the earlier contest list and began corresponding with some of those individuals, including Ellen Kreiger. McAleer suggested the name Wolfe Pack. In 1977, when the Murder Ink Bookstore hosted a dinner to celebrate the publication of McAleer's biography, attendees completed a questionnaire that revealed a positive response toward organizing the Wolfe Pack. On June 6, 1978, Kreiger met with five others and the Wolfe Pack was established. Awards were first given the following year.

1979	Larry Block	<i>The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling</i>
1980	Helen McCloy	<i>Burn This</i>
1981	Amanda Cross	<i>Death in a Tenured Position</i>
1982	Hugh Pentecost	<i>Past, Present, and Murder</i>
1983	Martha Grimes	<i>The Anodyne Necklace</i>
1984	Jane Langton	<i>Emily Dickinson Is Dead</i>
1985	Dick Lochte	<i>Sleeping Dog</i>
1986	Robert Goldsborough	<i>Murder in E Minor</i>
1987	Charlotte MacLeod	<i>The Corpse in Oozak's Pond</i>
1991	Tony Hillerman	<i>Coyote Waits</i>
1992	Robert Barnard	<i>A Scandal in Belgravia</i>
1993	John Dunning	<i>Booked to Die</i>
1994	Aaron Elkins	<i>Old Scores</i>
1995	Sharyn McCrumb	<i>She Walks These Hills</i>
1996	Laurie R. King	<i>A Monstrous Regiment of Women</i>
1997	Michael Connelly	<i>The Poet</i>
1998	Dennis Lehane	<i>Sacred</i>
2006	Tess Gerritsen	<i>Vanish</i>

SHAMUS AWARDS

The Private Eye Writers of America recognizes excellence in the private investigator (P.I.) genre. Created in 1981 by Robert J. Randisi, the group defines private eye mysteries as those in which the protagonist is a professional private investigator and not a police officer or a government agent. Categories for this award are best P.I. novel, best P.I. paperback original, best P.I. first novel, and best P.I. short story.

BEST P.I. HARDCOVER NOVEL

1982	Bill Pronzini	<i>Hoodwink</i>
1983	Lawrence Sanders	<i>Eight Million Ways to Die</i>
1984	Max Allan Collins	<i>True Detective</i>
1985	Loren D. Estleman	<i>Sugartown</i>

1986	Sue Grafton	<i>"B" Is for Burglar</i>
1987	Jeremiah Healy	<i>The Staked Goat</i>
1988	Benjamin Schutz	<i>A Tax in Blood</i>
1989	John Lutz	<i>Kiss</i>
1990	Jonathan Valin	<i>Extenuating Circumstances</i>
1991	Sue Grafton	<i>"G" Is for Gumshoe</i>
1992	Max Allan Collins	<i>Stolen Away</i>
1993	Harold Adams	<i>The Man Who Was Taller than God</i>
1994	Lawrence Block	<i>The Devil Knows You're Dead</i>
1995	Sue Grafton	<i>"K" Is for Killer</i>
1996	S. J. Rozan	<i>Concourse</i>
1997	Robert Crais	<i>Sunset Express</i>
1998	Terrance Faherty	<i>Come Back Dead</i>
1999	Bill Pronzini	<i>Boobytrap</i>
2000	Don Winslow	<i>California Fire and Life</i>
2001	Carolina Garcia-Aguilera	<i>Havana Heat</i>
2002	S. J. Rozan	<i>Reflecting the Sky</i>
2003	James W. Hall	<i>Blackwater Sound</i>
2004	Ken Bruen	<i>The Guards</i>
2005	Ed Wright	<i>While I Disappear</i>
2006	Michael Connelly	<i>The Lincoln Lawyer</i>

BEST P.I. PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

1982	Max Byrd	<i>California Thriller</i>
1983	William Campbell Gault	<i>The CANA Diversion</i>
1984	Paul Engleman	<i>Dead in Centerfield</i>
1985	Warren Murphy	<i>Ceiling of Hell</i>
1986	Earl Emerson	<i>Poverty Bay</i>
1987	Rob Kantner	<i>The Back Door Man</i>
1988	L. J. Washburn	<i>Wild Night</i>
1989	Rob Kantner	<i>Dirty Work</i>
1990	Rob Kantner	<i>Hell's Only Half Full</i>
1991	W. Glen Duncan	<i>Rafferty: Fatal Sisters</i>
1992	Paul Kemprecos	<i>Cool Blue Tomb</i>
1993	Marele Day	<i>The Last Tango of Delores Delgado</i>
1994	Rodman Philbrick	<i>Brothers and Sinners</i>
1995	Denis Lehane	<i>A Drink Before the War</i>
1996	William Jaspersohn	<i>Native Angels</i>
1997	Harland Coben	<i>Fade Away</i>
1998	Laura Lippman	<i>Charm City</i>
1999	Steve Womack	<i>Murder Manuel</i>
2000	Laura Lippman	<i>In Big Trouble</i>
2001	Thomas Lipinski	<i>Death in the Steel City</i>

2002	Lyda Morehouse	<i>Archangel Protocol</i>
2003	D. Daniel Judson	<i>The Poisoned Rose</i>
2004	Andy Stratka	<i>Cold Quarry</i>
2005	Max Phillips	<i>Fade to Blonde</i>
2006	Reed Farrell Coleman	<i>The James Deans</i>

BEST P.I. FIRST NOVEL

1985	Jack Early	<i>A Creative Kind of Killer</i>
1986	Wayne Warga	<i>Hardcover</i>
1987	J. W. Rider	<i>Jersey Tomatoes</i>
1988	Michael Allegretto	<i>Death on the Rocks</i>
1989	Gar Anthony Haywood	<i>Fear of the Dark</i>
1990	Karen Kijewski	<i>Katwalk</i>
1991	Walter Mosely	<i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i>
1992	Thomas Davis	<i>Suffer Little Children</i>
1993	John Straley	<i>The Woman Who Married a Bear</i>
1994	Lynn Hightower	<i>Satan's Lambs</i>
1995	Dennis Lehane	<i>A Drink Before the War</i>
1996	Richard Barre	<i>The Innocents</i>
1997	Carol Lea Benjamin	<i>This Dog for Hire</i>
1998	Rick Riordan	<i>Big Red Tequila</i>
1999	Steve Hamilton	<i>A Cold Day in Paradise</i>
2000	John Connolly	<i>Every Dead Thing</i>
2001	Bob Truluck	<i>Street Level</i>
2002	David Fulmer	<i>Chasing the Devil's Tail</i>
2003	Eddie Muller	<i>The Distance</i>
2004	Peter Spiegelman	<i>Black Maps</i>
2005	Ingrid Black	<i>The Dead</i>
2006	Louise Ure	<i>Forcing Amaryllis</i>

BEST P.I. SHORT STORY

1983	John Lutz	"What You Don't Know Can Hurt You"
1984	Bill Pronzini	"Cat's Paw"
1985	Lawrence Block	"By the Dawn's Early Light"
1986	Loren D. Estleman	"Eight Mile and Dequindre"
1987	Rob Kantner	"Fly Away Home"
1988	Ed Gorman	"Turn Away"
1989	Loren D. Estleman	"The Crooked Way"
1990	Mickey Spillane	"The Killing Man"
1991	Marcia Muller	"Final Resting Place"
1992	Nancy Pickard	"Dust Devil"
1993	Benjamin Schutz	"Mary, Mary, Shut the Door"

MAJOR AWARDS*Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*

1994	Lawrence Block	“The Merciful Angel of Death”
1995	Brendan DuBois	“Necessary Brother”
1996	Gar Anthony Haywood	“And Pray Nobody Sees You”
1997	Lia Matera	“Dead Drunk”
1998	Carolyn Wheat	“Love Me for My Yellow Hair Alone”
1999	Warren Murphy	“Another Day, Another Dollar”
2000	I. J. Parker	“Akitada’s First Case”
2001	Brendan Dubois	“The Road’s End”
2002	Ceri Jordan	“Rough Justice”
2003	Terence Faherty	“The Second Coming”
2004	Loren D. Estleman	“Lady on Ice”
2005	Pearl Abraham	“Hasidic Noir”
2006	Michael Wiecek	“A Death in Ueno”

THE SHAMUS EYE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

1982	Ross Macdonald
1983	Mickey Spillane
1984	William Campbell Gault
1985	Howard Browne
1986	Richard H. Prather
1987	Bill Pronzini
1988	Dennis Lynds
	Wade Miller (Robert Wade and Bob Miller)
1991	Roy Huggins
1992	Joseph Hansen
1993	Marcia Muller
1994	Stephen J. Cannell
1995	John Lutz
	Robert B. Parker
1997	Stephen Marlowe
1999	Maxine O’Callaghan
2000	Edward D. Hoch
2002	Lawrence Block
2004	Donald E. Westlake
2006	Max Allan Collins

Victoria Price

CRIME AND DETECTIVE FICTION TIME LINE

Authors whose last names appear in SMALL CAPS are subjects of articles.

- 1794 British radical philosopher William GODWIN's *Things as They Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* is the first modern detective story.
- 1827 The anonymously published *Richmond: Or, Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Officer, Drawn from Private Memoranda* is the first novel to present a police officer as a detective.
- 1828-1829 *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827* exaggerates the exploits of the brigade of the Sûreté officer François-Eugène VIDOCQ.
- 1830 Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Paul Clifford* introduces the era of "Newgate novels" (c. 1830-1847), scandalous for their sympathetic portrayal of the poor and criminals.
- 1834 The publication of Harrison Ainsworth's *Rookwood* and later *Jack Sheppard* (1839), both about highwaymen, marks the graduation of common criminal protagonists from crude "gallows literature" for the poor to novels intended for the middle class.
- 1834-1835 Honoré de BALZAC's *Daddy Goriot* includes a character named Bibi-Lupin, a former convict turned police officer based on VIDOCQ.
- 1836 William GODWIN dies.
- 1837-1839 Charles DICKENS's *Oliver Twist* stirs controversy because of its underworld setting, violence, and sympathy for juvenile criminals; its popularity leads to at least six theatrical versions by year's end.
- 1838 Joseph Sheridan LE FANU's "A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess" is the earliest known use of a crime in a supposedly impossible, or locked-room, situation.
- 1841 Edgar Allan POE's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" introduces detective C. Auguste Dupin.
- 1842 London's Scotland Yard creates the Detective Department.
Edgar Allan POE transports the real-life murder story of Mary Rogers from New York to Paris, where Dupin solves the crime in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt."
- 1843 Edgar Allan POE's "The Gold Bug" introduces ciphers to detective fiction.
- 1846 Some reviewers consider Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Lucretia: Or, The Children of the Night* to be a serious offense against morality; it is based on real crimes by poisoner Thomas Griffith Wainwright.
- 1849 Edgar Allan POE dies.
- 1852-1853 Charles DICKENS's *Bleak House* introduces Inspector Bucket, based on a real Scotland Yard detective.
- 1857 François-Eugène VIDOCQ dies.
- 1859 Charles DICKENS's "Hunted Down" is based on a murder committed by poisoner Thomas Griffith Wainwright.
- 1860 Wilkie COLLINS's *The Woman in White*, a romantic suspense novel, highlights the unfair legal treatment of women.
In America, the era of the dime novel (c. 1860-1915) begins when Irwin P. Beadle launches *Beadle's Dime Novels*, which emphasize Western characters; however, detectives soon dominate.

- 1861 *The Lady Detective*, a novel, is published anonymously.
Ellen Price Wood, writing as Mrs. Henry Wood, publishes *East Lynn*, among the first of the “sensation novels” focusing on crimes by and against women.
- 1862 The most famous sensation novel, M. E. BRADDON’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*, is published.
Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* tells of the pursuit of a reformed convict by an unrelenting police officer.
- 1863 Hawkshaw the detective, a character in Tom Taylor’s drama *The Ticket of Leave Man*, is among the earliest detectives on the American stage.
- 1864 *Uncle Silas* is published; it becomes one of Joseph Sheridan LE FANU’s best-known works.
- 1865 Louisa May ALCOTT’s “V. V.: Or, Plots and Counterplots” introduces detective Antoine Deprès, modeled on Edgar Allan POE’s Dupin.
- 1866 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKI publishes *Crime and Punishment*.
Writing as Seeley Regester, Metta Victor publishes *The Dead Letter*, the first fully developed American detective novel.
Émile GABORIAU’s *The Widow Lerouge* features Lecoq, a detective modeled on both Vidocq and Dupin.
- 1868 Wilkie COLLINS’s *The Moonstone* introduces Sergeant Cuff, based on an actual police officer involved in the sensational Constance Kent murder case.
- 1869 Émile GABORIAU’s *Monsieur Lecoq* appears.
- 1870 Charles DICKENS dies, leaving *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* unfinished; many authors will offer solutions.
- 1875 Wilkie COLLINS’s *The Law and the Lady* presents an intelligent and courageous female investigator, intent on setting aside a verdict against her husband.
- 1878 Anna Katharine GREEN’s *The Leavenworth Case*, featuring police detective Ebenezer Gryce, is a best seller.
- 1879 *Three Heroes and Five Gallants* is among the first Chinese crime novels to be lithographed for comparatively wide circulation; its protagonist is the legendary eleventh century Judge Bao Zheng.
- 1881 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKI dies.
- 1882 Judson R. Taylor introduces one of the earliest Native American sleuths in *Phil Scott, the Indian Detective: A Tale of Startling Mysteries*.
Mark TWAIN’s “The Stolen White Elephant” burlesques detective stories.
- 1883 A story in Mark TWAIN’s *Life on the Mississippi* incorporates one of the earliest fictional uses of fingerprint identification.
- 1885 Robert Louis STEVENSON publishes *The Body Snatcher*, based on actual serial murders by William Burke and William Hare in 1828 in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 1886 John Russell Coryell introduces pulp fiction hero Nick CARTER in *Street and Smith’s New York Weekly*; many authors write later Carter stories.
Robert Louis STEVENSON’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* appears.
Fergus Hume’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* is a best seller.
- 1887 Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE introduces Sherlock Holmes in “A Study in Scarlet” in *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*.
Popular actor Richard Mansfield stars in the first stage version of Robert Louis STEVENSON’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

- The publication of Emilio de Marchi's *The Priest's Hat* marks the beginning of Italian crime fiction.
- Expiation* is E. Phillips OPPENHEIM's first novel.
- 1889 Wilkie COLLINS dies.
Originally written in English and published in England, Maarten Maarten's *The Black Box Murder* is probably the first detective novel by a Dutch author.
- 1891 George Newnes, Ltd., begins publication of the *Strand Magazine* (1891-1950); although initially successful, its lasting popularity is assured by its publication of Sherlock Holmes stories (1891-1950).
- 1892 Israel ZANGWILL's *The Big Bow Mystery* is the first novel to use the locked-room device.
Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is the first collection of Holmes stories.
- 1893 Gilbert Parker in *Pierre and His People* is among the first to chronicle the adventures of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, then called the Northwest Mounted Police.
Private investigator Sexton Blake appears; the first story was written by Harry Blyth for young people and published in *Halfpenny Marvel*, but Blake becomes the protagonist of more than four thousand episodes for adults, written by many authors.
Tired of being identified with Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE causes the detective to fall to his death in "The Adventure of the Final Problem," published in the *Strand Magazine*, resulting in great public outrage and thousands of canceled subscriptions.
- 1894 Robert Louis STEVENSON dies.
Catherine Louisa Pirkis creates a professional female detective in stories collected as *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*.
- 1896 Melville Davisson POST introduces an unscrupulous criminal lawyer as a protagonist in *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*.
Mark TWAIN publishes *Tom Sawyer, Detective*.
Publisher Frank A. Munsey converts *Argosy* from a juvenile publication to the first pulp magazine for adults (1896-1943; men's magazine 1943-1978).
- 1897 Anna Katharine GREEN introduces single female detective Amelia Butterworth in *That Affair Next Door*; the most fully developed female detective up to this time, Butterworth will inspire Agatha CHRISTIE.
Grant ALLEN creates a swindler hero, Colonel Clay, in *An African Millionaire*.
- 1899 Actor William Gillette, who will become identified with Sherlock Holmes on stage, screen, and radio, first appears on stage in *Sherlock Holmes* in Buffalo, New York.
A. J. Raffles, gentleman burglar, appears in stories collected as *The Amateur Cracksman* by E. W. HORNUNG.
- 1900 Douglas Blackburn's *Kruger's Secret Services* is among the first crime novels set in modern Africa.
Biograph releases a thirty-five-second film of *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*.
- 1901 African American writer Pauline Hopkins's *Hagar's Daughter, A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice*, serialized in *Colored American Magazine* (1901-1902), is probably the first novel to introduce a detective as a key figure in a story of complex racial relationships.
- 1901-1902 Sherlock Holmes returns in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- 1902 Mark TWAIN's *A Double-Barrelled Detective Story* parodies Sherlock Holmes.
- 1905 Director Edwin S. Porter films *The Life of an American Policeman*.

- Edgar WALLACE's *Four Just Men* begins a series of novels about men who punish criminals the law cannot or will not touch.
- 1906 Jacques FUTRELLE's Augustus F. X. Van Dusen ("the Thinking Machine") stories are collected in *The Chase of the Golden Plate*.
- Robert BARR introduces one of the first comic detectives in *The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont*.
- 1907 Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the story of terrorists in London, is based on an 1894 incident at Greenwich, England.
- The first genuinely scientific detective, R. Austin FREEMAN's Dr. John Thorndyke, appears in *The Red Thumb Mark*.
- Joseph Rouletabille, investigative reporter, solves the crime in Gaston LEROUX's *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*.
- 1908 Mary Roberts RINEHART publishes *The Circular Staircase*, which becomes her most famous novel.
- 1909 Carolyn Wells introduces detective Fleming Stone in *The Clue*.
- Mary Roberts RINEHART's *The Man in Lower Ten* becomes a best seller.
- Private investigator Sexton Blake first appears in the English silent film *Sexton Blake*; it is the first of many appearances of this character on film, radio, and television.
- Pioneer film director D. W. Griffith films *Edgar Allan Poe*, showing POE's "The Raven" poem sold for too little cash as Poe's young wife dies.
- 1910 Mark TWAIN dies.
- H. B. Warner stars in the theatrical success *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, adapted by Paul Armstrong from O. HENRY's story "A Retrieved Reformation."
- D. W. Griffith's films *A Child of the Ghetto* and later *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912) are among the first to depict urban gangs.
- At the Villa Rose* introduces A. E. W. MASON's French Inspector Hanaud.
- Baroness ORCZY's stories about Lady Molly Robertson-Kirk, a detective, are collected as *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*.
- 1911 The first collection of G. K. CHESTERTON's Father Brown stories appears as *The Innocence of Father Brown*.
- Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre's *Fantômas*, a film featuring a masked villain, is a sensation in France, with thirty-one eventual sequels and five films in 1913 and 1914 alone.
- 1912 Jacques FUTRELLE dies in the sinking of the *Titanic*.
- R. Austin FREEMAN invents the inverted detective novel (the reader knows the criminal from the beginning) in "The Case of Oscar Brodski," published in *The Singing Bone*.
- 1913 Earl Derr BIGGERS publishes the immensely popular *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, which George M. Cohan immediately adapts to a successful play.
- Marie Belloc LOWNDES rewrites her 1911 story "The Lodger" now as a novel.
- Mystery writer Carolyn Wells publishes *The Technique of the Mystery Story* (revised 1929), the earliest known instruction book for mystery writers.
- E. C. BENTLEY presents flawed, fallible detective Philip Trent in *Trent's Last Case*.
- Sax ROHMER collects stories about a criminal organization intent on world conquest in *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*.
- 1914 Ernest BRAMAH's stories about blind Max Carrados, the first severely disabled detective, are published as *Max Carrados*.

- 1915 Anna Katharine GREEN introduces a debutante detective in *The Golden Slipper and Other Problems for Violet Strange*.
Richard Hannay, a South African mining engineer, is featured in John BUCHAN's best-known work, *The Thirty-nine Steps*.
Street and Smith launches *Detective Story Magazine* (1915-1949).
- 1916 William Gillette stars in the film version of *Sherlock Holmes*.
Arthur B. REEVE's *Constance Dunlap: Woman Detective* presents a criminal turned sleuth.
- 1918 Melville Davisson POST develops historical mysteries; his *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries*, a collection of stories, describes life on the Virginia frontier at the time of Thomas Jefferson.
Boston Blackie's Little Pal begins a film series that will continue until 1927 and be revived during the 1940's.
- 1919 *Boston Blackie*, a film based on Jack Boyle's character, is released.
- 1920 H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan launch *Black Mask* magazine (1920-1951).
Marie Belloc LOWNDES's detective Hercule Poirot appears in *The Lonely House*, inspiring Agatha CHRISTIE's Hercule Poirot.
H. C. BAILEY introduces forensic pathologist Reggie Fortune in stories collected as *Call Mr. Fortune*.
Tutt and Mr. Tutt is the first collection of Arthur Train's stories about lawyer sleuth Ephraim Tutt.
Herman Cyrile McNeile, writing as SAPPER, publishes the first Bulldog Drummond novel, *Bulldog Drummond: The Adventures of a Demobilized Officer Who Found Peace Dull*.
The Bat, a play based on Mary Roberts RINEHART's *The Circular Staircase*, opens in New York.
John Barrymore stars in film version of Robert Louis STEVENSON's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
Agatha CHRISTIE's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, introduces Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.
- 1922 Agatha CHRISTIE introduces detectives Thomas and Prudence Beresford, known as Tommy and Tuppence, in *The Secret Adversary*.
Among the first comic horror plays is John Clawson Willard's *The Cat and the Canary*, opening in Washington, D. C. (A 1939 film version stars Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard.)
Winnie-the-Pooh author A. A. MILNE publishes *The Red House Mystery*.
Carroll John DALY's "The False Burton Combs," published in *Black Mask*, is considered the first modern private eye story.
John Barrymore stars in the film *Sherlock Holmes*.
- 1923 *The Step on the Stair* is Anna Katharine GREEN's last novel.
Dorothy L. SAYERS introduces detective Lord Peter Wimsey in *Whose Body?*
- 1924 Edgar WALLACE's mild-mannered, dangerous detective J. G. Reeder appears in *Room 13*.
John RHODE's *A.S.F.: The Story of a Great Conspiracy (The White Menace)* is among the first thrillers to deal with cocaine smuggling.
Silent-film comedian Buster Keaton stars in *Sherlock, Jr.*, as a movie projectionist who yearns to be a detective.
Philip MacDonald's *The Rasp* introduces Colonel Anthony Gethryn, publisher, whose mission is to anticipate crimes before they occur.
- 1925 John RHODES introduces professor detective Dr. Lancelot Priestley in *The Paddington Mystery*, first of a seventy-two volume series.

- Charlie Chan of the Honolulu police first appears in Earl Derr BIGGERS's *The House Without a Key*.
- Monsignor Ronald A. KNOX, who later develops rules for detective story writing, publishes his first novel, *The Viaduct Murder*.
- 1926 S. S. VAN DINE introduces erudite detective Philo Vance in *The Benson Murder Case*. Agatha CHRISTIE's innovative use of the narrator of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as the murderer upsets many critics.
- 1927 Alfred Hitchcock's film of Marie Belloc LOWNDES's *The Lodger* is released; Ivor Novello stars. *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* is the final collection of Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE's Holmes stories.
- J. B. PRIESTLEY publishes his first mystery, *Benighted (The Old Dark House)*.
- The release of *Underworld*, a film based on journalist, author, and playwright Ben Hecht's story and directed by Joseph von Sternberg, initiates an era of gangster films.
- 1928 Patricia WENTWORTH's retired governess and private investigator Maud Silver debuts in *Grey Mask*.
- W. Somerset MAUGHAM publishes *Ashenden; Or, The British Agent*, a fictionalized account of his work for British intelligence.
- Charles Laughton is the first actor to portray Agatha CHRISTIE's Hercule Poirot in the London play *Alibi*, adapted by Michael Morton from *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Harley Quin, Christie's mysterious detective, appears, with his name slightly changed, in the first film of her work, *The Passing of Mr. Quinn*.
- Two book clubs, the Crime Club and the Detective Story Club (purchased by Crime Club in 1930), are established to market crime and detective fiction.
- Mystery writer Anthony BERKELEY launches the Detection Club for British writers committed to traditional detective stories.
- Leslie CHARTERIS's *Meet the Tiger* introduces the Saint, Simon Templar.
- Josephine TEY's *The Man in the Queue* introduces Detective Alan Grant.
- 1929 *The Roman Hat Mystery* by Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee writing as Ellery Queen introduces detective Ellery QUEEN.
- Gladys MITCHELL's psychiatrist detective Dame Beatrice Adela Lestrangle Bradley is introduced in *Speedy Death*.
- William Powell and Louis Brooks star in the first Philo Vance film, *The Canary Murder Case*.
- W. R. BURNETT publishes *Little Caesar*; in 1931, starring Edward G. Robinson, it becomes the first major gangster film.
- Margery ALLINGHAM's Albert Campion appears in *The Crime at Black Dudley*.
- Ronald Colman stars in *Bulldog Drummond*, based on the fiction of SAPPER.
- 1929-1930 Dashiell HAMMETT publishes *The Maltese Falcon*, his only novel about Sam Spade.
- 1930 Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE and Melville Davisson POST die.
- Agatha CHRISTIE introduces detective Jane Marple in *The Murder at the Vicarage*; her first play, *Black Coffee*, opens in London.
- The Shadow* (1930-1954) is first broadcast on the radio; William Gillette stars in the opening episode of the *Sherlock Holmes* radio series (1930-1935, 1936, 1939-1946).
- H. C. BAILEY introduces unethical, Bible-quoting attorney Joshua Clunk in *Garstons (The Garston Murder Case)*.

- New York Police Inspector Christopher McKee appears in Helen REILLY's *The Diamond Feather*.
- 1931 *Public Enemy*, one of the most influential gangster films, stars James Cagney. Peter Lorre becomes an international star for his portrayal of a child murderer in the German film *M*, directed by Fritz Lang.
- In France, Georges SIMENON's Inspector Jules Maigret appears in a series of stories and novels beginning with *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett (Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett)*. Two humorous detectives are introduced: Asey Mayo (Cape Cod's "Codfish Sherlock") in Phoebe Atwood TAYLOR's *The Cape Cod Mystery* and unmarried schoolteacher Hildegard Withers in Stuart PALMER's *The Penguin Pool Murder*.
- H. Douglas Thomson's *Masters of Mystery: A Study of the Detective Story* is the first full-length treatment of the genre.
- Edgar WALLACE writes dialogue for first sound motion picture version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, starring Robert Rendell.
- 1932 Edgar WALLACE dies.
- Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies* introduces Harlem detective Perry Dart. *Dime Detective* magazine (1932-1953) begins publication.
- Miss Pinkerton* introduces Mary Roberts RINEHART's nurse detective Hilda Adams.
- Bela Lugosi stars in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, a film version of Edgar Allan POE's work; Paul Muni stars in Howard Hughes's *Scarface*, an Al Capone film based on a W. R. BURNETT story; and Frederic March wins an Academy Award for his role in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, released in 1931 and based on Robert Louis STEVENSON's book.
- Graham GREENE publishes *Stamboul Train (Orient Express)*.
- 1933 Earl Derr BIGGERS dies.
- First broadcast is made of the popular radio series *Calling All Cars* (1933-1939).
- John Dickson CARR's Dr. Gideon Fell is introduced in *Hag's Nook*.
- Earl Stanley GARDNER publishes the first Perry Mason novel, *The Case of the Velvet Claws*.
- Sherlock Holmes admirers found the Baker Street Irregulars.
- 1934 Dashiell HAMMETT publishes his last novel, *The Thin Man*, featuring Nick and Nora Charles. Rex STOUT launches the partnership of Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin in *Fer-de-Lance (Meet Nero Wolfe)*.
- William Powell and Myrna Loy star in Hammett's *The Thin Man*, the first of six Thin Man films.
- John Dickson CARR's Sir Henry Merrivale first appears in *The Plague Court Murders*. The Sherlock Holmes Society (later the Sherlock Holmes Society of London) is founded.
- James M. CAIN publishes *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, which becomes his most successful novel.
- New Zealand novelist Ngaio MARSH introduces detective Roderick Alleyn in *A Man Lay Dead*.
- 1935 Anna Katharine GREEN dies.
- G. K. CHESTERTON's final collection of Father Brown stories is *The Scandal of Father Brown*. Future English poet laureate C. Day Lewis, writing as Nicholas BLAKE, begins his detective series featuring Nigel Strangeways with *A Question of Proof*.
- John Dickson CARR's *The Three Coffins* includes a lengthy lecture by Dr. Fell on devices used to create locked-room effect.
- Donald Cook stars in *The Spanish Cape Mystery*, the first of many Ellery QUEEN films.

- 1936 The radio series *Gangbusters* (1935-1957) begins, presenting dramatic versions of real crimes.
G. K. CHESTERTON dies.
Michael INNES introduces detective John Appleby in *Death at the President's Lodging* (*Seven Suspects*).
Graham GREENE publishes *A Gun for Sale* (*This Gun for Hire*).
Eric AMBLER's first thriller, *The Dark Frontier*, anticipates nuclear weapons.
Bette Davis and Warren William star in *Satan Met a Lady*, based on Dashiell HAMMETT's *The Maltese Falcon*.
Alfred Hitchcock films W. Somerset MAUGHAM's *Ashenden* as *The Secret Agent*.
- 1937 Rex STOUT introduces Theodolinda Bonner, who, with a female partner, runs a New York City detective agency, in *The Hand in the Glove* (*Crime on Her Hands*).
Hitchcock films Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* as *Sabotage* (*The Woman Alone*).
Love from a Stranger, starring Basil Rathbone and Ann Harding, is the first Agatha CHRISTIE film to be released in the United States.
Anthony BOUCHER publishes his first mystery, *The Case of the Seven of Calvary*, with Sanskrit professor Dr. John Ashwin.
The radio series *Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons* (1937-1955) begins.
New series characters include Leslie Ford's Colonel John Primrose (who appeared alone in her 1934 *The Strangled Witness*) and Grace Latham in *Ill Met by Moonlight* and retired professor Leonidas Witherall in Phoebe Atwood TAYLOR's *Beginning with a Bash*.
- 1938 The Great Merlini, protagonist of Clayton Rawson's first novel, *Death from a Top Hat*, is a magician who runs a magic shop on New York's Times Square.
Helen McCloy introduces psychiatrist detective Dr. Basil Willing in *Dance of Death* (*Design for Dying*).
Daphne DU MAURIER publishes *Rebecca*.
Introducing the Toff features John CREASEY's Hon. Richard "The Toff" Rollisson.
S. S. VAN DINE's *The Gracie Allen Murder Case* (*The Smell of Murder*) is among the first celebrity fiction murder cases.
- 1939 S. S. VAN DINE dies.
Writing as A. A. Fair, Erle Stanley GARDNER introduces Bertha Cool, head of a detective agency, and her employee Donald Lam in *The Bigger They Come*.
Anthony BOUCHER's Irish investigator Fergus O'Brien first appears in *The Case of the Crumpled Knave*.
New radio series include *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, at first written by the Ellery QUEEN partnership of Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee (1939-1948), *Mr. District Attorney* (1938-1952), and *I Love a Mystery* (1939-1952).
Raymond CHANDLER's Philip Marlowe is introduced in *The Big Sleep*.
Craig RICE's series characters Jake and Helene Justus and Chicago attorney John J. Malone first appear in *Eight Faces at Three* (*Death at Three*).
Brett HALLIDAY's *Dividend on Death* is his first novel about private investigator Michael Shayne; Halliday quits writing the series in 1958, but ghostwritten works continue until 1976.
Elliot Paul's *The Mysterious Mickey Finn; Or, Murder at the Café du Dôme* features detective Homer Evans, an American living in Paris.
The first Nick CARTER film, *Nick Carter, Master Detective*, stars Walter Pidgeon.

- Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce appear as Sherlock Holmes and Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, initiating a Twentieth Century-Fox series. Eric AMBLER's *A Coffin for Dimitrios (A Mask for Dimitrios)* is published; it will be his most famous novel.
- Dealing with a man's attempt to drive his wife insane, Patrick Hamilton's play *Gas Light* opens in London; as *Angel Street*, it opens in New York in 1941; and it is filmed as *Gaslight* (1944) with Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer.
- 1940 Cornell WOOLRICH publishes his first suspense novel, *The Bride Wore Black*.
New series characters include Anthony BOUCHER's Sister Ursula in *Nine Times Nine*, Elizabeth DALY's author and bibliophile detective Henry Gamadge in *Unexpected Night*, and Pam and Jerry North in Frances LOCKRIDGE and Richard LOCKRIDGE's *The Norths Meet Murder*.
- 1941 *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* begins publication.
Striptease artist Gypsy Rose Lee publishes *The G-String Murders*, ghostwritten by Craig RICE. New radio series include *The Adventures of the Thin Man*, based on Dashiell HAMMETT's characters (1941-1950), and *Bulldog Drummond* (1941-1949, 1954), based on a character created by SAPPER.
Margaret MILLAR begins her writing career with *The Invisible Worm*, featuring psychoanalyst Dr. Paul Prye.
Christianna BRAND's Inspector Cockrill's first case is *Death in High Heels*.
Helen MACINNES publishes her first espionage novel, *Above Suspicion*.
Howard Haycraft's *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story* is the first full-length American study of the mystery genre.
Director John Huston films Dashiell HAMMETT's *The Maltese Falcon* starring Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Sidney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.
- 1942 Charlotte ARMSTRONG's first mystery novel, *Lay on, Mac Duff!*, introduces detective Macdougall Duff.
The radio series *Suspense* (1942-1962) begins; a single episode, aired in 1940, stars Herbert Marshall in an adaptation of Marie Belloc LOWNDES's *The Lodger*. Another new series is *Mr. and Mrs. North* (1942-1954), based on the novels by Frances LOCKRIDGE and Richard LOCKRIDGE.
Major crime films include *Journey into Fear* with Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton, the first filming of an Eric AMBLER novel, and *This Gun for Hire* with Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake, based on Graham GREENE's *A Gun for Sale*.
Jorge Luis BORGES's story "Death and the Compass" appears in *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi*.
- 1943 George Harmon COXE's "Flashgun" Casey first appears in a novel, *Silent Are the Dead*.
Vera CASPARY publishes *Laura*, which will become her most famous work.
New radio series include *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1943-1955); *Casey, Crime Photographer* (1943-1950); *The Falcon* (1943, 1945-1952, 1953-1954), based on a 1940 Michael Arlen story "Gay Falcon"; and *Perry Mason* (1943-1955).
Agnes Moorehead's performance in "Sorry, Wrong Number" on *Suspense* is considered outstanding and frequently repeated.
- 1944 Edmund CRISPIN introduces detective Professor Gervase Fen in *The Case of the Gilded Fly (Obsequies at Oxford)*.
Actor George Sanders publishes *Crime on My Hands*, ghostwritten by Craig RICE.

- Director Billy Wilder's film *Double Indemnity*, based on the James M. CAIN novel, stars Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray, and Edward G. Robinson.
- Raymond CHANDLER's "The Simple Art of Murder" appears in *The Atlantic Monthly*.
- 1945 Ellery QUEEN partners Manfred B. Lee and Frederic Dannay found the Mystery Writers of America.
- René Clair directs the first film version of Agatha CHRISTIE's *And Then There Were None* with Barry Fitzgerald, Walter Huston, and Louis Hayward.
- Dashiell HAMMETT's Continental Op stories are collected in *The Continental Op*.
- Lawrence TREAT introduces the modern police procedural in "*V*" as in *Victim*.
- Craig RICE's *Home Sweet Homicide* (published 1944) is filmed with Lynn Bari, Randolph Scott, and Peggy Ann Garner starring; it becomes a box-office hit.
- 1946 Craig RICE is the first mystery writer to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine.
- J. B. PRIESTLEY's *An Inspector Calls*, his most famous crime play, opens in London.
- Baker Street Irregulars begin publication of *The Baker Street Journal*, dedicated to scholarship and information about Sherlock Holmes.
- A new radio series, *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, begins, based on Dashiell HAMMETT's detective.
- James M. CAIN's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is filmed with Lana Turner and John Garfield.
- Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall star in Howard Hawk's film version of Raymond CHANDLER's *The Big Sleep*.
- Lillian de la TORRE's historical detective stories are collected as *Dr. Sam Johnson, Detector*.
- Patricia MCGERR's *Pick Your Victim* is the first known novel in which suspense results from a problem with identifying the victim.
- 1947 Mickey SPILLANE's Mike Hammer novels begin with *I, the Jury*.
- New radio series include *Murder and Mr. Malone* (1947-1951), based on the fiction of Craig RICE.
- As a contribution to the eightieth birthday celebration of England's Queen Mother Mary, Agatha CHRISTIE writes "Three Blind Mice," the basis of her long-running drama *The Mousetrap*.
- David Lean films Charles DICKENS's *Oliver Twist* with Alec Guinness as Fagin.
- 1949 Agatha CHRISTIE's *Witness for the Prosecution* is first telecast in America with E. G. Marshall as the attorney.
- Ross MACDONALD, writing as John Macdonald, introduces detective Lew Archer in *The Moving Target*.
- Dutch diplomat Robert H. VAN GULIK translates an anonymous eighteenth century manuscript about the seventh century cases of magistrate Di Renjie as *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee* and begins to write and adapt other Judge Dee stories for Western readers.
- Alec Guinness plays eight characters in the comic murder film *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.
- William FAULKNER's rural attorney detective Gavin Stevens appears in stories collected as *Knight's Gambit*.
- Suspense* (1949-1964) and *Martin Kane, Private Eye* (1949-1954) are first televised.
- 1950 Patricia HIGHSMITH publishes the psychological thriller *Strangers on a Train*, which is filmed (1951) by Alfred Hitchcock, starring Robert Walker, Farley Granger, and Ruth Roman.
- Helen McCloy is the first woman president of Mystery Writers of America.
- John Huston films *The Asphalt Jungle*, based on W. R. BURNETT's 1949 novel.

- Television series *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* begins (1950-1959, 1975-1976).
 Fawcett Books introduces Gold Medal paperbacks, the first to include original works rather than reprints in an inexpensive format; the move increases circulation and attracts major crime writers.
- Graham GREENE publishes *The Third Man*, which had been released as a film with Orson Welles the previous year.
- Lawrence G. Blockman's stories about detective pathologist Dr. Daniel Webster Coffee are collected as *Diagnosis: Homicide*.
- 1951 Harold Q. Masur ghostwrites opera singer Helen Traubel's *The Metropolitan Opera Murders*.
 John Collier's short stories of fantasy and murder appear in *Fancies and Goodnights*.
- 1952 Agatha CHRISTIE's *The Mousetrap* opens in London to become the longest-running play in theatrical history.
 Jim THOMPSON creates a reputation as a master of noir writing with *The Killer Inside Me*.
 Gore Vidal, writing as Edgar BOX, publishes *Death in the Fifth Position*.
- 1953 *Manhunt*, a magazine devoted to tough private eye fiction, begins publication; a four-part serial by Mickey SPILLANE ensures its success (1953-1967).
 John CREASEY and others found the Crime Writers' Association.
 Agatha CHRISTIE's play *Witness for the Prosecution* opens in London.
 Ian FLEMING introduces James Bond in *Casino Royale*.
- 1954 Alfred Hitchcock films *Rear Window*, based on Cornell WOOLRICH's 1942 story "It Had to Be Murder," with James Stewart, Grace Kelly, and Raymond Burr.
 Sir Arthur Conan DOYLE's son Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson CARR collaborate on Sherlock Holmes stories published as *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*.
- 1955 Patricia HIGHSMITH introduces antihero Tom Ripley in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.
 The Crime Writers' Association gives its first award, the Crossed Red Herrings award, later changed to the CWA Gold Dagger award, then the Macallan Gold Dagger, and the Duncan Lawrie Dagger.
Alfred Hitchcock Presents is first televised with Alfred Hitchcock as master of ceremonies and original story editor (1955-1965, 1985-1986).
Dixon of Dock Green is British television's first long-running police procedural (1955-1976).
 John CREASEY, writing as J. J. Marris, introduces Scotland Yard Commander George Gideon in *Gideon's Day*.
 Edward D. HOCH begins an unusual writing career as one of the few authors to make a living primarily by writing short stories, first publishing "Village of the Dead" in *Famous Detective* magazine.
- 1956 Alan Hunter's Inspector George Gently first appears in *Gently Does It*.
 Ed MCBAIN's 87th Precinct novels begin with *Cop Hater*.
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine begins publication.
 Agatha CHRISTIE's Miss Marple makes her American television debut with "A Murder Is Announced" on *Goodyear Television Playhouse*, starring British entertainer Gracie Fields.
- 1957 Craig RICE and Dorothy L. SAYERS die.
 Craig RICE's *My Kingdom for a Hearse* is posthumously published.
 African American writer Chester HIMES, living in France, publishes *For Love of Imabelle (A Rage in Harlem)*; translated into French (1958), it brings Himes the Grand Prix de la Littérature Policière, marking the first time the award is given to an author who is not French.

- Raymond Burr plays *Perry Mason* in a new television series (1957-1966, 1973-1974).
 Billy Wilder directs a film of Agatha CHRISTIE's *Witness for the Prosecution* starring Marlene Dietrich, Charles Laughton, and Tyrone Power.
 Bill Knox's Glasgow, Scotland, Crime Squad officers Colin Thane and Phil Moss first appear in *Deadline for a Dream (In at the Kill)*.
- 1958
 Carroll John DALY and Mary Roberts RINEHART die.
 Graham GREENE publishes *Our Man in Havana*, filmed by Carol Reed in 1959 with Alec Guinness, Burl Ives, Maureen O'Hara, Ernie Kovacs, Noël Coward, and Ralph Richardson.
 Colin Watson introduces Inspector Purbright of Flaxborough, England, in *Coffin, Scarcely Used*.
- 1959
 Raymond CHANDLER dies.
 A. C. Baantjer launches a series featuring Amsterdam police inspector Jurriaan De Kok (or De Cock); the novels quickly become European best sellers but are not translated into English until 1992.
- 1960
 Robert BLOCH's novel and screenplay for *Psycho* are the basis for the Hitchcock film starring Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh.
 New series characters include Donald HAMILTON's spy Matt Helm in *Death of a Citizen* and Elizabeth LININGTON's (Dell Shannon's) Los Angeles police lieutenant Luis Mendoza in *Case Pending*.
- 1961
 Dashiell HAMMETT dies.
 Wall Street banker detective John Putnam Thatcher is introduced in Emma LATHEN's *Banking on Death*.
 John LE CARRÉ's George Smiley first appears in *Call for the Dead*.
- 1962
 William FAULKNER dies.
 P. D. JAMES introduces Scotland Yard Commander Adam Dalgliesh in *Cover Her Face*.
 Margaret Rutherford plays Agatha CHRISTIE's Miss Marple in *Murder She Said*, the first of four MGM Marple movies; Christie's Hercule Poirot makes his U.S. television debut in "Hercules Poirot" on *General Electric Theater*.
 British jockey Dick FRANCIS's first mystery is *Dead Cert*.
 Len DEIGHTON publishes *The Ipcress File*, his first espionage novel.
 Nicholas FREELING's Inspector Van der Valk first appears in *Love in Amsterdam (Death in Amsterdam)*.
- 1963
 Major genre films include the first James Bond film, *Dr. No*, with Ursula Andress and Sean Connery, and the first Pink Panther film with Peter Sellers and David Niven.
- 1964
 Ian FLEMING dies.
 Inspector Ganesh Ghote of the Bombay, India, police is introduced in H. R. F. KEATING's *The Perfect Murder*.
 Other new series characters include Amanda CROSS's Professor Kate Fansler in *In the Last Analysis*, Harry KEMELMAN's Rabbi David Small in *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late*, John D. MACDONALD's Travis McGee in *The Deep Blue Good-by*, Joyce PORTER's sloppy, greedy police officer Wilfred Dover in *Dover One*, and Ruth RENDELL's Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford in *From Doon with Death*.
- 1965
 Chester HIMES publishes *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, which becomes his best-known novel.
 John BALL introduces African American homicide detective Virgil Tibbs in *In the Heat of the Night*, which is filmed in 1967 and stars Sidney Poitier and Rod Steiger.

- Swedish writers Per WAHLÖÖ and Maj SJÖWALL create Stockholm detective Martin Beck in *Roseanna*.
- 1966 Margery ALLINGHAM dies.
New series characters include Catherine Aird's Detective Inspector C. D. Sloan in *The Religious Body*; George Baxt's gay African American homicide detective Pharoah Love in *A Queer Kind of Death*; Lilian Jackson BRAUN's newspaperman, Jim Qwilleran, and his cats in *The Cat Who Could Read Backwards*; and Jon CLEARY's Australian police Inspector Scobie Malone in *The High Commissioner*.
- 1967 Allen J. Hubin launches *The Armchair Detective* magazine.
E. V. CUNNINGHAM introduces nisei Zen Buddhist police officer Masao Masuto in *Samantha*. *Act of Fear* is the first novel featuring Michael COLLINS's one-armed Polish-Lithuanian private investigator Dan Fortune.
- 1968 Anthony BOUCHER dies.
Tom Stoppard's spoof of traditional country estate murders, *The Real Inspector Hound*, opens in London.
The television series *Hawaii Five-0* (1968-1980) begins.
W. J. BURLEY introduces Superintendent Charles Wycliffe in *Three-Toed Pussy*.
Peter DICKINSON's *The Glass-Sided Ants' Nest (Skin Deep)* features Scotland Yard's Superintendent James Pibble.
- 1969 Mario Puzo publishes *The Godfather*, a novel about the Mafia.
Collin Wilcox's *The Lonely Hunter* introduces former Detroit Lion homicide detective Frank Hastings.
- 1970 Erle Stanley GARDNER dies.
The first Bouchercon, or World Mystery Convention, honoring Anthony BOUCHER is held in Santa Monica, California.
Lawrence SANDERS (*The Anderson Tapes*) and Joseph Wambaugh (*The New Centurions*) publish their first novels.
Anthony SHAFFER's suspense play *Sleuth* opens in London and New York.
New series characters include Joseph HANSEN's homosexual insurance claims investigator Dave Brandstetter in *Fadeout*, Reginald HILL's Yorkshire police officers Andrew Dalziel and Peter Pascoe in *A Clubbable Woman*, Tony HILLERMAN's Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police in *The Blessing Way*, Peter LOVESEY's Victorian policemen Sergeant Richard Cribb and Constable Edward Thackeray in *Wobble to Death*, and Donald E. WESTLAKE's comic criminal bungler John Dortmunder in *The Hot Rock*.
- 1971 Manfred B. Lee of the Ellery QUEEN writing partnership dies.
Mystery writer Colin Watson publishes *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience*, a study of British mysteries.
MGM is first major studio to produce a film starring an African American detective; Richard Roundtree portrays John Shaft in *Shaft*, based on fiction by Ernest Tidyman.
James McCLURE's *The Steam Pig* introduces Afrikaner police lieutenant Tromp Kramer and African detective Micky Zondi.
The Swedish Academy of Detection awards its first Martin Beck award for best foreign novel.
Marian BABSON's first mystery, *Cover-Up Story*, features public relations specialists Douglas Perkins and Gerry Tate.

- Bill PRONZINI introduces his nameless San Francisco pulp magazine collector and detective in *The Snatch*.
- Frederick FORSYTH publishes *The Day of the Jackal*, about an assassination attempt on French president Charles de Gaulle.
- The *Columbo* television series (1971-1978, 1989-1991) begins. Its inverted mystery stories star Peter Falk as a disheveled Los Angeles police detective.
- 1972 Nicholas BLAKE dies.
- Julian SYMONS publishes *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel, A History (Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel)*, a nonfictional work about the mystery genre.
- Dilys Winn's Murder Ink in New York City is the first American bookstore to sell only crime and detective fiction.
- P. D. JAMES introduces private investigator Cordelia Gray in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*.
- Lillian O'Donnell's police detective Norah Mulcahaney first appears in *The Phone Calls*.
- Joe GORES's *Dead Skip* is the first novel about Daniel Kearney Associates, detectives who primarily repossess automobiles.
- Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* is made into an Academy Award-winning film by Francis Ford Coppola.
- 1973 John CREASEY dies.
- The Crime Writers' Association establishes an award for new writers called the John CREASEY Memorial Dagger, which later became the New Blood Dagger.
- Thomas and Tuppence Beresford are protagonists of Agatha CHRISTIE's final novel, *Postern of Fate*.
- Anthony BOUCHER's criticism is collected as *Multiplying Villainies: Selected Mystery Criticism, 1942-1968*.
- Tales of the Black Widowers* collects Isaac Asimov's dining-club mystery stories.
- Buddy Ebsen stars in the television series *Barnaby Jones* (1973-1980); Telly Savalas stars in *Kojak* (1973-1978).
- 1974 Robert BARNARD (*Death of an Old Goat*) and Stephen KING (*Carrie*) publish their first crime novels.
- Boston private investigator Spenser is introduced in Robert B. PARKER's *The Godwulf Manuscript*.
- Sidney Lumet directs a film of Agatha CHRISTIE's *Murder on the Orient Express* with Alfred Finney as Poirot, Lauren Bacall, Ingrid Bergman, Wendy Hiller, and John Gielgud.
- Roman Polanski directs *Chinatown*, a tribute to Raymond CHANDLER, starring Jack Nicholson and Faye Dunaway.
- James Garner stars as a private detective in television's *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980).
- 1975 Rex STOUT dies.
- Janet Rudolph launches Mystery Readers International.
- James Anderson's *The Affair of the Blood-Stained Egg* Cozy parodies English country house murders.
- Where Are the Children?* is Mary Higgins CLARK's first suspense novel.
- Hercule Poirot makes his final appearance in Agatha CHRISTIE's *Curtain*; his death is announced, and an obituary makes headlines in many newspapers, including *The New York Times*.

- New series characters include Simon BRETT's unsuccessful actor Charles Paris in *Cast, in Order of Disappearance*, Colin DEXTER's Inspector Morse in *Last Bus to Woodstock*, and Janwillem VAN DE WETERING's Amsterdam detectives Hank Grijpstra and Rinus de Gier in *Outsider in Amsterdam*.
- Television's *Barney Miller* (1975-1982) stars Hal Linden as a New York police captain.
- 1976 Agatha CHRISTIE dies.
Otto Penzler and Chris Steinbrenner publish *The Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*.
New series detectives include Lawrence BLOCK's Matt Scudder in *In the Midst of Death*, William W. BUCKLEY, Jr.'s CIA agent Blackford Oakes in *Saving the Queen*, Elizabeth PETERS's Victorian archaeologist Amelia Peabody in *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, and David Williams's British investment banker Mark Treasure in *Unholy Writ*.
- 1977 James M. CAIN and John Dickson CARR die.
Marcia Muller's series detective Sharon McCone, often described as the first contemporary woman private investigator, first appears in *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*.
Other new series characters include Lawrence BLOCK's burglar Bernie Rhodenbarr in *Burglars Can't Be Choosers*, Antonia FRASER's television journalist Jemima Shore in *Quiet as a Nun*, Jonathan GASH's antique dealer Lovejoy in *The Judas Pair*, Stuart M. KAMINSKY's celebrity private investigator Toby Peters in *Bullet for a Star*, Ralph MCINERNEY's Father Roger Dowling in *Her Death of Cold*, and Ellis PETER's medieval Brother Cadfael in *A Morbid Taste for Bones*.
- 1978 Admirers of Nero Wolfe form the Wolfe Pack.
Peter Ustinov plays Hercule Poirot in the film version of Agatha CHRISTIE's *Death on the Nile*; Vanessa Redgrave and Dustin Hoffman star in *Agatha*, based on Christie's brief disappearance during the 1920's.
John MORTIMER's Horace Rumpole stories are collected in *Rumpole of the Bailey*.
Charlotte MACLEOD's comic Christmas novel *Rest You Merry*, set at a rural Massachusetts agricultural college, introduces sleuth Professor Peter Shandy.
Ken FOLLETT publishes his first best seller, *Eye of the Needle*.
- 1979 Allen J. Hubin publishes *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction, 1749-1975*.
Malice Domestic presents the first Agatha Awards.
New series detectives include Margot Arnold's American anthropologist Penny Spring and Welsh archaeologist Sir Tobias Glendower in *Exit Actors, Dying*; Mark Hebdon's Chief Inspector Evariste Clovis Pel of Burgundy, France, in *Death Set to Music*; William X. Kienzle's Father Robert Koesler in *The Rosary Murders*; Charlotte MACLEOD's Sarah Kelling and her future husband, art investigator Max Bittersohn, in *The Family Vault*; James MELVILLE's Japanese police superintendent Tetsuo Otani in *The Wages of Zen*; and Anne Perry's Victorian police officer Thomas Pitt in *The Cater Street Hangman*.
- 1980 Alfred Hitchcock dies.
Angela Lansbury stars as Miss Marple in a film version of Agatha CHRISTIE's *The Mirror Crack'd* with Elizabeth Taylor, Tony Curtis, Rock Hudson, and Kim Novak.
The musical drama *Les Misérables*, adapted by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg from Victor Hugo's 1862 novel, opens in Paris.
Robert BARNARD publishes *A Talent to Deceive: An Appreciation of Agatha Christie*, the first book-length critical study of Christie.
Barbara D'Amato's first detective novel, *The Hands of Healing*, begins, in part, as a tribute to Agatha Christie.

- PBS begins the television series *Mystery!* with “She Fell Among Thieves,” a BBC adaptation of a novel by Dornford Yates.
- Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988) starring Tom Selleck is first televised.
- New series characters include Lisa CODY’s Anna Lee in *Dupe*, Loren D. ESTLEMAN’s Detroit investigator Amos Walker in *Motor City Blue*, and Tony HILLERMAN’s Navajo police Sergeant Jim Chee in *People of Darkness*.
- 1981 Umberto ECO publishes *The Name of the Rose*, a mystery that blends detectives and philosophy. *Hill Street Blues*, loosely based on Ed MCBAIN’s 87th Precinct novels, is first televised.
- Robert Randisi founds the Private Eye Writers of America.
- New series detectives include Sarah CAUDWELL’s Oxford medieval law specialist Hilary Tamar in *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, Martin Cruz Smith’s Moscow police officer Arkady Renko in *Gorky Park*, Susan Dunlap’s Berkeley, California, police officer Jill Smith in *Karma*, Ruth Dudley Edwards’s civil servant Robert Amiss in *Corridors of Death*, Martha GRIMES’s Detective Inspector Richard Jury and aristocrat Melrose Plant in *The Man with the Load of Mischief*, Margaret MARON’s New York City police officer Sigrid Harald in *One Coffee With*, Dorothy Simpson’s police inspector Luke Thanet in *The Night She Died*, and Peter Turnbull’s Glasgow, Scotland, P Division in *Deep and Crisp and Even*.
- 1982 Ellery QUEEN writing partner Frederic Dannay and Ngaio MARSH die.
- Light Thickens* marks the last appearance of Ngaio MARSH’s Roderick Alleyn.
- The Private Eye Writers of America presents the first Shamus awards.
- Entertainer Steve Allen’s novel *The Talk Show Murders* features Allen himself.
- Other new series characters include Aaron ELKINS’s anthropologist Gideon Oliver in *Fellowship of Fear*, Sue GRAFTON’s Kinsey Millhone in “A” *Is for Alibi*, Sara PARETSKY’s Chicago investigator V. I. Warshawski in *Indemnity Only*, and Julie SMITH’s San Francisco attorney Rebecca Schwartz in *Death Turns a Trick*.
- The television series *Cagney and Lacey* is the first to feature two female detectives as tough professionals (1982-1988).
- 1983 New series detectives include Jon BREEN’s racetrack announcer Jerry Brogan in *Listen for the Click*, Max Allan COLLINS’s private eye Nate Heller in *True Detective*, Jane Dentinger’s actor/detective Jocelyn O’Roarke in *Murder on Cue*, Jill MCGOWN’s English police officers Judy Hill and Lloyd in *A Perfect Match*, and Eric Wright’s Toronto, Canada, police inspector Charlie Salter in *The Night the Gods Smiled*.
- 1984 Chester HIMES dies.
- Crime Writers of Canada establish the Arthur Ellis awards.
- Janet Rudolph launches *The Mystery Reader’s Journal*.
- Angela Lansbury stars in the television series *Murder She Wrote* (1984-1996), loosely based on Agatha CHRISTIE’s Jane Marple; Joan Hickson plays Miss Marple in *The Body in the Library*, the first of ten Christie works filmed for the BBC.
- First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt appears as a detective in an apparently ghostwritten series begun by her son Elliot Roosevelt, with *Murder and the First Lady*.
- George Baxt begins his celebrity murder series with *The Dorothy Parker Murder Case*.
- The Hunt for Red October* is Tom Clancy’s first novel.

- New series characters include Dorothy Cannell's Ellie Haskell in *The Thin Woman*, Jeremiah HEALY's Boston investigator John Francis Cuddy in *Blunt Darts*, Sharyn MCCRUMB's forensic anthropologist Elizabeth MacPherson in *Sick of Shadows*, Sister Carol Anne O'Marie's Sister Mary Helen in *A Novena for Murder*, and Gillian SLOVO's journalist Kate Baeier in *Morbid Symptoms*.
- Miami Vice* (1984-1989), a television series starring Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas, begins.
- PBS *Mystery!* begins broadcasting the critically acclaimed British television series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984-1985), starring Jeremy Brett. The series becomes *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, then *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, and finally *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* before ending in 1994.
- 1985 Ed Gorman and Robert Randisi found *Mystery Scene* magazine.
- New series characters include Anna CLARKE's Professor Paula Glenning in *Last Judgement*, Andrew Greeley's Chicago priest John "Blackie" Ryan in *Happy Are the Meek*, and J. A. JANCE's Seattle homicide officer J. P. Beaumont in *Until Proven Guilty*.
- 1986 Jorge Luis BORGES and John D. MACDONALD die.
- Sara PARETSKY and others form Sisters in Crime.
- Ed Gorman, Charlotte MACLEOD, and Robert Randisi found the American Crime Writers League.
- Paco Ignacio TAIBO II and Julian Semionov form the International Association of Crime Writers with branches in many countries.
- Michael INNES's John Appleby appears for the last time in *Appleby and the Ospreys*.
- The Bouchercon convention establishes the Anthony Awards.
- New series characters include Marian BABSON's aging Hollywood stars Evangeline Sinclair and Trixie Dolan in *Reel Murder*, Robert Campbell's Chicago politician and sewer inspector Jimmy Flannery in *The Junkyard Dog*, Max Allan COLLINS's Eliot Ness in *The Dark City*, Kinky Friedman's country-western singer sleuth Kinky Friedman in *Greenwich Killing Time*, and Joan HESS's Arkansas bookstore owner Claire Malloy in *Strangled Prose*.
- 1987 Mystery Readers International establishes the Macavity Awards.
- New series characters include Linda Barnes's police officer turned cab driver Carlotta Carlyle in *A Trouble of Fools*, James Lee BURKE's New Orleans police officer Dave Robicheaux in *The Neon Rain*, Joan HESS's Arkansas police chief Arly Hanks in *Malice in Maggody*, Carolyn Hart's bookstore owner Annie Laurence in *Death on Demand*, Caroline GRAHAM's Chief Inspector Tom Barnaby in *The Killings at Badger's Drift*, Lia MATERA's San Francisco attorney Willa Jansson in *Where Lawyers Fear to Tread*, Ian RANKIN's Scottish police inspector John Rebus in *Knots and Crosses*, and Peter ROBINSON's Chief Inspector Alan Banks in *Gallows View*.
- Peter Ustinov plays Hercule Poirot in a film version of Agatha CHRISTIE's *Appointment with Death*.
- 1988 Batya Gur, the first widely recognized Israeli detective novelist, publishes *The Saturday Morning Murder*, set in Israel; the series detective is Moroccan-born Chief Inspector Michael Ohayon.
- Elizabeth GEORGE's first novel, *A Great Deliverance*, introduces series characters including Thomas Lynley and Barbara Havers.

- Other new series characters include Thomas H. COOK's Atlanta, Georgia, police officer Frank Clemons in *Sacrificial Ground*, Lia MATERA's San Francisco attorney Laura Di Palma in *The Smart Money*, Janet Neel's London police inspector John McLeish and civil servant Francesca Wilson in *Death's Bright Angel*, Corinne Holt Sawyer's aging widows Angela Benbow and Caledonia Wingate in *The J. Alfred Prufrock Murders*, and Scott Young's Inuk Royal Canadian Mounted Police inspector Matthew ("Mateesie") Kitologitak in *Murder in a Cold Climate*.
- 1989 Georges SIMENON and Daphne DU MAURIER die.
A Time to Kill becomes John Grisham's first best-selling legal thriller.
 Larry Gelbart's *City of Angels*, a musical spoof of hard-boiled detective films, opens on Broadway.
 New series characters include John HARVEY's police detective Charlie Resnick in *Lonely Hearts* and Annette Meyers's Wall Street headhunters Leslie Wetzon and Xenia Smith in *The Big Killing*.
- 1990 Walter MOSLEY introduces African American detective Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins in *Devil in a Blue Dress*.
 Paco Ignacio TAIBO II begins a series featuring Mexico City detective Héctor Belascoarán Shayne with *An Easy Thing*.
 Other new series detectives include Patricia Cornwell's forensic pathologist Dr. Kay Scarpetta in *Postmortem* and Jane Haddam's retired Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) department head Gregor Demarkian in *Not a Creature Was Stirring*.
 Sharyn McCURMB begins exploration of Appalachian culture with *If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O*.
- 1991 Graham GREENE dies.
 The Crime Writers of Scandinavia and Sisters in Crime Australia are formed.
 New series characters include Ann GRANGER's Meredith Mitchell and Alan Markby in *Say It with Poison*, Jennifer Rowe's Australian detective Verity Birdwood in *Grim Pickings*, and Sandra Scoppettone's lesbian private investigator Lauren Laurano in *Everything You Have Is Mine*.
- 1992 The North American Branch of the International Association of Crime Writers gives its first Hammett awards.
 The Independent Mystery Booksellers Association and its Dilys Award are established.
 New series characters include Edna Buchanan's Cuban American Miami crime reporter Britt Montero in *Contents Under Pressure*, Liza CODY's female wrestler Eva Wylie in *Bucket Nut*, Eleanor Taylor BLAND's widowed African American police detective Marti MacAlister in *Dead Time*, Donna Leon's Venetian commissario Guido Brunetti in *Death at La Fenice*, Margaret MARON's North Carolina judge Deborah Knott in *Bootlegger's Daughter*, Barbara NEELY's African American domestic worker Blanche White in *Blanche on the Lam*, and Dana STABENOW's Alaskan detective Kate Shugat in *A Cold Day for Murder*.
- 1993 Leslie CHARTERIS dies.
 National Park Ranger Nevada BARR's *Track of the Cat* introduces Anna Pigeon of the National Park Service.
 Sharan Newman begins a series set in twelfth century France with *Death Comes as Epiphany*.
 Other new series characters include Deborah CROMBIE's English police detectives Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James in *A Share in Death* and Laurie R. KING's San Francisco homicide detectives Kate Martinelli and Alonzo Hawkins in *A Grave Talent*.
 Television's *NYPD Blue* series begins (1993-2005).

- 1994 Allen J. Hubin publishes *Crime Fiction II: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1749-1990*.
 Carol O'CONNELL's *Mallory's Oracle* introduces computer ace Kathy Mallory.
 Janet EVANOVICH's *One for the Money* introduces bounty hunter Stephanie Plum.
- 1995 Patricia HIGHSMITH dies.
 Crime Writers' Association of Austria is formed.
 Thomas PERRY's New York Native American guide Jane Whitefield first appears in *Vanishing Act*.
 Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle are detectives in Walter Satterthwait's *Escapade*.
 Peter J. Heck's *Death on the Mississippi* is the first of his six Mark Twain Mysteries.
- 1996 Dale Furutani's *Death in Little Tokyo* is the first novel by an Asian American to feature an Asian American detective, Ken Tanaka.
 Carolina Garcia-Aguilera introduces Cuban American private investigator Lupe Solano in *Bloody Waters*.
 Georgia sisters Mary Alice Crane and Patricia Anne Hollowell appear in the first Southern Sisters novel by Anne George, *Murder on a Girls' Night Out*.
 Mark TWAIN's major detective fiction is collected in *The Stolen White Elephant and Other Detective Stories*.
- 1997 J. K. ROWLING's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone)* is the first of her seven Harry Potter books.
- 1998 Eric AMBLER dies.
 Alexander McCall Smith creates Precious Ramotswe, the only private detective in Botswana, in *The Number One Ladies' Detective Agency*.
- 1999 Inspector Morse makes his final appearance in Colin DEXTER's *The Remorseful Day*.
- 2000 *CSI* is the first of several popular television series about crime-scene investigations.
- 2001 *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is the first of J. K. ROWLING's novels to be adapted to the screen.
 Mark TWAIN's *A Murder, a Mystery and a Marriage* is posthumously published.
- 2002 Dean James's *Posted to Death* introduces homosexual vampire detective Simon Kirby Jones.
 Fiona Mountain's genealogist detective Natasha Blake appears in *Pale as the Dead*.
 Mainframe computer Turing Hopper detects in Donna Andrews's *You've Got Murder*.
- 2003 Amanda CROSS dies.
 Jacqueline Winspear begins her *Maisie Dobbs* series, set in the aftermath of World War I.
 Christopher Fowler invents London's Peculiar Crimes Unit, headed by an aging Arthur Bryant and John May, in *Full Dark House*.
 Mark TWAIN's 1898 play *Is He Dead?* is posthumously published.
- 2005 Ed MCBAIN dies.
- 2007 J. K. ROWLING's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is her seventh and final Harry Potter novel.

Betty Richardson

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF AUTHORS

This chronology lists writers covered in these volumes in order of their date of birth. Author pairs who shared a pseudonym are listed under their real names, with the pseudonym in parentheses, before the birthdate. The birthdates for Barry Maitland, Charles Todd (a mother-and-son team), Margaret Maron, and Phil Rickman are not known. This arrangement serves as a supplemental time line for those interested in the development of mystery and detective fiction. For another chronological perspective, see the Crime and Detective Fiction Time Line on page 2289.

1600'S AND 1700'S

Voltaire (November 21, 1694)
William Godwin (March 3, 1756)
Ann Radcliffe (July 9, 1764)
Adolf Müllner (October 18, 1774)
François-Eugène Vidocq (July 24, 1775)
Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (January 10, 1797)
Honoré de Balzac (May 20, 1799)

1801-1820

Alexandre Dumas, *père* (July 24, 1802)
Eugène Sue (January 20, 1804)
Edgar Allan Poe (January 19, 1809)
Charles Dickens (February 7, 1812)
Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (August 28, 1814)

1821-1840

Fyodor Dostoevski (November 11, 1821)
Wilkie Collins (January 8, 1824)
Émile Gaboriau (November 9, 1832)
Louisa May Alcott (November 29, 1832)
Frank R. Stockton (April 5, 1834)
M. E. Braddon (October 4, 1835)
Mark Twain (November 30, 1835)
Thomas Bailey Aldrich (November 11, 1836)

1841-1860

Ambrose Bierce (June 24, 1842)
Anna Katharine Green (November 11, 1846)
Grant Allen (February 24, 1848)
Guy de Maupassant (August 5, 1850)
Robert Barr (September 16, 1850)
Robert Louis Stevenson (November 13, 1850)
John Russell Coryell (Nick Carter; 1851)
Thomas W. Hanshew (1857)
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (May 22, 1859)

1861-1880

R. Austin Freeman (April 11, 1862)
O. Henry (September 11, 1862)
Edward Stratemeyer (October 4, 1862)
Eden Phillpotts (November 4, 1862)
J. S. Fletcher (February 7, 1863)
W. W. Jacobs (September 8, 1863)
Arthur Morrison (November 1, 1863)
Maurice Leblanc (1864)
Israel Zangwill (February 14, 1864)
William Le Queux (July 2, 1864)
A. E. W. Mason (May 7, 1865)
Baroness Orczy (September 23, 1865)
E. W. Hornung (June 7, 1866)
E. Phillips Oppenheim (October 22, 1866)
Arnold Bennett (May 27, 1867)
Marie Belloc Lowndes (1868)
Victor Whitechurch (March 12, 1868)
Ernest Bramah (March 20, 1868)
Gaston Leroux (May 6, 1868)
Melville Davisson Post (April 19, 1869)
Erskine Childers (June 25, 1870)
Saki (December 18, 1870)
W. Somerset Maugham (January 25, 1874)
G. K. Chesterton (May 29, 1874)
Edgar Wallace (April 1, 1875)
Jacques Futrelle (April 9, 1875)
E. C. Bentley (July 10, 1875)
John Buchan (August 26, 1875)
Mary Roberts Rinehart (August 12, 1876)
Patricia Wentworth (1878)
H. C. Bailey (February 1, 1878)
Elizabeth Daly (October 15, 1878)
Freeman Wills Crofts (June 1, 1879)
Arthur B. Reeve (October 15, 1880)

1881-1890

A. A. Milne (January 18, 1882)
 Sax Rohmer (February 15, 1883)
 John Rhode (1884)
 Earl Derr Biggers (August 26, 1884)
 John Leslie Palmer (Francis Beeding; September 4, 1885)
 C. E. Vulliamy (June 20, 1886)
 Vincent Starrett (October 26, 1886)
 Rex Stout (December 1, 1886)
 Henry Wade (September 10, 1887)
 Ronald A. Knox (February 17, 1888)
 Raymond Chandler (July 23, 1888)
 Arthur W. Upfield (September 1, 1888)
 Sapper (September 28, 1888)
 S. S. Van Dine (October 15, 1888)
 Erle Stanley Gardner (July 17, 1889)
 Carroll John Daly (September 14, 1889)
 G. D. H. Cole (September 25, 1889)
 Kathleen Moore Knight (c. 1890)
 Agatha Christie (September 15, 1890)
 Harry Stephen Keeler (November 3, 1890)

1891-1900

Helen Reilly (1891)
 Octavus Roy Cohen (June 26, 1891)
 James M. Cain (July 1, 1892)
 Anthony Abbot (January 22, 1893)
 Margaret Cole (May 6, 1893)
 Dorothy L. Sayers (June 13, 1893)
 Anthony Berkeley (July 5, 1893)
 John P. Marquand (November 10, 1893)
 Baynard H. Kendrick (April 8, 1894)
 Dashiell Hammett (May 27, 1894)
 J. B. Priestley (September 13, 1894)
 Cleve F. Adams (1895)
 Ngaio Marsh (April 23, 1895)
 Frances Lockridge (January 10, 1896)
 Peter Cheyney (February 22, 1896)
 Josephine Tey (June 25, 1896 or 1897)
 Heimito von Doderer (September 5, 1896)
 Richard Hull (September 6, 1896)
 Dennis Wheatley (January 8, 1897)
 Walter B. Gibson (September 12, 1897)
 William Faulkner (September 25, 1897)

Josephine Bell (December 8, 1897)
 Hilary Aidan St. George Saunders (Francis Beeding; January 14, 1898)
 Richard Lockridge (September 25, 1898)
 Anthony Gilbert (February 15, 1899)
 Leonid Maksimovich Leonov (May 31, 1899)
 Mignon G. Eberhart (July 6, 1899)
 Jorge Luis Borges (August 24, 1899)
 C. S. Forester (August 27, 1899)
 Vera Caspary (November 13, 1899)
 W. R. Burnett (November 25, 1899)
 Bruce Graeme (May 23, 1900)
 Cyril Hare (September 4, 1900)
 Geoffrey Household (November 30, 1900)

1901-1910

Richard Webb (Patrick Quentin; 1901)
 Gladys Mitchell (April 19, 1901)
 George Harmon Coxe (April 23, 1901)
 Thomas Kyd (July 18, 1901)
 Lillian de la Torre (March 15, 1902)
 Kenneth Fearing (July 28, 1902)
 Georgette Heyer (August 16, 1902)
 Georges Simenon (February 13, 1903)
 Leo Bruce (June 20, 1903)
 Hugh Pentecost (August 10, 1903)
 Phyllis A. Whitney (September 9, 1903)
 Frederick Nebel (November 3, 1903)
 Cornell Woolrich (December 4, 1903)
 Lawrence Treat (December 21, 1903)
 Nicholas Blake (April 27, 1904)
 Margery Allingham (May 20, 1904)
 Darwin L. Teilhet (May 20, 1904)
 Brett Halliday (July 31, 1904)
 Graham Greene (October 2, 1904)
 Lester Dent (October 12, 1904)
 Frederic Dannay (Ellery Queen; 1905)
 Manfred B. Lee (Ellery Queen; 1905)
 Charlotte Armstrong (May 2, 1905)
 Stuart Palmer (June 21, 1905)
 Pierre Boileau (April 28, 1906)
 Jim Thompson (September 27, 1906)
 Michael Innes (September 30, 1906)
 Jonathan Latimer (October 23, 1906)
 Simon Brett (October 29, 1906)

John Dickson Carr (November 30, 1906)
 James Hadley Chase (December 24, 1906)
 Leslie Charteris (May 12, 1907)
 Daphne du Maurier (May 13, 1907)
 Elspeth Huxley (July 23, 1907)
 William Haggard (August 11, 1907)
 E. X. Ferrars (September 6, 1907)
 Helen MacInnes (October 7, 1907)
 Christianna Brand (December 17, 1907)
 Andrew Garve (February 12, 1908)
 Joan Fleming (March 27, 1908)
 Ian Fleming (May 28, 1908)
 Craig Rice (June 5, 1908)
 Harry Carmichael (June 20, 1908)
 Thomas Narcejac (July 3, 1908)
 John Creasey (September 17, 1908)
 Harry Kemelman (November 24, 1908)
 August Derleth (February 24, 1909)
 Phoebe Atwood Taylor (May 18, 1909)
 Eric Ambler (June 28, 1909)
 Chester Himes (July 29, 1909)
 Seichō Matsumoto (December 21, 1909)
 William Campbell Gault (March 9, 1910)
 Simon Harvester (June 28, 1910)
 Winston Graham (June 30, 1910)
 Robert H. Van Gulik (August 9, 1910)
 Jean Potts (November 17, 1910)

1911-1920

John Newton Chance (1911)
 Velda Johnston (1911)
 Ed Lacy (1911)
 John Ball (July 8, 1911)
 Gerald Kersh (August 6, 1911?)
 Anthony Boucher (August 21, 1911)
 Hugh Wheeler (Patrick Quentin; March 19, 1912)
 Julian Symons (May 30, 1912)
 Michael Gilbert (July 17, 1912)
 Robert L. Fish (August 21, 1912)
 Lilian Jackson Braun (June 20, 1913)
 Ellis Peters (September 28, 1913)
 Pat Flower (February 23, 1914)
 W. J. Burley (August 1, 1914)
 L. P. Davies (October 20, 1914)
 E. V. Cunningham (November 11, 1914)

Margaret Millar (February 5, 1915)
 Leonard Holton (April 9, 1915)
 Ross Macdonald (December 13, 1915)
 Jack Webb (January 13, 1916)
 Donald Hamilton (March 24, 1916)
 John D. MacDonald (July 24, 1916)
 Mary Stewart (September 17, 1916)
 Stanley Ellin (October 6, 1916)
 Helen Eustis (December 31, 1916)
 Robert Bloch (April 5, 1917)
 Jon Cleary (November 22, 1917)
 Patricia McGerr (December 26, 1917)
 Anne Morice (February 18, 1918)
 Mickey Spillane (March 9, 1918)
 Charles Willeford (January 2, 1919)
 Anna Clarke (April 28, 1919)
 Elleston Trevor (February 17, 1920)
 Lawrence Sanders (March 15, 1920)
 Richard Neely (April 18, 1920)
 Hillary Waugh (June 22, 1920)
 P. D. James (August 3, 1920)
 Akimitsu Takagi (September 25, 1920)
 Dick Francis (October 31, 1920)

1921-1930

Friedrich Dürrenmatt (January 5, 1921)
 Patricia Highsmith (January 19, 1921)
 B. M. Gill (February 15, 1921)
 Elizabeth Linington (March 11, 1921)
 Edmund Crispin (October 2, 1921)
 Peter King (1922)
 Lionel Davidson (March 31, 1922)
 Alistair MacLean (April 28, 1922)
 Alain Robbe-Grillet (August 18, 1922)
 Pierre Magnan (September 19, 1922)
 Charlotte MacLeod (November 12, 1922)
 William P. McGivern (December 6, 1922)
 Patricia Moyes (January 19, 1923)
 John Mortimer (April 21, 1923)
 Dorothy Gilman (June 25, 1923)
 Joseph Hansen (July 19, 1923)
 Desmond Bagley (October 29, 1923)
 Michael Collins (January 15, 1924)
 Margaret Truman (February 17, 1924)
 Joyce Porter (March 28, 1924)

Michael Avallone (October 27, 1924)
Ann Waldron (December 14, 1924)
Tony Hillerman (May 27, 1925)
Edgar Box (October 3, 1925)
Elmore Leonard (October 11, 1925)
William F. Buckley, Jr. (November 24, 1925)
Amanda Cross (January 13, 1926)
Ross Thomas (February 19, 1926)
Anthony Shaffer (May 15, 1926)
Per Wahlöö (August 5, 1926)
Ed McBain (October 15, 1926)
Jean Stubbs (October 23, 1926)
H. R. F. Keating (October 31, 1926)
John Gardner (November 20, 1926)
Nicolas Freeling (March 3, 1927)
Robert Ludlum (May 25, 1927)
Mary Jane Latsis (Emma Lathen; July 12, 1927)
Robert L. Duncan (September 9, 1927)
Elizabeth Peters (September 29, 1927)
Janet Laurence (December 3, 1927)
Peter Dickinson (December 16, 1927)
Mary Kelly (December 28, 1927)
Martha Henissart (Emma Lathen; 1929?)
Rolando Hinojosa (January 21, 1929)
Len Deighton (February 18, 1929)
Ralph McInerny (February 24, 1929)
Bill James (August 15, 1929)
Ira Levin (August 27, 1929)
Marian Babson (December 15, 1929)
Mary Higgins Clark (December 24, 1929)
Ruth Rendell (February 17, 1930)
Edward D. Hoch (February 22, 1930)
Charles McCarry (June 14, 1930)
Colin Dexter (September 29, 1930)

1931-1940

James Melville (January 5, 1931)
Janwillem van de Wetering (February 12, 1931)
Martha Grimes (May 2, 1931)
Caroline Graham (July 17, 1931)
John le Carré (October 19, 1931)
Joe Gores (December 25, 1931)
Umberto Eco (January 5, 1932)
Antonia Fraser (August 27, 1932)
Robert B. Parker (September 17, 1932)

Manuel Puig (December 28, 1932)
Ron Goulart (January 13, 1933)
Donald E. Westlake (July 12, 1933)
Jonathan Gash (September 30, 1933)
Stuart M. Kaminsky (September 29, 1934)
Rex Burns (June 13, 1935)
Aaron Elkins (July 24, 1935)
Maj Sjöwall (September 25, 1935)
Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza (January, 1936)
Reginald Hill (April 3, 1936)
Carolyn Hart (August 25, 1936)
Peter Lovesey (September 10, 1936)
Robert Barnard (November 23, 1936)
James Lee Burke (December 5, 1936)
Joseph Wambaugh (January 22, 1937)
Patrick McGinley (February 8, 1937)
Gregory McDonald (February 15, 1937)
William Deverell (March 4, 1937)
Margaret Coel (October 11, 1937)
Shizuko Natsuki (1938)
Stuart Woods (January 9, 1938)
Lawrence Block (June 24, 1938)
Frederick Forsyth (August 25, 1938)
John Harvey (December 21, 1938)
Sarah Caudwell (May 27, 1939)
Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (June 14, 1939)
Ann Granger (July 12, 1939)
James McClure (October 9, 1939)
James Crumley (October 12, 1939)
Thomas Harris (1940)
Sue Grafton (April 24, 1940)

1941-1950

D. J. Donaldson (1941)
Barbara Neely (1941)
Stephen J. Cannell (February 5, 1941)
Alan Furst (February 20, 1941)
John Dunning (January 9, 1942)
Stephen Greenleaf (July 17, 1942)
Martin Cruz Smith (November 3, 1942)
Peter Tremayne (March 10, 1943)
Bill Pronzini (April 13, 1943)
Janet Evanovich (April 22, 1943)
David Morrell (April 24, 1943)
Jon L. Breen (November 8, 1943)

Stephen Solomita (November 29, 1943)
 Liza Cody (April 11, 1944)
 J. A. Jance (October 27, 1944)
 Julie Smith (November 25, 1944)
 James Sallis (December 21, 1944)
 Eleanor Taylor Bland (December 31, 1944)
 Dean R. Koontz (July 9, 1945)
 Nancy Pickard (September 19, 1945)
 Susan Conant (May 20, 1946)
 James Wilson Hall (1947)
 Rupert Holmes (February 24, 1947)
 Michael Dibdin (March 21, 1947)
 Linda Fairstein (May 5, 1947)
 Carol O'Connell (May 26, 1947)
 Sara Paretsky (June 8, 1947)
 Thomas Perry (August 7, 1947)
 Jill McGown (August 9, 1947)
 Thomas H. Cook (September 19, 1947)
 Stephen King (September 21, 1947)
 John Lescroart (January 14, 1948)
 Sharyn McCrumb (February 26, 1948)
 Max Allan Collins (March 3, 1948)
 James Ellroy (March 4, 1948)
 Jeremiah Healy (May 15, 1948)
 Sandra Brown (June 12, 1948)
 Alexander McCall Smith (August 24, 1948)
 Jonathan Valin (November 23, 1948)
 Lindsey Davis (1949)
 Joan Hess (January 6, 1949)
 Paco Ignacio Taibo II (January 11, 1949)
 Elizabeth George (February 26, 1949)
 Scott Turow (April 12, 1949)
 Ken Follett (June 5, 1949)
 Minette Walters (September 26, 1949)
 Kathy Reichs (1950)
 Peter Robinson (March 17, 1950)
 Archer Mayor (July 30, 1950)
 Sarah Dunant (August 8, 1950)

1951-1960

Ken Bruen (1951)
 Michelle Spring (1951)

John Burdett (July 24, 1951)
 Natsuo Kirino (October 7, 1951)
 Lia Matera (1952)
 Walter Mosley (January 12, 1952)
 Nevada Barr (March 1, 1952)
 Gillian Slovo (March 15, 1952)
 Dana Stabenow (March 27, 1952)
 Deborah Crombie (June 5, 1952)
 William L. DeAndrea (July 1, 1952)
 Loren D. Estleman (September 15, 1952)
 Laurie R. King (September 19, 1952)
 Colin Cotterill (October 2, 1952)
 Qiu Xiaolong (1953)
 Laura Joh Rowland (1953)
 Carl Hiaasen (March 12, 1953)
 Tess Gerritsen (June 12, 1953)
 Robert Crais (June 20, 1953)
 Don Winslow (October 31, 1953)
 Lee Child (October 29, 1954)
 John Grisham (February 8, 1955)
 Iain Pears (August 8, 1955)
 Philip Kerr (February 22, 1956)
 Steven Saylor (March 23, 1956)
 Boris Akunin (May 20, 1956)
 Douglas Preston (May 20, 1956)
 Patricia Cornwell (June 9, 1956)
 Michael Connelly (July 21, 1956)
 George P. Pelecanos (February 18, 1957)
 Lincoln Child (October 13, 1957)
 Laura Lippman (January 31, 1959)
 Ian Rankin (April 28, 1960)
 Miyuki Miyabe (December 23, 1960)

1961-1968

Martyn Waites (1963)
 Barry Eisler (1964)
 J. K. Rowling (July 31, 1965)
 Dennis Lehane (August 4, 1965)
 Denise Mina (August 21, 1966)
 Adrian McKinty (1967)
 John Connolly (May 31, 1968)

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